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City of the arts tag is perfect for Chichester

There are no cities in the United Kingdom, except for London, that have the extraordinary diversity of very highly regarded art facilities that the city of Chichester is blessed with.

Within its walls Pallant House Gallery has the finest collection of modern British art in the world; the nearby Cass Foundation arguably has the best sculpture park in Europe and unrivalled expertise in making and constructing heroic monumental sculptures which are exported worldwide.

The Chichester Festival Theatre is the most successful production company outside the capital and in the last year has sent work to London, New York and Toronto.

West Dean has an unrivalled campus with wonderful around-the-year post-graduate courses in many different subjects.

The World and Downland Museum next door to it in Singleton maps the history of the arts and crafts of yesteryear; Chichester University and Chichester College are hugely successful and are rising to great heights in the national league tables at a very rapid rate; the national open art competition has its home in our city, drawing artists from the entire nation to compete for major money prizes to display their work in an open art exhibition held annually at

the Minerva Theatre.

Our cathedral has many wonderful events including the famous biannual Festival of Flowers and at present to mark its 900th anniversary, *Son et Lumiere*.

We also have the incredibly diverse Chichester Festivities every summer with artists from across the world. The Roman Palace at Fishbourne has busloads coming from the liners docking in nearby Southampton.

Roots Across the World has had more than 60 nationalities performing in local events since its inception only a few years ago.

This list could go on and on and I am embarrassed at how many are going to be left out of this letter, for which please accept my apologies. Even right in the centre we now have a very successful local gallery at The Oxmarket which has hundreds of exhibitions each year and is booked up by artists wanting to exhibit their work for well over a year ahead.

Those mentioned are just some of the many art facilities we have here and there are so so many more with an increasingly strong accent on the developing youth.

The city also has a host of very fine artists living within the immediate vicinity and in towns and villages within easy reach, many of whom have international status. We are

becoming a great centre of the arts.

Increasingly because of the arts, used in the broadest use of the word, thousands are drawn to Chichester as a centre for business; entertainment; shopping and eating and for holiday-making.

Beside all this we have phenomenally-beautiful countryside; 50 per cent of our borders are seaside; we have the finest horseracing venue in Great Britain; we attract more visitors than anywhere in the world for the two leading motor racing events at Goodwood, the Festival of Speed and the Revival.

Surely it really is time to trumpet all this to the world at large?

If we adopt the name 'Chichester: the city of the arts' it will focus a huge amount of attention on this area and will bring untold new business to our city and ensure we are recognised both nationally and internationally for all we have to offer.

There is no downside to this suggestion and I am very firmly of the belief the sooner the city authorities adopt this title the better, lest some other city decides to use a title which describes all we have in art, learning and heritage in one very powerful strap line.

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