



1. Introduction

Our Bid extends across East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth Council areas - 70 miles of spectacular coastline connected by ancient waterways to inland landscapes of haunting beauty, ecologically rich and diverse with the largest areas reserved for wildlife in the UK.

As Dr Kathryn Ferry said *“Over generations we’ve turned being by the sea into a cultural experience. This coast has all the archetypes of the great English seaside. From beach huts and wild landscapes of Suffolk and Norfolk coasts to seafront splendours of Great Yarmouth, it promises something for all ages and tastes”*.

Our bid focuses on our two great seaside towns, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and hinterlands. The area has a long heritage, millennia of connections with the sea and the world beyond - and proud identities as exemplars of the great British seaside – thriving destinations and diverse, innovative, modern places.

We offer a range and breadth of amazing places and attractions for all interests, the capacity to meet the dreams of many millions of new visitors and an unrivalled opportunity to connect our own communities, cultural organisations and businesses like never before.

Both towns are renewing themselves and their place in the world – in the renewable energy industry and as places of fertile creativity and cultural distinctiveness.

Both Councils are committed to unprecedented investment in our infrastructure and cultural sectors. The Government has awarded a total of more than £63m across the two areas by Towns Fund, Heritage Action Zones and Future High Streets funding alone.

We start from our strength in staging large scale cultural events, and welcoming visitors. Our major events and festivals, organised by our award-winning cultural organisations the First Light Festival and Out There Arts, inspire and entertain tens of thousands of people; our visitor economy welcomes more than 20 million visits a year – and more than 7 million staying nights.

Beyond the towns, we offer rich heritage and culture – natural and man-made; the Broads National Park and AONBs, but also great resources for STEAM business and innovation, for instance, BT’s global R&D HQ Adastral Park, home to digital start-ups and breakthroughs such as in optical fibre.

With our Bid area less than 90 minutes from London, our renewed train network (with its operator supporting our Bid) and with good access to a range of airports and sea routes, we are ready to attract millions of new people to explore and appreciate our culture in 2025.

2. Who is involved?

Great Yarmouth borough Council, East Suffolk Council, together with Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council are leading the Bid. Our stakeholder map spans 180 organisations already involved – and the range and depth of support can be seen in our letters of support for partner and supporting organisations across the business, community and voluntary sectors, our health sector, police, academia, transport sector and arts, culture and heritage sector.

We have enthusiastic support of New Anglia LEP, both County Councils, Suffolk & Norfolk Chambers of Commerce, Norfolk Community Foundation, Suffolk Community Action, our four MPs, Universities of East Anglia and Suffolk and many others. Key partners will range across our artists and cultural organisations and partners in environment, education, research, business and health and disability sectors.

Our Arts Council England NPOs; Preservation Trust and Heritage Action Zones; Creative People and Places (Freshly Created); Cultural Education Partnerships (Lowestoft Rising and Enjoy); Norfolk Museums Service and libraries will be at the heart of the bid.

We've engaged with the Broads Authority and the Wildlife Trusts, who have extensive reserves, access, engagement and education programmes in our area and with our own marine partners at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science in Lowestoft.

A detailed Framework of Intent with UEA defines a key role, running major longitudinal programmes of evaluation, leading innovation and research programmes and joining with UK and international researchers and universities to explore ideas and challenges.

Some of our most enthusiastic development partners have been our health providers and community wellbeing organisations, including in public health, Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and James Paget Hospitals. Third sector partners at the forefront of delivering wellbeing, economic and health outcome change in our communities, such as Access Community Trust, have been centrally involved.

We're planning with our partners in Highways, the Police, our rail operator and public transport colleagues, organisations such as RNLI who provide beach safety, colleagues in coastal protection, how we will move very large numbers of people into and around the area and plan major events, public safety and access.

3. Diversity of leadership, governance and partnerships

Locally, we have diverse communities in which people from many backgrounds have come to live and work, with significant Romanian, Slovakian, Lithuanian, Polish, Bulgarian and historic Greek Cypriots and Portuguese communities.

We also have significantly larger than national average numbers of people with disabilities or life-limiting conditions, and disparities of wealth and life chances.

Our City of Culture will set out to involve and give voice to people from all our communities, and from all backgrounds, and where people from identified groups are under-represented we will take action to increase their stake and involvement.

UK City of Culture gives us a unique opportunity to work with artists and participants, and to reach audiences, from all backgrounds, ensuring the full representation of all identities and voices in all our programmes, and all our audiences.

4. Why is UK City of Culture important to us?

We have a unique place and culture to share with the people of the UK and far beyond, at the same time the UK City of Culture can transform the lives of our communities, addressing decades of disadvantage, with a legacy for the years ahead.

Increasingly, we are at the heart of national life. Our innovation in renewable energy is driving the national campaign for a sustainable future, our seas are once again busy with sustainable shipping and researched as solutions to ecological and sustainability challenges.

This innovation is fitting for the place where the sun rises first every morning on the UK, but it is also rooted in the heritage and identity of our place and people.

These are ancient communities – the first place that humans crossed Doggerland to set foot on what is now Britain - and centuries of living on sea and land, fishing, trading with the world, and then welcoming the world to enjoy our place, has fitted us for what is to come.

We have made huge strides in recent years, celebrating and sharing our vibrant cultures, but we have much more to do. City of Culture offers the chance to share all that our brilliant cultural organisations have achieved, and their visions and dreams, with everyone around the UK – and to secure the investment and momentum to continue our journey.

Our coast is much loved and visited - Great Yarmouth and East Suffolk welcome more than 20 million visits a year – attracted by our natural heritage, our culture, our sense of fun and our people. UK City of Culture will be a big but natural step in the development of this fantastic offer, building on the ground-breaking events and festivals of the last few years and planning many more and new events with partners locally, across the UK and internationally so that 2025 will be a celebration of our coast and of many other cultures across the world.

We have world class work in hand - from Great Yarmouth's spectacular Winter Gardens and its renewal in time for the celebrations (awarded £10m of Heritage Horizons funding by Heritage Fund), and Ice House Circus School development, to our National Trust partners at Sutton Hoo. Generations of artists have made their way here to live and work, UK City of Culture will renew and diversify this creativity for generations to come.

Ours will be a celebration at once rooted in our communities and heritage and reaching out to the world; fundamentally of its place and time, reflecting the cultures of the world with which we traded, those who came and continue to come here to make their lives - and timeless – stretching back into our history and surging forward to our sustainable future.

And that future is key to our vision – a legacy for our communities, for our young people in which opportunity is levelled up, talent nurtured and retained, health and life inequality ended through opportunity and activity; our diverse communities fulfilled and enriched, their culture squarely on the world stage.

5. Key Themes of our UK City of Culture 2025 Programme

We've just started this journey and themes should not be straitjackets - they should intrigue, entice, stimulate and enable everyone to find a point of embarkation...

The irresistible pull...

The UK was formed by the sea – more so here than anywhere. It made us, connected us, carried our influence around the world. It brought, and brings, people, cultures, ideas and energies to this most innovative, bold and welcoming place. It brings challenges of coastal change. And it is the focus of our next reinvention, the UK's leader in clean energy. ***The sea: awe-inspiring, changeable - a uniting energy!***

The silver darlings...

So many of our stories are of migration: silver herring, people, birds... Great Yarmouth & Lowestoft were built on migrations of herring, and of ***people***: the Scottish herring girls; the first humans crossing Doggerland; communities welcomed from all over the world, links with partners across the North Sea and beyond. These traces, ***migrations and connections*** resonate through our programmes as they do in the migrations of the sea and the birds across our reserves and landscapes.

The blue space...

We keep coming back to water and wellness. And the connections we make between them. Celebrations on water – at sea, in historic ports and tributaries that carried our forebears inland – to places like Sutton Hoo. Our Waterways longer than Venice or Amsterdam. Flotillas, regattas, community/artist boatbuilding; the sunrise before anywhere else in England; festivals of fire and light writ large.

But also ***the healing power of water and the capacity of our landscapes for quiet, reflection, recovery***. With our health partners we will focus on wellbeing and mental health - of our communities, our young people and volunteers, our artists and visitors – the power of Blue Space.

The landscape that ate my heart...

The great beaches and inspirational landscapes of the UK will be the great glories of 2025 – our sweeping coastline, land and water, our wildlife, new opportunities to

experience nature and culture as one. With Broads National Park, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and others, we will explore this landscape, unspoilt, rewilded, in a physically present and digitally resonant way, to be the galleries and halls for the work of contemporary artists, writers, composers, musicians, performers - haunting, playful, compelling. ***A landscape of immediacy and a landscape of mind.***

listen to your heart and celebrate...

Our towns are some of the great places of ***entertainment of the UK***. Our beaches great playgrounds, the splendours of the Great British Seaside. Great Yarmouth the home of circus and Lowestoft the spectacular celebration of First Light. Our programme will be a celebration and a release for all of the UK – of music, street performance, comedy, theatre – and our beaches will see events like no other in the UK for scale, audacity and brilliance. Fitting the coast generating the UK's future energy!

6. Embedding environmental sustainability

Great Yarmouth & East Suffolk have a unique position in this debate – we have a highly sensitive coastal environment, our coast, landscape and main towns are particularly vulnerable to the cumulative effects of climate change - at risk from sea level rise and extreme weather, with great areas inland of delicate ecosystems of wetland, marsh and the most important breeding habitats for many species of invertebrate, bird, fish and animal.

In recognising the need to respond to these challenges – including decarbonisation of our economies and the requirement for physical adaptation - local carbon emissions have fallen, but much remains to be done. At the same time, our coastline is at the centre of the world's largest market for offshore wind, the staging of wind turbines forms a very visible part of our skylines and the sector has a key role in our evolving economy and the livelihoods of our residents, with the potential to create real opportunities for local communities, address structural inequalities and meet societal expectations and ambitions around resource depletion, environmental quality and climate change.

Our City of Culture programme will rise to these challenges and opportunities – with a practical focus. Wherever possible events will be planned to be net zero carbon and with managed environmental impacts. Special arrangements for waste management and remediation will be in place across the programme and we will identify and empower sustainability champions among our governance, staff, volunteers, artists/partners and communities who we will brief, support and enable to call the programme to account.

Risks and impacts will be mitigated through sustainable event planning, in which strategy is tested against a Sustainability Assessment System, and appraised by our sustainability partners UEA (and their world-renowned Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research) and Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership so that our programme is a test and an exemplar for new approaches and the decarbonisation of the cultural sector.

We will focus not only on energy, but also on an end to end analysis of the environmental lifecycle of our events – travel to site of artists, kit and audiences; energy consumption, site impacts, audience wellbeing, air quality impact, light and impact on our dark skies, waste, recycling and reuse, remediation of event venues, behaviour change, sustainability legacy.

7. Investment Plan

We have developed a comprehensive financial analysis which shows the cost of delivery to be in the region of £36m over six years. Infrastructure investments already committed for the geographic area in-scope total at least £300m and will be significantly higher by 2025. Our outline programme will see investment of £13.6m ranging from major highlight events to extensive resources for community activity. The programme itself will feature our range of venues, promoters and festival organisers - aligning their year round programmes with our UK City of Culture 2025 Programme.

8. Impact

Residents and communities are at the heart of our ambitions to realise a vibrant and inclusive coastal economy and our years as the holder of the UK City of Culture designation, our programmes and our planning and evaluation will mark a step change in our benefits for those communities.

Over recent years, and despite our huge progress, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft share a number of complex, interrelated challenges with other seaside towns – connectivity/isolation, the quality of housing stock, population seasonality, transience and demographics, health/wellbeing outcomes and the availability/accessibility of funding, reflect in a persistent legacy of deprivation, depressed wages, land values and restricted social mobility, which exacerbates structural inequalities.

Skills, qualifications, aspirations, intergenerational life choices and a traditional reliance on certain forms of employment or specific industries are a limiting factor in residents' wealth and employment opportunities. Both the labour market and demand for public/health services are distorted by demographics - our age distribution is skewed towards older, less economically-active individuals. GVA per head has failed to keep pace with other similar areas. This is the challenge which we aim to address in all our regeneration investments and strategy, but in which we aim to achieve a step-change by being UK City of Culture 2025.

The challenges our communities face are multiple and reinforce one another. Residents tend to work longer hours and earn less and are frequently employed on a casual/seasonal basis in lower-skilled positions.

If local people of all ages and backgrounds are to benefit from new opportunities and wider economic recovery, they need to be able to access the right jobs at the right level. If our place can successfully enhance its 'offer' to better meet the expectations of growth industries' employees in terms of culture, heritage and artistic provision, there is significant potential to attract and retain human capital and further investment – enabling a range of wider ambitions in relation, for example, to the high-growth clean energy sector.

Heritage, arts and culture is, therefore, an engine of local opportunity; capacity building in our key creative clusters will confer transferable, portable skills and create real opportunities for residents, bring new creatives and employers to be role models for our young people – and sustain the ‘lifestyle’ buzz so intrinsic to local distinctiveness and sense-of-place, attracting and retaining visitors and driving consumer footfall.

Culture is absolutely intrinsic to both sense-of-place, the vitality of the wider economy, further transformational renewal and the massive physical and social regeneration interventions already underway.

By 2025 and more especially, by the end of 2028, we will have taken a step change – for our creatives and our cultural sector, in the value to our wider economy and in pride, confidence and appreciation of the huge strengths we have as a place – a step change of real immediate benefit to people’s lives, irreversible and sustainable, as we take our place as one of the UK’s exemplars of the way we can level up our societies through partnership, patience, long term investment and care, but also by the step change that a celebration such as City of Culture can achieve.

9. Legacy

It is central to our thinking that UK City of Culture should be about both the year itself but also be profoundly transformational for our culture, our economy, our communities and our environment – and for our region generally – for many years thereafter.

We are committed to an engaged and co-designed process with our communities as we develop our bid, through which we will enable and empower them to identify the legacy they most need and want to see from their City of Culture – but even at this stage, we can see from our conversations with our communities and cultural partners the aspirations and ambitions that are coming to life through the City of Culture process.

Our cultural sector identifies a legacy that takes growth and confidence into the decades beyond 2025. Our cultural organisations want to be better recognised and celebrated locally, nationally and internationally, to have better resources to make great work, with resilience and the ability to plan long-term. There should be new opportunities for our own talented creatives to stay and work here successfully, and particularly for our creative young people, but there is also an ambition that we should welcome many new creative businesses to come and be based here, or just to make work here, including in filming and multi-media production to strengthen the supply chain for local creative business.

Our venues and event promoters see a legacy of raised profile, improved infrastructure, market intelligence and position, combatting seasonality and increasing production capacity and audiences.

Our communities and residents demand sustained improvements in their lives – and there is excitement about a legacy of 2025 that touches the challenges we face – improving prosperity, creating new quality jobs, building confidence, resilience and health through engagement and improving our people’s wellbeing. Through more people taking part, more people exploring creativity and connecting with others from

all backgrounds in their community, momentum will be achieved to sustain the change in all the years that follow.

We see a legacy for our environment – investment in and celebration of our journey to decarbonisation and sustainability, closer partnerships with our renewable energy sector to drive benefits to local organisations and people, increased sustainable tourism including to support the economic resilience of our environmental management organisations and profound potential to change behaviours among both residents and visitors.

We plan a legacy in which our towns are reimagined, better known, better understood and appreciated at home and beyond – preconceptions addressed and with a new pride and confidence in our future and that of our people; and we are focusing on that legacy from the very start of our bid process, through our theory of change, our engaged development process and delivery structure and through our commitment to long term resourcing and leadership beyond 2025.

10. Contact Us

Support the Great Yarmouth & East Suffolk UK City of Culture 2025 Bid on your social media platforms and website, in your communication bulletins and with your friends and contacts #CityofCulture2025

Get ready to participate when the real work starts – once we get shortlisted in September 2021!

To be kept up to date, take part in workshops and further discussions to shape our Bid please email GY&ESCityofCulture@great-yarmouth.gov.uk