



# FOREWORD

We are committed to culture as an intrinsic part of economic growth in our area and to the future of our communities. This Framework sets out our ambitious long term aspirations and detailed action plan for the next three years 22/25. We are in an exciting period of change across Boston and East Lindsey; we are seeing regeneration like never before with the Boston Town Deal, Connected Coast, our response to the Government's Levelling Up agenda and our aspiring plans for Boston 2030.

We know that high quality cultural experiences instills pride of place and creates inspired communities. We've seen this through the extemporary work of Magna Vitae delivering events such as the outstanding SO Festival in East Lindsey and Transported Arts delivering phenomenal projects such as Illuminate in Boston. We want to build on the success of these two organisations, and owe thanks to the exceptional foundations they have

laid to pave the way to a more positive future. This Framework allows us to bring together the work, knowledge and talent across our two areas to build a stronger cultural voice for East Lincolnshire.

Our residents are at the heart of what we do and sit at the heart of this Framework. We must never forget the importance of the volunteers, groups and charitable organisations who work tirelessly to deliver cultural activities and run venues in our towns and villages. The value these bring to our communities is unmeasurable. This Framework highlights these efforts and sites, and references the need to support and cultivate these dedicated citizens.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a heavy impact on our lives, in times of such uncertainty cultural activities brought communities together, gave hope and inspired. Improved health and wellbeing is a key driver for our councils – encouraging active and healthy lives and enlivening

opportunities for skills and learning for all ages.

Success will mean more participation, more local talent upskilled and nurtured, more opportunities, more creative places and spaces, more ambition and a more sustainable future. These outcomes will drive footfall, strengthen business growth and give a better quality of life. Success will only be achieved through collective efforts and collaboration and we look forward to partnering with some of the fantastic stakeholders we've worked with to create this Framework, and would like to thank them for their input to date.



*Cllr Skinner*



*Cllr Leyland*



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This Cultural Framework for Boston and East Lindsey is commissioned by the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. It is supported by Arts Council England and project managed by Magna Vitae. It is undertaken by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy.

The Cultural Framework is informed by extensive collaboration and engagement with communities across Boston and East Lindsey. Multiple workshops, interviews and a survey enabled the co-creation of a shared vision and agenda for culture-led renewal.

This sets out core themes and a set of strategic priorities for culture to drive renewal in this distinctive, compelling and culturally rich part of Lincolnshire. It focuses on long-term impact and provides an action plan for the next 3 years (2022-2025).

Thank you to all who have contributed to this Cultural Framework for Renewal.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Framework identifies the important role culture plays in place development and renewal. It recognises the distinctiveness of existing cultural assets each location already has to offer. The strategy between East Lindsey and Boston sets an ambitious cultural programme and connects heritage and innovation in the visitor economy to the community's health and well-being and supports environmental sustainability.

The Cultural Framework is informed by extensive collaboration and engagement with communities across Boston and East Lindsey. Multiple workshops, interviews and a survey enabled the co-creation of a shared vision and agenda for culture-led renewal. It is supported by Arts Council England and was project managed by Magna Vitae.

The definition for culture and the context for East Lindsey and Boston aligns with the Government's levelling up mission and includes a commitment to increasing audience participation levels across all types of cultural activity – from the very low levels of participation which have led to Arts Council England positioning Boston and East Lindsey as priority places for investment in cultural development.

Four strategic themes for cultural renewal been created, each with a specific focus relating back to the consultation.

## **Culture, Health and Wellbeing**

Ensuring culture makes a strong contribution to improved health and wellbeing for the whole population. As well as boosting individual mental and physical health outcomes, culture helps to build resilient and cohesive communities.

## **Culture for all**

Boston and East Lindsey prioritise culture for everyone, residents and visitors alike and those with disabilities (physically or hidden), where affordability isn't a barrier for involvement. Supporting meaningful employment in cultural sectors. Participation for all, encouraging active healthy lives, reducing loneliness, improving wellbeing and creating community cohesion through pride of place.

## Cultural Places

Recognising the area's unique mix of towns, coastal resorts, villages and rural hamlets. Using culture to revitalise town centres and to connect communities by pioneering a distributed community leadership model for cultural provision, building capacity locally.

## Cultural Infrastructure

Developing venues. Outdoor spaces, festivals, networks, heritage and natural assets to create a vibrant, high quality community centred ecosystem.

A Cultural Board will be formed to play a strategic leadership role to position culture in the area's renewal and to create a significant voice for the South and East Lincolnshire sub-region through the strength of partnership. The Cultural Board will be guardians of the Cultural Framework and will drive forward the priorities and targets for each of the above themes while supporting the delivery of the Action Plans for Boston and East Lindsey.



# VISION

Boston and East Lindsey will be known as beacons of inclusive cultural dynamism. Both councils will work together with an ambitious programme to drive local impact through culture. They will foster opportunities for culture-led renewal: where every community takes part to create a distinctive cultural ecosystem which connects heritage to a shared future, drives innovation in the visitor economy and other key sectors, contributes to health and wellbeing and supports environmental sustainability.

# CONTEXT

This Cultural Framework for Boston and East Lindsey presents an opportunity to shape a shared strategic approach to culture while retaining a focus on their distinctive qualities. The establishment of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership<sup>1</sup> lays a platform for new collaboration and exchange and provides opportunities to build scale and drive impact through culture, with ambitious plans for town centre renewal, rural renaissance, a revitalised tourism offer, and a diverse and inclusive economy. This new partnership also provides opportunities for coordinating the development of cultural capacity and facilitating innovation through culture which can bring communities together and enhance wellbeing as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and look to the future.

Covid-19 has caused immense suffering and generated uncertainty across every area of society. It has also brutally exposed the fragility of core economic sectors, including tourism and the cultural and creative industries, which depend on micro enterprises and freelancers and which thrive through interactions with audiences. In a 2020 Report<sup>2</sup>, the RSA estimated that one in three jobs are at risk due to the pandemic with East Lindsey one of the most exposed areas due to its dependence on hospitality and seasonal tourism. Culture plays an important role in the visitor economy of Boston and East Lindsey, with festivals and events a key element of the overall experience and cultural organisations and artists dependent on a blend of income, including that generated through tourism. Covid-19 has proved damaging in the capacity for income generation. But it has also, through the uplift in domestic tourism experienced between lockdowns, benefitted from UK audiences looking again at local opportunities for days out and short stays.

The pandemic has changed the way we live, work and connect. While many have missed the joy and richness that taking part in live and in-person cultural activity brings, the ability to create meaningful interactions digitally brings many new opportunities to reach new audiences in new ways. There is also a greater competition for 'experience' tourism, which has been accelerated by digital platforms. The shift towards increasing self-employment and working from home, including the move some have made from cities to small towns and villages, provides opportunities for Boston and East Lindsey to build a talent pool of artists, cultural producers and small creative businesses.

The pandemic has also required us all to reconsider what we value and what we need, with culture increasingly recognised as a vital part of a healthy, fulfilled life and as critical to a more balanced and diverse economy. The country is also facing an unimaginable cost of living crises with inflationary impacts deepening inequalities, urban space is more important than ever and people's connection to outdoor spaces and nature has deepened. The connection between culture and wellbeing is increasingly well understood, as demonstrated through a recent report by Arts Council England which monitored the role of culture in supporting health and wellbeing during the pandemic and its role in our recovery<sup>3</sup>.

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURE?

For this Framework, culture refers to a wide-range of activities and assets – from everyday activity to professional cultural practice. We cover the full range of activities supported by Arts Council England and are mindful of the need to connect with all age groups and cultural identities.

**Culture is our lives, identities and communities.** It is the way we see ourselves and our place in the world. It is where we live, who we are and how we learn. It is how we live our lives. It is how we dress, communicate, eat and drink. It is how we build and decorate our homes. It is how we express ourselves – from music to sport. It is how we design and inhabit our streets and open spaces. It is what we do and why we do it.

**Culture is heritage.** It is our memories and stories, lived through our friends and relatives here and elsewhere. It is what we imagine ourselves to be. It is our possessions and artefacts. It is the built and natural landscape. It is our story and how we re-tell it. It is who we were and who we are becoming.

**Culture is museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, theatres, libraries, festivals and events.** It is how we record, collect, curate and present our identities and how we understand others' identities. It is how we preserve and bring to life our stories. It is how we express our world to others. It is about the conscious experience of culture.

**Culture is practice.** It is the applied imagination of artists, writers and performers. It is the act of making – ideas, text, code, objects, paintings, sound and vision. It is performance. It is active participation. It is innovation and renewal.

**Culture is industry.** It is the economic value generated by culture. It is the jobs and revenue. It is the added value – to innovation, productivity and brand. It is the creative and digital businesses. It is the design, production and trade of intellectual property (IP). It is tourism and retail. It is the competitiveness of the wider economy.

**Culture is our shared future.** It is how we connect and exchange. It is what we have in common and how we differ. It is our neighbourhood, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, religion, values and politics.



However, this Framework is not just about post-Covid recovery through culture. It is about long-term renewal: building stronger, safer, happier communities; enhancing quality of life and quality of place; diversifying the economy and nurturing opportunities for all. This includes a commitment to increasing audience participation levels across all types of cultural activity – from the very low levels of participation which have promoted Arts Council England to position Boston and East Lindsey as **priority places** for investment in cultural development.

This Framework builds on the existing cultural assets in Boston and East Lindsey: a rich heritage with each settlement deeply connected to its past; a varied cultural landscape, from seaside entertainment to lively village halls, innovative festivals to inspirational public art; an increasingly diverse population contributing to cultural dynamism and bringing fresh international connections; and a distinctive geography of waterways and Wolds, villages and market towns, coastal dunes, arable landscapes and woodlands. Boston and East Lindsey are already places of culture.

This Framework also builds on significant progress in recent years to support cultural activity, build capacity, and demonstrate commitment to excellence and innovation in cultural infrastructure, partnership and programming. This is evidenced in the growth of festivals and events, which connect local communities to international best practice (e.g. SO Festival and the work of Transported in Boston); in the work of artists and cultural producers; and in the ambition for excellence in both urban and rural cultural infrastructure and programming, with Magna Vitae playing an important facilitating role and fresh partnerships (such as with the University of Lincoln) are connecting the coast to the county. The seeds have been sown for this Framework to provide a structured approach to long-term culture-led renewal which will build pride, connect communities, and contribute to the area's renaissance.

## Levelling Up And Inclusive Growth

The strategic context for this strategy includes the heightened national focus on investing in areas which have missed out on the economic growth that other more prosperous areas have enjoyed. For Boston and East Lindsey, this is already translating into Towns Fund deals which will bring in over £70 million to support new and improved infrastructure, develop transport links, nurture skills, increase employability, grow businesses and enhance the overall quality of place. Culture is an integral theme across all three Towns Fund Deals – in Boston, Skegness and Mablethorpe, recognised for the role it can play in placemaking, regenerating historic buildings, attracting visitors, boosting the economy and building civic pride.

The area is also hopeful that it will be successful in applications to the next round of Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022. Culture can play a major role in levelling up for Boston and East Lincolnshire: supporting talent development and employability, galvanising town centres, diversifying and innovating across the visitor economy, and building capacity and confidence for all communities. In turn, this will build a dynamic cultural ecosystem for Boston and East Lindsey which supports sustainable long-term development.

The **Corporate Strategy for East Lindsey 2020-2030**<sup>4</sup> sets out an ambitious agenda where “everybody has a chance to thrive”. This includes priorities for the revitalisation of town centres, enhanced health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, an uplift in entrepreneurship and business development, and a focus on a dynamic and resilient visitor economy. Culture is the golden thread which connects these priorities and will be central to the area's sustainable and inclusive development.

**Boston's bid for City Status**, part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, drew from the area's compelling cultural heritage and described the ways culture continues to drive renewal, with diverse influences from Eastern Europe and beyond continuing a long history of international in- and out-migration. Though unsuccessful, it set Boston's forward vision for community led cultural as an integral part of the town's transformation.

## A Greater Lincolnshire – County wide initiatives

This Cultural Framework also builds from and connects to a range of local strategies and strategic partnerships where culture is increasingly to the fore of agendas in skills, tourism, economic growth, social care, health and wellbeing and environment.

In 2017 Lincolnshire's Cultural strategy was launched with five core themes each of which is still relevant to the area and very much inform the thinking of this Framework:

- Inspiring Children & Young People
- Nurturing, Attracting, & Retaining Talent
- Growing Participation & Wellbeing
- Supporting the Economy
- Strengthening Places & Communities

In 2019, the Creative Lincoln Shire Project, led by the University of Lincoln and local partners including the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) and the County Council, identified priorities for investment and support to drive inclusive growth through culture. Many of its findings are relevant to this Cultural Framework – not least the overall finding:

*“Lincolnshire has emergent, but undeveloped, cultural and creative industries. The County has not significantly benefitted from the very high growth of the creative industries nationally and internationally and lacks the hubs and associated agglomeration effects seen elsewhere. The quality of place, access to talent relatively low cost of living, and strong local culture, all point to the potential of establishing a high growth and high value creative economy.”*

The Creative Lincoln Shire research identified coastal Lincolnshire as growing in terms of cultural tourism, festivals and events, all of which provide talent pathways for a strong and sustainable cultural ecosystem. In addition, the research outlined how:

*“Market towns and villages across the County are becoming micro-hubs for creative businesses which can, with the right network and support infrastructure, build capacity for growth and innovation”.*

The research cites festivals as key drivers for innovation, talent and market development, and as catalysts for inward investment and place-making.

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP's **Strategy for Inclusive Growth** prioritises the visitor economy and a tourism offer that attracts higher spending visitors throughout the year underpinned by a vibrant creative and cultural offer, demonstrating how critical the sector is. It also highlights the importance of the creative industries – identifying over 3,000 businesses across the county – as a small but growing sector, with an important role to play in skills development and employment growth.

The LEP is focussed on skills with particular priorities being addressing the skills challenges of the next decade, including the need to replace people leaving work through retirement and the need for more people to fill technical and professional jobs. It prioritises inspiring and supporting young people to stay and work in the area. This Cultural Framework can kickstart a process of strategic development for the creative industries, focusing on nurturing talent, boosting creative employment and self-employment, and building strategic partnerships with key employers (from Butlin's to Batemans), establishing the Midlands Coast as a hub for creative practice.

The establishment of a new **Visitor Economy Board** for Lincolnshire and the expansion of **Visit Lincoln** to cover the whole county as the business-led **Destination Lincolnshire** reflects a new strategic approach to growing tourism. The new Board will seek to grow the tourism sector estimated to be worth £2.39 Billion and employing 30,000 people. As well as Skegness, the UK's 4th most popular holiday resort, Boston and East Lindsey's diverse tourism offer stretches from the natural beauty of the Wolds and coastline to aviation and Second World War heritage. With culture and heritage integral to growing the tourism sector and encouraging visitors to take-in a wider footprint of the area, Boston and East Lindsey can become hubs for new types of cultural tourism based on shared itineraries which interweave contemporary culture, heritage, nature and wellbeing.

**The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire** (2018) sets out an ambitious agenda for improving health and wellbeing throughout the county. In many of the areas it prioritises, arts and culture are already making a difference, with the potential to do much more in the future. These include the focus on improving mental health – something that organisations including Transported in Boston have been focussed on. Prevention – across health and care – is an overarching theme along with supporting people to get work and stay in employment. Engaging with arts and culture has been shown to be as vital to preventing ill-health as physical activity.



## Arts Council England - Support for Priority Places

Arts Council England's 10-year Strategy, Let's Create, and its Delivery Plan for 2021-2024, set out priorities for future work which will help drive the impact that culture can deliver across the country. This includes a renewed commitment to a place-based approach (and Levelling Up) which will see investment targeted at 'left-behind places' which include Boston and East Lindsey as well as other nearby places: North East Lincolnshire, Fenland and Peterborough. While the mechanisms through which support priority places will be delivered are still being finalised, there will be increased support to ensure that areas which currently receive less than average grant funding can grow their cultural capacity. The approach will also see closer working between Arts Council England and other strategic bodies such as English Heritage and the National Lottery Fund for Heritage: to coordinate approaches and maximise shared investment.

The four investment principles set out by Arts Council England provide a good framework for prioritising investment and support for Boston and East Lindsey:

» **Ambition and Quality:** a commitment to supporting ambitious cultural organisations and artists committed to quality, connected to the public and investing in training and skills. *This is already a priority for organisations in Boston and East Lindsey, something that the Town's Fund investment will help deliver and which will connect the culture sector to the broader strategies at a Lincolnshire level.*

» **Dynamism:** a commitment to invest in organisations strengthening their governance and leadership, developing the skills and wellbeing of their workforce, improving their data culture and adopting appropriate new technologies across their business. *New dynamic ways of working, including utilising digital technology, rural touring and the reanimation of heritage for contemporary cultural practice, all feature across Boston and East Lindsey, while networks such as the SOcial are bringing opportunities for new and emerging cultural leaders. There is clearly much to be done here in terms of growing the support for artists and producers of all ages. Joining together organisations and programming, and generating new types of innovative cultural practice.*

» **Environmental responsibility:** a commitment to cultural organisations and individuals leading the way in their approach to environmental responsibility. *In an area where the risk of flooding and wider effects of climate change are already experienced, this is already a priority for Boston and East Lindsey, and connecting culture to the natural environment through projects and infrastructure is understood to be critical. Furthermore, opportunities to catalyse green tourism and partner green economy priorities across the Midlands Coast, position this Framework as a vital tool for sustainable and responsible cultural development.*

» **Inclusivity and relevance:** a commitment to equality and fairness, and encouragement to cultural organisations which draw on a wider range of views and experiences. *Organisations such as Transported in Boston have national reputations for community led cultural development, while smaller organisations across the area are driven by volunteers working in community settings. With the impact of the Brexit referendum still very raw, with challenges of talent loss and bridge-building for the area's diverse population, cultural renewal can only be achieved if every community feels shared and equal ownership of the area's cultural future. This includes a targeted approach to put culture to the fore in tackling health inequalities and supporting diverse talent to prosper, including people of disability.*



The three strategic outcomes for Let's Create are also highly relevant to this Cultural Framework:

- » **Creative People:** ensuring we are open, inclusive and supportive of everyone, championing participation and working to ensure no one is left behind. This includes a focus on what makes East Lindsey and Boston distinctively diverse – such as through our Eastern European population, our higher than average older population, our military communities, our caravan communities, and our rural population.
- » **Cultural Communities:** nurturing cultural renewal through our places and infrastructure, and embracing wider notions of community, including those linked to senses of shared purpose and identity.
- » **A Creative and Cultural Country:** championing artists and cultural practitioners, driving excellence and innovation and growing a dynamic ecosystem which reaches across the Midlands Coast and contributes to the regional and national cultural offer.



## Wider Opportunities

As well as hopefully seeing the worst of the pandemic end in 2022, a number of events and festivals present opportunities for collaborative cultural development in Boston and East Lindsey. For example:

- » Unboxed: Creativity in the UK, which runs from March to October will be the largest creative programme ever in the UK with 10 nationwide programmes mixing science, technology, engineering, mathematics and the arts which will engage audiences in person, online on TV and radio.
- » The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a key part of the Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda, providing money for local councils to invest in three priority areas: local communities and places; support for local businesses; and people and skills. Boston Borough Council will receive £2.2m, East Lindsey District Council has been awarded £4.4m.
- » The Boston Massachusetts 400th anniversary commemorations provide a platform for international collaboration which nurtures local engagement and participation. This is building toward a major programme of activity in 2030. Alongside the work of Transported, So Festival and cultural anchors such as Boston Blackfriars and Skegness Embassy Theatre, there are growing opportunities to position the area as a hub for partnership working and touring which tests new types of cultural practice, connects creative making to heritage, and fosters local pride.

» Digital innovation provides opportunities to create a more dynamic, interactive and accessible tourism and cultural offer. Improvements in digital capacity and connectivity can open-up, deepen and extend cultural programming. For example, the BFI-supported Midlands Film Hub is bringing film to community centres and village halls and supporting audience engagement via connections to archives, access to film-makers and film-making and storytelling. Digital can also help mobilise young people's participation in the cultural ecosystem – e.g. via opportunities in creative technology, in programming interactive and immersive cultural experiences, and in supporting networks and exchange.

» The Partnership has submitted ambitious Levelling Up bids; focusing on the regeneration of cultural and heritage attractions in East Lindsey and revitalising under-used areas of Boston. If successful, East Lindsey would gain more than £8.1m to work with its partners on cultural and tourism projects in the market towns of Alford and Spilsby, to regenerate Alford Windmill, Alford Manor House and Spilsby Sessions House. The money would secure the future of heritage assets, adding to the tourism offer across the Lincolnshire Wolds as well as compliment the Towns Deal funding already secured for projects in Skegness and Mablethorpe. In Boston, a bid for up to £20million would support the ambitious plans seek to regenerate and reinvigorate a large brownfield opportunity in the centre of the town. Working with partners, the scheme known as PE21 will bring forward several strategic interventions which will collectively increase activity, footfall, and improve the image and vitality of the area. An announcement on the Levelling Up bids is expected in the Autumn 2022.

» Kaunas, Lithuania, will be European Capital of Culture in 2022 – offering 'One Big Stage for Europe', including multiple collaborations with arts and cultural organisations from different countries. With such strong Lithuanian connections in this part of Lincolnshire, opportunities for cultural exchange are possible, even if the UK is now a 'third country' to the European Union.

» Tourism renewal. The Government's Tourism Recovery Plan (DCMS 2021) sets out a commitment to re-build and reinvigorate tourism, with a focus on recovering domestic overnight trip volume and spend to 2019 levels by the end of 2022, and inbound visitor numbers and spend by the end of 2023. To deliver this will involve a regional focus – levelling up impact, with a focus on extending the average visitor stay, increasing resilience, enhancing the visitor experience and increasing accessibility. The cultural sector of Boston and East Lindsey stands to benefit from this programme and can contribute to its effective delivery. Events, festivals and cultural development activities across Lincolnshire and in nearby North Norfolk, present opportunities for collaboration and exchange. By building capacity across this wider geography, Boston and East Lindsey can become hubs of cultural development with a scale and sustainability unavailable by just working locally. The emergent concept of the 'Midlands Coast' – from the Humber to the Wash, can provide a strategic narrative for large-scale cultural renewal, providing opportunities to connect and collaborate with Grimsby Creates and the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board. Shared activities can include audience development, professional exchange and coordinated programming.

» City of Culture 2029: As a sub-region our Partnership has agreed to come together with Lincoln and North East Lincolnshire to develop a bold, ambitious, countywide proposition which will seek to create significant longer term impact on Lincolnshire, its arts infrastructure, communities and visitors alike. This is a key milestone and step change in preparing our collective capacity, ecology and co-operation frameworks for a confident 2029 City of Culture Bid to see step change in our sector to flourish grow and innovate.



# BOSTON

## Sample Of Cultural Highlights

The market town of Boston has a remarkably rich history. In the 13th Century it was the second largest port in the country, ranking it is part of the Hanseatic League – of which it is one of five UK members today. Many of the original Pilgrims on the Mayflower set off from the town, including the founder of the city of Boston in Massachusetts. The wider borough (population 65,000) today is notable for its football club, diverse population, port, and the importance of food production to the local economy. Boston also has a strong voluntary cultural sector and an active cultural life from heritage enthusiasts to a wide variety of activities programmes in village halls and community spaces. The town deal, worth £21.9 million will:

*“achieve sustainable economic growth and pride of place through bold urban design, digital solutions and connected communities. This will launch Boston into the future, build on its unique heritage and make our town an exciting place to live, work, invest and visit for generations to come.”*



## Museums & Galleries

**Blackfriars Arts Centre** – home to two local amateur groups and host to a varied programme of professional productions.

**Savoy Cinema** – Modern facility screening films and live theatre with a café-bar.

**Shodfriars Hall** – Adjacent to Blackfriars, will be brought back into use as a cultural centre through the Towns Fund.

**We'll Meet Again WW2 Homefront Museum** – award winning museum based at Freiston Shore, with a collection of WW1 and WW2 artefacts.

**The Bubblecar Museum** – with 50 microcars including Bond, Isetta, Reliant and Bamby.



## Natural Environment

**Boston Central Park** - Formerly a private deer park and now a focal point for the town it houses a bird aviary, café and skate park.

**Freiston Shore** – a naturally regenerated salt marsh, that benefits wintering, passage and nesting birds.

**Frampton Marsh** – RSPB reserve and one of Europe's most important locations for freshwater wildlife.

Other highlights include Havenside Nature Reserve, Boston Woods, Boston Road Brick Pits, Witham Way Country Park, Boston Central Park and Westgate Woods.



## Heritage

**St Botolph's Church** – known as the Boston Stump and for being the largest Parish Church in the UK, its size reflecting the importance of the town. As well as being used for worship it hosts a range of arts activities.

**Hussey Tower** – A Scheduled Ancient Monument built in the 15th century and once part of a large manor house.

**Boston Guildhall** – Built in the 1390s, a symbol of Boston's power at the time, now housing a museum and used for weddings.

**The Old Kings Head** – in Kirton, a rare 16th Century example of the Fenland Artisan Mannerist style



## Venues & Community Spaces

Include the **Gliderdrome**, a unique concert venue, **The Beonna at All Saints**, a focal point for the community, **Centenary Methodist Church**, a venue used for community meals, concerts, homeless housing project and much more.



## Libraries

**Boston Library** – Housed in the County Hall, hosts activities for adults and children including arts and crafts, IT skills, music and drama groups.



## Arts & Cultural Organisations

**Transported** – A strategic, community focused programme part of the Arts Council England's National Portfolio programme, driving cultural development across Boston and beyond. This includes a focus on boosting everyday cultural participation.

**Boston Sinfonia** – Founded in 1996 to give a platform to local professional standard musicians and orchestra in residence at the Stump.

**Boston Hanse Group** – The New Hanse brings together 197 towns and cities from across Europe in the spirit of the original Hanseatic League.

**Bos Musical Theatre Group** – an award-winning performing society based in Boston.



## Notable Projects

**Boston Buoys Art Trail** a series of artworks created on former working buoys, **Boston Book Festival** championing diverse authors, **Illuminate Boston**, 1620 lanterns to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims, **Emerge Festival** a free family event with games, performance and music, **Aerial Dance Classes** for the adventurous. **'Boston – the small town with a big story'** a special website created by 44 Boston College students and Transported Street Art projects working with local communities.



# EAST LINDSEY

## Sample Of Cultural Highlights

Bigger than many counties and geographically the fifth largest district in England, East Lindsey's 137,000 residents are spread between a mix of market towns, coastal towns, villages and rural locations including Manby, Alford, Wragby, Spilsby, Woodhall Spa, Mablethorpe, Skegness, Horncastle, Chapel St Leonards and Louth. Its coast is renowned for its natural environment as well as home to the 4th largest holiday resort in the country. The Lincolnshire Wolds is an area of outstanding Natural Beauty. The economy is dominated by tourism on the coast and agriculture inland. Magna Vitae play a vital role in supporting culture and leisure activities across East Lindsey, with plans to extend their role in rural areas. Skegness and Mablethorpe have secured £48.4 million Town Deal so they can:

*“make their distinctive contributions to a Connected Coast, renewed and refreshed as settlements through a programme which diversifies their economies, builds their skills base and establishes them as national test beds for future living and natural resource management.”*



## Museums & Galleries

**Alford Manor House** – the largest thatched manor house in the country, built in the 17th Century, adjacent to the museum of Rural Life.

**Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum** - housed in a rare 19th Century corrugated iron bungalow, it tells the unique history of the village.

**Louth Museum** – award-winning museum with 4 galleries and a library.

Other museums include Magdalen College in Wainfleet, Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, Magdalen College Museum, Sir Joseph Banks Centre Museum and The Village Church Farm.



## Natural Environment

Highlights include the North Sea Observatory, and its programmes in culture and environment, Hubbard's Hills, wonderful beaches, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes, Chapel Marsh pit and Huttoft Bank for wildlife, Woodhall Spa Woods, Snipe Dales Country Park.



## Networks

Networks include the SOcial, SO Festival's creative network, attracting over 60 members. Alford Hub with 90 active volunteers, Louth Art Trail and Horncastle Together.



## Libraries

There are four County Council-led libraries in Skegness, Mablethorpe, Louth and Woodhall Spa; plus a portfolio of small community-led libraries. Village halls and community hubs are also vital parts of the community cultural infrastructure.



## Arts Venues

**Skegness Embassy Theatre** – Managed by Magna Vitae, with multiple adaptable auditoriums, it is central to the Skegness Town Deal plans to create a cultural hub.

**Riverhead Theatre** – Run by the Louth Playgoers, puts on frequent amateur productions and runs workshops for all ages.

**Spilsby Sessions House** – Currently undergoing restoration once funds are secured it will be a community venue and heritage asset.

Other notable assets include Louth Jazz Club, Neverland Theatre and Arts Centre, Grubby Knees Theatre Company, Horncastle.



## Notable Projects

The SOvember Weekender in Skegness for digital arts encounters, Skegness Beach race attracting crowds of 30,000, Halloween at Hildreds shopping centre, Festive Fabuloso which toured 5 towns in winter 2021 with a repurposed organ and light show.



## Arts & Cultural Organisations

**SO Festival** – a major international street art festival offering a variety of outdoor entertainment in Skegness and Mablethorpe. Other festivals include Zero degrees in Louth and Beyond the Woods.

**Magna Vitae** – a charitable trust running cultural, leisure and health facilities across Lincolnshire (including the SO Festival).

**Live and Local** – Facilitates high-quality professional performance in small venues across the district (as well as nationally).

**Choral Societies** – there are numerous local groups including in Louth, Horncastle, Alford.

**Louth 13+ Youth and Community Centre** – a hive of activity for young and old since 1992.

**Zero Degrees Festival, Louth** – an exemplar community-led festival working across the arts.



## Heritage

**Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre** - a popular heritage attraction.

**Gunby Estate** – An 18th Century country house set in a landscaped 100-acre park.

**Tattershall Cottage** – The ruin of a grammar school, then later a brewery, saved for the nation in 1974.

**Lincolnshire Aviation Centre** at East Kirkby.

Other highlights include Alford Windmill, the work of Louth Navigation Trust, Claythorpe Watermill, St Wilfred's Church, Bolingbroke.

# FOUR STRATEGIC THEMES FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

Consultation for this Cultural Framework has brought into sharp relief both the opportunities for cultural renewal in Boston and East Lindsey and the challenges. As recognised by Arts Council England in the allocation of Boston and East Lindsey as priority places, the area is one of significant potential but also one where multiple barriers have historically stood in the way of system-wide cultural renewal. The area's ageing population and sustained loss of younger talent, limited transport links, health and wellbeing indicators, fragmented communities, and lack of critical mass in a range of industries, are commonly identified as challenging features or as barriers to cultural development.

But the area can also be understood from an 'asset-based perspective', where its heritage, natural and built environment, existing cultural offer, and the ambition and aspirations of its people, provide a set of cultural resources which can be nurtured as part of a holistic process of cultural renewal. The distinctive geography – as part of the Midlands Coast and with a network of villages and market towns – provides opportunities for a networked and coordinated approach (e.g. building from the Vital and Viable Towns Network in East Lindsey).

In exploring what is possible, what is needed, and also what is most challenging, this consultation for this Cultural Framework has identified 4 interconnected strategic themes. These provide the thematic architecture for culture-led partnership and investment:



## HEALTH & WELLBEING

Culture makes a strong contribution to improved health and wellbeing for the whole population. As well as boosting individual mental and physical health outcomes, culture helps to build resilient and cohesive communities. Culture plays a vital role in post-Covid recovery, supporting a process of healing, of re-emergence, and of new-found confidence. Culture helps to build positive relationships between people and place, reducing depression, anxiety and loneliness.

## CULTURE FOR ALL

Boston and East Lindsey prioritise culture for everyone, residents and visitors alike. For children and young people, culture is part of everyday life, with opportunities to participate inside and outside school, with the chance to grow and develop skills and with progression routes to employment and education. For families, culture provides for more attractive, healthy places to live and activities for all ages. For communities, this helps build cohesion, animate places and build pride.

## CULTURAL PLACES

The area's unique mix of towns, coastal resorts, villages and rural hamlets are connected through shared cultural activity that animates high streets, attracts visitors on- and off-season, and connects people to heritage and the natural environment. Culture plays a leading role in regenerating and revitalising town centres and supporting the recovery of tourism; culture connects communities through new touring models; and culture links with leisure and sport to support active participation in civic life.

## CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Boston and East Lindsey are a model for innovative, inclusive cultural infrastructure of all kinds – including venues, outdoor spaces, festivals and networks to support a vibrant, high-quality, community-centred cultural ecosystem. Heritage and natural assets are re-imagined and re-modelled as spaces for cultural production and expression. The area becomes a hub for innovative cultural practice – including in outdoor arts, rural touring and community engagement.

# 100 VOICES FROM BOSTON & EAST LINDSEY

In addition to a programme of workshops and interviews ranging from national partners and investors such as Arts Council England to local cultural organisations, schools, colleges, venues, community groups and artists, consultation for this Framework involved a survey to improve understanding of the needs and aspirations of local people. We distributed an online survey across East Lindsey and Boston to gather a wider range of opinions. Close to 100 local people responded, split into thirds between creative practitioners, employees and volunteers at cultural organisations, and community members interested in the arts.

In terms of their views on the area as a place to be based as a creative practitioner, respondents were generally positive. On average they felt there were creative opportunities in the area, that they can network with others, that their work was valued by communities and cultural organisations. However nearly 50% felt there weren't sufficient or appropriate venues to accommodate their work in the area, with cost or administrative barriers cited alongside the lack of purpose-built cultural infrastructure for some types of cultural activity.

The importance of collaboration and creative organisations to freelancers was clearly seen with 82% having worked with a cultural organisation in the area, 68% outside the area, 16% internationally and 63% with an organisation in another sector (e.g. technology, health, wellbeing and tourism).

People working for organisations were particularly keen to develop new audiences (86% strongly agreeing), were happy with their venues (57% tending to or strongly agreeing) and increase volunteering activities (48% strongly agreeing).

In terms of audiences, survey respondents were unsurprisingly heavy attenders - 60% had attended 6 or more cultural activities in last year and 30% 2-5 cultural activities. 60% knew where to find information on events but 67% felt there weren't enough live events indicating an appetite for more. They felt cultural activity was affordable (53%), open and inclusive (54%) which reflects the community nature of much activity. However, work is not as local as it could be with 60% of respondents saying they had to travel more than 20 minutes to attend an event.



In terms of what they thought of East Lindsey and Boston as places of cultural activity there were a real mix of responses. On the negative side, people reported a lack of activity or variation:

*“Not enough going on. Could be much more going on.”*

*“There is a lot of opportunity to create cultural activities with these areas - I just rarely see such events in the area.”*

*“East Lindsey tends to be quite samey with the same events, same people etc. A bit of variation would be nice.”*

Transport, size and the rural nature of the area were frequently cited as barriers:

*“It is difficult to secure higher quality performers due to the excess costs and lower audience numbers. In the past there have been higher levels of subsidy available.”*

*“The long distances people have to travel limits participation in cultural events and activities, and particularly the very limited public transport. In Louth we now have no long-distance coach service (to London etc), no railway, no local buses in the evenings, and no Sunday buses.”*

There were several more positive comments, though they mention a lack of overarching cultural partnership, limited venues, and challenges with engaging people from different parts of the community:

*“Transported is exceptional, what a difference they have made.”*

*“What goes on in Boston already is great, but there is massive potential to invest in people and their talents and especially our beautiful heritage buildings, so everything comes alive for the benefit of all.”*

*“Obviously as rural places they will always have limitations in terms of availability and accessibility for cultural events. As a creative I don’t have a problem with that, it is just a challenge that I am happy to have for the privilege of living in this area. There is lots going on: e.g., theatre, arts cinema, music. Visual arts less so as no dedicated venues.”*

Finally, a quote which really sums up the challenge and opportunity for this Cultural Development Framework:

*“The area is so huge and so spread out with such a range of small centres of population that it is sometimes hard to get a handle on what is going on. There are some real pockets of cultural excellence for sure, but an arguable lack of coordination sometimes makes it hard to understand the overall direction of travel.*

*The Cultural Framework is perhaps an opportunity not only to raise the profile of arts & cultural activities across the area, but also develop the understanding of its significance amongst potential partners (such as businesses, local councillors etc).”*

# THEME 1. CULTURE, HEALTH & WELLBEING

## The Vision

Culture makes a strong contribution to improved health and wellbeing for the whole population. As well as boosting individual mental and physical health outcomes, culture helps to build resilient and cohesive communities. Culture plays a vital role in post-Covid recovery, supporting a process of healing, of re-emergence, and of new-found confidence. Culture helps to build positive relationships between people and place, reducing depression, anxiety and loneliness.

## The Challenges and Opportunities

In common with Lincolnshire as a whole, improving health and wellbeing in East Lindsey and Boston is a priority. Due to a range of factors, including pockets of multiple deprivation, low income and skills levels, demographic profile (with an ageing population), parts of the area suffer from poor health outcomes with people suffering more years of physical and mental ill health, lifestyle-related illnesses and chronic conditions and shortened lifespans. Issues to do with rural isolation, transport and poor housing, particularly for some coastal communities, makes the problem more acute. Added to this has been the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected poorer and vulnerable communities here as it has nationally and internationally.

Culture is already playing an important part in helping people to live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives. Whether it is providing people with the transferable skills and confidence that can help them gain employment or stay in employment (a vital driver of better health), helping tackle the problems caused by loneliness or isolation through active participation and volunteering or bringing communities together through major events that encourage a sense of cohesion and civic pride.

In addition, opportunities to connect cultural provision and participation to the provision of health and wellbeing services can be explored as a strategic priority for the area. This can leverage incoming investment – such as the proposed Wellbeing Hub in Skegness. There is a growing body of good practice in cultural and social prescribing – e.g. targeting health conditions caused by loneliness or frailty; or supporting people to build culturally active lives as a preventative intervention. Plus opportunities to boost volunteering in cultural activities can attend to a range of personal and collective challenges, not least the ways community confidence and trust are weakened due to the lack of community engagement and dialogue.

## Priority Areas for Action

- » Build on the current work being done at a County level through the One You Lincolnshire programme which supports healthy living. This presents opportunities to work with commissioning services can deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes in deprived wards. Support Lincolnshire, the online directory of available support and services, can feature cultural provision as a vital part of the portfolio of resources available to deliver a healthier Lincolnshire.
- » Connect the proposed Wellbeing Hub in Skegness and Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe (both featured in successful Towns Fund bids) to a culture and wellbeing programme. This can be part of an ambitious R&D project on culture and wellbeing – partnering local cultural organisations and local health and wellbeing infrastructure to national and international best practice. It can test and model approaches to cultural prescribing and mobilise volunteering as a wellbeing priority.
- » Expand and scale up the work of groups including Transported, which have used the arts to help tackle physical and mental health issues.
- » Increase the connections between culture and heritage, using culture as a means to encourage new visitors to the area's physical and cultural heritage, building pride and confidence for all communities.



# THEME 2. CULTURE FOR ALL

## The Vision

Boston and East Lindsey prioritise culture for everyone, residents and visitors alike and those with disabilities (physically or hidden), where affordability isn't a barrier for involvement. For children and young people, culture is part of everyday life, with opportunities to participate inside and outside school, with the chance to grow and develop skills and with progression routes to employment and education. For families, culture provides for more attractive, healthy places to live and activities for all ages. For older people, cultural activity helps reduce loneliness and enhance health and wellbeing. For communities, this helps build cohesion, animate places and build pride.

## The Challenges and Opportunities

Boston and East Lindsey cover a large geographic area, with an extraordinarily rich natural and heritage landscape. However, with this comes the challenge of connectivity: communities can feel isolated and presents the logistic difficulty of delivering high-quality arts across a dispersed community of villages, market towns and rural areas. Across the area, rural touring, festivals and shows, amateur groups, village halls, small venues and galleries abound. The SO Festival, now seen as a model of good practice in Outdoor Arts with an international focus, is one of the few organisations with the capacity to produce work of scale, but funding restrictions have limited its reach into rural communities.

Across the area, in spite of the great work done by organisations and individuals, there are still areas of low engagement (particularly in coastal areas). Such low engagement is particularly pronounced in areas with the greatest social and

health challenges – i.e. the people for whom cultural participation can be most impactful. The pandemic has revealed how many have missed the life-affirming benefits that culture brings, as well as shining a light on the impacts of inequality and the vulnerability of sections of society.

A key challenge for long-term cultural development is the limited opportunities for children and young people to participate in cultural activities (particularly post-16) and to access experiences and networks which could further their progression – e.g. into the creative industries. Lincolnshire Music Education Hub and Lincolnshire Local Cultural Education Partnership are undertaking vital work to provide children and young people with access to cultural activities and working with schools and colleges to build provision. Engagement and participation for children and young people, including opportunities to develop skills in culture and the creative industries, will be critical if any version of 'Levelling Up' is to be achieved. This is recognised in the Government's recent report: A Best Start for Life<sup>11</sup>.

## Priority Areas for Action

- » Prioritise projects which can tour across the area – building connections between communities, growing capacity and coordinating programming through accessible and inspiring itineraries. This includes scope for collaboration and coordinated programming across the Midlands Coast and inland to hubs of activity across Lincolnshire. It also includes accelerating digital practices such as through the digitalisation of archives, touring of film and other art forms, and innovative commissioning.
- » Build the cultural offer for children and young people, connecting and amplifying existing success stories to establish a programme of excellence and innovation in programming and engagement. This could be spearheaded by the move of The Mighty Creatives to Skegness and the development of the Local Cultural Education Partnership and Music Education Hub, which will help coordinate activity between schools, organisations, further and higher education as well as ensuring that cultural skills development is prioritised at a LEP level.
- » Focus on talent development pathways for young people in culture and the creative industries. For example, develop activity spaces for culture outside of the school / college, in town centre locations (such as old shops) – to build confidence and enhance vitality. Make links between the further education sector and the local and regional cultural ecosystem – to raise the profile of opportunities for cultural and creative work in the area and to build progression pathways for young people.
- » Prioritise cultural activities which link to areas of existing interest and activity. For example, food and drink, walking and cycling, nature and heritage, are all areas for which there is significant existing participation. Cultural programming which explores these acts of everyday participation can bring more people into cultural activities and support new areas of work for professional artists and cultural producers.
- » Diversity advantage: the distinctive nature of cultural diversity in Boston and East Lincolnshire is rarely viewed as offering the area an advantage, whether in terms of economic development or social cohesion. But the talent and aspirations of the area's diverse communities provides a renewable resource which can add to the vitality and innovation of the cultural sector. The area, and in particular Boston, has thrived through its links to the rest of the world. Culture in Boston and East Lindsey will only thrive if the area's diversity is viewed as an opportunity: for a new type of culture built on exchange, trust and a shared future.

Due to the strength of volunteering, amateur groups and community infrastructure (from hub libraries to churches and village halls) there is a strong grass roots which can be built on. Transported is a national exemplar in mobilising community participation and engagement, including volunteering. The success of Live and Local which has been operating in the area for 30 years, enabling venues to stage high-quality arts in the smallest of places, shows the benefit of a joined up collective approach. Equally the success of shows that tour – such as the recent Festive Fabuloso and the increasing range of Transported, demonstrate opportunities to connect the cultural offer, share efficiencies and establish a whole place approach to cultural programming.

The University of Lincoln is playing a leadership role in connecting cultural provision which reaches different communities – such as via the Lincolnshire One Venues network, which provides opportunities for coordinated programming.

There is high demand for training and skills for people of all ages as can be seen with groups including the Louth Playgoers providing classes and opportunities for young and old alike or Grubby Knees Community Theatre delivers workshops for young people interested in performing arts. This type of community capacity-building can help grow a distributed leadership model for the area, with micro-clusters of cultural activity growing access and participation across the wider area.

# THEME 3. CULTURAL PLACES

## The Vision

The area's unique mix of towns, coastal resorts, villages and rural hamlets are connected through shared cultural activity that animates high streets, attracts visitors on- and off-season, and connects people to heritage and the natural environment. Culture plays a leading role in regenerating and revitalising town centres; culture connects communities through new touring models; and culture links with leisure and sport to support active participation in civic life. East Lindsey and Boston can pioneer a distributed community leadership model for cultural provision, building capacity in community centres, village halls, heritage settings, libraries and other settings to coordinate programmes of cultural activity and impact-facing provision.

## The Challenges and Opportunities

The proliferation of small towns and villages and rural nature of much of the area has always posed a challenge in ensuring that everyone can easily access culture. Tightening resources has historically necessitated the concentration of investment in key organisations and larger towns, meaning that some places feel they have not had access to the resources they need.

The cultural ecosystem of Boston and East Lindsey is made up of a mix of relatively established organisations usually based in bigger settlements with a larger number of smaller, grassroots groups, venues and spaces geographically dispersed. These include local museums and heritage sites, community groups, village halls, churches and libraries, which are often reliant on volunteers. While some receive

funding, they are often heavily reliant on small grants and the local community for resources. Established larger organisations such as Transported and the SO Festival successfully work with local groups and venues to bring work to new areas, while Live and Local has a long history of enabling even the smallest of venues to put on high quality and innovative work.

Incoming investment through the Towns Fund provides a major opportunity to align cultural development to social and economic transformation. Imaginative enhancements to the public realm, new routes for leisure and culture, and new or revitalised cultural infrastructure will lead a period of sustained regeneration in Skegness, Mablethorpe and Boston. Each place is leveraging its heritage assets to deliver contemporary cultural, social and economic impact. There is much to play for here – such as via the momentum of the

Boston Massachusetts 400 celebrations, which will shine a light on the area's deep roots and international connections. For Skegness and Mablethorpe, heritage as seaside destinations with intimate links to big cities in the Midlands and North, provides a compelling opportunity for renewal – e.g. in cultural programming, independent retail and as centre of cultural production.

To achieve sustained cultural renewal in these towns, it will also be important to build connections across the wider area, with local hubs in smaller places feeding into a network of cultural development, benefitting from the scaling up of capacity in the larger towns and contributing themselves to the area's overall vitality.

## Priority Areas for Action

To ensure that culture can play a leading role in making the whole area and all its places more attractive, more prosperous and more liveable, will mean helping all parts of the ecosystem to flourish. There are three main ways this can be achieved:

- Firstly, by enabling larger, established organisations to use their scale and capacity to work even more effectively with local groups, producers and artists. This includes developing rural touring, cultural programming based on connected itineraries, and partnership with even larger cultural organisations in the wider region, encouraging them to come to Boston and East Lindsey to develop and test new work, innovate and grow.
- Secondly, by providing more support for smaller groups and grassroots organisations, through networking, mentoring and skills, support with applications and helping them connect to key local services.
- Thirdly, by supporting and promoting local events in a coordinated way so that residents and visitors alike can easily find out about events, exhibitions and performances and view this as part of an area-wide cultural programme. This will put culture to the centre of Visitor Economy Resilience Plans and provide a focal point for the work of Destination Lincolnshire.

Other key priority areas for place-based cultural renewal include:

- » Heritage renewal and activation: Boston and East Lindsey have a portfolio of heritage assets which are under-utilised as contemporary resources for culture. Boston's Townscape Heritage project has illuminated the town's considerable heritage assets and also highlighted the need to actively pursue new uses for heritage buildings. Plus, the intangible heritage assets of the area provide a rich seam of inspiration for new cultural programming – from the Hanseatic League to the agricultural history, cultural renewal can draw on the resources of the past. To provide integrated and meaningful outcomes, projects must be aligned with the recommendations from Boston Historic Place Panel, along with the use of information from the Local Listing Campaign, managed by Lincolnshire County Council.
- » Environmental responsibility: There is an opportunity, indeed necessity, to position culture as an enabler for community responses to climate change – e.g. building environmental literacy and responsibility; delivering carbon neutral solutions; seeding national and international collaborations which pioneer 'slow' and sustainable cultural exchange, agile cultural production and green tourism. Boston and East Lindsey can build partnerships into North East Lincolnshire, where there is considerable investment in off-shore energy, to develop a Midlands Coast cultural offer which champions environmental sustainability and works with nature as a cultural resource. There is much to build from – such as the work of the North Sea Observatory, which has led successful programmes such as Bathing Beauties and Structures on Edge, linking cultural practice to the fragility and beauty of the natural environment.

# THEME 4. CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## The Vision

Boston and East Lindsey are a model for innovative, inclusive cultural infrastructure of all kinds – including venues, outdoor spaces, festivals and networks to support a vibrant, high-quality, community-centred cultural ecosystem. Heritage and natural assets are re-imagined and re-modelled as spaces for cultural production and expression. The area becomes a hub for innovative cultural practice – including in outdoor arts, rural touring and community engagement.

## The Challenges and Opportunities

While home to some excellent individual infrastructure ranging from larger festivals like SO Festival, catalysts of community engagement Transported, much loved theatres such as the Embassy or Riverhead, or distinctive venues such as the recently listed Gliderdrome and the contemporary architecture of the North Sea Observatory; overall the cultural infrastructure landscape of Boston and East Lindsey needs a re-boot. The many smaller venues and spaces are heavily reliant on volunteers, often lacking in resources and capacity. Larger venues will benefit from modernisation and a process of re-imagination to explore a range of uses. And, as previously mentioned, heritage assets are under-utilised as spaces for contemporary cultural activity.

Boston and East Lindsey have also begun to explore other types of cultural infrastructure, recognising that it is not just venues or festivals which deliver cultural renewal. For example, explorations in public art such as Time and Tide Bell in Mablethorpe or Transmission's Boston Buoys Trail or their Art on Lorries project, demonstrate the possibility of inspiring audiences through the connection of heritage, landscape, and art. These interventions play an important social role, building identity and pride, as well as catalysing cultural tourism. Opportunities to re-Imagine identity and place through public art and public realm interventions will play a role in the area's long-term cultural renewal.

## Priority Areas for Action

- » New investment will lead to significant improvements in the area's cultural infrastructure. The Town Deals in Boston, Mablethorpe and Skegness will provide much needed investment into facilities – providing new and updated cultural facilities as part of wider plans which will boost the local economy, improve skills and place attractiveness. Sutton-on-Sea Colonnade will see the construction of a landmark building that will introduce new café, restaurant, gallery and exhibition spaces, with viewing decks overlooking the beach. This has the potential to be a new type of culture house for the area – a base for international exchange and dynamic cross-art-form development. The Embassy Theatre will be a central part of plans to regenerate Skegness Foreshore as it becomes a true 'hub' providing homes to artists and producers (including The Mighty Creatives). Alongside townscape and heritage improvement projects, Boston will bring back Shodfriars Hall as a cultural centre next to Blackfriars Art Centre and there will be a dynamic re-birth of heritage assets in the town centre – to promote and present the area's creative talent base (e.g. in partnership with the College)
- » An uplift for performing arts infrastructure. The area's strengths in theatre and performance, which will be boosted by these investments, could be developed by further support for local creative producers, training and mentoring for young producers and performers, building stronger connections outside the region (but in the Midlands and East of England but also internationally through established connections such as the Hanseatic League (Boston), Helsingør (East Lindsey) and Eastern Europe (area-wide)). With a focus on specialisation in theatre and performance, and in particular outdoor arts, an opportunity exists to test the feasibility of establishing a creation centre in East Lindsey – to establish the area as a hub for innovation, production and exchange, housing a cluster of companies and building international residency opportunities.
- » The Midlands Coast. By working together in new ways, East Lindsey and Boston can scale-up and connect their cultural offer. This also presents the opportunity for stronger and more structured partnership with the rest of the County and beyond. The stretch of coast from the Humber to the Wash is, in effect, the Midlands Coast. It has been a place of escape from the cities in the East Midlands and Yorkshire, a place of discovery for nature-lovers, and a place of arrival and departure. Yet the coast lacks a unified cultural offer, which in turn diminishes its identity at a regional and national level. This Cultural Framework prioritises stronger partnership along the coast and inland to kickstart a cultural renewal of scale and reputation. This includes NPOs in large cities inland such as Nottingham and Leicester; plus with infrastructure close by such as The Hub in Sleaford and Usher Gallery, Lincoln. It also prioritises positioning the Midlands Coast as an area for testing new types of cultural programming – inviting NPOs from across the region to develop new work, build innovative cultural practice, and in turn help nurture a local cultural workforce toward a sustainable cultural ecosystem.
- » Reinvigorating green cultural tourism. While already of vital importance to the region, cultural tourism can be boosted. Unique and popular assets, as diverse as The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre or the hidden gems of Woodhall Spa including Jubilee Park and the Kinema in the Woods, need to be placed within narratives that better capture the extraordinary richness and diversity of the area in ways that capture wider attention. There is also an opportunity to interweave leisure and wellbeing assets such as cycle routes with cultural programming and infrastructure, including public art. This – aligned with a Midlands Coast narrative – can establish accessible and compelling itineraries for culture which attract locals and visitors to enjoy the area in new and enriching ways. This can involve a focus on green and sustainable cultural programming and tourism, including pioneering work with natural materials, activities which encourage longer-stay or 'slow' artistic residencies, and cultural activities which promote volunteering and activism in environmental sustainability.



# CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

As a cultural sector, partners in Boston and East Lindsey will flourish through ever stronger collaboration. To achieve the vision set out in this Cultural Framework, it is recommended Boston and East Lindsey set up a Cultural Reference Group or Board to offer dynamic leadership and a collective voice for culture. One option is to establish this as a whole place cultural partnership or Culture Compact – as part of a network of place-based cultural boards with a mission to attract and coordinate investment in and through culture. It is also desirable for a new place-based partnership to deliver a programme of activities as, potentially, a new National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England. A bid for such a programme has been submitted – in an attempt to boost capacity and develop an ambitious long-term programme of culture-led renewal.

This Culture Board will involve representation from both Councils and the County, leading cultural organisations, education providers and representation from freelancers and micro creative enterprises. It will work to identify opportunities for a more coordinated cultural offer and it will work to advise on the delivery of this Framework – such as with regard to priority actions supported by Towns Funds and forthcoming Levelling Up and Priority Place investment.

The Culture Board will work to champion, connect and challenge the cultural sector of Boston and East Lindsey. It will:

- » Play a strategic leadership role to position culture to the area's renewal.
- » Connect the distinctive cultural strengths and assets of the area to ensure stronger partnership, imaginative collaboration and effective skills and knowledge exchange.
- » Be an advocate for cultural investment and provide a shared front door for new types of cross-sector partnership.
- » Connect with and broker relations across the region's networks and hubs of cultural practice, which includes multiple place-based partnerships, sector groups, and a diverse cultural workforce of freelancers and micro-enterprises across the Midlands Coast and inland.
- » Lead on public and sector engagement to ensure strategic priorities remain relevant and to grow the profile of culture across the area. This can include a place-based cultural and creative campaign – to boost awareness of the area's cultural qualities and grow confidence in the role of culture for positive place-making. It can also include targeted further engagement to ensure culture-led change is given due attention over the long term. For example, engagement with children and young people should be prioritised to ensure cultural renewal is relevant to their needs and that they recognise the positive impact being made.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Boston and East Lindsey Culture Board will prioritise objectives set out in this Framework for Cultural Renewal. It will also lead on three special projects:

- » **Annual Culture Workshop:** the AGM for the area's cultural sector. This event will review impact over the year and reflect on new opportunities for cultural renewal. It will bring local councillors to the table to describe how culture is supporting renewal and it will provide a platform to showcase good practice in the area. This workshop would work well as part of a festival programme – to coincide with a calendar cultural highlight for the area, perhaps involving national and international cultural experts to help position Boston and East Lindsey as open to innovation and learning. It can also be co-led by children and young people, supporting them to shape and influence the process of cultural renewal.
- » **Evaluation and Impact Narrative-building:** The Board will work with an evaluation partner to establish a measurement framework to track progress and impact – based on the priorities of this Framework. This will be informed by the Theory of Change set out below. A set of SMART objectives and KPIs will need to be developed by the Culture Board as part of its inception and set up process.
- » **Data Innovation:** Linked to the above, it will be important to monitor, measure and benchmark progress and impact in dynamic and engaging ways. This is to go beyond basic data on engagement levels - for which there is need for some initial baseline research, especially to understand how cultural participation varies across distinctive communities (such as caravan or military communities). For example, qualitative data on talent development pathways for children and young people, sector resilience and sustainability, and environmental impact; will help position the area as a place which underpins its ambitious vision with an ambitious approach to understanding impact and working long-term to genuinely deliver culture-led renewal.

# A CULTURAL FRAMEWORK & ACTION PLAN

## Vision

Boston and East Lindsey will be known as beacons of inclusive cultural dynamism. Both councils will work together with an ambitious programme to drive local impact through culture. They will foster opportunities for culture-led renewal: where every community takes part to create a distinctive cultural ecosystem which connects heritage to a shared future, drives innovation in the visitor economy and other key sectors, contributes to health and wellbeing and supports environmental sustainability.

# FOUR THEMES FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

**Culture Health and Wellbeing**

**Culture for All**

**Cultural Places**

**Cultural Infrastructure**

## MAIN OUTCOMES

Enhanced health and wellbeing through culture.

Improved confidence and reduced loneliness and isolation.

Improved perceptions on quality of life.

Increase in audiences for culture and active participation in a range of cultural activities.

Improved community cohesion.

Uplift in coordinated cultural provision across the area.

Increase in opportunities to work in culture and the creative industries.

More opportunities for diverse communities to participate and drive cultural renewal.

Growth in the local cultural economy – enhancing vitality and increasing cultural tourism volume and spend.

Enhanced public spaces and integrated cultural, leisure and heritage itineraries.

Heritage assets revitalised for cultural use.

Increase in environmental responsibility and sustainable practice in culture.

Increase in partnership for programming and cultural development.

Re-vitalised cultural infrastructure to the heart of transformed towns.

New innovative cultural infrastructure – feasibility and development.

Growth of festivals (number and scale) as catalysts for cultural renewal.

Increase in high quality public art which enhances the heritage and natural landscape.

Established collaboration and exchange programmes across the Midlands Coast – establishing the area as a hub for regional cultural development.

# EAST LINDSEY PRIORITY ACTIONS

*“A place where everybody has a chance to thrive”* (East Lindsey Strategic Plan 2020-2030).

Culture Health and Wellbeing	Culture for All	Cultural Places	Cultural Infrastructure
<p><b>1.</b> Develop a cultural prescribing and commissioning model to align with the two proposed infrastructure developments featured in the Towns Fund: Wellbeing Hub in Skegness and Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe. This is to be pitched as a culture, health and wellbeing R&amp;D project.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Introduce cultural itineraries / wayfinding as part of a wider boost in wellbeing and healthy living activities – e.g. public art commissions integrated into walking and cycle routes; and culture / heritage and natural environment routes established.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Introduce shared cultural programming, touring and visitor itineraries which connect the coast to inland East Lindsey. This is to enhance the reach of activity into all communities, scale-up cultural programming, and build a stronger overall cultural tourism package. A priority action here is to boost digital capacity across the arts and cultural sector, attending to digital connectivity issues, supporting digital literacy and growing the digital capacity of artists and organisations.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Position culture to the heart of town centre renewal – prioritising the development of festivals and events and utilising old retail and heritage assets as spaces for culture – e.g. for events, pop-up creative markets, and for community dialogue. The ‘urban rooms’ model can be adapted to East Lindsey – with spaces set up for community engagement, cultural commissioning and showcasing local talent. This can tour across the District, connecting different urban centres through coordinated programming and engagement.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Prioritise the core cultural infrastructure interventions set out in the Connected Coast Towns Fund Bids:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish the Colonnade as a hub for contemporary culture – linking learning, enterprise and experience. Develop a vision and strategy for this intervention.</li> <li>- The flagship foreshore development in Skegness, including a rejuvenated Embassy Theatre as a hub for cultural learning, enterprise and innovation; and re-inventing Skegness Illuminations to become a platform for innovation in light art and digital projection. Develop a vision and strategy for this intervention.</li> </ul>

Culture Health & Wellbeing	Culture for All	Cultural Places	Cultural Infrastructure
<p><b>3.</b> Boost the capacity of cultural organisations and artists to work with partners in social care to develop cultural experiences for harder to reach communities – e.g. elderly people and / or people with long-term health issues. This is to reduce isolation and enhance mental health. This can commence with targeted capacity-building and training activities to support cultural practitioners to work in such settings.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Work with education providers to co-design a ‘work in culture and the creative industries’ campaign – to raise the profile of creative work, build connections with employers, and provide targeted support to promote enterprise and showcase local talent. This includes connecting the flagship Skegness Learning Campus and Skegness Grammar to support arts and cultural education; creative enterprise and events.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Intercultural exchange and capacity-building. Work to establish East Lindsey as an open, tolerant, and trust-based cultural ecosystem. This means brokering connections between different communities through arts and culture; commissioning new work which breaks down barriers; giving different cultures a platform for cultural expression; and supporting new cultural activities based on a combination of cultural influences which reflect the distinctive cultural mix of the locality.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Public realm revitalisation: ambitious and radical public art commissions, the development of amenities for outdoor arts (e.g. future-proofing public spaces for events and festivals), and ‘smart’ infrastructure such as innovative lighting, interactive bus shelters, and an overall re-think where design and creativity are central to the provision of new public realm and transport infrastructure.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Heritage renewal: activating heritage sites as spaces for cultural production and consumption – on both a meanwhile basis and as part of regular cultural programming. Develop a list of priority heritage assets which can be used for cultural activities and promote them to the cultural sector as resources to be activated.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Boost sector networking, knowledge exchange and data insight gathering. This includes working with National Portfolio Organisations and international organisations to work more in the area and develop and grow existing organisations to build capacity and expertise and in turn support local people to participate in culture.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Prioritise capacity-building and growth in the festival sector, establishing the District as a centre for production with key specialisms (e.g. outdoor arts and young people). Position this growing hub as an internationally-facing opportunity, connecting East Lindsey to Europe and beyond. To activate this, set up a festival and events working group (with Boston) to explore growth and innovation opportunities.</p> <p><b>4.</b> Boost cultural leadership across the ecosystem – underpinned by a distributed leadership model where each place has a venue, project or activity which has grown in capacity, connectivity and confidence, and which feeds into the approach and priorities of the Culture Board.</p>

# BOSTON PRIORITY ACTIONS

*“...Launch Boston into the future, build on its unique heritage and make our town an exciting place to live, work, invest and visit for generations to come.”* (Boston Town Investment Plan).

## Culture Health and Wellbeing

1. Introduce cultural itineraries / wayfinding as part of a wider boost in wellbeing and healthy living activities – e.g. public art commissions integrated into walking and cycle routes; and culture / heritage and natural environment routes established. Transported is already leading activities in this area, connecting the town to outlying communities.

## Culture for All

1. Work with education providers (in particular Boston College and via the Youth Ambassadors Programme and the Holy Trinity Initiative) to co-design a ‘work in culture and the creative industries’ campaign – to raise the profile of creative work, build connections with employers, and provide targeted support to promote enterprise and showcase local talent. This can include options appraisal for a town centre hub / venue (see cultural infrastructure theme) which can showcase creative talent and develop Boston town centre as a hub for culture and the creative industries. This links to the Boston Mayflower concept. – to upskill and nurture future leaders, prepare young people for the job market and enable a strong local culture and shared community activities. One additional action is to leverage the proposed Mayflower facility as a centre for STEAM learning and creative entrepreneurship (see Cultural Infrastructure theme).

## Cultural Places

1. Enhance pride of place and drive economic activity by positioning culture to the heart of town centre renewal – utilising old retail and heritage assets as spaces for culture – e.g. for events, pop-up creative markets, and for community dialogue. The ‘urban rooms’ model can be adapted to Boston – with spaces set up for community engagement, cultural commissioning and showcasing local talent. This aligns with the Town Investment Plan priorities for Holy Trinity, Townscape Heritage Project, and Wide Bar Gate Shop Front Scheme

## Cultural Infrastructure

1. Prioritise the core cultural infrastructure interventions set out in the Towns Fund Bid - St Botolph's - Medieval Library, Lighting and Blenkin Memorial Hall Shodfriar's Hall: creation of a new internationally significant heritage attraction which utilises innovative lighting to operate as a visual attraction after dark and an interactive heritage centre (and enterprise centre) by day. Shodfriar's Hall in particular offers opportunities for cultural use – with scope to operate as an arts centre, studio and rehearsal hub and community space. A preliminary action is to develop the vision and feasibility / business model for this to include contemporary cultural activity.- The repair, renovation and redevelopment of the Blenkin Memorial Hall for multi-purpose community use, with a focus on culture and entrepreneurship (e.g. potential for creative industries). This central historic building can be a beacon of culture-led renewal. This also needs action to develop the vision, feasibility and strategy.

Culture Health & Wellbeing	Culture for All	Cultural Places	Cultural Infrastructure
<p><b>2.</b> Boost the capacity of cultural organisations and artists to work with partners in social care to develop cultural experiences for harder to reach communities – e.g. elderly people and / or people with long-term health issues. This is to reduce isolation and enhance mental health. This can commence with targeted capacity-building and training activities to support cultural practitioners to work in such settings.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Build connections between healthy living, food and culture, linking the Borough and environs' agricultural and trading history to explore the culture of food. This also opens-up opportunities to engage with and connect the Borough's diverse communities to explore the culture, social history and future of food.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Intercultural exchange and capacity-building. Work to establish Boston as an open, tolerant, and trust-based cultural ecosystem. This means brokering connections between different communities through arts and culture; commissioning new work which breaks down barriers; giving different cultures a platform for cultural expression; and supporting new cultural activities based on a combination of cultural influences which reflect the distinctive cultural mix of the locality. This provides an opportunity to link Boston's ancient international connections (e.g. the Hanseatic League and links to Boston Massachusetts) with more recent cultural connections to Eastern Europe, Portugal and other countries. A key action is to present Boston's diversity as an asset in its bid for city status.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Develop cultural programming which makes more of the Borough's parks and natural assets as spaces for inspiration and inclusive participation. Sites such as Central Park, village greens and natural landscapes such as Freiston Shore and Frampton Marsh provide resources to focus on art and the environment, boosting environmental literacy and responsibility and providing inspiration to both participants and artists. An art and environment programme could be an initial action – positioning culture as a catalyst for environmental responsibility and the enjoyment of nature and green spaces.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Heritage renewal – Boston's heritage cluster: activating heritage sites as spaces for cultural production and consumption – on both a meanwhile basis and as part of regular cultural programming. Develop a list of priority heritage assets which can be used for cultural activities and promote them to the cultural sector as resources to be activated.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Public realm revitalisation: ambitious and radical public art commissions, the development – building on the success of Transported's Boston Buoys. This includes opportunities to provide heritage and cultural itineraries for the town – connecting key assets such as the Guildhall and Blackfriars to lesser known heritage sites. Utilise digital technology to provide interactive itineraries which connect the heritage and contemporary cultural life of the Borough.</p>	<p><b>2.</b> A re-imagined FE College 'in the spirit of the Mayflower' – via two new buildings for Boston College as:</p> <p><i>“an inspirational space to raise aspirations and super-charge community and employer engagement with the other critical investments that have been made at the College – specifically the Institute of Technology, the Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology Centre and the Digital, Transport, Logistics Academy.”</i></p> <p>Culture can be central to the success of this new facility: in the vision and concept, linking heritage to the town's future; in the potential for new cultural programming; and in the potential for a dedicated STEAM programme which puts the arts to the heart of approaches to science, technology, engineering and maths. With concept development and a strategic plan, Boston can lead the 'STEAM revolution' for towns and cities across the country.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Undertake feasibility and scoping work to establish the Gliderdrome as a mixed-use centre for cultural activity – with a focus on live music, entertainment and events. It is a distinctive heritage asset which can become a dynamic centre for medium-scale programming. This can help boost the local festivals sector and provide opportunities for Boston to feature on tours for live music, circus, performance, and a range of leisure-focused trade and cultural events (e.g. antique fairs, roller-skating etc.). A preliminary action is to scope options and undertake feasibility for a preferred option(s).</p>

# KEY

- 1 // This also includes South Holland District.
- 2 // <https://www.thersa.org/press/releases/2020/one-in-three-jobs-in-parts-of-britain-at-risk-due-to-covid-19-local-data-reveals>
- 3 // The Role of Arts During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Alexandra Bradbury, Katey Warran, Dr Hei Wan Mak & Dr Daisy Fancourt, Arts Council England 2021.
- 4 // [https://business.visitlincolnshire.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/ELDC-Corporate\\_Strategy\\_2020\\_to\\_2030\\_single\\_pages.pdf](https://business.visitlincolnshire.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/ELDC-Corporate_Strategy_2020_to_2030_single_pages.pdf)
- 5 // Placing Culture & Creativity at the Heart of Lincolnshire: Lincolnshire's Cultural Strategy 2017
- 6 // Also see the LEP's Industrial Strategy: <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/strategies-and-plans/local-industrial-strategy/>
- 7 // <https://www.midlandsengine.org/sector/green-growth/>
- 8 // <https://unboxed2022.uk/>
- 9 // Applications open in January 2022 for small grants between £750 and £10,000.
- 10 // <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/>
- 11 // <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>





**East Lindsey**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

*served by One Team*