

FRONT COVER TBC

NAME OF STRATEGY

**A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR LOWESTOFT
2020-2025**

Introduction

Lowestoft is experiencing a cultural renewal in and around the town at the moment; we invited everyone to the beach to celebrate the inaugural First Light Festival in 2019, Lowestoft Rising LCEP is enabling every child and young person in the town to have access to cultural activity and the Marina Theatre is going from strength to strength, welcoming an annual audience of 80,000 people. But we want to achieve more for our residents, the place we live, work and visit and the cultural sector who are providing us with these exciting and special experiences.

Name of Strategy is central to bringing forward more creative opportunities for the town, positive impact on people's lives and making our rich and varied cultural assets stronger and more resilient, the Lowestoft Cultural Leadership Group in partnership with East Suffolk Council have prepared this Cultural Strategy for the town, **Name of Strategy**. Our TEN key outcome priorities all strive to make Lowestoft a place where it celebrates being on the eastern edge of the country, where its creatively edgy and the leading edge in cultural leadership, culture in placemaking, community participation and economic growth.



Pakefield Man, First Light Festival 2019. Photo: Kate Ellis

culture can be
commemorations historic buildings
libraries landscapes memories
languages and dialects **visual arts** dance
nature galleries **performing**
oral history arts exhibition **concert**
archives **theatre** crafts
Combined Arts creative media **museums** monuments
Literature **Music** historic gardens **habitats**
carnivals festivals **food** revealing the past
heritage collections photography
this strategy includes
Kirkley Village **Oulton** **Carlton Colville** **North Lowestoft** **Broad** **Gunton**
Somerleyton **South Lowestoft**
Kessingland **Pakefield**
and everywhere in between

OUR AIMS

PEOPLE

People will be happier, stronger and more connected through taking part in cultural activity.

Strengthen the role of arts and heritage in the local education offer through clear pathways for children and young people to engage in culture and creative activity.

People will feel a sense of belonging through developing and having a say in culture in their communities.

We will ensure that all our venues and cultural events are as welcoming, accessible and inclusive as possible.

PLACE

Championing the role of culture in everything that we do, supporting our local priorities and attracting investment to build pride and growth.

Celebrate our position as the most easterly community through Lowestoft's relationship with water, the beach and protected landscapes.

ECONOMY

We will work with partners to support a strong and diverse cultural programme to promote investment and inclusive growth.

We will work to transform our historic buildings and creative spaces, encouraging cultural entrepreneurialism by supporting cultural innovation and improved networking.

Through supporting innovation and ambition, our cultural organisations will be at the heart of Lowestoft's growth.

We will develop compelling and innovative offers for residents and visitors using our unique assets.

OUR 2025 VISION

Lowestoft will be transformed into a vibrant and energised town with every resident enjoying and taking part in arts, culture and heritage.

We've chosen People, Place and the Economy as our key themes for **Name of Strategy**. The following quotes, in their own words, are from cultural partners and participants, each describing the impact of culture on themselves, on the place and on communities.



The First Light Festival is galvanising people to come up with ideas and use their imaginations. All kinds of creative ideas and solutions are buzzing about. This doesn't usually happen! It's like it's given people's vision a push in the right direction. I can't overemphasise how much the town felt different. I've never seen anything like it. I felt rejuvenated by it.

Facebook comment, First Light Festival



Culture is a source of economic growth, both directly in terms of jobs and employment, and as a source of innovation and collaboration with other growth sectors. They attract talent, support our visitor economy and drive investment into vital cultural assets in our towns and cities, making them more vibrant and attractive places. Culture is worth £83.6m to the economy of Norfolk and Suffolk.

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, Culture Drives Growth



With the town centre facing significant challenges, it's important to attract a range of activities to the area. Local residents appreciated the works and the exhibition. It's important that more similar events take place, to promote local talent and encourage more visitors.

Peter Aldous MP, visit to Easterly Artists Exhibition



Anything which brings different groups from a town or a community together to celebrate what's common has got to be a good thing. Something which is physically active, which is creative, artistic, but also bringing together heritage and a sense of community has got to be worth investing in.

Glass House Dance, Lowestoft Dance Map, Dance East, Making Waves Together



The project has given our children's writing a real purpose and aspiration. There is no doubt in my mind that we need to continue to offer our young people these amazing opportunities and experiences.

Teacher at Gunton Primary Academy, Untold Tales, Marina Theatre, Making Waves Together



My partner bought me a camera to help me cope with severe depression and anxieties that I've suffered with for the last 30 years. I like to spend at least 5 minutes of every day on the beach taking photos as it helps me to relax and sets me up for the daily struggles I face within myself.

Local resident, Rise and Shine, The Ness



I haven't thought before about the range of careers available in the creative industries and discarded the idea of pursuing a career in such a company, however, now I might consider it in the future.

Local high school pupil, Marina Theatre, Creative Choices



The project was so enjoyable, meeting wonderful people, speaking and singing with the children was fantastic. It gave me a reason for living - knowing you're not past it, there are still things to learn and enjoy.

Lowestoft Folk, Suffolk Artlink

People will be happier, stronger and more connected through taking part in cultural activity.

We'll work with partners to create and deliver a diverse range of cultural opportunities for local people and visitors to watch, engage and participate in culture.

New cultural experiences will help people come together to empower and enrich their lives.

Support the sector to tackle social isolation, help people lead healthier lives and improve mental health for some of our most vulnerable communities.

Continue to create ways to introduce non-audiences to activities and push the boundaries of creativity to stretch people's views and attitudes.

Build on the work with young people to enhance confidence, self-esteem, knowledge and positive social connections through arts and heritage.

The sector will aim to be environmentally responsible, reducing any impacts on communities, climate and nature.

We will ensure that all our venues and cultural events are as welcoming, accessible and inclusive as possible.

Opportunities for all generations and resident groups to take part and enjoy cultural activity and not to be limited by family income, age or by educational background.

Improve audience facilities at all our theatres and libraries to help enable them to build audiences, diversify programmes and use their buildings to their fullest potential.

Work with partners to provide dementia friendly sites and programming which can help people living with dementia and their companions stay connected to their families and communities for longer and have joyful, life enhancing experiences.

To work with partners to put in place the infrastructure within the district and region to facilitate ease of movement to enable people to experience cultural activities and explore cultural spaces.

Explore innovative ways to interpret collections inside and outside the museums. Increase participation and diversifying audiences by improving communication and signposting.

Improve our media profile and position, making our work more visible.

People will feel a sense of belonging through developing and having a say in culture in their communities.

We'll raise the profile of cultural engagement and involve people in regeneration projects and 'big ideas'.

Bring Lowestoft's heritage to life through arts and performance, connecting our past with the future and the place.

We'll co-design projects with our communities and audiences so they feel a sense of ownership and control.

We'll open the door for more nationally and internationally renowned art and performance and diverse programming so we can see Lowestoft in a national and international setting.

Strengthen the role of arts and heritage in the local education offer through clear pathways for children and young people to engage in culture and creative activity.

Support Lowestoft Rising Cultural Education Partnership in making further investments in the local cultural sector and strengthening the role of schools and education providers in culture.

Build on the town's connections with local and regional colleagues, sharing skills and knowledge to co-produce effective programmes of engagement.

Continue to work closely with our heritage partners to build on collaborative work that has inspired place-based storytelling and playwriting about the experiences of working people in our town.

Work with our further and higher education providers to map out progression pathways, build connections and support young people into personal development and employment and support New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Cultural Sector Skills Plan.

Build on the Cultural Schools Programme and CPD (Continuing Professional Development), support our secondary schools, with teachers developing skills and confidence in the teaching of performing arts and delivering a legacy within the school beyond the programme.



The Ness Beach School. Photo: Jo Leverett



Poetry People, GritFest Photo: Pete Smith

Championing the role of culture in everything that we do, supporting our local priorities and attracting investment to build pride and growth.

Culture will be a key priority for Lowestoft, with the Cultural Leadership Group working with partners to advocate for its cross-cutting themes.

East Suffolk Council will co-invest in cultural provision alongside regional and national funders that support our vision.

We'll build upon our rich and diverse cultural assets to help change perceptions, build investment and profile of the town outside and within our geographical boundaries.

Continue to work with the sector to ensure that large-scale ambition is inclusive and reaches all.

By working with partners we'll value our built heritage and find practical ways to protect, conserve and interpret it for future generations to enjoy and use our built environment to provide our communities a sense of place.

We'll add to our cultural assets with new landmark projects to further re-enforce our place making and regeneration efforts.

Celebrate our position as the most easterly community through Lowestoft's relationship with water, the beach and protected landscapes.

We'll support and invest in groups while embracing new opportunities, activities and partnerships, locally, regionally and nationally.

We'll encourage groups to deliver and commission work that responds to the landscape, our shared heritage and our cultural identity.

Culture will reinforce the work around place making and used to influence public realm design and encourage more public art opportunities for communities to be inspired by.

Forge new relationships with partners, including the private sector, to promote the sector as part of a cultural tourism and community development offer.

Lowestoft will embrace, harness and promote its unique position and we'll be seen as an exemplar in terms of cultural-led regeneration, where Lowestoft embraces innovation and confidence, we'll celebrate being creatively edgy!



We will work with partners to support a strong and diverse cultural programme to promote investment and inward growth.

Working with partners we'll make Lowestoft an attractive environment for creative businesses to locate and create work.

We'll take advantage of the enormous potential to develop creative hubs as part of the UK's Industrial Strategy.

We'll promote and support artisan and creative producers through programmes and events.

We'll showcase excellence to help transform our town centre and seafronts.

We will work to transform our historic buildings and creative spaces, encouraging cultural entrepreneurialism by supporting cultural innovation and improved networking.

Animate and find new economically sustainable uses for redundant buildings in the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, starting with buildings at risk.

Work with partners to provide creative workspace for emerging talent in the town, start-ups and progression routes into the creative industries.

We'll support the growth of cultural enterprises, training, capacity building and employment opportunities.

Provide opportunities for peer to peer review and bringing cultural organisations and artists together to collaborate and test ideas.

Connect and strengthen cultural community assets through support and developing creative capacity.

Through supporting innovation and ambition, our cultural organisations will be at the heart of Lowestoft's growth.

We'll embrace opportunities, explore new ideas and deliver excellence in everything we do from conservation to performance.

Work with partners to grow heritage and arts organisations' digital space to reach new audiences, achieve their mission, evolve their business practice and work with tourism and destination partners to develop exemplar digital initiatives, promoting the place and cultural tourism.

We'll embrace partnership working, especially where additional resources and experience could bring forward innovation and learning opportunities.

We'll continue to build connections with our science, digital and engineering partners to intergrate arts and heritage into their work.

The cultural sector will be more sustainable and resilient through broadening its revenue streams with new models of investment.

Our key assets will have the same profile, levels of investment and resources experienced by their counterparts in other parts of the region.

We will develop compelling and innovative offers for residents and visitors using our unique assets.

We'll increase cultural tourism opportunities in the town, extend the tourist season, create a compelling destination and link visitors to more cultural experiences.

Develop and support our key cultural assets, including theatres, libraries, museums, parks, heritage, festivals and natural landscapes to benefit from the cultural tourism visitor economy.

Improve the visitor experience by having a clear vision of the unique offer our key destinations need to make.

Ensure the foundations that underpin the cultural tourism visitor economy are in place to enable our cultural assets, events and festivals to reach and grow visitor numbers.



A window of opportunities and new beginnings, by Andrew Lees
Finalist in the Rise and Shine Competition

Our Ambitious Cultural Strategy

the town, from our former Beach Village 'The Grit' and the historic High Street to Lowestoft Rising, Heritage Open Days and Making Waves Together and we need a strategy that brings all of our work and efforts together under a shared vision that is both aspirational and achievable.

Lowestoft has been through a significant period of cultural development over the last few years, which in part is the result of investment and advocacy driving a fresh momentum. The showpiece event in 2019 was the First Light Festival which was an accumulation of work and effort to support the sector and make it more vibrant through collaborations and finding imaginative ways to reimagine our shared spaces and assets.

We want investment and growth to be inclusive and this strategy aims to do that. We have a wide variety of assets and partnerships in

Culture has a key role to play in addressing some of Lowestoft's most pressing issues but also in promoting the place as a visitor destination. Like many coastal communities, Lowestoft does face some serious challenges, but we can use our cultural assets to help reverse some of these difficulties. There are many studies to prove how culture can be enlisted to tackle some of the socio-economic challenges at a local level, including promoting more cohesive communities and maintaining healthier lives.

We created our vision and priorities by listening to artists and cultural organisations, immersing ourselves in the sector and communities, using consultations and learning from our experiences of delivering projects.

The Cultural Strategy has been made possible through the Great Place Schemes, delivered by Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England, with additional funds and support from East Suffolk Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, Great Yarmouth Town Centre Partnership, Lowestoft Vision and the Broads National Park.



Lowestoft Dance Map, DanceEast in partnership with Making Waves Together. Photo: DanceEast



Excelsior LT472 (preparing the sails at the Ness) Photo: Rob Howarth

We want to use culture to change people's views of Lowestoft. In a recent survey partners and residents were asked how confident the town was and only 6% agreed that the town was confident and when asked about innovation 81% said that the town wasn't innovative.

Lowestoft has always had an important relationship with water and especially the sea; it has influenced the lives and industry of the people who have lived and worked in this special place. What began as an ancient fishing port became the place of Birds Eye and frozen food, evolving into an important centre for renewable offshore wind energy.

In the early 20th century Lowestoft was one of the countries leading tourist resorts and a major fishing port with a fishing community 'The Grit' that literally grew up on the beach and epitomised the nature of the place. We are now celebrating and sharing the story of our seascape and unique position as the most easterly point of the UK along with a seascape with big skies, beaches, Broads, coastline and marshland. We celebrate being the most easterly point in the UK where the sun rises first and we want to share our easterly experience with residents and visitors.

Despite all the good things that are happening in the town, the socio-economic profile of Lowestoft is likely to point towards less cultural participation than the national average. Active Lives survey data indicates that 44.5% of the population in Waveney (former district) have engaged in 3 or more cultural activities in a year, which is below the national average of 52.2% (arts activity). In Waveney, the number of people taking part in arts activities is lower than heritage activities, with 40.64% for arts and 44.08% for heritage activity. If Lowestoft was counted outside of local authority data it is likely that it would be considered an area

where cultural participation is in the bottom 33% nationally. The Cultural Leadership Group will be working with partners to ensure we distinguish between district and town and that we have a clear picture of how well Lowestoft is performing and ranking nationally.

With both East Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils issuing a climate change emergency, projects like North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone strive to make a positive contribution to environmental policy through conserving our built environment, focusing on buildings at risk and creating green spaces for communities



Suffolk Artlink, Lowestoft Folk Hildesley Court. Photo: Pagepix

to enjoy and play. In some circumstances, re-using historic buildings can have fewer environmental impacts than new builds and secures the building for future generations to appreciate, reminisce and feel connected.

66 Truly successful places are much more than economic powerhouses. They are underpinned by a sense of creative vibrancy, a manifestly strong quality of life, and a clear sense of cultural identity.

NALEP Culture Drives Growth

Having a diverse cultural offer will create a place that attracts creative industries and people that would further add to the visitor economy and market the town to

holidaymakers. The historic High Street has the opportunity to be a focal point for artisan and creative industries as well as culture. Initiatives such as the First Light Festival has put Lowestoft on the map nationally and attracted a new audience to the town. The economic potential of culture in the UK is immense, the sector is the fastest growing sector with an increase nearly twice as fast as the UK economy, with the Cultural Sector contributing £29.5b to the UK economy in 2017 and accounting for £1.6 of the UK GVA (DCMS Sector Economic Estimates) and in 2016, the arts and culture industry employed 137,250 people in the UK (Public Investment, Public Gain).



Lowestoft Dance Map, DanceEast in partnership with Making Waves Together. Photo: DanceEast



Excelsior LT472, Photo: Rob Howarth

Lowestoft Making a Difference

4,500 people employed in arts, entertainment and recreation in East Suffolk, more than contruction, agriculture, forestry and fishing. For every job supported by arts and culture, an additional **1.65 jobs** are supported in the wider economy

Over **4 million** secured from National Lottery Heritage Fund by Suffolk Wildlife Trust to create the biggest habitat restoration and wetland development for a decade at Carlton Marshes

455 outreach engagments with 232 volunteering hours and 165 students engaged at Lowestoft Suffolk Archives last year.

£500,000 secured for North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, the **only place** in Suffolk to recieve this investment

40,000 active library accounts in Lowestoft, including **5,500** under 15. Over **300** sessions held each year for children and babies around crafts, story time, authors and games. A further **500** older people attend an activity every 3 months at Lowestoft Library

Watertight Words reached **1,700** school children and local people

Working with nationally renowned, Hemmingway Design to transform the South Beach Seafront

10,000 visits to Heritage Open Days venues and activities over 2 weekends

Marina Theatre presented **183** live performances **257** cinema showings **31** live or encore theatrical screenings last year enjoyed by an annual audience of **80,000**

1,768 school pupils taking part in drama, art, opera and creative writing projects with cultural partners as part of Making Waves Together

Seagull Theatre presents over **200** shows reaching **12,000** people

£863,800 secured for Making Waves Together, the only place in East of England and **1 in 16** nationally

Lowestoft Museum and Lowestoft Martime Museum combined had over **15,000** visitors last year

1,200 people attended Pearls from the Grit touring theatre show

First Light Festival attracted **30,000** people with **9** out of **10** agreeing that the 'First Light Festival has left them feeling more positive about Lowestoft'

59 Discover Arts Awards awarded as part of Lowestoft Dance Map

Over **120** cultural groups and enterprises in Lowestoft

CULTURAL CAPACITY

There has been a considerable amount of cultural investment into Lowestoft over the last few years (from 2016) including over £400,000 from East Suffolk Council, £640,000 Arts Council England Funding into Waveney and over £5 million from National Lottery Heritage Fund, including over £4 million to create a southern gateway to the Broads National Park in partnership with Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This investment has paved the way for the acceleration of cultural opportunities in Lowestoft and firmly place culture at the heart of regeneration in the town. 'Without public investment into arts and culture, the remarkable success of the UK's creative industries would simply not be possible' (Public

Investment, Public Gain). But its important that this investment continues at a significant rate and we make smart and collective investment choices.

Lowestoft Rising Cultural Education Partnership is seen as an exemplar in partnership working, recognised nationally in bringing together cultural and learning providers to provide a menu of multi-arts activities for every child in Lowestoft. A partnership which includes 33 organisations, including 20 primary schools, to enable every child to create, visit and know (understand and review) culture.



You're never too young to join the Library!

Suffolk Libraries, Lowestoft Library. Photo: Jo Wilde

Carlton Marshes, Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Photo: John Ferguson

Drawing audiences from the eastern coastline and inland to Norwich and south to Suffolk's coastal towns and villages, the Marina Theatre is firmly rooted in its community and plays an active part in the arts ecology of the east. There is a strong commitment to support the people of Lowestoft and the wider area, not simply by presenting an outstanding and varied programme in the auditorium, but in delivering a variety of learning and social programmes outside of their building.

The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is a five year programme in partnership with Historic England, East Suffolk Council, Lowestoft Town Council, East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust and Lowestoft Vision. Launched in May 2018, the scheme will run until March 2023. Historic buildings that have deteriorated will be restored and brought back into use; and the assets within the conservation area, such

as the Scores, will be improved; kick-starting regeneration and helping to celebrate the unique character and heritage of the area.

The inaugural First Light Festival held at the midsummer solstice in 2019 on Lowestoft's South Beach was a massive success attracting 30,000 visitors over 24 hours. The festival celebrated the changing tides, light and darkness, sun and stars for a unique shared experience with music, dance, film, talks, walks, sports and workshops as well as the best local and regional food, drinks and produce.

This Cultural Strategy is part of the Great Places, Making Waves Together scheme which is seeing communities and groups in Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth work together to build cultural partnerships, engage new audiences and put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of the local vision.



Easterly Artist Exhibition Britten Centre. Photo: Carl Matthews

MEASURING SUCCESS

This Cultural Strategy has been adopted by the Cultural Leadership Group which was established in November 2018 to bring together key national and local collaborators to drive forward the cultural vision for the town. The role of the group is to maximise the opportunities for developing a varied and excellent range of arts, heritage and culture in Lowestoft and to act as a collective voice to influence decision makers. The strategy is also supported by East Suffolk Council.

An action plan will outline how we'll respond to our high level aims and priorities of People, Place and Economy and we will publish this online and it will be reviewed annually.

Success will be measured using different methodologies that are consistent across the cultural sector to track progress and impact using original baseline information.

Outcomes for People, Place and Economy

Levels of investments into arts and heritage

Levels of visits, audiences, participation and engagement

Number of young people engaging in arts and heritage

Number of creative business start-ups and expansion

How culture has influenced policy and other sectors

Number of historic buildings brought back into use

Press coverage and social media

THE LEADERSHIP GROUP MEMBERSHIP

**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SUFFOLK MUSEUMS
THE BROADS NATIONAL PARK EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL SUFFOLK ARTLINK
FLIPSIDE FIRSTLIGHT FESTIVAL CIC HISTORIC ENGLAND
LOWESTOFT TOWN COUNCIL LOWESTOFT RISING LOWESTOFT VISION
MARINA THEATRE TRUST NEW ANGLIA LEP SEAGULL THEATRE
SUFFOLK ARCHIVE SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL SUFFOLK LIBRARIES
SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST**



First Light Festival 2019. Photo: Kate Ellis

Thanks to...

**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND
HISTORIC ENGLAND ACCESS COMMUNITY TRUST NEW ANGLIA LEP
ASSOCIATION OF SUFFOLK MUSEUMS BROADS NATIONAL PARK
COMMUNITY ACTION SUFFOLK EASTERLY ARTISTS DANCE EAST
EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL EXCELSIOR TRUST FLIPSIDE THINKINGPLACE
FIRSTLIGHT FESTIVAL CIC GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
PHIL AVES DANNY STEEL JULIA DEVONSHIRE GENEVIEVE CHRISTIE
LOWESTOFT RISING LOCAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP JO LEVERETT
EAST SUFFOLK PARTNERSHIP HERITAGE OPEN DAYS LEE HENDERSON
LEE JOHNSON LOWESTOFT TOWN COUNCIL LOWESTOFT VISION
LOWESTOFT PLAYERS MAKING WAVES TOGETHER PATRICIA DAY
MARINA THEATRE TRUST EMMA BUTLER-SMITH SUFFOLK LIBRARIES
MARINA THEATRE CREATIVE FORUM SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
JAYNE KNIGHT NORTH LOWESTOFT HERITAGE ACTION ZONE
POETRY PEOPLE SEAGULL THEATRE SUFFOLK ARTLINK
SUFFOLK RECORDS OFFICE SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST PETER ALDOUS MP**

