

Final Draft – for comment

A Local Cultural Strategy for Bath & North East Somerset



BATH & NORTH
EAST SOMERSET

Foreword

Bath & North East Somerset is a special place. The City of Bath is known world wide for its Roman and Georgian history and heritage and attracts millions of visitors annually. The new Bath Spa will add to this by placing exciting modern architecture at the centre of the city. Norton Radstock is one of the most interesting towns on the North Somerset coalfield with a fascinating, if overlooked, mining and industrial heritage. Keynsham houses nationally significant Roman and medieval archaeology and all of these urban centres are surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in the region.

Our arts programmes embrace all art forms and work in all areas – from our international festivals to our innovatory and inspiring projects in the many communities that make up our district. Our museums tell us about the building of Bath, South East Asia, costume and fashion, as well as bringing the work of major regional, national and international artists to the district. The sports facilities at the University of Bath are of international standard and are being enhanced further as a result of the University's designation as part of the English Institute of Sport.

Our parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are havens of peace, as well as providing one of the best children's playgrounds in the South West. Bath & North East Somerset is home to some of the best media companies, as well as the Natural Theatre Company and the Theatre Royal. A large number of artists and other creative workers have moved to the area. There is a sense of place about Bath & North East Somerset that makes people want to live here, work here and visit.

But we must do more and we want to do more. We want to put culture at the heart of life and work in Bath & North East Somerset. We want to create communities of people participating fully, in the way that they wish to do, in the life and culture of the community. We want to get more people reading, writing, singing, dancing, playing, performing, exercising and watching. We want to create new cultural facilities as well as celebrate more what we have in our unique built and natural environment. We may have international sports facilities at the university, but we also want good local sports facilities throughout the district.

This cultural strategy – the first ever in Bath & North East Somerset – is put forward as a dynamic document. It is based on consultation carried out over the past year and reflects the aspirations of those involved. We are committed to delivering all that is in the agreed strategy and more. These are already ambitious proposals and finding the resources required will be a challenge. We believe that we can meet that challenge. We seek your comments, your endorsement, your support and, most of all, your involvement.

Nicole O'Flaherty

Executive Member for Tourism, Leisure & Culture

1. Introduction

Bath & North East Somerset: leading cultural development

Bath & North East Somerset Council wants to make the area a better place to live, work and visit. Cultural development is a central element of the council's strategy to achieve this on its own and by working in partnership with others.

Culture means a broad spectrum of interests in which people participate in order to live more fulfilled lives. Arts, leisure services, heritage, sport, open spaces and libraries, as well as the commercial creative industries, are examples of activity that come under cultural development.

This local cultural strategy (LCS) is based on the premise that the council can help to provide or facilitate access to various places, services and activities in which individual people will be keen to participate. It is written in the belief that, for a generation or more, fewer people have had the inclination or the opportunity to participate actively in creative or personally enriching activities. If there has been a falling-off of such participation, the reasons may be complex and difficult to counter. It has been suggested that the growth of television and computer games (themselves cultural activity) have led to a decline in wider participation. Perhaps the shifting priorities of childhood education towards equipping young people with necessary skills to enter the workforce has had to be, to some extent, at the cost of developing cultural inclinations and opportunities.

What is included here is what the people of Bath & North East Somerset told us that they would like to see in the LCS, through the Best Value research (see <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/modernising/020705weeklylist/bvlnicole.htm> for details), interviews and questionnaires. While it is impossible for any local authority to effect major changes to broad cultural trends, the council recognises that it has a key role to play in encouraging cultural life in the area. It accepts that in the past culture and cultural activity may not have had the priority and support that it deserved. We are determined to change this.

What is cultural planning?

Cultural planning is the strategic development and use of the cultural assets of a city or an area – including people, organisations, businesses, traditions, buildings, parks. It is about both activity – cultural programmes – and a way of doing things: joining-up, partnerships and management.

Why a cultural strategy?

We have not prepared a cultural strategy simply because government asked us to. We want a cultural strategy so that we can celebrate the role culture plays in Bath & North East Somerset. We want to ensure that we are working together effectively and for the benefit of all – whether that be economic development, tourism, health, education, community planning. We need to have a strategy so that we can obtain more funding for cultural activity. Above all else, we want to promote a greater quality of life for all in our area helping to build the five elements of a good modern society: human capital (people); social capital (networks and trust); economic capital (business); environmental capital (sustainable development); and cultural capital (what Bath & North East Somerset is and what it will become).

Our scope

The scope of the LCS covers both the definition of culture and the geographic area that we are concerned with.

The meaning of culture Culture means different things to different people. People in Bath & North East Somerset believe that culture is about the way people do things and how they live their lives. It is about communities and the common links that people have with each other. Culture raises the human spirit and condition and engages people. People cherish above all the architecture and built heritage of the city of Bath and the parks and countryside in the district. The LCS recognises this by including a wide number of cultural activities in its definition of culture, including: arts, sport, leisure, parks and open spaces, creative and cultural industries, heritage/ history, museums, libraries, myths and legends, archives, religion, children's play, home entertainment, science, faith and tourism.

Geographic scope We know that culture does not stop at the boundary of the authority. Bath & North East Somerset itself, and the cultural activity that takes place here, is enjoyed by many people that do not live in the district, just as many people that live in Bath & North East Somerset travel to Bristol and Cardiff, among other places, for cultural activity. The Bath & North East Somerset LCS, as well as fulfilling the needs and aspirations of people in the district, offers an opportunity to work with our sub-regional and regional partners in Culture South West.

Culture in distinct communities

The geographic area covered by Bath & North East Somerset includes many different local communities with distinct identities and a variety of historical associations. There is also considerable diversity in communities with common interests not necessarily based on geography. There are millions of visitors every year attracted by the range of heritage, sporting and cultural attractions and the local economy depends on these. In developing a cultural strategy there needs to be recognition and use made of local distinctiveness and place.

Priorities and resources

This strategy brings together the views from some members of the groups representing potential users of cultural services and is an attempt to define priorities.

Resources directly available to the local authority for investment in cultural services are always going to be limited, and plans to achieve some of the aspirations here depend on forging partnerships with many other bodies, such as town and parish councils, voluntary organisations and community groups, private sector companies, educational institutes as well as regional and national planning and funding agencies such as the Arts Council of England and the British Film Institute. It means also putting forward coherent and strong cases for funding.

The strategy also recognises the need to ensure that culture and leisure service providers link closely with other functions within the council, especially education, transportation, property services, Best Value, and in the formation, management and implementation of community and local plans. We seek also to link with others working to build a better district such as the Initiative for Bath and North East Somerset and the West of England Strategic Partnership. Culture here is about making and using connections – joining together people and initiatives for the common good.

Future work

Following consultation, a new edition of the strategy will be prepared for formal adoption by Bath & North East Somerset Council. We know that there is much more work to do beyond this – especially the need to investigate all projects thoroughly in the preparation of detailed feasibility studies. The final document will include an action plan which will identify the specific work in each area, the development needs of each project and the timetable.

2. The culture of Bath & North East Somerset

Bath & North East Somerset brings together an outstanding urban centre, historic post-industrial and market towns, picturesque villages and some of the country's most beautiful green spaces. It is bounded to the north by the Cotswolds and to the South West by the Mendip Hills. The urban area of Bath is one of the finest cities in Europe: a historic city and a vibrant hub of cultural activity, tourism and learning. The city is embraced by rolling hills and woodland, and is dissected by the River Avon.

The district owes much of its distinctiveness to its local geology, which in turn has had a major influence on heritage. Hot spring water bubbles up between the cracks in the Jurassic Stone of Bath at a constant flow of over one million litres everyday and at a temperature of 46°C (115°F). The enjoyment of the springs can be traced back to the Mesolithic era. The hot springs have attracted visitors to Bath since before the arrival of the Romans. The Roman Baths were the focal point of worship, therapy and recreation within the city for many centuries and now attract around 900,000 visitors annually. The soon to be completed Bath Spa project will once again use the thermal waters for bathing in a complex that will combine historic buildings with a new state-of-the-art leisure spa leading, perhaps, to a growth in health tourism.

Geology too, in the form of the North Somerset coalfield, was the reason for the development of the small towns immediately south of the city. This area is characterised by its rare mixture of beautiful countryside, proud Victorian industrial architecture and the remains of the mining industry's infrastructure (for example the Somersetshire Coal Canal and the Somerset and Dorset Railway). The rest of the district is important historically, too: the industrial and mining areas of Norton Radstock, and the magnificent archaeological collections in Keynsham, tell us about the history of our communities as well as being important communities now.

The historic importance and beauty of Bath has been recognised through the city being designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987. Twenty-five per cent of the rural parts of the district are designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Our many churches, and Bath Abbey are centres for heritage, cultural activity and an integral part of local community life.

Building on, and complementing, this historic heritage is arts and culture – important to both residents and visitors. Ninety-three per cent of visitors in 1998 identified Bath as a 'city of culture and the arts'. The work that takes place in the 18 museums makes up one part of this and is the reason for 28 per cent of museum visits made to the South West. Bath & North East Somerset is the only local authority with two designated museums. Another reason is the year round programming of cultural activities that takes place in the district. These include the International Music Festival, Literature Festival, Bath Fringe Festival, Mozartfest, Guitar Festival, Shakespeare Festival, Midsomer Norton Carnival, Keynsham Music Festival, Radstock Gala Day, Heritage Open Week, International Puppet Festival, Jane Austen Festival and Bath Film Festival. In addition to festivals and events the council supports a number of permanent galleries and performance spaces, including Windows Arts Centre, Victoria Art Gallery, the Holburne Museum, the Hotbath Gallery, Theatre Royal Bath, Ustinov Studio and the Rondo Theatre. The area has a large number of commercial galleries. But it is also the place itself that evokes this response: whether shopping in the centre, eating or drinking, or walking in urban and rural areas, the resident and visitor knows that the place is different to others, and is special.

Culture and cultural activity play an important role in the economy of Bath & North East Somerset. As well as attracting tourists – an important source of wealth – the area attracts creative people. A strong area of the local economy is the high number of cultural and creative industries in the district including architects, designers, web designers, and digital media organisations. Feilden Clegg Bradley architects, and Future Publishing, are just two of the world-class creative companies in the district. The 2000 Arts Impact Assessment – which looked at the overall arts ecology of the district – estimated that in 1998/ 1999 there was an economic impact of £30 million from organisations supported by the council from an investment of £740,000. This is complemented by £195 million in annual income generated by 2.7 million visitors according to the Tourism Economic Impact Assessment undertaken in 2000.

There are strong links also between culture and community development where cultural activity and arts projects help promote social inclusion. iTimsbury Community Resource is a National Lottery funded initiative for the village that uses cultural activities such as film nights, health walks, computer courses, reminiscence projects and craft Saturdays involving local residents of all ages. North East Somerset Arts has been involved in many projects that have increased creative participation of local people through their vision to promote and develop all forms of quality art provision with communities through the district. They work with communities in Chew Valley, Keynsham, Norton Radstock and South Bath.

Access to green space is another important part of culture. The district includes parks and woodlands: Royal Victoria Park, Alexandra Park, Parade Gardens, Henrietta Park, Sydney Gardens, Hedgemoor Park, Alice Park, Green Park and Keynsham Memorial Park. Four of these parks and gardens have been designated as being of Special Historic Interest (two cemeteries in the district also have this designation). Royal Victoria Park includes one of the finest collections of trees in the country. This wealth of greenery and open spaces provides many opportunities for leisure activities, learning, relaxation and the simple enjoyment of outdoor places. Designated areas in Bath & North East Somerset include the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Mendip Hills AONB and the Forest of Avon. Other areas of high landscape value include Chew Valley Lake, Blagdon Lake, Avon Valley Country Park and Kennet and Avon Canal. All of these areas are intersected by recreational routes – including the Avon Walkway, Cotswold Way, Limestone Link, Bristol and Bath Railway Path, Community Forest Path and Bath Skyline Walk.

Sport and recreation also play a significant role in helping to develop and enhance the lives of all members of the community, offering fitness opportunities as well as a sense of self-esteem and building confidence. There are over 300 voluntary sports clubs in the district. Forty TeamBath players participated in the 2002 Commonwealth Games. There are four major local authority leisure centres in the district in Bath City Centre, Culverhay, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton. All provide professional coaching facilities and swimming pools and a range of indoor and outdoor facilities accommodating over one million visitors annually. Bath Rugby Club, Somerset Cricket Club and Bath City Football Club bring national and international sport to the city. In addition, there are the top class sports facilities at the University of Bath that attract international athletes to train there. The university and numerous schools make their sports facilities available for public use. Bath & North East Somerset Council has recently achieved the accolade of being the first local authority nationally to involve all of its primary schools in the Sport England and Youth Sport Trust venture TOP Play and BT TOP Sport – national programmes designed to introduce core skills, fun and specific sports to four-11 year olds.

The opportunities for learning in the district are good especially with the provision of eight libraries including Bath City Centre, Midsomer Norton, Keynsham, Moorland Road, Paulton, Radstock, Saltford and Weston. There are also two mobile library services that cover rural areas and deliver a wide range of materials, information and facilities. The introduction of the People's Network will mean that all libraries will be able to offer full web access. In addition to learning, libraries remain an important community focal point, a place for cultural activities, and a source of information on local history, complementing the extensive archives service that preserves and stores written records relating to the history of Bath & North East Somerset.

Challenges

Bath & North East Somerset faces many challenges. However important culture is for the district, most of the resources available to a council are committed to schools, social services and other statutory services. We believe that good ideas will always succeed, however, even in times of financial constraints, and the LCS identifies the structures that we will create to secure the funding we need to deliver what we want.

The key challenges for us are:

- Maintaining the quality of current services and ensuring quality in new activity
- Ensuring all areas of the district benefit from cultural activity
- Maximising resources available for cultural activity, especially in arguing for cultural activity against other resources
- Retaining history and heritage and building a modern city and district
- Building on local distinctiveness without rejecting the new
- Ensuring access for all that wish to participate

3. Values and vision

We want to make culture central to the work of Bath & North East Somerset. We want to retain the historic nature of the district at the same time as creating a vibrant modern city and district. We want to make Bath & North East Somerset a better place to live, work and visit.

We are also ambitious – and share the aims and aspirations for our area that all those who have participated in the development of the LCS have expressed. Much of what we plan to do will take some years to complete; other activity – smaller in scope – is easier to achieve. What we will do is make change happen, but always by building on the strengths of our area.

We aim to deliver this programme in five years.

Bath & North East Somerset Objectives

We work within Bath & North East Somerset's key objectives:

- To deliver quality and accessible services
- To promote a thriving economic community and combat poverty
- To build a healthier and safer community
- To promote quality of life and environmental stewardship
- To encourage and support lifelong learning

Values

Ten core values drive the work of the LCS:

- *Culture* – as important in itself and as an instrument for social progress
- *Partnership* – linking people, services and plans internally within Bath & North East Somerset; between Bath & North East Somerset and the people and organisations of the area; between Bath & North East Somerset and the sub-region
- *Inclusion* – for all activities so that all can participate, prioritising areas of discrimination based on race and disability
- *Added value* – by always undertaking work that is in addition to that provided by others and by integrating new activity in every initiative
- *Quality* – building on and improving what we have already; insisting on quality in all new projects
- *Diversity* – in celebrating all cultures and traditions
- *Fun* – so that all participate in events with a sense of enjoyment
- *Educational* – to promote learning
- *International* – promoting exchanges, enhancing twinning, using extensively the status of World Heritage Site
- *Promoting creativity* – always supporting new work by the dynamic creators in Bath & North East Somerset

Themes

We have five themes:

- Uniqueness – recognising and emphasising local distinctiveness and place
- People taking part – promoting access, participation and enjoyment of cultural activities for all
- Renaissance – culture and cultural activity integrated in economic development, regeneration, community planning
- Environment, city and countryside – making best but sustainable use of green spaces and building links between city, town and country
- Broadening lives and minds – culture in health and lifelong learning

Structures

New structures and partnerships are needed to deliver the LCS. We will organise better working internally through dedicated staff and joint working. We will use existing partnerships – and create new joint working where necessary – to gain the influence, and develop the advocacy, to gather the resources we will need.

4. Uniqueness – recognising and emphasising local distinctiveness and place

Local distinctiveness refers to what makes a place unique. By appreciating the local, and what we have, we become more inspired by our everyday places and this in turn improves the quality of our lives. We recognise that the different geographical communities within Bath & North East Somerset have distinctive, individual characteristics. The LCS supports activity that promotes local distinctiveness to ensure that the identities, heritage and individual cultural needs of Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Chew Valley, Keynsham, Salford and other villages in the district are recognised as being equally as important as the identity of the city of Bath.

We will:

- Prepare cultural action plans for specific areas, including Norton Radstock, Keynsham, Chew Valley, Twerton, Southdown, Snow Hill
- Promote local distinctiveness in landscape appraisal studies
- Encourage action to make movement to, and around, the district easier for residents and visitors through better information provided in a locally distinctive way
- Develop a series of self-guided cultural walks, paths and trails, linking different parts of the district
- Develop, display and distribute greater information on the history of Bath & North East Somerset, on place names, street names, plaques
- Develop the role of smaller libraries to better reflect the community or locality they serve, both in their use as a community resource and through the materials and services they provide
- Promote and help deliver cultural strategies in our educational institutes and faith groups
- Promote a series of books on Bath & North East Somerset
- Expand heritage open days
- Adopt Life in the Public Realm strategy to help create locally distinctive features
- Celebrate team and individual achievements at all levels

5. People taking part – promoting access, participation and enjoyment of cultural activities for all

All too often people feel that they cannot take part in the activities that they would like to because of physical barriers, a feeling that they do not belong, a fear that they are too young or too old, because of cost and transport problems and, sometimes, a lack of time.

We want to increase access to, participation in and enjoyment of all cultural activities for those that wish to participate. We will facilitate the increased involvement of people who feel excluded within localised areas in Bath & North East Somerset and improve local provision based on the needs and desires of local people.

Cultural activity can help overcome barriers. We can help make buildings accessible and promote better pricing. We need to work in partnership to create better transport provision and to give people the confidence to engage and participate.

We will:

- Ensure every citizen can learn about cultural activity and the opportunities it provides through the communications strategy
- Work with schools to build confidence in, and develop knowledge about, culture from an early age
- Increase access to school facilities for cultural recreation, vocational and non-vocational learning opportunities
- Organise campaigns to increase awareness of health benefits through participation in cultural activity
- Identify and target key groups where sport will promote better health but who are currently missed on grounds of illness, financial hardship, isolation and vulnerability
- Develop a sports capital strategy for the provision of key facilities: playing pitches, sports halls, swimming pools and kick about areas
- Improve quality of sports facilities
- Develop supplementary planning guidance to secure contributions from developers for new cultural facilities
- Devolve small project funding for cultural projects
- Work with community groups to promote and celebrate ethnic cultures
- Consider flexible opening hours for council-run cultural activities
- Ensure continuous programme of development for all cultural organisations to promote better access
- Work with transport providers to promote reduced bus travel costs for cultural activity
- Work with University of the Third Age and other senior citizens' groups to develop strategy on culture and older people
- Develop libraries as a distribution network for information on cultural activities

6. Renaissance – culture and cultural activity integrated in all aspects of economic development, regeneration and community planning

Cultural activity and cultural facilities play a key role in regenerating and renewing cities, districts, regions and countries. Just as with community development, culture and cultural activity helps build a healthy economy, promotes regeneration, attracts inward investment and creates jobs. There is great potential in the contribution that cultural facilities could contribute to key strategic developments at Western Riverside, Bath Quays, Southgate and Radstock which is benefiting from town centre renewal.

Regeneration will be helped by the creation of safer cities, towns and villages. Cultural development has a key role to play here too through designing out crime and disorder. Healthier communities will be encouraged through the associated benefits resulting from involvement in cultural activities.

We will:

- Make the case for culturally-led regeneration through case studies and participation in key regeneration projects
- Consider the development of three key capital arts and heritage projects:
 - A new cultural quarter in Bath – contemporary performing arts centre, artist and creative industries studio space, new contemporary art gallery, library, shops, and, possibly, the new Museum of Bath
 - Community arts facilities in Keynsham and at Chew Valley Schools
- Promote and develop the creative industries in Bath & North East Somerset
 - Participate in regional research programme
 - Establish a forum for the creative industries
 - Develop and deliver action plan
- Promote and increase outdoor cultural events and activities:
 - early evening summer street concerts
 - parks cultural events season
 - sports events
 - family cultural events
- Investigate new facilities for the contemporary arts in Norton Radstock
- Promote best practice in regeneration through recognising the importance of public realm and urban design
- Include in the Life in Public Realm strategy, the writing of character assessments for key neighbourhoods in Bath & North East Somerset with a joined up vision of how the cultural life of each area might be developed to underline and enhance its distinctive character
- Include in the Local Plan, Public Realm Strategy and other planning documents, a commitment to creating innovative and top quality contemporary buildings and public spaces that enhance the built heritage of Bath & North East Somerset
- Adopt and deliver the draft public art policy for Bath & North East Somerset
- Promote cultural tourism with year-round festivals
- Develop initiatives for dressing the streets of Bath & North East Somerset

7. Environment, city and countryside – making best but sustainable use of green spaces and building links between city, town and country

Bath & North East Somerset is made up of rural areas and urban centres. Sometimes tensions can arise due to concerns about disparities in funding between town and country. We seek to maximise the potential of the diversity of the Bath & North East Somerset area by celebrating the unique characteristics and products of different places. We also seek to build further the growing reputation of the district – and the sub-region – as a centre for sustainable development.

We will:

- Create a detailed, costed plan for realising the full potential of the water in the district in terms of walking, water sports, events, cycling, public art (including ornamental and functional fountains, bridges, signs, paths, gates, stiles, sculpture), access to heritage, access to cultural facilities, water transport, environmental information
- Ensure arts and other officers' involvement in the management of parks and open spaces
- Encourage greater use of open spaces for cultural activities
- Consider greater use of cemeteries for paths/ trails, local history
- Consider use of new park ranger scheme to increase the value of open spaces for residents and visitors
- Examine the feasibility of a rural cultural touring scheme, run by local councils and volunteers
- Work with Envolve, Western Partnership for Sustainable Development and Forum for the Future to develop a sustainable approach to cultural development
- Develop further the sales of local products and celebration of food through support to farmers' markets and BITE festival

8. Broadening lives and minds – culture as lifelong learning, in education and health

Participation in cultural activity helps broaden minds and can promote a healthier lifestyle. It can introduce participants to other cultures, allowing them to think about the past and the present as well as where they wish to go in the future. We see culture as a valuable component in lifelong learning.

We will:

- Develop libraries as centres for a broader range of cultural activities, including adult and community education classes, arts workshops and small events
- Co-locate where possible new library developments in council and non-council facilities
- Work with youth and community services, DAFBY and others to produce a plan for increasing access to cultural activities for young people aged 25 and under
- Support the development of new community sports and arts facilities at specialist colleges in Norton Radstock, Chew Valley and Bath
- Support Assembly as a major biennial festival of the contemporary visual arts
- Support the development of the Little Theatre as a regional centre for cultural cinema
- Develop further the Museum of Bath – as a window on the city for visitors and as a place for people to learn about where they have come from and where they can go in the future
- Consider the development of a museum in Keynsham
- Promote health tourism as a key part of the cultural offer of the district
- Promote wider use of the Recreation Ground
- Develop the Creative Learning Agency as a web-based arts education resource for schools
- Consider the creation of full-time arts, museums and sports education officer posts to help deliver the priorities in the council's education development plan

9. Communications

Communicating to many audiences details of the strategy and, more importantly, progress with the delivery of the strategy is critical in raising the level of debate, involving all, supporting the case we will make for new funding, and building support generally. We also want to celebrate Bath & North East Somerset as a centre for culture.

Objectives

We have four objectives in communications:

- To celebrate the culture of the area
- To publicise the cultural work of the council
- To publicise the work of culture in the area
- To learn more about people's views so that the LCS can be continuously refined and renewed

We will:

- Produce and update regularly a website with details of all cultural events and news items with links to organisations and initiatives, including anti-clash diary
- Work with local media to maximise coverage of events, activity, group and individual achievements
- Work with the new tourism company to ensure that culture is publicised effectively
- Promote Bath & North East Somerset cultural activity to students through a student cultural discount pass
- Ensure that full profile on streets is given to Bath & North East Somerset cultural activity with banners, flags, signs
- Work with churches and other organisations to engage and inform communities
- Use Voicebox to identify and review needs and wants
- Work with key regional agencies such as West of England Strategic Partnership, South West Regional Development Agency, South West Screen, to raise the profile of Bath & North East Somerset as a centre for the creative industries

10. Policy, structures and evaluation

We do not want this strategy to be put on a shelf and forgotten. As well as identifying what we want to do in the document, we explain how this will be delivered and how our work will be measured through new monitoring, evaluation and consultation systems.

The strategy will be adopted by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

We will:

- Establish a corporate council culture and leisure group to oversee, manage, link and monitor culture and leisure issues and other council plans
- Develop realistic, but increasing, capital and revenue investment, with cost-benefit justifications for projects and the appointment of new staff to deliver the LCS and other strategies
- Move to three year rolling funding agreements with key voluntary sector organisations

Partnerships

We know that we are not able to deliver this strategy on our own. Bath & North East Somerset Council already works with a range of partners. We will expand this work through the creation of a Bath & North East Somerset cultural development partnership, made up of representatives of the council, key stakeholders from the cultural communities, and private and voluntary sector interests. The Bath & North East Somerset cultural partnership will have six aims

- To ensure connections are made between all council service areas
- To bring together all key partners for the delivery of the strategy – internal to Bath & North East Somerset Council and external
- To maintain momentum with the implementation of the LCS
- To bring together the resources needed to deliver the LCS
- To commission new work for strategy development and implementation
- To provide an opportunity for open debate

Its members could include:

- Bath & North East Somerset Council: corporate culture and leisure group, economic development, Western Riverside and others
- South West Arts, Culture South West, South West Screen
- South West RDA and other governmental and non-governmental agencies
- University of Bath and Bath Spa University College
- Representatives of arts and cultural organisations
- Representatives of private sector companies, such as Future Publishing, Wessex Water, BBC/ HTV, Bath Chronicle

- Initiative for Bath & North East Somerset
- Representatives of existing partnerships in Bath & North East Somerset in arts, sport, heritage

Assistance to cultural organisations

To develop to full potential, new and existing cultural organisations and companies need assistance. We are committed to excellence in the management of culture in Bath & North East Somerset.

We will:

- Consider again the role of a central body as an overall development group for cultural organisations
- Encourage South West Arts Marketing and the Single Regional Agency to assist further with the development of arts and cultural organisations
- Develop training programmes in management, fundraising and building partnerships
- Promote the subsidised use of un-let council property for cultural activity

Networking

All districts need networks for debate and discussion. Informal networks exist but more could be done. We will:

- Promote the development of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution as a forum for debate about the future of the district
- Investigate the potential of a Common Purpose programme for Bath & North East Somerset
- Support the work of Bath Area Network of Artists (BANA), Norton Radstock Arts Consortium, Bath & North East Somerset Arts Partnership, and the Bath & North East Somerset Forum for Sport

Evaluation

We are determined to make an impact and make change stick. Evaluation of our work will be built in from the start of each project and will take place also well after a project has ended.

- All Bath & North East Somerset funded projects to conform to standard methods of evaluation reported annually with an overall annual report published and distributed widely
- All long-term funded projects to take part in long-term evaluation every five years
- Benchmarks to be established with comparable-sized local authorities for comparison

11. Consultation

The LCS development process has obtained quantitative data through questionnaires and surveys, including wide circulation to arts organisations and to rural communities via the mobile library service. The consultation has also gained qualitative data through face-to-face interviews with key consultees. The research complements, and uses, the work of the Bath & North East Somerset Culture and Leisure Best Value Review, which has looked at the choice, quality and availability of cultural and leisure activity. In addition to key people in Bath & North East Somerset the review has consulted with residents, users, non-users, parish councils, youth, elderly people and disabled people.

This summary document is the next step in the consultation process. Views on the document are welcomed. The timetable is:

5 August - 9 September	Public consultation
9 September	Bath & North East Somerset Overview and Scrutiny panel discusses strategy as part of consultation
15 - 30 September	Final document prepared
Mid-October	Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers final plan
6 November	Cabinet considers strategy
21 November	Bath & North East Somerset Council debates strategy
December	Strategy published

In the future, we will:

- Participate in, and use, the findings of the rolling three year Best Value consultation programme with hard to reach groups
- Organise an annual Bath & North East Somerset cultural seminar looking at implementation of the strategy and promoting debate about future work
- Have specific small group discussions about issues in the LCS

Comments on the Document

This document has been prepared by Andrew Kelly of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership. Please send written comments on the draft strategy to:

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