

# Thriving, collaborating and achieving impact - a Culture and Heritage Strategy for King's Lynn

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## Councillor Foreword

*King's Lynn has a unique and distinct wealth of heritage assets along with a dedicated and passionate array of community and cultural organisations achieving brilliant programmes and events for our community; the aim of this strategy was to understand how we can better utilise our underutilised physical assets, build on the existing activities to ensure the combined forces of our cultural and heritage assets enables both to flourish to support the growth and investment needed in the town centre. The combined power of these assets, underpinned by this strategy, will help us, collectively, to deliver our ambitions for a sustainable and thriving town centre and vibrant centre for cultural enterprises and events.*

*We are delighted with the enthusiasm and support from existing partners and stakeholders, and new people and organisations who have engaged with us during the strategy development; many productive and exciting conversations have started and I look forward to working collaboratively with everyone to take the aims set out in this strategy forward.*

Cllr Ring, Portfolio Holder and Deputy Leader

## Introduction and overview

The Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk has sought to develop a bold, ambitious and co-created strategy to ensure the sustainability and resilience for the town's cultural future.

This strategy sets out a collaborative vision for maximising the impact of King's Lynn's rich cultural landscape and heritage strengths. It outlines a set of priorities to guide collective efforts to ensure culture and heritage in King's Lynn thrive and inspire. We will be a place where our town's vibrant festivals, galleries, heritage and historic sites, and cultural programmes succeed and achieve impact for years to come.

This strategy aims to outline ways to enhance our cultural identity, celebrate our achievements and unlock opportunities for growth and greater international profile.

Our starting point is one from a position of strength. We boast an impressive cultural scene, including annual highlights such as the King's Lynn Festival, Festival Too and a strong events programme led by the borough council. Historic sites such as St Nicholas Chapel and Lynn Museum offer year-round engagement, while the GroundWork Gallery and pop-up exhibitions showcase local talent. At the heart of the town lies St George's Guildhall, a historic performance venue undergoing a transformational redevelopment funded by the Town Deal. From festivals to schools' outreach and theatrical performances, the strategy considers these strengths and many others, in terms of how they can be harnessed to achieve greater impact for King's Lynn's culture and heritage.

This strategy and the actions put forward within it reflect the voices of our communities, cultural and heritage stakeholders, and the wider creative industries through an open process of consultation and co-creation. We thank everyone involved in the development of this work for their ideas, enthusiasm and support. The strategy presents the opportunities for working collaboratively to make the most of resources available, address gaps and engage audiences – in particular, those not regularly accessing our culture and heritage offer. As with any strategy, it will evolve and therefore, there is a need for continued dialogue and flexibility, ensuring it remains relevant over the next decade.

By leveraging King's Lynn's strengths and addressing challenges, this strategy paves the way for a confident, creative and inclusive future and a culture and heritage sector that thrives and inspires.

## What is a Culture and Heritage Strategy?

A strategy is a guiding framework of principles and approaches designed to achieve specific outcomes.

For King's Lynn, this Culture and Heritage Strategy offers a shared vision and direction of travel for cultural and heritage organisations, creative industries, communities and other stakeholders to align their efforts and develop the culture and heritage offer and connect it with diverse communities. It also sets out how our culture and heritage has a wider role to play across other agendas such as the

means to promote regeneration, economic development – in particular, the growth of Creative Industries - stronger communities, and better health and wellbeing for our people.

With significant investment already underway, such as Arts Council England's support for arts organisations working in the town, the Town Deal's Rail to River Project and Levelling Up funding for the Southgates masterplan, the strategy needs to help and guide those working in the sector to unlock further opportunities. As an Arts Council England 'Priority Place', King's Lynn is well-positioned to benefit from targeted support; and where investment in culture and heritage is made, we need to demonstrate our impact across other important policy agendas too.

## Vision

### **King's Lynn in 10 Years: A thriving, collaborative and impactful culture and heritage sector.**

Our vision is a King's Lynn where the culture and heritage sector is collaborative, outward-looking and internationally connected.

Our heritage is reimagined through dynamic, contemporary projects, celebrating King's Lynn as a vibrant living-heritage town.

Young people are leading the way as the makers, creators and producers in our sector.

Children who engaged with culture early on are our audiences and innovators, ensuring a sustainable cultural sector for years to come.

Cultural and heritage organisations are thriving and collaborating, addressing gaps identified and offering diverse, inclusive and accessible experiences that engage residents of all ages and attract visitors from further afield.

We are a cultural hub, proudly rooted in place, but outward facing, keen to share our unique identity with an international audience.

Culture in King's Lynn is environmentally responsible, proactively working towards reaching net zero emissions.

## Outcomes

King's Lynn has many strengths to build on, including our inspiring built heritage, rich stories and historical connections, as well as our creative people, innovative businesses and motivated voluntary sector.

This Strategy seeks to position culture and heritage at the heart of King's Lynn's identity, projecting a confident and outward-looking brand to the world.

The changes we want to measure and achieve are:

### **1. Increased engagement with culture and heritage by diverse communities**

To achieve this outcome, organisations in the culture and heritage sector need to collaborate on developing a compelling case for culture and think about radical ways to increase engagement amongst those not regularly accessing our culture and heritage offer. We need a bold and ambitious narrative about King's Lynn's creativity and heritage, and working together, we need to develop innovative projects that drive the regeneration of our town and the surrounding areas and engage new audiences. Sharing knowledge about what is working and where further support is needed will help to identify and address gaps in provision to deliver meaningful engagement with diverse communities.

## **2. King's Lynn is viewed as outward-looking and internationally connected**

King's Lynn has the potential to strengthen its international cultural connections. Our distinctive medieval heritage connects to our Hanseatic maritime history, which has strong international links, and there are historic links between King's Lynn and Canada and America, including Vancouver, Lynn Massachusetts and Norfolk Virginia. Unlocking King's Lynn's past can help its present to be outward-looking with a reputation as a cultural destination attracting UK-wide and international visitors. Doing more to celebrate historic characters of King's Lynn who have global significance could also raise the awareness and appeal of King's Lynn to an international audience, such as Margery Kemp, who wrote the first biography in the English language, and Robert Armin, Shakespeare's comedian.

## **3. A culture and heritage sector that is resilient and thriving**

To be resilient and ensure sustainability, we must work together to future-proof the sector. We need to be confident about our creativity and cultural identity. We must provide more opportunities for young people to explore their creativity and pursue careers in the sector and the wider creative industries. Our sector needs to be more relevant to younger audiences through a strengthened contemporary arts offer, for instance through animating heritage with creative technologies and immersive experiences. The culture and heritage sector, and more widely the creative industries, need to be supported to realise their full potential in bringing about economic growth and improved community outcomes. For cultural activities and organisations to be sustainable and resilient, they must operate in an environmentally responsible manner, ensuring that their goals are achieved within the planet's ecological limits and proactively working towards net zero emissions.

## **4. Everyone feels a sense of pride in King's Lynn's culture and heritage and identifies a part of it that is relevant to and inclusive of them**

Culture and heritage can underpin King's Lynn's identity. Everyone—from its people and businesses—should feel included in the culture and heritage offer. They should feel it is relevant to them and that their contribution to developing the culture and heritage offer is valued. Because of culture and heritage, communities will come together to celebrate and learn from each other and feel a sense of belonging and pride. For young people, progression routes must be developed, from school-age engagement to adulthood, enabling them to thrive creatively and take a leading role in the town's cultural future. For King's Lynn's older residents, opportunities to encourage their continued

engagement include a coordinated and supported range of volunteer roles available across the sector, offering rewarding cultural and heritage experiences, as well as intergenerational opportunities to connect to audiences and the cultural workforce.

## **5. Engagement with culture and heritage is recognised as an impactful way to reduce inequalities and improve well being in King's Lynn**

Whilst King's Lynn has much to celebrate, there are pressing social issues, such as health inequalities and deprivation in some areas, that must be addressed. Culture and heritage need to be accessible and inclusive for those facing the greatest barriers to engagement. Partnering with charities, agencies and community organisations outside of the sector, such as health partners, we can demonstrate the valuable role culture plays a role in tackling key issues and delivering against several policy agendas and wider social outcomes.

### **Themes and Priorities**

As a sector, we set out how a focus on delivering actions against the following key themes and priorities will help us to achieve our strategy's vision and outcomes.

#### **Priority 1: Young People as Makers, Creators and Producers**

Young people in King's Lynn are inspired and empowered to explore their creative potential, equipped with the skills and opportunities to become the makers, creators and producers in a thriving culture and heritage sector. Culture supports the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people, through joyful and playful experiences, and builds their confidence and curiosity.

#### **Priority 2: Animating King's Lynn Heritage**

King's Lynn is transformed into a dynamic, innovative and interactive heritage centre. By animating our rich history through modern storytelling methods, interactive experiences and year-round programming, heritage will be inclusive and accessible, engaging and relevant to all, especially young people.

#### **Priority 3: Collaborative working for resilience**

A resilient, thriving and inspiring culture and heritage sector exists in King's Lynn because of effective collaboration amongst the range of people and organisations operating within it. Under a shared vision, organisations will be better at demonstrating their impact, have more financial stability and be creating a vibrant cultural landscape that benefits all.

#### **Priority 4: Embedding Inclusivity and Diverse Voice in King's Lynn Culture and Heritage**

A vibrant, inclusive cultural scene in King's Lynn amplifies diverse voices and celebrates the rich cultural contributions of all local communities. We want every resident and visitor to feel represented, valued and inspired to participate in and contribute to King's Lynn's culture and heritage.

## Actions we must take

### **Priority 1: Young People as Makers, Creators and Producers**

What we can do now:

1. Enable established artists to mentor and support young people by leveraging existing skillsets in the borough.
2. Profile diverse role models in the creative industries to raise aspirations, inspire and demonstrate career possibilities to young people.
3. Make the case to school leadership teams about the value of cultural and heritage experiences for a well-rounded education.
4. Engage with schools through partnerships and provide cultural programming and resources for teachers and educational practitioners.
5. Promote and celebrate inspirational stories from young makers, creators and producers.
6. Seek further funding to continue the schools' engagement programme at the Guildhall.

In the long term, we will explore ways to:

1. Start building aspirations in schools by integrating culture and heritage education across the curriculum, using creative approaches to teach other subjects.
2. Expand the cultural programme in our town, specifically for and by young people.
3. Create inclusive and accessible creative spaces by repurposing unused buildings (including underutilised heritage sites) and developing multi-use hubs, ensuring spaces align with the needs of young people and future programming opportunities.
4. Develop additional performance and production spaces, such as outdoor venues and non-cultural town centre locations, to platform young people-led projects across artforms.
5. Support emerging artists and freelancers with professional development opportunities.
6. Develop clear progression routes from education into the workforce, including support for creative entrepreneurship and addressing skills gaps in practical heritage trades.
7. Establish ways to ensure meaningful, ongoing consultation with young people to guide future projects and programmes.

### **Priority 2: Animating King's Lynn Heritage**

What we can do now:

1. Develop an engagement programme with input from cultural organisations to ensure diverse voices contribute to plans and programming, and secure funding.
2. Promote King's Lynn heritage through existing technologies such as VR, AR and apps - building on existing Heritage apps and projection projects.

3. Begin linking historical buildings and stories with current and future programmes to enhance their relevance.
4. Develop creative joint promotion initiatives between organisations to further the reach of heritage offerings.
5. Start audience development efforts by offering new and diverse experiences at heritage assets, attracting a broader demographic.
6. Seek funding for an outreach programme to engage new audiences while the Guildhall is closed for renovations, building on established programmes that animate heritage in a variety of ways for wide audiences.

In the long term, we will explore ways to:

1. Build partnerships and networks to provide interactive, year-round cultural programmes in heritage spaces, ensuring appropriate and innovative use of vacant or underutilised heritage spaces.
2. Coordinate community involvement and co-creation by developing volunteer programmes across heritage sites.
3. Further embed advanced technologies like interactive trails, augmented reality, dedicated heritage apps, gaming and coding to create engaging, tech-driven experiences.
4. Working collaboratively with existing programmes such as the Long Term Plan for Towns, statutory organisations and funders to ensure the aims of the strategy are embedded in the development proposals to maximise underutilised assets.
5. Design a cohesive visitor experience across King's Lynn sites, including a potential heritage hub, improved signage and enhanced visitor facilities such as dedicated parking.
6. Develop a vibrant evening economy through new audience engagement strategies and unique offerings at heritage sites.

### **Priority 3: Collaborative working for resilience**

What we can do now:

1. Learn from other towns (e.g., Cambridge, Norwich) and case studies such as Arts and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes to adopt best practice in cultural diversity, guidelines and marketing, adapted to our own specific context.
2. Take a coordinated approach to developing student work placements, whereby colleges, creative industries and cultural organisations could work together to share the workload and resource in providing these important experiences for young people.
3. Establish a network or forum to share resources, align activities and collaborate and develop other structures key to implementing the Culture and Heritage Strategy, such as a Culture Steering Group, task groups and buddy systems.

4. Develop the Guildhall Creative Hub to enable networking among creative and heritage professionals. Maintain transparency and clarity in local authority cultural funding decisions with regular signposting to national grants that can support culture and heritage projects. Work with the Business Improvement District (BID), Multi-User Hub, and regeneration initiatives to provide facilities for young people starting creative businesses and encourage collaborations with existing creative businesses.

In the long term, we will explore ways to:

1. Develop a cohesive brand and identity for King's Lynn culture, with consistent messaging and an online presence.
2. Facilitate collaborative programming through task groups for key events in King's Lynn and celebrate successes.
3. Collaborate with economic development and regeneration teams to strengthen creative industries, provide appropriate spaces and encourage businesses to locate or stay in King's Lynn.
4. Support economic strategies and the evening economy by raising the profile of King's Lynn's cultural and heritage offerings.
5. Promote environmental responsibility by sharing best practice from across the sector to reduce emissions, and to devise and adopt a minimum standard of environmental responsibility measures across the King's Lynn cultural sector.
6. Partner with health organisations and community groups to explore how cultural activities can improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

#### **Priority 4: Sustainability, inclusivity and diverse voice embedded in King's Lynn Culture and Heritage**

What we can do now:

1. Analyse King's Lynn's current demographics and identify gaps in connections across our culture and heritage offer.
2. Learn from successful models in other areas, such as Great Yarmouth's work with displaced communities.
3. Implement inclusive audience development strategies, using a mix of traditional and digital media as well as accessible services such as Park and Ride.
4. Actively engage with communities in their spaces through outreach, relevant content and participatory opportunities.
5. Continue community consultation and engagement to develop future culture and heritage initiatives.
6. Invest in inclusivity and access provisions across the cultural and heritage sector.
7. The Borough Council will lead by example by taking action on reducing its climate impact and emissions across its cultural facilities.



In the long term, we will explore ways to:

1. Develop dedicated cultural spaces and programmes, such as a riverside hub, to bring together diverse creative voices and provide opportunities for participation and creation.
2. Target grants and funding to diverse-led creative projects and organisations, while supporting freelancers and creative practitioners with tailored professional development programmes.
3. Celebrate and promote the contributions of diverse voices, addressing various age groups, LGBTQ+ communities, displaced communities and diaspora settled in King's Lynn.
4. Broker and support the development of partnerships between our sector and other sectors to co-develop creative projects and establish methods to measure their impact on delivering wider social outcomes, such as improved health and wellbeing.

### How will we do it

The Culture and Heritage Strategy outlines the steps that need to be taken to spark action and address priorities. It should serve as a guide rather than a delivery programme.

Everyone in King's Lynn's cultural and heritage sector—that is commercial businesses, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, educators, local authorities, artists, and freelancers—has a role to play in delivering the strategy, contributing to a shared vision of a sector that is thriving, collaborating and achieving impact.

To maximise impact, the strategy must be led by a focused and supported group while being integrated into broader areas such as health and wellbeing, tourism, economic development, regeneration, youth provision and transport. Embedding the Strategy across these areas ensures it delivers meaningful and lasting benefits to King's Lynn cultural life, economy and community.

A successful Culture and Heritage Strategy requires a focused and collaborative approach, driven by a dedicated structure. Facilitated by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, this structure ensures actions are accountable, inclusive and aligned with the needs of the community.

Key components of this structure comprise a Culture Steering Group and targeted Task Groups to deliver specific projects.

An Annual Culture Summit will bring stakeholders and the wider community together to review progress and share practice.

#### *The Culture Steering Group*

This group will be central to driving the strategy. Comprising of eight to ten individuals representing diverse expertise and community voices, members will be selected via a criteria matrix to ensure inclusivity. The group will meet quarterly, guided by a clear remit and Terms of Reference, with initial training on equitable ways of working. Led by an independent Chair, the group will oversee progress, establish Task Groups and match opportunities to strategic objectives. Including young people within these groups will help ensure projects are relevant and engaging for future generations.

### *Task Groups*

These small, dynamic groups will include relevant stakeholders and may engage partners outside our sector, such as health organisations, to address shared goals. Task Groups will operate as needed, securing funding for projects where required and reporting outcomes to the Steering Group.

Potential initial groups include

- Marketing and Communications Network,
- Volunteer Coordination Task Group,
- Riverside Programme team,
- Cultural Forum/Network,
- Young People's Creative Heritage Group

### *Annual Culture Summit*

This event will bring together all with an interest in culture and heritage in King's Lynn to share projects, ideas and best practice and to celebrate achievements. This will also be an opportunity to review the strategy's objectives and delivery of outcomes considering changing circumstances and contexts.

The Summit will showcase successful collaborations and be a safe space to discuss and reflect on achievements, challenges and ideas to develop. It could even be a space for creative demonstrations to help us develop our own ideas for culture and heritage programming.

### **Conclusion**

The Culture and Heritage Strategy for King's Lynn provides a framework to realise a thriving, collaborative and impactful culture and heritage sector. By aligning efforts across diverse stakeholders—ranging from cultural and heritage organisations to communities, businesses, and educators—the strategy leverages our town's existing strengths while helping us to address gaps in engagement and inclusion. It lays out a clear vision to enhance King's Lynn's cultural identity, celebrate its achievements, and unlock opportunities for innovation, sustainability and growth.

This strategy also seeks to integrate culture and heritage into broader agendas, such as economic development, health and wellbeing and community cohesion. By embedding a shared vision across our sector, and ensuring that every resident feels represented and included in what we do, we can reimagine our identity as a vibrant, creative and outward-looking cultural hub.

We would like to thank everyone who has generously contributed their time, thoughts and ideas to developing this Culture and Heritage Strategy for King's Lynn.

### **A note about definitions**

For the purpose and scope of this document, we have used the definition of 'Culture' from Arts Council England's 10 year Strategy, Let's Create. The Arts Council use the term to mean all those areas

of activity associated with the artforms and organisations in which Arts Council England invests: collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre and the visual arts. By describing all of this work collectively as 'culture', rather than separately as 'the arts', 'museums' and 'libraries', this aims to be inclusive of the full breadth of activity that they support.

The strategy also includes heritage as defined by the Heritage Fund as anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations. This can include physical things such as buildings, collections, monuments, museums, libraries and archives, and also includes things that aren't physical, such as community heritage and pride in local places, cultural traditions, skills, knowledge and memories. It also includes spaces for nature and landscapes. In this strategy, we focus on how we use and respond to our heritage.