

# CULTURAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR DUDLEY MBC

View from the Hill Consulting Limited

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This new, cultural strategy will play an important role in implementing the vision of Dudley's Economic and Regeneration Strategy (March 2024). This outlines a pathway for Dudley Borough to "play a full role in driving forward the West Midlands as a whole. To be an aspirational place, in which individuals, families, communities and businesses thrive."

The cultural strategy provides a cohesive approach that will be resilient to the changing economic and social conditions within Dudley. It will build on the current cultural activity, Dudley's range of nationally recognised tourist attractions, its distinctive and dynamic culture, green spaces, canals and broad industrial heritage. Together the strategy and action plan will transform places and lives, supporting improved health and well-being ensuring that culture makes a substantial contribution to place making.

Culture means many things to many people. We are defining culture in its broadest sense so that it encompasses:

- Heritage - architecture, tourism assets, civic buildings, canals, castle, museums and industrial history
- A sense of shared identity – traditions, dialect, shared experience, shared pride, the Dudley flag
- Cultural practice - festivals, music, entertainment, creative activities, sport, events and food and drink.

Dudley's culture is dynamic, ever-changing and distinctive. It is constantly evolving reflecting its demographics and population. This strategy recognises that culture can transform places and lives and in so doing so, support improved health and well-being.

Our vision for Dudley Borough is to become a place where everyone can participate in culture how and if they want to. There will be equity of opportunity from community led co-creation, to culture that reflects the ethnicity and demographics of all communities, to work that is ambitious and covers every art form. Everyone will be able to access culture as they want to - from the many green spaces within the borough, beside a canal, on a high street, in a neighbourhood, in a venue or on a stage.

By adopting this vision, the borough will achieve the following outcomes:

1. Increased numbers of people and organisations will be able to produce cultural activity
2. Cultural activity will support increased vibrancy and activity on local high streets and within neighbourhoods.
3. There will be a greater variety of cultural activity, reflecting the changing ethnicity and demographics of the borough.
4. There will be increased ambition within the cultural sector

5. Greater numbers of people will participate in culture - diverse and multi-generational, reflecting the change demographics of the borough.
6. New cultural clusters will be formed and external cultural organisations will choose to locate to the borough, forming a new cohesive cultural ecology.
7. The profile of the borough will be raised, supporting higher levels of growth for the culture, creative and tourism sectors.

We will implement the strategy using five themes, all of which align to the objectives within the wider Economic and Regeneration Strategy. The themes will form a strategic framework for associated actions over the short, medium and longer term.



Theme 1: investing in **capacity building** to build stronger **resilience** within the creative and cultural sectors



Theme 2: continuing to invest in **skills development** to support future culture leaders and to support life-long learning.



Theme 3: increased **diversity of programming**



Theme 4: fostering and adopting a more **collaborative culture**



Theme 5: having **ambition** regarding **cultural infrastructure and production**.

Ownership, oversight, monitoring and governance of the strategy will be devolved to a Dudley Cultural Partnership – a new, diverse body representative of the cultural sector. DMBC will sit on and be part of the Partnership. They will be a facilitator, working with strategic regional partners, seeking funding and providing resource to support its work.

Other members of the Partnership will be drawn from local businesses, the tourism and cultural sector, education, the NHS, community and voluntary organisations, creatives and the broad cultural sector. Members of the Partnership will work in an unpaid capacity to support the evolution and growth of the cultural ecosystem with Dudley borough.

Delivery of themes and actions will be via a mix of project work streams and Cultural Action Zones (CAZ), commissioned to deliver local cultural activity aligned to the strategic ambitions of the strategy.

CAZ are community led cultural and arts programmes, led by local people for local priorities. They are based on an identified area, creating hyper local action based on collaboration and cross-pollination. They have a flexible model which can respond to the needs and challenges of an area e.g. health, social cohesion etc.

CAZ projects will be commissioned by DMBC as the accountable body, with oversight from the Cultural Partnership. Recommended commissioning goals

include a focus on providing cultural activity for younger generations, working collaboratively with other CAZ areas, having transparent deliverables, clear accountability and a governance framework. Successful programmes will be hyper local and also linked to engagement and endorsement by the new Town Board structures.

In our recommended cultural strategy delivery model, the Cultural Partnership will provide light touch monitoring and oversight of the entire borough wide programme, ensuring alignment to the strategic goals and outcomes listed above.



Figure 1: Images from consultation workshops to develop the strategy

## CONTEXT

### **Local Economy**

Dudley borough has recovered well from the pandemic, though it still has issues of unemployment, deprivation and social isolation in some areas. The number of jobs has returned to pre-pandemic levels and 82% of inhabitants are economically active – higher than both the Black Country and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).<sup>1</sup> With 323,500 people, it is the second least deprived area in the West Midlands. 92.1% of the population was born in the UK (92.1%), with 94.4% of the population responding that their national identity was British, English or a combination of both. Like all urban areas, the ethnicity of the region is changing, with 82.4% identifying their ethnic group as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.

Cultural activity can help tackle disadvantage and social isolation, support local economic growth, job creation and training, create stronger, more cohesive communities, improve people's health and well-being and raise levels of aspiration and attainment. The March 2024 Economic and Regeneration Strategy, outlines the vision for Dudley borough to “play a full role in driving forward the West Midlands as a whole. To be an aspirational place, in which individuals, families, communities and businesses thrive.” This cultural strategy and action plan will play an important role in implementing this vision for Dudley.

It provides a cohesive cultural approach that will be resilient to the changing economic and social conditions within Dudley borough. It will build on the current cultural activity, Dudley's range of nationally recognised tourist attractions, its distinctive and dynamic culture, green spaces, canals and broad industrial heritage. Together the strategy and action plan will transform places and lives, supporting improved health and well-being ensuring that culture makes a substantial contribution to place making.

### **Economic Value of the Creative, Cultural and Tourism Sectors**

#### **Employment**

There is a wide-ranging and diverse creative and cultural sector within the borough, with the area having strengths in tourism, heritage and museums. The sector employs over twelve thousand eight people as indicated by the infographic below.

It is important to note that these totals exclude freelancers, as these are not captured within published statistics given that many do not have to register for VAT or PAYE. Freelancers play a very important role in the cultural and creative economy and to a

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<sup>1</sup> Introductory statistics drawn from the Economic Regeneration Strategy, March 2024.

lesser extent, in the tourism sector. For example, numerous freelancers are active as crafts workers and in the theatre, dance and festival sectors.

A detailed analysis of the full economic and social value of the creative and cultural sectors is outlined in Appendix 1. Almost half, (49.6%) of workers are full-time reflecting the seasonal nature of some cultural and tourism employment. Based on ONS data<sup>2</sup>, we calculate that the employment levels equate to 1,008 FTE in Dudley's creative and cultural sectors and 686 FTE jobs for the tourism sector.



#### Economic Contribution of the Cultural and Creative Sectors

We estimate that the employment levels above made a total direct contribution to GVA of approximately £44.1 million. But the sector has a significant wider effect on the economy through supply chain purchasing. For example, a theatre may purchase design services and costumes, as well as security services and food and drink for its productions. This generates a multiplier effect as the initial injection of expenditure makes its way down the supply chain, creating economic value and supporting employment at each stage. In addition, as workers employed directly and those within the supply chain spend their wages and salaries, this supports further economic multipliers known as induced effects. A significant amount of economic

<sup>2</sup> ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

activity and employment is typically supported outside the cultural sector itself. And thus, provides Dudley with an opportunity to create a far wider cultural economy.

We have estimated the nature and scale of these multiplier effects using published data from ONS in the form of its supply-use framework<sup>3</sup>. Bringing these factors together, we find that the **total core economic footprint of the cultural and creative sector in the DMBC area is equivalent to 12,794 jobs and £88.44 million in GVA.**

#### Economic Contribution of the Visitor Economy (including Tourism)

Dudley reported 9.39 million visitors (tourists plus all other visitors) to the area in 2022 (141.2m in the WMCA area), at a value of £401.39million.<sup>4</sup> Day visits accounted for 91% of all trips, with the rest being overnight stays in the area. The average expenditure per visit was £42.74.

Cultural tourism is an important sector within the overall visitor economy. However, there is limited evidence nationally which identifies its economic impact. A visitor survey undertaken by West Midlands Growth Company<sup>5</sup> asked visitors about the primary activity being undertaken in the area, and what other activities were being undertaken whilst visiting the West Midlands. Using analysis of this data, 1.97 million visits to Dudley in 2022 can be attributable to culture. Assuming the average spend per cultural visit is roughly in line with the overall average from the Dudley STEAM data for 2022 (£42.79 per visitor), it implies that **a total of £84.30 million in visitor expenditure is attributable to cultural tourism in the Dudley area** (1.97 m visits x £42.79 per visit).

### **Economic Forecast – Cultural, Creative and Tourism Sectors**

According to Ernst & Young, the economy should see a return to growth in real incomes (takes inflation into account) over the next three years. The UK is expected to achieve an annual GVA growth of 1.9% per year for the period 2024 to 2027. with the West Midlands growth forecasted to be 1.7%. The UK annualised GVA growth by sector 2024-27 shows that Arts, entertainment and recreation and the Accommodation and food service activities sectors are each expected to achieve an annual GVA growth of 2.2% per year for the period 2024 to 2027.

We have used the Ernst & Young report, to forecast potential growth of the sector. In 2022, the creative and cultural industries made a total direct contribution to GVA of approximately £88.44 million. Cultural tourism to the DMBC area made a total direct

<sup>3</sup> We Made That and Hatch (2019) Creative Supply Chains Study

<sup>4</sup> STEAM report to WMGC, May 2023

<sup>5</sup> Report referenced in West Midlands Cultural Sector Analysis, Hatch, et al. (2021), Source: West Midlands Growth Company Visitor Survey, 2019. The survey was undertaken during April and May 2019 and provides a snapshot of visitors to the region, their reason for visiting and the type of visit being made. A total of 665 interviews were conducted over a ten-week period.

contribution to GVA of approximately £84.30 million<sup>6</sup>. We have divided the expected West Midlands GVA growth per year for the period 2024 to 2027 (1.7%) by the equivalent for the UK as a whole (1.9%) to generate a multiplier ratio (0.89). By applying this ratio to forecast GVA growth for the creative and cultural industries and the cultural tourism sectors in the DMBC area up to 2027, we estimate that **the GVA for creative and cultural industries is forecast to reach £94.90 million by 2027** and the **GVA for cultural tourism is forecast to be worth £91.10 million by 2027**.



Figure 2: Classroom, Black Country Living Museum

## Spatial Audit of Dudley Borough's Cultural Ecosystem

The borough of Dudley is predominantly urban, with four main towns interspersed with smaller towns and urban villages. A feature of the borough's communities, is that each of these main towns has a distinctive local identity and communities feel a sense of pride in where they live. This is in addition to the overarching sense of place for the borough, and for some, a sense of pride in coming from the Black Country.

The main town centres are Dudley, Stourbridge in the southwest, Halesowen in the southeast and Brierley Hill near the centre. These towns are areas of economic focus and regeneration for DMBC and hence their cultural assets and ecosystems were

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<sup>6</sup> Using ONS data

mapped as part of this project. In addition, three further places were mapped, Lye, Sedgley and Kingswinford as these are the three next largest areas of population within the borough.

Appendix 2 provides a detailed mapping of each of the seven areas. This work reveals that within the borough there are:

- 149 creative industry businesses
- 252 organisations within the cultural sector
- 252 buildings within the heritage sector
- 45 attractions/businesses within the tourism industry.

These are broken down as follows:

Number of Assets	Brierley Hill	Dudley	Halesowen	Kingswinford	The Lye	Sedgley	Stourbridge
Creative Industries	22	33	31	12	5	12	34
Cultural Sector	40	54	39	12	9	20	78
Heritage	15	91	35	17	4	27	63
Tourism Industry	9	14	4	3	2	2	11
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>186</b>

Stourbridge, Halesowen and Dudley have the largest populations of the borough and have the highest density of creative industries. As expected, Stourbridge and Dudley also have the highest levels of cultural and Heritage assets with 141 and 145 respectively. Dudley has the highest number of tourism assets (14) with Stourbridge second (11).

Lye, as the smallest and least populated area in the borough, has the least number of assets across the board. Lye is also an area of deprivation and contained within the Levelling Up corridor, therefore it should be prioritised for investment in cultural activity to support regeneration of the area and to address some of the health, welfare and community challenges.

## Methodology

The strategy was been developed to include the entire borough using a collaborative process, with extensive internal and external consultation. This approach is outlined in appendix 3.

The data and the outputs from the diverse engagements were then synthesised to produce the proposed vision, themes, implementation model and action plan of the strategy.

### **Increasing participation in cultural activity**

As part of the workshops, we asked stakeholders to summarise what was needed to improve levels of participation and remove barriers to taking part in cultural activity. Answers varied widely across the groups but the following core themes were identified:

- Mixed entry price points

- Affordability is perceived as a barrier for some sections of the population, therefore the borough offer needs to incorporate a range of price entry points, from free to paid to premium.
- Take culture to where people are
  - Across the borough there is a need for a breadth of programming that can accomodate more niche interests as well broader mainstream appeal so more accessible activity i.e. a wide/diverse programme. Size and scale should vary from projects such as the 'Collage Club' at the Faithful Coffee Lounge in Brierley Hill, to Heritage Open Days, the Black Country Festival and the recent broad appeal Otter Trail, encouraging exploration across the borough.
- Intergenerational cultural offerings
  - Building on the workshop feedback there is a clear need for cultural activity that can appeal across the generations. Festivals, music performances and the Digbeth Dining Club were all cited by younger participants as the type of cultural activity they found appealing and attract a wider family audience too.
  - Transition Stourbridge hosted a free fruit giveaway in 2021 and 2022, supporting families and homes across the town to create a community orchard across people's gardens and Claptrap music venue continues to attract audiences from across the West Midlands. Lastly Beware the Moon, a collaboration between Flatpack Festival and Dudley Zoo have attracted over five and a half thousand people to their al fresco horror events since 2016, showing how having the right content for the right audiences can create sustainable programming.
- Empower communities to hold their own events.
  - The recent work by CoLab Dudley and the Brierley Hill Cultural Consortium illustrates the good practise that exists in some areas of the borough in relation to co-creation and producing culture that reflects and speaks to local communities. Hyper local activity helps answer the question 'Am I welcome here?' i.e. feel a sense of belonging by seeing cultural activity produced by similar members of the community. There was widespread consensus that co-creation and community led activity would support greater levels of participation and support reanimation of high streets and local neighbourhoods.

## What Do We Mean By Culture?

Culture means many things to many people. For this Dudley Borough strategy, we are defining culture in its broadest sense so that it encompasses:

- Heritage - architecture, tourism assets, civic buildings, canals, castle, museums and industrial history
- A sense of shared identity – traditions, dialect, shared experience, shared pride, the Dudley flag
- Cultural practice - festivals, music, entertainment, creative activities, sport, events and food and drink.

Dudley's culture is dynamic, ever-changing and distinctive. It is constantly evolving reflecting its demographics and population. This strategy recognises that culture can transform places and lives and in so doing so, supports improved health and well-being.

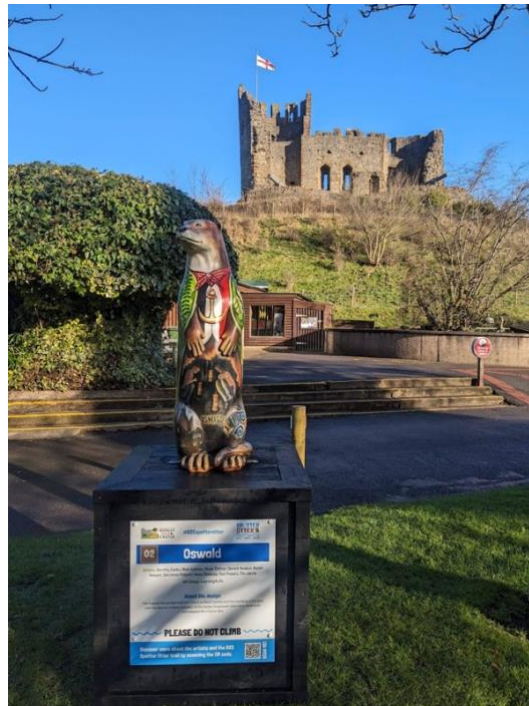


Figure 3: Oswald the Otter, Dudley Zoo and Castle

## The Strategy

### Vision

Dudley Borough has a strong industrial heritage, with a strong and distinctive local cultural identity, both at a town and a borough level.

Our vision for Dudley Borough is to become a place where everyone can participate in culture how and if they want to. There will be equity of opportunity from community led co-creation, to culture that reflects the ethnicity and demographics of all communities, to work that is ambitious and covers every art form. Everyone will be able to access culture as they want to - from the many green spaces within the borough, beside a canal, on a high street, in a neighbourhood, in a venue or on a stage.

### Outcomes

Adoption of this strategy will lead to the following outcomes:

1. Increased numbers of people and organisations will be able to produce cultural activity
2. Cultural activity will support increased vibrancy and activity on local high streets and within neighbourhoods.
3. There will be a greater variety of cultural activity, reflecting the changing ethnicity and demographics of the borough.
4. There will be increased ambition within the cultural sector
5. Greater numbers of people will participate in culture - diverse and multi-generational, reflecting the change demographics of the borough.
6. New cultural clusters will be formed and external cultural organisations will choose to locate to the borough, forming a new cohesive cultural ecology.
7. The profile of the borough will be raised, supporting higher levels of growth for the culture, creative and tourism sectors.

To implement the strategy, we will adopt five themes. These will form a strategic framework for associated actions over the short, medium and longer term.



Theme 1: investing in **capacity building** to build stronger **resilience** within the creative and cultural sectors



Theme 2: continuing to invest in **skills development** to support future culture leaders and to support life-long learning.



Theme 3: increased **diversity of programming**



Theme 4: fostering and adopting a more **collaborative culture**



Theme 5: having **ambition** regarding **cultural infrastructure and production**.



Figure 4: Dudley Canal and Caverns, Dudley Canal and River Trust


## 1. **Capacity Building and Resilience**

Theme one addresses the need for the borough to have a cohesive, vibrant network of organisations, artists and creative companies. It is recommended that the building of cultural capacity within local voluntary, community-led or cultural organisations is funded. This activity should be led by local need but could include bidding for funding, how to grow or recruit audiences, promotional channels and activity and developing organisational structures to support bids into external funders. Greater capacity within local groups will support the production of greater numbers of events and higher levels of community-based co-creation, helping extend and increase levels of cultural activity across the borough and its high-streets.

By having a greater volume and diversity of local cultural activity, there will be a greater choice of culture for residents to access how and when they want to. Capacity building will also foster greater resilience, as organisations improve their skills to explore different operating models, such as producing full-price activity to fund 'free' taster sessions to increase audience/accessibility and other alternate funding routes. A sustainable cultural ecosystem should lead to the creation of cultural activity at a range of different price points, thereby addressing one of the barriers to cultural participation and positioning culture at the heart of place making.

To stimulate greater volumes of local cultural activity, DMBC should provide initial funding for resource to lead collective bids into national funding streams such as ACE. We acknowledge that the council has limited resources therefore it is likely that these bids will be few, but if the borough is to successfully leverage its position as being one of the Arts Council's Priority Places in Levelling Up for Culture, it will need to provide some funding. A first project would be for DMBC to fund an expression of interest (and if successful, full bid submission) into developing a Place Partnership project bid from ACE to support implementation of this cultural strategy.

These outcomes support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: **Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy**, as well as Theme 4: **Reinventing town centres across the borough**.

	<b>Capacity and Resilience Building Key Actions</b>
a)	Funding for a range of business support programmes to help community/volunteer/cultural organisations host, and lead cultural co-creation and community led cultural activity.
b)	DMBC to employ a 'cultural broker' (or other title tbc) to support local community, volunteer and cultural arts organisations across the Borough. They will help identify diverse community groups across the borough, act as the entry point for these local organisations to navigate the differing departments within the council (roads/public realm, licensing, events team etc.), support greater collaboration and connectivity and facilitate joint funding bids. The new role should build on existing skills and passions, connecting and collaborating with existing community assets and resources.
c)	DMBC to identify funding to commission grant/bidding capacity to support partners to access funds where bids must be led by a local authority e.g. WMCA, Arts Council


## 2. Skills Development

Theme 2 recognises the benefits that culture can bring in helping develop the skills of local communities, especially in relation to those furthest away from the job market. There is already a strong adult education programme operating across the borough, funded by the WMCA. The strategy recommends the continuation of this funding, help residents from all areas of the community to hone and develop both existing and new skills. This aligns strongly with Arts Council England's strategic goal of supporting everyone to develop and express creativity throughout their lives.

In addition to continuation of the adult learning programme, theme 2 recommends an investment in a specific programme of leadership development for young

adults, working in the cultural sector, in the early years of their careers. By leveraging the strengths of the local FE provision, Resonance and other providers, the borough has an opportunity to implement a dynamic, sector specific programme to support the next generation of cultural leaders, thereby making them more likely to stay, create and produce within the borough.

These outcomes would support delivery of Theme 2 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: **Investing in people and building skills for tomorrow.**

	<b>Skills Development Key Actions</b>
a)	Continue, sustain and build on current education programmes/funding to ensure that through cultural activity, opportunities for life-long learning are supported.
b)	Create a skills programme that supports early-career leadership for the cultural sector within the Borough. This will develop the next generation of leaders within the local arts and culture sector who will take this strategy forward over the next 10-years.

### 3. **Diversity of Programming**

Theme 3 recommends that a range of cultural activity is commissioned and facilitated to appeal to younger generations. By ensuring that multi-generational activity takes place, the borough will be able to sustain both existing audiences and build those of the future. The engagement highlighted an appetite within younger generations to participate in culture, therefore creating programming to appeal to this audience will be key to the longer-term vibrancy of the sector.

Theme 3 also builds on the capacity building activity in theme 1. By supporting greater community led cultural activity, and increasing the ability of local groups and artists to produce cultural work, DMBC can facilitate a broader range of activity, across all art forms. Recent projects such as the Heritage Action Zone in Brierley Hill and the High-Street Towns project in Dudley illustrate that a vibrant programme of community events can be supported, by careful commissioning, tactical funding and leveraging the support of local, willing partners.

The strategy recommends that the diversity of programming is led by local community/cultural groups. The role of the council will be to support this diversity by considered commissioning of local, community led programmes and by providing a brokerage resource to become 'easier to work with' for local groups.

It is also recommended that, via the delivery structure, a forum is provided in the medium to long-term, to facilitate critically acclaimed, high quality work which can be produced by local cultural producers, entrepreneurs and creative companies. By building a diverse cultural programme across the borough, it will lead to

content that can appeal to both local audiences and visitors to the borough, thereby increasing the tourist appeal to the borough.

Facilitating a diversity of programming aligns with theme 3 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: **Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy.**


	<b>Diversity of Programming Key Actions</b>
a)	Work with new and existing partners to introduce a range of programmes across art forms to encourage cultural participation by younger generations, thereby building audiences of the future
b)	Bringing culture to all the 'communities of Dudley', via commissioning of cultural action zones within Dudley. These will bring local programmes of co-creation and community based culture to each area, thereby providing equity of access and participation.
c)	Work with Town Boards to leverage cultural action zones to support regeneration of high streets and neighbourhoods.
d)	DMBC to act as a convenor to work with local cultural producers, entrepreneurs and creative companies to attract and develop critically acclaimed, high quality work across the art forms.




Figure 5: Red House Cone, DMBC

#### 4. **Collaborative Culture**

Theme 4 relates to encouraging greater collaboration at both a local and regional level and stimulate greater partnership working between cultural groups across the sector. The strategy stakeholder engagement identified that there were pockets of collaboration but generally, activity was isolated and there is little cross-sector knowledge or sharing of best practice. The recent strategy stakeholder workshops were well received, providing a simple platform for local groups to network and find out more about each other's work. Going forward, regular cross-sector forums are recommended, to continue these conversations and to facilitate greater collaboration in the sector.


Lastly this theme identifies the need for DMBC to continue to work collaboratively with regional partners. To support continued growth of the Visitor Economy, DMBC should continue to fund and evolve the Discover Dudley platform, working proactively with the West Midlands Growth Company to promote the borough and create itineraries. Highlighting the breadth of the local offer (including a developing, more diverse cultural offer), will encourage dwell time, thereby attracting greater visitor spend and increasing overnight stays.

The outcomes of the activity above will support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: **Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy**

	<b>Collaborative Culture Key Actions</b>
a)	Use commissioning to support greater local collaboration and to break down silo working.
b)	The Cultural Partnership should lead a programme of engagement with the cultural sector, started by the workshops implemented for the strategy.
c)	The Cultural Partnership and DMBC should continue to work collaboratively with regional partners.

#### 5. **Ambition - Cultural Infrastructure and Production**

The last theme centres on supporting projects that have the potential to stimulate growth in the medium to longer term. They vary in scope and scale, yet all provide the potential of creating a step change in the cultural ecosystem for the borough.

 The following list outlines both the projects and key actions needed to take these projects forward.

- I. **The first project** is to explore developing a creative cluster for future glass makers. Action one is for DMBC to commission a feasibility study to examine

whether there is a potential for partners within the Stourbridge Glass Quarter to collaborate and evolve the current cluster. The study should explore economic viability, potential economic and visitor economy benefits and economic impact, costs and benefits.

- II. Aligned to the outcomes of project one, **project and action two**, is for DMBC to investigate with the Ruskin Glass Centre and the Stourbridge Glass Museum the viability of a joint bid for NPO status for the Glass Quarter. Any bid would need to tie into the ACE Let's Create Strategy and be submitted ready for the 2027 portfolio round. The benefits of NPO status are:
  - a. increased profile and reputation of the Quarter nationally as a tourist destination.
  - b. provision of stability and an element of core funding from March 2027
  - c. a contribution to overheads for each of the organisations involved in the bid.
- III. **Project three** relates to the proposed Steamyard project in Lye. Steamyard is an exciting Creative Arts Village being developed on a 5-acre, 220,000 sq. ft. site adjacent to Lye railway station and in easy reach of all local communities and transport links.

The strategy of the redevelopment will be to act as a significant HUB working with local stakeholders to embrace and improve creativity, heritage, culture and tourism. Its potential impact on the local economy will be the development of new and existing businesses, supporting entrepreneurship and emerging talent. The Steamyard team, with DMBC and WMCA are already in detailed discussions with a national orchestra to relocate to the site. There is the potential to develop wider education, community and youth programmes into the project, based on this potential relocation.

Action three involves the Cultural partnership and DMBC working with the owners and consultants leading the Steamyard project. They should communicate regularly with stakeholders of the project to identify ways in which the cultural ecosystem, the council and WMCA can facilitate its development, if it continues to align with the economic regeneration goals of the borough.

- IV. **Project four** ties into exploiting the rich industrial heritage of the borough and raising its profile nationally. By working collaboratively on an audience development study, there is scope for DMBC and other partners to create a step change in potential new national audiences for the borough.

Action four is for DMBC, working with the WM Growth Co. and other stakeholders to commission audience development work. It is envisaged that partners could include the Black Country Living Museum, Dudley Zoo and Castle, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, the Glass Quarter and other larger cultural actors

- V. **Longer term**, as the strategy is implemented and evolved, we recommend that the borough continues to have **ambition**. The Cultural Partnership

should lead or endorse all future projects but a potential workstream could be to work across the tourism/cultural sector to catalyse a 3<sup>rd</sup> NPO or other such mechanism. It is important that the Partnership continues to raise the profile of the area. A medium to longer term action could therefore be to collectively bid for a 3<sup>rd</sup> NPO organisation within the borough.

- VI. **The last action** is linked to the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark. This is a Black Country initiative, with Dudley playing a key role. The strategy endorses the recommendations and implementation of the Local to Global pilot and the continued investment in audience development, marketing and tourism development and associated training plan.

The outcomes of these projects would support delivery of Theme 3 of the Economic and Regeneration Strategy: **Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy**, as well as Theme 1: **Unlocking enterprise and innovation**



Figure 6: Himley Hall, DMBC

## Delivery Structure

There needs to be clarity on who will own, implement, and drive forward the strategic framework above. The structure will need to:

- allow for evolution so it remains aligned with the economic regeneration priorities for Dudley
- recognise the strengths and roles of different players within the sector

- respond to changing local, regional and national economic conditions and opportunities
- be sustainable over a 10-year timeframe, creating a clear process for the incorporation of new actions/themes over the longer term
- operate transparently and be accountable
- be inclusive, representing all parts of the local cultural community.
- communicate progress openly, be receptive to feedback and engage widely with the local cultural community

We have carried out an options appraisal for three potential delivery mechanisms using a SAFE (Suitable, Accessible, Feasible) framework. These options were:

- A cultural board
- A cultural compact
- Cultural action zones.

The full detail of this appraisal is attached as Appendix 4. Based on this analysis we are recommending a hybrid model consisting of a strategic Cultural Partnership that will own and implement the strategy, overseeing its delivery via a series of projects and cultural action zones.

## **Cultural Partnership**

We recommend that ownership, oversight, monitoring and governance is led by a Cultural Partnership – a new, diverse body representative of the cultural sector. DMBC will sit on and be part of the Partnership, but as one of many members. They will be a facilitator, working with strategic regional partners, seeking funding and providing resource to support its work.

Other members of the Partnership will be drawn from local businesses, the tourism and cultural sector, education, the NHS, community and voluntary organisations, creatives and the broad cultural sector. Members of the Partnership will work in an unpaid capacity to support the evolution and growth of the cultural ecosystem with Dudley borough. It is recommended that a representative from Dudley Creates, Dudley's Cultural Compact, be invited to be part of the Partnership.



Themes and actions will be delivered via a mix of project work streams and Cultural Action Zones, commissioned to deliver local cultural activity aligned to the strategic ambitions of the strategy.

The new Cultural Broker role will work closely with the action zones, galvanizing local groups, coordinating bids and helping community based organisations navigate DMBC during cultural activities.

DMBC will provide administrative support to the Cultural Partnership to ensure high levels of governance, transparency and communications to

the wider cultural community.

## **Cultural Action Zones**

Cultural Action Zones (CAZ) are community led cultural and arts programmes, led by local people for local priorities. They are based on an identified area, creating hyper local action based on collaboration and cross-pollination whose flexible model can respond to the needs and challenges of an area e.g. health, social cohesion etc. Their goal is to enable greater access to culture for local communities and they can convene multi-agency action and multi-agency funding.

A recent Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP pilot illustrated that the CAZ model can increase pride, cohesion and activity within communities. They can also increase awareness and support for local artists, generate revenue and build partnerships and support the visitor experience, reputation and cultural offer. Depending on the model and aims, they can also support skills development, the engagement of young people and can create sustainable programmes and legacy.

A key feature of action zones is that they are designed and delivered locally. CAZ projects are commissioned, therefore any programme will need to be introduced along with some element of funding. Recommended commissioning goals are a focus on providing cultural activity for younger generations, working collaboratively with other CAZ areas, having transparent deliverables, clear accountability and a governance framework.

The strategy recommends that the programmes are hyper local and linked to some oversight by the new Town Board structures. The Cultural Partnership will provide light touch monitoring and oversight of the entire borough wide programme. A type of CAZ already exists via the Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone and the Dudley Town High Street Project and it is recommended that these become Cultural Action Zones. Based on the mapping analysis, the next zone recommended for commissioning is Lye due to its paucity of cultural assets. Increasing access to culture can play an active role in supporting regeneration of the area and tackling some of its health challenges.

In the medium to longer term, depending on funding, we recommend that the Cultural Partnership with DMBC stagger roll out of a CAZ across the two-remaining levelling-up areas - Stourbridge and Halesowen. Any further zones will be determined by the Cultural Partnership and available funding via DMBC.



Figure 7: Images Brierley Hill HAZ and Blank Canvas, the Story of My Journey – Just Straight Talk

## Detailed Action Plan

Appendix 5 contains a detailed action plan, indicating potential funding streams and whether the actions should take place in the short, medium or longer term.

## Funding Streams

A review of available external funding streams is contained in Appendix 6. The action plan indicates that current sources of funding include:

1. Business Growth West Midlands – leveraging existing funding via its workshop strands to support capacity building and its business support programme to facilitate growth for creative businesses within the borough.
2. Good-2-Great Programme – there is the potential to use some of the existing programme to support new CIC/charities via this funding stream.
3. WMCA – CWG legacy funds or cultural development funds. DMBC have already made a successful bid to ring-fence monies to support implementation of the cultural strategy.
4. WMCA – on-going funding for adult learning
5. WMCA – skills funding via the existing FE funding allocation
6. WMCA – skills funding via the bootcamp initiative.

The strategy recommends exploring wider ACE project funds via the Place Partnership scheme to secure new sources of funding for strategy implementation.

## Conclusion

This is an exciting time for the cultural ecosystem in Dudley Borough. Nationally and regionally, government has recognised that cultural activity has been proven to help tackle disadvantage and social isolation, support local economic growth, job creation

and training, create stronger, more cohesive communities, improve people's health and well-being and raise levels of aspiration and attainment. By building on the recommendations of this ambitious cultural strategy, the borough will have a tangible opportunity to increase cultural participation, grow and broaden the range of cultural activity across all art forms, build on the strength and dynamism of its tourism sector, support the reanimation of its high streets and strengthen the local fabric of its communities. Together the strategy and action plan will transform places and lives, supporting improved health and well-being ensuring that culture makes a substantial contribution to place making.