

Celebrating Culture at the Heart of our Communities

Hertfordshire Association of Cultural Officers (HACO), the overarching countywide cultural partnership, believes that culture is essential to the quality of life of our communities. Equally, it plays an important role in the local economy. HACO recognises that cultural activities support community cohesion, skills development, our mental and physical well-being and allows us to express and celebrate our identities.

It is also important that we value and support our diverse range of cultural assets. The 'magic and wonder' of the experiences they provide are essential to the health of the sector and our communities.

Children's Play

Play is an essential part of development through childhood, allowing children space and time to learn social, emotional and physical skills, whilst also supporting their health and well-being.

Throughout Hertfordshire play schemes continue to expand with activities available across the county, including adventure playgrounds, play centres, holiday play schemes, after-school clubs and play areas. New services such as Play Ranger schemes have thrived and have seen a significant increase in usage by children with disabilities.

Further development of new styles of play spaces in local communities that have been identified as having unmet play needs is underway through the Playbuilder programme. Hertfordshire will also begin reporting on the new National Indicator NI 199 'Children's satisfaction with parks and play areas.'

My Play Space - Play Rangers

Many of the county's local authorities have set up new three-year Play Ranger projects that ensure teams of professional play staff are based in local parks and woodlands. The key aim of such initiatives is to ensure that children can play safely in the outdoors, encouraging risky and challenging play whilst increasing usage of the local open spaces and parks within Hertfordshire.

Free of charge, weekly play sessions are run throughout the county with activities ranging from climbing trees, playing football, rounders and games to heating soup over camp fires and constructing obstacle courses.



"Ross loves Play Rangers. It gives him a good excuse to get muddy, build dens and be out in the fresh air".

Free Swimming in Hertfordshire

As part of a national initiative¹, six of Hertfordshire's local authorities now offer free swimming sessions for residents aged 16 and under and over the age of 60. Beginning in April 2009, the scheme is intended to encourage people to become more active and more healthy. Figures for the first six months of the scheme indicate an increase in the number of visits to pools across the county.

Free Swim Scheme in Hertfordshire - First Six Months			
Local Authority	April to June 2009	July to September 2009	Total - April to September 2009
BBC	10,004	21,303	31,307
EHDC	4,342	5,525	9,867
SACD	14,554	20,098	34,652
SBC	7,118	7,505	14,623
TRDC	5,366	7,431	12,797
WHBC	5,626	6,630	12,256

Source: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2009

London 2012 - A once in a lifetime opportunity

The new international Olympic White Water Canoe Centre is being built in the county at Waltham Cross and will be completed by the end of 2010. It will host the Games events from 29th July – 1st August 2012 with 12,000 visitors expected each day.

A joint county and Broxbourne Borough Council project (part of the Museums, Libraries and Arts Council funded People's Record) will aim to capture the memories and thoughts of Broxbourne residents about the impact of the Olympics in their local area. The project links to the wider Making Memories project run through Hertfordshire Archives.

Meanwhile, the county has 17 pre-Games training camp sites and has secured its first team – the British Virgin Islands. The Ready for Winners Partnership, formed by key organisations in Hertfordshire, continues to work to maximise the opportunities brought by the Games².

Herts Youth Games

Every year over 2,000 young people participate in a range of sports competitions as representatives of their districts in the Herts Youth Games.

With the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games rapidly approaching, the Herts Youth Games now incorporates a cultural element. Taiko drummers, Winterguard and young dancers all added to the rich cultural experience in 2009. For more information visit: www.sportinherts.org.uk/hertsyouthgames

Culture in our community

The Herts Arts Partnership and the County Arts Development Officer develop countywide arts and cultural projects such as the very successful Green Heart Partnership. These projects support wider strategic aims such as community cohesion and increasing opportunities for a range of individuals and groups.

South Oxhey sings on BBC2

A major BBC campaign to 'get the country singing' was galvanised by a large community development initiative in South Oxhey. The television series 'The Choir: Unsung Town' brought the achievements of the town's residents to national attention.

The production's aim was to create the country's largest community choir in a location where singing could be shown to bring enjoyment and also foster a sense of community pride. The choir's 180 members were challenged to learn difficult songs and perform them in daunting venues such as St Alban's Abbey. The programme culminated in their headline performance at the new South Oxhey Festival in May 2009 in front of 6,000 people.

Carly Harvey said: "Since joining the Choir, I have refound my drive and eagerness to achieve. I found for the first time in many years that I could actually do something besides being a Mother, something that was JUST FOR ME!"

A partnership of Three Rivers District Council, local charity ASCEND, Hertfordshire Music Service and the South Oxhey and Carpenders Park Extended Schools Consortium continue to support the initiative.

With our Ears to the Ground

Commissioned by the county council and three district councils, Green Heart Partnership and the artists group Proboscis are delivering a Hertfordshire-wide community engagement project about how well people from different backgrounds get on with each other.

During Autumn 2009, Proboscis spent time with over 250 people gathering thoughts on what the word 'community' meant to them through one to one conversations and creative exercises. The range of views from people between the ages of 5 and 90, from diverse backgrounds and in a variety of settings including community groups and the general public is documented in the project blog:

<http://withourearstotheound.wordpress.com/>

St Albans Mela

In September 2009, Clarence Park in St Albans hosted the first major Mela in the district to be organised by young people from St Albans Youth Council.

The Mela, a community celebration or festival to bring people together, was considered a great success and offered something for everyone. With acts such as Mumzy (an R'n'B singer from East London), Ronak Mela Baja (the only Bollywood brass band taking part in the national bandstand marathon) and Gurusoundz playing on the main stage, the event attracted up to 2,000 people who enjoyed a fantastic day of food, music and dance.

The Mela also offered the opportunity for quiet contemplation with a Mushaira, a traditional event where poets gather to perform their works.

Artists from the World Arts Platform were also part of the Mela, delivering family arts activities to raise awareness of their skills amongst the local community. www.worldartsplatform.org.uk

Picture copyright Twenty Twenty Television



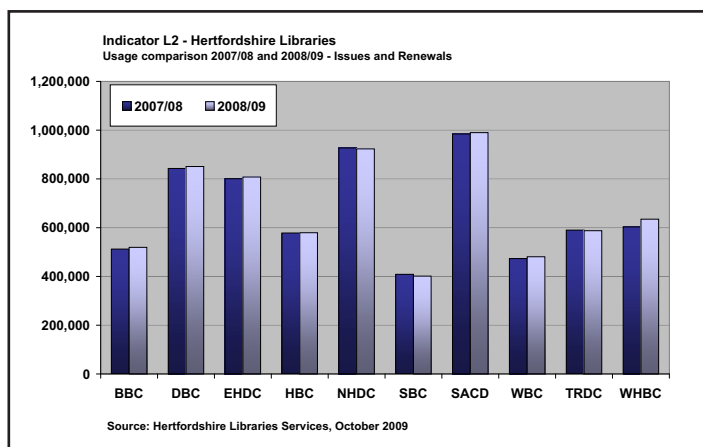
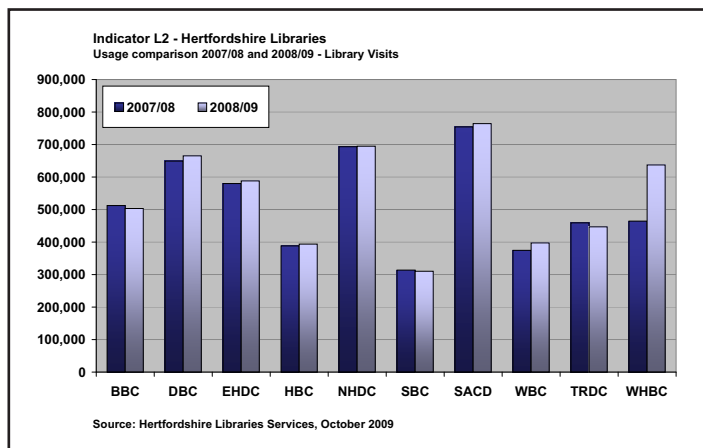
BBC programme brings together Hertfordshire community



Hertfordshire Library Services

Hertfordshire delivers cultural activities through its library, archives and local studies services. These encourage reading for pleasure, develop digital citizenship, provide access to information and support both formal and informal education. Hertfordshire Library Services support over 300 reading groups, attract over 17,000 people in the Summer Reading Challenge, provide story reading in every library, free internet access for the public and deliver 2,000+ computer taster sessions for those with little or no experience.

The service is delivered through a network of 47 buildings and mobile fleet of 13 libraries. As part of an ongoing investment strategy that began in 2007 called "Libraries for the 21st Century", opening hours have been extended and buildings refurbished and replaced, increasing library use.



Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies (HALS)

Hertfordshire Archives aims to promote and preserve Hertfordshire's unique heritage for the study and enjoyment of all. The specialist centre at County Hall holds 3 million documents on 5 miles of shelving.

Attracting researchers from across the globe, it provides access to original manuscripts, illustrations, maps, and printed sources dating from 1060 to the present day.

HALS regularly hosts events and introductory tours – including talks on research methods for local and family history – to raise awareness of its facilities, and delivers a programme of talks and family learning across the county. Projects include 'Hidden Talent', to showcase treasures of the collections, and 'Hidden Histories', promoting greater understanding between diverse communities by raising awareness of links between Hertfordshire people, the slave trade and its abolition. It is currently engaged in a two year project 'Making Memories', working with volunteers to set up a Community Archives Network for Hertfordshire, increasing IT skills, and giving everyone a voice. In the 2008/09 there were:

- 37 volunteers, working a total of 1,876 hours
- 60 exhibitions and 91 learning events held
- 4,259 people attending learning events
- 11,113 people doing research at the Archives Centre
- 12,865 documents produced from the Strong Rooms
- 42,681 enquiries received
- 60,686 people visiting HALS online resources

Hertfordshire Museums Partnership

The county has 37 museums and a further 7 attractions which are supported through the Partnership; 22 are accredited by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, the sector's quality standard. Supported by the county council and 9 districts, benchmarking data for 2007/08 covering 10 museums out of a possible 34 show there were:

- 207,839 museum visits
- 15,779 schoolchildren involved in learning events
- 3,668 young people involved in outreach events
- 4,721 museum adult group visits
- 2,031 people participating in outreach events
- 1,550 public research enquires dealt with
- 55,354 hours & £368,657 of volunteer time given
- 366 special events
- 54 temporary exhibitions

1 For more details visit the DCMS website at: http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/sport/5809.aspx

2 For more details on the Hertfordshire Ready for Winners Partnership see the Quality of Life Report 2008