1. Introduction

Culture and creativity are vital to the economic and business life of Bath and North East Somerset. Culture is the life-blood of our community, and creativity and culture touch the lives of everyone in Bath and North East Somerset, whether visitors, local residents or businesses. Participation in heritage, arts, and other cultural activity enables people to celebrate, grow, learn, think, and debate – the hallmarks of a community with a strong identity whose citizens are active in local democracy.

The City of Bath and its surrounding area is home to a significant cluster of creative businesses which are reinventing Bath’s tradition of invention and creativity, for a modern age. Our cultural reputation, inspiring environment, and our leading educational facilities continue to attract highly skilled people working across diverse fields such as web and digital technology, architecture, publishing, and television and film production.

This Cultural and Creative Strategy Review is a strong statement of the value of culture and creativity to the local community. It is also a clear commitment to working together to increase participation in creative activities of all kinds.

2. Executive summary

Vision

Bath and North East Somerset will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st-century place with a strong social purpose and a spirit of wellbeing, where everyone is invited to think big – a ‘connected’ area ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations.

Collaboration, creativity, imagination and innovation are at the heart of this ambitious new strategy review. Our challenge now is to work together to build on our world-class heritage as ‘a masterpiece of human creative genius’ (UNESCO) to create an inspiring cultural and creative sector. It has long since been shown that a healthy society and a strong economy are inseparable from a vigorous cultural and creative environment. It does not just create jobs, broaden education and attract visitors. It lifts the spirits, deepens connections across communities and makes people feel better about where they live.

Our Cultural and Creative Strategy Review is built around ten core propositions concerning our ambition and activity, audiences and participation, and infrastructure and connectivity. Specific actions are set out to take forward each proposition.

The case for the strategy review

The arts, culture, and creative industries are widely recognised for their positive impact on the economy and society.

Purpose of the strategy review

The strategy provides a framework for action which encourages a coherent, collaborative approach across the sector, Council and funding bodies to ensure cultural and creative excellence for all, and economic sustainability and growth.

The three key areas to address are:

- Ambition and Activity
- Audiences and Participation
- Infrastructure and Connectivity
3. The case for the sector

The arts, culture, and creative industries are widely recognised for their positive impact on the economy and society.

“Employment in the creative and cultural economy in B&NES is increasing at over twice the national rate.”

Economic impact

Employment in the creative and cultural economy in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) is increasing at over twice the national rate at a time when the creative industries are recognised as one of our most powerful tools in driving growth. GOMIQ, worth £77bn a year to the UK economy as a whole. Creative industries generate £183m in GVA in B&NES with 700 businesses employing 4,200 people supported by a further 2,500 individuals in self-employment, while arts and cultural activities contribute £157m and provide over 6,000 jobs.

Arts Council England (ACE) identifies five key ways that arts and culture can benefit local economies: attracting visitors, creating jobs and developing skills, attracting and retaining businesses, revitalising places, and developing talent.

Bath is rated by NESTA as one of the UK’s creative-digital hotspots, particularly for architecture, publishing, and design, with much potential for wider economic growth. The economic power of the cultural sector is highlighted in B&NES’ own Economic Strategy Review 2014-30 (ESR): “The city’s reputation as an international visitor destination is also a driver for the cultural sector in Bath. The wider visitor economy, covering the tourism, leisure, culture and retail sectors accounts for 10,000 jobs, 25% of total employment in the city, and generates £315m GVA annually.”

Social value

Increasingly, the arts and culture are entwined with initiatives to foster social inclusion, promote mental health and wellbeing, and inspire children and young people. Research offers robust evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, and reduce social exclusion and isolation.

Research also demonstrates that taking part in arts activities has a positive impact on mental health and depression, and improves the likelihood of students from low-income families entering university. The intrinsic value of culture and creative learning is at the heart of B&NES’ Child Friendly City Initiative.

4. Where are we now?

Social value

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4. Where are we now?

As a world-class heritage destination, Bath and North East Somerset owes its timeless appeal to centuries of creativity and innovation. The city offers an unbeatable lifestyle combining cultural and sporting excellences, breathtaking architecture, high street independent shops, markets and cafes, all in a remarkable walkable setting. Culture and lifestyle are cited by 38% of those moving to the area (and 44% residents) as a key incentive for living in B&NES. Bath is a great place to live, work, play, and do business.

The area has a unique concentration of cultural and creative enterprises, varying from small self-employed businesses and individual artists and writers to large commercial businesses, together with a higher education sector working at the cutting edge of culture, creativity, and digital technology.

Strong creative links with Bristol and the South West are encouraging inward investment, as demonstrated by the recent industry-focused AHRC funded collaboration between Bath Spa, UWE, and Bristol universities, ‘Bristol and Bath by Design’, and the Arts Council-funded ‘Cultural Destinations’ project. B&NES lost National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding for 2015-18, leaving just one NPO-funded organisation, Creativity Works (£271,000). Other cities with comparable populations did significantly better, in terms of the number of organisations awarded NPO funding: York (4), Norwich (4), Oxford (6), Exeter (7), Brighton (8). The new strategy will address this.

Bath and Bristol form the largest tech cluster outside London and Bath’s employment growth in the knowledge economy of 7% far exceeds the national figure at 2% (ESR). We are in a prime location, along an internationally recognised creative innovation corridor from west London to Cardiff and future electrification of the Great Western mainline will improve capacity and comfort for commuting.
The importance of a world-class, vibrant cultural and creative economy should not be underestimated. For an area renowned for millennia for its healing waters, there is scope to deepen the area already undertaken socially-engaged arts projects that do better?

5. Priority themes

Three priority themes have emerged from discussions in wide-ranging sector consultation with over 150 organisations and through research. This process was led by Bath Bridge with a sector-wide steering group. Together, these themes point to ten areas of action which are described in the following section.

Arbitration and activity:

1. World-class culture
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and B&NES

Audiences and participation:

4. Visibility and discoverability
5. Audiences and engagement
6. Children and young people
7. Marketing talent

Infrastructure and connectivity:

8. Venues and work spaces
9. Culture with digital
10. Financial sustainability and infrastructure

1. World-class culture

B&NES is creative, imaginative, and innovative. We have an exceptional range of festivals. But we can and should aim higher. We need to see ourselves within a national and international context in terms of programming, funding, and marketing: do we measure up? What could we do better?

Actions

1. Develop effective national and international marketing; about – be proud of – our existing excellence and expertise.
2. Make more of our gateways/entrances to the city to welcome visitors and promote events. Our culture should be visible at street level: it’s one of the city’s major selling points.
3. Support national, and international centres of cultural and creative excellence.
4. Work in partnership to deliver a lively contemporary cultural programme that meets the highest standards of international excellence.
5. Maximize opportunities for collaboration with regional, national, and international centres of cultural and creative excellence; for example, build on our world-renowned spa heritage and the European spa town networks.
6. Maintain the area’s profile as a centre for major events through the development of a year-round programme of events and festivals (ESR).
7. Ensure access to excellence for all.

Financial sustainability and infrastructure

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9. Work in partnership to deliver a lively contemporary cultural programme that meets the highest standards of international excellence.
10. Maximize opportunities for collaboration with regional, national, and international centres of cultural and creative excellence; for example, build on our world-renowned spa heritage and the European spa town networks.
11. Propose an enhanced role for the local libraries for audiences and engagement.
12. Develop and promote the concept of Bath as the centre of the national and international business – and for expanding workspace and skills, and have a suitably attractive offer for residents and visitors (and for the enormous number of students living in the West of England).
13. Encourage a high level of creative-digital skills across all ages in our workforce to meet current and future demand (working with the LEP, FE, and HE).
14. Develop an enhanced role for the local libraries for audiences and engagement.
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16. Establish networks and collaborative initiatives for national and international business – and for expanding workspace and skills, and have a suitably attractive offer for residents and visitors (and for the enormous number of students living in the West of England).

Audiences and participation:

1. World-class culture
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and B&NES

Visibility and discoverability

4. Visibility and discoverability
5. Audience and engagement
6. Children and young people
7. Marketing talent

Audiences and Participation:

8. Venues and work spaces
9. Culture with digital
10. Financial sustainability and infrastructure

City identity and B&NES

1. City identity and B&NES
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and B&NES

Creative economy

1. Creative economy
2. City identity and B&NES
3. Creative economy

Collaborative networks

1. Collaborative networks
2. Creative economy
3. Collaborative networks

Children and young people

1. Children and young people
2. Creative economy
3. Children and young people

City identity and B&NES

1. City identity and B&NES
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and B&NES

5. Priority themes

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Arbitration and activity:

1. World-class culture
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and B&NES

Audiences and participation:

4. Visibility and discoverability
5. Audiences and engagement
6. Children and young people
7. Marketing talent

Infrastructure and connectivity:

8. Venues and work spaces
9. Culture with digital
10. Financial sustainability and infrastructure

1. World-class culture

B&NES is creative, imaginative, and innovative. We have an exceptional range of festivals. But we can and should aim higher. We need to see ourselves within a national and international context in terms of programming, funding, and marketing: do we measure up? What could we do better?

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3. Creative economy

This is a proven strength for B&NES, but requires action to ensure that we remain competitive in terms of workforce and skills, and have a suitably attractive offer for national and international business – and for expanding homegrown companies.

Action

1. Ensure availability of superfast broadband across B&NES, essential for creative-digital industries and important in facilitating a broader geographical spread of businesses across the area.
2. Communicate the distinctive offer of our area, to attract national and international businesses looking to relocate to the Bath-Bristol corridor.
3. Encourage a high level of creative-digital skills across all ages in our workforce to meet current and future demand (working with the LEP, FE, and HE).
4. Regenerate our historic town centres through culture and the creative industries, to create distinctive, connected, and affordable places to live and work – linked with the city of Bath through transport (e.g. green cycle routes), high-profile branding, and business facilities.
5. Support national and international marketing; about – be proud of – our existing excellence and expertise.
6. Work with regional and national partners and stakeholders to develop a more complete and visible cultural and creative offer for the area, and to engage the maximum number of students living in the West of England.
7. Exploit collaboration and joint working between grassroots cultural and creative organisations in the West of England.

Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

Singapore ‘Gardens by the Bay’ designed by

Future Publishing: international publisher

landscape architects, Grant Associates

status as a key UK hotspot for creative and tech industries.

diverse funding sources, and taking full advantage of our

workers’. Challenges and opportunities include attracting

being ‘improved health and wellbeing for local residents and

local cultural businesses’, with one of the key outcomes

in local residents attending events’, and ‘more sustainable

workers participating in cultural activity’ with a ‘20% increase

growth and new jobs. Targets include ‘more residents and

and Culture’ being identified as one of the core sectors for

Digital’ being identified as one of the key sectors, and ‘Arts

50% of the 396 interviewees, with the Holburne Museum

visible at street level: it’s one of the city’s major selling points.

welcome visitors and promote events. Our culture should be

1. World-class culture

2. Creative economy

3. City identity and B&NES

4. Collaborative networks

5. Priority themes

3. City identity and B&NES

2. Creative economy

1. World-class culture
4. Visibility and discovery

We need to tell our story better, amplifying what we do in a coherent, powerful way: to residents, visitors, business, and investors. All of the heart of the strategy review is the development of an engaging digital marketing strategy to raise the sector’s profile locally, nationally, and internationally to facilitate its success.

**Actions**
- Promote the sector at a national and international level: make-use of our award-winning creative-digital marketing and design agencies and young vloggers.
- Promote new experiences:
  - Be a Local Tourist: build on the Discovery Card and existing open-week events to encourage residents of all ages to discover what’s on offer on their doorstep.
  - Bath Art and Culture map (BAC map): produce a beautifully-designed, pop-up culture map to highlight the diversity of venues, and promote year-round events in a monthly calendar of events and activities.

Curate the city: develop Bath Lucern and Paradise, new cultural routes, peopled with surprise and delight, to join up cultural venues (e.g. from Roman Baths to Holburne Museum via Northanger Abbey’s alleyways, to the Corridor arcade, Victoria Art Gallery, Pulteney Bridge, to the Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens).

- Develop a simple but effective, comprehensive What’s On platform, building on existing systems and working with Bath Box Office, Bath Tourism Plus, and B&NES-based creative-digital businesses.
- Curate the platform with innovative digital marketing, the Discovery Card, Bath Passport, and audience data analysis.
- Consider a city-wide approach to booking: working with Bath Festivals (which manages booking for 120 organisations), local festivals, universities (Bath Spa Live, (CA at the University of Bath).

5. Audiences and engagement

We need to understand our audiences to encourage sustainability and diversity of participation. We have diversity across cultural forms, such as for example, the theatre, with the Theatre Royal Bath, the Ustinov Studio, Natural Theatre, and Killer Theatre. An Audience Agency profile report for BANES commissioned for this strategy review showed that engagement with the sector is unusually high with 80% of BANES residents taking part in an arts, cultural, or sporting activity at least once a month, and attendance for most art forms greater than the national average by around 20% or more. Concerns: people never or rarely engage with culture and creativity; something this strategy review will seek to address.

**Actions**
- Use digital technology to gather audience data and insights to measure and deepen audience experience, and highlight opportunities to increase participation.
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- Research the participation gap identified within specific communities and develop strategies to address this.
- Work with local employers to promote engagement in volunteering programmes.
- Align the cultural and creative offer with the profile of the local workforce: we will lead nationally with our cross-sector framework in which it can develop. We need to celebrate our creativity, and build on our tradition of working with HE and schools.

6. Children and young people

Culture and creativity for children and young people is an area of national and international excellence for BANES with the UK’s only dedicated children’s literature festival, Bath Spa University’s world-leading postgraduate course in writing for young people, specialist theatre at the egg, leading creative-learning research organisation S4D0 consultancy, and a strong tradition of working with HE and schools.

**Actions**
- Support and promote high-quality activities and events opportunities to the creative imagination.
- Consult with children and young people on the choice of events.
- Ensure social inclusion through our specialist organisations and many voluntary groups.
- Build on our national reputation for excellence in this area by furthering the work of, and collaborations between, our specialist enterprises.
- The Council will facilitate the organisation of suitable spaces for activities and events to enhance the lives and learning of all children and young people in BANES.

7. Nurturing talent

To encourage sustainability and diversity we need to encourage new talent into the sector and establish a supportive framework in which it can develop. We need to celebrate and support those who are working at a national or international level in the sector, and who might take on a leadership role.

**Actions**
- Develop supportive points of entry for: Young cultural entrepreneurs
  - Specialist internships (to improve diversity)
  - Professional and community volunteering
  - Diverse cultural leadership (existing and emerging)
- Active networks
- Collaborative project groups
- Patronage: business sponsorship

**Support for Cultural and Creative Businesses**

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- Active networks
- Collaborative project groups
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- Active networks
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5. Venues and workspaces
The premises and related infrastructure needs of arts and cultural enterprises in B&NES varied, from basic studio spaces and professional facilities for artistic creation, rehearsal, performance, and exhibition. We have noted the lack of specialist workspaces for broadcast and film (The Commons, Bath Spa University) and for art and performance (The Edge, University of Bath) and should collaborate to build best use of these.

6. Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

- **Co-working Hub, Bath Artists Studio, The Makery, and Glove (University)** and for art and performance (The Edge, University of Bath) and should collaborate to build best use of these.

- **Increase availability and diversity of workspace hubs for the arts and cultural enterprises in B&NES are varied, from basic studio type spaces (e.g. during the Christmas Market).**

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7. Collaborative networks

- **Collaborate, joint-working across the Council and sector will facilitate the provision and improvement of permanent or temporary venues and work spaces.**

- **Promote sector networking and social space, mix of provision with an initial focus on the Cultural & Creative Bath Partnership and The Guild Co-working Hub space.**

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10. Financial sustainability & infrastructure

- **Financial sustainability is a key funding for bodies who want to be sure that their investment will be of long-term benefit. The B&NES Economic Strategy Review, launched in November 2014, describes the importance of the sector and hence the case for balanced support to sustain it. The Council, despite extreme financial pressures, will wish to enhance the economic and social benefits through continued investment in the sector. This strategy review aims to provide the framework for that investment and to create a coherent ecosystem for the sector.**

- **Actions**
  - Put in place a new, ethically robust Cultural and Creative Investment Board to support the Local Authority funding process and ensure strategic working between different bodies investing in culture in B&NES.
  - Through a new collaborative Cultural and Creative Bath Partnership to deliver an infrastructure to support the sector, make beneficial connections, and deliver high-quality, up-to-date advice.
  - Develop long-term strategies for working across sectors and with a wider variety of funders to increase income sources and ensure more joined up as a sector through collaboration, and with benefits across infrastructure and operations, marketing.
  - Increase revenue from public engagement, including tourism, using digital technology and high-quality arts marketing.
  - Increase effectiveness of collaborations.
  - Develop touring for our excellent productions and exhibitions.
  - Reposition the sector and support individual organisations to succeed in the next ACE National Portfolio Organisation funding round (2018).
  - Communicate clearly the contribution of the Council, across the sector to the (and the wider) benefit of the Creative Bath Partnership (CCBP) and with a wider variety of funders to increase income sources and ensure more joined up as a sector through collaboration, and with benefits across infrastructure and operations, marketing.
  - Represent the sector to the CCBP, the.axis of interest or through a specific project. This self-initiated and self-governing groups are often defined with individual enterprises.

Cultural and Creative Investment Board (CCIB)

- **Made up of key public sector funders (e.g. Arts Council England, Economic Partnership) and Local Economic Partnerships with B&NES Council, Bath Tourism Plus, and three cultural and creative sector representatives to:**
  - Provide ethically robust, diverse, sustainable governance.
  - Support the development of culture and the creative industries.
  - Identify strategic priorities and possibilities for investment and advise the Council on the level and allocation of its support to the sector.
  - Facilitate cross-department funding and working within the Council on projects.
  - Implement the strategy review and prioritize short- and long-term goals, set targets and milestones.
  - Work with key cultural organisations locally, regionally, and nationally to develop transformative projects.
  - Attract and coordinate, where necessary, external funding for cultural projects.
  - Identify and facilitate large-scale opportunities, e.g. national and international bids.

Cultural and Creative Bath Partnership (CCBP)

- **Representing the sector, bring together the Cultural Bath, Cultural Forum, and The Guild Co-working Hub to:**
  - Work differently, smarter, across sectors, and with a wider variety of funders to increase income sources and ensure more joined up as a sector through collaboration, and with benefits across infrastructure and operations, marketing.
  - Facilitate cross-department funding and working within the Council on projects.
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  - Identify and facilitate large-scale opportunities, e.g. national and international bids.

Specialist groups and Individuals

- **Self-initiated and self-governing groups are often defined with individual enterprises. This strategy review, through the CCBP, will encourage networking and collaboration across these groups and with individual enterprises.**
Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

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and to all those who supplied images

Bath Literature Festival celebrates twenty years in 2015