

Newcastle's Cultural Strategy 2022-30

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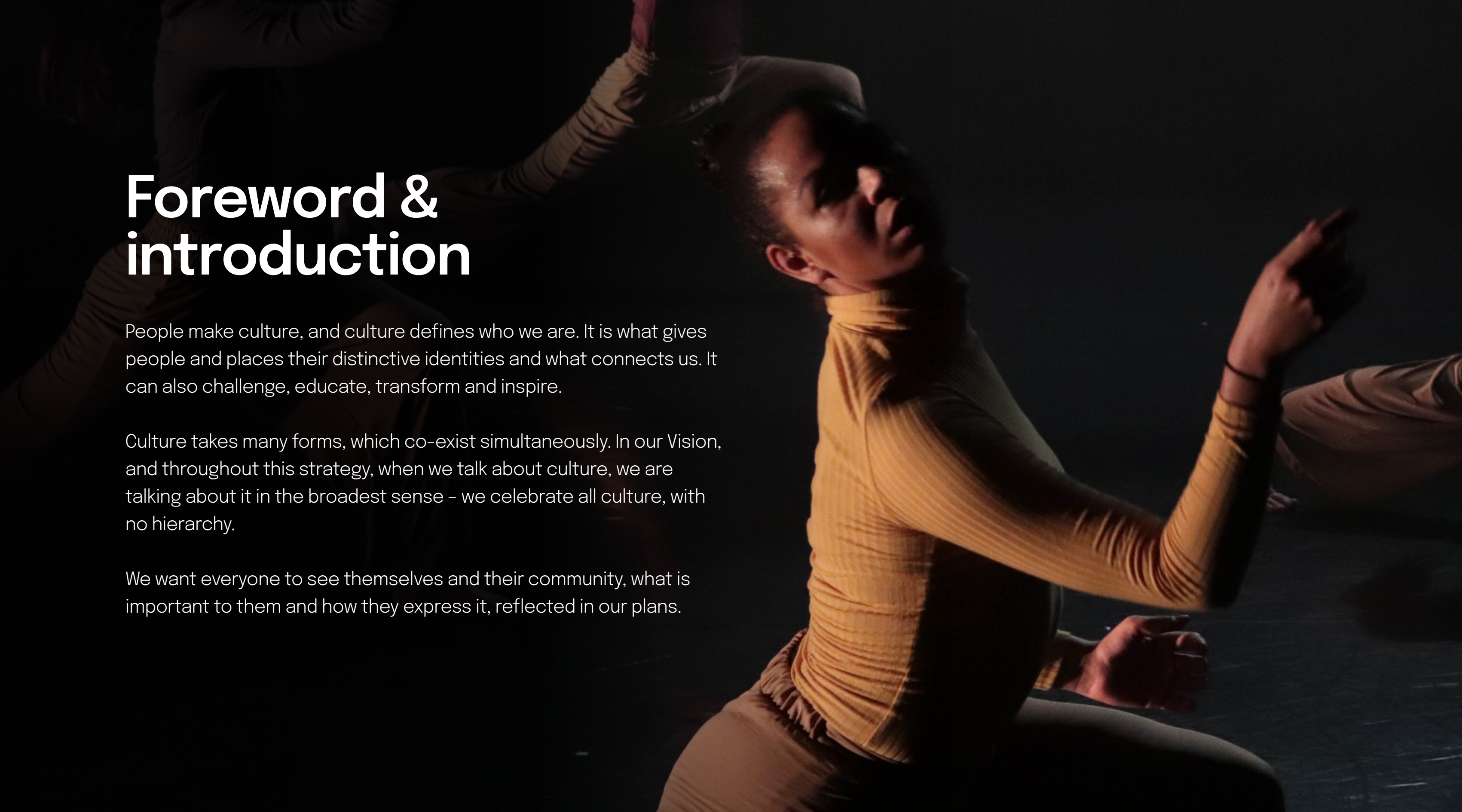


Foreword & introduction

People make culture, and culture defines who we are. It is what gives people and places their distinctive identities and what connects us. It can also challenge, educate, transform and inspire.

Culture takes many forms, which co-exist simultaneously. In our Vision, and throughout this strategy, when we talk about culture, we are talking about it in the broadest sense – we celebrate all culture, with no hierarchy.

We want everyone to see themselves and their community, what is important to them and how they express it, reflected in our plans.



Why do cities need culture?

The culture of a place is the creative expression of its citizens and communities: it reflects our thoughts, our feelings, our needs, our fears. It is stimulated and shaped by our habits, histories and traditions and by our circumstances – where we are, who we know, what we have and what we’ve been through.

Our city’s culture makes us distinctive and allows us to stand out from the crowd. It enables us to connect to others – locally, nationally and internationally – by sharing ideas, values, knowledge, services and friendship. Culture connects us to each other and to the rest of the world.

If cities need culture for distinctiveness, connectivity and profile, there is also a wealth of evidence that they also need it for social and economic well-being, for health, for happiness, and for their own sustainability. Culture is what makes cities vital, vibrant and dynamic.

Newcastle is a small city, well-networked, well connected and rich in cultural assets and potential. Properly cared for, nurtured, celebrated and developed, the culture of the city will bring rich rewards for us all. If we optimise its value, we’ll ensure the well-being of the city for the future.

The Vision, the Strategy and this definition of culture have been developed by the Newcastle Culture Compact.

What is a Culture Compact?

Culture Compacts emerged as a key recommendation of the Cultural Cities Enquiry. The Enquiry, conducted by an independent commission on behalf of the Arts Councils of England and Wales, Creative Scotland, Core Cities and Key Cities, examined how culture might be more effectively and sustainably resourced, and how the benefits of cultural activity could be more equitably shared.

It noted that the cultural sector in all cities is important to, and provides benefits for, a broad range of stakeholders. This includes citizens and local communities, businesses, the health and education sectors, the voluntary sector. It proposed that cross-sectoral coalitions – culture compacts – should be established to optimise the value of culture in each city, to identify priorities for future development, and to create a network of Culture Compacts across the country. At the same time, it recognised that it is increasingly difficult to secure resources from the public sector for investment in cultural activity and that we need to find new ways of generating funds to enable growth.

In Newcastle, extensive consultation about the challenges facing the cultural sector and the establishment of a Culture Compact took place in 2019. The Newcastle Culture Compact, which has since been renamed Newcastle Creates, was formed from stakeholder nominations in early 2020. It coordinated the co-production of the Culture Vision in autumn 2020.

Newcastle Creates has a small number of core members representing a broad range of interests. It is supported by specialist advisory groups. The membership of these groups is wide and reflects the Compact's ambition to have the right people around the table to contribute to its thinking. It will review membership regularly and undertake consultation with a much broader constituency throughout the city to ensure that the Compact and its plans remain relevant and representative.

Newcastle Creates' principal purpose is to represent, to coordinate, to influence, to lead and to shape the thinking that will enable the culture of the city to develop in a way that will help Newcastle to achieve its ambitions.

It will work by:

- Listening to needs and developing initiatives which provide solutions
- Advocating and lobbying for cultural activity
- Working in partnership to deliver interventions for meaningful change
- Commissioning research and evaluation to enhance the evidence base for the value and impact of culture which will inform investment decisions
- Convening people from across sectors and communities to shape and develop the cultural life of our city

Newcastle Creates' values of fairness and equity, cooperation & collaboration, environmental sustainability, curiosity and ambition underpin its Vision and cut across its aims and ambitions. Although geographically its focus is Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle Creates recognises the porous nature of the city's boundaries. It welcomes opportunities to work with our neighbours and to connect with friends and colleagues across the globe. We are better when we work together.

Executive Summary

This is a cultural strategy with people at its heart – Newcastle’s artists, makers, audiences, communities and visitors. Its starting point is that everyone is creative. It sets out a ten-year vision to reignite Newcastle’s reputation as a thriving cultural and creative city.

Newcastle has all the ingredients to be an exceptional, internationally renowned and connected cultural city. It has an enviable cultural infrastructure and a wealth of exceptional cultural venues, organisations and initiatives. It is home to a large skilled freelance creative workforce and an impressive independent and commercial cultural scene, with a rich portfolio of heritage assets and one of the fastest developing digital sectors outside London. It has a growing multicultural and international community and is proud to be a City of Sanctuary. It has leading universities and colleges, with world-class facilities, which collaborate to enhance and champion the cultural sector.

We are doing great things, but there are challenges: Are we capitalising on collaborative and cross-sector opportunities? Are we as inclusive or equitable as we need to be? Are we ambitious or vocal enough about all aspects of our creativity? The city has been heavily hit by Covid-19, and its impact has been uneven: those who were excluded before are even more disadvantaged now. The pandemic will have a long tail.

This strategy sets out how we will unlock the full potential of culture for the economy, communities and their well-being. By focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion; prosperity; opportunity; place; well-being and climate, culture and creativity can be central to the city’s emergence from Covid19. If we realise the ambitions expressed here, we will lay solid foundations for the future. We need to be bold and think differently.

To do this we need to make three systemic changes:

- Expand our definition of culture to be much broader in terms of what is made and experienced, and by whom
- Take action to achieve our aspirations around equality and equity so they have real meaning, from workforces to audiences, from policy and decision-making to opportunity.
- Improve partnership working and governance: we need to have the right people around the table. For inclusive, sustainable development we need purposeful partnerships with the NHS, education, local government, business, voluntary organisations and communities. With new partnerships we can expand our reach, innovate and be ready for the opportunities of new place-based funding.

Our Vision and Strategy provides the strategic framework within which Newcastle Creates will operate. It is intended to be dynamic: although it sets out our ambitions for the next 10 years, we will revisit it with stakeholders every two years to ensure that it continues to reflect the aspirations of the city and its citizens.

This is, particularly important as we transition from Covid-19 and fully understand the effects of the pandemic on the cultural sector and city at large. We need constantly to review and analyse where we are, what we have achieved and where we need to improve.

Newcastle Creates is charged by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), with leading the development of the cultural sector in the city and with coordinating, collaborating and advocating for culture so that it is collectively owned.

Where are we now?

This is a key moment for Newcastle. As the city emerges from the ravages of the global pandemic, we have the opportunity to create a more just, sustainable and inclusive society and to challenge social inequality. Culture can make a significant contribution.

This is an opportunity to stimulate a step-change in the scale and value of Newcastle's cultural eco-system, and to enhance its reach and impact. If we build on our strengths and address our weaknesses, we will increase Newcastle's reputation – locally, nationally and internationally.

Over the past 20 years, the city, its people and its cultural sector have shown themselves to be remarkably resilient, rolling with the punches then recovering, reforming and reinventing for the future.



In that time, amongst other success stories, Newcastle's cultural sector has;

- Created a national Centre for Children's Books – Seven Stories
- Developed a nationally significant new business model (and some great drama) at Live Theatre
- Seen a bespoke self-built, community driven Cinema and venue at Star & Shadow
- Revitalised and re-developed the Mining Institute, now known as the Common Room
- Ensured hundreds of artists could make use of temporarily vacant spaces across the city
- Retained talent from across the country and around the globe as increasing numbers of the city's graduates choose to make the city their home
- Facilitated extraordinary international collaborations drawing threads between our city and others around the world.

Then Covid-19 hit.

Now we need to build back - differently.

The pandemic has drawn attention to pre-existing problems within the sector: the precarity of the workforce; unsustainable financial models; the lack of diversity and the exclusion of some communities. It has also given us time to think about how we can address these issues, and about the role culture might play in the future of the city.

How we can create change

We can work together to put culture at the heart of the city, its communities, and sustainable social, environmental and economic development by;

Acknowledging the challenge

- The cultural sector will need to be supported in its recovery, it will need to adapt to its new circumstances post-pandemic and post-Brexit, to become productive.
- Competition for resources will be fierce, new means of investment will be required, and the resources we secure will need to be invested well
- The creative workforce will need to be nurtured, especially young people and the freelance community
- More opportunities need to be created for 'good' work, for continuous skills development, for entrepreneurial-ism

Making the most of opportunities available

- The government's 'Levelling-up' agenda
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group Northern Culture enquiry, which identified culture as an under-acknowledged driver for levelling up
- The City Centre Transformation Programme
- The North of Tyne Combined Authority's Culture & Tourism programme
- The city's emerging heritage framework.

Getting everyone to play their part

- Businesses and the universities, the City Council and the North of Tyne Combined Authority can encourage, facilitate and provide investment and new ways of working;
- Creative people and organisations can support the local population, ever-changing and ever-growing, to have better access to creative opportunities and develop new creative skills, and ensure that culture is embedded across the city and part of everyday lives.
- We need to redouble our efforts to remain international, to grow as a City of Sanctuary and support inter-cultural exchange. The city faces challenges including high levels of poverty, and we need new collaborations and innovation to address these at a fundamental level.

The vision

By 2030 Newcastle will be renowned as a city whose culture and economy are built on the creativity, industry and imagination of its people. It will be a city where the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish. It will be a place where identities and cultures are celebrated, and everyone feels they belong.

Newcastle Creates



The vision is underpinned by our values which are:

Fairness and equity – We will ensure that everyone is able to celebrate the culture that is important to them and to explore other cultures. We recognise some people have been historically excluded from this, and that we need to challenge existing structures, taking action on a scale proportional to disadvantage to make positive change.

Cooperation and collaboration – We will foster an environment where problems are solved by people and organisations working together and collaborating to overcome challenges.

Environmental sustainability – We recognise the significance and urgency of the climate crisis, and the need to work toward environmentally sustainable practices within the cultural community and the city. We believe that culture can play a leading role in engaging with these challenges and advocating for change.

Curiosity – We acknowledge that new ideas emerge from those willing to experiment, innovate and explore. We will encourage, listen, reflect and take time to understand, encourage and nurture new concepts and perspectives.

Ambition – We believe the cultural sector should be ambitious and risk-taking in its work. We understand the value experiencing culture brings in joy, well-being and meaning. We recognise and support the contribution culture and creativity make to our city's economy and to making our city a distinctive place – a place people want to live in, work in, learn in and visit.

Themes and ambitions

Equality, Diversity & inclusion

Newcastle will champion cultural democracy and tackle inequalities of engagement with culture in our communities and in the cultural workforce.

Objectives:

To champion, encourage and support all creative cultures so that the whole population of the city is represented and reflected

To ensure that all citizens and visitors have access to cultural opportunities that meet their needs and aspirations.

Through targeted working, challenge inequality and under-representation in the cultural and creative sector, amongst participants, audiences and its workforce

To celebrate and nurture intercultural dialogue and the international culture of Newcastle

To embrace, enable and encourage risk-taking, innovative approaches to creativity, and engagement with new and unfamiliar cultural activity and opportunities.

Prosperity

Newcastle will encourage and support the development of a dynamic and growing cultural ecology which contributes to an inclusive wider economy and breaks down the barriers to access and participation.

Objectives:

To enhance the profile of the city and attract investment, employment and visitors, through creative production, the promotion of its cultural offer, and celebration of its heritage.

To grow the economic value of the cultural and creative sectors and create new opportunities for employment.

To ensure that all work in the cultural sector is good work, is accessible and inclusive, appropriately rewarded, suitably supported, and includes opportunities for advancement and personal and professional development.

To address the critical shortage of creative workspace in the city to enable a sustainable creative environment and grow the creative economy.

To stimulate and support accessible and affordable skills development opportunities across all creative disciplines at all levels and ensure that there are appropriate pathways for those wishing to develop creative skills and careers.

Opportunity

Newcastle will encourage and support the development of a dynamic and growing cultural ecology which contributes to an inclusive wider economy and breaks down the barriers to access and participation.

Objectives:

To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience and participate in cultural activity from the earliest age.

To working in partnership with formal and informal educational organisations and initiatives to offer high-quality cultural and creative learning for all young people.

To develop partnerships, programmes and targeted support that create an environment in which creative talent can be identified, developed and retained.

To increase and enhance the provision of creative lifelong learning and participation opportunities which enable communities to develop new creative skills and connect through culture.

To embed culture into the fabric of the city, creating opportunities for cultural engagement in every public place and space.

Place

Our past, our future and our people will define the city and make it distinctive, a city where every citizen, community and neighbourhood thrives.

Objectives:

To draw on our distinctive built and social heritage and the significant potential of our digital sector to attract investment and visitors.

To secure Newcastle's international profile and credentials as a distinctive cultural hub, welcoming international business, collaboration and partnerships.

To exploit the city's status as a regional capital and core city and become an exemplar of a place which uses culture for inclusive recovery and transformation following austerity, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

To support the creation of ambitious and distinctive proposals for major cultural interventions and visitor experiences in our city, ensuring they benefit the widest communities.

To ensure that Newcastle is a great place for artists to live, work and thrive.

To ensure that all neighbourhoods across the city have the opportunity to engage in culture and use it to celebrate, own, question and enhance their places.

Health & Wellbeing

Creativity will be a positive force for health and well-being, for building connectivity and communities where everyone can participate.

Objectives:

To work closely with the health, voluntary and education sectors to promote the role of culture in delivering positive health and well-being outcomes.

To develop innovative cross-sectoral partnerships, particularly but not exclusively with healthcare professionals, which ensure communities across Newcastle can access cultural activity, making them happier, more connected, healthier environments.

To work in partnership with communities to identify needs, barriers to participation and local solutions which enable cultural participation contributing to improvements in mental and emotional well-being.

To prioritise cultural needs and aspirations, on a scale proportional to disadvantage particularly amongst those worst affected by Covid-19.

To develop research and evaluation partnerships that accumulate knowledge about the health and well-being impacts of cultural activity and disseminate research findings for continuous learning, impact and resource development.

Climate

Artists of every kind will lead, influence, advocate, and inform policy to create change for sustainable living.

Objectives:

To promote the role the cultural sector in articulating, collaborating and communicating with a wider general public the impact of climate change, enhancing climate change literacy and shaping the beliefs and behaviours of the city.

To be an exemplar of how a whole sector might act together to confront the climate crisis and effect change.

To be the voice that encourages an ever-present focus on climate in any discussion on the cultural future of the city .

To promote the widespread adoption of Net Zero as a goal for makers of all scales and forms, together with measures and actions to achieve it .

To stimulate the creation of new partnerships and actively participate in existing partnerships to constantly engage with others to achieve a sustainable future

Delivering the Strategy

Newcastle Creates is made up of representatives from sectors across the city, including culture and heritage, HE, FE, voluntary and community, business, and schools. It has a voluntary Chair and a series of working groups based around the strategy's themes which also have Chairs.

Theme Working Groups are made up of people interested in developing and delivering on the action plan related to each theme. These groups have representation from a broad range of interests and expert advisors. The groups will develop terms of reference and work plans for each year to help ensure progress and enable review.

Newcastle Creates and its Theme Working Groups recognise that consultation and engagement must underpin everything that they do: for the strategy to remain relevant over the coming decade it must be shaped by the people of the city, who it will most profoundly affect. Their contributions will inform and enable a continuously virtuous cycle of planning, objective setting, initiative development, monitoring and evaluation, and review.



To enable this to happen, we will develop a structure that allows for a wide membership, where citizens, communities and organisations can contribute at whatever level they wish. We will have multiple ways for people to engage – through social media, in-person events, digitally, and at least one cultural summit each year to listen, reflect, plan and horizon-scan together.

An overarching **Action Plan** has been written and will remain under constant review. It is purposefully ambitious and will be underpinned by shorter-term plans which will provide flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

The assessment of progress will involve:

- Review of SMART objectives linked to Action Plans by Working Groups and the core Compact Group
- Ensuring our values are embedded in all of the work we do
- Annual review sessions with the wider sector and city

The next task of Newcastle Creates is to finalise an appropriate governance and operational model, along with a monitoring and evaluation framework, to best enable delivery and review progress. Throughout we will seek to be equitable and accountable.

Call to Action

The Vision for Culture has been collectively created at a time of great flux and change across our city. The pandemic has highlighted and sometimes exacerbated the inequalities that exist in our society. It has also shown us the strength we have in coming together and connecting as communities both for our own sense of well-being, but also in getting things done. Culture has a significant role to play in revitalising, and building a sense of pride in our city, in being a catalyst for a thriving and inclusive economy, and in helping people to feel happier and empowered.

We can make Newcastle a thriving and inclusive cultural centre, which is nationally and internationally recognised, we invite you to come and join us on the journey to make that happen.

Please email info@newcastlecreates.co.uk

