



Somerset County Council

Creative industries:
Somerset Creative Industries Development Agency (CIDA, say cider!)



Somerset County Council is working with district authorities in the county and the Arts Council of England South West, to set up Somerset CIDA – a creative industries development agency, to begin operation in 2006. It has a vision for Somerset – a place where the arts and creative industries can thrive.

The agency will offer information, training opportunities, marketing, advocacy and challenge funding for the sector. It will maximise the impact of current investment from the public sector and attract further investment from the RDA – initially Rural Renaissance, Sustainable Communities and Investing in Communities, Learning and Skills Council and local business.

This project has the ambition to combine the outsourcing of arts development and grant funding county-wide with a pro-active programme of business support. The particular shared priority addressed is, 'Promoting the Economic Vitality of Localities.'

Currently, creative industries in the UK produce a turnover of more than £112.5 billion, employ 1.3 million people and are growing at a current rate of 11 per cent per annum. The South West region's creative industries are growing at roughly half this rate, and Somerset's growth is currently a quarter of this rate. The target will be: to reach parity with regional performance, during the next five years. This would create 1,800 new jobs and contribute £100 million to the local economy.



Will Shakespeare Opal Jug



James Codrington – Arc Dining Chair, Walnut and Cherry

Somerset CIDA will:

- act as a champion locally, nationally and internationally for Somerset's creative industries

- add value and enrich the communities that local authorities serve
- build capacity within the sector
- represent the sector on the Local Strategic Partnership
- more specifically, it will invest in organisations that can deliver specific outputs and outcomes rather than grant aid on a deficit funding basis
- introduce a tendering system, to encourage collaborative approaches across the public and private sector
- monitor, access and advise on external funding opportunities for local authorities and the creative industries sector
- spearhead the setting up of a creative-industries resource hub that is centred in Taunton with planned 'satellites' in West Somerset and Mendip
- strengthen Taunton's role as a regional centre for creative industries
- put creative industries at the centre of Taunton Deane's Sustainable Communities submission to the ODPM
- exploit pioneering creative industries and specific broadband applications, to overcome rural deprivation
- work with the Somerset Learning Partnership and Arts Matrix – a regional advice and artists' support programme, to deliver bespoke learning packages
- work with SW Arts Marketing, to improve strategic marketing knowledge and skills across the county

Outcomes will include:

CIDA's aims include a better focus and leverage for existing public sector investment and to create a higher profile for creative industries within the county and beyond. It will support existing arts delivery organisations and agencies, by working closely with them, to secure sustainable futures of county-wide community delivery. It will also meet the challenge of increasing the growth of the creative industries sector through high quality business advice, bespoke learning packages and resource provision. The programme will ensure that more local authority investment goes into supporting creative activity and less into servicing bureaucracy.

Current planned outputs during the three-year schedule include:

- capital needs audit and strategies for investment, training and public art
- two well-funded building-based creativity centres ie, Brewhouse, Merlin
- three district area-based community arts outreach organisations ie, Art Life, Bridgwater Arts Centre
- one county-wide rural performance development agency
- support for 150 existing and 50 new businesses or organisations
- creation of 50 new jobs and business training for 100 people in the sector
- creation of at least 20 newly-managed workplaces for creative industries
- three new resource centres ie, hub and satellite models
- improved survival rates for creative industries and small businesses – from 30 to 50 per cent during three years
- improved set up rates of SMEs in visual arts, crafts and media

- attraction of inward migration of 20 new creative businesses
- efficiency savings of 12 to 15 per cent on local authority investment

The project is backed by research undertaken by Culture SW and Somerset local authorities during the last two years. Ongoing core investment should be in the region of £1 million a year. The feasibility stage costs approximately £225,000, of which one third is already secured.

For further information please contact:

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