



WELLS – CANDIDATE CITY

## **PRESS RELEASE – Wells to Move Forward with Ambitious Cultural Programme**

### **EMBARGOED UNTIL 22:30 14 July**

Following the submission of an Initial Bid by Wells to be the UK City of Culture for 2021, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport announced the shortlist of cities this evening.

Although Wells is not on that shortlist, the DCMS congratulated the Wells team for its exciting and well-prepared bid and the City will still benefit from the extensive work and planning undertaken earlier this year.

The Minister of Culture has proposed a meeting with the Wells team to discuss how the ideas in the Initial Bid can be advanced – and cultural activity boosted in smaller cities and towns.

Having led a consultation process to develop the Initial Bid, the next steps for the Steering Group for the Wells UK City of Culture 2021 Bid will involve developing many of the exciting ideas and activities proposed for the city and its local area. It has even been suggested that Wells might host a "Not the City of Culture" Festival in 2021.

Andrew Webb, lead for the Steering Group, said "Our bid process was never just seen as an end in itself, but a valuable way of bringing local people and organisations together to discuss what we want our towns to look like in the future. We are excited about what those next steps will be."

The work and contributions to the bid process from countless people and organisations has been greatly appreciated – and ideas and feedback are still welcome from all members of the community as we work to implement ideas to make our community more exciting, stronger and more inclusive."

Please follow us on Twitter [www.twitter.com/WellsCoC2021](http://www.twitter.com/WellsCoC2021) and Facebook [www.facebook.com/WellsCoC2021](http://www.facebook.com/WellsCoC2021) to hear what we are planning next.

## Wells CoC 2021 (@WellsCoC2021) | Twitter

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

The latest Tweets from Wells CoC 2021 (@WellsCoC2021). Support Wells and Mendip in the bid to become UK City of Culture 2021. Use #W2W. Wells, England

Plans for specific events are still being drawn up but next steps will include:

### **Culture**

- A new Wells Cultural Forum is being established with the aim of sharing ideas and improving coordination between arts groups, schools and the city's festivals
- The city's festivals are launching an initiative to ensure that young people are involved in the design of festival ideas and content
- A new Theatre Festival will be launched in 2018
- The heritage and cultural partners in the city are examining how to develop an event involving an illumination of the exterior of prominent buildings to tell the stories of our city
- Cedars Hall and Wells Cathedral Choir are to co-operate with GFM radio to ensure that performances by local young musicians are made available through radio and internet streaming to local residents.
- The informal Wells Heritage Planning Group will be enlarged to include the Bishop's Barn and Wells Almshouses and work to ensure that future visitors and residents are able to enjoy our vibrant and living medieval city
- The Wells & Mendip Museum is launching a project to create a permanent gallery which will tell the history of the City of Wells. The gallery will replace the Wells Remembers exhibition following the commemoration of the end of WW1 in November 2018
- The Bishop's Palace is currently undergoing an exciting project reviewing the interpretation of the Palace Interior and formulating plans to bring to life the many and varied stories linked to the history of this unique site in the most engaging way possible
- The Bishop's Palace will embark upon a development project with the aim of opening up parts of the Palace previously inaccessible to the public, including high level walkways, giving panoramic views of the City
- The Bishop's Barn and Recreation Ground will be applying for funding to secure the future of the barn, consulting with the local community on the site master plan and activities programme, and restoring and upgrading the building and facilities to develop a thriving community programme
- The archives of the Wells Journal, which were moved to Watford for digitisation following the takeover by the Mirror Group, will return to the city and be available at the museum to researchers

## **Community**

- A new community website [www.yourwells.com](http://www.yourwells.com) has been launched with the aim of encouraging local residents to get involved in all aspects of art, culture, sport and community – whether as a participant, audience member or volunteer
- A volunteering brochure setting out a range of opportunities in the city and surrounding area has been produced and was launched in national Volunteers' Week earlier this month
- New “tear-off” maps are being produced listing the shops and businesses in the city and a website [www.wellshighstreet.com](http://www.wellshighstreet.com) is being created to help promote our independent retailers with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and Visit We

## **Tourism**

- Visit Wells, the Wells Visitor Information Service coordinated by the museum, has been recognised as the official Tourist Information Centre for the city and will continue working closely with the City Council and Visit Somerset to promote the area
- Wells has become fully affiliated to Visit Somerset in order to increase the coordination of tourism initiatives
- The Visit by Coach initiative is being supported for 2017/18 by the Cathedral, Bishop's Palace, Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Wells Civic Society and the Wells & Mendip Museum and Visitor Information Service – this will include coaches being met and greeted by teams of volunteers
- Destination Wells, an initiative to attract international visitors will take place in October, hosted by The Swan Hotel
- The Bishop's Palace is developing a new Visitor Services Strategy designed to welcome increased numbers of tourists and putting in place the necessary infrastructure to accommodate and encourage this.
- The Wells Visitor Information Service is working with the TICs in neighbouring towns, Mendip District Council and Visit Somerset to develop a new tourism strategy for the Mendip area
- The [www.wellssomerset.com](http://www.wellssomerset.com) website has been updated and is attracting 60% more visitors than in 2016, with over 1,600 visits a day. The City Council has also launched a tourism website [www.visitwellssomerset.com](http://www.visitwellssomerset.com)

**ENDS**

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Notes to Editors:

The overall aim of the UK City of Culture programme is to encourage the use of culture and creativity as a catalyst for regeneration, to promote the development of new partnerships, and to encourage ambition, innovation and inspiration in cultural and creative activity. Cities and areas that bid for the title will need to spell out their own vision for UK City of Culture and how they will use it in making a step change in their area and creating a lasting legacy.