

Watford Cultural Sector

Options Analysis Report



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Prepared by AEA Consulting for Watford Borough Council

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Foreword by Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford

Watford has a proud, and well deserved, reputation as a great place to enjoy arts, entertainment and heritage. Through our Cultural Strategy 2018-25 we have set out how, together with our partners, we can secure its long-term position as an exceptional regional centre and put Watford even more firmly on the cultural map.

This year, more than ever, we have recognised the vitally important role culture plays, not just in our individual lives, but also in the vibrancy and success of Watford. We have not been able to join together as usual to enjoy Watford's outstanding cultural and entertainment venues or our outdoor festivals and events. There is no doubt that we have missed these shared experiences and life without them has, for me, reinforced the value our cultural sector brings to Watford both economically and socially.

We want to ensure, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we have the right plans in place for arts, entertainment and heritage in Watford. We know that the last year has changed the cultural environment significantly but we want to remain ambitious, making the most of the town's opportunities and the commitment and passion of our cultural partners and providers. Our major transformational plans for the Town Hall Quarter are a great example of where culture can play a vital part in stimulating the local economy and bring life and vitality to the town but there are lots of other initiatives and ideas we know can contribute as well. We also want to harness the strength of 'Watford Together', the fantastic response to the pandemic from our cultural sector, which opened up exciting new ways we could reach out to the town and use the power of creativity to connect people.

This makes it the right time to look for new, inspired ways of boosting Watford's cultural sector. We have been working with a specialist team to review our Cultural Strategy and engage with our partners on how we can collaborate and build a successful and sustainable future for culture, arts, entertainment and heritage in our town and for our community.

I am confident that this will make sure Watford continues to push forward and demonstrate how it will remain a vibrant and diverse home for culture now and in years to come.

Peter Taylor



Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Brief and Approach

AEA's Brief

Published in 2018, Watford's Cultural Strategy (2018-2025) describes a vision for the future of the Borough's cultural and creative sector "to grow sustainable opportunities for creative enterprise, cultural provision and participation for our local communities, business and visitors which will, in turn, strengthen Watford's appeal as a creative destination." To achieve this ambition, Watford Borough Council (WBC) has progressed with an action plan centred around four priority areas: local heritage, vibrancy and connectedness, career opportunities, and artistic production. In 2020, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, WBC has taken the decision to reflect on how best to adapt these priorities to the change in circumstances. Building upon the success of Watford Together, a joint project with the Council and culture and leisure partners to engage Borough residents in creative activities during lockdown, WBC seeks to identify opportunities for new collaborations and efficiencies (physical, programmatic, and virtual) across Watford's cultural assets.

In August 2020, WBC commissioned AEA Consulting to revisit existing proposals and explore new ideas and lines of enquiry, including but not limited to:

- The proposed development of a Town Hall Quarter in the north of the town centre;
- The proposed refurbishment or relocation of Watford Museum;
- A unifying brand and communications platform for Watford's cultural sector;
- Shared services for cultural organisations;
- The physical consolidation of cultural assets;
- Increased workspaces for cultural and creative industries; and
- The identification of current gaps in Watford's cultural provision.

The intention of this exercise is not to replace the outcomes of the Cultural Strategy but to review and prioritise initiatives given the impacts of COVID-19, the proposed masterplan for the north of the town centre, and the increasing need for cultural organisations to achieve financial sustainability in light of anticipated decrease in funding available from the Council.

AEA's Approach and Methodology

AEA's approach and methodology included consultation with 39 local cultural sector stakeholders, a review of existing plans and strategies, comparator analysis and desk research, articulating findings and recommendations, and reviewing this analysis and recommendations with the WBC Leadership Board. Our analysis is presented in the five sections of this document:

- **Situation Analysis (Section 1):** an analysis of Watford's cultural market, including demographics, the contribution of the creative industries, levels of cultural engagement; and identified gaps in the provision of built infrastructure and the wider needs of the sector;
- **Case Studies (Section 2):** a benchmark analysis of six UK municipal cultural initiatives, highlighting key learnings relevant to Watford;
- **Emerging Options (Section 3):** an assessment of emerging options for Watford's cultural infrastructure and provision including their merits and limitations;
- **Recommendations and Next Steps (Sections 4-5):** recommended course of action for Watford's cultural organisations and long-term sustainability of the local cultural sector.

The key findings and recommendations contained within sections 1, 3 and 4 are summarised on the following pages.



Executive Summary

Key Findings

Watford's strength is in its diversity – that of the demographic and socio-economic makeup of its residents and of a cultural scene that encompasses **professional performing arts companies of national significance, successful grassroots initiatives, and an active music and 'maker' community**. It is important to recognise and celebrate this diversity, to nurture Watford's home-grown talent, and, by doing so, create strong foundations for future vitality and sustainability of Watford's cultural and creative sector.

Our findings echo those of the 2018-2025 Cultural Strategy: a close relationship between culture and built heritage in Watford; the presence of three Arts Council England National Portfolio theatre organisations (all of them active touring companies); a vibrant community arts scene with regular series of events at the Watford Museum, Pump House Theatre, and independent music and night-time venues; high-quality cultural education facilities at the West Herts College; well-connected stakeholders through various networks including the Cultural Forum, Watford Area Arts Forum, and Cultural Leaders Group; and popular home-grown cultural events (Imagine Watford, Big Events programme).

WBC is recognised for championing culture and continuing to support key organisations and programmes including the Watford Museum, Watford Palace Theatre, Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre and Imagine Watford with operating funding and infrastructure. The Council contributed around £1 million in the form of both direct subsidy and non-commercial rents for Council-owned cultural venues in 2019. The role of the Council in bringing stakeholders together through the Cultural Leaders Group, Cultural Forum and initiatives like Watford Together is also seen as important – if not yet entirely comprehensive – in supporting the coordination and communication of cultural activities in Watford.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the many demands on local authority spending, particularly in the view of the work that will be needed to ensure that their area is able to bounce back strongly both from an economic and community point of view, there is potential for cultural activity and to regenerate and support recovery efforts. The recommendations in this report are accordingly designed to recognise the current financial pressures and complement the proposed Town Hall Quarter project.



In our analysis of **existing gaps and issues in the cultural provision** in Watford we have identified the need to strengthen strategic oversight and leadership for Watford's cultural sector to ensure cohesive development, delivery, and communication of a diverse range of cultural activities. While the Cultural Leaders Group was initiated to facilitate improved networking among key stakeholders, the scope of its representation, authority and decision-making power is limited. In cities and towns across the UK and elsewhere, cultural leadership is often delivered through an umbrella governance structure which we discuss in the options analysis in Section 3 and in case studies analysis provided in Section 2 and Appendix H.

Similarly, there is **a need for strong and consistent communications** to promote Watford's cultural offer to the town's residents and visitors in a way that is more representative of its full scope – both professional and community arts – building on existing initiatives such as Visit Watford but going further.

Analysis of the quality and volume of the cultural infrastructure in Watford highlights that there are some older buildings that would benefit from **investment to bring them up to modern standards and enhance their value** in terms of what they can offer to serve different creative purposes and audiences. There is a demand for specific types of spaces currently missing in Watford: creative workspace – artist and maker studios and creative co-working; rehearsal and performing arts practice studio(s); exhibition spaces; and some support infrastructure (storage, etc.). The proposed Town Hall Quarter may provide space for some of these shared facilities.

AEA observed and noted the scope to improve the **character and quality of public realm** in Watford's town centre that, currently, in places does not reflect either Watford's potential or best practice in public space design, safety, and wayfinding. Creative solutions can be adapted to continue improve and connect Watford's town centre and parts of its high street into one cohesive and attractive 'quarter' while also linking up and improving wayfinding for cultural venues.

The next pages summarise options and recommendations developed to address these identified gaps and issues and to advance the cultural sector in Watford. More detailed analysis of each option and recommendation can be found in Section 3 (Emerging Options) and Section 4 (Recommendations) of this document. Options and recommendations have been grouped into three areas: Town Hall Quarter, Leadership and Governance, and Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support.

Executive Summary

Options and Recommendations

I. Town Hall Quarter: cultural infrastructure provision within the proposed development in the north of the town centre

Options	Recommendations (I)	Rationale	Spatial Requirements*	Indicative Cost
1. Proposed development of a 'Town Hall Quarter' cultural offer in the north of the town centre	1.1 Regenerate the north of the town centre through public realm interventions, commercial and cultural uses (the reimagined Colosseum, potential addition of the re-located Watford Museum, and current Watford Central Library).	General support for the revitalisation of the north of the town centre which is considered 'underutilised' and would benefit from stronger placemaking and greater volume of cultural activity.	N/A	High
	1.2 Identify appropriate approach and potential partners to repurpose the Town Hall, Colosseum and any other available sites to provide a creative workspace offer as part of Town Hall Quarter cultural offer. As part of this test the feasibility of leasing space within the Town Hall/Colosseum. This could provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a rehearsal space facility for dance and performing arts rehearsals, training, and small-scale events; - a visual arts exhibition space with a programme of rotating exhibitions to showcase work (paintings, sculpture, ceramics, etc.). 	Increased animation of the the north of the town centre with cultural activity and addition of 'anchor' tenant which could provide stable long-term income stream for WBC. There is significant demand for theatre and dance performing arts space from arts and community groups as well as strong regional presence of creative industries workers – a growing sector with positive wider economic and social impacts. There is no dedicated visual arts exhibition space in Watford currently which is detrimental to providing opportunities to showcase visual art works by local and visiting artists.	~250 sq m creative studios/offices ~500 sq m coworking space ~100 sq m networking/event space ~100–200 sq m visual arts space ~100–150 sq m rehearsal facility	Medium
	1.3 Increase utilisation and animate the Colosseum building to create a vibrant cultural centre for Watford.	The Colosseum is currently underutilised and has limited programmatic scope. The Council can expand its uses following a recent revision of operating arrangements.	N/A	Low
2. The refurbishment or relocation of Watford Museum	1.4 Update Museum programme and displays as part of an overall review of Museum and Heritage service and investigate the feasibility of re-locating to a repurposed space in the Town Hall as part of the Town Hall Quarter project.	Potential relocation to the Town Hall requires further testing and can be factored into the Town Hall Quarter plans.	Spatial requirements to be confirmed following WBC review of Museum spatial requirements	Medium



*estimated spatial requirements are indicative and require further testing

Executive Summary

Options and Recommendations

II. Leadership and Governance: coordinated strategy and oversight for the cultural sector

Options	Recommendations (II)	Rationale	Spatial Requirements	Indicative Cost
3. Strategic oversight of cultural sector in Watford, including coordinated communications, unified branding, and shared services	2.1 Develop a governance structure for coordinated strategic oversight of cultural sector including planning, programme development and delivery of cultural activities. While the Council can initiate the establishment of such structure, it would be an independent sector-driven entity and can be incorporated as an independent charity, e.g. a Trust governed by a Board. Jointly with cultural organisations in Watford, WBC can look to identify funds to help establish new governance arrangements.	Formalised and representative governance structure including cultural organisations and representatives for local business and residents will enhance coordination and collaboration across cultural activities, creating new efficiencies and funding opportunities. While there is a high level of cultural activity in Watford, it could be better coordinated, and marketing and fundraising can benefit from a more centralised approach.	N/A	Low
	2.2 Deepen community engagement through regular and consistent dialogue with residents and creative practitioners.	Sustained community engagement with residents and creative practitioners will ensure that cultural activities are relevant and impactful.	N/A	Low
	2.3 Improve data collection and analysis to drive better returns on cultural investments.	Data collection and analysis of utilisation and engagement will enable progress monitoring, drive efficiencies, and inform evidence-based decision-making.	N/A	Low
	2.4 Develop a centralised communications platform to promote Watford's cultural sector to residents and visitors – either by repurposing the existing website/brand or creating a new one.	Enhanced brand and coordinated marketing will streamline the communication communications and encourage greater attendance and impact.	N/A	Low
	2.5 Investigate other opportunities for shared services and co-efficiencies.	Potential opportunities for shared CRM, ticketing, education or admin require further investigation with key cultural stakeholders.	N/A	Low
4. COVID-19 sector support	2.6 Continue to signpost at-risk cultural venues and organisations to potential grant and funding sources and maintain ongoing dialogue with national lobbying and funding organisations.	Some cultural infrastructure at risk due to the current operating environment, especially independent and grassroots music venues.	N/A	Low



Executive Summary

Options and Recommendations

III. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support: improvements to culture infrastructure

Options	Recommendations (III)	Rationale	Spatial Requirements*	Indicative Cost
5. Improvements to existing cultural infrastructure	3.1 As landlord, WBC can work with local venues including the Pump House Arts Centre and Watford Palace Theatre to seek funds and mechanisms to improve, update and animate existing infrastructure.	Address required repairs to refurbish existing facilities of the Pump House and Palace Theatre, increase accessibility, and accommodate growing levels of activity in both venues.	Rehearsal/performance space: ~100–150 sq m Storage & scenic workshop: ~140–220 sq m	Medium
6. Provision of new cultural facilities, including rehearsal/studio space for theatre and dance, creative workspaces, and exhibition/gallery space	3.2 Consider adaptive re-use of vacant buildings in Watford for creative activities such as galleries and studio space, workspace, rehearsal space, exhibition/bespoke retail, led by private and not-for-profit initiatives (including Watford BID and <i>intu</i>).	Efficient use of vacant space to animate town centre through adaptive creative reuse of existing buildings.	Flexible based on supply	Low
7. Physical consolidation of cultural assets around main hubs of activity in the town centre	3.3 Continue to enhance public realm, wayfinding and outdoor social & event spaces to increase connectivity, attractiveness and footfall and facilitate greater cohesion of public spaces and cultural venues.	Besides the area around the Town Hall, there are no clear opportunities for physical consolidation but connectivity and visibility of culture and cultural assets can be improved throughout the town.	N/A	Medium

For full context of options and recommendations, please review sections 3 and 4 of this report. These recommendations were developed by AEA based on the market analysis and consultation undertaken in August-September 2020 and are addressed at Watford's cultural sector ecosystem. There is emphasis on specific recommendations for initiatives that can strengthen and support the cultural provision in Watford. It is not expected that the WBC will be in a position to address any of these directly, without the engagement of the wider public, the private sector and the local cultural sector leaders. Given the legacy of "Watford Together" and to maximise efficiencies, it is recommended that Watford's cultural organisations and the WBC address these recommendations collaboratively.



*estimated spatial requirements are indicative and require further testing

Executive Summary

Next Steps

Identify Funding Sources and Mechanisms

The funding for cultural sector infrastructure updates and consolidation efforts can be sought from a number of public and private funders including but not limited to:

- For cultural infrastructure improvements and repurposing:
 - National Lottery Heritage Fund
 - Historic England
 - The Architectural Heritage Fund
 - Philanthropic foundations and trusts
 - Private sector partners and investors
 - Developer contributions (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy)
- For leadership and governance consolidation / structure
 - Arts Council England
 - Philanthropic foundations and trusts
- For wider sector support
 - Arts Council England
 - National Lottery Heritage Fund
 - Historic England
 - The Architectural Heritage Fund
 - Private sector partners and investors
 - Developer contributions

Agree on Implementation Timeline

The recommended initiatives can be implemented in parallel commencing in late 2020 – early 2021, specifically:

Town Hall Quarter

- Test the feasibility of repurposing the Town Hall to accommodate the Museum and other cultural uses and updating the Colosseum to increase its utilisation and establish action plan.

Cultural Sector Leadership

- Facilitate the establishment of a formalised governance and leadership organisation for cultural sector in Watford.
- Launch a consolidated online platform for Watford culture.
- Create a mechanism for continued community engagement, e.g. regular community meetings, an open online membership network, community surveys.
- Set up data collection and analysis of cultural sector indicators.

Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

- Partner with private and public stakeholders to facilitate increased utilisation of built infrastructure for creative uses, specifically landlords of commercial units; vacant retail units at *intu*; and vacant units at the Watford Market.

More detailed funding sources and an action plan is provided in Section 5.



1. Situation analysis

1: Market Analysis



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Context

Introduction

Watford is one of ten districts within the County of Hertfordshire, and Watford town a major regional hub due to its size and location: 17 miles northwest of London, it is **well-connected** by rail, underground and motorway to central London, and within the boundaries of the M25 orbital motorway. The town has always been a hub for business and transport – first founded as a market town on a well-travelled route for traders, it bloomed into a busy regional hub in the early nineteenth century, with the opening of the Grand Union canal in 1814 and the railway in 1837, linking Watford to as far North as Lancashire. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Borough's traditional agricultural base had been replaced by **brewing, milling, paper-making and printing** – so significant that during the mid-twentieth century, Watford was the largest printing centre in the world.

The town's modern-day strengths are built upon on its **heritage in creation and design** – there are over 92 nationally listed buildings in Watford – as well as the location for **major corporate headquarters** from retail, to food and beverage, and the creative industries. **Warner Brothers' Studios** in Leavesden draws upon the heartland of British filmmaking in Herts, and the unique mass of cultural activity within Watford itself.

For its size, Watford sees **an high number of creative and cultural organisations**, spanning a variety of art forms, attracting audiences from outside the County, and is matched by scores of creatives, artists and makers, who along with the Borough's residents, enjoy the benefits of having both the greenery of Hertfordshire and the bustle of London within reach. Watford still remains a place of commerce and movement – **the intu shopping centre** draws upon the wealthy milieu of South West Herts, encompassing a total of approximately **1.6 million residents** from as far as Luton, attracting the residents of the wealthy boroughs of Buckinghamshire, including Amersham and Beaconsfield. Relative to Hertfordshire, Watford's cultural offer is distinctly contemporary and is a far more urban in nature. Although still verdant with the **190-acre Cassiobury Park** and eleven more 'Green Flag' rated spaces across the Borough, unlike the Roman heritage of St Albans and stately homes such as Hatfield House, Watford can build upon its cultural diversity and excellent cultural education facilities at **West Herts College**, cultivating creative talent that adds to Watford's assets.

In order to further the understanding of market demand for the cultural provision in Watford, the following section analyses demographics of the Borough's population, highlighting its relative affluence, ethnic diversity and high cultural engagement. The scope of local creative and industry specialisation is also mapped out to present possible relationships between the commercial and not-for-profit industries in Watford. In order to predict what future demand may look like following COVID-19, and make recommendations that capture such changes and address the long-term impact of the pandemic, pre-2020 figures on visitation and cultural engagement are updated with new data on cultural consumption during the lockdown, reflective of changing cultural consumer behaviour, and the changing willingness to return to in-person activities.



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market Analysis

Key Takeaways

1. Watford is young, ethnically diverse, relatively affluent, and highly educated; sharing many demographical characteristics with London.
2. Cultural and ethnic diversity needs to be represented in Watford's cultural offering, in addition to maintaining access to a significant segment of the population from low-income or deprived communities.
3. National and international corporations headquartered in Watford provide opportunities for commercial support and relationships between for-profit and not-for-profit cultural organisations.
4. Watford's visitor base is mainly domestic and predominantly to visit relatives or friends; as such, the cultural offering ought to prioritise its residents, and those commuting into Watford for work.
5. Cultural engagement has drastically changed in the wake of COVID-19; concerts and theatre performances have been replaced by digital consumption, while heritage sites and green spaces have risen in importance.



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand

Demographics

Population: Age and Gender

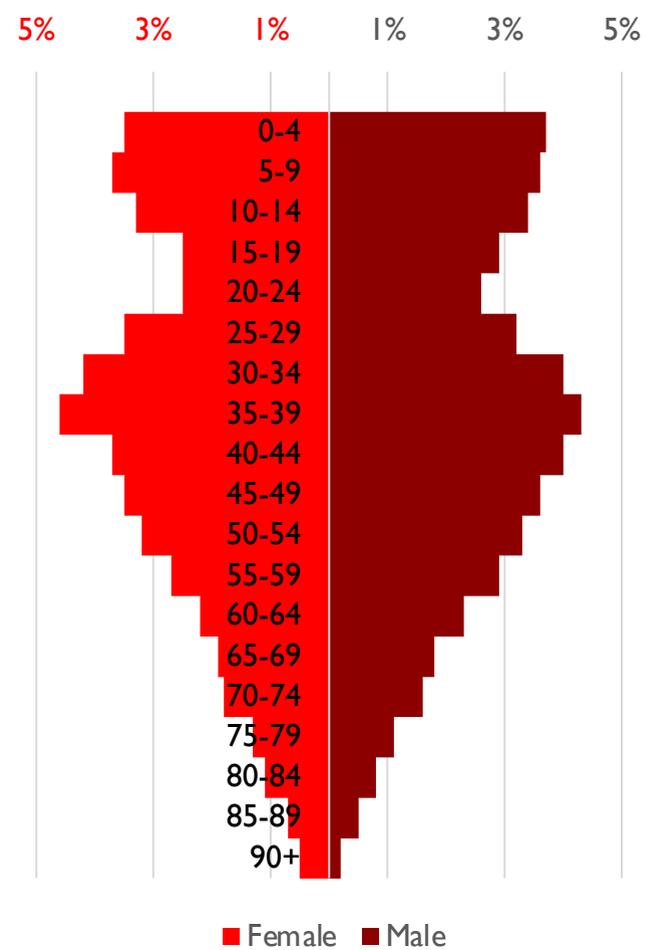
Watford has an estimated total population of **96,767** and is the most densely populated part of Hertfordshire. Current estimates forecast population to grow to **over 105,000 inhabitants by 2025, and 110,000 by 2035**. The split between the registered male and female population is almost exactly even, with no available measurement of the transgender population. The age distribution of the male population is slightly aging in comparison to the female population.

The average age in Watford is **36 years**, four years younger than the national average of 40. The youthful age structure and large working population is the primary reason for the area's rapid growth – 26.5% of the population are between the ages of 0 to 19; and 32.1% of the population are between the ages of 30 to 49. This shows that the **majority of the population is aged under 50, with more under 30s overall than over 50s**.

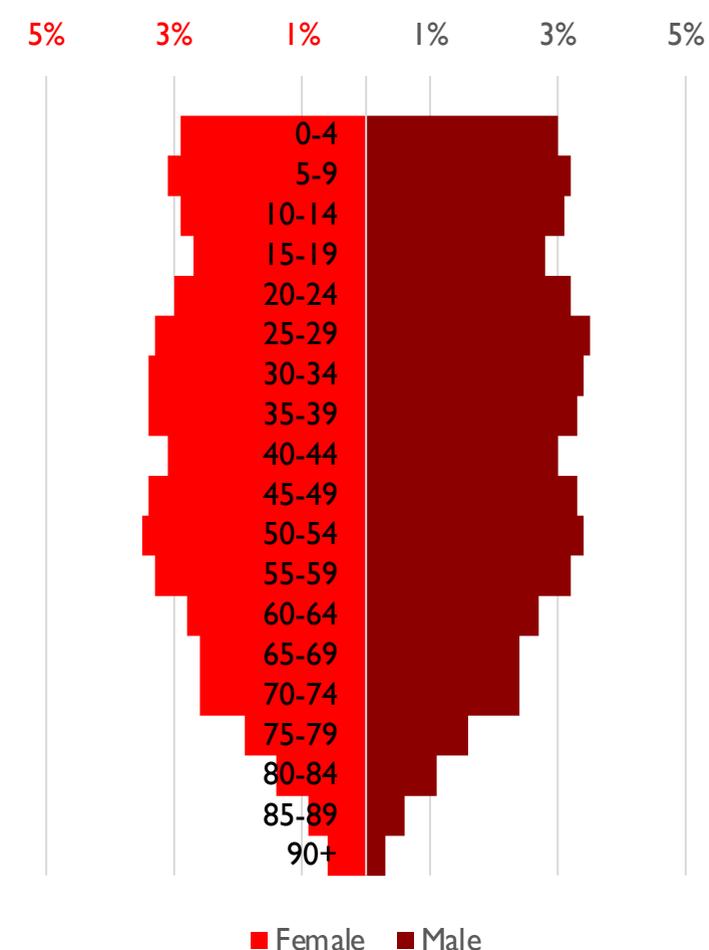
In addition, families and young professionals make up a large proportion of Watford's residents. As of 31 May 2020, there were **40,274 council tax registered households**. Year on year growth in total number of households is predominantly attributed to single person households (44%), and households with dependent children (35%).

As a result, the demand for arts and culture activities, in particular, family entertainment, is significant. Although considered more 'urban' by county standards, Watford's offering has an opportunity to continue addressing and prioritising the Borough's youthful population, both young families, under 20s as well as mobile and affluent young professionals.

Watford Population, mid-2018
estimates
(n=96,767)



England Population, mid-2018
estimates
(n=55,977,178)



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand

Demographics

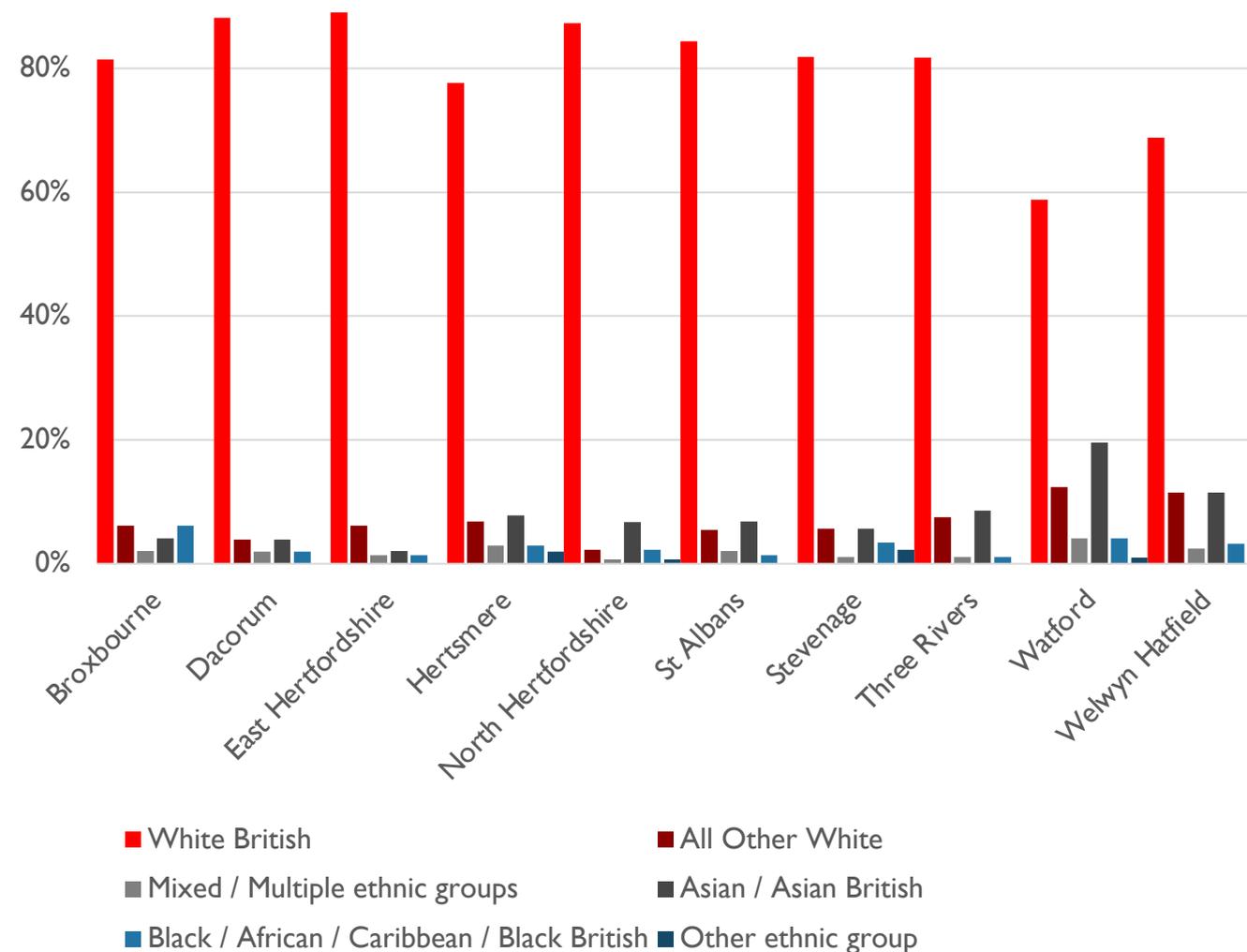
Population: Ethnicity

A major asset to Watford is its ethnic diversity, as the most ethnically diverse Borough in Hertfordshire. **29% of its population is non-White**, the highest within the County, and also far above the national average of 15%. The 2011 Census recorded a **large Pakistani, British Indian, British Asian and African** resident population in Watford. The most recent ONS estimates from mid-2019 do not measure for the same categories, but confirm that the British Asian population of Watford has increased to around 20% – **greater than any other borough in Hertfordshire, and even London** – which although has a non-White population of 41%, has around the same proportion of British Asians of Watford's total population, 18%.

Watford's diversity is attributable to both recent migrants from **Europe**: Romania and Bulgaria, who were given EU residency rights in 2014, and eight countries that joined the EU in 2004, including Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. Outside of Europe, migration from **South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa** is also significant, which have remained at a similar volume in the last five years. Data from the recent EU Settlement Scheme confirm a high number of residents with citizenship from EU countries – a total of 11,630 applications were made in Watford alone, with significant representation from countries such as Romania, Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria. As such, the languages spoken within the Borough are diverse and growing. While approximately 60% of households speak English, a school survey from 2018 highlighted the significance of **Urdu, Polish and Tamil** as languages spoken at home.

The Borough's diversity needs to be reflected in its cultural provision, both in terms of catering to language needs, as well as being representative of and celebrating the Town's various communities. In addition to one-off celebrations and activities, this diversity can play a crucial role at the heart of cultural leadership and overall programming in Watford's cultural assets, and elevate the work of non-White practitioners, artists and cultural organisations in the Borough.

Population by Ethnic Group (%)



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand

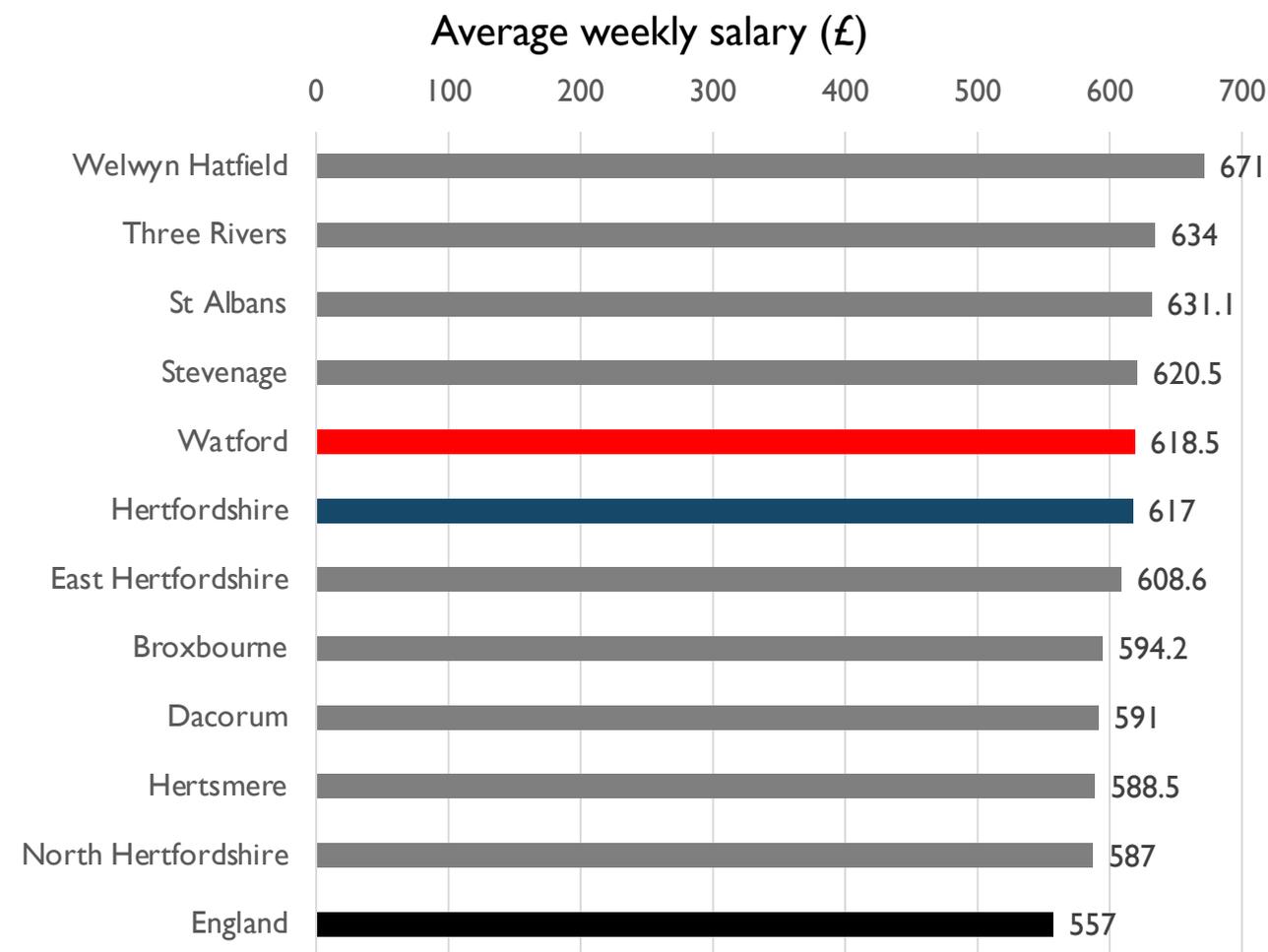
Demographics

Population: Wealth & Health

Watford is an affluent Borough by national standards. The Office of National Statistics estimates that the average weekly salary in Watford is **£618.6**, just above **Hertfordshire average of £617**, and **national average of £557**. Neighbouring boroughs also see above national average weekly salaries – Three Rivers, St Albans, and Dacorum within a 15-mile radius. Consumer profiles, such as MOSAIC, confirm that major segments of the Watford population are able and willing to spend on leisure. Largest segments are singles and couples with high occupational mobility (11.9%); urban families with stable incomes (8.7%) and affluent families (8%).

However, Watford also scores below average on several key health and deprivation indicators, such as crime, living environment, education or skills, health and disability. Although the Borough overall is less deprived than over half of authorities in England, it is the third most deprived Authority in Hertfordshire. Within Watford, Central, Holywell and Meriden wards are the third most deprived areas, with **Central the only ward in the top decile of deprivation across the Country**. There is limited detailed information on the average health of the population; the 2011 Census records around 14% of respondents with a disability. Similarly, there is little data on homelessness, with approximately 15 registered statutory homeless in Watford, and 153 households living in temporary accommodation.

The range in socioeconomic circumstance across the Borough is indicative that although a large proportion of residents are able to enjoy the Town's retail and entertainment offer, community programmes and free-to-enter assets and activities remain essential to keeping access even for all communities, and decisions on where to develop additional cultural facilities should take into consideration that the most deprived wards, Central and Holywell, are clustered South of the town centre, while Meriden is on the North-eastern edge of town.



Source: MOSAIC Profiling for Watford, 2018.

1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market supply Industry Specialisation & Employment

The Borough has been identified as a significant economic driver of the Region – a ‘functional economic market area’ also encompassing **Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans and Three Rivers**. The five Boroughs are exceptionally well-connected and are able to capitalise on connections along the M1 growth corridor North to Luton, as well as to London, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford. Watford’s main industries are **knowledge-based service industries** – nearly **50%** of the total Borough employment are in these sectors – including **professional services** (14%) and **retail**. Sectors that see an above national average concentration in Watford, measured by having a Location Quotient (LQ) of larger than 1, are **computer-related services and activity** (1.8), **retail** (1.75), **professional services** (1.65) and **telecoms** (1.41).

Retail is the driving force behind Watford’s draw – **65% of expenditure in Three Rivers and 34% in Hertsmere is conducted in Watford**, specifically for less frequently purchased and high value items. Recent years have also seen the development of research and innovation in Watford, with companies drawn to the area’s affordable commercial rents and excellent transport links. This is also reflected in the high number of national and international corporations headquartered in Watford – the opposite table lists the top 21 employers in Watford by annual turnover. In addition to manufacturing and wholesale, there is a strong representation from retail/ hospitality and food and beverage, including **JD Wetherspoon, TK Maxx (TJX UK) and Hilton**.

There is potential for industry to support and develop Watford’s cultural ecosystem. Outside of engagement with the Watford Football Club, the Council might assist in developing relationships between Watford’s cultural sector and commercial sponsors. In addition to the firms listed, there are a number of major corporations located in new office spaces on Clarendon Road, such as **PwC**, and the ongoing development of **Sky Studios Elstree**: both are significant opportunities for partnership.

Top Employers in Watford by total turnover, 2020

	Name	Turnover	Total Employees	Industry
1	Smith & Nephew Plc	3.87bn	18.03k	Manufacture of chemical products
2	TJX UK	3.16bn	20.94k	Retail
3	Costco UK	2.71bn	7.16k	Wholesale
4	Costco Wholesale	2.62bn	7.06k	Wholesale
5	JD Wetherspoon Plc	1.82bn	25.48k	Public houses and bars
6	Wickes Building Supplies Limited	1.29bn	7.92k	Retail
7	Vinci Plc	909.16m	3.55k	Activities of head offices
8	Vinci Construction	904.34m	3.38k	Construction of commercial buildings
10	Premier Lotteries UK	813.4m	1.15k	Non-trading
11	Camelot UK Lotteries Ltd	683.9m	783	Gambling and betting activities
12	CP Holdings Ltd	588.55m	6.96k	Construction of commercial buildings
13	Corona Energy Retail 4 Ltd	572.12m	4	Trade of electricity
14	Medtronic Limited	513.85m	796	Manufacturing of dental instruments and supplies
15	ADM Agriculture Ltd	482.85m	24	Wholesale
16	Hilton Worldwide Manage Ltd	472.85m	30	Hotels
17	Corona Gas Management Ltd	472.16m	4	Wholesale of fuels etc
18	TJX Europe Buying	470.81m	N/A	Business support activities
19	Beko Plc	424.78m	279	Manufacture of electric domestic appliances
20	Kodak Limited	345.36m	194	Other
21	Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd	302.41m	1.28K	Wholesale of wine etc



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market supply Creative Industries

There are also a number of for-profit creative industry firms in Watford. Mapping of Companies House registered firms in Watford has found that creative industry sub-sectors represented are IT, software and computer services; film, TV, video, radio and photography; advertising and marketing; and music, performing and visual arts. LQ analysis does not find that the creative industries in Watford (5% of all total registered firms) are more concentrated relative to the national level – in fact, they have decreased from 7% of all registered firms since 2011.

South West Herts has an above national concentration of creative industries firms, affirming that Watford is well-placed to capture the creative workforce from neighbouring areas. The LQ for SW Herts compared to the national average is 1.2, and the sector accounts for around 19,000 jobs – an increase of almost 4,500 since 2012. In particular, Hertsmere and Three Rivers, both hubs of British filmmaking and production, sees a high proportion of transient and project-based workers, but a **lack of creative workspace**.

Watford's resident creative population – brought together by networks such as the **Watford Area Arts Forum** – also benefits from an exceptional creative and arts school, **West Herts College**. An analysis of cultural education provision in Hertfordshire singled out West Herts College as an outstanding provider of education to the area, but underdeveloped links with the wider creative industry. Although there is some provision of placements and evidence of career progression onto co-located creative firms, the College is insufficiently capitalised upon as a cultivator of arts and culture talent in Watford.

As it stands, Watford has as of yet, not prioritised or developed long-term links between the for-profit creative industry and the not-for-profit cultural organisations, including West Herts College, and if new creative workspace is introduced, is also well-positioned to make up for the shortfall in space supply for creative workers within its bounds and neighbouring boroughs.

Registered and Active Creative Industry (CI) Firms in Watford, September 2020

Sub-sector	Count	% of CI
Advertising and marketing	111	17%
Architecture	37	6%
Crafts	6	1%
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	52	8%
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	131	20%
IT, software and computer services	176	27%
Publishing	38	6%
Museums, galleries and libraries *	0	0%
Music, performing and visual arts	101	15%
<i>Total</i>	652	



Source: Great Britain Day Visitor Survey, 2016; Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, Watford Cultural Plan: Action Plan and Needs Assessment, July 2011; South West Herts Economic Study Update, Hatch Regeneris, May 2019; Hertfordshire Growth Board Development Programme, Creative & Screen Industries Business Case Draft, 2020. Table data source: Companies House Data, September 2020. *Companies House data does not capture Council-owned assets or any firms not registered with Companies House, as a result, zero museums, galleries and libraries are identified.

1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand Tourism before COVID-19

Prior to COVID-19, Watford attracted a significant amount of day and overnight visitors. The most recent detailed figures for day visits to Watford from the Great Britain Day Visitor Survey between 2014 and 2016 cite an annual average of **2 million day visits**, contributing a total of £90 million. The same period saw an average of **179,000 domestic overnight trips** to the Borough, generating £29 million over the year. 58% of visits were to see friends and relatives (abbreviated to VFR), in addition to 26% visiting for leisure. Watford only sees some 44,000 visits from overseas – as such, its visitor base is overwhelmingly domestic.

This is **around average** for the County – East Herts sees the highest number of annual visitors, totalling 4.3 million, with Broxbourne only seeing 1.3 million. On the whole, the County is predominantly a VFR destination, drawing over 44% of all visitors across the County. This will likely remain the case while long distance travel is impacted by the pandemic and domestic tourism will be encouraged in lieu of international travel.

Hertfordshire's Visitor Economy, 2017

Borough	Annual visitors (million)	Annual value (million)
St Albans	2.1	£200
Dacorum	3.4	£269
Watford	2	£269
Three Rivers	3.3	£198
Hertsmere	1.4	£128
North Herts	2.9	£210
Stevenage	1.8	£143
East Herts	4.3	£275
Broxbourne	1.3	£113
Welwyn Hatfield	1.9	£196



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand Cultural Consumption before COVID-19

Consumer Segmentation

Using the relevant segmentation developed by Audience Agency, the three largest segments of cultural audiences in Watford are:

- **Experience Seekers:** active, diverse, social and ambitious singles and couples who engage with and seek out arts and culture on a regular basis;
- **Commuterland Culturebuffs:** affluent and settled white-collar professionals, they prefer traditional artforms such as heritage, and are also willing to travel and pay for cultural experiences.
- **Dormitory Dependables:** a dependable audience of heritage and mainstream arts and culture activities, but a busy lifestyle or limited access to a diverse cultural offering means that engagement is periodic but not a staple.

Audience Spectrum segment	Watford		Hertfordshire		Index
	Count	%	Count	%	
Metroculturals	195	0%	15,138	2%	12
Commuterland Culturebuffs	22,339	23%	256,437	27%	84
Experience Seekers	23,337	24%	121,805	13%	186
Dormitory Dependables	18,345	19%	228,332	24%	78
Trips & Treats	7,411	8%	100,697	11%	71
Home & Heritage	5,582	6%	57,739	6%	94
Up Our Street	4,968	5%	34,687	4%	139
Facebook Families	10,997	11%	91,770	10%	116
Kaleidoscope Creativity	2,025	2%	24,493	3%	80
Heydays	2,895	3%	20,012	2%	140
Unclassified	-		-		
Adults 15+ estimate 2017	98,094		951,110		

Cultural Participation

Cultural engagement in Watford is **relatively high** – attributed to its relatively affluent population, with cultural appetite furthered by easy access to both London and a local cultural offer.

The most recent measurement of participation in Watford by the Audience Agency shows that Watford has an above average level of cultural participation relative to Hertfordshire (which already has above average engagement nationally), with the largest proportion of residents engaging with **theatre (50%)** and **pop/ rock concerts (42%)** – testament to Watford's recognised strengths in the performing arts and the music scene.

Audience Spectrum segment	Watford		Hertfordshire		Index
	Count	%	Count	%	
Art galleries	24,395	32%	299,873	31%	102
Art gallery once a month or more	1,049	1%	10,267	1%	128
Ballet	10,695	14%	121,183	13%	111
Classical concerts	13,609	18%	159,958	17%	107
Comedy shows	20,058	26%	253,320	26%	99
Contemporary dance	8,924	12%	88,499	9%	126
Jazz concerts	11,871	15%	131,902	14%	113
Opera	8,955	12%	100,438	10%	112
Plays	29,374	38%	370,166	38%	99
Popular/rock concert	32,056	42%	404,144	42%	99
Theatre	38,770	50%	486,866	50%	100
Theatre once a month or more	2,176	3%	20,075	2%	136
Adults 15+ estimate 2018	77,061		964,866		



1.1. Situation analysis: Market Analysis

Watford: Market demand

The impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Consumption

Cultural engagement has shifted dramatically in the aftermath of a nationwide lockdown, with a dramatic uptake in digital provision and consumption of arts and culture, as well as the adaptation to operating with social distancing measures in place. Watford's role as a networked urban commuter town, with a high proportion of employment in service industries has meant that it has been hard-hit by both the health and economic implications of the pandemic. In the UK, it ranks **18th in per capita COVID-19 death rate (6.72 deaths per 10,000 residents), and 34th in total percentage of residents with employment furloughed (13.33% furloughed).**

Effect on cultural engagement

The most popular activities prior to COVID-19 in the East of England – cinema, theatre and pop and rock concerts – have been replaced by more accessible activities in or near the home - **TV and Radio (86% in July), outdoor exercise (79% in July), and video games (43% in July).** Easing of lockdown measures have also resulted in a steady increase in those engaging with **heritage**, including local history, historic parks, sites, or National Parks, but with continuing **digital consumption of arts and music.** Although the recorded levels of enthusiasm to return to in-person activities has increased (only 18% of respondents would not be comfortable at all, in comparison to 27%), the rising number of cases and local lockdowns will likely have an effect on the willingness to return to arts and culture venues.

Implications on programming and operations

Changing consumption patterns will also mean that that there will be less international touring exhibitions or productions – these will likely be limited to regional tours, or cut altogether. Corporate hire of venues will also be negligible. In addition, Art Fund's museum sector survey has highlighted that museums will have to rely on, and highlight, the strengths of their existing collections.

Audience Agency have predicted broad behavioural changes for their audience spectrum segments during COVID-19. Focusing on the three largest segments seen in Watford, one might anticipate their cultural consumption habits may reflect the following:

- **Experience Seekers** will be less resistant to changes in format, such as streaming. The social aspect of cultural engagement will likely be a key driver for a faster return to in-person experiences.
- **Commuterland Culturebuffs** will have made use of heritage offerings during the past few months – many are National Trust and English Heritage members and are usually frequent attenders of traditional cultural organisations.
- **Dormitory Dependables** will have also been frequent visitors to outdoor heritage sites, and are likely keen to see Christmas pantomimes return in the winter.

Participation, East of England (pre COVID-19)

Cultural Activity	At least once in the last 12 months
Art galleries	28%
Classical concerts	15%
Comedy	25%
Contemporary dance	9%
Jazz	9%
Plays	35%
Pop/ rock concerts	38%
Theatre	49%
Museums	30%
Archaeological sites	7%
Stately homes	21%
Cinema	79%

Participation, East of England (May-July 2020)

Cultural Activity	May	June	July
Arts/ music online	45%	39%	36%
Creative activities at home	52%	46%	41%
Video games	44%	42%	43%
Heritage	27%	26%	36%
Outdoor exercise	73%	71%	79%
TV/ Radio	89%	92%	86%
Not comfortable at all	27%	16%	18%



1. **Situation analysis**

■ **2: Cultural provision in Watford**



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Cultural Sector Analysis

Observed strengths and limitations

Our analysis of the current cultural provision in Watford identified a number of strengths – assets and activities contributing to the vibrancy of Watford’s cultural sector, and some limitations – factors that are seen as constraints to further growth of the sector. Some of these can be addressed with specific initiatives (discussed in sections 3 and 4 of this report), others are larger ‘environmental’ issues that need to be taken into account when considering priorities for Watford’s cultural ecosystem.

This section discusses Watford’s cultural assets and provides, level of demand (attendance) at key venues, and gives an overview of existing cultural infrastructure to inform the analysis of gaps and issues in provision, together with the results of consultation and review of WBC and individual organisations’ strategies and materials.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Active cultural and creative sector comprising diverse art forms, organisations and initiatives, particularly for a town and borough of its size;▪ ‘Anchor’ cultural and creative organisations and venues of regional and national recognition including Warner Bros. Leavesden, BBC Concert Orchestra, Watford Palace Theatre, Rifco Theatre, Electric Umbrella and tiata fahodzi;▪ Strong existing networks for cultural organisations (Cultural Leaders Group) and amateur and freelance artists, writers, makers and musicians (Cultural Forum, Watford Area Arts Forum);▪ Provision of local cultural education programmes and facilities by West Herts College;▪ Local council championing culture and creativity in Watford through funding, events and other support;▪ Strong home-grown and community organisations and initiatives including Watford Recycling Arts Project (WRAP), The Pump House, Watford Museum, Herts Inclusive Theatre, Fringe Festival, and Imagine Watford;▪ History and heritage centred around trade, printing, brewing, built infrastructure and Watford Football Club;▪ Library service serving nearly 10,000 of active borrowers and delivering events and programmes including active reading groups;▪ Significant visitor economy supported by Watford Football Club and Warner Bros. studio tour;▪ Connectivity and location providing easy access to London and the countryside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Proximity to London creates competition with London’s cultural and tourism offerings;▪ Limited wayfinding, design intervention or landmarks within the town centre make it difficult to navigate, especially for tourists;▪ Lack of cohesive branding and messaging to promote the richness of Watford’s cultural offer;▪ A411 ring road impacts public realm and limits expansion of the high street to the north and south;▪ Town centre focused on commercial uses and dominated by <i>intu</i> shopping centre.



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Arts & culture in Watford

Arts & Cultural Assets

Watford has number of cultural organisations and infrastructure that span diverse art forms. The Council operates heritage and civic assets: the local **Watford Museum, the Town Hall**, as well as the green spaces and facilities within them, such as **Cheslyn House and Gardens, Cassiobury Park** and various sports facilities. There are three professional producing theatres that are all nationally well-regarded and Arts Council England portfolio organisations – the **Palace Theatre, tiata fahodzi and Rifco Theatre**, as well as the **Colosseum**, a large commercial-hire venue with a seated capacity of 1,392. **Watford Central and North Watford Libraries** are owned and operated by Hertfordshire County Council. In addition, there are at least four small music venues in pubs and cafés across the town centre, as well a nightclub and bar operated by national chains **The Deltic Group** and **Stonegate Pub Company**.

There is good educational provision in the area, with two partially selective grammar schools as well as a campus of **West Herts College**, which provides creative higher education courses. Grassroots creative activity and community programmes are also well-developed at the Palace Theatre and the Pump House, in addition to the **West Herts Inclusive Theatre**, which is located at the **Holywell Community Centre**, home to a number of civic and creative charities.

Throughout the year, Council-run **BIG EVENTS** bring festivals and events to the town, while the Palace Theatre's **IMAGINE WATFORD** festival of outdoor arts commissions new work that reflects and cultivates contemporary British arts and culture.

Watford Football Club and the **Warner Bros. Studios** at Leavesden draw a large proportion of visitors to the Town; however, **audience overlap is minimal** with the town centre's retail and leisure offering.

The following pages provide a short overview of known organisations and cultural infrastructure in Watford, and a list of mapped organisations by type.

Amanartis: Recently redeveloped creative workspace and studios founded by Amma Gyan in the Council-owned Old Free School building.

Electric Umbrella: Founded in 2013 by Tom Billington and Mel Boda, it leads music sessions to empower those with learning disabilities, serving communities across South West Herts.

Fire (Brigade) Museum: Based in the Watford Fire Station, the museum exhibits a selection of items related to Watford's fire service and memorabilia.

Herts Inclusive Theatre: An inclusive theatre company located at the Holywell Community Centre, it hosts workshops open to all, as well as family arts activities and other community projects.

Holywell Community Centre: Located near the King George V Playing Fields, the land is owned by the Council and is currently operated by Watford and Three Rivers Trust.

Music and nightlife: There are a number of bars and small music venues in the town – pubs such as the White Lion and the Horns, indie LP Café, as well as the 2,000-capacity Pryzm nightclub. Much of the nightlife is clustered around the Northern area of Watford town centre.

Other educational facilities: Other notable schools are the Watford Grammar Schools for Boys and Girls and the Watford School of Music. Both partially selective grammar schools partner with the music school to offer music teaching to its students. Watford School of Music is also one of the 13 music centres provided by the Hertfordshire Music Service. The Dan Tien, a dance school, is also located in the town centre.

Parks and open spaces: Watford has a number of green spaces, twelve of which have been awarded Green Flag status. This includes the 190-acre Cassiobury Park, the location of the Henry Colbeck-designed Cheslyn House & Gardens, and Oxhey Park, which has recently undergone redevelopment to provide new sports and leisure facilities as well as the creation of wetland.



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Arts & culture in Watford

Places of worship: These include the Holy Rood Church, St Mary's Church, Watford Central Mosque and Al Zahra Centre.

Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre: Watford's former water pump station, converted in the 1970s into a theatre and volunteer-run community arts centre. It is now the home and venue of a vibrant cohort of artists, small touring companies and local arts societies.

The Barn: A multipurpose community venue, the Barn is operated by Watford and Three Rivers Trust, and is located in the Town Centre, directly opposite the Palace Theatre.

The Harry Potter Experience: Located at Warner Bros. Studio Leavesden, an experience and studio tour of the Harry Potter Film Series. While it was at one point the most visited paid attraction in the UK, the studios have not much interest in further engagement with the town and apart from the inclusion of a stop at the town centre on their hop-on/off bus.

tiata fahodzi: An ACE portfolio organisation established in 1997, it is a theatre company for and about the British African-heritage communities, and an important platform and voice for Black theatre in the UK. (The company was located at The Barn and moved out in the course of the 2020 lockdown. It may continue its collaboration with the Watford Palace Theatre as it returns to rehearsals and live shows in 2021).

Watford Central Library and North Watford Library: Two public libraries located in the centre and North end of the town, owned and operated by the Hertfordshire County Council. The Central location features a specialist workspace, CreatorSpace, with digital and technical equipment for hire.

Watford Colosseum: A 1,268-seat historic concert and events venue, its shoebox hall has renowned acoustics and is also the home of one of the best Compton organs in the country. The Colosseum is used by the BBC Concert Orchestra for rehearsals, recordings, and occasional performances.

Watford Football Club: Home of English professional football club, and frequent sponsor of Watford events.

Watford Leisure Centre – Central & Woodside: Leisure and sports centres with facilities such as gym, dance studio, swimming pools, operated by Everyone Active and managed in partnership with the Council.

Watford Museum: Housed in a Grade II listed building in the former Benskin's Brewery complex, the Museum opened in its current site in 1981, and exhibits a selection of local history materials and materials relating to the town's football club. The building requires significant modernisation and work to meet accessibility, display, and storage requirements, with the majority of its 35,000-item collection in storage facilities that can be improved.

Watford Palace Theatre: Arts Council England portfolio producing theatre, with a Creative Associate programme and well-regarded youth and community theatre groups. Its Resident Partner company, Rifco Theatre, also an ACE portfolio organisation, is a touring company that produces plays and musicals embedded in and celebrating the British Asian contemporary experience.

West Herts College: Watford's campus of West Herts College, providing full-time courses and apprenticeships. Its cultural educational provision is strong, and it also has brand new facilities for hire.

The **Visit Watford** initiative and website promotes Watford's leisure amenities – the website sees over 2,050 unique views, and has a total of 3,452 social media followers.

Additionally, Hertfordshire County Council operates **Creative Herts**, a website for all creative firms and organisations in the County and its current Herts Year of Culture, however Creative Herts is underused and does not have much buy-in, with issues around quality management of listings. Reports have indicated there is a preference to have a more curated directory that also includes grassroots organisations and venues.



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Arts & culture in Watford

The next two pages provide a tabulated list of arts and cultural assets in Watford, sorted by art form or type – the data used to inform the analysis of current cultural provision in Watford, alongside wider materials review, desk research, and consultation conducted by AEA in August-September 2020.

Art form	Name	Description	Owner	Operator	Size (sq m)	Capacity
Arts & Culture Organisations	Rifco Theatre	British-Asian producing theatre company	Rifco Theatre	Rifco Theatre		
Arts & Culture Organisations	Tiata Fahodzi	British-African theatre company	Tiata Fahodzi	Tiata Fahodzi		
Arts & Culture Organisations	Electric Umbrella	Charity for musical empowerment of those	Electric Umbrella	Electric Umbrella		
Arts & Culture Organisations	Herts Inclusive Theatre	Inclusive theatre company in SW Herts				
Civic	Town Hall: Large	Town Hall, offices of Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	N/A	170
Civic	Town Hall: Small				N/A	40
Civic	Watford Central Library	Public library	Hertfordshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council	1437	N/A
Civic	North Watford Library	Public library	Hertfordshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council	715	N/A
Civic	Holywell Community Centre	Community centre and multipurpose venue	Watford Borough Council	Watford and Three Rivers Trust	N/A	N/A
Civic	The Barn: Hall	Multipurpose community venue	Watford and Three Rivers Trust	Watford and Three Rivers Trust	N/A	80
Creative working space	Amanartis	Creative co-working space	Watford Borough Council	Amanartis	N/A	N/A
Cultural education/ Education	West Herts College	Local campus of cultural education college	West Herts College	West Herts College	4,400	N/A
Cultural education/ Education	West Herts College: Rehearsal and Dance Studio		West Herts College	West Herts College	N/A	N/A
Cultural education/ Education	West Herts College: Theatre		West Herts College	West Herts College	N/A	120
Cultural education/ Education	The Dan Tien	Dance school	The Dan Tien	Harebreaks Community Hub	N/A	N/A
Cultural education/ Education	Para Dance	Inclusive dance organisation	Para Dance	Para Dance	N/A	N/A
Cultural education/ Education	Watford Grammar School for Boys: Concert Hall	Grammar school for boys aged 11-18	Watford Grammar School for Boys	Watford Grammar School for Boys	N/A	270/372
Cultural education/ Education	Watford School of Music	Music school part of Herts Music Service	Hertfordshire Music Service	Hertfordshire Music Service	2,040	
Cultural education/ Education	Watford Grammar School for Girls	Grammar school for over girls aged 11-18	Watford Grammar School for Girls	Watford Grammar School for Girls		
Entertainment	The Harry Potter Experience	Warner Bros Studio attraction	Warner Brothers Studios	Warner Brothers Studios	50,000	N/A
Heritage & Museums	Watford Museum	Local history museum	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	782	500
Heritage & Museums	Watford Museum: Space 2 Gallery (with reception and café)	Temporary exhibition space	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	77	N/A
Heritage & Museums	Fire (Brigade Museum)	Museum about Watford Fire Brigade	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	N/A	N/A



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Arts & culture in Watford

Tabulated list of arts and cultural assets in Watford, sorted by art form or type (cont.)

Art form	Name	Description	Owner	Operator	Size (sq m)	Capacity
Heritage & Museums	Cheslyn House and Gardens, with gallery exhibition space	Henry Colbeck house and 3.5 acre gardens	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	14,164	N/A
Music & Nightlife	The White Lion	Pub and small music venue	Ei Group	White Lion Watford	N/A	N/A
Music & Nightlife	O'Neills	Pub and small music venue	Mitchells & Butlers	O'Neills	N/A	N/A
Music & Nightlife	The Horns	Pub and small music venue	Ei Group	The Horns Watford	N/A	200
Music & Nightlife	LP Café	Independent café and small music venue	n/a	LP Café	N/A	N/A
Music & Nightlife	Walkabout	Bar and venue	n/a	Stonegate Pub Company	N/A	N/A
Music & Nightlife	Pryzm	Nightclub and venue	The Deltic Group/ Pryzm	The Deltic Group	N/A	2,500
Parks and open spaces	Cassiobury Park	190-acre park	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	768,903	N/A
Parks and open spaces	River Gade	-	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	N/A	N/A
Parks and open spaces	River Colne	-	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	N/A	N/A
Performing Arts	Watford Palace Theatre: Auditorium	Theatre	Watford Borough Council	Watford Palace Theatre	N/A	595
Performing Arts	Watford Palace Theatre: Rehearsal Studio	-	Watford Borough Council	Watford Palace Theatre	50	N/A
Performing Arts	Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre	Performing arts community centre	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	170	124
Performing Arts	Pump House: Rehearsal Studio	-	Watford Borough Council	Watford Borough Council	80	N/A
Performing Arts	Colosseum: Main Hall	Commercial theatre and venue	Watford Borough Council	HQ Theatres	949	1,392
Place of worship	Holy Rood Church	Roman Catholic Parish church	n/a	n/a		
Place of worship	St Mary's Church	Anglican church	n/a	n/a		
Place of worship	Watford Central Mosque	20th century mosque	Watford Mosque Association	Watford Mosque Association		
Place of worship	Al Zahra Centre	Shi'a mosque	Al Zahra Centre	Al Zhara Centre		
Sport & leisure facilities	Watford Football Club	Stadium and home of Watford FC	Watford Football Club	Watford Football Club	N/A	22,200
Sport & leisure facilities	Watford Leisure Centre - Central & Woodside	Fitness and leisure centre	Everyone Active	Everyone Active	N/A	N/A



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Arts & culture in Hertfordshire

Recent Cultural Infrastructure

A number of new cultural facilities with provision for **visual arts galleries and creative work space (including maker studios and rehearsal studios)** have opened in the County in the previous year, but are largely concentrated in St Albans and are not well-distributed across South West Herts. A shortlist of relevant projects across the County is outlined below – the opening of such facilities in Watford itself would benefit both the Borough’s residents and neighbouring towns with low to little provision of such spaces. In addition, the identification of a number of creatives living around the M25 ‘banana’ would also likely benefit from these additional spaces.

Type	Name	Description	Distance	Size (sq m)	Capacity
Gallery space	Reveley Lodge/ Stables Gallery	New purpose built gallery space in old stables	3.6 mi	N/A	N/A
Gallery space	St Albans Museum + Gallery	Extension and refurbishment	8.7 mi	N/A	400
Creative co-working space	St Albans BubbleHUB	Co-working space	10.7 mi	N/A	
Makers' studios	Potten Farm Studios	Studios located on equestrian grounds	5.2 mi	Individual studios: 11.4	N/A
Rehearsal studios	Bircherley Green development	Planned commercial and residential development	25.3 mi	270	N/A



1.2. Situation analysis: Cultural provision in Watford

Watford: Context

Attendance at key cultural venues

Watford Museum

In 2017-2018 Watford Museum saw total visitor numbers of **11,075**. Major audience segments are **school groups**, as well as **independent adults and families**. Evidence from consultation suggests museum draws from **diverse audience groups** both in terms of ethnic origin and age. There is potential to draw a higher number of visitors from the museum's catchment area of a twenty to forty minute travel time, encompassing almost 9 million residents.

In comparison to a cohort of regional benchmarks – Hertford Museum, St Albans Museum & Gallery, Stevenage Museum, Bishop's Stortford Museum, Bucks County Museum, Wardown House and Bushey Museum – Watford Museum's attendance is **54% below the median value** (see Appendix F for benchmark data). Stevenage Museum is most directly comparable as the only museum of the three not to have undergone a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) redevelopment project. Although the museum is similarly located on an inaccessible side of a busy major road, it still sees **almost twice as many annual visitors** as Watford Museum (18,780).

The Museum is located on the Lower High Street in Watford Central. The museum's outreach work is significant – audience consultation from the HLF's Phase 1 evaluation report found that **84% of consultees**, both current and non-visitors, considered the museum to be **important to the local community** as well as a social hub.

Watford Palace Theatre and Pump House

In 2018-2019, the Palace Theatre sold **49,187** tickets, a slight decline from the previous year. There is no reliable total attendance figure available for the Pump House, although they estimate around a total of **16,000 participants** for the year across all activities.

The Palace Theatre's audience base is **overwhelmingly White**, at 88% of all audience members, with 6% Asian audience members, 2% Black audience members and 4% other non-White audience members. Relative to Watford's ethnic diversity, these figures show disproportionately low attendance by ethnically diverse audiences. There are no data for either the Palace Theatre or Pump House to indicate where their audience members reside, but it is understood that the Palace Theatre's audience base travel from outside of the area, while the Pump House's audience is more embedded in the Borough and town.

Watford Colosseum

In 2019, the Colosseum sold **70,000 tickets** across genres such as comedy, ballet, music as well as for commercial events such as functions and sporting events.

The majority (40%) of the Colosseum's visitor base draws from **beyond Watford** and the neighbouring boroughs of Rickmansworth, Oxhey, Bushey, Abbots Langley, with a **6% draw from London**. The majority of tickets are sold as full-price/ adult tickets, with only a small proportion for schools or families.



1. Situation analysis

■ 3: Identified Gaps and Issues



1.3. Situation analysis: Identified gaps and issues

Gaps in cultural infrastructure provision in Watford

Identified gaps in provision of built infrastructure for cultural activities

Our analysis of the current state of Watford's cultural provision identified some gaps in the provision of built infrastructure to accommodate cultural production, training, and presentation.

Insufficient provision of creative workspace

Apart from recently opened Amanartis (with space for four small studios) and the provision of equipment for rent at the central library, we have not identified other spaces dedicated to creative work, e.g. arts and crafts making. Watford has some commercial office space for rent but it is unlikely to be affordable or attractive to creative professionals (or amateurs). This appears to be a gap when compared to other towns where initiatives have been launched to expand provision of creative workspace by repurposing existing building into artist and maker studios and creative coworking spaces.

Cultural infrastructure in need of improvement and renovation

Watford Museum's current building is in need of renovation and the exhibition displays would benefit from being refreshed. Other buildings, including The Watford Palace Theatre and Watford Colosseum, require some refurbishment.

The Pump House building is in need of renovation and modernisation to make it fully accessible. It also requires greater and more accessible provision of parking space (which it could share with the nearby Watford Museum).

Uneven utilisation of built cultural infrastructure

A review of programme activities and results of consultation undertaken for this exercise suggest that the Watford Colosseum is largely empty during daytime and there may be scope for greater utilisation of the other facilities in town to activate them in off-peak times.

Need for rehearsal and studio performing arts space

Rehearsal and small studio space is required for professional, amateur, and creative learning uses – a facility (or multiple facilities) for use by The Watford Palace Theatre, Pump House Theatre, Dan Tien, and performing arts and music organisations and groups in the area.

Exhibition / gallery space

There is limited provision in Watford to present visual art, especially group exhibitions, sculpture works, or large-scale art. Occasional exhibitions have been put on at the temporary exhibitions room at the Watford Museum and some of the historic houses across Watford with limited floor space.

Storage and scenic workshop space

The performing arts organisations in Watford are currently missing a (shared) facility to make and store set and costume design objects. This imposes restrictions on what can be manufactured and stored in Watford for use across Watford performing arts venues.

Public realm, wayfinding, and outdoor social & event space

Where some initiatives (e.g. Heritage Trail) are already addressing certain issues with the design of public realm in Watford, there is a need for further improvements for the town's pedestrian areas; addition of welcoming public plazas and outdoor gathering spaces; provision of accessible spaces.



1.3. Situation analysis: Identified gaps and issues

Wider cultural sector issues

Identified cultural leadership, communications, representation, and sector support issues

Some sector-wide issues related to the strategic oversights, communication between Watford's cultural players and of Watford's cultural offer to its audiences; and measures required to support independent and grass-roots artists and activities.

Need for consistent strategic and programmatic oversight

- While the Council and key stakeholder in Watford are proactive about supporting and developing the cultural sector in town, there is currently limited coordination between various activities on strategic and planning level. The approach to the development of infrastructure could also benefit from greater coordination.

Need for greater engagement with local private and corporate sector

Limited evidence of the cultural sector engagement with:

- Local businesses and locally based business community of multinational firms
- Employees of local businesses
- Partnerships with WFC; Warner Bros.; or other large entertainment, education, and sports companies

'Fuzzy' brand and communications

- Need for improved cohesion in communicating Watford's strengths, its brand as a town, and its cultural offer

Need for representation of diverse organisations and community in cultural leadership and programmatic oversight

- Certain arts groups and organisations expressed the need for involvement in decision-making and sector-wide forums. Without this there is a risk of these groups feeling underappreciated and unrecognised and not fully connected to Watford; the town would miss out on a rich seam of cultural, creative and artistic talent, enthusiasm, and commitment. Going forward Watford would benefit from making sure these organisations are more frequently and genuinely engaged in setting the agenda for the cultural sector in Watford.
- This should include greater representation of Watford's diverse community (in terms of race, age, socio-economic background, etc.) across cultural sector leadership groups and networks.
- **Lack of centralised marketing and information platform for Watford's cultural offer**
- While Visit Watford offers some consolidation of information on 'what's on' in Watford, it is not comprehensive and is aimed at visitors rather than residents. There is no town-wide platform or information source focusing on cultural sector and its preoccupations that could also encourage greater cooperation and networking within the sector.

No current schemes or mechanisms to support independent Watford music and night-time venues and providers

- COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on the local music and nightlife economy and those employed by local music venues and night clubs (hospitality staff and contracted artists). Some have been able to access grants – both national and local – but this sector will need further consideration both during the pandemic and as the country bounces back from restrictions.



2. Case studies

■ Key learnings



2. Case studies

Summary

Mission, governance, core activities, and funding sources

We have analysed the following six case studies of local initiatives and entities driving cultural development in individual boroughs and cities to inform our analysis of emerging options and recommendations for Watford's cultural sector. They were selected to represent diverse approaches of governance, infrastructure provision, activities and funding. The following page summarises key learnings relevant to the issues observed in Watford. Detailed cases studies can be found in Appendix H (page 101).

Name	Location	Core Mission	Governance	Infrastructure	Core Activities	Funding Sources
Creative Folkestone	Kent, England	Production-led regeneration	Independent charity	Work/live space; Multi-arts centre; Digital hub Online	Property; Public art; Festivals & events; Arts centre operations; Learning & engagement	Rental income; Grants; Donations & legacies; Programme income; Trading & Investments
Culture Mile	London, England	Create a cultural destination	Local authority initiative	Partner organisations; Network; Online	Programming; Community engagement; Learning; Network & partnerships; Public realm; Advocacy & research	Local Authority
Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)	Fife, Scotland	Enriching cultural provision in Fife	Council-led	Libraries and Archives; Museums; Galleries; Venues; Online	Programming; Community engagement; Network & partnerships; Venue operation	Local Authority; Trading & Investments
Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues	Newcastle, England	Enhance collaboration of cultural venues and overall cultural sector	Voluntary membership	Gallery; Arts centres; Museums & archives; Theatres & cinema; Online	Investment in infrastructure and skills; Audience development and engagement ; Inter-organisational efficiency; Research and innovation; Advocacy	Member organisations; Project based funding
Sunderland Culture	Sunderland, England	Culture-led regeneration and community cohesion	Independent charity	Museums; Galleries; Performing arts centre; Online	Programming; Community engagement; Venue operation; Infrastructure development	Core founders: University, City Council, Sunderland MAC Trust ACE and NHLF; Grants; Programme income
Waltham Forest (Borough of Culture 2019)	London, England	Bring people together and boost cultural sector	Council-led	Museum; Galleries; Event spaces; Co-working spaces; Online	Events & festivals; Grant-making; Infrastructure improvement & development; Learning & education; Support & mentorship	GLA funding; Grants; Corporate sponsorship; Local council



2. Case studies

Key Learnings

Page 1 of 2

Provision of built infrastructure and cultural activities

Taking the inside out' by bringing cultural activities to the public realm: taking cultural activities outside of their traditional setting, particularly into the public realm and other unexpected places (pubs, shops, heritage sites, etc.), can increase impact especially among audiences with historically low engagement. Outdoor programming and festivals can also encourage greater collaboration between cultural organisations.

'Hyper-local' cultural activities: similarly, bringing cultural activities from their traditional centres into local communities can help to drive accessibility and engagement among new audiences.

Flexible use of existing infrastructure: existing community centres, shop fronts, vacant properties, etc. can be re-purposed to enable new temporary cultural interventions, filling gaps in built infrastructure in a way which is low-cost and adaptive to changes in demand.

'Always on' calendar of activity: cultural events and activities should be staggered throughout the year to keep momentum and maintain brand awareness and relevancy. While activities will vary significantly in scope and scale, consistency will have an impact on the overall perception of residents and visitors.

Cultural leadership, communications, representation, and sector support (contd. on next page)

Representative and expert leadership in decision-making and strategic oversight for the local cultural sector: strong leadership from boards and governance bodies in decision-making roles is required to represent the collective interests of the cultural sector rather than individual partners. To encourage this, governance structures should be broadly based and representative of the cultural sector.

Diversified funding through an independent charity for city-wide cultural initiatives and infrastructure: an umbrella organisation (such as Creative Folkestone, Sunderland Culture, Fife Cultural Trust) can access funding aimed at city-wide delivery that may otherwise be unavailable to individual organisations or the local authority – including grants and donations.

Wide breadth and scope of membership organisations for deeper collaboration: an umbrella organisation that encompasses a diverse range of venues – size, art form, programming – but with a cohesive set of clear aims will encourage natural collaboration over competition.

Digital a required component of infrastructure offer: all case studies include some form of digital component bringing the diversity of the local cultural together for the benefits of its current prospective audiences. Online resources include maps of key venues, directory of organisations and creatives, calendar of events, centralized ticketing, volunteering opportunities, job vacancies, public art and heritage trails, advertisements for vacant studios and creative workspaces, networks and community events, news and developments, annual reports and research.



2. Case studies

Key Learnings

Page 2 of 2

Cultural leadership, communications, representation, and sector support

Cohesive branding and communications: clear and consistent branding and messaging across physical and digital realms is essential. A single platform for multiple venues and users offers ease of access for audiences and allows for marketing, sales, and data management coordination between local venues.

Shared services across venues can create efficiencies and cost savings: a centralised structure to oversee functions such as fundraising, marketing and programming, can improve oversight for programmes and venues, identifying opportunities for collaboration and consolidation.

Strategic alliances with key stakeholders to consolidate cultural programmes and infrastructure: partnerships between the local council, key stakeholders and anchor institutions (e.g. universities, trusts) are required for consolidation of resources and venues that are not in the council's ownership.

Cross-sector partnerships: furthermore, developing relationships outside of the cultural sector (in business, retail, travel, hospitality, etc.) is vital to developing a holistic destination strategy and maximizing the potential for impact and engagement. For example, promoting cultural activities in local hotels and travel hubs.

Community engagement: regular communications with residents and workers to understand their needs helps to build interest and commitment to cultural activity. Involving local people in programme development and governance allows their voices to be heard and represented – not only the interests of prospective residents and visitors, but existing ones too.

Data collection and evaluation: tracking key performance data enables evaluation against objectives and incremental improvement of programmes and delivery over time. It also enables impact assessments and communication with wider stakeholders.

To date, these examples of municipal initiatives – specifically those providing oversight and management of local cultural assets through a formalized entity – have been resilient in facing the impacts of COVID-19 and national lockdown. Such resilience largely depends on the strength of their funding mix, i.e. not being reliant on sole income source (e.g. local authority) and ability to adopt programmes and venues to new public health and safety requirements to continue operations onsite and online.



3. Emerging options



3. Emerging options

Options for Consideration

On the following pages we summarise the nine options for the support, consolidation, and advancement of the cultural sector in Watford, analysing their respective pros and cons.

These options were developed based on the WBC's brief, the 2018-2025 Cultural Strategy, gaps and issues identified through research and consultation completed by AEA in August-September 2020.

1. The proposed development of a physical 'Town Hall Quarter' in the north of the town centre;
2. The refurbishment or relocation of Watford Museum;
3. Strategic oversight of cultural sector in Watford, including a unified brand and communications platform for Watford's cultural sector, and shared services for cultural organisations;
4. COVID-19 cultural sector support;
5. Improvements to existing cultural infrastructure;
6. Provision of new cultural facilities, including rehearsal/studio space for theatre and dance, creative workspaces, and exhibition/gallery space;
7. Physical consolidation of cultural assets around main hubs of activity in the town centre.



Photo by © Simon Jacobs, Watford Observer.



3. Emerging options

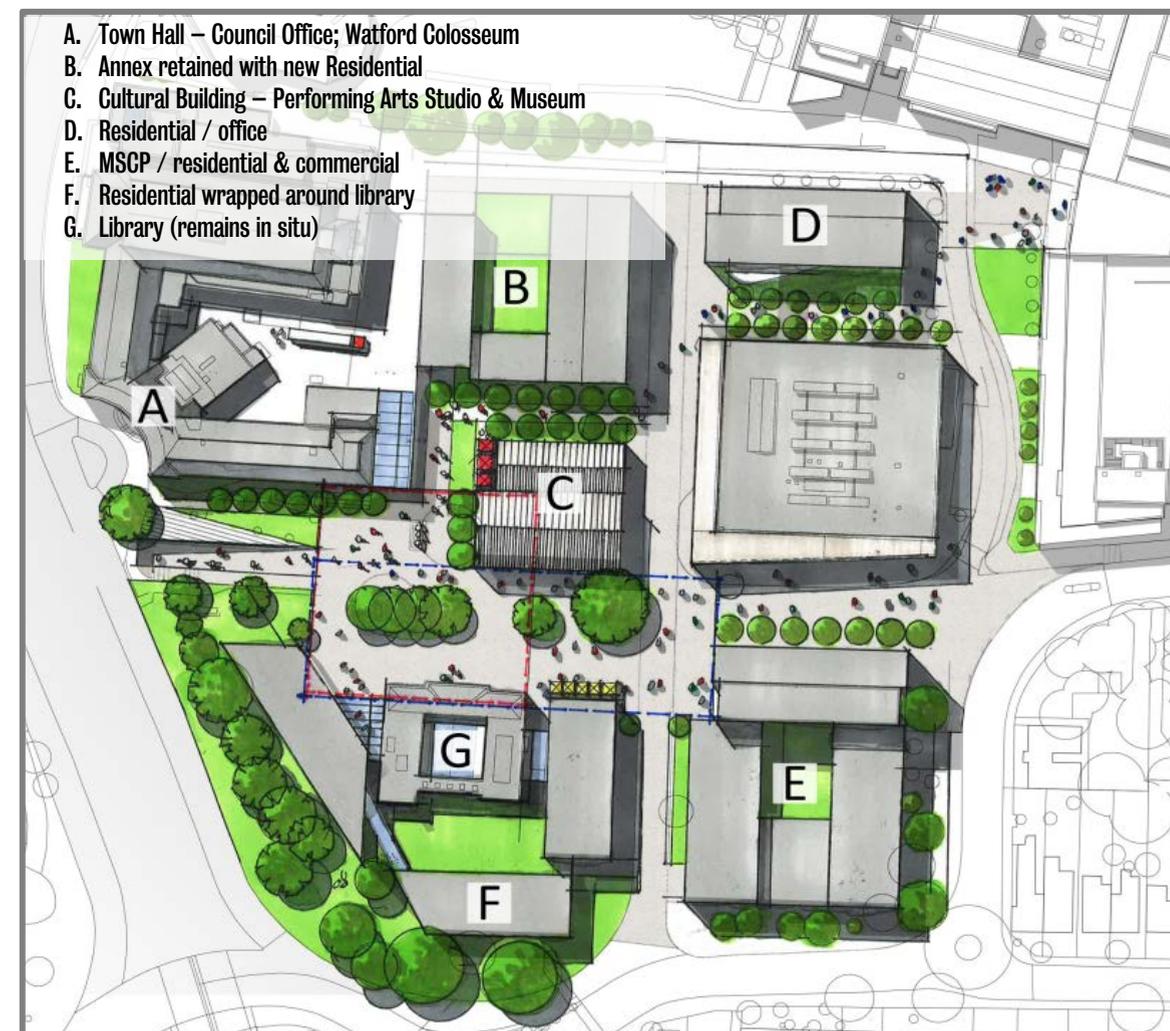
3.1 Development of a Town Hall Quarter cultural offer in the north of town centre

Overview

A proposed Town Hall Quarter (previously 'cultural hub') in the north of Watford town centre is to comprise existing and new performing arts facilities (Watford Colosseum; new performing arts studio/rehearsal space), potentially Watford Museum, Watford Library, and other potential venues to accommodate culture and creative uses. The idea for a Cultural Quarter is included in the Watford Cultural Strategy (2018-2025) and a proposed masterplan for the redevelopment of the Northern cluster of the town centre was put to public consultation in 2019. The vision for the project includes potential repurposing of parts of the Town Hall building into civic and cultural uses, e.g. creative work and learning spaces.

The proposal includes the potential move of the Watford Museum creating physical connection between the museum and library. Various design options were considered in the past for the new cultural building in which both the performing arts space (to accommodate the Pump House Theatre) and the Museum were accommodated in separate new buildings. One such solution included a stand alone building providing about 2,230 sq. m. of floor space, with 1,200 sq. m. allocated to the museum and an estimated total capital cost of £14.1 million, with the largest proportion of that cost going to performing arts space that requires higher specification. Another proposed solution is to move the Museum to the Town Hall, where it would occupy a 600 sq. m. exhibition space on the lower ground floor, along with 450 sq. m. of storage space; and another 60 sq. m. of retail space on the ground floor.

The proposed cultural hub is part of a larger masterplan to revitalise the north end of the town centre, attract footfall, create accessible and welcoming public spaces, new residential development, and a redeveloped car park. Some of the key drivers for the development of the north end of the high street is to better connect it with the rest of the high street and the town and the need to improve the appearance and use of the Town Hall building while offering new and expanded facilities for civic, cultural and creative uses.



Proposed town centre redevelopment incorporating Cultural Hub; Drawing by PRC Architects, provided by Watford Borough Council.



3. Emerging options

3.1 Development of a Town Hall Quarter cultural offer in the north of town centre

Watford Colosseum

Operated by the HQ Theatres from 2010 to 2020, in 2018-2019 Watford Colosseum hosted 70,000 visitors through a programme of ticketed evening shows (mostly focused on live comedy and music), community rentals, and private hires. The venue also hosts ITV's *Snooker Shoot Out* and has an ongoing agreement with the BBC Concert Orchestra for a 90-day hire of the main hall each year. The BBC Orchestra primarily utilises the Colosseum for orchestral recitals and recordings and occasional live concerts. Prior to the venue closure imposed by COVID-19, the HQT's venue operation team consisted of 19 full time, 2 part time, 102 casual staff and 54 volunteers. At present, the Colosseum is the only large-scale performance venue in Watford, and is seen as an asset to the Borough bringing commercial acts, comedy, sports, and music shows to local audiences.

Currently, the future near-term operation of the Colosseum faces the following issues:

- The building's roof needs repair, among other essential works;
- In the most recent year reported (2018-2019), it saw 70 'dark days' (or 20% of the year);
- Daytime activity is very limited;
- There is little communication and cooperation between the Colosseum and other cultural venues, community and cultural stakeholders in Watford;
- The termination of the HQ Theatres operating agreement;
- Its location in a less animated north end of the town centre is perceived as a disadvantage by some of Watford cultural and community stakeholders – a perception mostly impacted by the nature of the public realm nearby (underpass, car park, distance from high street) rather than the character of the building itself.



Image source: Watford Observer.



3. Emerging options

3.1 Development of a Town Hall Quarter cultural offer in the north of town centre Watford Colosseum

There are several scenarios potential scenarios for the short- and long-term future uses of the Colosseum.

Refurbish now, open later

As the Colosseum requires refurbishment (roof repair; potential updates to refresh other parts of the building including foyer and bar areas) and given current restrictions on live performance and public gatherings, it would be beneficial to undertake any necessary building works as soon as possible to have the venue in a good condition by the time it is able to reopen. The refurbishment period can be also used to further develop the brief for the Colosseum's uses and programme and either revise the arrangement with the HQ Theatres or put out a tender to find another operator.

Continue operations now, close to refurbish later

Other scenarios considered by WBC included the extension of the HQ Theatres agreement for two more years (up to 2023). This was not taken forward.

Encourage greater utilisation by BBC Concert Orchestra and consider similar arrangements with other long-term users: performing arts companies, satellites of national projects and organisations, music industry

The ongoing rental arrangement with the BBC Concert Orchestra has been beneficial to both parties. There may be opportunity for increased utilisation by the BBC Concert Orchestra (especially if more flexibility in calendar planning is possible) and also for attracting other long-term users and renters given in the most recent year the venue had 70 'dark days'.

Diversify evening programming

While the Colosseum has hosted shows of national and international acclaim, overall its programming is not particularly reflective of any specific curatorial strategy and it could benefit from more specialised and coordinated programming with specific focus on target audience groups and being more reflective of local demand and demographics. There appears to be opportunities, for example, to present a high quality and more diversified contemporary live music programme; touring West End productions; and live cinema and transmissions of live theatre from the world's leading theatre companies.

Encourage daytime use by local community and artists

Nearly all interviewees consulted acknowledged there is little day-time activity at the Colosseum while it has the space for social and creative uses: café, event room, and spacious foyer. Given its location in the north end of the town centre, daytime activity can be promoted by allowing greater community use (meetups, classes, workshops), F&B offer (daytime café), lunchtime concerts and live events building on earlier initiatives such as the #LobbyLive platform that allowed local musicians to perform in the foyer.



3. Emerging options

3.1 Development of a Town Hall Quarter cultural offer in the north of town centre

Analysis Summary (Page 1 of 2)

Pros

- **Improve public realm in the north of the town centre and animate it with cultural programming activities:** as outlined in the 2019 Watford High Street (North) and Cultural Hub masterplan and the current Town Hall Quarter programme, among the key goals for such redevelopment is the improvement to traffic arrangement and connectivity and the animation of the public realm so it provides better experience, similar to that a recently redeveloped Parade area and the more animated parts of Watford high street.
- **Synergy with larger development creating a new north ‘quarter’ for the town centre:** as the residential and commercial developed to go ahead, the new residents of the area could have access to a variety of cultural facilities in their immediate neighborhood.
- **Co-location of new cultural facilities next to the Watford Central Library, The Horns pub, Watford Colosseum, and West Herts College would allow for greater concentration of day- and night-time activity and generate increased footfall:** creating a new ‘anchor’ of cultural activity in the north of the town centre would require programmatic synergies, along with infrastructure colocation, and a combination of both daytime (museum, library, creative workspaces, rehearsal studios) and night-time facilities (live music, bars, and performing arts) would allow to maintain 24/7 leisure offer in the north of the town centre.
- Opportunity to repurpose, renovate, and reimagine existing infrastructure (namely the Town Hall and Colosseum) is likely to be more **cost efficient and environment friendly** than creating new purpose-built facilities.

Cons

- **There is no obvious rationale for the relocation or development of new cultural facilities as a tool to improve connectivity and public realm:** rather, the focus may be on human-scale redevelopment of the area with the provision of high-quality public space and improvement to the quality and visibility of current facilities, namely the Watford Colosseum and Town Hall.
- **Limited appetite from some cultural operators in Watford to relocate the focus of cultural activity to the north end of the town:** while the operators of the individual organisations that are considered for relocation – such as the Pump House Theatre – welcome the idea of expanded and renovated purpose-built facilities, they do not see a clear rationale for relocation from their current location. Other cultural stakeholders encourage support of cultural activity where it has organically developed over the years rather than purposefully shifting the focus and investment to the north end that has access issues. As case studies elsewhere suggest, improving – rather than relocating – existing cultural infrastructure in locations with high footfall and history of community engagement proves more beneficial to increasing public engagement and improving cultural provision.
- **Audience demand for new or expanded cultural facilities in the north end location unclear and untested:** although the public consultation findings from the most recent Cultural Strategy analysis and its recommendations have been cited as rationale behind the idea for a Cultural Quarter, no direct recommendations or demand were identified in the materials from that consultative process. The results of a more recent public consultation on the masterplan (September 2019) show that the respondents consulted predominantly see the need for the area revitalisation as it is seen as “underutilised” and requiring improvements to public realm and access.



3. Emerging options

3.1 Development of a Town Hall Quarter cultural offer in the north of town centre

Analysis Summary (Page 2 of 2)

Pros	Cons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Potential for the Watford Museum relocation to drive footfall to the area is unknown: the museum currently attracts about 10,000 visitor a year – this level of visitors unlikely to drive significant additional footfall to the north end of the town centre. (The aim of a relocation, as envisaged through the Museum and Heritage services review, is to strengthen the Museum offer and broaden its appeal to attract both physical and virtual visitors.)▪ Potential negative impact on existing cultural venues in Watford: consultees have expressed concerns that if a significant effort and investment is to put into relocation of cultural activity to the north end of town centre, it may have detrimental effect on cultural activity elsewhere in town, if not well-balanced and effectively led.▪ Cost considerations: there is yet little evidence that a new built facility in the north of the town centre would allow for significant cost savings <i>vis a vis</i> redevelopment and expansion of current cultural facilities elsewhere.▪ New development's impact on BBC Concert Orchestra office and storage space: construction works in the Town Hall and adjacent buildings would require for relocation of the office space (420 sq. m.) occupied by BBC Concert Orchestra. No suggestion have yet been made on where the office space would be relocated for the period of redevelopment.▪ Lingering impacts of COVID-19 on attendance: as England faces recurring COVID-19-associated restrictions in 2021, cultural participation for live programming remains at historical lows and cultural production is restricted. This is likely to have a long-term effect on traditional arts and cultural audiences who would be reluctant to gather in large numbers for some time to come which should be taken into account when estimating demand for live event at the Colosseum and nearby pubs, and other venues in Watford to create realistic projections of future attendance for indoor events.



3. Emerging options

3.2 Refurbishment or Relocation of Watford Museum

Overview

The proposed move and expansion of the Watford Museum is part of the current proposal for the expansion of cultural offer in the north of the town centre.

Watford Museum is currently located on Lower High Street in a Grade II listed Georgian town house, part of the former Benskins Brewery complex. The museum's collection comprises over 35,000 objects including fine art, archival materials, art and sculpture, historical artefacts, archeological material, and costume and textiles. The Space2 Gallery also shows temporary exhibitions, and the museum has a diverse programme of community and performing arts events including comedy, film and spoken word. While attendance is currently limited to advanced bookings only, normal opening hours are Thursday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm and admission is free. In 2017/18, the museum welcomed c. 11,043 visitors, including 543 educational visits.

The Museum requires refurbishment to be fit for purpose on its current site. In 2016, WBC successfully applied for first round (Development Phase) funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the 'Making Connections' project to refurbish and expand the Museum in size and programmatic scope. WBC were awarded £175,800 to complete the first phase of work. In 2019, before an application for Phase 2 funding was submitted, the project was terminated due to increased costs making it no longer viable for WBC both in terms of the capital and ongoing revenue support required.

Nonetheless, work completed in Phase 1 of the project highlighted the following needs for the museum to be fit-for-purpose and which remain unaddressed:

- **Access and circulation:** the building is difficult to navigate and improvements are required for disabled access.
- **Building condition:** while in an overall stable condition, repairs are required to the building both internally and externally.

- **Limited opening hours:** the Museum is open 3 days a week.
- **Low attendance:** the Museum attracts around 10,000 visitors per year, below other comparable museums.
- **Limited staff resource:** the Museum operates with ~3 FTEs (Museum Curator, Learning Officer, Collections Officer, and Museum Services and Support Officer) and staff are required to perform duties outside of their actual roles.
- **Displays and interpretation:** the current exhibits would benefit from refreshing and interpretation can also be improved. Displays do not represent the diversity or energy of Watford today. There is limited access to collections online.
- **Unsuitable storage facilities:** the storage facilities are overcrowded, not easily accessible and are not properly controlled environmentally putting collections at risk of damage and limiting object rotation and display.
- **Space limitations:** there are significant space constraints e.g. learning room, event space, café.
- **Funding constraints:** public funding has been decreasing and opportunities for earned income generation (e.g. retail, food&beverage, events) are limited.
- **Collections management issues:** the collection has expanded significantly and may require rationalization under new collections management, acquisitions and disposals policies. Only 2% of the collection is on display and only 50% of the collection has been registered on the current collections management system.

The Council now faces the decision whether to move the Museum to the Town Hall Quarter (potentially to a refurbished space within the Town Hall building) or otherwise re-consider refurbishment and expansion on the current site.



3. Emerging options

3.2 Refurbishment or Relocation of Watford Museum

Analysis Summary (Page 1 of 2)

Pros

- **Increased size and quality:** the current site presents physical constraints to the museum's design and orientation. After the expansion as proposed in the Making Connections project, total floor area would have increased to 922m² (NIA), but a minimum area of 1,264m² is expected to be required to accommodate sufficient front and back-of-house services and to allow any room for future expansion.
- **Expanded programme:** increased space would allow for temporary exhibitions from other cultural bodies, galleries and museums, as well as increased learning and community events.
- **'Cluster' effect:** the combined draw created by the museum, library, Colosseum, leisure centre and new commercial spaces could help to create a destination for residents and visitors, increasing footfall to the area in the north end. The museum in its current location is at a distance from other cultural infrastructure, with the notable exception of the Pump House.
- **Geographic location:** the museum would also be in closer proximity to Watford Junction (approximately 10-minute walk), the busiest rail station in the town. It would also be an attraction between the town centre and Cassiobury Park that gets millions of visitors each year.
- **Potential to increase attendance:** estimated annual visitors to the refurbished current site were 20,000 from the stable year. With an expanded size and programmatic scope and situation within a cluster of culture, leisure and educational facilities, this number is likely to increase. However, the potential for the museum to attract domestic and international tourists remains uncertain.

Cons

- **Lack of consensus:** consultation with stakeholders revealed universal agreement that the museum building in its current form is not fit-for-purpose and improvements are required. However, there is little consensus around the need to move the museum to the north of the town centre. This is consistent with public consultation in which 36% of respondents supported the relocation of the museum and council buildings, while 35% did not and 28% were undecided.
- **Increased capital and operating costs:** Based on cost data from a cohort of recent museum benchmarks (see Appendix F) and the minimum space required for the museum (1,264m²), the capital costs for a new museum project are likely to be in excess of £6.4 million. Alternatively, initial scenario testing by HLA Architects suggests the museum could be accommodated within the Town Hall. The current assumption provided by Montagu Evans is that the cost to relocate the museum to the Town Hall could be financed within the sale price of its existing site but more detailed analysis is required. A third potential option is to combine the Museum with Watford Library (owned and operated by Hertfordshire County Council) into a single structure, but neither museum nor library are enthusiastic about this, especially given that the Library recently underwent renovation. Therefore, at present, the only financially viable option for relocating the museum to the north of the town centre is believed to be within the Town Hall. In this case, annual operating expenditure is likely to increase based on increased physical and programmatic scale.



3. Emerging options

3.2 Refurbishment or Relocation of Watford Museum

Analysis Summary (Page 2 of 2)

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Potential for increased income generation: increased footfall and expanded space for retail, f&b and venue hire facilities would increase opportunities for income generation.▪ Potential for enhanced partnerships: potential for improved connections with local cultural organisations in the north of the town centre, including West Herts College and Watford Library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Potential limitations on attendance: as a local museum, there is a risk that Watford Museum will not be able attract tourists (a significant majority of the total potential audience) unless its size and programmatic ambitions are expanded to include touring exhibitions, large-scale events, etc. The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on audiences' propensity to gather in enclosed spaces is also unknown.▪ Risk to community impact: the museum's outreach work is significant – audience consultation from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Phase 1 evaluation report noted that 84% of consultees, both current and non-visitors, considered the museum to be important to the local community as well as a social hub. There is a risk that this function could be undermined or disrupted through its move to a new location.▪ Negative impact to Lower High Street: the museum, Pump House and Fire Museum currently create their own cluster of cultural and community activities around the Lower High Street identified in the Watford Cultural Strategy (2018-2025) as a cultural hub with community focus. The removal of the museum from its current site could have a negative impact on these neighboring venues and the character of the local area.▪ Need to protect Benskins Brewery building: The current museum building has considerable significance as a three-storey, double-pile Georgian mansion and it is highly valued by local residents for its aesthetic value and connection to local history. It is one of few historic buildings in the town that offers public access and its protection was identified as a key objective in public consultation. While many respondents recognised that the current building is limited in its offer, they appreciate its heritage value.



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford’s cultural sector

Overview – Governance

To streamline strategic oversight and coordination of cultural programmes, infrastructure development, sector support initiatives, marketing and fundraising for the cultural sector in Watford, the Council could consider facilitating an establishment of a centralised governance structure that should meet most of the following criteria:

- Full representation of cultural operators and stakeholders in Watford (e.g. bottom-up approach – not by Council invitation but by sector nomination);
- Consolidate resources of key local partners and funders inviting ‘anchor’ Watford institutions to oversee its activities with representation from public and private sectors;
- Set up strategic direction and accountability for meeting key milestones and delivering agreed programme of activities for the benefit of all Watford residents;
- Identify and introduce initiatives supporting collaboration and efficiencies between multiple stakeholders and operators;
- Have expert input and oversight from experienced cultural sector leaders;
- Plan and deliver Watford-wide calendar of cultural activities across all its civic and cultural venues (e.g. avoiding calendar conflicts or underutilisation of certain venues and spaces);
- Engage independent artists and practitioners, young people, and minority communities in decision-making and curation of cultural programme for Watford;
- Support development of cultural leadership, skills, and home-grown artistic talent;
- Support renovation and updates to cultural infrastructure.

Some potential governance structures to consider include less formalised consortiums and advisory boards and more formalised independent charities and Council-led initiatives.

Governance Model	Examples
Cultural Trust / “Creative Watford” – an independent charity overseeing cultural venues and services and/or culture-led regeneration and placemaking projects; governed by a Board of Trustees	Sunderland Culture (“cultural compact”), Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife), Creative Folkestone
Cultural Consortium – an advocacy and steering group; voluntary and not a constituted body	Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues
Local Authority Initiative – a Council-run placemaking and programming initiative to consolidate cultural offer and promote Watford’s cultural brand in close collaboration with anchor cultural organisations; option for advisory group(s) to provide oversight and direction	Culture Mile, London; Waltham Forest Borough of Culture (2019)
(Culture-led) Business Improvement District – strategic consolidation of place-branding and cultural initiatives led by BID in close collaboration with local cultural leaders	Better Bankside, London
Association of Cultural Organisations / Venues – constituted not-for-profit membership entity	Exhibition Road Cultural Group, London



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Analysis Summary – Governance

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Input from key sector champions and funders: a new structure would allow to draw leadership and resources from private and not-for-profit sector that may be represented by local education and third sector organisations, businesses, and philanthropic funders.▪ Expert and strategic oversight of disjointed initiatives: engagement of sector leaders and a centralized body to oversee cultural activity in Watford would allow to plan and implements a coordinated calendar of activities and initiatives.▪ Representative leadership for Watford's cultural sector: while the new governance structure may be led by the Council along with several core partners, it is to ensure representation of Watford's diversity by allowing for nomination of governing members (e.g. Board Member or Advisory Board members).▪ Achieving efficiencies in programming and use of infrastructure: a centralized and inclusive governance structure will ensure coordination and consolidation of programming activities – Watford-wide as well as at individual sites and venues – an ensure most effective use of infrastructure required for these activities.▪ Centralised marketing: a coordinated communication and marketing of Watford cultural activities, e.g. an oversight of centralized digital resource and diary platform for the arts with one-stop ticketing for cultural events.▪ Centralised fundraising: an independent governance structure (incorporated) can allow to fundraise for placemaking, cultural regeneration, heritage support, and other national funding programmes that are available for city-wide partnerships but may be unavailable to individual organisations or local authorities. It can also have a fundraising officer to raise funds from private sector and 'organised philanthropy' for support and development of cultural activities in Watford.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Difficulty in implementation to ensure adequate representation and delivery its mission and aims: careful navigation of stakeholder interests and representation will be required to ensure the governance body is delivering to the benefit of all Watford residents, support its cultural sector, and maintains a positive brand.▪ Potential duplication of existing efforts: some activity already overseen by the Council or leading cultural operators in Watford may need to be reallocated to the new structure and the feasibility of such reallocation needs to be tested.



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Overview – Unified Brand and Communications

During the pandemic, WBC and local culture and leisure partners collaborated under the umbrella of 'Watford Together'. The initiative sought to engage Borough residents in creative activities – from online acting classes to talent shows and book clubs – through a dedicated website that brought the partners' online resources together in one place. There is a desire shared between WBC and the other partners to harness this momentum and to communicate more cohesively in the future.

Until Watford Together, there was no unified brand that represented arts, culture and heritage in Watford and, given its purpose was principally digital engagement, there remains no single source of information to find out about activities in and around Watford. There was consensus among consultees that a unified communications platform for the cultural sector would be a positive development, communicating all that Watford has to offer in a clear and compelling way. However, it was also recognized that there is already a proliferation of websites, organisations and brands that partially represent the cultural sector, its activities or its constituents (see right).

Therefore, it is recommended that brands/websites are rationalized where possible to create a single overarching narrative and brand. A majority of consultees agreed that the Watford Together brand itself is specific to the current moment and may not be appropriate long-term. Other potential themes explored as part of Watford Museum's Making Connections project and the Watford Cultural Strategy (2018-2025) include:

- **We Love Watford:** Watford has a wealth of stories, communities and history to explore.
- **Made in Watford/Watford Production House:** from farming, brewing and paper making, to today's TV, media, music and theatre industries, 'making' encompasses Watford's past and future aspirations.
- **We Are Watford:** Watford is the most diverse in Hertfordshire, a rich mix of people and cultures united by where they call home.

Selection of Brands/Websites Promoting Watford's Cultural Activities



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Overview – Unified Brand and Communications

Activation of a unified communications platform could take place in both the digital and physical realms, integrated with public realm improvements and the heritage trail to create a strong overarching narrative for culture in Watford. .

Physical Elements

- *Wayfinding*: legible signage, information and gateways at key junctions to help navigate Watford's cultural landmarks and create distinct neighborhoods.
- *Heritage trail*: mapping key moments in Watford's history through mapping and signage.
- *Public art and other public realm interventions*: art and other other design measures, such as surface treatments, materials and lighting to create pathways, landmarks and destinations.
- *Events, pop-ups and other activations*: branded festivals and events, including Imagine festival.
- *Out-of-home media*: posters, banners, billboards, etc. to advertise upcoming events and activities.
- *Printed media*: maps, calendars, newsletters, leaflets (Cultural Chronicle) brochures, etc. to inform residents and visitors about Watford cultural offer and upcoming events
- *Tours*: organised tours around around Watford's key heritage and cultural sites.
- *Networking and knowledge sharing*: events to encourage cohesion and collaboration across the cultural sector.
- *Cultural champions*: identification of advocates for Watford's cultural sector.

Digital Elements

- *Website*: a central hub for all information regarding Watford's cultural sector. Content could include: calendar of events and festivals; centralized ticketing platform; map of cultural infrastructure, public art and heritage trails; directory of artists and creatives; volunteering opportunities; job vacancies and other ways to get involved; advertisements for vacant studios and creative workspaces; networks and community events; news and developments.
- *Mobile app*: What's On, ticketing, etc. similar in scope to website content.
- *Digital communications and social media*: event promotion and marketing across platforms to engage with different audiences, particularly a younger demographic.
- *Newsletter*: mailing list to keep residents and visitors informed about upcoming events and developments across the sector.



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Analysis Summary – Unified Brand and Communications

Pros

- **Support among cultural leaders:** there was broad support for the ambition to communicate more cohesively, highlighting the strength and breadth of Watford's cultural offerings
- **'One stop' shop website:** improved quality of information about Watford's cultural sector made easily accessible to visitors and residents.
- **Develop Watford brand and identity:** a strong and distinct communications platform will help to develop Watford's identity and attraction as a destination, with culture at its heart.
- **Opportunity to deepen collaboration and partnership:** the process of creating a collective platform will help to deepen partnerships across the cultural sector – especially if the cultural sector is defined broadly to include individual artists and creators, the night-time economy, creative industries, etc.
- **Increased footfall at cultural venues and events:** improved wayfinding and information sharing will encourage residents and visitors to explore the area confidently.
- **Enhanced understanding and pride in Watford's cultural heritage:** a heritage trail and improved information and signage will help to increase resident's knowledge of the town's rich history.

Cons

- **Existing brands/websites:** there are already a number of umbrella brands/websites promoting cultural activities in Watford. Therefore, rationalization is required before creating an overarching platform that represents the sector more holistically. This could be achieved through an expansion of an existing identity (e.g. Visit Watford) or something new altogether.
- **Financial investment:** the design phase for the heritage trail (delivered by Dallas-Pierce-Quintero) is estimated to cost £20,000. Additional investment will be required for additional public realm interventions; design and testing of a brand and messaging; new website design and upkeep; and ongoing marketing and communications.
- **Risk of redundancy:** unless it is updated regularly there is a risk that a dedicated website for cultural activities could become outdated or irrelevant.



3. Emerging options

3.8 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Overview – Shared Services

There are potential advantages of centralizing services across cultural assets in Watford. This could result in economies of scale, financial savings or increased knowledge from pooled resources, leading to improved delivery of services. Potential opportunities for integrated services include:

- Facilities management;
- Box office and ticketing;
- Marketing and communications;
- Education and learning expertise;
- Storage and archives;
- Administrative functions including HR, IT and finance.

The areas in which consultees demonstrated interest were primarily ticketing and marketing and communications, pooling customer data (where possible) to understand visitor profiles and behaviors and potentially bundling or cross-selling services and experiences. However, there was not consensus around the exact nature of any collaboration, which could be explored further through a forum such as the Cultural Leaders Group.

There are several considerations to bear in mind:

- Savings or benefits must outweigh costs for any shared services proposal to be viable;
- There should be a balance of benefit for larger and smaller organisations;
- Flexible collaboration is important, as not all organisations might be able or want to take advantage of the opportunities or ideas presented;
- Sharing and collaborating must be practical and legal; organisations must operate within their agreed procurement processes, particularly those that are linked to WBC;
- Evidence of progress on any joint working or shared services needs to be gathered and tracked to demonstrate the cost savings and efficiencies achieved, as well as wider benefits of collaboration.



3. Emerging options

3.3 Strategic oversight of Watford's cultural sector

Summary of Analysis – Shared Services

Pros

- **Financial efficiencies:** there is potential to identify cost savings through economies of scale or pooled resources.
- **Increased quality of operations and services:** shared knowledge and resources could enhance the quality of operations and services across assets. For example, joint marketing and communications campaigns could increase reach and impact.
- **Enhanced collaboration across sector:** opportunity to better integrate existing cultural assets across Watford, leading to increased connection, cohesion and complementarity.

Cons

- **Lack of appetite or consensus:** among the cultural organisations consulted, there is currently a lack of enthusiasm for or consensus around the potential for shared service provision. Further investigation is required to establish the types of services that could be shared and the associated costs and benefits.



3. Emerging options

3.4 COVID-19 Cultural Sector Support

Overview (as of October 2020)

The cultural and creative sectors, along with tourism, are among the worst affected by the current COVID-19 crisis. Cultural organisations, and their workers, have experienced significant reductions in earned income generation as well as money raised from donations, grants and sponsorship. In total, the creative industries sector is expected to lose 30%, or £74 billion, in revenue due to the coronavirus. As the furlough scheme, which has been a lifeline for many, comes to an end, organisations are yet to see the benefit of the £1.57 billion rescue package for the cultural and heritage sector which was announced in July.

This puts cultural and creative sector organisations – including museums, galleries, theatres, music venues, independent cinemas – in a very precarious position. In Watford, the Colosseum is closed until 2021; the Palace Theatre will not open before December 2020; The Pump House has re-opened but with a limited programme; and Watford Museum is open on Saturdays by appointment only. Grassroots music venues, including The Horns and LP Café, have re-opened but, due to social distancing requirements, it is not financially viable to present their usual live music programme further impacting trade. Nightclubs are also at particular risk – not allowed to re-open but excluded from the £1.57 billion rescue package and with no specific guidance or support from government. Of course, these closures also have an impact on the artists and organisations that usually would be performing or presenting their work, with limited prospects for future work.

In addition to the financial support that WBC continues to provide to Watford Palace Theatre, the Pump House, the Colosseum and Watford Museum, the Council can signpost at-risk cultural venues and organisations to potential grant and funding sources and maintain ongoing dialogue with national lobbying and funding organisations.



3. Emerging options

3.4 COVID-19 Cultural Sector Support

Analysis Summary

Pros

- **Protect existing cultural ecology and infrastructure:** Watford has a rich and diverse cultural ecology that – provide it can withstand the current environment – will continue to bring benefits to the town and its residents.
- **Demonstrate commitment to culture:** send a clear message to residents that WBC values culture and its contributions to public life in Watford.

Cons

- **Financial constraints:** WBC is already faced with additional costs and financial losses due to the COVID-19 crisis, forcing it to make difficult decisions regarding resource allocation. For this reason, advocacy campaigns and policy measures – other than direct financial support – may be the preferred course of action of the Council.



3. Emerging options

3.5 Improve existing cultural infrastructure

Overview

Current reduction in activity across Watford venues due to the impacts of COVID-19 presents an opportunity to update some of the cultural infrastructure in need of repair and repurpose some of the vacant space for cultural and creative uses. Specifically:

- Updates to the Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre building to improve visitor and artists experience and accessibility of the building;
- Repair of the Palace Theatre roof and / or potential extension to add a level to incorporate rehearsal/studio space, green room, community events space, and additional office space;
- Repurposing of existing space in town into a storage and scenic workshop space (between 140-220 sq m according to prior studies) use by performing arts organisations in Watford;
- Improved facilities for city-wide and outdoor events, e.g. accessible bathrooms and changing rooms in the town centre;
- As part of ongoing public realm improvements, incorporate space for outdoor events throughout the town centre.



Pump House Theatre; source <https://pumphouse.info/>.



3. Emerging options

3.5 Improve existing cultural infrastructure

Analysis Summary

Pros

- Delivering **required repairs** to existing facilities of the Pump House and Palace Theatre will **increase accessibility and accommodate growing levels of activity** in both venues while keeping them **safe for use**.
- **Grow Watford Palace Theatre offer** by adding space to produce new work and for education and community activities.
- **Finding space for scenic workshop and storage** would allow to continue scenic production in Watford and provide essential storage facilities for theatre companies (storage currently occupies public areas and rehearsal room at the Watford Palace Theatre).
- **Provide welcoming environment for artists and performers** with restricted mobility by having accessible bathrooms and changing rooms available to the public in the town centre.
- **Diversify outdoor event infrastructure** by incorporating additional public realm design solutions allowing for events and safe public gatherings.

Cons

- **Uncoordinated efforts** in updating or repurposing existing infrastructure may result in increased costs and inefficiencies in overall utilization.
- Given the implications of COVID-19 on local authority funds, **the Council is unlikely to be able to support with capital funding** – improvements and repairs need to be covered by individual venues or partnerships between venues and a capital fundraising campaign.



3. Emerging options

3.6 Provision of new cultural facilities

Rehearsal and Studio Space

The consultees from professional and community performing arts organisations and groups in Watford expressed a need for a provision of performing arts practice and rehearsal facility in Watford. Specifically, such facility is required for the following uses for which there is insufficient infrastructure provision in Watford:

- Space for small-scale theatre performances, talks and workshops (seating capacity 50-100);
- Space for dance classes (with sprung flooring);
- Space for theatre rehearsals;
- Space for music practice/rehearsals.

Options to meet this demand for a performing arts studio / rehearsal space include:

- Adding studio/rehearsal space to WPT;
- Conversion of empty retail space at into into temporary studio/rehearsal space;
- Adaptive reuse of a space elsewhere on high street – potentially in a location between the Pump House and WPT;
- New build facility at the north end of town centre, possibly at the redeveloped Town Hall;
- Negotiate terms to regularly use West Herts College facility at a reduced market rate.

A combination of one rehearsal space for dedicated use of Watford-based and visiting professional theatre and dance companies (as an upper level extension at the Watford Palace Theatre) and a rehearsal and practice space elsewhere in the town centre would be a recommended solution to increase the provision of required space that would support professional and amateur performing arts practice in Watford. Prior studies indicate a size approximately ~100-150 sq m for such rehearsal facility to meet growing demand for dance classes and theatre and music rehearsal space.



The Alchemical Studios, New York. Image source: sharemyspace.com.



3. Emerging options

3.6 Provision of new cultural facilities

Creative Workspace

The creative industries in Watford are well represented by IT, software and computer services (176 firms); film, TV, video, radio and photography (131 firms); advertising and marketing (111 firms); and music, performing and visual arts (101 firms). The wider South West Herts area is also home to a number of creative industries firms and freelancers accounting for 19,000 jobs in total – an increase of almost 4,500 since 2012. In particular, Hertsmere and Three Rivers, both hubs of British filmmaking and production, sees a high proportion of transient and project-based workers. This is likely to increase with the opening of Sky Studios Elstree, planned for 2022.

Local networks, such as the Watford Area Arts Forum, and local creative education providers, most significantly West Herts College, also provide a pipeline of creative talent seeking opportunities for work within the creative ecology. While before the pandemic some of these graduates may have sought work experience in London, there is initial evidence to suggest increased propensity to live and work outside of the capital.

Previous cultural strategies commissioned by WBC in 2009 and 2011, and, most recently, the 2018-2025 Cultural Strategy have consistently identified creative workspace as a gap in Watford's cultural ecology.

Nonetheless, workspace provision for creative industries in the area remains limited. There are some co-working and serviced offices on and around Clarendon Road and, further afield, the BubbleHub co-working space was recently launched in a former pump house in At Albans. There are also plans to open two new artist studio spaces within Watford: Amanartis and Little Cassiobury. However, these are limited in scope and scale, and only likely to accommodate up to 8-10 individuals across both sites.

Overall, there are few facilities currently that centre around a community of creative firms or freelancers or otherwise specialized to meet the needs of the creative sub-sectors

and Watford is well-positioned to capture industry workers from within and around the Borough to become a regional hub.

Workspace could include: desk space; studio and makerspaces for woodwork, ceramics, prints, crafts, etc; IT facilities; exhibition and presentation space; meeting rooms; and networking/ canteen areas. The target users for these spaces would be creative freelancers, SMEs. And, potentially, the wider community. The workspace could be managed by the council itself, or an independent commercial operator or charity / social enterprise such as ACAVA, ACME, SPACE, Meanwhile Space, Spacemakers, etc.

Potential sites for creative workspace(s) include:

- *Town Hall*: a study completed by HLM Architects identified 1,830m² (NIA) of potential workspace available in the town hall building, excluding area required for the council's offices.
- *Watford Market*: identified as a potential site for a creative enterprise and food hub in the Watford Cultural Strategy (2018-2025).
- *Benskins Brewery building*: if vacated, Watford Museum's current site could be converted into workspace, ideally with some public element (e.g. café) to maintain a degree of public access.
- *Watford Library*: vacant office space on the upper floors could be used as co-working space (Wimbletech/Workary specialise in converting underutilised library space into co-working space).
- *Other vacant and meanwhile spaces in and around the town centre.*



3. Emerging options

3.6 Provision of new cultural facilities

Exhibition / Gallery Space

There is an expressed need – and currently a lack of provision – for a visual arts exhibition and event space in Watford.

Opportunities for provision of visual arts exhibition space include:

- Repurposing one of existing town centre buildings into an exhibition space for a long-term use for temporary exhibitions;
- Pop-up and temporary project space(s) at vacant commercial units on high street, at Watford Market, and at *intu* shopping centre;
- Some potential additional provision is planned at the Little Cassiobury house that may come online in the next five years pending the outcomes of forthcoming HLF grant applications for renovation of the house;
- Incorporating an exhibition space at the repurposed Town Centre.

The size requirements for a gallery and exhibition space are flexible and some of parameters for the space include:

- Ability to accommodate large scale work (paintings, sculpture);
- Ability to accommodate rotating exhibitions and multi-media;
- Adaptable space to accommodate a variety of layouts (e.g. permanent walls for visual arts display).



Mackie's Corner art space and Halloween-themed installation (2019) in a former Mackie's Corner shop in Sunderland. Photo by © Sarah Hellowell.



3. Emerging options

3.6 Provision of new cultural facilities

Analysis Summary

Pros

- **Meet the demand expressed by key cultural operators in Watford for increased infrastructure provision:** expanded and new facilities sought by cultural organisations in Watford would allow them to expand their activities and meet current demand. Some have experienced loss of support facilities recently (storage, scenic workshop) and are seeking for spaces in Watford to fulfill these requirements.
- **Support growth of independent artists and creatives:** exhibition and small studio theatre/performance space could showcase the work of local, regional, and national artists and allow space for practice, training, and experimentation required in the process of cultural production.
- **Encourage development of the creative economy and adjacent sectors:** the creative industries have become an increasingly significant sector of the UK's economy in the past two decades. One in six jobs in London are in the creative economy and, up until the outbreak of COVID-19, the sector was growing more than five times faster than the national economy. The sector's knock-on effect on adjacent sectors is also well understood, with each job in the creative industries supporting an additional 0.75 jobs in the wider economy.
- **Attract new producers and presenters to Watford:** current limitations of Watford's cultural infrastructure mean that many active and developing theater and visual arts companies and individual artists and producers are unable to use Watford as a base for their production and presentation activities. Provision of such infrastructure could help attract additional cultural organisations and drive creative talent to the area.

Cons

- **Uncertainty around long-term implications of COVID-19:** with much cultural production currently paused it is yet unclear whether it would go back to pre-COVID-19 levels or if new types of spaces may be required, e.g. those equipped for digital production and recordings rather than live interaction.
- **Capital costs:** some capital investment from Council may be required in the initial development phase of new facilities, although needs are expected to be limited especially for 'meanwhile' projects in vacant spaces. By working with partners across Watford the Council will be able to develop buy-in and funding opportunities.
- **Operating costs:** we do not expect the Council to be primarily responsible for the operating costs of any new facilities, although this will depend on the operating model for individual projects. For example, creative workspace could be Council-owned and managed or outsourced to another commercial or charitable provider.



3. Emerging options

3.6 Provision of new cultural facilities

Analysis Summary

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Animate underutilised spaces with cultural uses: multiple stakeholders consulted and anecdotal evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on retail and high street businesses suggests there will be an increasing number of vacant commercial properties and units in Watford that can be utilised for 'meanwhile' and/or long-term cultural activities.▪ Provide hub for cross-sector collaboration and innovation: co-locating firms across various sub-sectors under one roof will help to stimulate connections and collaboration across fields, creating local supply chains and promoting innovation.▪ Build Watford's brand as a cultural and creative centre: new creative facilities, especially if they are housed in the Town Hall or other central location, could signal the Council's commitment to the cultural and creative industries and help to cement Watford's brand as a creative hub.▪ Partnership opportunity and investment: opportunity to work together with artists, small businesses and other partners. For example, potential partners to support the development and financing of creative workspace include West Herts College, Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Leaders Group, Warner Bros, Hertfordshire LE and Hertfordshire Growth Board.▪ Knock on effect for local regeneration: bringing creative industries workers into the town centre area could help to support footfall and consumer spending around the town.▪ Potential to generate revenue: depending on the operating and business model of workspace provided, it may generate revenues for the Council while providing a service to local artists, freelancers and SMEs.	



3. Emerging options

3.7 Physical consolidation of cultural assets

Overview

Scope for physical consolidation of existing and planned cultural assets in Watford includes:

- Performing arts hub or 'Theatre Place hub' around current site of Watford Palace Theatre with the addition of:
 - Studio and rehearsal space
 - Storage and scenic workshop space
 - Administrative and community use (event) space
 - Social and front-of-house hospitality space (e.g. expanding the theatre bar onto the street level or within the building).
- 'Library and Creative Workspace hub' in the north, with potential synergies with the Watford Colosseum if it is to expand daytime activity the creative workspace to occupy space at redeveloped Town Hall and establish links with the Colosseum (e.g. by activation Colosseum café and foyer with daytime programming and F&B) and Central Library.
- 'Community Arts and Museum hub' at the south end of town centre – the Museum and Pump House 'campus' with renovation of both buildings, improved access, public realm solutions connecting the two buildings, and expanded and improved parking.
- Pop-up visual arts gallery spaces at repurposed properties in the town centre: such projects can occupy vacant commercial buildings; Watford Market units; and units at *intu* for a limited time. At the same time, there is a demand for the provision of a permanent visual arts gallery for Watford, ideally located in the town centre.
- Explore potential for consolidation of some of the required facilities, e.g. scenic workshop; storage; rehearsal space(s) to allow efficiencies and maximise utilisation.



3. Emerging options

3.7 Physical consolidation of cultural assets

Analysis Summary

Pros

- **Encourage synergy and higher utilisation of art form-specific infrastructure:** there is potential for greater coordination of activities requiring similar types of infrastructure and collaboration between Watford's performing arts organisations (in sharing rehearsal and performance space). Collaboration between individual artists and creative practitioners and general growth of independent creative production in Watford would also be encouraged by provision of creative workspace and co-location. Similar recommendations have been made in current and previous cultural strategies.
- **Reinforce existing hubs of cultural activity by consolidation of assets similar in nature and target users and audience groups:** while there are pockets of activity and diverse cultural offer at existing venues, they would benefit from strengthening the links with their immediate built environments and associated expansions to meet the requirements for cultural productions and presentation. This includes launching a central art exhibition space and/or pop-up and meanwhile exhibition spaces in vacant properties – located within the vicinity of each other for ease of access.
- **Designed solutions to update, expand and repurpose existing infrastructure:** investment has already been made in plans and designs for a renovated museum at the Benskins Brewery building; repurposed Town Hall; and initial outline of the extension for the Watford Palace Theatre. These plans can be reviewed and adapted with the goal to consolidate physical infrastructure assets where possible.

Cons

- **In a town the size of Watford, 'consolidation' of cultural infrastructure might be unnecessary:** arguments can be made for an 'even' distribution of cultural infrastructure across the town centre rather than adding to existing hubs of cultural activity.



4. Recommendations



4. Recommendations

AEA's Recommendations

Having analysed the pros and cons associated with emerging options to address issues and developments in Watford's cultural sector, AEA recommends the following set of key initiatives to support and improve the provision of cultural infrastructure in Watford, and to strengthen strategic leadership, communication and coordination of cultural activities. These recommendations are consistent with previous and current planning and strategies commissioned by the WBC (as described in Appendix A).

1. Town Hall Quarter

- 1.1 Regenerate the north of the town centre through public realm interventions, commercial and cultural uses (the reimagined Colosseum, potential addition of the re-located Watford Museum, and current Watford Central Library).
- 1.2 Identify appropriate approach and potential partners to repurpose the Town Hall, Colosseum and any other available sites to provide a creative workspace offer as part of cultural offer in the Town Hall Quarter. As part of this test the feasibility of leasing space within the Town Hall/Colosseum.
- 1.3 Increase utilisation and animate the Colosseum building to create a vibrant cultural centre for Watford.
- 1.4 Update museum programme and displays to make museum fit for future and investigate the feasibility of re-locating to a repurposed space in the Town Hall as part of the Town Hall Quarter project.

2. Leadership & Governance

- 2.1 Develop a governance structure for coordinated strategic oversight of cultural sector including planning, programme development and delivery of cultural activities.
- 2.2 Deepen community engagement through regular and consistent dialogue with residents and creative practitioners.
- 2.3 Improve data collection and analysis to drive better returns on cultural investments.
- 2.4 Develop a centralised communications platform to promote Watford's cultural sector to residents and visitors – either by repurposing an existing website/brand or creating a new one.
- 2.5 Investigate other opportunities for shared services and co-efficiencies.
- 2.6 Continue the Council's support of at-risk cultural venues and organisations including grassroots music venues and talent by supporting fundraising efforts and liaising with national lobbying and funding organisations.

3. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

- 3.1 Seek funds and mechanisms to improve, update and animate existing infrastructure including Pump House Arts Centre and Watford Palace Theatre. This includes necessary repairs and improvements and the potential extension of the Watford Palace Theatre to accommodate more space for rehearsals and small-scale performances, community use and an office/green room.
- 3.2 Consider adaptive re-use of vacant buildings in Watford for creative activities such as galleries and studio space, workspace, rehearsal space, exhibition/bespoke retail, led by private and not-for-profit initiatives.
- 3.3 Continue to enhance public realm, wayfinding and outdoor social & event spaces to increase connectivity, attractiveness and footfall and facilitate greater cohesion of public spaces and cultural venues.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

1. Town Hall Quarter

1.1 Regenerate the north of the town centre through public realm interventions, commercial and cultural uses (the reimagined Colosseum, potential addition of the re-located Watford Museum, and current Watford Central Library).

Test the feasibility of animating the north of the town centre with improved public realm, greater connection between existing cultural assets, and consolidation of cultural activity across neighbouring facilities: repurposed Town Hall, Colosseum, and Central Library.

Get a clear understanding of the requirements for support spaces – size and physical conditions – and their potential consolidation within the Town Hall Quarter: storage facilities for BBC Concert Orchestra and The Watford Palace Theatre; scenic workshop for the Pump House Theatre and Palace Theatre.

1.2 Identify appropriate approach and potential partners to repurpose the Town Hall, Colosseum and any other available sites to provide a creative workspace offer as part of Town Hall Quarter. As part of this test the feasibility of leasing space within the Town Hall/Colosseum.

Repurposed space at the Town Hall, connected to some of the Colosseum facilities, may provide appropriate facilities for long term tenancy of creative learning, visual arts, performing arts, and creative workspace operators.

It is understood that the Council would not be able to offer such facilities for free, however, a below market rate can be considered to offer greater provision of cultural and creative infrastructure for Watford-based cultural organisations, educators, and practitioners.

Creative Workspace

There is a need for increased workspace for cultural and creative uses in Watford to harness the potential for growth in the creative industries and adjacent sectors. This could include subsidised studio spaces for community uses as well as a hub for creative freelancers and SMEs. Minimum recommended spatial requirements for creative workspace is 850 sq. m. comprising:

- 10 artistic studios/small private office spaces (25 sq. m. each)
- 500 sq. m. of desk and communal space (kitchen, meeting rooms, etc.) which would accommodate approximately 50 workers (10 sq. m. each)
- 100 sq. m. café/networking space that could also be used for talks or small exhibitions.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

1. Town Hall Quarter

1.2 Identify appropriate approach and potential partners to repurpose the Town Hall, Colosseum and any other available sites to provide a creative workspace offer as part of Town Hall Quarter. As part of this test the feasibility of leasing space within the Town Hall/Colosseum. (CONTINUED)

Additional space may be required for specialist facilities or equipment (such as computer labs, 3D printers, or pottery workshops, recording studio etc.) but none of these were identified as specific needs in the course of this exercise.

The lease rate for workspace should depend on the user and lease required. Artists require more subsidy to maintain a studio space and typically seek longer lease arrangements than freelancer workers and SMEs. The current rate in London for artist studio space is approximately £15 per sq. ft. or £161 per sq. m. but ranges from around £10 per sq. ft. / £107 per sq. m. to £20 per sq. ft. / £213 per sq. m. Based on a lease rate of £161 per sq. m., annual revenue from each studio space would be £4,036. If leased as a private office to small businesses, rental rates could be increased.

The average commercial lease rate for co-working space around the Watford area is £200 per person per month. Bubble Hub (St Albans) charges £200 for a hot-desk membership and £375 for a fixed-desk; Regus Watford charges £139 (10-days access) or £209 (unlimited access) for a hot-desk and £190 for a fixed-desk; and Halkin Watford Junction charges £190 for a hot-desk. Flexible and/or subsidised rates would encourage greater accessibility, utilization and growth of creative sub-sectors. For example, £99 to hot-desk, £175 for a dedicated desk and £375+ for a private office space.

A rehearsal space facility for dance and performing arts rehearsals, training, and small-scale events

Establish feasible options for providing rehearsal studio space (with sprung flooring) for dance, theatre, and music training, workshops, rehearsals, and public events. The facility can be shared between performing arts operators in the area. Consider adding such facility to a redeveloped Town Hall or repurposing existing event room ("The Forum") at the Colosseum, if feasible.

The facility requires a minimum of 100-150 sq m; is usually equipped with (removable) sprung flooring; flexible seating; mirrors; ballet bars; adjustable lighting; AC/heating and ventilation systems; and bathroom and changing room facilities.

A visual arts exhibition space with a programme of rotating exhibitions to showcase work (paintings, sculpture, ceramics, etc.)

As part of Town Hall conversion, consider allocating exhibition space for a long-term use for temporary exhibitions. Led by WBC or an individual cultural organisation / art initiatives, the development of the space can be supported with private sector investment (e.g. by housing a private gallery or private gallery operator with an agreement for public programming to serve the whole of Watford).

In parallel, vacant commercial units on high street, at Watford Market, and at *intu* shopping centre can be utilised for pop-up and temporary art projects.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

1. Town Hall Quarter

1.3 Increase utilisation and animate the Colosseum building to create a vibrant cultural centre for Watford.

In addition to essential repairs, increase the usage of the Colosseum spaces and main hall during the daytime. Minimise the number of 'dark days' by offering the hall for community hire at reduced/flexible rates (e.g. offer discounts for periods of lower demand), facilitating increased utilisation by BBC Concert Orchestra, and other potential long-term residents.

Explore linking the Colosseum to the rest of cultural offer in Watford and the Town Hall Quarter being developed both through the use and facilities and joined programming.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

1. Town Hall Quarter

1.4 Update museum programme and displays to make museum fit for future and investigate the feasibility of re-locating to a repurposed space in the Town Hall as part of the Town Hall Quarter project.

In August 2020, HLM Architects completed a study to establish whether Watford Museum could be accommodated spatially within the Town Hall. While this initial assessment suggests that a re-location is possible, further feasibility assessment is required to understand the space required for the museum service, whether the interior spaces within the Town Hall are suitable for the museum's uses, and the costs associated with renovation – which are currently assumed to be less than £1.25 million to achieve a break even position for the Council.

The minimum net internal area required for the museum to continue to offer a similar programme as it does today is 1,264 sq. m. If the ambition for the museum, its programme, and its attendance were to be expanded, spatial requirements could increase to 1,810 sq. m. or more depending on the precise nature of the programme (e.g. increased learning space, event space, or exhibition space may be appropriate). Further research is required to define the scope of the new museum building and a detailed space programme to fulfill those functional requirements. More details on spatial requirements can be found in Appendix G.

Funding support for the conversion of the Town Hall or the development of a new museum building could be derived from various sources including developer contributions via Section 106 (s106) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and fundraising via grants and donations. The projected operating expenditure in each of these scenarios should also be considered, with the potential of establishing an independent charitable trust to support diversification of funding via increased grants and donations.

Setting up an independent Trust to run the Museum rather than operating it as a WBC subsidiary may offer opportunities to diversify its income streams and partnerships, specifically in seeking funding from philanthropic sources and private donors.

The Museum can also partner more closely with the Watford Football Club in reinventing the WFC-dedicated display and programmes and expand digital engagement.

A 'fit for future' Museum would have expanded space for events and changing exhibitions, strong online presence, while building on its strong community links to deliver regular programme of activities in its new reimagined space.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership and Governance

2.1 Establish a governance structure including key stakeholders for coordinated strategic oversight of cultural sector including planning, programme development and delivery of cultural activities.

Establish an oversight body for coordination of cultural programming and investment in Watford. While the Council can initiate the establishment of such structure, it would be an independent sector-driven entity and can be incorporated as an independent charity, e.g. a Trust governed by a Board. Jointly with cultural organisations in Watford, WBC can identify potential funding sources for a new governance entity, including repurposing some of the WBC funding from cultural events and activities cancelled due to COVID-19. It is to become an umbrella structure to represent the key cultural organisations and groups of Watford, representatives from the business community, philanthropic, education and community organisations (e.g. Watford Arts Forum, Watford African Caribbean Association).

This new structure could provide:

- coordination of cultural activities across all Watford venues;
- oversee planning and delivery of key sector and infrastructure support initiatives;
- consolidation of marketing, fundraising, CRM for key Watford venues and Borough-wide events and festivals.

This effort would include engagement with key local funders from private and public sectors: consider approaching WFC; largest employers; education institutions (West Herts College; Watford School of Music; Momentum Performing Arts Academy); or any new partners and stakeholders with an interest in establishing new facilities or programmes in Watford (e.g. education providers; film industry; theatre companies who can have a satellite in Watford given its proximity to London and transport links).

A new governance structure may be constituted as an independent charity (with a Board representing the Council and other major funders, plus independent members to champion Watford's cultural sector) or association of existing organisations.

The cost of establishing a new structure will include administrative setup and governance costs and, from the beginning of operations, staffing costs to cover the salaried personnel who would operate the new organisation. According to benchmark data for similar initiatives, governance costs come to circa £90,000 (up to £8,000 in legal fees and £82,000 in administration, HR/recruitment, etc.); with an annual salary for an Executive Director of up to £60,000 and up to £50,000 in staffing costs for part-time Creative Director and Fundraising Director/grant writer for the initial year(s) of operation.



Overview of key cultural sector stakeholders in Watford.
Source: 2018-2025 Watford Cultural Strategy.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership and Governance

2.2 Deepen community engagement through regular and consistent dialogue with residents and creative practitioners

Create a mechanism to continuously gather input from the creative community in Watford.

This can be done via existing forums and networks and engaging these in an advisory role to a new governance & strategic oversight structure (see recommendation '2.1' above).

Further to that, undertake a stakeholder mapping analysis to identify key players and practitioners not yet represented in the consultation and decision-making for the cultural sector in Watford so that such process is fully representative of Watford's diverse communities.

Individual arts organisations can also undertake measures to attract diverse audiences through tailored audience developed initiatives; by creating programmes representative of specific communities and experiences; and by working directly with community groups in Watford and beyond.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership and Governance

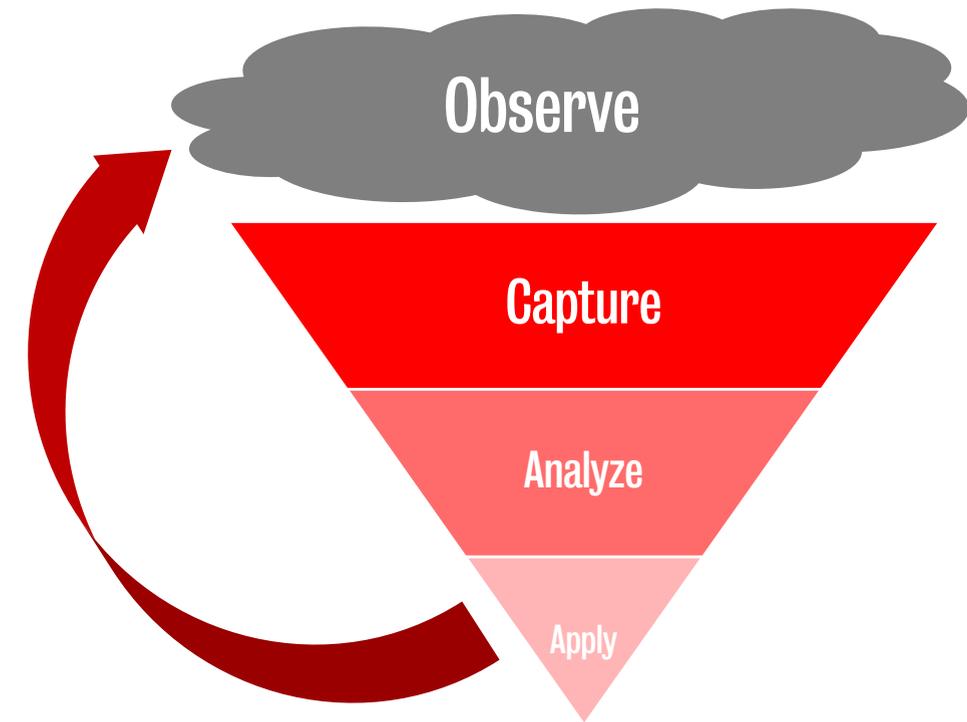
2.3 Improve data collection and analysis to drive better returns on cultural investments.

Capture the breadth and impact of cultural activities in Watford by developing a set of metrics and data points for collection and analysis.

This will enable communication of the value and impact of cultural programmes and organisations to their beneficiaries, and existing and potential partners and funders. This would also allow for the WBC to track the performance of various initiatives, encourage incremental improvements and, where appropriate, measure their return on investment.

Data points and metrics to track may include:

- Individual and collective footfall / attendance at Watford's cultural venues;
- Attendance at outdoor events and festivals;
- Participation in workshops and classes;
- Attendance and participation by residents; by visitors;
- Number of partners engaged (by event / over a calendar year);
- Number of sponsors and size of sponsorship contributions received (over a year);
- Number of funders and size of grants raised (over a year);
- Spend per attendee;
- Individual artists / cultural organisations engaged (over a year);
- Venue utilisation (as average percentage of capacity over a year and average by event type).



“Data Journey” funnel to capture, analyse, and apply key metrics on cultural sector in Watford.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership and Governance

2.4 Develop a centralised communications platform to promote Watford's cultural sector to residents and visitors – either by repurposing an existing website/brand or creating a new one.

We recommend consolidating existing brands and websites promoting Watford's cultural sector into a single platform. This property can be activated in both physical and digital realms, establishing an overarching identity for the cultural sector and its initiatives. This could be through a new platform or the expansion of an existing one (e.g. Visit Watford).

After a branding decision has been taken, the development of new website is expected to cost around £7,500 depending on its complexity. Recurring costs to host and maintain the website are expected to be around £10,000 including 0.25 FTE which could be absorbed within an existing role within WBC or another local organisation.

The website should act as a central hub for all information regarding Watford's cultural offer, including (at a minimum):

- Calendar of events and festivals;
- Map of cultural infrastructure;
- Public art and heritage trail;
- Directory of artists and creatives;
- Volunteering opportunities;
- Job vacancies and other ways to get involved;
- Advertisements for vacant studios and creative workspaces;
- Networks and community events;
- Other news and developments.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership & Governance

2.5 Investigate other opportunities for shared services and co-efficiencies.

The principal opportunity for shared services is the development of a website and brand through which to promote Watford cultural sector cohesively and consistently. Other opportunities for shared service delivery, including ticketing, CRM and administrative functions, require further exploration with cultural venues – principally, Pump House, Watford Palace Theatre, Watford Museum and Colosseum – but are not expected to create significant financial savings. Collaboration and knowledge sharing through the Cultural Leaders Group and/or refreshed governance structure will improve overall cohesion and impact of the cultural sector.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

2. Leadership and Governance

2.6 Continue the Council's support of at-risk cultural venues and organisations including grassroots music venues and talent by supporting fundraising efforts and liaising with national lobbying and funding organisations.

Local music talent and the venues hosting live music acts have suffered (and continue to suffer) loss of most (in some cases all) income-generating activities over the 2020 lockdown period and require immediate support measures to prevent them from closing and/or leaving Watford.

Some of such measures can be supported or introduced by WBC:

- Encourage the landlords of local venues to apply to become Assets of Community Value (offering greater opportunity for Watford communities to keep such buildings in public use and ensure they remain a social hub for the community).
- Liaise with national lobbying and funding organisations (e.g. Music Venue Trust) to secure relief funding for the venues and individual music artists.
- Support fundraising campaigns (e.g. by making a 'matching pledge' or virtual/outdoor fundraisers).
- Explore available policy measures to protect existing music infrastructure.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

3. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

3.1 Seek funds and mechanisms to improve, update and animate existing infrastructure including Pump House Arts Centre and Watford Palace Theatre. This includes necessary repairs and improvements and the potential extension of the Watford Palace Theatre to accommodate more space for rehearsals and small-scale performances, community use and an office/green room.

The Pump House building requires an update to bring it up to 21st century standards and improve accessibility. Consider adding an expansion with a rehearsal/studio space either at current location or elsewhere in the town centre.

Support the proposed extension at the Palace Theatre to accommodate a studio and rehearsal space, community event space, and additional office and green room facilities at a top-level expansion. Signpost and update public realm in the vicinity of the Palace Theatre building (as recommended in earlier cultural strategies) using public art and creating a public plaza / promenade between the theatre and high street.

Capital funding for required improvements can be sourced from regional and national public, private, and philanthropic resources as WVBC is not in the financial position to cover such expenses.

The capital improvement can be funded by a tailored funding campaign driven by a new governance structure and the individual organisations.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

3. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

3.2 Consider adaptive re-use of vacant buildings in Watford for creative activities – such as galleries and studio space, workspace, rehearsal space, exhibition/bespoke retail.

Maximise the use of existing built assets in Watford including vacant spaces and ‘meanwhile’ uses – consider animating existing buildings in the town centre and on high street. In Watford town centre, spaces for adaptive re-use may be available from private landlords (who can be approached in a coordinated campaign) of commercial premises on high street. The retail units at *intu* shopping centre and Watford Market can also be made available for temporary pop-up projects.

According to a recent ACE report and other studies of cultural organisations and the urban fabric, arts organisations and initiatives increase footfall in high streets, repurpose vacant buildings and create employment. Some examples include the Tees Valley Great Places programme in which a not-for-profit organisation Empty Shop took over a derelict shop and turned it into a centre for creative work; Manchester’s Hallowe’en in the City in which inflatable ‘monsters’ were installed above retail buildings; and FabLab Devon based in Exeter Library providing maker spaces. Research by the Institute of Place Management and Manchester Metropolitan University finds that while “retail was still seen as an important element for the future of the high street by those participating, they also saw high streets offering other activities that served the community. They were places where individual and collective experiences should happen.” These findings are in tune with Historic England’s report on the changing face of the high street: people are increasingly looking for a leisure experience rather than just shopping.

A recent Fabian Society report, *Cultured Communities: The crisis in local funding for arts and culture*, puts forward a recommendation for a £500-million investment to help local councils buy empty high street shops and rent them to arts organisations and creative freelancers “and for other uses that strengthen local arts and culture.” The consensus from research and precedents is that arts and cultural uses animate the high streets, attract new audience groups, and enrich the leisure offer in town centres while also contributing to job creation, skills development, and growth and visibility of a local arts sector.

Studies of cultural participation suggest a move in audiences and artists preferences for more accessible, participative, informal venues: as a 2014 Why “Where” Because “Who” study commissioned by Irvine Foundation suggests, “responsive, innovative use of place fuels experiences outside the walls of usual arts spaces, so the arts can live where communities live.”

In the UK, national funding initiatives aimed at revitalisation of high streets have been launched and are open to local authorities and individual artists and arts organisations. For example, from mid-September 2020 invitations are open for a Historic England-led Cultural Programme in partnership with Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, commissioning artists and creative organisations across the country to celebrate and showcase our high streets. It comprises cultural programming, co-created with communities and delivered by artists, to provide a creative response to document and reflect the High Street across the whole period of the programme until 2024. £1.2 million will be made available to artists and cultural organisations who can apply to work with us on a variety of commissions over the course of four years.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

3. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

3.2 Consider adaptive re-use of vacant buildings in Watford for creative activities – such as galleries and studio space, workspace, rehearsal space, exhibition/bespoke retail.

(CONTINUED)

Potential locations include the Town Hall, Watford Market, the Benskins Brewery building (if vacated), the Watford Library (upper floors which are currently under-utilised) and other vacant and meanwhile spaces in and around the town centre (see Recommendation 1c). As a first step, we recommend identifying and engaging with key partners (Herts LEP, West Herts College, Hertfordshire University, Hertfordshire Growth Board, BBC, Warner Bros, etc.) to develop a better understanding of potential tenants and their needs; the corresponding spatial requirements; and sources of funding.

Consider new models of land use to provide affordable creative workspaces, e.g. the example of a Creative Land Trust established in London in 2019. Operating as an independent social enterprise, with support from the Mayor of London, Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Outset Contemporary Art Fund, the Trust aims to secure 1,000 affordable workspaces by 2024. The Trust supports the acquisition or long-term leasing of creative workspaces that are at risk, thereby building a network of permanent spaces that will remain affordable in perpetuity. Once spaces are acquired, the Trust offers various models of ownership and rental agreements, from outright purchases to leases set at an average of £15 per square foot per year but no higher than £19 per square foot per year. While the Creative Land Trust is in its infancy, emerging research demonstrates the social and economic value of preserving space for creative production and consumption across the city. Time will tell whether this model is both scalable and replicable; however, early signs are promising.



4. Recommendations

Proposed Goals and Recommendations

3. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

3.3 Continue to enhance public realm, wayfinding and outdoor social & event spaces to increase connectivity, attractiveness and footfall and facilitate greater cohesion of public spaces and cultural venues.

Research and consultation suggests that the richness and diversity of Watford's cultural and heritage offer is not always visible or understood and that the public realm could be improved to support wayfinding, highlight key sites and heritage to visitors, and better connect infrastructure.

The 2018-25 Cultural Strategy highlighted opportunities for improved wayfinding, street-naming, greening and softening, de-cluttering, sculpture and public art installation, and street furniture and other design interventions to create distinct neighbourhoods and improve the town centre's overall look and feel and connectivity. Dallas Pierce Quintero have since started to develop these ideas through a 'heritage trail' concept and the installation of the Welcome to Watford signage at Watford Junction station.

We recommend that WBC continue to work on these initiatives while also improving upon outdoor social and events spaces where possible. For example, the addition of an accessible changing room and bathroom facility for street performers on the high street.



Watford Parade; photo © David Parker.

5.

Next steps and action plan



5. Next Steps

Funding Sources

Securing funding to support recommended initiatives

Recommendations outlined in this report will require identifying and securing associated funding from multiple funding sources: public funders in England, private donors, philanthropic foundations, developers, commercial and corporate sponsors and partners, and individual policy and cross-sector initiatives. Most of these funding opportunities are available to individual charitable cultural organisations or Trusts delivering cultural programme and activities, while other can be pursued by a local authority, i.e. WBC.

Potential funders of cultural infrastructure improvements and repurposing

- National Lottery Heritage Fund regular grants towards capital infrastructure projects
- Historic England grants towards preserving and repurposing historic buildings
- The Architectural Heritage Fund towards preserving and repurposing historic buildings
- Philanthropic foundations and trusts, including The Wolfson Foundation, the Clore Duffield Foundation, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and Wellcome Trust.
- Private sector partners, philanthropists and investors: explore new opportunities for raising funds and social investment from local businesses and philanthropists with invested interest in Watford's cultural sector and heritage (e.g. Sir Elton John's interest in WFC and its legacy appears underexplored).
- Developer contributions: WBC can apply 'Section 106' and Community Infrastructure Levy to reach agreement with developers to secure provision of community and cultural infrastructure as part of any new / planned development(s) in Watford and specifically in the north of the town centre.

Potential funders of sector leadership and governance consolidation

- Arts Council England regular grant programmes (currently - National Lottery Project Grants)
- Philanthropic foundations and trusts
- Local 'anchor' institutions as direct funders and founders of a new governance structure

Potential funding sources towards wider sector support

- Arts Council England (as above)
- National Lottery Heritage Fund – funding towards heritage buildings preservation
- Historic England (as above)
- The Architectural Heritage Fund
- Private sector partners, philanthropists and investors, specifically local retail businesses and large-scale office facilities tenants with spaces that may be available for creative and cultural uses by local community and visiting artists
- Developer contributions



5. Next Steps

Funding Sources

Immediate funding opportunities for cultural sector – COVID-19 recovery

Philanthropic funders

The Garfield Weston Foundation Weston Culture Fund launched on 5 October 2020: the £25 million fund is designed to support mid to large scale cultural organisations in the UK to help them restart work, re-engage with audiences, adapt to changed circumstances and generate revenue. The fund is specifically for charitable organisations with a pre-COVID-19 regular annual income of £500,000 or greater; smaller organisations will be able to apply for Foundation's regular grants programme via their website as usual. Closing date for applications was 9 November 2020. Decisions announced by end of January 2021. Another round of applications may be available in 2021.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is receiving funding applications from late October 2020, running a mixed new grantmaking programme of recovery grants and programme grants. This will allow those those applying to adjust their plans in the light of their experiences and learning.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has launched a new strategy and opened for grant applications in late October 2020. New strategy addresses three main aims: Our natural world is protected, restored, and improved; A fairer future; and Creative, confident communities.

Public funding – England

Local councils are eligible to apply for a UK government scheme to compensate councils in England for losses, including losses from museums and cultural assets. All relevant losses, over and above the first 5% of planned income from sales, fees and charges, will be compensated for at a rate of 75p in every pound.

In July 2020, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced a £1.57 billion rescue package for cultural and heritage organisations to help them weather the impact of coronavirus. Culture Recovery Fund was administered by Arts Council England, British Film Institute, Historic England, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with two organisations in Watford securing the CRF support funds: Watford Palace Theatre and Para Dance UK.



5. Next Steps

Action Plan Town Hall Quarter

Below is a list of actions to progress recommendations for the development of cultural uses and facilities as part Town Hall Quarter masterplan.

Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	2018-2025 Cultural Strategy	AEA Options Review Recommendation
1 Further develop the vision, mission and programmatic ambitions for the relocated Watford Museum in the north of the town centre.	WBC; Museum Manager	Q4 2020-Q1 2021		✓
2 Test the feasibility of repurposing the Town Hall to accommodate Watford Museum.	WBC; Museum Manager; architects	Q1 2021		✓
3 Test the feasibility of accommodating other cultural uses – creative co-working space, visual arts space, performing arts studio/rehearsal space – in the Town Hall and Colosseum. Consult with key potential users on spatial and fitout requirements.	WBC; CLG; cultural and creative sector stakeholders; architects	Q1 2021		✓
4 Explore the potential use of Colosseum spaces for WPT and other users in the first half of 2021.	WBC, WPT, CLG	Jan 2021		✓
5 Establish action plan for the future of the Colosseum including works to repurpose to increase utilisation through long-term tenancy arrangements, increased programming and community uses during the day, and continuing tenancy agreement with the BBC Concert Orchestra.	WBC; cultural and creative sector stakeholders	Q1-2 2021		✓



5. Next Steps

Action Plan

Leadership and Governance

Below is a list of actions to progress recommendations of the AEA options analysis and 2018-2025 Cultural Strategy action plan for leadership and governance consolidation and optimisation of strategic oversight of cultural sector in Watford.

	Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	2018-2025 Cultural Strategy	AEA Options Review Recommendation
1	Convene a workshop to develop the cultural sector leadership oversight and governance model which will be the most appropriate for Watford's cultural organisations.	WBC, CLG, AEA	January 2021 CLG meeting	✓	✓
2	Take steps to implement preferred governance model: agree on objectives and roles; action plan and priorities; budget/resource consolidation; delivery mechanism, responsibilities and timeline for implementing actions 3-6.	CLG, Watford cultural, education and civic leaders, WBC	Q 1-2 2021	✓	✓
3	Review Cultural Strategy progress and monitoring arrangements. Review Funding arrangements and CLG partnership contributions.	WBC, CLG	Q 1-2 2021	✓	
4	Cultural Champions / Cultural Forum: continue to increase membership and regular engagement.	WBC, Pump House, Palace Theatre	2020 onwards	✓	✓
5	Cultural Volunteering: maintain sign-ups and engagement.	WBC, Colosseum, Pump House	2020 onwards	✓	
6	Culture Embedded into local planning policy: Cultural Strategy used as a reference document in local planning policies and is considered in all future developments.	WBC	2020 onwards	✓	
7	Raise profile of Creative Careers: fulfil awareness and access for young people with regards to creative employment possibilities.	HCEP, WBC (<i>pending HCEP funding</i>), WPT, West Herts College	2021 onwards	✓	



5. Next Steps

Action Plan

Leadership and Governance (continued)

	Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	2018–2025 Cultural Strategy	AEA Options Review Recommendation
8	Decide the optimal architecture for Watford’s digital presence and develop online platform to represent the cultural sector in consultation with key stakeholders.	WBC, CLG	Q2 2021	✓	✓
9	Develop a business case to consolidate Watford’s place branding (incorporating 2021 review of Destination Management budget by WBC) by merging place marketing and place promotion across the business, cultural and visitor sectors. Ambition enabled by consolidating marketing and promotion budgets key local stakeholders and encompass opportunities to jointly promote Watford with other key stakeholders such as <i>intu</i> , the BID, Warner Bros., Watford Football Club, and others.	WBC, CLG, BID	Q2 2021	✓	✓
10	Create a mechanism for continued community engagement, e.g. regular community meetings, an open online membership network, community surveys.	CLG, Culture Forum, WBC	Q3 2021	✓	✓
11	Set up data collection and analysis of cultural sector indicators.	WBC + all cultural stakeholders in Watford	Q3 2021		✓



5. Next Steps

Action Plan

Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support

Most of the actions to support cultural infrastructure provision in Watford below can be progressed simultaneously starting in 2021. Some of these actions – such as improvements to wayfinding, greening, and engagement of the West Herts College students in a creative enterprise at Watford Market – are already underway.

	Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	2018–2025 Cultural Strategy	AEA Options Review Recommendation
1	Partner with private and public stakeholders to facilitate increased utilisation of built infrastructure for creative uses, specifically landlords of commercial units; vacant retail units at <i>intu</i> .	Individual cultural organisations (incl. WPT) and creative groups; <i>intu</i> management; private landlords; BID	2021 onwards		✓
2	Continue to invest in wayfinding and public realm improvements throughout the town centre. Planning and regeneration and community and environment services to scope town-wide wayfinding project. Greening, softening integrated into the planning briefs.	WBC	2021 onwards	✓	✓
3	Market – further enhancements to design of market, expand market offer, adapt some market units for creative retail and cultural uses. Launching creative space and enterprise for the West Herts College students.	WBC	2021-2022	✓	✓
4	Provide creative community space – explore opportunities and sites to accommodate artist/creative workspace.	WBC, Amanartis, cultural sector stakeholders	2021 onwards	✓	✓
5	Complete masterplan for the redevelopment of Watford Palace Theatre building	WPT	April 2021		✓
6	Adapt a space in town centre for scenic workshop and store	WPT	Q1-Q2 2021		✓
7	Update and maintain the Pump House building	Pump House, WBC	2021		✓



5. Next Steps

Action Plan

2018–2025 Cultural Strategy Actions

This list summarises actions set out by the 2018-2025 Cultural Strategy. While those are not specifically addressed in the AEA's options analysis, these actions have been initiated or are planned to deliver on the goals and ambitions set out by the current cultural strategy.

	Action	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Status
1	Watford Fringe	Pump House; CLG; Cultural Forum	2020 onwards	Delivered in 2019 and in 2020 (albeit stripped back), planned for 2021 onwards
2	Watford Film Festival	WBC, Pump House	2020 onwards	Delivered in 2019; 2020 postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19
3	Cultural Chronicle (printed publication)	WBC, Cultural Forum	2020 onwards	On hold due to COVID-19
4	Deliver Digital Heritage Trail	WBC, Museum Manager, Dallas-Pierce-Quintero	2020-2021	Delayed due to COVID-19
5	Explore and discuss Heritage Strategy options	WBC, Museum Manager, Dallas-Pierce-Quintero	2020-2021	Delayed due to COVID-19
6	Deliver BIG events	WBC and contractors	2020 onwards	Planned to take place in 2021, subject to COVID-19 restrictions
7	Imagine Watford festival	Watford Palace Theatre, WBC	2020 onwards	Planned to take place in 2021, subject to COVID-19 restrictions
8	Music festival	WBC, Cultural Forum	2020 onwards	Variety of music events planned subject to COVID-19 restrictions
9	Develop and deliver Public Art Strategy	WBC	2020 onwards	Evolved and incorporated into wider Wayfinding and Public Art Strategy
Hertfordshire-wide initiatives				
10	Deliver Hertfordshire Year of Culture	WBC, Cultural leaders, Community Arts Forum	2020-2021	Launched in Jan 2020; Legacy plan tbc
11	Herts Cultural Education Partnership (HCEP)	HCEP, WBC, Royal Opera House Bridge	2020-2022	To be delivered over next 2 years



APPENDICES

- A. Tracking Recommendations Against Previous Strategy Documents
- B. Watford Cultural Strategy 2018–2025 Summary
- C. List of Materials Consulted
- D. List of Consultees
- E. Audience Agency Segmentation for Watford
- F. Museum Benchmarks
- G. Museum Spatial Requirements
- H. Detailed Case Studies
- I. Feedback from Cultural Leaders Group review (November 2020)



A. Tracking Recommendations Against Previous Strategy Documents

The table below tracks where AEA’s proposed recommendations have already been a key topic in Watford’s previous cultural strategies produced in 2009, 2011 and 2018. With one exception – improved data collection and analysis – all of our recommendations have appeared in at least one previous strategy document.

	Recommendation	2009 Town Centre Cultural Study	2011 Cultural Plan	2018-25 Cultural Strategy
1. Town Hall Quarter	1.1 Regenerate the north of the town centre through public realm interventions, commercial and cultural uses (the reimagined Colosseum, potential addition of the re-located Watford Museum, and current Watford Central Library).			
	1.2 Identify appropriate approach and potential partners to repurpose the Town Hall, Colosseum and any other available sites to provide a creative workspace offer as part of Town Hall Quarter cultural offer. As part of this test the feasibility of leasing space within the Town Hall/Colosseum.			
	1.3 Increase utilisation and animate the Colosseum building to create a vibrant cultural centre for Watford.			
	1.4 Update museum programme and displays to make museum fit for future and investigate the feasibility of re-locating to a repurposed space in the Town Hall as part of the Town Hall Quarter project.			
2. Leadership and Governance	2.1 Develop a governance structure including key stakeholders for coordinated strategic oversight of cultural sector including planning, programme development and delivery of cultural activities.			
	2.2 Deepen community engagement through regular and consistent dialogue with residents and creative practitioners.			
	2.3 Improve data collection and analysis to drive better returns on cultural investments.			
	2.4 Develop a centralised communications platform to promote Watford's cultural sector to residents and visitors – either by repurposing an existing website/brand or creating a new one.			
	2.5 Investigate other opportunities for shared services and co-efficiencies.			
	2.6 Continue the Council's support of at-risk cultural venues and organisations including grassroots music venues and talent by supporting fundraising efforts and liaising with national lobbying and funding organisations.			
3. Wider Infrastructure Support	3.1 Seek funds and mechanisms to improve, update and animate existing infrastructure including Pump House Arts Centre and Watford Palace Theatre. This includes necessary repairs and improvements and the potential extension of the Watford Palace Theatre to accommodate more space for rehearsals and small-scale performances, community use and an office/green room.			
	3.2 Consider adaptive re-use of vacant buildings in Watford for creative activities such as galleries and studio space, workspace, rehearsal space, exhibition/bespoke retail, led by private and not-for-profit initiatives.			
	3.3 Continue to enhance public realm, wayfinding and outdoor social & event spaces to increase connectivity, attractiveness and footfall and facilitate greater cohesion of public spaces and cultural venues.			



B. Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025

Actions Summary (Page 1 of 3)

The table below summarises the action plan produced as part of the Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025. WBC has since adopted these actions into its planning, each completed to varying degrees.

5 Steps in Cultural Development	Focus Areas	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
1. Preparing the Soil: Physical Watford <i>Drawing out Watford's character & creating the right conditions to support a diverse cultural offer</i>	1.1 Heritage & Character 1.2 Distinct Neighbourhoods 1.3 Wayfinding 1.4 Greening, softening & animating	Commission a digital trail to draw out Watford's heritage stories, and attract audiences and aid wayfinding	Commission a family of permanent heritage inspired art, design + greening interventions within the public realm including at key gateways and unloved spaces and to aid wayfinding	Integrate bespoke creative landscaping and street design throughout all new public realm development & planning policy to build Watford's identity as a creative destination
		Produce a Public Art Strategy & Plan		
2. Sowing Cultural Seeds <i>Creating the conditions for diverse culture, creativity and creative enterprise to grow</i>	2.1 The Market & Meanwhile Uses 2.2. Creative Workspaces 2.3 Creative Community & Exhibition Space 2.4 Maximising existing offers	Reposition New Watford Market as a creative enterprise & food hub with a seasonal night-time creative social offer (& heat lamps)	Identify an existing or new build space with a café in or close to the town centre - for creatives and wider community to make, present and sell work, learn skills, 'have a go' and network	
		Establish a detailed plan for the redevelopment of Watford's key cultural infrastructure Watford Museum / Watford Palace Theatre / Production Space / Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre / Watford Colosseum	Identify how to provide one or more teen youth focused space/activity in the town centre e.g. youth focused café, teen shelter, alcohol-free club evenings, outdoor silent disco	



B. Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025

Actions Summary (Page 2 of 3)

The table below summarises the action plan produced as part of the Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025. WBC has since adopted these actions into its planning, each completed to varying degrees.

5 Steps in Cultural Development	Focus Areas	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
3. Nurture & Support Growth <i>Creating opportunities for cultural and creative participation and production to flourish</i>	3.1 Festivals & Cultural Events 3.2 Creative Careers & volunteering	Develop and establish a Watford Film Festival as a key date in Watford's cultural calendar – to develop talent and attract footfall to Watford (bringing together the Short Film festival and the Young Film Festival) and consolidate Watford's strength in film	Participate in Herts Year of Culture 2020 Building on Hertfordshire's Cultural Education Partnership, devise & pilot a plan to create more opportunities for young people in Watford to access local culture, raise awareness of creative careers, develop creative skills & access to workplace experience	Increase opportunities for young people in Watford to access local culture, raise awareness of creative careers, develop creative skills & access workplace experience
		Develop Watford Fringe as a hotbed of local creative talent for all ages, across the Borough - ensuring wide appeal and, including fund-raising to support local talent with a high quality creative event at the heart		
		Create opportunities for cultural volunteering		
		Build on Watford as a place of emerging music. Encourage & support local grassroots, professional and community initiatives including schools, orchestras, bands and choirs via, for example, Own The Stage and Record Store Day		



B. Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025

Actions Summary (Page 3 of 3)

The table below summarises the action plan produced as part of the Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025. WBC has since adopted these actions into its planning, each completed to varying degrees.

5 Steps in Cultural Development	Focus Areas	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
4. Attract Pollinators <i>Encouraging new audiences & promoting creative Watford</i>	4.1 Cultural Narrative: Watford Production House	Align the Destination Branding and Management Strategy with the Cultural Strategy & ensure culture is at the heart	Develop Cultural Champions and Ambassadors	
	4.2 Communications	Devise and implement a plan to enhance communications about culture in Watford		
		Commission public creative projects to promote local cultural events – e.g. a seasonal printed ‘Watford Culture Chronicle’ and bespoke culture information panels with changing information		
		Produce a young people’s guide and resource about culture and creativity in Watford		
5. Encourage Self Seeding <i>Ensuring Watford’s cultural future</i>	5.1 Planning for Culture	Refresh Governance to support effective delivery of the Cultural Strategy	Embed culture within Watford Council’s local planning policy to generate enhanced public realm, more affordable creative space and funding for local activities	Review the Cultural Strategy against progress to plan ahead
	5.2 Governance & Partnerships	Plan for a digital future by harnessing technology to increase access to Watford		



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D. List of Consultees

Organisation	First Name	Second Name
Amanartis	Amma	Gyan
Arts Council	Sam	Worboys
Arts Development Manager WBC	Lewis	Butler
Arts Development Manager WBC	Laura	Horn
BBC Concert Orchestra	Andrew	Connolly
Dallas-Pierce-Quintero	Juliet	Quintero
Electric Umbrella	Mel	Boda
Everyone Active (SLM)	Gary	Foley
Hertfordshire Library Services / Herts County Council	Taryn	Pearson-Rose
Hertfordshire Library Services / Herts County Council	Russel	Barrow
Herts Inclusive Theatre	Caroline	Stevens
Horns	Jane	Gilles
intu	Charlie	Griffiths
intu	Vicki	Costello
intu	Leigh	Brooks
Little Cassiobury	Alex	Macgregor Mason
Little Cassiobury	Cheryl	Gardner
Momentum Performing Arts Academy	Ben	Darmanin
Pryzm (Deltic Group)	Adrian	Swain
Pump House	Sharon	Gaffney
Rifco Arts (AD, CEO)	Pravesh	Kumar
Rifco Arts (ED)	Jenny	Roberts
The Dan Tien	Amy	Lazzerini
Vibe FM	Howard	Groves
Visit Watford	Andrew	Kirby
Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.	Dan	Dark
Watford Area Arts Forum	Helen	Nicell
Watford BID	Maria	Manion
Watford Chamber of Commerce	Chris	Luff
Watford Chamber of Commerce	Saffron	Johnson

Organisation	First Name	Second Name
Watford Chaplaincy	Frances	Novillo
Watford Football Club	Stuart	Timperley
Watford Museum	Sarah	Priestley
Watford Palace Theatre	Brigid	Lamour
Watford Palace Theatre	Samantha	Ford
Watford Palace Theatre	Jamie	Arden
WBC - Events Manager	Helen	Smith
WBC - Head of Leisure and Environmental Services	Chris	Fennell
WBC - Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture	Paul	Rabbitts
WBC Leadership Team: Donna Nolan Alan Gough Kathryn Robson Andrew Cox		
West Herts College	Chris	Pearson
West Herts College	Gill	Worgan



E. Audience Agency Segmentation for Watford

Audience Spectrum Segment	Description	Watford		Hertfordshire	
		Count	%	Count	%
Experience Seekers	An important and significant part of urban arts audiences, these highly active, diverse, social and ambitious singles and couples are younger people engaging with the arts on a regular basis. Students, recent graduates and in the early to mid-stages of their careers, they live close to city centres, have easy access to and attend a wide variety of arts, museums galleries and heritage. Interests cover mainstream, contemporary and culturally diverse offers and attending is at the heart of their social lives. They are mostly in search of new things to do and have disposable income to spend on a variety of leisure activities like sports/arts memberships and frequent visits to cafes, bars and restaurants. Digitally savvy, they will share experiences through social media on their smart phones	23,337	24%	121,805	13%
Commuterland Culturebuffs	Affluent and settled with many working in higher managerial and professional occupations. Commuterland Culturebuffs are keen consumers of culture, with broad tastes but a leaning towards heritage and more classical offerings. Mature families or retirees, living largely in leafy provincial suburban or greenbelt comfort, they are willing to travel and pay for premium experiences, their habits perhaps influenced by commuting. Motivations are multiple, ranging from social and self-improvement, to the pursuit of learning opportunities for older children. They tend to be frequent attenders and potential donors.	22,339	23%	256,437	27%
Dormitory Dependables	A significant proportion of audiences are made up of this dependably regular if not frequently engaging group. Most live in suburban or small towns and show a preference for heritage activities, alongside popular and more traditional, mainstream arts. Many are thriving well off mature couples or busy older families; life stage coupled with more limited access to an extensive cultural offer mean that culture is more an occasional treat or family outing than an integral part of their lifestyle.	18,345	19%	228,332	24%
Facebook Families	Arts and culture play a very small role in the lives of this younger, cash-strapped group living in suburban and semi-urban areas of high unemployment. They are the least likely to think themselves as arty, while less than a third believe that the arts is important. Nevertheless, they do go out as families: cinema, live music, eating out and pantomime.	10,997	11%	91,770	10%

Audience Spectrum Segment	Description	Watford		Hertfordshire	
		Count	%	Count	%
Home & Heritage	Conservative in their tastes, this more mature group appreciates all things traditional: a large proportion are National Trust members, while classical music and amateur dramatics are comparatively popular. While this is not a highly engaged group – partly because they are largely to be found in rural areas and small towns – they do engage with the cultural activity available to them in their locality. They look for activities to match their needs and interests, such as accessible day-time activities or content exploring historical events	5,582	6%	57,739	6%
Up Our Street	Living reasonably comfortable and stable lives, Up Our Street engage with popular arts and entertainment and museums, and are also visitors of heritage sites. Many are older and have some health issues, living on average or below average household incomes, so access in all its forms can be an issue. Modest in their habits and in their means, value for money and low-risk are important factors in leisure decision making.	4,968	5%	34,687	4%
Heydays	Heydays are the group least likely to attend arts or cultural events, believing that the arts are no longer as important or relevant to them as perhaps they once were. Many live in sheltered or specially adapted accommodation for older people, and are excluded from many activities due to a raft of health, access and resource barriers. If they do engage this is likely to be participatory such as craft and knitting, painting, reading and writing activities organised by their sheltered housing, church group or community library.	2,895	3%	20,012	2%
Kaleidoscope Creativity	Characterised by low levels of cultural engagement despite living in and around city areas where plenty of opportunities are within easy reach. A great mix of people comprise this segment with a wide range of ages, living circumstances, resources and cultural backgrounds all living cheek-by-jowl. Low incomes and unemployment can present barriers to accessing some cultural provision. Nevertheless, two thirds do engage with more popular and accessible culture annually, some of this in the local community and outside the mainstream. Free, local events like outdoor arts, festivals and carnivals may appeal, and so might popular offerings like musicals and music events.	2,025	2%	24,293	3%
Metroculturals	Prosperous, liberal urbanites, Metroculturals choose a city lifestyle for the broad cultural opportunity it affords. They are therefore interested in a very wide spectrum of activity, but many tend towards their own preferred artform or style. Although active museum attenders, more engage with the arts and many on a weekly basis. Working in demanding but rewarding professions, they are highly educated and have a wide variety of other interests from food and travel to current affairs and architecture.	195	0%	15,138	2%



F. Museum Benchmarks

Attendance

Museum	City	2019
Hertford Museum	Hertford	26,740
Stevenage Museum	Stevenage	18,780
Watford Museum	Watford	10,485
Bishop's Stortford Museum	Bishop's Stortford	9,413
St Albans Museum + Gallery	St Albans	330,000
Bucks County Museum	Aylesbury	93,270
North Hertfordshire Museum	Hitchin	Avg of 1000/week
Wardown House	Luton	77,832
Bushey Museum	Bushey	
	<i>Average</i>	71,911
	<i>Median</i>	22,760
	<i>Watford Museum median comparison %</i>	-54%



F. Museum Benchmarks

Capital Costs

Name	Location	Project Status	Size (sq. m.)	Capital cost (£)	Cost per sq. m. (£)
Blackpool Museum	Blackpool	Announced	2,500	13,000,000	5,200
The Amelia	Tunbridge Wells	Announced	4,000	13,200,000	3,300
Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration	London	Announced	1,100	8,000,000	7,273
Danum Gallery, Library and Museum	Doncaster	Announced	4,580	15,000,000	3,275
The Silverstone Experience	Northampton	Completed	4,000	20,000,000	5,000
Windermere Jetty Museum of Boats, Steam and Stories	Windermere	Completed	3,500	20,000,000	5,714
British Museum Archaeological Research Collection	Berkshire	Announced	15,628	64,000,000	4,095
V&A Dundee	Dundee	Completed	8,500	80,000,000	9,412
Royal Air Force Museum	London	Completed	5,200	8,580,000	1,650
Victoria & Albert Museum Collections and Research Centre	London	Announced	15,000	22,000,000	1,467
Aerospace Bristol Museum	Bristol	Completed	3,200	20,592,000	6,435
Postal Museum	London	Completed	2,787	28,158,000	10,103
<i>Average</i>			5,833	26,044,167	5,244
<i>Median</i>			4,000	20,000,000	5,100

G. Museum Spatial Requirements

Space	Current sqm allowance	Proposed min. sqm allowance	Indicative sqm for expanded programme	Notes
Visitor reception	*	30	40	Increased to allow for increased attendance (up to 90,000 p.a.)
Shop	32	30	40	Increased to enhance income generation
Café	*	25	50	Increased to enhance income generation
Temporary exhibition	*	60	300	Increased to accommodate travelling exhibitions and rentals
Events space	N/A as not enough room for a dedicated events space.	60	80	Increased to accommodate different events formats and rentals
Resource room	12	20	30	Increased to accommodate higher attendance and enhanced usability as study room
Learning space	62	70	70	Able to accommodate one class size
Museum stores	157	467	450	Storage requirements are high vis a vis exhibition space therefore active collections management and rationalisation is recommended
Offices	102	102	150	Increased to accommodate larger staff necessary to manage expanded programme
Permanent displays	340	400	600	Increased to accommodate larger interactive exhibits with higher percentage of objects on display
TOTALS	782	1,264	1,810	

The proposed minimum spatial requirements for Watford Museum (1,264 sq. m.) were developed by WBC in July 2019. This is considered the minimum space required to deliver a programme similar to that which is already being delivered at Watford Museum, but with modest adjustments for proper storage space, education facilities, events space etc.

The indicative spatial requirements for an expanded programme (1,810 sq. m.) are intended to provide some basis from which to consider the spatial implications of an expanded programme (e.g. touring exhibitions, academic lectures, film screenings) and larger permanent exhibition space which would enable around 10% of the existing collection to be on display (currently only 2% are exhibited). More work is required to define the scope and ambitions of the relocated museum and therefore the necessary space to accommodate it.

All areas are net internal areas and exclude toilets, general store cupboards, plant spaces, corridors and outdoor spaces.

*77sqm was the total size of the entrance, café and temporary exhibition space. This space was limited in size due to the nature of the building boundaries.



APPENDICES

H. Detailed Case Studies



Creative Folkestone

Overview

Established in 2002, Creative Folkestone is a charity dedicated to transforming the town of Folkestone through culture and creativity. It is an example of a regeneration program with culture and artistic production at its core, seeking to make an attractive environment for arts practitioners and change the image of Folkestone in the process. It does this through the provision of artist live and workspace, events, festivals, public art, and learning and engagement activities.

The charity's objectives, as set out in its governing documents are:

The fostering of knowledge and appreciation of art, music and literature; the relief of poverty by assisting individuals who are in need, in particular by assisting artists to become self-supporting through their art; the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for the inhabitants of Folkestone and the surrounding district; the promotion of regeneration in areas of social and economic deprivation.

The charity was founded by local businessman Sir Roger de Haan who, having sold Saga Group for £1.35 billion in 2004, committed to Folkestone's regeneration. This followed a prolonged period of neglect after the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, which had a significant impact on local jobs and prosperity as tourism declined. The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust (RDHCT) has since invested significantly in the town and wider area, including Creative Folkestone programmes and infrastructure. For example, more than £60 million has been invested in developing and refurbishing the Creative Quarter, which is based around the town's old High Street and largely comprises businesses – like art galleries, craft shops, architects' offices, marketing agencies and design studios – owned and staffed by creatives.



Image: Creative Folkestone Official Website.



Creative Folkestone

Programming & Activities

Creative Folkestone's activities can be divided into four primary areas: property; public art; festivals and events; arts complex; and learning and engagement.

Property

Creative Folkestone manages a portfolio of 90 properties in the town's Creative Quarter located in the town centre. RDHCT has provided the funds to acquire and repair, refurbish or in some cases rebuild, many of these buildings which were previously in a state of serious disrepair or derelict. Once completed, the buildings are transferred to the control of Creative Folkestone on 125-year leases at peppercorn rents. Properties are rented as work or living space to tenants engaged in a wide range of creative occupations, from artists and writers to digital media, photographers and film makers. Currently, the area is populated by a community of over 500 artists and creative industries.

Public Art

Through its public art initiative, Folkestone Artworks, Creative Folkestone has installed 74 works by 46 artists throughout the town. This includes work by Tracey Emin, Anthony Gormley and Yoko Ono, and many others, including many site-specific works created in response to their environment. A visitor centre, free guided tours, and four suggested walking routes help visitors to enjoy the collection to its fullest. The collection continues to grow as more works commissioned for the Folkestone Triennial are added every year. It is the largest urban outdoor exhibition of contemporary art in the country.

Festivals and Events

The town is animated by three regular events:

- Folkestone Triennial: Started in 2018, the Triennial invites artists to exhibit sculptural works in public spaces. Around 20 new artworks are commissioned every year, many of which become permanent. The format was inspired by Münster (Germany), Echigo-Tsumari (Japan) and Santa Fé (New Mexico).
- Folkestone Book Festival: a 10-day festival that brings celebrated authors to speak in Folkestone. It first started in 1982.
- Open Quarter Festival: a 10-day event that includes networking, talks, performances, on-street, theatre, live music, workshops, exhibitions and open studios led by Creative Quarter tenants.

Arts Complex

The Quarterhouse is a multidisciplinary arts centre in the heart of the Creative Quarter. The project, located in a former builder's yard, was funded by RDHCT and designed by architect Alison Brookes. Its programme includes comedy, music, film, festival, theatre, circus, dance and live-screenings of NT Live and ROH Live. In 2018/19, 367 performances took place with 21,656 tickets sold.

Learning and Engagement

The charity also offers various family drop-ins and school workshops, artist talks and workshops as part of its festivals programming. This is a growing area of focus.



Creative Folkestone

Physical & Digital Infrastructure

Creative Folkestone's physical assets are clustered in the Creative Quarter on, and around, the Old High Street. Here, it currently owns 90 properties, split into 240 business and residential units. These comprise around 60 shops, 60 flats and 120 offices or artist studios. The majority of these are rented to creatives, with the exception of some facilities offering food, drink or educational facilities. Together they constitute a diverse mix of artists, film-makers, designers, photographers, boutiques, specialty food shops, etc.

Most units are rented at market rates, with a small number subsidized to support recent graduates and new businesses. Business are required to be open from Wednesday to Saturday (at a minimum), and occupancy levels are almost 100%, creating a hive of cultural activities that attracts both residents and visitors.

Other physical infrastructure owned by Creative Folkestone includes the Quarterhouse arts hub, where they have their offices; Block 67, a community arts space, and Glassworks. Glassworks is currently being developed into a digital hub called digital:glassworks to meet the demand for technology companies and create new business opportunities with the cultural sector. There are currently 19 tenants occupying about one third of the available space which is being converted into small office spaces and communal hot-desking areas. The project is supported with funding from a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund via the Great Place, the Scheme South East Creative Cultural and Digital Support programme, and the EU Interreg North Sea Region programme.

In 2019, the Creative Folkestone was re-named (formerly the Creative Foundation) and launched a new brand identity. This included the development of a new website that replaced six existing websites, bringing together the charity's output under one platform. Website content includes:

- Information relevant to all core projects: Creative Quarter, Quarterhouse, Folkestone Artworks, Book Festival and Folkestone Triennial;
- Comprehensive event listings and calendar (with tickets available to purchase);
- Listings for all tenants in the Creative Quarter;
- Details for flats, studios/retail or office spaces available to rent;
- Relevant news and developments;
- Join and Support page including details for membership, donations, corporate sponsorship, grants and volunteering.

The new brand was also rolled out across all signage in Quarterhouse, at Glassworks and Folkestone Artworks.



Creative Folkestone

Governance & Organisational Structure

Creative Folkestone is an independent arts charity founded in 2002. Its key management personnel are its Board of Trustees and Chief Executive. The Board is supported by four sub-committees who oversee Management, Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Creative Quarter Regeneration.

In 2019, there were 22 staff members on average, working across the following functions:

- Creative Quarter: 2
- Development: 2
- Marketing: 3
- Learning and engagement: 1
- Management and administration: 5
- Quarterhouse: 3
- Visitor Experience: 6

The local council supports Creative Folkestone in various ways. In addition to financial support, they have kept business rates reasonable for start-ups and small concerns and maintain modest car parking costs, which is vital for attracting visitors to spend some time in the town. For example, car parking is free in the weekends leading up to Folkestone's Book Festival.

Other partner organisations and initiatives include:

- Arts Council England: since April 2018, Creative Folkestone has been recognized as a National Portfolio organisation.
- Great Place Scheme: funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and supported by ACE, Artsworld, the South East Bridge, Kent County Council and Christ Church Canterbury University, with Historic England.
- South East Creatives, a business development programme supporting the growth and sustainability of the creative, cultural and digital sectors in the South East.
- Culture Kent, a cross arts and tourism project that aimed to promote Kent as a national and international cultural destination, running from 2014 to 2017.
- England's Creative Coast, a public art project designed to connect arts organisations across, Kent, Essex and Sussex (postponed until Spring 2021).



Creative Folkestone

Business Model

Income

Creative Folkestone has benefited enormously from the support of the RDHCT which, in total, has invested approximately £42 million to the arts and creative industries, including major renovations in the Cultural Quarter.

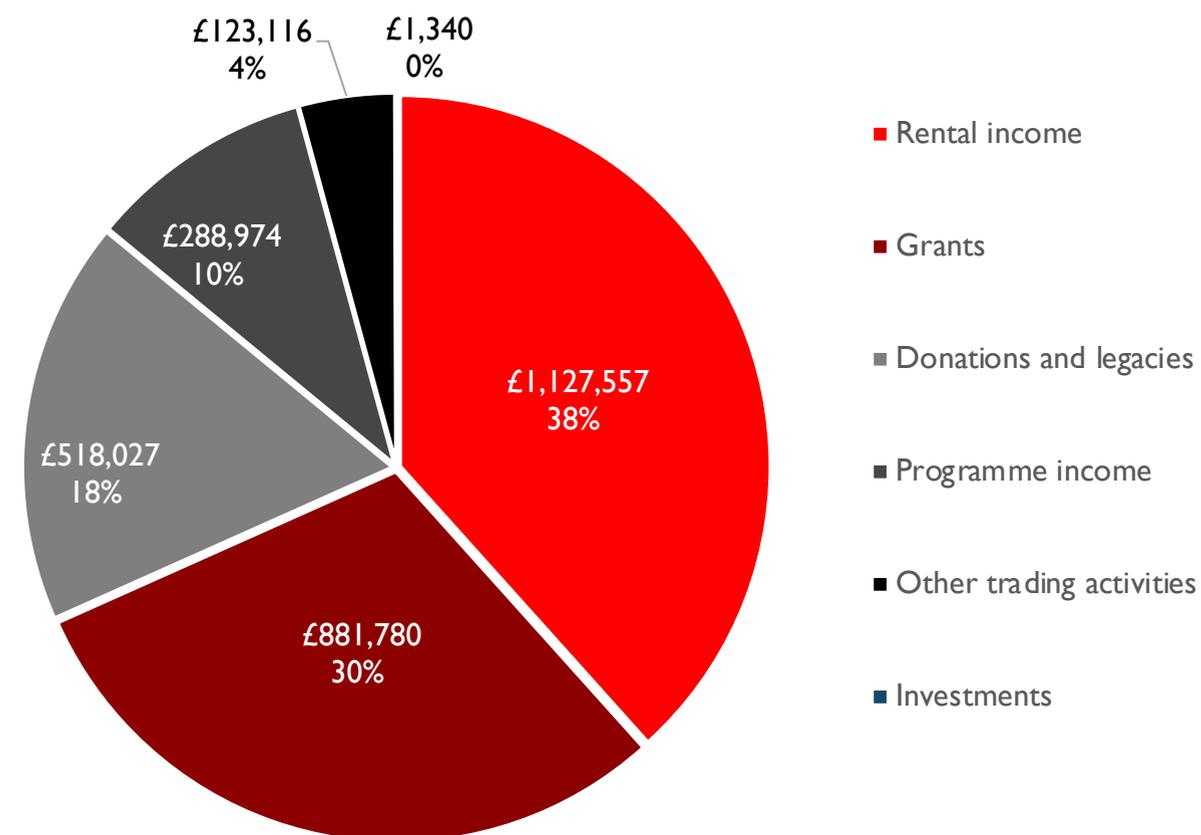
Over time, the organisation has become less reliant on RDHCT by diversifying its income. In 2019, it raised £2.9 million income, a large proportion of which (38%) was derived from property rentals. Grants were also significant, including contributions from Arts Council England, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Kent County Council, Folkestone Town Council, Interreg Europe and South East Creative.

In March 2019, Creative Folkestone launched a membership programme that offers discounts on performances and in selected shops, cafes and restaurants; access to members only events and newsletters; and acknowledgement on the Creative Folkestone website.

Expenses

Creative Folkestone's operating costs are primarily associated with its programmatic activity. In 2019, direct costs associated with programming was £2.2 million. Other costs included finance, admin and other support costs (£640,000), grants payable to artists (£36,796) and trading activities (£50,932). Total operating expenditure amounted to £2.9 million.

Creative Folkestone Income Distribution, 2019



Creative Folkestone

Learnings

Artists and creatives encourage visitors – but only if they're visible: Many would be happy simply to paint or create all day, but we build into the lease certain responsibilities – like a minimum number of hours during which shops and galleries need to be open and staffed, and weekend opening is encouraged at busy times, like the Triennial.

Build gradually but deliberately: In 2008, Creative Folkestone opened buildings, including the Quarter House, and also launched the Folkestone Triennial. This was followed by the economic downturn which meant that properties were vacant for some time. Chief Executive Alastair Upton says the lesson learned is to spread development over several years, minimizing risks and making the process less stressful.

Strong leadership has an important catalyzing effect: Be as inspirational as you can in presenting your vision to people, as you'll need to encourage them to take a long term view. You'll need a powerful voice – be it an individual like Roger De Haan or a visionary council – to champion the project through thick and thin.

Diversity creates opportunities for collaboration and innovation: There is some synergy in building between the various businesses in the Creative Quarter; for example, a local web designer builds websites for up-and-coming local business

Grow cross-sector partnerships: Creative Folkestone has built strategic partnerships with a range of organisations, including visitor attractions, retail, transport, and hotels. Visit Kent has also helped to broker fruitful partnerships with

Southeastern Railways and DFDS Ferries – enabling Creative Folkestone to run workshops on DFDS Ferries and have a pop-up presence at St Pancras International engaging London audiences and Kent commuters, and leading to subsequent successful collaborations with Southeastern.

Consider the needs of existing residents in addition to visitors: Some of the wider regeneration funded by RHDCT has attracted criticism as it is perceived to benefit primarily newcomers and visitors rather than existing residents. For example, only eight percent of the new development's housing stock will be classed as affordable. There is also a risk that, as property and other amenities become more expensive, the artists that were instrumental in the regeneration of the town will be pushed out.

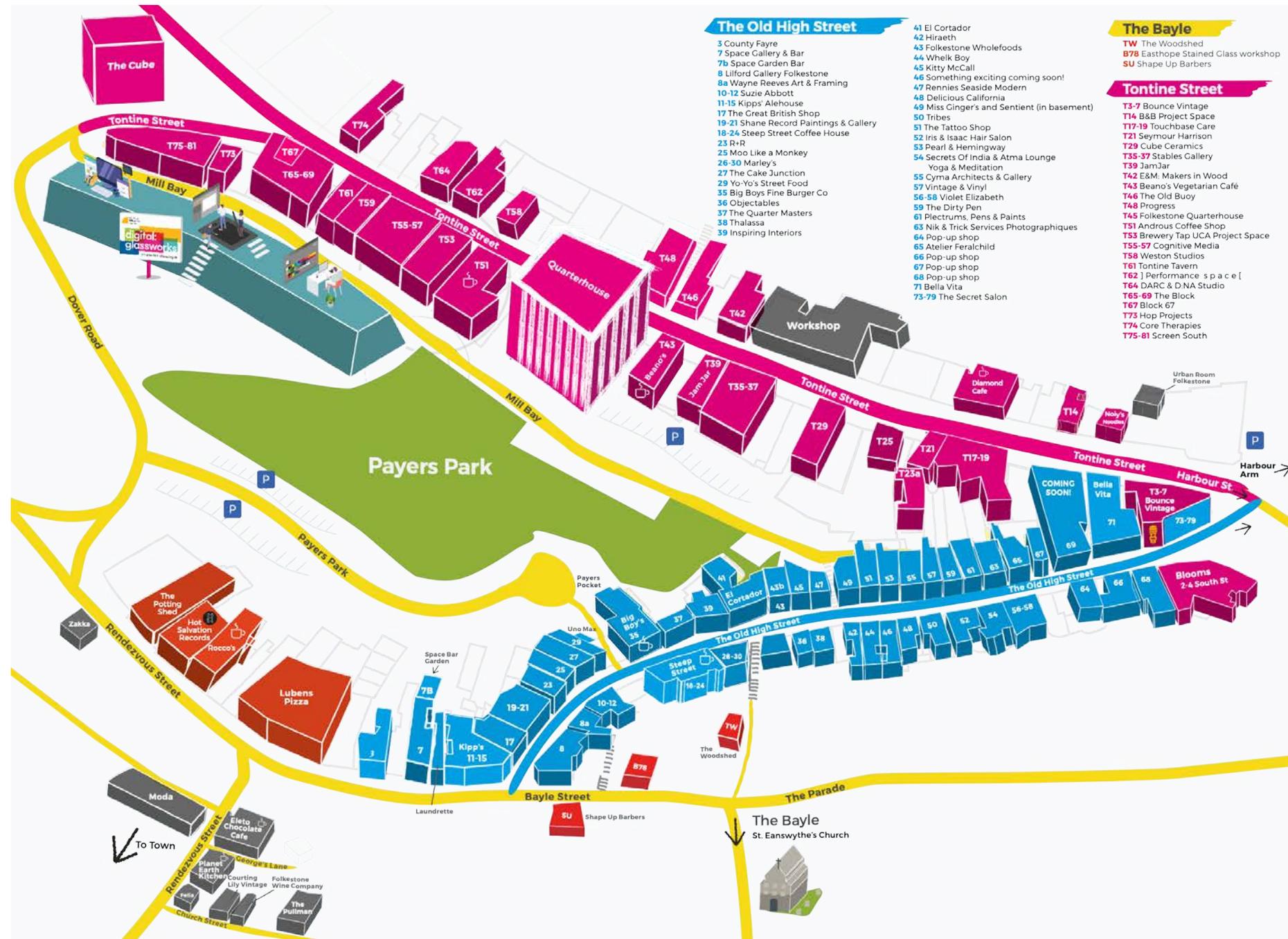
Consistent branding and communications: with the re-naming of the charity, Creative Folkestone rebranded to ensure all visual communications are clear and consistent. In addition to wayfinding, this included consolidating six websites into one platform for all Creative Folkestone activities.

Focus on customer experience: A new visitor centre was recently realised at the Quarterhouse and a new Visitor Experience team has been established. Staff have undergone training to create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere for visitors and to give visitors insight into the artworks and encourage membership and donations.



Creative Folkestone

Map



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

Overview

Waltham Forest was the Mayor's first ever London Borough of Culture in 2019. The Mayor's objectives for the award were to bring Londoners of all ages and backgrounds together by placing culture firmly at the heart of local communities. Throughout 2019, more than 1,000 projects, events and cultural activities formed the programme for Waltham Forest's London Borough of Culture year, created with over 800 artists and creative organisations.

The programme included visual and performing arts events, multi-arts festivals, grant-making for local cultural events and infrastructure improvements, new cultural infrastructure development, schools engagement and workshops, 1:1 surgeries and support for creatives, etc. Key achievements over the course of the year included:

- Over 1,000 events, workshops, installations, exhibitions, tours and trails took place across each of the borough's wards
- Over 500,000 visits to cultural events and activities in the Borough
- Over 1,000 Legends of the Forest volunteers recruited to support events, workshops and performances
- 100% of Waltham Forest schools engaged with the programme
- 81% of audience members agreed that the event they attended made them feel that Waltham Forest welcomes everyone
- Over £1 million raised through sponsorship and fundraising, with ongoing relationships with partners and investors



Image: Waltham Forest London Borough of Culture Twitter



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

Programming & Activities

The programme was co-designed with local communities and sought to be as inclusive as possible. Activities took place throughout the year, with 11 major 'hero' events punctuating the annual calendar. Activities were developed around three core themes:

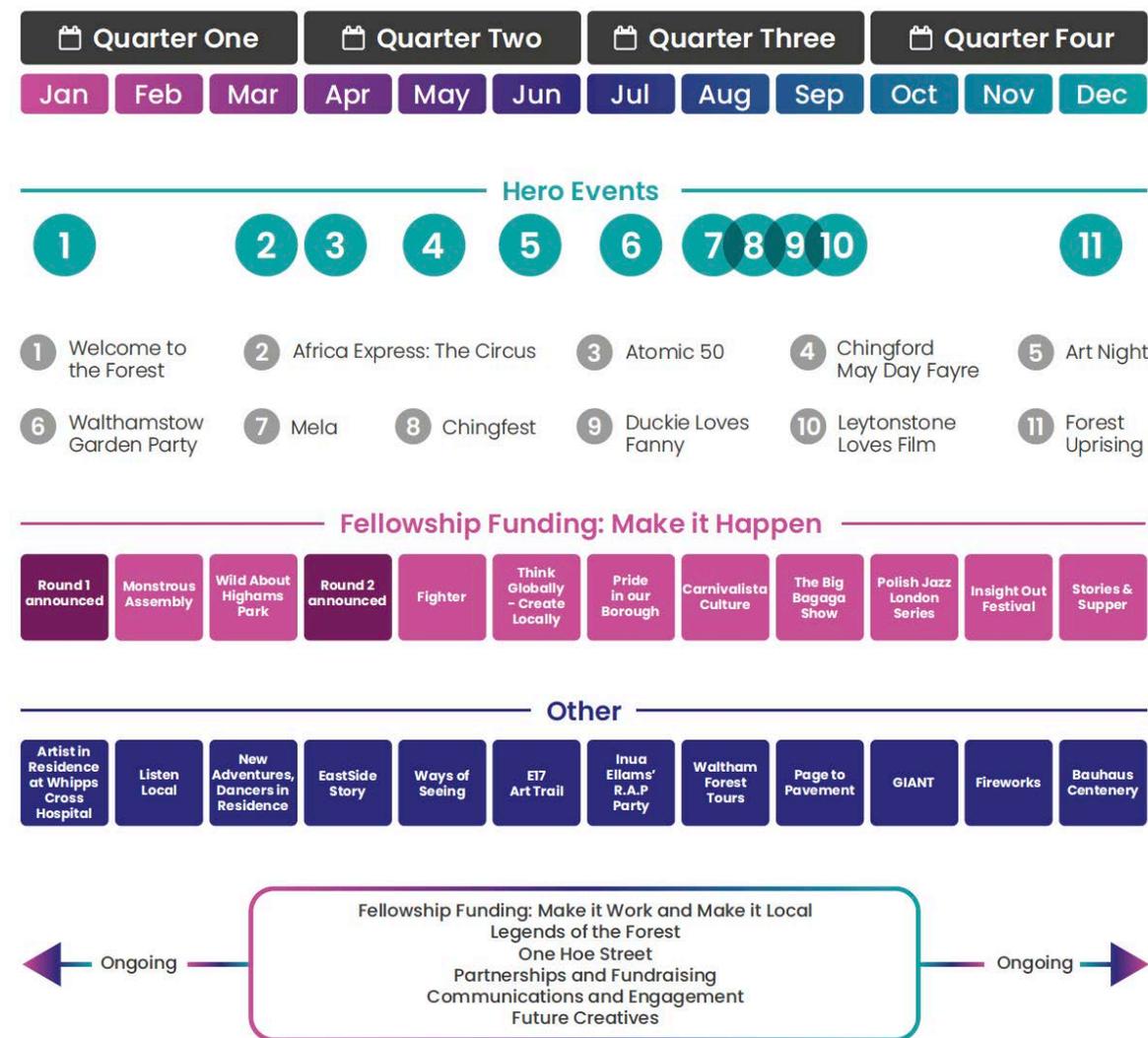
- 'Makers' reflected the manufacturing history of the Borough and its future prosperity in the creative industries;
- 'Radicals' highlighted that we needed to experiment and look at different approaches as both a Council and as a Borough to improve residents' quality of life; and
- 'Fellowship' reflected the ambition to develop of a meaningful and inclusive programme, with long-lasting impact for communities.

Programmatic activities included visual and performing arts events, multi-arts festivals, grant-making for local cultural events and infrastructure improvements, new cultural infrastructure development, schools engagement and workshops, 1:1 surgeries and support for creatives, etc. See right for main programme highlights.

Five aims, or 'step changes', were defined against which to measure the impact of the programme. These aims, the target outcomes and impact highlights are summarised on the following page.

Going forward, activities will be cantered around three priorities: culture as our identity; culture as a bond; and culture as a catalyst for the future.

Main Programme Highlights



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

Programming & Activities Summary Table

Aims	Target Outcomes	Impact Highlights
<p>Culture as our identity: a catalyst for developing a more ambitious cultural offer – putting Waltham Forest on the map as a premier location for cultural experiences with a sustained visitor economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising our profile Boosting the local economy Raising pride in the Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over £4.1 million spent in the local area by audiences across 10 hero events Over 500,000 visits to cultural events and activities in the Borough Over £1.1 million generated in external funding and investment in the programme
<p>Culture on every corner: hyperlocal activities created by and for communities in local neighbourhoods. We'll experiment with non-traditional spaces, as venues and identify where creative individuals and organisations can connect them to communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving everyone, everywhere Embedding culture in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86% of audience members enjoyed the event they attended Over 1,000 different events, workshops, installations, exhibitions, tours and trails across every ward in the Borough 67% of attendees at our hero events were local residents
<p>Cultural capacity: The creative sector will develop and mature. Our culture-ready Council will ensure those with capacity and ambition can find the right space in the borough.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding culture in our businesses Developing creative professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 11,300 hours provided by over 1,000 Legends of the Forest volunteers £250k in capital improvements to schools through cultural interventions £40,000 in Make it Work Fellowship Funding improved and created cultural spaces
<p>Culture as a career: Young people will be inspired to seek creative careers. As our cultural sector grows, it will be able to tap into a local workforce with the best skills in creative business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upskilling local people Establishing pathways to creative careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of schools (88) in Waltham Forest engaged with the London Borough of Culture programme Over 100 young people receiving paid work experience and coaching in the creative sector through Future Creatives 64% of volunteers said they gained and developed skills through the Legends of the Forest programme
<p>Culture as a bond: Council and its partners will radically change how they work with the cultural sector and communities, developing a deeper and shared understanding of the cultural ecology to enable communities to adopt a leadership role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing people together Using culture to improve wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £200,000 in Make it Local Fellowship Funding enabled the delivery of over 350 hyper-local events in every ward of the Borough 81% of audience members agreed that the event they attended made them feel that Waltham Forest welcomes everyone 65% of residents say culture should be a priority for the Borough in the future



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

Physical & Digital Infrastructure

Existing cultural infrastructure (pre-LBC 2019)

Vestry House Museum and Gardens: community room and award-winning garden. The museum hosts a number of displays reflecting the local area's unique heritage.

William Morris Gallery: the only Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation operating in the Borough and the only public museum devoted to the life and legacy of William Morris: designer, craftsman and socialist. Housed in a Georgian house, built in the 1740s, and set in Lloyd Park in Walthamstow, the grade II* listed building was Morris's family home from 1848 to 1856. It reopened in August 2012 following a major redevelopment and offers exhibitions, events and education programmes.

Walthamstow Wetlands: Europe's largest urban wetland nature reserve. Recently opened to the public, the site is free to visit and accessible to all. Two small indoor venues – the Engine House and Turbine Room.

Chingford Assembly Hall: Lounge and hall with a raised stage at one end. Max capacity 435 people.

Walthamstow Assembly Hall: Art Deco Grade II listed hall built during WWII. The Max capacity 1,400 people. Regularly played by the London Symphony Orchestra, it also has two licensed bars and a grand piano.

Winns Gallery: small contemporary gallery in Lloyd Park – the grounds of the William Morris Gallery.

New cultural infrastructure (post-LBC 2019)

CRATE St James Street: a purpose built hub for local entrepreneurs in food, drink, design, health, beauty, etc. Similar to BOXPARK developments, the space is comprised of converted shipping containers to create a network of small open shop fronts available for rent. Social enterprises receive a 50% discount.

One Hoe Street: new council-managed co-working and exhibition space to support the creative sector. In 2019, it was used by partners and local organisations to deliver over 100 new activities and events.

Fashion Hub (temporary): Making for Change, a partnership between Waltham Forest Council, the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, and The London College of Fashion, created a new Fashion Hub in Leyton Green, formerly a derelict ex-Morrisons. Students supported local women from deprived communities to develop skills and create sustainable fashion.

Welcome to the Forest: website for residents and visitors to Waltham Forest to find out about and share cultural events and initiatives in the Borough, including open access event listings, volunteer programme and resources and funding opportunities for creatives. Various stories, images, videos and tours of Waltham Forest are available to view on Google Arts & Culture

Through the Make it Work Fellowship Funding grant programme, a number of spaces have been improved for cultural activity. The council has also committed to transforming EMD Cinema into a live performance venue



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

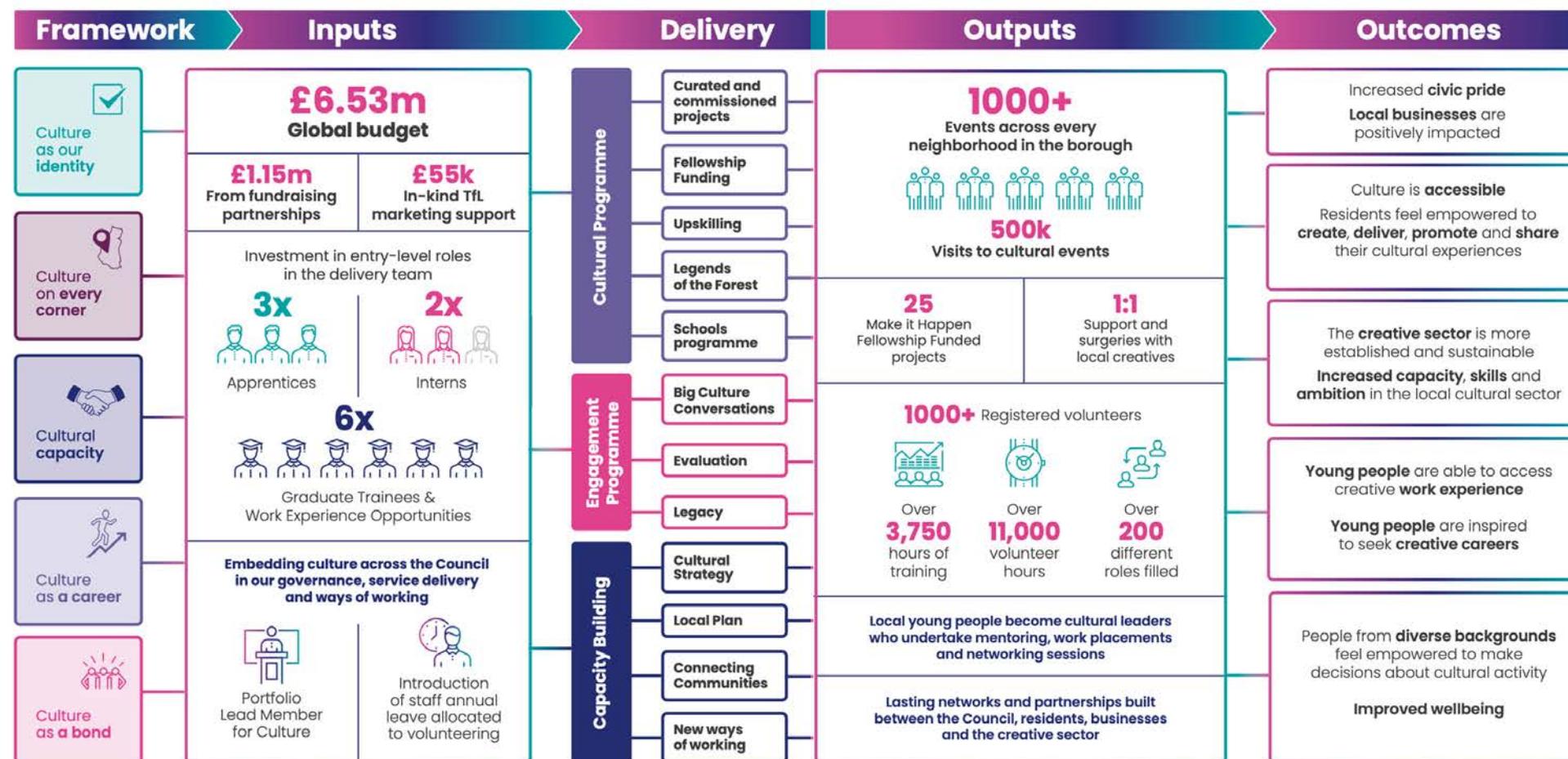
Governance & Organisational Structure

Waltham Forest was announced as the first ever London Borough of Culture and was awarded £1.35million of funding to deliver a programme of ambitious cultural activities. This was supplemented by various funding partners to achieve a total budget of £6.5million, including:

- 1.15m sponsorship from commercial partners and local businesses
- £55,000 in-kind TfL marketing support
- Programme specific funding from Art Fund

Activities were led by Waltham Forest Borough Council, delivered in partnership with various venues, funders, artists, producers, etc. and a large support base of over 1,000 volunteers. Programme design was influenced by local community consultation which aspired to represent the diversity of residents across Waltham Forest.

Delivery Framework



Waltham Forest (London Borough of Culture 2019)

Learnings

Local partnerships: To deliver the programme, the council worked with partner organisations, which resulted in events and activities that were deeply rooted in the local area. Although we always set the brief, by devolving the programme to other organisations and individuals who were better placed to engage specific communities, we were able to reach a much more diverse audience.

Community engagement and co-production: The council worked with the local community to develop the programme. This was achieved through various channels, including a representative resident panel – reflecting the diversity of identities, ethnicities, abilities and ages that make up the Borough – to share their thoughts with us at four different points during the year; three Big Cultural Conversations engaging 100 residents in each to gather qualitative views; and the Big Youth Conversation survey of 1,000 young people. Positioning community involvement at the centre of activity deepened connections with the council.

Hyper-local initiatives: There was a deliberate attempt to engage with people across the Borough, especially in areas with low levels of cultural engagement. For example: The Make it Local strand of the Fellowship Funding programme empowered local residents to deliver hyper local cultural programmes. Community decision-making panels also awarded Fellowship Funding Make It Happen grants (worth around £270k) for improving cultural spaces across the Borough.

Data collection and evaluation: Data measuring the impact of programmes was meticulously collected. This was done on a quarterly basis, rather than waiting until the end of the year, so shape events iteratively. Data collected was quantitative and qualitative to gather the case studies and local stories.

'Always on' calendar: events and activities were staged throughout the year to maintain momentum.

Programmatic relevance: It is an especially young and diverse Borough, so programmes were developed specifically to engage with their population. For example, school engagement was prioritized and the Future Creatives programme which enabled 100 young people to gain work experience in the creative sector. Older generations in care homes were engaged with in the Inside Out Festival.

Embedding culture in the council: culture has been embedded across the Council's governance, service delivery and ways of working. This included the introduction of staff annual leave allocated to volunteering.

Accessibility: Waltham Forest is just outside the bottom 10% of the most deprived local authorities and deliberate attempts were made to ensure activity was delivered locally, free or low-cost, and accessible to those with a health problem or disability. For example, disability arts organisation, Attitude is Everything, was commissioned to support the programme, and to advise on how to maximise accessibility during the year.

Adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure: Small existing community venues were used to host activities and events took place in unexpected places to encourage engagement among those that don't normally attend arts events e.g. Art night saw works installed in pubs, shops, library, etc.



Culture Mile

Overview

Culture Mile is a hub for the cultural and creative industries clustered around a number of arts, educational and civic organisations located in the north-west corner of the City of London. It was initiated by the City of London Corporation ('the City') in 2017 together with four partner organisations ('Core Partners'): the Barbican Centre, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and the Museum of London. As currently defined, Culture Mile's total geographic area constitutes a little under a fifth of the Square Mile (approx. 0.2 sq. miles).

It was established in support of two principal aims in the City's Cultural Strategy and Corporate Plan for 2018 - 2023. These are described in Culture Mile's 2018-28 strategy as:

- To contribute to changing perceptions of the City to ensure that it is recognised as a global leader in culture, creativity and learning as well as commerce; and
- To develop Culture Mile as a vibrant and welcoming cultural, creative & learning destination for all.

Culture Mile's current work programme comprises eight individual work-streams, each championed by one of the four Core Partners: Communications, Communities, Marketing, Learning, Partnerships, Programming, Property, and Public Realm.

The area is also the location for an ambitious programme of investment in cultural infrastructure over the next decade, including the new Museum of London at West Smithfield, the proposed Centre for Music, and the transformation of Beech Street tunnel.



Image: Culture Mile Official Website



Culture Mile

Programming & Activities

Culture Mile's current work programme comprises eight individual work-streams, each championed by one of the four Core Partners:

- **Communications:** building the narrative for Culture Mile as the cultural and creative centre in the heart of the City of London;
- **Communities:** engaging with local residents in the City and neighboring boroughs to help shape the programme and to work with areas and individuals that have had limited cultural engagement historically through workshops and performances;
- **Marketing:** advertisement and awareness building for Culture Mile's programmes and events;
- **Learning:** connecting various educational organisations and resources to boost their outreach and impact. Specific programmes include:
 - The School Visits Fund which provides up to £300 towards the cost of a visit to a wide variety of London's cultural venues
 - Dual Site Visits offer curriculum-based facilitated sessions for primary or secondary school students to two cultural site in the City of London
 - The Fusion Prize which invites schools, universities, charities, businesses, and others to work together and pitch ideas for innovative programmes or products designed to develop the creative, communication, organisational and thinking skills required of London's young people in the 21st century – with a £50,000 development fund
- **Partnerships:** Culture Mile has developed a network of 30 organisations in the area which are committed to the ambitions of the project and which, it is hoped, will help to realise them. The Network is comprised of a diverse range of sectors including: hospitality, retail, performing arts, property, education, etc.
- **Programming:** while events are currently postponed due to COVID-19, Culture Mile has produced various events and festivals in the past. These events are designed to encourage collaboration between partners, bring programming into the public realm, encourage visitors to experience the City in new ways, and boost the area's image as a cultural quarter. Last summer, 'Play The Mile' was a three-month initiative that included 12 outdoor installations, 10 site-specific music commissions, 50 regular performances and activities and more than 100 music concerts in venues and unusual spaces for the Sound Unbound festival.
- **Property:** Culture Mile is also involved in proposals for new cultural infrastructure, including the Centre for Music and new Museum of London, and attracting new businesses to the area. In 2019, Culture Mile commissioned a research paper that recommended actions to unlock the potential of Culture Mile as a hub of creativity, enterprise and innovation.
- **Public Realm:** Culture Mile works with the Corporation's planning department to improve the public realm through greening, softening, pedestrianization, etc. It recently commissioned a series of 12 installations to animate the area following an open design competition.



Culture Mile

Physical & Digital Infrastructure

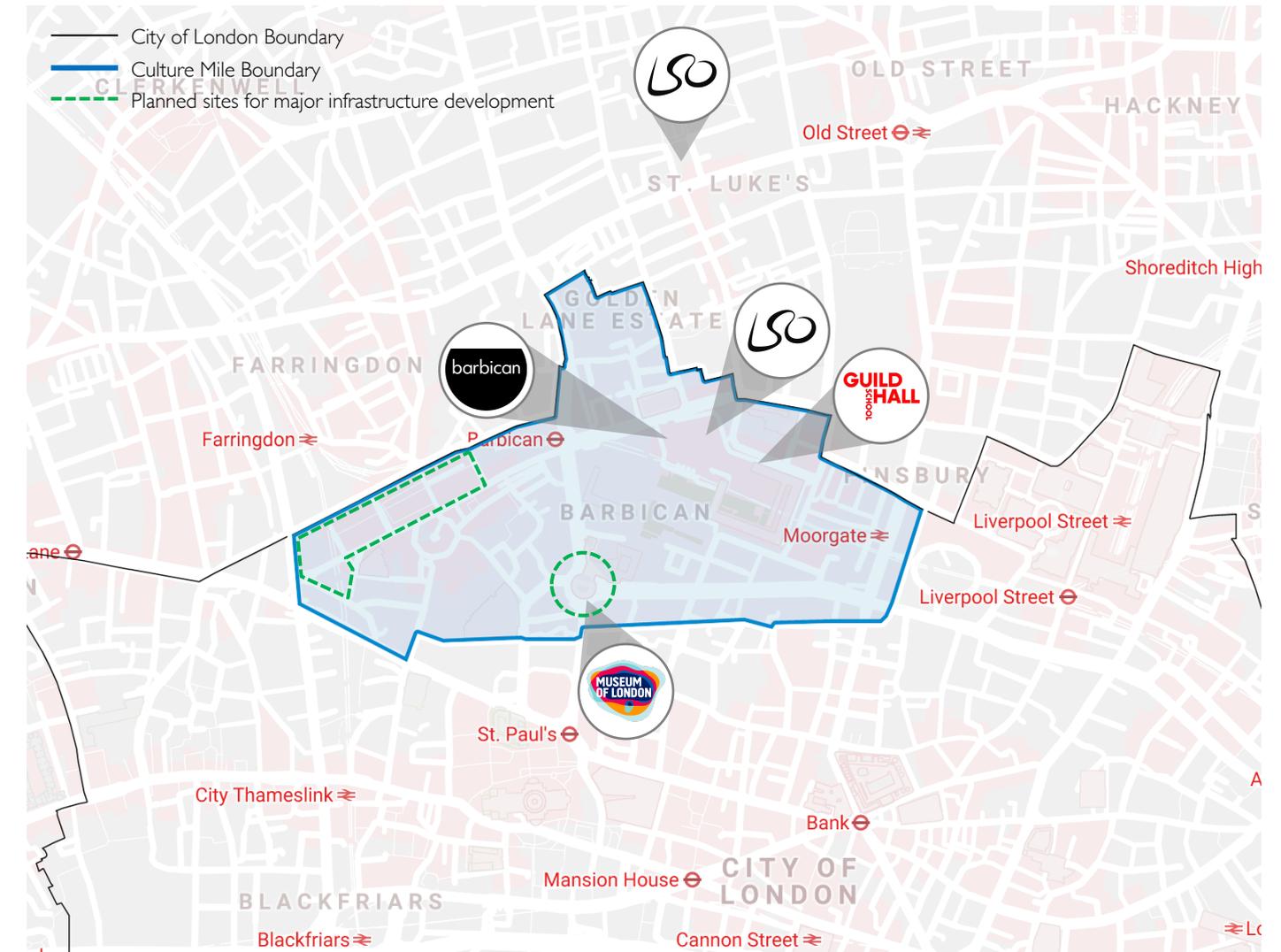
Culture Mile's main assets and infrastructure are its Core Partners institutions, all of which are well established cultural centres (see right). In 2017- 18, total attendance across these institutions was 2 million, divided between the Barbican Centre (65%), Museum of London (34%), and Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1%). The LSO also performed at the Barbican Centre 70 times and achieved an average capacity of 87%.

Culture Mile programmes and events take place across these four venues, in the public realm, and in a number of other partner venues within the Culture Mile Network. The Network has over 30 members and represents a commitment to the project and, in particular, contributing to the culture of the City.

The area is home to other types of infrastructure too that create it's unique heritage and character including: Cultural Assets (heritage sites, artistic organisations and anchor institutions); Learning Assets (schools, universities and higher learning institutes); Physical Assets (hard and soft infrastructure that create an 'open' environment like open access wifi and green spaces); and Networking Assets (formal and informal settings like co-working spaces and restaurants).

In the digital sphere, Culture Mile has an official website which includes maps, itineraries and upcoming events programmed by Culture Mile and its Core Partners.

Map of Culture Mile



Source: AEA Consulting



Culture Mile

Governance & Organisational Structure

Culture Mile is an initiative of the City of London Corporation. It is run by a staff of around five full-time equivalents who work with the Core Partners to deliver its programmes. In total there are around 25 members of staff deeply involved with the Culture Mile initiative, although they might be contracted by a partner organisation. Each Core Partner leads on the delivery of particular workstreams:

- Barbican: Communications and Programming
- Museum of London: Marketing and Learning
- LSO: Community
- Guildhall School of Music and Drama: Partnerships
- City of London Corporation: Property and Public Realm

The Culture Mile Executive includes members is the strategic and operational oversight group, which includes the individuals from the Corporation, and Chief Executives and Senior Managers from the Core Partners. It reports to the Culture Mile Working Party which consists of Corporation Members and Senior Officers.

Culture Mile's 'distributed model' of execution enables intimate operational involvement while encouraging increased collaboration and new ways of working. It also capitalises on the expertise of these world-class cultural institutions. However, it also relies upon the goodwill and commitment of the Core Partners who are required to make substantial contributions to Culture Mile's successful implementation. Through close collaboration, the aspiration is to benefit the Core Partners, the Corporation and the residents, workers and visitors to the area.

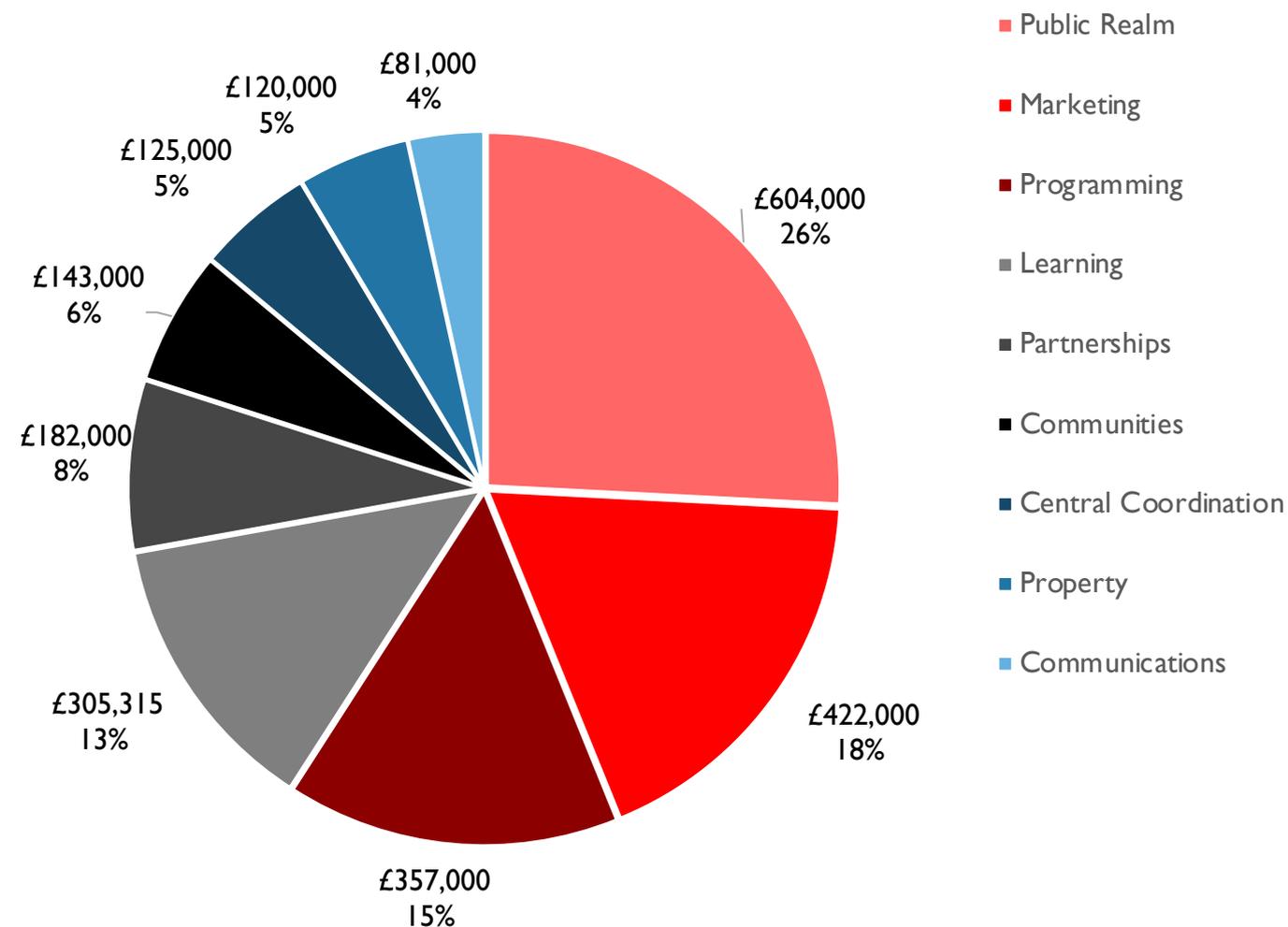


Culture Mile Business Model

Culture Mile is an initiative of, and fully funded by, the City of London Corporation. During the 2019-20 financial year, Culture Mile received a total budget of £2.4 million for all its activities. The majority of this funding went toward public realm initiatives (26%), marketing (18%) and programming (15%).

Every £1 invested from the City of London Corporation, is said to have been matched by more than £1 investment toward activities from the Core Partners and other Network members – although this presumably includes in-kind support.

Culture Mile Funding Distribution, 2019-20



Culture Mile

Learnings

Collaboration and 'distributed' model: Culture Mile relies on the close collaboration of the Corporation of London with the Core Partners. By aligning behind a common goal and purpose, each organisation is able to contribute its expertise for the collective benefit of the partners and their beneficiaries. This collaborative approach has created a deeper commitment to the project's success.

'Taking the inside out': Specifically, Culture Mile is a platform for existing cultural institutions in the area to expand their programming into the public realm, increasing their outreach and impact.

Holistic and integrated approach: Culture Mile's activities are broadly based, including artistic programming, research, the public realm, learning and education, advocacy and communications, and property interests. This, along with their integration with the local authority, enables a holistic understanding of and approach to area improvements.

Place-making and area branding: Through advocacy, research, marketing and communications, public programming, and community engagement, Culture Mile is shaping the perception of the area from a business and financial centre, to a hub for culture, creativity and heritage.

Focus on local communities: in 2020-21, Culture Mile will focus on engaging and delivering value for local communities (residents, businesses and young people). This shift is a response to the evolving needs of local people due to the pandemic, focusing on addressing social isolation and creating a sense of togetherness with the residents they are closest to.

Brokering relationships: through its Network and events, Culture Mile is able to broker relationships and forge new partnerships in the area.

Addressing social mobility: through its learning and fusion skills programmes, Culture Mile seeks to directly address deprivation in the local area and encourage social mobility.

Role of the local authority: The City of London Corporation acts as the local authority in the Square Mile and plays a critical role in supporting and promoting the City as the world's leading international financial and business centre. It is also the fourth largest funder of culture in the UK, investing £110 million heritage and cultural activities every year. The Culture Mile initiative is one of many designed to change the perception of the City not only as a financial and business centre, but also a centre for culture, creativity and commerce. Culture Mile is enabled by the City's financial support and – without it – its operational model would have to be adjusted to become more self-sufficient.

Data collection and evaluation: This is the first year that Culture Mile published an Annual Review, recording the breadth and impact of its programmatic activities. This enables it to communicate its value clearly, to its beneficiaries, partners and principal funder the City of London Corporation.



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)

Overview

Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife) is a charity responsible for various cultural venues and services across Fife. Scotland's third highest populated local authority area, the County sits on the Eastern coast, and is overseen by a unitary Fife Council. It was a centre of heavy industry in the nineteenth century and following the building of Forth and Tay rail bridges to Edinburgh and Dundee respectively, was a major transport hub of goods, notably linoleum. In recent years, Fife's major industry has transitioned into technology and electronics, forming a part of what is known as 'Silicon Glen' in the central belt of Scotland, an area of high concentration of technology firms and start-ups. In addition to operating arts and culture venues across the region, the Trust facilitates national and international partnerships to bring a growing and diverse cultural offering to its residents.

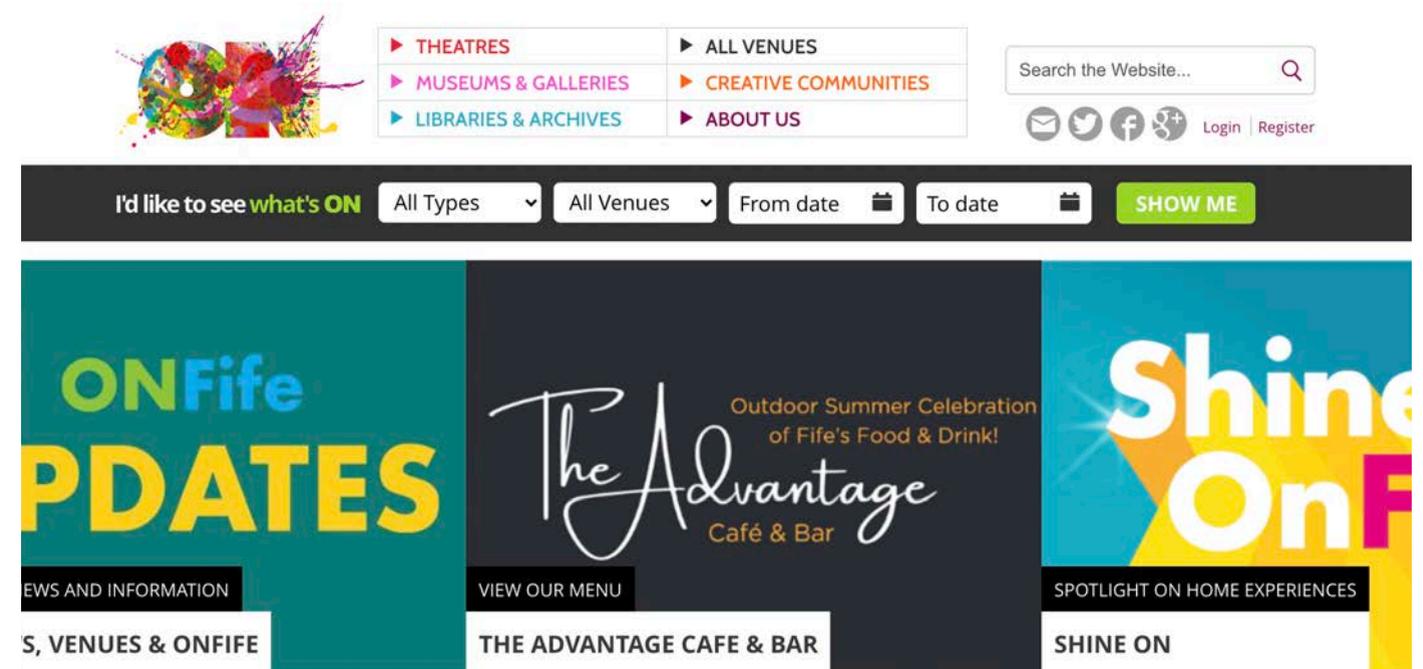
- **Mission:** Enriching lives in Fife
- **Vision:** Fife will be a culturally vibrant and rewarding place to live, work, study and visit,
- **Purpose:** To provide creative, entertaining and learning experiences that enhance the quality of life, through partnerships and in the Trust's museums, galleries, libraries and theatres.



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife) Physical & Digital Infrastructure

The Trust is headquartered in Kirkcaldy, and oversees:

- 35 branch and integrated Fife Council libraries, the schools' library service, two mobile libraries, a home delivery service and two support buildings.
- 12 museum and heritage venues including St Monan's Windmill and St Margaret's Cave. This also includes the Dunfermline Carnegie Library, the world's first Carnegie Library, recently redeveloped at a cost of £12.4 million to build a museum and art gallery, a local studies centre and a children's library with a café.
- 4 theatre and community venues: Rothes Halls, the Adam Smith Theatre, The Lochgelly Centre and Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline. The £3 million refurbishment of the Adam Smith Theatre into a creative hub has just begun and is expected to finish in spring of 2021.
- Fife's mobile museum, The MAC bus, which tours to schools and venues within and outside the region.
- Fife Council's new Collections & Archives Centre in Bankhead, Glenrothes, collections and records management, including stewardship and care for objects in trust.
- Development of Fife's Cultural Strategy, Partnerships, and Consortium.



ONFife.com centralises information about its venues and an integrated "What's on" calendar of events listings, including booking and hire across available venues.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trust has set up two initiatives, a creative and cultural industry support network, Create in Fife, and a space for community-led and online projects, ShineOnFife, both hosted on the Trust's website.

The former collects resources for creative organisations and professionals, while the latter publicises all new online community programmes across five areas: books and libraries; theatre & entertainment; museums & galleries; community and Dunfermline tours.



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)

Programming & Activities

The 42 venues under the Trust's remit encompass three broad categories: Theatres, Museums & Galleries and Libraries & Archives.

Theatre programming prior to COVID-19 spanned both local and touring music, drama, comedy, dance and film productions, across four theatres: Adam Smith Theatre, Carnegie Hall, Rothes Halls and Lochgelly Centre. The venues range in function and style, from the historical Carnegie Hall and Adam Smith Theatre, to newer purpose-built venue Rothes Halls and community education centre, Lochgelly Centre. Each theatre has individual box offices, although the Trust applies a reservation fee for tickets above £5 purchased online or over the phone.

The Trust organises a roster of exhibitions at their **museums, galleries and heritage spaces**, in addition to collaborating with local organisations such as Fife Contemporary, Fife Printmakers and local festivals. Artistic production from both recent graduates and amateur artists are promoted in exhibitions and the Shell-sponsored Fife Art Competition. The Trust also manages venue hire for community exhibitions, in addition to the 110,000 items collectively held across museums and galleries. Collection storage is centralised at the newly built Collections Centre in Glenrothes.

In addition to core library services, online, mobile & home delivery services, the Trust has also animated **libraries** as cultural hubs – hosting music and dance performances, family events – and welcoming nation-wide initiatives such as Fun Palaces: community-led co-created events.



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)

Governance & Organisational Structure

Ten full-time staff manage the Trust, in addition to a Board of ten members, only open to Fife Council. There are three executive-level roles: Chief Executive Officer, Director of Corporate and Commercial Development and Director of Creative Development and Delivery.

At the managerial level, two positions directly oversee museums, archives & galleries, and the libraries service. Five other members of staff oversee operations, partnerships, transitional catering, marketing & audience development and all programmes.

The venues employ 547 staff – 108 full-time, 215 part-time and 224 casual positions.

The Trust manages the Cultural Consortium, an advocacy and steering group that unites key individuals, groups and cultural organisations on behalf of the Fife Council. Key functions are to:

- Act as the umbrella partnership body for cultural planning in Fife
- Inform and review the cultural strategy
- Promote the contribution of culture to key outcomes
- Co-ordinate development and promotional approach for all cultural activity

Members provide funding data twice a year to inform annual reporting, in exchange for free training and development, support network and partnership opportunities.

The Trust is accountable to both Companies House and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)

Business Model

Income and Expenses

The Trust is funded directly by the Fife Council – in 2018/2019, funding in the form of a management fee totaled £8,094,561, 70% of the Trust’s total income. This allows 80% of all services delivered by the Trust to be free at the point of access, supported by an additional earnings generated from the Company’s trading subsidiary, Fife Cultural Services Trading Ltd, through catering, bars and cafés in five key venues, income from retail, room hire and ticketed events. The subsidiary is currently expanding with new experiential facilities, namely an escape room at Rothes Halls, in addition to building corporate meeting room hire and catering.

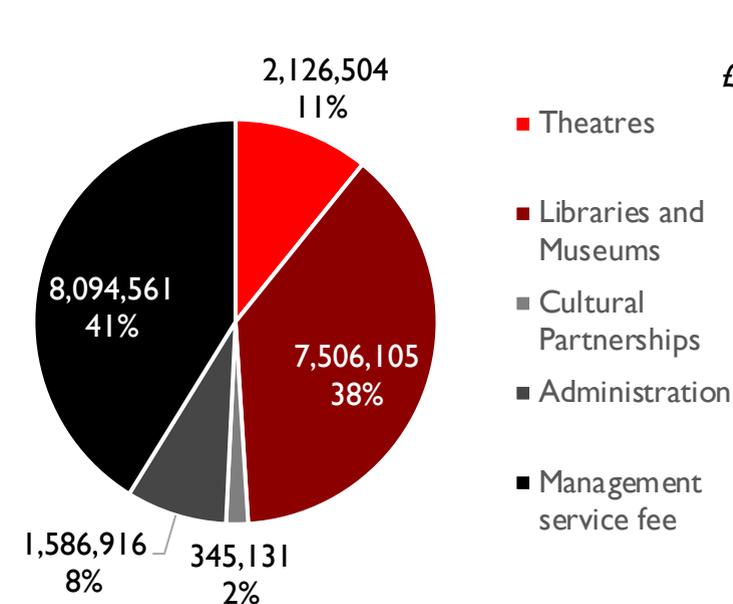
Libraries & Museums make up the largest proportion of operating costs, around 59%. This is followed by theatre and customer services, and administration and costs associated with cultural partnerships.

Income and Expenses of Fife Cultural Services Trading Ltd (2019)

	2019
Turnover	£1,139,663
Cost of sales	(£756,664)
Administrative expenses	(£120,420)
Distribution under gift aid	(£190,000)
Retained earnings	20,017

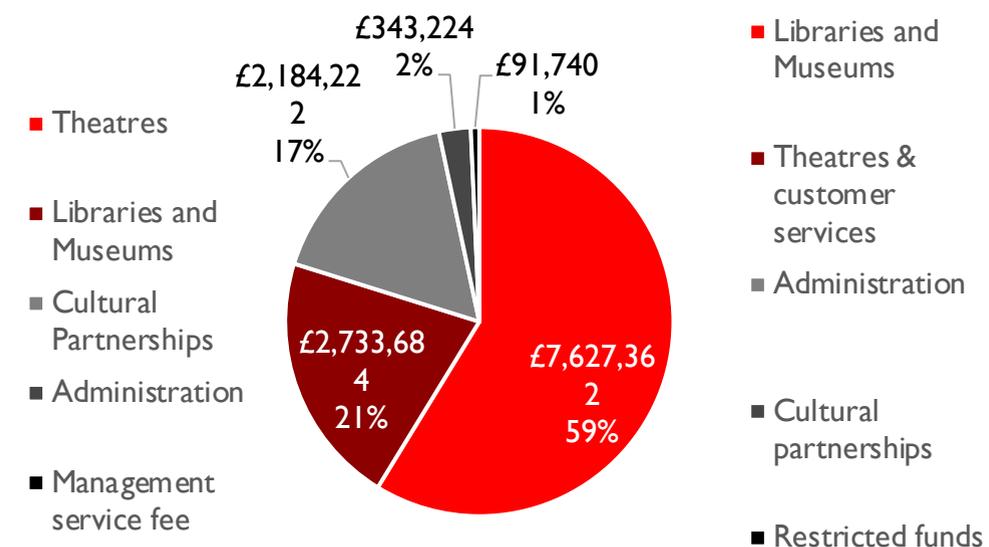
Fife Cultural Trust Income Distribution

(2019)



Fife Cultural Trust Expenditure Distribution

(2019)



Fife Cultural Trust (ONFife)

Learnings

Develop a well-maintained and cohesive digital infrastructure: ONFife.com brings together the services of the Trust – functioning as a centralised calendar of all events as well as executing key services such as venue booking, volunteering and library catalogues. It also was essential in hosting the Trust's COVID-19 lockdown initiatives that boosted community engagement and centralised resources and support for the creative sector in Fife.

A centralized body allows for well-built relationships with national and regional partnerships: Centralising governance over the cultural assets across the region has allowed membership organisations and venues to successfully bid for fundraising – in addition to fundraising from Scottish Enterprise, the Trust, as a member of the Dunfermline Heritage Partnership, secured an additional £500,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Fife Council, and the Scottish Government. The Trust is also a member of Community Leisure UK, whose members make up over 80% of Scotland's publicly funded leisure and cultural assets alone, VOCAL, and the Scottish Creative Industries Partnership.

Focus on local and regional creative development: As the first cultural body in Scotland to have a dedicated Creative Development team, the Trust has facilitated high-profile partnerships, such as participation in Danny Boyle's ambitious Armistice centenary project held across the UK's beaches, with the resulting Pages of the Sea held in St Andrews with support from the Trust.

Growing self-sufficiency with a trading subsidiary: The Trust receives an increasing amount of support from its trading subsidiary – in 2019, it received £190,000 directly through Gift Aid – assisting the Trust's shift to a more financially sustainable model with less reliance on Council contribution.

A centralised strategic framework helps align priorities but needs to be sensitive to diverse assets: The unpopular decision in 2016 to disregard public consultation and significantly reduce public library provision in the region highlights the need for dedicated strategies for specific assets in addition to an overarching strategy. Subsequently, a new Libraries Strategy was created with expanded consultation in addition to a new strategic framework, built over a 12-month consultative process.

Consistent data collection and measurement: information about the cultural assets of the region is well-collected; figures such as collective footfall allow the collective impact of the organisations under the Trust's remit to be easily measured and monitored.

Well-placed capital investment from Council will pay off: Although costly, commitment from Fife Council allowed the region to attract significant attention through the redeveloped Dunfermline Libraries + Gallery, collecting a swathe of national awards, and Fife's Collections Centre at Glenrothes. The former saw 170,000 visitors in its first year of operation, and the latter has proved an essential resource for researchers, significantly strengthening the region's cultural reputation.



Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV)

Overview

A consortium of 10 non-profit distributing cultural organisations in the Newcastle-Gateshead area, operating 20 venues across visual arts, performing arts, music, dance, film, writing and literature, heritage, archives and museums, and science communication in Tyne and Wear. They aim to 'maximise the artistic, social and economic potential of the cultural sector in the North East' through the development of 'strategic and creative initiatives, sharing learning, experience and resources and by being a strong collective voice.'¹

The area has seen a period of culture-led regeneration in the last 3 decades, redeveloping the old industrial riverside site to a hub of cultural activity. It brings together flagship buildings such as the Sage Gateshead and the BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art, and older organisations such as Live Theatre and Theatre Royal. It is also an important bridge between the Newcastle and Gateshead boroughs, which have traditionally posed a political challenge in terms of facilitating collaboration.

The group was founded in 2009 following a decade of informal partnerships between the Chief Executives of each respective organisation, in order to formalise and embed the alliance across all member organisations, resulting in strategic and commercial collaboration, as well as knowledge exchange and support. Since 2009, the organisations have hosted 39 million visitors and engaged 8.5 million in learning and participation programmes, including 6 million children and young people.² Between 2018 and 2019, the alliance collectively contributed £94 million GVA to the North East region.



Source:

1. NGCV Sharing Protocol, revised July 2020.

2. Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues Economic Impact Reports, available at <https://ngcv.org.uk/collective-impact/economic-impact/>. Image: Andrew Tryon via Flickr.

Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) Physical & Digital Infrastructure

The ten organisations and their venues represented by NGCV are:

- BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, and BALTIC39 – the UK's largest gallery dedicated to contemporary art
- Sage Gateshead – International music centre, conference and event venue
- DanceCity – Purpose-built dance centre and studios in the former Sunderland Fire Station
- Seven Stories: National Centre for Children's Books
- Life Science Centre – educational science centre and the biggest planetarium in the North of England
- Theatre Royal – Historic theatre in the heart of Newcastle
- Live Theatre – Writing theatre located on the Quayside
- Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) – Major service for nine museums and galleries across Tyneside, in addition to archives across Tyne & Wear
- Northern Stage – Largest producing theatre company in the region
- Tyneside Cinema – Independent cinema and last remaining active newsreel cinema

NGCV runs "NGCV ning" - an online social network for the partnership, where staff of the 10 organisations can collaborate and share information, learning and opportunities. Individual groups can be formed within the network to discuss specific concerns or priorities, and the network is open to both full-time staff and volunteers.

Sign Up Sign In Search NewcastleGateshead Cult

NEWCASTLE GATESHEAD CULTURAL VENUES

BALTIC DANCECITY Dance for the North Life live theatre NORTHERN STAGE

Sage Gateshead seven stories THEATRE ROYAL TYNE & WEAR archives & museums TYRESIDE CINEMA

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Events

CEO's and Chair's Joint Meeting
November 2, 2020 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm – Laing Art Gallery (Function Room)

CEO's Meeting
November 2, 2020 from 6pm to 7pm – Laing Art Gallery (Function Room)

CEO's Meeting
January 12, 2021 from 3pm to 5pm – Tyneside Cinema

+ Add an Event View All

THE NING-NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues

NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) is a voluntary partnership of 10 organisations running 20 venues, archives and heritage sites in Tyne and Wear. We work together to share learning and information and maximise our sustainability, as well as our social, cultural and economic impact.

This NGCV ning is an online social network for the partnership, where staff of the 10 organisations can work together and share information, learning and opportunities. It is not a website and is not open to people who are not staff or volunteers of the 10 organisations to join.

If you wish to sign up to the ning, please do so [here](#).

Please state the NGCV organisation you work or volunteer for on the correct line of your profile page, if you do not do this membership will be declined.

For our public facing website, please visit [NGCV.org.uk](#)

Groups

Development Forum 23 members	Green Campaign 26 members	Chief Executives 24 members	Staff Information 101 members	HR Network 14 members
Facilities Management an...	Digital 25 members	City of Dreams informati...	Front Line Services 10 members	Public Engagement 33 members

Welcome to NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues

[Sign Up](#) or [Sign In](#)

Notes

NGCV staff offers

Take advantage of 10 special offers especially designed for staff and get discounts and deals across NGCV's 20 cultural venues and sites. For details see below or click on the link to download them: [NGCV Staff Offers 2019-20](#)

Offers include discounts in...

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Created by [Dejan Baharini](#) Feb 12, 2015 at 8:45pm. Last updated by [Lucy Deprez](#) Jul 30.

Notes Home

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Created by [GNCV Admin](#) Oct 6, 2009 at 7:28pm. Last updated by [GNCV Admin](#) Oct 6, 2009.



Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV)

Programming & Activities

While venues lead on individual programming, NGCV acts as an umbrella organisation that brings together planning and expertise and develops relevant initiatives. Common priorities have since been developed and refined to include:

1. Investment in infrastructure, skills and talent
2. New approaches to audience development and engagement
3. Maximising organisational efficiencies and standards of excellence
4. Connecting the sector to wider innovation and opportunities.

In relation to the four core priorities, projects have included:

1. Investment in infrastructure, skills and talent
 - NGCV Capital Investment Strategy was developed in 2012 to leverage additional capital investment
 - An NGCV self-funded talent development initiative, Passionate about Artists, was expanded into a regional programme with ACE support. Co-chaired by Dance City and Stockton ARC from the south of the region.
2. New approaches to audience development and engagement
 - City of Dreams – A ten-year commitment launched in September 2018 developing cultural experiences for children and young people in Newcastle-Gateshead. The programme has co-developed a strategy and action plan with nearly 1000 children and young people, and over 200 staff from 40+ organisations in the area.

- Family Explorers – A digital project and network founded in 2013 to help empower families to explore, share and review cultural experiences in the North East of England. Managed by NGCV, the network also partners with regional organisations, and manages the North East Family Arts Network.
 - The Unusual Suspects project, funded by ACE, collected shared data across NGCV to test new approaches to audience segmentation.¹
 - A feasibility study in 2017 was commissioned for a proposed unified Customer Relationship management (CRM) approach and a 'What's On' system
3. Maximising organisational efficiencies and standards of excellence
 - Staff groups meet regularly to discuss and promote a collective approach – including the Human Resources Network, Facilities Managers and Finance Directors/ Operations Group.
 - Establishing the NGCV Green Campaign in 2012 to streamline sustainability strategies
 3. Connecting the sector to wider innovation and opportunities
 - CultureCode – Collaboratively formed with Arts Council England and Codeworks, this 18-month project created opportunities for collaborations between arts and developer communities in the region.



Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV)

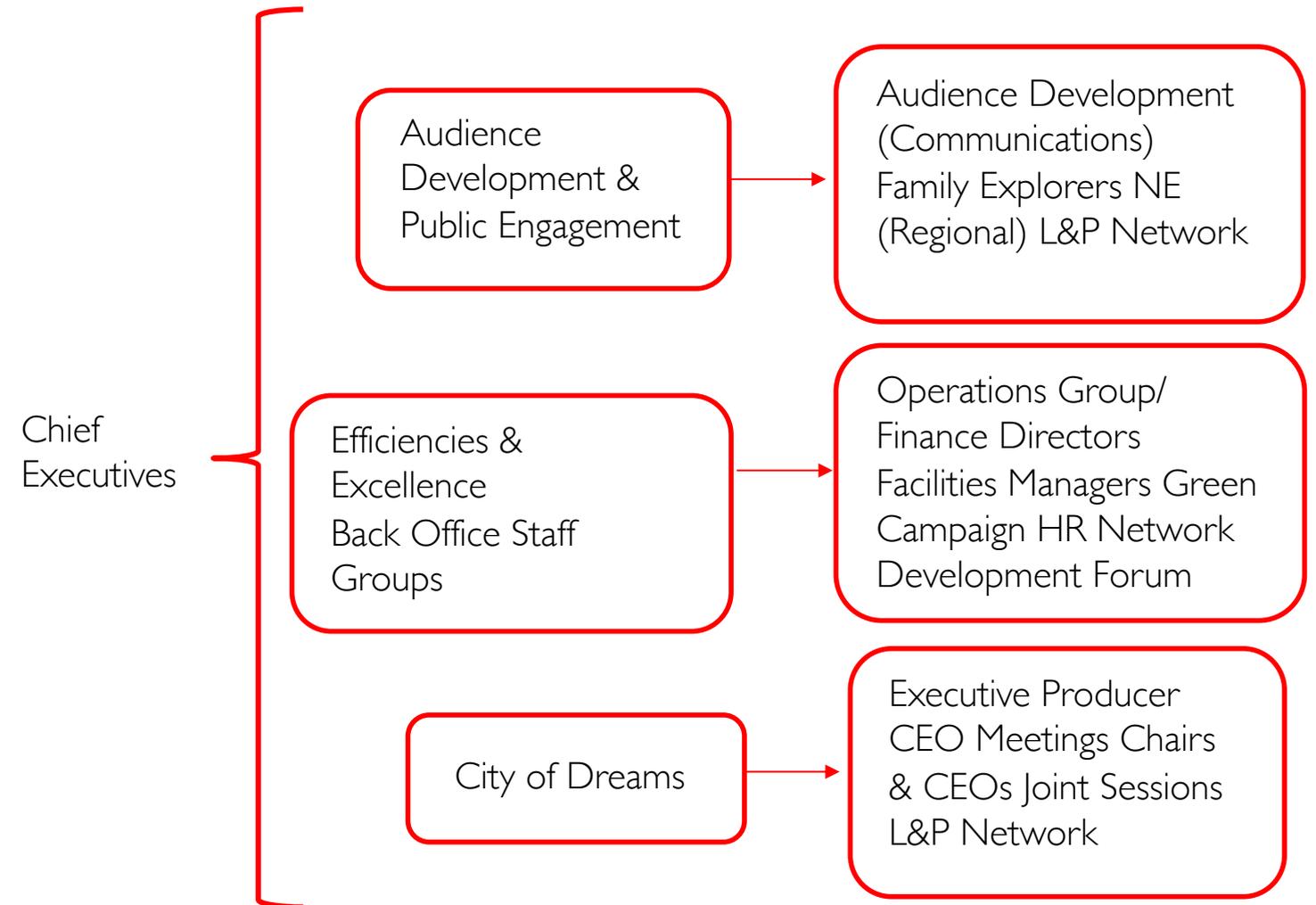
Governance & Organisational Structure

- The organisational structure is enshrined in the Sharing Protocol and revised annually.
- The alliance is chaired on a rotational basis by members – Sage Gateshead and BALTIC are joint chairs for 2020-2021.
- NGCV is a voluntary group and is not a constituted body, and executive decision-making resides with the Chief Executive Officer of each venue, who meet bi-monthly to review strategies, monitor progress and identify new opportunities.

Key stakeholders are:

- Newcastle Gateshead Initiative
- Newcastle City Council
- Gateshead Council
- North of Tyne Combined Authority
- Newcastle University

Workflow, NGCV Sharing Protocol, July 2020



Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) Business Model

Venues receive individual funding and have mixed means of revenue generation. NGCV does not contribute to additional revenue generation, and all administration relating to finances are managed by Northern Stage.

NGCV does not directly employ any individuals but have two part-time staff employed through member organisations: NGCV Co-ordinator through TWAM, and the Executive Producer for City of Dreams through Northern Stage.

Of the ten members:

- Centre of Life and Theatre Royal receive no public funding and are self-sustaining.
- Profits from enterprises owned by Live Theatre are a significant contributor to earned income in order to support charitable activity. In 2018/2019, over £800,00 of income was derived from these activities – the major contributor being ownership of adjacent office space. (41%)
- Earned income from non-cultural activities is derived from venue hire for conferences/ events, parking, retail, catering, investments, and tours.
- In 2019, all member organisations collectively received £19.7 million in subsidies from Arts Council England, local authorities and other sources.



Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV)

Learnings

A voluntary partnership is financially light but strategically impactful: NGCV's voluntary structure allows for a flexible partnership with impactful results – financial and administrative support varies per project, but knowledge sharing and collective influence is consistent.

Wide breadth and scope of membership organisations encourages deeper collaboration: The 10 cultural organisations represented by NGCV span all cultural forms including visual arts, performing arts, film, writing and literature, heritage, archives and museums, as well as science communication. This mix of organisations cultivates natural collaboration over competition. The rotational nature of leadership allows all member organisations an equal chance in chairing the partnership.

The diversity in size of organisation helps share benefits equally: Eight of the ten members of NGCV are ACE portfolio organisations. The partnership allows all organisations to tap into their joint experience, such as experience in accessing diverse streams of funding, culminating in a NGCV Capital Investment Strategy, or leveraging national and European initiatives such as the Local Renewal Fund and the European Social Fund.

Online and offline networks of collaboration are equally significant: An online forum, such as NGCV's "ning" allows for both programming and back-office collaboration, allowing staff at all member organisations to participate in discussion and generate ideas without the necessity of formalised and regular meeting groups.

Concerns can then be crystallised and brought to Chief Executives at monthly meetings.

Collaboration also means data sharing: The willingness to actively share and pool knowledge, in addition to audience data, results in a better understanding of audience engagement across all organisations. NGCV has been able to produce highly specific and detailed research projects on innovative methods of engaging the respective organisations' communities. These are in turn published publicly – allowing the wider creative industry to benefit from innovative practice and opportunities; and in turn, cementing the partnership's reputation.

Devolved leadership ensures balance between individual organisations: Especially important for partnerships that encompass organisations with significant audience overlap, a devolved leadership ensures that no single organisation remains dominant and each member's individual needs are addressed in turn.

Highlighting fundamental commonalities between members ensure a common goal: All ten partners of NGCV are not-for-profit building-based cultural organisations. The common desire for financial sustainability in the context of non-profit arts organisations drove the co-creation of common priorities which keeps the partnership focused, and relevant to all member organisations.



Sunderland Culture

Overview

Sunderland Culture brings together the investment of the three main drivers and funders of arts provision in the city: Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Music, Arts & Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent delivery model.

The need for an umbrella organisation to consolidate Sunderland's cultural infrastructure and programmes came out of the ambitions of the three main partners to increase cultural engagement in Sunderland and revitalise its cultural infrastructure in the context of shrinking public funding. Sunderland Culture was set up in a bid for the 2021 UK City of Culture and, while the bid itself was unsuccessful, it allowed to pull together cultural resources for greater impact in the city.

The University of Sunderland and MAC Trust also collaborated on a successful bid for the Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme with the Cultural Spring project, now in its second three-year phase of delivery. The project's goal is to work with communities across the two metropolitan boroughs of Sunderland and South Tyneside engaging local people in decision-making and arts commissioning process in the places where they live and work.

The mission of Sunderland Culture is to "improve lives of everyone in Sunderland through culture" and its business plan sets out five key changes it aims to achieve: improve the city's profile and reputation; create connectivity amongst Sunderland communities; build confidence and aspiration for young people; improve health and wellbeing; and grow Sunderland's creative economy.

In 2018-2019, the programmes and venues overseen by Sunderland Culture received over 2 million visitors and engaged nearly 53,000 participants. In 2018 Sunderland Culture became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and is also a grantee of ACE's Ambition for Excellence programme.



Sunderland Culture

Physical & Digital Infrastructure

Sunderland Culture’s strategic ambitions are achieved through a core programme at the venues owned by main partners: Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art and National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland; Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens and Arts Centre Washington (owned by Sunderland City Council); and The Fire Station arts centre owned by Sunderland MAC Trust. The current arrangements with the owners of cultural venues is that Sunderland Culture is responsible for delivery of programmes at these venues while the Council and University are responsible for management and upkeep of facilities and employment of staff. The exception to this is the Fire Station where Sunderland Culture acts as the manager of the building.

Sunderland Culture manages an online platform that includes listings for all events and activities delivered by the organisations and its venues along with a blog on arts and creativity in Sunderland and details of each of the venue programmed by Sunderland Culture team.



What's On	Online Programme	Our Venues	About Sunderland Culture
Classes and Courses	Sunderland Stories	Arts Centre Washington	Our Board
Comedy	Online Arts Award	The Fire Station	Our Funders
Craft Fairs	National Glass Centre Online Exhibition	National Glass Centre	Press
Dance	Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art Online Exhibition	Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art	Opportunities
Exhibitions	Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens Online Exhibition	Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens	Annual Review
Films	Sunderland Photographic Association Online Exhibition	City-wide Programme	Support Us
For Families	Andrew Tift – One Day You'll Be Older Too Online Exhibition		Study Arts in Sunderland
Music	Age of Creativity		
Special Events			
Theatre			
Education	Hire	Food & Drink	Sunderland Culture Blog
Arts Award			
Online Arts Award			



Sunderland Culture Programming & Activities

Sunderland Culture delivers programmes at each of its five core venues as well as city-wide events and community engagement programmes. The large-scale events include the The Tall Ships Races, a four-day event bringing over 50 tall ships into the city and a programme of over 200 street theatre, dance and circus performances, featuring UK and international artists. The events attracted over 1.2 million visitors in 2018. Sunderland was chosen by 1418 Now as one of 30 locations nationwide to host Danny Boyle's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day in 2018. Sunderland Culture delivered Pages of the Sea on Roker Beach, produced the Teesside event and supported the Northumberland coast event.

Sunderland Culture also produces events at of-use historic buildings in the city centre; delivers a series of performances across the city ("Sunderland Stages"); produces health & wellbeing mini-festivals; and commissions site-specific outdoor events.

Community arts programmes delivered by Sunderland Culture in collaboration with schools and community organisations across Sunderland are aimed at engaging young people, older residents, BME communities, and people with special needs or autism.

In parallel, Sunderland Culture is working with all key partners on updating the city's cultural infrastructure by overseeing multi-year revitalisation projects supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund; ACE; and other grants, donations, and sponsorships. It has also launched and manages a new single ticketing and CRM system across all venues linked to a new website.



Sunderland Culture

Governance & Organisational Structure

Sunderland Culture was formed in April 2016 as a partnership set up by Sunderland City Council, the University of Sunderland and the business-led Sunderland MAC (Music, Arts and Culture) Trust.

Sunderland Culture's activities are managed by a board comprising directors from each of the three partner organisations along with five independent members.

The organisation's operations are overseen by a Chief Executive and a Creative Director.

Currently, Sunderland Culture oversees the development and delivery of programmes across the city and at its five core partner venues. As a next step, it is planned to transfer the delivery teams at individual organisations under one umbrella of Sunderland Culture so it becomes a single organisation rather than a hybrid of partnerships.



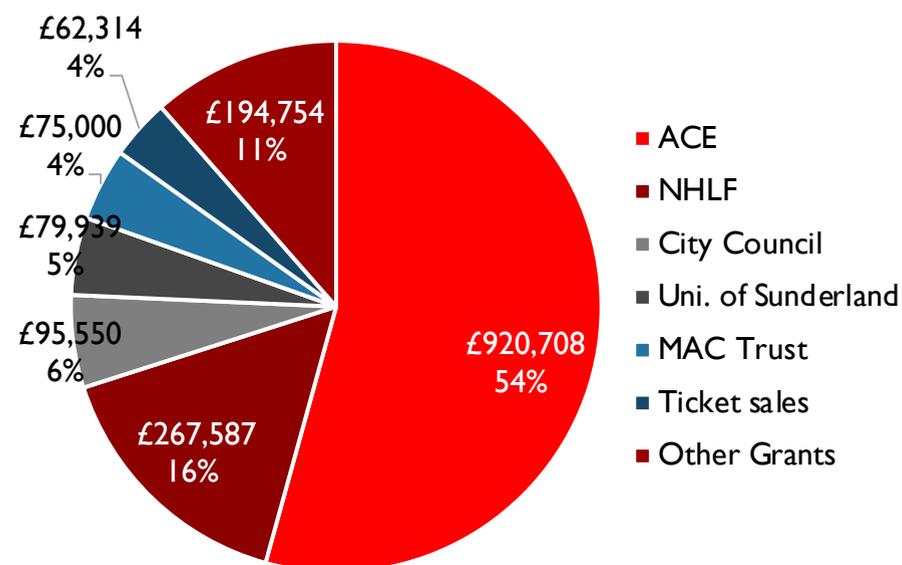
Sunderland Culture Business Model

The main funders of Sunderland Culture are the Sunderland City Council, Sunderland MAC Trust, Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund, and University of Sunderland. The University also donates staff time and office facilities to Sunderland Culture.

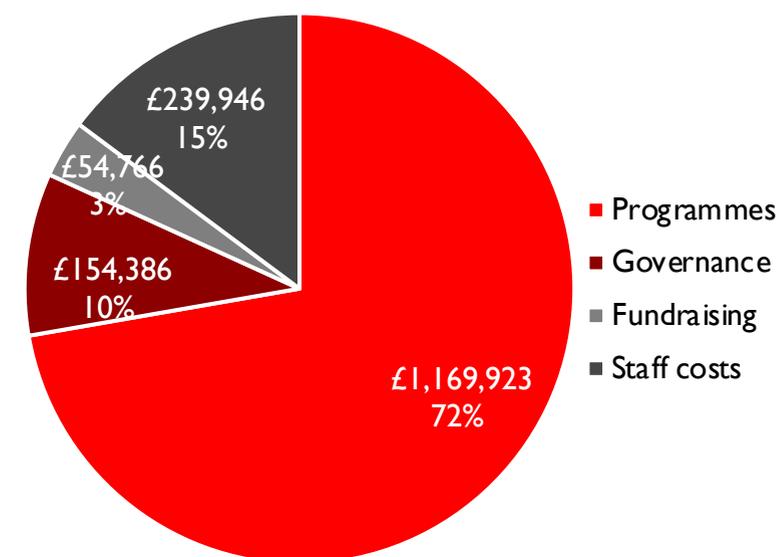
As 2019 was the first year of Sunderland's Culture operation as ACE NPO, its contributed income was generated through two main ACE programmes: NPO and Ambition for Excellence.

72% of all expenses (the funds generated through these grants and donations, and funds generated through events and workshops ticket sales), are distributed towards programming activity – producing and delivering the events at core venues and across the city. Governance costs represent funds expended on the setup of Sunderland Culture through grants generated from ACE and NHLF. Staffing costs go to the delivery team directly employed by Sunderland Culture to deliver activities and is funded through restricted grants. The costs of fundraising came from a capital fundraising campaign to complete a new auditorium at Fire Station, the performing arts centre directly operated by Sunderland Culture.

Sunderland Culture Main Income Sources (2019)



Sunderland Culture Expenditure Distribution (2019)



Sunderland Culture

Learnings

Strategic alliance with major city stakeholders is important for consolidation of cultural programme and infrastructure: The key founders and funders of Sunderland Culture are instrumental to its establishment and operation. The City Council alone would not have been able to efficiently consolidate resources and venues that are not in the Council's ownership.

Effective management of such partnership structure requires concerted effort: Individual organisations have their own direction and agenda and the success of partnership is often dependant on individual leaders of the partner organisations.

Board representation is important: The Board gets to decide the distribution of funding and strategic priorities so equal representation of key partners is important to maintain interests of all partner organisations.

Launching an independent charity for the city-wide cultural initiatives and cultural infrastructure allows to diversify funding sources: Sunderland Culture has been able to apply and received funds from Arts Council England, National Heritage Lottery Fund, and philanthropic foundations, along with core funding from its three founding bodies. The organisation is able to apply for funding programmes aimed for city-wide and multi-venue delivery that would be inaccessible to individual venues or the Council.

Streamlined communications, CRM, and ticketing offers ease of access for audiences and allows for marketing and sales coordination between the venues: a single online diary and booking platform, CRM, and ticketing system for all programmes produced by Sunderland Culture creates efficiencies for marketing and sales and a coordinated visitor data collection and management.

Centralised marketing and fundraising created efficiencies and cost savings: Sunderland Culture oversees fundraising for all programmes and venues under its umbrella and provides marketing oversight, with specialist support staff at each venue.



APPENDICES

I. Feedback from Cultural Leaders Group review (November 2020)



Cultural Leaders Group Feedback: Summary

Comments from a review meeting on 4 November 2020

These notes summarise feedback received from the members of the Watford Cultural Leaders Group (CLG) at a (virtual) meeting on 4 November 2020 hosted by Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford, and members of the WBC Leadership Board to review the identified options, recommendations and analysis behind this report and proposed next steps. The feedback comments received are grouped in three main themes explored in options analysis: Town Hall quarter development; sector leadership and governance; and wider cultural sector infrastructure support in Watford.

I. Town Hall Quarter: cultural infrastructure provision within the proposed development in the north of the town centre

Options	Feedback
<p>1. Proposed development of a 'Town Hall Quarter' cultural offer in the north of the town centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CLG members see the development of new and updated spaces for cultural uses as a positive move to further improve Watford's cultural offer; provide needed cultural infrastructure support; and animate the north end of the town center, while also connecting it with the High Street and other key town centre sites; ▪ Attendees would like to see more activity in and around the Colosseum and are interested in future plans for the building; ▪ It is seen important to ensure cultural provision is well distributed across Watford and investment in the Town Hall Quarter does not draw away investment and activity from other parts of town.
<p>2. The refurbishment or relocation of Watford Museum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CLG members agree that the Watford Museum requires a new and expanded facility to fully realise its potential – a proposed space as part of Town Hall Quarter is considered advantageous to deliver the space required for the museum while also situating it next to other cultural venues (the Colosseum; Central Library); ▪ With the museum's move, The Pump House will be the sole provider of cultural services in the south end of the town centre and would like to ensure that new development does not interfere with the activity established at the current Pump House venue.



Cultural Leaders Group Feedback: Summary

Comments from a review meeting on 4 November 2020

II. Leadership and Governance: coordinated strategy and oversight for the cultural sector

Options	Feedback
<p>3. Strategic oversight of cultural sector in Watford, including coordinated communications, unified branding, and shared services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A CLG member acknowledged a desire for strategic cultural leadership in Watford and coordinated oversight moving forward to take advantage of Watford's strengths and increase accountability on delivering planned initiatives; ▪ While attendees agree a coordinated oversight would be beneficial, they seek to understand better difference between various potential governance and strategic partnership models for the sector and what model may be most appropriate for Watford (<i>a governance workshop is planned in January 2021 to explore options for strategic oversight and governance further</i>); ▪ There is a high level of interest among CLG members in implementing a joined communication and marketing platform for Watford aimed at providing both residents and visitors with up-to-date information on cultural venues, activities, and services available in Watford in a clear, coordinated, and appealing way. It can function as a 'landing' page for Watford's cultural sector online presence then redirecting visitors to individual organisations for bookings; ▪ Mayor Peter Taylor questioned the capacity and need for a new formalised governance structure for a town the size of Watford and whether other alternatives of strategic oversight may be better suited to Watford's needs.
<p>4. COVID-19 sector support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ While smaller and independent venues are not represented on CLG, participants acknowledge a need for support towards grassroots activity in Watford and the importance of the longevity of smaller venues and initiatives.



Cultural Leaders Group Feedback: Summary

Comments from a review meeting on 4 November 2020

III. Wider Cultural Infrastructure Support: improvements to culture infrastructure

Options	Feedback
5. Improvements to existing cultural infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Both community and professional groups expressed the need for expanded and updated infrastructure: support for performing arts activities, visual arts exhibition space, artist studios were specifically mentioned;▪ There is interest in fully exploring and implementing the idea of repurposing/using some of the Watford Market units for creative retail or artist studios.
6. Provision of new cultural facilities, including rehearsal/studio space for theatre and dance, creative workspaces, and exhibition/gallery space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ As above.
7. Physical consolidation of cultural assets around main hubs of activity in the town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Attendees did not specifically comment on ideas around physical consolidations but acknowledged further improvements may be needed to increase connectivity and signposting between cultural venues in Watford.



