

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
Board meeting – Wednesday 19 January 2022**

West of England Cultural Plan Draft

Purpose of the report

1. To present a draft summary (see Appendix A) of the Cultural Plan which has been developed by the West of England Cultural Compact.

Recommendation

LEP Board members to provide feedback on the Cultural Plan – it's overarching ambition, objectives, priority themes and proposed activities.

Background

2. The draft Cultural Plan builds on the previous West of England Combined Authority and Arts Council England jointly funded cultural strategy work led by the West of England Cultural Compact.
3. A working group of the LEP, the Cultural Compact is chaired by Professor Sue Rigby with a core membership from the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, North Somerset Council, the One City Culture Board, Culture Weston and Visit West.
4. Achates Philanthropy Ltd was appointed, through a competitive process, to assist the Cultural Compact with the development of the Plan. A comprehensive literature review and analysis of the external policy landscape was undertaken, as well as consultations facilitated by and with the membership of the Cultural Compact.
5. The Cultural Plan was to identify ways to achieve the following:
 - Inclusive and vigorous talent pipelines for culture in the region.
 - An ambitious investment strategy in the people who make culture and the spaces where culture is lived.
 - Business engaging with, and understanding the power of culture, to increase prosperity and success in the region.
 - All geographies and communities in the region can access culture as a tool in placemaking, engagement, and community-building.
 - All residents and visitors can access culture and cultural activities for their own wellbeing, development and enrichment.

6. The structure of the Cultural Plan is through Focus Areas and Cross Cutting Themes. An agreed set of Strategic Approaches (drawn from the regional cultural framework) is included as a set of guiding principles for prioritising actions and interventions.
7. The proposed initiatives of the Cultural Plan balance recovery measures and longer-term strategic ambition, which includes putting the West of England on the map for regional and global success whilst ensuring the ongoing resilience of culture in the region.
8. The first draft high-level West of England Cultural Plan follows an extensive consultation process to develop the regional cultural framework. The Cultural Compact is meeting with key cultural and creative industry stakeholders in January to share and discuss the activities and output of the Compact, along with the draft Plan.
9. In December 2022, S Bashford and Chair of the Cultural Compact, Prof S Rigby, met with the Chief Executive Darren Henley OBE and South West Area Director of Arts Council England Phil Gibby, to discuss progress to date on this jointly funded initiative; and to share potential joint ambitions for the way forward. Parties will work towards a launch of the Cultural Plan, with the West of England Metro Mayor, early in 2022.
10. Building on recovery funding committed to date, a new £15m Regional Recovery and Adaptations fund is being considered by WECA Committee on the 28th January 2022. This includes a £1.5m allocation to start the implementation of key parts of the Cultural Plan. The funding will be used to leverage further financial support from other sources including Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, for example, putting in place the foundations for a more substantial Regional Cultural Investment Fund in the long term.

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APPENDIX A

**West of England Cultural Plan
Executive Summary**

West of England Cultural Compact
v0.6 07 January 2022

Cultural - The Next Revolution

Agricultural, industrial, digital, cultural...the next revolution will not be in what we know, or what we can do, but in what we choose to think and make. Machines will not make the future, people will.

Making good choices, and making brilliant connections between ideas, will drive the next decades of progress towards a more equal society and to net zero. Creativity is everyone's.

The West of England is a powerhouse for innovation, with a thriving cultural ecology that competes on a global level. The region is home to over 6,000 creative businesses estimated to contribute £638 million to the economy each year, a double designated UNESCO World Heritage site in Bath, and the most productive digital cluster in the UK.

We will make sure that the people of the West of England can take a lead in this next revolution, by embedding culture at the centre of everything we do.

Culture is the dynamic engagement of people with meaning. It is sufficient in itself, but can also be harnessed to support individuals, communities, and businesses to thrive - this is the role of the West of England Cultural Compact.

We will start pragmatically, embedding culture in our ambitions for talent development; support for creative freelancers, Start Ups and the SME economy; placemaking, and wellbeing. This is the beginning of a wider engagement with the potential of culture to transform our economic and personal lives to be at the forefront of this new and powerful way of imagining our best futures.

The Cultural Plan is summarised in this document and outlines how this revolution will be brought about.

The Amplifying Role of the West of England Cultural Compact

The focus of the Cultural Plan is not to supplement or to compete with the existing cultural activity taking place across the region. Instead, the West of England Cultural Compact, through the Cultural Plan, acknowledges the dynamic approaches of the cultural activity which is already taking place across the region and sets out to 'amplify' this by focusing and attracting public, private and third sector funding and resources where it can have the greatest impact. It will also play a central coordinating role – drawing on the density and

strengths of our existing networks, evolving good practice models and supporting opportunities to share knowledge and approaches.

At the same time, the Cultural Plan recognises the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the cultural ecology and workforce across the West of England, with cultural and creative freelancers and SMEs amongst those most affected. In looking forward to a prosperous future for the region's cultural activity, the Cultural Plan aligns with the priorities and strategic programmes set out in the West of England Recovery Plan¹ and aims to build on the impact of the region's Cultural and Creative Recovery Fund, designed and implemented by the West of England Combined Authority.

The approach of the West of England Cultural Compact recognises that cultural provision across the region is not equally distributed and that the West of England is a diverse ecology of communities, geography and infrastructure. The initiatives outlined therefore set out activity towards the provision of a comprehensive offer so that all geographies and communities in the region can access culture.

The Cultural Plan is informed by policy, is evidence based and also brings to bear the regional insight, convening power and influence around strategy and investment that the West of England Cultural Compact has been set up to enact and enable.

Delivery of the activities set out in the Cultural Plan will require a dynamic mix of investment approaches, drawing together national, regional and local opportunities, and ensuring any public resource helps to unlock commercial investment and return for the region.

The West of England Cultural Plan

The West of England Cultural Plan ("Cultural Plan") balances recovery measures with longer-term strategic ambition, which includes putting the West of England on the map for national and global success whilst ensuring the ongoing resilience of culture in the region and the creation of decent jobs and training opportunities. We mean to start quickly, develop fast and end with transformation.

The initiatives are set out in such a way as to allow us to implement some activity immediately and quickly (12 months); develop activity that requires longer planning horizons (1-5 years); and build a track record of success to create the opportunities for our more ambitious initiatives (5-10 year trajectory).

¹ <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/West-of-England-Recovery-Plan.pdf>

Short-term [12 months]

Principally simpler initiatives which can be implemented quickly by further developing existing activity and exploiting new funding opportunities. There will be a focus within this period on initiatives that prioritise young people and freelancers, including building on existing measures like the Combined Authority's Creative and Cultural Economy Recovery Programme.

Medium-term [1-5 years]

More significant, region-wide initiatives, including those focused on strengthening networks both across the creative and cultural industries and with the wider commercial, civic, and not-for-profit sectors and those addressing geographical gaps in support and provision. This phase also includes the development of a coherent and compelling narrative for a diverse, people-focused West of England as a driver for visitors and investment into the region ('Happy Place' campaign); and a key focus on towards net carbon action, including through the proposed Regional Sustainable Living Centre.

Long-term [5-10 years]

Major projects that will make the region synonymous with culture and cutting-edge creativity on a national and international stage. Culture will be the driving force for significant regional development and strategic public-private investment. These initiatives might include the development of an Immersive Digital Experience, major amplification of existing cultural infrastructure, and a Mega Event to focus attention on the West of England; and will be contingent on unlocking significant public-private investment.

Initiatives are grouped under four **Focus Areas**.

Talent Development

To develop inclusive, ambitious and effective talent pipelines for culture in the region and beyond; to promote pathways into the creative and cultural industries for emerging talent; to ensure that creativity forms part of the expectations of employers of their staff; and start where it is most impactful, by ensuring that culture is included across the school curriculum.

Creative Freelance, Start Up & SME Economy

To support the continued growth and post-pandemic recovery of the creative industries in the region; providing targeted support to businesses who are central to the West of England's distinct cultural and creative ecology, to help them thrive; and to attract significant national and international investment to drive future growth and development of the sector.

Placemaking

To place culture at the centre of placemaking, community-making and regeneration strategies; to ensure that the value of cultural investment is promoted and understood by local and regional government and business; in celebrating the region's differences to develop a compelling, coherent narrative to drive tourism and participation in culture.

Wellbeing

To ensure that all residents and visitors can access culture and cultural activities for their own wellbeing, development, and enrichment; and that culture is at the heart of happy, thriving, and healthy communities.

Running across the Cultural Plan are three **Cross-cutting Themes**:

Inclusion

A focus on engaging and creating pathways into culture and the wider creative industries regardless of background. This will include some targeted activity where evidence shows groups are underrepresented within the sector, for example, individuals from the global majority; asylum seekers and refugees; people with lived experience of homelessness.

Environmental Sustainability

Support of cultural initiatives that promote changes in behaviour and contribute to accelerating our transition to Net Carbon Zero.

Digital Technology and Innovation

Activity that further cements and amplifies the region's position as the UK's engine for digital and creative innovation.

Focus Areas

(I) TALENT DEVELOPMENT

For the West of England to take a leading role in the next revolution, it is vital that we invest now in the next generation of disruptors and makers. The next great innovation, be it environmental or technological, could come from anywhere and from anyone. It is therefore critical that the creativity of every child and young person in the region is given space to flourish and that emergent talent is given every means to succeed.

Cultural Sector School Twinning & Curriculum Exemplars

Working through the West of England Careers Hub, ensure every secondary school in the region is linked with artists and a cultural organisation so young people are inspired about future training and job opportunities. To share knowledge and good practice approaches to embedding arts and culture in the school curriculum and to support schools and wider educational settings to register for the Artsmark Award.

Outcome: Creative approaches to teaching enhance participation levels and improve educational attainment amongst schoolchildren.

Cultural Careers & Talent Development Platform

To work with the innovative and engaging online regional resource promoting training, qualification programmes to create a bespoke platform for creative and cultural career opportunities. To evolve a set of good practice talent development models and to support organisations to ensure a comprehensive offer across the region as a whole.

Outcome: The creative industries is more inclusive and representative of the region.

Regional Technical Level Qualifications and Apprenticeships

To support cultural organisations to develop and exploit the opportunities offered by new Technical level Qualifications (to be phased in from 2023) and apprenticeships to open up pathways to the creative industries, drawing on existing regional employment and skills programmes like Future Bright and the devolved Adult Education Budget.

Outcome: The creative industries is more inclusive and representative of the region.

Music Sector Pathways

Region-wide training, work placement and employment programme, focused on non-traditional pathways into music for underrepresented young people aged 16-25. Coordinated with Arts Council England funded Music Education Hubs and delivered with music charities and commercial industry partners and venues.

Outcome: The creative industries is more inclusive and representative of the region.

(II) CREATIVE FREELANCE, START UP & SME ECONOMY

Creative freelancers, Start Ups and SMEs are the beating heart of our cultural economy but have also been amongst those most impacted by the pandemic. At the same time, the Combined Authority's inward investment service – Invest Bristol and Bath – is helping to attract new companies to exploit the West of England's impressive university, research and development and freelance asset base. The initiatives under this focus area not only help the region's freelancers, Start Ups and SMEs to recover from the impact of Covid-19, but also to thrive and prosper in the period ahead. And in so doing, to attract new creatives and businesses to call the region their home through the promotion of our cultural and creative assets and workforce.

Freelancer Transition Programme

To develop and launch new support – including mentoring and training – for freelance creatives through the Combined Authority's regional business support services (West of England Growth hub) to help with their transition and adaptation in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

West of England Good Employment Charter

To ensure a significant number of creative and cultural businesses participate in the Metro Mayor's Good Employment Charter, helping them to improve investment in their staff, and enable more inclusive, equitable and sustainable working practices.

Industry Leading Accelerator Programme

To open a West of England Growth Hub Accelerator, drawing together the region's extensive business incubator support offer, for scaling creative industry start-ups and small businesses. This will build on the success of the region's Combined Authority and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) supported Creative Scale-Up programme.

Targeted Inward Investment programme

Alongside dedicated support to help businesses access the finance they need to grow and flourish, a targeted campaign to attract new creative and cultural businesses to the West of England based on the region's unique and growing strengths, for example, in creative technology (CreaTech) and high-end TV and film production.

All of these initiatives share the same two Outcomes:

- *Creative freelancers, start-ups and SMEs feel equipped and supported to thrive.*
- *Continued growth of the creative industries in the region.*

(III) PLACEMAKING

Embedding a rich and equitable cultural offer is central to healthy, happy, thriving communities and to building the character and distinctiveness of place that makes people want to live, study, work and visit in the West of England.

Public art supports quality urban design with the creation of unique spaces and places, alongside social engagement of new, emerging and revitalised communities. The impact of culture on local people, communities and places is far-reaching. Investment in culture drives local productivity and employment and contributes to the regeneration of areas and revitalisation of our high streets. It helps to bring communities together – opening up new perspectives, encouraging participation in civic life and enabling us to explore our collective future. The initiatives under this focus area will seek to ensure that the benefits, impacts and opportunities of culture are equally available to everyone in the West of England. These initiatives include a focus on working with local communities and investing in cultural infrastructure and activity in more deprived areas, to support levelling up across the region.

Cultural Infrastructure Toolkit and Charter, and Value Campaign

To develop a dynamic Cultural Infrastructure Toolkit and Charter for and with property developers to strengthen approaches to cultural investment. This will include exploring ways of using policy levers across the region (for example section 106 agreements and CIL) that align cultural investment with education, community and housing priorities. A joint national campaign with other Cultural Compacts targeting businesses, cultural organisations and their audiences, on the value of cultural investment will be delivered in parallel.

Outcomes:

- *Culture contributes to wellbeing and happy, thriving, and healthy communities.*
- *Enhanced understanding of role of culture within regional planning.*
- *Increased commercial sector awareness of the value of cultural investment.*
- *More opportunities for artists to deliver public art programmes or have spaces to allow their vision and ideas to thrive.*

Maximising our region's Cultural Hubs and Assets

Building on and better connecting the strong network of creative and cultural hubs in the region, to enable more people to experience culture for the first time. This will include the development of the role of libraries and other public assets, extending their reach into all our urban and rural communities. In addition, tools, guidance, and support will be developed to

assist the transfer of local amenities to cultural organisations, including vacant properties and buildings formerly owned by local authorities.

Outcomes:

- *Culture contributes to wellbeing and happy, thriving, and healthy communities.*
- *Cultural Hubs including libraries use their community reach to engage and enable more people to experience culture of the first time especially children and young people.*

Regional Sustainable Living Centre

To establish one or more Regional Sustainable Living Centres² – a home for businesses, traders and charities that have a green and ecological business model and innovative environmental programmes – and the development of ancillary Sustainable Living Hubs, across the region within community libraries.

Outcomes:

- *Increased awareness of the climate emergency amongst local residents, charities, organisations, businesses and creatives.*
- *Local residents, charities, organisations, businesses and creatives are better equipped to take action towards net-zero carbon.*

Immersive Digital Experience

To create an internationally recognised and commercial immersive space for art, design, film, music, and video games that explores and celebrates the innovators transforming society through digital technology.

Outcomes:

- *Increased public recognition of and interest in the West of England as the UK home for digital innovation.*
- *Culture in the region is more sustainable.*

A 'Happy Place' Campaign

To develop a regional campaign to drive tourism for the West of England, which positions it as the diverse, inventive, wellbeing centre of the UK and has a unified frame that can be interpreted at a local level. The campaign would connect the busy cultural, creative, festival and music scene today with Bath's heritage as a wellbeing destination since the Roman Empire, as well as showcasing arts and health initiatives.

Outcomes:

² The intellectual property for this specific model is owned by CD Land Management and Achatas Philanthropy, it is noted that other models exist.

- *Improved perceptions of the West of England as a great place to live, study, work and visit;*
- *Culture contributes to wellbeing, thriving and healthy communities.*

Mega Event

To proactively target opportunities for hosting a ‘mega event’ in the West of England focused on the happiness, wellbeing, and environmental sustainability themes.

Outcomes:

- *Improved perceptions of the West of England as a great place to live, study, work, and visit.*
- *Culture contributes to wellbeing and happy, thriving, and healthy communities.*

(IV) WELLBEING

Culture is an essential part of a life well lived. Arts and culture-based interventions offer new and surprising ways to promote the health and wellbeing of communities and to help them flourish and grow. Participation in culture is a fundamental human right, as outlined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The initiatives under this focus area seek to unlock the potential of culture to transform the lives of peoples in the West of England who are most at risk of social exclusion – asylum seekers and refugees, people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as wider communities.

Collaborating with stakeholders who are actively addressing areas of deprivation across the region will be essential in ensuring that culture and creativity can be experienced by everyone; particularly where it contributes to improved mental health and rising aspirations.

Arts in Health Coordinators

Appointment of Arts in Health Coordinators to connect cultural organisations with social prescribers and link workers within local health, social and housing services.

Outcomes:

- *Increased wellbeing amongst residents participating in social prescribing activities.*
- *Culture contributes to wellbeing and happy, thriving, and healthy communities.*

Arts and Homelessness Civic Plan

To implement Arts and Homelessness International's arts and homelessness civic plan including embedding arts and creativity into homelessness services through brokering partnerships between homelessness and cultural organisations.

Outcome: Arts and cultural activity contributes to improved outcomes for local people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Widening access to culture

To make cultural venues and organisations accessible to all people and communities in the community, regardless of background. This will include targeted support where evidence shows specific barriers exist,

Outcomes:

- *The West of England's arts and cultural provision is more welcoming to all people in the region regardless of background*
- *Arts and cultural activity contribute to improved outcomes for target groups where specific barriers exist, with increased participation, reduced loneliness, and an improved sense of belonging.*

Disabled Access Support

To partner with disabled-led arts and access organisations to help arts and heritage venues in the region improve access.

Outcomes:

- *The West of England cultural provision is more welcoming to disabled and neurodiverse people.*
- *Disabling barriers are better understood by cultural organisations and action is taken to address these.*