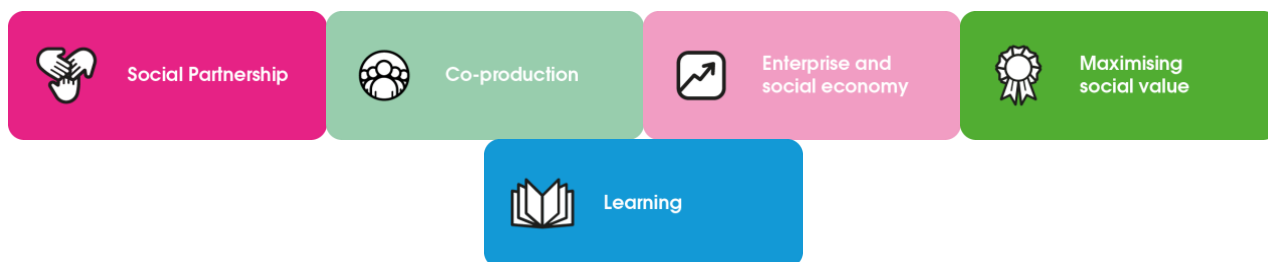


## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



### Lewes District Council

## Lewes District: Cultural Economy

Promoting community wealth and wellbeing has been a priority in Lewes District Council's work over the last 5 years. One of the ways we have realised this approach has been through making use of council buildings and resources to support arts and culture which has enhanced our local economy.

The council leased its offices in the centre of Lewes to Charleston Trust, an arts & heritage organisation focused on the Bloomsbury Group in Sussex. The initial lease was for 5 years for an exhibition space, café and education and training facilities. However, an economic impact assessment has been carried out and subsequently a decision has been made in March 2025 by Cabinet to grant a 25 year lease to the Charleston Trust based on the benefits already demonstrated but also support the trust's vision for the gallery to become a permanent national gallery which, in partnership with other galleries in the country, could display the most important Bloomsbury Works and other works of national significance in Sussex.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Nicholson said "The granting of a longer lease is fundamentally important if the team at Charleston is to establish partnerships with Tate, the V&A, and National Portrait Gallery, attract more external investment, and open a national gallery in Lewes - an incredibly exciting prospect and one that would undoubtedly generate an even greater number of visitors to the town and support more jobs for local people."



Event at Charleston in Lewes

In terms of the impact on the local economy and spending in the town's businesses, over 100,000 people have visited Charleston in Lewes since September 2023 to experience work by Picasso, Modigliani, Lee Miller, and Grayson Perry, among many others displayed at the gallery. A survey found that nearly two-thirds of visitors combined their visit with other activities in Lewes, and nearly half visited restaurants, bars, shops, markets, or other cultural venues.

Over a five-year period, Charleston in Lewes is projected to attract over 560,000 visitors, generating an annual average of £4 million in town wide economic benefits and creating 56 jobs. As cultural tourism is less impacted by seasonal fluctuations, these benefits and visitor spending patterns would support the town's high street and wider economy during the off-peak periods.

Cllr Nicholson said "As well as the wonderful cultural contribution and hugely welcome economic impact on our town, it is the far-reaching and highly significant collaboration between Charleston in Lewes and East Sussex College Group that has really brought the council's ambition for our partnership to life.

Young people and their education and training are central to so much of what Charleston in Lewes has become, and that relationship will only continue to evolve and develop. Unsurprisingly, Ofsted inspectors recently praised the creative skills programme, which 800 students will enjoy over the coming year.

I'm also delighted that over 2,000 residents have taken part in workshops, teachers from 22 schools have participated in artist-led training programmes and 41% of visitors have visited for free or benefitted from concessions, such as a monthly weekend Pay What You Can day and free entrance for all under-18s."

## Artwave Festival



## Artwave Festival

The council also funds a festival of artists and makers in the Lewes District. Every year hundreds of creatives exhibit in Lewes, Seaford, Newhaven and the surrounding villages.

The event gives art lovers the chance to discover new work, meet artists and makers, and buy directly from them. Last year, Artwave featured the work of more than 1,000 artists and makers across 163 exhibitions, generating over £333,000 in total income for them. The diverse work on show included jewellery, painting, sculpture, printmaking, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and photography.

It is estimated that more than 53,000 people visited over the three weeks of the 2024 festival, which has run since 1993. As well as being a popular annual event for residents, the flagship visual arts festival funded by Lewes District Council is a gateway for people from farther afield to discover and enjoy Lewes district - with the average visitor spending just under £40 on non-artwork items such as food, drink, shopping and accommodation.

According to a report by Artwave organisers, an impressive 98% of visitors in 2024 expressed their intention to return to the festival in the future, highlighting the event's strong appeal.

The 2025 festival runs from September 6 to 21. More information is available at the website <https://www.artwavefestival.org/>

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