



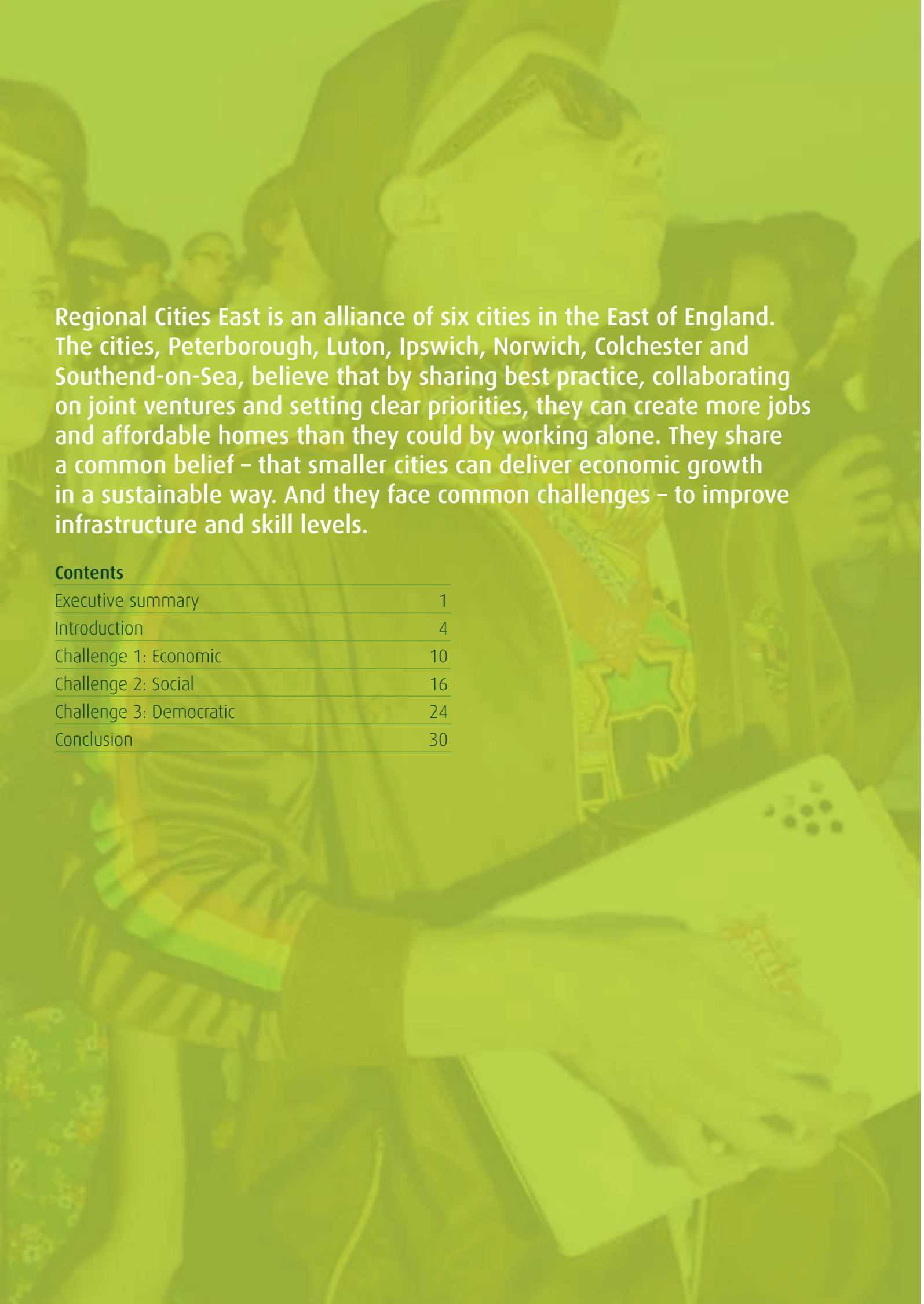
Bigger thinking for smaller cities

How arts and culture can tackle economic, social and democratic engagement challenges in smaller cities

A discussion paper from Regional Cities East
September 2010

Regional **Cities East**

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Regional Cities East is an alliance of six cities in the East of England. The cities, Peterborough, Luton, Ipswich, Norwich, Colchester and Southend-on-Sea, believe that by sharing best practice, collaborating on joint ventures and setting clear priorities, they can create more jobs and affordable homes than they could by working alone. They share a common belief – that smaller cities can deliver economic growth in a sustainable way. And they face common challenges – to improve infrastructure and skill levels.

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Executive summary

As the country gets to grip with the national debt and the difficult decisions to make, it would be tempting to fall into the trap of measuring everything by its cost and nothing by its value.



Zimbabwean poet, novelist and social commentator Chenjari Hove at the Reception for the launch of Norwich City of Refuge. Photo: Martin Figura

This paper is written from a very different perspective in which value comes first. It asserts that a cost effective response to the economic, social and democratic challenges smaller cities face requires that we support policies and practices that add value in numerous ways. It proposes an approach in which a network of arts and culture projects in smaller cities can be used to maximise economic, social and democratic returns.

Arts and culture have been integral to regeneration over the past decade. They have helped to arrest the decline of large, post-industrial cities like Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle. However, today's challenges differ greatly from those of the past decade, so a different approach is needed. The key question today is not how to arrest decline, but how to reinvigorate economic growth. Rapid demographic change has made community cohesion a priority. And the continuing public scepticism towards institutions, together with a renewed interest in delivering local services at a local level makes it vital for citizens to be empowered to play an active role in their communities.

In meeting these new challenges, the smaller cities of England have a critical role to play. Many of these cities are economically buoyant; home to growth industries in the knowledge economy and well placed to drive private sector jobs growth. Their scale makes them ideal for building community cohesion. Smaller cities also offer the prospect for more active citizens, with close knit communities keen to influence and be involved in shaping and delivering local services.

Across the Regional Cities East partnership, carefully planned investment in arts and culture has successfully built on these smaller city advantages, benefitting all sections of society.

Stimulating the economy:

- The firstsite project in Colchester is showing how arts and culture can help to drive economic vitality and attract investment to an area.
- Metal, in Southend, shows how empty buildings can be brought back into productive use cost effectively, helping to attract and retain artistic talent and revitalise communities.

Building bridges:

- The Writers' Centre in Norwich demonstrates how a city's own unique assets can be harnessed to build a sense of identity shared by all.
- The UK Centre for Carnival Arts in Luton promotes community cohesion through shared experience, allowing people of different cultural backgrounds to come together to learn more about each other.

Engaging local people:

- In Peterborough, the Citizen Power project is putting local citizens in control, enabling them to make choices about the future of their community.
- DanceEast in Ipswich successfully reaches out to people at risk of being marginalised, and helps them play a full and active role in society.



Ian McEwan signs after his Writers' Centre Norwich event in May 2010
Photo: Martin Figura

Principles for success

One of the reasons the initiatives across the Regional Cities East network have succeeded is that they have built on existing local strengths using six key principles which place the arts and culture at the core of local strategies:

1. Arts and culture can act as a stimulus to complementary economic activity.
2. Arts and culture can revitalise and make effective use of under-utilised physical assets.
3. Arts and culture that is rooted in the community can build into a strong positive identity for a place at a local, national and international level.
4. Arts and culture can demystify community differences and bring diverse cultures together.
5. Arts and culture can engage communities and encourage active citizenship.
6. Arts and culture can engage marginalised groups to take part in collective action and help them to achieve their potential.



Billy Bragg and Phill Jupitus rehearse for the Big Busk, Metal Village Green festival, 2009. Photo: Benedict Johnson

Future policy

We recommend four policy measures to help realise these principles and ensure that area-based cultural interventions deliver success:

- **Develop functional cultural areas:** Just as the economy is driven by functional economic areas there is the potential to develop functional areas for culture. Within these areas local authorities, Arts Council England and the cultural sector can develop a programme of co-investment that focuses resources on key assets, organisations and high impact interventions. Public money and the combined advocacy of the partners can be used to lever other sources of investment finance and philanthropy. Functional areas for culture should be factored into emerging plans for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- **Collaborate to maximise resources and impact:** Functional cultural areas should see local authorities pool resources into shared Cultural Services teams. This would enable efficiency savings and more effective exploitation of existing cultural assets. Further linkage across local authorities could enable collaborative commissioning opportunities for the cultural sector to deliver services across the area.

- **Empower creative communities:** Arts centres of excellence should work with local government and other organisations within the professional and amateur arts sector to develop creative public engagement which strengthens communities and enables cohesion and citizenship. The Big Society thinking about the role of social enterprise, mutuals and charities offers opportunities for new financial vehicles and ways of working, for example through community led trusts or partnerships.
- **Harness creative leadership:** Arts leaders can play a significant role as civic leaders, collaborating with local authorities to shape local priorities, advocating for the value and contribution of arts and culture to future well-being and prosperity, and driving increased philanthropy locally.

This paper makes the case that networks of high quality arts and culture initiatives in smaller cities can offer solutions to a range of national challenges. Continued investment and support for initiatives that follow the principles and policy measures identified above will help the Government reach its economic, social and democratic ambitions despite the current economic climate.

Introduction:

The value of arts and culture and the potential of smaller cities

The importance of arts and culture

Few of us would deny that arts and culture have at some point had a profound impact on our lives. From childhood, trips to museums and galleries help to fire our imaginations and broaden our perspectives on the world. Film, music and theatre form the backdrop to our relationships, social lives and leisure time.

Important as these individual impacts are, arts and culture also have a social and economic role to play. A thriving arts and culture sector is an essential component of a prosperous, stable and happy society. But more than just adding colour and escape to life, arts and culture are at the very vanguard of tackling serious national issues. This paper suggests how we can make the most of arts and culture in tackling the country's most pressing concerns. The country is confronting a number of serious issues which urgently need addressing. We are faced with a record deficit, rapid demographic change and an increasing public scepticism towards institutions.

Carefully targeted support for the right arts and culture projects is a good way to use scarce resources efficiently to engage society in tackling these issues.

Arts and culture help to drive national economic success. In 2007, before the global financial crisis hit, the creative industries accounted for £59.9bn or 6.2% of UK Gross Value Added (GVA) with £16.6bn in exports and nearly 2m jobs.¹ Arts and culture are central to tourism in the UK: this was worth £86 billion in 2007 – 3.7% of GDP – and directly employed 1.4 million people.² Exports of services by the Creative Industries totalled £16.6 billion in 2007. This equated to 4.5% of all goods and services exported.³

Arts and culture bridge community divides and foster a sense of shared identity. As a major research project backed by the British Council found “Culture enables us to appreciate points of commonality and, where there are differences, to understand the motivations and humanity that underlie them.”⁴

Arts and culture provide the means for people to make an active contribution to civic life. In 2004 a government study found that, “cultural activities can be highly effective in improving the skills and confidence of individuals and improving the quality of life and the capacity of communities to solve their own problems. Such activities can contribute to the physical economic and social regeneration of an area.”⁵

1 Arts Council figure: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/why-arts-matter/facts-and-figures/>

2 British Tourism Framework Review, The British Tourism Industry Today, see page 6 of this report – http://www.visitbritain.org/Images/btfr%20full%20final_tcm139-173003.pdf

3 DCMS Economic Estimates, February 2010

4 Bounds, Briggs, Holdon, Jones 'Cultural Diplomacy' Demos 2007

5 DCMS: Culture at the Heart of Regeneration

“Arts can have a transformative effect in regeneration policy, education policy, quality of life policy and many other areas.

Arts and culture driving success

The past decade saw arts and culture make a powerful contribution to halting the economic decline of big, post-industrial cities. For example, the inaugural Manchester International Festival and Liverpool’s year as European Capital of Culture both had a profound impact in the North West. They showed that complementary arts and culture projects in cities across a region could lead to benefits far greater than the sum of their parts.

The Government has shown awareness of the opportunities offered by the arts. In one of his earliest speeches as Shadow Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt said, “Arts can have a transformative effect in regeneration policy, education policy, quality of life policy and many other areas.”⁶ This endorsement has been maintained in the early days of the new government. In his first major speech as Secretary of State, Hunt pledged to, “Champion the value culture brings – economic value, value to society and to individuals, value as a nurturing ground for creative industries.”⁷

The issues of today are different to those of the last decade. The regeneration imperative is no longer about halting the urban economic decline caused by industrial change. It is about nurturing growth, and allowing places in the UK to realise their full potential by targeting resources towards the places and projects most able to offer a return, in many cases, this means supporting smaller cities.

6 Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, June 2008

7 Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, May 2010

The opportunity in smaller cities

Smaller cities, particularly those in the South East and East of England, are some of the most productive in the UK. As a recent Centre for Cities report found, smaller cities like Luton, Norwich and Southend are among the very best when it comes to driving private sector jobs growth.⁸ The same smaller cities are also growing at a fast rate – the East of England is projected to have the highest level population growth in the country over the next decade.⁹

Smaller cities also offer many of the right characteristics for arts and culture to flourish. Artists and writers are attracted to small cities because they are easier to network in, they provide a vibrant community in which artists can develop and share their ideas. This attractiveness is even greater for small cities in the East of England, as London is within easy reach. Smaller cities are also attractive places in which to live because they offer a good quality of life. The 10 cities with the lowest per capita carbon emissions in the UK are all smaller cities – including Southend, Luton and Ipswich.¹⁰

In the current economic climate, a fresh approach to arts and culture is needed. Jeremy Hunt has signalled a new commitment to a mixed economy of arts funding, with public money working alongside philanthropic donations and lottery funds. Smaller cities offer a clear route to ensure maximum value is returned on investment, whatever the source.



A performer at the Luton Carnival
Photo: Amiel Barrimond

⁸ Private Sector Cities: A new geography of opportunity, Centre for Cities, June 2010 Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP, May 2010

⁹ ONS population estimates released on 24 June 2010
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/popnr0610.pdf>

¹⁰ DEFRA 2006, cited in the Centre for Cities City Outlook, January 2009

A smaller city approach for arts and culture policy

Colchester, Ipswich, Luton, Norwich, Peterborough and Southend make up the Regional Cities East (RCE) partnership. Each of these has developed outstanding arts and culture projects which are helping them tackle three nationally important challenges:

1. The need to drive sustainable economic growth and tackle disadvantage
2. The need to create cohesive communities with a sense of place and shared identity
3. The need to encourage active citizenship and community participation

RCE has looked at each of these challenges in turn commissioning researchers to investigate how arts and culture projects in the six RCE cities are contributing solutions to these challenges. By visiting each of the projects and speaking with the people involved, researchers have been able to identify the principles which drive success.

This autumn the Government will announce the results of its first major spending review. It is already clear that substantial cuts in public spending will happen. The evidence in this paper shows how the right support for arts and culture projects, carefully targeted to smaller cities, can add value and be cost effective.

Networks of high quality arts and culture projects in smaller cities can offer solutions to a range of national challenges. Continued investment and support for initiatives that follow the principle identified in this paper will help the Government reach its economic, social and democratic ambitions despite the current economic climate. This approach will direct energy and resources in ways that have wide ranging local and national impacts.



DanceEast supported State of Flux Dancefilm Company perform *Forgetting Nastaha*, by Heather Eddington, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of State of Flux

Challenge 1: Economic

Drive sustainable growth and tackle disadvantage

The first report from the new Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), which was published in June 2010, brought the sobering news that the UK's economic recovery was still tenuous. Its forecasts of 2.6% growth in 2011 and 2.6% in 2012 were well below the previous administration's predictions¹¹, a trend which is echoed in a variety of subsequent forecasts. The actions the government is taking to bring down the deficit are designed to inspire market confidence and boost the economy. However, if the UK is to fully emerge from the recession it needs to enter a sustained period of growth. This means new jobs, skilled workers and economic vitality in every part of the country.

Cities will need to be at the heart of this. Even before the recession, cities were key economic drivers. In 2008, 62% of jobs in England were in cities, which were also home to 62% of the country's high skilled workers.¹² Not all cities are the same though, and making use of the unique qualities of each particular city will be a vital element of the recovery. For instance, smaller cities tend to be strong performers on earnings and high skills. With the exception of London, smaller cities make up the top 10 for both of these measures.¹³

Making sure smaller cities are able to get the most out of their indigenous and distinctive strengths will be an important element of a sustainable recovery.

But economic growth is not enough. We need to make sure that no one is left behind. A report recently found that over the past 30 years the UK has become a more unequal country, with the richest 10% of the population now more than 100 times as wealthy as the poorest 10%.¹⁴ A separate report from Save the Children revealed that 13%

of the UK's children are now living in severe poverty.¹⁵ This entrenched disadvantage and the inequality it gives rise to are major national challenges, and there are no easy answers. Local communities need to work together to tackle local disadvantage and bring marginalised people into the mainstream of society.

Smaller cities, with their close knit communities already have a relatively positive story to tell, with lower levels of inequality than is found in UK's largest cities. Smaller cities are well placed to demonstrate local collective action to tackle deprivation.

Furthermore, smaller cities are well placed to drive national economic growth. They need to build on this by making the most of every asset at their disposal and working in partnership with other sectors and bodies. Their rich cultural offer will undoubtedly be one of these assets.

11 Office for Budget Responsibility
http://budgetresponsibility.independent.gov.uk/d/press02_140610.pdf

12 NOMIS 2009, Annual Business Inquiry (2008 Data)

13 'Cities Outlook 2010' Centre for Cities (Jan 2010)

14 'An Anatomy of Economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel' (Jan 2010)

15 'Measuring Severe Child Poverty in the UK' (Jan 2010)

RCE solution: firstsite in Colchester

firstsite in Colchester is a world-class contemporary visual arts organisation founded in 1994, which runs a host of outreach programmes working with art to engage schools, universities and the wider community. Visitor numbers have grown by 400% in the past ten years, so more space is needed.¹⁶

firstsite's new home, which has been designed by internationally acclaimed architect Rafael Viñoly, will include a gallery and presentation spaces; education spaces; a 200 seat auditorium with conference facilities, a shop and a cafe. It is expected to act as a cultural landmark for the region and attract 1.5 million visitors over the next 10 years.¹⁷ While the development of the £28 million project has seen frustrations due to delays, firstsite's new home will open in autumn 2011.

One of the key economic benefits of firstsite's new home is that it will act as a catalyst to transform the run-down and neglected St Botolph's area into Colchester's cultural quarter. The plans for the mixed-use regeneration scheme put forward by Garbe Development in partnership with Ash Sakula Architects have already levered in £50 million of investment. The proposed scheme will include 12,000 sq ft of retail space to let, a 7,500 sq ft creative business centre offering SMEs (small and medium enterprises) support and networking opportunities, up to 150 homes (50 of which will be affordable), a 90-bed hotel, and a mix of independent retail, cafes and restaurants.

According to Josie Worner, cultural services manager at Colchester Borough Council, there had long been discussions about developing a cultural quarter for the area. But, until the plans for firstsite came along there was insufficient investor confidence to put the plans into action. "It has turned what was once an

unmarketable offer into one that's marketable", she says. Martin Scott, acquisitions manager at Scott Properties, says firstsite was, "a contributing factor," in his decision to buy a site in the cultural quarter to develop a restaurant and small hotel. "It will bring something different to Colchester and bring something to keep people in the town," he says.

Ewan Dodds, managing director at Whybrow Chartered Surveyors, says the iconic new building will help to attract an improved retail offer to the town centre and adds that a diverse arts and culture offer is just as important as the business offer in a town. "Our local economy would be much the poorer without it. Having a strong arts and culture brand of such a diverse nature greatly strengthens what our businesses do."

Robert Sakula of Ash Sakula Architects says the aim of the cultural quarter and the firstsite development is to create a more supportive environment. "We are developing a business centre where small incubated type businesses which are just starting, for example creative industries, artists and graphic designers, might move so that we have a creative hub of like minded people."

Anne Turrell, Leader of Colchester Borough Council, says: "Getting businesses to invest in Colchester is a priority and firstsite is going to help build our global profile. The prestigious facility will help create new jobs, as well as providing the community with an outstanding artistic asset."

Key principle: Arts and culture can act as a stimulus to complementary economic activity

www.firstsite.uk.net

¹⁶ Creative Collaborations: A Shared Prospectus for Growth 2009-2011, EEDA and Arts Council England, 2009

¹⁷ Creative Collaborations, EEDA and Arts Council England, 2009



“ Having a strong arts and culture brand of such a diverse nature greatly strengthens what our businesses do.”

firstsite, new building under construction,
June 2010. Photo: Douglas Atfield



“It [Metal] has done amazing things for the confidence of the community and helps artists to see why they should be putting their energy into [Southend] rather than looking for work in London.”

Chalkwell Hall, Metal Village Green festival, 2009. Photo: Benedict Johnson

RCE solution: Metal in Southend

In Southend, artists are helping to bring empty buildings back into use with the support of national arts organisation Metal. Setting the precedent, Metal converted historic Grade II listed Chalkwell Hall, which was formerly used as a storage facility by the local authority parks department, into its new headquarters. It is now a low carbon flexible space for UK and international artists to live and work together alongside the community. The building and its residents act as a think-tank and catalyst for ideas and action, promoting the role of artists in civic renewal.

As part of Metal's role to develop opportunities for local artists and creative businesses, they mentored a local artist collective, CoExist Arts, and brokered a relationship for them with Essex and Suffolk Water. Metal had been working in partnership with the utilities company to identify creative solutions for wider community engagement. One opportunity identified through this partnership was a vacant water pumping station in the heart of a residential area. In September 2009, Metal seized the opportunity to acquire an 18 month short term lease on the property which had been empty for 10 years. Run by CoExist Arts, the building has been converted into the Temporary Arts Project or TAP which offers affordable artists' studios and a creative hub for networking and discussion.

The TAP has eight studios, gallery space, a 60-seater cinema, a dark room and a print room. It also provides office space for Metal and four other arts organisations, including IDEA13 and the borough's magazine, Level 4. Regular workshops, networking events and exhibitions take place at TAP and the area now has a dynamic feel. The scheme has been made possible thanks to the grants Metal

received from Southend Borough Council's economic development team and sponsorship from Essex & Suffolk Water.

Metal's managing director Colette Bailey says the creation of TAP has been "A motivator all round", not only by providing artists with space in which they can work at fairly low rent, but also in helping to regenerate a fairly deprived ward in the north of Southend. "It is demonstrating to Southend how valuable these spaces are. It has done amazing things for the confidence of the community and helps artists to see why they should be putting their energy into [Southend] rather than looking for work in London."

The presence of Metal has helped Southend become a real success story for community engagement in the arts. In 2008-2009 Southend was one of only nine local authorities nationally to show a significant increase in arts participation.¹⁸

Nigel Holdcroft, Leader of Southend Borough Council sees the project as a great way of building on Southend's existing assets, "Metal has helped revitalise this part of Southend and encourage more local people to get involved in arts and culture. Our magnificent estuary views make us an inspiring place for culture to flourish, and we are delighted that new generations of artistic talent are choosing to make Southend their home."

Key principle: Arts and culture can revitalise and make effective use of under utilised physical assets

www.metalculture.com

¹⁸ This is based on measures of success of Local Area Agreement National Indicator 11.

Challenge 2: Social

Create cohesive
communities with a real
sense of place and identity

The UK's journey towards multi-culturalism has not been without difficulty. As a greater variety of ethnicities, faiths and cultures have found themselves living side-by-side, tensions have inevitably emerged. But diversity does not have to mean fragmentation. Growing populations bring new cultural assets and experiences to places, which can complement and combine with the very best of all that has gone before. This type of cultural interplay forges a sense of shared local identity. This not only binds local people together, it creates the opportunity to present a bold and confident face to the outside world.

The arts offer a forum for this cultural interplay to occur. At their most fundamental the arts are about people expressing themselves, their experiences and their understandings of the world. Places where people best share their own cultures and have an appreciation of local heritage are likely to be those rich in opportunity for people to engage in artistic expression. Thriving local arts are therefore an essential part of building a cohesive sense of identity. The national experience of the last decade shows how important this is.

In the wake of the 2001 race riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, the Government-commissioned Cattle Report found towns suffering a 'depth of polarisation' around segregated communities living 'a series of parallel lives.' The report found that 'mutual ignorance of inward-looking communities can easily turn to fear.'¹⁹

Since then, community cohesion has become a national priority, prompting a range of initiatives and further reports. These included the establishment of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, which looked at local and practical ways to foster cohesive communities. The lessons that emerged included:

- The need for local authorities to show leadership
- The need to develop and market a local vision in order to build a local sense of belonging
- The need to devise schemes to promote meaningful interaction between different cultural communities

For local leaders in cities, these challenges are particularly pressing. Cities tend to have higher than average levels of diversity. This is true in the East of England, where the majority of the region's Black and Minority Ethnic community lives in urban areas – the minority group percentage of the population in RCE cities is 14.11% in comparison to 8.4% overall in the East of England. In smaller cities, simple geography makes greater social interaction between different groups much more likely.

¹⁹ Community cohesion, report of the Independent Review Team, 2001 (The Cattle Report)

Great strides in tackling tensions have been made since the Cantle report was published in 2001. In 2008-09, 84% of people thought their community was cohesive, agreeing that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well together.²⁰ In spite of this, maintaining a shared sense of local identity is still difficult when faced with rapid population change.

Sense of identity is a major factor in community cohesion. The past 40 years have seen significant changes in people's sense of identity. As the Commission on Integration and Cohesion have said: "The UK has changed significantly from the 1960s and 1970s when single identities captured people's sense of who they were reasonably well. People felt themselves to be or were identified as either White or Black, for instance, Afro-Caribbean or British – which meant the UK was made up of a range of distinctive and separate ethnic communities.



These identities remain, but increasingly, people are moving away from single identities to multiple identities not just based on race or ethnicity, but differences in values, differences in life-style, consumption, social class, differences across generations, gender etc. People now have multiple identities and adjust these to the situation they are in – and this seems particularly true for the children or grandchildren of migrants.”²¹

Again, the challenges of multiple identities are compounded for smaller cities, whose diversity is set to increase as their populations grow. Engendering a sense of shared identity, which does not diminish the diverse other identities people hold, is an issue that community arts and culture are well placed to address. Opening up opportunities for people of all backgrounds to tap and build on the artistic heritage of a city can help develop a shared sense of identity.



21 Our Shared Future, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007

RCE solution: Writers' Centre Norwich

Norwich has a literary heritage that stretches back 900 years. It is a history that still finds expression in the city's artistic identity today, and is a key part of the attraction for its many visitors. "Literature is incredibly strong in Norwich" says Steve Morphew, Leader of Norwich City Council "Lots of artists and writers are very attracted to the city, and we all benefit from the presence of creative people."

Norwich's consistent provision of literary richness is fuelled by the Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN) which was founded in 2004. In collaboration with the University of East Anglia (UEA) the centre attracts international, national and local writers to take part in programmes held throughout the year as well as an annual literature festival. The strength of this collaboration has brought a range of international writers to Norwich including Nobel Prize Winner and twice Booker Prize winner JM Coetzee, Margaret Drabble and many others.

WCN has worked with Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and UEA to apply for Norwich to become a UNESCO City of Literature. This will raise the national profile of the city as a literary capital, attracting creative people, increasing cultural diversity and providing a powerful cultural brand for the city that can be adopted and adapted in many ways by residents, businesses and the city partners.

"Becoming England's first UNESCO City of Literature," says Chris Gribble, WCN's Chief Executive, "will enable Norwich to develop its cultural brand identity with tourism and business partners. More importantly, the work we plan with local and regional communities in schools and libraries will enable people across Norfolk to connect to diverse communities around the globe through the UNESCO Creative Cities network. Norwich is a place where writing has driven social change and progress, and WCN's mission is to further this tradition into the 21st Century, putting our region at the heart of the Big Society as well as the Global Village."

WCN works closely with the annual Norfolk and Norwich Festival (NNF), which is the oldest city festival in the country. The 2010 festival was one of the most successful to date, attracting almost 300,000 visitors and contributing £6.2 million to the local economy.

To launch the UNESCO bid, the centre brought world-famous author Ian McEwan, the first ever MA student in Creative Writing at the UEA to Norwich during NNF 2010. It was also supported by local bookshop owner Henry Layte, whose independent bookshop, The Book Hive, ran events, readings, children's activities and book launches. During the festival period, the bookshop encouraged 12 writers – whose contacts were provided by the centre – to come in on different days over a two-week period and write for an hour while sitting in the shop window. The 'Hack In a Box' scheme was an idea that Layte developed to allow people to see writers at work and have greater contact with literature in an everyday setting.

"I am continually amazed by the cultural landscape here in Norwich," says Layte. "People are now visiting Norwich from further afield. More people are coming here and talking about [the city] because of what's going on artistically and culturally."

Commenting on the Writers' Centre's involvement in the festival, Jonathan Holloway, artistic director at Norfolk and Norwich Festival, says, "A festival should be fun but it should also have huge intellectual rigour otherwise it is just a party. Its writing offer is part of what makes Norwich extraordinary worldwide and it adds a huge difference to what is offered by the weekend festivals."

Key principle: Arts and culture that is rooted in the community can build into a strong positive identity for a place nationally and internationally

www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk

The audience enjoy the Writers' Centre Norwich Summer Reads event with Mick Jackson, Nii Ayikwei Parkes and Naomi Alderman. Photo: Martin Figura





RCE solution: UK Centre for Carnival Arts in Luton

In the past, Luton has made national headlines for tensions that have occurred between different communities. It has the highest BME population of any local authority in the East of England, with more than 50% of school pupils from BME groups.²² The Luton International Carnival offers some hope in helping to turn these views around and create a harmonious Luton that celebrates diversity.

The £7.3 million UK Centre for Carnival Arts (UKCCA) in Luton opened in May 2009 and is the new home of Europe's biggest one-day carnival. The event attracts some of the world's best carnival artists to take part alongside Luton's residents who can learn how to make costumes and engage with carnival arts.

Every year, the centre runs Mas camps over eight weekends. The camps invite residents to listen to music, see costumes being made, as well as eat and socialise with each other. Carnival day itself involves around 150,000 people, including spectators, production teams and those taking part in the parade. "[Mas Camp] gives people a chance to see the whole process involved in putting on a carnival," says Noel Nanton, head of learning and participation at UKCCA. "It's also a chance for people to see the connection between the new centre and the carnival community. [Carnival] is the best reflection of the local society and an opportunity for that melting pot [of different communities] to be demonstrated throughout the town."

Luton has a growing Polish community. This year, a voluntary organisation called the Active Polish Community (APC) took part in the carnival for the first time. One of its goals is to promote good relations with other nationalities and with people of other religions. APC chairperson Magdalena Oska

says it is through working with other cultures in activities such as carnival that different communities gain a better understanding of one another and learn how to respect and tolerate each other. "Arts are a good way of getting people together when they do not look the same or have the same language and skin colour. [The carnival] gives us a chance to show we are trying to integrate and show we are part of the town and that we can work together. We do have problems with racism [in Luton] but [with events like carnival] we are doing something about it. We need more events like it to help integration and tackle racism."

UKCCA is not only promoting cohesion through the one-day annual event, it runs year round activity, including dance and mask making. It ties in many of its activities around calendar events such as Black History Month and International Day for Older People. The centre complements the work of Luton in Harmony, which is led by Luton Borough Council on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Hazel Simmons, Leader of Luton Borough Council said: "We're immensely proud of the annual carnival events here in Luton and the international profile they give us through links with other carnivals around the world. UKCCA helps people from culturally diverse backgrounds have a real voice in the wider community. We all gain from the shared understanding of each other this brings."

Key principle: Arts and culture can demystify community differences and bring diverse communities together

www.carnivalarts.org.uk/ukcca

²² Beds and Luton Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2009/10, http://www.luton.gov.uk/internet/housing/the%20bedfordshire%20sub-region%20and%20housing%20partnership%2009/strategic%20housing%20market%20assessment_1.htm

Challenge 3: Democratic

Encouraging active citizenship and community participation

A dominant story in the run up to the 2010 election concerned the public's increasing scepticism towards institutions. Even setting aside the expenses scandal, which dominated headlines, feelings of disengagement have been worryingly high. In April-December 2009, only 37% of people felt they could influence decisions in their local area, and only 20% felt they could influence decisions affecting Britain.²³

However, people are keen to play a role in their communities and have an influence on the quality of local life, with 41% of adults taking part in some sort of formal volunteering at least once in 2009.²⁴

The Government has put people's desire for active citizenship at the heart of its reform programme, opening up many local services to public influence. Launching his plan for the 'Big Society' Prime Minister, David Cameron, said: "We know that the best ideas come from the ground up, not the top down. We know that when you give people and communities more power over their lives, more power to come together and work together to make life better – great things happen."²⁵

This drive to encourage active citizenship needs to be met with spaces where people can come together and find common ground to make the change in their communities that the state cannot.

Locally, public institutions can help to create spaces where people can apply their community spirit. This is the challenge facing smaller cities.



A performer at the Luton Carnival, 2010
Photo: Amiel Barrimond

23 Ibid

24 Ibid

25 Cabinet Office press release, 2 June 2010

RCE solution: Citizen Power in Peterborough

Citizen Power puts into practice the principles that underpin the Big Society. Driven by Peterborough City Council in partnership with the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), this innovative programme includes a wide range of projects that will help citizens become more self-reliant, resilient, altruistic and creative. It is already helping Peterborough to overcome some of the local challenges the city faces around drug-related crime, educational attainment, in addition to building levels of engagement and trust amongst local people.

Matthew Taylor, CEO of the RSA says "Citizen Power is a far-reaching and innovative programme of work exploring the relationship between place and identity. This new and exciting partnership will provide new ways of cultivating civic capabilities, attachment, participation and innovation at a local level". The objectives for Citizen Power are to encourage creative, citizen-led policy innovation to enable the public to come up with new ways of delivering policies and services and also to grow a vibrant arts and culture offer.

The strands of the Citizen Power programme are:

- Peterborough Arts and Social Change, putting art at the heart of the city
- Peterborough Curriculum, connecting what we learn with where we live
- Peterborough Civic Commons, empowering local people to take action
- Peterborough Recovery Capital, helping those with drug or alcohol, problems to fulfil their potential
- Peterborough Civic Health, a new way of thinking about communities and measuring the vibrancy of community life
- Peterborough Social Media, making the right connections to get people involved

The arts strand will make links across the rest of the programme. It will develop a series of creative events, artists' residencies and high profile commissions in which international and local artists will work with local people in Peterborough to help create a blueprint for active, sustainable citizenship in the city. This activity will build on the existing arts and cultural landscape in Peterborough.

Opportunity Peterborough's vice-chairman Clive Morton says, "Many people feel that they don't have a voice, Citizen Power will give them the confidence and opportunity to make a difference".

Nigel Keohane, Head of Research at the New Local Government Network, says the active citizenship being promoted in Peterborough fits in with the Government's localism agenda by empowering local leaders with new legitimacy: "A city is more likely to get strong leaders if people identify with local politicians and are actively involved because politicians will feel as if people are actively challenging them."

Peterborough City Council's leader Marco Cereste says, "Citizen Power is helping to create a sense of community and bring new life back into the city. I'm delighted that people in Peterborough are engaging in arts and culture to have a real influence over their community."

Key principle: Arts and culture can engage communities and encourage active citizenship

www.citizenpower.co.uk



Citizen Power: Peterborough events, July 2010
Photos: Pip Warters

“ Citizen Power is helping to create a sense of community and bring new life back into the city. I’m delighted that people in Peterborough are engaging in arts and culture to have a real influence over their community.”

RCE solution: DanceEast in Ipswich

DanceEast brings world-class dance to the East of England, presenting an eclectic programme of performances, widening the experience of audiences and bringing a new and invigorated audience to dance. Following a successful fundraising campaign DanceEast is now based in an outstanding new facility in Ipswich.

The brand new Jerwood Dance House, designed by architect John Lyall, was opened in 2009. This £8.9 million development on the Ipswich waterfront is the cultural hub of the regenerated dockside, and will be the hothouse for the development and presentation of new and emerging dance talent.


"The DanceEast building has rejuvenated the waterfront," says DanceEast artistic director and chief executive Assis Carreiro. "It has been a huge asset because it is iconic and stands out. It's really

important for the status of dance in the city and it perhaps gives businesses confidence that things are changing here."

Ipswich Borough Council Leader Liz Harsant says: "Ipswich really benefits from being home to a nationally and internationally significant arts institution like DanceEast. The impact on our community is immense, particularly as so many young people get a chance to come together and take part in activity that they otherwise might not have a chance to."

The DanceEast Academy Programme offers young people aged 10-18 with exceptional potential in dance the opportunity to access high quality dance training. Students are given opportunities to work with professional dance artist companies and to attend trips to see professional performances.





The programme is designed to help young people maintain a healthy balance between academic work and dance training with courses taking place at weekends, evenings and during school holidays. Means-tested grant funding is available for all successful applicants through the Department for Education's Music and Dance Scheme. Additional financial support is available to grant holders to cover up to 100% of dancewear and travel costs. DanceEast visits different schools across the region in search of potential talent for the scheme and invites children to the centre for an audition.

Martyn Rose, DanceEast's Chair, is proud that the scheme spots talent in children who may not have dance on their radar and who are from socio-economic groups that cannot afford to pay for weekly dance classes. For these marginalised groups the scheme becomes a valuable source of social

capital. It gives them an opportunity to engage with their peers in a relaxed and enjoyable context, free from the bureaucratic barriers of more traditional civic engagement and community participation.

Rose says: "We talent scout, especially for the kids in areas of deprivation. In this country people think dance is for posh people and I think it's sad. We are finding champions in schools and getting teachers to talent spot and we are trying to infiltrate as many schools as possible."

Key principle: Arts and culture can engage marginalised groups to take part in community activity and achieve their potential

www.danceeast.co.uk



Welcome event at DanceEast
Photo: Anthony Cullen

Conclusion: Lessons and recommendations

During the UK's economic boom years decline was halted in the UK's large, post-industrial core cities. But the economic boom has proved unsustainable and new approaches are needed to get the best economic, social and democratic return from the arts. With resources scarcer than they have been for a generation the challenge now is to support the places and projects best placed to deliver success.

This paper shows what can be achieved with innovative thinking. Across the RCE network of cities high quality arts projects are making powerful contributions to tackling the country's most pressing economic, social and democratic challenges. They are doing so by collaboratively realising the six principles of success detailed throughout the case studies in this report.

As the examples from RCE show, there is no single model that can be applied uniformly. Activities and interventions must respond to a vision that is specific to each city's strengths and needs in order to deliver high impact results. The six cities have built on their existing strengths, led by arts organisations with the potential to achieve a national and international profile, delivering significant social and economic returns to the community in which they are based. In this way, arts and cultural initiatives in smaller cities offer a tantalising opportunity to deliver the new principles of localism and decentralisation.



Carnival queen for Luton Carnival, 2010. Photo: Clare Kendal

Recommendations

Based on the RCE experience, we recommend four policy measures to ensure the success of arts and culture in smaller cities:

- **Develop functional cultural areas:** Just as the economy is driven by functional economic areas there is the potential to develop functional areas for culture. Within these areas local authorities, Arts Council England and the cultural sector can develop a programme of co-investment that focuses resources on key assets, organisations and high impact interventions. Public money and the combined advocacy of the partners can be used to lever other sources of investment finance and philanthropy. Functional areas for culture should be factored into emerging plans for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- **Collaborate to maximise resources and impact:** Functional cultural areas should see local authorities pool resources into shared Cultural Services teams. This would enable efficiency savings and more effective exploitation of existing cultural assets. Further linkage across local authorities could enable collaborative commissioning opportunities for the cultural sector to deliver services across the area.

- **Empower creative communities:** Arts centres of excellence should work with local government and other organisations within the professional and amateur arts sector to develop creative public engagement which strengthens communities and enables cohesion and citizenship. The Big Society thinking about the role of social enterprise, mutuals and charities offers opportunities for new financial vehicles and ways of working, for example through community led trusts or partnerships.
- **Harness creative leadership:** Arts leaders can play a significant role as civic leaders, collaborating with local authorities to shape local priorities, advocating for the value and contribution of arts and culture to future well-being and prosperity, and driving increased philanthropy locally.

The coming years will be difficult. Public spending cuts may make it tempting for vital partners to withdraw support for arts and culture projects. This would be a mistake. The value of arts and culture to the success of our cities is apparent, so it is important that visionary schemes such as those illustrated here continue to be backed and endorsed by Government. Arts and culture projects – like the ones showcased here – offer high quality experiences for local communities and have demonstrated their ability to drive economic growth, build social cohesion, and encourage active citizenship. As a direct result people will be able to enjoy the benefits of living in vibrant, neighbourly areas that can face the future with confidence.



Thadian Pillai's avenue of Chandeliers, Metal Village Green festival, 2009. Photo: Benedict Johnson

Colchester Borough Council
Ipswich Borough Council
Luton Borough Council
Norwich City Council
Peterborough City Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
In collaboration with Arts Council England

www.rce.org.uk

Regional **Cities** East