

# GOV



## COVENTRY CULTURAL STRATEGY 2017-2027





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# VISION

**BY 2027 COVENTRY WILL BE A CULTURALLY ATTRACTIVE, VIBRANT AND PROSPEROUS CITY TO LIVE IN, WORK IN AND ENJOY.**

THE CITY IS A DYNAMIC PLACE OF INVENTION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND YOUTHFUL AMBITION AND IS PROUD TO BE A LEADING CITY OF CULTURE IN MODERN BRITAIN.



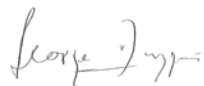


# FOREWORD

The City Council is fully behind the Cultural Strategy and its vision for Coventry.

It will help us become a culturally attractive, vibrant and prosperous city for everyone who lives, works and studies here – and a leading city of culture in a modern Britain. Culture and the arts make places special – they reflect a shared history and heritage, and unite communities. They have an important role to play in supporting the future economic success of Coventry and we will build on that valuable contribution as our city grows.

Our continued commitment to working in partnership will ensure not only that the arts and cultural activity play their part in the growth of our city but also that though the delivery of the Five Goals and Seven Big Ideas that underpin this strategy, everyone can feel the benefits of a thriving cultural sector.



**Councillor George Duggins**  
Leader, Coventry City Council

This strategy is a really important document for our city – it gives us the foundations that will allow us to build the future growth and sustainability of our cultural assets.

It has been developed with the help of local people and organisations, so it's packed full of things that are important to our residents and the future hopes of our creative and cultural groups. It is also a 'living document' which will be responsive in embracing new ideas, people and technologies across its ten-year life.

This approach creates a powerful document with a powerful plan.



**Councillor Linda Bigham**  
Coventry City Council's Cabinet  
Member for Community Development

Coventry is rich in culture and this document will help keep us focused so we make sure that every single person who lives here can access arts and education in the city in whatever form suits them.

This cultural strategy is an important milestone in the cultural advancement of the city and provides a crucial roadmap for our growth and development. The fact that it has been produced by a partnership involving both universities and the City Council is also deeply significant, signalling the collective desire of our organisations to work together for the benefit of the whole city.

The earliest institution in Coventry University's evolution was the Coventry School of Design, founded in 1843. Since this time, creativity has been a key component of our work and our mission and as we look forward we recognise the vital importance of creativity to our city – to its economy, its communities and its landscape. This strategy not only offers the city direction, but also highlights its cultural, creative and artistic potential.



**Professor John Latham**  
Vice-Chancellor and CEO,  
Coventry University

I'm delighted that Warwick is strengthening our commitment to our region by supporting Coventry in developing its cultural strategy and through our continued commitment to contributing to the implementation through the five key goals and big ideas.

The cultural strategy will provide a robust foundation, underpinned by the research provided by both institutions for Coventry City Council's vision for 2027 which can only be stronger by coming together to support our city and will in turn benefit the city, partners and of course the huge range of independent arts organisations and groups across the city.

It is important that as an institution, we use our expertise and research to support and improve the lives of communities in our local area as well as our global outreach and activities. Many of our staff and students, present and future will benefit from this vision across their lifetimes by having more vibrant, rich, cultural hubs in our city.

I look forward to seeing this vision coming to fruition over the coming years.



**Professor Stuart Croft**  
Vice-Chancellor and President,  
University of Warwick

**I want to say a particular congratulations and thanks to the City Council. We know that local authorities and government have been under enormous pressure in terms of funding over the last few years and where a council like Coventry City Council is remaining committed to the value and the power of arts and culture in difficult times, it is hugely appreciated and will be a great reward to the community.**

**Sir Peter Bazalgette**, Chair ITV plc, Chair Arts Council England 2012 - 2017



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of this strategy has been funded by Coventry City Council and Arts Council England (ACE) with support from both the University of Warwick and Coventry University and is based on an extensive consultation process. The strategy will continue to evolve over the ten-year journey towards achieving its vision.

It's important that this strategy remains flexible and consultative in order to stay fresh and embrace new ideas, people and technologies. There will be an on-going research and evaluation process to regularly inform the implementation of the strategy.

into a recognised centre of national significance for its heritage and contemporary culture. These changes are based on the current cultural, economic and political landscape; being responsive to changing circumstances will keep the strategy live.

The strategy sets out a ten-year vision for the cultural life of Coventry. The vision builds on the existing heritage and culture of Coventry and in Part B, proposes five key goals for cultural growth in the city and 'Seven Big Ideas' for transforming the cultural life of the city. The strategy also identifies some of the incremental changes that will, over a decade, transform Coventry

Cities that take culture seriously recognise that investments in culture have a wide range of other benefits which are both social and economic. A successful strategy needs to be distinctive, ambitious and based on a partnership that has a commitment and relevance to both the people and place of Coventry.

## FIVE KEY GOALS



PARTNERSHIP



LIFELONG LEARNING



DIVERSITY



HEALTH & WELLBEING



ECONOMIC GROWTH

# COVENTRY CULTURAL STRATEGY 2017-2027



# PART A: VISION AND PRINCIPLES

## WHAT DOES THIS CULTURAL STRATEGY AIM TO DO?

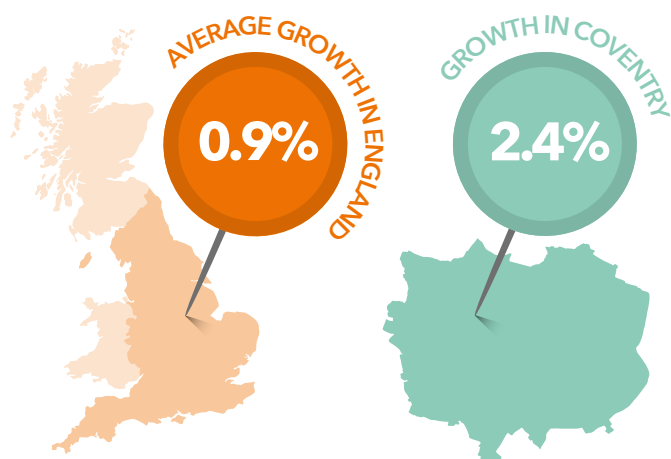
The cultural strategy aims to recognise and expand the opportunities that exist for residents and visitors to engage with, experience and enjoy the arts and heritage that surround them in all of their variety. Coventry has a proud city-wide culture of welcome and a reputation for being a place of peace and reconciliation.

It is resilient and has adapted over history to many profound changes in its industrial and social landscape. It has a positive culture of reinvention and rediscovery. The cultural strategy is forward looking, contributing to a city that is prepared to face the challenges of the future and build on its proud heritage and collective values.

The strategy is designed to maximise the new partnerships that have come together to support the city's bid to be UK City of Culture in 2021. This important initiative could be a

transformational milestone in a ten-year journey towards a longer term cultural ambition. But, the ambitions presented in the strategy are not dependent on a successful bid. The process of bidding has already been transformational and the energy, enthusiasm and ambition of Coventry will be carried forward through the implementation of the strategy. New partnerships, and extensive consultations and workshops with residents, artists and cultural organisations have established an on-going public dialogue about the future of cultural growth in Coventry.

### POPULATION GROWTH (MID-2014 VS. MID-2015)<sup>1</sup>



Coventry is the 9<sup>th</sup> fastest growing local authority in England.

While the population growth can be attributed to several factors, the main reason for the rise (75.0%) is net international immigration. This is partly due to the increase in the number of overseas students attending local universities.

**A FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTION IN THE CITY, HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER THE CITY COUNCIL, THE UNIVERSITIES, PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, ALL OF WHOM HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE CULTURAL GROWTH OF THE CITY.**

**IN AN AGE OF AUSTERITY THESE NEW PARTNERSHIPS WILL MAXIMISE THE RESOURCES AND INVESTMENT NECESSARY FOR CULTURAL GROWTH.**

The cultural strategy calls for new partnerships between the city's leading cultural organisations and the many community groups that offer neighbourhood cultural activity. This strong partnership approach will lead to new and radical opportunities to share resources and costs, and to develop new arts projects that combine their artistic strengths.

The partnership approach will make sure that there is clear signposting for cultural activities in the city so that all residents and visitors can be aware of what's happening and where. A better connected and signposted cultural life will lead to more choices for people of all generations and backgrounds to participate across the city. It will also attract visitors to share in Coventry's cultural wealth and energy.



The time is right for Coventry to maximise its cultural and heritage resources to provide social, economic and educational benefits for the city. Coventry has a vital role to play in the new West Midlands Combined Authority and an enriched cultural life will strengthen both the city and region.

The strategy draws on and expands the key goals and recommendations of the Warwick Commission report *Enriching Britain: culture, creativity and growth*.<sup>2</sup> The recently published 2016 Culture White Paper from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)<sup>3</sup> stresses the importance of public investment in culture beyond London as a key strategy for regional growth, pride and prosperity.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has identified Culture and Tourism as a priority<sup>4</sup> and private sector networks such as the Business Improvement District and Chamber of Commerce have embraced the new energy around culture in Coventry. A recent study of businesses in the city shows strong support and ambition for cultural and creative growth from the private sector.<sup>5</sup>

The combined assets and strengths of the city give Coventry the opportunity to lead a national agenda of inclusive growth through building a cultural life that is for all, that is sustainable and which contributes to other important social, educational and economic objectives. By making culture a strategic priority, Coventry will be well-placed to benefit from public and private funding and to model the impact of culture on the prosperity, ambitions and the wellbeing of a city and its region.

Despite severe reductions in grant-in-aid from central government and with increasing pressure on its resources,<sup>6</sup> the City Council remains committed to playing its part in supporting cultural growth in a period of austerity and

recognises that any necessary reductions in budgets for local culture and heritage can also negatively impact on longer term social and economic objectives.<sup>7</sup> The Council understands that the cultural vitality of the city is important to its identity, aspirations and quality of life.

The cultural strategy sets out goals and ambitions for the city, but these cannot be achieved by the City Council working on its own and from within its own resources. Future growth will depend on a more co-ordinated investment plan that includes the universities, community action groups, volunteers, trusts, the commercial sector and national funding agencies such as Arts Council England (ACE), Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The partnership approach to the City of Culture 2021 bid has demonstrated the willingness of a wide variety of UK stakeholders to work together for the good of the city and a strong and clear cultural strategy will attract new private and public investment in its cultural infrastructure and vitality.

Participating in cultural activities increases levels of health and wellbeing and brings people of different backgrounds together.<sup>8</sup> Coventry is a richly diverse city; a focus on sharing in cultural events will encourage interaction between communities and new understandings of the creative power of diversity in the city.

**THE AMBITION OF THE STRATEGY WILL ALSO BE STRENGTHENED BY THE INCLUSION OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN OTHER KEY SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES SO THAT ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE BECOMES A KEY THEME IN ALL THE WORK THAT THE CITY PLANS FOR FUTURE GROWTH AND WELLBEING.**



*"I like to think of Coventry as a living, breathing tapestry that shifts and moves, being at the cutting edge of what is new while appreciating what has gone before. A tapestry made up of diverse citizens that have chosen to come to Coventry or to stay in Coventry where our reputation is known throughout the world, where we appreciate difference and where our different cultures provide bright individual threads that are still part of our living tapestry."*

**Coventry City councillor**





## WHAT DOES CULTURE MEAN TO COVENTRY?

The strategy covers the future of the city's contemporary cultural and heritage assets. It aims to be inclusive of the many different ways and places in which residents use their leisure time and express themselves for a variety of purposes.

This includes health, wellbeing, education and lifestyle choices. There is a wide range of publicly funded and commercially popular arts and heritage in the city. This includes: galleries and museums; heritage buildings and spaces; libraries and community arts groups; parks and open spaces; theatre; digital arts; film; dance; popular and classical music; Asian, African and East European arts; festivals and other community events.

Through the consultation process we have learnt that for many people sports, lifestyle, food, faith and heritage-based activities are an important part of their cultural lives. The architecture of Coventry has also been identified as a key aspect of its cultural DNA. This strategy recognises the value of these important activities and looks at how the arts and heritage in the city can connect and extend the choices residents have to lead more culturally-fulfilling lives.

Cultural activity is essential to a well-rounded education both in school

and in the community and will give children, young people and others the creative skills to problem solve, express themselves and develop their self-esteem and confidence.

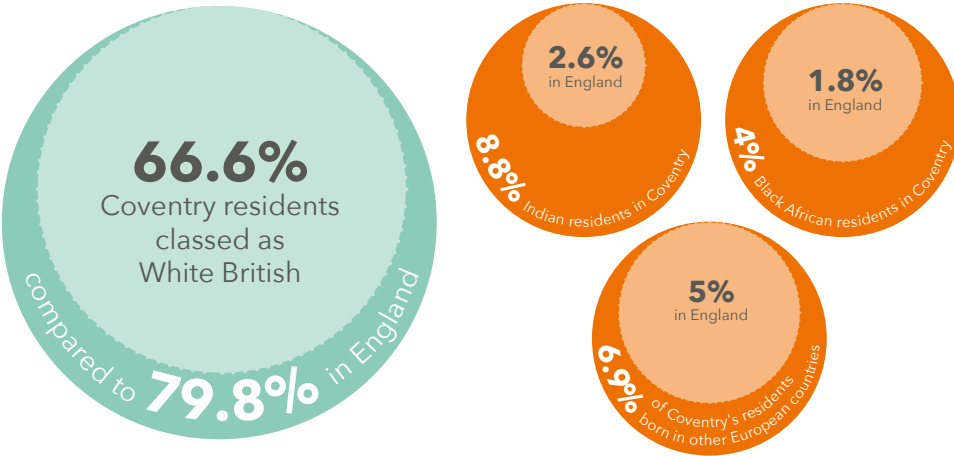
The presence of two universities and major high-tech industries alongside Coventry's proximity to the digital creative cluster in Leamington Spa, makes the city well placed to develop its creative industries potential by extending opportunities for young people and developing the technological and creative skills of the next workforce in the city. The city will develop creative quarters that combine workspaces and cultural venues to accommodate growth in the local creative industries and enhance the appeal of the city.

The city's new cultural strategy will complement the successful Coventry Sports Strategy 2014-2024, and contribute to the West Midlands Combined Authority's key objective to increase physical activity in the region.<sup>11</sup>

**INVESTMENT IN CULTURE THROUGH SUPPORTING MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES AND OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES HAS BEEN SHOWN TO HAVE POSITIVE ECONOMIC OUTCOMES FOR TOURISM AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.<sup>10</sup>**

**THE TOURISM AND DAY-VISITOR POTENTIAL OF THE CITY HAS NOT YET BEEN REALISED AND INCREASING VISITORS AND THEIR ECONOMIC SPEND TO THE CITY IS ONE OF THE STRATEGY'S GOALS.**

### POPULATION BY ETHNICITY AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (SELECTED, 2011)<sup>9</sup>





## THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Over the past two years there has been a number of consultation events that have reached over 500 people and organisations who are actively interested in the future of culture in the city. These include artists, young and older people, youth services, charities and support service providers. The results of the consultation process produced new ideas for cultural growth that have been incorporated into the strategy. The strategy will be kept alive and fresh by regular evaluation and on-going consultation with residents and their representative organisations.

### THE CONSULTATION PROCESS HAS INCLUDED:

- Structured primary research carried out with households in Coventry. A household survey in summer 2016 generated over 2,000 responses to questions related to their cultural preferences. In addition, individual one-to-one consultations took place with a range of interested stakeholders as a precursor to developing the draft strategy
- Secondary research was carried out into resident demographics, educational attainment, community groups and their activities, creative and cultural industries
- A steering group of key cultural leaders in the city
- Meetings with artists, councillors, community activists, businesses and universities. The meetings were closely documented to inform the development of the principles underpinning the strategy
- Over 12 hours of cultural strategy workshops and 20 hours of workshops linked to Coventry 2021 (including two strategy specific consultation workshops – May 2016 at Coventry Transport Museum and June 2016 at Coventry University). These partners have been consulted through two structured consultation sessions where an open call for delegates was made. Two further meetings have taken place with Coventry's Youth Forum and Children Plan Group
- A film capturing aspirations and voices heard through the consultation process
- Social media and mobile video feeds from young people (240 responses)
- Blogs from a writer, musician, digital artist, young actor, cultural producer and property developer
- Research on demographics, audiences and household engagement
- A 12-month study on the potential of increasing cultural tourism (circa 2,000 responses to date) and audiences of cultural venues to the city
- An in-depth analysis of audiences and the potential to increase attendance in arts events
- Extensive research into the cultures, people and neighbourhoods that make up the city
- An audit of the existing cultural and heritage resources in the city





# PRINCIPLES DRIVING THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS SHOWED THAT THERE IS A STRONG COMMITMENT AND AGREEMENT ACROSS THE CITY FOR A CULTURAL STRATEGY THAT:

- IS INCLUSIVE
- IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AGES, CULTURES, COMMUNITIES AND ABILITIES
- REFLECTS THE RICH DIVERSITY OF THE CITY
- BUILDS ON THE HERITAGE AND VALUES OF THE CITY
- PROVIDES EDUCATION AND WELLBEING
- IS SUSTAINABLE AND CONTRIBUTES POSITIVELY TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY
- HAS THE VISION TO BUILD COVENTRY'S REPUTATION AS A VISITOR DESTINATION



"It's important that this strategy is meaningful to our young people who are going to be residents, innovators, owners of business in ten years' time and it will have the biggest impact on their lives."

Local councillor and community leader

The goals and ambitions for the strategy that follow are underpinned by a set of principles, which have evolved out of the consultation process. The strategy's key themes reflect Coventry's unique identity and cultural needs:

1. Cultural growth must be inclusive of the different needs and aspirations of the residents. Access to the arts must be for all and not prevented by costs or location.
2. The focus must be on encouraging greater participation across the cultural landscape so that more people create and share in the city's cultural offer.
3. Unlocking the rich cultural diversity of the city will be a hallmark of the strategy. Diversity is key to developing a living tapestry of the many cultural groups who have made the city their home. Diversity will be key to Coventry's success as a centre for cultural and creative industries.
4. Lifelong learning is at the heart of the city's cultural future. Children and young people of all abilities should have access to the arts and culture in school and in their communities.
5. A ten-year strategy must consider how to build a future legacy over time that is sustainable and flexible to withstand fluctuations in levels of public investment and new technologies.
6. Cultural growth in the city must boost the tourism and creative economy and contribute to skills training and growth in the service industries. It must also encourage public and private capital investment in its built environment and landscape.

Opportunities to learn and develop through the arts must reflect the needs of all generations. There must be talent pipelines in place to ensure that the next generation of artists and creatives realises its potential and is representative of the city's population.

## LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN COVENTRY<sup>12</sup>

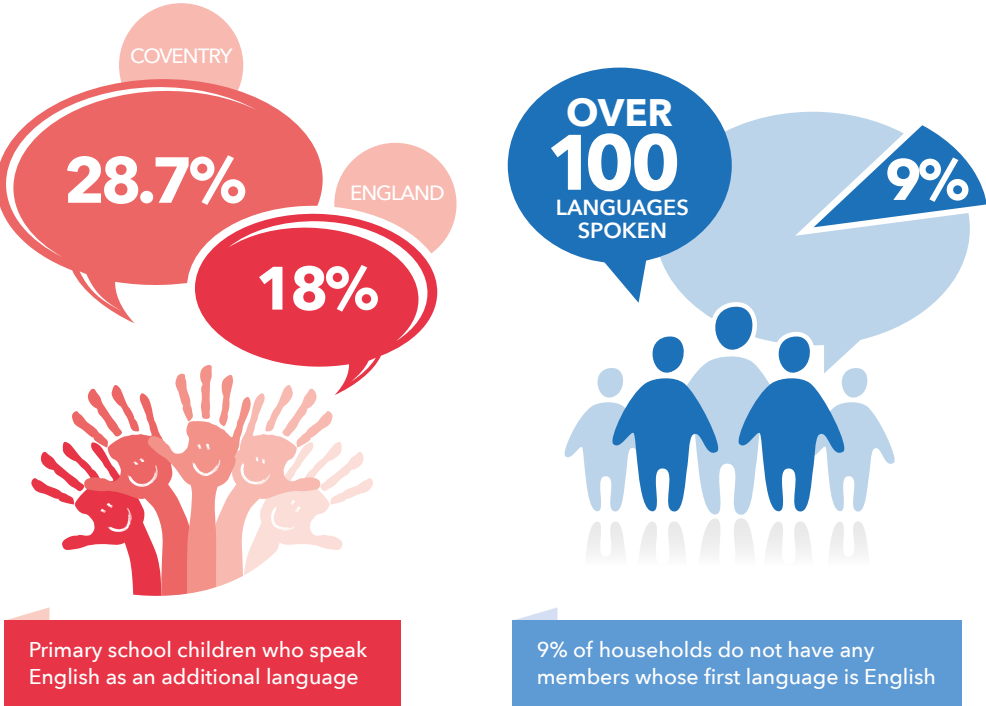
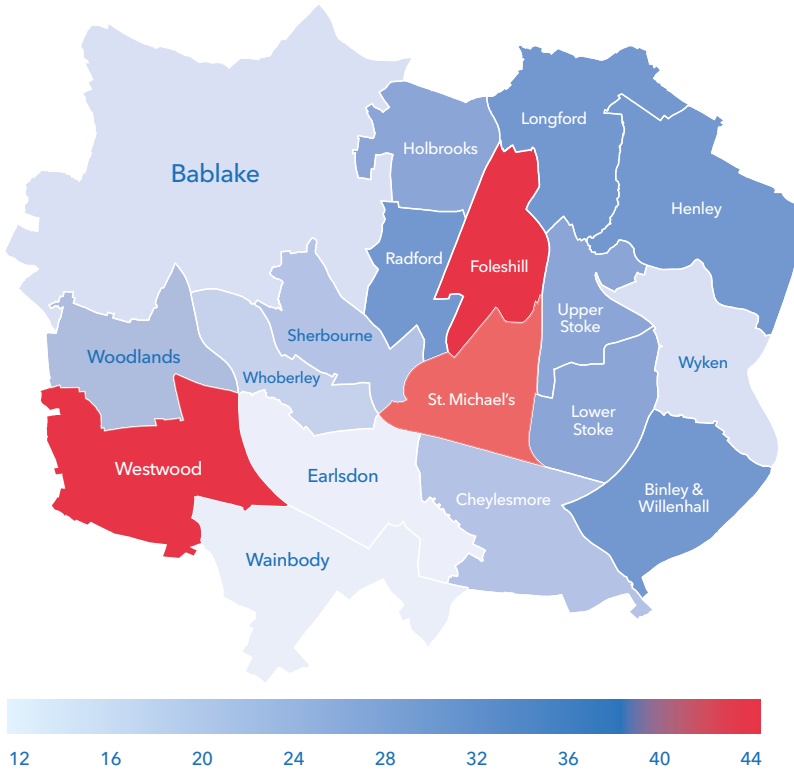






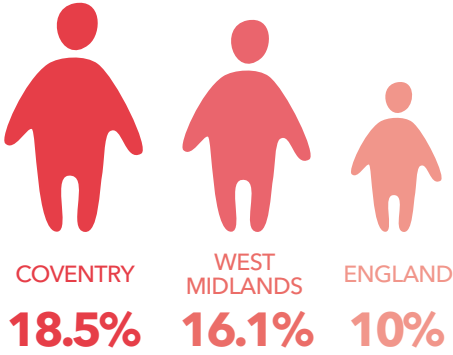
Photo credit: Nicola Young

CHILDHOOD DEPRIVATION<sup>13</sup> IN THE CITY:  
1 IN 4 CHILDREN LIVING IN COVENTRY ARE LIVING IN RELATIVE POVERTY



% of children in poverty  
(Oct-Dec 2015, after housing costs)

The extent of deprivation varies significantly across wards. While 1 in 4 children residing in the city are living in relative poverty, ten of Coventry's wards are in the bottom 20% of all wards in England. Two wards are in the top 20%. (Earlsdon and Wainbody.)



% of residents living in neighbourhoods amongst the 10% most deprived in England

DEMOGRAPHIC SEGMENTATION<sup>14</sup>

Acorn is a demographic segmentation of the UK's population based on a range of demographic, behavioural, and attitudinal indicators. Data sources used include both commercial and official data such as age of residents, ethnicity profiles, benefits data and housing and rental information.

ACORN CATEGORIES	COVENTRY	UK
Affluent achievers	11.7%	22.7%
Rising prosperity	1.4%	9.4%
Comfortable communities	27.6%	26.7%
Financially stretched	32.4%	22.4%
Urban adversity	26.4%	17.9%
Not private households	0.5%	0.9%

<sup>1</sup>



# BASELINE CULTURAL AND HERITAGE CAPACITY ANALYSIS

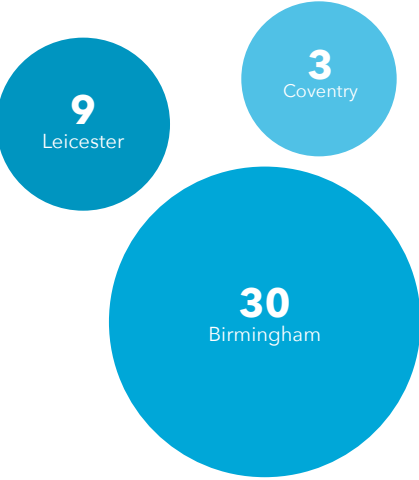
The cultural strategy is founded on a current audit of the cultural, heritage and public arts assets that exist in the city. The 'Seven Big Ideas', detailed in Part B, build on this audit and propose new developments which, taken together, will contribute to the 2027 Vision. Both universities have worked together on providing a baseline survey of the city including professional and amateur/community organisations.

## CULTURAL ASSETS

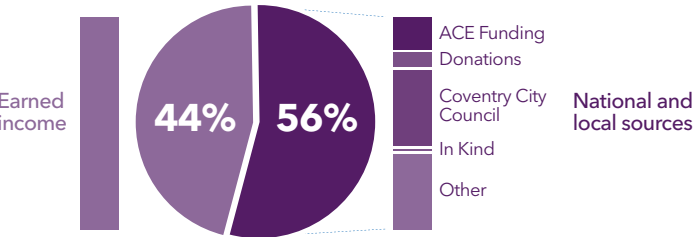
There are three National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in the city (organisations that receive regular three/ four year ACE funding) and one Major Partnership Museum (MPM) and arts organisation, Culture Coventry, which delivers the MPM in partnership with Black Country Living Museum.

In comparison, a city of a similar size like Leicester has nine NPOs and Birmingham, a larger regional city has 30. A critical mass of NPOs brings with it a recognition of high quality cultural practice, stability of funding and the opportunity to forward plan a cultural programme for the city.

### NUMBER OF NPOs<sup>15</sup> RELATIVE TO POPULATION



### INCOME OF CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS<sup>18</sup>



Crucially, NPOs are funded to work with children and young people and on this basis Leicester, with nine NPOs, has a much greater capacity to engage children and young people with professional arts organisations despite having a similar sized population. More work could be done to develop the city's arts organisations to a level where they are able to achieve NPO status.

Coventry has benefited from the Arts Council England, Museums and Schools programme; a four-year programme funded through the Department of Education as a response to key recommendations from the Henley Review<sup>16</sup>. Delivered by Culture Coventry in partnership with the V&A Museum, the programme has seen more than 650 schools and over 26,500 pupils visit the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry Transport Museum and the Lunt Roman Fort on at least two occasions since the programme began in 2012.

The NPOs represent 85% of the economic turnover of not-for-profit cultural organisations in the city and 44% of their funding comes from earned income. They remain vulnerable to fluctuations in public investment from national and local sources which provide 56% of their funding.<sup>17</sup>



OF 308 ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE CITY ONLY 15% ARE PROFESSIONAL AND THE REMAINING 85% ARE COMMUNITY AND AMATEUR GROUPS.<sup>19</sup>

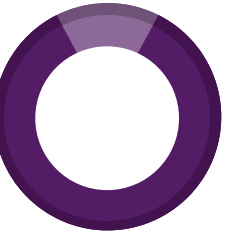
This sample includes a number of professional arts organisations that rely on short-term project funding from ACE, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and public investment from the city and other sources (TIE).

There is a significant and lively community and an independent professional artistic and cultural life in the city. Community groups are fairly evenly spread across the city.

There is both a resilience and fragility in the independent artistic and cultural sector. Many survive by exporting their work and time outside the city or by working on a project-by-project basis. These smaller organisations and individual artists are key to the vitality, vision and creativity of Coventry's cultural life. They continue a strong tradition of

### TURNOVER OF CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS<sup>18</sup>

NON-NPO 15%



NPO 85%



community engagement work by arts organisations in a city that pioneered Theatre-in-Education (TIE).

The smaller organisations and individual artists need space and resources to plan further ahead. There is a need for capacity building and the opportunity for individual mentoring and development. They are what makes Coventry's cultural programme distinctive.

There is strength in street theatre in the city. Imagineer Productions, who curate the Festival of Imagineers, has produced large scale works such as Godiva Awakes. Highly Sprung Performance Company have established a strong base in Coventry with national touring of theatre and award-winning street pieces as well as workshops and education work.

**28% OF THE SAMPLE OF ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS IS MADE UP OF DANCE GROUPS AND DANCE ALSO ACCOUNTS FOR 69% OF GROUPS DEDICATED TO YOUTH WORK AND 68% OF ETHNIC HERITAGE ARTS AND CULTURAL GROUPS.<sup>20</sup> THERE IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD ON THE SUCCESS AND ENTHUSIASM FOR DANCE IN THE CITY.**

*"My ambition is to recognise Coventry as a destination - as somewhere I would chose to come as opposed to somewhere I live. A place where people come for work but stay because of its culture. Culture is about feelings and not just of activities."*

Local university staff







Photo credit M Batchelor

TO GROW ITS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE, COVENTRY NEEDS TO INVEST IN BUILDING THE TRACK RECORD OF BOTH EXISTING PRODUCERS AND VENUES SUCH AS THE CATHEDRAL AND EMERGING NEW COMPANIES AND FESTIVALS.





CULTURAL CAPACITY

An important part of the cultural strategy is to identify and support the spaces and places where cultural activity takes place. The city has seen significant investment in facilities over the past ten years including at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry Transport Museum, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Warwick Arts Centre.

Amongst the NPOs, Belgrade Theatre is a well-managed cultural resource with a loyal audience and a clear artistic policy, although its capacity to programme innovative work has been

restricted by recent budget challenges. The Belgrade has ambitious plans to achieve a 70% earned income target by 2020 to offset these challenges. It is a production base, a receiving venue, an education space and a regular meeting place. The Belgrade Hub reaches out to communities, other cultural organisations and young people throughout the city.

It has good national links through co-commissioning but fewer international links despite its name. The bid for UK City of Culture 2021 offers a valuable platform to realise its full potential as a producer.



The Belgrade: Photo credit Nicola Young

The Belgrade has international significance via its history of creating the TIE (Theatre-in-Education) movement. It has been the training ground and launch pad for many of the city's other organisations – Imagineer Productions and EGO Performance were set up by Belgrade alumni. The theatre continues to build on this support for emerging local talent through its growing artist development programme, including its Springboard initiative. Its outreach community work and engagement with diverse communities is one of its real strengths.

Warwick Arts Centre is one of the largest multi-artform venues in the UK and has a considerable reputation nationally and internationally. As a regional creative hub it is a commissioner and collaborator, supporting artists and companies regionally, nationally and internationally and providing a strong leadership role across Coventry. It has commissioned and supported many of the city's agencies including Ludic Rooms, Mercurial Dance and Shop Front Theatre. Alongside its performance venues, Warwick Arts Centre also includes the Mead Gallery, a cinema and a visual arts trail across the university campus.

Warwick Arts Centre is committed to improving access to arts and culture across the city and delivers inspirational programmes of creative learning through public events, projects, skills development and research. Its education programme targets schools in wards with the lowest rates of participation in the arts with their flagship Boys Dancing project attracting national attention. Warwick Arts Centre's reputation offers multiple links and connections to UK-wide and international producers and is developing facilities to provide a UK-wide centre of excellence in creative digital industries innovation.

Since 1992, Talking Birds has been producing thoughtful, playful, resonant, mischievous and transformative meditations on people and place. Their work is characterised by a distinctive

blend of humour, music and visual flair in venues both conventional and unconventional across the UK and internationally – from the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank, to Kilkenny Livestock Mart; from a cavernous underground car park in Scarborough, to a decommissioned hospital in Coventry and to a giant aluminium whale which swallows up audiences one at a time.

The MPM, Culture Coventry, manages Coventry Transport Museum, Coventry Archives & Research Centre, the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, the Lunt Roman Fort and the Old Grammar School. Culture Coventry works in partnership across the museum, arts and heritage sector locally, regionally, nationally and internationally using its collections and programmes to engage and interact with audiences. Its internationally recognised and nationally Designated Collection tells the unique cultural story of Coventry's transport heritage.

The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum (the Herbert) is a dynamic visual arts space and cultural heritage museum. Its exhibitions are presented in all media; conceived and developed in-house or created in partnership with national venues. Its exhibitions tour nationally and internationally and it brings national partners into the city as well as mentoring emerging artists through solo or open exhibitions. An accredited vocational learning centre, the Herbert's reputation for creative media, outreach and community work has led to it working with partners across Europe and contributing to national and international conferences on the social and community benefits of engaging with culture.

The museums offer a platform for music and contemporary performing arts engaging with groups as diverse as The Enemy, Ensemble 1685 and street dance groups. The entire road transport holdings at the Coventry Archive & Research Centre are designated as a collection of national importance making it probably the UK's most important road transport archive.



PARTICIPATION IN ARTS AND CULTURE<sup>21</sup>

- At least 1 in 3 households in Coventry attended at least one cultural event last year
- Wainbody and Earlsdon have the highest levels of engagement – consistent across performing arts, museums and galleries, and the household survey
- Foleshill consistently has the lowest levels of engagement
- Over half the attenders come from outside Coventry, with museums and galleries doing a better job at pulling people in from a wider geographical area
- There are ‘hotspots’ outside Coventry, which include Kenilworth, Leamington Spa, Knowle, Hampton-in-Arden and Solihull

COVENTRY HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (2016)

Participation of Coventry residents that take part in one other arts and cultural activity in addition to going to the cinema or pub, clubs and bars is 67% for adults and 64% for children.

Around 20% of respondents count the cinema or going to pubs, clubs and bars as their only arts and cultural activity.

COVENTRY ENGAGEMENT - PERFORMING ARTS/FESTIVALS

Coventry wards - % of Coventry bookers

Solihull	1%
St Michael's	3%
Longford (Coventry)	4%
Henley (Coventry)	4%
Radford	4%
Upper Stoke	4%
Wyken	6%
Cheylesmore	6%
Lower Stoke	6%
Holbrook (Coventry)	4%
Binley and Willenhall	5%
Wainbody	9%
Earlsdon	9%
Whoberley	8%
Bablake	7%
Sherbourne	7%
Woodlands (Coventry)	7%
Westwood (Coventry)	6%
Sherbourne	7%

Performing Arts bookers

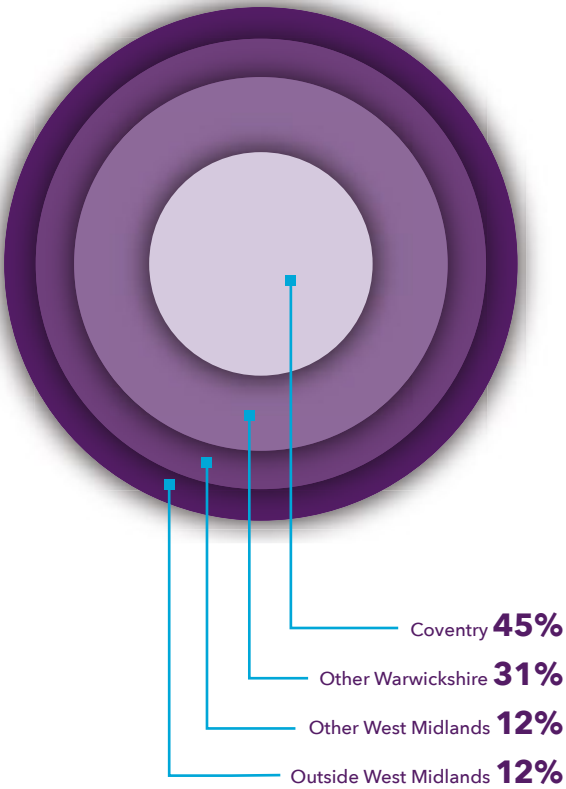
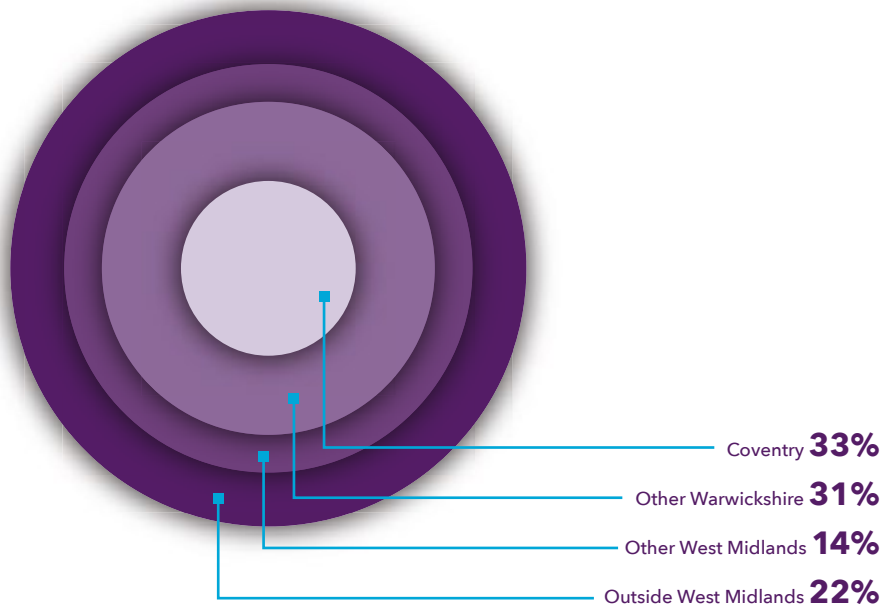


Photo credit Stefan Altenburger Photography  
Zürich Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth



Museums and Galleries respondents



Over 1/2 the attenders for Performing Arts/Festivals, and 2/3 for museums and galleries are travelling into Coventry from outside the city

AUDIENCE REACH ACROSS WIDER REGION



- Within a 60 minute drive time of Coventry
- Within a 45 minute drive time of Coventry
- Within a 30 minute drive time of Coventry





Coventry has a range of commercially-run city stages or venues from the Empire to Inspire, Drapers Bar and Fargo Box. Just outside the ring road is Tin Music and Arts who promote from The Coal Vaults at the Canal Basin. The Old Grammar School has recently been refurbished as a cultural resource and music venue by Culture Coventry and adds a further asset to the range of city centre venues. Coventry Music Museum is run by passionate volunteers. It is a treasure of musical history built around the '2Tone' movement but taking in a much wider musical history of the city.

The Ricoh Arena and its management are a major resource for the city, offering a suite of well-equipped venues for events and conferences and a stadium venue for major rock gigs.

Armonico Consort, The Coventry and Warwickshire Youth Orchestra and Coventry Music Education Hub also add to the capacity, with Armonico Consort delivering participatory projects on a scale that demonstrates an ability to manage ambitious programmes. Coventry Music Education Hub reaches over 12,000 children and young people every year.<sup>22</sup>

Imagineer Productions bring together arts and engineering in their street theatre, outdoor events and festivals with a year-round education and skills programme.

Open Theatre Company continues to offer ground-breaking and sustained work in cultural engagement for people with learning disabilities after successfully running the Shysters Theatre Company for 14 years. Open Theatre Company supports Belgrade Theatre and other city organisations to reach out to people with a wide range of disabilities and special needs. The City Council will continue to develop and expand work with cultural organisations which engage with the most vulnerable and challenged communities in the city.

The Albany Theatre, located in a mixed use development on the site of a former college, has plans to expand to create adjacent workspace. Run largely by volunteers, the space offers a venue for amateur and regular professional events, as well as film and cinematic events. The Criterion Theatre is another amateur theatre venue located nearby in Earlsdon.

Coventry Artspace is an organisation that has historically linked provision of artists' studio space with a community arts programme. The organisation is in transition to being more of an artists' commissioning body with supporting residencies and artist networking.

The city has a large number of Asian and Irish dance groups with the most successful winning national awards.<sup>23</sup>



The Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) is a social enterprise which focuses on the development of young people. Through building relationships based upon mutual trust and respect, the Foundation is able to support young people, particularly those living in challenging circumstances, to move forward in their lives. Using art as a vehicle for social change, the team has been able to develop a wide range of opportunities for young people to build their personal resilience as well as raise their aspirations in making positive lifestyle choices. The *Changing Trax* programme is the Foundation's response to supporting the city's cultural ambitions.

*"I think Coventry has quite a rich and diverse culture already. An ambition of mine would be that all young people regardless of which part of the city they come from and whatever their social circumstances feel genuinely connected to our cultural strategy and our city of culture bid. I think that is absolutely achievable by agencies working together to understand the needs of young people and support and celebrate young people so that young people themselves feel like they own the city and its cultural offer."*

**Staff member from organisation working with young people**



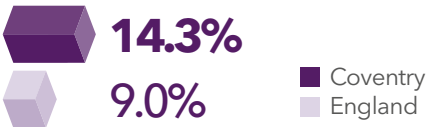
**AGE: COVENTRY'S POPULATION<sup>24</sup>**

**Average age of residents**



**Population by age group**

**STUDENT POPULATION**



**WORKING POPULATION**



The flow of overseas students has also contributed to Coventry's younger age profile.

Fargo Development Trust has programmed various events in the Fargo Box, market area, Urban Coffee Café and outdoor spaces including Coventry Pride Festival, food events and music. The *Imagine Hillfields* exhibition by photographer Jason Tilley and social historian Ben Kyneswood (developed from the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum's participation in the national 'Imagine project' - a five-year programme of national university-led research<sup>25</sup>) was a powerful example of how cultural diversity can be given a high quality

platform within communities. This has led to the creation of Photographic Archive Miners (PAM), a new organisation that aims to develop photographic archives from the City including that of Asian Photographer Masterji, Jaguar Land Rover and Courtaulds. PAM is a potentially important bridge between heritage and contemporary culture.

Local promoters include Jazz Coventry with whom national organisation Jazz UK recently promoted a successful jazz festival in the city.



Masterji and Coventry: Photographic exhibitions Fargo Village 2016

The City Council's events budgets have been reduced in recent years, however, large scale public participation events such as Coventry Motofest and the city-centre British Cycling event continue to be developed through relationships with local or national partners.

A central plank of the City Council's direct provision is the much-loved Coventry Godiva Festival, currently an annual free music festival attracting over 140,000 visits from a family audience for a three day event. The Festival has traditionally offered opportunities for local musicians to showcase their work across city venues prior to the main weekend through its Godiva Calling events. The addition of theatre, dance, visual art, circus and spoken word as part of the Coventry 2021 advanced programme in 2016 has also shown the potential for the Festival to broaden its appeal and showcase diverse talent within the city - hosting 270 performers from 42 acts in 2016. Its audiences are genuinely diverse, drawing from a wide range of communities and across the age spectrum.

More diverse and experienced advisors/practitioners are needed to nurture talent in the city. Film and TV appear to be under-developed areas in terms

of agency support in the city. However, Coventry University is building a new relationship with the British Film Institute (BFI) to address this gap.

The existence of the Coventry Ambassadors, a group of post-2012 volunteers managed through the social enterprise EnV, is a real asset and could be used more in the city's cultural events programme. The city should look for appropriate resource and create opportunities around its 2021 bid to strengthen the commitment to volunteering as an additional pathway to careers in the cultural sector.

The involvement of young people on boards such as Ego Performance and Community Arts Centre is to be commended and should be expanded in the city, so that cultural organisations in receipt of public investment who are working with young people are required to have youth representation on their board and are representative of the audiences they serve.

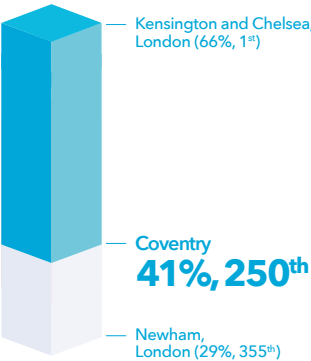
Developing capacity in the BAME communities may be best tackled through working with young people and agencies such as Positive Youth Foundation as well as with existing employers, not just in the arts.

**IT IS ALSO VITAL THAT BAME COMMUNITIES ARE FULLY REPRESENTED AT ALL LEVELS IN CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND THAT THE CITY STRIVES TO IDENTIFY, DEVELOP AND SUPPORT POTENTIAL BAME ARTISTS, CREATIVES AND ORGANISATIONS. THE AMBITION IS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL PORTFOLIO ORGANISATIONS IN COVENTRY AND THE CITY'S RICH DIVERSITY WILL PRODUCE THE CREATIVE TALENT AND PRODUCTION EXPERTISE NEEDED.**



ACTIVE PEOPLE SURVEY (2009)

The 2009-2010 Active People Survey, ranked Coventry 250<sup>th</sup> out of 355 local authorities in terms of participation in arts and culture with two London boroughs coming 1<sup>st</sup> (Kensington and Chelsea) and 355<sup>th</sup> (Newham)



The impact of the Marmot agenda (to reduce health inequalities) and the emphasis on the need to address the health and wellbeing of the city indicate that there are opportunities for partnership working across arts and health agendas. Evidence demonstrates that culture and sports can have a significant impact on the social determinants of health, and that participation can:

- promote social interaction and building social networks
- alleviate both physical and mental health problems
- develop life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, co-operation, communication and creative thinking
- build self-esteem, confidence and emotional resilience
- raise aspiration, increase personal choice and control
- increase concentration, helping to improve absenteeism, classroom behaviour and educational attainment among children and young people, and powers of recall in older people
- encourage informal, lifelong and inter-generational learning
- bond communities together and build bridges between people from different backgrounds, strengthening community identity, cohesion and a sense of belonging
- divert young people away from substance misuse and anti-social and criminal behaviour
- provide volunteering, work experience and employment opportunities

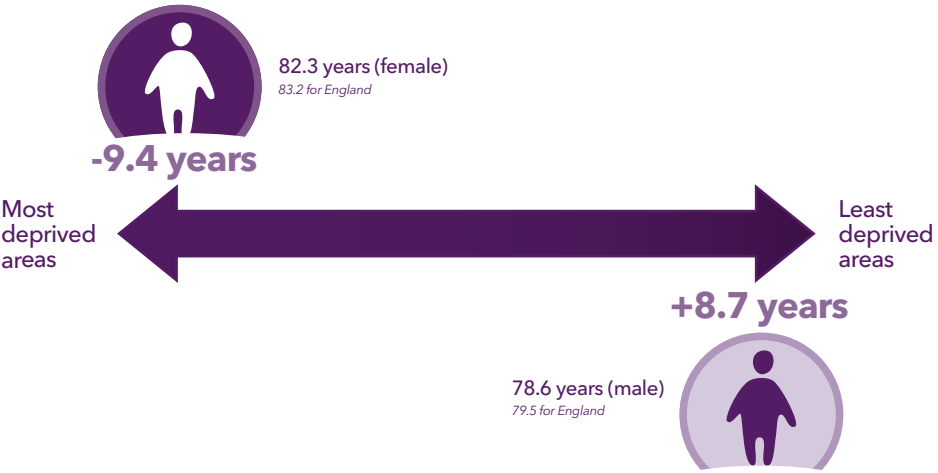
Existing projects indicate that this is an area where arts and cultural organisations could make a considerable contribution. Current examples of practice are being delivered by Belgrade Theatre through their Arts Gymnasium Programme, Culture Coventry through their Creative Bridges programme and Dementia engagement projects. The Pod (a well-established arts and mental health project run directly by the City Council with support from the NHS) and via voluntary sector organisations such as Arty Folks.



**THERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CITY TO GIVE A NATIONAL LEAD ON THE ARTS ROLE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING INITIATIVES. COVENTRY COULD PLAN THE FIRST ARTS AND WELLNESS CENTRE PROGRAMMING FOR ALL ABILITIES WITH PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ARTS INVOLVEMENT, AS WELL AS BRINGING TOGETHER HEALTH AND UNIVERSITY EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH INTERESTS.**

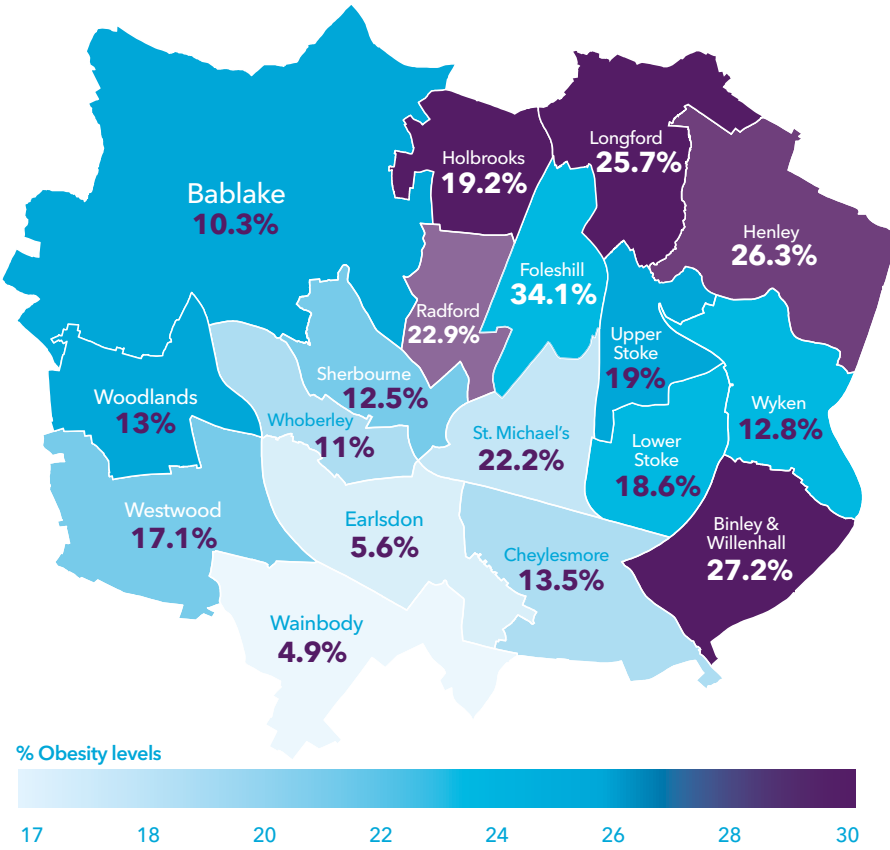
HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE<sup>26</sup>

Adult life expectancy



There are significant inequalities in average life expectancies ages for men and women in the most and least deprived areas of the City.

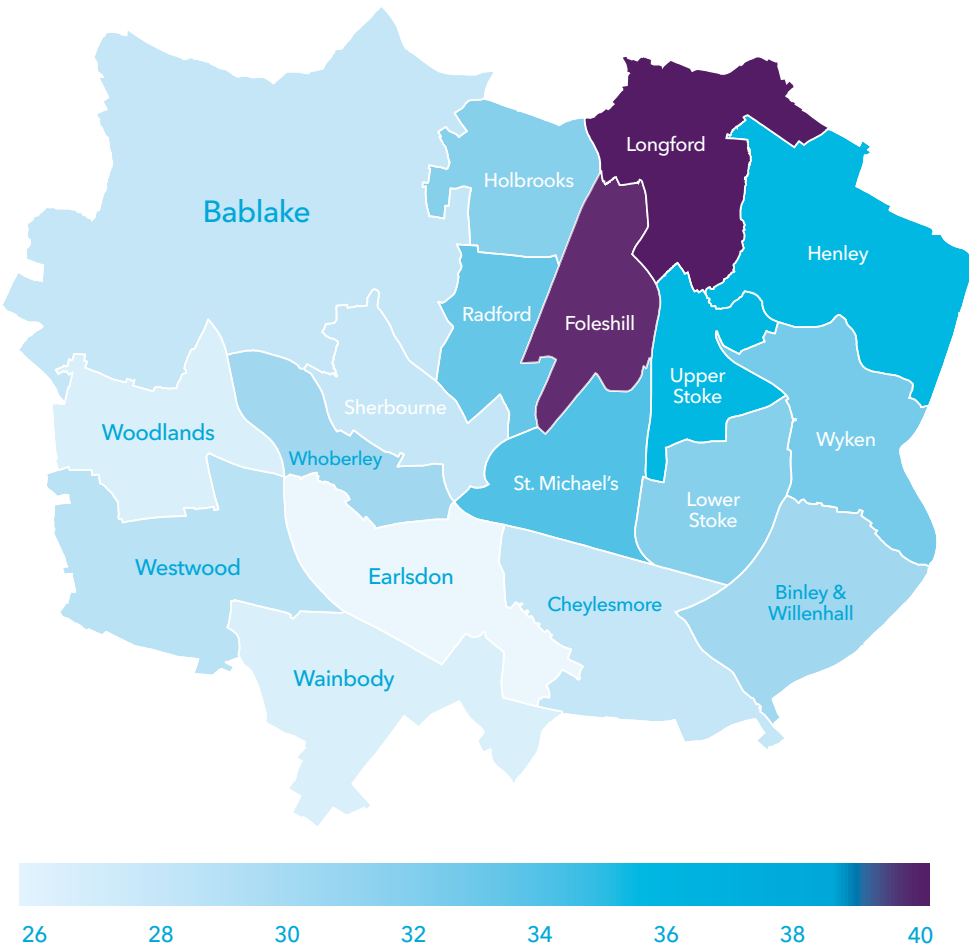
Adult obesity vs. income deprivation



These figures mask disparities in terms of deprivation; the proportion of obese adults ranges from 17.2% in Wainbody (where the rate of income deprivation is only 4.9%) to 29.9% in Longford (where the same rate is 25.7%).



HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE<sup>26</sup>



**% of children in year 6 who were classified as overweight or obese (2012/13 - 2014/15)**

Childhood obesity is a particular problem in Coventry. For the period 2012/13-2014/15, 35.1% of children in Year 6 (ages 10 and 11) were classified as overweight or obese. This is a slightly higher rate of obesity than the national figure (33.4%).





## HERITAGE ASSETS

The city has an impressive number of heritage assets including listed buildings, museums, archaeological finds and parks but only ranks 205<sup>th</sup> overall of 325 local authorities surveyed in the Heritage Index England.<sup>27</sup> The ranking is low for historic built environment and higher for museums, archives and artefacts and 95<sup>th</sup> for landscape and natural heritage.<sup>28</sup>

There is no doubt that there is under-developed potential for the City Council to make its medieval and post-war historical built environment more visible and valued. The Heritage Index England indicates that Coventry scores very well when it comes to activities related to museums, parks, archives and artefacts. The modernist architecture of the city is another major asset, recently celebrated in a major publication by Historic England.<sup>29</sup>

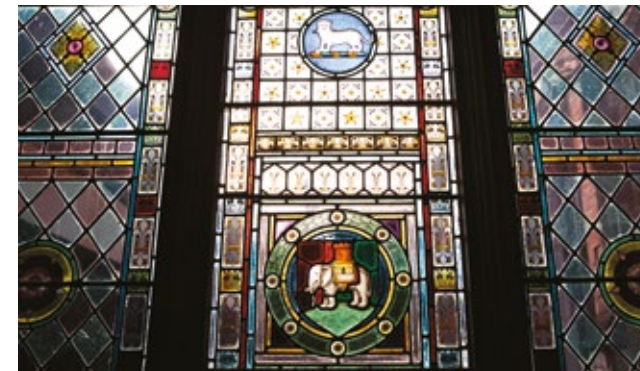
The creation of Culture Coventry as an independent Charitable Trust to manage the city's museums and art gallery has seen a transformation of Coventry Transport Museum and has the potential to do likewise with the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum. The Trust's Board, working in partnership with the city, has ambitious plans to transform the Herbert into the city's cultural and heritage hub, signposting visitors to Coventry's cultural, creative and heritage opportunities and attractions. Plans for the development of a creative arts and performance centre at the Herbert could help it to build a sustainable future while providing much needed performance, rehearsal and creative production spaces within the city centre. The Trust contributes to Coventry's night time economy through Herbert Lates.

Coventry Cathedral is one of the most important assets of the city. It has an international role in peace and reconciliation. It is one of the most important modern buildings in the UK and is a living architectural symbol of

the UK's post-war reconstruction and hope. It houses a significant collection of art and has over the years been a venue to many commissions, events and performances. Both the ruins and the 'new' cathedral offer iconic venues and it is currently developing a reputation as a safe and accessible space for cultural programming. The Cathedral will celebrate its centennial in 2018.

St Mary's Guildhall is also found in the city's historic Cathedral Quarter. Dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the Guildhall stands as a monument to the power and wealth of medieval Coventry. With magnificent interiors, collections of armour, historic furniture, artworks and internationally important tapestries, the Guildhall offers a window into Coventry's glorious past and is an historic venue with potential for greater profile with visitors and extended cultural programming.

Developments such as Fargo Village and Charterhouse have potential to transform the heritage offer of the city. Charterhouse, a 700-year-old Carthusian monastery, could become an ambitious heritage park with plans for a walking and cycling route that reveals the city's hidden River Sherbourne and creates an outdoor corridor and public art trail connecting the city to the countryside. Historic Coventry has an ambitious programme to reveal and animate other medieval property and sites within the city. Culture Coventry's recent restoration of the Grade I listed but derelict 14<sup>th</sup> Century Old Grammar School, and its management by Coventry Transport Museum, is an example of what can be achieved in Coventry through cultural, civic, charitable and community partnerships. The War Memorial Park, Coombe Country Park and city centre open spaces such as Broadgate, Millennium Place and University Square are some of the city's most used cultural assets.



Our consultation highlighted the affection that many people hold for Coventry Market and there were calls for its development to have cultural spaces planned around it, given the central importance of food to the diverse ethnic cultures of the city. Better use of car parks, subways, places of worship, public squares, streets and the ring road as arts venues were also suggested in consultation.

Coombe Abbey – although just outside the local authority boundary – is another important asset for cultural activity and has recently won awards for its management, conservation, education and visitor experience strengths. As well as providing a beautiful landscape for outdoor enjoyment for the city it is also becoming a major tourist attraction and holds a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence.

Coventry sits surrounded by Warwickshire with major attractions such as Warwick Castle, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and the canal network. The city is just 10 minutes by train from Birmingham International airport, 20 minutes from the centre of Birmingham and less than an hour by mainline train from London. 75% of the national population live within 2 hours of the city.<sup>30</sup>

The City Council has a destination team within its Place Directorate and is exploring options for destination management of the city as well as working with partners at Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) including Shakespeare's England and Marketing Birmingham.





PUBLIC ART

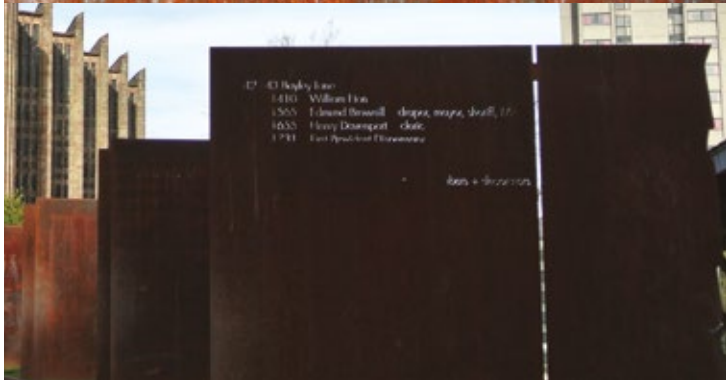
The University of Warwick has an extensive collection of public art in its grounds with a significant number of leading contemporary UK and international artists.

Work along the canal trail could benefit from the new partnership between Arts Council England and the Canal and River Trust.<sup>31</sup>

The potential exists to create trails in the city, which could also help with tourism and city orientation. The proposals for the Richard II Loop using old railway lines to create cycle and walking routes, offer a chance to develop a coherent programme of art commissioning<sup>32</sup> – potentially working with partners such as Sustrans.

There is national good practice and a manifesto for public art developed by arts organisation BEAM<sup>33</sup>, which could provide a basis for a plan in Coventry. Text-based work, lighting and digital commissions have the potential to improve or add to the quality of public realm and safety and enjoyment of public spaces.

The opportunity exists to have a coherent policy and commitment to the commissioning and upkeep of public art drawing upon the expertise of a range of partners.



COVENTRY IS A CITY THAT HAS EMBRACED PUBLIC ART FOR SEVEN CENTURIES. THE CATHEDRAL HAS A WORLD-CLASS COLLECTION OF PUBLIC ART AND CONTINUES TO EMBRACE THE ROLE OF ARTISTS IN ITS WORK. HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS SUCH AS CHARTERHOUSE WITH ITS 700-YEAR-OLD MURALS AND ST MARY’S GUILDHALL WITH ITS STAINED GLASS WINDOWS; HISTORIC TAPESTRIES AND CARVINGS ARE ALSO PART OF THE CITY’S ASSETS.



# CAPITAL PROJECTS

Warwick Arts Centre is of national significance as an Arts Council England client and has plans to expand its gallery, digital film facilities and learning programme, generating a sustainable future and additional skills, jobs and tourism for the Centre and conference business of the city. Located at the heart of The University of Warwick it will become a creative and digital hub where collaboration and innovation can be explored.

THE CITY HAS SEEN SIGNIFICANT RECENT INVESTMENT IN THE BELGRADE THEATRE, COVENTRY TRANSPORT MUSEUM AND THE HERBERT ART GALLERY & MUSEUM. LINKED TO WORK WITH THE COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP), THERE IS AN EXCITING RANGE OF EXISTING CAPITAL ASPIRATIONS, WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE 2027 VISION.

Charterhouse forms part of a larger vision for the riverside and a new visitor route to connect the visitor attraction of the 700-year-old Carthusian Priory with Gosford Green and Fargo Village. It is a transformational project with significant job creation, skills and tourism benefits. It also offers a new outdoor event space for the city.

These two projects are part of the Coventry ten-year vision for a cultural and tourism investment programme that is designed to reposition Coventry, through a sustainable capital plan, as a leading City of Culture.

Other pipeline projects under consideration include:

**Daimler Production Hub** – a creative industries growth hub combining art and design, developed around existing facilities currently housing theatre, dance and festival producers.

**Fargo Village** – further development of creative workspace and cultural space in Far Gosford Street.

**Cathedral** – proposals to remodel the access and interpretation of Coventry Cathedral as an attraction and world-class cultural venue in the heart of the city.

**EGO Performance** – proposals to develop a youth-led arts centre of national significance close to the Coventry Transport Museum either in existing premises or in new facilities.

**Albany Theatre** – proposals to secure creative workspace and improved audience facilities supporting an ‘Arts for Life’ agenda, linked to private sector development of the wider site.

**Belgrade Theatre** – working with partners to research sustainable cultural and tourism facilities around Belgrade Plaza.

**Herbert Art Gallery & Museum** – Culture Coventry is exploring proposals to extend the gallery and museum, creating an improved heritage interpretation, space for national exhibitions and a city centre conference facility.



The Belgrade: Photo credit: Robert Day



**Historic Coventry** have begun their ambition to safeguard and secure the heritage assets of the medieval city for the next 1,000 years.

**Drapers Hall** – proposals to develop a music education hub in an historic property adjacent to the Cathedral, St Mary’s Guildhall and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

**Shop Front Theatre** – long-term plans to relocate and grow Coventry’s unique Shop Front Theatre as a sustainable base for the growth of creative talent and the development of city centre animation and festival activity.

**Creative Industries Hub** – potential development of creative industries to build a critical mass of employment and business start-ups in vacant spaces

and strategic locations in the city (e.g. Canal Basin).

**Tin Music and Arts** – development of The Coal Vaults as a sustainable music venue growing local talent by inspiring and nurturing artists, writers, technical support professionals, promoters and audiences across music genres and a wide range of art forms.

The consultation on the strategy highlighted a strong demand for dedicated dance space in the city. Coventry is the only major city in the UK not to have such a centre and yet it has over 102 dance groups and both Further Education and Higher Education courses in dance. A dance hub shared by the different communities of the city offers one of the best routes to engaging the diversity of the city.

“Coventry is a city that knows how to reinvent itself, values diversity and believes in the marriage of the traditional and modern.”

Local councillor at the consultation workshop



CULTURAL TOURISM

The City Council has conducted regular economic evaluation of the tourism sector and linked to this strategy it has been taking a more in-depth look at its visitor profile and awareness of its visitor offer with a view to growing, in particular, the leisure market from both day and staying visitors in domestic and international visitor segments.

Tourism creates businesses, generates revenue, provides jobs and sustains retail, hotel and cultural sectors. Coventry has a relatively strong business tourism market built on local business and conferencing from its two leading universities of Warwick and Coventry, the Ricoh Arena and the NEC, which is just 10 minutes from Coventry by train. The City Council has a destination and business relationships team.

Coventry has a huge amount to offer but has not fully joined up or realised its tourism potential. It now has ambitions to synergise its cultural and heritage strengths connecting: Belgrade Theatre, Warwick Arts Centre, Shop Front Theatre and other independent cultural groups; festivals such as Coventry Godiva Festival, The Festival of Imagineers and Motofest; commercial events at Ricoh Arena; Coventry Transport Museum, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, St Mary's Guildhall, The Old Grammar School and of course, Coventry Cathedral.

The city's hotel stock has seen recent improvements but needs to grow its capacity and improve the range of quality and brands on offer if it is to realise its visitor potential. Research shows external perceptions of a limited range of hotel accommodation and a lack of self-catering facilities. There are significant sites for development including the new Friargate development as a gateway to the city from the railway station and further developments at the Ricoh Arena, which already hosts a Hilton Double Tree.

The city aims to get a better understanding of the visitor market and the implications of recent trends, to identify new product and marketing opportunities, and to incorporate such opportunities into regional and local strategies. A thorough and up-to-date understanding of visitors is needed to provide an evidence base for future strategy. Early output from this study has highlighted that only 28% of the UK visitor market has been to Coventry and that 77% of non-visitors cite a lack of knowledge in what Coventry has to offer. Only 16% of Coventry visitors get their information from websites in advance compared to 78% nationally – highlighting a major deficit in curated visitor information and the city's web presence.<sup>35</sup>

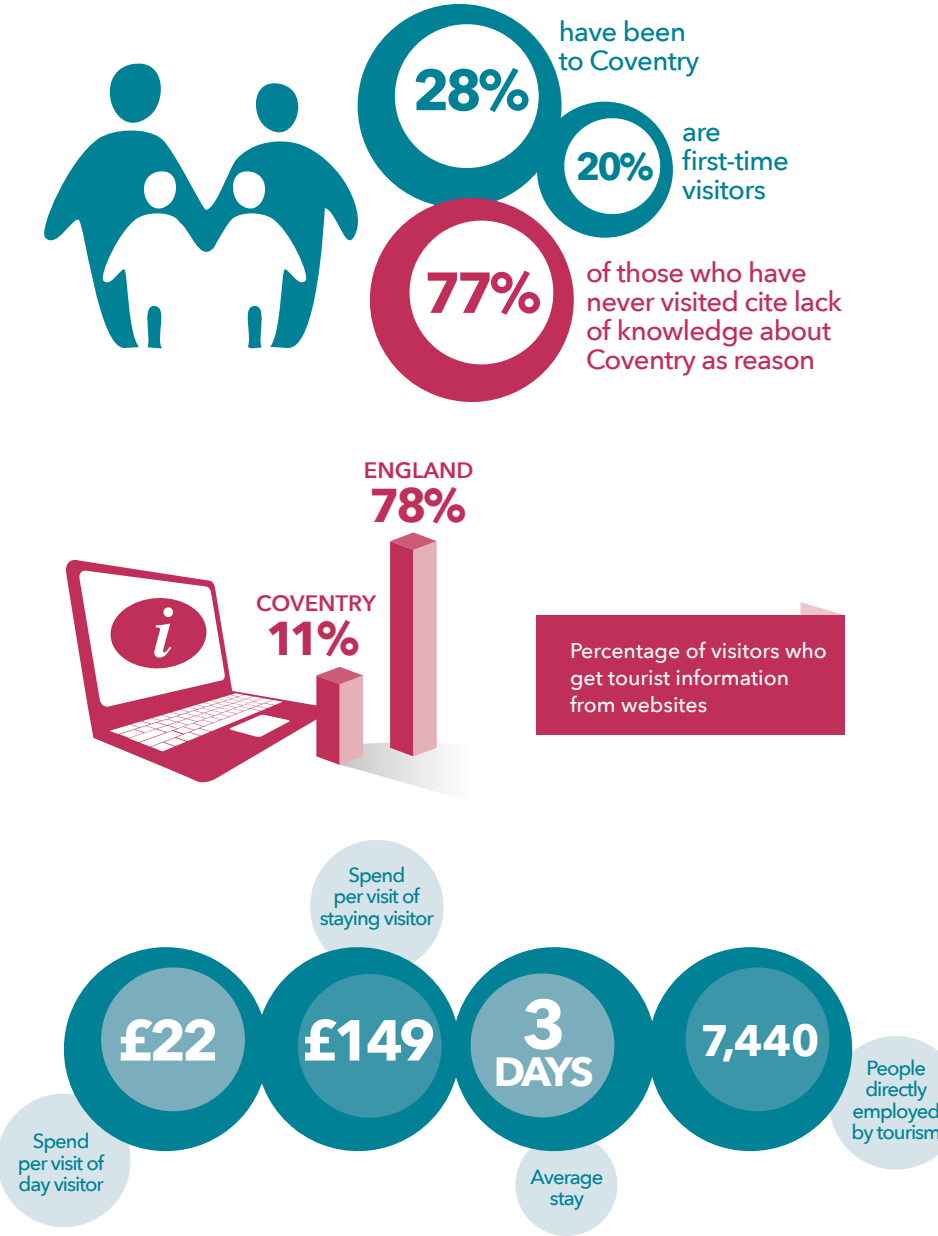


A MAJOR AMBITION OF THE STRATEGY IS TO BOOST TOURISM AND THE CULTURAL ECONOMY OF THE CITY. TOURISM PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN COVENTRY'S ECONOMY, CONTRIBUTING £419 MILLION ANNUALLY TO THE CITY'S ECONOMY AND SUPPORTING OVER 10,180 JOBS.<sup>34</sup>

THE STRATEGY PROPOSES THAT THE CITY WILL ENGAGE WITH ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, HISTORIC ENGLAND, HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND, VISIT ENGLAND AND VISIT BRITAIN TO PROMOTE ITS CULTURAL ASSETS. IT WILL BRING TOGETHER CULTURE AND TOURISM EXPERTISE IN THE CITY TO DEVELOP IMPROVED PACKAGING, PROVISION OF LISTINGS AND TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE CITY.

TOURISM RESEARCH HEADLINES<sup>36</sup>

UK visitor market



Our research suggests that 51% of current visitors' main reason for a visit is cultural<sup>37</sup> – to an arts event, exhibition, or heritage attraction. However there is evidence that visitors tend to visit for one thing – with the Cathedral, the Coventry Transport Museum or events being the main drivers. Visitors lack awareness of other arts facilities or activity and therefore do less and spend less than they might, particularly in the case of day visitors. The visitor profile echoes the city's own population – young and diverse.

This strategy, linked to emerging work towards a destination management plan and place partnership, will see the creation of a cultural tourism group in the city, measures to improve signage and listings of events and improved web presence. The city is laying the foundations to maximise the benefits of work with external agencies such as Historic England, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and Visit Britain.



## ASSESSMENT OF STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, OBSTACLES AND RISKS

In this section we reflect on what the audits, research and other sources of information tell us about Coventry's cultural strengths and opportunities and the obstacles and risks to be overcome.

### STRENGTHS

- Important heritage assets from medieval times through post-war architecture to the present
- Strong civic values of welcome, peace and reconciliation
- A rich diversity of cultures, over 100 languages<sup>38</sup> and 36.6% not of White British ethnicity<sup>39</sup>
- 7 years younger than national average<sup>40</sup> and city is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest and 9<sup>th</sup> fastest growing local authority in England<sup>41</sup>
- Over 300 arts and culture organisations in the city<sup>42</sup>
- Strong partnership with the universities, local businesses and community associations
- Strong youth sector provision
- Above national average active engagement with heritage including parks and open spaces
- Dance is a strength across the city
- City Council committed to joined-up policy making and active citizenship<sup>43</sup>
- Successful Music Education Hub
- High quality museums with nationally regarded and designated collections
- Two leading universities
- Vibrant independent cultural sector
- Some visionary individuals in cultural, business and political life of the city

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Use the emergent place partnership to co-ordinate growth and investment
- Join-up cultural, health, citizenship and community engagement agendas
- Increase tourism and cultural economy
- Use cultural programming and engagement to tackle inequalities in the city
- Leverage the diversity and youthfulness of the city
- Use the City of Culture 2021 Trust as a catalyst for long term partnership development
- Maximise the potential of the Cathedral and its quarter
- Rediscover and market modernist heritage assets
- Pitch for substantial national investment from ACE, HLF and DCMS linked to a place-based partnership
- Improve marketing and communications locally, regionally and nationally
- Develop access, engagement and training for children and young people
- LEP identified priority for culture and tourism
- Developer interest in culture in the city including Friargate, Coventry Telegraph site and Fargo



### OBSTACLES

- 18.5% of residents living in the 10% most deprived wards in England<sup>44</sup>
- Significant social, economic and health inequalities between wards<sup>45</sup>
- Communities beyond the ring road isolated from the city centre
- Negative external perceptions or lack of awareness about the city<sup>46</sup>
- Reductions in Grant-in-Aid to City Council<sup>47</sup>
- Low number of NPOs compared to similar cities
- Low levels of participation in arts activities – 41% against national average of 44%<sup>48</sup> and significant differences between wards<sup>49</sup>
- Low ranking for recognised heritage assets<sup>50</sup>
- Undeveloped tourism and lack of hotels
- Limited marketing and communications infrastructure
- Under-developed night and breakfast economy

- Lack of co-ordinated cultural programming across the city
- Low number of schools with Artsmark for quality cultural education offers<sup>51</sup>
- Lack of workspaces and cultural quarter for artists, creatives and cultural activity
- Fragility of independent cultural sector
- Poor web presence and what's on listings

### RISKS

- Austerity drives down the long-term aspirations of the city
- Fragility of arts sector leads to loss of key players and talent and energy
- There isn't sufficient cultural diversity and reach to be an inclusive and sustainable cultural vision
- City of Culture momentum is lost if the city doesn't win
- Coventry is marginalised by larger visions in the West Midlands Region
- Loss of key individuals and personnel





# PART B: FIVE GOALS AND SEVEN BIG IDEAS FOR CULTURAL GROWTH

*"The fact that Coventry is such a multicultural city is not something that's happened by accident, it's not something that has happened in the last ten years, there is a history here. We need to understand the diversity of the city and we need to educate people about where this has come from, especially young people who may not realise where this has come from."*

Workshop participant representing cultural diverse community group



## GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP

A new partnership approach to cultural growth, which ensures access and sustainable funding for a wide range of cultural organisations activities and events across the city. This partnership brings together the City Council, communities, the universities, local businesses and charities, and the professional and amateur cultural sectors to maximise resources, infrastructure, innovation and investment.



## GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING

All children and young people have an entitlement to the arts and digital creativity in schools and in their community which is not limited by family income, location or age. There are opportunities for all generations to learn from and develop through the arts. Talent is recognised, developed and supported through to early careers in the cultural and creative industries and beyond.



## GOAL 3 DIVERSITY

Communities and individuals are empowered to celebrate and share their heritages, cultures, abilities and identity and participate in the cultural life of the city. Diversity is one of Coventry's strengths and resources and the city is a place of mutual understanding, celebration and learning. Coventry is a national centre of excellence for diversity in the arts and creative industries.



## GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Arts and culture are core to the health and wellbeing of the city. Participation in and enjoyment of city-wide professional and community arts programming responds to the needs of all generations and combats isolation and mental health in our most vulnerable communities. Culture makes a major contribution to encouraging healthy lifestyles and physical activity.



## GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH

Coventry is a culturally vibrant, attractive and prosperous city that enriches the lives and environment for all residents. The city is a major tourist destination for the West Midlands and successfully attracts new businesses and investment, particularly in high-tech creative industries, talent development and cultural production.



# 2017-2027 GOALS IN ACTION

The strategy sets out the Seven Big Ideas that will make Coventry a great cultural city. Each of these ideas has been mapped here to show their potential to contribute to the five goals and make the principles of the strategy a reality.

## PLACE PARTNERSHIP

COVENTRY WILL  
ESTABLISH A NEW  
INDEPENDENT  
CULTURAL PLACE  
PARTNERSHIP  
TO SUPPORT  
CULTURAL  
GROWTH AND  
OPPORTUNITIES IN  
THE CITY.



### GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP

A new independent cultural partnership maximises resources, reduces costs and attracts investment. It builds relationships and networks between culture, civic life, business and education. The institutional partners engage more fully in the city and with its residents.



### GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING

Access to universities and commercial resources and expertise provides: lifelong learning including sector training and apprenticeships; volunteering and mentoring; opportunities to build sustainable cultural capacity and programming in the city.



### GOAL 3 DIVERSITY

A well-signposted, digitally enhanced and accessible cultural programme encourages wider participation and attendance in a broad range of cultural events.



### GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Arts and culture embedded in sports, health and wellbeing strategic initiatives. Targeted uses of partnership resources and expertise, including research, to positively contribute to the Marmot City objectives of reducing health inequalities.

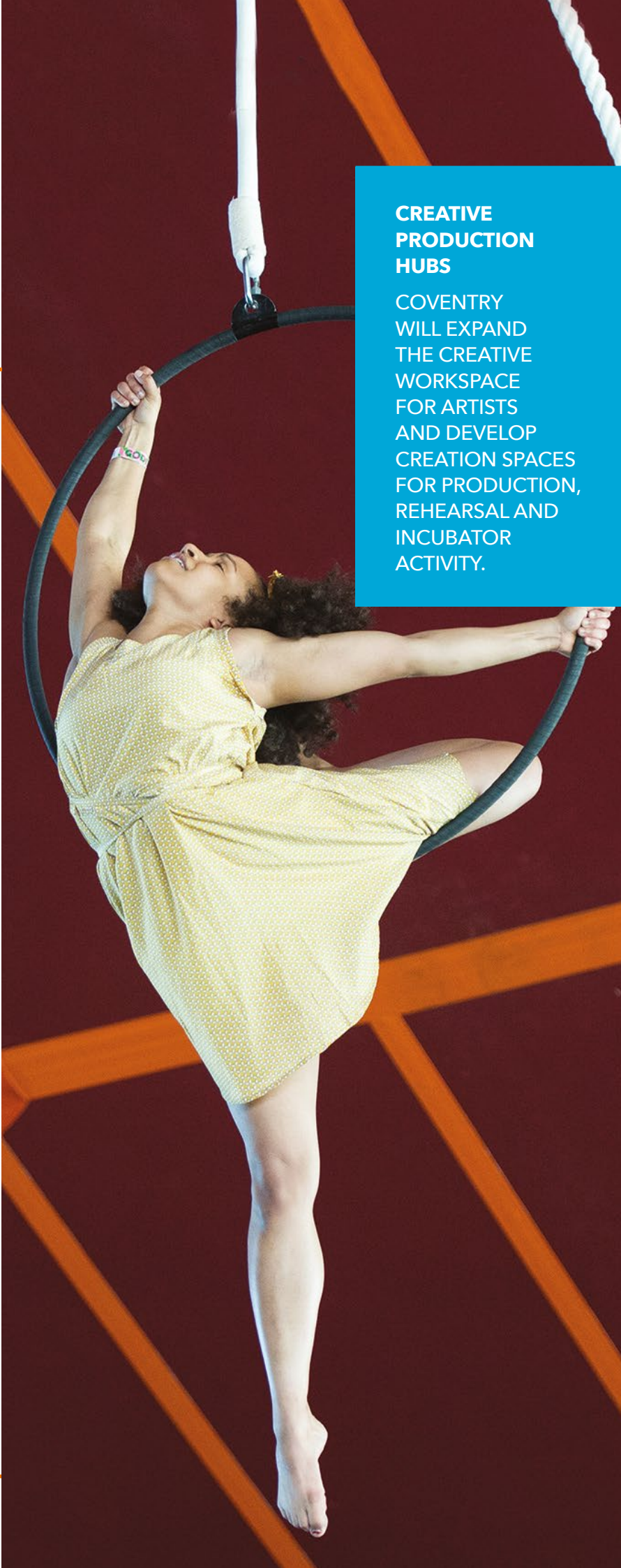


### GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH

Improved environment and cultural life attracts new businesses and graduates and increases the tourist economy. Maximising the cultural and heritage assets of the city through events and promotion provides a feel-good factor and enhances the confidence of the city as a cultural destination.

## CREATIVE PRODUCTION HUBS

COVENTRY  
WILL EXPAND  
THE CREATIVE  
WORKSPACE  
FOR ARTISTS  
AND DEVELOP  
CREATION SPACES  
FOR PRODUCTION,  
REHEARSAL AND  
INCUBATOR  
ACTIVITY.



### GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP

Mixed economy investment and access to additional sources of funding develops hubs as social enterprises with university and industry input.

The city grows the capacity and range of independent professional arts producers.

An increase in the number of National Portfolio Organisations with sustainable business plans.



### GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING

New creative hubs are also spaces for creative education, work experience and apprenticeships, offering pipelines and pathways to success. Venues, digital culture hubs, and youth talent opportunities are digitally connected and signposted.



### GOAL 3 DIVERSITY

A re-imagined library service provides local digital hubs and cultural spaces. Maximising the cultural production resources of radio, TV and new media facilities in the city and region.



### GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sports centres, libraries and other community centres host and signpost arts programmes targeted on health and wellbeing. A new hub for professional and community arts and wellness is established.



### GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH

Production hubs and creative quarters provide spaces for cultural activity, making and learning and attract private investment, new start-ups and talent.







**GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP**

A co-ordinated and strategic approach to programming, marketing and signposting arts and culture. Private sponsorship for flagship outdoor events the whole city can create and enjoy together. Greater use of enhanced city centre architecture, heritage assets, parks and neighbourhood public spaces for performances and showcasing the city.



**GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING**

Broadening opportunities for children, young people and older generations to engage with multiple arts forms as both audience and participants. Development of inter-cultural awareness and appreciation of diverse global art forms and cultural expressions.



**GOAL 3 DIVERSITY**

Encouraging, broadcasting and facilitating a broad range of local and large scale city-based participatory cultural events including heritage arts, food and lifestyles.



**GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Telling the stories of Coventry through the arts and voices of its diverse communities uncovers the creative potential in the city for all to share in.



**GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Inter-cultural events promote social cohesion, curiosity and understanding. Building a livelier urban culture grows night and day time economy. Neighbourhood diversity celebrated in city marketing and as a driver for tourism.

**CITY IS A FESTIVAL**

COVENTRY WILL BUILD A LIVELIER URBAN CULTURE BASED ON AN ANNUAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS THAT ATTRACTS VISITORS AND GROWS THE DAY AND NIGHT TIME ECONOMY.

**7 YEARS YOUNGER**

COVENTRY WILL BECOME A LEADER IN YOUTH ARTS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE DELIVERY OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMES.



**GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP**

Partnership mapping of youth engagement and opportunities to identify gaps and cold spots. Universities, Culture Coventry and cultural organisations to co-deliver youth-oriented cultural services.



**GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING**

Co-ordinated cultural programme offering and promoting affordable out-of-school opportunities and family-friendly cultural calendar to encourage inter-generational participation.



**GOAL 3 DIVERSITY**

All children and young people have access to cultural education and events including new digital arts and showcasing diverse talent



**GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Arts and cultural interventions engage with and raise awareness of key health priorities for the young including obesity, mental health and teenage pregnancy. Inclusive arts and wellness programming is co-ordinated to ensure that children of all abilities and backgrounds can access and benefit.



**GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH**

A focus on inclusive youth arts; a new inter-cultural dance focus and support for local community arts groups. Showcasing talent raises civic pride in the young.

and cultures. The city builds on its strengths in music and dance.

**NATION IN COVENTRY**

COVENTRY WILL POSITION ITSELF AS A CULTURAL CITY OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE.



**GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP**

Partnership approach increases the influence and reach of Coventry as a major cultural destination and attracts national and international events. Partnerships with major national institutions position Coventry as a key venue for events and exhibitions.



**GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING**

Focus on youth talent and mentoring produces next generation of professional and community artists and producers feeding national and international talent pipelines in a wide range of arts including digital arts.



**GOAL 3 DIVERSITY**

Investment in diverse arts and culture gains national reputation and attracts minority arts exhibitions, events and conferences.



**GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Establishing a new hub for arts and wellness to attract and bring together artists, health practitioners and academics to provide a national lead in arts and wellness.



**GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Status and drive as competitor for UK City of Culture 2021 brings national recognition boosts civic pride and transforms perceptions of the city. Draws in public and private investment and increases tourism economy. High profile events and exhibitions attract new visitor markets to the city.





#### GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP

A strategic partnership of agencies representing and giving voice to the diversity of the city. Collaborating in the creation of inclusive programmes and securing cross-community ownership of the cultural dynamic of the city. Universities providing spaces, expertise and educational and research support.



#### GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING

New focus on dance across the city encourages engagement in a wide range of new and traditional dance. Access to cultural education developed through schools and other centres of learning including opportunities to engage with a wide range of multicultural experiences.



#### GOAL 3 DIVERSITY

Co-ordinated cultural programme is representative of the city's diversity. There is increased participation, and ownership in local and city-wide events. Neighbourhood cultural events co-created with regional and national arts organisations.



#### GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Local sports hubs programming includes dance and arts related activities for all ages and abilities. Community based and led arts projects bring generations and cultures together for social interaction and creative production.

The city welcomes and develops national and international deaf and disabled professional artists as part of its programming.



#### GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH

The UK City of Culture bid process emphasises diversity and inclusion leading to new levels of civic pride and social cohesion and boosts neighbourhood economies. The city develops its international cultural links and visitor markets.

#### DIVERSE CITY

COVENTRY WILL SHOWCASE THE DIVERSITY OF THE CITY AND ITS TALENT AND SUPPORT A PROGRAMME THAT ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGH A WIDE VARIETY OF CULTURAL ACTIVITY.

#### GETTING COVENTRY MOVING

COVENTRY WILL FOCUS ON PROMOTING DANCE, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE CITY.



#### GOAL 1 PARTNERSHIP

The universities bring their expertise in dance, sport, health and administration. Cultural activities are embedded in sports, health and other civic strategies.



#### GOAL 2 LIFELONG LEARNING

New facilities for dance and a connected programme of dance and physical theatre encourage healthy lifestyles through artistic expression and engagement.



#### GOAL 3 DIVERSITY

Neighbourhood and city-wide focus on creating new cultural walks, trails, carnivals and festivals and other outdoor



#### GOAL 4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A lively and regular programme of neighbourhood cultural activity in centres and open spaces combats isolation and enhances emotional as well as physical wellbeing.



#### GOAL 5 ECONOMIC GROWTH

City-based cultural and heritage trails encourage movement around the city and encourage day visits and tourism.





# SEVEN BIG IDEAS

The Seven Big Ideas are at the heart of bringing the cultural strategy to the city. They represent achievable targets that will bring life and substance to the strategy's principles and goals. Under each idea the strategy proposes examples of the steps that could be taken.



## 1

### COVENTRY THE PLACE PARTNERSHIP

Coventry will establish a new independent cultural place partnership to support cultural growth and opportunities in the city.

The process of bidding for UK City of Culture 2021 is already joining up the city and delivering significant added value to the sector with the creation of the Coventry City of Culture Trust. The Trust is an independent body with representation from the City Council, the universities, the private sector and leading cultural and heritage organisations.

The strategy sees the trust as a prototype vehicle to drive the ambitions of a civic partnership approach to culture in the city. A partnership approach will access more funding routes for culture and ensure that resources are maximised and costs of maintenance and delivery are reduced. Some benefits to date include:

- Co-ordinated research and evaluation across the city
- Joining up the cultural sector and the beginnings of collaborative programming
- Establishing a dialogue between stakeholders and communities
- Widespread engagement of the two universities – including business development support and international collaboration
- Business engagement and investment in the city's cultural growth
- Improved media profile and positioning
- New partnerships – locally, regionally and nationally
- Establishing a new narrative of reinvention and ambition and strong themes for programming the city
- Making Coventry more 'visible' regionally and nationally
- Improved networking across the city with cultural, heritage, business and community groups and agencies
- Building capacity in the cultural sector and mentoring a new generation of producers, programmers and creative artists

Coventry City of Culture Trust is a charity. It has provided a neutral and trusted space to attract new cultural partners and funding. The Trust will provide a new financial model of cash and in kind support for a city-based partnership.

In time it could provide the basis for the ACE and HLF to commit funds for place-based working and capacity building of infrastructure. Capacity building and the strengthening of the professional cultural sector will be priority for a range of partners.

A key to the partnership will be the expertise of the University of Warwick and Coventry University in research, evaluation and the role of Coventry and Warwickshire Champions in promoting culture across sectors. There must also be a joined up approach in the delivery of policies and services to include culture as a part of the response to a wide range of issues including deprivation, mental health, social cohesion, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.

### SUMMARY ACTIONS:

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Establishing a partnership vehicle, based on the City of Culture 2021 Trust, for attracting inward investment and funding, maximising resources and co-ordinating partnership activity that reflects the needs and diversity of the city
- Developing a talent growth fund to support the next generation of cultural producers and educators in the city
- Co-ordinating partnership work around cultural equality and diversity
- Joining up fundraising support and bidding for major projects and delivering themed cross-city programming on an annual basis
- Co-ordinating listings, marketing and the promotion of the cultural tourism assets of the city
- Maximising the collective promotion of heritage and cultural assets including Historic Coventry, Culture Coventry, the Cathedral and other partners
- Leveraging the potential of the joint university input to city place-making through the creation of a joint University Coventry Creative Exchange
- Building on the strengths and cultural attraction for visitors of the city's museums, archives and architectural assets
- A partnership capital plan to develop the cultural capital of the city working with the LEP, ACE and heritage funding agencies

**THE CITY HAS A VERY STRONG BASIS FOR A PLACE PARTNERSHIP EMBRACING THE CITY COUNCIL, CULTURAL SECTOR, TWO UNIVERSITIES, PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHERS SUCH AS HISTORIC COVENTRY.**

**THE PROCESS OF BIDDING FOR UK CITY OF CULTURE 2021 HAS DEVELOPED A TEAM THAT CAN SUPPORT LONGER-TERM CULTURAL PROGRAMMING AND COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT IN THE CITY.**



## 2

**CREATIVE PRODUCTION HUBS**

Coventry will expand the creative workspace for artists and develop creation spaces for production, rehearsal and incubator activity.

Coventry doesn't yet have a critical mass of creative workspace. The spaces the city currently has are dispersed across a range of sites (e.g. Coventry Artspace, Canal Basin, Institute for Creative Enterprise at Coventry University (ICE), Daimler building, Fargo Village). Few of these sites have the critical mass to be scalable or independently sustainable. The strategy recommends a plan to be created for improved workspaces and to consider a series of zones for:

- Artists incubator workspace
- Creative production hub
- Digital industries growth
- City animators
- Local and accessible cultural and digital hubs

The Daimler Building could provide a basis for a production centre combining art, engineering, technology and street arts. The centre already houses Imagineer Productions, Highly Sprung and other part-time users and fits with the creative focus of Electric Wharf. This could become a building that

brings together artists, engineers and technologists to make new art. The focus on engineering and technology has the potential to attract investment from regional industries and skills training.

The Canal Basin has one of the greatest densities of cultural businesses in the city but has limited accessibility. The area could be developed and linked across the ring road to other cultural quarters around Belgrade Theatre, EGO Performance and Coventry Transport Museum.

The mapping of cultural spaces offers interesting opportunities to create links or quarters – there is an outer ring road cluster of the Canal Basin, Electric Wharf, Daimler, ICE, Fargo and the Albany Theatre and an inner city cluster of heritage and events spaces. EGO Performance, The Pod, Belgrade Theatre, Theatre Absolute, Coventry University, Fab Lab, Drapers, Fargo Village and Inspire are growing a greater city centre presence combined with the Cathedral, the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Transport Museum.

**THERE ARE PLANS TO DEVELOP CHARTERHOUSE AS A MAJOR HERITAGE CENTRE AND GREEN SPACE WHICH CONNECTS TO THE FAR GOSFORD CREATIVE QUARTER ALONG A NEW RIVER SHERBOURNE CORRIDOR. THIS CORRIDOR IS PLANNED AS A HOME FOR CREATIVE BUSINESSES AND WORK SPACES AND COULD LEAD TO A MAJOR NEW CULTURAL AND CREATIVE QUARTER ATTRACTING CREATIVES FROM BEYOND COVENTRY.**

**SUMMARY ACTIONS:**

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Supporting local industries with the development of a creative industries growth hub combining art and design, developed around existing facilities currently housing theatre, dance and festival producers
- Provide creative workspaces and improved audience facilities which support an 'Arts for Life' agenda to ensure that the most vulnerable and challenged residents have access to meaningful arts and heritage engagement
- Developing Coventry as a centre for professional and community creation and enjoyment of dance
- Improving lighting and accessibility to the Canal Basin and encouraging new occupancies by creatives and artists
- Developing new cultural tourism assets including hotels and visitor information resources through digital and virtual signposting
- Universities to develop graduate incubator space



## 3

**THE CITY IS THE FESTIVAL**

Coventry will build a livelier urban culture based on an annual calendar of events that attracts visitors and grows the day and night time economy.

The city has a major issue to address with the night time economy. Various factors encourage a 'drive in drive out' mentality and the city needs to encourage dwell time in the city. Venues and events, large and small, can be attractors to the city centre.

Herbert Lates, Drapers film nights, Cathedral special events and the Fargo niche festivals have shown how evening activity drives visitors. Tourism research has shown the draw of our festivals<sup>52</sup> and social media heat-mapping demonstrates pockets of activity – Spon Street, Far Gosford Street, Millennium Place and Belgrade Plaza included. New restaurants in the city centre have added life and food is an important part of our diverse cultures. There is an appetite for street performances and artistic activity, markets and food to enhance a visit to the city. This applies to areas such as Foleshill Road – potentially 'a golden mile' of food to rival Leicester's Humberstone Gate.

Large events like the Christmas lights switch-on bring in thousands of people but the city needs a critical mass of regular commercial events. The city also needs to recognise the potential and benefit of venues beyond the ring road as well as in the city centre. Warwick Arts Centre, Tin Music and Arts, Albany Theatre and Ricoh Arena are prime examples.

The Ricoh Arena, in particular, has shown the potential of large-scale events and concerts. These can be used to drive more city centre benefit by fringe events, marketing and hotel packaging. The city's architecture, old and modern, is one of our defining features. More can be made of our subways and pedestrian

spaces as galleries, temporary venues and well-lit urban gateways. The city has a fine collection of public art and there is a real opportunity to add to this through new developments including Friargate and the market redevelopment.

The 'City is the Festival' is a concept to use the very fabric of the modern and historic city as an events space. As part of public realm there is the potential for an artist-led lighting and signage strategy that could bring visitors to the city.

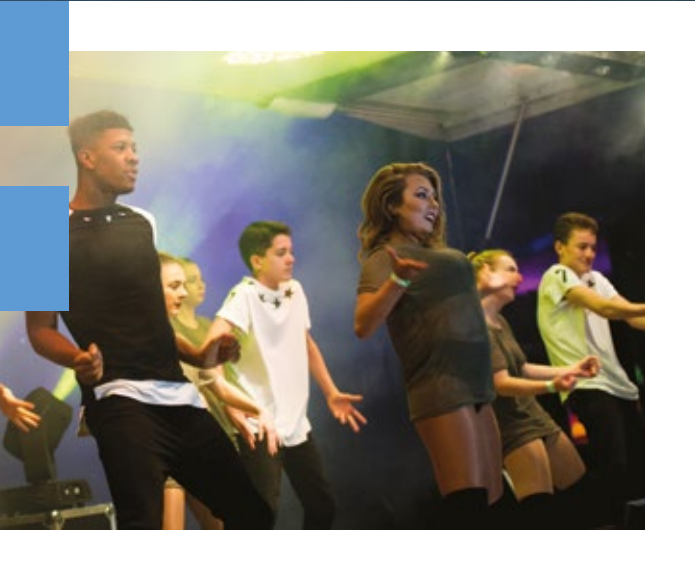
**SUMMARY ACTIONS:**

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Art trails – temporary commissions and trails to attract people to look at the considerable art and architecture of the city
- Heritage Trails – to inspire people with the medieval story of Coventry linking the medieval collections at the Herbert to the extant architecture
- Large scale events programme – annual calendar of events over a three-year period
- A 365 day calendar and 'what's on'
- All roads lead to .... A series of 'years of' – or focused celebrations – e.g. Cathedral 100, Year of Youth, Modernism and the city
- A biennial plan to host major public celebrations reflecting the identity, diversity and confidence of the city
- Winning UK City of Culture and bidding for other national events and conferences
- Pop up spaces – shop-front venues, showcasing talent in city centre and neighbourhood locations
- A Shop Front Festival
- Broadgate ('Godiva Square')/ Cathedral quarter spectacles that enhance the night time economy
- Alternative performance sites are considered (e.g. car parks as cultural venues)
- Strengthening existing community-based festivals with a particular emphasis on celebrating the diversity of the city (e.g. Melas, PRIDE)
- Building capacity of the Cathedral as a year-round cultural venue

A cultural programme consortium will be established to plan two and three years ahead and to drive forward city-wide projects. This will be led by the Place Partnership and involve a more formalised grouping from local cultural networks such as Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and CW8.





**THE STRATEGY MUST ENGAGE WITH ALL GENERATIONS, BUT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES AND A VOICE IN CULTURAL PLANNING. THEY SHOULD EXPERIENCE HIGH QUALITY ARTS AND CULTURE AS AUDIENCE MEMBERS, PARTICIPANTS, CREATORS AND LEADERS. IT IS A YOUNG CITY AND THE YOUNG SHOULD BE SUPPORTED TO SHAPE THE CITY'S CULTURAL FUTURE.**

# 4

## SEVEN YEARS YOUNGER

Coventry will become a leader in youth arts and talent development and young people will be directly involved in the delivery of cultural programmes.



Coventry is seven years younger than the England average age.<sup>53</sup> Therefore a focus on youth engagement through culture will be key to the success of the strategy. The strategy must address issues of talent and access to culture for marginalised young people alongside initiatives that will encourage graduate retention and talent pipelines. Some wards have over 40% of children living in poverty and with limited access to facilities.<sup>54</sup>

We have many cultural organisations and agencies in the field such as Belgrade Youth Theatre, Positive Youth Foundation, Shoot Festival, EGO Performance, Coventry Music Education Hub, Tin Music and Arts, Young Imagineers, Sprungsters, Notables, Grapevine, Irish dance groups, Coventry and Warwick University programmes and student societies. The city also has networks of schools, leisure centres and community facilities. The Coventry Music Education Hub reaches 12,000 children and young people across the city and is recognised as a national leader.<sup>55</sup>

Many young people now access their culture on the streets, digitally on phones, on tablets and in their homes. As well as traditional opportunities, culture needs to be accessible and engaging to young people across different media, virtual and physical. Coventry can develop a new generation of young programmers and producers and grow access through youth support agencies, training providers and education services to target hard-to-reach young people.

### SUMMARY ACTIONS:

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Providing accessible digital information about all of the organisations that work with children and young people, what they offer and what safeguards they have in place and at what cost. The information should include opportunities for talent to access progression routes through to advanced levels of training
- Establishing a new cultural education hub to expand on the music hub and to include digital and other arts popular in the city
- Strengthening the Cultural Education Partnership already in place and increase the number of schools with Artsmark status and the delivery of Arts Awards particularly, the accessible Arts developed by Culture Coventry
- Creating a new dance partnership to respond to the demand and to bring together different dance forms in the city
- Aspiring to create a national reputation for excellence through a Youth Digital Arts hub
- Supporting a new Cultures of Coventry Youth Orchestra that is inclusive of the cultures of the city



## 5

**THE NATION IN COVENTRY**

Coventry will position itself as a cultural city of national and international importance.

Coventry was a pioneer for city twinning and has 26 civic relationships around the world. The Cathedral, through its peace and reconciliation work and through the Community of the Cross of Nails, has over 90 international connections and in-depth relationships with Dresden and Volgograd. Coventry will partner with Kiel in 2017 to seal a relationship dating from 1947. The universities have major international footprints and Coventry artists have forged relationships abroad. However, whilst several organisations mentioned *ad-hoc* international work there are few sustained international and European cultural collaborations other than at Warwick Arts Centre. There has been limited cultural engagement and creative exchange with the 26 twin cities.

International partnerships could engage with the natural links to the diversity of the Coventry population and of artists in the city. India, China and Poland offer particular potential. Given Coventry's proud record of welcoming refugees the city could develop links to national and international cultural work covering issues of migration and sanctuary. Coventry was once the capital of England. Imagine if it housed the Tate Gallery, the Globe Theatre, the National Portrait Gallery, The London Jazz Festival and the O2 arena events. Well maybe it can.

Warwick Arts Centre is already a significant production hub and could be the equivalent of the LIFT Festival or Manchester International Festival working with national producers. The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum is already

working with national partners and is currently developing exhibitions in partnership with the Courtauld Gallery, National Portrait Gallery and the British Museum.

Both Coventry University and the University of Warwick are used regularly as national cultural conference venues and the city could build on this to position itself as a welcome host for national and international conferences. Winning UK City of Culture would help this process.

**SUMMARY ACTIONS:**

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Continue to nurture existing relationships with key national bodies and work towards developing practical relationships with key national agencies including the likes of Nesta, Historic England, Creative England and Arts Council England
- Building the capacity to bid for and access national funding
- Place partnership/City of Culture Trust bids to host major national events
- The Nation in Coventry – A residency each year by a national/international company, held in the city
- Developing broadcast relationships – BBC stages and BBC the Place
- Targeting Coventry as a central space for cultural conferencing
- A special relationship with the Royal Shakespeare Company – our national neighbour – to develop access for all to high quality professional arts works
- Working with the BBC locally, and regionally (The Space and Academy) to attract and establish joint events
- Building closer cultural links and exchanges with the 26 twinned cities
- Leveraging the iconic status of the Cathedral and its surroundings as a sought-after national/international performance site

- Promoting the national importance of Coventry Transport Museum which tells Coventry's story as the birthplace of the British Road Transport Industry
- Annual residency for leading artists focusing on the architecture and heritage assets of the city
- Attracting dance and other performing art industry conferences to the city e.g. One Dance UK and People Dancing
- Developing national partners for the Herbert and Mead Galleries



**COVENTRY IS WELL POSITIONED AS A SHOWCASE FOR THE NATION - WITH 40 MILLION PEOPLE WITHIN TWO HOURS TRAVEL TIME.<sup>56</sup> THE CITY WILL WORK TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO MAKE COVENTRY A CITY OF CHOICE FOR NATIONAL COLLECTIONS, EVENTS AND PRODUCTIONS.**



## 6

**DIVERSE CITY**

Coventry will showcase the diversity of the city and its talent and support a programme that encourages participation and attendance in a wide variety of cultural activity.

The rich diversity of the population of Coventry is a key cultural strength and provides a platform for a wide range of new and traditional forms of expression that are representative of the people and their neighbourhoods. The strategy embraces diversity in its widest sense and proposes a cultural future in which all generations, all heritages and all abilities have a voice and presence in the cultural life of the city. It is important that there is diversity amongst audiences, artists and board members of our biggest cultural organisations.

The recent 2016 exhibition of Masterji's photographs, the Herbert Art Gallery's 2016 participation in the Black Artist & Modernism Movements project leading to the Gavin Jantje's exhibition, and the telling of the story of Ira Aldridge, the ex-slave who ran Coventry's theatre in the 1840's are excellent examples of the power and appeal of the stories and voices of Coventry's communities.

*Traum*, an electrifying 2016 dance work by Theatre Absolute and the Romanian artists Marius Mates and Dimitar Goranov showcases the talents of the European communities in the city. The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum has a history of intergeneration work with new and older communities including specific projects with the Polish, South Asian and Asian communities.

The city has a proud tradition of artistic work with and for people with learning disabilities and also has the opportunity to become a beacon for professional deaf and disabled artists. Several of the city's cultural organisations such as EGO

Performance, Highly Sprung Productions and Talking Birds have worked with disabled groups such as Grapevine and disabled artists. Culture Coventry's Creative Bridges programme specifically works to support young people with learning disabilities into creative industry careers. Coventry Transport Museum is one of only three UK-registered Makaton Friendly Museums.

This work has often been low profile and needs to be given greater prominence in the city. The city has been at the national forefront of welcoming refugees and integrating communities. The cultural strategy will build on this distinctive feature of the city.

Faith and ethnicity have a strong influence on cultural choices and preferences in the city. There is a proud tradition of faith-based and secular cultural activity including music, dance and food events and the strategy proposes a major focus on developing the cultural arts of expression and talents of the African, Asian, European and wider international residents of the city and showcasing these so that they can be enjoyed across the city and region. A truly inclusive and diverse cultural strategy will also celebrate the different inter-generational cultural preferences to ensure that both young and old from all cultures are represented.

The strategy's cultural audit highlights a limited number of formally constituted or funded groups within the city's ethnic communities.<sup>57</sup> There is an active branch of BOPA, an African cultural association, and several local dance groups.



The city has hosted a number of Melas at the Belgrade, Coventry Transport Museum and Ricoh Arena, and Romanian dance artists have emerged from graduate programmes. The ambition to address diversity in the city will require proactive and professional interventions supporting residencies, building capacity and engaging with agencies such as the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre who promote festivals such as the refugee week celebration in the park. Coventry should be the touchstone for the Arts Council England's challenge to reach more BAME diverse communities. Coventry could also be a place to pilot new initiatives and test new solutions for engagement of different cultures.

**SUMMARY ACTIONS:**

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Establish a refugee arts festival during refugee week
- National residencies – by international artists from cultures represented in the city
- Celebrating the voices and stories of the city through neighbourhood and city-wide story-telling projects using performance, music, film and other digital media
- Leveraging the role of artists in leading peace and reconciliation initiatives
- Marketing and programming the Coventry Godiva Festival as a stage for the city's diversity of ages, cultures and abilities
- Co-creation and engagement programmes with BAME residents from all our main cultural producers
- Showcase and nurture the work of deaf and disabled artists at local, national and international level
- A neighbourhood-level BAME focused Arts Council England's 'Creative People and Places' project
- Curating a photographic archive of diversity and working class lives in urban Britain
- Programming neighbourhood food festivals that attract people from across the city and region
- Creating a Cultures of Coventry Youth Orchestra and dance company that is inclusive of the cultures of the city
- Prioritising for the first five years the professional development of BAME, non-UK heritage artists to build capacity within Coventry's diverse communities



## 7

**GETTING COVENTRY MOVING**

Coventry will focus on promoting dance, physical activity and active lifestyles to support the health and emotional wellbeing of the city.

Coventry has major health challenges and is seeking to tackle health inequalities through the Marmot Cities agenda.<sup>58</sup> There is increasing evidence that arts interventions including using museums and galleries as venues can alleviate a wide range of physical and cognitive conditions including obesity, dementia and depression.<sup>59</sup> The strategy recommends a close working relationship between the cultural sector, health providers and public health strategies to maximise the opportunities for the social prescription of arts interventions for a wide range of conditions and health-related issues.

On the surface, health and wellbeing may not appear to be a major problem in Coventry relative to England. Life expectancy at birth in Coventry is slightly lower than in England as a whole – for males it is 78.6 years (vs. 79.5 years in England) while for females it is 82.3 years (vs. 83.2).<sup>60</sup> However, what is more worrying is the wide inequality gap, as a man from the most deprived area is likely to die 9.4 years earlier than one from the least deprived area. The difference for a woman is 8.7 years.<sup>61</sup>

Childhood obesity is a particular problem in Coventry. In 2013/14 one in four Coventry children in Reception class (ages 4 and 5) at primary school are overweight or obese and one in three children in Year 6 (aged 10 and 11) are overweight or obese.<sup>62</sup> This is a slightly higher rate of obesity than either the regional or national average. Childhood obesity doesn't affect all of society equally, it is affected by the conditions in which people are born and grow. There is a strong relationship between

deprivation and childhood obesity. This means that children from the poorest backgrounds are the most likely to be obese.<sup>63</sup>

Projects such as The POD have expertise in arts and mental health and do valuable work through the visual arts. Herbert Media within Culture Coventry has a European reputation for its creative media and visual arts training for young people with learning disabilities and difficulties. The West Midlands Combined Authority has established a priority for physical activity. Coventry will contribute to this through the arts and heritage activities as well as sport and physical activity.

The city has a strong sports tradition and historic association with the bicycle. The link between cycling and the arts will be developed as a theme through to 2021.

Coventry is a walkable city. The plans for architecture, heritage and a pedestrianised city centre and other trails will seek to move people around the city. The proposed Richard II loop would provide a new walking and cycling route connecting a number of cultural quarters in the city. Historic Coventry has visionary plans to create a walking equivalent of the ring road, which could become a new set of cultural lungs for the city and uses public art as an attraction. The cultural sector could usefully learn from sports models to drive healthy living and lifestyle change through physical and mental cultural activity.

Whilst there are many public and private gyms, Coventry has over 102 dance organisations and no major centre for



dance. Dance is a strength of Coventry University with a centre for dance research and could work well alongside the inspirational dance programming of Warwick Arts Centre. The strategy proposes that the city consider the possibility of a new dance centre and federation, which brings all the various dance organisations in the city together. Working with schools, community groups and ethnic communities, the strategy proposes the working up of a project based on dance to get Coventry moving. There is evidence that dance is the most popular form of exercise after football and a focus on dance will help get the city moving for people of all ages and abilities.<sup>64</sup>

The strategy will embrace and celebrate the food of our different cultures. There is great affection for Coventry Market. The city has the opportunity to enhance the food offer for visitors but also to make the market a meeting place and tackle isolation through cultural engagement.

Public commissioning (an initiative supported by Arts Council England) is being pushed, based on the notion of integrating arts and culture into services such as those focusing on health and wellbeing. This means that greater emphasis is put on preventing harm and reducing the need of residents for more acute services.<sup>65</sup> In terms of older people, it is found that arts and cultural activity can foster resilience and independence. Such activities also contribute to mental health and wellbeing outcomes, especially when it comes to preventive and community care and instances where medication is not a viable alternative.<sup>66</sup>

**SUMMARY ACTIONS:**

Next steps towards achieving the objective might include but are not limited to:

- Increasing dance and physical cultural activity as a key priority in health and related strategies
- Feasibility work to explore the potential for a dedicated dance centre
- Working with health commissioners to produce artist-led interventions in mental health treatments and other health education priorities
- Establishing walking trails and cultural and heritage walks in the wards and the city centre
- Supporting artists in developing targeted health education projects with children and young people and older residents
- Developing the Richard II loop as an exciting pedestrian ring-road with cultural attractions that appeal across generations
- Making greater use of parks and open spaces for regular dance and physical activities with a cultural twist
- Work with Public Health colleagues and local NHS commissioners on projects that will alleviate isolated and emotionally-challenged residents of all ages
- Developing a centre for innovative practice in arts and mental health
- Themed outdoor arts events which focus on a specific need like child obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles in a fun and engaging way

**THERE IS INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS AND VARIOUS CULTURAL ACTIVITIES CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING, AS WELL AS THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF AND INTERACTIONS WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS.**



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The strategy will continue to evolve over the ten-year journey towards achieving its vision.

It's important that this strategy remains flexible and consultative in order to stay fresh and embrace new ideas, people and technologies. There will be an on-going research and evaluation process to regularly inform the implementation of the strategy.

The five key goals for cultural growth in the city alongside incremental changes identified within this report, will over a decade transform Coventry into a recognised centre of national significance for its heritage and contemporary culture. The five key goals will form the framework for biennial evaluation, measuring the progress around the transformational Seven Big Ideas for transforming the cultural life of the city.

These changes are based on the current cultural, economic and political landscape; being responsive to changing circumstances will keep the strategy live. The partnership of Coventry City Council, Warwick and Coventry universities will continue to evaluate and develop the strategy in line with the recommendations in this report. The ongoing updates and progress will be published on the Coventry cultural strategy website [culturechange.coventry.com](http://culturechange.coventry.com)



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(i) Have you attended any of the following cultural events (museums and galleries; pubs, clubs and bars; live events; live music; theatre; cinema; activities organised by arts-based community groups; faith-based cultural activities) in Coventry at least three times in the past 12 months?

(ii) If you have children (18 years or younger) in your household, have they attended any of the following cultural events (same list as above) in Coventry at least three times in the past 12 months?

Figures given only count residents who participate in at least one other arts and cultural activity in addition to going to the cinema or pubs, clubs and bars.



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