



Enhance Identity



Increase Opportunity



Celebrate

Reading's Culture & Heritage

STRATEGY 2015-2030

Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	2
Info graphics	3
Map	4
Why have a Culture and Heritage Strategy?	5
About Reading	6
Our achievements & current position	9
Reading Year of Culture	12
Reading Cultural Vision	13
Approach	13
Strategic position	13
Strategic Priorities	16
Delivery	18

Executive Summary

This strategy has been produced by Reading's Cultural Partnership. The Cultural Partnership was established in 2010 as a strategic delivery network with stakeholders from across sectors to support the delivery of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Reading.

It is expected that this strategy will be reviewed by the Cultural Partnership at least once a year with a report produced on progress against the agreed actions and the outcomes achieved.

The proposed period of the strategy is 2015 - 2030 with a review in 2020. Initially a three year delivery plan will be developed by the Cultural Partnership.

This Cultural and Heritage Strategy document is also available on the Cultural Partnership website.

<http://www.readingarts.com/artsdevelopment/>

traditions EVENTS **History**
activities life *place* together
Heritage PEOPLE
events DIVERSITY *art* food
COMMUNITY *music*
different LEARNING *area*
expression town

Reading is twinned with Speightstown,
Barbados, Clonmel, Ireland,
San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua and
Düsseldorf a German
Cultural Centre

161,000 PEOPLE
LIVE IN READING

*7 miles of
River frontage*

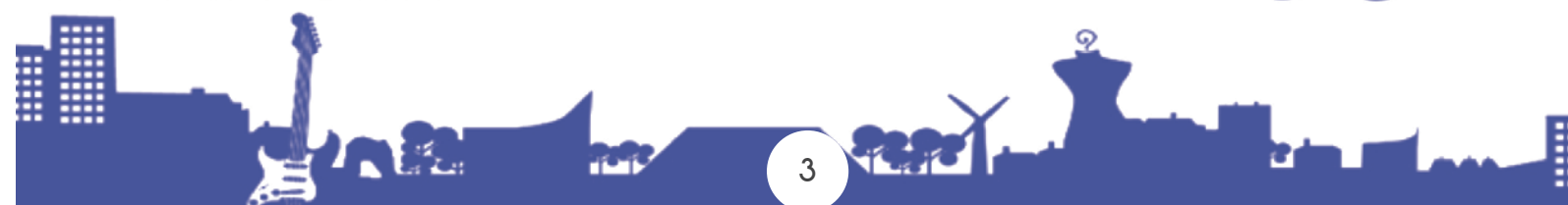
*Two
RIVERS*

THE SONG *Sumer is icumen in*,
WHICH WAS FIRST WRITTEN
DOWN IN READING ABBEY ABOUT
1240, IS THE EARLIEST KNOWN
FOUR PART HARMONY FROM
BRITAIN

300 pieces of art submitted
to Reading Arts Week each
year by *Reading artists*

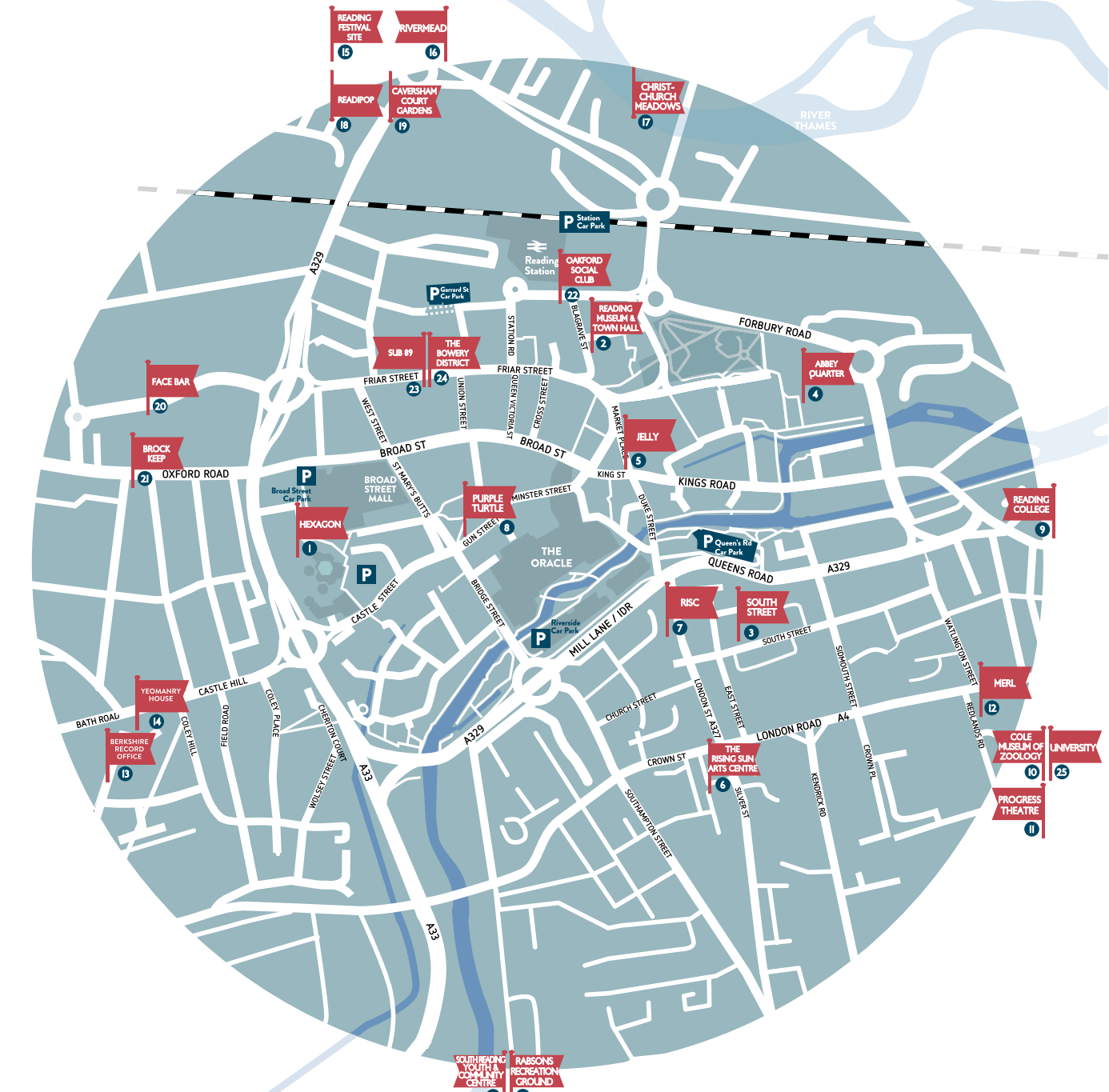
HOME OF
READING
FESTIVAL

*Oscar Wilde
WROTE THE BALLAD
OF Reading Gaol*



Reading's Culture & Heritage

STRATEGY 2015-2030



- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. The Hexagon | 8. Purple Turtle | 15. Reading Festival Site | 22. Oakford Social Club |
| 2. Reading Museum and Town Hall | 9. Reading College | 16. Rivermead | 23. Sub 89 |
| 3. South Street | 10. Cole Museum of Zoology | 17. Christchurch Gardens | 24. The Bowery District |
| 4. Abbey Quarter | 11. Progress Theatre | 18. Readipop | 25. University |
| 5. Jelly | 12. MERL | 19. Caversham Court Gardens | 26. South Reading Youth & Community Centre |
| 6. The Rising Sun Arts Centre | 13. Berkshire Record Office | 20. Face Bar | 27. Rabsons Recreation Ground |
| 7. RISC | 14. Yeomanry House | | |

Why have a Culture and Heritage Strategy?

Reading's Cultural and Heritage Strategy will identify the Cultural Partnership and partners' priorities and objectives for culture and heritage. Refreshing the strategy for Reading will give a sense of focus and direction for the sector over the medium term.

Benefit of a Strategy

There are many potential benefits of developing a strategy. A Local Government Association (LGA) paper, March 2013, reports that the arts provide nearly 1 million jobs and 67,000 cultural businesses contribute £28 billion every year to the UK economy. Tourism contributes £115 billion to the English economy and as well as attracting visitors to places, the arts encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more. Businesses choose to invest in places with a vibrant arts offer because they offer their employees a high quality of life. Arts and culture create a sense of place and it can help employees or families stay in the area.

It's important that strategic planning and decisions are made against a backdrop of an agreed vision and workable policy framework, devised by all potential partners and stakeholders locally and this is the purpose of the culture and heritage strategy.

Culture and Heritage in Reading are integral to the town's success as a place that welcomes and excites people to live, work and visit.

Over the fifteen years of this Strategy Culture and Heritage needs to strengthen and diversify to align with our growth, ambition and to secure investment. This will enable Reading to be a leading cultural destination nationally and internationally.

This Strategy is being developed in parallel with the Year of Culture for Reading in 2016 and outlines how this can be achieved in partnership with key organisations and agencies. Partners in the arts, voluntary, public and private sectors are essential to the delivery of this ambitious Strategy. These partners are recognised within the Delivery Plan and have been identified through consultation.

This Culture and Heritage Strategy responds to an evolving and growing sector and the development of the town over fifteen years that will enable Reading to capitalise on its cultural offer. The Strategy will contribute towards the Year of Culture in 2016. Initially a three year delivery plan will be developed by the Cultural Partnership.

What the Culture and Heritage Strategy will do

Reading's Cultural Strategy focuses on those issues and opportunities around which all of those involved in cultural provision, of whatever kind, can come together to make effective decisions about its future. The Strategy's priorities and aims seek to ensure that culture plays a full role in making Reading a vibrant, tolerant and enjoyable place to live, work or visit.

Reading is a vibrant economically successful town at the heart of the Thames Valley. With a resident population of approximately 161,000 and as the capital of the sub-region, the town directly serves a larger immediate catchment of over 250,000 and draws in workers and visitors alike from a wider area. The town has an established reputation as a business hub with particular strengths in information technology and business services. It is also a recognised major retail destination. Current levels of investment in the town are high and the population the town serves continues to grow.

Reading is a university town which brings benefits such as a culturally diverse population; a skilled workforce; Nationally recognised collections and museums, students who volunteer in the arts sector and help out at schools, high quality free public lectures. The University of Reading is ranked 156th in the world and 25th out of UK institutions (QS World University Rankings Sept 2015) and contributes to the town's international standing.

Our population has grown by 9% over the last 10 years and Reading is an increasingly diverse place. Reading is a vibrant multicultural town made up of many communities and is the second most ethnically diverse in the South East.

Reading has a high proportion of children and young people aged 0 to 18, representing 20.3% of its total population compared to the percentages for the South East and Great Britain. 49.4% of the school population belongs to an ethnic group other than White British compared to 25% in England overall. An increasing proportion is bilingual with 30% of pupils speaking English as an additional language, with 150 first languages in the area.

There are a growing number of older people living in the borough. The 2011 Census showed an 8% increase in the number of residents in the 65-74 age group compared with figures for the previous decade, although there was a slight decrease in the number of residents aged 75+.

Reading has a world-class economy and one of the most highly skilled labour markets in the world. Reading's relatively strong economic position and vibrant town centre means the town remains an attractive place to live. Reading is ranked as the UK's top place to live and work in the PwC/Demos Good Growth for Cities Index 2014.

Our Culture and Heritage

Reading has a well established reputation for its cultural offer: it has several multi-art form venues, including:

The Hexagon which provides a programme of events including theatre, comedy, classical music, pop & rock, dance and an acclaimed family pantomime. The large scale venue acts as a hub for the Thames Valley, pulling audiences in from around Berkshire and the larger region. The venue is well used by schools and community groups and for its professional touring work.

Reading Concert Hall, located at Town Hall, is a grade two listed Victorian concert hall, boasting a 150 year old Father Willis Organ. It regularly hosts acclaimed classical, folk music and comedy.

South Street Arts Centre is an intimate venue with a national reputation for its innovative programme of theatre, music, live literature

and comedy. It also programmes a strand of off-site work under the banner SITELINES garnering acclaim from audiences and national press.

Progress Theatre is an innovative amateur repertory theatre where Kenneth Branagh started his acting career.

Newly launched **Reading Studio** is a pioneering partnership between Reading Rep, and the town's further education provider, Reading College. The formation of Reading Studio heralds the beginning of a new approach to performing arts training in the South East and beyond.

Rising Sun Arts Centre is a community led organisation run by volunteers presenting a leftfield programme of participatory activity and cult / niche performance work. The programme is a mixture of local community artists and touring work.

OpenHand OpenSpace provides studio and gallery space in Brock Keep in West Reading, and organises art exhibitions and education activities. It also offers heritage activities related to the history of the Keep.

The town also has a number of pubs and clubs presenting regular live music and comedy including The Purple Turtle, Sub89, The Bowery District, Face Bar, Global Café and Oakford Social Club.

Artforms & Organisations

Reading hosts a huge number of diverse art and cultural organisations, from high quality amateurs, innovative semi-professional companies and internationally acclaimed professional artists. Art forms represented include theatre, visual arts, music, literature / spoken word and dance.

Reading University houses

- The only Arts cinema in Reading (The Reading Film Theatre).
- The Minghella Studios on campus with state of the art theatres and production facilities; and
- A vibrant student theatre scene

The independent arts sector has grown

substantially in recent years, delivering a number of high quality programmes including professional productions, events, festivals and exhibitions. There has been an increasing amount of collaboration, which has clearly enhanced Reading's cultural offer.

Recently the arts forum has been rejuvenated and there have been a number of networks established around specific art forms to develop a strong focus on new programme activity, delivered jointly where appropriate, sharing resources and learning. These networks will feed into the Arts Forum to create a better community led approach.

Reading CAN is a Culture and Arts network facilitated by Readipop and Jelly and supported by Artswork as the Arts Council Bridge organisation for the South East. The purpose of the network is to bring artists, arts and cultural organisations together to coordinate and improve Reading's cultural offer for children and young people. This has included networking events for teachers and artists, arts award training for artists, opportunities for children & young people to achieve Arts Award.

Heritage

The Heritage Index, compiled by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, in collaboration with Heritage Lottery Fund in 2015 found that Reading was in the top 16% overall in England for both the most heritage assets, such as monuments and museums, and how actively residents and visitors are involved with this local heritage.

Reading is an ancient town with over 1000 years of history. This has created a heritage of local, national and, for Reading Abbey, European and wider international significance. The borough contains over 1200 recorded archaeological sites, 800 historic listed buildings and nine museum and archive collections. These museums include **Reading museum** which displays artefacts from Reading's history, the delightful Biscuit Tin Gallery, the nationally important Silchester Gallery and Britain's very

own copy of the Bayeux Tapestry. The composer Gustav Holst taught at the university, and Wilfred Owen studied here - as did a host of other leading contributors to culture and heritage, including Artist Terry Frost.

Reading University is also home to The Beckett Collection, which is the world's largest collection of resources relating to Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). It has been recognised as being of national and international importance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

The Cole Museum of Zoology is based at the University of Reading and displays 400 of its 3500 species at any one time, while the **Ure Museum** (also at the University) holds the largest collection of Greek pottery in the UK. **The Museum of English Rural Life** is the most comprehensive national collection relating to the history of food, farming and the countryside. Its collections have Designated status ensuring their importance is recognised nationally.

Events

Reading plays host to hundreds of community events and festivals on an annual basis; engaging hundreds of thousands of people from across the Reading Borough and beyond. Activities and Events include festivals celebrating arts, music & leisure, community fun days & fetes, charity & fund raising activity and outdoor theatres, performances and cinema programmes.

The biggest and most famous town event is the Reading Festival, running since 1971. The second largest UK music festival - it attracts 90,000 fans every year, to watch headline acts from around the world.

Free university public lectures showcase some of the research topics that are carried out at the University. The lectures are given by researchers eminent in their field but in a manner that is easily understood by all. They offer a unique opportunity to learn something of the research, teaching and people that make the University a world-class institute.

58,000 people attend University public lectures and visit the university's museums every year. The University of Reading art final degree show is a popular event; the University also sponsors the Whiteknights Studio Trail and have produced Turner prize winning artists and judges.

All of these events and activities celebrate the people, places, geography and history that make Reading a vibrant and rewarding place to live, work and visit.

International Links

Reading also has well established twinning links with Düsseldorf. As a significant act of post-war reconciliation, the origin of the friendship is part of Reading's heritage and history. Today, groups of citizens such as choirs, orchestras, sports clubs and schools engage together in a wide range of activities. The Reading Düsseldorf Association is a member of the Reading Cultural Partnership. Düsseldorf is a major cultural centre. It is particularly notable for its modern art collections, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein and Clara Schumann Music School. Past and present Düsseldorf residents include Robert Schumann, Joseph Beuys, Wim Wenders, Kraftwerk and Die Toten Hosen.

Reading also has twinnings with Clonmel (Ireland), Speightstown (Barbados) and San Francisco Libre (Nicaragua). Each of these Links have Twinning Associations here in Reading who both organise, and engage with, cultural and community events in the town.

Every year, over 4,000 international students from 145 countries make Reading their home.

Local Partnerships

Existing and proposed partnerships are beneficial e.g. partnership between Reading Museum and the University has led to over £400k of Arts Council project funding in the last 2 years.

Our achievements and current position

Where are we now

Reading published its first cultural strategy in 2002 and the second strategy in 2009. The first strategy provided an ambitious plan for innovation and development. Many of the aspirations have been progressed through these strategies.

Achievements

A summary of achievements and where there is still work to do against the objectives included in the previous Cultural Strategy 'A Life Worth Living - the next Chapter - Reading's Cultural Strategy' 2009-12, which was extended to 2013 is presented in a series of images overleaf.

Reading's
Culture
& Heritage
ACHIEVEMENTS

Reading's Culture & Heritage

ACHIEVEMENTS

Children's Festival celebrated its 25th year in 2014



Reading All Steel Percussion Orchestra (RASPO) is now established as Reading's premier steel orchestra and welcomes all ages and abilities



'Let Me Ease Your Day' an art piece touring Reading, Belfast, Los Angeles, Chicago



Legacy of Valour exhibition shortlisted for prestigious Collections Trust National Award



Reading's annual celebration of the town's waterways 'Water Fest' has been running for over 25 years



Open for Art has significantly increased the number of arts activities in Reading town centre



Over 18,000 local school children a year visit Reading Museum to take part in workshops; the Bayeux Tapestry session is becoming increasingly popular due to the new National Curriculum and The British Museums 'Teaching history with 100 objects' online resource



Reading Pride celebrated its 12th year at Kings Meadow #prideinyou



Funding has been secured for enhancements and preparatory work to improve Reading's historic Abbey Quarter. Regular 'hard hat tours' of the Abbey Ruins keep the public involved in Reading's most important history site



Caversham Festival now extends over three days in its fantastic riverside setting



90,000 music fans visit Reading every August Bank Holiday weekend for Reading Festival



Reading Year of Culture 2016

Emerging from early consultation on this new Culture & Heritage Strategy for Reading there were strong messages that the town's vibrant cultural offer was not as visible as it might be. Recognising the strategic significance of this issue to Reading's continued success and reputation the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) adopted 'Cultural Life' as one of its priority areas for further work alongside the existing Cultural Partnership.

The consultation discussions generated a huge amount of energy, enthusiasm and commitment. What emerged from this enthusiasm and the acknowledged need to raise the profile of cultural activity in the town is the concept of a 'Year of Culture' for Reading, owned and delivered by local people and organisations under the umbrella of the Cultural Partnership and championed by the LSP (and all its constituent organisations). To help take this forward a joint LSP/ Cultural Partnership workshop on Cultural Life was held, where input was gathered for developing a proposed "Year of Culture 2016", linked to the aspirations of the developing Culture and Heritage Strategy.

What is the Year of Culture?

The Year of Culture 2016 is seen as a means of showcasing, enhancing, promoting and increasing engagement with the wide range of activities, events and networks that exist in the many fields of arts and heritage, all linked to promoting the wider attractiveness and prosperity of the Reading area. This will ultimately change perceptions of Reading, leaving a legacy of continued cultural excellence and reputation.

Where are we now in preparation for the Year of Culture?

A Cultural Life Working Group (CLWG) has been established from members of the LSP, Cultural Partnership board and the Arts Community. This will focus on the integrated development and delivery of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Reading and a year of Culture 2016. This group is a strong and purposeful partnership collectively owning and championing the Year of Culture and includes the University, Reading College, Reading UK CIC (the town's economic development company), key arts organisations, community representatives and the Council.

A Cultural Life event in January 2015 was attended by over 50 people, including members of the LSP, hosted by the University and organised by Readipop, focused on further planning and development of proposals for the Year of Culture. Significantly self-organising thematic groups are emerging from this initial meeting that will help provide a framework for further engagement and development of the Year of Culture. These proposals and emerging structures are being taken forward by the working group and delivery partner.

January 2016 will be marked with a 'Get Fit for Culture' themed series of activities and events that will mark the start of the Year of Culture. The formal launch is November 2015.

Reading Cultural Vision

The vision for Reading has been informed by contributions from many individuals, organisations and groups and our thanks go to them for their invaluable input.

By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.

Realising the vision will require everyone involved in the cultural life of Reading to work together.

The aim is to establish structures and networks as foundations for meaningful collaboration, building on much of the excellent work already being undertaken.

Approach

Collaborative working across organisational and sector boundaries, where appropriate, is encouraged. A 'culture of collaboration' implies a range of formal and informal links, from networking through to co-responsibility and joint enterprise.

In this strategy 'partnership' refers to individuals and organisations that share formal responsibility for agreed objectives and actions; 'stakeholders' refers to individuals and organisations that have an interest in an area, but are not bound by formal commitment to action.

There is recognition that caring for and engaging people with the town's heritage cannot be achieved by the Council acting alone; it must be done in partnership between the town's public, private and voluntary sectors, building on what has already been achieved.

Strategic Position

This Strategy aims to align with national policy and practice, outlining the approach to culture and heritage in Reading. It sets out commitments, priorities and aims.

National Policy

The development and growth of arts and museums in Reading has been underpinned by our national partner Arts Council England (ACE), whose mission is 'Great art and culture for everyone'. This sets out a 10-year vision for the Arts Council, with five ambitious goals at its heart:

1. **Excellence** is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
2. **Everyone** has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
3. The arts, museums and libraries are **resilient** and environmentally **sustainable**
4. The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are **diverse** and appropriately **skilled**
5. Every **child and young** person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

Originally published in 2010, this 2013 update reflects the Arts Council's newly expanded remit for museums and libraries. Through sharing this aspiration, Reading has established strong partnership with ACE, including the investment in the development of capital projects, and programme funding for numerous organisations working collaboratively across the Borough.

Arising from the Cultural Life event in January 2015, Community groups have been tasked to assess where we are at moment and where we are at the moment. From this an Arts manifesto for Reading will be developed, using the Arts Council art forms which support and contribute to the delivery of the goals published in 'Great Art & Culture for everyone'.

- **Combined Arts** - encompasses a range of organisations that work across multiple art forms to achieve their aims, including festivals, carnival, arts centres and presenting venues. It also includes artists, producers and companies that create multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary work, carnival, celebratory and participatory arts
- **Dance** - To widen understanding and appreciation of the many and varied kinds of dance, influenced by the social and demographic richness of British society, and other art forms
- **Literature** - support creative writing including poetry, fiction, life writing, storytelling, spoken word, writing for children and literary translation. It can be presented through a variety of media
- **Music** - support artists and organisations working across all genres of music and our aim is to bring the most inspiring musical experiences to audiences and participants in a wide range of contexts across the country
- **Theatre** - supported by the Arts Council includes work for specific audiences
- **Visual Arts** - embraces a broad range of media, such as painting or moving image work

Heritage

Reading's heritage is an important and unique asset, albeit sometimes our best kept secret, playing a vital part in the local people's pride and sense of identity. Reading's vision for the town's heritage is applied within the framework of national and local policies for culture, heritage and planning. The local planning authority has a statutory responsibility to protect Reading's assets. As the first step to tackle neglected structures, English Heritage regards the creation of an 'at risk' register. Reading Abbey ruins and gate are one of three 'At Risk' sites in Reading. The closure of Reading Gaol presents an opportunity to enhance an important part of the Abbey Quarter. The Heritage Lottery Fund continues to be a key funding partner in making this heritage accessible to Reading's people and communities.

Major successes include Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding for the Reading Abbey Project and the Museum of English Rural Life and other external endorsement, support and investment.

Economic Policy

Reading's Year of Culture 2016 and the development of the cultural industries' sector in Reading is an important part of the new Economic Development Plan for Reading led by Reading UK CIC (Reading UK CIC was established in 2007 as a Community Interest Company (CIC) and operates as a public/private partnership to promote and sustain the economic development of Reading.)

Consultation

Consultation and engagement has been a fundamental part of developing Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy. We have listened to the views of Reading people. In addition to desk-based research, the 'Your Say Arts', Heritage and Sport Consultation, engagement programme, Cultural Partnership and LSP workshops and events with the cultural sector have played an important role in directing the priorities of the Strategy.

We have also consulted through the Reading Borough Council website and with external partnerships and have promoted the consultation through the local press.

The parallel Abbey Quarter consultations in 2014 and 2015 had 2209 responses - higher numbers than for any previous Reading Borough Council online surveys - a clear indication of the extent to which people value their heritage.

Issues & opportunities

In order to achieve the vision a number of challenges have been raised and will be addressed through delivery of this strategy:

- Identify long-term sources of funding and investment for Reading's culture and heritage
- Empower communities to further engage in and advocate for the arts and heritage
- Challenge and change the negative image and perceptions of Reading
- Retain and attract the best creative practitioners to live and work in Reading
- Support cultural leadership and develop sector skills and capacity to grow
- Develop the cultural infrastructure to meet growth demands and opportunities
- Conserve and enhance Reading's unique heritage assets
- Raise awareness of the cultural and heritage opportunities and activities in Reading
- Use Reading's international links to enhance the range of experiences available here, and to develop a presence for Reading on the international cultural scene.

Commitment

This Culture and Heritage Strategy provides detail within the Delivery Plan of the projects that have been prioritised over the coming years. For Culture and Heritage to flourish they need to meet the aspirations of our current residents, visitors and expanding communities. To do this we will embed the following commitments into the Delivery Plan and related strategic decisions.

Through the delivery of this Strategy we will:

- Offer diverse opportunities and activities representative of Reading's demography
- Capitalise on opportunities to expand inward investment within the cultural sectors
- Ensure culture supports healthy communities and cultural wellbeing
- Support work that is inspiring and new, through a commitment to achieving excellence through exemplary projects.

Strategic Priorities

Consultation and engagement has informed the priorities and aims detailed below and provide the framework for the Delivery Plan (to be developed).

There are three priorities, each with two aims.

Strategic Priority One: Enhance Identity – Being Reading/Made in Reading

‘Being Reading’ - not emulating other places but having our own identity is a key priority for the town. The people of Reading are proud of our heritage and what has been achieved, and we are ambitious and visionary about its future. The identity of Reading needs to be celebrated and expanded to recognise the diversity of its people, the quality of place and its role as the capital of the Thames Valley.

The University of Reading is building a new strategy for 2026, the 100th anniversary of the University receiving its charter. One pillar of the University’s forward strategy is the establishment of a new research theme around Heritage & Creativity, designed to enhance links between creativity and heritage to add scale and real-world relevance to our research.

Aims:

a) People

The role of cultural opportunities in combating inequalities and the need to address inequalities in cultural participation in Reading are areas the strategy wants to address. To recognise our growing and diverse population, offering ways for people to be involved in, and supported by, the development of Culture and Heritage:

- New artistic commissions and public art in

- Reading that engage new communities.
- Foster pride within the Community and celebrate our hidden heritage gems through better access and interpretation
- Cultural workspaces and studios for artists and creative industries
- To promote the idea that culture and heritage can play a leadership role in the future of Reading

b) Places

To recognise the need for cultural hubs and creating new cultural spaces; such provision will ensure that Reading’s cultural offer grows and celebrates its sense of place:

- Promote the message that creative people, organisations and approaches are welcome in Reading
- Recognise and showcase the numerous and diverse cultural and heritage accomplishments, provision and events that already exist in Reading
- Deliver a successful Year of Culture for Reading in 2016, improving the quality and reach of the offering in Reading
- Establish the Abbey Quarter as Reading’s heritage quarter
- Utilise the culture and heritage message to promote Reading as a destination for tourists and visitors
- Recognise culture, heritage and creative industries as an important component of a vibrant Reading
- Encourage improved management and investment in Reading’s heritage assets, especially those that are ‘at risk’

Strategic Priority Two: Increase Opportunities through working together

Culture and Heritage offer a broad range of creative opportunities, for audience members, active participants and practitioners. It has the ability to bring people and communities together, to support learning and to expand the creative experiences of a growing population.

Fostering a commitment to work together across organisational and sector boundaries. A ‘culture of collaboration’ implies a range of formal and informal links, from networking through to co-responsibility and joint enterprise.

Aims:

c) Community & learning

To enable communities to experience, engage and participate in creative activities and opportunities at a range of levels. Cultural activity has a key role to play in enhancing the lives of groups with particular needs, such as people with learning disabilities and activities for older people as well as therapeutic activity for people with mental health problems.

Provide opportunities which support formal and informal learning through Culture and Heritage, enabling everyone to expand and develop their creative knowledge and skills:

- Increase participation and engagement in culture and heritage
- Making the best use of channels and networks available to promote what we have including the use the digital medium and media to drive up audience engagement
- Organising and managing events together
- Develop an Arts Manifesto for Reading
- Recognise and use local champions / expertise to lead and share best practice (music, art, heritage etc.)
- Work to build engagement through the newly established Cultural Learning

Partnership supported by the Arts Council England ‘Bridge’ organisation and ensure the ongoing delivery of the Reading Culture and Art Network for Children and Young people (Reading CAN) to open up opportunities

d) Economy - Wealth of Culture & Heritage

Culture is crucial to the economic wellbeing of any destination (not just a “nice to have”) - It gives resident’s quality of life - opportunities to participate and support, it strengthens the Visitor Economy and attracts and helps retain businesses who want to be part of an energetic and creative environment (and find the best staff). Investment in heritage and culture generates more spending in the local economy.

- Engage the business sector in mutually beneficial projects, such as the Abbey Quarter
- Attract and retain investment in Reading contributing to our economic prosperity
- Increase the skills and employment opportunities within cultural sector
- Need to get digital and creative industries involved in the cultural life of the town and the partnership work
- Engage with the LEP to ensure that its focus on social inclusion (through ESIF), skills and business tourism supports this Strategy
- Need to develop networks to link business to the cultural sector

2.3 Strategic Priority Three: Celebrate

Create events that make people proud of Reading as well as encourage people to visit our town. Using culture and heritage to celebrate Reading is a key priority for the Strategy.

Aims:

e) Events

To support events which celebrate Reading’s identity, diversity, achievements and cultural offer:

- Raise the profile of Culture and Heritage in Reading through quality commissions and events
- Concentrate on a programme of events which range in size and build on what we have and do
- Support accessible but high quality festivals
- Recognise and showcase the existing numerous and diverse arts and culture accomplishments, provision and events that already exist in Reading
- Use significant occasions and anniversaries, such as the 70th and later anniversaries of the friendship with Düsseldorf, as a focus for special events.
- Promote the Abbey Quarter brand and concept
- Improve the signage of culture and heritage assets to raise awareness including the 'Welcome to Reading'
- Increased engagement with the Arts Forum and other networks

Delivery

The Cultural Partnership is the owner of this Strategy and delivery is in partnership with community groups, organisations, agencies and stakeholders. Working together we will deliver the strategic priorities outlined in the strategy.

Initially a three year delivery plan will be developed by the Cultural Partnership.

The Delivery Plan will be achieved by partners securing inward investment through a number of routes. Previous programmes have had substantial investment by Arts Council England, developer contributions [Section 106]. The year of culture includes actions to source alternative investment and funding opportunities.

f) Communications

Preparatory work has been undertaken in relation to branding and marketing the Year of Culture. Led by the independent theatre company 'Reading Between the Lines' and with the support of the University a 'Made in Reading' brand has been developed and is being utilised by local cultural organisations to promote original local work.

To share and profile the creativity, skills and achievements taking place in Reading regionally, nationally and internationally:

- Further recognition for the role that the arts and public art play in the local economy through the provision of jobs, training, visitor's spend, inward investment, tourism, profile raising, marketing material and positive media.
- Coordinated promotion - print/web/social/public build awareness of the Cultural offer in Reading and making best use of channels and networks available to promote what we have
- Link with national and regional partners to keep Reading networked with strategically important partners
- Increased use of Made in Reading branding

STRATEGY 2015-2030