

Bolton's Cultural Strategy

A Cultural Renaissance

CLOTHING

Shimmering white clothes seen in tomb paintings were linen not cotton. Linen was not mass produced like today but was usually made at home by both men and women. They took a lot of effort to produce and were carefully patched and darned to extend their life. Only the wealthy could afford the finest, whitest linen.

BEAUTY

Looking good was an essential part of feeling good and functioning healthily in life and the next. One of the earliest chat-up lines in history comes from Egypt: "Put on your wig on and let's have a good time!"



Double Kohl Tube	Double Kohl Tube	Double Kohl Tube and Applicator Sticks
From Tomb of Hunefer	From Tomb of Hunefer	From Tomb of Hunefer
Date: 1850-1875 BC Period: New Kingdom Material: Wood	Date: 1850-1875 BC Period: New Kingdom Material: Wood	Date: 1850-1875 BC Period: New Kingdom Material: Wood and Lapis Lazuli



“ A country transformed by culture. Bringing us together, happier, healthier. To excite, Inspire, delight. To enrich our lives. ”

Arts Council Lets Create Strategy

Foreword

Bolton has a growing reputation as a creative town, from our amazing cultural assets such as Octagon Theatre, Bolton Central Library and Museum, Bolton Albert Halls to our world class events which sees visitors flocking to the town to enjoy Bolton Food and Drink Festival, major music concerts, and the Bolton Film Festival.

Bolton 2030

sets out our vision for the town. In 2030, we want Bolton to be a vibrant place built on strong cohesive communities, successful businesses and healthy, engaged residents. It will be a welcoming place where people choose to study, work, invest and put down roots.

Culture – including the arts, performing arts, heritage, history, film and landscape – is able to have a profound effect on this vision. As we physically transform our town centres, we also want to create enhanced public spaces and vibrant communities where people want to live and visit. The role of culture is vital in helping us achieve this.

There is clear and growing evidence of the impact creativity, culture and heritage has on quality of life, social mobility, skills, health and wellbeing. Bolton has a powerful community and voluntary sector and excellent cultural partnerships, and I would like to thank them for coming together to help develop this strategy.

Bolton's Cultural Strategy provides an ambitious vision for developing creativity in the borough and outlines how the identified cultural priority areas will be addressed. This document compliments the Bolton Brand, Visitor Economy Strategy, the Economic Growth and Resilience Plan which have the shared aim of providing a framework for driving the Bolton Vision 2030 forward.

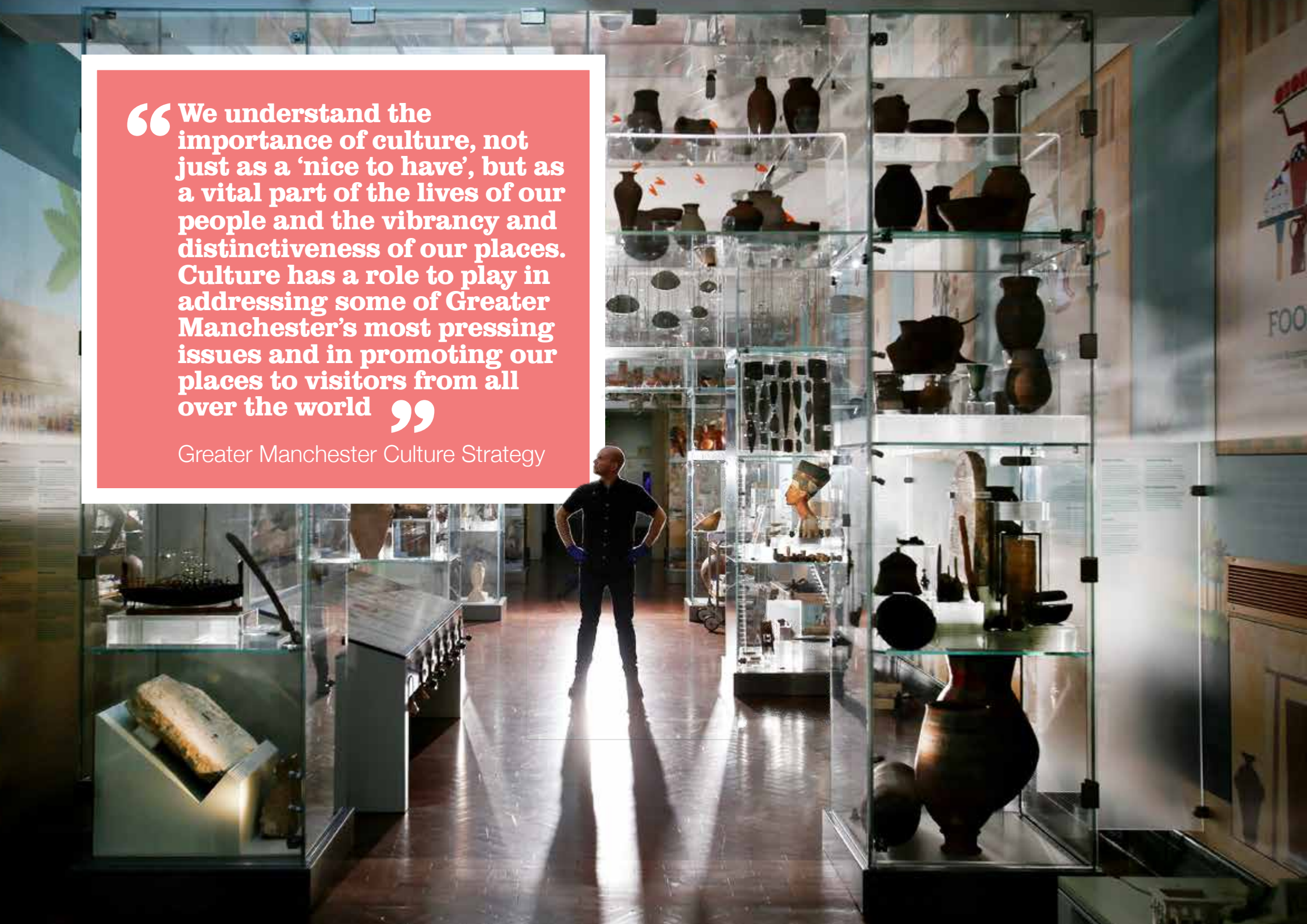
Our cultural vision is for the whole of the Borough, the district centres and everywhere in-between. I hope that you share the same vision and that we all can take part in creative experiences together.



Cllr Nadeem Ayub
Executive Cabinet Member – Culture

“ We understand the importance of culture, not just as a ‘nice to have’, but as a vital part of the lives of our people and the vibrancy and distinctiveness of our places. Culture has a role to play in addressing some of Greater Manchester’s most pressing issues and in promoting our places to visitors from all over the world ”

Greater Manchester Culture Strategy



Bolton 2030 is the long-term vision to achieve an Active, Connected and Prosperous borough. Underpinning this, the partnership agreed six outcomes:

Start Well - To ensure that children in Bolton have the best possible start to life and the happiness and wellbeing of our residents is improved, so that they can live healthy, fulfilling lives for longer.

Live Well - Older people in Bolton stay healthier for longer and feel more connected with their communities.

Age Well - Businesses want to work and invest in the borough and through their corporate social responsibility maximise social value opportunities, whilst creating good inclusive and sustained employment across the system.

Prosperous - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome, and connected.

Clean and Green - Our environment is protected and improved, so that more people enjoy it, care for it and are active in it.







Safe, Strong and Distinctive - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome, and connected.

These six outcomes clearly articulate the ambitions for the borough and underpinning each are key partnership groups leading on delivery. Partners can refine where to put efforts, reflective of current position and what matters, to then be firepower to drive delivery of outcomes. These partnerships are rooted in principles of equity, equality and fairness, in support of our broader ambitions for the borough.



Our Vision: Bolton is a place that's Active, Connected and Prosperous

Active, Connected and Prosperous Locality Board

	 Start Well	 Live Well	 Age Well	 Economic Prosperity	 Clean and Green	 Safe, Strong and Distinctive
Our outcomes >>>	A B C					
Our partners >>>	Children and Young Peoples Board	Healthy Neighbourhood and Communities Active Lives Anti-Poverty Team Bolton Skills	Ageing Well Partnership	Economic Prosperity Group The Bolton Family	Climate Group Clean and Green Partnership	Community Safety Partnership Cultural Partnership Connected Communities Brand Bolton
Our focus >>>	Our children and young people are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and protected from harm • Healthy in their physical and mental wellbeing • Achieve their potential • Feel they belong in Bolton 	Our residents are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In good health with a good state of mental wellbeing • Informing decisions, improving their life quality and promoting access to greater opportunities • Living in and building thriving communities where people and businesses live and work 	Our older residents are supported with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing • Economic challenges • Social implications • Transportation <p><i>(working towards the eight WHO domains of Ageing Well)</i></p>	We improve prosperity in the borough by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the social offer value in Bolton • Supporting every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives • Maximising Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester • Matching skills and training to employer future demand 	Our environment has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air and land free from pollution and infrastructure that is resilient to the impacts of climate change • An enhanced and expanded green infrastructure whilst making best use of our assets • Improved health equity to protect health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities for Bolton residents 	Our residents feel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected within their communities with a good understanding of their local offer • Safe and live in harmony together with reduced crime and antisocial behaviour • That their voice is heard • They have greater self-worth and happiness with access to creative, cultural and volunteering opportunities



Bolton Vision 2030 is a local partnership that brings together senior leaders from across private, public and voluntary sectors to lead Bolton' long-term vision for the borough. The Vision Partnership wants to see a Bolton that is active, connected and prosperous.



The borough is delivering an ambitious regeneration programme, instigated, and led by Bolton Council. The first project in this programme was the redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre, which re-opened in 2021, and follows the council's considerable investment in the Albert Halls and Bolton Museum. More recently, the council has been successful in securing £22.9m from Central Government's Towns Fund, £3.7m of which was allocated to the refurbishment of Bolton Central Library. There is a clear intent that culture plays a defining role in Bolton's growth and prosperity in the years ahead.

The vision partners and Bolton council, working with Arts Council England, wish to develop a cultural strategy that matches the ambition and outcomes of the vision. This strategy will embed creativity, culture and heritage within the wider strategy of the vision, seeking to harness the strong partnerships that exist within Bolton to grow the borough's cultural offer, for the benefit of local residents, visitors and the wider economy.

Bolton is ready to do things differently and the Bolton Vision Partnership is committed to using its resources to enable and support the new ideas, projects and partnerships that working culturally and creatively brings. Innovation and invention are part of Bolton's DNA and this strategy will draw from this to encourage bold thinking, creative risk taking, innovation and cultural ambition.

The strategy will establish Bolton as a new model of a "Creative Town", where culture, heritage and the arts are fully embedded across the social and economic development of the borough. It will seek to influence and connect all aspects of policy including regeneration, skills and learning, health and wellbeing.

The strategy will also sit within and link to a wider regional and national context of policies and policymakers such as UK Government's levelling up, cultural placemaking and industrial strategy agendas; Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund strategy and funding frameworks; GMCA's regional cultural, economic, social and industrial strategies.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved top, is holding a baby in a white outfit. They are positioned in front of a lush green wall with various plants and flowers. The word "Bolton" is written in large, orange, cursive letters across the top of the image.

Bolton

Our Cultural Vision

How we define culture in Bolton:

Art; Music; Literature; Heritage; Dance; Theatre; Craft; Photography; Film; Design; Museums; Combined Arts; Libraries.

A Cultural Renaissance

We want culture to be the heartbeat of Bolton, we want it to cut through everything that we do because we believe that culture characterises us as people, links us to a place, and connects us in a community.

It provides inspiration and entertainment. It is the context for interaction and cohesion. As we seek to build a strong and distinctive Bolton, our culture will define us and binds us together. It is a shared vision, and we will all benefit from its success.

Cultural assets

Bolton has a rich array of existing cultural and creative assets, from public venues such as theatres, libraries, music venues, museums, galleries, parks and arenas to dedicated spaces for artists, creative practitioners and cultural organisations to teach and learn, rehearse and record, meet and work. It is also home to unique public art and heritage assets, creative media and retail outlets, and many creative and cultural businesses.

Bolton Central Library, Museum, Aquarium and Archive

- housed in a Grade-II Listed building on Le Mans Crescent at the heart of Bolton town centre's cultural quarter. The museum underwent a £3.8m gallery refurbishment in 2017 to house an internationally acclaimed Egyptology collection with thousands of objects and a full-sized recreation of the tomb of Thutmose III. Bolton Central Library is coming towards the completion of a £3.7m refurbishment which has been funded by the Towns Fund. The library, which will include a café, will open in January 2024.

The Octagon Theatre - an award winning, producing theatre which makes its own scenery and costumes. Around 60% of its annual audiences come from outside Bolton. It is one of 35 cultural organisations in the Greater Manchester Culture Portfolio and one of 990 in the Arts Council England National Portfolio.

Bolton Film Festival is one of the Top 10 short film festivals in the UK, the festival has accreditation from both BAFTA AND BIFA. From over 12,000 festival worldwide Bolton Film Festival is the "Top 10 Best Reviewed" and "Top 50 Most popular" on FilmFreeway. The festival celebrates films from home and abroad and acts as an amplifier of emerging and established talent.

TV and film are of growing importance to Bolton with two dedicated film officers, contracts with Netflix, Sky, Warners, BBC and Pinewood; and in-demand locations such as Cheadle Square and Le Mans Crescent featuring on the likes of Peaky Blinders, Coronation Street and Cobra.





Heritage assets include Smithills Hall, Bolton Steam Museum and Horwich Heritage Centre plus local heritage trails and around 700 listed buildings.

Community cultural organisations such as Hive Gallery, Live From Worktown, Platform Gallery and Creatives Now.

The Albert Halls - a colonnaded neoclassical Victorian town hall which hosts live comedy, dance, music and pantomime shows in its 670-seat auditorium.

Bolton Music Service - the leading music hub in Greater Manchester, attracting funding from the Department for Further Education. The service teaches around 8,000 children weekly to play a musical instrument, teaches the music curriculum in over a third of our local primary schools and runs 45 weekly out-of-school bands, choirs and orchestras.

University of Bolton - School of Art - provides courses in animation, art and design, English/creative writing, fashion, graphic design, media/photography, performing arts and theatre. Its 2020 vision, set out in its previous strategy, was based on high-quality teaching, facilities and links to employment sector.

Bolton Food and Drink Festival - a nationally renowned event, the largest of its kind in the UK, which has won major awards over its 18 year history. The event features celebrity chefs such as James Martin and The Hairy Bikers.

Bolton at Home's Percent for Art service works with the local community to commission artists and arts organisations to develop socially engaged arts projects to improve local areas.

Headspace - an exciting and innovative arts organisation, run by and for peers with lived experience of mental health and neurodiversity. Specialising in stand-up comedy, film making and other performative art forms.



Our Priorities

Priority 1: Programmes and Partnerships



Improving cross sector communication and collaboration between Bolton's cultural ecosystem.



Developing a more joined up approach to cultural and creative programming.



Building on Bolton's excellent events offer and 'weaving' in cultural and creative activity.



Our Priorities

Priority 2: Place and Space



Driving more visitors and footfall to Bolton's town and district centres through culture.



Completing Bolton's cultural "jigsaw" and understanding how all of Bolton's cultural assets fit together.



Establishing a central cultural hub for Bolton's creative community.



Infusing wider regeneration schemes with culture and creativity.



Unlocking access for artists, organisations and communities to affordable creative spaces.





Our Priorities

Priority 3: Young People and Emerging Talent



Developing a “golden thread” of creative talent and career pathways for Bolton’s youth.



Improving Bolton’s offer for young people, linked to a vibrant grassroots music scene.



Providing cultural education and engagement opportunities for children and their families.



Our Priorities

Priority 4: Stakeholders and Resources

-  Raising confidence and ambition through renewed cultural leadership, vision and investment.
-  Establishing a cultural compact for Bolton.
-  Improving and extending access to funding for culture and creativity.
-  Building capacity and resilience in Bolton's cultural and creative organisations.
-  Leveraging the growing value of TV, film and creative technology to Bolton.



Our Priorities

Priority 5: Advocacy and Inclusion



Shifting perceptions of culture and creativity through evidence – based advocacy.



Building a better brand for Bolton that can be embraced by all.



Promoting accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Bolton's cultural life.



Our Priorities

Priority 6: Health and Wellbeing



Developing the Bolton Creative Health Network to deliver networking meetings for arts, culture, health and voluntary sector organisations across Bolton.



Generate a shared understanding of needs, developing collaborative approaches to commissioning, funding, and evaluation.



Develop capacity and will support shared approaches to developing work in the priority areas of social prescribing and mental health.

"We're so fortunate that Bolton has an incredibly rich culture of people who create a place that is full of life, comedy, character, and colour. Culture has the power to bring people together, create meaning, and inspire ideas and aspirations. The Octagon exists to do those things by telling stories, entertaining people, and creating opportunities for anybody to take part and express themselves."

**Roddy Gauld - Chief Executive,
Octagon Theatre**

"Bolton's Library and Museum Services sit at the heart of communities in the borough, providing access to information, collections and promoting reading for pleasure and learning, openly and without judgment. We use our collections and expertise to inspire curiosity, wonder and imagination. We believe that cultural activity is the heartbeat of our town and are proud of the creative activity delivered by us and by our partners in our venues."

**Sam Elliott - Head of Bolton Library and
Museum Services.**





"Hive Artists are proud to be a part of the rich cultural offer in Bolton. We believe culture and arts breathe life into our community, adding colours to our shared story, making our identity richer and connecting us through the joy of creativity. We look forward to working alongside our partners to help deliver Bolton's new and exciting Cultural Strategy."

**Julie Levy and Steph Dermott,
Hive Gallery**

"Led entirely by and for people who live with mental illness and neurodiversity, our culture is grassroots, accepting of difference and wrapped in Headspace Bolton's unique passion and voice. Our quality arts provision allows those people who feel alienated to both immerse themselves in local culture and belong on their own terms."

**Ginny Allende - Co-founding Director,
Headspace Bolton C.I.C.**

"Culture is essential for Bolton, enriching its identity, fostering community, and contributing to its social and economic well-being."

**Adrian Barber - Festival Director,
Bolton Film Festival**

2024 Delivery Plan Sprint

Action	Priority Area	Resource	How will we measure success?
Create and develop strong cultural networks. Introducing a strategic Culture Compact, widening participation of the Cultural Partners Network and developing Bolton's Cultural Education Partnership and Bolton's Creative Health Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes and Partnerships • Young People and Emerging Talent • Health and Wellbeing 	Bolton Council Policy Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Compact reports into and performance monitored by ACP Board • Cultural Partners Network events evaluated • Bolton Cultural Education partnership and Bolton's Creative Health Network deliver projects
Successful delivery of Bolton Cultural Education Partnership and Bolton Creative Health Network projects, including the redevelopment of Bolton Central Library, delivery of Put Big Light On Festival and improvements to Bolton Albert Halls.	Place and Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Shared Prosperity Funding • Bolton Council culture teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and audit of UKSPF funds • Increase in footfall at events and in cultural venues
Work collaboratively to bring inward investment in culture.	Stakeholders and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Compact • Bolton Council • External funders 	Increase inward investment
Carry out cultural asset mapping.	Place and Space	Experienced cultural consultants who have carried out similar projects.	Completed report that can be used by the Economic Growth and Regeneration team to inform future bids and projects.
Embed creative programmes into major events to expand the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes and Partnership • Place and Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Partners Network • Freelance artists and creative organisations • Inward investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in cultural activity in existing major events • Programme of cultural events delivered by partners
Explore opportunities for a central shared cultural hub.	Place and Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton Council Economic Development and Regeneration team • Culture Compact 	Temporary dedicated shared space operational.
Develop a joint cultural marketing plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and Inclusion • Programmes and Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton Council Marketing and Events Team • Culture Compact • Cultural Partnership Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in marketing reach • Shared online and print resources
Develop a film partnership to explore creation of a Bolton Film Office.	Stakeholder and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GMCA • Economic Development and Regeneration team • Culture Compact 	Partnership Agreement in place.

Delivery model and flow chart

Bolton's Active, Connected, Prosperous Board will provide executive leadership and governance for Bolton's Cultural Strategy. They are responsible for forming a new Cultural Compact who will have strategic responsibility for development of the strategy and ensuring that it is agile and compliments and responds to wider local, regional strategies. The Cultural Partners Network, Bolton Creative Health Network and Bolton's Cultural Education Partnership are responsible for delivery of the strategy.

