**Culture Team Notes – Tuesday 15th September 2026**
**Location: Lantern Club Room (Upstairs)**
**Time: 5pm**

1. Introductions and Apologies.

   In attendance
   Charmain Lovett – One Ilfracombe
   Mel Turnbull – Hand:Plant and town Councillor
   John Sellings – VFX Editor and Ilf Fashion & History Festival
   Nick Mollart – Ilfracombe Museum
   Julian Robinson – Local artist
   Olga Vynnk – Photographer
   Steve Gear – Ilfracombe Photography Festival
   Helen Pritchard – BANK Ilfracombe
   Caroline Bramwell – Ilfracombe Shanty Festival
   Alison Sanders – IBTA
   Jeanette Cann – Ilfracombe Chocolate Emporium
   Andrew Shanahan – Writer/Author
   Dee Seddon - Head of Combe Martin Primary School
   Laura Maughan – Ilfracombe Academy Art and Photography
   Jennie Cousins – Local artists and documentation/researcher for UKTOC
   Barbara Clarke – Events4Ilfracombe
   Karen French – CombeToons Local Artist
   Malcolm Wilkinson -North Devon Council and former Head of Art
   David Pritchard – Photographer
   Graham Kennedy – Filmmaker
   Martin Cooke – Holy Trinity
   Sue Cooke – Holy Trinity
   Kelvin Farndell – Ilfracombe Museum
   Steph Charles (and Ade!) – Ilfracombe Art Trail
   Niki Davis – Ilfracombe Shanty Festival

2. Update on the UK Town of Culture Bid following Shortlisters event in Manchester on 14th September – Charmain

Charmain gave an update on where we are at in the bid process and also feedback from the event in Manchester on Monday.

A reminder of the timeline:

Bid Submitted by 30th November
NEW UPDATE – Sir Phil Redmond will be visiting all 15 towns between now and Christmas.

End of Jan/Beginning of Feb 2027 – Top 3 towns announced

Feb 2027 – UK ToC panel visit the Top 3 Towns

By the end of March 2027 – Winner announced

At the moment we are very much in the engagement stage of the project. The Community Cultural Survey has been out for a couple of weeks and we have already had around 800 responses with many more to be inputted from the completed physical surveys.
We did pay for a Royal Mail Door to Door drop but as of yet, no-one has had any through their door! Luckily that was more of a back up plan and we are confident that we have been able to get to a huge array of local people, especially those who are harder to reach.
Care home, home carers and all three levels of schools have surveys and questionnaires plus we are having/have had focus groups with a wide selection of groups: Games Galore, Belle's Place, Hope Kitchen, Disability Group, Ilfracombe Poverty Truth Commission, young creatives, Twinning Association, Large local event leads, Wellbeing Wednesday, Ilfracombe Museum, Ilfracombe Library, Memory Café plus talking to bigger business such as TDK. We also have questionnaires for visitors to Ilfracombe, and local businesses.

All surveys are available on www.ilfracombetownofculture.co.uk so please share that.

If you are part of a group, or if you have groups of people that meet in your place who you think would like to have a conversation about what culture means to them, then please contact Charmain on Charmain.lovett@northdevon.gov.uk.

We are aiming to have the majority of the engagement sewn up as we need to get a move on with creating our programme.
It is essential that if you have an idea or a project on how you/your organisation could play a part in our programme for 2028 then please make sure that you complete the Google Form as soon as possible and it is essential that you give us a good idea of the cost to do this as we also need to write a comprehensive budget and show how we will potentially spend £3,000,000.
If we don't know about your idea then we will struggle to include it.
You can do that here - https://forms.gle/aY7HxLw1ZrqJkSEQ6

As a reminder, we can only include projects that align with our bid themes:

- Uncovering our History and Coastline
- Creative Careers and Young People
- Culture in Unexpected Places

There are also the 2 main cross-cutting themes of Celebrating our Community and "Postcards from Ilfracombe".

We will need to be clear that not all ideas will be included. We have to create a cohesive programme and unfortunately some projects may not feel like the right fit – but they won't be thrown away as there could be potential to fund these from other sources.

In terms of feedback from Manchester, it was a really great event. Helen & Charmain got to meeting the UK ToC Panel, all the other shortlisted towns and met some really inspirational speakers who have worked on previous City of Culture programmes.

What we found reassuring was that everything that the panel recommend that we all do – we are already doing! We are also ahead of the curve as some places haven't even started work towards their bid yet!
Some handy pointers for us included making sure we 'bookend' our programme with a big opening and closing event.
They also repeatedly used the terms "joy" and "ambition" and reminded us that this is very much about our community – why our town exists (literally why did the first residents choose this spot on the map to start a town), why are people still here to this day and "why now"?
They spoke a lot as well about proportionality and that this funding is to act as a rocket boost to enhance what we already do, but we shouldn't be do anything that it too big for us to deliver as they want to see our ideas to succeed, so we need to be ambitious, but realistic.

Thank you to those of you who are using the logos and hashtags already.
I'll reattach them to the meeting minutes email.

3. The Lanes Project Update from Helen Weedon and Fiona Bates -
   Helen sent through the following update:
   The Lanes Culture Club Update Progress since the August 2026 Culture Club meeting
   - The Lanes has moved from an initial proposal into a funded, partnered and publicly visible project, with its first community activity now confirmed.
   - Created a small archive exhibition at Ilfracombe Museum, including a public call-out for memories, photographs and stories from the original project.
   - Launched a public call out on social media.
   - Met Jon Bell, the original instigator, and recorded his memories and the wider story of Ilfracombe's cultural development for the museum archive.
   - Reconnected with Hazel Goldman, the original Free Form Arts Project Director, who has confirmed that around 1,000 local people participated in the original project.

- Put plans in place to deliver two free public drop-in workshops at the Landmark on 26 and 27 October.
- Secured a £1,500 budget for this pilot activity from Town of Culture. Developed plans for participants to create a new ceramic and mosaic artwork inspired by an image from the archive. It will feature in the exhibition for the DCMS visit and be displayed permanently in Ilfracombe Library.
- Positioned the activity as an early Town of Culture engagement pilot, combining archive, storytelling and collaborative making while beginning the next chapter of The Lanes

Next steps

- Plan, promote and deliver community workshops 26 & 27 October
- Visit Hazel in London and arrange for her to visit Ilfracombe.
- Continue to research and record the projects history whilst planning for its future.

I have attached the PDF to the meeting notes as there are some lovely photos as part of the update 😊

4. Ilfracombe History & Fashion Show – John Sellings

John gave us an update on the Ilfracombe History & Fashion Show which is taking place on 16th & 17th October.

On Friday 16th (10am-4pm) and Saturday 17th (10am-1pm) there will be an exhibition at Pip & Jims which will be free entry.
There is a fashion show on Saturday from 2-4pm with a cream tea, but that has now sold out – however they are looking to see if they can do a additional one.

They have managed to obtain a small bit of funding, but if anyone else has any ideas about other funding pots then please let then know.

Lucy is still looking for models of all ages and sizes, so please contact her if you'd like to wear one if her gorgeous collection pieces and strut your stuff down the runway! No28thecookery@yahoo.com

As an addition John told us about a film series that he has curated with Graham Kennedy at The Landmark called Critics Choice Cinema.
There will be one screening a month and the tickets are £5.
The current schedule is:
22nd October – The Thing

19th November – Hamnet (including a talk from John as someone who worked on the film)

13th December – Rare Exports

John is also running some manga and comic creation workshops in Barnstaple and is looking to set up a Manga Club in Ilfracombe.

5. AOB and any other updates

Steph updated us that the Art Trail Christmas Market will be happening again this year at the North Devon Resort on the 14th&15th November. They have 35 spaces and Art Trail participants have been given first dibs, but the closing date for them to show interest is Friday, so drop the Art Trail an email if you'd be interested should space become available – info@artilfracombe.co.uk

Caroline shared that the Shanty Festival has been booked for 10 & 11th July 2027 and they are expanding a little on this years offer by expanding the venues to the High Street.

Barbara shared that the IBTA are looking at a community minibus for next season.

Arts Council England Funding Presentation with
Philip Butterworth – Relationship Manager for Arts Council England

A big thank you to Philip for joining us to share the various Arts Council and Lottery funding strands which can be accessed by local creatives.
He handily had put a slide show together with lots of helpful links and advice, which I have attached to this email.

Another handy piece of information that Philip shared was the the Rural Services Network are a really good place to look for other funding sources - Rural Funding Digest - Rural Services Network

If anyone would like to speak to Philip further about applying for Arts Council funding then please contact him on Philip.butterworth@artscouncil.org.uk