

Response and statement of support for the Conwy Borough Council's Cultural Strategy and to the City of Culture 2025 bid - from CHAPS (Civic Hall Amateur Players Society) - Version 090821

This response and statement of support is prepared by the management committee of CHAPS - The Civic Hall Amateur Players Society.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Borough Council's preparation of its Cultural Strategy and to the City of Culture 2025 bid.

Background

Originally based in Deganwy, CHAPS had a home in Conwy Civic Hall centrally located in the Borough for many years. Despite the closure in 2014? of this key resource - a theatre – CHAPS has continued to flourish and put on popular and well attended performances in a variety of locations in Llandudno, Conwy, Llandudno Junction and Rhos on Sea. The Society has regularly staged three or four performances a year including murder mystery evenings (raising funds for the RNLI), celebrations of musical theatre, one-act plays and the celebrated annual Christmas pantomime. We pride ourselves on the fact that through local theatre, residents of all ages can have access to drama and entertainment, which is available at reasonable cost and in their home area.

Amateur Dramatics

We believe that one of the main aspects of the cultural strategy is to focus on the community based activities and encourage local initiatives and performance. Amateur dramatics (Amdram) is a key feature of this, and we have been surprised that there is no mention of the activities of the local amateur dramatics groups. The Civic Hall has staged the regional finals of the NODA (National Operatic and Drama Association) awards for many years. CHAPS has been a principal player in the local theatre scene for over 20 years and received many national awards.

Community focus

The future cultural strategy has opportunities and space for both professional performances in the two existing commercial theatres, and local amateur drama activities in the variety of locations that CHAPS now uses. These are generally local community halls where people from the surrounding areas are able to enjoy semi-professional and enthusiastic entertainment. These venues provide a focus for groups of people to meet and enjoy one another's company and to experience high quality performances and productions.

We believe there are opportunities for widening the focus of activities to include open air productions for visitors and tourists in the summer and other popular and novel drama formats. There is scope to also deliver these activities in the more rural parts of the Borough Council area, to ensure further widening provision. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with the relevant people within the Borough Council. We are aware that grant funding can be available for some of these activities, and are keen to work with the Council and other groups to achieve this.

Young people

The Society has always encouraged local talent and young players. We have created links with local dance groups who have participated in our performances. Some of these young people have subsequently moved on to take further interest and qualifications in drama, music and performance, and entered into national theatre. We are justly proud of the fact that the Society has benefited the local area and the individuals in this way.

Local mentors

We note that one of the central features of the cultural strategy is to encourage local mentors in activities which promote the talents of local people. CHAPS has always encouraged and used young local people particularly in our pantomimes. This has been a richly rewarding aspect of local amateur dramatics and is something that we would like to see encouraged and promoted. CHAPS would be happy to be involved and contribute to this and many other aspects of the strategy. We believe that amateur dramatics, and CHAPS, as the leading provider of this in the local area, have a key part to play in the future cultural strategy for the Borough Council.

City of Culture

The City of Culture 2025 bid, provides a focus for the delivery of the Borough Council's cultural strategy. CHAPS is ready and willing to enter into discussions on how to encourage and ensure the success of this bid. We would welcome contact, discussion and involvement with the Borough Council as it progresses and advances this bid.

13 August 2021