

CELEBRATE, CHAMPION AND CONNECT

East Suffolk Cultural Strategy 2023-28

East Suffolk Council
February 2023

ctconsults.

The Intelligence Agency

Cultural ecosystem

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Noun ecology

1.a cultural community of interacting people and their physical environment.

2."the East Suffolk arts, culture and heritage ecosystem is one of the naturally richest in the country"

3.(in general use) a complex network or interconnected system relating to the arts, customs and social behaviour of a society.

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Foreword

In East Suffolk we are proud of our culture offering, and celebrate the rich diversity of our cultural, arts and heritage assets. We have a vibrant creative sector here, full of fantastic local talent and originality, inspired by our magical coast, delightful towns and beautiful rural areas. This is reflected by the wealth of past and present artists and creatives, who not only contribute to our local economy, but provide a genuine sense of worth and pride for our communities.

At East Suffolk Council we understand the transformative powers of culture in our places and our communities. A positive sense of belonging and 'pride of place' can be linked to the celebration of heritage, and the participation in arts or creative activities. We are committed to exploring the needs of our creative sector further, and understand the links to place, environment and community contribution.

East Suffolk Council is grateful to all the local stakeholders who participated in the development of this Strategy, which will be co-owned by the Council and the wider creative sector. We look forward to more collaboration with our partners, and the opportunity to co-create programmes within our Action Plan which reflect the opportunities before us. This is the time to embrace everything that culture can offer on a local, regional and national level, and we will rise to the challenge.



Councillor Craig Rivett

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Economic Development & Assets
East Suffolk Council



Executive summary

This strategy sets out how arts and culture, heritage and creativity can and will continue to exert positive impacts with our local communities across East Suffolk. It will also connect into the key strategic plans and programmes for East Suffolk as a district, as defined in the local and regional major strategies and plans.

As the region's seminal cultural strategy¹ for cultural regeneration stated in 2016, but just as relevant now: "Culture is a source of economic growth, both directly in terms of jobs and employment, and as a source of innovation and collaboration with other growth sectors. They attract talent, support our visitor economy and drive investment into vital cultural assets in our towns."

Extensive research and consultation has informed the Strategy. Over 300 cultural, heritage and related assets were mapped across its rural and coastal landscape. Despite challenging economic times, the richness of the cultural offer remains a powerful foundation for an ambitious Strategy – and one that is sustainable and responsible. These strengths lie in cultural assets and community energy: festivals and events, high-quality community arts hubs, heritage, theatre and new writing, visual arts... the list goes on.

The potential of culture to enhance social, environmental and economic benefits are evident everywhere, not least in the ongoing progress of Lowestoft (amongst other success stories). But there are plenty of less prominent but equally bold and innovative examples of arts. East Suffolk's cultural and heritage strengths are part of the fabric of place. Its landscape inspires, it attracts an enviable creative workforce, and can point to areas of genuinely impactful cultural activity across the district. This is especially notable in such a rural / coastal part of the region. This rurality also creates issues of fragmentation and isolation, reducing access to cultural participation, education and skills development. There is however good evidence of collaborative will across culture and heritage, but also with partners in other sectors such as education, health and commerce.

This Cultural Strategy brings a critical alignment of vision, priorities and outcomes to enable the cultural workforce and its partners to realise more of its potential here in East Suffolk. In other words, a 'brain gain' not a 'brain drain'. Research findings identified a number of critical areas where the district as a whole, and individual communities can take significant steps forward. These include the integration of culture within wider strategic priorities – of East Suffolk Council, but also of the many partners and stakeholders who will make this Strategy a success.

Shared values of creative co-design, access and inclusion, supporting talent and expression will be at the heart of partnership-led delivery. This will bring East Suffolk Council as the commissioning body of the Strategy together with a sector eager to maximise sustainability and benefits through a joined-up approach to resources, development and programmes. A further core ambition is data and insight. Understanding what local people need and want is critical, and this Strategy has identified data as a key opportunity to respond to.

This collaborative approach will release more resources, skills and expertise to exploit the many opportunities set out in the Strategy. An enhanced sector-wide activation of information and insight, digital and connectivity, skills and training, creative planning and programming can be transformational over the next decade.

The Vision frames a prospectus for change and investment:

We will help nurture a richer, distributed cultural ecosystem in East Suffolk, uniting culture, heritage, community and landscape, with the ambition of enabling inclusive and sustainable cultural, social, and economic opportunities for all residents. The Strategy sets out three interlinked priorities to drive co-development of a robust action plan.

1. East Suffolk's cultural and creative economy will thrive, realising its potential and providing benefits for itself and for other sectors.
2. (Young) people will have opportunities to cultivate creative careers and lives without needing to leave the area, with clear pathways for skills, talent and career development.
3. Communities will have access to cultural participation opportunities inspired by the landscape, which benefit health and wellbeing.

The action plan will be developed and evolved in partnership with key stakeholders. This is key – it is and will remain an East Suffolk strategy (and not an East Suffolk Council strategy). That does not diminish the central role of the Council however. It has a clear leadership role as a planning, delivery and resource 'hub', supporting the Strategy at all levels from regional to the hyperlocal, bringing public, private and third-sectors together.

An action plan framework introduces some areas that will certainly be a focus of delivery. More will follow. These include exploring and developing work experience programmes; creative health and social prescribing; buddy schemes; joint funding support; culture in place-making; and supporting Local Cultural Education Programmes.

This Strategy has been informed by the district's many voices and advocates, and it is this 'cultural, heritage and creative community' that will deliver a successful Strategy. One that can only be from and for East Suffolk.

East Suffolk can create the right conditions for its creative economy and communities to not just survive, but thrive. The role and impact of culture will be better understood and valued. East Suffolk is a place with a truly diverse and developed cultural ecology. Let's celebrate that.

1 Culture Drives Growth, The East's Cultural Strategy 2016-2022, commissioned by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Culture Board.



Image: Sunset Arena, FolkEast 2022



Image: 1940s Weekend, London Road Heritage Action Zone, delivered by Seagull Theatre

CONTEXT & INSIGHTS



A1

Introduction & Overview

A1.1 INTRODUCTION

East Suffolk is an area rich in cultural and heritage assets. From internationally acclaimed concert halls to emerging community arts hubs, there is an enviable, albeit dispersed, asset base more comparable to a metropolitan area than a largely rural district. These assets create powerful foundations for an ambitious Cultural Strategy – which can truly inspire and engage all of East Suffolk’s cultural professionals, partners and communities.

An overall vision for how culture can provide a distinctive difference across the whole district has been lacking. This has inhibited activity and impacts. There are many local hotspots – e.g. Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Beccles (see map in section A2) – rather than a fully connected cultural ecosystem. In Lowestoft, a collective vision and collaboration has attracted investment into culture and culture-led regeneration. East Suffolk must work strategically to enable all of its towns and communities to value and understand the intrinsic value of culture and champion full, cultural lives.

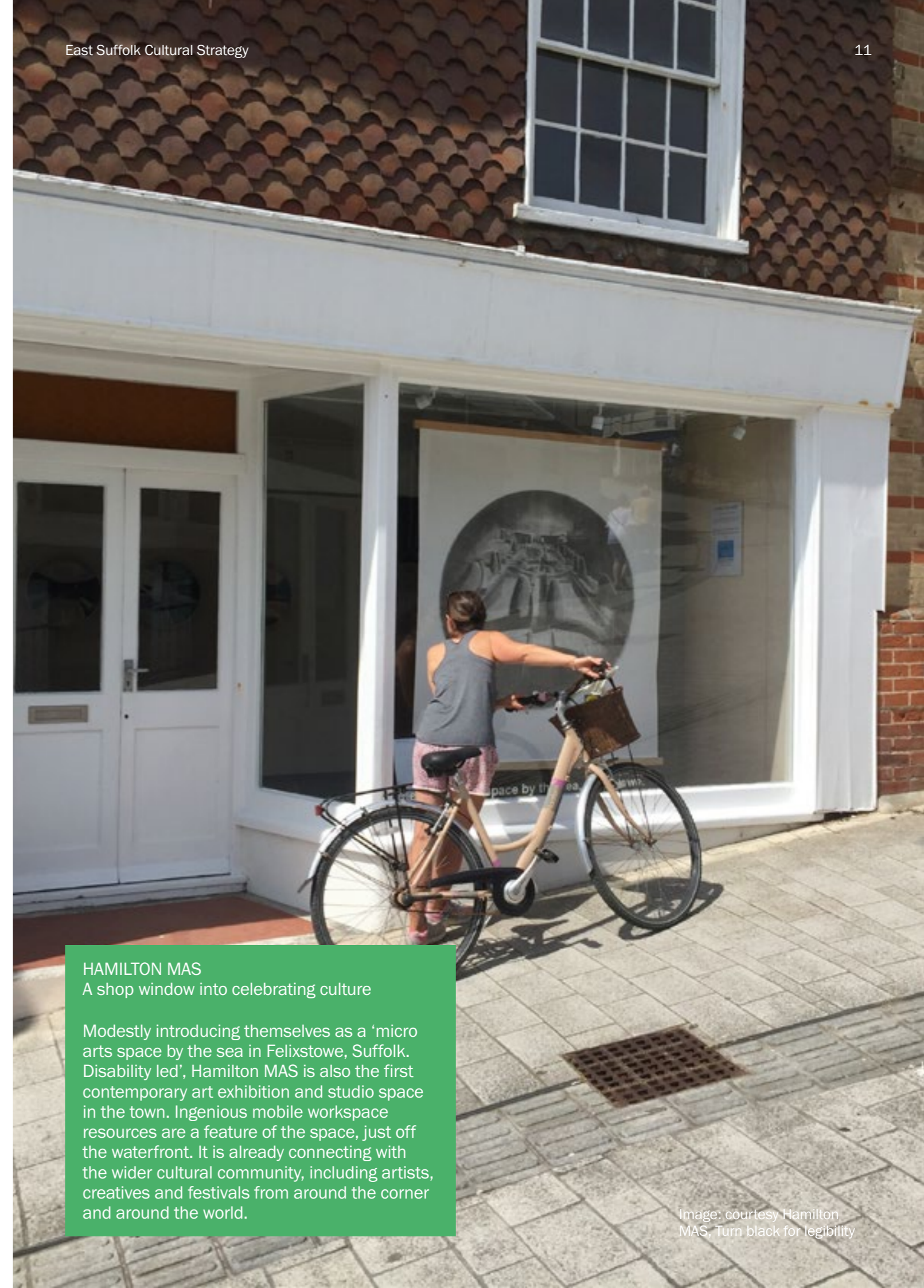
How to retain and grow creative populations is a key priority. To be inspired by the landscape and the richness of local heritage; to support creative people to grow and flourish; to nurture cultural diversity in places and spaces across the district; and help communities take an active role in cultivating creativity. All of which builds a sense of place and pride of place. This strategy sets out the priorities and route map to realise the potential of a creative economy – for local communities and for cultural tourism.

“This energy has been ignited by the arrival of creative professionals escaping spiralling city rents, and joining the home-working revolution triggered by lockdown. Some are returning to their home regions. The result is a cultural rewilding, or re-seeding, of ideas and skills, as those gaps in rural arts ecosystems start to fill.”²

This is all about taking a view of the whole cultural ecology with a holistic approach to supporting culture and creative practice in all its forms. It is about releasing the power of East Suffolk’s built heritage to inspire communities, and its natural environment to provide wellbeing. This is inclusive and engaged, from local programmes that build social confidence in young people to international artists, producers and practitioners working here to taking any opportunity to simply celebrate creativity in our communities.

East Suffolk Council recognises the placemaking potential of a wide range of local institutions and businesses, including cultural ones. By working more closely with the cultural sector on key shared agendas – from employment and skills, to health and wellbeing, to the visitor economy and inward investment – we can all help to develop more inclusive and creative local economies. Through this strategy, we are ensuring that cultural stakeholders can play the fullest role in fostering communities and local economies across East Suffolk.

² Louise Millar, The Guardian, 13.01.23. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jan/13/new-energy-ex-fighter-jet-hq-britains-cultural-rewilding>



HAMILTON MAS
A shop window into celebrating culture

Modestly introducing themselves as a ‘micro arts space by the sea in Felixstowe, Suffolk. Disability led’, Hamilton MAS is also the first contemporary art exhibition and studio space in the town. Ingenious mobile workspace resources are a feature of the space, just off the waterfront. It is already connecting with the wider cultural community, including artists, creatives and festivals from around the corner and around the world.

Image: courtesy Hamilton MAS, Turn black for legibility

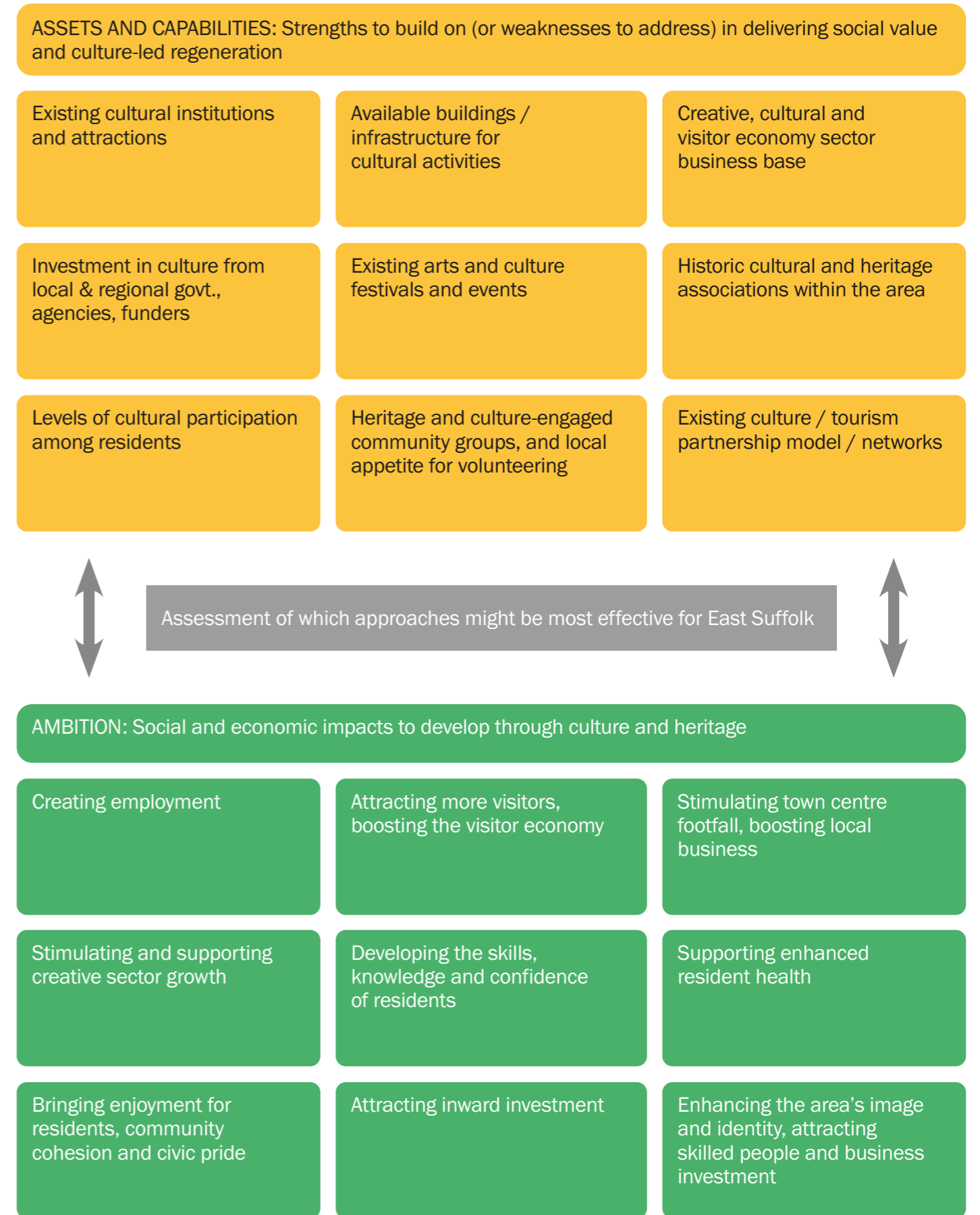
A1.2 WHY INVEST IN CULTURE TO DRIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT?

Culture-led regeneration has been shown to deliver a range of social and economic impacts (see chart). Numerous post-pandemic reports have demonstrated ‘the extent to which many arts and cultural organisations have responded to the crisis with creative improvisation, reimagining and strengthening their civic role’³. Many organisations have entered new areas of operation and new partnerships. These exist both online and offline in their local communities, and are most effective where co-creation, cross-sector working, and the use of pilot programmes are employed to reach new and existing parts of their communities, and economies.

East Suffolk can now assess its relative strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to develop a place-specific Cultural Strategy.

³ Economic contribution of the Arts, Creative Industries Council, 2020

“We are pleased that local authorities are increasingly recognising the ability of the arts and culture sector to generate positive change in their areas.”
Caloustie Gulbenkian Foundation



Source: Culture-led regeneration achieving inclusive and sustainable growth, Caloustie Gulbenkian Foundation and Local Government Association 2019

A1.3 A DEFINITION OF CULTURE FOR EAST SUFFOLK?

The importance of discussing definitions for terms like ‘arts’, ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’ lies not so much in the need to necessarily arrive at a strict, fixed definition. Culture, heritage, tourism and other terms become job titles, departments, national agencies. But that doesn’t fix anything in the minds of people seeking to understand what is, and isn’t ‘culture’.

As Arts Council England puts it:

“Culture means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, religion and other forms of heritage.”

What can help is to demystify and make any use of these shorthand terms inclusive for the widest possible audience. An important report on cultural audience development used quote from consultations as its title: Not For The Likes Of You (Morton Smyth, 2004).

What is more important is not to exclude people from arts, culture and heritage by making it one thing and not another. Nor should we spend days workshopping what a definition of culture might be in East Suffolk. The edges of any definition should be porous – letting ideas and new thinking in.

So if culture in a place means sport, or horticulture, great. This is an opportunity for diverse activities in diverse communities to experience new things, together.

How it all works together in a place is important too. In this Strategy we will use terms like ‘cultural ecology’ or ‘ecosystem’. Again, these are catch-all terms. If you really want a formal definition, then AHRC have one:

“The complex interdependencies that shapes the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings.”

The Ecology of Culture, John Holden, AHRC

When we try to combine the words ‘arts and culture’ as they are so often presented, the need for focused, ongoing discussions of how we – both as individuals and as parts of larger groups – are defining these concepts becomes even more evident.

By ‘arts and culture’, do we mean being artistically creative or experiencing something creative and original? Or do we look even wider, across all activities that indicate a ideas, learning and skills inspired by people, history and place? Creativity is universal, even if ‘creative industries’ try to take ownership more than most!

Perhaps Arts Council England can help again. Taking from their Let’s Create 2020-2030 strategy:

“Creativity is the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art, or a reimagining of an existing work. Culture is the result of that creative process: we encounter it in the world, in museums and libraries, theatres and galleries, carnivals and concert halls, festivals and digital spaces.”

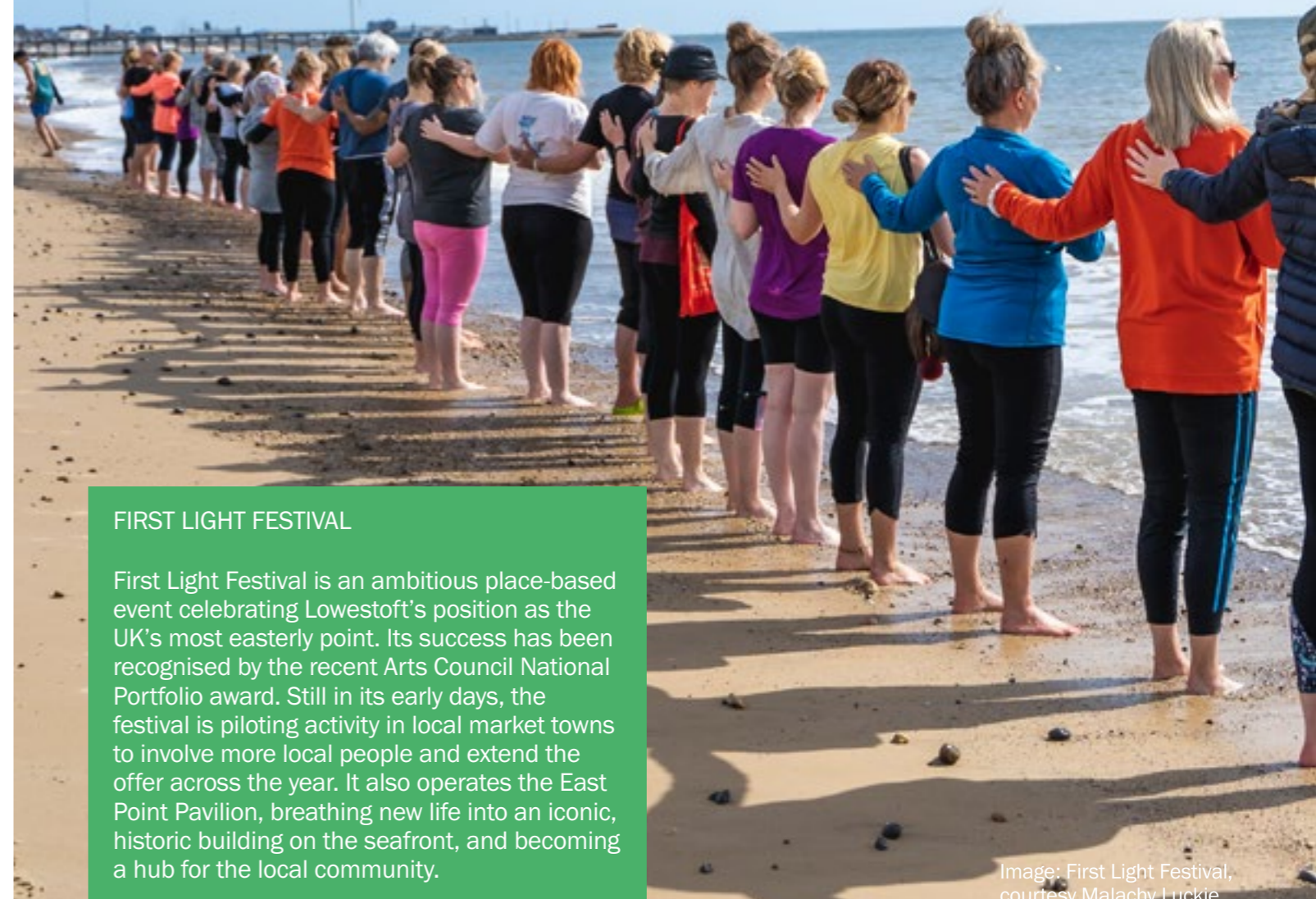
The good news is we don’t have to choose a definition. We get to decide, and change it over time too. In celebrating, championing and connecting culture, we’re doing the same for communities.

And that seems to be as good a starting point as any, regardless of a dictionary definition of ‘culture’.



“Culture means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, religion and other forms of heritage.”

Arts Council England



FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL

First Light Festival is an ambitious place-based event celebrating Lowestoft’s position as the UK’s most easterly point. Its success has been recognised by the recent Arts Council National Portfolio award. Still in its early days, the festival is piloting activity in local market towns to involve more local people and extend the offer across the year. It also operates the East Point Pavilion, breathing new life into an iconic, historic building on the seafront, and becoming a hub for the local community.

Image: First Light Festival, courtesy Malachy Luckie

Profile

A1.4 PROFILE: LOWESTOFT

When the question arises – why invest in culture? – the answer lies nearby. The ongoing impact of cultural and creative activity through capital projects, community programmes and events are demonstrable, and has not gone unnoticed across East Suffolk.

Building on the existing venues, heritage and creativity, Lowestoft has witnessed a cultural renewal over the last few years. Lowestoft had the vision and courage to try a new way, embracing and creating opportunities based on a reconnection to its unique landscape.

Collaboration was encouraged and flourished through place-based programmes like an exemplar Cultural Education Partnership and the Great Place scheme. A new Leadership Group generated a Cultural Strategy to provide the strategic focus.

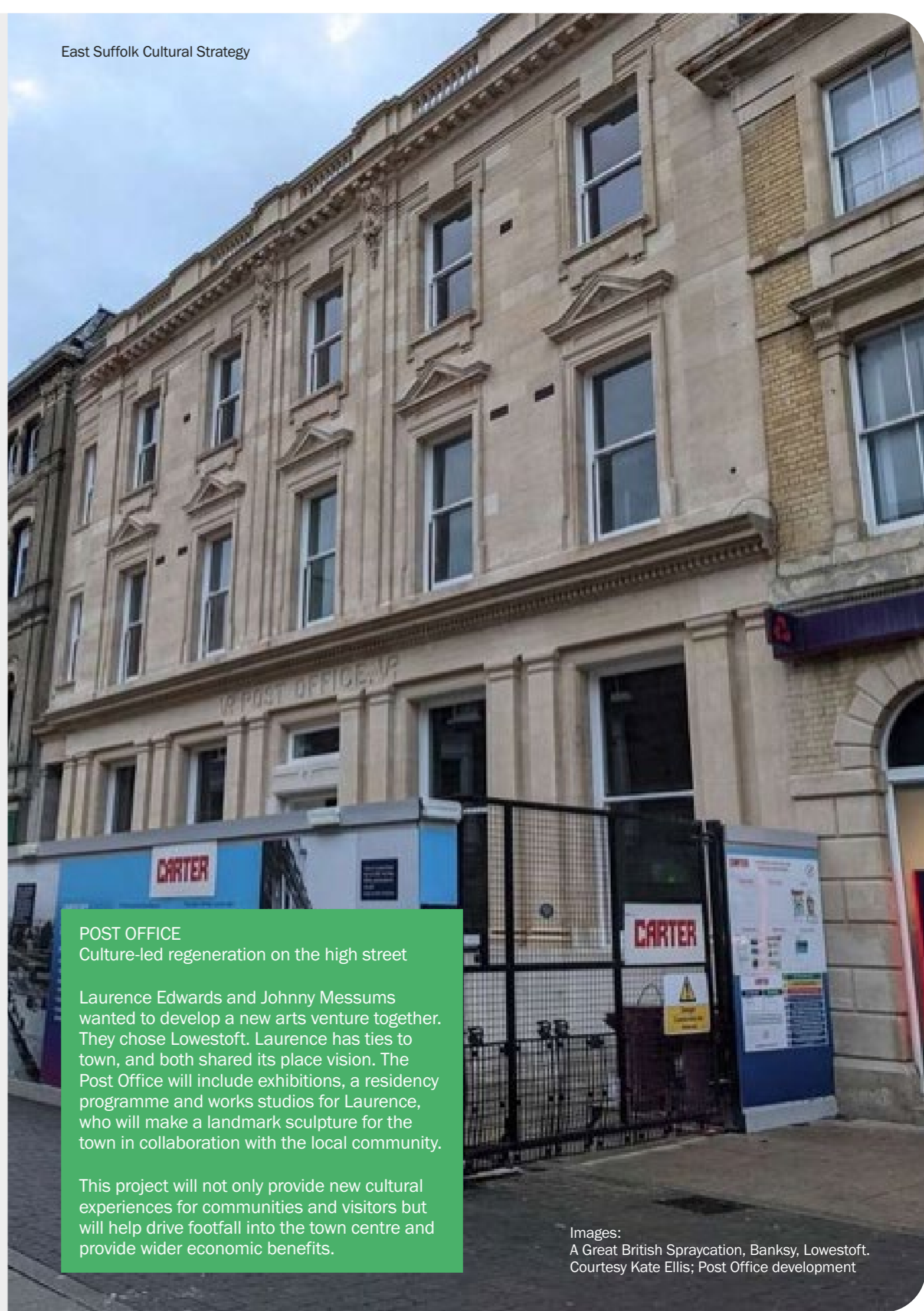
In 2019, everyone was invited to the South Beach during the inaugural First Light Festival. 30,000 people came. Through cultural opportunities the town is reversing outdated perceptions, bringing excitement, confidence, and energy back into the town.

Heritage plays an important role. The town boasts two Heritage Action Zones and a celebrated natural landscape at Carlton Marshes.

In November 2022, Arts Council England put its seal of approval on the town's progress. It announced that Lowestoft, for the first time ever, has two National Portfolio Organisations. The cultural leadership of First Light Festival CIC and the Seagull Theatre is bringing further investment and cultural opportunities into the town.

There is a strong emerging creative sector, with more creative talent producing in the town than ever before. The expansive natural landscape – with its big skies, wonderful light and sandy beaches – continues to inspire new generations. In 2021, Lowestoft was visited by the street artist Banksy during his Great Spraycation. Thousands of excited visitors (and media) flocked to Lowestoft and Oulton Board to see the artwork.

Culture is at the heart of the ten-year vision for the ongoing regeneration of Lowestoft. Investment into redundant spaces and heritage buildings and reimagining them as cultural spaces is a key component, including the Post Office and East Point Pavilion. Other places now look to Lowestoft for inspiration, but there is plenty more to accomplish for the town and for its communities. Lowestoft is just starting!



POST OFFICE
Culture-led regeneration on the high street

Laurence Edwards and Johnny Messums wanted to develop a new arts venture together. They chose Lowestoft. Laurence has ties to town, and both shared its place vision. The Post Office will include exhibitions, a residency programme and works studios for Laurence, who will make a landmark sculpture for the town in collaboration with the local community.

This project will not only provide new cultural experiences for communities and visitors but will help drive footfall into the town centre and provide wider economic benefits.

Images:
A Great British Spraycation, Banksy, Lowestoft.
Courtesy Kate Ellis; Post Office development

A2 Insights

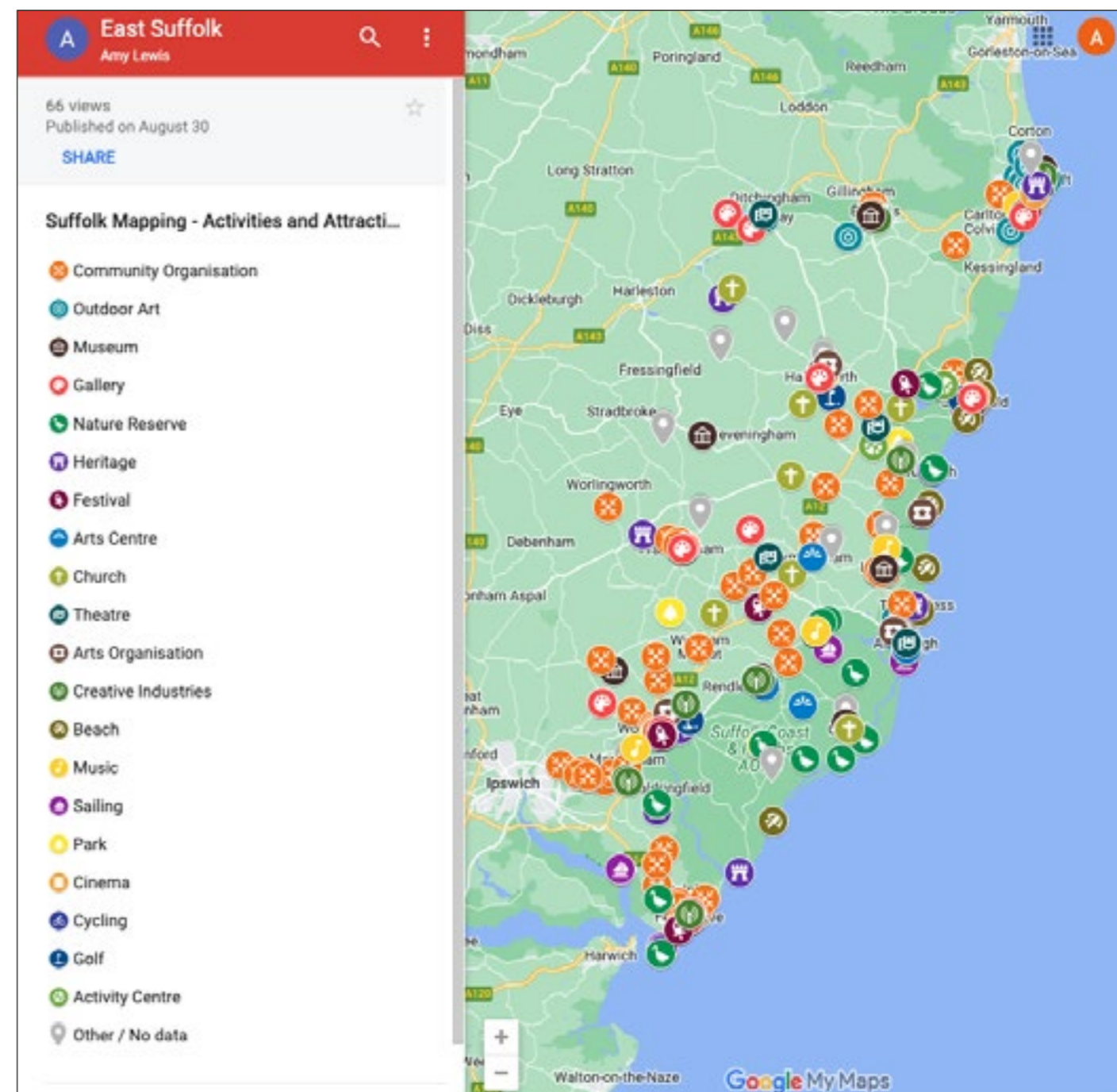
Research, consultation and analysis was conducted between June – October 2022. The subsequent Insights Report provided the evidence base for this Strategy. Findings were based on a series of 1:1 consultation interviews, desk research and small-group workshop activity, with representatives from a variety of culture, creative and other sectors.

A series of community and stakeholder engagement workshops were held at East Point Pavilion in Lowestoft, @Inc Felixstowe, Old Jet in Rendlesham, and Bungay's Fisher Theatre in September and October 2022, attracting c.80 attendees.

These workshops tested some emerging themes developed from earlier engagement. Attendees included community, cultural, heritage, sport and voluntary groups and organisations; businesses; creative practitioners; and Council officers.

Extensive desk research has built a picture of East Suffolk's strengths and needs in a local, regional and national context.

A dynamic online map of cultural and creative assets is available to continue to be populated at: <https://bit.ly/3QRU5vY>. With over 350 entries, it includes theatres, museums, heritage assets, arts centres, creative infrastructure and supply chain, cinemas, events and music venues, public art, community hubs, visitor attractions and active lifestyle offer.



EAST SUFFOLK
CULTURAL ASSETS
- GOOGLE MAP

A2.1 LOCAL CONTEXT

Understanding the demographics is useful for planning and also how places work and behave:

- c.246,000 population lives mainly within 11 market towns.
- As with many rural locations, it is older than the national average (average age 44 years; England 39 years).
- There is also an above average older population (65+ years – 23.84%, England figure is 18.4%). This is the only age group that is growing. The East of England population has grown by 8.3%, for context.
- Ethnic diversity is lower than the county average, and when compared to England as a whole.

There is a typical rural / coastal place narrative that young people move away. The south of the district neighbours Ipswich, the north is only half an hour from Norwich. Cambridge and London also exert a gravitational pull. But unlike some other regions, they often look to return when they are seeking security or to start a family. Strategies like this one aims to improve pride of place, jobs and leisure opportunities. This will help to retain and grow younger populations, and attract 'leavers' back earlier in their career.

Areas which have older populations typically find that there is more pressure on healthcare and social care services – although on average older people in East Suffolk do stay healthier for longer due to active and sociable lifestyles. Social prescribing and creative health initiatives are some of the tools available to us. They are especially effective in helping to mitigate the effects of poor mental health – sadly an issue which is significantly more prevalent in East Suffolk than across both county and country ⁴.

A balance of strategic investments must continue to be sought to meet diverse cultural needs. Some of our urban areas have deprived wards with lower levels of cultural engagement. District data can mask this reality from funders, making some funding awards harder to access.

A2.2 CULTURAL CONTEXT

The local cultural and creative sector is truly rich, across a variety of creative disciplines. There are clear strengths in festivals and events, with nationally significant Latitude sitting alongside place-based excellence such as FolkEast. Another strength is theatre and performance, which connects well into creative and new writing – with local players such as Ink and National Portfolio Organisation High Tide Theatre at the forefront.

Visual arts remains a notable part of the sector. East Suffolk can boast multiple commercial galleries and studio spaces for all price ranges, and renowned resident contemporary artists. New platforms support artists and service local communities, such as The Art Station, Saxmundham and Hamilton MAS, Felixstowe.

⁴ Suicide rates are much higher, and climbing, amongst East Suffolk residents, according to Suffolk Observatory



A CULTURAL PLACE FOR ALL AGES
Cultural engagement is not just for one generation

Given that older people make up a large proportion of residents, their social, health and cultural needs must be considered. Additionally, creating vibrant communities which appeal to younger people is also a priority. Balancing these needs and building cultural communities is vital to the future success of East Suffolk.

Images: Marina Theatre Next Stagers; Toptime session at Art Station, working with ceramics

And of course, Britten Pears Arts brings global acclaim and facilities – as well as Arts Council investment of c£5m within the current National Portfolio funding period. Snape Maltings is an international music school, with a major year-round programme.

Nearly half of the Association of Suffolk Museums' members are located in East Suffolk, with 28 museums and heritage centres of which 12 are accredited or officially working towards accreditation (many relying on a strong volunteer base). This is in addition to the plethora of English Heritage and National Trust sites, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. The Association works with members to improve practice and develops some excellent projects and exhibitions. The volume and variety of museums and heritage organisations in East Suffolk, and a willingness to pilot and embed new activities, offers a strong foundation for collaboration and impact.

“We have a culture of care – for each other, wildlife and the environment.”

Stakeholder comment

Partners historically viewed as primarily non-cultural (in many part of the country) operate fully as cultural players in East Suffolk. They realise the value of creative programming as part of their audience development and delivery outcomes. For example, Suffolk Wildlife Trust delivers a full range of creative activities across and beyond their sites. Suffolk Libraries' innovative approach has resulted in them becoming a National Portfolio Organisation; championing libraries as gateways to creativity and cultural venues – a lifeline in rural and isolated communities. The landscape and built environment are integral to cultural provision in East Suffolk. Naturally.

2.2% of the workforce in East Suffolk is employed in arts, entertainment and leisure (the UK average is 2.3%)⁵. Prior to the pandemic, East Suffolk's sector workforce was on an upward trajectory which far exceeded both the Suffolk and England trends – but these sectors were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and that growth trajectory has suffered as a result. However, the creative workforce still exists at a viable level within East Suffolk to respond to an ambitious strategy. This strategy will bring a critical alignment of vision, priorities and outcomes to enable the workforce and its partners to become more than the sum of its parts and realise more of its potential.

“There is mass [of cultural workers] but not critical mass.”

Stakeholder comment

This is a difficult time for public finances – in national and local government. That has a knock-on effect for culture and heritage organisations and the communities they serve.

5 NOMIS Open Access data – which does not include freelance or self-employed people, both of which form a large part of the cultural and creative workforce. Therefore, the true scale of the sector is masked.

We have a culture of care – for each other, wildlife and the environment.”

Stakeholder comment

SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

Showing that libraries are powerful cultural venues

In 2012, Suffolk County Council made the bold decision to create an independent charity to run the library service. This has enabled the service to attract additional funding, and it became an ACE NPO in 2018 in recognition of its excellence in cultural programming. Across 45 sites, there are 48 trained cultural ambassadors who programme gigs, theatre, exhibitions, workshops and classes for their communities. The service understands its role in being a trusted cultural venue – embedded within and unique to its individual communities.

East Suffolk is not immune, but it is resilient. It is experiencing an influx of new and returning residents as a result of:

- Being relatively affordable to buy property and live compared to London and much of the South-East.
- Having good transport links to the capital.
- Possessing an inspiring landscape.

This strategy is written for East Suffolk at this precise moment – to help it maximise the potential of this ‘brain gain’, and to support its communities through challenging times.

A2.3 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT IN EAST SUFFOLK

The thrust of this strategy is wholly aligned with East Suffolk Council’s strategic plan, and speaks to each priority with clarity and robustness. The engagement process illuminated that the local creative sector is looking to East Suffolk Council to demonstrate support for the cultural and creative industries. There is hope that this strategy will create the conditions within which culture is demonstrably valued and developed. To date, East Suffolk Council has been supportive of the sector when possible. This has included developing culture-led visions to enable confident targeting for investment (e.g. Heritage Action Zones), and working with cultural venues on business plans and robust feasibility studies. Similarly, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for East Suffolk includes grants for the development of events and cultural activities which support town centres. The Spirit of 2012 funding received by the Council has been used to develop cultural and heritage volunteering programmes which support sustainable infrastructure of the cultural sector.

“We don’t work in East Suffolk because we are not asked to.”

Stakeholder comment (NPO, based in Ipswich)

It is clear that where the Council does provide strategic coordination, the assets have worked hard, realising investment and growth. The Strategy will help to harness Council and partner resources to build sustainability for community and local cluster-led organisations, such as Old Jet and Asylum Studios. East Suffolk will always be an attractive place for creative people by virtue of its natural assets, and will therefore always be a creative place. But to sustain the cultural sector, to create resilience, coordination is required to realise and accelerate the latent growth, innovation and talent. This is a story of underexploited potential.

However, there is not a specific role currently within the Council with responsibility for sector development or providing sustainable, ongoing, strategic support at a district level. For East Suffolk Council to continue to demonstrate its commitment to this sector and its understanding of the importance of culture and creatives within the ecosystem, it is seeking new ways of incorporating cultural sector development into its core work.



ESG – ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, GOVERNANCE

Three key factors when measuring the sustainability and ethical impact of an investment in a business or company. Most socially responsible investors assess companies using ESG criteria to screen investments, partnerships and planning approvals.

This Strategy is a part of this process, thinking in cross-departmental and cross-agency terms. Social needs rarely fit neatly into departmental structures of any organisation or agency. It is only a multi-agency approach that can connect to those with responsibility for communities, planning, digital transformation, economic development, public health, social care, regeneration, environment, licensing, education and skills.

New Anglia LEP's Creative Unlimited⁶ scheme supported businesses in the cultural, creative and digital sectors through workshops, masterclasses, mentoring and business support. A more modest version of this scheme could be delivered in-house by the East Suffolk Council Economic Development team, helping creative entrepreneurs leverage their potential. This is especially relevant for early career creatives and start-up businesses, who may need more guidance and support as they develop their practice, partnerships and operating models. Wherever a coordinating cultural and creative economy development role sits, East Suffolk and its organisations and residents need to know who to contact to take a place-based approach (e.g. not individual organisations) to investment and opportunities.

⁶ <https://newanglia.co.uk/creative-unlimited/>

“There is a need for a holistic understanding of culture, a broad and deep definition of culture and heritage.”

Stakeholder comment



YOUTH THEATRE Young people creating

Fisher Youth Theatre has up to 80 active members. Tutors provide learning activities across a range of theatrical disciplines – acting, dancing, singing, stage fighting, film and production and technical aspects of theatre. Each year group produces up to two full-length plays, musicals or showcases of a variety of work. Marina Theatre is also very active with young people, providing a vital gateway into all aspects of performing arts and the skills that make it possible.

Image: Marina Theatre,
Next Stagers community group



A CULTURAL VISION FOR EAST SUFFOLK

B1 VISION

We will celebrate creativity and heritage in all of East Suffolk's distinctive places. We will nurture and enable a flourishing cultural sector which supports stronger communities and economic benefits for all.

B1.1 NURTURING OUR CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

We'll achieve this Vision by ensuring that the mass of cultural, creative and related heritage workers in East Suffolk can better connect. Connect to new opportunities to help them develop their work and make a bigger difference to life across the region. The cultural sector is a unique 'development asset' as it bridges commercial activities with a strong collaborative focus on the 'social economy'. In other words, social enterprise. Cooperatives, community enterprises and numerous other forms of cultural enterprise focus on social outcomes.

The cultivation of cultural talent across East Suffolk creates real opportunities for how cultural programmes can help connect the social economy to the wider economy. This in turn can play a vital role in creating new opportunities and talent pathways across different parts of the East Suffolk economy. The aim is to both help sustain cultural, heritage and creative enterprises, whilst enriching opportunities. It will be ever more important to seek to support stronger partnership working between cultural, commercial and public partners on key shared agendas, such as wellbeing, and inclusive growth.

Creative people add value to their communities. Relocating to places like East Suffolk capitalises on blended working trends and enhances quality of life. This really suits creative disciplines and is something to build into promotional communications. Data will be needed to understand and track how creative communities and clusters develop, behave and sustain themselves over time. Underpinning the Strategy is a single-minded approach to the opportunities for the creative and cultural economy. A prospectus for change is a key foundation stone for investment – something that funders increasingly look for (see B2.1). This will be achieved through an understanding of the value that culture can add to communities. For example, the role of culture and creative inputs into health – Suffolk is already one of the country's leading cultural social prescribers – and into education, into skills and workforce, and placemaking and regeneration.

Another key pillar is cultural leadership.

The energetic Lowestoft team can't be replicated everywhere, but the lessons can be taken by other towns and clusters. This needs to be driven from the Council. Why? Because it worked in Lowestoft, and the Council is uniquely well-placed working across communities and disciplines, and connects into extensive town, enterprise and community programmes. This is key to enable support as cultural leaders look to step up and make a difference in their communities.

Cultural entrepreneurship is a factor and deserves support, both in terms of people starting up and creating events and programmes, activities and venues, but also contributing to communities and wider placemaking.



FOLKEAST

Connecting place, heritage and contemporary

Based in the grounds of Glemham Hall, in between Woodbridge and Saxmundham, the festival has bounced back after the pandemic with a full 2022 programme. A collaborative approach can be seen through its connections across the arts, environment, place-making and tourism. It seeks to build on traditions and make some new ones – making Suffolk's heritage a part of the offer in a contemporary way.

Image: The Imagined Village, FolkEast 2022, courtesy John Heald

B1.2 CORE AMBITIONS FOR THE STRATEGY

Being engaged is one key to unlock future success. But it must be combined with partnerships and joint leadership that works to ensure this Cultural Strategy becomes an embedded part of wider plans for sustainable, long-term change. To these ends, this Strategy acts as a manifesto for partnership working which will together deliver its core ambitions. It aims to nurture a sense of place for local communities that builds an activated sense of pride and belonging. That's a shared ambition worth pursuing.

Integrate



Residents will be engaged and inspired to **participate** – protecting, conserving, experiencing and creating culture in their communities and landscape, all year round.

Access



East Suffolk residents will have a right to culture and their heritage, with open access regardless of age, location or ability to pay – encouraged to seek to **create** new skills, experiences, memories, resources and connections.

Talent



East Suffolk's communities will attract, retain and nurture creative residents and partnerships. Artists and creatives will be embedded in and valued by their local communities, as we **support** and value local expertise, knowledge and creativity. Young people will be a particular focus, creating tomorrow's cultural audiences, participants and activists.

Data & insight



We will continue to **listen** to the 'wants and needs' of local people, supporting their agency as equal partners. Data and insight will be utilised to inform cultural planning and programming.

B2 The Cultural Narrative

B2.1 A SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY ASTUTE APPROACH

As we have set out, the scale of the challenges culture faces – like many sectors – demands a unified response to effect sustained benefits:

- Collaborative leadership;
- Common ambition;
- Cross-cutting agendas;
- Delivery partnerships.

Local stakeholders are keen to grow the foundations of recovery (and build on successes in many places). They are crystal clear that a vital role of the Strategy is to help provide the opportunity to local leaders (cultural and others) to effectively identify and serve the diverse, complex needs of their places.

This complexity means that any adequate Strategy response cannot adopt a short-term horizon for impact; or be too narrowly focused on how to improve the cultural offer in the area.

Rather, enhancing the cultural capability and capacity of East Suffolk must be fuelled by placing front and centre the contribution that culture can make to improving the lives of the many East Suffolk communities.



A PROSPECTUS FOR CHANGE

The Strategy should give the ‘green-light’ to innovative, ambitious, relevant ideas and planning – both deployable now and for the long-term.

Images: (top) Ukelele workshop and Youth Theatre, courtesy Marina Theatre; (bottom) Connection Points exterior, Art Station, courtesy Dean Brannagan

i. ARTISTS AND CREATIVES – SUPPORT & DEVELOP

East Suffolk has always been a place with magnetism for creative people – an inspirational landscape, with golden sunlight, a sea breeze and ancient heathland. The environment has fostered creativity in those that are born here, and attracted many from elsewhere to this unique cultural ecosystem.

The pandemic and other socio-economic challenges are seeing creative people move away from cities to more peaceful – and affordable – places, and East Suffolk is an obvious beneficiary of this trend. This is putting demand on the existing cultural infrastructure – arts studios and rehearsal space are often full. Where more facilities are opening they can too quickly become full. A rich visual art scene breeds a swathe of commercial galleries to sell work produced locally, contributing to cultural tourism from those interested in making purchases and building their personal collections. Snape Maltings is a world class concert hall, conservatoire, with a phenomenal music school, and many of the historic market towns have their own theatres, cinemas, museums, historic properties, exhibition spaces and galleries. The landscape provides a gallery of its own: there is also a lot of art in spaces (arts and sculpture, even performance). The cultural and heritage assets in East Suffolk work collectively to generate great appeal and act as attractors for residents and visitors alike.

Yet, some local creatives can feel undervalued, unsupported, and isolated from sources of support and funding. The fragmented geography means that cumulative effects are harder to realise.

Creative people moving to the area are often not well embedded into communities, and their creative experience not readily maximised for wider benefit. This Strategy seeks to reprioritise the cultural and creative economy within East Suffolk. It demonstrates the value of its vital role in supporting quality of life, and place-making.

Culture helps build a sense of community identity. Culture contributes hugely to the visitor economy. It supports public health and wellbeing. It plays a role in caring for our distinctive environment.

“Artists want to be part of the community, education; to be valued and part of the dialogue.”

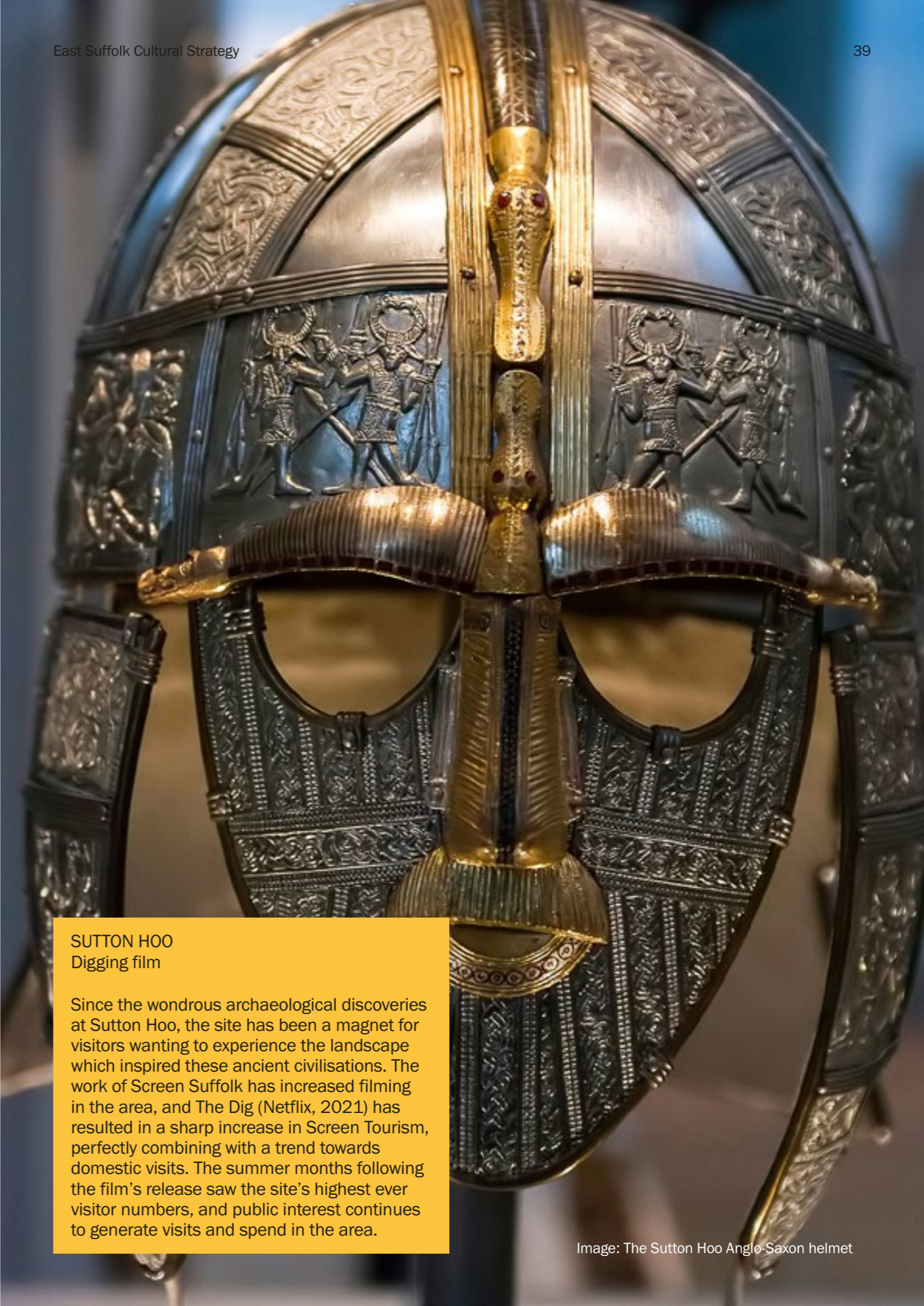
Stakeholder comment

By ‘creatives’, we must also acknowledge the supporting professionals – the crew, the tech team, the marketeers, the front of house team and more. These skill sets necessarily need to be nurtured alongside the traditional ‘creatives’ – it is a co-dependency. That ecosystem again. Old Jet Studios at Bentwaters, Rendlesham houses art studios, exhibition space, recording studios, storage for stage sets and props – as well as offering art classes and workshops for the public. This mixed offer demonstrates how co-locating ‘back of house’ infrastructure alongside artistic production facilities enables aggregate benefits.

Screen Suffolk keeps a register of local crew in order to ensure the economic benefits of filming in Suffolk can be retained locally.

“Artists want to be part of the community, education; to be valued and part of the dialogue.”

Stakeholder comment



SUTTON HOO
Digging film

Since the wondrous archaeological discoveries at Sutton Hoo, the site has been a magnet for visitors wanting to experience the landscape which inspired these ancient civilisations. The work of Screen Suffolk has increased filming in the area, and *The Dig* (Netflix, 2021) has resulted in a sharp increase in Screen Tourism, perfectly combining with a trend towards domestic visits. The summer months following the film’s release saw the site’s highest ever visitor numbers, and public interest continues to generate visits and spend in the area.

How East Suffolk continues to prioritise creative industries alongside cultural industries is all part of the sector's diversity and resilience, and has positive environmental impacts.

"In East Suffolk we treat creativity as a job, unlike many places. There is less shame in being artistic, in earning an artistic wage."

Stakeholder comment

Whilst the cultural and creative industries in East Suffolk are plentiful, the vast majority are freelancers, sole traders and SMEs. This limits capacity to offer opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships, and the early career opportunities. East Suffolk can target those wishing to enter the sector to start building their skills, experience and portfolio here. Many young people move away to big cities to start their careers in the cultural sector. Culturally-rich East Suffolk has the additional benefit of being an appealing place to live and therefore many people do move back once they are more established in their careers. External factors such as the pandemic and cost of living crisis have accelerated this influx of creative people moving (back) to the area. This is a good thing for East Suffolk, and makes this strategy very timely. But how might the loss of young people be limited in the first place? The answer lies in opportunity – to learn, train and practice.

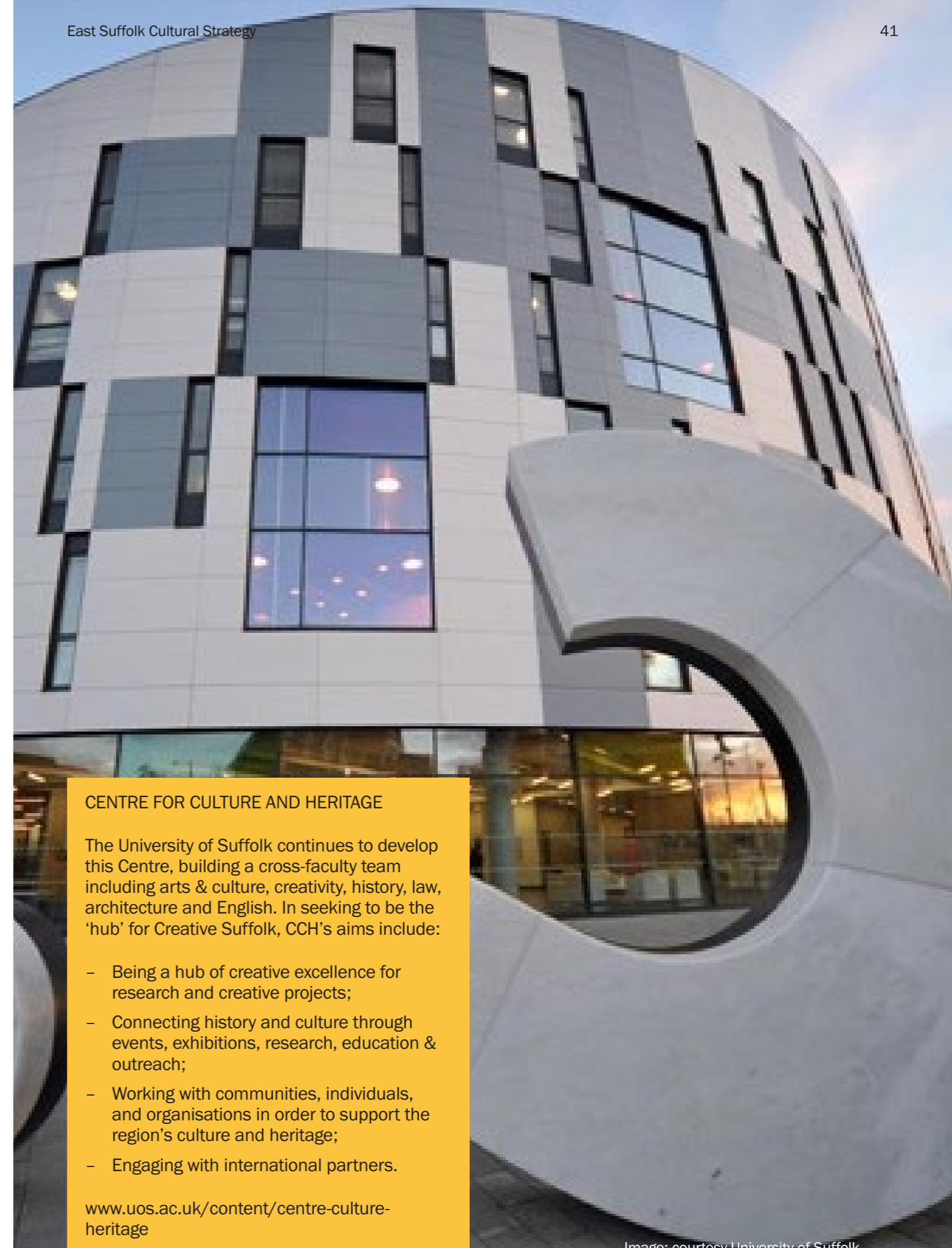
The University of Suffolk is developing its Centre for Culture and Heritage to offer more partnerships with cultural organisations to offer opportunities for students. East Coast College in Lowestoft is an accreditation partner which offers interdisciplinary cultural and creative degrees, alongside their existing range of arts, culture, creative, media and digital courses for school leavers and adults. Now that the study options are developed, partnerships can be created with cultural organisations and creative industries to offer younger people opportunities to develop their voluntary and more importantly, their paid work experience. By being

relevant locally at all career stages, the whole district will benefit. Astute partnership working via the Suffolk Cultural Consortium saw a number of East Suffolk museums and cultural organisations secure external funding to pay for apprenticeships in 2021. Schemes such as Kickstart should be strategically supported to expand and grow over the coming years. This will help to stem the outgoing tide of young people leaving before they return, and help to contribute to more vibrant community life.

*"The creative industries sector offers a fractured landscape with a high volume of micro / small businesses operating. They have found a shortage of large creative industries businesses to help build a strong ecosystem and support other organisations by expanding the talent pool, providing more visibility and investment in the region, offering scope for mentoring and support for growth and greater collaborative potential."*⁷

Stakeholder comment

⁷ New Anglia LEP Create Growth application



CENTRE FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

The University of Suffolk continues to develop this Centre, building a cross-faculty team including arts & culture, creativity, history, law, architecture and English. In seeking to be the 'hub' for Creative Suffolk, CCH's aims include:

- Being a hub of creative excellence for research and creative projects;
- Connecting history and culture through events, exhibitions, research, education & outreach;
- Working with communities, individuals, and organisations in order to support the region's culture and heritage;
- Engaging with international partners.

www.uos.ac.uk/content/centre-culture-heritage

Image: courtesy University of Suffolk

New Anglia LEP's Skills Manifesto is:

'to create the environment for retaining the brightest and the best'.

East Suffolk's mass of cultural workers need to evolve to become a critical mass, driving a mixture of social and economic benefits. This can be achieved through better collaboration, partnership and networking – all of which presents a (not insurmountable) challenge in a dispersed geography. Place-based networking can be achieved in the larger conurbations – Lowestoft already has an active cultural forum, and Felixstowe has enough creative organisations and individuals to establish one. Both cultural forums can use this strategy and accompanying action plan to inform their own local plans, adapted to their places and people. These in turn will enable more opportunities for partnership working, joint funding bids, and skills sharing.

But for smaller market towns and villages, mobile cultural networking events (with online options) may be an approach to support collaborative opportunities across the whole district. Economic factors alone make partnership working the best way to secure funding for projects and events, develop skills and improve wellbeing in the process. Cultural networks can be informal and open to all – town and parish councils, community groups, healthcare providers etc. – and connect with local community partnerships.

ii. COMMUNITIES – INCLUDE & ENGAGE

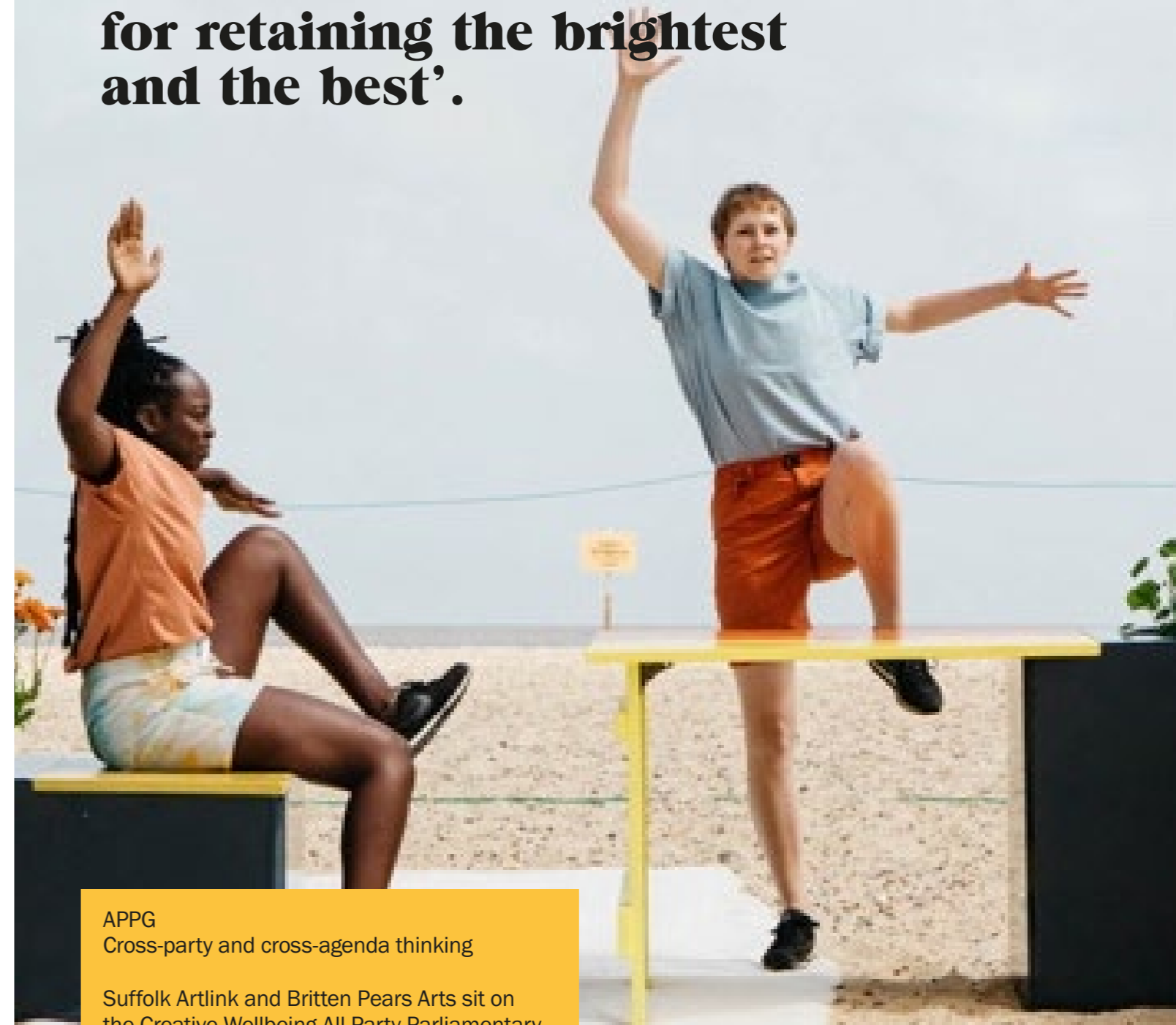
There is already strength in creative health – Suffolk Artlink, Britten Pears Arts and the NHS Suffolk & North East Essex ICP are national leaders in social prescribing and sit on the All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing. The social prescribing pilots in the area have explored prevention methods of singing to ease symptoms of chronic / persistent pain and Parkinson's Disease, tea dances for people with dementia, forest school for people experiencing poor mental health and more. As a result, more investment is going towards 'green social prescribing' in an appreciation of the benefits of outdoor activities for wellbeing. But there is more potential for healthcare workers to partner with creative organisations of all levels – community choirs, painting groups and so on – and to support those (voluntary) organisations to better support individuals with additional health needs.

"There is a real understanding of the benefits of cultural activity in health, by health providers."

Stakeholder comment

“There is a real understanding of the benefits of cultural activity in health, by health providers.”
Stakeholder comment

‘to create the environment for retaining the brightest and the best’.



APPG

Cross-party and cross-agenda thinking

Suffolk Artlink and Britten Pears Arts sit on the Creative Wellbeing All Party Parliamentary Group alongside the local Integrated Care Partnership. Britten Pears Arts also hosts regular think tanks on this topic, such as singing for chronic pain. Given the local leadership, excellence and expertise in social prescribing and creative health, it would be sensible to explore ways to invest in and expand their programmes in order to address the health and wellbeing needs of more residents.

www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/

Image: Longest Days of Summer, Suffolk Artlink. Courtesy Nick Ilott

Whilst East Suffolk is rich in cultural infrastructure and venues, there is still rural isolation and cultural poverty where community venues such as the local library and village hall serve that need. Eastern Angles has worked closely with village halls to develop their experience in producing and programming cultural activities for local residents. But often, this relies on individual motivation and goodwill, meaning that there is a fragility and vulnerability with more isolated communities. The Spirit of 2012 Cultural Volunteering programme, which is being developed collaboratively with Great Yarmouth, is a good example of a project building strength into this delicate network. It will initially focus on Lowestoft then expand into other towns, villages and small communities. Like the heritage sector, which is largely run by volunteers, schemes such as this tend to attract older people looking for opportunities to socialise and develop new skills in retirement. However, there is also opportunity to work with younger people who may have a need to develop personal skills; skills which have been more difficult to acquire due to the pandemic and national lockdowns. This is an opportunity for culture and heritage organisations to act as one.

The programme should look at targeted recruitment to ensure the benefits are felt by residents of a variety of ages and needs, building sustainable volunteer networks for the future.

“Community connectors are a fragile web.”

Stakeholder comment

Additionally, opportunities for creative participation in all areas and at all levels need to be further developed. Whilst data shows that East Suffolk residents are more active than the national average both in childhood and into older age⁸, how residents engage with culture, heritage and creativity on an everyday basis is not fully understood. Some venues can generate meaningful audience segmentation data. However, what barriers exist to participation (lack of public transport, issues with venue accessibility, pay barriers, for example) need further analysis.

There are plenty of opportunities for babies, toddlers & children to participate in cultural activity through the likes of singing and youth theatre. Some communities have a very active cultural offer for their residents – Aldeburgh and Halesworth have multiple societies which support social and cultural stimulation for their communities, accounting for residents being less likely to experience loneliness especially in older age⁹. However, anecdotally, many people feel unwelcome at local groups, which may require auditions for new members. To understand the barriers and open up access to more people and all levels of talent and experience will enable more residents and communities to express their full creative potential.

iii. PLACE AND SPACES – COMMUNICATE & ANIMATE

East Suffolk is an ancient region – an idiosyncratic, unique, particular landscape which has attracted and informed human life for millennia. Stone tools found in Pakefield are possibly the earliest evidence of human activity in Britain. Archaeological finds at Sutton Hoo evidence occupation from neolithic times, and the Anglo-Saxon royal burial mounds yielded the finest examples of artistic endeavour of their kind. Clearly, East Suffolk has some history. It has inspired creativity for time immemorial. How the places and spaces can continue to play a role in the cultural lives of today’s residents needs to be explored and maximised.

8 Active Lives survey and Suffolk Observatory
9 Suffolk Observatory



PRO CORDA TRUST
Starting a lifetime in arts as early as possible

Access to high-quality and inspirational culture is a right for all residents. Pro Corda Trust continually aims to expand their offer so more young people can benefit. The Trust works with local children with additional education needs through music making and participation.

A bursary scheme ensures that finance is not a barrier to access to the National Chamber Music School and its many programmes, events and festivals.

Image: Pro Corda Academy students from Alde Valley Academy

Suffolk is the driest county, with its wide-open skies and sunrises, offers the largest area of managed land in the country¹⁰. Creative activity which celebrates this is easy to spot: First Light Festival; the activity programme offered by Suffolk Wildlife Trust at Carlton Marshes; Maggi Hambling's Scallop sculpture on Aldeburgh beach. Each of these examples are notable because they are not in 'traditional' arts venues – they are rooted in the landscape. This principle can inspire new creative and heritage interpretation and participation activities within green spaces. A shared goal of more people developing a deeper connection to wildlife and the landscape can be achieved.

“We want to promote wildlife on doorsteps, in back gardens, communities, businesses, and for people to take action for wildlife everyday.”

Stakeholder comment

Other non-traditional venues for arts engagement include libraries, community halls, village greens, and town squares. In 'small places' it is important to consider all community spaces as potential cultural venues. This is especially important in the national context of declining high street retail and the need to generate alternative reasons to spend time in towns. Culture has a huge role to play in providing animation and social interaction. East Suffolk has plenty of cultural venues in its market towns, so enabling them to act as 'hubs' and work in partnership with smaller or non-traditional venues could enable those experiencing rural isolation to access culture on their doorstep.

“These are the curses of small places – you're not on the doorstep of great things.”

Stakeholder comment

And whilst the landscape and natural environment are special in East Suffolk, the historic built environment is too. It's a great asset which can be better utilised to realise economic and wellbeing benefits. Lowestoft's High Street Heritage Action Zones attest to this, creatively using built heritage. East Suffolk's communities are full of listed and non-designated historic buildings, with the distinctive “Suffolk pink” exteriors, thatched rooves, timber frames and handsome sash windows; iconic black fisherman's huts...

All of these contribute greatly to East Suffolk's quality of place. Historic buildings are expensive to maintain. Work with partners including the Landmark Trust and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust can help to prevent decay, dilapidation and loss of these assets and find sustainable uses which enable more people to benefit from them. The conversion of some of the iconic Martello Towers into holiday accommodation is a good example of appropriate commercial utilisation of the sites, enabling unique heritage tourism experiences for visitors. The aesthetic qualities of built heritage must be celebrated and protected, not for just their own sake but for the sake of the community, district and nation.

¹⁰ A combination of AONBs, and land managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSPB

“We want to promote wildlife on doorsteps, in back gardens, communities, businesses, and for people to take action for wildlife everyday.”

Stakeholder comment



AUDIENCE SPECTRUM

Shared data is powerful data

The Audience Agency has developed and managed the audience segmentation platform for Arts Council England for a number of years. Whilst this contract is in the process of being awarded to another supplier, the Audience Spectrum approach to audience data, cluster analysis and how its insights informs planning remains valid. This applies equally for individual organisations and for cultural places like market towns and rural clusters. Such data can then be overlaid with other accessible datasets including ONS, NOMIS, Active Lives etc.

<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-finder-data-tools/audience-spectrum>

East Suffolk has the best UK climate for festivals, which provide cultural animation and tourism throughout the summer. These festivals serve a wide variety of audiences across multiple artforms, but the shoulder seasons and winter months are not so well served. East Suffolk's cultural programming could be considered deciduous rather than evergreen. A strategy which looks at the quieter (and less touristic) times of year could enable residents to feel more connected with cultural activities.



“Historic built environment should be supported to be more accessible for the benefit of all – residents and visitors. The uplift in wellbeing is immeasurable.”

Stakeholder comment



THORINGTON THEATRE

An exemplar of use of place and spaces

A beautiful outdoor venue inspired by and rooted in the environment and landscape, the theatre naturally focuses on summer programming and tourist audiences. Taking advantage of the UK's most clement climate, East Suffolk can target an enhanced winter / off-season offer for local residents. This is one way to expand audiences and extend seasons, In the case of assets like Thorington Theatre, it could enable more local theatre-makers to explore working in outdoor environments.

Image: courtesy Thorington Theatre

C. STRATEGY



Image: Earth powered by the Sun,
FolkEast 2022, courtesy John Heald

C1

A ROUTE MAP – CONVERGING COMMON PURPOSE AND FOCUS ACROSS EAST SUFFOLK

C1.1 THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

The cultural sector is looking to the Council for strategic leadership (and guidance with funding of course).

As a strategy for East Suffolk, it requires the necessary partnership mentality.

In viewing the cultural & creative industries as regenerators, social and economic value creators, the Council can respond with tools, expertise and support to drive demonstrable impacts, including through nurturing cultural entrepreneurship.

The Council can be a focal point for cultural development, co-designing (across departments and with external partners) and deploying local and district-wide responses.

01 PURPOSE

Use the Cultural Strategy as a unifying common purpose for grassroots engagement and community involvement.



02 MODEL

Create a new collaborative model to take forward the Cultural Strategy and develop a detailed action plan – strengthening inclusion and supporting distinct communities.



03 LEAD

New cultural leadership to identify how, and in what ways, the Cultural Strategy's priorities can be best advanced and sustained for social and economic impact.



04 CO-DEVELOP

The cultural leadership to identify key strategic partnerships and co-investment opportunities



05 REWILDING

Create energy and momentum, ensuring East Suffolk becomes a regionally and nationally recognised as a dynamic cultural ecology.

Priority Aims & Objectives

1. EAST SUFFOLK'S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECONOMY WILL THRIVE, REALISING ITS POTENTIAL AND PROVIDING BENEFITS FOR ITSELF AND FOR OTHER SECTORS.

Objectives

- i. Develop a clear position for East Suffolk as a place which inspires, welcomes and backs creative people & businesses through dissemination of the Strategy.
- ii. East Suffolk Council will ensure that the cultural sector is proactively invited to tap into existing business skills, training and other development and support services as any other industry (including but not only Council programmes, e.g. East Suffolk Means Business), to enable them to realise their potential.
- iii. East Suffolk to become a leader within the East of England region in activating its creative workforce, including 'supply chain' businesses, to create a circular creative economy.
- iv. Position and empower the cultural economy to harness opportunities for investment, innovation and growth through more integrated and consistent coordination in joint planning, funding and messaging.
- v. Develop co-location, networking and collaboration opportunities for artists and creatives across the district, countering the isolation of home-based working.
- vi. Explore potential of built heritage and find new, creative, sustainable uses for underutilised buildings.
- vii. Ensure clear (sector and public-targeted) information provision and data capture are effectively managed.
- viii. Undertake a skills and capacity audit for cultural SME and third-sector organisations. This will identify existing skills (and gaps), informing development needs in critical areas (e.g. logistics, communications, fundraising, administration). It will target digital skills as a transformative 'growth and innovation' tool for the sector and individual business development – data capture, marketing & engagement, training, collaboration etc.
- ix. Support creative approaches to heritage and environmental conservation, usage and interpretation. This will involve work with conservation officers, East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, local museums, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust etc., to respond to sites of historic interest / ancient monuments, empty buildings etc.
- x. Support environmentally sustainable approaches, solutions and pilots within the cultural and heritage sector.



MUSEUMS

Developing through collaboration

The Long Shop Museum collaborated with other museums across Suffolk to secure funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to offer skills development programmes for those interested in careers in museums and heritage.

'Special Delivery' was a multidisciplinary project led by Halesworth Museum that explored historic and modern methods of communication.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO CULTIVATE CREATIVE CAREERS AND LIVES WITHOUT NEEDING TO LEAVE THE AREA, WITH CLEAR PATHWAYS FOR SKILLS, TALENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT.

Objectives

- i. Support the development of the LCEPs, increasing opportunities for school pupils to learn from local practising artists and creatives.
- ii. Embed creative education opportunities for young people, enhancing existing programmes and developing new initiatives where possible, with partners including Festival Bridge.
- iii. Increase opportunities for participation and training in cultural activities.
- iv. Building as standard an approach to cultural programming which includes skills development and work experience opportunities.
- v. Developing a bespoke work experience and apprenticeship model which enables cultural / heritage volunteer-run organisations, sole traders and SMEs to facilitate placements. This will have a particular focus on young people, designing accessible work placements that under 25s and under 18s can take advantage of (working around full-time education, taster weeks etc.).
- vi. Promote business and organisational support programmes to target freelancers, early career creatives and entrepreneurs to help establish themselves in the workforce, including early career leadership development training and support.
- vii. Ensure technical and 'back of house' career experiences are offered alongside 'creative' skills opportunities.



THE ART STATION
Continually evolving the arts centre

The Art Station saw the demand for more studio and co-working provision for creative professionals. It also understood how these assets could create opportunities for young people to gain work experience.

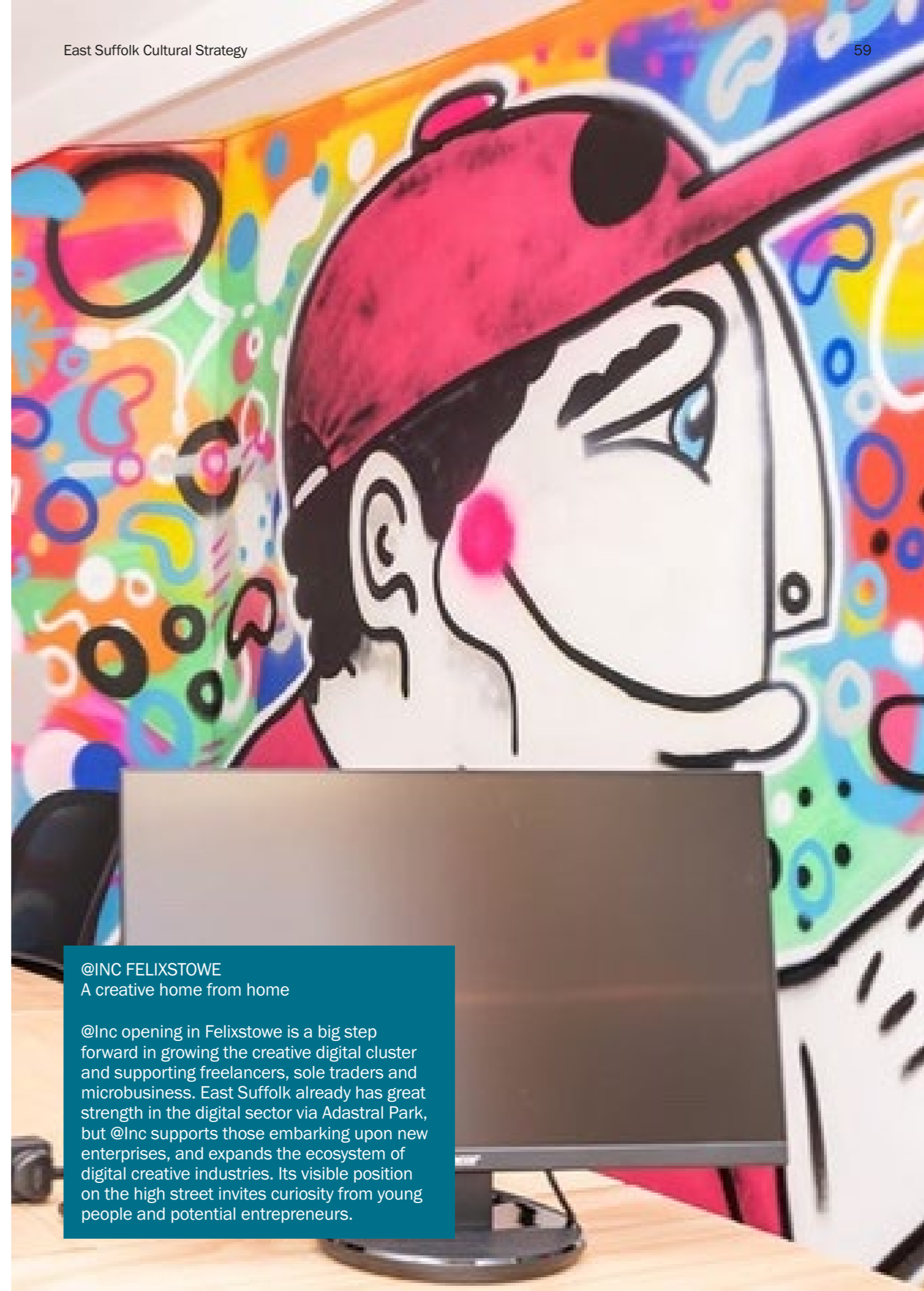
The team is now central to establishing a new Local Cultural Education Partnership – which will deliver creative education programmes for local young people.

Image: Raku firing at Butley Mills, led by Richard Oliver. Courtesy Dean Brannagan

3. COMMUNITIES WILL HAVE ACCESS TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES INSPIRED BY THE LANDSCAPE, WHICH BENEFIT HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

Objectives

- i. Continue to refine mapping the organisations and places which could be part of a cultural programming offer, especially those based outdoors and in the landscape. Mapping can add criteria, including funding, target audiences, community programmes etc.
- ii. An audience mapping audit will seek to understand their needs and barriers to participation, to better inform the action plan on an ongoing basis to develop targeted and impactful cultural engagement.
- iii. Develop cultural activity visibility through new / targeted information channels and other engagement / sign-up mechanisms.
- iv. Audit audiences to understand their needs and barriers to participation, to better inform the action plan on an ongoing basis.
- v. Develop a public arts strategy which includes and where necessary prioritises art in the public realm and/or landscape. This should be an embedded consideration in high street regeneration, public realm and urban landscaping and masterplanning.
- vi. Develop an all-year-round cultural events programme which focuses on co-production with residents, linking with East Suffolk Council's Events Strategy.
- vii. Where a mass of culture and heritage organisations exist in one area (e.g. Felixstowe), establish cultural forums which are open to other sectors such as education, leisure, community, environment, health etc. The forums will enable place-based and community-led action.
- viii. Connect these forums / memberships into the existing East Suffolk Community Partnership scheme (eight cover the district), and its initiatives and intelligence sharing.
- ix. A buddying scheme can be developed which partners a traditional arts / heritage organisations with a non-traditional / community venue to develop cultural confidence and build access to creative experiences in more community places and spaces.
- x. Work with Spirit of 2012 cultural volunteering programme to sustain the scheme beyond funding period, and target recruitment where it will have the most impact.
- xi. Offer programmes for creative participation which are accessible for all residents and for all talent levels, and where possible, inspired by the landscape.
- xii. Create partnerships between managers of outdoor spaces and cultural, heritage and community organisations to enable more co-programming.
- xiii. Expand and sustain the excellent local practice in creative health so that more residents may benefit (e.g. green social prescribing programme), including better training and support for organisations hosting prescribed patients.
- xiv. Increase opportunities for creative interpretation within the landscape and heritage environment.



@INC FELIXSTOWE
A creative home from home

@Inc opening in Felixstowe is a big step forward in growing the creative digital cluster and supporting freelancers, sole traders and microbusiness. East Suffolk already has great strength in the digital sector via Adastral Park, but @Inc supports those embarking upon new enterprises, and expands the ecosystem of digital creative industries. Its visible position on the high street invites curiosity from young people and potential entrepreneurs.

C3 ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

C3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Framework should cover an initial 2-year period. It is designed as a starting point for a dynamic plan to guide actions and build capacity over this period. The principle of co-design will be central to its full development in the months immediately following adoption of this Strategy. This process will be facilitated by East Suffolk Council but will continue to engage the cultural and heritage sector and other relevant stakeholders.

The 'live' Action Plan will be an iterative, dynamic document, being updated on a regular basis (at least annually, but ideally much more often), as impacts, insights and opportunities present, through programme investment and evaluation.

The Action Plan will be structured according to strategic priorities and their underlying objectives. Specifically, where possible, it:

- Sets realistic targets;
- Identifies the actions needed to achieve the target;
- Allocates responsibility to task leaders and supporters;
- Defines timescales;
- Set out resource / funding requirements and their sources;
- Identifies methods for evaluating the success rate and impact of each activity against the relevant target;
- Suggests indicative costs where possible.

C3.2 PROGRESSIVE FOCUS

The Year 1 focus is to get getting up and running, building on existing activity and aligning with ongoing plans and programmes. Year 2 will focus more on implementing plans, as well as building on Year 1 activities and lessons learned from them. As new circumstances and opportunities emerge, proposed actions should be reviewed and refined.

OBJECTIVES TO ACTIONS	Priority	Timescale	Lead/ partners	Resource	Evaluation
Aim / Objective					
Explore feasibility of, and options for, staff resource for cultural economy development within East Suffolk Council					
Assess how the community grants programme can better service cultural activities and events					
Develop a leadership programme for early career creatives					
Establish roving cultural networking events across the district, with programmed speakers and activities					

ACTION PLAN BUILDING BLOCKS

The development of the action plan will be a fully collaborative process. As such this sample framework is very much a starting point only.

The actions included below are purely placeholder samples, to show the kinds of tasks that this process may produce, and the detail that will support them.



D. ADDENDUM

D1

LIST OF CONSULTEES

Role	Organisation
Manager	The Cut Halesworth
Co-Director	Suffolk Art Link
CEO	Suffolk Libraries
Director	Hamilton MAS
Director	The Art Station
Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member, Economic Development	East Suffolk Council
Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure, Tourism	East Suffolk Council
Leader and Chair of Community Partnerships Board	East Suffolk Council
Chief Executive / Chair	Marina Theatre / Lowestoft Cultural Leadership Board
Head of Knowledge Exchange & Business Engagement	University of Suffolk
Director	First Light Festival
Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship	University of Suffolk
Culture and Heritage Programme Manager	East Suffolk Council
Artistic Director	Eastern Angles
Freelance artist	Woodbridge Spirit of Place Festival
Associate Director	Ink
Museums Development Manager	Suffolk Museums
Arts Development Manager	Suffolk County Council
General Manager	Eastern Angles
Managing Director	Old Jet
Operations & Business Development Manager	Screen Suffolk
Arts Marketer & Events Manager	Freelance
Artistic Director	Ink
Director of Outreach	Pro Corda Trust
Deputy Director of Partnerships and Alliance Delivery	Suffolk and North East Essex ICS
Head of Creative Programmes	Dance East
Community Fundraising Manager	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Chair	Easterly Artists / Suffolk Open Studios

Role	Organisation
Head of Creative Programmes	Dance East
Community Fundraising Manager	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Chair	Easterly Artists / Suffolk Open Studios
Chairman	East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust
VEE Joint Norfolk & Suffolk DMO Networking Group	Visit East of England
Operations & Business Development Manager	Screen Suffolk
Director	FolkEast
Secretary	East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust
Executive Director and Joint CEO	HighTide Theatre
Executive Director	Britten Pears Arts
Corporate Events and Commercial Partnerships Officer	East Suffolk Council
Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship	East Suffolk Council
Leisure Development Partnership Manager	East Suffolk Council
Plus	
Economic Development, Regeneration and Communities Officers	East Suffolk Council
Several businesses and organisations, as well as individual practitioners with c.30 attendees, notably freelancers, not-for-profit and micro-enterprises.	Lowestoft informal meetings

One-to-one consultations were conducted with representatives from a variety of culture, creative and other sectors. The tables below set out who has responded to consulting approaches to date, from a larger database of nearly 200 contacts, which also served the workshops.

Organisations	
Alex Seinet Photography	Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils
Asset Education	Blyth Valley Team Ministry
Beccles Town Council	Bungay Events & Business Association
Britten Pears Arts	Bungay Town Council
Bungay Museum Trust	Community Action Suffolk
Cohere Arts	East Suffolk Council
DanceEast	Eastern Angles Theatre Company
Easterly Artists	Felixstowe BID
Felixstowe Chamber of Trade and Commerce	Felixstowe Radio
Felixstowe Town Council	Framlingham Town Council
Freelancer: Roger Abbott	Halesworth & District Museum
Halesworth Town Council	Hamilton MAS
Jan Pulsford Music Productions	Jetty Lane CIO
Jo Leverett	Jubilee Opera Chorus
Kesgrave Town Council	Landguard Fort Trust
Leiston Community Land Trust	Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council
Little Green Wholefood Shop	London Metropolitan University
Lowestoft Vision	Old Jet
Pier Projects Art Agency	New Anglia LEP
Seckford Theatre	Screen Suffolk
Spadge Art	Southwold Town Council
Suffolk Artlink	Spinning Wheel Theatre
Suffolk Growth Partnership	Suffolk County Council
Suffolk Youth Project	Suffolk New College
The Cuts Arts Centre	The Art Station
The Suffolk Coast DMO	The Gallery Box
The Waffle Shack	The Voice cLoud
Two Sisters Arts Centre	Thorington Theatre
Volunteering Matters	University of Suffolk
Victoria Petchey Art	Waveney Arts & Crafts Centre
Woodbridge School	Woodbridge Town Council



A series of community and stakeholder engagement workshops were held in Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Rendlesham and Bungay in September and October 2022. These workshops tested some early and emerging themes developed from the desk research and one-to-one consultations already undertaken, through use of stimulus questions and facilitated discussions. Attendees included community, cultural, heritage, sport and voluntary groups and organisations; businesses; creative practitioners; and Council officers, with representatives from these organisations. Some additional consultees may have attended but were not registered on the day.

REPORTS, STUDIES AND PLANS

1. Accessibility and Inclusion: Enabling Growth in the Suffolk Visitor Economy 2023
2. Aldeburgh – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2020
3. An inclusive growth monitor for measuring the relationship between poverty and growth, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016
4. Beccles – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
5. Destination Management Plan, Visit East of England
6. Collaborative Music Practice for Health (CPD Short Course)
7. Consumer Sentiment Survey, Visit East of England
8. Cornerstones of Culture LGA Report
9. CPD Short Course Evaluation Report, Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research & Britten Pears Arts
10. Create Growth Programme application, New Anglia LEP
11. Creative Hub Needs Assessment 2020
12. Creativity, Culture and Connection, Responses from arts and culture organisations in the COVID-19 crisis, Common Purpose, 2020
13. Creativity, Culture and Connection, Responses from arts and culture organisations in the COVID-19 crisis, Common Purpose, 2020
14. Cultural Strategy evidence report, New Anglia LEP
15. Culture Drives Growth - New Anglia Cultural Strategy 2016-22
16. Culture Drives Impact - The Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board Manifesto 2024-28
17. Creative Industries Innovation in Seaside Resorts and Country Towns - Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre
18. Digital Springboard presentation, LGA, 2022
19. East Suffolk Economic Strategy 2022-27
20. East Suffolk Open Space Report, 2021
21. East Suffolk Visitor Economy Strategy 2022-27
22. Economic contribution of the Arts, Creative Industries Council, 2020
23. First Light Festival Evaluation 2019
24. Framlingham – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
25. Halesworth – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
26. Indoor & Built Sports Facilities Strategy 2021
27. Kirkley Community Plan
28. Lowestoft Creative Hub Implementation Plan 2020
29. Lowestoft Cultural Strategy 2020-25
30. 'Left behind' areas in Suffolk, OCSI
31. Leisure Strategy 2021
32. Leiston – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
33. Making ends meet: the cost of living in Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and Public Health & Communities, 2022
34. Making Waves Together, Lowestoft & Great Yarmouth Great Places Evaluation 2020
35. Mapping & examining the determinants of England's rural creative micro-clusters, Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre
36. Movers & Stayers: Localising Power to Level Up Towns, DEMOS
37. Naturally, Brand story & creative brief
38. Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy 2017
39. Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy 2021
40. Saxmundham – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
41. Southwold – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2018
Consumer Sentiment Survey, Visit East of England
42. Southwold Town Centre Strategy, 2018
43. Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, 2020
44. Suffolk Devolution Deal
45. Start East evaluation report, 2020
46. Suffolk Hidden Needs report, Suffolk Community Foundation, 2020
47. Suffolk Libraries - A predictive impact analysis, 2019
48. Suffolk Libraries – Creating positive wellbeing and making lives better, 2020
49. Suffolk Libraries Strategy 2019-22
50. The creative countryside: Policy and practice in the UK rural cultural economy, Journal for Rural Studies
51. The State of Children in Suffolk, 2016
52. Town Centre baseline reports, 2019
53. UKSPF Events, Arts & Culture Grants brief
54. Understanding the value of arts & culture, Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2016
Destination Management Plan, Visit East of England
55. Visit East of England Destination Development Plans 2021 & 2025
56. Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project: Reasons to Co-Create, University of Warwick
57. Waveney Local Plan
58. Wickham Market – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019
59. Woodbridge – Understanding the heart of our town: town centre baseline report, 2019

DATA / WEB

1. Suffolk Mapping – Activities & Attractions, CTConsults, 2022
2. East Suffolk Profile, Suffolk Office of Data & Analytics, 2021
3. East Suffolk Data Pack
4. Lowestoft Town Data, East Suffolk Council, 2019
5. Income estimates for small areas, England and Wales: financial year ending 2018, ONS
6. English indices of deprivation, 2019, gov.uk
7. NOMIS data
8. Census data
9. National Lottery Project Grants 2018-19 – 2022-23, Arts Council England
10. Co-op Community Wellbeing Index
11. The Association for Suffolk Museums key stats 2019/20
12. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/biosciences/culture-nature-health-research>

D3

Editorial: Inclusive Growth

'Inclusive growth' predates the Levelling Up agenda (a strategic fund and policy not designed to benefit Suffolk).

To quote Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) from 2017: "Cities should make inclusive growth an organising principle for their place, leading the agenda and catalysing action. This should include setting ambitious new targets around employment, pay and skills attainment." This applies equally to towns and districts.

Therefore, how the cultural sector plays into the education and skills system is an inclusive growth agenda. If the cultural sector, and the Council in supporting the cultural sector, places the right emphasis on job growth, and better-quality jobs (and being a fair wage / living wage employer), then that is inclusive growth. There is then 'softer stuff' around raising ambition and inspiring action etc., such as fostering collaboration and asking difficult questions. This reflects all the things the cultural sector can contribute to.

The JRF's Inclusive Growth Monitor¹¹ is full of indicators around economic measures; income, living costs, labour market exclusion, output, employment. If East Suffolk continues to explore how to extend inclusive growth into human capital (a JRF phrase) and subjective wellbeing, then culture can play a full role.

East Suffolk Council recognises the place making potential of a wide range of local institutions and businesses, including cultural ones. By working more closely together with the cultural sector on key shared agendas – from employment and skills, to health and wellbeing – the Council and partners can all help to create more inclusive local economies, and through this strategy there is an effort to ensure that cultural stakeholders can play

the fullest role in the development of communities and local economies across East Suffolk.

One of our challenges for East Suffolk could be – through its strategic priorities and inclusive growth agenda – in building strong partnership working on key priorities that embraces key cultural stakeholders in more value adding ways.

The cultural sector is a unique development asset as it habitually spans commercial profit-oriented activities, with a strong collaborative focus on the 'social economy' – a broad term encompassing social enterprise, cooperatives, community enterprises and numerous other forms of enterprise focused on social outcomes.

The self-seeding of cultural talent across communities in East Suffolk creates real opportunities to see how the cultural sector, and cultural initiatives, could help bridge and connect the social economy to the wider economy, thereby playing a vital role in creating new opportunities and talent pathways across different parts of the East Suffolk economy.

11 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/inclusive-growth-monitor>



An inclusive growth monitor for measuring the relationship between poverty and growth

by Christina Beatty, Richard Crisp and Tony Gore

This report presents a new tool – the inclusive growth monitor – to measure the relationship between prosperity and poverty. Economic prosperity does not necessarily benefit all and there is a compelling need to understand whether cities are delivering 'inclusive growth'.

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<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/inclusive-growth-monitor>



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