

PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

> *Increasing levels of participation in cultural activities in the Borough*

In the arts this has been another typically vibrant year:

- Arts in the Park, the annual showcase of community and voluntary arts across the Borough, again enjoyed success generating a good level of attendance and interest
- A programme of Street Art Festivals, Hot on the Streets, ran through the Summer in Atherton, Leigh and Wigan
- In August the Wigan One World Multicultural Festival attracted more than 4,000 visitors to Mesnes Park
- The Arts Exchange adopted a new constitution
- A Disability Arts Forum was established and a Dance Development Network introduced
- The Turnpike Gallery in Leigh has committed to a new vision for cultural development in the community and the growth of closer links with Libraries & Lifelong Learning
- Wigan Pier Theatre Company has established new youth theatres at Higher Folds, Shakerley, Shevington, Wigan and Worsley Mesnes
- The Words05 Literary Festival attracted interest from within and beyond the Borough boundaries

- A new Arts and Health Project was introduced with the PCT
- Work on a brand new arts development strategy got underway in consultation with local people through the Citizens' Panel and stakeholders through the Arts Forum

On 2004/5 Chris Wyatt, Community Regeneration Manager for Arts and Festivals at WLCT has said, *"The arts scene in Wigan is alive and more than ever there are local opportunities to get involved or simply enjoy the work of others. With exciting new artistic developments included in plans for the regeneration of Wigan Pier Quarter and public arts proposed for Leigh Sports Village, the future for arts in the Borough looks certain to continue as dynamic and exciting."*

Opportunities for participation in **sport and physical activity** have again increased this year.

- 2 new Disability Athletics Clubs were established in Lowton and Wigan
- Football Festivals for all Special Schools were run for the first time
- Work to widen the inclusive sport and youth development programme from the original target areas of Hindley and Westleigh has got underway
- Coach training programme in Rugby League has been launched
- School holiday sports programmes are now offered in 11 sports

Active Life programmes are progressing as planned

- Local Exercise Action Pilot (LEAP) was a success involving older people in physical activity
- BCNUL8R and GASP - children's health and physical activity projects
- Next Steps - aimed at helping people become more physically active in their own community
- Steps to Health - an exercise referral scheme aiming to encourage people who are inactive to take up some form of physical activity

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Developing inclusive dance programmes for young people within the Borough

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Culturally diverse activity continues to develop – helping the growth of cohesive communities, working to improve cultural awareness and understanding, and encouraging the growth of a zero tolerance attitude to racism

Some of the work includes:

- Black History Month - Literary workshops, thematic displays and music reviews all featured last October
- Kick Racism Out of Football – using the game as a medium through which to raise cultural awareness, positively promote multi-culturalism and race equality and engage a wide range of people in the dissemination of a zero tolerance attitude to racism
- Wigan One World Festival - is now entering its third season and encourages positive celebration of local diversity through the arts, multi-cultural food and sporting activities. Last year more than 4,000 people were involved in a samba carnival parade; community demonstrations in martial arts; musical performances and workshops centred on african and asian music-making, gospel, rap, reggae and funk; multi-cultural football and much more. This year's festival programme climaxed with a carnival day at Mesnes Park in August as before, launched with the opening of multicultural art and film exhibitions at the Turnpike in Leigh on 25th June
- Words 05 – The annual literary Festival organised by Leigh and Wigan Words Together Literary Society attracted interest on the part of several hundred more visitors this year. Black poetry, BME writing and a Catalan Day - built around an exhibition of paintings by Tapies, and poems by Brossa, created during the Francoist era in Spain, illustrating a subtle but determined resistance to oppression – added to last year's multicultural strands and evidenced the committee's support for Borough-wide works on race equality

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Wheelchair basketball at Robin Park through which new opportunities for participation are extended to disabled young people as part of a wider disability sports development programme across the Borough

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This year the Leisure & Culture Trust have also:

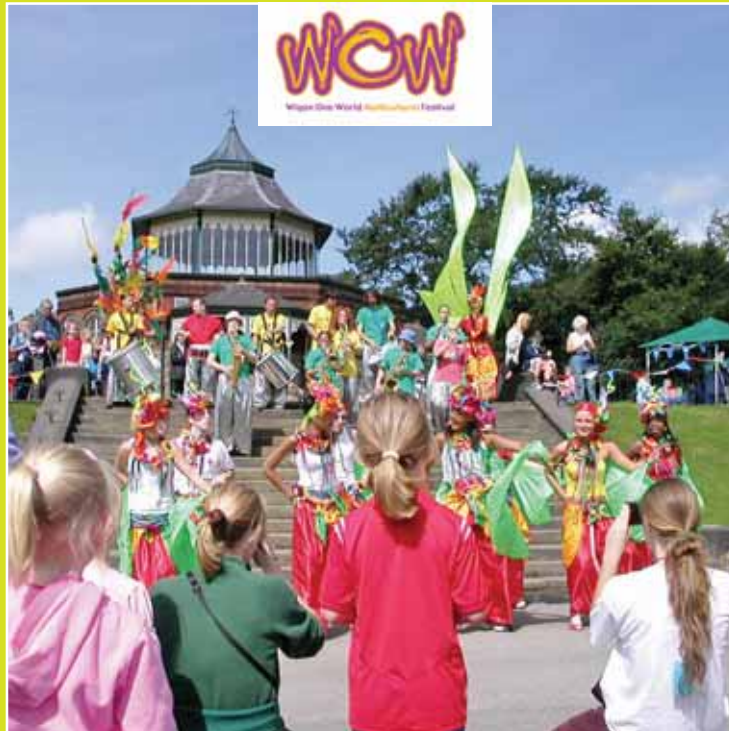
- offered discrete physical activity sessions for older Black Minority Ethnic (BME) adults as part of the LEAP programme
- supported arts work with male and female groups of young people through the Youth Arts Challenge Scheme
- assisted the BYOU Group (gay, lesbian and bisexual youth project) in their work towards the Garden of Delights Festival in Manchester
- commissioned a comprehensive report on the accessibility of play areas for children with disabilities to inform future development works
- committed to building bridges for traveller children and their families with mainstream leisure services through play
- worked with socially disadvantaged communities to increase the accessibility of cultural opportunity through play schemes, community work and a festival
- worked with older people to explore, understand and help counter 'isolation' through the Say Hello literature project led by Wigan Pier Theatre Company and Age Concern
- launched the 'Stepping Stones to Good Mental Health' initiative at Leigh Library which provides people with opportunity to get advice and information about mental health issues from their local library
- continued with works to increase the History Shop's accessibility for people with mobility problems, visual impairment, hearing impairment, dexterity and learning difficulties
- offered work placements through Grounds Maintenance for disadvantaged young adults
- targeted recruitment work on those with disabilities and people of more senior years
- worked through a diversity awareness training programme for staff
- and much, much more

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Multi-cultural teams participate in a five-a-side football festival at the annual Wigan One World event
– in support of the Kick Racism Out of Football campaign and community cohesion works more generally

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A fabulous community festival celebrating the ethnic and cultural diversity in Wigan

Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust is a lead player in corporate work towards Level 1 on the Equality Standard for Local Government and to increase interest & participation in leisure & cultural activities on the part of all social groups. WLCT has committed to the development of a discount and incentive scheme aimed at those at risk of social exclusion in particular. In April 2005 'freestyle' was launched making swimming free for all age 16 and under.

> *Improving access to information and enhancing communication and developing the role of culture in personal development and community regeneration*

In January 2005 the Cultural Partnership presented to and received useful feedback from the first Community Empowerment Programme Conference sharing news of the Partnership's work and future plans in respect of community involvement and strategy development. Regularly contributing to Untitled News, the Borough Partnership's Newsletter, and the local press the Partnership is committed to the development and improvement of its general communication arrangements.

Libraries:

- Have achieved the National Public Library Standard for the number of publicly accessible free internet PCs in September 2004 – completing the People's Network
- Are now compliant with 21 out of 26 public library standards as against 14 out of 26 in 2003/4

- Opened six new Homework Clubs for children and young people in the Autumn as well with attendance levels steadily rising

In **Heritage:**

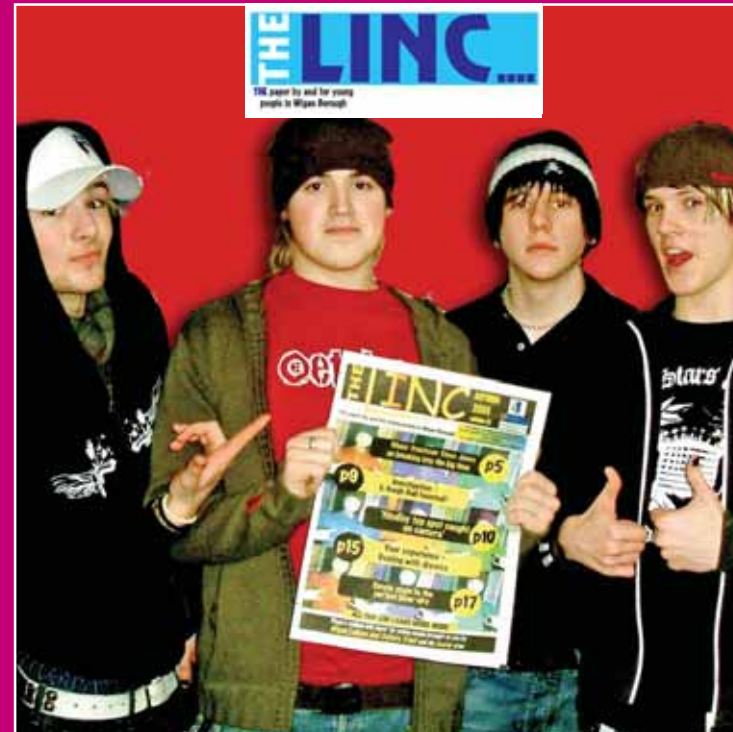
- work has continued on indexing census data from 1891 and 1901, editions of the Wigan Observer from 1955 through 1990 and the Dootson Collection at Leigh
- With the Education Department and Haigh Hall Wigan Pier Theatre Company have been leading on work towards a performance piece on the History of Haigh Hall – a Young Roots Heritage Project
- The Over 50s Forum Legacy Project continues its development of a community archive with support from Age Concern and the Workers' Educational Association

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> *Make best use of existing facilities and the development of new facilities*

Following on from the Arts Venue Audit of 2004 the Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust's Project Management Team have started work on an Access Strategy, prioritising works according to the level of facilities' usage.

In September 2005, Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust launched their new vision for Getting Wigan Active.



McFly check out the LINC on their visit to Wigan, Christmas 2004

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Leigh Sports Village: A £78 million investment in sport and educational facilities for the Borough

There are 3 priorities underpinning the vision:

1. As part of wider regeneration works Wigan Pier and the surrounding area are about to be transformed into a new Cultural Quarter. Through consultation a new performance venue and studio space is being developed at Trencherfield Mill. First phase development work will also see the construction of

■ apartments ■ bars ■ restaurants ■ shops ■ and a hotel

A new heritage interpretation facility will be created and maintenance of the recently refurbished steam engine will continue

During the second phase there will be a brand-new Creative Industries Complex created in what is currently the Way We Were Centre. This will bring new facilities for artistic enterprise to the Borough encouraging business start-up and the growth of new employment opportunities

2. Sport & Physical Activity – encouraging more people in the Borough to take part in physical activity. The vision includes a closure of outdated, under-used, costly facilities and the creation of new purpose built swimming pools and sports centres of excellence.
3. Libraries and Information Services – increase usage, improve opening hours and buildings, increase range of services on offer and investment in book stores to name but a few changes. Golborne Library was the first new facility to re-open in April following a £60,000 investment in refurbishment and Explore branding



The newly refurbished Golborne Library is opened for all to 'explore' and enjoy

Elsewhere....

- the first sod was cut on Leigh Sports Village Project in March and work by the Leigh & District Sports Partnership towards the construction of a new stadium, athletics arena and swimming pool; creation of playing pitches and changing facilities; development of commercial leisure/retail parks and private housing is well underway. Updates can be viewed at www.leighsportsvillage.co.uk
- The Joined-Up Mesnes Park or JUMP Project was launched this year by the WLCT's Parks Section to constructively address anti-social behaviour issues
- A first stage bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been submitted with Mesnes Park's restoration, and work on the bandstand, cafe pavilion and Dalton's steps the focus. Costings are being generated for safe well-illuminated routes and CCTV
- Implementation of the new Community Playgrounds Strategy is underway
- In reflection of the Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust's commitment to maintaining public War Memorials restoration and upgrade projects have been undertaken across the Borough with Council support at Wigan, Leigh, Platt Bridge and Golborne
- The Playing Fields Strategy continues to progress and this year has seen important drainage works completed at Leyland Park, Hindley and Laithwaite Park and Newtown
- The Sure Start Play Patch garden project at Hindley secured funding for another year enabling the continued delivery of play sessions and family activities through the year. A second play garden – The Tot's Plot at Astley – is being developed on the back of its success through Environmental Management & Sustainability representing an investment of £104,000

> *Developing a positive and innovative image for the Borough*

- In April a brand-new shop window on the Borough opened – a Tourist Information Centre on Wallgate, Wigan. The TIC will support the anticipated 60,000 visitors and tourism telephone enquiries, tourism students, local attraction and hotel managers plus provide information to help potential tourism developers make investment decisions.

The new TIC has the country's first ever state-of-the-art e-Tourism Centre, offering users access to electronic tourism information and data. Visitors are able to book local hotel accommodation without having to visit the Centre's counters.

“Tourism in the Borough is currently valued at £252m a year and this figure is set to grow;” said Wigan's Tourism Development Manager Keith Bergman. *“With new developments such as the Wigan Pier Quarter, Leigh Sports Village and the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre, the local tourism industry needed a stronger hub. The TIC will become the place on the high street for all things travel and tourism-related.”*



Wigan's brand new Tourist Information Centre and e-tourism facilities



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A Meeting Place provides a place for young people to meet their friends and usually involves some fixed outdoor equipment.

> *Focusing on the needs and aspirations of young people*

- Providing information for **young people** on issues of interest and concern, celebrating their achievements and helping communicate their views to wider strategic and public audiences, the Linc editorial team have produced four newspapers this year each distributed to 30,000 young people across the Borough
- In positive representation of young people more than 60 press releases were issued by the Young Persons' Press Officer in an effort to counter negative publicity and create a more realistic and positive image of young people in the local press
- Through the Extreme Sports Development Officer work is underway to develop new facilities at Ashton and Tyldesley. The Extreme Scene newsletter has continued to keep young people with an interest in Extreme Sports up to date with local developments and provide opportunities for them to have their say
- A Meeting Places for Young People Development Officer was successfully seconded into the post for six months and during this time assisted with the completion of two new sites at Mesnes Park, Wigan and Platt Lane, Whelley and the progress of several others

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CONCLUSIONS AND THANKS

It's been another memorable year; a real credit to the hard work and commitment of people around the Borough with a passion for cultural development. The Partnership has achieved a number of successes and brought the lifetime of the current cultural strategy to a very pleasing conclusion.

This next year the Partnership will be working hard on the development of new tools for strategic cultural development.

- An audio-visual presentation – telling Wigan's cultural story in evidence of participation and achievement across the Borough, coverage of what makes for 'Wiganicity' in local people's minds and the challenge of current and prospective partners on cultural priorities – will be produced through inclusive consultation and workshop activity far and wide. The finished recording that follows will hopefully help to redefine the image of the Borough, build pride and motivation towards community involvement and active citizenship, and reveal gaps in the perspectives of policy and decision-makers on needs, priorities and opportunities.
- A Cultural Manifesto making a broad set of Partnership commitments to the support of development works across the sector will also be produced with reference to a diverse editorial group.

Since the introduction of *Northern Soul* in 2001 the cultural landscape has changed quite significantly. Locally the WLCT has been established, some services have been



The spirit of partnership: an officer and community representative work together on the new Cultural Manifesto



Pavement art on Play Day at Norley Hall

revised, new performance management systems have been introduced and, significantly, culture and quality of life now feature more prominently in corporate strategic thinking. The value of culture is more readily acknowledged and prominently reflected in Local Strategic Partnership work than before. Nationally, guidance has been issued on the integration of Community Plans and Cultural Strategies (following on from the Local Government Act of 2002), and this has been taken-up in the Borough's new Community Plan set for formal launch this year. The emphasis is on improving the quality and range of facilities and opportunities with a view to increasing participation.

There will be no new strategy but instead an innovative approach to the development of a local vision, more specific action plans and partners' engagement in continuing cultural development. The Partnership will be involving a wide range of people in the process of developing the new audio-visual and written resources then rolling them out to achieve optimum effectiveness, but if you would like to find out more please let us know.

For more information on the work of the Cultural Partnership please contact:

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