

Visual Arts in Worcestershire – An Audit

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Executive Summary

During the process of this audit it became clear that there are a large number of galleries in the county offering a diverse range of visual arts. There is an even spread of private and public galleries in operation with a concentration of galleries in particular districts of the county - Malvern, Broadway and Worcester. The quality of exhibition space varied greatly which on the up side allows for a range of visual arts, from amateur to professional, solo to group to be exhibited publicly but on the downside can undermine the quality of the visitor experience which then reflects on the art work itself.

What was most evident from the research process was the lack of continuity within the sector. Every gallery, even within a specific sub-sector like libraries, operated in a different way. Some galleries only had one individual making the artistic decisions, some didn't even have a programming policy and very few engaged in marketing activity. Many publicly owned spaces were Worcestershire County Council (WCC) facilities. There was a desire from this sub-sector to engage in joint marketing initiatives and this could follow through to developing support for the sector in terms of programming policy, selection processes and improvement of the physical exhibition space.

Private galleries produced very high quality websites and generally promoted the work of the owner artist. A few private galleries exhibited the work of other artists on a temporary or small scale basis. These galleries do not typically work in partnership with other organisations or engage in joint marketing campaigns. They tend to rely on cultural tourism, offering additional services such as framing and the reputation of well established artists to attract visitors. Private galleries are commercial businesses and do not operate as a traditional not-for-profit arts business. They work in isolation to the rest of the arts sector and other private galleries.

Public galleries were often much more community focussed offering the opportunity to work in partnership, programme a wider range of visual arts work and support local artists. They attracted a wider range of audiences, both arts and non-arts, by virtue of their primary business – libraries, arts centres etc. There is greater opportunity in these galleries to introduce new people to visual arts either as a cross-over from other arts disciplines (film, theatre) or from other cultural activity (library, museum).

There are several artist led independent visual arts organisations in Worcestershire. These have formed due to a shared interest in a particular form of visual arts (photography), to enable joint initiatives or to network with other like minded individuals. These groups have been artist led creations and represent a mobilised force looking to raise the profile of visual arts in the county, increase opportunities to exhibit and share knowledge.

A common response to the questionnaire was a desire by the visual arts community to have a countywide arts week or open studios event on a similar model to Herefordshire's **h.Art**. Worcestershire based galleries and artists often commented on how well Herefordshire promoted and valued the visual arts sector and hoped Worcestershire could develop its reputation in this field. Galleries owners/organisers were keen to raise the profile of visual arts and work towards a large scale event on a regular basis (annual or biannual).

Many respondents also wanted to have a two way communication with WCC fostering a greater sense of belonging to and contributing to the development and vigour of the sector. There was a welcoming response to WCC seeking to support the development of the visual arts but individual respondents were often unable to identify ways that WCC could help. The sector as a whole has very much developed organically and in isolation. In most cases the visual arts community are looking for the necessary leadership to help them raise the profile of the visual arts economy and artistic standing in Worcestershire.

1.0 Definition of the brief

For the purposes of this audit the term 'gallery spaces' was defined as all designated spaces for the display and sale of visual arts works within the county of Worcestershire. These spaces could be in libraries, arts venues, theatres or dedicated commercial galleries. 'Visual arts' covers paintings, drawing, mixed media photography, printmaking, sculpture and textiles created by individuals or groups, amateur or professional.

1.1 Background

In June 2008 Worcestershire County Council appointed Stephen Wilson as Arts Officer for Worcestershire County Council. There had been a 2 year period where no Arts Officer was in post after the former officer had left after 10 years developing arts in the county.

The appointment of a new arts professional has offered the County the opportunity to objectively review the whole of arts development in the County and develop a new strategy to take the arts forward over the next 3-5 years. As part of the review process it became clear that very little provision was currently focused towards the visual arts, and in fact there was no up to date picture of the sector.

Three departments of the council, Arts Service, Arts Education and Economic Development decided to jointly fund an audit of the visual arts in Worcestershire; Stephen Wilson - Arts Officer, Steve Ricketts – Economic Development Officer, Marion Gager – Visual Arts Advisor. The information gathered from the audit would be used in the following ways:-

- *For artists and arts organisations to have a better understanding of the spaces that are available in terms of exhibiting their work*
- *For existing visual arts providers to have a greater understanding of what else exists within the county in terms of other spaces and to use this to develop partnerships*
- *For individual artists to have a better understanding of the sales opportunities available through commercial gallery space and how they can work within that sector*
- *For stakeholders and funding bodies to investigate where there are gaps in provision and to investigate ways of filling those gaps*
- *To develop an understanding of how many visitor numbers attend visual arts in the county*
- *To develop greater understanding of the type of art that is being displayed across the county and the priorities of galleries and space providers*

1.2 Audit aims

The aim of the audit was to develop a comprehensive contact database of all permanent gallery spaces in the county, create a listings guide of as many galleries as possible and garner responses from gallery owners and visual arts groups about current activity and partnership work with suggestions on how the sector might be further supported or developed.

Key Tasks

- A comprehensive contact database of all galleries in the county (Excel)
- An initial contact database of visual arts groups/clubs/societies in the county
- A listings gallery guide in Word format
- Report detailing findings and making recommendations for the sector's development

Key Outcomes

- To draw together existing databases and contact details into one comprehensive database
- To undertake an audit and create a listings of gallery spaces in Worcestershire
- To identify additional visual arts activity such as partnership work, work with schools, creative courses and studio hire space
- To contact key visual arts groups/collectives to ascertain where they have exhibited and the kind of exhibition work/projects they engage with
- To garner suggestions and feedback regarding how the sector could be developed

2.0 Methodology

An initial meeting took place with Stephen Wilson and Marion Gager to agree the scope of the work, the methodology and timetable. Key contacts we identified and databases shared.

2.1 Contact information

Steve Ricketts held the largest database of galleries in the County and this became the starting point and framework. Economic Development Officers at district level were not contacted at this stage as the county perspective appeared to be comprehensive and was likely to only incur a duplication of effort.

Local authority arts officers and tourism officers were contacted to establish district level knowledge of the visual arts and specific contact details. Tourism officers saw this information as very much an arts officer's responsibility. Although neither departments had specific databases the arts officers provided information on galleries within their district including, in most cases, direct contact information. The information provided was clearly put together on request and not from an existing database.

Visual arts groups/club/societies were also contacted with the aim of finding out which galleries they have exhibited in collectively or as individual members to ensure as full a picture as possible on all known gallery spaces.

When using the contact lists it was evident that a fair amount of information was out of date or inaccurate. Much time was spent assembling information gathered from a variety of sources as stated above and well as information resulting from my own primary research including websites, 'What's On' publications and telephone enquiries. Data was also added throughout the process of this audit as information came to light through questionnaire responses and 1-1 consultation.

These approaches enabled the database to be created for the distribution of the questionnaire.

2.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was created to send via email to all contacts on the collated database. This posed various problems in terms of quantity of email addresses available and spam/firewall settings for county council led galleries resulting in emails being blocked.

Non-returned questionnaires were followed up by telephone calls where information allowed. Commercial galleries appeared very reticent to respond to the questionnaire even after a follow up phone call. For some it appeared too much of a cold calling sales drive and could not see the potential development opportunities, perhaps due to that particular sub-sector's lack of partnership experience.

2.3 Consultation

Consultation took place in two formats. Firstly as part of the questionnaire there was the opportunity for gallery managers to add their own comments and ideas regarding the growth of the visual arts sector. Some galleries contacted did not meet the overall definition of the brief but indicated an interest in this work and were open to partnership ideas in the future (**see 4.5**). Contact was made via email to key clubs, groups and societies and in several cases followed up by telephone. This proved to be a very useful part of the consultation as these groups represented a large number of individual artists brought together by a common goal and unmet need. (**4.6**)

2.4 Visits

Visits were made to see the range and quality of space available to artists for exhibition.

Visits Made

Droitwich Library

Greenstage Gallery

Malvern Library

Damon Hall Art Studio

Worcester Art Gallery & Library

Worcester Cathedral

Spark Arts existing knowledge of the sector:-

Birties of Worcester

Bromsgrove Library

Jinny Ring Craft Centre

Malvern Theatre

Number 8 Community Arts Centre

The Fold

Pershore Library

Stourport Library

The Showell Gallery

The Artrix

Worcester Porcelain Museum

2.5 The Regional Picture

Many counties in the region run art weeks/open studios. Throughout the audit many galleries made reference to both Herefordshire and Warwickshire's high profile countywide weeks. In the case of **h.Art** the opportunity to mount this programme came through an injection of European and Advantage West Midlands funding. It has now run for 8 years growing from modest foundations into a significant event in the Herefordshire calendar and is much envied by Worcestershire based visual artists and galleries. Herefordshire County Council's involvement in the initiating and organising of the event has reduced each year and it is slowly being handed over to the artists as they realise the benefit to their business and profession. The initial high levels of initial funding enabled the Council to allow time for the project to evolve and attract artists to participate. Now artists will pay to be a part of the project as they can see the rewards and benefits in terms of sales, marketing and profile but this did not happen straightaway. **h.art** is a key part of Herefordshire's Arts Strategy.

h.Art is Herefordshire's Open Studios event, giving people exclusive access to artists' studios, workshops and exhibitions. The 8 day event allows you to meet the makers in relaxed, informal surroundings, learn about their techniques and inspiration and provide sales opportunities. Many venues also offer demonstrations, refreshments and one off taster session or creative courses.

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/h-art

Warwickshire Artsweek is the biennial celebration of the visual arts & crafts, open to all artists living and/or working in Warwickshire. Since its inception in 2000, Warwickshire Artsweek has grown from a handful of exhibitions and open studios across the county to over 170 separate events and now forms part of the growing national calendar of open studio and Artsweek events that happen every year across the UK.

The event, now in its 8th year, offers artists a wonderful opportunity to promote and sell their work through galleries, open studios, exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations. And for the visitor it is a chance to take some pleasant trips out and about to visit and meet artists, and having the opportunity to buy affordable works of art direct.

To help visitors plan their visits and give them an overall view of the work of participating artists, there is a taster exhibition in each area (Rugby, Stratford upon Avon and Warwick), known as a

Showcase Exhibition, where each artist will have one piece of work on display. For more information on these exhibitions please browse this website or visit your local library, tourist office of information, post office, local hotel/café to pick up your free copy of the Warwickshire Artsweek 68 page colour brochure, which details each artist and their respective event.
www.warwickshireartsweek.co.uk/events.asp

ArtsFest is Birmingham’s biggest and most vibrant cultural festival. It is an annual event lasting all weekend and is absolutely FREE. Artfest promote the event as:-

- A celebration of the astounding wealth of creative talent existing in the West Midlands
- A promotion of the West Midlands as the bustling cultural centre it is – full of high quality, innovative, cutting edge arts and entertainment activities.
- A festival for the young and old alike and we really do stick by our motto that there is something at ArtsFest for everybody to enjoy!

www.artsfest.org.uk/about.php

Other counties outside the region
hosting long running arts weeks...

Dorset Arts Week is a massive event including over 800 Dorset artists at more than 330 venues across Dorset.
www.dorsetartweeks.co.uk

Somerset Art Works (SAW) is a non-profit making organisation promoting the Visual Arts and creating opportunities for Visual Artists in Somerset through advocacy, promotion and development. Part of their work includes the Somerset Arts Week.
www.somersetartworks.org.uk

2.6 Arts Council England (ACE)

In 2006 ACE launched *Turning point*, their 10-year strategy for the contemporary visual arts. This strategy highlights national issues that have a clear relevance to Worcestershire including helping artists build sustainable careers, building partnerships, developing workspace,

developing open studio programmes, social and economic value and the wider engagement between the public and the visual arts.

Turning point focuses on five areas:

- audiences, participation and education
- support for artists
- innovation and risk
- diversity and leadership
- places, spaces and partnerships

“We see an opportunity to build partnerships with government and the local authorities to develop workspace and open studio programmes that bring artists, often working collectively, into contact with the public.”

ACEWM Visual Arts Policy

ACE priorities for visual arts 2007–2011:

- To support a more confident, diverse and innovative arts sector, which is valued by and in tune with the communities it serves
- To enable more people to take part in the arts as both audiences and participants
- To contribute to the development of the creative economy
- To help create vibrant communities across the country
- To celebrate diversity

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Questionnaire Returns

84 galleries were contacted in total. 31 completed a full questionnaire response (Appendix B). These respondents make up the entirety of the *The Gallery Guide* (Appendix A). 7 respondents did not meet the definition of the project but were keen to be kept informed of any further development work in this field (4.5).

No. Galleries contacted	No. responded	No. did not meet the definition of the brief(2.3)	Total % response
84	31	9	47%

14 galleries were not contacted but feature on the *Contact Database* (Appendix C) because they clearly did not fit the definition of the brief, contact information could not be acquired and/or they were discovered too late in the process of the audit. These are still listed on the *Contact Database* for future reference.

44 galleries did not respond. This was due to one or more of the following factors:-

- Their contact information was inaccurate on their website or on the *Contact Database*
- Their spam or firewall blocked the email
- They did not feel the project was relevant to them
- They perceived the approach as predatory rather than proactive

Some non-respondents were small libraries that more than likely did not have an exhibition space and with part time opening hours were difficult to contact by phone. Where possible, galleries that did not respond to the email questionnaire were contacted by telephone and messages left or conversations took place with the relevant staff. This had a reasonable effect. 4 galleries said they were sending information by post but only 1 was actually received.

3.2 Spread of Activity

19 galleries or organisations identified on the *Contact Database* do not have a postcode either because the information could not be found or they represent a group or organisation rather than an actual gallery space. These are still listed on the *Contact Database* as they could be involved in future development work and still make up the picture of visual arts in Worcestershire whether they participate or not.

The total number of galleries identified to date, with a listed postcode is 86.

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Postcode Sector	No of galleries	% of total
B45	1	1.2
B47	1	1.2
B48	1	1.2
B60	6	7
B61	3	3.5
B80	1	1.2
B96	1	1.2
B98	3	3.5
DY9	1	1.2
DY10	3	3.5
DY11	3	3.5
DY12	3	3.5
DY13	1	1.2
DY14	2	2.3
WR1	17	19.8
WR2	3	3.5
WR3	1	1.2
WR4	1	1.2
WR6	3	3.5
WR8	2	2.3
WR9	1	1.2
WR10	5	5.8
WR11	2	2.3
WR12	11	12.8
WR13	2	2.3
WR14	8	9.3
WR15	1	1.2

3.3 Operational Set Up

Total no. of completed questionnaires	No. of Public	%	No. of Private	%
31	14	45%	17	55%

3.4 Types of activity

Worcestershire has a rich variety of gallery spaces. There are many **private galleries** established by a single artist’s selling their own work. These galleries sometimes exhibit other artists work on an exhibition or long term sales basis. These galleries appeared engaged with the idea of marketing opportunities such as a Gallery Guide and potential future economic development plans. They are extremely business orientated and are likely to only really engage with County on this basis. They did not offer creative courses, studio space or work in partnership. They also had no interest in working with schools. These businesses are not typical arts businesses as they are not driven by charitable objectives. They are commercial profit making businesses. Where contact was made by telephone to chase non-returned questionnaires there was some reticence to engage with the audit as they were unable to see the potential benefit by being involved with wider strategic development. Talking to this sector requires a non-arts focused language to engage and truly support this sector. Many commercial

galleries had offered other related services such as **framing and limited edition prints**. Customers to these galleries were going there with visual arts in mind.

“We have a Schools Open Exhibition project.... working in partnership with two local artists, six schools and with some funding from Wychavon District Council”
Number 8 Community Arts Centre

Many galleries are part of bigger organisations such as **arts centres, theatres, libraries and museums** (which for the purposes of the rest of the audit I refer to

this sub-sector as community focussed galleries.) These typically operated in a more traditional arts business way balancing charitable objectives with income targets. They often ran courses and worked in partnership with their local district council. Many only had an individual making the decisions for the entire visual arts programme which perhaps limited the gallery’s artistic range and diversity in programming. What was most striking is that every gallery operated differently even within the same sub-sector (libraries, arts centres etc). This could be due to human resources, the importance of the gallery within overall business and the skills base of the individual in charge. Galleries that were part of

larger organisations have the **potential to develop cross-over audiences and introduce new people to the visual arts.**

Across all galleries **exhibitions ran on average for one month.** The more **community focussed galleries tended to accept a wider range of visual arts and were open to the idea of working in partnership** on projects in the future, particularly with local schools.

Many galleries had programming policies and several highlighted **specialisms** such as:-

- ceramics
- contemporary art
- sculpture.
- Furniture
- Glass
- Larger works
- Decorative wall art
- Jewellery
- Original paintings
- Textile
- Local art
- Figurative

A **very small number of galleries offered creative courses or studio space** for long term hire. Some libraries and arts centres have rooms to hire for meetings or the running of creative courses. Creative courses tended to be a part of arts centres provision for children & young people and adults or part of town based events, such as Kidderminster Arts Festival, when held at a library.

“...total library figures 142,804 in 2007/8. No separate gallery stat(istic)s available.”
Driotwich Library

What would be interesting to ascertain is how long the galleries had been in business and how accurate their data was on the visitor numbers. For the galleries situated in larger organisations data that was submitted was invariably part of the overall organisations visitor numbers rather than discreetly visual arts visitors. It was therefore impossible to gain a true picture of how many visitors attend visual arts in the county.

3. 5 Websites & Marketing

Most galleries had websites. The websites ranged in content and quality but all gave a sense of the gallery and its provision. They tended to be very much geared towards consumers and very little, if any mention of attracting artists to exhibit.

The libraries varied greatly in how they listed their own website address. None of the links tested actually took the viewer to a list of visual arts exhibitions in libraries around the county, some didn't work at all.

There was very little printed commercial literature detailing galleries such as city or town maps, 'What's On' guides etc in public areas. Information found was often poor quality in terms of content and presentation. Most notable was the lack of any collective marketing material for the visual arts. What does exist is down to each individual gallery and the resources and prominence it placed on such work. Traditional directories such as yell.com, BT and Thomson were also varied in their coverage.

The questionnaire did not seek to investigate marketing activity and gallery websites. This information is gleaned from the process of trying to build a database of galleries in the county and is worthy of considerably more research and development.

3.6 Networking Opportunities and the Artist

There are several artist led organisations operating in Worcestershire. These organisations are voluntary led and appear to spring from a range of needs experienced by the visual artists themselves which are currently not being met. Many of the organisations are similar in their vision to the national organisation *a-n* www.a-n.co.uk whose mission *“is to stimulate and support contemporary visual arts practice and affirm the value of artists in society”*.



Wychavon Area Network for Artists (WANA) WANA are art enthusiasts and artists, based in and around Pershore, who have come together with a vision of creating a sense of community within the local visual arts scene. Set up in September 2007 there are near 50 members of which 12 sit on the committee.

WANA provides a forum for artists to come together to share their interest in art. There is a yearly programme of events that includes social evenings - hosted mainly at Number 8 Community Arts Centre, talks, outings to galleries, workshops and group exhibitions. They have a long term ambition to create a visual arts festival or open studios. They have the support of Jenny Davis, Arts Development Officer, Wychavon District Council (WDC). www.wana.org.uk



During the research a new organisation came to light called **Worcestershire Contemporary Arts (WCA)**. WCA is an artist-led initiative established in April 2008 and aims to:

- Create opportunities and dialogue around contemporary art in Worcestershire
- Establish a network for mutual support amongst local, UK and international artists
- Increase exhibition opportunities in Worcestershire and beyond
- Invite international artists to show and talk about their art in the region
- Investigate the idea of provincial art and contemporary art in the rural setting
- Build lasting relationships that contribute toward the profile of contemporary art in Worcestershire.

WCA meet regularly at The Pitt Studio and are planning a number of exhibitions including the Malvern Exhibition of Contemporary Arts (MECA) in June 2009. www.w-ca.co.uk

VENA – **Vale of Evesham Network of Artists** is an artist initiated group organised by Jenny Davis (WDC). VENA has been meeting for around 12 months to highlight shared needs and discuss potential partnerships. The network has decided they would like to organise a visual arts festival in October 2009.

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They are holding initial scoping meetings in March and are also working with WANA to devise and deliver the project.

Wyre Forest Arts Forum – ‘The voice of the arts in Wyre Forest’ is a long established district arts forum although has recently been less active since the departure of its Chair, Judith Price.

4.0 Comments

Not all galleries responded even when a follow up telephone call was made. Their details have been kept and a log of contact with all the identified galleries has been made. It may be that the original email did not find the relevant member of staff or people were on holiday and having missed the deadline did not take any further action. Importantly their details have been kept so that they can be included in future development work.

Schools and colleges were not included in this brief as they were not publicly accessible, designated gallery spaces. As a more comprehensive picture of visual arts activity is known within the professional sector there will certainly be opportunities for partnership between schools, colleges and industry.

There are a significant number of restaurants and cafes that have art work for sale on the walls of the main eating area. Within the parameters of this brief they were not included as they were not designated gallery spaces but a business providing a platform for artists to promote and sell their work whilst offering an aesthetic enhancement for the establishment. Where establishments were identified they were added to the contact sheet but not contacted as part of this audit.

The report does not make any reference to looking at public art as it is a gallery specific audit. However it is worth noting that public art has had a reasonable high profile in Redditch where galleries are significantly under-represented.

4.1 The Gaps

“We always find Worcestershire difficult to communicate with as a whole, as it seems much more district based...”
Greenstage Gallery

<p>Strengths</p> <p>A willingness to work together</p> <p>A shared vision to be involved in an open studios programme</p> <p>ACE Visual Arts Strategy</p> <p>Several artist led organisations wanting to promote and develop visual arts</p> <p>A large number of galleries spaces in both the private and public sector</p> <p>A wealth of visual arts work in the county</p>	<p>Weakness</p> <p>Lack of countywide communication and profile for visual arts</p> <p>Varying levels of visual arts activity and support within each District</p> <p>Lack of awareness by private galleries of marketing resources already available</p> <p>Lack of centralised information for cultural tourism and school parties</p> <p>Huge disparity in quality of exhibition space, especially with the libraries sub-sector</p> <p>Only a hand full of galleries helped with the installation and dismantling of exhibitions</p> <p>Variances in programming policy and procedure</p>
<p>Threats</p> <p>The internet and the place of galleries when art work can be bought through online galleries and access to artists directly via their own websites</p> <p>Difference in outlook between the private and public galleries</p> <p>Range in quality of exhibition space in libraries</p> <p>Economic Climate</p>	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>An envy of Herefordshire’s h.Art artweek</p> <p>A desire to engage in partnership work where resources could be shared and maximised - such as marketing or touring high profile exhibitions</p> <p>An interest in working with schools</p> <p>The place of public art within the development of the sector</p> <p>Resources such as Destination Worcestershire, www.whatsonworcestershire.co.uk, WAM</p>

4.2 Recommendations

The audit highlighted a very clear message. Galleries are keen to be involved in a **high profile arts week or open studios event** after seeing the benefit of **h.Art** on the visual arts sector in Herefordshire. WCC have successfully run Skills on Show, a mixed arts showcase held at County Hall one weekend in the summer, for many years during the former's Arts Officer time in post. Many artists and visitors valued the showcasing and networking opportunity that the event provided as well as the supporting marketing and PR work. With a determination by ACE to pursue partnerships with local authorities the time is ripe for realising this ambition.

There is also an urgent need for a **comprehensive guide to gallery** spaces in the county to be used by galleries, artists, visitors and educationalists. A well marketed guide can help increase visitor numbers to all gallery spaces and enable pro-active organisations, artists or schools/colleges to begin to foster partnerships which could have strong social and economic outcomes. An online guide would enable the information to be easily updated and managed although consideration must be given to ensure the guide drives visitors to attend the galleries and not make the internet a substitute for experiencing the visual arts first hand.

“...with the internet now taking over sales for artists there is not enough revenue in it for private, for profit businesses, to survive in this sector...”
Jinny Ring Craft Centre

There is a desire and openness to establish a **permanent and two way communication between galleries and WCC**. Given an opportunity to be valued within the arts scene of Worcestershire, initiatives could flourish and allow artists and galleries the control to develop the sector with the leadership, support and wider perspective of WCC.

To enable such projects to take place various partnerships and consortiums would benefit from being established. The hook of working towards an Open Studios event would act as a strong catalyst for further work developing the arts sector.

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a. **Visual Arts Network**

A Service Level Agreement with an artist led organisation to act as a county network for artists and galleries.

- Manage an online gallery guide
- Share knowledge
- Promote opportunities
- Devise partnership projects to address gaps in provision and opportunity
- Two way communication with WCC to inform strategic development
- Training courses (marketing, legal, artistic, business, programming etc)
- Programme touring exhibitions (national and regionally created)
- Design, print and distribute any relevant printed material
- Research into visitor numbers to galleries in multi-discipline venues
- Explore international links where sales opportunities may exist

b. **Business breakfasts for private galleries**

An initially short term network led by Economic Development in partnership with Arts Service and Destination Worcester with the aim of:-

- Research project to discover the current level and nature of visitors to private galleries in the county
- High profile marketing campaign to encourage cultural tourism in Worcestershire (some towns or districts already use visual arts as a hook to a town being recognised as a keystone destination)
- Devise and share joint marketing initiatives such a print design and distribution

c. **Education Projects**

- Devise one, or a series of, Schools Open Exhibitions led by and hosted in libraries and larger community focussed galleries throughout the County
- Young Professionals Network – supporting young artists to become professionals and stay in the county

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- Teachers Network – supporting teachers to work with galleries bringing local artists into schools and school parties into local galleries (working with Visual Arts Network)

“Would a touring programme within Worcestershire be feasible?”
Kidderminster Library

d. Artistic Programme Investment

- National Touring Programmes brought to key galleries in each district
- Countywide Tour of student created work

e. Investment in spaces

- Libraries – exhibition spaces
- More research in to the need for permanent studio spaces for practicing artists (*The Fold & The Hope Market* models)

4.3 Further Partnerships

Restaurants & Chamber of Commerce

It would be worth engaging in advocacy work with the local Chambers' of Commerce to see if more non-arts spaces can be used for the display of professional visual arts work. Case studies can be garnered from

businesses that already welcome such partnerships. Arts & Business would be a useful partner and potential funder for such work. If WCC did have an SLA with a visual arts consortium this could be one of their areas of activity.

Idea!

*Commission of visual arts works by
10 artists for display in non arts
businesses*

Schools

There was a good level of interest in working with schools from the community focused sub-sector. Projects are a good way to ensure organisations are encouraging all members of the community to access their facilities, bring potentially new audiences to the venues and offer young people a platform to present their work beyond the boundaries of the school environment. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement. The model created at Number 8 Community Arts Centre could be a useful model for similar projects throughout the county or as a single county led initiative.

Idea!

*Worcester Library & Art Gallery -
Worcester Technology College Arts &
Design Students 'End of Year Show'*

Colleges

Both Further Education and Higher Education institutions that run art courses such as First Diplomas, BTEC National Diplomas in Arts & Design, Photography or Fashion & Textiles would

make ideal partnership with local community based galleries. Exhibitions of end of year shows would create a great sense of professionalism and focus for students and be a great way of arts centres or libraries widening their audience base and raising the profile of their gallery spaces. The partnership would offer an excellent opportunity for marketing and PR through local press coverage, private preview and gallery launches by local visual arts professionals.

Worcestershire Arts Marketing & Destination Worcestershire could play a vital role in the promotion of both an open studios programme and a gallery guide. They could also be involved in research work regarding visitor numbers and the social and economic benefit of galleries in the County.

4.4 'As written' comments from Questionnaires

Birties of Worcester

- Herefordshire publish a guide each year of galleries and artist studios that are open to the public. Any chance of Worcestershire doing the same?
- Similarly Stratford publish one for a month when they are promoting visual arts
- It was a missed opportunity for the Council to have used a Bristol based firm to have come up with their new £20,000 logo. Local school children might have been given the chance to compete for it!

Evesham Library

- Currently building a new exhibition area in foyer (March 2009)
- Would like to work with schools providing there is enough lead time
- Would like to see more textile exhibitions
- We try to programme at least a year, taking expressions of interest and possible month(s) through the year, and finalising our programme in the preceding September – hence the need for lead time for a schools exhibition.

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- I also attached to the email details of our exhibition areas – they are complex and individual, and that seems the easiest way to explain them.

Greenstage Gallery

- We always find Worcestershire difficult to communicate with as a whole, as it seems much more district based than say Herefordshire. We would like to see something that brings together all the arts within the county and something which would enable us to communicate with the whole county with details of our exhibitions.

Jinny Ring Craft Centre

- Ultimately visual arts will only survive in the public sector – with the internet now taking over sales for artists there is not enough revenue in it for private, for profit businesses, to survive in this sector – customers are now using the galleries as a viewing platform and are then searching to make direct contact, at reduced prices, with the artists. Our gallery is shrinking all the time and will probably cease entirely soon due to this dimension. The Danger is that as the private sector shrinks the artist have less walls pace to display and therefore the public sector feels it has to meet this need to protect the talents of the artist – and before you know it the artist is beings subsidised by the state.

Kestrel Gallery

- need more exhibition spaces, studio space and teen art programs

Kidderminster Library

- The professional travelling exhibitions, such as those from Hayward and Icon were very popular. The last we had here was of Picasso sketches, and it attracted a lot of press interest, as well as people travelling to view them. We also sent a mail-shot to the local schools, and had a number of them bring classes down to see the exhibition. Such exhibitions raise the profile of the library & arts service within the local community, boosts our visitor figures and allows the local community access to art they would otherwise be unable to see, certainly at a local venue.
- Would a touring programme within Worcestershire be feasible? If we knew, for example, to reserve a specific month for a touring exhibition we could accommodate it. However that would need to be coordinated centrally.
- A single brochure promoting all the exhibitions across the County would be very useful, at the moment individuals have to look up each venue to see what they have on, and if they are not

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local, they would probably not see any press releases for them, yet if they are interested people will travel to see an exhibition.

Malvern Library

- We are always happy to work in partnership with other services within the County Council and organisations in the Community

Number 8 Community Arts Centre

- I suggest a visual arts specific website which would provide a directory of artists and institutions as well as a space for listing gallery exhibitions, events and training etc. It would be very useful for building an e-newsletter or publication to directly promote what's on in the area with gallery audiences. This is something which is difficult to do at present because exhibitions and gallery events have to compete alongside live events and community events in most listings even though live audiences and visual arts audiences can be very different. As well as this, most exhibitors have relatively small marketing or publicity budgets so any form of a 'what's on' service needs to be cost effective for promoters as well as audiences.
- Another suggestion would be to hold a biennale exhibition based in publicly and privately run arts venues and galleries as well as artist studios (although biennales are often associated with bustling cities, there is a county-wide event similar to this in neighbouring Warwickshire <http://www.warwickshireartsweek.co.uk/>). This would be very useful for artists, arts organisations and galleries in terms of networking and forming partnerships. It gives smaller exhibitors a county-wide platform to promote themselves, allows established local audiences to get a real feel for what's on offer in their area and would build new visual arts audiences.

Pershore Gallery

- Copy Herefordshire
- Get the glossy magazines to do more coverage

Pershore Library

- We currently work with several local schools and would like to develop this.
- Would like more discussion and co-operation than we do now

Redditch Library

- Gallery closed until approx mid 2010
- New gallery space will be available on completion of major refurbishment at Redditch Library

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- We would be interested in encouraging artist workshop/ demo day/ watch the artist at work, links with schools - especially older age group

Tenbury Library

- Yes – in Tenbury, a small rural town, we have a lot of cross cultural events working with small local groups – museum, writers, readers, historical, schools, High School and so on. This could be used to mount a county-wide event that gives groups money and advice and practical help to maximize the advantages they have - and publicize how good local communities are in encouraging the arts.

The Gallery at Bevere

- This questionnaire is a good start, but a visit by an Arts professional from the Country Council would provide a much greater understanding of the site and what is on offer

The Quay Gallery

- We need more areas for local arts and crafts people to display their work and show their talents, schools could hold a local art week, for people of all ages, which would give younger people an insight into art in their area and also give them inspiration

The Showell Gallery

- Wychavon needs a dedicated gallery, workshop and studio space. Also there is little provision for children and young people to participate in visual art out of school. It would also be great to get a public art policy and strategy for the county in conjunction with the districts.
- Also a project idea might be to create a county visual art festival or trail drawing on the work that is already happening in the districts e.g the Wychavon visual arts festival, Wana etc Maybe also some sort of county training courses in developing up an coming artists and training in community arts, running workshops etc.

Worcester Porcelain Museum

- I strongly support the growth of the visual arts sector in Worcestershire and would welcome a coordinated approach in both planning and marketing.
- In addition to having gallery space our museum has space that can also be used for courses and workshops on a reasonable hire basis.
- I should be pleased to work with other gallery / providers to improve Worcestershire's offer.

4.5 Non-Returned Questionnaires (not within the definition of the brief)

The Swan Theatre, Worcester – Gallery space a permanent home to two organisations

Avoncroft Museum - temporary exhibition space

Will Tooby – The Fold, Bransford – complex of commercial artist studios with a café, open to the public

Caro Sweet – has her own studio which she opens one weekend in June each year

Pershore Town Council – wall space in Council Chamber – not open to the general public

Rita Thorn – online gallery of an individual artist

Vale of Evesham Network of Artists – new arts forum led by Wychavon District Council

4.6 Consultation list

Sharon McSwiney - Worcestershire Guild of Designer Craftsmen

Judith Price - Worcestershire Guild of Designer Craftsmen

Rachael Griffiths – Worcestershire Contemporary Artists

John Kellet – Vale of Evesham Camera Club

Jonathan Cochrane – Redditch Borough Council

Loz Samuel – Wyre Forest District Council

Jenny Davis – Wychavon District Council, VENA

Lois Parker – WANA