



CHAPTER EIGHT

CULTURE AND LEISURE

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Britain's creative industries are the envy of the world. Our writers, musicians, actors and athletes are a source of national pride and an important part of our national economy. Our libraries and museums enrich our lives with access to literature and local history. However, after ten years of Conservative cuts, our creative sector has now been devastated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Labour in Wiltshire will do everything that we can to protect and develop culture and leisure in the county. Libraries, museums, theatres, sports facilities and music venues are not luxuries - they are at the heart of our community, vital to our physical and mental wellbeing.

LABOUR WILL

- Keep all current public libraries open, including mobile library services.
- Develop the wider use of public libraries as community facilities.
- Continue funding of Wiltshire museums and support new projects.
- Ensure that funding from new housing developments is used to improve the provision of sports facilities and playing fields throughout Wiltshire.
- Ensure that every secondary school student is taught basic cookery skills, including how to prepare healthy, affordable meals at home.
- Support our local music and arts venues, galleries and festivals through increased funding and promotion.

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LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

Almost 800 libraries have been lost nationwide since the Conservatives came to power in 2010. Sharp cuts to funding have left many libraries understaffed, with outdated facilities and reduced opening hours. The Labour Party understands the value of libraries: they are an important community asset and a vital lifeline for many people who may otherwise have few sources of social interaction. Labour will keep all of our public libraries open, including mobile services, and will seek to employ more library staff and extend opening hours where possible.

We will promote the use of libraries as wider facilities for our communities, following the successful Calne Community Hub model. The library hall and meeting room in Calne is available for bookings by community groups and used as a base for services such as Citizens Advice surgeries. Libraries should host coffee mornings, charity events, film nights - any kind of event that brings people together and helps foster a sense of community. We will help our libraries to organise promotional events such as readings by authors.

Library finances can be bolstered by hiring out space for meetings: Labour's vision for Wiltshire relies not only on increased funding for our cultural facilities, but more intelligent use of the assets we currently have. Our campaign to promote library use will focus on building links with local schools, to promote library services with the younger generation.

We make a similar commitment to promoting Wiltshire's museums. Museums are a vital tool in protecting our heritage and passing on our shared history to future generations. We will back imaginative initiatives that bring social history to life using new technologies, such as the recent St Mary Street QR Code Trail run by Chippenham Museum. Every town in the county could have more historical information visible on the streets. QR codes with links to historical information are a great way of engaging the public.

SPORT AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

The Community Infrastructure Levy is a one-off payment by developers to support community infrastructure. Whenever new housing developments arise across Wiltshire, we will seek to use some of the money to improve the provision of sports facilities, equipment and playing fields.

We will support and promote sport in Wiltshire: from increased grants to sports clubs, to publicity campaigns encouraging participation; from giving children the chance to try new sports through to increasing the number of school visits from trained coaches.

We also recognise that small independent fitness centres have an important part to play in improving health and wellbeing. We see that Wiltshire Council has a role in helping these centres to establish and develop.

Physical and mental wellbeing relies on a balanced, healthy diet. A Labour council in Wiltshire will ensure that every secondary school age person is taught basic cookery skills, so that they can prepare nutritious, affordable meals at home for themselves and their family. We will work with secondary schools to make sure the curriculum includes more practical home economics information, such as how to plan and execute a balanced food shop.

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ARTS AND LITERATURE

Labour will help our creative sector recover from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. We will support music and arts venues, theatres, galleries, festivals and cultural events as we come out of lockdown. We will do this, not just through funding, but also through publicity and promotion.

We value the important role that Wiltshire plays in being the host to military bases and are committed to helping forces personnel and their families feel more integrated with local civilian communities. We recognise the part that local festivals and events play in making this happen and will seek to foster stronger links between local organisers and bases.

We understand that a thriving cultural scene stems from the classroom. We will work hard to ensure that the arts are well represented in Wiltshire schools. We will establish new Drama Clubs in schools that do not have one, and we will organise school visits from authors and poets, in conjunction with our campaign to improve local libraries.

We will campaign for school visits by trained music teachers, and the provision of musical facilities in primary schools, so that every child gets the opportunity to learn an instrument before the age of eleven. We will put creativity back at the heart of the curriculum, working with secondary school teachers to make sure the arts are not sidelined from secondary education.

We will launch a creative careers advice campaign in sixth form and colleges, to demonstrate the range of careers and opportunities available, and the skills required in the creative industries: not just music, drama and literature, but also the tech sector.