

Making Culture Count: Practical Tools for Long-Term Place Strategy

Local Government Association Annual
Conference and Exhibition
Wednesday 8th July 2026



Welcome

- **Overview**

This session explores how councils are using the new **Cultural Strategies Think Kit** – a co-designed, interactive website of prompts and tools – to develop cultural strategies that connect neighbourhood realities with council priorities and national objectives. Drawing on **practical experience from Bristol and Winchester**, it shows how this approach supports collaboration and stronger place-shaping impact.

- **Contributors**

- Ian Leete: Senior Adviser – Culture, Tourism and Sport (Local Government Association)
- Dan Ashton: Professor of Cultural and Creative Industries (University of Southampton)
- Emalene Hickman: Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer (Winchester City Council)
- Elise Hurcombe: Arts Development Manager (Bristol City Council)

What is your current cultural strategy position?

A current one

Plans to develop a new one for the first time

A current strategy with plans to 'refresh' or 'revise'

A past strategy and plans to develop a new strategy

Something else



Join at slidocom #2678 621

Cultural Strategies and Futures

- Recommendations for developing and sustaining a cultural strategy.



[Cultural strategies and futures](#)

Recommendations

Models and Approaches

Findable and Sharable

Access and Context

Structure and Language

Methods and Consultation

Themes and Priorities

Policy and Position

Geographies and Boundaries

Living and Responsive

Continuity and Evaluation

Success and Failure

Network and Share

The Think Kit: From recommendations to resources



CULTURAL STRATEGY
THINK KIT



The University of Southampton and Local Government Association have collaborated on developing the recommendations from the Cultural strategies and futures report into an accessible think kit resource pack for creating and sustaining a cultural strategy.

- Collaboration between LGA (Ian Leete) and University of Southampton (Dan Ashton and [colleagues](#))
- Funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council Impact Acceleration Account
- Co-Design stage followed by Community of Practice

Grouping recommendations

Starting Points

Content

Evaluation

Overarching/Access

Model and
Approaches (R1)

Methods and
Consultation (R5)

Themes and
Priorities (R6)

Policies and
Position (R7)

Geographies and
Boundaries (R8)

Living and
Responsive (R9)

Continuity and
Evaluation (R10)

Findable and
Sharable (R2)

Access, and
Context (R3)

Structure and
Language (R4)

Creating resources

- Interactive
- Templates



No.	Publisher	Title	Publication Year	Valid until	Timeframe	Type of Reference Document	Type of organisation publishing reference material
1	Example Local Authority	Example cultural strategy	2025	2031	6	Cultural Strategy	Local Authority
2	Arts Council England	Lets' Create	2020	2030	10	National Policy	Arm's-length body
4	National Lottery	National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategy	2023	2033	10	National Policy	National Government
5	British Film Institute	Screen Culture 2024	2023	2033	10	National Policy	National Government
6	Historic England	Championing Heritage, Improving Lives	2021	2031	10	National Policy	National Government
7	DCMS	DCMS Departmental Overview 2021-23	2023	2033	10	National Policy	Arm's-length body
8	Example Local Authority	Annual Library Plan	2023	2024	1	Local Policy	Local Authority
9							
10							

Examples for today

	Recommendations	
	Models and Approaches	★
	Findable and Sharable	★
	Access and Context	
	Structure and Language	
→	Methods and Consultation	
	Themes and Priorities	
	Policy and Position	★
	Geographies and Boundaries	★
→	Living and Responsive	
→	Continuity and Evaluation	
	Success and Failure	
	Network and Share	

The launch event with CLOA in November 2025 introduced:

- Models and Approaches
- Findable and Sharable
- Policy and Position
- Geographies and Boundaries

The recording is available [here](#).

Methods and Consultation

Recommend cultural strategies provide information for all data sources that clearly indicates the **dataset being used** and **why**, and provide **details** on any **consultation** processes.

Methods and Consultation: Cultural Strategies

Consultation Planning Checklist

The **Cultural Strategies Consultation Planning Checklist** is a Word Document with prompt questions focusing on:

- 1) Consultation Aims and Design
- 2) Ethical Considerations and Data Protection
- 3) Data Generation, Analysis and Sharing

1. Consultation Aims and Design

Question	Resources and skills to address this	Ideas
What is the overall research design or approach?		
Who will participate and what is required to enable their access and participation?		
What specific questions will be engaged with?		
Do these questions align with existing consultation, surveys etc. from your and neighbouring area?		

Prompts and Suggestions:

Based on the needs identified in the **resources and skills** column, are there local and regional organisations (e.g. universities) which could contribute?

What can approaches centring **co-creation, citizen-led and creative methods** enable? (See suggested resources and references)

Can consultation methods initially be **piloted** with a smaller group?

Are **accessibility and inclusivity** embedded in the approach and the materials? (*Think Kit Resource 2 on access and structure might help here*)

Methods and Consultation: Cultural Strategies Data Overview Template

The **Cultural Strategies Data Overview Template** is an Excel Spreadsheet with column headings to help you add and structure the information on the datasets you are using.

 University of Southampton		CULTURAL STRATEGY THINK KIT				 Local Government Association	
No.	Data Source Title	Commissioning Organisation	Link/Reference	Type	Date Collected / Published	Relevance Period	Reason for use in this strategy
1	Taking Part	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey	National Survey	2022/2023	Annual	[e.g., Provides national benchmark for engagement]
3	Audience Answers	Audience Agency	https://evidence.audienceanswers.org/en	Sector Data	01/05/2024	Ongoing	[e.g., Insights into local arts audiences]
4							

Living and Responsive

Recommend cultural strategies are made **accessible** using digital technology platforms that **enable updates, responses and continued consultation**, and that exploring the features and characteristics of different technological platforms could **support wider engagement** in a greater variety of ways

Living and Responsive

Interactive ThingLink - four prompt questions lead to a series of information boxes that include further questions and resources

R9. Living and Responsive

1. Where will the cultural strategy be hosted?

2. How will the cultural strategy be accessed and saved?

3. Will the cultural strategy be updated within its stated timeframe?

4. Will continued public engagement and consultation be undertaken and communicated?



1. Where will the cultural strategy be hosted?

Local Authority website

An independently hosted website

Return to the list of questions



Local Authority website

This will help ensure **accessibility** and **security**. See Local Government Association guidance on [accessibility requirements for public bodies](#) and on [cyber security](#).

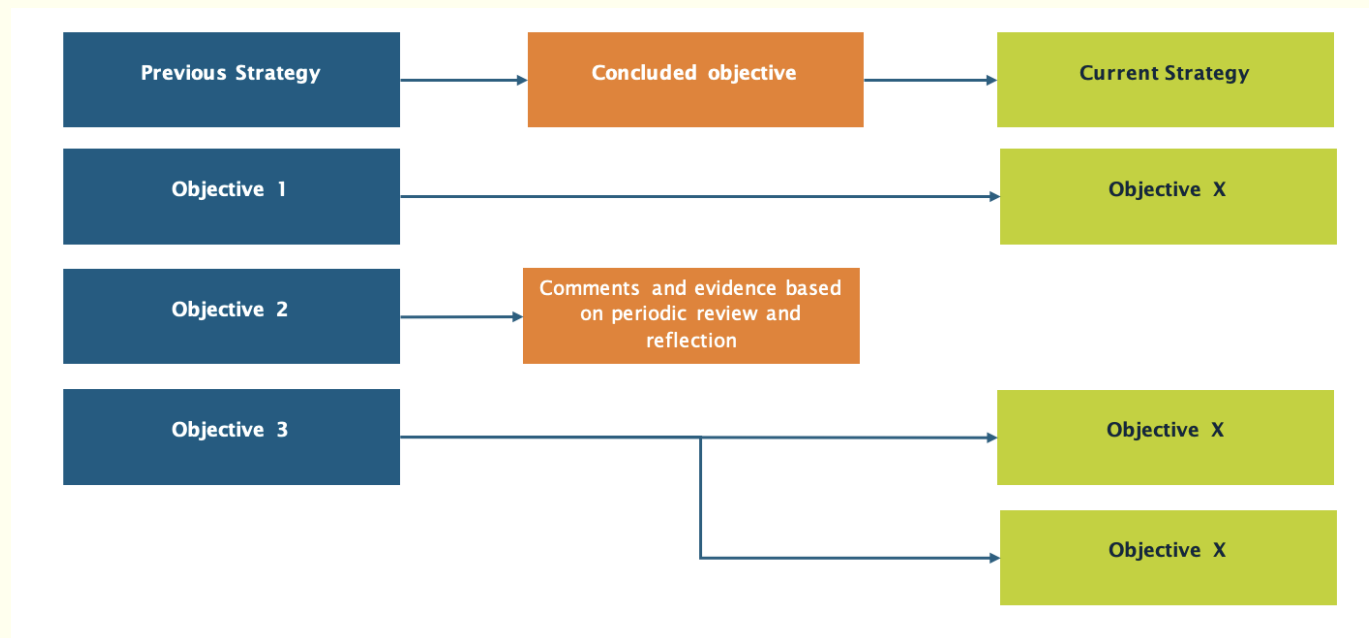
This will have implications for authoring and editing access. If the local authority is part of a collective (see [Think Kit Resource on Recommendation 1: Models and Approaches](#)), is there scope for collaboratively authoring and agreeing content?

Continuity and Evaluation

Recommend new cultural strategies, where applicable, **reference relevant past strategies** to reflect and evaluate on the status of their aims, and going forward establish a way **for aims to be regularly reflected on and evaluated.**

Continuity and Evaluation: Cultural Strategies Continuity Flowchart

The **Cultural Strategies Continuity Flowchart** is a Word document template with coloured boxes and linking arrows to help make connections and evaluate continuity between different cultural strategies over time. It can be downloaded, adapted and used.



Continuity and Evaluation: Cultural Strategies Periodic Review & Reflection

The **Cultural Strategies Periodic Review & Reflection** is a Word document with a suggested structure and prompt questions. It can be downloaded, adapted and used.

1. Progress Review

Alignment to Strategy	Action/Activity	Lead	Progress Indicators	Progress Updates	Related data	Follow up action
[E.g. If there are themes]	[Insert action/activity]	[E.g., if a partner or group is leading]	[Insert progress indicators]	[Insert update in relation to indicator]	[Insert data source/evidence and location]	[Add follow up action to revise/replace current progress indicator in next periodic review]
Education and Young People	1. Establish relationship with secondary schools	Cultural Education Partnership	All five schools in area contacted and added to database for updates from Council newsletter	Four schools added and one school to reply	Database managed by [name] and available at [location]	[Name] to contact remaining school by [date]
	2. Support youth-led arts festival	[Names]	[Name] to facilitate feedback from youth organisers	6/8 youth organisers participated in feedback. Summary report produced	Summary report of feedback prepared by [name] and available at [location]	[Name] to circulate link to report to encourage feedback and recommendations are considered for xxx future events by [date]

Ways to engage and questions for today

Access the Think Kit:

<https://culturalstrategies.soton.ac.uk/think-kit/>



Join the **Network**:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/15693035/>

Questions/comments on the Think Kit:

Join at slidocom #2678 621

<https://app.sli.do/event/9XtuBDnZ8tPvYNb2DpMLge>



Engaging with the Think Kit: Perspectives from Emalene Hickman

Winchester City Council &
Winchester District Cultural Strategy
Collective

Engaging with the Think Kit, focusing on:

[Continuity and Evaluation](#)

[Living and Responsive](#)



Winchester District Cultural Strategy

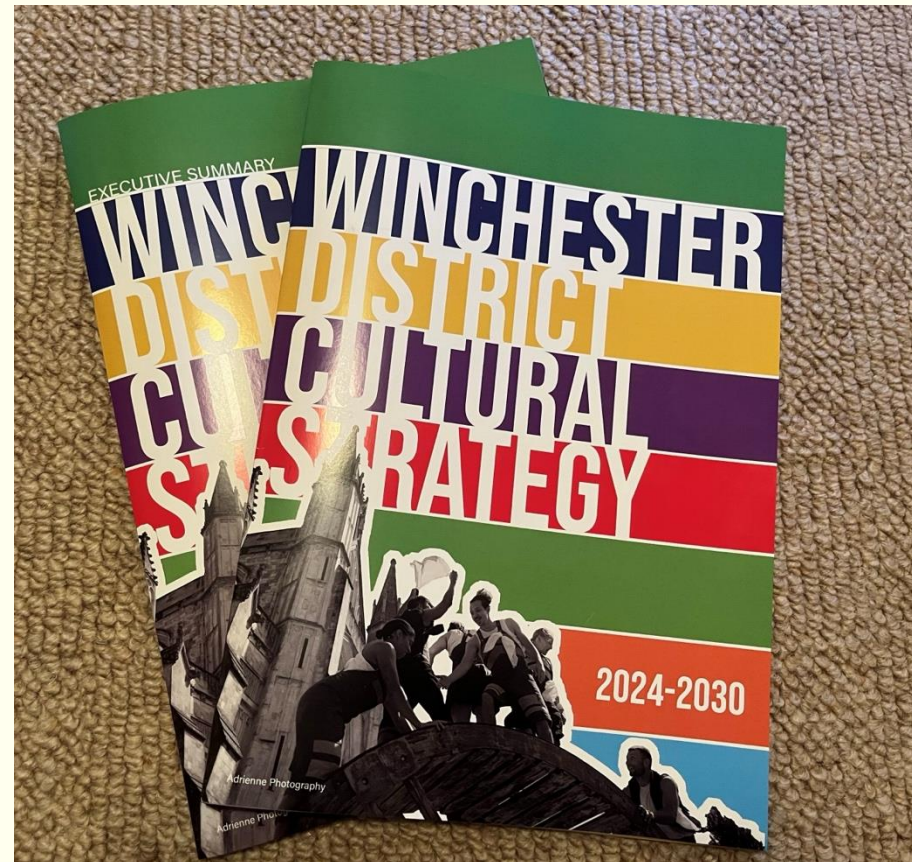


**CULTURE, INNOVATION AND THE
WINCHESTER ECONOMY 2014-2019**



2014

2024



A lot can change in 10 years...

- Brexit
- Global conflicts
- Cost of living crisis
- Social Media
- Reduced funding
- Changing demographics
- Not to mention a global pandemic...

This led us to consider:

- Purpose of a strategy
- Role of the local authority
- Partnerships
- Transparency
- Reporting

Continuity

INTRODUCTION

This strategy aims to articulate Winchester district's cultural offer and the benefits it provides, embolden the sector to work collaboratively and act as a lever to attract investment.

Winchester City Council will support, facilitate and enable partnership activity and act as convener, offering the opportunity for the sector to come together regularly to share progress, challenges and opportunities.

A 'live' and agile approach will be adopted throughout the delivery of the strategy which will allow findings to be included as they become apparent.

This document is a shared vision for cultural development across the Winchester district, what we want to achieve and what our priorities are until 2030. Winchester City Council is the author of this strategy which has been co-designed by stakeholders and partners across the district. The strategy aims to create the conditions for partnership within the cultural sector and with other sectors. The values, vision, aims and objectives have been developed jointly with partners which represent a

broad cross-section of cultural and creative providers, as well as linked sectors providing a strategic overview of activity across the district. Winchester City Council has adopted this strategy which will be delivered in partnership and by the stakeholders and partners, one of which is the council. There is a strong desire from the sector to work in partnership and collaborate to ensure that Winchester district is making the most of the cultural experiences it has to offer. Over 100 individuals operating within the arts, heritage, community, faith and creative industries have attended workshops to help develop this strategy which speaks to the will and value of partnership working.

Winchester district already has a well-established and recognised culture and creative sector which delivers for both visitors and residents. From events such as Boomtown, Wickham Festival and Hat Fair, to iconic heritage such as Winchester Cathedral and Bishop's Waltham Palace, through to multi-use spaces such as The Arc. There is a thriving creative industries scene within Winchester district which is the home to over 350 design companies, 300 film, television and video organisations and 100 architecture firms. The possibilities within community infrastructure, independent and grassroots creative activity must also be acknowledged, particularly in the more rural areas of the district.

This strategy aims to balance the wants and needs of the residents with the desire to encourage tourism whilst taking into account wider considerations. It is also noted that the differences between the needs of urban and rural communities, heritage and contemporary culture and, appetites of younger and older audiences should be considered throughout.

Context and renewed approach

Winchester district's last Cultural Strategy was developed in 2014 and held various ambitions including: building innovation and excitement, fostering creativity, community and collaboration, growing talent and creating prosperity. It also purported the creation of a 'creative leadership group' comprised of members from the city council and the two universities.

In the 10 years since the last strategy was developed, many local, national and international developments, events, conflicts and social movements have occurred which have fundamentally changed the landscape within which the cultural sector operates and the manner in which audiences engage with culture.

Increased costs and additional visa requirements have made it more difficult for organisations to secure international talent, which in turn can affect investment. An increased focus on injustice, conflict, crisis and systemic oppression, brought to the consciousness of generations through social media, has resulted in more demanding audiences who are looking for organisations and venues to take an active stance, particularly when it comes to the climate emergency. It also changes our demographics as we welcome people into our 'City of Sanctuary' and seek to embrace them and the culture they offer and desire.

The sector was also disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cultural venues were among the first to close and last to re-open during the various waves

of lockdowns. This had serious financial implications for many venues and festivals which were forced to run emergency appeals and apply for survival funding. The effects of this are still being felt by some organisations who are also now having to contend with a 'cost-of-living' crisis in the UK. During these difficult times, many people turned to arts and culture as a source of comfort, this has led to a change in audience behaviour, with people booking last minute, a greater expectation for 'hybrid' or digital events and a greater expectation of being able to engage in culture and creativity from home.

Whilst navigating these challenging times, organisations have had the chance to test new approaches and it presents the opportunity to 'build back better'. Therefore, the themes of the strategy respond to these concerns.

Winchester City Council recognise the strength of sector and how valuable it is for the local economy, sense of community, tourism, wellbeing and a host of other benefits but also appreciate we are in challenging times. Many organisations are at full capacity just delivering their core activity with less funds and higher expectations leaving reduced capacity to strategise. The council wanted to support the sector and in 2022 appointed a Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer. This role has already supported the development and growth of: networking and stakeholder convening, engagement in wider networks representing Winchester regionally, supporting organisations with signposting and funding, reviewing and updating website content, running events and promoting cultural activity. This role will continue this work alongside facilitating and enabling the outputs of this strategy.

The previous strategy for Winchester district was very ambitious and put the onus on to the 'creative leadership group' to deliver the numerous outcomes. For several years there were multiple initiatives which brokered partnerships, leveraged funding and favourable rent, built capacity, acknowledged volunteers and supported a host of projects across the district. However, the leadership group consisted of only three organisations and an overreliance on their leadership proved problematic when individuals moved on. Therefore, this strategy aims to distribute the responsibilities more widely and be realistic about what is achievable with the resources available whilst remaining ambitious. It also aims to be agile and responsive, allowing findings, funding and capacity to guide, and possibly change, the direction of travel.

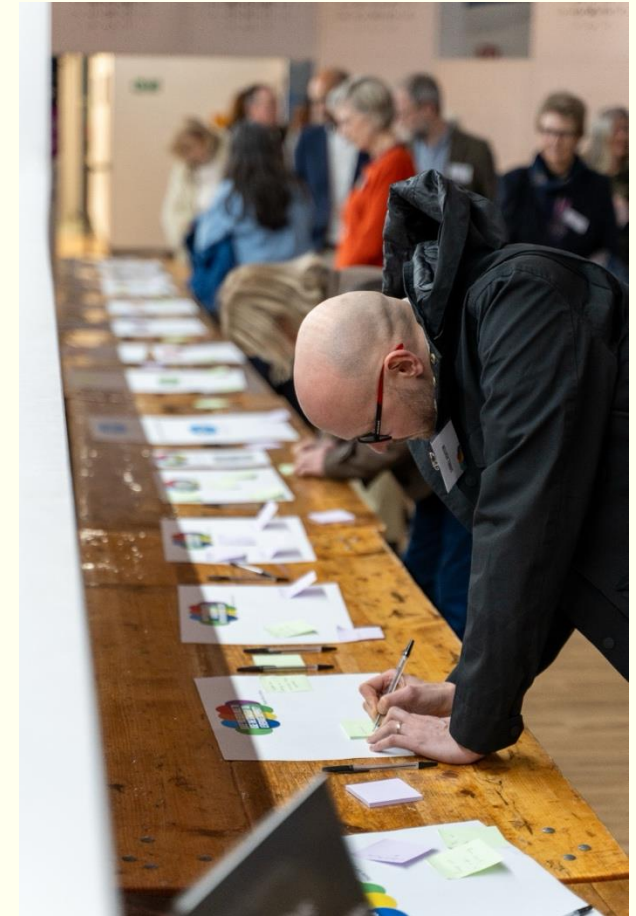
Important to reflect on what came before and has happened since.

Comment on what worked well and what we are planning to do differently and the context behind this.



Evaluation

- The Winchester District Cultural Strategy Collective meet quarterly to review progress and realign activity. Each year they review action plans and articulate actions for the following year.
- Public events for the sector to learn more and feedback on priorities and themes.
- Online surveys for wider public and residents to comment.



Responsive

- Events to demonstrate the relevance and impact of the work delivered through the strategy.
- Opportunity to inform and influence the priorities and action plans.
- Allowing changing landscapes to guide conversations.



Living

- A data hub which maintains transparency and visibility
- Accessible to anyone who is interested
- Documents the processes, activity and decision making

Winchester District Cultural Strategy

Winchester District Cultural Strategy 2024-2030

The cultural strategy sets out a shared vision for the cultural development of the Winchester district until 2030. The strategy was developed and will be delivered in partnership and intends to empower organisations, communities and individuals to create their own cultural and creative activity. It documents the district's cultural offer and its benefits, aims to encourage and facilitate collaborative work, and provides a focus through a range of themes and priorities.

The **Cultural Collective** is a strategic partnership that brings together the stakeholders with an ability to influence and drive the successful delivery of the Winchester District Cultural Strategy. The collective members provide strategic leadership and direction that enables successful implementation of the cultural strategy. This page uses 'we' as the voice of the collective.

Documents

[Winchester District Cultural Strategy 2024-2030](#)

PDF, 2.4MB

[Winchester District Cultural Strategy - End of year 2 report](#)

PDF, 1.8MB

[Winchester District Cultural Strategy - Year one action summary](#)

PDF, 204KB

[Winchester District Cultural Strategy Evidence Base](#)

PDF, 5MB

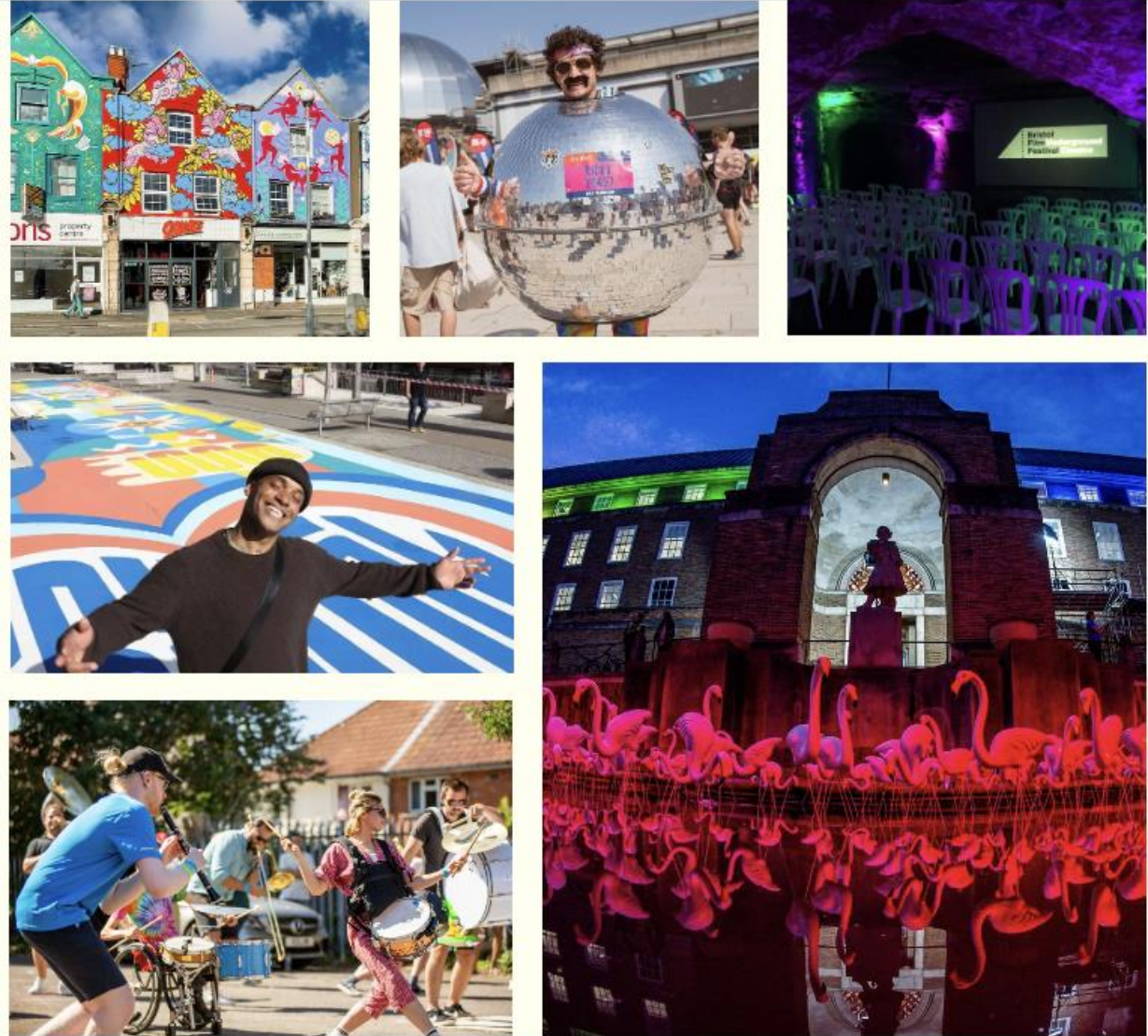
Engaging with the Think Kit: Perspectives from Elise Hurcombe

Bristol Culture Strategy

Engaging with the Think Kit, focusing on:

Methods and consultation

Noting trends in decision-making at national levels and what this can look like within place, e.g. artists commissions and citizens assemblies.



...but not everyone benefits equally, and barriers to cultural participation persist across the city.

Residents who report never participating in cultural activities (%) *Source: QoL survey (23/24)*

Worst performing wards	%
Hartcliffe & Withywood	50.8%
Stockwood	47.7%
Filwood	41.1%
Hengrove & Whitchurch Park	41.1%
Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston	34.2%

Best performing wards	%
Redland	6.2%
Ashley	6.6%
Bishopston & Ashley Down	6.8%
Clifton	8.4%
Cotham	9.1%
Bristol average	21.7%

Best-Worst Gap

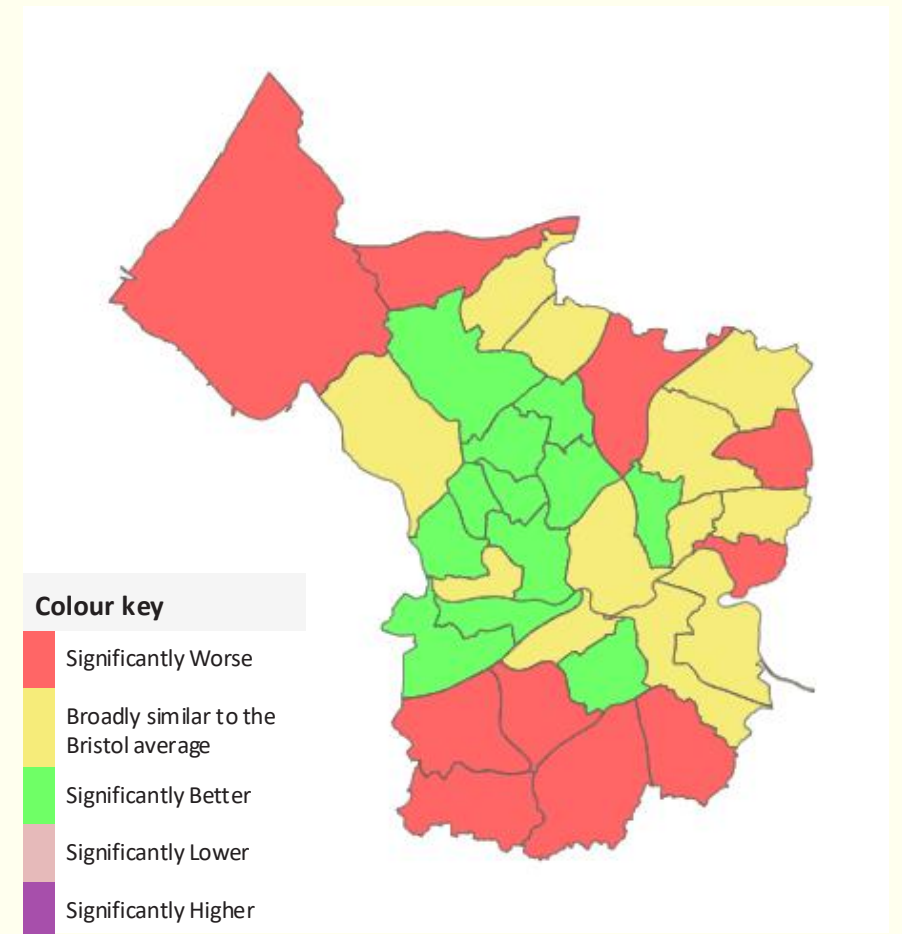
44.6%

Difference between the best and worst performing ward

Deprivation Gap

14.6%

The 10% most deprived areas compared to Bristol average





Culture Generates
£892.9m
Economic Impact
in Bristol each year

#BristolCulture

Bristol Light Festival © Andre Pattenden



For every **£1**
Bristol City Council
Invests.
Arts Organisations
Leverage **£88** into
the City.

#BristolCulture

Bristol Pride Festival © Matt Whiteley



Bristol's Cultural
Sector Reached

10.9m
People

Through Live & Digital
Experiences in 2024

#BristolCulture

Bristol International Balloon Fiesta © Paul Box

Including

£122.4m

In Social Value:
Health & Wellbeing,
Community Building,
Education, Employment,
& Environment.

#BristolCulture

Paraorchestra at Bristol Beacon © EljayBriss

Why do we need to engage with citizens?

We deliver on our 'Many communities' priority in our corporate strategy

Intentional ways of working with citizens is critical to the success of a Cultural Strategy and enables:

Inclusion: Reflects the city's diverse voices and lived experiences.

Ownership: Builds trust and community-led creativity.

Alignment: Supports corporate goals like equity, wellbeing, and sustainability.

Insight: Provides real-world data to shape effective, responsive plans.

Partnerships: Connects communities with wider networks and investment.

The next 10 years will bring major transformation, pressures and opportunities for culture...



Major citywide regeneration



Bristol's population is projected to grow



Health and wellbeing pressures



Community tensions



Extreme weather, flood risk and the ecological emergency



Technological advances



Devolution will reshape local and regional working



Arts & Culture Events

...so we need a Culture Strategy to help us navigate this change and steer the city towards fairer, inclusive cultural growth.





Bristol

Culture for everyone, shaped by us, shared by all.

“

We want a Bristol where everyone knows what's going on and feels invited. We believe in openness and transparency about how decisions are made and where the money goes. We want our parks, schools, and empty buildings to come alive with creativity, and for travel across the city to be easy and accessible so no one is left behind. We imagine a city where all the different voices in the community help to actively shape its cultural life and legacy.

2. Transparency in Cultural Funding



We want to work with Local Authorities, Mayoral Combined Authority and Funders to publish accessible breakdowns of cultural funding decisions, incl. rejected applications, and include citizens in decision-making. Because funding currently feels inequitable and does not reach the communities that need it most. So that funding becomes trusted, accountable and driven by community priorities.



- [Assembly Microsite Landing Page - Citizens For Culture](#)

Our Approach

- Convene Culture Working Group
- Engage One City Culture Board
- Review existing evidence & commission Culture Impact Survey
- Explore sustainable funding models for Cultural Investment Fund
- Design engagement approach
 - Creative Commissions
 - Surveys
 - Workshops
- Engage internal & external partners
- Identifying key themes and priorities
- Develop an action plan



Emerging Themes

**Radical
Inclusion**

**Creative
Health**

Placemaking

**Community
Cohesion**

**Inclusive
Growth**

**Cultural
Participation**



Tell us what matters to you before
10 July 2026 by scanning the QR code or by
going to bristol.gov.uk/arts-and-culture



**We are creating a new
plan for arts and culture.**

**Tell us what matters
to you before 10 July 2026.**



Engaging with the Think Kit: Questions for Emalene and Elise

Questions/comments for Emalene and Elise:

Join at slidocom #2678 621

<https://app.sli.do/event/9XtuBDnZ8tPvYNb2DpMLge>



Discussion: what could cultural strategy innovation for your area look like?

Join at slidocom #2678 621

<https://app.sli.do/event/9XtuBDnZ8tPvYNb2DpMLge>



Summary: Please share feedback

Please share feedback....

- What has been valuable?
- Any changes in your understanding or confidence around cultural strategies?
- Any suggestions or follow up?

Join at slidocom #2678 621

<https://app.sli.do/event/9XtuBDnZ8tPvYNb2DpMLge>



Thank you and ways to connect and engage



Access the Think Kit:

<https://culturalstrategies.soton.ac.uk/think-kit/>



Join the Network:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/15693035/>

Make contact with Dan (d.k.ashton@soton.ac.uk) and Ian (lan.Leete@local.gov.uk) to explore more