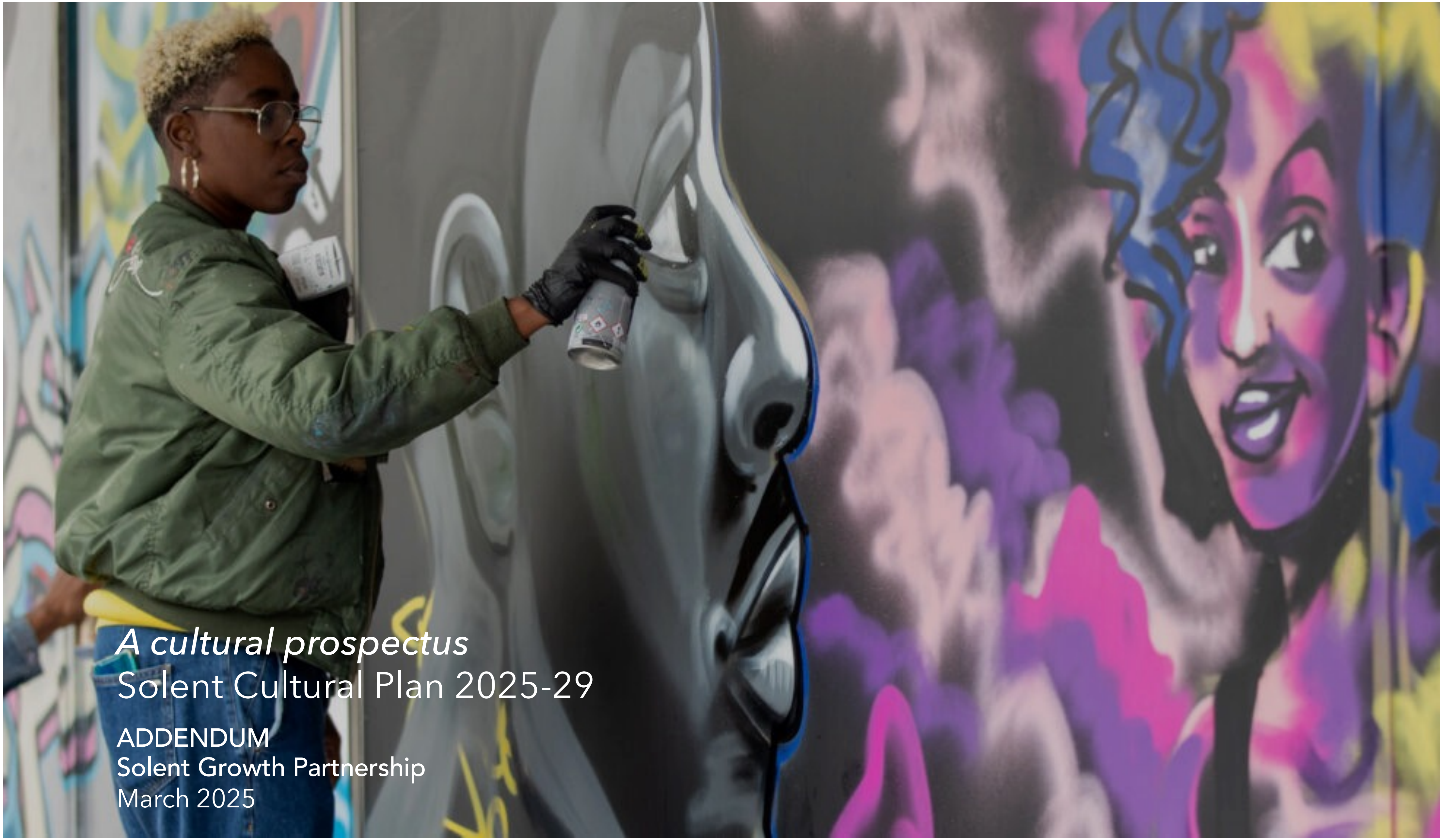

A cultural prospectus
Solent Cultural Plan 2025-29

ADDENDUM
Solent Growth Partnership
March 2025

ctconsults. The Intelligence Agency

CONTENTS

Cultural ecosystem

| ˈkʌltʃ(ə)rəl ˈiːkəʊˌsɪstɪm/

Noun ecology
1.a cultural community of interacting people and their physical environment.
2."the Solent arts, culture and creative ecosystem is one of the naturally richest in the country"
3.(in general use) a complex network or interconnected system relating to the arts, customs and social behaviour of a society.

Commissioned for Solent Growth Partnership

Cover image: Multi-Stories Westquay Southampton.
https://southamptonforward.org.uk/multi-stories/
Graffiti artist Carleen De Sözer. Courtesy RCM.
Back cover image: Victorious Festival, Portsmouth

D1. EVIDENCE BASE (SUMMARY)

A full **Insights Report** is available. This section includes some summary elements of this report which provides an aggregated evidence base for the strategy.

D1.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The conversations and workshops have explored topics such as:

— Proposition & narrative. The challenge of developing a Solent-wide proposition which is distinct, whilst also celebrating its distinctive cities, towns and environment;

— Investment. The need for a clear investment proposition for the cultural sector in Solent;

— Investment. The need to prioritise the cultural and creative industries for strategic investment, and how that sits within the wider investment needs of the Solent region;

— Working practice. The advantages and challenges of collaboration across the region;

— Talent. Skills needs, talent retention & development and the role of the education cluster;

— Sector needs. Cultural infrastructure, funding and partnership requirements;

— Sector needs. The role of culture in placemaking, regeneration and community building;

— Sector needs. How this plan might support other local cultural strategies – and how it supports other plans, strategies, ambitions and policies (including Carbon Net Zero);

— Sector needs. How the cultural economy is performing, its links to economic development, and other related sectors such as tourism and leisure;

— Strategic. What is needed for a successful Cultural Plan to also be sustainable in the longer-term.

"We lack a feeling of being a destination."
Stakeholder comment

Can this strategy have enough focus and specificity as 'Solent'?

The findings were navigated to some degree through key areas of focus. This was in response to the brief and preliminary conversations with stakeholders that helped to further define the scope of analysis. A core theme was how sector players work with their partners, communities and councils effectively – within and across local authority 'borders'. The action planning that will flow from the strategy can address small, localised tasks as well as longer-term structural, regional initiatives.

"Our approach should be little and often, not big and shiny, for the impact to really be felt."
Stakeholder comment

...and be able to be effectively monitored and evaluated?

Analysis identified a wealth of (cumulative) data capture, analysis and insight, with the potential for more regional data aggregation. A Solent-wide response to this could be transformational over time in terms of informing planning and operations, but also advocacy and case-making – within councils (and through Solent Growth Partnership) and with regional and national funders like Arts

D1. EVIDENCE BASE (SUMMARY)

Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the next generation of regional investment support funds.

Does this report indicate both a shared ambition and a willingness to pursue that ambition together?

Capacity and (financial) resource are always significant limiting factors in activating and sustaining change-making programmes. What has been very evident in this process is how quickly stakeholders have moved past this issue (and not returned to it). There is quite rightly a strong place-based focus, especially where established networks and shared programmes exist. It will be interesting to track how being involved as a regional player and partner is realised. But for now, the examples that the cultural sector and stakeholders can point to as examples of intent and delivery are positive.

"Victorious really put their money where their mouth is. It's lovely to see that relationship and there's very high levels of trust and regard for them locally. Their support for culture is extraordinary."
Stakeholder comment

This regional mindset can be beneficial for the full spectrum of the cultural offer across Solent – city to rural, major player to grassroots programmes, cross-cutting social and economic agendas – and to the key partner infrastructure that supports it, not least local authorities, further and higher education.

Realism and relevance are potential booby-traps for a strategic plan. They can give stakeholders permission to step away from being a part of the forward programme: "that's not relevant to us". However, the findings have illustrated a diverse potential mix of strategic recommendations so that most (and hopefully all) cultural players can find something in it for them – individually or as place-based collectives. This will be a mixture of the regional, and more local or thematically specific or time specific.

What can we aim to achieve in the next 3-5 years? What is a reasonable timeframe to see positive impacts?

Again, any action planning needs to have a blend of short, mid and longer-term activities. Some of these should be developmental and using the opportunities that a regional view affords – pilots, action research that can start in one place and roll-out. Some can be open programmes – like skills training in digital transformation. Some will be about enhancing existing systems, networks and projects, e.g. supporting Creative Island, Folio New Forest, Portsmouth Creates, Southampton Forward. The key will be to set goals that have a rolling timeframe of delivery, creating opportunities to review, report and then 'go again'. This is important for advocacy and case-making on an ongoing basis as well – many programmes are supported on a discretionary basis by the local authorities and that is never taken for granted. An ability to report regular positive news and impacts – from the cultural community and the people they serve – is key to being able to maintain momentum in delivery of the strategy. And then to review and renew its vision.

D1. EVIDENCE BASE (SUMMARY)

D1.2 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Broad & deep cultural asset base. 2. Cultural strategies /development agencies in place. 3. Further & higher education cluster. 4. High-quality green capital. 5. Southampton UK City of Culture 2025 bid / legacy. 6. Strategic investments via ACE, Levelling Up. 7. Creative economy cluster workforce of 40,000. 8. The home of the original modern music festival. 9. Global hub for marine and maritime sectors.	1. Poor connectivity within and across whole region. 2. Visitor economy is often focussed on cruises, rarely leading to local visits. 3. Lack of coherent place narrative. 4. Historic under-investment from strategic agencies. 5. Lack of data sharing across region. 6. Weak collaborative approach to funding / investment. 7. Emerging evidence base for investment in cultural & creative industries.

Opportunities	Threats
1. Increased interest from strategic development agency / inclusion in key strategies. 2. Renewed interest from strategic funders. 3. Film Office development (at feasibility). 4. Regional role of Solent Growth Partnership. 5. 'Pilot & roll out' model. 6. Greater networking within / across region and sector. 7. New investments in cultural infrastructure. 8. Cultural tourism underdeveloped visitor market. 9. Shared cultural narrative to build prominence of cultural sector, leading to strategic investment.	1. 'Central South' vs. 'Solent' zones: potential confusion. 2. Brain drain from proximity to London / other places. 3. Political uncertainty, leading to short-term thinking, reduced collaboration. 4. Feelings of regional inequality re: investment. 5. Over-tourism / over-reliance issues, in certain areas. 6. Maritime economy dependency leads to cultural economy being deprioritised. 7. Lack of artist studios / creative spaces. 8. Cost of living / property prices make economic stability difficult for freelance creative workforce. 9. Changing council roles as funders / cultural leaders.

D1.3 ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SUMMARY

In following a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) approach, sectors reviewed included Civil Society; Creative Industries; Cultural Sector; Digital Sector; Gambling; Sport; Telecoms; and Tourism.

Data analysis set out the employment across a set of creative industries clusters, which totalled 41,569 jobs. The more traditionally understood cultural industry jobs (creative arts, entertainment, libraries, museums and cultural activities) accounted for 12% of this total (5,085 jobs). Cultural employment value (GVA) was estimated at £220m. It is worth noting that digital jobs represents half of total regional wages and 58% of total GVA from the DCMS combined sectors.

Digital sector jobs contribute a much larger GVA per head (£75,000) than the average DCMS job (£48,000), however DCMS jobs are predominantly knowledge-based and export-oriented, meaning they generate a greater impact for the economy than most population-driven jobs (such as in hospitality and retail services).

The South-East is the largest employer in the UK after London, with 14% of the UK's jobs. This equates to an estimated £125 billion in annual wages and £266 billion in GVA for all industries. The South

D1. EVIDENCE BASE (SUMMARY)

East contributes 16% of all DCMS jobs in the UK, which means that there is a proportionately larger concentration of these industries in the region. DCMS industries in the South-East generate an estimated £33 billion in GVA per annum, and £24 billion in wages. Averages wages in the South-East are the second highest in the UK (after London), with DCMS sector wages particularly high.

When compared with other parts of the South-East region, the Solent region has a smaller proportion of population and employment, and a predominantly lower-wage and GVA industry profile. This indicates opportunities for growth in DCMS employment, based on proximity to other region employment nodes, a growth in digital and creatives industries, and anchored by many of the lifestyle attributes of the region. Increasing DCMS industry wages in Solent to the London average could increase total wages per annum by £203 million.

The full report also addresses a number of cultural economic drivers, and has informed emerging strategic priorities. It also takes a view on cultural infrastructure. A focus on developing core cultural infrastructure can provide the platform to support extensive performance, development, training and education programmes.

With the changing employment and industry profile of port cities, traditional trade-related jobs can be augmented through innovative and knowledge-based development, and strategies that leverage other strengths in cultural and creative industries.

New or growing cultural hub spaces can emerge from disused private or government sites (for example the Historic Dockyards in Portsmouth). Design and curation of arts hubs need to consider the provision of internal public spaces for tenants to enable greater opportunities for cross-pollination amongst creatives, organisations and audiences.

Cultural organisations can benefit from affordable, accessible spaces available that will accommodate their full schedule of activities. As many of the cultural and creative assets in Solent are small businesses or even individual creatives, the sharing of knowledge and innovations that arise from co-location can be extremely valuable.

"the Spring in Havant is somewhere that does really well in engaging communities."
Stakeholder comment

Local authorities benefit through an increase in people accessing arts services which increases traffic into the region and spending on hospitality and retail. Spending on arts services also has flow-on effects to the local economy through employees of the facilities. Collaborative facilities create opportunities for safe, active and connected communities, which enhances the liveability and vibrancy of the region.

D2. LIST OF CONSULTEES

Organisation
Adumbration Arts Ltd.
Art Asia
Arts Council England
Artswork
a space arts
Aspex Gallery
BlackBox Theatre Company
City Eye
City of Portsmouth College
Creative Island
Creative Network South
Crying Out Loud
Eastleigh Borough Council
Fareham Borough Council
Fratton Big Local
Gosport Borough Council
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Hampshire County Council
Hampshire Cultural Trust
Havant Council
In Focus Education and Development
Isle of Wight Council
Makers Guild CIC
MAST Mayflower Studios
Minstead Trust
Misty Ceramics
Motiv8 South
New Forest District Council
New Forest Heritage Centre
New Forest Show

Organisation
New Theatre Royal
Ports Fest
Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth Creates
Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust
Royal Armouries – Fort Nelson
Sandown Carnival
Social Enterprise Link
SoCo Music Project
Solent NHS
Solent Partners
Solent University
Southampton & Isle of Wight Music
Southampton City Council
Southampton Forward
The Berry Theatre
The Brickworks Museum
The Common Space
The Diving Museum
The Mary Rose Trust
The Point Eastleigh
Tourism South East
TravelRest Hotels Ltd.
University of Portsmouth
University of Southampton
Ventnor Exchange
Visit Portsmouth
Winchester Design Festival
Winchester School of Art
World Cities Culture Forum

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D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

MARSEILLE & THE CALANQUES NATIONAL PARK

The biodiverse landscapes of the Calanques National Park provide breath-taking scenery, water sports and leisure activities near to the port city of Marseille. The city's destination management brand is 'Sustainable Marseille', leaning heavily on the wider National Park and landscape to promote visits across the region. Alongside the cultural offer in the city, this approach creates a holistic tourism experience.

Marseille has also started working in a wider regional economic partnership with Aix en Provence, targeting cultural tourism development opportunities.

SANTANDER & BILBAO

'The Guggenheim effect', as it has become known, is the result of Bilbao's approach to regeneration using signature culture and design investments. Prior to this, it was an industrial port with issues around pollution in both the air and water, and the industrial landscape means there are no beaches. Nearby city Santander has also invested in a new gallery, hoping to attract the same visitor demographics for dual-city trips. With better access to the water, Santander offers beaches and water-based activities. A regular bus service connects the two cities across just over 100km. There are two return ferry departures per week from Portsmouth to Bilbao / Santander.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

ANTWERP & ‘SLOW URBANISM’

An industrial port town that suffered in the 1980s from ‘dead zones’, traffic congestion and crime – Antwerp’s approach to regeneration was both short and long-term. Are-specific projects in key problem areas were delivered alongside longer-term, strategic, holistic interventions. A former railway site, ‘Spoor Noord’, was transformed into a landscape park to provide ‘green lungs’ for the city, recreation facilities and start-up spaces for SMEs. A Chief City Architect was appointed to ensure spatial quality and liveability. The Sint Andries district is a designated ‘smart zone’ where new smart technologies are piloted and citizen feedback gathered, before implementation across the city. Blue Gate North is under development as an eco-effective, water-bound business park – one to watch.

HUMBER ESTUARY – THE EASTERN GATEWAY

Another economic region united – or divided – by water. Another area undergoing devolution and with a major Freeport, that is made up of multiple local authorities with challenges around connectivity, shared identity and historic underinvestment (and with the impact on image that brings). The Humber region has many commonalities with Solent, past and present. Two universities are equally active with industry research and civic / cultural engagement, building Hull’s year as UK City of Culture in 2017. It has been positioning as the ‘energy estuary’ in recent years, placing itself – with good justification – as being at the heart of decarbonisation and the renewables sector.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

WEST OF ENGLAND

A cultural compact case study

A regional compact model, covering a hard-to-define area for residents, practitioners and visitors. Why regional? To align with and plug into wider regional recovery and inclusive growth plans. It had a high-level profile including the LEP, combined and local authorities and four universities, alongside cultural consortia and destination management organisations.

The Cultural Cities Recovery Report refers to the Cultural Compact as a key vehicle for "*delivering local recovery and renewal in cities and towns, providing strategic leadership, increasing local capacity and promoting efficient, sustainable use of resources to increase places' ability to attract investment, build local talent and enterprises, and reanimate city and town centres*". For the West of England, a coordinator role was a key driver for progress.

"Those who know the West of England love it, its super creativity, and its can-do attitude to take action and achieve results. This Cultural Plan will ensure even more people fall under the West of England's spell to build upon our already outstanding national and global success."
Dan Norris
West of England Metro Mayor

"The Cultural Compact is about helping people in the West enjoy better lives, better lived. It places culture and creativity front and centre of our jobs, skills, wellbeing and investment agenda. Our unique regional design makes us a trailblazer for national policy and an international beacon for this vital work."
Professor Sue Rigby
Chair, West of England Cultural Compact
Vice Chancellor, Bath Spa University

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

Six 'sprints' guided the Compact's work of influencing, auditing, evaluating and doing – informing regional strategy development.

1. Demonstrate the role of culture in placemaking and community renewal.
2. Extend and evaluate the potential of culture to support community and individual wellbeing.
3. Analysis and mapping of cultural asset provision and its capacity to address wider diversity and community needs.
4. Pilot ways to connect cultural assets and sustainable itineraries to help the region develop its heritage tourism.
5. Influence discussions and build a shared understanding around culture as a way to improve communities and to provide an inclusive environment.
6. Explore ways to build sustainable, inclusive talent pipelines.

The Compact employed a clear action-based approach:

— Progress work strands through the direction of stakeholders.
— Align activity with the Metro Mayor's Manifesto.
— Find ways to integrate cultural plans into regional strands.
— Commission local experts to undertake key aspects, with tightly drawn and rapid pieces of commissioned work.
— Publicise and communicate the work through WECA, the LEP and more widely to ensure regional engagement.

Lessons

1. Scheduling work packages as a driver for advocacy, e.g. case-making by delivering results based on a clear, shared programme, co-designed and co-produced where possible.
2. Alignment is the only way to impact regionally and locally.
3. WECA required and secured a clear strategic cultural plan and the partnerships in place to make a difference.
4. Culture and placemaking have a key role to play in delivering the Levelling Up agenda. WECA and the Metro Mayor can join up strategic activity to deliver integrated support – business, skills, transport, housing, environment.
5. "Levelling Up" of places without established cultural infrastructure should not mean a "Levelling Down" of places that already have thriving cultural sectors.
6. The West of England Cultural Compact would like to see:
   i. Devolved longer term funding to support the cultural sector to drive inclusive regeneration and economic growth.
   ii. Strengthened leadership role of Cultural Compacts including UK-wide networks of local authorities, artists and community organisations.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

ST AUSTELL

Borne out of a place branding starting point, in 2015 the Austell Project was incorporated as a community interest company – St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF). The group joined together to stimulate economic growth, enable funding streams, forge stronger relationships and are proud to act as the Coastal Community Team for the St Austell Bay area.

The Austell Project is funded from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Coastal Communities Fund and key project partners – including Town Council, County Council, Eden Project, St Austell Brewery and St Austell Print Company. Additional advocates include Sir Tim Smit, Emma Bridgewater, Geraint Richards (Head Forester for the Duchy of Cornwall), the Lord-Lieutenant of Cornwall.

Lessons

1. The place brand roots of the project created a focus on narrative activation and place marketing. Effective place partnership relies on making the case for how the town can be more than the sum of its parts. Is it a partnership of organisations or key 'movers and shakers'?
2. They have focused on essentially two things that they are known for and can 'own' – ceramics and environment (Eden). This helps to have clarity, and just needs good communications and diverse action planning to ensure that this does not exclude anything not ceramic or 'green'.
3. In this respect secondary areas of focus have been able to come through as areas for development: outdoor adventure tourism / innovation. This brings with it a welcome spotlight on young people, skills and talent retention and the creative industries.
4. The main website is trying to be B2B and B2C at the same time, which isn't advised. Other places like Shrewsbury have fallen into the same trap. They need to be clearer in how they engage and communicate, and that means more than one platform - which will help with the already promising profile they have generated for culture as part of the place-making mix.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

CREWE

The Crewe Cultural Forum is made up of 100+ people, committed to making culture central to the town's development. A core working group, including the Lyceum Theatre, Cheshire East Council, Crewe Town Council, Crewe Heritage Centre, Cheshire College South and West, South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and YMCA Crewe did the groundwork to identify main priorities for a joint strategy – but the 'forum' is very open and welcomes attendance from across the whole community.

Public engagement has included a series of "My Town Is Crewe" films. This has led to new partnerships and projects with young people and emerging artists, including establishing a male dance company, and community theatre company. The strategy identifies goals to support regeneration through culture and heritage, enabling creativity to help drive economic growth.

Purpose

— Give young people a sense of cultural identity and opportunities to explore it.
— Create confidence and distinction for culture in Crewe.
— Promote, celebrate and protect Crewe's unique heritage.
— Create a strong, sustainable creative and digital sector.
— Recognise culture's ability to impact health & wellbeing.
— Make Crewe a vibrant place that has culture and creativity at the heart of its economic success and appeal.

A core cultural strategy group is made up of representatives of key cultural organisations plus representatives from business education, voluntary and health sectors, with coordination by Cheshire East Council. This group plans to become constituted in its own right, to better pursue funding place-based opportunities. A wider Crewe Cultural Network has been set up, open to any interested party. This wider group holds proactive network receives and responds to updates from the Strategy Group.

Actions

— Reimagining Lyceum Square (awarded £750k).
— 3-year project for young people with opportunities to learn new skills and find out about routes into creative careers.
— Crewe's (post-) pandemic response.
— New youth arts & music strand within Towns Fund bid.
— Crewe Heritage Centre working to Museum Accreditation.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland's model started out as a cultural partnership led / facilitated and administered by the University, City Council and Music & Arts Trust. Its aim was to coordinate cultural vision, promote joint planning and facilitate better engagement between cultural partners across Wearside (Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, National Glass Centre, Cultural Spring, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Arts Centre Washington, Sunderland Empire, North-East Photography Network, Libraries Service and Canny Space).

The partnership was instrumental in driving Sunderland's 2021 UK City of Culture bid (unsuccessful as a bid, but with a strong and continuing legacy comparable to Southampton) and there have been a number of significant developments.

In 2016, the lead partners formed Sunderland Culture, bringing together the three main arts funders / providers in the city into a single, independent delivery model. Its brief is to manage the cultural venues and develop city-wide cultural projects. It is now an NPO, and has secured Great Place, Ambition for Excellence and Culture Recovery funding and runs a £60m programme designed to work across culture and community to 2024.

Sunderland has been a recipient of one of the ACE's pilot Cultural Compacts. A programme evaluation suggests that the maturity of its in-sector partnership has been beneficial in supporting cross-sector partnership and delivering active funded programmes.

Its website is public-facing – sharing opportunities for attendance and participation at the key venues and a city-wide programme of sector skills development, and student fellowships. There are also community-wide projects delivered in partnership with education, social care, health providers as well as active community groups.

Lessons

- Joint bidding is an accelerator for joint working.
- Relationship between cultural sector and creative industries is there – but how evolved is it? A key question for Solent.
- A single organisational model is strong from an advocacy / demonstrating impact / leveraging resources perspective.
- It is the single organisational model (and the combined power of the University / City Council especially) that has given the cultural compact 'teeth'.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

FREEPORT EAST & SCREEN SUFFOLK

Screen Suffolk is the film office for the county, managing all enquiries on behalf of the local authorities, and with an ambition to be the most 'film-friendly' county in the UK. Screen Suffolk now acts on behalf of all district councils, the county council and landowners as the official film office for the county. It offers a county-wide 'one-stop' film service. They promote Suffolk's film service infrastructure, creative talent and locations, in the orbit of London. Their aim is to be the most film-friendly county in the UK.

They have a strong economic imperative, but also have active programmes to support the industry in areas including training (see Suffolk's Get Set Ready programmes) and wellbeing. They continue to build their asset mapping – a location Library – to give every opportunity to location scouts. They offer simple film permit procedures that are production-friendly. Local talent is important, and they build and maintain cast and crew supplier databases as a service for prospective and current productions.

They offer location support, permits and run a directory of local crew and supply chain businesses, keeping as much of the spend within Suffolk as possible. Screen Suffolk also runs skills development programmes in partnership with the local industry. As a result of their work, Screen Tourism is a rapidly growing market – Netflix's 'The Dig' saw visitor numbers to Sutton Hoo increase by 30% on pre-pandemic levels. Freeport East now offers further opportunity to grow this sector.

FILM INDUSTRY GROWTH IN HAPPY VALLEY

Within and part of the Screen Yorkshire region, **FilmCalderdale** sits next to the more established Bradford Film Office (also a UNESCO City of Film). Last Tango in Halifax, Marvel Studios' The Secret Invasion, Happy Valley, Gentleman Jack and Ackley Bridge are some recent productions not only filmed in Calderdale, but closely associated with its histories, landmarks and landscapes. It is now a burgeoning centre for film & TV production and creative development. Delivery partners include Leeds Beckett University and the digital media sector has grown in the area as a direct result of this investment. This has generated a genuine screen tourism market, following the stories of both fictional and historical characters into the 'valley's' towns and villages, waterways and moors.

Lessons

— They seek to celebrate and nurture local talent, providing centralised and dynamic services, support and information.
— Training can be effectively developed with local educational bodies – further and higher education.
— This can very quickly drive screen tourism – if destination managers actively engage with local authorities / film offices to develop itineraries / products for tour operators & visitors.
— The more professional, proactive and industry-facing the film office platform is, the more successful it will be.
— Figureheads help – Sally Wainwright in West Yorkshire continues to be central to the image offer.

"Calderdale is a valley that keeps on giving."
Shane Meadows, Director of This Is England, The Virtues

Images: Production on the Suffolk coast; Filming Gentleman Jack for BBC TV on location in Calderdale.

D4. CASE STUDY COMPARATORS

THE TEENAGE MARKET

Since its inception in Stockport in 2012, The Teenage Market® has been helping to unlock the potential of young people and breathe new life into market places and high streets in towns and cities across the UK. Supported by the government's High Streets Task Force, towns have massively benefitted from the power of the initiative to engage with their town's young people.

Young people are supported to sell their homemade products at a market where they don't have to pay any fees. The market is complemented by a stage showcasing local young performers such as bands, dancers and more. This creates a lively atmosphere in town centres, supporting placemaking initiatives as well as young entrepreneurialism. On average, £5 goes directly into the pockets of young people for every £1 of public money invested in the initiative.

"Since taking part, I've grown my business, gained new followers on social media, and even secured custom orders. It's been a really life-changing experience."

By providing a clear pathway for young people to make money through their creative enterprise, it has opened up new opportunities for them to take on the next step of their small business journey, whether that be by becoming part of the regular market offer, as Earlestown and Carlisle, or opening up a shop on the high street, as in Salisbury and Horncastle.

"It was exactly what I was looking for: a free platform to showcase my work without the financial pressure. It gave me the confidence to take that first step. I nearly sold out on my first day and I felt so validated seeing people appreciate my work. anxieties. "Before, I found social interaction intimidating. Now, I can start conversations with anyone—whether it's customers or fellow traders. The market environment is so welcoming that it feels natural to connect."

D5. FEATURE: CREATIVE INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Overview

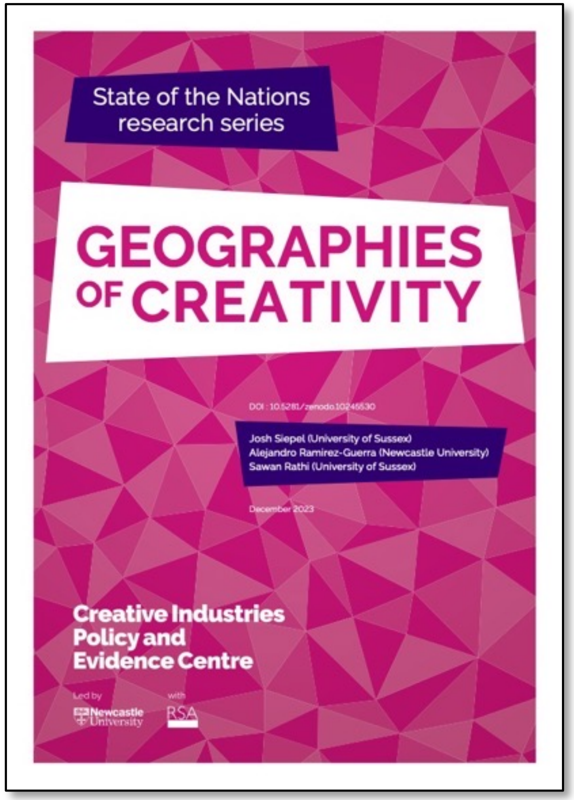
This report explores economic indicators at the creative clusters and micro-cluster levels. The data highlights broad geographical areas in the UK where the potential for developing creative corridors can be usefully considered. Solent is one of these, not least in its relative proximity to London which is experiencing more creative industries looking for more affordable options[1].

The report shows that creative clusters continue to play a central role in the UK's creative industries growth, justifying continued 'prioritisation in major investment programmes'. However, it also examines the role of smaller creative 'micro-clusters' and, potentially, pan-regional 'creative corridors' (joining up clusters at a more regional level). Bringing clusters (typically in cities) and micro-clusters (often specialist or in smaller conurbations / rural areas) together in this way can create a creative powerhouse, supporting development and innovation and building a creative place narrative. This is where regional policy is critical. As such, this is especially relevant where devolution comes into the equation and regional economic zones are both economic and policy drivers. Again, this speaks directly to the ambitions for the Solent.

There are opportunities to support local cultural and creative industries growth through targeted support for creative micro-clusters – such as film, festivals, or the historic dockyards of Portsmouth for example – which can shape 'interventions to local sub-sector strengths, needs and opportunities'. It is critical to take a more 'joined-up and pan-regional approach' to the economic development and support of such clusters, creating cross-pollination of ideation, opportunity and ultimately growth. This approach can embrace a 'pilot and roll-out' that builds mutual benefit across all parts of the Solent, driving an inclusive regional model rather than concentrating on the economic powerhouses of the region at the expense of other areas. Research shows that the cultural ecosystem and creative (micro)clusters are likely to develop alongside each other and that this proximity and related interdependencies should be fostered.

Cultural infrastructure and organisations

Cultural heritage infrastructure and the organisations and producers that constitute it are increasingly being recognised in this context of creative clusters. All cultural, heritage and creative players in the Solent – organisations, businesses, freelancers, networks and infrastructure – make a huge contribution to successful creative clusters. Solent Growth Partnership and its local authority partners can further this progressive approach by incorporating the concepts and language of creative clusters and creative corridors within policymaking – how they can inform how clusters can help a regenerative cultural sector grow sustainably.



1 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/16/creatives-leaving-london-and-for-the-first-time-i-understand-why

D5. FEATURE: CREATIVE INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

The anchor role of universities in the North of England was noted, and the potential to further unlock this partnership asset ‘through greater investment in knowledge exchange and joined-up activity in areas like skills, training and access to facilities’. This may provide some useful insights for the powerful higher education resource in Solent.

Potential for growth

London and the South-East dominate the creative industries (69% GVA). Even though many parts of the UK have seen growth post-pandemic, regional inequalities are marked. The Southampton sub-region is identified as a Creative Conurbation. The Solent was not identified as one of the tentative creative corridors with marked growth potential. However, within the South East there is a supercluster model centred on London that the Solent could link to and develop a corridor of its own, targeting creative micro-clusters are which are a key growth hotspot for creative industries.

Policy implications

‘Analysis points to the possible opportunities for joined-up policymaking across government levels and administrative boundaries, and it highlights the potential for devolved powers at national and local levels to play significant roles in supporting the growth of creative clusters and micro-clusters across the UK through targeted interventions.

There are numerous ways that policymakers can share their knowledge, support wider collaboration and provide opportunities for sharing learning and best practice across creative clusters and micro-clusters.

At a national and cross-regional level, policymakers should consider the governance models needed to enable alignment of creative industries support across administrative boundaries. For example, policymakers should consider the role they can play in supporting the development of pan-regional networks and fostering cross-regional linkages between clusters of all scales by building on existing business support and creative R&D investment models to promote mutual knowledge exchange, develop relationships and stimulate new supply chains.

D6. CULTURE AND BUILDING A PLACE BRAND

CREATING A CONFIDENT, USEFUL NARRATIVE

The Solent region has genuine cultural distinctiveness. This needs to drive competitive advantage in an evermore competitive national funding landscape. Regions that have a clear narrative gain competitive advantage – in attracting genuinely diverse talent and driving wealth creation.

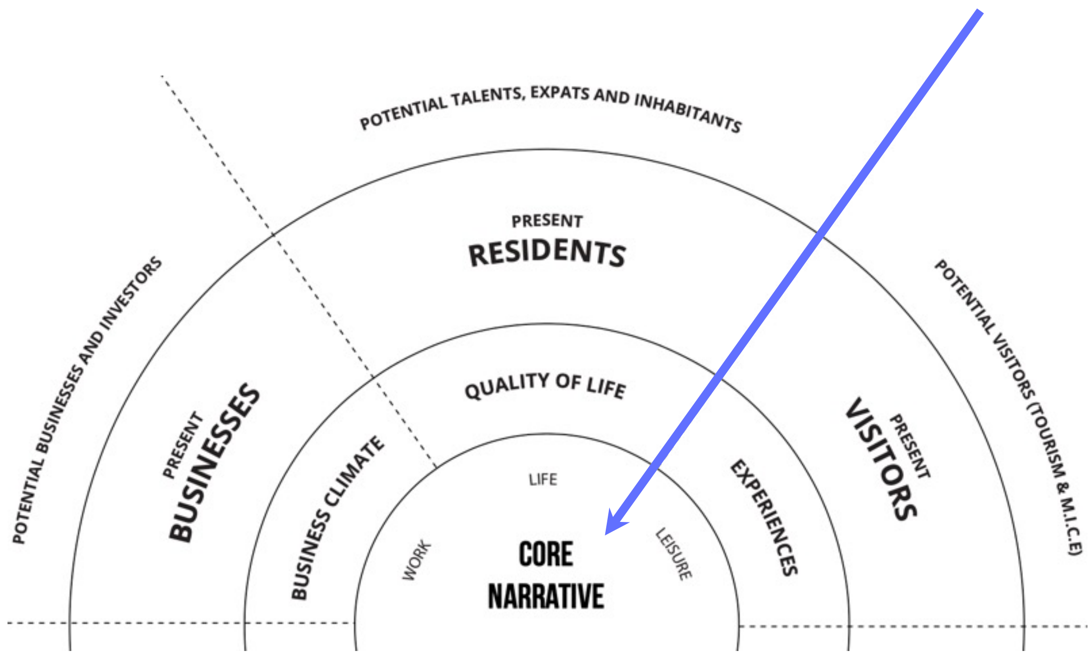
A conversation about culture has to be a conversation about place identity. This Plan reassesses the emerging Solent place brand, the understanding of the region, and how the different constituent parts of this region do – and can – work together. A focus on culture has unlocked a better understanding of an economic and social development model for the Solent, whilst retaining its central role. This Cultural Plan cannot be delivered without developing a more effective and collaborative place-based model.

As well as time, it takes leadership, vision and coordination to build impactful place narratives. And they certainly cannot really shine without the place distinctiveness and authenticity of culture and heritage. Place marketing needs these place-specific points of difference. Everywhere promotes themselves as a great place to live, relocate, work, visit, build a career and realise ambitions. The figures are critical to flesh out the reality of these opportunities, but it is culture that can add most colour and value to the quality of life a place offers. Solent has a strong cultural sector – even in these challenging times – and can now really use it to shape the story it tells the world and the invitations it transmits.

So, like all places, the Solent region has a positive story to tell, but has to earn its stripes. As cultural leaders and players, the sector is in continual dialogue with its stakeholders and publics – and the narrative can build on this. A successful place brand is more than place marketing. It helps manage a place's direction and development, and it needs to come "with teeth" rather than a suite of narrative stories and a pretty visual. This is what is needed in Solent (and in all places actually). A place brand should, first of all, stimulate a series of actions and activities that will prove that there is no hyperbole in the narrative.

The place narrative should be applied over time to all aspects of the region, using culture and creative industries as a starting point – but not stopping there.

The Vision statement forms the core narrative:
The Solent cluster is the UK's most dynamic alliance of creative & cultural commerce and exchange.



D6. CULTURE AND BUILDING A PLACE BRAND

A clear set of values can provide the basis for a destination 'narrative'. This can set the bar for new plans and programmes as they are developed, to help cultural enterprise deliver at the level and with the depth and volume we aspire to. Shared values can become the framework for a Solent Narrative. It can also be impactful for inward investment and tourism in particular.

CONNECTING TO PLACE MARKETING

Propositions developed for specific target markets / sectors, such as culture, do not exist in isolation. These 'place brand' initiatives aim to be consistent with the wider destination narrative. A full place brand development process may be recommended to cohere all aspects of the Solent / post-devolution economic zone.

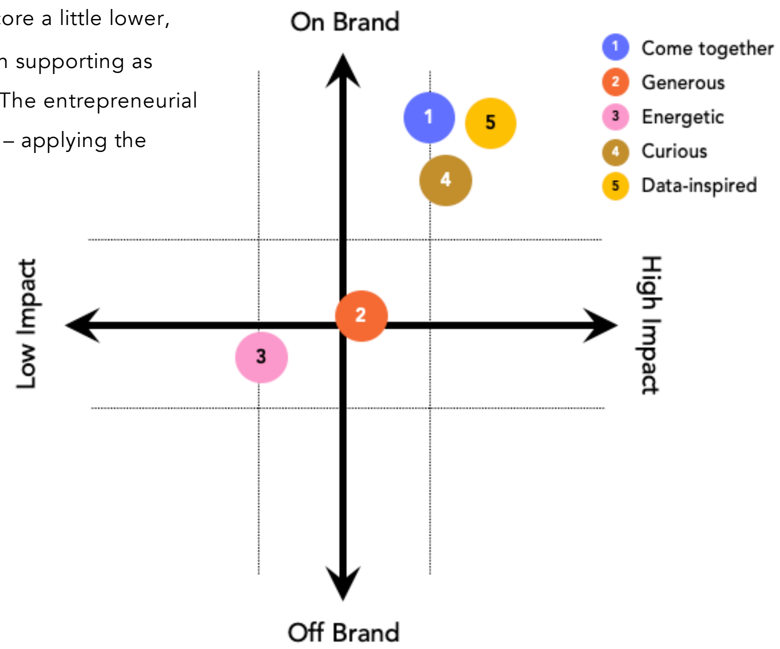
NARRATIVE AS A CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL

A place brand planning tool can help to identify, improve and support the best proposals and programmes. In doing so the place brand can quickly become embedded across and beyond the region. This approach has informed new cultural investments such as festivals, capital bids and cross-sector partnerships. This is the opportunity and challenge presented by a culture-rich narrative for Solent. This is why the value set expressed in this Cultural Plan can form the basis for a future-facing, cross-sector place brand narrative for Solent.

Example

This imagined brand narrative exercise has made an assessment for a potential collaboration between a set of cultural organisations and a university to transform its audience insights in order to make much more compelling cases for support, e.g. (joint) funding bids, business and investment planning, evidencing the market for a new cultural initiative etc.

We can see that values 1, 4 and 5 score very highly. Collaboration and co-design, coupled with new ways of working in longitudinal research clearly is on brand. The other values score a little lower, but not too low. Overall, a proposal that is worth supporting as appraised by the place narrative and its values. The entrepreneurial potential of this work may be in the next stages – applying the research and data insights.



The Narrative acts as both a means to assess creative plans and programmes, but also as a collaborative tool and a challenge to drive up quality and innovation.

D7. FEATURE: INCLUSIVE GROWTH

'Inclusive growth' predates the Levelling Up agenda.

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

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

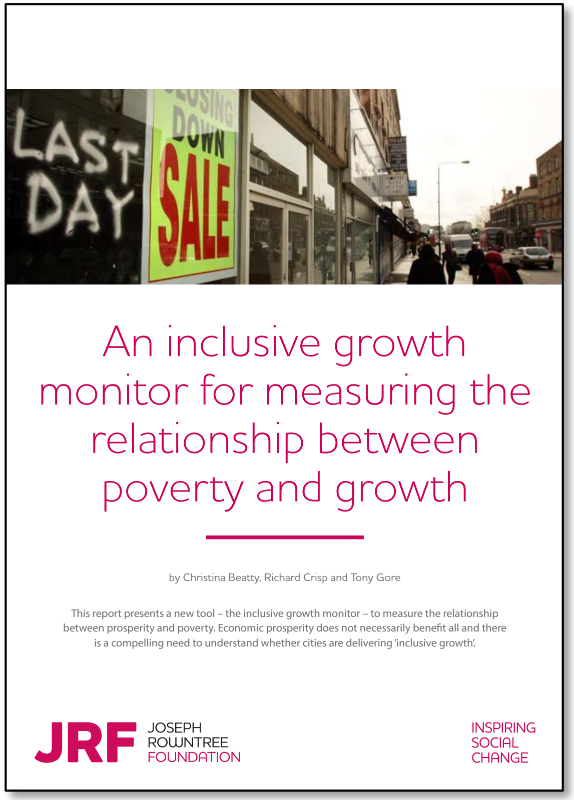
The JRF's Inclusive Growth Monitor[1] is full of indicators around economic measures; income, living costs, labour market exclusion, output, employment. If Solent continues to explore how to extend inclusive growth into human capital (a JRF phrase) and subjective wellbeing, then culture can play a full role.

Solent Growth Partnership and the region's local authorities recognise the place making potential of a wide range of local institutions and businesses, including cultural ones. By working more closely together with the cultural sector on key shared agendas – from employment and skills, to health and wellbeing – Solent Growth Partnership can help to create more inclusive local economies, and through this Plan there is an effort to ensure that cultural stakeholders can play the fullest role in the development of communities and local economies across Solent.

One of our challenges for Solent could be – through its strategic priorities and inclusive growth agenda – what more can be done to build strong partnership working on key priorities that embraces key cultural stakeholders in more value adding ways etc.

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

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



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

D8. A DEFINITION OF CULTURE FOR SOLENT?

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

As Arts Council England puts it: "*Culture means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, religion and other forms of herita*ge." We can demystify and make use of these terms as inclusive shorthand for the widest possible audience.

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

So, if culture in a place means water-based sport, or horticulture, or the 'great outdoors', great! This is an opportunity for diverse activities in diverse places and communities to experience new things, together.

How it all works together in a place is important too. In this Plan we use terms like 'cultural ecology' or 'ecosystem'. Again, these are catch-all terms. If you really want a formal definition, then AHRC have one: "*The complex interdependencies that shapes the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings.*" (The Ecology of Culture, John Holden, AHRC).

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

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

Perhaps Arts Council England can help again. Taking from their Let's Create 2020-2030 strategy: "*Creativity is the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art, or a reimagining of an existing work. Culture is the result of that creative process: we encounter it in the world, in museums and libraries, theatres and galleries, carnivals and concert halls, festivals and digital spaces.*"

The good news is we don't have to choose a definition. We get to decide, and change it over time too. In celebrating, championing and connecting culture, we're doing the same for communities. And that seems to be as good a starting point as any, regardless of a dictionary definition of 'culture'.

D9. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES MANIFESTO

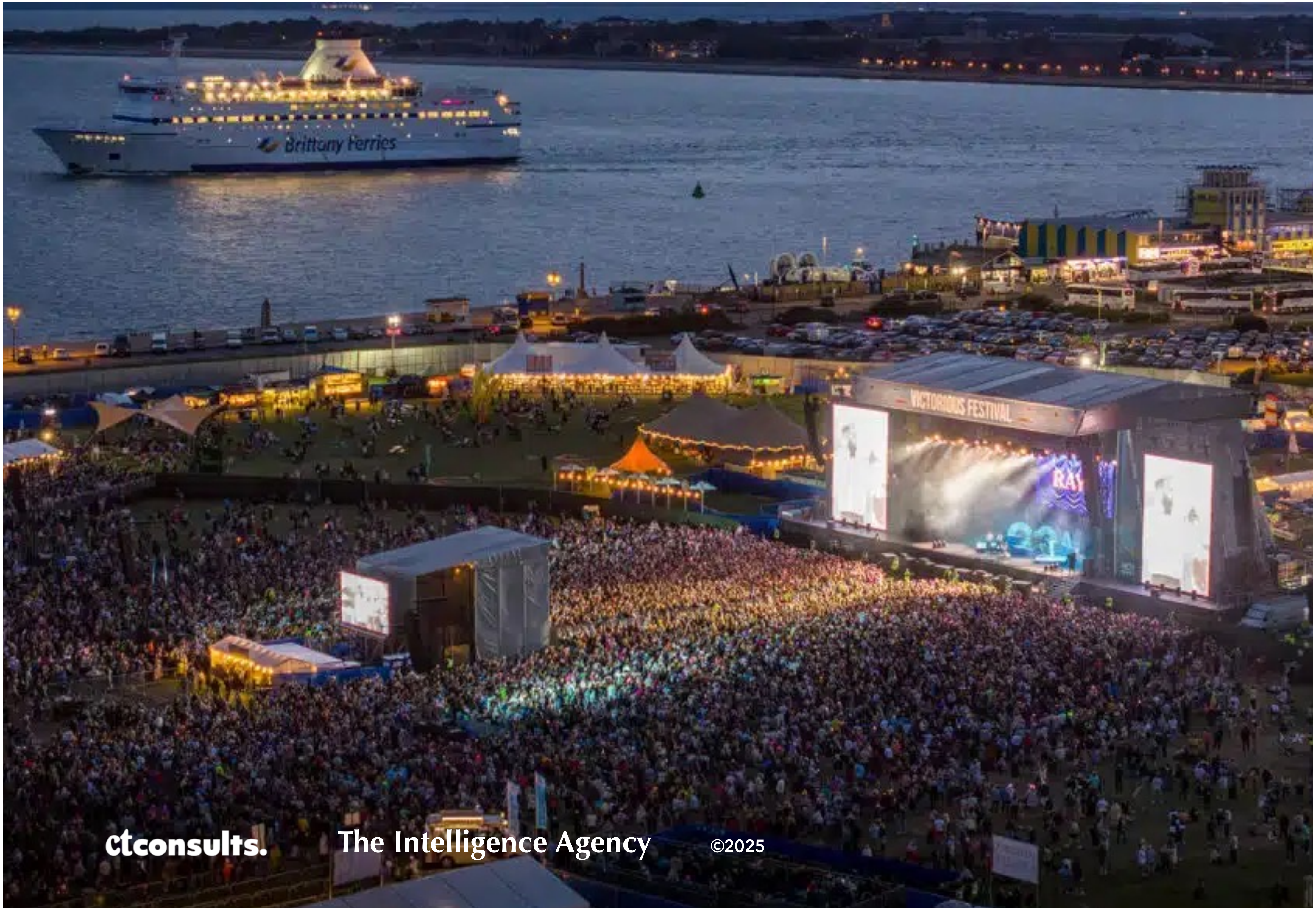
Creative industries deliver three types of value: economic, social and reputational. Adding over £100bn to the UK economy, and £46bn in goods and services exports, creative industries continues to grow at twice the rate of the general economy. Two million people work in it, and another million are expected by the end of the decade.

And, as the Manifesto asserts: "Beyond these economic benefits, the creative industries continue to tackle regional inequalities, build communities… and enable individuals to lead lives that are happier, healthier, more sociable, and enriched through access to culture and creativity."

But there remains enormous potential to go further. Better capitalisation, filling skills gaps, increasing diversity and access to opportunity can all be hugely impactful. The Creative Industries Manifesto (Creative Industries Federation and Creative England) sets out 10-points to help unlock inclusive growth. Some of these that genuine local and regional cultural agency can respond to (now or in the future) includes:

1. Ensure access to specialist business support for all early-stage creative enterprises and freelancers.
2. Cut business rates for cultural, music and heritage spaces, ensuring local and combined authorities can creatively use devolved powers.
3. Put cultural and creative education at the heart of the school curriculum, working to ensure sufficient resources for extra-curricular activities, as well as metrics for the impact of creative education that goes beyond salaries.
4. Diversify workforces and opportunities for young people through support of the national Creative Careers Programme.
5. Align with and support the Sustainability Innovation Challenge to enable UK's 'world-leading creativity' to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This includes plugging cultural activity into action on climate change, health & wellbeing, inequality and so on.

www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2019-10/Creative%20Industries%20Manifesto.pdf



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