Hastings' Cultural Strategy 2022-2027

Draft
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Hastings
Borough Council

To share your views on this draft strategy go to:

www.hastings.gov.uk/arts-culture/strategy

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The consultation closes on 2 October 2022 at 11.59pm.

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Executive summary

Hastings is widely acknowledged as being a fascinating coastal town that possesses a unique cultural identity. The town is rich in cultural currency and is a highly desirable place to live, work and visit. Hastings has a wealth of cultural assets, organisations and individuals that have contributed to creating this enviable reputation.

The vibrant and eclectic cultural experiences on offer here provides endless opportunities for engagement, participation, fun and enjoyment. Regardless of interests or background, there are cultural activities to suit every taste in Hastings. The town's wide-ranging cultural landscape include hugely popular annual festivals such as Jack in the Green and the record-breaking Pirate Day. The town is home to pioneering Turner Prize nominees, Project Art Works, as well as two Royal Institute of British Architecture award-winners, Hastings Contemporary and Hastings Pier.

The town has seven museums including the award-winning Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. The Shipwreck and the Fishermen's Museums are amongst others that showcase the town's rich and unique history. There is a vibrant live music scene. Hastings is home to Fat Tuesday the UK's largest Mardi Gras. The biennial International Piano Concerto Competition attracts world-wide recognition, contestants, and audiences. Hastings Reggae Festival is one of the most popular music festivals in the South East. The town is also home to many sector-leading creative business and entrepreneurs such as Curve Pusher, Ten66 Television and Links Signs Ltd.

Hastings' well regarded cultural reputation is reflected in the levels of funding cultural organisations and creative practitioners receive from bodies such as Arts Council England. The quality of Hastings' cultural and creative sector has resulted in successful external public and private investment.

This cultural strategy sets out a vision for the town that sees culture and creativity continuing to play a pivotal role in the town. This strategy is intended to support the town's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. We, as the local authority, want to work collectively with the communities and people of Hastings towards outcomes that benefit all.

Introduction

This cultural strategy sets out a vision for Hastings that sees culture and creativity continuing to play a pivotal role in the town. It grounds cultural activity in supporting local communities and building collective pride in Hastings. It sees culture as a driving economic force within the town and the sector as a leader in supporting action on the climate emergency. It demonstrates the important role cultural activity has in helping to improve the health and wellbeing of Hastings' residents and visitors.

Despite Hastings being seen as a good place to move, live and work in. The town has very high levels of disadvantage and hardship. It is still ranked as the most deprived town in the South East of England and the second most deprived seaside resort in the country. Over the last decade Hastings' position on the Index of Multiple Deprivation has worsened. This strategy will not solve Hastings' social, economic or health problems on its own. It does, however, have the potential to make a substantive contribution to reducing hardship, increasing opportunity and improving wellbeing outcomes across the town. This can be achieved through joined up working across the council as well as with public service partners, third sector organisation and with private enterprise. By work with partners we can create a more inclusive and accessible cultural sector.

Access to cultural activity is recognised as a factor that contributes towards, balanced, healthy, fulfilled, and meaningful lives. Cultural activity provides a sense of identity, belonging, shared values and meaning. It is intrinsic part of our citizenship. It is an indicator of quality of life and a right we should all possess. None of us are without culture. It is a fundamental and distinctive component that shapes our character and binds us to others. Expressing culture through creativity unifies and aligns people and communities.

This strategy has been shaped through discussions with local communities, cultural organisations, creative practitioners and strategic partners. Their willingness to contribute to this strategy demonstrates the determination people have to support culture as a driver for economic and health improvements in Hastings.

This strategy builds on earlier culture-led regeneration strategies. Those strategies contributed to the high regard Hastings' cultural offer is now held in. This strategy is grounded in the hopes and aspirations of the town's communities. It aims to benefit all who were born, grew up, live, work, and visit the town. This strategy is intended to enable community engagement and support regeneration efforts. It is hoped that residents who have not previously engaged with culture, those facing hardship and those excluded from cultural opportunities will be the greatest beneficiaries of this strategy.

Overview and local factors

This strategy has been developed during exceptional and challenging times. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in an extraordinary upheaval to daily life. It has forced us all to adopt measures not experienced in living memory. Such a major occurrence will have a knock-on-effect for public services and places like Hastings. It will continue to impact on economic and health inequalities for years to come. Those that have been most affected by Covid-19 are also the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society. Unfortunately, many in Hastings fall into this category. The link between low income and poor health is well established. Income inequalities lead to health inequalities and the pandemic has highlighted the real-life consequences of these disparities. People with poor health and chronic conditions face more severe health impacts and social disruption because of the pandemic than they did before. For Hastings, the town's already poor public health statistics will continue to see the impact of COVID-19 for many years to come. It is essential this strategy gives serious consideration to the role culture can play in minimising the health and wealth inequalities that exist here.

There is much work to be done by public services to recover from the pandemic. The council's already stretched resources cannot work in isolation to make positive change. However, this cannot be done in isolation. Success will be through joint working between public services and partners including social, health and care service providers. Culture, sports and play have a role in this as well. Their very nature makes them important contributors to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes and life chances of local people alongside other public services, third sector bodies and private enterprise.

This strategy provides the foundations upon which Hastings' cultural and creative stakeholders can continue to create a sustainable cultural offer. It is a framework intended to support an inclusive and accessible cultural environment for all visitors, residents and communities in the town.

This strategy builds on the regeneration activity the council has supported over the last 20 years. It follows on the successful award of £24.3 million for the Hastings' Town Deal.[1] The strategy takes into account strategic plans and initiatives by local, regional, national government and non-government bodies. It is reflective of the priorities in Hastings Borough Council's Corporate Plan, 2020-24 and the Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2021.[2] It aligns with the council's Environmental Action Plan and Equalities commitments. It is primed to contribute to the successor organisation to the Hastings Opportunity Area - the Priority Education Investment Area.

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[1] Hastings Town Deal. www.hastingstowndeal.co.uk

[2] Department of Health and Social Care, *Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal* Communities (2021) www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities

This inclusive approach is deliberate. It is intended to move the cultural ecology away from siloed short-term activities and towards a multi-disciplinary and cross-sector approach to tackling the longer term inequalities of the town. It sees the local cultural ecology playing a significant role in addressing the socio-economic and health conditions that have relegated Hastings to being the 13th most deprived town in England.[3] The coronavirus pandemic led to innovative partnership working across public services, third sector and private enterprise. Now is the time to build on this and improve the life chances of residents and consolidate Hastings as a highly desirable place to live, work and visit.

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[3] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2019* (2019) www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019

<u>Vision</u>
Hastings will be one of England's best cultural destinations. Where the high quality, vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable experiences created by our cultural organisations and practitioners are celebrated and encouraged. Through culture we will tackle the town's key social and health challenges and reach the most excluded people.
Culture will enrich the town's economy, supporting residents to live their best lives.

By 2027 Hastings will be:

- A place where all residents, irrespective of their neighbourhood, have access to high quality cultural activities that enhance their health and wellbeing and enrich their lives

- A place that is renowned for encouraging its talented cultural sector to deliver an inclusive and accessible offer that is innovative, vibrant and resilient

- A place where the creative industries make substantive contributions to skills development, employment prospects and the economic output of the town

- A place that is synonymous with an environmentally responsible and progressive cultural sector; where carbon reduction, recycling and waste reduction are integral to fantastic cultural events and activities.

<u>Cultural priorities 2022-27</u>
Over the next five years Hastings' cultural sector will work together to:

1. Ensure all residents and communities can engage in and experience high quality cultural activities that are accessible and inclusive.

2. Establish across Hastings a dynamic cultural ecology that fosters a sense of pride, belonging and identity.

3. Support cultural organisations, creative practitioners and the creative industries to achieve their ambitions for growth, engagement and excellence.

4. Raise the profile of Hastings nationally as a town synonymous with a progressive cultural offer, universally recognised as vibrant, welcoming and attractive to visitors.

5. Increase the importance, awareness, and implementation of environmental protection in enhancing cultural and creative activity.

PRIORITY 1 Ensure all residents and communities can engage in and experience high quality cultural activities that are accessible and inclusive

<u>Introduction</u>
This priority aims to deliver an inclusive, accessible and equitable cultural offer for all residents and visitors. Cultural and creative experiences should include opportunities for all people to engage and contribute to high-quality activities in their neighbourhoods. To achieve this, it is essential that the voices and needs of people and communities are heard. This is particularly true of groups who have historically been excluded such people living with a disability or in isolation, and those experiencing financial hardship.

<u>Local context</u>
Hastings has a vibrant cultural offer with many opportunities for people to take part in cultural activities. However, many of the town's residents, especially those experiencing hardship and poor health, do not currently feel cultural activities are for them. These groups feel excluded and disenfranchised from taking part. This is particularly so for young people:

> *"many of them don't have £3.40 bus fare to get to the seafront…even if they did have why would they come into the town? They'd also need money to buy lunch, they don't have that sort of money"* [Community Engagement worker]

The inclusivity and accessibility priorities of this strategy are not demands that all activity should possess the ability to attract everybody. Even the most well considered and delivered creative experience will not appeal to everyone. Rather, cultural activity should not fundamentally or inadvertently exclude people. People planning creative and cultural activities should actively seek to reduce barriers to engagement. Efforts should be taken to create conditions in which people and communities are supported and encouraged to take part.

To ensure this will require cultural organisations, creative practitioners and the creative industries to adopt approaches that put people and communities at the heart of their activity and decision making. The sector needs to explore ways to coordinate activity to enhance their individual impact so that the cultural ecology reaches more communities and people.

<u>Key challenges</u>
- If you have not experienced the transformational nature of cultural engagement you are not interested in it.
- The lack of interest felt by many people and their communities towards culture is deep rooted - reversing these perceptions and enabling lived experience is likely to take time

- Siloed short-term activities are unlikely to result in the systemic change promoted by this strategy
- Co-production and collaborative approaches for involving communities in the creative process and decision making adds time and requires greater resources than traditional creative programme development
- Cultural organisations and creative practitioners will need to embrace change – considering innovative ways of accommodating the cultural values, beliefs and identities of the people they are working with.

Opportunities and actions
- Working with partners to create a more inclusive and accessible cultural sector that supports and enhances Hastings' Equality Charter
- Encouraging cultural organisations and creative practitioners to develop closer, more regular community activity with people and communities across the town
- Ensuring joined up approaches across the borough by working with stakeholders and encouraging co-production and collaborative approaches by cultural organisations, creative practitioners and the creative industries
- Working with cultural stakeholders to increase opportunities for community participation through co-creation, collaborations and consultation
- Creating opportunities for communities to engage directly with cultural leaders and decision makers

Outcomes
Encourage clear routes for co-creation, consultation and involvement between the cultural ecology and residents. Inclusive and accessible practices will be embedded across the town's cultural and creative activity. The cultural identity of Hastings will evolve to include a richer and wider representation of visitors, residents and communities.

PRIORITY 2 Establish across Hastings a dynamic cultural ecology that fosters a sense of pride, belonging and identity

Introduction

This priority aims to create opportunities for impactful and engaging cultural activities across the town. It encourages the continued use of popular cultural assets and historic sites. It also challenges cultural organisations and creative practitioners to take cultural activity into neighbourhoods. We all have the right to see our culture and identity reflected in cultural activities where we live. Community-led culture and creative activity fosters an enhanced sense of connectivity, local identity, and pride. Local residents and communities should not have to travel to experience high quality culture and creative activities. Inclusive and accessible culture should be available within people's neighbourhoods and community. This is essential if any progress is to be made in reducing the barriers people face when living in challenging socio-economic circumstances. The town will adopt a genuine commitment to work together, with co-design promoting authentic involvement.

Local context

Local culture and creativity should reflect the diverse identities that make up the people and communities of Hastings. Culture and creativity should encapsulate a common and shared belief in what makes the town a great place to live and work. This strategy recognises that to achieve the aim of a collective sense of pride will involve people and communities as partners and co-creators of the cultural activity taking place in the town.

It is recognised that much of the town's cultural and creative assets tends to be in town centre locations and along the seafront. However, across the town there are a range of local neighbourhood assets, including buildings and public spaces, that could be used for cultural activities. Using local neighbourhood assets to deliver cultural activity will make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of an inclusive and accessible cultural offer for all.

One of main challenges facing community-based activity is the lack of networks and groups in the areas of the highest deprivation. Local people and communities should be supported in developing their own programmes. The cultural organisation and creative practitioners have a role to play in helping facilitate community activity in this way.

Key challenges
- The time and resources necessary for longer-term engagement to develop awareness and confidence in the value of their contributions
- Project leads will need to factor in time and resources to facilitate meaningful co-creating and community engagement.

- An audit may be required to determine the full potential of community assets across the town.

Opportunities and actions

- Conducting periodic needs analysis surveys with people and communities across the town on cultural engagement
- Supporting cultural activity that responds to the social needs and concerns of the town's communities
- Facilitating opportunities for partnership activity and engagement across communities and neighbourhoods
- Providing access and opportunities for people and communities to contribute to and co-create plans on future cultural developments in the town
- Enhancing and sustaining built assets with capital investment when funding allows and bringing cultural assets into areas that are currently underserved
- Building on the previous successes with the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize work with the Local Plan to bring amazing architecture to the town.

Outcomes

The diversity of the town's population is represented in the range of high-quality cultural activities that take place in Hastings. More people can see themselves, their lives and culture reflected in the town's cultural and creative offer. Hastings' vibrant cultural offer can be experienced in local neighbourhoods as well as the town centre and seafront areas.

PRIORITY 3 Support cultural organisations, creative practitioners and the creative industries to achieve their ambitions for growth, engagement and excellence

Introduction

This priority is focused on maximising the potential of Hastings' organisations, people and businesses. The success of this strategy will be reflected in the extent to which cultural organisations, creative practitioners and the creative industries are able to achieve their goals and aspirations in the town. The shared objectives of these sectors and the council represents a partnership that collectively possesses the combination of skills and experience to successfully deliver this strategy.

Local context

Hastings is fortunate to host a cultural and creative sector that is bold, ambitious, and forward-thinking. The town has always been a place of growth and expansion. For those who are bold, entrepreneurial and community spirited, there is no better place than Hastings. According to national census data the town's population has grown by over 24,000 people in the past 50 years, an increase of 37%.[4] Indications are that the town's population will continue to increase as people redefine their ambitions and look for an inspirational place to live. The town's growth brings both benefits and challenges.

The growth of Hastings' cultural sector is one of the town's success stories. This strategy has been developed to support local strategic plans to strengthen the town's cultural ecology and assets. Substantive capital funding is being made available through the Town Investment Plan and is an example of the advantages of a collective effort. It offers the potential for real change and a springboard from which other cultural and creative projects and initiatives can successfully emerge. This strategy is primed to support the successor organisation to the Hastings Opportunity Area - the Priority Education Investment Area.

Culture has a clear role to play in the economic transformation of towns. This strategy advocates a joint approach to developing projects and bidding for public funding and business investment.

Key challenges

- Reduced resources may limit the impact of sector support organisations and development initiatives that currently help organisations and practitioners to achieve their ambitions

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[4] Office for National Statistics, *Census unearthed: explore 50 years of change from 1961* (2021) www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/censusunearthedexplore50yearsofchange from1961/2021-08-09

- The loss of European funding and reduced government support for major projects and activities for cultural organisations and the creative industries
- Many cultural organisations and creative practitioners need to focus much of their efforts and priority on activity that directly impacts their sustainability and resilience of their financial bottom line
- Capacity and resources for research and development activity is limited - this potentially restricts opportunities to engage with business support initiatives for growth.

Opportunities and actions
- Supporting local initiatives and networks that strengthens the collective contributions of the town's cultural organisations and creative practitioners
- Supporting cultural organisations to secure funding and investment from external funders
- Signposting relevant business support, organisation development, and professional career development opportunities available locally and regionally
- Providing advice on opportunities to work with local and central government funded initiatives
- Where possible easing procedures or campaign to reduce barriers that hinder business growth and development

Outcomes
Hastings cultural organisations and creative sector will grow and thrive. Culture will contribute to the town's economic growth. Established cultural organisations and creative industries will become more resilient. Newer businesses, social enterprises and start-ups are incubated and supported as they innovate, evolve and grow.

Cultural stakeholders will be central to the strategy's success. They will be equipped with strategic guidance and provided with a supportive environment. Driven by their ambitions and commitment they will help guarantee the success of this strategy.

PRIORITY 4 Raise the profile of Hastings nationally as a town synonymous with a progressive cultural offer and is universally recognised as vibrant, welcoming and attractive to visitors

Introduction

This priority aims to support the promotion of Hastings and its unique cultural and heritage offer. It builds on the work already underway in this area through public, private and joint initiatives. The success of these have helped to position the town as a popular place to live, work and visit. It is widely recognised that there needs to be an on-going marketing and information strategy to maintain the momentum. Highlighting the breadth and vibrancy of the towns cultural and creative offer is important to the success of this strategy.

Local context

The reputation and perception of a place determines its success in attracting people to live, work, visit and invest in. In recent years Hastings has successfully shed many of the negative perceptions and views held towards the town. A major success story in Hastings' evolution is the breadth and quality of its cultural ecology. As the country emerges from the pandemic, opportunities exist for Hastings to re-establish its credentials. There is opportunity to positioning the town again as a great visitor destination for culture and pleasure seekers from the UK and overseas.

In 2019, the total value of cultural and tourism activity to the town was worth £386 million and attracted 4 million visitors. The cultural sector was generating £1.24 for the local economy for every £1 spent. It also supported 1.65 jobs for every 1 cultural sector job. Overall, the culture and tourism sectors supported over 7,000 jobs in the town. Hastings has the potential to capitalise and grow from this baseline over the next decade.

In 2021 Hastings was successful in securing Welcome Back funding. It allowed the council to promote the town as a safe environment for visitors and supported the local trader's recovery from the pandemic. In consultation with business leaders, the council used the funding to deliver a programme of cultural and creative events across the town's main shopping streets during the low season. Activities were undertaken to encourage exploration of the town centre's less visited areas, increasing footfall and business for local traders. This was an important step for Hastings' cultural sector. It demonstrated the crucial role cultural activities play in attracting people to Hastings.

Key challenges
- Despite the range of high-quality cultural activities the level of deprivation in the town remains stubbornly high

- Changes in perception occur gradually and requires investment - being known as a culturally vibrant destination should never be taken for granted and the town has to stay ahead of the game
- The coordination of messaging needs broad partnerships and joined up working between public, private and joint initiatives
- Any cultural 'branding' of Hastings needs to reflect perceptions of the town's cultural stakeholders, its people, and communities.

Opportunities and actions
- Working with sector stakeholders to deliver targeted and consistent messaging about the town's cultural offer for its residents and visitors
- Supporting the existing and emerging marketing strategies targeted at selected visitor and tourist markets
- Highlighting and showcasing the growing regional, national, and international successes of Hastings-based cultural organisations, creative practitioners and creative industries
- Increasing the use of digital technologies to promote and communicate the breadth and quality of Hastings' cultural offer.

Outcomes
There will be a more joined up approach to describing Hastings' cultural vision and priorities. Public, private and joint initiatives will be supported and strategies to draw in UK and international visitors will be encouraged. Hastings' residents will experience the benefits of a vibrant visitor economy through increased opportunities for employment and cultural activity.

PRIORITY 5 Increase the importance, awareness, and implementation of environmental protection in enhancing cultural and creative activity

Introduction

This priority recognises that climate emergency is one of the most pressing concerns of our time. Each of us has a vital role to play in addressing the climate change. This will involve individual and collective actions by residents, visitors, workers, and investors in Hastings. It is right that our cultural offer and creative activities contribute to that collective effort to halt and reverse the damage done to the environment. Culture has a vital role in raising awareness of climate change and how we can contribute to environmental responsibility and sustainability. Culture can bring directly to our attentions the consequences of not addressing responsibility to the environment.

Local context

Hastings' Climate Emergency Strategy provides clear information on the issues facing the town and what needs to be done.[5] Exploring options for reusable energy, reduced use of harmful commodities, engaging in sustainable procurement policies and carbon neutrality are amongst a range of strategic activities the council will undertake as part of its environmental strategy. These actions will be coordinated with other local activity that plans to tackle the climate crisis. Collectively will need to take action to address the Climate Emergency. Where possible, the cultural sector should ensure our activity will contribute towards Hastings' Climate Emergency Strategy objectives.

Key challenges
- Changing attitudes - overcoming climate-crisis sceptics and engaging those less engaged in climate issues to encourage individual and collective environmental action

Opportunities and actions
- Devising and implementing borough-wide practices and policies that can be universally adopted.
- Empowering communities to integrate environmental activity with cultural and creative experiences
- Considering social, economic, and environmental issues in project planning and outcomes that aligns with the council's Climate Change Strategy
- Supporting for the development of environmentally conscious and sustainable businesses and the green economy
- Raising awareness in local communities to encourage pro–environmental behaviour

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[5] Hastings Borough Council, *Climate Change Strategy* (2020) www.hastings.gov.uk/my-council/policies-strategies/climate-change-strategy/

- Consideration for devising an environmental action plan for cultural organisations, creative practitioners and creative industries operating in the town.

<u>Outcomes</u>
Local communities are empowered to undertake projects that contribute to environmental sustainability and reduce the impacts of climate change. There is increased awareness of the need to take individual and collective action to reduce carbon emissions, increase recycling and adopt environmentally active and protective lifestyles.

Definitions[6]

Access / accessible

We use access and accessible to mean that people should not be excluded from an activity on the basis of having a disability or protected characteristic. We use accessibility in its broadest sense and includes physical, sensory and intellectual impairments. Accessible cultural and creative activities empower people with disabilities and protected characteristics to be involved and enjoy them in the same way others do.

Creative industries

These are "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property."[7] Creative industries include: advertising; architecture; the art and antiques market; crafts; design; designer fashion; film and video; interactive leisure software; music; the performing arts; publishing; software and computer games; and television and radio.

Creative practitioner and creatives

This is used to refer to all those who work in culture and the creative industries at all levels. This includes, but is not limited to artists, curators, designers, developers, producers, technicians, and those who make, share, reshape and interpret culture and cultural content.

Creativity

Creativity describes the process through which people apply their knowledge, skill and intuition to make, produce or participate in culture and cultural activities as creative practitioners, hobbyists, participants, pupils, students and volunteers.

Culture

We define culture as all areas of activity associated with architecture, carnivals, ceramics, collections, combined arts, crafts, dance and movement, design, drawing, festivals, film making, heritage, live art, libraries, literature, museums, music, painting, participatory and social arts practice, photography, printmaking, outdoor arts, sculpture, theatre, video and visual arts. This includes the tangible and intangible culture of the local area such as beliefs, language, food, historic practices and traditions.

Cultural activities

This refers to the wide range of activities and actions cultural organisations and creative practitioners are involved with. This includes, but is not limited to, cultural

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[6] Unless otherwise stated the definitions in this strategy align with Arts Council England, *Lets Create Strategy 2020-2030* (2020) www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate

[7] DCMS, *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* (2001) www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-mapping-documents-2001

programmes, employment opportunities, events, exhibitions, interventions, installations, projects, skills development and volunteering.

Cultural ecology

This is used to describe the mixture of people, organisations and networks who produce, use and consume cultural and creative activities. It also includes the relationships between them that creates the eco-system needed to sustain existing activity and the development of new ones across all areas of culture and the creative industries.

Cultural stakeholder(s)

These are individuals, groups and organisations who have a vested interest in this strategy through their involvement in the cultural ecology of the town.

Inclusive / inclusivity

We use inclusive and inclusivity to mean giving equal access and opportunities to everyone by removing barriers to participation to all irrespective of disability, gender, medical or other needs, race, religion, and sexual orientation.