Cultural strategies and futures

**Professor Daniel Ashton
and Makanani Bell**

University of Southampton

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines findings and makes recommendations from the Public Policy Southampton funded project, *Cultural strategies, compacts and futures: The role of local government in connecting culture with place, health and the environment.* The project team of Professor Dan Ashton and Makanani Bell were based in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Southampton. The project was developed in partnership with the Southern Policy Centre and ran from January to June 2023 (project identification number: 86272). The findings are available on the **project website** hosted by the University of Southampton.

This project aimed to understanded how local government can effectively position culture in relation to priority issues such as place, health and the environment. As the project developed, a wider set of findings emerged exploring how cultural strategy documents are created, updated and shared. As such, the recommendations in this report focus on and suggest changes in the practice of commissioning and creating cultural strategies. The recommendations are relevant for any organisation (local authorities, culture trusts, Cultural Compacts, etc.) as they approach commissioning and creating cultural strategies and/or reflect on their continued purpose and value.

AIMS AND CONTEXT

This project aimed to provide detailed insight into the varying approaches of cultural strategies in addressing these priority issues by undertaking an extensive review and thematic analysis.

Cultural strategies are important elements in how local authorities engage with and support the role of culture and make connections with social, economic, environmental and health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Local Government Association (LGA) **Cultural strategy in a box** report outlines, how 'many local councils have sought to maximise the role of culture in their approaches to place, economy and society' and that cultural strategies have been produced to 'coordinate their approach and develop a shared vision with residents and cultural partners' (2020: 4). This theme of coordination is of particular importance in the **Cultural Cities Enquiry** which sets out the importance of a 'coalition of support' and the recommendation for Cultural Compacts. As this report will explore more, cultural strategies can be commissioned and created by a variety of organisations often working in partnership.

The LGA **Cultural strategy in a box** report defines a Cultural Compact as, 'an effective place-based partnership structure that seeks to enable places to take full advantage of their cultural resources, embed them within wider local and national strategic development plans, and contribute to inclusive growth' (2020: 8). As the Key Cities **Culture and Place in Britain** report considers, member cities can use their 'convening power' to develop and empower 'Cultural Compact partnerships as key drivers of their cultural strategy' and take into account 'the learnings of the Cultural Compacts and Creative People and Places evaluations' (2023: 62; see also the Arts Council England commissioned, 2020 **Review of the Cultural Compacts Initiative** by BOP).

Examining cultural strategies and their relation to Cultural Compacts is a priority for understanding and evaluating how to effectively position culture in relation to priority issues such as place, health and the environment.

Cultural strategies and Cultural Compacts are both deeply embedded in the specifics of an area and address common and widely identified (inter)national issues and priorities. *Culture and Place in Britain* (Key Cities, 2023: 62) suggested that 'looking at the overall picture, the strategies of places differ in local content and priorities but there are no big changes in overall trends between those adopted a decade ago and newly developed ones.' Whilst issues of place, health and the environment often feature within cultural strategies and the focus of Cultural Compacts, there is not a clear understanding of how this is done in different ways.

The *Cultural Strategies and Futures* project funded by Public Policy Southampton aimed to provide detailed insight into the varying approaches of cultural strategies in addressing these priority issues by undertaking an extensive review and thematic analysis. As indicated, a further set of broader findings and recommendations emerged of interest and significance for those creating and renewing cultural strategies.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FINDINGS

The project had four interlinked stages.

1. Finding strategies and compacts

In stage 1, we used secondary data analysis (SDA) of publicly accessible local authority websites in England to identify and archive cultural strategy and Cultural Compact documents.

A search was conducted in January 2023 for Cultural Strategies from all 332 councils in England using the **List of Councils in England** (2021). The search was 'cultural strategy + council name' on Google and 'cultural strategy' on individual council websites. Results were organised into: Yes; Can't Find; and Not Yet. Rather than providing a definitive 'no' category, these distinctions take account of where there is a stated intention to develop a cultural strategy ('not yet') and where a cultural strategy may exist, but our searches did not locate it ('can't find').

A total of 147 strategies were found. Some cultural strategies are joint strategies between councils (i.e., Adur and Worthing Joint Strategy). If there is a joint strategy, this does not mean the council does not have its own individual strategies (i.e., Oldham and Tameside have individual strategies, that may be outdated, even though they are in the joint Greater Manchester Strategy).

Each strategy is the most recent we can find.

We found that cultural strategies could be described in different ways, but that "cultural strategy" was the most common at 61% (90 out of 147).

We encountered challenges with locating, accessing and positioning some strategies.

→ 23 out of 147 do not have a publication year.

→ 31 out of 147 do not include what years the strategy covers.

→ 125 of 147 strategies do not list consultants or authors.

→ Some websites or council documents list having a cultural strategy, but the actual document cannot be located.

→ In one case the strategy document was made 'public' but is located behind password protection.

Search results for 'cultural strategies' by council type

The 2021 **List of Councils in England** divides councils by type: Metropolitan District, London Boroughs, Unitary Authorities, County Councils, and District Councils. Table 1 below outlines the results for searching for cultural strategies for each council according to the council type. In the 'yes' column, there are a total of 152 councils with strategies, yet we only found 147 strategies. Some strategies are joint strategies, meaning one strategy covers two or more councils. This explains the discrepancy between 147 cultural strategies found for 152 councils. Future iterations of the search will look at other formulations (e.g., Combined Mayoral Authorities).

	Yes	Can't Find	Not Yet
Metropolitan Districts	25	10	1
London Boroughs	23	8	2
Unitary Authority	37	18	4
County Councils	13	11	1
District Councils	55	114	10
GRAND TOTAL	**152**	**162**	**18**

Table 1: Search results for 'cultural strategies' by council type.

Councils with joint cultural strategies

Table 2 below identifies which councils have a joint strategy. The column on the right outlines which councils are involved in each strategy. If the collection of councils has a name, this is in the column on the left. For example, Kent Thameside refers to Gravesham and Dartford Borough Councils. The joint strategies can have different kinds of councils in the same strategy. There are also other configurations which include county councils and local authority areas (for example, **Creative Estuary**)

Councils Involved	Joint Name
Bolton; Bury; Manchester; Oldham; Rochdale; Salford; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford; Wigan	**Greater Manchester**
East Lindsey; Boston Borough	
Fenland; East Cambridgeshire; Cambridge City; South Cambridgeshire; Huntingdon; Cambridgeshire County	**Cambridge sub-region**
Copeland; Allerdale; West Cumbria	
Gravesham; Dartford	**Kent Thameside**
Adur; Worthing	

Table 2: Councils with joint cultural strategies.

Cultural strategies published per year

Our findings show that most cultural strategies that are available have been published in the last three years from 2020-2022 (with 2023 incomplete). As we are identifying the most recent strategy for each place, this does not mean that more strategies were published in these years. It does however show that many places are either publishing or updating their cultural strategy. This is seen in the data in table 3 where between 2002 and 2019 there are less than 10 places each year which are still to update their cultural strategy. Overall, the concentration of publications in the last three years from 2020-2022 provides evidence of the drive for places to have current cultural strategies.
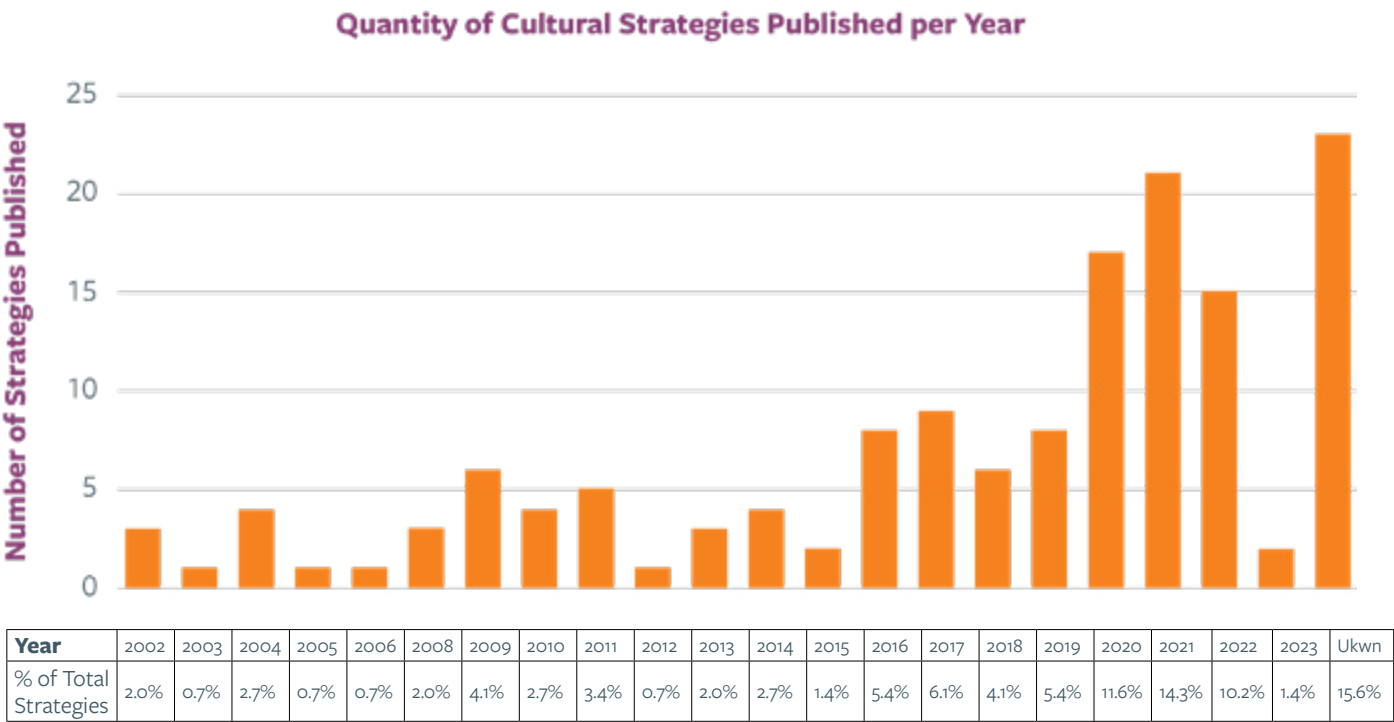

Quantity of Cultural Strategies Published per Year

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Ukwn
% of Total Strategies	2.0%	0.7%	2.7%	0.7%	0.7%	2.0%	4.1%	2.7%	3.4%	0.7%	2.0%	2.7%	1.4%	5.4%	6.1%	4.1%	5.4%	11.6%	14.3%	10.2%	1.4%	15.6%

Table 3: Quantity of cultural strategies published per year with the percentage of the total collection of strategies (147) per year beneath.

From table 3, we summarise the following points:

→ It was difficult to discern if a cultural strategy was new or updated.

→ 23 strategies did not have publication years (15.6%), which is more than any publication year.

→ 2019-2022 account for 36.7% of all cultural strategies published.

→ No cultural strategies were published in 2007.

→ Strategies cover between two and twenty years (i.e., 2014-2016).

→ Most cultural strategies cover five-year periods (27% - 40 strategies), although not all cultural strategies indicate the years covered.

2. Finding place, health and the environment in strategies

In stage 2 we conducted **qualitative content analysis** of the strategies identified in stage 1 to explore how 'place', 'health' and 'environment' are included. These are priority issues in cultural sector discussions and policy, for example within the LGA's **Cultural strategy in a box** and were identified as the main focus in relation to the Public Policy Southampton New Things Fund **funding call**. Only the cultural strategies and not the Cultural Compacts were analysed because there was considerable variation in what was found for Cultural Compacts (e.g., websites; short documents; fuller strategies).

Each of these priority issues ('place', 'health' and 'environment') were a main focus area or code. Within these, several sub-areas (or sub-codes) emerged from the data that enabled more nuanced engagement with the different meanings and uses (e.g., Environment: Climate Change). The analysis also extended beyond these three priority issues to examine other priorities that were prominent in the strategies: economy, access, education. For information on this process and examples used in the workshop, please see the presentation used in the workshop that is available as Cultural strategies, compacts and futures project design and findings on the **project website**.

3. Reflections and exchanges on strategies

Stage 3 was the knowledge exchange workshop, *A conversation on cultural strategies* (held on Friday 5th May 2023 in Southampton). The workshop examined findings through the insights and expertise of participants, and we explored the priorities for the project report developed in stage 4. Participants included: culture trusts, local government, the Local Government Association (LGA), Arts Council England (ACE), cultural and creative sector organisations, and creative freelancers. Please see the **project website** for the **programme for the event.**

4. Recommendations on the role of cultural strategies

This report providing policy recommendations on cultural strategies is the output from stage four of the project and the twelve recommendations included below relate to both the analysis of the cultural strategies and the discussions from the knowledge exchange workshop, *A conversation on cultural strategies*. These recommendations are presented as part of an ongoing and shared conservation, and with recognition that those working on cultural strategies experience varying financial and resourcing challenges.

This report is authored by Professor Daniel Ashton and Makanani Bell (University of Southampton research team) with the support of contributors to the workshop – Dr Simon Eden (Director of the Southern Policy Centre), Claire Gevaux (Chief Executive at Culture Chelmsford) and Emalene Hickman (Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer at Winchester City Council).

The contributions of the workshop participants are acknowledged and greatly appreciated, in particular: Jane Bryant (Freelance cultural/arts consultant), Charles Freeman (Freelance researcher and consultant), Adam Gent (Relationship Manager at Arts Council England), and Ian Leete (Senior Adviser - Culture, Tourism and Sport at Local Government Association).

The research team appreciatively acknowledge the following University of Southampton colleagues involved in supporting the project and producing this report: Isabella Wang, Aiysha Qureshi and Yaryna Basystyuk (Public Policy Southampton); Hayley Evans and Rachel Wootton (Conference, Events and Hospitality); Debbie Webber (Winchester School of Art Finance) and Ben Dean (Professional Services Finance); Isobel Stark and Sarah Brooks (Research Services); Sophie Taylor, Charlotte Willbourne and Simon Dade (Valley Graphics).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Models and approaches	We recommend a detailed analysis of 'local authority' and 'culture trust' approaches and processes and how they overlap, differ and align.
2. Findable and sharable	We recommend creating an accessible database of strategies as a resource for insight and reflection.
3. Access and context	We recommend cultural strategies are created and published following accessibility guidelines and explicitly ensure the accessibility of text and images, provide information on publication and authorship, and provide credit and attribution for content included.
4. Structure and language	We recommend updates to LGA's **Cultural strategy in a box** and the 'Future vision and goals' section of ACE's **What Works – Cultural Strategy Content Checklist** that elaborate on what frequently used terms (e.g., aim, vision) cover and do.
5. Methods and consultation	We recommend cultural strategies provide information for all data sources that clearly indicates the dataset being used and why, and provide details on any consultation processes.
6. Themes and priorities	We recommend reflecting on changes and continuities in cultural strategy themes and priorities by engaging with a wide range of cultural strategies that can provide insight across a variety of years and places.
7. Policy and position	We recommend cultural strategies go beyond providing a reference list of policies and strategies that are referred to and create a matrix or table that includes all the policies and strategies referred to and indicates when they were published, if they are timebound, and how long they remain in alignment.
8. Geographies and boundaries	We recommend that the development of cultural strategies give attention to changing geographies and boundaries and make connections with different 'neighbours' to explore cultural strategy alignment and the pursuit of common purpose.
9. Living and responsive	We recommend cultural strategies are made accessible using digital technology platforms that enable updates, responses and continued consultation, and that exploring the features and characteristics of different technological platforms could support wider engagement in a greater variety of ways.
10. Continuity and evaluation	We recommend new cultural strategies, where applicable, reference relevant past strategies to reflect and evaluate on the status of their aims, and going forward establish a way for aims to be regularly reflected on and evaluated.
11. Success and failure	We recommend that the ongoing evaluation of cultural strategies emphasize sharing learning and experiences, and transparently reflect on what was intended and what could be done differently.
12. Network and share	We recommend exploring the value of a *Cultural strategies network* to share experiences, insights and suggestions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Models and approaches

Analysis of our collection of strategies and the discussions at the workshop highlighted that cultural strategies are initiated or commissioned and coordinated in a variety of ways. Specifically, we identified local authorities and culture trusts as the main drivers behind cultural strategies. Where both local authorities and cultural trusts operate, different forms of partnership and different responsibilities were identified.

The role of Cultural Compacts in initiating and coordinating cultural strategies can be better gauged in coming years. Further research is required to understand the relationship between strategies and Compacts. For example: Do Compacts initiate or commission strategies? Do strategies set out the creation of Compacts? How are the activities of Compacts aligned to strategies, for example as a delivery mechanism?

We recommend a detailed analysis of 'local authority' and 'culture trust' approaches and processes and how they overlap, differ and align. This analysis could provide insights into the different circumstances and factors shaping who initiates or commissions and coordinates a cultural strategy and the ways in which authorities, trusts and other organisations collaborate within these arrangements.

2. Findable and sharable

Existing cultural strategies are an important resource for exploring how priorities and approaches to connecting culture and place change over time and are attuned to the specifics of different places. They can also be a valuable resource for those involved in developing a cultural strategy.

We recommend creating an accessible database of strategies as a resource for insight and reflection. This project has made steps towards this with:

1. Cultural Strategies in England overview:

This is a spreadsheet providing an overview of the search results with various factors and filters. Other ways of visualising and filtering the search results are underway and will be updated on the **project website**.

2. Cultural Strategies in England database:

This is a folder of cultural strategy documents (147 at the time the research was conducted in 2023).

This overview/spreadsheet and database/zip folder are accompanied by the word document *Introduction to the Cultural Strategies in England database*, which outlines the research design and results.

This is an ever-changing picture, for example with the publication of new cultural strategies and changes to geographies and boundaries (see recommendation 8 – geographies and boundaries). Whilst useful in covering up to January 2023, a resourcing challenge exists on how and when to maintain and update the database. Any updates to the overview and database will be updated on the **project website** and recorded in *Introduction to the Cultural Strategies in England database*.

3. Access and context

Greater clarity and consistency are needed in making strategies accessible and providing the information that is required to contextualise them.

We recommend that cultural strategies are created and published following accessibility guidelines. For example, UK Government guidance on *Publishing accessible documents* available **here** and Arts Council England Digital Culture Network guidance available **here**.

For context, we recommend that cultural strategies explicitly consider providing or addressing the following:

→ The year of publication.

→ The period of time covered by the strategy.

→ The authorship, including consultants. Where there is consultation and/or collaborative authorship, this process should be explained.

→ The design and artwork for the strategy should be credited.

→ All images should provide alt-text as required to enable accessibility.

→ All images of artwork, events, projects, etc. should credit the photographer/designer of the image and the actual artwork, events, project, etc. in the image.

→ A link to a permanently archived version of previous strategies.

4. Structure and language

What Works – Cultural Strategy Content Checklist published by ACE outlines the aspects or elements identified as contributing to an effective cultural strategy. The strategies we analysed were published after this ACE checklist and the LGA **Cultural strategy in a box** resources and include many of the suggested elements.

Whilst noting that guidance in the **What Works – Cultural Strategy Content Checklist** suggested strategy elements are tailored to suit the needs of the place, there remains scope for consistency in how elements are understood and included. For example, strategies would often start with a statement on the purpose. There is inconsistency in understanding and applying terms such as 'vision', 'mission', 'aims', 'objective' and 'purpose'.

We recommend updates to LGA's **Cultural strategy in a box** and the 'Future vision and goals' section of ACE's **What Works – Cultural Strategy Content Checklist**

that elaborate on what frequently used terms (e.g., aim, vision) cover and do. This could provide a starting point for shared (but not prescriptive) understandings which could enable those creating and using cultural strategies to share practice and make connections. Updated LGA and ACE materials could explicitly explain what the possible different parts of a strategy do and how they come together.

5. Methods and consultation

We identified a variety of evidence and data sources and datasets being referenced within cultural strategies. This includes the use of existing data sources and sets (e.g., **Audience Agency**; Department of Culture, Media and Sport **Taking Part** survey) and bespoke surveys and consultation for the strategy. We found varying levels of detail and clarity on the sources for data and the consultation methods used. The most detail was provided where an appendix was employed.

We recommend that cultural strategies provide information (for example, in the form of a table) **for all data sources that clearly indicates the dataset being used and why**. Firstly, we recommend that cultural strategies provide references for all data sources. This could include published datasets that are directly accessed, datasets found in other reports and documents and secondary reference, and data generated through consultation. This information should include when the dataset was published, and how long it remains current/up-to-date. Secondly, we recommend providing specific information on why a dataset is being used. This will enable easier and more effective identification of new datasets as they are created or published. If the cultural strategy is approached as a living document (see recommendation 9 – living and responsive), a table addressing these two things can enable updates and periodic reflections on the relevance of existing and/or new datasets.

We recommend that cultural strategies provide details on the consultation process. This could outline and reflect on approaches to research design and co-design, ethics and data protection. Specifics on data generation could include: the sampling and recruitment; method (e.g., focus group; questionnaire); the participation numbers; the facilitation; the analysis; and the storage and sharing. The data generated could be made available for direct access (as appropriate within the terms of the research design, ethics and data protection). We also recommend considering ways of connecting consultation questions and methods across places to enable sharing and comparison (for example, in relation to recommendation 8 on common purpose with neighbouring places).

6. Themes and priorities

As introduced in the aims and context, this project intended to explore how priority issues feature within cultural strategies in different places and over time. This proved challenging to do in terms of the availability of "out of date" strategies and subtle changes in terminology (i.e., around environment). We did however find that a review of cultural strategy content at this scale prompted reflections on changes in language (for example, 'arts on referral' and 'social prescribing') and recognition of where certain priorities came into usage (for example, 'wellbeing' in 2002). This also enabled insight into how cultural strategies connect with a wider range of policies, strategies and plans produced, for example, by a local authority. Reference to these other policies, strategies and plans ensures that cultural strategies are not isolated. It also enables consideration of shared or different understandings of and approaches to priority issues.

We recommend reflecting on changes and continuities in cultural strategy themes and priorities by engaging with a wide range of cultural strategies (see recommendation 2 – findable and sharable) **that can provide insight across a variety of years and places**. The *Cultural strategies, compacts and futures project design and findings* presentation from the project (see project materials at the end) gives some suggestions on how themes and priorities can be identified and reflected on. Detailed consideration of themes and priorities can prompt reflection on wider trends and patterns that can be considered in relation to place specific priorities and themes, for example generated through consultation (recommendation 5 – methods and consultation), and the intended outcomes of a cultural strategy.

Cultural strategies connect with a wider range of policies, strategies and plans produced, for example, by a local authority.

7. Policy and position

A consistent approach within cultural strategies is to reference and align to policy. This helps establish the currency of the themes and priorities set out in a cultural strategy and position a place and their cultural strategy within a wider conversation.

An associated challenge is when a cultural strategy is published in between or across policies or strategies. For example, ACE published its 2010-20 strategy (*Great Art and Culture for Everyone*) in 2013 and its 2020-30 strategy (*Let's Create*) in 2020. We identified that 15.7% of strategies were published between 2017-2019. We also identified that 27% of strategies covered a 5-year period. A scenario can be identified in which strategies published between 2017-19 for 5 years only maintain currency with ACE's current strategy for a couple of years before they drop out of currency with the new strategy. Adding in the range of other policies, strategies and reports further compounds the challenge.

We recommend that cultural strategies go beyond providing a reference list of policies and strategies that are referred to and create a matrix or table with greater detail. This matrix would include all the policies and strategies referred to and indicate when they were published, if they are timebound (e.g., ACE 10-year strategy) and how long they remain in alignment. If the cultural strategy is approached as a living document (see recommendation 9 – living and responsive), this matrix or table may enable periodic reflections on the continued relevance of specific policies and/or updating with new policies. Such a matrix or table could assist in communicating the challenges of changing policy and that a cultural strategy might be better served through having flexibility or autonomy in how it attaches to policy and other strategies.

8. Geographies and boundaries

We identified how cultural strategies connect to and are shaped by changing geographies.

Firstly, joint cultural strategies mean that a place may have a cultural strategy operating at one level (i.e., Metropolitan District; London Borough; Unitary Authority; County Council; District Council) and at joint level (e.g., Greater Manchester; Cambridge sub-region). This also has implications in relation to recommendation 7 (policy and position) as the two strategies might have different life cycles and align to different policy and sector considerations.

Secondly, a place might be located within different geographies and different boundaries for different purposes. Points of reference could include:

→ **Arts Council England Area Councils**

→ **Business Improvement Districts**

→ **Combined authorities**

→ **Electoral boundaries**

→ **Levelling Up Fund areas**

→ **Local Enterprise Partnerships**

→ **National Health Service Integrated Care Boards**

Noting these different geographies and boundaries might be of varying relevance. For example, there might be significant points of reference when considering policy but less so when it comes to how lived experiences of how culture is created and engaged with. The point is that cultural strategies may need to recognise and refer to multiple geographies and boundaries.

Thirdly, we noted how cultural strategies must consider relationships to places that exist aside from those defined by boundaries. It is beyond this report to explore the issues of culture, identity and belonging which might inform relationships and affinity to place. Travel did however emerge in the workshop as a significant consideration in how relationships to place are formed and sustained. This discussion included examples of transport links being a defining factor in how people might access and engage with cultural venues and activities. The point follows that people can engage with arts and culture in places that are not within the place they are most permanently located/covered by a cultural strategy.

We recommend that the development of cultural strategies give attention to changing geographies and boundaries and make connections with different 'neighbours' to explore cultural strategy alignment and the pursuit of common purpose.

9. Living and responsive

Closely connected to recommendation 3 (access and context), recommendation 4 (structure and language), recommendation 7 (policy and position) and recommendation 10 (continuity and evaluation) we note the limitations of cultural strategies as static documents.

The issue is not that the main content of a cultural strategy needs to be updated, but rather on how aims and actions can be followed up and elaborated and how changing policy and sector considerations can be updated.

We recommend that cultural strategies are made accessible using digital technology platforms that can enable updates, responses and continued consultation. The choice of specific platforms may be linked to the software used by the organisation coordinating the cultural strategy, but the aim of the recommendation is the shift from a static to a living and responsive document.

We recommend exploring how the features and characteristics of different technological platforms could enable wider engagement with a strategy in a greater variety of ways (for example, not just written text). This partly relates to recommendation 3 (access and context) and recommendation 4 (structure and language), but focuses more on how challenging and changing the form of communication might enable different types of engagement by as wide a range of contributors and interested parties as possible.

10. Continuity and evaluation

Recommendation 2 (findable and shareable) on a permanently archived version of previous strategies responds to the challenge of identifying and finding cultural strategies. The lack of permanent access to past strategies also creates a challenge for understanding the histories of cultural strategies for a place. Without explicit reference to past strategies, new and renewed cultural strategies and their aims and priorities can seem to exist in isolation. **We recommend that new cultural strategies, where applicable, reference relevant past strategies to reflect on and evaluate the status of their aims.**

Going forward, **we recommend that new cultural strategies establish a way for aims to be regularly reflected on and evaluated in the future.** Interim reflection and evaluation may be shaped by the models of ownership and delivery of the strategy (see recommendation 1 – models and approaches). For example, connected to local authority reporting (for example, the **Winchester City Council progress report**) or via an interim strategy (for example, **Coventry Cultural Strategy Refresh in 2022**). Consideration should be given to what is the most appropriate "action plan" option and process, and the ways in which evaluation of an action plan can shape future aims and actions. Reflection and evaluation towards the end of the strategy life span can be picked up in the next strategy.

Action plans, or other methods for continual evaluation, could also include an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure the strategy and related decision-making are fair (for example, **Dorset Council**) and sustainability reporting (for example, Julie's Bicycle **environmental programme**) relating to environmental aims and commitments.

11. Success and failure

Closely related to the point on evaluation (recommendation 10) is the need for space to consider how the successes and failures of cultural strategies are discussed. This would likely be in relation to various aims within a strategy rather than the whole strategy. Taken in relation to recommendation 7 (policy and position), this recommendation also encourages opportunities to question and reflect on how "successful" the policies and strategies of others (e.g., government; funders) have been. The approach to making cultural strategies living and responsive (recommendation 9) could enable incremental evaluation and reduce the pressure on ideas of total "success" and "failure". An incremental approach could also facilitate the sharing of failure as a form of peer learning. **We recommend that the ongoing evaluation of cultural strategies emphasise sharing learning and experiences, and transparently reflecting on what was intended and what could be done differently.**

12. Network and share

The knowledge exchange workshop for stage 3, *A conversation on cultural strategies* (see project materials at the end), was enthusiastically engaged with by participants. The evaluation included suggestions to 'bring people together again/more' and asked, 'is there value in this group meeting again?'. These comments highlight the interest and suggest the need for a network or a community of practice. This could be a forum to discuss the practicalities of many of the above recommendations and provide a form of peer support (for example, in relation to recommendation 11 - success and failure).

We recommend exploring the value of a Cultural strategies network to share experiences, insights and suggestions. Such a network or community of practice should consider relationship with existing networks. For example, the **Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association** and regional networks of arts, culture, creative and heritage sector local government officers. From the outset, discussions of feasibility and structure would benefit from engagement with ACE and LGA as the two organisations in England with materials and resources on cultural strategies. The geographic reach (i.e., across nations and regions) would need to be considered.

LINKS TO PROJECT MATERIALS

The project website has the following resources and materials:

Introduction to the Cultural Strategies in England database

DOI: **https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1121**

This word document introduces the *Cultural Strategies in England overview* (spreadsheet) and *Cultural Strategies in England database*. It includes an overview of the search results; the takedown policy; and a table outlining updates and version changes to *the Cultural Strategies in England overview* (spreadsheet).

Cultural Strategies in England overview

DOI: **https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1119**

This is a spreadsheet providing an overview of the search results with various factors and filters. These are outlined in an *Introduction to the Cultural Strategies in England repository*. Other ways of visualising and filtering the search results are underway and will be updated on the **project website**.

Cultural Strategies in England database

DOI: **https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1120**

This is a zip folder containing the cultural strategy documents identified and examined during the project.

Cultural strategies, compacts and futures project design and findings

DOI: **https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1122**

This is a slideshow presentation from the knowledge exchange workshop, *A conversation on cultural strategies* held on Friday 5th May 2023 in Southampton. It sets out the project's context, design and findings.

A conversation on cultural strategies programme

DOI: **https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1123**

This is the programme from the knowledge exchange workshop, *A conversation on cultural strategies* held on Friday 5th May 2023 in Southampton.

Stock photos are used throughout and are posed by models.