

CULTURE MAKES LIVERPOOL

LIVERPOOL CULTURAL STRATEGY

2025-2030





FOREWORD

Behind every amazing event, show, performance, gig, art installation, play, and the hundreds of cultural events and activities which take place in Liverpool, is an artist, creative, or worker, who is just trying to make a living doing what they love.

Liverpool is a city that does culture well. From hosting major international events to nurturing a rich ecosystem of cultural organisations - some with histories spanning over a century - the city continues to champion creativity. It gives space to emerging voices through world-class festivals, is home to the UK's longest-running creative communities programme, and proudly holds the title of the world's first UN Accelerator City for climate change. Culture is the blood that runs through the city's veins. It is a proud UNESCO City of Music, host city to Eurovision on behalf of our friends in Ukraine, and home to a constellation of art and artists creating rich and diverse content supporting a £5 billion visitor economy which in turn supports over 30,000 jobs.

In 2021, Liverpool City Council published a cultural strategy that set out a roadmap to recovery. As Liverpool led the national response to COVID-19, with its groundbreaking events research programme, the Council acted quickly to secure the livelihoods of cultural workers and their organisations through business support, amending grant conditions, and through the furlough scheme.

Three years on, we can look optimistically to a future which sees more culture for more people in more places across the whole city. Although there are challenges, particularly in public funding, the city has always been able to do great things with modest resources. This Cultural Strategy has been

commissioned by Culture Liverpool, but it is not simply "the Council's strategy." It is a rallying cry for everyone who makes and loves culture in our city.

For cultural leaders, it is a statement of ambition. For funders, it is a clear summary of priorities. It is led by data with an empirical evidence base detailing the positive impact culture and creativity have for education, skills, health, wellbeing, tourism, innovation, and the wider economy.

Liverpool City Council will work closely with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Mayor Steve Rotherham to meet the ambitions of the wider city region. The City Region's success is based on collegiality; culture does not have political boundaries and collectively we are stronger. There are also real opportunities for the city region to be at the forefront of conversations with the UK Government about transformational approaches to investing in culture.

This strategy is for people across the culture sector and those who value and champion culture's ability to make a difference as part of public health, community cohesion and education interventions. We will continue to use culture to give a voice to those who need it.

We are excited, we are committed, and we are ready. Here's to the next five years.



Harry Doyle
Cabinet Member for Health,
Wellbeing and Culture

INTRODUCTION

The money spent by local and national government on culture is not only the fuel that makes our artistic lives possible but a show of faith that art, artists, and culture in all its forms has a valuable role to play in our society.

Culture Makes Liverpool. It's the days out at the docks, the major events across the city, visits to museums and galleries, watching great shows at the theatre or in the school hall. It's the intimate programmes and projects in pubs, cafes, and parks. It's the paintings on gable ends, choirs in care homes. It's the thing that can turn your life around. It's the thing that makes us human, and it's Liverpool's global calling card.

In an era of constrained public spending, culture cannot be optional. There is no more valuable endeavour than teaching people to take part in a growing part of our economy. There can be few more impactful ways to spend public money than bringing people together around shared experiences, connecting new friends and old ones, and using culture as part of the solution to the health and social care issues of our time.

Culture is a societal good, but it is an economic one too. Eurovision gave a net £54.8 million economic boost to the city, the Council's annual funded programme generates over £30 million in both turnover and GVA, The Beatles legacy adds £81.9 million to the Liverpool economy each year and supports 2,335 jobs. Culture drives Liverpool's economy; it gives people great jobs and opportunities, and it makes Liverpool "the most exciting city" in the UK to visit.

Culture has been the backbone of the regeneration of our city. Liverpool's visitor economy, our ability to attract and retain students, our international brand, and our growing creative industries, stem from the cultural joys within our city.

The core belief on which this Cultural Strategy is based is simple - we believe equally in participation and in global positioning.

We will support this by:

Enabling arts organisations to be independent and give them the tools to succeed.

Ensuring high quality is our benchmark throughout all our programmes.

Investing for the long term to allow cultural leaders and organisations to grow.

Supporting culture to collaborate across sectors.

Making our work locally rooted and internationally focused means our cultural activity is a product of this city, and its impact reverberates internationally.

This refreshed strategy is not a change of direction but a commitment to adapting to the world as it changes. In the last decade, our city has been

transformed by culture and in the next decade it will change again.

What will make the difference is more power devolved more locally, with the funding that meets our level of ambition. On Culture Liverpool's part, we will continually make the case for Liverpool as a cultural leader of the country, continue our commitment to high-quality cultural work, and reach every corner of the city to bring culture to more people.

Collectively, we do amazing things, and we are only getting started.

Collectively, we do amazing things, and we are only getting started.



Claire McColgan CBE,
Director, Culture Liverpool





VISION AND PRIORITIES

Liverpool City Council's vision over the next ten years remains for Liverpool to be an exemplary city for cultural innovation.

We have retained the three priority areas from our 2021 strategy:

- Culture strengthening our communities.
 - Culture celebrating our place.
 - Culture supporting our people.
- We have also added a fourth priority area in this refresh:
- Culture growing our economy.

Together, our four priority areas show how we will achieve our vision.

As the post-pandemic world has become a little clearer, we have developed three outcomes for each of the priority areas. These are things our stakeholders have told us are most important to ensure success in delivering our vision. These outcomes are critical in determining our actions over the lifetime of the strategy.

Underpinning our vision and priorities are three principles:

- Collaboration & resilience.
- Equality & inclusivity.
- Environmental sustainability.

LIVERPOOL TODAY

Liverpool is a city of poets and playwrights, of artists and music makers.

Known for its vibrant energy and warm hospitality, it's a place where diverse communities, arts and culture are celebrated, and visitors are welcomed with genuine openness. From world-class cultural institutions to grassroots creativity, it offers a fun and exciting environment where people connect and actively continue to shape an inclusive, dynamic cultural life for all who live, work and visit here. Liverpool is home to The Bluecoat, the UK's first arts centre established in 1927, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, whose recordings reach over 700,000 listeners across 170 countries each month—just on Spotify alone. Liverpool was the first city outside of London with a Tate gallery, host to some of the UK's best-loved and most diverse festivals, home to six amazing theatres, and 486,100 amazing residents. Not to mention the ongoing global and historic impact of The Beatles!

Arts Council England funds twenty-two National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in Liverpool with a total of £9.87 million annually. These organisations span music, theatre, combined and visual arts and include the likes of Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Africa Oyé, Sound City, 20 Stories High, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres, DaDa, Homotopia, The Reader, Liverpool Biennial, Open Eye Gallery and many others, who reach millions of people every year.

Many of these NPOs are also part of the 27 organisations funded directly by Liverpool City Council through the Cultural Arts Investment Programme (CAIP), which distributes £2.25 million annually to Liverpool's arts and cultural organisations. CAIP has significantly

bolstered Liverpool's cultural landscape. In the 2023-24 financial year, CAIP-supported organisations attracted 3.4 million visitors, marking a return to pre-pandemic levels and a substantial increase from 1.8 million in 2022-23. This resurgence has positively impacted the local economy, supporting 4,463 jobs and contributing approximately £33 million in economic impact (GVA). CAIP is managed by Culture Liverpool, the business unit of Liverpool City Council behind the major events programme in Liverpool as well as the city's cultural and arts offer including Tourist Information, Libraries and the City Halls portfolio (St George's Hall, Liverpool Town Hall and Croxteth Hall).

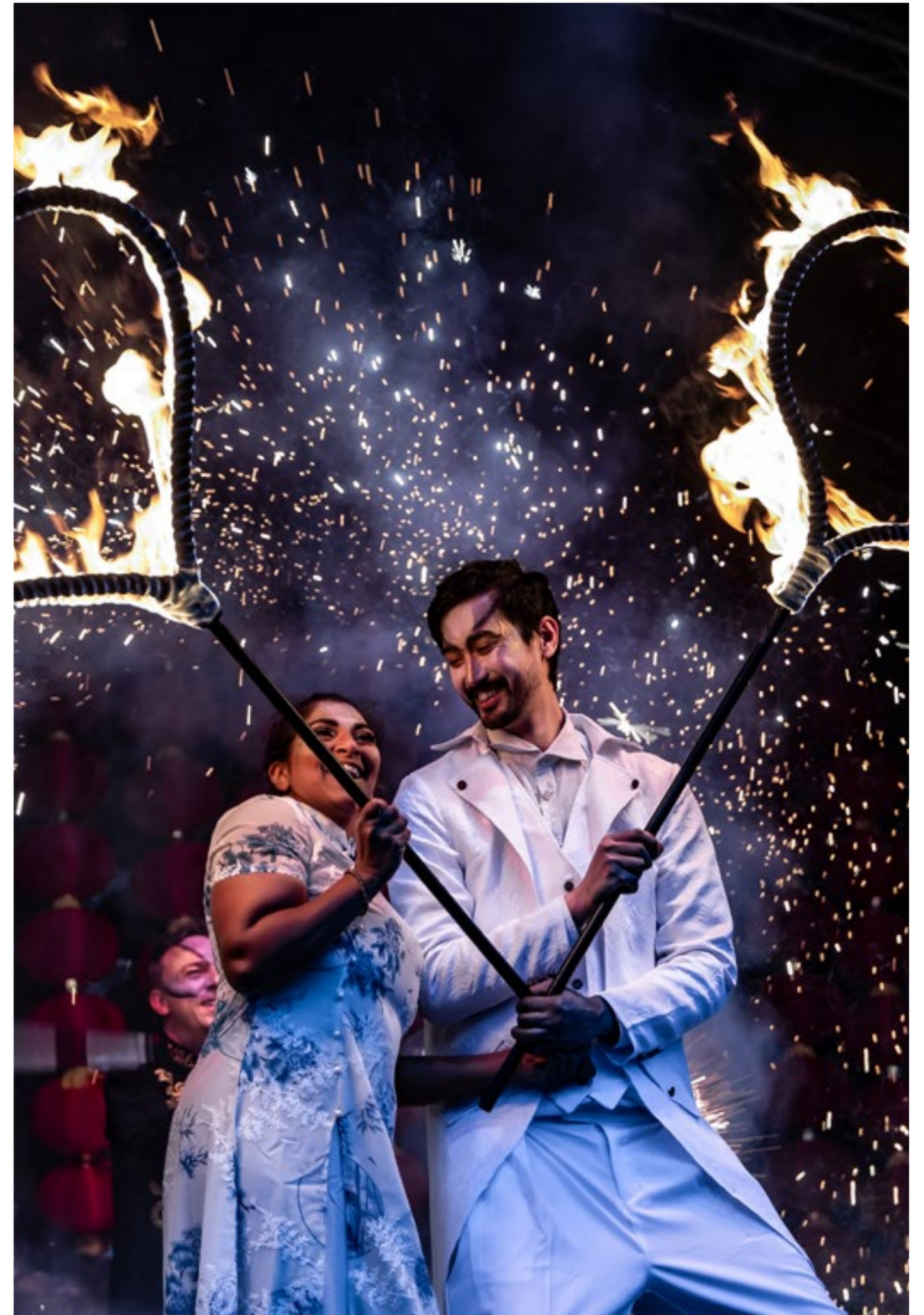
Culture Liverpool also works closely with arts and cultural organisations across the Liverpool City Region to support community-based arts and cultural programmes, as well as delivering large scale cultural events like Eurovision, Cunard maritime events, the Giant Spectacular, River of Light, Mersey River Festival and Liverpool International Music Festival. Culture Liverpool actively collaborates with and supports the UNESCO City of Music programme.

Culture Liverpool leads the Council's role as a champion of the wider cultural sector and convenor with national government. This work recognises that culture does not exist in isolation, but is interwoven with our shared heritage, communities, economic fortunes, and sense of place. The forthcoming heritage and library strategies will complement this work and be guided by the principles outlined here in this document (including the environmental

management of spaces). Their success will be one of the ways we measure progress toward our cultural ambitions. In addition, Culture Liverpool works with Neighbourhood Management teams across the city to create a range of cultural programmes through the Creative Neighbourhoods programme, working with funding from various sources including council departments to support a range of wellbeing and community cohesion initiatives. In 2025, this will include supporting the cultural aspects of the £5bn national Pride of Place programme, which empowers communities to shape local investment, revitalise public spaces, boost small businesses, and foster pride in town centres and cultural assets.

Uniquely outside London, several of Liverpool's museums and galleries are owned by the nation and funded principally by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. With over four million objects and around 2.5 million visitors each year National Museums Liverpool's (NML) venues include historic buildings at the heart of the city, including the Walker Art Gallery and World Museum, as well as waterfront venues including the International Slavery Museum, Maritime Museum and Museum of Liverpool.

Liverpool is a culturally diverse city with the oldest Chinese community in Europe as well as the longest and most established African-Caribbean community in the UK. Liverpool has a long history of delivering events and festivals across a network of community venues and a wide range of performance spaces and outdoor locations.





MUSIC & LIVERPOOL

Liverpool has a particularly strong history of making great music, reflected in our designation as a UNESCO City of Music. Behind the amazingly talented musicians lies an outstanding infrastructure of producers, technicians, venues, studios, and festivals.

Liverpool is a city that is awash with music. It is part of the fabric and the very being of the city. It is right that we celebrate our glorious musical heritage and in particular that we are the hometown of the “Four Lads Who Shook the World” and who changed pop music forever.

In recent years, we have shifted our focus toward the present and our future ambitions instead of merely reflecting on the past. We have an incredibly diverse and dynamic music scene and despite difficult times, our grassroots venues are at the very heart of this flourishing ecosystem. Music tourism campaigns such as “Discover a New Beat” have promoted a simple message: if you are a music fan then Liverpool will have something for you be it Merseybeat, electronic music, jazz, rock, indie guitars, folk, or classical.

Alongside exciting new emerging talent, we have amazing festivals like Africa Oyé, Liverpool Irish Festival, On The Waterfront, Baltic Weekender and Sound City which reflect our diverse musical offering. We are a city that rejoices in big musical events encompassing everything from Eurovision, through to our Taylor Town activation events when Taylor Swift played at Anfield, through to the Radio 1 Big Weekend.

The music industry and music tourism are important economically to the city just as much as they are cultural assets. Music businesses such as Modern Sky, Sentric Music, Ditto and Ad Lib all have a global reach enhancing the reputation of the city internationally and contributing to more than £100 million of GVA directly generated by the city region's music sector every year. Music tourism itself is responsible for at least an additional GVA of £100 million a year.

In 2025 we celebrate a decade as a UNESCO City of Music. In 2015 we decided we should bid for this designation because it would bring the benefit of international recognition of what in reality we already knew – that Liverpool is a City of Music. The UNESCO designation gave us easy access to other cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, but the links to the other Music Cities have been the most rewarding. Liverpool has been an active member of the network sharing good practice with others, collaborating and, where possible, finding opportunities for local musicians to play in other UNESCO Cities.

The Liverpool City Region Music Board was established in December 2018 as a direct result of a Music

Strategy commissioned by Culture Liverpool. Two key recommendations of the strategy were the establishment of a music office and the setting up of an industry music board. The Board is supported by the Liverpool City Region Mayor and after consultation with the wider sector, developed a set of priorities and an action plan to take these priorities forward. These priorities have been developed over time to reflect the impact of the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. The work of the Liverpool City Region Music Board demonstrates the region has a proud story to tell as a place for music and musicians, however funding, infrastructure, inclusion, and skills remain acute challenges to the shared success that we all want.

POSITIONING DANCE IN LIVERPOOL'S CULTURAL FUTURE

Dance is a vital and distinct art form that reflects Liverpool's diverse cultural landscape—from street and social styles to professional practices rooted in global traditions. While its profile may not be as prominent as visual art or music, dance plays a crucial role in the city's creative ecology, contributing to live performance, education, and community health & wellbeing. As an inclusive and accessible activity, dance supports public health and social connections. Rhythm-based forms such as tap and percussive dance foster intergenerational engagement, combat loneliness, and promote both mental and physical wellbeing.

Culture Liverpool has consistently championed dance as a vital part of its funded portfolio and annual programme of work. This includes recent support for the Leap Dance Festival, as well as investment in dynamic organisations such as Sole Rebel, Melt CIC, Movema, RAWD, and Afro Dance Academy.

These organisations represent a rich spectrum of dance practices and contribute significantly to the city's cultural vibrancy, inclusivity, and international reach.

Dance practitioners in Liverpool are uniquely positioned to contribute to the city's inclusive and forward-thinking cultural vision. Their work often intersects with music, theatre, digital arts, and education, making them natural collaborators across

sectors. To fully harness the potential of dance, the need to explore and implement effective approaches for reviewing and enhancing support for dance-led organisations is recognised. Strengthening this infrastructure will empower these organisations to play a vital future role in education, community engagement, and international cultural exchange.



NURTURING TALENT

The commitment to nurturing talent is one of Liverpool's key strengths. 2024 saw the formation of the new Culture Network LCR CIC, operating across the Liverpool City Region, offering opportunities for advocacy, learning, knowledge-sharing and more to creative individuals and cultural organisations of all sizes. The input of this network, and others, will be critical in helping guide their actions and their contribution to the delivery of this strategy.

The city's infrastructure, including its wonderful universities and colleges, helps maintain a thriving cultural sector despite a period where public finances are shaky. Artists and organisations have told us that tight finances and the cost of living are profoundly reshaping the cultural landscape. The long tails of the impacts of Brexit on the visitor economy and COVID-19 on how we all live, work, and play are changing not only our cultural organisations but our shared cultural lives. The innovative capacity of Liverpool's diverse cultural sector is the city's biggest strength and the solution to navigating these challenging times. As demand for high-level skills grows, as social care pressures increase, and as loneliness reaches epidemic levels, organisations and their partners will be even more collaborative.

As Culture Liverpool, CAIP

organisations and Liverpool Public Health directly reach over 121,000 people annually to promote good health, our shared expertise can be deployed to an even greater effect. And as the Council Plan, Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy, and a myriad of development plans come into life, culture can be a force for co-producing an ever more culturally rich and joyful Liverpool.

Culture Liverpool carries out three roles:

- As a direct funder of culture and supporting many organisations in their artistic programming, in particular CAIP, and our neighbourhood commissioning programme that lead to the delivery of positive cohesion and wellbeing outputs & outcomes.
- As a bidder and delivery body for major events (both cultural

and wider), funded by partners such as the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and others.

- As a convener, collaborator, and coordinator of partners (from within Liverpool and from further afield) to make an even bigger impact, and to strengthen the cultural brand for the city – for example our team support Liverpool City Region's Music Board and positioning as City of Music, as well as the wider Visitor Economy strategy for the region.

This approach allows Culture Liverpool to focus on its areas of expertise, supporting and delivering cultural events, growing the visitor economy, and ensuring the success of our creative communities through co-production, collaboration, and use of Culture Liverpool knowledge and connections.





LIVERPOOL SINCE 2021

Liverpool is an innovative city, and it has changed enormously since the last Cultural Strategy was published in 2021. Most profoundly, the impacts of COVID-19 have changed audience habits, the labour market, the visitor economy, and perhaps less visibly, reminded everyone how much a role culture plays in our lives.

As we all sat at home watching the latest series, playing video games, Zooming with our friends, or staying out of workplaces so others could be safe, there was perhaps no greater reminder of the power of culture as a connecting force.

Liverpool City Council has changed too. Since 2021, the council has developed a new Council Plan, installed a new leadership team, and developed clear shared priorities. The Council Plan commits the council to support an inclusive growing economy, high-quality skills, education and employment, thriving communities, healthier lives for all and a connected and accessible city, all underpinned by a well-run local authority and supported by cross-cutting principles of climate action,

inclusion and equality, and innovation and transformation.

Liverpool City Council's plan aims to make the city fairer, cleaner, and stronger for all. This vision is structured around six key pillars, each with specific priority outcomes:

1. A Strong & Fair Economy for All:

Focusing on business growth, inclusive job opportunities, sustainable neighbourhood development, increased investment, and enhancing Liverpool as a cultural destination.

2. High-quality and inclusive education, skills, and employment:

Ensuring accessible education and skill development to prepare residents for employment opportunities.

3. Thriving Communities:

Promoting greener neighbourhoods, transforming local services, enhancing safety, providing affordable housing, and addressing homelessness.

4. Healthier lives for children and adults:

Improving health outcomes and ensuring accessible healthcare services for all residents.

5. A Well-Connected, Sustainable, and Accessible City:

Developing comprehensive transport plans, improving connectivity, supporting sustainable travel, and enhancing infrastructure.

6. A Well-Run Council:

Achieving financial sustainability, fostering a skilled and diverse workforce, ensuring high-quality governance, and delivering excellent services.



These priorities are guided by cross-cutting principles of climate action, inclusion and equalities, and innovation and transformation.

Culture has a crucial role in all these areas, and it is our approach to collaboration which makes much of this work possible. However, there are some things that have not changed, and this includes The Liverpool Model for Culture that has been built over the past fourteen years:

- Artist first – putting artists and creatives at the heart of our cultural offer.
- Investment – a multi-year commitment to spending public

money on arts and culture so they can grow, including revenue funding, project funding invest to save/earn support.

- Whole city support – everyone understands the value of culture – from closing roads to working in schools, cleaning streets to public health, there are no blockers, only enablers in helping us do extraordinary things.
- Locally rooted, internationally focused – we produce work that could only happen in Liverpool, but which matters internationally.
- Patient impatience – success does not come quickly. When something does not work initially, there is no

need to panic or change direction. Trust in the process. However, settling is never an option—continuous progress and innovation remain the priority.

Liverpool City Council's Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy makes it clear that a more equal Liverpool depends on the vitality of the city's businesses, bolstered by an effective public sector, and underpinned by an ethos that no community should be left behind.

These are principles that we have sought to replicate in the Council's work throughout our collaborative approach to economic development,

including supporting delivery of key Combined Authority strategies and events, developing local talent through the Screen Workforce plan, or improving our infrastructure through Liverpool's Music 2030 Vision.

This work is made more impactful through partnership work. The role of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in promoting Liverpool's work on culture and harnessing visitor economy outcomes has been consolidated through the establishment of the Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership; a Race Equality Manifesto has been created and adopted by the whole cultural sector; and a

brighter spotlight is being shone on Liverpool's cultural works. Overall, this work has positioned departments across Liverpool City Council and Culture Liverpool as expert partners—able to produce, convene, fund, deliver, collaborate, and advocate simultaneously.

This flexibility is crucial because growing costs continue to affect the operating budgets for the cultural sector throughout the UK, with standstill statutory funding, increased pressure on recruitment and employment costs, and the toughest ever market for fundraising. This means an ever-increasing need for collaboration within the sector in

terms of co-production and collective planning, as well as sharing resources such as workspaces, box offices, and staff skills.

Engagement with stakeholders and partners during this strategy refresh has reinforced the importance of cultural programmes in neighbourhoods across Liverpool—strengthening inclusion, community connections, and a shared sense of belonging. Building on the city's strong legacy of neighbourhood and public health initiatives, this strategy will deepen collaboration with public health and wellbeing plans to better support communities and improve quality of life across the city.



PRIORITY 1: CULTURE STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES

Culture brings people together and shapes the communities we live in. It influences choices about public space, built heritage and the urban environment. It provides us with spaces, both physical and digital, to connect with others.

It has clear social impacts, including helping to integrate communities, reduce loneliness, increase neighbourhood safety, and improve mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Culture is vital to supporting community cohesion, putting the needs of the most vulnerable and disengaged at the heart of our neighbourhood programmes on small as well as largescale programmes, including mental health.

Summary of a stakeholder interview

The partnerships between artists, cultural organisations and communities mean these benefits filter into the lives of people in Liverpool. Many cultural and social enterprises are rooted deeply in the daily life of the neighbourhoods where they are located. Other cultural organisations and artists work with partners from health, education and other sectors to deliver high-quality creative programmes across the city to improve livelihoods, raise ambitions and

shape the places we live for the better. While the city boasts many significant cultural assets, our communities and residents are also actively creating and engaging with culture in diverse ways outside of formal institutions.

This rootedness allows communities to create works that are authentic to the places they live. It also means not shying away from the shameful aspects of our past including Liverpool's role in the transatlantic slave trade. Events in 2024 including lectures, workshops, and new commissions, formed part of the Slavery Remembrance Day programme to remember the millions of lives impacted by, and the lasting legacies of, the transatlantic slave trade.

"Young people are creating great outputs through the Creative Neighbourhoods programme, including films, dance commissions, DJ sets, and exhibitions, shown both in local areas and the city centre."

Stakeholder interview

The consultation for this strategy has shown that there was significant support for arts and culture to be embedded further in how the city responds to issues facing our communities and for community led and grassroots cultural activity.

Outcome 1: Liverpool will be a pioneering city for partnerships between culture and health with increasing investment in the health outcomes of culture and a deeper understanding of the resulting impacts.

Liverpool City Council has developed an innovative partnership with Liverpool Public Health with highlights including:

- Embedding Public Health messaging and creatively encouraging healthier habits through our River of Light celebrations in 2023 and 2024.
- Investing Public Health funding into the Cultural Arts Investment Programme (CAIP) to increase





Shooting From Below - a performance that took place at Unity Theatre during DaDaFest International 40 starring Tamm Reynolds- Image copyright Brian Roberts/DADA 2025.

community and individual health and wellbeing and broaden the reach of Public Health messages.

- A major role for Public Health in hosting the Eurovision Song Contest 2023.

Example: EuroLearn. Eurovision EuroLearn schools worked with artists to design pysanka eggs (decorated eggs, traditional in Ukraine and other Slavic cultures). Teachers and artists wanted to make sure pupils who might not make it into the city centre could still engage with Eurovision and have positive experiences and “lifelong memories” of the event. One child who won a medal for his pysanka egg design and who attended a EuroLearn event at Leasowe Millennium Centre said: “I’ve just won Eurovision!” He described it as the best day of his life.

Continuing to develop this partnership will be a priority for the period of this strategy. Liverpool City Council will work closely with the health sector to deliver better creative contributions to public health and use the tangible public health benefits of creative engagement to leverage further increases in funding for arts and health. These impacts will be routinely measured through a common evaluation methodology. We will continue to embed the Five Ways to Wellbeing into our work.

Outcome 2: Culture Liverpool, cultural institutions, and freelancers will become an integral and valued part of improving outcomes for communities across the city.

Culture shapes communities. It is art on the streets, exhibitions in pubs and places of worship, and it is events that bring people together. Culture doesn’t just make places nicer to live, it “makes places”. Culture is the means through which shared identities are forged—it is found in the murals, icons, and

heritage that instil pride in a place. It also serves as a ladder, offering those denied opportunities by circumstance a chance to reach new heights.

Since the last strategy, Liverpool City Council has adopted a new model of working across thirteen neighbourhoods, each led by a senior manager who will identify the key issues facing their neighbourhood, and work with partners and departments across the Council to address them. The Creative Neighbourhood programme:

- Is place-based to support areas of high need and low engagement. Culture and creativity are used in platforming stories and voices of under-represented communities.
- Works within neighbourhoods to signpost residents to service delivery partner.
- Builds on existing initiatives within neighbourhoods, such as community, library and health services.
- Supports the creative activity and aspirations of neighbourhoods. Resources for engagement activity such as external funding sources, operational support, and introductions to stakeholders, can and should be shared.

There is strong demand for community-led cultural development. It is important to ensure that decision making processes are transparent, accessible and inclusive and that more opportunities are developed for a wider representation of the community to help shape future strategy, through establishing network events and greater engagement throughout the city.

Funding and resources to support and develop hyper local and grass roots activity are key to nurturing a thriving creative ecology. To achieve this aim policies and processes will be co-developed with artists and

audiences, our funding will be made ever more transparent, and we will explore new funding mechanisms as devolved and national schemes are developed. While there are some strong examples of inclusive engagement, best practice will be shared across the funded and non-funded cultural sector.

Culture Liverpool will champion, promote and continue to secure investment for work between cultural organisations, artists and communities:

Example: Creative Neighbourhoods is an ongoing programme by Culture Liverpool that engages communities across the city through collaborative projects and creative interventions. These initiatives include artistic residencies, public art development, events, and creative engagement workshops, all aimed at fostering local pride, inclusivity, cohesion, accessibility, and empowerment within neighbourhoods such as Anfield, Croxteth, Garston, Kirkdale, Picton, and Walton. At Creative Neighbourhoods Garston, Culture Liverpool commissioned Open Eye Gallery to deliver a socially engaged artistic residency with artist workshops, meet with local people, and gather stories on the themes of nature and heritage. This resulted in a visioning document and exhibition containing creative feedback and ideas about the future of Garston High Street.

Raising awareness of what’s on the high street has led to Garston Library being used as a creative space to bring people together, with free-family performances taking place including local theatre company Altru Drama performing Charlotte’s Web, with free reading and activity books supplied by the library team. Audience Member Isobel said: “I didn’t know our library was even open. I loved bringing the kids here before lockdown, so this was a nice reason to come back.”

Outcome 3: The cultural sector - including cultural leaders, staff, freelancers, artists, participants, and audiences - will be more representative of the communities they serve.

National evidence continues to show under-representation of working-class, minority, and marginalised communities—including women, disabled people, and ethnically diverse people—in the creative workforce. Following the murder of George Floyd, over 40 of Liverpool's creative organisations issued a statement reflecting on their learnings and actions around racial justice, diversity, equality, and inclusion. Since this Anti-Racism Manifesto, organisations have taken significant steps to address structural racism and injustice, but the sector recognises it still does not fully reflect the communities it seeks to serve.

Since the last strategy was published, there has been progress in diversifying leadership within Liverpool's cultural institutions and broadening access to employment opportunities. Data from CAIP organisations shows good representation across staff and boards, but underrepresentation remains among transgender, disabled, and other communities with protected characteristics. This outcome supports the Equality and Inclusivity principle of the strategy, and we will continue to push for greater representation through enhanced monitoring, communication, and ongoing dialogue.

Many cultural organisations do outstanding work promoting understanding between communities, including Africa Oyé, Liverpool Arab Arts Festival, Mandela8, Liverpool Irish Festival, Pagoda Arts, The Women's Organisation, Writing on the Wall, and BlackFest. Culture

Liverpool will continue to champion inclusive co-creation and community-led initiatives, giving artists a role in shaping strategic programmes that reflect the city's diversity.

Culture Liverpool will encourage all funded organisations to demonstrate best practice in developing trustee boards, staff teams, volunteers, participants, and audiences that reflect the city's diversity. Funding agreements will continue to include key performance indicators (KPIs) on diversity, and Liverpool City Council will update and promote model agreements, EDI policies, and inclusive recruitment and governance practices.

Example Liverpool Arab Arts Festival (LAAF) actively supports the principles of equality and inclusivity by showcasing diverse voices and fostering cross-cultural understanding through its rich programme of events. In 2025, the festival featured powerful performances like Penguin, a one-man play by Syrian artist Hamzeh Al Hussien exploring displacement and identity, and Arabs Are Not Funny, a bold comedy night challenging stereotypes. Community engagement was central to events such as the Jordanian Food & Cultural Experience with Yamama, which brought people together through shared heritage and storytelling, and the Palestinian Tatreez Workshop, celebrating traditional embroidery and cultural memory. Through these and many other events, LAAF continues to reflect and uplift Liverpool's diverse communities, aligning strongly with the city's cultural strategy for inclusion and representation.





PRIORITY 2: CULTURE CELEBRATING OUR PLACE

Liverpool has developed into one of the UK's leading visitor and cultural destinations, supported by an outstanding cultural offer.

This is because of investment in heritage assets, the ongoing commitment to making the city culturally innovative, and a long-term commitment to destination marketing. Liverpool City Council and partners are custodians of a plethora of small and large cultural venues including theatres, museums, galleries, live performance venues, studios, exhibition spaces that are not only of huge local significance but consistently produce and showcase world-class art for residents and visitors alike. Liverpool's diverse and extraordinary architecture is one of the city's most important assets and a key tool for attracting an international visitor base.

This strategy will be delivered in partnership with everyone who works to make our place better. This will include working with the Liverpool Business Improvement Districts (BID). The introduction of The Liverpool ABID (Accommodation BID) Charge will help fund new events and activities to bring people into the city. We will collaborate with our cultural organisations and

Liverpool BID to develop programmes that deliver meaningful local benefits and support the people working across Liverpool's cultural sector.

Outcome 1: We will align strategies for investing in and making best use of both historic and contemporary cultural venues and spaces, developing a pipeline of projects to deliver a cultural infrastructure which can better meet the needs of Liverpool's creative communities.

Liverpool has an enviable estate of globally and nationally significant buildings. Many of these buildings are used as cultural venues including the city centre's oldest building (The Bluecoat on School Lane), art-deco acoustic masterpiece (Philharmonic Hall), one of the world's finest Victorian civic quarters in St George's Quarter (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool Central Library, World Museum, St George's Hall, Empire Theatre, Royal Court Theatre, Playhouse Theatre), the Albert Dock (Maritime Museum,

International Slavery Museum, Tate Liverpool), and the Stirling Prize-winning Everyman Theatre.

The ongoing regeneration of Liverpool's creative quarters—including the Baltic Triangle, Fabric District, Cavern Quarter, Williamson Square, Hope Street, the Central Business District, and Ten Streets—highlights the opportunity to embed culture at the heart of economic growth.

This strategy will support the continued development of existing creative clusters while encouraging the emergence of new ones, recognising their potential to drive inclusive regeneration and cultural vibrancy.

Other major capital investments in Liverpool such as the new Waterfront Transformation Project, Knowledge Quarter and major developments at Littlewoods Film Studios can also be the catalyst for more and more ambitious development of our cultural and heritage infrastructure.

Culture Liverpool and its partners will collaborate with City Development to identify and support funding opportunities, while also seeking to maximise the potential of community asset transfers. Culture Liverpool will continue to champion the use of planning tools and devolved powers to safeguard cultural and creative organisations from displacement—recognising their essential role in regeneration. These buildings are not only valuable cultural assets but also represent a shared civic responsibility.

Throughout this strategy, Culture Liverpool and Liverpool City Council will work closely with partners to clearly communicate funding priorities, ensuring that cultural spaces remain accessible, well-used, and environmentally sustainable.

Outcome 2: Culture Liverpool will play a key role within Liverpool, the Liverpool City Region and with Liverpool's cultural organisations in contributing positively to the new Culture Network LCR CIC to deliver outstanding creative work across the region.

Collaboration across boundaries will be critical to delivering cultural opportunities over the next decade. Culture Liverpool will explore working in partnership across the wider Liverpool City Region, along with partners nationally and globally.

Building on the Liverpool City Region's rich cultural assets, over sixty cultural organisations have come together to form Culture Network LCR CIC—an initiative aimed at enhancing and unifying the region's already dynamic cultural landscape. Culture Liverpool will encourage Liverpool's creative and cultural organisations to play a full and active part in the Culture Network and to bring their depth of experience to benefit the wider region.

Outcome 3: A focussed, coherent programme of internationally significant cultural events will continue to bring social and economic benefits to the whole Liverpool City Region.

Major event programming remains central to cultural provision and destination marketing for Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region. Eurovision 2023 was a stand-out moment for this, bringing £54.8 million of economic benefit to the City Region, reaching two million people through education and community programmes, and 473,000 attendees at Eurovision events.

Investment in festivals has delivered economic and social benefits to the whole city and its diverse communities. This strategy continues the priority of coordinated development of the sector and its audiences to allow Liverpool to address wider ambitions, identifying new revenue opportunities to develop and expand established festivals and achieve even better value for public money.

Culture Liverpool has a variety of roles to play across different festivals and events, whether acting as a convenor and facilitator for events delivered by arts partners (e.g., Africa Oyé), using its resources and influence to bring major events to the city (e.g., Eurovision), or developing cultural programmes that maximise the impact and benefit of commercial events to Liverpool and its people (for example, Taylor Swift). Liverpool City Council will deliver and enhance the positive outcomes of a wide range of festivals and events.

Example: The 200th anniversary of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (Rocket 200) in 2029-30 will provide a huge opportunity for a linear celebration along the route, which takes in some of Liverpool's (and the wider region's) most in-need communities. The Rocket 200 partnership has secured £200,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop plans for a programme that will connect themes including railways, locomotion, passenger travel, arts and

culture, engineering, built heritage, landscape, community histories, and a shared sense of place along the historic route. Culture Liverpool and Liverpool City Council are already engaged in planning the development of a programme of events with partners including NML, Metal, University of Liverpool, St Helens Council and - at the other end of the line - Manchester City Council, the People's History Museum, Science Museum and Home.

Outcome 4: A vibrant, inclusive programme of cultural activity and talent development which reflects Liverpool's diverse communities and celebrates local talent.

Liverpool has a diverse creative community.

Residents are actively engaged in producing and delivering culture with and for their communities and visitors. Often these activities are voluntary led and can be difficult to sustain over the longer term. This strategy aims to promote a cross sectoral approach to developing and showcasing community-led, home-grown, and grass roots culture.

At the time of writing new funding may become available over time through government initiatives, devolved funding pots, and discretionary funding made available to Liverpool City Council. As funding becomes available criteria will be developed to support:

- Commissions for new work and projects by local artists and residents which reflect and celebrate Liverpool's diverse communities and neighbourhoods.
- The development of opportunities for cross sectoral synergies and collaboration at a project and strategic level.

Our commitment is to support talented freelancers and cultural practitioners across Liverpool - putting artists and creatives at the heart of our cultural offer.





Sandra Suubi, 'Samba Gown' Procession, 2023. Liverpool Biennial 2023. Courtesy of Liverpool Biennial. Photography by Pete Carr

PRIORITY 3: CULTURE SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

Across the city there is a shared ambition to grow the education, training, and opportunities people need to take the next step in their creative journey.

There is a clear ambition to build on the work done in the previous strategy to see more children and young people across the city have opportunities to raise their creativity, both within and outside of mainstream education. Liverpool City Council will continue to support key partners to do this, including cultural and educational organisations such as Sound! Music Hub.

Outcome 1: Liverpool's educational institutions will have a clear understanding of the skills needs of the sector and can provide appropriate training and qualifications. The sector will have equitable, well-signposted routes to work for qualified candidates.

Liverpool's creative educational institutions are widely admired, and our creative organisations across the subsidised and for-profit sectors provide professional development and access to a continued skills journey

across a wide range of creative jobs. It remains crucial that young people can access opportunities to work in the cultural sector, and that Liverpool's organisations continue to attract the best new talent.

Liverpool enjoys a long-nurtured cultural ecosystem that helps people access experiences, education, and training which can lead jobs and careers in the culture and creative sectors and provide transferrable skills for other employment. However, consultation with the higher education sector show that there is a distinct challenge for universities in supporting graduates into the cultural sectors.

Employers in the cultural sector are often small-scale, and they rely on many freelancers owing to the dynamic nature of shows, music events, and installations. Liverpool will only continue to appeal as a destination for talent if the education and culture sectors work together

to provide clear pathways and opportunities for artists, technicians, and administrators. As Culture Liverpool continues to bring together cultural organisations the sector will work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to ensure data, insights, and employer needs in the cultural economy are shared. Culture Liverpool will continue to champion clear points of entry for sector-specialist business support, supply chain development, and skills growth for creative enterprises within the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. In addition, new partnerships will be sought to ensure this approach is inclusive and to extend reach to all diverse communities and sections of society.

We will work to ensure everyone is given a fair opportunity to engage with the creative sector and access pathways to jobs within the creative workforce.

Example: Action! is a skills initiative made possible through £2.3 million of British Film Institute National Lottery funding, which was awarded to Screen Alliance North, a skills cluster partnership delivered by Liverpool Film Office, North East Screen, Screen Manchester and Screen Yorkshire. The partnership aims to make the screen sector more accessible and to help build a thriving and skilled workforce across the North of England. Over three years, Liverpool Film Office is aiming to support 1,000 people into the industry by delivering an innovative, free-to-access skills programme to build a stronger, more diverse screen sector in the Liverpool City Region.

Action! offers a range of free-to-all courses and career development training including career surgeries, basic training, workshops, industry bootcamps, access to additional employability assets, and masterclasses. On recent shoots Action! trainees have worked across roles including assistant director, costume, props, locations, make-up and sound.

Outcome 2: Liverpool will develop its strengths in film, music, events, performing arts, museums and galleries and delivers high-quality workspaces, business support, and artistic opportunity to artists, creatives and businesses in these subsectors.

Liverpool offers opportunities in almost every conceivable artform and celebrates particular strengths in some fields that are ripe for further growth. Since the last strategy, the city has successfully grown its Film Office and Music Office offer, and Culture Liverpool's investment decisions now consider ways in which investments contribute to stimulating collaboration across the creative sector to help create an internationally

significant 'smart specialism' in large-scale event production.

The growing interface between culture and R&D is a strength of the city. Discussions with Liverpool's universities indicate a growing interest in collaborative cultural initiatives that are strategically positioned to secure external funding. This collaborative model, as we have seen in other projects such as The Pandemic Institute, is a key tool in growing the agglomeration impacts of culture and one all Liverpool partners will seek to nurture.

Liverpool has some outstanding artist studio spaces including Royal Standard, The Bluecoat, Hub Studios, and Make CIC to name four, but there are fewer high-quality co-working spaces that support other start-up and scale-up businesses than in comparator cities, and there is a need for to work collaboratively across the sector and with education institutions, banks, and other partners with an interest in developing creative businesses to deliver better workspaces, business support, and mentoring.

Retaining a skilled workforce is not only about the availability of good jobs but also about the vibrancy of the city. Studies of comparator cities suggests the cultural appeal of a place is key to attracting a skilled workforce. The actions in this strategy, and the council's work with education partners, will help promote Liverpool as not simply a place with good jobs but one which is culturally exciting and diverse.

Outcome 3: We will work to make Liverpool a better place for freelancers, partnering with artists, creatives and organisations across the city to improve conditions for independent creatives.

Freelancers working in the north of England typically make 90% or more of their income from their freelance work in the cultural and creative industries. But 68% of freelancers are earning less than £20,000 a year – and 35% are earning less than £10,000 a year. This represents a critical threat to the sustainable future of arts and culture in our city because these artists and freelancers represent much of the backbone of creation and production of artistic content.

An Arts Council England report found that the twin impacts of the pandemic and the rising cost of living have affected the entire sector, with freelancers often experiencing these challenges most acutely. They are navigating the same issues as their employed counterparts, but with less financial security and often lower incomes. The study also highlighted that practitioners from under-represented backgrounds are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain careers in the sector, and that significantly more progress is needed to achieve full inclusivity.

We will support all efforts to retain the incredible talent that exists in our city. Culture Liverpool will work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Culture Network LCR CIC to improve workplace culture, recruitment practice, induction, access, career development, pay and contracts and other issues for freelancers. We will ensure that the Council's procurement and grant-making policies support high standards for creative freelancers.





Antony Gormley, 'Another Place', 2005.
Photo by Steve White

PRIORITY 4: CULTURE GROWING OUR ECONOMY

The impact of culture is wide reaching. From the financial benefits generated by cultural activities and industries (including job creation, tourism revenue, and contributions to GDP) to much wider benefits, such as attracting investment, revitalising communities, and enhancing Liverpool's appeal to businesses and skilled workers. Culture not only enriches our society but also drives sustainable economic growth.

Cultural and creative organisations, businesses, and assets play a vital role in Liverpool's economy. They are major employers, attract visitors, and help make the city a vibrant and inspiring place to live, work, study, and grow. Culture is more than just events and exhibitions—it is the feeling they leave behind, the memories they create, and the way they bring people together. It also improves lives through placemaking, job creation, and opportunity.

While the UK economy has faced serious challenges in recent years, Liverpool's cultural sector has helped the city stay resilient. Though we have not yet reached the level of investment needed to fully unlock its potential, culture has continued to support communities and drive local pride. As the economy begins to recover, cultural organisations are well placed to benefit from

future growth—ensuring that culture remains central to Liverpool's renewal and long-term success.

Culture's reach is not monolithic and homogenous, and its impacts are felt unevenly across geographies, its contribution to the economy varies by asset, and it has spillover benefits that are more and less keenly felt depending on an enormous number of factors.

National evidence indicates that culture is not only a multi-billion-pound contributor to the UK economy, but that a significant proportion of these benefits stems from local authorities, who are collectively the largest public funders of culture nationwide. Simultaneously, while Liverpool City Council provides a multi-million pound funding settlement to key cultural organisations, budget pressures mean

the Council cannot fund as broadly or as deeply as it would wish to. Therefore, the central challenge that the Council faces is how to make the most of the growth potential of cultural assets while balancing a challenging funding settlement. Getting this balance right is key to the future of Liverpool's culture offer.

Outcome 1: Major events are key to the prosperity of the city and the enjoyment and impacts of these events will be spread by building a culture where more organisations can join in.

Eurovision Economic Impact in Liverpool, Insights for Future Large-Scale Events, looked at how "one-off large-scale events" boost the wider Liverpool economy. Their emerging findings are that large-scale events like Eurovision boost the number of financial transactions within a hyper-local geography.

A report by Turley Economics demonstrates that concerts held at Anfield over the past five years have contributed more than £31 million to the local economy, driven primarily by performances from global megastars such as Taylor Swift.

One of the standout successes of Swift's visit was the way it became a city-wide occasion, extending beyond the stadium itself. The Taylor Town Trail featured eleven art installations, enabling fans without tickets to engage with and enjoy the experience. According to Liverpool Business News, citing the Eras Tour Spending Report by VoucherCodes, the Taylor Swift event alone generated over £25 million for Liverpool's economy.

One lesson from Taylor Swift is that Liverpool simply should not 'Shake It Off' when it comes to its reputation for hosting great large scale cultural events. The 'Love Story' created by the Taylor Swift experience demonstrates that events held in one part of the city can deliver economic and cultural benefits across the whole of Liverpool.

Harnessing brand assets like this allows major organisations like our universities, community centres, libraries, galleries, and others to join in the fun. And fun is the key cultural idea here. Culture Liverpool will work to turn events into celebrations that bring people to Liverpool even where enthusiasm for tickets outstrips the capacity of venues. This will be achieved by the proactive building of collation of partners, it will in part by continuing the close working between the city council and venues, along with pro-active communications that build a culture of joining in.

Outcome 2: Culture Liverpool will develop clearer support mechanisms through which we organise activities, interventions, and funding, dependent on the economic purpose of an activity.

The strength of Liverpool's cultural offer is its variety. There is a continual challenge to ensure that culture is as widely felt as it could be across all of Liverpool's wards but there is no question that Liverpool's offer is diverse.

Culture is Liverpool's international calling card. To the outside world Liverpool's cultural offer is the mixture of the leading events, eye-catching museums and galleries, and its music and visual arts heritage. To the city, culture performs three distinct but equally valuable economic functions.

The most visible is that there are cultural events that occur because of Liverpool's reputation, infrastructure, and cultural competencies. The major gigs, international festivals and global sports events, take place because Liverpool can service the needs of artists, companies, international federations, organisations and brands. This international brand for hosting these kinds of events is hard won but easily lost. Liverpool City Council will continue to work closely with partner agencies, businesses, and stakeholders in the visitor economy to embed this competency within Liverpool and the wider Liverpool City Region.

There are then the cultural assets which are driven primarily by their artistic merits and are homegrown in Liverpool. These attract visitors and

customers and are built on a legacy of cultural excellence. It is hard to imagine the variety of Lucian Freud at Tate Liverpool, Art Plays Games at Fact, Red or Dead at Liverpool's Royal Court, and an international Irish festival, occurring in many other cities. Put simply, major exhibits like Diego Velázquez, music by Taylor Swift or Echo and the Bunnymen, and the Royal Institute of British Architects walking tours happen because of Liverpool's infrastructure, reputation, and cultural legacy.

Finally, there are the cultural works that allow people to live more expansive and connected lives. For example, Blue Rooms, The Bluecoat's inclusive art project, is working with LUSH to design and commission new work by learning disabled artists. In economic terms, culture is about the big events, the local talent, and transformative and directed activity. Each intervention requires distinct forms of support, and Liverpool City Council is committed to providing clarity around funding criteria. This includes aligning resources with the most appropriate types of activity

and developing evaluation methods that reflect both conventional metrics—such as Gross Value Added (GVA)—and broader ambitions tied to the inclusive economy, including participation, outreach, and community engagement.

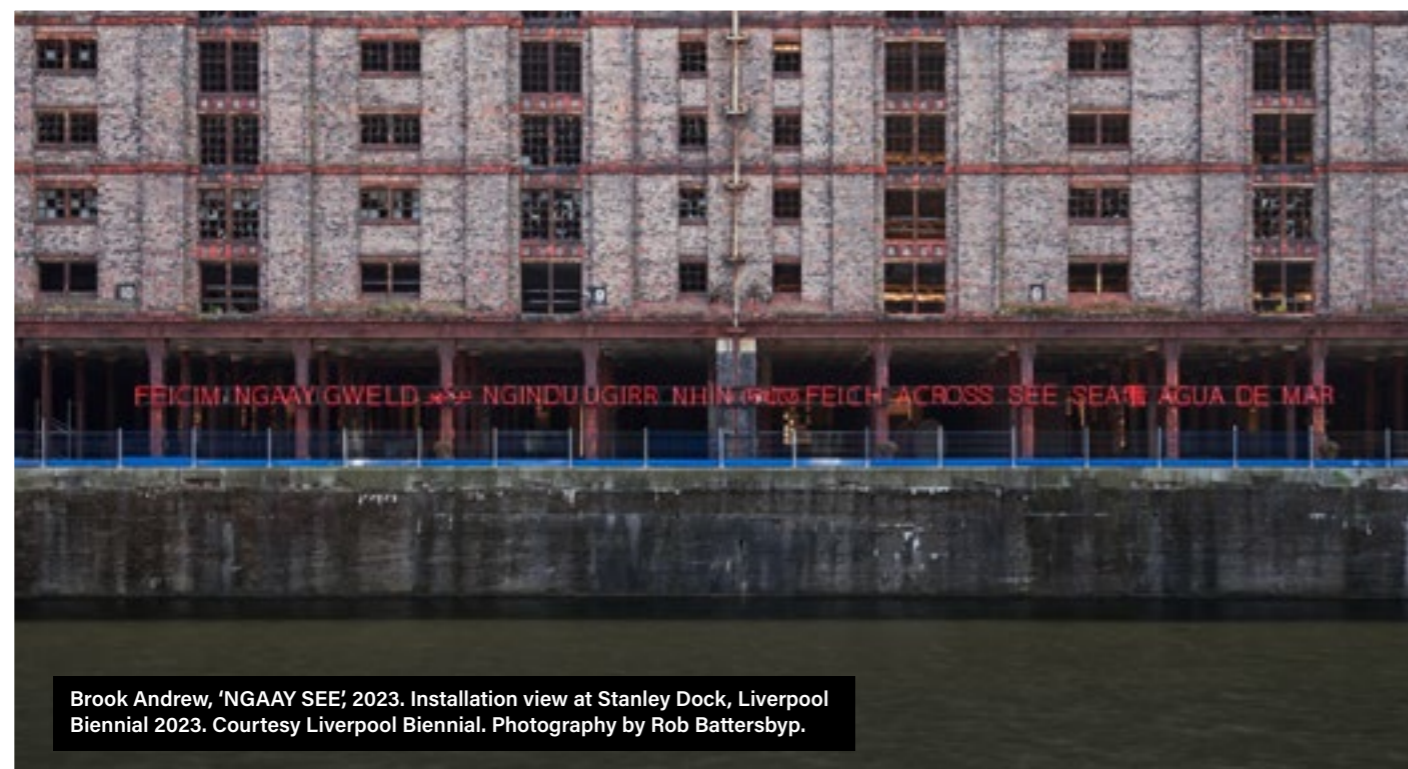
Outcome 3: Culture will be wholly integrated into Liverpool's wider ambitions for economic growth.

The future of Liverpool's economy will be based around a mixture of leading R&D assets, big civic institutions like its universities, emerging technologies, digital and creative assets, life sciences, maritime, all of which will be underpinned by a creative and cultural sector that will be the envy of the world.

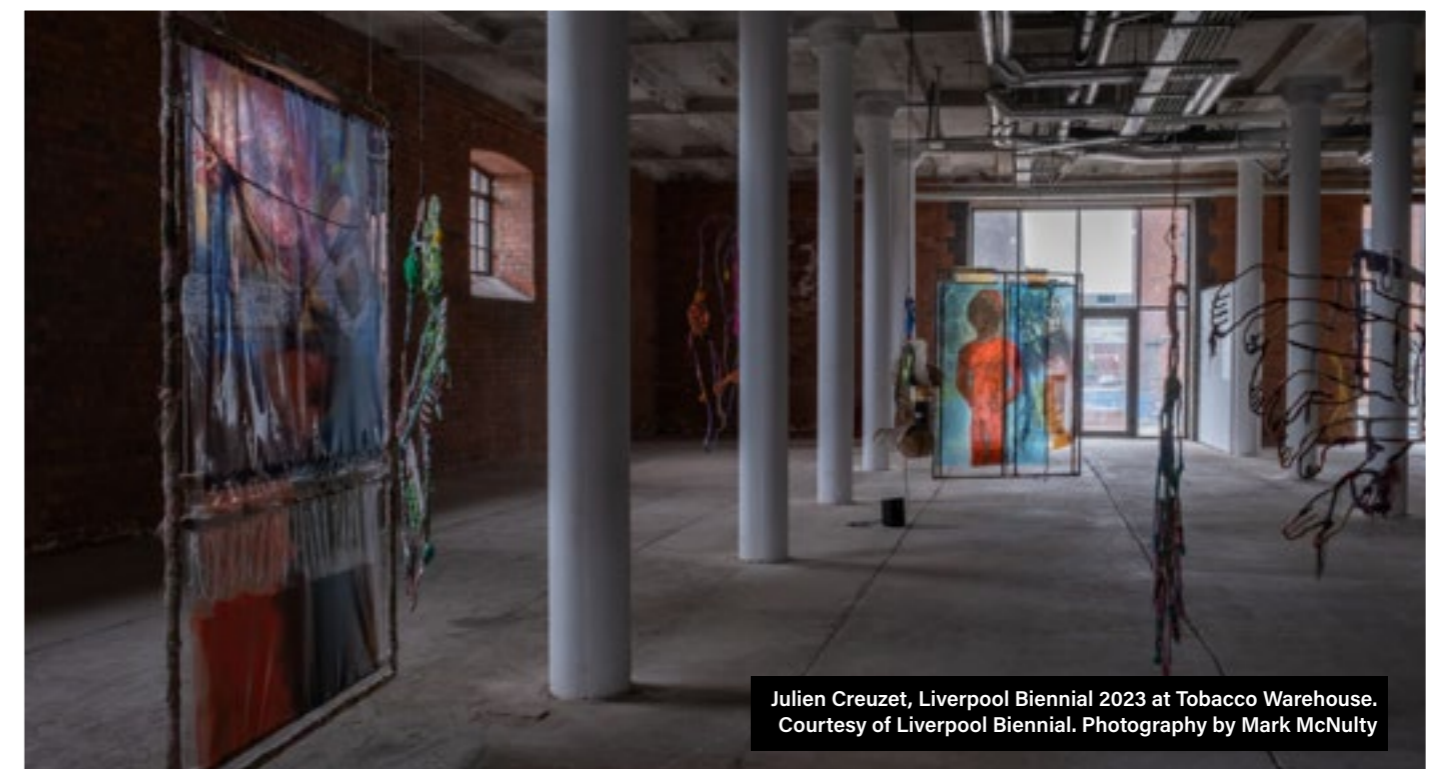
Liverpool's cultural offer is sometimes perceived as fragmented, with connections between activities and institutions not as seamless as they could be. Strengthening these links would help audiences better navigate the city's cultural landscape and align cultural initiatives more effectively with wider city priorities—

maximising their reach and impact. Culture also provides a platform for other sectors to showcase innovation. For example, the stories of Liverpool's scientific breakthroughs during the COVID-19 pandemic are part of the city's heritage and reinforce its national significance. The legacies of maritime history, advanced manufacturing, and the work of Liverpool's universities gain public support through how they are presented and made accessible.

Liverpool City Council's Inclusive Economic Strategy will prioritise culture as both a cross-cutting theme and a catalyst for growth. Working with landowners, developers, and investors, the Council will foster creative clusters such as the Baltic Triangle, Fabric District, and Knowledge Quarter—maximising their agglomeration effects. This approach will champion inclusive growth, ensuring opportunities reach all communities, regardless of socio-economic status, age, disability, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.



Brook Andrew, 'NGAAY SEE', 2023. Installation view at Stanley Dock, Liverpool Biennial 2023. Courtesy Liverpool Biennial. Photography by Rob Battersbyp.



Julien Creuzet, Liverpool Biennial 2023 at Tobacco Warehouse. Courtesy of Liverpool Biennial. Photography by Mark McNulty

OUR SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

COLLABORATION & RESILIENCE

Over the past 15 years, a series of major events—including the global financial crisis, austerity measures, the COVID-19 pandemic, and shifts in public funding—have placed exceptional pressure on the culture and creative sector. Despite ongoing challenges, organisations across Liverpool have shown remarkable resilience—continuing to deliver high-quality work, often with fewer resources, while diversifying income streams to remain sustainable and impactful.

Culture Liverpool has worked across sectors to secure new funding for cultural organisations, collaborating with key partners such as Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to advise and support strategic change. We will continue to champion the importance of revenue diversification in cultural and creative enterprises—both in our own work and among funded organisations.

Through close collaboration with networks and partners, we will support the sector to develop new intellectual property, expand into domestic and international markets, explore innovative models of social investment, and diversify sources of private and philanthropic funding.

Creative people and organisations are instinctively collaborative, and Culture Liverpool is proud to be part of a creative economy powered by people who are always looking for opportunities to work together. But collaborative working is also challenging in our sector, with funding models that are inherently

competitive, and organisations having limited capacity to look beyond the day-to-day as they seek to deliver vital services and stay afloat financially.

Culture Liverpool is committed to making its funding more collaborative and responsive. We will continue to seek feedback from funded organisations and the wider sector to improve how we deliver this.

To support shared growth, Culture Liverpool will convene forums to develop collective resources—including marketing, communications, ticketing platforms, and shared access to gallery, rehearsal, and performance spaces. This approach will help maximise the use of capital investments in cultural infrastructure, with a continued emphasis on the city's existing cultural, historical and heritage assets.

Liverpool will be a leader in supporting increasing collaboration between the culture sector and public, community, voluntary and charitable agencies. This will include

looking for new ways to deliver social and environmental benefits, and in the process, identify sustainable revenues for cultural activity.





Pimp my Wheelchair - an event held for DaDaFest International 40 at Sefton Park Palmhouse showcasing the work of Faith Bebbington and Janet Price. Image copyright Brian Roberts/DADA 2025.

EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVITY

A City That Celebrates Diversity.

Liverpool is proud to be a welcoming city that celebrates its diverse communities. The Council is committed to building a more inclusive and equal city—tackling inequalities while promoting the distinct identities that make Liverpool unique. These ambitions are embedded in the Council Plan, City Plan and underpin the development and delivery of this cultural strategy.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Liverpool City Council recognises and protects individuals from discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Council is committed to going beyond the protected characteristics to include care experience and socio-economic status. This commitment is central to the cultural strategy, ensuring that cultural activity reflects and supports the full diversity of our city.

The Council is dedicated to inclusive leadership, using robust equality data and equality impact assessments to inform decisions and support policy and service development. This strategy embeds equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) throughout cultural programmes and governance.



ADDRESSING RACISM AND HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Racism remains a significant challenge with deep impacts on Liverpool's communities and workforce.

The city is home to Europe's oldest Chinese community, Britain's oldest Black community, the UK's first mosque, and one of its oldest Jewish communities. Liverpool has long welcomed migrants—from Ireland, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean, to more recent arrivals from Eastern and Central Europe.

In early 2024, the Council affirmed that tackling inequalities alone is not enough—it must become actively anti-racist. The race riots of 2024 underscored the urgency of this commitment and the need for strong, inclusive leadership.

Key initiatives include:

- Liverpool Arts and Culture Race Equality Manifesto: original developed by the LARC and COoL cultural networks, signed by dozens of cultural organisations, with seven pledges and clear targets.
- Expansion of the International Slavery Museum: In partnership with National Museums Liverpool, telling the story of the transatlantic slave trade and its enduring impact.
- Support for racially diverse-led businesses: In collaboration with the LCR Equality Hub, promoting career opportunities and investing in race equality.

- Development of an anti-racism Strategy and Action Plan for the Council and a city-wide anti-racism strategy, working with the members of the Liverpool Strategic Partnership.

More information is available on the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpage.

<https://liverpool.gov.uk/council/equality-diversity-and-inclusion>

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Working-class communities have historically faced barriers to arts participation due to financial constraints, limited networks, and systemic class biases. Despite Liverpool's rich cultural heritage, grassroots artists often struggle to access mainstream platforms and funding.

With 8% of residents and 57% of children living in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally, targeted action is essential. While 64% of CAIP-funded events focus on equality and diversity, further efforts are needed to remove barriers for working-class individuals.

Culture Liverpool will:

- Work with funded partners to promote free and subsidised events, including jobseeker and unemployed ticket rates.
- Monitor EDI outcomes through annual grant reporting.
- Work to ensure equitable resource distribution.





YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, a £5 million initiative, supports 18–21-year-olds not in employment, education, or training (NEET)

Culture Liverpool will contribute by creating accessible pathways into the cultural sector—through placements, workshops, and events—helping young people build confidence, gain skills, and access employment.

This supports both the Trailblazer's goals and the city's commitment to a more diverse and inclusive cultural workforce.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AND REPRESENTATION

Initial consultation highlighted concerns about the accessibility of cultural events and the extent to which inclusion is embedded in programming.

In response, the Council will work closely with underrepresented artists and audiences to co-design new standards for events and programmes. These efforts will be monitored through the strategy's governance arrangements. The Council supports communities across all protected characteristics through its CAIP programme, including:

- Homotopia – championing LGBTQIA+ arts and culture
- DaDaFest – promoting disability and deaf arts
- Milap – celebrating South Asian arts
- Collective Encounters – using theatre for social change

This cultural strategy builds on the city's strong tradition of community-driven initiatives, aiming to ensure that cultural leadership, staffing, and participation reflect the full diversity of its population. Grounded in the principles of the Equality Act 2010, the strategy protects individuals across nine protected characteristics and promotes inclusive leadership through evidence-based decision-making.

This approach ensures that arts and culture in Liverpool remain accessible, representative, and inclusive contributing to a fairer and more vibrant city for all.





ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Since declaring a Climate Change Emergency in 2019, Liverpool City Council has made substantial progress towards Net Zero, and in realising the many benefits of this including stimulated the local green economy, placing us at the forefront of new industries, and demonstrating leadership to other cities in the UK and globally

Liverpool has been designated as the UN's first-ever Accelerator City, as part of the UN's Entertainment and Culture for Climate Action (ECCA) initiative. This recognises the city's commitment to rapidly decarbonising its live music and TV/film production sectors.

The programme brings together artists, scientists, and local authorities to implement sustainable practices, including hosting low-carbon live music events and industry summits. In November 2024, Liverpool featured performances by Massive Attack, Idles, and Nile Rodgers & Chic to showcase sustainable event production. The 'Expedition One' summit also united professionals to pioneer decarbonisation strategies in the entertainment sector. Liverpool will be sharing the experience, learnings and outputs from its first accelerator year at Expedition 2 in November 2025.

Liverpool serves as a testbed for sustainable cultural practices, aiming to set a global precedent. The initiative is backed by a network of public and private sector partners, along with UN agencies, working to drive innovation in entertainment and cultural industries. Through this programme, Liverpool seeks to demonstrate that creative sectors crucially when working with cities can play a leading role in climate action while ensuring long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

The culture sector also has a vital part to play in this challenge, and we will continue to support the

independent efforts of the SHIFT network of cultural organisations who share knowledge, resources, and best practices.

Along with our own cultural activities we will accelerate the transition to Net Zero carbon over the rest of the decade. This will be accomplished, for example, by sharing a green charter with venues and promoters, and by continuously working towards carbon reduction initiatives. This includes prioritising clean, sustainable energy sources, increasing energy efficiency and reducing waste, with the council providing ongoing support and guidance.

Liverpool City Council will continue to champion the vital role of cultural organisations in engaging audiences with environmental sustainability through the example they set and the work they produce. The Council will help other sectors of the economy to be aware of the support they can get from the cultural sector in helping to shape opinions and raise awareness of a range of issues including clean energy, active travel, water and waste and biodiversity.

Culture Liverpool will play a crucial role in helping cultural organisations achieve their net-zero goals by providing guidance, resources, and incentives. We will provide and signpost to resources sustainable practices and facilitate access to funding for green initiatives, such as upgrading to energy-efficient infrastructure or installing renewable energy systems. Additionally, the Council will embed sustainability requirements into funding agreements

to ensure climate-conscious strategies are prioritised. To ensure progress, the council will establish systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of these initiatives, adjusting where needed. Together, we will champion a collective transition to Net Zero.

This work will be formulated into an implementation plan that will be interrogated through the governance arrangements for the wider cultural strategy. The implementation plan will consider both the specific sustainability challenges of the sector including the use and reuse of the estate, waste produced from events, and the intersections between sustainability and the equity ambitions of the plan, and the opportunities for the cultural sector to lead the way in setting an example of sustainable practices across the city.

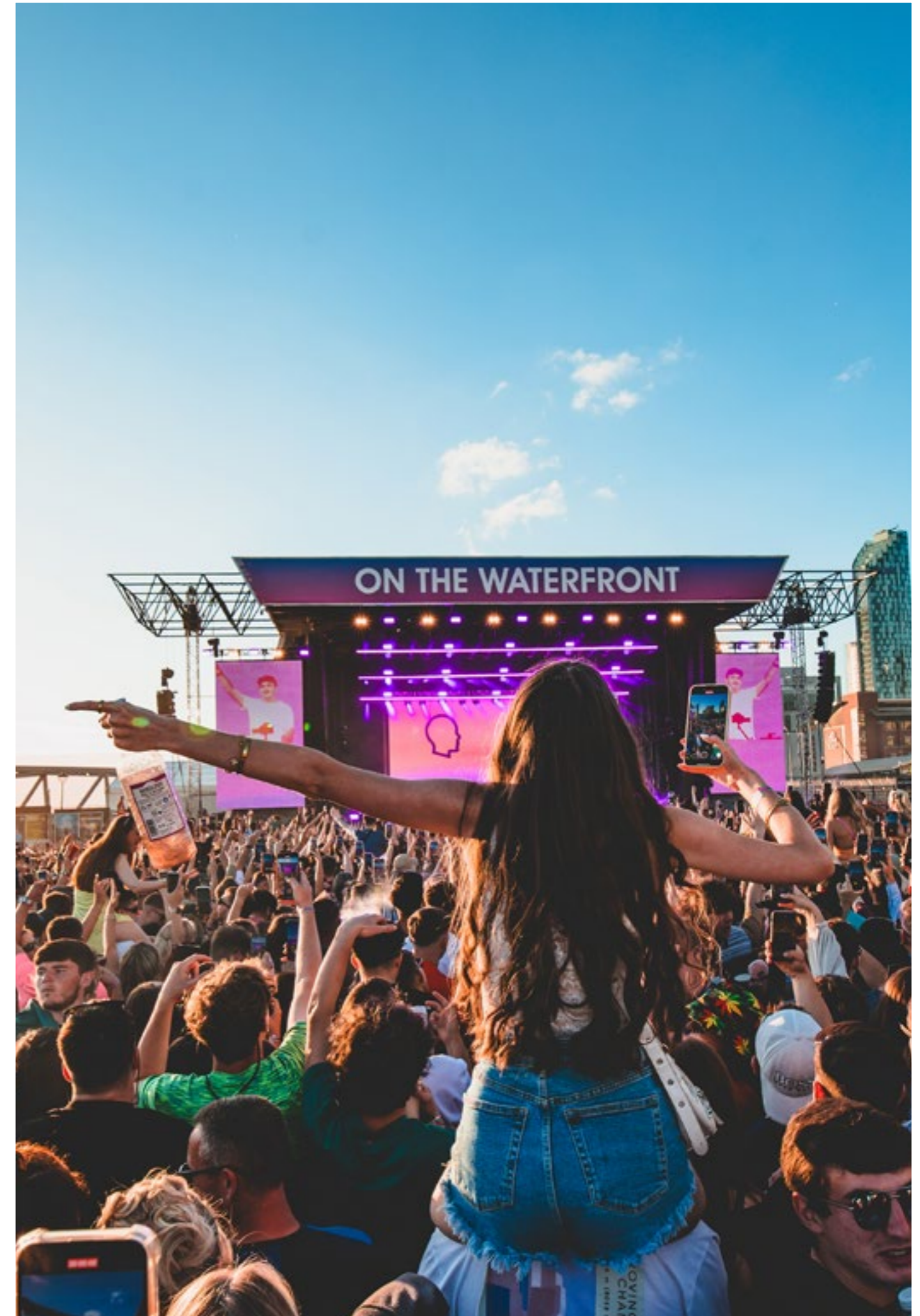
THEORY OF CHANGE

We have developed four key priorities and eight key goals, all underpinned by the Liverpool model which prizes our expertise in collaboration, production, and convening partners.

The Liverpool Model is our theory of change that underpins everything we do: Artists and creatives are at the heart of our cultural offer.

- We invest for the long term to allow cultural leaders and organisations to grow.
- We support culture wherever it may be supported by the engine of our civic institutions where we will close roads, visit schools, clean streets, and integrate culture into all our work.
- Our work is locally rooted and internationally focused, which means our cultural activity is a product of this city, but its impact reverberates around the world.
- We never rest on our laurels, but we also give artists and organisations the time to succeed.

This will be brought to life through detailed implementation plans shaped by the strategy, and through collaborative processes that will be openly shared with the cultural sector—ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute and be part of the journey.





HOW WE WILL GOVERN THE PLAN

The strategy's implementation and impact will be measured and monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms:

1. Partnership-Based Evaluation

Culture Liverpool will continue to work with The Culture Network LCR CIC to help shape policy and provides feedback on strategy delivery. CAIP (Cultural Arts Investment Programme): This programme tracks metrics such as visitor numbers, job creation, and economic impact which act as a barometer of the health of the cultural sector.

2. Neighbourhood Community Engagement

Culture Liverpool will continue to engage via the Neighbourhood Model to involve the community in both our programme and any appropriate consultations—for example, the forthcoming next phase of CAIP and the development of Pride of Place. Pride of Place is a community-led initiative that celebrates local identity, creativity, and civic pride, aiming to strengthen connections between people and the places they live. This will involve increased engagement and activity via the council's Neighbourhood Management Team to ensure the needs of each neighbourhood are better understood—giving residents

a voice and enabling decisions to be informed by local issues, ultimately improving outcomes for residents.

Progress will be monitored through the use of regular feedback loops, community reporting, and shared evaluation frameworks, ensuring transparency and accountability while adapting to emerging needs and insights from each neighbourhood.

3. Data-Driven Insights

The strategy will increasingly be led by data, with ongoing evaluation of how culture impacts education, skills, health, wellbeing, tourism, and innovation. This evidence base supports funding bids and policy development.

4. Internal Scrutiny

Culture Liverpool will lead on data collection and analysis, developing an empirical evidence base to track progress across all the priority areas. Annual reporting to Liverpool City Council's Cabinet will ensure political oversight and accountability will be backed up by regular reports to the Culture Scrutiny Committee along with reports to the Cabinet Member for Culture & Tourism.

8 KEY GOALS FOR 2030

Promote Liverpool's Cultural Identity

Liverpool will be promoted nationally and internationally as a leading cultural city, with a coherent programme of significant cultural activity and support for local artists and underrepresented art forms.

Embed Health & Wellbeing in Culture

Public Health messaging and the Five Ways to Wellbeing will be fully integrated into cultural programmes and neighbourhood initiatives.

Strengthen Arts & Health Partnership

A robust, citywide Arts & Health network—including hospitals and public health partners—will deliver creative contributions to health and wellbeing, supported by shared data.

Champion Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

All funded cultural organisations will demonstrate best practice in diversity, with embedded KPIs, updated EDI policies, and annual monitoring of socioeconomic and equality data.

Co-Design Accessibility Standards

New accessibility standards for events and funding will be co-designed with disabled artists and audiences, ensuring cultural activities are inclusive for all.

Drive Cultural Regeneration & Infrastructure

A pipeline of infrastructure projects and a clear investment strategy will support creative communities, cultural regeneration, and Net Zero ambitions.

Develop Skills & Opportunities for All

Education institutions will align training with sector needs, clear routes into cultural employment will be established, and freelancers will benefit from improved pay, conditions, and support.

Grow an Inclusive, Sustainable Cultural Economy

Major events will be more inclusive, new music and creative industry initiatives will be launched, and cultural planning will be integrated into Liverpool's economic growth strategies, prioritising inclusive growth and community cohesion.



WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT IN FIVE YEARS

We have developed four key priorities and eight key goals, all underpinned by the Liverpool model which prizes our expertise in collaboration, production, and convening partners.

1. Culture Strengthening Our Communities

- Public Health messaging and the Five Ways to Wellbeing will be embedded across cultural programmes and neighbourhood initiatives.
- A strengthened Arts & Health network will include hospitals and public health partners.
- A robust partnership between Liverpool City Council and the health sector will deliver creative contributions to health and wellbeing, supported by shared data.
- New accessibility standards for events and funding will be co-designed with disabled artists and audiences.
- All funded cultural organisations will demonstrate best practice in diversity across boards, staff, volunteers, and audiences.
- Diversity KPIs will be embedded in funding agreements, with updated EDI policies and model agreements.
- Annual rapid reviews of events will be conducted to ensure relevance and inclusivity.

- Socioeconomic and EDI data will be included in annual monitoring (e.g. free/subsidised events, jobseeker ticket rates).
- The Racism Equality Action Plan will be further developed in partnership with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

2. Culture Celebrating Our Place

- A pipeline of infrastructure projects will support creative communities and cultural regeneration
- LCR Culture Network CIC will bring together Liverpool's cultural organisations.
- Liverpool will be promoted nationally and internationally through the LVEP.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration will be embedded in cultural planning and delivery.
- A coherent programme of internationally significant cultural activity will deliver social and economic benefits citywide.
- Local artists and underrepresented art forms will be supported through new funding criteria.
- Independent, community-rooted cultural programmes will be

developed and supported.

- The cultural offer will be better integrated across council services (e.g. support for road closures, schools, clean streets).
- Development of Williamson Square and the Playhouse will be prioritised.
- A sustainability framework will be implemented to address environmental challenges in culture, including the future development of the SHIFT network.
- A clear strategy will guide investment in cultural venues and spaces, aligned with Net Zero goals.

3. Culture Supporting Our People

- Liverpool will enhance its strengths in film, music, events, performing arts, museums, and galleries.
- Education institutions will better align training and qualifications with cultural sector needs.
- Clear, equitable routes into cultural employment will be established and signposted.
- A single point of entry for creative business support will be championed.

- Artists and creatives will be signposted to high-quality workspaces and business support.
- The council will support Freelancers in achieving improved pay, conditions, and support structures.
- Procurement and grant-making policies will be used to improve freelancer standards.
- Collaborative partnerships will deliver better mentoring, workspace, and business development.
- New initiatives will support youth engagement and skills development.

4. Culture Growing Our Economy

- Major events will be more inclusive, with broader participation from diverse organisations.
- Clear support mechanisms will guide funding and interventions based on economic purpose, including the use of 'Invest to Save' or 'Invest to Earn' principles.
- The Music Lab incubator and the "Abbey Road of the North" recording studio will be launched.
- "Immersive Liverpool" will be established as a new music-focused attraction. Cultural planning will be integrated into Liverpool's economic growth strategies.
- Partnerships with Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery, and DCMS will promote Liverpool as a cultural investment hub.
- Cultural clusters will be prioritised through planning and investment powers.
- Culture Liverpool will work across departments to align with public health, libraries, and heritage strategies.
- Inclusive economic growth and community cohesion will be embedded in cultural development.



METHOD: HOW THIS DRAFT STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The original brief issued in February 2024 requested a 'refresh' of the existing 2021 cultural strategy, which had been published and implemented post-Covid in 2021.

It was felt that the changes to both the cultural and local government landscapes since then had been significant and a review and refresh of the current plan would enable the city to consider those changes, further build on the city's areas of success, and focus on the priorities for the Council Plan around the economy, health and wellbeing, climate change, accessibility and equality.

Although commissioned by the City Council, as were the previous strategies, it was felt important that the strategy was co-created with the sector and incorporated areas such as heritage and major events, which had not been explicit in previous iterations.

The period of the strategy's development has been one of swift and dynamic change, including a national election and a rapidly changing national and regional economy.

The scope of the strategy included the creative and cultural industries (as defined by DCMS, which includes heritage, arts and museums, but also publishing, gaming, computer design, architecture, film, TV, music and radio). The strategy takes an overview of areas for development without focussing on one specific industry. The appointed consultants (Counterculture Ltd) have undertaken three stages of work, in tandem with the work being done to develop other Council strategies, particularly the Inclusive Economic Growth Plan for the City.

1. Desk Review: An update of context since the 2021 strategy. This has included a literature review of key local, national and regional strategies. The focus of this strategy is on updated activity since 2021, so analysis has included integrating emerging findings on the economy, cultural and creative landscapes, adjacent sectors including health, education, and spatial planning,

identifying key stakeholders and assets, and updated regional and local documents in the context of the COVID-19 recovery and major events programmes since 2021. The strategy refresh also emerges in the early term of a new government so while being mindful of emerging priorities being cautious to not seek to assume too much about their intentions prior to any major fiscal events.

2. Stakeholder Engagement: The consultants have worked with key stakeholders, including the City Council and national external funders, the Liverpool City Region Cultural and COoL networks, the Higher and Further Education sectors, and a range of communities and residents. The methodology has ranged from several 1:1 interviews (using the same questions for everyone) to larger roundtables and a sector-based online questionnaire. From this work Counterculture built a comprehensive sense of;

- current perceptions of culture in Liverpool
- how people understand and use the current cultural strategies (both Liverpool's and the wider City Region's)
- current trends in the sector and the city
- where people are focusing locally, nationally and internationally
- strengths and assets to build on, gaps and weaknesses to fill; and
- priorities and challenges to manage over the next 5 years, including funding avenues and approaches, and a sense of what a flourishing cultural sector in the city could look like by 2030
- Public Health messaging and the Five Ways to Wellbeing will be embedded across cultural programmes and neighbourhood initiatives
- A strengthened Arts & Health network will include hospitals and public health partners

3. Strategic Planning:

Counterculture has worked with teams from several other areas in the City Council and the wider Combined Authority to ensure that this strategy aligns with other policies and action plans in development and supports them. This has included looking at capital priorities (including heritage), funding options and the co-dependent roles of both Culture Liverpool and the wider sector to ensure that any refresh of the priorities and approach for culture in the city incorporates as much co-dependency with the Council Plan as possible, whilst also reflecting the wider needs of the sector.

4. Consultation: A draft version of the consultation was shared online, and two in person workshop sessions were organised with cultural stakeholders in June 2025. The online consultation gathered feedback from 76 respondents on the

clarity, accuracy, and effectiveness of Liverpool's Cultural Strategy 2025. Overall, the strategy was well-received in principle, but concerns were raised about its implementation, inclusivity, and relevance to local communities:

- **Clarity:** 84% found the strategy clear and understandable.
- **Vision & Priorities:** 79% agreed or strongly agreed with the vision and priorities.

5. Final Version:

The final version of the Liverpool Cultural Strategy 2025-2030 addresses key concerns raised during public consultation. It demonstrates a strong commitment to:

- **Inclusive, Community-Led Development:** Expanded Creative Neighbourhoods and Pride of Place initiatives ensure cultural activity reaches outer neighbourhoods and underrepresented groups.
- **Accessibility & Representation:** The strategy commits to co-designing accessibility standards with under-represented artists and embedding diversity KPIs in funding agreements.
- **Support for Freelancers & Local Artists:** Clear actions are outlined to improve pay, conditions, and access to opportunities for independent creatives.
- **Reflecting Diverse Communities:** Cultural programming celebrates Liverpool's heritage and diversity, with support for grassroots and community-led initiatives.
- **Economic & Environmental Sustainability:** Major events are leveraged for city-wide benefit, and Liverpool's role as a UN Accelerator City reinforces its climate leadership.
- **Transparent Governance & Delivery:** Implementation will be monitored through neighbourhood engagement, data-led evaluation, and annual reporting to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee.

THANK YOU

This Culture Strategy refresh was made possible by the generosity of many people in organisations across the city. Liverpool City Council and Counterculture Ltd would like to thank...

- 20 Stories High
- ACC Liverpool
- Africa Oyé
- Arts Council England
- Blackfest
- Bluecoat Display Centre
- British Council
- Cinema Nation CIC
- City of Liverpool College
- Collective Encounters
- Comedy Trust
- COoL
- Culture Network LCR CIC
- Curious Minds
- DaDa
- Draw and Code
- FACT
- First Take
- Heart of Glass
- Hobo Kiosk
- Homotopia
- Liverpool & Merseyside Theatres Trust (Everyman & Playhouse)
- Liverpool Arab Arts Festival
- Liverpool Biennial
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership
- Liverpool European Partnership
- Liverpool Film Office
- Liverpool Hope University
- Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts
- Liverpool Irish Festival
- Liverpool John Moores University
- Liverpool Music Board
- Liverpool ONE
- Luma Creations
- Make CIC
- Mandela 8
- Melt CIC
- Merseyside Sport
- Metal
- MILAP
- Movema
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- National Museums Liverpool
- Netherley Youth & Community Initiative
- Open Eye Gallery
- Osun Arts
- Pagoda Arts
- Public Health Liverpool
- Pulse Agency
- RIBA North
- Royal Court Theatre
- Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
- Scale Liverpool
- SHIFT Network
- Social Interest Group (SIG)
- Sole Rebel
- Tate Liverpool
- The Black-E
- The Bluecoat
- The Sound Agents
- Tiber
- Tmesis Theatre
- Unity Theatre
- University of Liverpool
- Wired Aerial Theatre
- Wirral BC
- Wirral Make Fest
- Writing on the Wall

Thanks also to the individual artists and creatives who took the time to attend workshops and contribute. Inclusion in the list above does not imply endorsement or approval of this final document.

Disclaimer:

All information contained within this document is accurate at the time of publication (November 2025). However, this document and its proposed actions are subject to change without notice or liability to Liverpool City Council or its partners. Independent advice should be sought before acting on any recommendations, which are undertaken at the individual's own risk.



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