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

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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 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” (DCMS, 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 in B&NES generate at least £575m and

provide over £5,000 jobs.

Arts Council England (ACE) identifies five key ways that arts

and culture can boost 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 further economic growth.

The economic power of the cultural sector is highlighted


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 15,500 jobs, 25% of total employment

in the city, and generates £151m 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

activites has a positive impact on dementia and

depression, and improves the likelihood of students from

low-income families getting a university degree. The

intrinsic value of culture and creative learning is at the heart

of B&NES’ Child Friendly City initiative.

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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 excellence, breathtaking

architectures, high-quality independent shops, markets and

cafés, all in a remarkable counterpart 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.

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.

Creative and Strategic Review

Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

Cultural and Creative Strategy Review
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 sharing group. Together, these themes point to ten areas of action which are described in the following section.

Aviation and activity:
1. World-class culture
2. Creative economy
3. City identity and BANCES

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. Visible and discoverable culture
10. Financial sustainability and infrastructure

World-class culture

BANCES has a creative, imaginative and innovative, beautiful, inventive heritage. We have an exceptional range of festivals. But we need to promote this to make a real difference to people’s lives. For an area renowned for resilience in the face of change, in the city of Bath, a journey of resilience, innovation and renaissance.

Actions
Do better?

1. World-class culture

- Work in partnership to deliver a lively, contemporary cultural programme that meets the highest standards of international excellence.
- Maximise 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.

- Maintain the area’s profile as a centre for major events through the development of a year-round programme of events and festivals (ESR).
- Ensure access to excellence for all.

Creative economy

This is a proven strength for BANCES, essential for creative-digital industries and important in facilitating a broader geographical spread of businesses across the area.

- Communicate the distinctiveness of our offer to attract national and international businesses looking to relocate to the Bath-Bristol-Cardiﬀ corridor.
- 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).

Action
- Ensure availability of superfast broadband across BANCES, essential for creative-digital industries.

City identity and BANCES

- Communicate the distinctiveness of our offer to attract national and international businesses looking to relocate to the Bath-Bristol-Cardiﬀ corridor.
- Promote Bath as a unique city of imagination and innovation.
- Develop and promote the concept of Bath as the city of a constellation of excellence e.g. Radstock’s national excellence in dance, and an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation, Creative Work: major international music festivals in Bath, Bristol and Cardiﬀ.
- Develop an entrepreneurial role for the local libraries for connecting communities, work, and culture.
- Work with regional and national partners and stakeholders to develop a more complete and visible cultural and creative offer, and to ensure that Bath remains the number one destination for students living in the West of England.

Action
- Expand collaboration and joint working between grassroots cultural and creative organisations in the West of England.

"Creative skills and a creative workforce are important to innovation and growing a knowledge-based economy" Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS)
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 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 and/or a monthly calendar of events and activities.
- Curate the city: develop Bath Lanes and Parades: new cultural routes, peppered with surprise and delight, for activities and events to enhance the lives and learning of all children and young people in B&NES.
- 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.
- Develop the platform with innovative digital marketing, the Discovery Card, Bath Passport, and audience data analysts.
- Consider a city-wide approach to booking: working with Bath Festivals (which manages booking for 120 organisations), local festivals, universities (Bath Spa Live, (ICA 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 Kilter Theatre. An Audience Agency profile report for B&NES commissioned for this strategy review, showed that engagement with the theatre is unusually high with 80% of B&NES 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. Conversely, 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.
- 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 new workforce attracted by the presence of creative and tech businesses.
- Extend access to the health and wellbeing effects of culture and creativity: we will lead nationally with our cross-sector approach to the new Social Prescription Initiative.
- Expand our audience base beyond B&NES: to the West of England, national, and international audiences.
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6. Children and young people
Culture and creativity for children and young people is an area of national and international excellence for B&NES 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 5x5x5=creativity, 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 activities and 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 B&NES.

7. Nurturing talent
To encourage sustainability and diversity we need to encourage new talent into the sector and establish a 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
- Support and develop supported points of entry for:
  - Young cultural entrepreneurs
  - Specialist internships (to improve diversity)
  - Professional and community volunteering
  - Diverse cultural leadership (steering and emerging) and ambassadorship

- Diverse cultural leadership (steering and emerging) and ambassadorship
- Active networks
- Collaborative project groups
- Patronage: business sponsorship.
8. Venues and work spaces
The premises and related infrastructure needs of arts and creative sector will facilitate the provision and improvement of permanent or temporary venues and work spaces.

9. Collaborative networks
Collaborative networks will be encouraged by the CCIB, with a focus on: coordination of activity across the sector (including maintaining accurate and up-to-date information about the sector and its spaces). These networks will be self-initiated and self-governing groups.

10. Financial sustainability & infrastructure
Financial sustainability is key for funding bodies who want to be sure that their investment will be of long-term benefit. The Cultural and Creative Industry (C&CI) business model supports investment, and to create a coherent ecosystem for the sector.

Cultural and Creative Investment Board (CCIB)
Made up of key public sector funders (e.g. Arts Council England, Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Economic Partnerships) with B&NES Council, Bath Tourism Plus, and 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 support to cultural organisations
- Facilitate cross-department funding and working within the Council on projects
- Implement the strategy review and prioritise short- and long-term goals, set targets and milestones
- Work closely with 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. major national and international bids

Cultural and Creative Bath Partnership (CCBP)
Reinforcing the sector, this brings together Creative Bath, Cultural Forum, and The Guild Co-working Hub to:

- Represent the sector to the CCIB
- Coordinate activity across the sector
- Develop ideas, collaborations, and connections
- Identify areas for research (e.g. audience, impact measurement, creative industry cluster mapping)
- Communicate feedback from the CCIB, and from specialists and individuals
- Foster a collegiate and collaborative approach among culture sector enterprises
- Be supported by B&NES Economy & Culture Team

Specialist groups and Individuals
Self-initiated and self-governing groups are often defined by areas of interest, or specific projects. This strategy review, through the CCIB, will encourage networking and collaboration across these groups and with individual enterprises.
Cultural and Creative Strategy Review

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Bath Literature Festival celebrates twenty years in 2015.