

Cultural Development Plan for Bath and North East Somerset Council 2025 – 2027 – Draft for Consultation with Cultural Sector

This document is an early stage draft of a cultural development plan prepared by Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES).

It is being circulated for comment from the Cultural Sector in Bath and North East Somerset.

These comments will be integrated into the plan for review by Cllrs and Officer in Autumn 2025.

The aim is to create an action plan for the Council to commit to between 2025 and 2027. This action plan will sit as an appendix to the Cultural Development Plan. B&NES would particularly welcome comment on the action that the Council could take over the next two years to deliver the aims of the Cultural Development Plan.

An example of the type of action plan we would like to create can be found in the [BANES Housing Plan](#).

Comments should be sent to Robert Campbell, Head of Culture and Heritage, Bath and North East Somerset Council. Robert_Campbell@bathnes.gov.uk

Rob would welcome a conversation if that is your preferred way to feedback.

We would like to have received the majority of feedback by the end of June 2025.

Cultural Development Plan for Bath and North East Somerset Council 2025 - 2027

INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Development Plan for Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) aims to lay the ground-work to create a vibrant cultural landscape across the area.

Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) will work over the next two years, leading up to the next local government election, to create an environment where culture thrives, supports the local economy and improves the health and wellbeing of audiences. This Development Plan outlines the key priorities and actions to be undertaken over the next few years.

B&NES will support, facilitate and enable partnership activity and act as a convener, offering the opportunity for the sector to come together to share progress challenges and opportunities.

This strategy covers the period 2025 – 2027 so that it aligns with the local government electoral cycle. The aim is to spend this period setting the stage for a longer-term approach to culture that can be shaped and endorsed by the incoming administration in 2027. The 2 year period will focus on:

- Aligning Council generated cultural activities with B&NES corporate priorities and integrating cultural activities into existing and future Council work streams
- Working with the sector to understand what they need to make culture thrive in BANES and helping them to make this happen

This document has been authored by B&NES and it is the anticipation that it presents a starting position to share and discuss with the sector before a final cultural strategy is created by the end of 2025.

This Development Plan aims to balance the needs of residents, and the opportunity for culture to improve people's lives, with the desire to support the vibrant visitor economy in BANES. It also recognises the need to understand and consider the different needs between urban and rural communities, urban centre and suburbs, heritage and contemporary culture and the different appetites across audience groups.

The components are here to create a vibrant cultural landscape and B&NES feels that it can add the most value by understanding and facilitating the potential of the current and future cultural sector in the authority for the benefit of those who live, work and visit here.

CULTURE

We use ‘culture’ to mean: collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, heritage buildings, music, theatre, the visual arts, festivals, location filming and large sporting events.

This is based on the Arts Council England (ACE) definition of culture. ACE don't include festivals/events in their definition but mixed discipline community centric activity across the council make this an important strand of cultural activity in BANES

Heritage Buildings and location filming are also not included by ACE but are clearly important aspects of the cultural offer within BANES

In relation to place-making in BANES, and in Bath especially, sport is an important activity. The impact of Bath Rugby on the City, the local relevancy of Bath City FC and large events, such as Bath Half Marathon, warrant the addition of communal sporting activity in our definition.

The inclusion of the above additions also makes an alignment with the Visit West Destination Management Plan.

Whilst note noted in the definition, we recognise that landscapes are also vitally important to the cultural offer in BANES:

- The green setting of the city is one of the outstanding universal values for which Bath is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- As an authority with many rural areas the connection to nature and the traditions associated with working and living in rural areas are hugely relevant
- Audiences who are in the market for cultural experiences are often also looking for experiences and green and blue spaces – combining these provides deeper outcomes for audiences

VISION

The Council's vision for culture in BANES is to be recognised as a region with a vibrant and inclusive cultural offering that contributes to the health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity of its residents and visitors.

We recognise the transformative power of culture to improve economic, health and wellbeing outcomes and see it as vital component in delivering B&NES' vision to 'improve people's lives'.

'Tackling the climate and nature emergency' is one of the council's core policies and we see culture as a key component of connecting and energising people behind this outcome.

Culture is one of the 9 priorities in the B&NES Corporate Strategy: Valuing and developing the contribution of culture to Bath and North East Somerset

CONTEXT

Bath and North East Somerset

Bath and North East Somerset covers 136 sq miles with a population of 193,400 across 84,000 council tax households. It is a mix urban and rural communities with the largest population centre in the double inscribed UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath. Bath has a population of 94,000 which is swelled by around 40,000 students each year.

The Council

B&NES established a cultural strategy in 2011, covering the period up to 2026. This strategy was reviewed and updated in 2015. However, the infrastructure needed to implement the strategy faced challenges, including the dissolution of the B&NES Arts Development Team in February 2019. In May 2023, the Liberal Democrat manifesto included strong commitments to culture, leading to the creation of a new economic development and culture portfolio. In 2024 the council's Heritage Services was given formal responsibility to develop a new cultural strategy with the Service renamed as 'Culture and Heritage Services' and the Head of Service being nominated as the lead officer for Culture in the council.

The council delivers a range of cultural activity which is outlined in Appendix 1.

Local Culture

BANES already has a well-established and recognised cultural and creative sector which delivers for both visitors and residents. It includes iconic heritage destinations in Bath, established festivals and events across the district and anchor institutions willing to play their part. There is a thriving creative industries scene which is home to over 1,155 creative industry businesses with a total creative economy value of £230m GVA. Locations across BANES are regularly used of TV and film location.

Over the past 4 years tv and film productions have generated an average of 130 filming days per year bringing in £150,000 average revenue to the Council and £2,700,000.00 direct spend into the local economy (Filming in England matrix). Each year, there are on average 150 events taking place on Council owned land and highways and this ranges from large scale events in our Heritage Parks, street markets, to community events in our Towns and Parishes. The scale ranges from headline concerts in Royal Victoria Park, to the Spring Fayre in Bath city centre, to community events like the Midsomer Norton Wassail.

Bath is well served by cultural provision. There are several independent Museums including the Holburne Museum, American Museum, Bath Abbey and Gardens and those of Bath Preservation Trust. The National Trust own large areas of the green space around the city and is looking to redevelop the Assembly Rooms as a major new attraction in Bath. There are several small museums including the Museum of Bath at Work. There are also surprising connections in Bath including Emperor Haile Selassie who made Fairfield House his home during his exile from Ethiopia in the late 1930s. There is a vibrant festival scene including Bath Festivals, Curious Minds, Mozart Fest, Bath Carnival and Bathscape Walking Festival. There are several

significant venues including the Theatre Royal, Komedia, The Forum and The Egg as well as two independent cinemas and a large Odeon.

The wider district cultural offer includes Radstock museum, Somerset & Dorset Railway, and Keynsham Abbey ruins. There are several music and arts festivals and markets supported by the town councils and volunteers in Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Keynsham that attract large numbers e.g. Keynsham has the largest free music festival in Europe. Midsomer Norton attracted 3000 people to its recent free-to-access music and arts festival at the town's outdoor amphitheatre, and has welcomed over 10,000 visitors to its community cinema. Radstock is home to two new cultural spaces: Old Printworks Arts, a creative workspace, and Trinity Hub, a community hub and events space. The Somer Valley Walking Festival has become established in recent years led by the Somer Valley Rediscovered team that is reconnecting people to greenspaces in the historic Somerset Coalfield. Keynsham has over 200 local societies and groups mainly run by volunteers demonstrating there is high social capital in our area.

The rural landscapes of the district includes parts of two National Landscapes- the Cotswolds and Mendip Hills there are numerous cultural heritage attractions and activities. One of the largest events is Valley Fest a music and food event attracting 10,000 people. Many events are organised by local groups and societies and include art trails, open gardens and walks and tours of historic sites and villages.

Led by the council, partnership programmes such as Bathscape, Somer Valley Rediscovered and Chew Valley Reconnected all offer opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with the cultural aspects of those areas, whether that be helping to restore features and learn or explore. Benefits include health and well being for those who participate as well as contributing to the rural economy as an element of green/cultural tourism.

Regional Context:

BANES does not exist in isolation and its situation within the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) area is a huge strength and opportunity. There is a thriving cultural and creative landscape across the MCA and the devolution agenda championed by central government provides the opportunity for BANES to be part of a strong cultural ecosystem that extends across the region. The MCA has a [Cultural Compact](#) and [Cultural Plan](#).

B&NES is an active participant in [Visit West](#), the Local Visitor Economy Partnership. The Visit West region covers Bath, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucester. The Destination Management Plan is found [here](#).

There is a wide cultural offer across the region that is complementary rather than competitive in offer. North Somerset has recently hosted a prominent activation, 'Sea Monster', as part of the Unboxed programme and has received £18m of Levelling up funding that will, in part, enhance their cultural offer. Bristol has a well developed cultural scene with some nationally significant independent operators such as SS Great Britain and the Old Vic alongside a longstanding council provision of museums and other cultural activity. South Gloucester has less of an established cultural

economy but with the addition of the Wave, Aerospace Bristol and the relocation of Bristol Zoo, it is becoming a destination in its own right.

BANES' proximity to London is a huge boost to its cultural and visitor economy. The rail and road connections to the capital mean that BANES audience reach can extend to London. Bath receives many day-visitors and short-break visitors from London.

INSIGHTS

In the 10 years since the review of the previous Council Cultural Strategy there have been fundamental changes in the landscape in which the cultural sector operates.

Social media has heightened awareness of injustice, inequity, inequality, conflict, crisis, and systemic oppression, leading to audiences demanding organisations take an active stance, especially on social justice, climate and environmental issues.

The cultural sector was hit hard by COVID-19, with venues closing early and reopening late during lockdowns, resulting in financial difficulties. Many venues and festivals sought emergency funding, and some are still affected while dealing with the UK's cost-of-living crisis. COVID changed audience behaviour towards last-minute bookings and expecting hybrid or digital events.

Organisations have tested new approaches, creating opportunities to 'build back better.' B&NES values the sector's contribution to the economy, community, tourism, and wellbeing but acknowledges current challenges. Many organisations operate at full capacity with limited funds, reducing their ability to strategise.

There are two, key, overarching strategic pieces of work that inform the council's policy making:

Economic Strategy

Culture is referenced under the resilient business strand of the Strategy and the visitor economy features under stronger places.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

There is alignment between culture and each of the JHWS's four priorities. In relation to the first priority, *ensuring that children and young people are healthy and ready for learning and education*, all children and young people should have the opportunity to engage in cultural experiences and develop their cultural awareness. We know that cultural experiences can play a pivotal role in supporting social and emotional wellbeing, academic learning, and reducing inequalities in educational attainment.

Through nurturing a creative economy, the Cultural Strategy also has an important role in *improving skills, good work and employment*, the second JHWS priority.

Culture can help to build *compassionate and healthy communities*, the third JHWS priority, through for example being accessible and inclusive to all, and supporting outcomes such as reduced social isolation, self-confidence, and belonging.

Culture also has an important role to play in placemaking and *creating health promoting places*, the fourth JHWS priority, with cultural placemaking emphasising the role of culture, creativity, heritage assets, and innovative practice in making places more liveable.

The JHWS has a strong prevention focus. The strategy aligns with the Cultural strategy in several areas: it makes the explicit link between good work and employment - as such, it is an extension of the economic strategy

Key Issues in BANES:

- **The Economy**
Economic growth in BANES has not kept pace with England and West of England. Growth in BANES is the lowest of all the local authorities in the West of England as well as amongst our statistical neighbours.

The Creative Economy in Bath and North East Somerset is a diverse and productive part of our overall economy, with a range of mainly smaller businesses and institutions across the district. A key component of nurturing the Creative Economy in BANES identified by the Economic Strategy and Local Plan is the supply of creative workspaces across the district to keep up with demand across the range of creative industries requiring space. However, research commissioned by BANES has identified that the current supply of property is insufficient, with industrial floorspace in low supply, causing high levels of demand and competition. This competition is notable between creative workspaces and other higher yield and more viable uses such as housing, and particularly purpose-built student housing (PBSA). Moreover, notable community creative spaces have been lost, such as Creativity Works in Radstock in 2024 (an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation), and other workspace and studio space provision is unstable and often precarious due to sites pending redevelopment, or short-term lease tenancy.

- **Children and young People**
The attainment gap between Free School Meal (FSM) and non-FSM pupils is consistently larger across all key stages in BANES than the gap seen nationally. In addition, KS2 attainment in the FSM cohort in B&NES is lower than their FSM cohort nationally, and was the lowest nationally in 2022/23 and 4th lowest in 2023/24. There is strong corporate and political support to address these entrenched inequalities. Poor educational attainment is linked to outcomes later on in life, such as lower income, and worse health compared to those who have better educational attainment.
- **Deprivation Driving Health and wellbeing needs**
Overall, our residents live a good quality of life. Most of us are in good health and enjoy a good standard of living. Still, inequalities exist. Residents who live

in areas with greater levels of deprivation or experience other forms of disadvantage are more likely to suffer from long-term illness, live in poor housing conditions and are unable to afford the healthier foods. In 2019/20, 9% of children and young people in BANES were estimated to be living in relative poverty (before housing costs) and in 2020 11.2% of the BANES population was considered fuel-poor (low-income, low energy efficiency methodology). The difference in life expectancy between our most deprived and least deprived areas is 10 years for women and 6.5 years for men. In addition, BANES has higher rates of poor health and wellbeing for some indicators, including higher hospital admissions for self-harm and mental health needs in young people, and higher than average (27%) residents experiencing loneliness often, always, or some of the time.

The Sector

The [West of England Cultural Plan](#) was produced by the West of England Combined Authority and launched in 2022. This Plan notes the regional context, particularly the value of the creative industries in the South West having grown by 27% since 2010. Further, the Plan recognises that the region is known for being a 'powerhouse for innovation and invention'. The Cultural Plan notes the following strengths in the regional cultural ecosystem:



CULTURAL AUDIT

In late 2024 and early 2025 an audit of 'hard (venues and attractions) and soft (individuals and groups without a fixed venue)' cultural infrastructure across B&NES was undertaken. This was funded by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority under their Culture West programme.

The initial audit surveyed 100 respondents and produced an interactive map as well as some recommendations for change. The audit is included as an appendix to this plan. Recommendations included:

- **Tourism:** Respondents recognise that inbound tourism is crucial for B&NES budget. Balancing this with support for local creatives and cultural activities for residents is essential.
- Recommendation:
 - Provide targeted support for projects, venues, or events offering free or low-cost options for locals
 - If a tourist tax is introduced, ensure a portion supports inclusive cultural activities for residents.
- **Venues:** A lack of access to hire spaces and affordable venues was raised by respondents.
- Recommendation:
 - Particularly where new homes are being built, are policies could be put in place to protect existing public spaces, venues and events
- **Commissioning:** Only 15% of respondents said they had delivered commissioned work for B&NES or a civic partner organisation. The majority said the work was valued under £10k
- Recommendation:
 - B&NES to work to support uptake in commissioning via toolkits and active creation and promotion of opportunities
- **Events:** The frustrations of promoting and delivering events within BANES was raised. A more coherent voice on this from the sector, with specific common challenges identified, would enable B&NES to consider how policies and processes can be improved to support grassroots and hyper-local cultural events to take place.
- Recommendation:
 - To meet with artists, producers and community organisers to jointly identify the key challenges, and bring this voice to decision-making around town centre management.
- **Children, Young People and Families:** Increase the offer for children, young people and families who tend to travel less far for their cultural activity. There

could be a gap between levels of provision for children 0-18 and the proportion of the population in that age bracket.

- Recommendation:
 - Look in more detail at organisations that selected 'all ages' to establish whether their offer is likely to appeal to those under 18
- **Freelancers and micro organisations:** 51% of respondents who invested time in completing the questionnaire were freelancers / sole traders or micro organisations. Many of these mentioned the ongoing challenge of raising funds, feeling supported, feeling connected and securing job opportunities in BANES.
- Recommendation:
 - Considering how best to support these people and organisations. Options include networking, workspace, easy access grants, training and qualifications and business development support.
- **Volunteers:** There seems to be lots of opportunities for volunteers to play an important role in cultural activity across BANES.
- Recommendation:
 - Consider convening organisations that engage with volunteers to learn more about the roles they play and how the most can be made of, and for, these cohort.
- **Investment:** Identified as a potential growth area for the sector in BANES, but acknowledging the challenge of the current financial climate and the challenge of increasing investment from private giving, trusts and foundations and businesses in an equitable way.
- Recommendation:
 - That the Cultural Development Plan considers the role increasing private investment can play in supporting the sector and any levers at B&NES' disposal to encourage equitable distribution of private investment
- **A cohesive network:** Respondents spoke about the lack of cohesion and network, lack of 'joined-up thinking' or place to find out what is going on.
- Recommendation:
 - To explore directly with the sector what form this could take and how existing networks can be complemented and built upon.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Taking the strategic context into account there are some clear objectives that the Cultural Strategy will be required to achieve

It is under these outcomes that an action plans will be created:

1. Health and Wellbeing

Leveraging cultural activities to improve the lives of all people across B&NES, with a focus on target communities such as young people and those from deprived areas, and addressing issues such as inclusion, inequalities and cultural capital.

Why?

The health and wellbeing of residents is enshrined as a key council priority exemplified by the Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy. As such, the Council is already working to tackle some of the most significant health related issues in the Authority. Culture and creativity have an undeniable positive impact on an individual's health and wellbeing - both directly and through the wider determinants of health - and are an important aspect of the Council's approach to the Health and Wellbeing of residents. Evidence supports the use of cultural strategies to improve family cultural capital, a significant factor in the educational attainment gap between children and young people. Access to cultural opportunities and experiences has also been linked to improved mental health and wellbeing.

There is some recent research that support these assertions [here](#) alongside the work undertaken and collated by the DCMS [here](#).

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Whilst overall health and wellbeing is good in BANES there are significant socio-economic inequalities in health and wellbeing outcomes and life-expectancy, as well as significant needs that come with an ageing population and increasing mental health needs. These issues are well understood and there are a number of existing strategies into which culture can be integrated to help affect change where it is most needed. Culture can be a key driver of for happiness, socialisation, life experiences and learning for everyone.

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027, we will be moving to a place where culture and creativity will significantly enhance the health and wellbeing of all B&NES residents. This will be achieved by ensuring that culture is accessible and inclusive for all our communities, everyone feels that the diverse range of cultural and heritage offers belong to them, and we create more spaces and places where culture happens, including by taking cultural offers to where people are. Key activities to promote will include social prescribing into cultural offers, pro-active engagement of under-represented groups and those experiencing inequalities (including through education settings and third sector partners), and

promoting volunteering and community led projects. Action planning related to existing Public Health strategies will have clear cultural inclusions, and external cultural organisations will have a clear understanding of the health and wellbeing needs that their cultural projects can support.

How are we going to bring about this change?

We will work across the council to identify opportunities for culture to support public health outcomes for residents. Council teams delivering cultural activities will need to clearly identify which health and wellbeing needs they are targeting, why and for which population groups, and how they will measure and report on the efficacy of their work. The plans to develop the new Fashion Museum Bath will have a clear health and wellbeing theme, including addressing issues of inclusion and equity, with a significant proportion of the activity plan focussed on this area.

Case Study

TBC

2. Placeshaping

Embedding B&NES' distinct identity as a centre of culture, creativity, heritage, and beauty in council policy making. Integrating culture into the Council's infrastructure planning to ensure it delivers on the wider Cultural Strategy's outcomes and objectives.

Why?

B&NES recognises that culture and heritage can transform a place – making it somewhere people want to live work and visit. The council is now taking a place shaping approach bringing together various services in the council to create sustainable places and communities. Work is being led by the Place and Regeneration Service in Sustainable Economy with Programme Managers for specific place teams for – Bath, Keynsham & Salford and Somer Valley. The Place teams will engage with the councils plans to deliver ambitious housing targets (14,800 additional by 2042) and range of transport projects. All these major pieces of work that could have positive impacts on the cultural landscape across BANES.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Geography and infrastructure pose a challenge – there is a paucity of creative workspace and public transport that requires improvements to meet need of residents and visitors. It is also much easier to capture audiences for culture in Bath than it is in the more rural places across the district. The sector often finds it hard to make culture happen in their places – frustrated by a perceived culture within the council that can't be flexible enough to make changes required. However, with significant plans to affect change across the authority (as described in key council documents such as the Corporate Strategy,

Economic Strategy, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Green Infrastructure Plan, Housing Plan, Regeneration prospectus, Journey to Net Zero amongst others), the council can use the existing resources at its disposal to integrate culture into its vision for the future.

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027 culture will be well integrated into the new Local Plan. There will be a council 'view' of the different places across BANES with a clear articulation of the place for culture within key council strategies. Those wishing to make culture happen in their place will find it easy to engage with the council and get the outcomes they want.

How are we going to bring about this change?

Officers across the council will work to ensure that culture is integrated into their strategies and plans creating or transforming places to improve the quality of life for residents, support growth, and foster vibrant, sustainable communities. Culture will be integrated into the council's approach to place shaping. Those teams responsible for facilitating cultural activity will engage with the sector to work through how their processes and approaches could evolve to make it as easy as possible for cultural activity to occur. We will continue to develop our plans for the Fashion Museum Bath to act as a catalyst for regeneration of the Milsom Quarter.

Case Study:

TBC

3. Creative Economy

Ensuring that the Creative Industries feel supported in BANES and that people of all ages can develop their creative skills with pathways into employment.

Why?

In 2023, BANES was home to 1,155 creative industry businesses, with a total creative economy value to the district of £230m GVA per annum - a comparably higher GVA per job relative to other sectors. This sectoral value is anticipated to increase to £271m GVA p.a. by 2030. Creative industries play to our area's strengths in terms of graduates from both our local universities, our residents' skills profiles, and through the fact that most of our creative economy is represented by micro businesses which reflects the profile of BANES as a location for SMEs.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

The conditions exist in BANES for the creative industries to thrive. With two universities and a quality further education provider in Bath College, there are

already partners working to improve skills and pathways into employment. There are a good number of existing creative businesses and proximity to Bristol provides an ecosystem that creative activity in BANES can thrive on. Most recently the MCA has been identified for additional central government funding to support the creative industries.

However, the BANES area is experiencing a supply deficit in creative workspace - particularly for artists' studio spaces - that constrains a range of sub-sectors across our creative industries.

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027 there is a clear approach from the Council to improve the supply of creative workspace. The Council are also supporting skills programmes that provide a pipeline into the creative industries with a focus on young people from deprived communities.

How are we going to bring about this change?

We will create and action a creative workspace strategy, engage with the MCA to ensure BANES received funding to support the creative industries and continue to pursue our ambitious skills programmes. There will be a focus on engaging young people from deprived communities. We will integrate creative industries skills programming into our activity plan for the new Fashion Museum.

Case Study:

TBC

4. Visitor Economy

Creating cultural experiences that attract visitors locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Continuing to ensure that Bath is a primary location for filming and the screen tourism that can follow it.

Why?

The City of Bath already attracts millions of visitors each year. It is a world class cultural centre boosted by a strong tourist economy driven by the attributes that have seen the city twice inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage list. Bath acts as a honeypot which can then support visitor economy businesses across the district. There is a strong Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) in Visit West with a clear Destination Management Plan to help bring visitors into BANES. There is also a vibrant set of outdoor events across BANES, facilitated and enabled by the council.

Bath is famous as a destination for film and television. This has a demonstrable impact on the visitor economy as the popularity of screen tourism continues to grow. In 2025 Visit Britain research highlights 9 out of 10

potential visitors to the UK have been positively influenced by film or TV. Visit West's 2023 survey reported that 21% of visitor's said that television had played a part in motivating their visit. This translates to over a million visitors a year being motivated in part to visit Bath by what they've seen of the city on television. The same survey notes that 28% of day visitors associated the area with Bridgerton. The TV series has spawned a whole new industry of Bridgerton tours and experiences in the city. Bridgerton series 1 was viewed in 82 million+ households worldwide and generated an estimated £8.4m for the local economy in the financial year 2023-2024, £3.4m from filming and £5m from Bridgerton tourism. Other key productions include Wonka, Persuasion, McDonald and Dodds, The Outlaws, A Good Girl's Guide to Murder and First Dates

What are the challenges and opportunities?

The symbiosis that links the cultural landscape and visitor economy in Bath means that there is an existing brand and market for the cultural sector to capitalise on. The council's owns and operates one of the most significant visitor economy businesses in the UK - the Roman Baths. This means that B&NES is uniquely invested in needing to support and grow visitors to the city. Bath also has a high student population who can be encouraged to make the most of the cultural offer across BANES as well as the cultural sector benefiting from the Visiting Friends and Relatives effect. However, there are seasonal peaks and troughs in visitor numbers to the city that it would be advantageous to smooth out. It is also desirable to increase the number of visitors staying longer and spending more across the whole of BANES.

Working in partnership with stakeholders the council support in the region of 150 events taking place per annum which deliver economic benefit from spend and jobs in the area.

B&NES runs the Bath Film Office which encourages and facilitates location filming in the city.

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027 there should be a clear cultural calendar for BANES that responds to the visitor market opportunities – either to draw visitors into BANES at times when historically they are less likely to visit or to capitalise on the busier times to the financial sustainability of the visitor economy. The council will help facilitate this calendar and work with sector to help make culture happen to the benefit of the sector, residents and visitors.

The Council will actively state that its policy is to encourage location filming and outdoor events in the City with the express benefit of immediate and down-stream economic activity.

How are we going to bring about this change?

B&NES will work with Bath Spa University to establish a cultural network that can offer advice and guidance on visitor trends. Cultural activity undertaken

by the Council will need to actively consider its role in supporting the visitor economy and how it will measure and demonstrate this impact.

Case Study:

TBC

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

There will be some cross cutting themes that will help shape the Cultural Development Plan

These will be woven throughout the action plans that support the identified Strategic Objectives and may have actions associated with them individually. They will provide a further way of measuring the success of the Cultural Development Plan.

- **Inclusivity**
Why is this a theme?

All parts of the cultural community in BANES must feel that the cultural plan is relevant to them. Demonstrable efforts will be made to ensure a wide range of cultural activities that are accessible to all. Measures will be developed to target groups that have been identified as traditionally under-served by the culture sector, e.g. young people and those from deprived areas. Audiences should also have a voice in cultural policy making.

What is the change we'd like to see?

In 2027 residents across BANES will feel that there is cultural activity happening that is both relevant and accessible to them and engage with these activities without experiencing barriers. Engagement from traditionally under-served communities will increase through collaborative engagement work with the third sector and other community organisations, e.g. faith groups, youth clubs. All communities will see themselves represented in the cultural sector and young people will perceive that a career in the creative industries could be for them irrespective of their background.

How are we going to bring about that change?

The council will aim to extend Discovery Card uptake into all communities across BANES with a focus on areas of deprivation.

We will create more spaces and places where culture happens, including by taking cultural offers into communities and community settings, and using cultural locations as destinations for other interventions that broaden their appeal (e.g. baby clinics in cultural venues).

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training developed by Culture & Heritage Services will be rolled out to all Council staff undertaking cultural activity.

The Council will actively seek to engage traditionally underserved communities by collecting data on the audiences engaged by its own cultural activity and will establish a survey for cultural organisations to engage with that will also collect audience data. More coordinated work with health and voluntary and community partners will also assist in this endeavour.

The Council will support the Citizen's Assembly for Culture planned for autumn 2025 and consider how resident voices and active engagement can be brought into cultural policy making and strategy going forward.

- **Environment sustainability**

Why is this a theme?

In-line with the council's declaration of climate and ecological emergencies the cultural strategy should help the cultural sector in BANES to be more environmentally sustainable and climate resilient as well as helping audiences to engage with these topics in a positive and impactful way. The council has adopted the Economic Doughnut Model in underpinning its approach to improving people lives and in preparing for the future. It will evaluate decisions and actions in order that they seek to meet or address social and economic foundations or needs, without exceeding environmental capacity, moving BANES towards a more resilient, greener and fairer economy.

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027, environmental responsibility will be automatically considered by partners when developing projects, as a primary consideration rather than an afterthought. We will communicate our stance on environmental responsibility to our audiences, providing clear explanations of our actions and the motivations behind them. Culture will be used as a tool to engage audiences in discussions about sustainable practices and to foster innovative solutions.

How are we going to bring about that change?

The Sustainability Manager currently employed by Culture and Heritage Services will extend her remit to cover the Council's wider approach to culture and will work with the Climate and Environment Service to ensure appropriate advice and support is provided and in assessing impacts of cultural activity with regards meeting the councils targets for net zero and nature positive by 2030. and attractions are climate resilient B&NES will continue to maintain and improve the parks and green spaces under its care meaning they can continue to play an important role in the cultural life of our places.

- **Financial sustainability**

Why is this a theme?

A key concern of the sector is the lack of funding to support new and emerging work and practitioners as well as the ongoing viability of established institutions and groups. The cultural development plan must be focussed on

ways in which the council can support the financial sustainability of the sector – this could be direct grants but can also extend to waiving fees and charges, marketing support and support for fundraising activities

What is the change we'd like to see?

By 2027 it will be clear to external parties how to work with council to secure third party funding for their activities. There will be a clear and transparent way for cultural organisations to discuss council support for their activities through the alleviation of fees and charges. It will be as easy as possible to work with the council to deliver cultural activity reducing the resources required to make culture happen.

How are we going to bring about that change?

The council to work with partners to develop a cohort of projects suitable for joint applications to public funders, trusts, and foundations. By working together and focusing on strategic priorities, we can strengthen applications and improve success rates. By working to create a cultural network this partnership will become easier. B&NES will build relationships with funders to highlight the excellent cultural activity which happens across the area..

- **Quality, Experimentation and Creativity**
Why is this a theme?

It's important that the cultural sector continues to achieve a quality output but also one where new and exciting work and opportunities are championed

What is the change we'd like to see?

There is a vibrant cultural calendar in BANES of both long established events and activities but also a continuing stream of work new to the area. Across a range of cultural disciplines there is award winning activity that attracts funding, new audiences and media coverage.

How are we going to bring about that change?

We will continue to monitor the cultural activities and organisations in BANES by repeating the audit of cultural infrastructure at regular intervals. The Council will work to support not just those organisation and individuals it has historically but actively look to work with new and emerging talent.

KEY ACTIVITIES

There are a number of key activities that B&NES will take forward and will form part of the Council's approach to culture:

1. The Fashion Museum

- The Council's largest investment in culture will be via its support for the Fashion Museum Project. This significant capital project will deliver on all the Strategic Priorities and Themes noted in this strategy.
- The Fashion Museum will open at the Old Post Office realising the power of fashion to more people than ever and extending the reach and reputation of the internationally respected collection which was gifted to the city in 1955 and is exhibited worldwide. The museum will uncover the past, present, and future of fashion and its positive role in civic life, whilst being fully accessible for free for local people. We will champion designers, makers, manufacturers, and wearers and celebrate the diversity and complexity of fashion. We want to reach the widest possible audience by creating a dynamic, relevant, and meaningful encounter with fashion through a programme which will inspire, embolden, and empower and provide a window to the future of the fashion industry.

2. The Bath Social Impact Network: Culture

- The council has committed to partnering with Bath Spa University to help establish a cultural network for BANES. The network will be a way for the sector to hear from the Council and the Council to listen to the sector. It will be a vital tool in establishing a cultural strategy and will be a key mechanism to consult with the sector. The network will also be an important mechanism to develop long-term relationships with funders including ACE and the MCA Cultural Compact as well as becoming a vehicle to coordinate and bring together funding bids to bring funding from external bodies into BANES. It can also be a way to commission relevant research and data gathering exercises

3. Changing the way the council approaches culture

The council needs to change its own organisational culture so that the approach across the council is to make it easy for culture to thrive in BANES.

- Review the current arrangements whereby the council delivers or facilitates cultural activity and ensure it is fit for purpose
- Ensure culture is considered in the development of the new Local Plan
- Increase advertising opportunities available to cultural sector – e.g. city centre poster sites and banners and via the Discovery Card channels
- Work with cultural providers and council colleagues to see what changes could be made so that culture can happen more easily. This

could include waiving fees, offering payment plans, making it easier for 3rd parties to deliver cultural activity

4. Attainment Gap

- B&NES is taking a whole system approach to reducing the educational attainment gap. A core factors contributing to the attainment gap includes inequitable cultural capital and this is evidenced in BANES by the different levels of engagement with cultural opportunities by children, young people from different socio-economic backgrounds. This is exacerbated by the large rural communities and challenges with public transport alongside the concentration of cultural activity in Bath.
- As such it is vital that the B&NES Cultural Strategy helps to address the educational attainment gap by increasing social capital, aspiration and social mobility in children and young people from disadvantaged families; for example, by supporting skills and knowledge development, enhancing opportunities for expressing identity and feeling belonging, and reducing barriers to participating in the cultural and heritage offer.
- A range of action will support this work and will be tracked via the 'Be Well BANES' Steering Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

5. Regeneration and green infrastructure programmes and activity

Culture is an important factor in boosting the vibrancy of towns and cities, and a healthy number of the Council's cultural activities are delivered through its existing regeneration and green infrastructure programmes, which are predominantly grant-funded by external bodies and delivered in partnership with community organisations and other bodies. There is a strong existing programme of cultural activity in Bath's Milsom Quarter and Bath Central Riverside, complementing arts-led regeneration schemes throughout the district, in Twerton, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock. This includes the creation of meanwhile use community spaces, outdoor event spaces, public art installations, street dressing and murals, as well as providing funding and administrative support for community festivals and other cultural programming.

B&NES will continue to:

- Embed culture into its place shaping strategies/regeneration strategies
- Work in partnership with parish councils and community stakeholders to co-create projects which ensure that there is exceptional, community-led cultural provision across BANES
- Identify suitable sources of funding both internally and externally to ensure the long-term viability of culture-led regeneration and GI programmes that deliver cultural activities.

6. Implementing a strategy to increase creative workspace in B&NES

- There is potential to harness greater economic, social and community benefits from greater clustering¹ of the creative industries within B&NES.
- This Creative Workspaces Strategy commits to addressing this gap and growing market failure through a cohesive policy approach that aims to retain existing space, and boosting the supply of appropriate, affordable creative workspaces through the following action plan interventions:
 - Support the clustering of creative workspace;
 - Working through partnership with key organisations and the private sector to locate new opportunities;
 - Trialling meanwhile-use and pilot projects to boost short-term supply and test site viability;
 - Using council assets that are under-utilised to provide further supply of workspace;
 - Focussing support on the Somer Valley area, and;
 - Protecting industrial sites and employment land allocations that support workspace

7. Working with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority

- B&NES will continue to engage with Visit West and the MCA to further the aims of the cultural sector within BANES.
- The recent announcement by central government of additional creative industries funding for the MCA region is an example of an opportunity for the cultural sector in BANES to benefit from its location in the MCA region

¹ Clustering: formally and informally-linked networks of creative organisations operating in a focused geographical area

Next Steps

1. Review and Consultation

- Review the Cultural Development Plan with Senior Officers and Councillors.
- Use the BSINT network and other existing networks to consult with the cultural sector
- Develop detailed action plans against the Strategic Priorities and Cross Cutting Themes

2. Citizens Assembly for Culture

- In Autumn 2025 a Citizens Assembly for Culture will be run as part of the MCA's culture west programme. This will provide the opportunity for a representative and inclusive 'residents' view of culture to be provided to inform B&NES approach to culture.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

- B&NES has part funded a pilot to measure cultural value with Bristol City Council. Once this pilot concludes in early 2025 consideration will be given as to how this can be rolled out in BANES

Appendix 1 - Existing Council Cultural Activity

B&NES does not have a defined culture team or cultural service. Cultural activities is currently dispersed across a number of different Services:

- Heritage Services (Sustainable Communities Directorate)
 - Operate the [Roman Baths](#), [Clare Learning Centre](#), [Victoria Art Gallery](#), [Bath Record Office](#) and [World Heritage Centre](#) and are looking to deliver a major capital project [Fashion Museum and Collections Store](#)
 - The Head of Heritage Services sit on the Board of Visit West, the WECA Cultural Compact and the B&NES specific 'Bath's Cultural and Creative Ambition Group' that reports into the Council's Future Ambition Board.
 - Heritage Services had a turn-over of £18m in 23/24 and realised a net profit of £8.2m which was returned to the Council. The Service has 150 FTE staff. This compliment increases in-line with seasonal demand.
 - The Service Strategy is included in **Appendix B**
 - The Heritage Services 5 year Business Plan can be found [here](#)
 - Heritage Services administers the Discovery Card scheme which provides free access to the Roman Baths and Victoria Art Gallery for local residents alongside a range of discounts across the cultural, leisure and hospitality industry.
- Regeneration (Sustainable Communities)
 - Delivers grant funded (for the most part) [re-generation activities](#) across the authority including public realm improvements, pop-up cultural venues and activities and the facilitation of festivals and cultural infrastructure
- Green Infrastructure (GI) (Sustainable Communities)
 - A key outcome of the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Team's programme of strategic GI projects is to 'Create and maintain valued healthy landscapes: Design and deliver high quality GI that improves local sense of place and protects and enhances landscape character and the natural, cultural and heritage services that they provide.' (West of England Joint GI Strategy)
 - One aspect of the UNESCO inscription associated with the Bath World Heritage site is the city's green setting. – The [Bathscape](#) partnership project, established in 2018 with Heritage Lottery Funding has been engaging people in exploring, learning and restoring this landscape. Engagement includes 1744 walkers at 4 annual walking festivals, 103 people trained and 2566 people participating in events to explore the landscape.
 - [Somer Valley Rediscovered](#) current 5 year project focuses on the historic landscape of the Somersetshire Coalfield restoring and enhancing connectivity between the settlements, green and blue infrastructure and access to nature.

- Community & Compliance (Place Management, Operations Directorate)
[Events Office](#)

- Supported 99 events and festivals across 476 event days in the last year, ranging from large-scale commercial events eg Michael Bubl  concert to small community events eg Firs Field
- Generates an income to the Local Authority through the hire of Council owned land, and for internal B&NES teams (*eg Parking Services, Traffic Management, Licensing etc*).
- Delivery of Council-led events are managed by the Events Office team and they also work in partnership with stakeholders eg Bath BID, Bath British Legion, Mayors Office, to deliver partnership events. Events included Summer Sundays, King Charles III Proclamation Day, Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee, Tour of Britain and Tour Series. Remembrance Sunday events are delivered by the Events Office in partnership with Bath British Legion and the Mayor's Office.
- The Events Office hosts a bi-monthly Cultural Events Group to identify gaps and to coordinate a year-round calendar of events.

[Bath Christmas Market](#)

- The Bath Christmas Market team deliver and market the Bath Christmas Market event on behalf of the Local Authority. The event generates an income for related Council teams including Parking Services and Licensing. For details on the event Thursday 23rd November to Sunday 10th December 2023 see [Christmas Markets](#)

[Bath Film Office](#)

- The city of Bath, its heritage buildings and its surrounding heritage green spaces are an attractive destination for filming and they are the backdrop to many domestic and international films and television productions, *including Bridgerton, McDonald and Dodds and The Outlaws*.
- Working closely with Visit Bath, the Film Office generated 90 plus pieces of national and international media coverage in one month, promoting the cultural profile of the area.
- Generates an income to the Local Authority via internal teams including Heritage Buildings, Property Services, Parking Services and Highways. There is an economic benefit to the area from production crew spend and film tourism.
- See [Film Office](#)

- Parks (Operations Directorate)

- There are a number of authority runs parks across the district. Some of these, such as [Parade Gardens](#), [Royal Victoria Park](#) and [Sydney Gardens](#) are key pieces of green infrastructure within Bath relevant to the UNESCO inscription and the heritage of the City.

- Library Services (Business Change and Customer Services, Operations)
 - The Library Service operate 3 core libraries – Bath Central Library, Keynsham Library Information and Advice Services and Midsomer Norton Library Information and Advice Services, – as well as a Mobile Library Service. Two of the libraries offer access to council services, and the service as a whole is part of the Customer Service Team
 - The Library Service works in partnership with 11 Community Run Libraries.
 - The Library Service is one of 7 authorities in a consortium, Libraries West, which brings all lendable books and other items into a single catalogue, providing over 2.5 million items for customers to borrow. The Customer Services Business Manager sits on the Libraries West Board.
 - The Library Service has 31,000 members and had an annual footfall of 333,000 in the core libraries in 2022-23. Customers borrow an average 34,000 physical and 13,000 digital items each month.
 - The Libraries host an ongoing [programme](#) of cultural activities in addition to books, to support, educate and entertain. The Mobile Library provides weekly outreach events. Our social media engagement supports and promotes our events, resource, Library themes and organisational initiatives
 - The Library Service provides a wide range of other resources such as free computer access and wi-fi to support customers. The spaces themselves are a resource, providing safe warm places, sensory spaces, children's engagement activities, study areas and a venue for other partners to use to support customers.
 - The Library Service is guided by the Service Strategy, national Universal Library Offers and our developing strategy - Libraries for Life.

- Music Services

B&NES works in partnership with other Council's to deliver Music Services to residents. This work is summarised [here](#).

Appendix 2 – Policy Context

- Economic Strategy
 - Pillar: Stronger Place
Objective: Enabling all people and places to share in prosperity
Priority:
Drive a sustainable and innovative visitor economy
 - Pillar: Resilience Business
Objective: Building a diverse, creative and sustainable business base
Priority:
Nurturing emerging sectors and specialisms including culture and creative
 - Pillar: Creativity and Innovation
Objective: Establishing Bath and North East Somerset as a centre for scientific and health academic excellence, inclusive innovation and creativity.
Priorities:
Maximise local benefits of B&NES leading innovation assets;
Promote B&NES as an innovation testbed;
Ensure all sectors and business are supported to innovate;
Create spaces for creativity to thrive across B&NES.
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Bath and North East Somerset remains a broadly healthy place to live with a high quality of life, many people throughout our district suffer from mental health difficulties, are out of work, and are experiencing isolation. This is contributed to by a range over interacting factors across health, environment and socioeconomic building blocks – the latter having the most influence on our physical and emotional health, and include things such as our financial situation, education, community, family and social support, employment, transport and leisure. The aim of supporting more accessible, affordable and engaging places to work and be creative throughout the district is an important aim in achieving the priorities of the B&NES Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The following priorities and delivery actions provide further policy support for a more accessible and inclusive creative economy:

Priority 2: Improve skills, good work and employment

2.1 Work with education providers and other partners to provide robust and inclusive pathways into work and including for disadvantaged young people.

2.3 Support the development of and access to an inclusive labour market, focusing on engaging our populations most at risk of inequalities in accessing and maintaining good work.

Priority 3: Strengthen compassionate and health communities

3.1 Continue to develop the infrastructure that encourages and enables individuals, organisations and networks to work together in an inclusive way, with the shared aim of supporting people in need and building strong local communities.

3.2 Enable and encourage proactive engagement in health promoting activity at all ages for good quality of life.

Priority 4: Create health promoting places

4.1 Utilise the Local Plan as an opportunity to shape, promote and deliver healthy and sustainable places and reduce inequalities.

We've started achieving this aim of supporting more disadvantaged residents to access creative spaces and community projects and develop their creative skills and businesses through the Old Printworks, Radstock, Little Lost Robot, and Creative Twerton projects. These have brought under-used spaces across our district back into use for creative purposes through B&NES support.

- [Green infrastructure strategy](#)
 - Notes the benefits that investment in green infrastructure can bring to enhance landscape character and built heritage as well as helping to invigorate the local economy and natural tourism and enhancing a sense of place. The intersection of GI and Culture is an important, place specific aspect of any future cultural strategy.
- Regeneration strategies:
 - Bath Public Realm & Movement Strategy
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/major-projects/public-realm-and-movement/public-realm-movement>
 - Milsom Quarter Masterplan – complete <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/milsom-quarter/masterplan-overview>
 - Bath Central Riverside Masterplan – underway
 - Radstock Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan – complete
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/radstock-town-centre-regeneration-action-plan>
 - Midsomer Norton Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan – underway
 - Keynsham Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan – underway
 - Old Brewery Quarter Town Centre Masterplan, Midsomer Norton – underway
- [Heritage Services Strategy](#)
 - Written in 2022 this document outlines the Service priorities to 2027. The Service operates the largest tourist attraction in the West of England and is leading the large capital project to build a new Fashion Museum in Bath

There are a number of key regional strategies that any B&NES led cultural strategy will need to recognise:

- [WECA Cultural plan and regional growth plan](#)
- [Visit West Destination Management Plan](#)
- [North Somerset Cultural Action Plan](#)
- Bristol Cultural Strategy

The West of England Region is made stronger by the sum of it's parts and cultural consumers and practitioners do not see the Local Authority boundaries.

DRAFT