



**City of Openness, Imagination  
and Originators**

**A Strategy for Bristol Culture**

**@CulturalBristol**

**tom fleming / creative consultancy /**

*Courtesy of Chris Bahn*

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# *Bristol: the City Built on Heroic Hardship*

## by Miles Chambers

This is an extract from the poem Bristol Poet Laureate Miles Chambers read out at the swearing-in ceremony of Mayor Marvin Rees.



*Harbour Festival, Courtesy of Chris Bahn.*

*Bristol, Bristol the city that was built on the bricks of heroic hardship.*

*Bristol, Bristol the place of dreams and possibilities the place of creative aspirations culture commerce and its own seductive music.*

*Bristol, Bristol a place still haunted by the ancestral ghost that echoes the historical hangover that yet sobered us up to what time hasn't changed*

*Bristol, Bristol. Take a walk. Be inspired. Feel the magical connection see a positive future Come dance in this festival of ideas.*

*See, we don't have to wait for carnival every year. The party is right now right here,*

*This very stage, the very atmosphere is encouraging us to lose our fear cause geographically there's no go areas round here...*

*I belong here with the good schools offering a good future to a bad past. The bad schools offering a bad future to a good past.*

*It's here on these streets that the youth are spitting the lyrics of the future that will change the wrong decisions of the past.*

*I belong here! Right now in this place we have the opportunity to be something great, something amazing together...*

*To utilise the collective potential of us all. That will make this place unique and special... Let's answer the call. I belong right here!*

# Foreword

## **Cllr. Estella Tincknell, Cabinet Member for Culture, Events and Equalities**

From St. Pauls' Carnival to St. George's Hall, from the South Bristol Art Trail to the Somali portraits at M Shed, and from Banksy's murals to memories of a 1970s adventure playground in Lockleaze in *Junkyard* at the Old Vic theatre, Bristol is a city replete with cultural activity, energy and imagination. Culture is a key component in Bristol's economy, providing the jobs and businesses that are helping the city to thrive and which will help to guarantee a successful future. Indeed, few cities of its size across the globe can boast the cultural strengths that have become Bristol's hallmark. This is a city that combines world-beating festivals, a thriving music scene, an amazing architectural and engineering heritage, and a burgeoning creative and media sector within an extraordinarily diverse landscape.

Bristol's cultural reputation has grown rapidly over the last decade and the city has benefitted economically in significant ways from the boost in cultural tourism. But these positive changes have not reached all communities across the whole city, and increased economic and social polarisation has meant that these benefits are not enjoyed equally by every citizen. This cultural strategy therefore seeks to build on and extend what is being done well, while also recognising and addressing the challenges posed by economic and social inequalities, spatial segregation, and a lack of diversity in many of the city's cultural organisations.

The strategy is bold in its aims, radical in its reach, and clear in its focus. It sees culture as central to the economy, and to everyday life and communities, not simply as a specialised practice. It recognises the importance of excellence while refusing elitism. It acknowledges the crucial relationships between cultural activity, education, health and wellbeing, and identifies the partnerships that will be needed to sustain these over the next decade.

The strategy appears at a time of significant change both locally and nationally. Constraints on the city council's finances have meant that new ways to support Bristol's creativity need to be found. Brexit may pose considerable challenges to the city's economy. At the same time, the election of a Metro Mayor for the West of England offers expanded opportunities to work strategically with partners across the sub-region in new ways. These are all changes that the strategy is designed to address. Investing in and supporting the cultural economy will be a vital part of Bristol's future.

Above all, the strategy seeks to capture a commitment to the principle that every Bristol citizen should be able to participate in and benefit from the city's cultural life and economy and the belief that they, in turn, will contribute to the success of the city.

**June 2017**

# Summary

**Why Culture Matters:** This cultural strategy is the culmination of a period of critical discussion and research which has provided a set of fresh perspectives on the role culture can play in shaping Bristol. It recognises the valuable contribution culture already makes to the city but also the potential for far wider engagement that would deliver a better future for all.

**Bristol – a City of Culture:** We want to make Bristol an even more dynamic, open, distinctive and enjoyable place to be, using culture to address the city's many social and economic challenges. For the purposes of this strategy we are defining culture in its widest sense, embracing: our lives, identities and communities; heritage; museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, theatres, libraries, festivals and events; practice; industry; and our shared futures.

**The Challenges We Face:** Bristol is a city of culture, but it is not yet a great city of culture. A great city of culture does not demonstrate such high levels of inequality in terms of access, participation and ownership. Challenges to be faced in Bristol include: sustaining existing partnerships into the future; reaching and engaging everyone across the city with the same degree of impact; being fully inclusive, reflecting the city's diversity of perspectives, ideas, skills and aspirations; and securing sufficient levels of financial investment.

**The Opportunities We Can Embrace:** Bristol is a fast-changing city, demographically, economically and culturally. It is a city of creative voices and originators. It is also an increasingly young and intercultural city. The cultural sector needs to take every opportunity to ensure Bristol's diverse communities are properly included in the

city's cultural scene. The burgeoning creative economy can be a catalyst for a city-wide push for Bristol to be the ideas and innovation capital of the UK. There are opportunities to build on current successes including existing engagement initiatives, international links and Bristol's leading role in cultural place-making. A joined-up cultural offer that has participation from across both the public and private sectors, with strong leadership and a clear 'ask', is essential.

**Building the Conversation:** This cultural strategy draws on extensive research from which three themes have been developed:

- City of openness: increasing cultural participation through partnership and leadership; the development of capacity and infrastructure across a more connected city; and a clear offer of cultural education and routes into employment.
- City of imagination: re-imagining Bristol (its economy, infrastructure, identity) through culture by sparking the imagination; championing the radical; commissioning the unknown; and finding new uses for heritage assets.
- City of originators: supporting the city's artists, creatives and makers so they can develop productive and sustainable careers in Bristol and finding ways for the city's full talent base to contribute to success.

**A Cultural Framework for Bristol:** Bristol is operating from a position of relative strength: the economy is resilient and growing, with new jobs being created and new investment in the pipeline; the population is increasing, getting younger and more diverse; the 'brand' of Bristol is increasingly recognised nationally and internationally; the approach to culture-led partnership and collaboration across the city is exemplary; the approach to cultural leadership is positive; the city has the raw materials.

To build from these qualities and for culture to play a transformational role in the future of Bristol, there are six priority intervention areas:

- **Cultural leadership group:** to work closely with partners across the city to build on Bristol's strengths as a city of openness, imagination and originators.
- **Cultural investment and infrastructure:** to shape a smarter, more coherent and innovative approach to culture, maximising potential investment and the returns this brings.
- **Cultural pathways:** to ensure Bristol is a city that connects cultural participation to opportunities in cultural production and the creative industries, opening-up cultural opportunity across the city.
- **Districts of culture:** to connect the districts to each other and to the city centre, helping to build a more collaborative and accessible Bristol.
- **Cultural place-making:** to facilitate culture-led development and embed cultural elements across the physical and emotional geography of Bristol.
- **Unlimited collaboration:** to mobilise cross-sector and interdisciplinary working where culture is a critical part of the innovation mix, driving growth and competitiveness and opening-up opportunities for the imagination to flourish.

**Next Steps:** Delivering this strategy will require a joined-up and concerted effort from a wide range of partners, local, regional, national and international. The cultural leadership group will make connections and seek new types of commitment to ensure Bristol builds from rather than holds back from its considerable cultural strengths.

# Introduction: Why Culture Matters

In Bristol culture is who people are, what people do and what people want to be. It is for every day and for the special occasion. It is at home, on the streets and across every neighbourhood. It has been a catalyst for economic diversification and growth; for talent attraction and retention; for inward investment and tourism; and for innovation and competitiveness.

Culture improves the quality of life for Bristol people, offering participation in activities that go far beyond what traditionally might be recognised as 'the arts'. It provides access to ideas, to community, to fun and to employment. It helps to bring confidence, cohesion, health and wellbeing.

This cultural strategy is *for* the city and *of* the city. It is the culmination of a period of critical discussion and research which has provided a set of fresh perspectives on the role culture can play in shaping the city's future.

It is a strategy for an inclusive and ambitious city where everyone has a part to play and where no single organisation owns the agenda. Bristol City Council is one partner among many others, and the strategy sets out challenges and opportunities for which there is a collective responsibility.

Culture in Bristol is driven by a sector that includes individual artists, world-leading arts organisations, brilliant museums, exciting and engaging festivals and buoyant creative industries. Bristol is an

open, outward-looking city, connecting globally with places, artists and audiences. It is also a city undergoing transformation, with a youthful, diverse population generating new, distinctively Bristolian identities.

Culture delivers economically for the city, whether it is in helping ensure the city's high rate of graduate retention or in the interaction between public investment and private enterprise that supports a thriving and significant independent media sector.

Bristol has a reputation for tolerance and for having a socially-driven cultural sector whose organisations include some of the best in the country for engagement and education.

However, it is also a city part-built on the slave trade and many people feel it has yet to develop a collective memory that fully recognises the legacy of its past. It is a city of economic, social and physical disparities, with communities severed by poor post-war planning, inadequate transport infrastructure and housing inequality.

Culture has already played a key role in the successful reinvigoration of some areas of Bristol. It has a city centre with the potential to be one of the best cultural destinations in the UK. But other parts of the city demonstrate multiple indicators of deprivation. Such places may feel disconnected from the rest of the city.

Addressing inequalities in health, wealth and opportunity and supporting everyone to reach their potential by creating successful places to live, work and play are central to the ambitions of the mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees.

He says:

*“...my mission is to make sure the world sees a Bristol where every citizen is participating in our city’s success; and not a Bristol held back by the price of inequality. The city must not succeed only for the benefit of the few, at the expense of the many.”*

This strategy identifies how culture can deliver a better future for all of Bristol, one in which every community in every neighbourhood has the opportunity to contribute to the way the city talks about itself and is understood by others.



*Courtesy of Wesport.*

# 1. Bristol – a City of Culture

To help meet Bristol’s social and economic challenges, we want to see:

- A fairer distribution of cultural capital so that everyone benefits.
- More connected and less isolated communities.
- Happier, more engaged, more active and, therefore, healthier people.
- Young and older people able to participate in culture at home and in local communities, through school and college, and into employment.
- Artists, creative businesses and cultural organisations reaching new and larger audiences and markets and accessing talent that is more diverse and more representative of the city.
- The cultural economy grow and add value to other parts of the economy, such as in the creative industries, tourism, the digital sector and science, by providing ideas and experiences that attract people to live, work and play in the city.

- The identity and experience of the city improved, making Bristol an even more dynamic, open, distinctive and enjoyable place to be.

So, what do we mean by culture?

### **Culture is our lives, identities and communities**

It is the way we see ourselves and our place in the world. It is where we live, who we are and how we learn. It is how we live our lives. It is how we dress, communicate, eat and drink. It is how we build and decorate our homes. It is how we express ourselves – from music to sport. It is how we design and inhabit our streets and open spaces. It is what we do and why we do it.

### **Culture is heritage**

It is our memories and stories, lived through our friends and relatives here and elsewhere. It is what we imagine ourselves to be. It is our possessions and artefacts. It is the built and natural landscape. It is our story and how we re-tell it. It is who we were and who we are becoming.

### **Culture is museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, theatres, libraries, festivals and events**

It is how we record, collect, curate and present our identities and how we understand others' identities. It is how we preserve and bring to life our stories. It is how we express our world to others. It is about the conscious experience of culture.

### **Culture is practice**

It is the applied imagination of artists, writers and performers. It is the act of making – ideas, text, code, objects, paintings, sound and vision. It is performance. It is active participation. It is innovation and renewal.

### **Culture is industry**

It is the economic value generated by culture. It is the jobs and revenue. It is the added value – to innovation, productivity and brand. It is the creative and digital businesses. It is the design, production and trade of intellectual property (IP). It is tourism and retail. It is the competitiveness of the wider economy.

### **Culture is our shared future(s)**

It is how we connect and exchange. It is what we have in common and how we differ. It is our neighbourhood, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, religion, values and politics. It is our city.



# 1.1 The Challenges We Face

Bristol is a city of culture, but it is not yet a great city of culture. A great city of culture is not one that demonstrates such high levels of inequality in terms of access, participation and ownership. Culture has ensured that Bristol has one of the most progressive and attractive identities of any UK city, but not everyone has benefitted.

Among the challenges to be faced in Bristol are:

## **Sustaining mutual support and partnership**

Bristol has a strong track record of cultural partnership, which must be sustained into the future. Perhaps uniquely, this partnership-working crosses the public, private, media and cultural sectors in significant ways. For example, Bristol's independent media sector draws on the training and experience of publicly funded organisations such as Watershed and, in turn, supports the city's venues, organisations and initiatives with in-kind work and contributions to governance. This mutual commitment is vital to Bristol's future as a cultural centre. Shared platforms, networks and intermediary organisations such as Bristol Cultural Education Partnership, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP), DIY Arts Network, Bristol Festivals and Events Forum, and Theatre Bristol, foster trust and a mutual sense of purpose. Both of Bristol's universities are increasingly active partners and leaders across economic and civic life. There is a consensus that great cities of culture are made through a collective responsibility shared across sectors. Bristol has made considerable progress in this regard but much more needs to be done.

## **Reach and coordinated provision**

Despite many examples of excellent practice, the cultural sector has struggled to reach and engage everyone across the city with the same degree of impact. Limited organisational capacity and the challenge of making and maintaining connections with others are daily challenges. While the sector provides routes to jobs and life chances to many, a coordinated approach requires active intervention and a clear set of outcomes linked to skills, employment and engagement.

## **Inclusion**

The cultural sector as a whole has not engaged the full array of talent that Bristol has to offer and this includes the diversity of perspectives and ideas, as well as the range of skills and aspirations available. The cultural workforce does not reflect the profile of the city's overall population. In addition, audiences, while increasingly mixed, city-wide and intergenerational, remain relatively homogeneous in terms of class and age for certain art forms, organisations and venues. Targeted audience development work (e.g. by the Bristol Old Vic and Watershed) are beginning to show what is possible when the city is more connected, but these require a sustained and sustainable approach.

## **Investment**

As one of the UK's Core Cities, Bristol is comparatively well-off, with a growing economy and population. Culture is a big contributor to the city's economic success and as well as its brand and identity. Bristol City Council has for many years been a genuine champion of the city's cultural sector and of the role of culture in city-making more generally. It has, for example, developed and retained a strong culture team which plays a vital enabling and nurturing role. It has also made major investments. These have been in the form of capital – such as the conversion of the city's old industrial

museum into M Shed in 2011 – or in-kind, including by offering long-term leases to key cultural institutions such as Watershed, Spike Island and ss *Great Britain*.

However, the council spends less than a quarter of what Liverpool City Council does on culture and less than a third of the budget of Birmingham or Leeds. It also spends less than smaller cities such as Coventry and Leicester.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is set to reduce its cash investment as it seeks to bridge a £100million budget gap over the next five years. As this strategy sets out, while the proportion of council money will reduce, its role as an active partner in securing investment from other public and private sector sources will increase. These will include opportunities to invest in infrastructure through the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (WELEP) and West of England Regional Spatial Strategy (WERSP) as well as new forms of private sector contributions (including Section 106 investment). This will be at a time when competition from other sectors for additional support – including health, education, the environment and welfare – will be increasing.

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<sup>1</sup> 2014/15 taken from Department for Communities and Local Government: Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England.

## 1.2 The Opportunities We Can Embrace

Bristol is a fast-changing city, demographically, economically and culturally. Its population is set to pass half a million by 2027 and the wider urban area and city-region are also growing. The demographic profile is changing, with new influences that range from Somalia, Kenya and Southern Africa to the Europeans who have made Bristol their home, blending with the cultural identities forged from earlier processes of migration and intercultural exchange.

There are now at least 45 religions, at least 50 countries of birth, and at least 91 main languages spoken by people living in the city. The proportion of the population who are not 'White British' is now 22% of the total. This is approaching a level of hyper-diversity found in a global city such as London.

The city's economy is also expanding and diversifying, with 17,973 new business start-ups in the five years to September 2015. The working population is now above that of 2008 and the time of the financial crisis.

There are many examples of inward investment, expansion and the introduction of key infrastructure, hubs, clusters and festivals which are the catalyst for innovation and competitiveness. These include Engine Shed, Bottleyard Studios, Hamilton House, the Festival of Ideas and Unit-DX.

### **Bristol talent**

Bristol is a city of creative voices and originators. It is also an increasingly young and intercultural city. Its two universities

contribute to almost 20% of the city's population, with many graduates remaining or returning to work.

At present the city's multiple communities co-exist but do not always cohere. However, the cultural sector has an exciting opportunity to ensure Bristol's changing population and talent pool is properly included in the city's cultural scene. This can be achieved through effective skills investment, audience development, inclusive governance and policy priorities.

### **A burgeoning creative economy**

Since May 2017 Bristol has been part of a new city-region comprising the West of England Combined Authority. This can be seized as an opportunity to continue to develop one of the UK's major creative economy clusters. Powered by four leading universities, the region has strengths in telecommunications, TV, networking, gaming, virtual reality, hardware, robotics, silicon chip design, digital production and marketing, and cloud computing.<sup>2</sup> The gross value added in the region by these digital businesses stands at £1.8billion a year, and grew by 26% between 2010 and 2014.<sup>3</sup>

The cultural sector and the distinctive cultures of Bristol have helped produce an ecosystem of talent, facilities, businesses and organisations. These have in turn contributed to Bristol's reputation for innovation, especially in the fusion of art and science, creativity and technology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A Creative Tech Manifesto for Bristol 2016, prepared by TechSpark and Bristol Media.

<sup>3</sup> Bristol and Edinburgh are the only UK cities outside the London/South East region to appear in the top 20 for their concentration of both creative industries and technology, defined by location quotient

[http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/geography\\_uks\\_creative\\_high-tech\\_economieswv20151.pdf](http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/geography_uks_creative_high-tech_economieswv20151.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the recent report (2017) by UWE researchers, Professor Andrew Spicer and Dr Steven Presence, *Go West! Bristol's Film and Television Industries* [http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/31444/1/Bristol\\_FilmTV%20Industry\\_low\\_webfinal.pdf](http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/31444/1/Bristol_FilmTV%20Industry_low_webfinal.pdf)

There is much to build on here. Culture can be a means for a city-wide push to be the ideas and innovation capital of the UK, as was vividly set out in a *Creative and Tech Manifesto*, prepared by TechSpark and Bristol Media with contributions from across the creative and technology sectors.

This opportunity is evident in significant agreements between major partners. These include the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) drawn up between Arts Council England (ACE) and the University of the West of England in 2016 to champion and develop Bristol as a city of arts technology. The BBC Bristol Partnership has signed three MoUs with partners including Bristol City Council, University of the West of England, Bristol Media, Watershed and University of Bristol. This opportunity is also demonstrated through the role the University of Bristol plays in generating knowledge and nurturing talent and in major city developments such as Temple Quarter and Engine Shed.

### **Building on success**

Bristol already has success stories to tell. Data collected from 24 cultural organisations in the city in 2016 showed a total audience of just under three million people attending events and activities. The research also revealed a collective turnover of £42million and an economic impact of £90million to the wider economy. This cultural ecology is vital not only for audiences, but also artists and people working in the creative sector.

Cultural organisations are reaching out across the city and increasing the diversity of their audiences. For example, Bristol Plays Music, which was awarded Music Hub of the Year, has interactions with every school in the city. Bristol Museums has successfully increased its audiences from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and achieved engagement from its target postcodes

year-on-year thanks to programmes such as its ESOL courses and youth panel. Other examples of good practice include: Watershed's programme for deaf audiences and its work with RIFE; Acta's on-going community theatre programme; and Cirque Bijou and Diverse City's integrated circus company Extraordinary Bodies. Bristol's family-friendly arts festival organised by Arnolfini and partners won this year's best family event in the Get Creative Family Arts Festivals Awards.

The city's commitment to inclusiveness has meant that the ParaOrchestra, featuring musicians with a range of disabilities, has made its home here. Inclusivity also makes economic sense. For example, there is a burgeoning LGBT+ arts scene, especially in and around Old Market, which has contributed to the economic regeneration of that area.

## **International culture**

Bristol's cultural success should be both local and global. This means enabling cultural organisations to build international connections, both through the routes of diaspora, promoting Bristol as a city of sanctuary and openness; and by generating links with partners in other transforming places. The proposed bid to become a UNESCO City of Film in collaboration with the University of the West of England will provide an opportunity to flag up Bristol's international profile and its media success. In addition, Bristol's commitment to digital technology, an expanded airport and twinning agreements with other cities mean that existing connections can be more extensively explored.

As a city with strong research and trading links with Europe, Bristol will need to show its continued commitment to collaboration and shared purpose in the context of Brexit. Led by the council, the city's cultural organisations, universities and key businesses are well placed to do this. Bristol's role as international lead in the Core

Cities group also provides an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to culture-led international relationships.

## **Cultural place-making**

Culture has already contributed enormously to the character and texture of Bristol. This is evident not only in the grand Georgian terraces of Clifton, the drama of the suspension bridge and iconic buildings in the city centre, but also by the architectural and topographical diversity of the wider city, from the expanse of Stoke Park in the North West to the narrow lanes of Totterdown in the South. Recognising the importance of place-making should not be confined to new developments or to one-off public arts projects. It should be extended to the whole city to fully reflect the diversity of Bristol culture. For example, the proposal for a cultural trail in the St Mark's Road area of Easton could be a pilot for the roll-out of a range of city-wide trails that celebrate Bristol's cultural heritage.

As with many UK cities, post-war planning in Bristol worked as much to disconnect communities as to improve their living conditions and mobility. However, new or improved cultural infrastructure could work to anchor and connect parts of the city; signage can be transformed to include digital signage and new way-finding technologies; public spaces can be adapted for sport, festivals and other events; and affordable creative workspace can encourage talent to actively produce new culture. This includes the imaginative use of our heritage assets: for example, via 'meanwhile' (temporary) cultural use of buildings or by the way in which we ensure a legacy is left for future generations.

Growth also brings challenges. This is where confidence is key and a joined-up cultural offer which has participation from across both the public and private sectors, with strong leadership and a clear 'ask', is essential.

## 2. Building the Conversation

This cultural strategy draws on extensive research and has been led and supported by a steering group, membership of which includes representatives of Bristol City Council (staff and elected members), Wesport, VOSCUR, Watershed, BCDP and a sample of people drawn from Bristol's professional creative community.

The strategy has involved over 150 conversations and a workshop programme which has played a vital role in engaging as inclusively as possible not only with the city's cultural sector but with a range of other communities. A summary of workshops is provided in Appendix 3.

### 2.1 Three Themes

The strategy has three themes which were developed through this research. They are informed by Bristol's unique cultural identity and sense of place, while challenging the city to think and do differently. They are also influenced by the four strategic pillars identified at a Bristol Culture Inquiry Day in late 2015 (see Appendix 2).

## Theme 1: City of openness

The cultural sector in Bristol has thrived through its openness and generosity – it is relatively informal, networks are organic and the overarching sense of identity is one of tolerance, inclusion, sharing and environmental sustainability.

However, individual organisations and artists have limited capacity to reach out and ensure Bristol culture as a whole is open. Approaches to planning and development have previously been too closed to the possibilities of a culture-led approach.

*This theme is about increasing cultural participation through partnership and leadership; the development of capacity and infrastructure across a more connected city; and a clear offer of cultural education and routes into employment. As the city's population changes, so will its culture. This brings new voices, types of cultural practice and identity'.*

*It also focuses on the role of culture in place-making: expanding notions of a cultural intervention so that culture shapes our approach to sports provision, housing, transport, health, education, wellbeing and public space.*

## Theme 2: City of imagination

The cultural sector in Bristol has flourished across the city's spaces and places, many of which have been produced and actively encouraged by visionary and passionate Bristolians. They have given Bristol a longstanding reputation for innovation, especially in the fusion of art and science, creativity and technology. But do we make the most of our creative talent when we plan for Bristol's future(s)? Can we position culture to fire the imagination of all our communities in all our districts? Can we utilise culture as a resource for re-imagining the city's economy, its transport and housing infrastructure, and its identity?

*This theme is about re-imagining the city through culture. To deliver this, Bristol will need to extend its lab and studio culture across the city. Bristol can also be a place that champions the unlimited imagination: where, for example, disability is not a barrier to active cultural participation.*

*For Bristol to be inclusive and ambitious, reaching out and sparking the imagination is a necessity. This will involve championing the messy, marginal, radical, and avant-garde; commissioning the unknown; finding new uses for heritage assets; and trusting our cultural organisations to work with their audiences and users in shaping Bristol's constantly changing culture.*

## Theme 3: City of originators

Bristol is a city of artists, creatives and makers. Small-scale and independent enterprises help fuel a high-tech high-growth creative economy. Bristol's strengths in advanced engineering and aerospace technology, its pioneering animation and wildlife film clusters, and its radical arts all exemplify the city's power of origination in the space where science, technology and creativity meet. The universities and larger cultural organisations play a vital enabling role, convening collaboration, encouraging R&D and bringing about innovation and growth. But not enough originators can go beyond R&D and the creative economy is not accessible to many from across the city's diverse communities.

*This theme is about championing the city's originators to develop productive and sustainable careers in Bristol and to open ways for the city's full talent base to contribute to success. It is about the enabling conditions for creative practice, where there is a real danger that growing inequality, increasing social fragmentation, and heightened property and operating costs will prevent the collaboration which Bristol thrives on.*

*It is important that Bristol nurtures an ecosystem of diverse practice – from artists' studios to new festivals; neighbourhood-based events, to internationally significant cultural commissioning. It is also vital that new ways of working and investing enable organisations and businesses to grow so that talent stays in the city and can define its future(s)*

# 3. A Cultural Framework for Bristol

This cultural strategy proposes a different approach to partnership and investment. The old certainties where Bristol City Council operates as the primary public funder and lead body will be replaced by a new reality of sharing, openness, collaboration and a more mixed economy for investment. What is certain is that Bristol is operating from a position of relative strength:

- The economy is resilient and growing, with new jobs being created and new investment in the pipeline. Transport improvements and new development sites in the city and across the city-region – including the Temple Quarter, Filton airfield and major new housing plans – will contribute to this.
- The population is increasing, getting younger and more diverse, giving the city a youthful and international energy and providing opportunities to address skills shortages and to secure new audiences.
- The ‘brand’ of Bristol is increasingly recognised nationally and internationally. This is evidenced by growth in the visitor

economy and the continued role played by and popularity of the universities.

- The approach to culture-led partnership and collaboration across the city is exemplary. This includes: the commitment of both universities to aligning institutional, civic and cultural interests; the expressed commitment of Business West and the Local Enterprise Partnership to culture as a driver for economic development; and the maturity of the conversation amongst arts organisations regarding a changing investment landscape for culture.
- The approach to cultural leadership is positive. The elected mayor’s declared commitment to culture, the role of the universities, and ACE’s support for Bristol via its National Portfolio Organisations and the MoU with the University of the West of England will help to ensure culture remains a priority.
- The city has the raw materials: the talent, heritage, organisations, businesses, audiences and attitude to embark on a very exciting period of culture-led city-making. It has an economy of scale and ecology of excellence and innovation capable of transforming opportunities across the city and of taking Bristol to the next level in terms of its national and international standing as a city of culture.

To build from these qualities and for culture to play a transformational role in the future of Bristol, there are six priority intervention areas.

## 3.1 Bristol Cultural Leadership Group

**What?** A new cultural leadership group for the city in which cultural organisations and representatives come together with the city council, voluntary sector, universities and business to align strategic agendas and be a clear platform for cultural partnership and investment.

The Bristol Cultural Leadership Group will include:

- 5 partners from the DIY Arts Group
- 5 partners from the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership
- The partners currently operating within the Steering Group for this Cultural Strategy.

The group would be responsible for the delivery of this cultural strategy and its key themes. It would be tasked with developing an action plan and ensuring its delivery.

To ensure that the group can deliver, it will require a part-time champion – potentially a senior cultural figure who can galvanise support, manage the delivery of projects and ensure that there is buy-in at the highest level into its work. The group will conduct its work through 'Task and Finish' groups established on key areas of delivery.

**Why?** To ensure there is a shared cultural platform for the city; that partners know where to go to explore cultural opportunities; and that there is clear leadership in times of crisis or opportunity.

- It will operate as the platform for culture-related policy and investment agendas across the city.
- It will lead advocacy and strategic engagement activities – prioritising culture and economy, education, health and wellbeing, and planning.
- It will play a leadership role in fund-raising and attracting different types of investment and partnership for culture.
- It will take guidance from the wider cultural sector through active partnership and engagement.



Courtesy of Wesport.

## 3.2. Cultural Investment and Infrastructure

**What?** *A commitment to becoming a leading city for innovative approaches to cultural investment. Led and driven by the city's new leadership group, a range of measures will be explored which will increase the flow of alternative sources of finance (i.e. non-grant-funded).*

**Why?** *To transform the investment landscape for culture in a time of structural, political and technological change – to create a growing, resilient and agile cultural sector. Sources of revenue and capital for culture will be diversified and grown, enabling culture to play a transformational role for the city. And sustainable solutions will be found for the city's cultural infrastructure – attending to renovation needs, expansion plans and gaps in provision.*

Key issues to explore:

- How to increase the investment going into culture in Bristol at a time when public funding is being squeezed.
- How to widen the funding base for cultural organisations so that they better connect with the opportunities of a more diverse and youthful population.
- How to extend the funding base for cultural organisations so they can better connect with the wider economy, private sector and philanthropic giving.

- How to support cultural organisations to take advantage of new and emerging forms of investment including crowd funding, social investment and equity funding.
- How to support cultural organisations so that they can increase the investment and revenue they generate from commercial and earned income and explore new business models.
- How the public sector (including Bristol City Council) can use its resources and powers to unlock new revenue streams (e.g. via planning gain).
- What can be done through collaboration at a city and city-region level.

Considerations are introduced in Appendix 1 – a paper which explores different types of investment and partnership for culture.

Partners can explore opportunities such as:

- Private sector investment – e.g. in corporate giving and sponsorship, equity investment in leading-edge cultural organisations and creative businesses, and in-kind support through technical expertise and space.
- Cultural investment through Business Improvement Districts (BID) and in major new developments.
- Cultural back-office and systems: options for shared services (e.g. accounting and insurance) identified so cultural organisations can reduce costs overall.

- Audience and Intellectual Property (IP) test-beds – collaborative R&D activities with the university sector to unlock commercial and knowledge assets across the cultural sector.
- ‘Meanwhile’ (temporary) use of property (from across the commercial and public sectors), with astute use of community asset transfers (and parallel capacity-building activities); and strong culture-led commitments to workspace provision in new-builds.
- A coordinated approach to cultural infrastructure investment – in line with the priorities set out by the city’s Infrastructure working group (to which the partners in the leadership group are committed) and targeting investment through the WELEP Infrastructure Fund.



*Dave the Crane*

## 3.3 Bristol Cultural Pathways

**What?** Consolidation and growth of cultural education and participation across the city – prioritising inclusion; advocating for the arts; more effectively placing cultural and creative activities at the heart of the curriculum and school experience; and enabling a clear route from cultural learning and participation into skills development, further and higher education, employment, and continuous development throughout working lives

**Why?** Bristol is the first city in England to become part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, affirming the city’s strong commitment to lifelong learning. If Bristol is to flourish, then partners will need to commit to arts, creative and cultural education. This is to enrich the lives of young people and build a culturally active population for the future via continuous access to culture and cultural education. In turn this can generate pathways for long-term cultural participation, technical and professional development, and routes to employment in the cultural sector and creative industries.

Bristol could have the most joined-up creative economy in the UK. This would include a committed and coordinated approach to arts, creative sector and cultural education (see below); the development of clear and accessible skills programmes which link talent to employment (including self-employment); and a continued learning and skills offer which enables the talent base to constantly re-skill, adapt and explore opportunities throughout their careers and across the city.

Vital here will be stronger partnerships that connect cultural participation, education and pathways. Steps might include:

- Science, culture and technology education pathfinders – led by a cohort of cultural and science organisations and schools that connect STEM subjects to the arts and cultural sector as part of the Bristol Cultural Curriculum (see below). This will trial the convergence of science and cultural learning and commission scientists and artists to collaborate to generate new learning tools and experiences.
- The Bristol Cultural Curriculum (driven by Bristol Cultural Education Partnership – BCEP) is an excellent idea based on a shared cultural education offer for schools. Co-designed by cultural organisations and participating schools, this is a way of building in culture and the arts so that STEM becomes STEAM and education is linked to employment opportunities in the cultural and creative industries. The Bristol Cultural Curriculum has scope for expansion across the city and to feed directly into the research and skills development activities of the universities and FE colleges.
- Bristol Plays Music (BPM) – as the national government-funded music hub – is already having a big impact for many young people across the whole city with around 10,000 hours of music teaching across the more socially disadvantaged areas from Hartcliffe to Southmead. Developing a joined-up approach which links early years' provision to skills development for the creative industries will enable effective talent development and more focused outcomes.

## 3.4. Districts of Culture

**What?** *A city that embraces its full diversity and the transformed culture this brings. An annual Districts of Culture programme where two districts per year feature as the 'priority areas' for investment and partnership from across the cultural sector (in addition to normal core business considerations). This will shine a light on culture in different districts of the city, provide a platform for cross-city cultural exchange, and enable two districts per year to benefit from intensive culture-led change.*

**Why?** *To rebalance the city-centred focus of investment. To embrace the city's changing cultural landscape and to build cultural capacity and confidence; to celebrate the city's diversity; to connect the city across its diverse physical and cultural geography.*

Districts of Culture will be where partners can trial and demonstrate best practice in cultural engagement, learning and skills, and commissioning. It will ensure that there is a more strategic approach to working across the city. It is an opportunity to explore how the cultural landscape of Bristol is changing through new ways of collaborating. The types of thing that the two districts will benefit from might include:

- Neighbourhood showcases at the M Shed – making the work available to a wider audience at a key central venue.
- A touring programme from the city's cultural organisations.
- Inter-district residency, touring and commissioning activities led by each District of Culture – generating dialogue

between communities from different parts of the city.

- Cultural innovation activities in partnership with the universities and key organisations in health, education and business to trial culture-led interventions – e.g. in cultural prescribing for health and wellbeing outcomes; in workforce and audience development; and in regeneration activities such as ‘meanwhile’ use cultural hubs at the heart of the district(s).
- Cultural destinations profiling: promoting the Districts of Culture through Destination Bristol and Bristol and Bath Cultural Destinations activities.
- A set of legacy commitments – to be co-defined with Bristol’s communities.



## 3.5 Cultural Place-making

**What?** A culture for Bristol place-making programme which positions the city’s cultural sector as a resource of expertise and creativity which can transform the quality of the city’s public spaces; give energy and personality to the tourism offer; drive approaches to inward investment and talent attraction / retention; and ensure the city is open and inclusive.

**Why?** In Bristol place matters. This is evident in the ways senses of place are passionately and evocatively described by Bristolians of every background. The places of Bristol are cultural – rippling with meaning, associated with certain characteristics and continually contested. Place is a universal reference point for all citizens – whether it be the city’s place in the UK or the world, the rivalry of football teams from the north (Rovers) and the south (City) of Bristol, the psycho-geography of the city’s edgelands (such as Severn Beach, Leigh Woods or the Avon’s banks), or the distinctive vernacular of the city’s many districts.

The city is also home to some major cultural place-makers – such as leading arts producers Situations, the Pervasive Media Studio (which has pioneered the Playable City across the world) and The Architecture Centre – and vital arts organisations that have played a transformational role in their local communities (whether these be local or communities of practice) from Spike Island to Knowle West Media Centre, Tobacco Factory to Tribe of Doris, Acta to St. George’s, Travelling Light Theatre to Trinity.

The importance of place is recognised at a policy level via the Place Directorate (within which the Arts and Culture team is located). This works to ensure the city is a great place in which to live, work and visit. To deliver this, it focuses on improving the quality of place, from the city centre to the individual districts. This includes a focus on economic development and prosperity; on inclusion and wellbeing; on planning, infrastructure and design (including one of the best art in the public realm programmes in the UK); and on culture.

The opportunity in Bristol is for each of these place-making elements to be understood as cultural interventions, and in doing so value and support culture-led improvements to the city. In turn this will help to build the capacity of the cultural sector, generating greater economic and social value, and it will positively influence attitudes to Bristol as a place to do cultural work and as a place to 'live culture'. Opportunities include:

- New ways of investing in cultural activities and infrastructure across the city (revenue and capital), with clear guidelines for unlocking developer contributions (see Section 3.2).
- Housing. Houses and the neighbourhoods they shape are themselves cultural interventions. Bristol can pioneer housing-led growth as a cultural programme. It can also explore opportunities for a percentage of artists' work-live facilities as part of the affordable housing and employment space commitment.
- Night-time economy review. Bristol currently has a strong night-time economy but this may be challenged by new developments in the city centre, and should also be subject to critical review given its privileging of specific

demographics. One option here is to audit and review the current night-time economy of the city, develop a strategy for its renewal and development, and consider options to champion Bristol as a city that celebrates its clubs, bars and alternative cultural offer. Amsterdam and London are high profile cities with a 'night mayor/ tsar'. Bristol might consider a similar direction if culture is to thrive after dark.

- Cultural tourism coordination. Building on the work of the Bristol and Bath Cultural Destinations programme, opportunities for shared programming and promotion, and the more effective promotion of the city's heritage assets, are vital.
- A coordinated community offer with Wesport – the Sports Partnership for the West of England – aligning with the Wesport Strategy 2016-20: Improving Lives. Wesport's values of 'Passion, Respect, Integrity, Diversity, Excellence' are of real relevance to this cultural strategy. Opportunities exist to coordinate activities – e.g. cultural organisations to partner with Wesport to jointly approach schools for after-school programming; a shared presence at Wesport-led community and 'mass participation' events; and a coordinated approach to recruiting volunteers.
- Coordination in the festivals and events sector. Bristol is a city of festivals and events. They are one of the main ways the city tells its stories – about itself and to the world. Bristol can, with a development programme brokered by the Bristol Festivals and Events Forum, consolidate, coordinate and grow its festivals offer. This can include shared skills and knowledge exchange, coordinated procurement of local cultural producers and artists, and a R&D strand that cuts

across the whole festival landscape to encourage the use of new technologies and connection between the arts, science and technology.



## 3.6. Unlimited Collaboration

**What?** A commitment to supporting collaboration, talent development and innovation with the aim to position Bristol as a globally recognised city for the convergence of creative and technology, culture and science. This will include a set of pathfinder R&D activities to explore the relationships between the universities and culture, technology and creativity. It will also champion and support the work of Bristol's cultural sector working in partnership with health, social care, sport and other sectors which play a key role in the health and wellbeing of the city.

**Why?** To open the creative possibilities of the city to all communities and individuals. Bristol is a leading European city for the convergence of the arts, the creative sector, science and technology. The arts and cultural sector plays a critical role in this ecosystem, infusing the city with the ideas and energy of creative originators and providing the R&D which shapes innovation as well as the atmosphere and cultural life conducive to talent development, retention and attraction.

*This will embed the city's successful lab and studio culture (which is so vital to the arts and creative sectors), within community, health, wellbeing and inclusion agendas.*

Partners may consider:

- Championing organisations and programmes where Bristol is showing genuine innovation. The ParaOrchestra and Extraordinary Bodies are exemplars of openness and the

celebration of unlimited human potential. The city's huge strengths in circus and outdoor arts also offer so much potential in opening up the city. A re-born St. Paul's Carnival can also demonstrate the city's intercultural credentials, by reaching out across the city and bringing the city to St. Paul's, and by engaging newer communities from across Europe and Africa.



- A culture for health and wellbeing platform. A priority role for the new leadership group will be to set out a cultural offer to the health and social sectors based on genuine shared agendas and the co-creation of opportunities for culture-led health and wellbeing innovation and provision. This can in turn mobilise new types of partnership and commissioning as seen in Create Gloucestershire.
- Science, culture and technology education pathfinders and catalysts. A city-wide response to the ACE and University of the West of England MoU on Bristol as a City of Arts and Technology is needed. This can explore opportunities to build on initial outcomes of cross-sector collaborations: convening collaborative research, prototyping, critical discussion and cultural production in ways that connect art and science, the humanities and technology. This can be through co-located lab-based activities in cultural and education institutions, plus there is a major opportunity to embed collaborative practice across the city – e.g. in district-based hubs, businesses and education and health settings.
- International positioning and collaboration. If Bristol is to grow as an inclusive and ambitious city, internationalisation must be a priority. As the lead city for the UK Core Cities' international strategy, Bristol can and must demonstrate openness in how it supports culture-led development and it must recognise its local cultures as global in their reach and relevance. The universities with their reach have a clear role here.

## 4. Next Steps

Delivering this strategy will require a joined-up and concerted effort from a wide range of partners, local, regional, national and international. The next steps required to begin implementing the strategy are:

- 1) The Bristol Cultural Leadership Group to be established. This will include securing funding for the first year for the part-time champion to drive the group forward.
- 2) Members of the leadership group to set out a clear action plan for the strategy. This will involve consultations with a wider network of partners across the cultural sector and in other key sectors. This process will also identify further shared opportunities in addition to those already outlined. A 'Big Culture Conversation' focused on funding and income generation will be a priority.
- 3) For a quick win, the leadership group should consider introducing some pilot or test-bed activities. It should also work quickly to establish practical delivery plans for favoured interventions – e.g. for Districts of Culture.
- 4) Together with regional and national partners, the leadership group should consider what additional sources of funding might be required to connect the strategy to a wider set of opportunities. This means ensuring that regeneration and place-making projects in the pipeline are fully connected to culture and that early opportunities to make a difference are not missed.

- 5) It is vital that the leadership group begin the process of exploring how culture can be better integrated into the commissioning process and the delivery of health and wellbeing outcomes because they are such important elements of an inclusive city.
- 6) Similarly, because the population of Bristol is changing so fast, the leadership group should set out a policy and process for cultural inclusion which tests every priority in terms of how it works for the whole city.



## Appendix 1: Investment Options Paper

See separate document.

## Appendix 2: The Four Pillars

The Four Pillars of Bristol's Cultural Future(s) were initially developed through the city's Cultural Inquiry Day, held in December 2015. They have since been adapted to ensure they are inclusive of the key ingredients of a successful city of culture, and capable of underpinning the three themes and priority actions of this cultural strategy. The four pillars are presented below:

### Equality & Inclusion

**Cultural participation:** active cultural lives in every district, contributing to healthier, happier communities.

**Cultural ownership:** a new era of increased engagement and participation which opens up ownership of Bristol culture to communities across the city.

**Cultural planning:** a city where culture is a key influence on planning, development and design – toward excellence and inclusion in place-making.

### Connectivity & Collaboration

**Cultural leadership:** a clear designated group / platform to advocate for culture and ensure culture is a priority agenda for investment and planning.

**Cultural partnership:** a strong working relationship within the cultural sector and between the cultural sector and the rest of civil society

**International culture:** where the international is local and the local international.

### Talent & Learning

**Cultural learning:** culture, arts and creative sector packaged to provide a compelling offer as a STEAM agenda.

**Cultural pathways:** clearly structured and brokered opportunities for progression

**Innovation and excellence:** university and culture-led R&D, teaching and infrastructure which positions Bristol as a leading city for creative and digital.

### Cultural Expressions

**Independent cultural production:** an active nurturing environment for myriad locally-driven cultural events and festivals.

**Exchange:** of knowledge and skills, plus coordinated programming and fund-raising across the cultural sector.

**Cultural infrastructure:** continued renewal and development of the city's physical infrastructure to facilitate organisational growth, scale-up festival capacity, and generate new audiences and revenue streams.

## Appendix 3: Workshops

Workshops included:

- **Bristol as an international city of culture.** This workshop brought together cultural and educational partners to explore how Bristol 'does international', how it can do better, and how it can connect international and local activities. It resulted in a new thought leadership paper which is published via @culturalbristol
- **Culture and community value.** Co-hosted by VOSCUR, this workshop brought together people from across the community, voluntary and education sectors of the city. It focused on how we open up cultural opportunity, different models for procurement and engagement, and alternative approaches to commissioning and partnership.
- **Bristol as an intercultural city.** Co-hosted by the Black South West Network, this workshop explored how Bristol operates as an intercultural city. It discussed the city's incredible range of cultural activities and identified the main challenges to and opportunities for diverse cultural practice to flourish.
- **Bristol's festivals and events.** Co-hosted by Bristol Festival and Events Forum, this workshop explored how the sector can grow, diversify, innovate and play a more strategic role for the city.
- **Children and young people.** Co-hosted by the Bristol Creative Youth Network, this very interactive workshop explored different senses of identity and place and worked to re-imagine a future Bristol which is more open and relevant to the diverse interests of young people.
- **Digital Creatives.** Co-hosted by the Pervasive Media Studio, this workshop explored how Bristol delivers the enabling conditions for creative practice and creative business. This included a focus on the key spaces and platforms, networks and support programmes. It also focused on different senses of place, aspirations for the city and ideas for improvement of the city's creative and knowledge infrastructure.
- **Additional workshop-style interventions.** These have involved participation in previously planned events – where *Bristol's Cultural Future(s)* has secured a slot on the agenda. This includes two meetings of the DIY Arts Network and a symposium on higher education and cultural partnerships (hosted by Watershed; produced by BCDP).