



Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029

Our communities; our
heritage; our shared future

for discovering • for inspiring • for sharing





FOREWORD

“

We are advocates
of partnership
and believe in the
power of creativity
and culture to
change lives.”

A word or
two from our
Co-Chairs,
Bill Morris
and Julius
Weinberg:



Bill Morris LVO



Julius Weinberg DM; Med, FRCP, FFHP

Since being asked to join Buckinghamshire Culture, a fledgling cultural partnership for the county, we have been champions for the Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy.

Our careers have taken us all over the world and crossed many sectors and industries, yet on being approached to support the cultural partnership we both realised how little work we had done where we live and were excited to change that!

We are delighted to be supporting and steering Buckinghamshire Culture and can see the immense value and impact that the Cultural Strategy can have for residents here. We are advocates of partnership and believe in the power of creativity and culture to change lives.

Buckinghamshire has a great deal to offer, it is green, leafy, has beautiful market towns and villages and plenty to see and do, but that is not the whole picture and we think there is more that creativity and culture can do – to ensure that all of our residents live healthier, happier lives. We have seen how well-planned, inclusive creative and cultural projects can bring people together, build vibrancy, encourage people to try new things and engage children and young people in new ways.

Here in Buckinghamshire, we are spearheading activities that honour our cultural assets and heritage, but bring them to life in new ways – such as through Storytelling across different arts disciplines, sharing cultures and lived experiences; telling the story of Buckinghamshire itself through our buildings and landscapes and the objects and artefacts cared for here; bringing the legacy of the Paralympic story to life for audiences and artists now; working on ways to embed creativity and culture into the everyday, in our town and village centres, and our neighbourhoods; developing projects that support wellbeing and health through creativity and culture; and developing the infrastructure and capacity to deliver great, inclusive projects in the county.

Buckinghamshire Culture is a great asset for the county, as it has a remit to steer and support the implementation of the Cultural Strategy, but it cannot do this alone. So, we are asking all of you to do your bit to help...

Regards,

Bill and Julius



WHIZZFIZZFEST

Aylesbury



“
Culture is
integral to the
identity of local
areas up and down
the country and
has the potential to
transform a place.”



Foreword	2
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	8
The Value Proposition for Culture	13
Strategic Context	16
Vision, Aims and Core Commitments	19
Building from our Cultural Strengths	21
Strategic Outcomes	25
Cultural Strategy Action Plan	29



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“

We want to make
Buckinghamshire an even
more dynamic, distinctive
and enjoyable place to be.”

SLEEPING LION STATUE

Market Square, Aylesbury



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture plays a vital role for Buckinghamshire: contributing to distinctive communities and places, enhancing our quality of life and wellbeing, enhancing our tourism offer and contributing in many significant ways to our economy. Buckinghamshire has an enormous depth of cultural offering. The rich mix that it has to offer to residents, visitors and investors is worth celebrating. This Strategy aims to make the county an even more dynamic, distinctive and enjoyable place to be, using culture to enhance the everyday, and address the county's social and economic challenges, building from its real strengths.

Cultural Strengths and Opportunities

Parts of Buckinghamshire are fast-changing – demographically, economically and culturally. It is crucial that cultural opportunities are developed alongside the new communities to maintain a high quality of life for Buckinghamshire residents both now and in the future. We need to work with partners across the region, county, and the world to deliver high quality and inspiring activities for the people of Buckinghamshire. Together we need to address the long-term under-funding of culture in Buckinghamshire, working with local and national funding bodies and partners to strategically address this gap and build our capacity and sustainability.

We need to be innovative and bold, and build on good practice to be seen as an inclusive and sustainable cultural destination that is not over-shadowed by London, and in doing so, build our sense of place and identity.

Challenges

Collectively, we need to work much harder and more collaboratively if culture is to provide the transformative experiences for our residents that we

know it can. We need to build lasting partnerships which put culture at the heart of the economic development and growth agenda. We need to maximise the positive influence of culture on health, wellbeing and social care. We need to do much more to reach and engage everyone across the county with the same degree of impact; being fully inclusive, reflecting the county's diversity of perspectives, ideas, skills and aspirations; and securing sufficient levels of financial investment to attend to the inequality of opportunity that our residents face.

Vision

Our vision is to celebrate our identity and increase opportunity. To use culture to make Buckinghamshire a creative and exciting place to live, study, visit and do business. We aim to protect and promote our cultural and artistic heritage and help communities to grow.

Strategic Outcomes

01

A thriving economy and transformed places

02

Equality of access to cultural activities and opportunities

03

Improved health and wellbeing of the population

04

An energised creative and cultural sector

To understand more about how this Strategy will be implemented and brought to life, please see the Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy Action Plan.

INTRODUCTION



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CRAFT GUILD

Stoke Mandeville

Buckinghamshire – a County of Culture

Culture plays a vital role for Buckinghamshire: contributing to distinctive communities and places, enhancing our quality of life and wellbeing, enhancing our tourism offer and contributing in many significant ways to our economy.

“The rich mix that Buckinghamshire has to offer to residents, visitors and investors is worth celebrating.”

Buckinghamshire has an enormous depth of cultural offering: our heritage and history; our built and natural environments; and our contemporary cultural lives, activities and the amenities that support them. Unique elements which contribute to the cultural mix of Buckinghamshire include the National Trust properties such as Waddesdon Manor, Discover Bucks Museum (our county museum), and internationally renowned facilities such as the film studios at Pinewood, as well as Chiltern Hills, country parks such as Langley Park, and the motor racing circuit at Silverstone. We have a unique contribution to international heritage as the birthplace of the Paralympic movement.

Culture is a vital component of our creative industries: providing talent, ideas and innovation. In addition, we have many artists, crafts makers and creative businesses. The rich mix that Buckinghamshire has to offer to residents, visitors and investors is worth celebrating.

This Cultural Strategy is the culmination of a period of critical discussion which has provided a set of fresh perspectives on the role culture can play in shaping Buckinghamshire. Spearheaded by Buckinghamshire Council, through a new Cultural Partnership which brings together the leading organisations and voices for culture in Buckinghamshire, it recognises the valuable contribution culture already makes to the county, alongside the potential for far wider engagement to deliver a better future for all. The Strategy aims to ensure that culture sits at the heart of approaches to economic development, new housing and communities, health and wellbeing, education and skills.

We want to make Buckinghamshire an even more dynamic, distinctive and enjoyable place to be, using culture to enhance the everyday, and address the county's social and economic challenges, building from its real strengths.

Why Culture Matters

Culture improves the quality of life for Buckinghamshire people, offering participation in activities that go far beyond what traditionally might be recognised as 'the arts'. It provides access to ideas, to community, to fun and to employment. It helps to bring confidence, cohesion, health and wellbeing.

Culture is a catalyst for economic diversification and growth; for talent attraction and retention; for inward investment and tourism; and for innovation and competitiveness.

“Culture is integral to the identity of local areas up and down the country and has the potential to transform a place.”

The Culture White Paper, DCMS, March 2016.

“There is a need to fashion proactively investment strategies and interventions that are more responsive to local need and demand, to talent from across the country, and to natural organic growth in the creative vibrancy of our town and cities.”

Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth
The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on
the Future of Cultural Value.

What do we mean by culture?

For the purposes of this strategy we are defining culture in its widest sense, embracing: our lives, identities and communities; heritage; museums, galleries, cinemas, music, theatres, libraries, festivals and events; practice and industry.

- **Culture is our lives, identities and communities:** it is the way we see ourselves and our place in the world. It is where we live, who we are and how we learn. It is how we express ourselves – from music to sport.
- **Culture is heritage:** it is our memories and stories and possessions and artefacts. It is the built and natural landscape.
- **Culture is industry:** it is the economic value generated by culture in terms of jobs and revenue. It is the added value – to innovation, productivity and brand. It is the creative and digital businesses and the design, production and trade of intellectual property. It is tourism and retail and the competitiveness of the wider economy.
- **Culture is museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, theatres, libraries, festivals and events:** it is how we record, collect, curate and present our identities and

how we understand others' identities. It is how we preserve and bring to life our stories.

- **Culture is practice:** it is the applied imagination of artists, writers and performers. It is the act of making – ideas, text, code, objects, paintings, sound and vision. It is performance and active participation.

The Opportunities We Can Embrace

Parts of Buckinghamshire are fast-changing – demographically, economically and culturally. Local plans across the county indicate that high numbers of homes will be built over the next 15–20 years. These developments – including Aylesbury Garden Town and new transport infrastructure – need to be recognised as cultural opportunities. It is crucial that these opportunities are developed alongside the new communities to maintain a high quality of life for Buckinghamshire residents both now and in the future. We can revitalise our historic town centres by enhancing their role as hubs for cultural activity as part of a wider and richer mix of uses.

Our creative industries can be a catalyst for economic growth which in turn enhances the innovation capacity of our cultural sector. With the Government's Sector deal for the Creative Industries, Buckinghamshire can play a much more pronounced role, complementing London's position as a global creative city. We need to work with partners across the region, county, and the world to deliver high quality and inspiring activities for the people of Buckinghamshire. Together we need to address the long-term under-funding of culture in Buckinghamshire, working with local and national funding bodies and partners to strategically address this gap and build our capacity and sustainability, and the number of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations.

The Challenges We Face

Buckinghamshire has so many qualities for which culture plays a starring role: our built and natural heritage, rural arts and crafts, growing creative industries, and strong voluntary sector – to name just a few. However, we need to work much harder and more collaboratively if culture is to provide the transformative experiences for our residents that we know it can. Our attractions and places of historical and cultural interest are widely dispersed, therefore sustainable and accessible transport and accommodation options need to be explored. We need to build lasting partnerships which put culture at the heart of the economic development and growth agenda – to ensure we future-proof the economy and develop high-quality places through new housing-led growth. We need to maximise the positive influence of culture for health, wellbeing and social care. We need to do much more to reach and engage everyone across the county with the same degree of impact; being fully inclusive, reflecting the county's diversity of perspectives, ideas, skills and aspirations; and securing sufficient levels of financial investment to attend to the inequality of opportunity that our residents face. The increasingly concerning climate change situation must be considered, we must look at reducing consumption and support sustainable lifestyles, as well as using creativity and culture to communicate and explore the need for change. We need to be innovative and bold, and build on good practice to be seen as an inclusive and sustainable cultural destination that is not over-shadowed by London, and in doing so, build our sense of place and identity.

What is the purpose of this Cultural Strategy?

Partners in Buckinghamshire need to take every opportunity to ensure the

county champions culture as a key way to improve quality of life, enhance wellbeing, and deliver sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Cultural Strategy has been developed:

- To articulate a shared ambition and priorities.
- To provide a vehicle that drives collaboration.
- To help cultural organisations and creative practitioners increase visibility, reach and engagement.
- To help build capacity and enhance the sustainability of our cultural sector.
- To increase inward investment, with culture increasing the attractiveness of the county.
- To ensure culture enhances the quality of all our places – from reinvigorated town centres to major new housing developments; from our rural landscapes to our villages.

A Cultural Partnership

To ensure culture is a headline agenda for Buckinghamshire, an independent Cultural Partnership has been established, called Buckinghamshire Culture.

Buckinghamshire Culture will work closely with partners across the county to build on the County's strengths and attend to its challenges. It is tasked with shaping a smarter, more coherent and innovative approach to culture, maximising potential investment and the returns this brings. It will continue to consult the sector and stakeholders to build on and evolve the aims and priorities of this Strategy over time.

Senior-level participation from strategic partners will be essential – bringing together the unitary council, universities, health, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP),

The Rothschild Foundation, Visit Buckinghamshire, Bucks Business First and key cultural organisations. The partnership will have a wider network too, made up of the breadth of creative and cultural organisations and individuals across Buckinghamshire.

Tasked with shaping and steering the cultural development of the county, the partnership will harness the power of working together. Through delivery of the Strategy vision, the Partnership will support the vibrancy, resilience and ambition of Buckinghamshire's cultural sector by spearheading new collaborations; sharing learning and improving communication; and ensuring culture sits at the heart of agendas in economic development, growth, place-making, health and wellbeing. The Partnership will harness the impact of culture on people's lives and use this to make the case for culture and creativity to be embedded across all areas of growth and development.

Key areas of responsibility will include:

- Sharing knowledge and connections to enhance the quality of partnerships across the county.
- Playing an advocacy and fundraising role – to attract investment for culture and the creative industries in Buckinghamshire. Vital will be aligning the priorities of the Cultural Partnership with those of our key partners.
- Presenting a shared voice and access point for partners seeking to develop a strategic approach to culture – in planning, economic development, tourism, health and wellbeing.
- Setting up task and finish groups on priority areas – to fundraise and deliver on activities and funding opportunities.

- Working closely with strategic and funding partners for culture – such as, Rothschild Foundation, Arts Council England National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Structure and Governance

Buckinghamshire Culture will register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2021. This model has been chosen as it offers the status of an independent legal entity, as well as providing charitable status. We see this as a formalisation of the cultural partnership model and strategic role that the partnership will play in the county. The ambition is for Buckinghamshire Culture to embody a co-investment model, where core organisations commit resources to the operation and delivery of the partnership. The CIO will be governed by a constitution and will have a Board of Trustees.

The wider Buckinghamshire cultural network (from creative and cultural sector, economy, health, education and place-making) will continue to be invited to help shape delivery, receive regular communications and invites to meetings, networking and activities, as well as attend sharing days and events. Membership will be open to all that share the Buckinghamshire Culture values and aims and feel that they make a distinctive contribution to creativity and culture in Buckinghamshire.



QUEENS PARK ARTS CENTRE

THE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR CULTURE



WATERSIDE THEATRE

Aylesbury



Culture, Growth and Place Making

"Culture is integral to the identity of local areas up and down the country and has the potential to transform a place."

(DCMS, 2016)

"There is a need to fashion proactively investment strategies and interventions that are more responsive to local need and demand, to talent from across the country, and to natural organic growth in the creative vibrancy of our town and cities."

(Warwick Commission, 2015)

In 2016, there were around 284,000 Cultural and Creative Industries businesses in the UK – over one in ten of the total number of businesses in the country, generating £91.8 billion for the UK economy in GVA and supporting over 3 million jobs. The geographic distribution of such businesses is dominated by London, and the South East, with strong concentrations in the M4 and M40 corridors.

Oxford Economics estimates that the Creative Industries could create 300,000 new jobs and generate £132.1 billion in GVA by 2025, if spend and investment is increased by 20% on 2019 levels. (Creative England, 2021)

Culture is at the heart of our towns and cities. It creates jobs and makes our local communities across the country better places to live, work and visit. (Arts Council England, 2020)

"44% of people that remained in an area and 43% of people that moved to an area cited arts and culture as an important factor in their decision – this is equal to the number that cited schools."

(Arts Council England, 2019)

"By creating vibrant events and experiences in town centre locations, areas can boost wellbeing, improve mental health and tackle isolation."

Revitalising Town Centres, A Handbook for Council Leadership.

Culture and Communities

Participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and make communities feel safer and stronger (Arts Council England 2014).

"A quality cultural and creative education allows people to develop rich expressive lives, and it is essential to the flourishing of the UK's cultural and creative identity and the Cultural and Creative Industries that this opportunity is not limited to the socially advantaged and the privately educated. This is a fairness, equity and economic imperative."

(Warwick Commission 2015).

Engagement in structured art and culture improves the cognitive abilities of children and young people. (Arts Council England, 2014)

Culture, Happiness, Health and Wellbeing

Seventy-six per cent of older people say art and culture is important in making them feel happy; 57 per cent say art and culture is important in helping them meet other people; and 60 per cent say it is important in

BEKONSCOT MODEL VILLAGE

Beaconsfield



encouraging them to get out and about. (Arts Council England 2014)

Arts and cultural intervention can have a positive impact on specific health conditions such as dementia, Parkinson's and depression. (Arts Council England, 2014)

People who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60 per cent more likely to report good health compared to those who had not. (Arts Council England 2014)

"Visiting heritage sites is estimated to save the NHS over £193.2 million by reducing demand for GP visits and psychotherapy."

(Historic England, 2019)

The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives, better lived. The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care (ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness, mental health). The arts can help save money in the health service and social care. (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Well-being, 2017)

In total, 85% of adults reported that being in nature makes them happy and this was consistent across different population groups. Those who had visited a natural space in the last 7 days reported being happier than those who hadn't. There is a positive role for nature in supporting children's well-being, with eight in ten (83%) of children interviewed agreeing that being in nature made them very happy. Six in ten

children (60%) reported to have spent less time outdoors since the start of coronavirus, more than double the proportion that had spent more time outside (25%). (The People and Nature Survey for England, 2020).

Economic Growth and Prosperity

Nationally, the creative industries are the fastest growing sector of the economy. The sector has created jobs five times faster than the overall economy since 2010. (Arts Council England, 2015)

In 2016, there were around 284,000 Cultural and Creative Industries businesses in the UK – over one in ten of the total number of businesses in the country, generating £91.8 billion for the UK economy in GVA and supporting over 3 million jobs. The geographic distribution of such businesses is dominated by London, and the South East, with strong concentrations in the M4 and M40 corridors.

Government figures show the country's successful creative industries contributed £111.7 billion to the UK in 2018, equivalent to £306 million every day. This is up 7.4 per cent on the previous year, meaning growth in the sector is more than five times larger than growth across the UK economy as a whole, which increased by 1.4 per cent. (UK Government, 2020)

The arts and culture industry has grown £390million in a year and now contributes £10.8billion a year to the UK economy. The sector contributes £2.8billion a year to the Treasury via taxation, and generates a further £23billion a year and 363,700 jobs. (Arts Council England, 2019)



STRATEGIC CONTEXT



CHILTERN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

Chalfont St Giles

Creativity and culture are integral to everything we do, whether it's the house we live in, the car we drive, or the films we enjoy – all of these things have involved huge numbers of designers, makers, artists, producers, directors. When it comes to leisure and the things we do to keep us happy and healthy, creativity and culture form the core of a great deal of these activities. And when we leave the house to go to work or school, creativity and cultural activities can help us to learn and develop skills, generate income and increase footfall, connect to a place and generate a sense of community and identity.

“Creativity and culture are integral to everything we do, whether it's the house we live in, the car we drive, or the films we enjoy.”

It is therefore, important to consider the strategic context for Buckinghamshire and to see how and where there are opportunities to collaborate, support or spearhead projects and activities that include and embed creativity and culture.

The Cultural Strategy directly supports the Buckinghamshire Council Corporate Plan 2020-2023 aim of making 'Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work and do business' and delivers to these specific Council strategies:

- Happier, Healthier Lives – a plan for Buckinghamshire (2021) has been published by Buckinghamshire

Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board. It contains seven priorities, two of which align to this Strategy:

- » Promoting mental health and wellbeing including addressing social isolation.
- » Community engagement and resilience.
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment outlines current and future health, care and wellbeing needs of the local community and identifies a range of groups and communities that could benefit from creative and cultural engagement and participation and shows the need for the cultural sector to be as open and accessible as possible.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) are key partners for the Cultural Strategy, with their focus on 'the creative and digital economy with Pinewood Studios at its core'. The Cultural Strategy supports BLEP's strategies in these respects:

- Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy 2019, the foreword of which quotes Roald Dahl, sets out plans to grow Buckinghamshire's £14.9bn economy by driving innovation. The Cultural Strategy will support the drive to:
 - » Develop a 'creative and digital cluster' around High Wycombe, the National Film and Television School, and Pinewood Studios.
 - » Meet skills shortages in creative-tech careers.
 - » Enable inspiring work experience opportunities creative, space, digital health and high value manufacturing sectors.
 - » Make the towns in Buckinghamshire attractive to businesses and employees in the creative and digital sector.

- Buckinghamshire Growth Strategy 2017-2050 which will deliver 105,000 new homes over its lifetime, sets out a vision for a 'vibrant, balanced and resilient' Buckinghamshire through four objectives – two of which echo core areas for the Cultural Strategy to deliver to:

- » Skills and Talent.
- » Town Centre Regeneration.

In addition, their guiding principle for action: 'stimulate sustainable, vibrant and liveable urban centres, that are appealing to knowledge workers and young professionals', is a key area for collaboration with the Cultural Strategy.

The Buckinghamshire Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) is in development, and a Cultural Education Strategy will

soon be created. The CEP strategy will align to the Cultural Strategy, ensuring that children and young people are offered rich and engaging cultural education opportunities.

There are several areas of regeneration and growth across Buckinghamshire, these include East West Rail, Aylesbury Garden Town and High Wycombe and Chesham regeneration plans. In each case, the Cultural Strategy has the capacity to support and embed creative and cultural projects that ensure new developments are vibrant places to live with flexible spaces for community and cultural activities, and cultural provision that improves quality of life, wellbeing and social cohesion.



VISION AND CORE COMMITMENTS



Vision

Our vision is to celebrate our identity and increase opportunity. To use culture to make Buckinghamshire a creative and exciting place to live, study, visit and do business. We aim to protect and promote our cultural and artistic heritage and help communities to grow.



Mission

Working together to shape, build and celebrate a bright cultural future for Buckinghamshire.

Core Commitments

These core commitments run through the Strategy and Action Plan. They outline the ethos that underpins the Strategy and its delivery, and the foundation stones that partnerships and collaborations will be built on.

Bold and Brave

Spearheading innovative collaborations and projects that allow audiences, participants, staff and volunteers to take part in, and experience, culture in new ways – impacting perception and behaviour. Thinking big and creating inspiring, high-quality activities that involve and empower our citizens, harnessing the imaginative power of our creative industries and professionals to engage people in making, production and participation.

Children and Young People

Creating the landscape for co-production and high-quality cultural experiences for children and young people that broaden their horizons, enable them to develop new skills, support their mental and physical wellbeing and build pride

in themselves and their achievements. Valuing the amazing things that happen when children and young people are free to work with artists and cultural practitioners as equals.

Creative and Cultural Talent

Driving ongoing development and networking opportunities for artists, makers, cultural professionals to build a resilient and innovative sector. Sharing and learning together through regular events and workshops, as well as case studies and sharing best practice from within, and beyond, Bucks. Building trust and developing partnerships to deliver the Strategy and Action Plan.

Cross-sector Collaboration

Shaping partnerships within, and beyond, the cultural sector that prove the value, and raise the profile of, the beneficial impacts of culture for groups and individuals. Influencing policy, increasing reach and developing sustainability through innovative and unusual partnerships that work across strategic agendas to transform lives through engagement and participation in creativity and culture.

Equality and Inclusion

Celebrating diversity and recognising that providing equality of opportunity and promoting a culture of inclusion are vital to success. Working towards cultural staff, volunteer and audiences being reflective of the diversity of the communities that Bucks cultural organisations serve and influence. Ensuring that equality and inclusion are embedded in delivery of the Cultural Strategy, and the partnership's policies and decisions.



BUILDING FROM OUR CULTURAL STRENGTHS



FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS AT DISCOVER BUCKS MUSEUM

Aylesbury

In Bucks we have several key areas of strength that we can build from. Areas where we can work with a range of partners from the county, region, county and across the world to develop inspiring projects and activities. These include:

Literary Heritage

Buckinghamshire has a rich history as a place of writing, reflection and imaginative story-telling. For example, John Milton finished *Paradise Lost* in his cottage (now a museum) in Chalfont St. Giles and world-famous children's author Roald Dahl lived in Great Missenden for many years and wrote many of his best-selling books from a 'writing hut' in his garden. Children's author Enid Blyton and fantasy writer Terry Pratchett are also both former Bucks residents. For many years, every summer in Aylesbury, a Roald Dahl Festival has been held, celebrating the work of this local author, including a giant puppet parade featuring local school children and artists, attracting thousands of visitors. Recently the festival has grown as WhizzFizzFest to become a wider celebration of children's literature, keeping the parade and fun activities but also celebrating other contemporary authors.

In Buckinghamshire, we can do more to celebrate our literary heritage and provide accessible itineraries for visitors. We can also inspire our young people to become brilliant story-tellers, enhancing literacy and confidence. Plus, we can support a new generation of writers, film-makers, games developers and other types of story-tellers to establish Buckinghamshire as a county of contemporary literature.

Sports Heritage

Buckinghamshire is a county with a strong tradition of innovation and excellence in sports. It is the home of Silverstone, the purpose-built rowing lake at Dorney, and Wycombe

Wanderers, a football club with a strong community tradition. Buckinghamshire is also widely recognised as the birthplace of the Paralympic movement. Sir Ludwig Guttman organised the first 'Stoke Mandeville Games'; the forerunner of today's Paralympic Games to coincide with the start of the London Olympics in 1948. The revolutionary treatments at Stoke Mandeville Hospital introduced sport as rehabilitation and an exciting movement was born. To coincide with London 2012, a Cultural Olympiad project was delivered by Buckinghamshire Council celebrating our unique heritage. Buckinghamshire Council is one of the founding partners of the National Paralympic Heritage Trust, a charitable trust which has been set up to protect and celebrate British Paralympic Heritage. Through an agreement with the International Paralympic Committee, this heritage is recognised at the start of each Summer and Winter Paralympics as the Paralympic Heritage Flame starts its relay at Stoke Mandeville Stadium with a celebratory festival.

In Buckinghamshire, we can build from this tradition of innovation and excellence. For example, inspired by the Paralympic Movement, we can become the UK's most



accessible
county
for cultural
participation.

We can embrace
digital technology
and our cultural assets
to increase the legibility of
our cultural offer and grow a
more immersive and interactive
programme of cultural experiences.

Our Places of Historical and Cultural Interest

Buckinghamshire has a huge variety of attractions and places of historical and cultural interest, and our proximity to London provides a major opportunity to build the audience for our culture. We have a significant number of National Trust properties with some of the finest country houses and formal gardens in this region: the sumptuous Rothschild chateau at Waddesdon, Prime Minister Disraeli's country retreat at Hughenden Manor, the most magnificent landscape garden in Britain at Stowe. We have a great County Museum in Aylesbury (now a National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England); the second longest-running visual arts open studios event in the country (Bucks Art Weeks); one of the UK's largest arts centres (Queens

Park Arts Centre); excellent performances at Garsington Opera and outdoor activities available include climbing the high ropes or mountain biking in Wendover Woods and seeing the



cherry blossom and bluebells, mountain biking at Aston Hill, enjoying Burnwood Forest, kayaking on the Thames or competing on the Olympic rowing course at Dorney Lake. Nowhere is very far from a country pub with fresh, contemporary food, ales from a family brewery and wine from the county's award-winning vineyards. Bucks is Britain's most filmed county, and home to Pinewood Studios. Its villages have witnessed countless gruesome Midsomer Murders.

Many of the larger towns throughout the county offer theatres, galleries and museums, with a range of arts, crafts and studios open to the public. There's a great range of summer festivals including Penn Fest music festival and a range of festivals at Waddesdon.

In Buckinghamshire, we have a wide-ranging and high-quality cultural offer, but we can do more to connect it. We can develop a more coherent programme of activities and map of attractions; we can work harder to share knowledge and jointly promote activities; and we need to make our cultural landscape more accessible and participatory. We can develop our accommodation offer to encourage more leisure overnight stays in the county.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Buckinghamshire has some fine and varied countryside. The Chilterns are known for their rolling hills, wooded green valleys and chalk downland meadows. 324 square miles of superb scenery offer opportunities for walking, cycling, water sports and canals, wildlife-watching and camping.

The Chilterns are quick to reach by train or by car, and easy to explore with boots, buggies, bikes or boats. The Chiltern Way is a circular walking route of around 125 miles km, and the Chilterns Cycleway is a 170-mile circular cycle route - both taking in some of

the finest scenery in the country. A new walking festival has launched featuring a host of locations, landscapes and lifestyles with hikes, guided tours and special events taking place across the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty throughout Spring.

“Across the county we have many micro creative firms, with specialism in visual arts, craft and design.”

In Buckinghamshire, we can more effectively attract visitors to our beautiful countryside and we can do so by engaging them in innovative and sustainable cultural activities. This includes festivals, food and drink programming, and artistic commissions which raise awareness of ecology and sustainability issues. We can also make connections between the urban and rural areas, such as through active audience development activities which open up appetites for diverse communities to come to the countryside; or partnerships with universities to encourage activities which connect art, science and technology.

Our Cultural and Creative Economy

Buckinghamshire has a high growth cultural and creative economy. This includes the globally significant Pinewood Studios, an anchor cluster for the UK film industry; and the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, which plays a vital role in nurturing talent and ensuring the country continues to produce some of the best creative talent in the world. The south of the county is home to

multiple high growth creative firms, with particular strengths in digital (TV, film, gaming and software); and music publishing. Across the county we have many micro creative firms, with specialism in visual arts, craft and design. They are often playing an active role in their communities and connecting to the wider cultural tourism offer (such as, via Buckinghamshire Craft Guild). In High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire New University has a strong track record in nurturing creative talent, building on the town's furniture heritage to develop a pipeline of graduates in design and arts. To the north of the county, the University of Buckingham is investing significantly in its cultural infrastructure, paving the way to become a cultural and creative hub.

In Buckinghamshire, we have a strong tradition of creating and making – from furniture to film. We need to do more to support creative talent to develop and grow in the county – rather than lose talent to London and beyond. Our main towns, in particular High Wycombe and Aylesbury, can become important regional hubs for the cultural and creative industries – with a focus on high quality workspace and stronger sector networks; as well as establishing strategic links to major clusters in London (such as design and crafts). We must also work much harder to provide opportunities for a diverse range of creative and cultural work – ensuring we develop a rich cultural education offer, and develop effective skills programmes in partnership with industry. The LEP's Creative Skills sub-group can play a key convening role to support this area of development.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



PARALYMPIC HERITAGE EXHIBITION

Touring



In Buckinghamshire, we want to use culture to make the county a creative and exciting place to live, study, visit and do business. To achieve this, our Strategy Action Plan will deliver against four county-wide outcomes.

Outcome One: **A thriving economy and transformed places**

Ambition

To establish Buckinghamshire a major hub for high value cultural creative and industries activity. This will require an active and imaginative approach to our town centres and to main areas of housing-led growth: encouraging the development of local hubs and clusters. It will also require a dynamic approach to sector networking: connecting Pinewood and the National Film and Television School to networks of micro firms across the county and building stronger business to business exchange. There is also an opportunity to increase the visibility of the local cultural and creative industries sector to other parts of the economy – to increase opportunities to ‘buy local’.

To ensure that creativity and culture are part of place-making, transformed high streets and 21st century town centres that support vibrant creative communities in the long term – making the most of adaptations and acceleration catalysed by the Covid-19 pandemic. To put culture at the heart of town and village centres: establishing a dynamic and distinctive mix of retail, cultural production (such as crafts, design, visual arts and other types of ‘maker spaces’), events and leisure activities.

To establish Buckinghamshire as a recognised destination for leisure, heritage and arts through a cohesive tourism

plan based on a shared narrative and stronger sector networks, which encourage knowledge exchange and shared approaches to programming and marketing. Specific strengths can be leveraged here – e.g. to promote Buckinghamshire’s offer as a preferred centre for major sporting and cultural events and accessible tourism.

Priority Actions from the Action Plan:

1. Ensure that creativity and culture are part of place-making, transformed high streets and 21st century town centres that support vibrant creative communities in the long term. Create a Placemaking Action Group to support and drive this work.
2. Ensure creativity and culture have their rightful place in decision making in the county, including ‘Cultural Impact Statements’ supporting key local developments and strategies.
3. Work with partners to make best use of creative industries data, to understand the range and impact of creative industries existing in Bucks and the potential to connect, leverage benefits and work together.

Outcome Two: **Equality of access to cultural activities and opportunities**

Ambition

To support residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, to engage in culture at a local level through innovative programming, new models of delivery, securing external funding and working in partnership. Offering a range of ways to participate in culture, enabling everyone to experience how culture can enhance quality of life, self-esteem and to help feel connected to a place and community.





“We want to use culture to make the county a creative and exciting place to live.”

Celebrating diversity and recognising that providing equality of opportunity and promoting a culture of inclusion are vital to success. Working towards cultural staff, volunteer and audiences being reflective of the diversity of the communities that our cultural organisations serve and influence. Ensuring that equality and inclusion are embedded in the delivery of the Cultural Strategy, its policies and decisions.

To establish Buckinghamshire as a centre of excellence in cultural participation and education: with partners working to establish cultural education as a right for every young person, by reaching out and expanding vital parts of the offer. To ensure that we are developing the skills and appetite for a thriving creative and cultural sector in the future. Developing creative careers events and initiatives and embedding skills development into projects and education of children and young people. To establish Buckinghamshire as the most accessible county for cultural participation.

Priority Actions from the Action Plan:

1. Develop an annual, county-wide co-ordinated ‘Open Weekend’ activity, where organisations and venues provide opportunities to participate and get involved in arts and heritage, with the aim of building creative participation in Bucks.
2. Develop Access & Inclusion Action Group to shape exciting and innovative projects that foreground

access, inclusion and participation, to celebrate difference and create opportunities for those facing inequalities and living with disabilities.

3. Work with Buckinghamshire Community Boards to develop and deliver creative and cultural projects within the communities of Bucks that meet local need, are relevant and increase engagement with creativity and culture.

Outcome Three: Improved health and wellbeing of the population

Ambition

To maximise the role of culture in promoting happiness, individual health and wellbeing and a personal sense of achievement, as well as the benefits of participation and engagement in a wider community setting.

Supporting the prevention agenda, with respect to physical and mental health, through initiatives such as cultural commissioning, creative and cultural activities through social prescribing, bespoke and targeted projects which can transform life experiences for those involved.

Priority Actions from the Action Plan:

1. Create Health and Wellbeing Action Group to explore opportunities for projects and programmes that can deliver creativity and culture to support health outcomes for residents.
2. Work with communities (through Community Boards and other partners) to deliver projects that aim to positively impact on health and wellbeing, evaluating and collecting evidence of impact.
3. Embed creativity and culture into the Bucks social prescribing offer.

Outcome Four: Energised creative and cultural sector

Ambition

To build capacity within the creative and cultural sector, develop leadership and risk taking. To improve the sustainability of our cultural offer. To enhance the individual and collective ability of our creative and cultural sector to meet the needs of the community it serves – responding to changing priorities in health and wellbeing, community engagement, localism, digital delivery and relevance.

To nourish and support our freelancers, artists and creatives in the county – building training, development programmes and support that enables artists to flourish in Buckinghamshire.

To position our cultural offer, in particular our rich heritage and collections and the diverse stories of our communities, as a resource for contemporary cultural practice – such as festivals, events, filming, creative workspace and reinvigorated town centres and rural hubs.

Priority Actions from the Action Plan:

1. Navigating the New Normal programme to support cultural organisations to re-build after Covid-19 – initiating a Bucks Cultural Leaders network and programme, build skills and support orgs to re-engage, be more relevant and build back better.
2. Exploring opportunities to reduce the digital skills deficit for Bucks cultural organisations – skillshare events in response to Covid and recovery.
3. Building capacity, quality, risk taking and aspirations in the county through inspirational speakers, Leaders Network and initiatives to build and strengthen cultural organisations,

community engagement and leadership in Bucks.

Building Buckinghamshire Culture

In order to achieve all of the above, and for the Cultural Strategy to achieve success, we also need to Build Buckinghamshire Culture, our cultural partnership:

Priority Actions from the Action Plan:

1. Develop a clear brand/identity and online presence for Buckinghamshire Culture that the sector can get behind, and want to use.
2. Implement the best possible structure and Governance for Buckinghamshire Culture in the mid/long-term and find a home for Buckinghamshire Culture with Bucks New University (as well as securing hot desking in other organisations as is safe).
3. Create and implement a Communication Plan that addresses internal and external communication, and aims to develop profile for the partnership and greater awareness of existing and new creative and cultural projects and programmes.

Action Plan, Evaluation and Monitoring

Buckinghamshire Culture's Board, led by the Co-Chairs, will oversee the Action Plan via an annual review of the Action Plan to monitor progress against the milestones we have set.

Robust evaluation and strong case studies will be essential to prove impact and will be used to advocate for the value of creativity and culture. Buckinghamshire Culture will have a key role to play in sharing the value and impact of the Cultural Strategy and its constituent projects for the community of Buckinghamshire.



Cultural Strategy Action Plan

The Cultural Strategy Action Plan outlines how we aim to deliver the Strategy – please see separate document for the Action Plan.





QUEENS PARK ARTS CENTRE

Aylesbury

An abstract background painting featuring a mix of vibrant colors including green, yellow, red, and blue. The painting has a textured, expressive style with visible brushstrokes. A large, solid red circular shape is positioned in the lower right quadrant, partially overlapping the text.

“

**The Partnership
will drive forward
the Cultural
Strategy, and
develop ways to
collaboratively
deliver the
vision, aims
and objectives,
themes and
priority actions.”**



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