

## Newcastle: Vision for Culture

### 1. Why a cultural vision?

Newcastle's rich heritage and culture has always been shaped by the people who've lived, worked, settled and passed through the city. A new vision for arts and culture will continue to put people at the heart of the cultural life of Newcastle. Our shared vision will help everyone to access, engage with, learn from and contribute to creating great art and culture.

The *Newcastle Cultural Partnership* and *City Council* have stimulated conversations across the city on the future of arts and culture, asking what is culture for, what might arts and culture look like in the future and, what do we do together to make this happen? We wanted to develop a vision for the future of arts and culture in our city – something that all partners and people can be part of to ensure that we have a thriving cultural scene for generations to come.

It's not by coincidence that this conversation has taken place during the most challenging economic and funding conditions in generations. These challenges require all of us to come together to agree a way forward.

This document sets out a draft vision for the future of arts and culture in the city. And we want to explore what each of us can do to make our vision a reality. We hope that we have listened to what you have said and that this vision reflects our conversations. So please let us know what you think of our draft and, more importantly, tell us if this is something you can be part of...

#### ***What do we mean by culture?***

Our culture is who we are. It is the way we understand what's important to us, and the way we make sense of the world. Culture is art, music, sport, heritage, films, stories and many more things. It is made and absorbed by everyone, every day. Some people and organisations have particular roles to play in refreshing and sharing it - but it is in us all, and about us all.

### 2. What is our cultural vision for 2020?

#### *A city inspired by its culture*

In 2020 Newcastle's arts and culture will inspire the city. It will make us feel good, laugh, cry and challenge us. Newcastle will be buzzing with creative spirit, offering opportunities for everyone to play their part in creating our culture – continuing to make ours one of the most vibrant cities in Europe. The expressions of our culture will reflect life as it is for the people who live here and give voice to their dreams for the future. Our shared stories will continue to be told in the city, bringing people of all generations and backgrounds together.

We will write the expressions of our culture large across the city. These cultural expressions will be an ingrained part of the everyday life of the city. People will be inspired to develop skills and learn new things through arts and culture. They will make friends, have their views challenged, and learn to work collectively. People will be inspired, challenged and changed because they are working with some of the best cultural resources and artists in the country.

#### A strong ecology

We will also have developed and adapted quickly to new ways of resourcing culture. Artists will feel encouraged to live and work here and helped to increase their own resilience and self-sustainability – Newcastle will be the place to be for artists because we will have a vibrant mix of free and ‘paid-for’ cultural venues and services, and thriving, creative businesses. And, talent will be encouraged and nurtured. The city’s cultural places and spaces – including cafes, bars and historic buildings will be valued by people of all backgrounds. These places will be recognised as important and exciting incubators of art, creativity and fun. Thriving, community-based arts initiatives will co-exist, inspire and be inspired by world-class arts venues and events. Museums, libraries and galleries, their rich cultural resources publicly known and accessible, will continue to thrive across the city.

#### Equality of opportunity

Arts and culture will be inclusive and transcend geographical, community and social boundaries- with equality of opportunity for all. We will value, celebrate and encourage all forms of arts and culture. Newcastle will be a place where everyone has their creativity nurtured - arts and culture will rest in everybody’s hands. We will value all creative activity and will support any individual or organisation to achieve excellence. Arts and culture will help us all to understand and celebrate diversity.

#### Cosmopolitan culture – what it means to be a city/cultural leader

Culture will be outward looking, bringing the world to Newcastle and encouraging the world to share its culture with us. Our stories will be taken beyond our city – making people curious and attracting them to visit, live and work here. Newcastle will continue to give great artists and performers to the world. We will not be restricted by city boundaries - as a key city and meeting point for the region, we will play our part - with others – in the cultural life of the North East.

Culture will continue to make a huge contribution to a growing economy **but**, above all, culture will be seen as a thing of value in itself because, quite simply, it improves our wellbeing, making life more fulfilling and joyful.

### 3. Understanding our vision

- *Culture is who we are...*

Culture should not be seen as a privilege – it is a right. It helps all of us shape and understand ourselves and the world around us. It helps us define who we are, enables freedom of thought, broadens our horizons and makes us feel alive, special and of value. It embraces not only galleries, dance, music, film, libraries, museums, archives, heritage sites and architecture but also community clubs, sports, public parks and all forms of learning.

Our shared vision acknowledges the strong role culture plays in Newcastle's social and economic priorities. But culture it is not solely an instrument to overcome wider, societal challenges. Arts and culture create experiences of immense value in themselves. Culture brings joy and stimulation, enriching our lives, inspiring and entertaining.

- ***The economic benefit***

In the great cities of the world, strong economy and vibrant culture go hand-in-hand. Newcastle has benefited immensely from an incredible cultural regeneration in the past 15 years. People visit Newcastle from around the world, contributing to economic growth, aspiration, and reputation. The economic impact and benefit of the city's biggest cultural organisations alone is estimated at over £100million.

Alongside the direct economic benefits, our culture will continue to create an attractive and welcoming place – encouraging people to live and work, businesses to locate and tourists to visit. If Newcastle has the right culture –if it's safe, it's fun, and families and children feel comfortable, and if it is creative - then businesses want to do business here. This in turn drives an economy that's successful and supports everyone in the city.

Major arts infrastructure can be a lever to encourage private sector inward investment. Newcastle and other cities have used museums, galleries and concert halls to achieve this as part of their economic visions. To maximise economic value, Newcastle's businesses and other economic partners need to be part of our vision. In turn, our vision for culture should link to wider economic strategies for the city and region.

- ***The cultural ecology – infrastructure and talent***

We want Newcastle to continue to welcome artists. This means affordable, yet inspiring spaces to work and places to show or perform. Artists are adept at finding places and spaces themselves, over time helping to create informal cultural quarters. In future, all sectors have a stake in helping to create and protect valuable cultural spaces.

This is not just a job for the Council although its regeneration, planning and regulatory functions can play a part. Whilst cultural places and spaces should not always be viewed

merely as a 'staging post' on the way to further regeneration, the private sector has a pivotal role through co-investment.

Debates on cultural visions can often be presented as a choice between larger cultural institutions and iconic venues on the one hand, and community based initiatives on the other. We have both in Newcastle, and indeed need both. Larger cultural institutions are a valued part of the city's cultural infrastructure – they often help smaller organisations to perform and, in turn, those smaller organisations bring new life to the big institutions. So, we can value, and expect excellence from, all types of arts and culture

- ***Inclusion and inequalities***

At its best culture is the most powerful driver for fairness that we have. We need to ensure that culture in Newcastle is 'culture at its best'. It needs to be owned by everyone with opportunities for all to get involved. Our cultural organisations need to be meaningfully connected to all the communities in the city.

We will continue to value culture as a driver for fairness and opportunity. We believe that cultural activities have the potential to be a powerful force in addressing the inequalities that exist in Newcastle. Our shared vision can help all residents the opportunity to explore what culture means to them.

Culture can be thoughtful and provocative and has the potential to create enormous social capital, improve wellbeing, community cohesion and understanding. Culture will continue to help develop respect for others and encourages people to question their attitudes and behaviours.

- ***A Cosmopolitan City: Taking Newcastle to the World and bringing it home***

Through our culture, we all have a role in projecting Newcastle to the wider world, enhancing our national and international reputation. Arts, culture and heritage play an important part in bringing new experiences to the city, building the confidence and wellbeing of people here and attracting investment and talent from outside the region and overseas.

- ***Inspiring learning, innovation and creativity***

A vibrant cultural scene and access to rich cultural and heritage resources will have a transformative effect on education and aspiration, raising the ambition and potential of people of all ages in the city and wider region. In turn, this contributes to developing creative industries and strengthening the knowledge economy.

#### **4. How can we come together to make this happen?**

We want to develop this work through a strategy which makes clear what everyone can do to make our vision a reality – including arts and culture providers, the Council, residents, businesses as well as voluntary and community organisations. This won't be proscriptive but, should be supportive and ambitious. We will be pragmatic and get on with it; that's the way things tend to work. We have an opportunity to create a supportive framework within which culture can thrive, and be of real benefit to all of us.