



INSPIRATIONAL CREATIVITY: TRANSFORMING LIVES EVERY DAY

Our cultural ambition for Kent

Our Vision

By 2027 Kent will be a confident, vibrant county, where extraordinary cultural activity is available that enriches and transforms the lives of everyone.

Our Ambition

Our ambition is to create a place where:

- Our investment in creativity and innovation ensures that entrepreneurs and extraordinary cultural practitioners choose to invest, live and work in Kent.
- Enchanting, surprising and innovative things happen.
- Diversity is celebrated and thrives.
- Our transformative cultural product, achieved through collaboration and ambitious, resourceful cultural planning, is recognised nationally and internationally.



Introduction

This strategy sets out the shared ambition of all the creative partners in Kent, where culture becomes a part of everyday life with more people engaging with, experiencing and being inspired by, excellent arts.

Culture is a key driver for the prosperity of the county. The creative economy is one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK. The digital and creative industries are highlighted by government as a priority for growth and Kent has much to contribute to this.

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In the last few years, you [the Creative Industries] have been the fastest growing sector in the economy, earning nearly £90bn in 2015, more even than our successfully spectacular automotive sector. This industry leads the way. Two million people employed in all parts of the UK, a quarter of a million businesses - you make Britain what we are but you also tell the world what Britain can do.

Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2017



LV21, image credit Rikard Osterlund

Culture is an essential ingredient for a fulfilling and richly rewarding life. Creativity helps us to see the world differently and understand our place within it. A rich cultural heritage builds our sense of who we are and where we are from, affirms our identity and helps us to build our resilience and self-esteem.

Kent, largely rural, extensively coastal, with internationally important arts and heritage, post-industrial estuary towns and inspirational cultural landscapes, has a distinctive offer. Our county is the UK’s main gateway to Europe, and with its unique location between mainland Europe and London is well positioned to maintain and grow an international outlook.

The region is on the edge of significant change – over the next ten years the Kent and Medway population will increase by just over a quarter. This will need to be met with significant housing and infrastructure growth. The county is characterised by some notable highlights with emerging companies alongside comparatively small and geographically dispersed creative clusters. In order to fulfil our potential and play a nationally significant role we must build on these to establish greater critical mass and strengthen our collective voice.

This strategy is shaped by Kent’s cultural sector and local authorities. It aims to strengthen collaborative work across these and other partners including the private sector, the third sector and the public sector. The time is right for the cultural and creative industries to recognise opportunities, to enable significant economic growth for Kent and to work with local people embedding culture into the fabric of our society.

We will do this through three key actions:



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We know that investment in culture not only has immense economic value; it also has a wide range of benefits that touch all our lives every day. We can see the difference that culture has on children’s education, and we are beginning to understand better the profound relationship between culture, health and wellbeing. Everyone should have the chance to experience culture, participate in it, create it, and see their lives transformed by it.

The Culture White Paper. DCMS. 2016



Jasmin Vardimon Company, Pinocchio, Image credit: Tristram Kenton

Create

Supporting and enabling the presentation of excellent work and the growth of world class creative productivity.

The creation of excellent cultural product is at the heart of everything we do. Bold and experimental art encourages people to take part, and helps us to build a reputation as a dynamic county that provides rich cultural experiences for every person as part of their everyday lives.

A strong cultural infrastructure is vital to the production and presentation of excellent work and has a number of essential elements, which go beyond our networks of venues, heritage locations, natural environment and technology. It includes people, collaboration, creativity and networks, which collectively form an ecology that supports delivery of high quality arts and cultural experiences.

Creating the right kind of workspace is also critical – from artists’ studios to large-scale production hubs.



We will...

- Enhance and invest in the cultural infrastructure where there is proven potential for sector growth.
- Ensure that all children and young people in Kent have access to high quality culture from an early age and on their own terms.
- Support the production of ambitious high quality work.
- Support and nurture valued creative, cultural and heritage professionals to deliver excellence through production, commissioning and programming.
- Support cultural and digital activity that increases community engagement in culture.
- Provide exciting and challenging experiences that will have a long-lasting impact upon participants and audiences.
- Encourage and support the creation of work that demonstrates collaboration across a wide range of diverse backgrounds, organisations, disciplines and perspectives.
- Showcase Kent’s reputation as a creative county locally, nationally and internationally.
- Invest in workspace development.

Innovate

Developing original and creative ideas, encouraging creative leadership and supporting skills and learning.

Success is dependent upon initiating and embracing innovation, and creating the space for experimentation. With the growth of new communities and creative clusters throughout Kent, it is vital that we encourage and nurture creative ideas.

Facilitating experimentation and linking with Kent's world class research institutions and universities will support growth and skills development. Leadership and learning are key to innovation and we will nurture new talent, new ideas and a highly skilled workforce.



We will...

- Pursue investment opportunities to enable cross-sector collaboration and risk taking.
- Encourage growth of creative clusters.
- Support new formats and mediums for cultural production and experiences.
- Support existing creative leaders and inspire those of the future.
- Work with our outstanding education institutions, further developing research and innovation.
- Promote cultural learning with improved careers guidance and vocational learning opportunities to develop employability, social and creative skills.
- Embrace advances in technology as essential components of the cultural landscape, and maximise their creative potential as artistic tools.
- Enable children and young people to become respected as commissioners, curators and producers of culture as much as they are audiences and participants.
- Seek new opportunities for the interpretation and marketing of our heritage assets.





Sustain

Delivering access to finance, support for businesses, smarter ways of working, and empowering entrepreneurship.

Kent is ideally placed to further develop its thriving creative economy and become a place where creativity is at the heart of everyday life, and every person in Kent has access to cultural activity.

We know that a substantial proportion of the creative sector in Kent is freelance. We will review established business models and explore ways of working together to shape the sector to become more resilient. It will be a journey that realises potential, encourages collaboration, supports development, enables growth and works towards financial stability to support a mixed economy of skilled freelancers, micro-businesses and larger companies.

Building the profile of Kent and its unique role as a centre of creativity is key. Culture led regeneration has already made a tangible difference to many areas and through effective partnership working, profile building and collaboration, we will enable Kent to be seen as an exciting and innovative creative place.



We will...

- Develop an approach to sector specific business support that champions resilience and sustainability.
- Prioritise the development of the creative industries workforce with a focus on supporting the needs of freelance practitioners.
- Explore new investment opportunities and access to finance, including engaging with public sector commissioning and supporting the creative sector to be investment ready.
- Embed culture and the creative economy firmly within Kent planning frameworks, ensuring that cultural provision and inspiring design is at the heart of all new developments and integral to the growth of strong, resilient and successful communities.
- Encourage the development of new technologies and resilient cultural business models, and capitalise on intellectual property rights.
- Collaborate with other sectors such as education and health, to embed the arts and creativity within their work, create models of good practice, and develop the knowledge and skills within the creative sector to deliver new programmes.
- Maximise the role of digital distribution to showcase and promote work extensively and reach new audiences.
- Expand Kent's cultural tourism offer, to grow the visitor economy further through enhanced connectivity and innovation.

Towards 2027

Throughout the life of this strategy we will explore and develop a range of initiatives and grow a successful and innovative creative economy which will become part of everyday life in Kent.

We aim to...

- Grow cultural infrastructure and activity to respond to population increase and planned housing growth.
- Invest in sector specific skills, training and business development.
- Connect with planners and developers to ensure that the development of Kent's housing and transport networks enables cultural and creative industries to grow.
- Seek to influence the provision of superfast broadband and learning programmes to strengthen digital connectivity.
- Invest in affordable creative workspaces.
- Encourage cluster led growth.

How will we know we have been successful?

- Kent will be respected locally, nationally and internationally as an ambitious, creative county.
- All Kent residents will access rich cultural experiences as part of their everyday lives.
- Our ambitions for cultural entitlement for children and young people will be realised and demonstrated through the ART31 Commitment.
- Kent will become a place that will attract more people to live and visit, and more businesses to locate.

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The raw materials of the creative industries, including the publicly supported arts, are talent and ideas. Therefore, investment in innovation and R&D across the creative industries is essential for economic and employment growth.

Creative Industries Federation 2016.



How will we measure success?

We will design and implement different methodologies for collecting and evaluating information, but will consistently capture specific data throughout the life of the strategy including:

- Creative outputs and outcomes.
- Young people as board members of creative organisations.
- Levels of investment.
- Numbers of jobs, traineeships, apprenticeships and internships, and opportunities for volunteering.
- Levels of participation, audience reach and engagement.
- Press coverage, marketing and publicity.



The success of this strategy relies upon the actions of all stakeholders, working together in support of our shared ambitions.

We will...

- Gather and make use of evidence developed through case studies, commissioned research and evaluation.
- Maintain political support and engage stakeholders in business, tourism, health and education as key advocates for the cultural and creative industries.
- Clearly communicate our impact in delivering outcomes for Kent's residents and restate the case for sustained investment.
- Use our collective voice to influence decision makers.

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*The government should recognise that creative industries
'will be as important to future economic success as
traditional industries such as cars or oil and gas'.*

John Kampfner. 2017



Antony Gormley, Another Time XXI 2013 (Coronation Parade), commissioned by the Creative Foundation for Folkestone Triennial 2017. Image credit Thierry Bal.

Delivery and ownership

This strategy has been adopted by Kent County Council and is supported by the Kent Cultural Transformation Board, whose purpose is to connect the cultural sector in the county, creating opportunities for engagement and enabling collaboration with partners.

The strategy will work alongside the individual business plans and artistic ambitions of Kent's creative sector, the strategic plans of key stakeholders such as Arts Council England and Historic England, and Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015 – 2020.

An implementation plan sets out detailed outcomes under each of the high level aims emerging from the key actions: Create, Innovate and Sustain. The plan will be published online and will be a live document capable of regular updating.

The vision and key themes of the strategy should also be viewed alongside plans from other stakeholders, in particular the South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan, Towards A National Prospectus for The Creative Economy in the South East and the Growth and Infrastructure Framework. Key partnerships include What Next?, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, South East Creative Economy Network, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission.

