

A New Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030

This strategy was unanimously adopted by Leeds City Council's Executive Board, which includes representatives from opposition parties, at a meeting on 17th July 2017.

Executive Summary: See separate leaflet & infographic for details

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1. What is culture?

There are many definitions of culture adopted by cities the world over. Leeds has created its own definition following a year of conversations with people from across the whole city, incorporating a vast range of perspectives.

Our definition of culture is:

“Culture is what we do and who we are, encompassing a broad range of actions and activities which have the capacity to transform, challenge, reassure and inspire, giving a place and its people a unique and distinctive identity.”

There are three elements to this definition:

- Transform, Challenge & Inspire: Culture is unique in being able to help us understand and reflect on the world around us, but also to reimagine that world. A small community gathering for sharing food each week has the capacity to transform the lives of the vulnerable and isolated. Equally the bold, ambitious and controversial staging of theatre, performance and dance has the capacity to push our boundaries, or even break them. This is what sets culture apart from other areas of society.
- Identity: Culture is the way in which we live our lives. It is the communities, places and spaces we create, the people we spend time with and ultimately how we respond to life’s challenges. We use cultural activity to both celebrate and reaffirm who we are. Less positively, culture can also serve to exclude people or groups, marking them out as ‘different’ and serving to divide us.
- What we do: Whilst inclusive of the arts, culture is also about a much broader range of activities that take place to bring people together. In addition to different art forms, culture encompasses parks, woodlands and green spaces, film, television, sport, gastronomy, design, literature, architecture, history, heritage, science, technology, and night life. Cultural activities will continue to grow and adapt as our society changes. This list will never be conclusive or definitive. Leeds will always remain open to new cultures.

2. Who is it for?

“Culture has no membership criteria”

- A conversation on culture with Gerry Godley
Principal & Chief Executive Leeds College of Music

Where traditionally the audience for a Culture Strategy has largely been the arts sector, this strategy aims to broaden the role of culture in Leeds, placing it at the heart of the city’s

narrative, embedding culture across all policy areas and as such its audience must also be much broader.

The audiences for the new Culture Strategy 2017-2030 include:

- Key decision and policy makers e.g., Leeds City Council, political parties, Leeds Local Economic Partnership, Leeds City Region, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Arts Council England.
- The arts sector e.g., those whose business it is to create, host or promote the arts and cultural offer of the city be they large organisations, individual artists and performers or community groups and collectives.
- Cultural organisations from professional sports clubs, restaurants, food and drink societies, small independent businesses and gig venues to local interest groups, volunteer networks, galas, craft groups and markets.
- The heritage sector e.g., Heritage Lottery Fund, Leeds Civic Trust, clubs and societies.
- Residents of Leeds e.g., people who live in communities across the city, young, old, community leaders, activists and social groups, regardless of whether or not they engage in what they consider to be cultural activities.
- Children and young people – both those who engage with the education system and those who don't. Although included in 'residents of Leeds' this paper focuses on creating a vision for culture in 2030, so it must pay particular attention to the generation who will be creating and delivering that future.
- Marginalised groups e.g., the city's migrant population, the city's LGBTQIA community, and other vulnerable groups.
- The education sector including schools, Further and Higher Education institutions across the city, and alternatives to school provision.
- The student population –students could be the future residents and businesses of Leeds.
- The commercial business sector e.g., banks, building societies, accountants, lawyers, digital and technology specialists and the thousands of Leeds SMEs.
- The regeneration and development community e.g., property developers, land owners and agents.
- The tourism industry e.g., hotels, restaurants, bars, key attractions and venues.
- Health authorities from the NHS and hospitals to service providers and users.
- Charities, Trusts, Foundations & Social Enterprises e.g. those giving their time and efforts to support others and build stronger communities.

3. Context

In developing the strategy discussions were rich and varied, as was our research into how cities across the world respond to, support and utilise culture. The following section touches

both on the common threads in those discussions and research, and sets the context for the Culture Strategy.

3.1 Local context

“They were the makers of the world”

- Taken from the poem *Every Age Has Its Own Gods* by Bee Smith (Appendix 3)

Leeds is the 3rd largest city in the UK by population, with an economy worth an estimated £21.3bn GVA. It is at the heart of the Leeds City Region, which has a population of 3 million. Leeds is ranked as a Gamma World City by the *Globalization and World Cities Research Network* classing it as a major city with a key role in linking the wider region to the world economy. It is by far the largest economy and employer in the city region, and acts as a major travel and tourism gateway. It has the busiest railway station in the north of England, a transport hub which will soon see a bigger daily footfall than Gatwick Airport.

Leeds is a strong university city. In addition to the qualities of our universities and colleges, students are attracted by the nightlife, fast-growing independent food and drink scene and cultural offer. Despite this draw the city struggles to retain graduates from its universities with many returning home after studies. The city does attract graduates from other cities but the supply of graduate posts exceeds the available talent. Conversely the supply of arts and culture graduates outstrips the available vacancies and opportunities in this field. As the architects of our future the city needs to better understand and retain the graduates that are so attracted to life in Leeds at the start of their careers.

A surprisingly green city, Leeds City Council manages 4,000 hectares of green space encompassing parks, woodland, nature reserves and 101 allotments across the city, on the doorstep of the Yorkshire Dales and with easy access to London, Manchester and Edinburgh. A relatively healthy city, life expectancy in Leeds has increased with people living an average of 81 years and the city has renewed its efforts to ensure that Leeds can be enjoyed at any age. Leeds is perceived to have a good quality of life, reflected by the 82% of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

However, Leeds is rapidly changing and will look and feel vastly different by 2030. There are 774,060 people living in Leeds and estimates that the population will grow to 819,000 by 2024 and exceed 1,000,000 by 2030.

The 2011 census did not collect data on sexual orientation but Stonewall estimates that for a city with a population of this size approximately 10% of that population will identify as LGBTQIA. Although Leeds has strong networks across this community and hosts the largest free Pride event in the UK, many of the people we spoke to in creating this strategy still faced xenophobia and violence and noted a lack of ‘safe spaces’ in the city often feeling that their culture is marginalised and ‘underground’.

Of the current population 140 ethnic groups are represented. There are 170 languages spoken, the most common other than English are: Polish (6,717 people), Urdu (4,989 people) and Punjabi (4,537 people) - and this will continue to fluctuate as migration patterns change. Other communities such as the gypsy and traveller community are significantly under-represented in the available data as not all are registered, the most accurate count at 2010 registers a gypsy and traveller community of 3,000 people in Leeds, 50% of which were thought to be under 25 years old.

A 2014 report by the Migrant Access Partnership suggested that, although Leeds does not have the largest numbers of migrants in the UK outside of London, it does have the greatest diversity in terms of country of origin, presenting its own unique opportunities and challenges in a modern, intercultural society.

The city will be transformed physically by 2030. We have a target to build 70,000 new homes by 2033, some of which will appear in new estates and others will be attached to existing communities. The city centre will double in size with the development of South Bank meeting residential communities in the south. The transport system will undergo a major overhaul upgrading road networks, introducing cycle paths, developing new transport systems and working towards a target of reducing damaging carbon emission by 80% by 2050, in a city where 53.6% of commuters still drive to work. Our current infrastructure, partly suffering from describing itself as 'Motorway City of the North' in the 1970s, does not service the city well with transport being a high concern for residents.

As digital technologies such as 5G develop further there will be more challenges as the 'smart city' movement gathers pace and requires much needed upgrades to infrastructure to service this growing demand. That said, the transformation of the city must be balanced with a responsible and sustainable approach and there are high penalties for landfill waste and a recycling target of 40% by 2020 to deliver on the city's Climate Change Strategy.

With the scale of ambition and energy in the city it would be easy to imagine a modern utopia by 2030, but not everyone enjoys the same quality of life across Leeds.

In 2014 11.09% of households experienced fuel poverty in Leeds compared to the national average of 10.9%. Some areas of the city have a life expectancy of 10 years less than the city average, in others unemployment is handed from generation to generation. It is estimated that 785 (5.2%) of our young people are not in education, employment or training and 1,263 children are currently in local authority care. Of our neighbourhoods 105 are in the top 10% of most deprived areas nationally, with 148 ranking in the top 20% of UK deprived neighbourhoods.

While some in the city do enjoy increased life expectancy, social mobility, and access to high quality cultural activity, better jobs and high quality housing, others live in deepening poverty. As some in the city enjoy Michelin starred gastronomy, others find themselves queueing at food banks. Figures provided by The Trussell Trust who operate four of the

city's food banks show that in 2013/14 the combined number of three day emergency food parcels given to those in need was 2,791, by 2016/17 this figure had soared to 15,771.

In conversations there was a strong view that our international reach is undersold, our national profile is low, and our voice has often been timid. Our relationship with our northern counterparts has been more often one of competition than companionship.

As local authorities face increasingly challenging financial conditions, the ambition to become Best City 2030 requires Leeds to radically rethink how it operates and connects across communities, organisations and departments to achieve a greater quality of life for everyone in the city.

Across each of the areas described above from developing a greater international outlook, celebrating the diversity of the city, growing the economy, and reducing unemployment to increasing health and wellbeing, resolving disconnect between communities and reducing poverty and isolation, culture has an integral role to play and must be central to our future development as a city.

The *Vision for Leeds 2011-2030* canvassed the city for its views on what would make Leeds the Best City, not the richest or biggest but the best for quality of life. There were seven priorities of which more than half had a cultural dimension: developing a great culture and entertainment offer; creating a cleaner and greener city; fostering good community relations; and a great community spirit. Six years into that vision and culture consistently remains high on the public's agenda with a recent South Bank consultation prioritising culture as the second most important factor in the future development of that area. Culture has the opportunity to become the golden thread that runs throughout all policy areas, unifying our collective ambitions and delivering on our vision for Best City 2030.

Organisations and individuals across Leeds are already achieving great things with culture at their heart. From creating world class art which builds an international reputation for the city, reframing our understanding of the world, to creating the makers, thinkers and activists of the future. It can also play a vital role in retaining graduates, improving health and wellbeing, bringing communities together and resolving tensions.

The city's cultural offer includes a number of large organisations that have been generations in the making. Leeds College of Music gave Europe its first Jazz qualification and celebrated turning 50 in 2016, with Phoenix Dance blowing out the candles on 35 years the same year. Leeds West Indian Carnival, Europe's oldest, will celebrate 50 years in 2017, alongside 40 years of Henry Moore Institute. Over the next five years Leeds Grand Theatre will be 140 years old, Opera North will turn 40, Northern Ballet will celebrate 50 years, West Yorkshire Playhouse will turn 30, and Northern Film School will hit half a century.

Leeds City Museum is the grandfather of them all and will turn 200 in 2019 in a city which has the largest local authority museum service in the UK contributing to an audience of 2.25 million per year for museums and heritage. National museums including The Royal

Armouries and Thackray Medical Museum, two of the country's greatest country houses in Temple Newsam and Harewood House and collections across Leeds Museums and Galleries and the University of Leeds which are designated of national and international importance all add to this impressive and diverse mix.

Our city has also continually created space for new voices to add to this vibrant tapestry. The Tetley has just turned three after reinvigorating the city's iconic brewery, Transform Festival has flown the West Yorkshire Playhouse nest and has just completed its second year as an independent festival and Leeds Indie Food Festival has just completed its fourth year celebrating the city's growing independent food and drink culture. Not only does this vast range of organisations present remarkable shows, the majority also run extensive engagement programmes benefiting millions of people every year.

This year some of our community galas will celebrate twenty years come rain or shine, and the iconic Leeds Festival will turn 20. On any weekend from May through to August there will be a number of festivals, fairs and feasts to choose from – helping build communities through huge amounts of mostly voluntary effort, from Garforth to Wetherby, Otley, Morley and everywhere in between. Alongside this Leeds has one of the largest celebrations of social history celebrating an industrious past filled with pottery, ceramics, tailoring and engineering through hundreds of community and volunteer events as part of the annual Heritage Open Days initiative, which was founded by the Council of Europe 22 years ago and continues to grow in the city each year.

The city benefits from a wide range of galleries, festivals and venues which provide cultural attractions for both popular and niche interests and continues to add to this, most recently with the innovatively designed First Direct Arena. In addition to the range of cultural venues, green spaces, historic mills and community venues the city is also home to some of the region's best known sporting achievements from world-class Test Cricket at Yorkshire County Cricket Club's Headingley home, to their neighbours Leeds Rhinos who regularly host 18,000 fans cheering their team to victory and Elland Road with its steadfast European fan base waiting patiently for glory. More recently the city has taken sport to the streets with the hosting of the Tour de France Grand Depart in 2014, city-wide celebrations for the Rugby World Cup in 2015 and successfully becoming the new home for the UK leg of the World Triathlon Series from 2016 onwards.

Even with a burgeoning independent scene, a thriving community culture, illustrious sports record and such an array of long standing, well respected cultural producers and venues, the city's cultural offer has, as yet, not achieved the wide national and international recognition it is capable of and not all of the city's residents take advantage of what is on offer.

The city's cultural activity has always been considered key to improving the quality of life by its residents, but is often overshadowed by the challenges the city faces as opposed to being an integral part of the solutions to overcoming these challenges.

Yet, it is this unique cocktail of ingredients that make our city an exciting place to build a life, create work, learn skills, and grow a business, which presents a new opportunity for the culture sector of the city to step up and take the lead. In order to grasp this opportunity we must raise our ambitions.

It is not enough to simply exist here; our cultural organisations must immerse themselves in the city. Our artists, creators, makers and producers can create a new kind of city where culture doesn't just respond to the agenda, but sets it.

3.2 Global context

Leeds is not alone in some of the issues outlined above. Cities around the world face population growth and demographic change, influxes of migration, climate change, the rapid advancement of technology and infrastructure, and the balance of retaining a unique identity and heritage whilst being open to the world and adaptable to globalisation. As part of the research for this strategy we have read about and spoken to other cities to understand how they are looking at the role of culture in the 21st century.

For a city of this size, Leeds itself does not have a strong cultural profile internationally, or even nationally, despite our many strengths. Even being home to the birth of the moving image has not really put us on the map. The city also sits within a region, Yorkshire, which has far greater resonance internationally and a stronger 'brand'.

Universities, businesses, cultural organisations and individuals have rich international networks but the city as a whole, until relatively recently, has not thought of or promoted itself in global terms.

Although Leeds is increasingly positioned as an international city, the referendum results highlighted its differences, with an almost equal vote for leave and remain. Leeds accounts for 37% of EU migrants in the Leeds City Region providing a valuable labour market for local businesses and enriching the city's cultural offer and global reach. With Article 50 triggered and the outcome of Brexit negotiations remaining uncertain Leeds will have to work hard to build relationships, maintain global partnerships and support all of its communities equally.

With the rapid pace of change there is an opportunity to strengthen our international presence. Whether you celebrate the UK's imminent exit from the European Union or mourn it, now is the time when new relationships and new challenges and opportunities will emerge for both nation states, and more importantly for cities.

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) is an international network of cities sharing ideas, lobbying for international policy change, researching the future of cities and providing guidance, insight and frameworks for addressing major global issues at city level.

In 2004 UCLG's *International Committee on Culture* was founded and created a framework for how cities could use culture to respond to global issues. The Committee has outlined nine key areas that Culture Strategies should consider in order to be globally relevant and

connected. This is known as *Agenda 21 for Culture*, and a detailed description of each area can be found in *Appendix 4*.

Leeds has committed to undertaking a co-produced Culture Strategy focusing on the specific issues and challenges that the people of the city have identified as relevant and pertinent to them. However in the development of the Culture Strategy it has become clear that the city shares many of the key principles outlined by Agenda 21 for Culture, specifically:

- Culture is a basic human right and everyone in the city has the right to celebrate & create their culture.
- A new central role for culture is needed, where culture in all its forms is interwoven throughout formal policy areas.
- The governance of cultural activity should be a shared responsibility. It is not the role of any single organisation or sector but must be shared across the city with everyone playing an active part.
- The definition of culture must be broad enough to encompass the tension between tradition and modernity, the shifting demographic and the impacts of globalisation and digitisation.

4 Values

A range of partners will deliver the new Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030. As a result of 18 months of intensive conversations, a set of six guiding values have been created to ensure that our actions work towards the same principles and to guide future decision making.

- **Bravery** – People across the city talked often of ambition, and it features strongly in many visions and strategies. However many people also felt that the city has not always had the confidence and boldness to deliver on its ambitions and see its visions become reality. Bravery combines both the ambition and confidence that could see the city take the risks that will realise its full potential.
- **Curiosity** – Curiosity is not always accepting the boundaries around us or following well-trodden paths. In discussions Leeds was often considered risk averse and afraid to fail which has hindered our ability to innovate and lead. Curiosity is a willingness to experiment and explore new cultures, new ways of working, and new technologies without the fear of failure. Curiosity is outward facing, interested in others, and discovering and creating the new. Curiosity is as much about how we get there, as it is about where we are going.
- **Generosity** – The opening of networks, the sharing of spaces, the space created for conversation and the time made for those around us. More than a personal attitude or a monetary transaction, this value must appear in the design of our city, and our urban and rural areas, creating the space for people to breathe, interact and

socialise. Generosity is not assuming that we know better than others and empowering those who are disenfranchised, even when we find the outcomes challenging.

- Respect – Moving beyond live and let live, respect is about not only accepting and acknowledging difference but actively welcoming and championing it. This value is the result of many conversations about division and difference. It is the value with which to challenge xenophobia, prejudice and exclusion. We must become comfortable with our differences and learn to celebrate them, seeking to unite rather than unify our communities, acknowledging our indigenous ways of life while leaving space for new traditions to influence our culture and create new identities.
- Resilience – Our culture is created by resourceful and passionate people who make things happen any way they can. Our cultural life has flourished for generations and will withstand austerity, digitisation, globalisation, and shifting demographics. It is nevertheless hugely challenged by these and other competing demands. The city will aid in the development of this resilience; supporting artists in their early development so they can stand alone. In return, the culture sector must do more than make great art, it must be embedded within the city, leading the change from within and finding new models to support its future.
- Honesty – While we can ask the culture sector and our communities to become more resilient in order for them to do so, we must be honest about the challenges ahead and provide support during transition. We must be able to acknowledge that publically funded cultural activity has seen its levels of subsidy reduce significantly. Honesty is about having difficult conversations, building trust and integrity. Without honesty and trust, resilience could become a buzzword for cuts as opposed to collectively developing a sustainable future for culture.

5 Aims & Objectives

If the city is to become the best, and culture is its tool by which to do so, we must consider how culture looks and feels when it is at its best. The Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030 aims to:

- Change perceptions and attitudes towards culture and the arts, moving the focus from what they cost to what they create.
- Ensure that culture is celebrated, runs through our DNA and is inextricably linked to who are we and what we do.
- Value and respect artists and creativity considering both vital to the growth and prosperity of Leeds and ensuring that they are promoted as part of our diverse economy.

- Become open to the cultures of the world, internationally connected, and play an active role in shaping global policy and leadership.
- Embrace and celebrate the differences in our communities, inviting artists and thinkers from all corners of the world to sit alongside us, and find new connections with Leeds.

We want this strategy to lead to benefits for everyone in Leeds, from residents, businesses, politicians and policy makers, to school children and those enjoying retirement. The objectives of this strategy are:

- For the city to value and prioritise cultural activity, utilising it as a means of improving the quality of life experienced by every person and every community in Leeds.
- For culture to build respect, cohesion and coexistence between and within communities and individuals.
- For people, whatever their background, to be supported to be creative through school, informal learning, training, volunteering and employment, ensuring that culture can be created and experienced by anyone.
- For Leeds to be nationally and internationally recognised as a liveable city, and a thriving, internationally connected cultural hub open to collaboration.
- For Leeds to be at the forefront of cultural innovation, making the most of new and emerging technologies.
- For the culture sector to grow and increase its contribution to Leeds' economy, by placing culture at the heart of the city's narrative.
- For established cultural organisations to be resilient, and to create an environment where new cultural organisations can flourish.

6 Areas of Focus

Our conversations have highlighted the differences across the city, both good and bad, and shown that there is a need for flexible and scalable solutions rather than one size fits all. A lot can change in thirteen years and the strategy needs to have the freedom to respond and adapt to those changes, remaining relevant and effective.

Backed by the values, aims and objectives the strategy will have five initial areas of focus for the first three years supported by a Delivery Plan. These areas will be reviewed throughout to ensure that they are still relevant, and that the work to date is achieving against the aims and objectives of the strategy.

The delivery of this strategy is a shared responsibility. The gold standard for delivery is that culture will be woven into the strategies and action plans of every council department, every school, every business, every university and college and every organisation in Leeds.

6.1 A City of Creators

“To be an artist is to believe in life”

- Henry Moore, Sculptor, Leeds College of Art alumnus

If we believe that a city cannot be sustainable without a resilient and varied cultural offer, and that offer cannot exist without the architects of it, then we must enable the conditions for the creators of culture to not only exist here, but to flourish here.

Leeds has long been a city where culture is made, a city in which artists, makers, creators and innovators have found the space and creativity to break boundaries. Whether through our culture of entrepreneurialism in our factories, mills and now our digital co-working spaces, in theatres, galleries, and studios or through our culture of community, volunteering and belonging.

Organisations such as Duke Studios, East Street Arts and FutureLabs are holding space for individual artists, designers, illustrators and producers, helping their creativity and businesses to thrive.

The creative and cultural industries have been valued at £84.1bn. They account for 5.2% of the UK economy and are its fastest growing sector. They now account for 1 in 18 of all jobs. Meaning that the individual life chances of one or two children in every Leeds classroom – from Horsforth to East Ardsley, Guiseley to Ledsham – is inextricably linked to the strength of the cultural and creative sector in Leeds. We not only need to attract and welcome the world’s creative and cultural greats but to also nurture and retain our own.

We must acknowledge and respect those who create our culture, paying them fairly and equally. Leeds educates and trains a very large number of artists, possibly more than any other city, and that isn’t counting the thousands of people across our communities who would not consider themselves to be artists, but nevertheless are creating our culture, from those running cinema nights and book clubs, to community galas and festivals.

We have to find a scalable solution that provides support throughout the creative journey and can accommodate those with training, expertise, vision and artistic excellence, alongside those who have no formal training or connections and nothing more than a grand plan to make their corner of the city the best place to live by 2030.

The city’s DIY scene, independent spirit, and intertwined network of educators and employers provides one of the best incubators for artists and makers in the country, however we have been less successful in creating the conditions for a life-long cultural

career. The glass ceiling sees many of our greatest talents build a life here and a portfolio elsewhere, and our understanding of what happens to our graduates is currently limited.

We must overcome any outdated view that culture is made by and for the elite, and become a city that is unafraid to champion art, culture and community. Our unapologetic appreciation for art and culture will set Leeds apart as the city where international artists, directors, makers and creators come to collaborate, marking us out as a playground for the riot of creativity, provocation and innovation that makes our culture distinctive.

In order to become A City of Creators, Leeds will:

- Create the conditions for every person living in the city to have the capacity to create and play an active role in the cultural life of Leeds, should they choose it.
- Set a baseline of the economic impact of the cultural and creative Industries and develop actions to increase it.
- Ensure that everyone working within the cultural and creative sector can be paid a living wage.
- Have a clear yet flexible and scalable model for how artists, creators and makers whatever their background can be supported at every stage of their development.
- Champion the importance of arts and culture throughout the education curriculum through proactive dialogue with head teachers.

6.2 A Place of Many Destinations

“You can’t just throw people together and expect it to work. There will be trouble. People don’t understand each other. They don’t just trust each other from the off. You have to do something to bring people together, instead of creating ghettos. You can’t ask people to change who they are and what they believe, but they live in this city together and culture can help them to do that.”

- A conversation on culture and identity with Middleton Dad’s Group

We are a city of many identities yet the story of our city centre is the only one we tell. We struggle with the idea of having many identities as opposed to one unified and easy to brand stamp of who are, often searching for our single USP in a diverse economy, a diverse city, with diverse communities, beliefs, customs and lifestyles.

We know the city centre is growing and as it expands out into the communities that surround it we have both a challenge and an opportunity. The expansion of the city centre creates space for a bold proposition for the city’s cultural portfolio, reimagining and redeveloping the unique assets already in place. However, we cannot simply pick up the barriers and move them two miles further out. We must instead turn to face our communities, meet them, connect to them, welcome them and include their many identities as part the city’s story.

We know that there is disparity in how the city is experienced by its different communities. The city centre borders Hunslet, Holbeck, Burmantofts, Little London, Sheepscar, Hyde Park, Burley, and Kirkstall and these communities are experiencing high levels of deprivation. However, in these areas accommodation comes at a lower price and has led to the creation of homes, studios and venues for artists, makers and creators in temporary and makeshift workshops and warehouses. Organisations such as Live Art Bistro, Music and Arts Partnership, The Works, Left Bank, Slung Low, Union 105 and Chapel FM are often working with the most vulnerable in our society whilst having the flexibility and freedom to create some of the most contemporary and internationally connected work in the city.

We must leave space for communities to create their own sense of place and identity, which reflects their unique history and heritage. We must become comfortable with the idea that Leeds, like all great cities, does not have one story to tell, we are multi-faceted, diverse and messy, and should seek to unite our communities rather than unify them. To understand, share, and celebrate difference rather than try to eradicate it.

Whilst we make plans to create 70,000 new homes by 2033, we have made little provision yet for how these new communities will communicate with each other, where they will meet, and what they might need to ensure a high quality of life. Cultural spaces can be a park, allotment or a library, market square or community arts centre and will be different for each community in the city, all coming together to create a rich, intriguing and varied cultural offer for Leeds. The recent consultation on the South Bank has shown a strong appetite that cultural planning should be integral to the development of this new community, but it must reflect the cultures of its neighbours in Hunslet and Holbeck for it to be truly sustainable.

For culture to happen there must be places for it to be created and shared. Leeds West Indian Carnival can only take to the streets in August because the Leeds West Indian Centre and Carnival House double up as workshops for costume design the year round. Our theatres and galleries can only fill their walls and stages if there is somewhere to create that work.

The city has a plethora of theatres, galleries, museums, churches, village halls, schools, libraries, studios, cinemas and community centres, spanning its geography from Adel to Pudsey. Not always used to their maximum potential, the remit of these spaces is too narrowly defined. It is not the norm for our bandstands and village halls to be the scene of world class theatre or art exhibitions. Our parks are not the best outdoor sculpture experiences in Europe. With some notable exceptions, our public art is largely Victorian – we have no iconic or unique pieces of art attracting crowds of international visitors eager to share our story, making Leeds stand out from the crowd.

We are fortunate in Leeds that we have space. As one of the fastest growing and most diverse cities in the UK with a community of artists and venues, Leeds could seize this moment to provide a welcoming, globally connected and sustainable alternative. To do so

we must open our mind to the potential of our existing spaces, work with our communities to use our assets to nurture the everyday creativity that leads to world class events and festivals, and reimagine our land and buildings as multi-faceted canvases and stages for creative expression.

The city has a responsibility to develop and grow but it must also have an obligation to do so sustainably and with respect, compassion, and consideration for what already exists.

In order to become A Place of Many Destinations, Leeds will:

- Plan for the public realm of Leeds to be its greatest cultural asset by 2030.
- Build on the legacy of our parks and waterways to create a new international standard which embeds culture in our streets, shopping centres, parks and urban spaces.
- Protect the creative spaces that already exist as well as creating new spaces and venues.
- Balance the need for income and commercial return with the need to provide affordable work space, meetings venues and community spaces for vital cultural activities to take place.
- Ensure that every new estate, every school, and every development, works towards creating distinctive places that build a greater quality of life for everyone in the city
- Ensure that our cultural venues will be generous with the spaces at their disposal, opening them up for community groups, rehearsal space, business and civic life.
- Connect from the city centre towards the communities that immediately surround the more affluent and thriving centre, placing greater emphasis on their identities and cultures.

6.3 A Connected City with a 'Yes' Mentality

"Leeds is a city of merchants that does little for its people."

- William Wilberforce, English Politician, Leader of the movement against slavery

The quote is historical but for some of the people we spoke to the sentiment still stands. Our people are our strength. Their ideas, passion, creativity and all out pride for where they live are what make us collectively Leeds, but they have sometimes been forgotten in favour of, shopping centres, economic growth, housing and infrastructure, important as those things are. Our transport takes us to and from the city centre, not between communities.

Leeds should be greater than the sum of its not insignificant parts, yet in some cases people identified more with a collection of streets that go by the name of 'The Garnetts' or 'The Methleys' than they do with 'Leeds'. Our culture is created by our people in a way that only we can, in spaces only we have, so we have to make a conscious choice to open the city and

its networks up and make it easier for people to create its cultures building a meaningful shared identity, without becoming restrictive and prescribed.

In doing so, we will meet silos and empires with a reckless generosity, sharing our assets, knowledge, expertise and networks. We will create an environment of trust where people of all ages and abilities have an active participation in deciding what forms our cultural life will take. We will acknowledge where there are tensions and face into them rather than shying away.

Agenda 21 for Culture makes a bold statement that cultural diversity is as important for humankind as biodiversity is for nature and the environment. Culture must be played out at every turn in public spaces, education institutions, offices and our homes.

The next thirteen years will see an inevitable and irrevocable change in our city. Leeds faces ongoing austerity with public sector budgets expected to weather further cuts over the next few years.

We need to be bold and to challenge each other. If you are working in the creative sector in Leeds it should be the normal expectation that you will actively participate in all its forms not just those related to your day job. There will be an expectation that you are part of something that is bigger, and will collaborate with it. If you have an opportunity, you will share it. If the city has a challenge, we expect you to share that too. Your networks need to be diverse and multi-faceted, your contacts and facilities shared and your minds open.

In return Leeds will enable creative thinking, ambitious ideas, big visions, grand plans and interventions. We will not forget the small things in between the cracks and the tiny actions that make a big difference. We will talk to our communities, our artists and designers more and bring them into the decision making process. In short we will say, yes.

In order to become A Connected City with a 'Yes' Mentality, Leeds will:

- Promote collaboration regardless of art form, size, scale or interest ensuring that the distinctiveness of Leeds cultural life is in the collision of its diverse cultures.
- Trust its people to map, plan and create their own futures, reducing dependency and the desire for permission.
- Have a 24 hour cultural life bringing the city to life morning, noon and night supported by transport facilities, hospitality and safe environments which invite people to dwell.
- Be open to all communities of the world absorbing artists, thinkers and creators, making the city a breeding ground for sustainable development.

6.4 A Leading International Capital of Culture

"Leeds talks about ambition but it has become complacent, settling for good where outstanding is within reach. To attract the best talent, entice inward investment, build

tourism and gain international repute our arts and cultural offer needs to be game changing, breath-taking and on a grand scale.”

- A conversation with Leeds property Forum on what culture can do for Leeds

Our city is well placed to step up and play an active role in a global community. Leeds has given many things to the world from the first ever moving image by Louis le Prince shot in Roundhay to sporting heroes, architects and musicians that have carried our name around the globe and the artists and sculptors that created a movement lasting for centuries, and still prevails today.

However our successes are not well known, aside from Leeds Museum and Leeds Art Gallery, none of our largest cultural organisations display the word ‘Leeds’ in their name. Our organisations don't always have the resilience or support to fulfil their potential on a global stage.

We host 7,300 international students in Leeds every year and more than 19% of our population is from migrant communities, set to grow further. Over the last century we have become a City of Sanctuary absorbing trauma from Europe and further afield, not just to contribute to our economy and labour market but we have also created space for new cultures to influence our way of life, our thinking and the way we shape our city and ourselves.

We invest in the cultures of the city because we know that the returns are far greater. Our cultural product has the potential to be one of our greatest exports, and propositions for inward investment.

Our economy, like our people, is diverse with no single point of distinctiveness; our people experience extremes of poverty and wealth; there are clear divides as evidenced in the EU Referendum. Our city centre thrives whilst some of our communities miss out on its benefits. Our city is diverse in gender, faith, ethnicity, class, age, and ability often finding itself middle of the road in national statistics. Our ‘average’ status hides the differences that exist within our borders but provides us with an opportunity to meaningfully respond to diversity and inclusion. Our work with Child Friendly Leeds, Adult Social Care for elderly people suffering with dementia, and the DIY disability arts scene in the city has proven that we can lead the way.

We are not in competition with our sister cities in the North; we provide an opportunity for them and them for us. However our voice in these conversations has been quiet and when it has spoken, it has not always been fully reflective of what makes Leeds distinctive – the culture of the city, the quality of life it affords, the contribution to the economy it gives, the openness to immigration created by the embracing of cultures which in turns creates a buoyant and skilled labour market. These things have not been reflected in our regional, national and international narrative.

In the political turmoil of 2017 where experts predict Brexit could take a decade to unfold, England and Scotland could separate, a wave of new elections will take place across Europe, the crisis in Syria seems to have no end in sight and global power is in flux, cities have the opportunity to do what seems to escape our nation states – unite fractures across the world, create room for a new kind of shared democracy and make global networks feel local and relevant.

It is time for Leeds to look beyond its borders and be generous with the opportunities at its disposal. We must open our city up and invite the world to join us here.

In order to become An International Capital of Culture, Leeds will:

- Bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2023.
- Not retreat from the international community and instead will be among the first to test, adapt, challenge and adopt principles and policies debated and developed by a global community, becoming an important laboratory for Europe regardless of the country's arrangements with the European Union.
- View migration as a virtue rather than an issue, reinforcing its status as a City of Sanctuary, supporting and nurturing new communities to share their cultures with us.
- Build on current research mapping of the visitor economy to inform proposals to increase international audiences to the city specifically for its culture and art.
- Be recognised as a city leading the way and creating best practice for diversity and inclusion, utilising the challenges of a diverse and divided population to cross boundaries and barriers, bringing the world closer together.
- Work with the Leeds City Region to provide a framework for investment in cultural tourism and the creative industries, and to maximise the role of culture to attract inward investment.

6.5 A Fast-Paced City of Cultural Innovation

“Leeds has phenomenal storytellers, artists and creators and a flourishing tech and digital scene, these two things rarely collide. Where other cities are seeing artists bring provoking and challenging content together with the technology and innovation to reach new audiences and reimagine worlds, we keep ours very separate and in doing so miss an opportunity.”

- A conversation with technology organisations as part of International Women's Day 2015 on collaboration between culture and technology

Leeds must prepare to not just take advantage of the future but to create it. The world around us is rapidly changing and we cannot tell what it will look and feel like in the future, how we will live our lives, what our reliance on technology will be and how this is integrated

into our culture. In an industry that changes by the hour we must learn to respond quickly, reduce red tape and build pace, energy and dynamism into our ethos in order to stay ahead.

Our children will reinvent our world in ways we cannot predict, just as we have reinvented our parents' worlds in ways that were once unthinkable and alien to them. We must become fleet of foot and with that comes the need to embrace risks and the willingness to fail fast, fail better and move on.

New and emergent technology brings new opportunities to create and explore worlds that were not within our grasp before, to connect with those close to us and those far away. Our future will be one of smart devices, connected cities and creative exploration where developing our own solutions is second nature.

Leeds has form in this field. Screen Yorkshire, managing one of the largest content funds in Europe is opening up access to film, television and animation and rolling out the region's scenery for leading directors, producers and commissioners. Artists including Invisible Flock, Dave Lynch and Will Simpson are blurring the lines between science, technology and art. Organisations like Slung Low are moving into the creation of multi-platform productions, weaving imagined worlds into our built environment and bringing culture to our phones, tablets and laptops.

Our city is at the forefront of the Smart City movement having created Leeds Data Mill, the first public/private Open Data platform in the UK, releasing data to enable smart solutions to form and our city to become connected to a global community of analysts and developers. Services for culture, such as Leeds Art Crawl and Open Audience, have been developed with greater sharing of data, comes a greater opportunity to connect our communities to the city's cultural offer and encourage them to reimagine it. Leeds Young Film Festival and Playful Anywhere are exploring how children and young people will use technology in the future, from Virtual and Augmented Reality to how our devices can connect to the world around us merging our on and offline lives.

Digitisation of services and the proliferation of technology have led to an increased sense of democracy with social media often cited as a revolution that connected people to their place; however this comes at a price. These new connected worlds can ironically become isolating and whilst joined to a global community of like-minded people they create insular bubbles which disconnect us from our differences and our immediate community, creating false realities. Culture is often notable by its absence in these artificial environments, stripping us of our identity, our connection to the place we live and to those around us, creating movements, provocations and protests that promote division over difference.

We cannot halt the advancement of technology and we cannot know where it will take us next, but we can embrace it, challenge it and mould it in our own image, using it to make positive connections, empower our people, bring us closer together, sell our story to the world and invite them to be among the architects of our life in Leeds.

In order to become A Fast-Paced City of Cultural Innovation, Leeds will:

- Create new opportunities for culture and art to collaborate with technology and the digital world, opening up new service provision across health, social care and wellbeing.
- Bring together creators, artists and makers to create new immersive experiences for a range of audiences that can take place throughout the city, across the North and internationally.
- Invest in our children and young people not only offering them the opportunity to create new cultural services but providing solutions in platforms and formats that meet their needs.
- Create the conditions necessary for artists, storytellers and producers to use technology throughout their work, creating multi-platform content which reaches international audience.
- Bring together its cultural data to reach new audience and build a sustainable demand for culture and storytelling, creating smart ticketing solutions, inviting communities across the city to uncover cultures that would otherwise be hidden to them.

7. A Delivery Plan

Now that we know our challenges and opportunities, we must collectively create a Delivery Plan for how we will respond to them.

The plan will set out how we will deliver on the commitments made in this strategy and who will lead each project, from individuals doing their bit for their community, to global organisations based in Leeds and public sector services, we will all have a part to play.

We cannot predict the future so as we design and deliver the ideas and solutions in the Delivery Plan, we will constantly challenge ourselves, respond to the world unfolding around us, try to influence those changes and adapt the strategy to make sure it is continually fit for purpose for the full 13 years of its term.

We will know we have been successful when people no longer question the value of culture; when a new project comes together and culture has a seat at the table from the start; when culture in its many forms is represented at leadership forums and debates that are not specifically related to culture; when our city is known for its vast and varied cultural life alongside its strong retail and professional services story; when nobody is asked to create outstanding work for free; and when there is outrage at the mere suggestion that culture is something that we can live without.

Join the journey and follow our progress at: www.leedsculturestrategy.co.uk