

**A strategic framework for culture and an action plan**

**Produced on behalf of the  
Thames Gateway South Essex Cultural Commission**

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## **A strategic framework for culture and an action plan**

### **1. Introduction**

This strategic framework offers an overview of how culture and sport can help deliver strategic objectives for communities, thereby developing the case for culture in respect of the economy and quality of life.

The primary audience for this paper is the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Cultural Commission. Potentially it will reach those whose remit may include strategic planning and planning for regeneration, community and cultural programmes and projects – to promote the broader community benefits that culture and sport can enable.

This paper takes into account current and emerging national, East region-specific priorities and plans, particularly Living Places, as part of the Creating Cultural Opportunities project. The framework was inspired by the approach of Thames Gateway North Kent's (TGNK) cultural framework (2006). It also references the innovative work of Professor Martin Elson and Lesley Downing for Culture East Midlands on spatial planning and planning for cultural infrastructure (Elson & Downing, 2006).

This framework has been drafted for the newly created TGSE Cultural Commission. The Cultural Commission was established following a key recommendation from the 2007 work of Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and Noema Research and Planning in their report, "Creating Cultural Opportunities: a methodology for strengthening cultural infrastructure in Thames Gateway South Essex". The framework is intended to be complementary to Tom Fleming's report. His work focused more on national and regional policies and analysis of local priority projects. This framework, however, focuses on opportunities through recently emerging priorities and opportunities for sub-regional partnership working, alongside alliances of cultural agencies in supporting sustainable communities and successful place making.

In addition, to set this framework in the TGSE-specific demographic context, we undertook a study (see Appendix 1) using Sport England market segmentation profiles - from 'Active People' and 'Taking Part' survey data - and Experian Mosaic-linked variables. This shows the social activities undertaken by each segment as well as the barriers that prevent them from participating. We modelled this data using population projection forecasts to 2029 to show how the demographic make up of TGSE is likely to change in the future and what the strategic issues are facing those responsible for planning future cultural infrastructure across the sub-region.

## **2. A fresh imperative: the new national plan for improving culture and sport**

It is significant that a new strategy has just been released (March 2008) by the Local Government Association (LGA) in partnership with Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and associated Non-Departmental Public Body partners: 'A Passion for Excellence: an improvement strategy for culture and sport' (source: DCMS website).

The new strategy states that evidence of the wider social and economic benefits of culture and sport have not been consistently documented and qualitative evidence that has not been based upon common methodologies. This new approach is intended to improve the evidence base to demonstrate the impact on community outcomes. It reflects Cllr Chris White's comment in the foreword to 'Creative Consequences' (a study produced by local authority partners working in Essex and South Essex): "A long-standing challenge for the sector has been to find effective ways of measuring and assessing the impact of its provision". He notes that the local authority partners involved are "demonstrating leadership in this area" through the study.

Culture and sport are recognised as being the glue that holds communities together; the new strategy covers the DCMS culture sub-sectors (listed below, beginning of Section 3). Its focus is on three key developments to deliver excellent sporting and cultural services for healthier, stronger communities:

- "The increasing recognition of the value of culture and sport in the wider economy (including creative industries);
- Greater emphasis on expertise and good judgement when looking to improve standards and raise performance;
- Advice to push money and responsibility... to the lowest possible levels" (ie delegating downwards).

The strategy aims to make culture and sport better at delivering economic, social and environmental outcomes in local communities; to simplify support; to improve performance and address under-performance; to build capacity and leadership. This strategy fits with the new DCMS corporate objectives and new Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets from April 2008 – referred to later in section 7. Funding.

## **3. The value of culture**

Central Government, through DCMS, defines culture as:

- The performing and visual arts, craft and fashion
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- Museums, artefacts, archives and design
- Built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- Sports events, facilities and development
- Media, film, television, video and language

- Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- Tourism, festivals and attractions
- Informal leisure pursuits

The aim of the DCMS is “to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.” (source: DCMS website).

DCMS delivers through its relationships and service agreements with NDPBs including Arts Council England, Sport England, the Regional Cultural Consortiums, etc. DCMS monitors participation levels through its ‘Taking Part’ survey and Sport England’s ‘Active People’. (Strategic priorities and PSAs are referred to later in section 7. Funding.) The regional Government Office promotes the Department’s strategic priorities and the cultural agenda throughout the region, including with the regional cultural agencies. The Department’s new strategic objectives are covered later, under Funding). Alongside DCMS funding relationships with NDPBs, local government is a major funder of culture, investing more annually than DCMS and Lottery. Nevertheless it is important to note that culture is a non-statutory service and therefore liable to suffer cuts. Lottery funds remain available for culture and sport however, these have been negatively affected due to developments towards London 2012.

Culture is not limited to professional organisations and dedicated facilities. Alongside these and still important are the many, less formal – eg community-based, amateur and voluntary - cultural activities in which everyone, from all communities can participate, and in a range of places, including open spaces, community halls and schools.

Living Places is a recent alliance of DCMS and Communities and Local Government (CLG) with the cultural agencies and sport. In its prospectus, in the section, ‘Making places come alive – the case for culture and sport’, it states (paraphrased):

Culture and sport...

- bring people together
- help develop identity and a sense of place
- make places more attractive
- make us healthier and happier
- enhance people’s skills and help generate prosperity
- help build safer communities
- help build stronger communities

Living Places wants to see places offering:

- a greater sense of identity and confidence
- more cohesive communities
- more prosperous
- healthier
- providing value for money

In addition, there is a value dimension (source: TGNK cultural framework) to culture that is about:

- Relationships – eg between individuals and groups
- Social standards, norms and values
- Shared memories, experience and identity
- Diverse faith, cultural and historic heritage and backgrounds
- What is considered of value to pass on to future generations

#### **4. Characteristics of culture**

The Thames Gateway North Kent cultural framework explains that culture can be characterised in the following terms, each dependent on interactions between people, places, and culture:

- *Intrinsic value*: this refers to benefits people gain from cultural experiences, including emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. We participate or engage in culture and sport for enjoyment, not simply because it helps us to be active. We visit the theatre because we enjoy and appreciate the experience, not because we need to contribute to the local economy.
- *Instrumental value*: this refers to the social and economic benefits brought by culture, such as supporting the local economy, job creation/maintenance, increased health and skills and decreased crime. Measures of such can be the foundation for public investment in culture.
- *Institutional value*: this refers to civic benefits engendered by people's participation in a shared experience whether produced by small or large organisations, either professional or community-based.

#### **5. A new alliance advocating culture for communities**

As outlined earlier (see Living Places etc page 3.) culture is a key component of successful places, those where people want to live and work, places that meet the diverse needs of communities and offer good services for all, thereby contributing to a good quality of life.

Good cultural provision attracts business and residents, it brings communities together and promotes cohesion, it can also help people raise their aspirations to realise their potential by being healthy and active through their involvement. "The importance of culture, leisure and sport in addressing issues such as social cohesion, health and crime is becoming increasingly apparent" (source GO-East [www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/](http://www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/)). Culture attracts tourists and investors who enhance local economy and it creates a sense of civic pride.

The importance of culture to communities is prioritised through the recently launched, Government-backed Living Places alliance. What is significant about this alliance is the backing of both CLG and DCMS together to involve

cultural agencies within the spatial planning context. This demonstrates a shift in Government interest from house building to place making, which complements its focus on new housing targets linked with economic growth through its Sustainable Communities Plan. This Plan identified growth areas in the programme for the East region, including Thames Gateway. "This plan will affect every region as part of the Government's drive to raise the quality of life in our communities through reducing prosperity, reducing inequalities, producing more employment, better public services and better health and education". (source GO-East [www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/](http://www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/))

Living Places sees the challenge for the cultural sector is in advocating to strategic and spatial planners, to ensure that high-quality culture is embedded and integral - rather than an add-on – in community planning and spatial planning processes. Culture must be designed in from the outset, as the glue that brings communities together and promotes cohesion and pride in places, rather than an afterthought.

Living Places has three overall objectives:

1. To provide those people who are shaping communities with information, advice, and support on the use of culture and sport to create better places.
2. To align investment from the sporting and cultural sector with sustainable communities funding across organisational boundaries so it works harder for people.
3. To empower communities to make cultural and sporting activity and infrastructure a part of their lives.

A Living Places East region group has been established and recently drafted an action plan (led by Arts Council East) to reflect priority projects of partners. It has not yet been confirmed how the regional alliance will link with partners at sub-regional and local levels. The membership composition of the TGSE Cultural Commission currently broadly reflects that of Living Places (at officer level rather than regional executive director level) and it presents a clear opportunity to develop sub-regional partnership working in this wider context and a set of shared priority projects (meeting regional, sub-regional and local priorities).

Cultural agencies in the Greater South East regions have already agreed their pan-Gateway priorities in terms of 'spatial transformers', projects of strategic transformation, of scale and prestige. These are reflected in the 'Developing a creative and cultural milieu' section of the draft Economic Investment Development Plan 2008-2013 (produced by SEEDA, EEDA and LDA) and include: The Royal Opera House Production Campus and National Skills Academy in Thurrock; Creative Industries (including a pan-Gateway scoping study); and Re-imagining the Gateway (profile-raising and prestige through cultural commissions and events including an international festival). A further priority would be promoting cultural planning, capacity building, and partnership. The lead partnership may be the pan-Gateway Living Places Partnership. It is also anticipated that the new Cultural Planning Toolkit (currently a 'tool' of Living Places) and embedding culture in cultural

frameworks will help inform capital investment planning, especially for cultural facilities.

## **6. Culture and sport and improved quality of life: wider benefits**

An important strength of culture and sport is that they can add value to agendas that are not necessarily led by the cultural sector, for example Tourism and Housing. Below are some examples of where culture and sport can contribute to key priorities for communities:

### **Children and young people**

- Children need space for creative play and to explore their own ideas through creativity as a means to learning
- Culture can offer a way of developing cultural capital, channelling positive energy and talent to create a sense of achievement and belonging

### **Community cohesion and citizenship**

- Cultural and sporting activities can engender a sense of connection, community and neighbourhood by bringing people together; they can break down barriers to perceived differences and build social networks

### **Creativity, Innovation and Enterprise**

- Cultural and sporting opportunities create cultural capital and contribute to talent and skills development.

### **Community development**

- Well-planned, well-designed residential developments with good community facilities offer better environments and more opportunities for residents and their families helping to enable more sustainable communities because people get out more and naturally create local surveillance
- Sustainable communities are safe and inclusive and meet diverse needs; there is less crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Economic development**

- Vibrant culture attracts investors and workforce. This is particularly true for knowledge-based economic sectors and higher-value jobs.
- Such environments can also help retain graduates
- Market positioning and offer, image and reputation: the cultural offer of a place can help add value as part of an inward investment proposal (eg Milton Keynes Theatre and Gallery)
- Culture and sporting assets can help improve productivity of tourism in promoting a place or attraction for high quality and distinctiveness
- Cultural tourists generally produce a higher value spend per head and may be desirable - and sustainable - than simply increasing visitor numbers without increasing their associated spend.
- *London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games*: opportunities for promotion and marketing of TGSE cultural assets

- Culture and sport provide employment as well as volunteering opportunities; the creative industries in the East region are a fast-growing sector. Creative industries accounted for 8.2% of UK GVA in 2001 (source: Living East, 'A Better Life')
- Investment in culture eg heritage can help lever significant other regeneration funds

### **Education, skills and learning**

- Culture and sport can offer learning opportunities for all ages and improving skills levels assists economic prosperity
- Engagement in culture leads to increased social capital. Places such as museums, libraries and sports clubs help build social capital, not only through their work, also through their creation of shared spaces
- Taking part can help improve individual self-esteem and confidence, even leading to a more active role in their communities
- Communication and technical skills can be learnt and developed

### **Environment, spatial planning and sense of place**

- Culture can contribute to developing a strong and unique sense of place
- Heritage assets, visitor attractions and quality of environment for residents of new and existing communities
- Culture and cultural opportunities contribute to place making and an attractive public realm for new and developing communities.
- People feel more sense of pride in communities with good community facilities; families get out more as families; social networks improve
- Property values increase as facilities and services are improved (eg Butler's Wharf and St Katharine's Dock in London)
- CABE believes that investment in design and culture can trigger the regeneration needed by seaside resorts through well-designed buildings, spaces and places

### **Healthy and active communities**

- Access to sport and culture can improve mental and physical health
- Culture and sport offer opportunities for participation and enjoyment, for all ages and abilities; they can help prevent or respond to health issues eg obesity. (*'Taking Part' provides regional data and 'Creative Consequences can produce sub-regional and district-level data profiles.'*)
- Volunteering in the cultural sector eg museums and heritage provides opportunities for older people

### **Social inclusion**

- Cultural and sporting opportunities can help excluded/deprived communities to raise ambitions and realise their potential, also helping to improve community cohesion

## **Sustainable community planning and delivery**

- Culture is at the heart of places where people want to live and work, that offer high quality of life and good services for everyone. The CLG definition of sustainable communities includes; “opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people”.
- Cultural and sporting infrastructure and opportunities must be created alongside residential and other developments

## **Volunteering**

The cultural and sporting sectors provide opportunities for numerous volunteers at professional and community levels.

## **7. Government priorities for culture and associated funding opportunities (excluding Lottery)**

### **7.1 Public Service Agreements (PSA)**

DCMS and Treasury agree PSA targets. These prioritise increasing access to and take-up of culture and sporting activities and may also target particular priority socio-economic groups. Such targets – and the associated reward grants – drive much cultural activity planning. The targets are based on regional context - via the objectives of the cultural agencies – as well as through local authority cultural policies.

There is currently emphasis from Government on increasing the role of the voluntary sector in delivery of public services and in LAAs.

There is a new PSA framework from April 2008-2011 that reflects the Government’s priority outcomes. Each PSA has a Delivery Agreement setting out plans and the role of key partners (see HM Treasury website). DCMS leads on one PSA (Olympics and PE and School Sport) with five supporting indicators (full details via PSA Delivery Agreement 22 on HM Treasury website).

DCMS also contributes to six other PSAs owned by other Departments:

- Raise the productivity of the UK economy
- Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success
- Address the disadvantage that individuals experience due to gender, race, disability, ages, sexual orientation, religion or belief
- Increase long term housing supply and affordability
- Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

DCMS also has a new set of strategic objectives for 2008-11:

- Opportunity: encourage more widespread enjoyment of culture, media and sport
- Excellence: support talent and excellence in culture, media and sport

- Economic impact: realise the economic benefits of the Department's sectors
- Olympics: Deliver a successful and inspirational Olympic and Paralympic Games with a sustainable legacy.

These objectives fit with the new improvement plan for cultural services referred to earlier.

## **7.2 Growth Area Funding**

Existing allocations in Thames Gateway South Essex are shown in the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan.

## **7.3 Community Cohesion Funding**

An investment of £50 million has been allocated nationally over the next three years to promote community cohesion and support local authorities in preventing and managing community tensions. This is an increase from £2m in 2007/08. Local councils will use the money to respond to their own particular challenges - some focusing on new migration, others looking more at how they promote interaction between people from different backgrounds. Activities might include - youth projects bringing people from different backgrounds together; involving young people in community activities through volunteering, mentoring or becoming neighbourhood wardens; school or places of worship twinning programmes, local pride in the community campaigns; conflict resolution; award ceremonies to celebrate local people and local achievements.

(Source: CLG website)

## **7.4 Sea Change**

This is a new fund (£45M in total; launched November 2007 and running from 2008-2011 awarding £15M per year) aiming to kick start wider economic regeneration in coastal areas (in areas of social and economic deprivation in need of regeneration) through specific investment in culture and heritage. CABE leading in partnership with RDA, English Heritage, MLA and Arts Council, Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund (DCMS Press Release 147/07). The funding supports cultural infrastructure including improving historic public spaces, conversion of old or creation of new cultural centres.

## **8. The regional and sub-regional growth and regeneration context – in brief**

The Thames Gateway is the largest regeneration project in the UK. Much of the East region's growth is proposed to take place within the government-designated growth areas. The growth agenda is based on significantly increasing housing and jobs. The TGSE sub-region is part of the wider Thames Gateway, which extends to London and the South East regions and which has been designated a growth area under the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan (2003).

TGSE comprises the five authorities of Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock. It forms the largest urban area in the East of England, and its mix of urban and natural environments represent a unique challenge for urban regeneration. With a population of over 635,000 in 2001 it represented 12% of the regional total. (See Appendix 1 for key projections).

Alongside economic development and community cohesion, culture plays a significant role in realising the growth agenda, hence the significance of the focus of the CLG/DCMS-led Living Places alliance referred to earlier. In this context, key cultural planning issues in the sub-region include: the changing demographic; the growth areas agenda and investment for associated infrastructure needs.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) – a partner in the Living Places alliance - advocates good quality design as an integral part of thinking and planning. It believes that everyone deserves to live, work and play in well-designed, attractive environments. Good design can help raise an area's profile, raising confidence among investors as well as people living in a place and those moving in. The Essex Design Initiative (Essex County Council) supports this approach through guidance and clear principles as well as learning opportunities for those working in the built environment. Local design guidelines – such as those produced by Southend Council for Southend Town Centre and the Canvey seafront initiative – help preserve valuable aspects of heritage alongside schemes of high quality, contemporary design. Recognising local heritage – part of the culture and history of places - can play a significant part in helping to create places that are unique and distinctive.

## **9. Sub-regional planning for culture**

In 2007, Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy with Noema produced a report. "Creating Cultural Opportunities: a methodology for strengthening cultural infrastructure development in Thames Gateway South Essex". This included an overview of policy drivers and current priority cultural developments in the area as Local Area Profiles including Basildon, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Castle Point.

The report also included projections of the numbers of jobs and dwellings to be created by 2021 and an overview of the priorities for regeneration of the TGSE area and the lead role of Thames Gateway South Essex partnership.

There is an argument that planning strategically for culture across the sub-region and across local authority boundaries (County, Unitary etc) could be more effective in terms of making provision and therefore more beneficial for communities themselves – audiences and users of facilities do not necessarily need to be limited by local authority boundaries. This could require sub-regional prioritisation of projects and a joined-up approach to planning of facilities and service provision. This approach could link to the role of the Living Places regional group.

Elson & Downing (p17 4.3) proposed a need in another designated Growth Area, the East Midlands – and at a sub-regional level - to produce a strategic analysis of cultural needs and opportunities in the context of population change and growth, and the likely location of new development over the next two decades.... (depending on how much useful information already exists).. that would need to consider:

- Existing situation: provision, needs, opportunities
- Likely demands created by growth and modernisation of services
- Existing local programmes, priorities and partnerships
- Existing priorities and action plans for implementation.

In Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) a tariff for culture is now being developed, based on the MKSM and North Northants pilots. A cultural infrastructure investment plan may be required to assist prioritising tariff expenditure.

Existing local and sub-regional opportunities (or tools) to support cultural and sporting infrastructure development and delivery include:

Community plans

Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements

Local Development Frameworks

Cultural strategies

Supplementary planning documents

Tom Fleming and Noema's 2007 report previously referred to, "A methodology for strengthening cultural infrastructure in TGSE", analyses local provision in chapter 3. TGSE Local Area Profiles. He summarises these under the following headings, with examples: cultural infrastructure; economic development and skills; recreation and healthy living; planning for distinctiveness; planning for growth.

Essex County Council has been recognised as one of the strongest local authority supporters of arts and culture. It monitors the impact of its investment through 'Creative Consequences' in partnership with local authorities including Unitaries, Southend and Thurrock. The cultural strategy for Essex, 'Celebrating Essex' recognises that culture "has a key role to play in tackling social, economic and environmental issues." It values the rich and strong cultural offer provided for residents yet acknowledges the lack of "significant landmark cultural facilities". It indicates "potential for significant cultural development" aligned with redevelopment of the Thames Gateway and, more specifically, Southend's cultural ambitions and ability to attract European funding.

Recent arts-led developments - including the move of the Royal Opera House's production campus to Thurrock, alongside the development of a National Skills Academy, plus the relocation of Metal to Southend – will help to catalyse the development of creative clusters in these locations. Building on the 2007 mapping study of creative and cultural businesses in TGSE by NMP for EEDA/Arts Council East, along with the cross-regional prioritisation of

support for creative industries (greater South-East draft EDIP referred to earlier) there is an opportunity for the Cultural Commission to prioritise focus on Creative Industries in the sub-region, especially if this fits with the joint agenda of the Living Places regional partners.

The agenda for Living Places is broad and resources must be used effectively and efficiently. The Cultural Commission may decide to ensure strategic focus and fit by concentrating on a few priority projects agreed with regional partners in the Living Places regional group. This approach could fit with the approach drafted by the Greater South East pan-Gateway partners in their draft EDIP (referred to earlier). The Cultural Commission may prioritise additional projects, however it is important to recognise that the Living Places partners have limited budgets and will therefore prioritise investment.

Reviewing the impact of the MKSM Cultural Co-ordinator role could highlight relevant transferable practice pan-Gateway. Aims of the post currently include: strengthening the message of culture as a cross-cutting theme for the development of sustainable communities within the growth area; advocating collaborative working across the sub-region; embedding culture in mainstream planning proposals; support for developers formulating cultural and community proposals and management options in area plans (to satisfy planning obligations); fostering collaborative working across three RDA regions between NDPBs and 16 local authorities; research and mapping of cultural provision across sub-region – baseline data and evidence for performance management.

## **10. Proposed action plan**

### **Short term**

1. Develop the TGSE Cultural Commission (TGSE CC) partnership and purpose (fit with Living Places priorities with long term relevance) including a clear vision for culture and sport. Include urban and rural areas.
2. Identify key partners and support required; build effective partnerships with commitment to the overall objectives of the TGSE CC.
3. Establish strategic objectives for culture across the sub-region. What are the spatial transformers pan-Gateway and in TGSE? Is there an overview / mapping of planned cultural and sporting projects and facilities for next 10-20 years across TGSE? (Note the demographic projections for TSGE in terms of cultural/social interests and age groups.)
4. Review approach of MKSM Cultural Co-ordinator; what learning points are applicable to the TGSE context? EG developing Cultural indicators for Annual Monitoring Review and adding value to partnership working across the sub-region. Explore potential to apply for GAF funding to transfer learning to TGSE through a similar post?

5. If funding for post forthcoming, Cultural Co-coordinator post to advocate for culture to be included in local development frameworks, etc
6. Plan how to measure cultural and sporting outcomes according to recommendations in new LGA improvement strategy, 'A Passion for Excellence': measures for overall participation and participation among target groups may be basic requirements.
7. Consider models for joint service provision and management

### **Medium term**

1. Influence policy and embed planning for cultural infrastructure in the planning process at sub-regional level:

Define cultural needs of communities of differing sizes and facilities, sites and locations

Analyse cultural needs and opportunities and development standards (both quantitative and qualitative)

Develop an SPD for cultural infrastructure across TGSE to raise funds; monitor uptake and effectiveness, including amounts raised

2. Develop a strategic planning tariff for developer contributions to culture. This would support the costs of new and better cultural facilities in new developments and regen schemes. (MK already has a development tariff in addition to S106).
3. Review and monitor take up of resources available to measure benefits of culture (eg new LGA culture and sport improvement plan). Improvements will help to strengthen the role of culture and sport in sustainable communities, eg monitor amounts raised for cultural infrastructure through SPDs.