

CULTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TFCO



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South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership



This Cultural Framework for Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland is commissioned by the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council). It merges the Cultural Framework for Boston and East Lindsey published in 2021 and the Cultural Strategy for South Holland published in 2024. It has been led and facilitated by Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (TFCC).

The Cultural Framework is informed by collaboration and engagement with communities across South and East Lincolnshire. It also heralds a new period of partnership and investment in culture across the distinctive communities and places of South and East Lincolnshire. It is an exciting time for a part of the country which has historically not benefitted from significant investment in culture and, as a consequence, does not have the infrastructure, capacity or track record for culture-led renewal and place-making as enjoyed in other places. With oncoming capital investment in culture and the establishment of a new National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England, which will drive partnership and support culture-led renewal, this Cultural Framework provides the terms of reference for a step change in the role and impact of culture.

The Cultural Framework sets out the context and core themes with a set of strategic priorities for culture to drive renewal in this distinctive and culturally rich part of Lincolnshire. It also looks longer term on the impact culture can have on a range of agendas, such as health and wellbeing, inclusivity, community cohesion and enhancing the overall quality of place.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURE?

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.

A VISION FOR CULTURE IN SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

“South and East Lincolnshire will be a place of active cultural participation. The area’s rich cultural heritage will be a foundation for new cultural activities which connect and energise local people, enhance overall wellbeing, and support the growth and sustainable development of cultural tourism and enterprise. The 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”.

The vision will be delivered through partnership:

- » With local people across all communities
- » With artists, cultural professionals and organisations
- » With enterprises in culture and tourism
- » With key organisations in health, wellbeing, environment, education and enterprise
- » With other councils - through the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.



DEVELOPMENT THEMES FOR CULTURE IN SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

Consultation for this Cultural Framework has identified ambition and opportunity for culture in South and East Lincolnshire and also highlighted a set of development challenges. As recognised by Arts Council England in the allocation of South Holland, 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 cultural renewal. The area's shifting demographics – an ageing population and sustained loss of younger talent, limited transport connectivity, health and wellbeing challenges, geographically dispersed and fragmented communities, are commonly identified as both barriers to cultural development and as areas where culture can play a positive role.

To deliver impact culture can also be understood from an 'asset-based perspective', where its heritage, natural and built environment, existing cultural offer, wealth of community level activity 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 four interconnected strategic themes for the South and East Lincolnshire Cultural Framework provide the structure for culture-led partnership and investment across the three districts:



THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR CULTURE IN SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

Culture as a Foundation to Strategic Partnership and Investment

This Cultural Strategy aligns closely with wider strategies for growth and prosperity across Lincolnshire:

The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) Sub-regional Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29 sets out ambitious goals to unlock growth across Greater Lincolnshire and achieve the Lincolnshire 2050 vision 'to create a flourishing future for all'. The four key priorities for SELCP, with culture at the heart, are:

- **Growth and Prosperity:** Delivering a Strategic Economic Plan for the Sub-region (encompassing a **destination management plan and cultural framework**), the Town's Fund Levelling Up, UKSPF and ACE funded programmes.
- **Healthy Lives:** This includes a commitment to **develop the leisure and cultural offer** for the benefit of residents alongside working to deliver the Healthy Living Action Plan.
- **Safe and Resilient Communities:** A promise to work with local communities to promote cohesion, community confidence and pride of place.
- **Environment:** Alongside working with the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network, to deliver a Climate Change Strategy. This priority seeks to focus attention on working with communities to develop green spaces and play areas, as well as protect and enhance built heritage and environment.

A New Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation

Following the launch of the Boston and East Lindsey Cultural Framework and Strategy, SELCP successfully secured **Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation status. This brought just under £2m to support art, culture and creativity across Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland** over three years 2023-2026. This includes the creation of cultural centres at Ayscoughfee Hall in South Holland, The Guildhall in Boston and the Colonnade in Sutton on Sea and a programme of giving more people access to culture on their doorstep and sharing the rich heritage and stories of the area. The NPO is a significant boost in investment in arts, culture and heritage. It builds on the work of Arts Council England investment in Transported, community-focused programme to get more people in Boston and South Holland enjoying and participating in arts activities. **A new Culture Board** has been set up to take a strategic lead on culture for the three districts.

Levelling up and inclusive growth

This Cultural Framework coincides with wider efforts to 'level up' the economy and provide pathways for development, growth and opportunity which have not been available to areas such as South Holland over recent years. The new NPO for SELCP will be working in a context of new place-based investment and regeneration. For example:

- £40 million of Levelling Up investment into South Holland for town centre rejuvenation, economic growth and to help transform health and wellbeing including through investment in the Castle Sports Complex, cycling and walking routes.
- £2.7 million from UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help build skills, employment and the area's economic growth. This includes investing in redundant community buildings as learning spaces – something people were keen to see happen in the consultations for this cultural strategy.

Culture can play a major role in levelling up for South 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 which supports sustainable long-term development.

Greater Lincolnshire – County wide initiatives

This Cultural Framework also builds from and connects to a range of county wide 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. These include:

A Vision for Greater Lincolnshire: A flourishing future for all. Three priority areas of focus are:

- **Community:** citizen-led transformation in our market towns, city, seaside resorts and rural hamlets. **Including a target for Culture** – that all citizens and visitors are provided with a high-quality, diverse art and cultural offering. And that young people and all our children become acquainted with art and culture. **Heritage** – fixing up historic buildings and assets.
- **Moving and living well.** Targets include: Place connected by **sustainable and abundant transport, digitally connected places** and all citizens have an equal chance of living a healthy life.
- **Innovation-led economy and shared prosperity:** Targets include: **Tourism** – destinations are prize winning, **Education** – every child has excellent education and adults have chance to refresh skills, **Jobs** – everyone enjoys a fulfilling employment.

Lincolnshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. First published in 2018, updated March 2023 to reflect the significant change in the landscape since the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of the Integrated Care Systems in July 2022. Five 'lever' areas are the focus of this strategy:

- Housing and homelessness
- Activity and wellbeing
- Environment and climate
- Economic inclusion
- Community empowerment.

THEME 1. CULTURE FOR ALL

THE GOAL:

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 older people, cultural activity helps reduce loneliness and enhance health and wellbeing. For communities, this helps build cohesion, animate places and build pride.

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 and creative jobs within other industries, such as innovators within the local agriculture and horticulture industries that find it hard to recruit the skilled innovators they need. 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.

“Arts and culture are ways to bring people together and we need that in South Holland where people stay within their own communities ... we need more intergeneration projects too to bring people of different ages and cultures together.”

“We need to open up more opportunity for young people. More arts and creativity in schools and digital transformation, not just for young people for everyone.”

“There is an opportunity to bring people together – through food and culture – e.g. linking our Eastern European communities, which are now into their second and third generation”.

THEME 2. CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

THE GOAL:

South and East Lincolnshire is a place to develop 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, micro-scale rural touring and community engagement.

South and East Lincolnshire is home to a rich seam of heritage and cultural assets. However, the cultural infrastructure landscape needs a re-boot. There is a lack of appropriate spaces to meet the demand for arts and cultural activity, with some of the larger venues and spaces not fit for purpose and many smaller venues and spaces heavily reliant on volunteers, often lacking in resources and capacity. There is also considerable demand to re-imagine the role of different heritage and cultural assets to develop a truly vibrant hub for culture which serves the wider Districts and County.

There is also significant appetite to access more of the area's community assets for cultural activities - from rehearsal to holding events. Plus, a growing network of artists is looking to access secure, affordable and accessible space for artistic practice.

Plus, there is a lack of cultural network activity and capacity issues make it challenging to build meaningful networks without a resource to coordinate activities and invest in new cultural programming.

“The are so few spaces available for us to hold creative activities, whether that’s singing, drama, arts and crafts, especially spaces we can afford as small community groups.”

THEME 3. CULTURAL PLACES

THE GOAL:

South and East Lincolnshire's mix of towns, villages, rural hamlets, wetlands and coast areas are connected through shared cultural activity that animates streets and open spaces, attracts visitors and connects people to heritage and the natural environment. Culture plays a leading role in regenerating and revitalising town centres and culture links with leisure and sport to support active participation in civic life. South and East Lincolnshire will pioneer a distributed community leadership model for cultural provision, building capacity in community centres, village halls, heritage settings and other settings to coordinate programmes of cultural activity and impact-facing provision.

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 settlements, notably Spalding. This means some places feel they have not had access to the resources they need.

The cultural ecosystem is made up of a mix of a few relatively established organisations (which are still very small), 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, all who play an active role in animating their places and building a sense of community and identity.

The difference between the coast and inland communities is pronounced, with a set of specific development needs for culture which vary from place to place. Targeted cultural investment in the coast – e.g. Skegness – will boost capacity and energise the wider cultural ecosystem. Similarly, cultural investment in towns such as Boston and Spalding, will catalyse renewal for wider communities.

There is also an opportunity to connect culture nature and environment – the area's distinctive flora and fauna, its agricultural history, and its distinctive topography and seasonal variety are all cultural assets in their own right.

THEME 4. CULTURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

THE GOAL:

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 and positive relationships between people and place, reducing depression, anxiety and loneliness.

South and East Lincolnshire is among the bottom 30 percent of local authority areas in England for health. For example, in South Holland, nearly 1 in 20 were self-identifying disabled in 2021. (East Lindsey is in the bottom 20% and Boston the bottom 10%).

There are high levels of physical inactivity among the population leading to multiple health issues. Lack of access to services due to the village and rural nature of the district is a challenge along with disconnected communities that can lead to loneliness and isolation.

But much work is underway to address these challenges. For example, Tonic Health support the health wellbeing of South Holland communities through the Spalding and Holbeach hubs and through outreach work. Increasingly arts and creative approaches are brought into the centres as part of the community wellbeing.

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, wellbeing and leisure services can be explored as a strategic priority for the area.

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP

The actions described in this Cultural Framework will each require a partnership model: to unlock resources and coordinate interventions so they can be more impactful to local communities.

Partnership is the golden thread that runs through this Cultural Framework. Even the smallest of interventions benefit from a collaborative and joined-up approach. The SELCP provides a strong foundation for partnership-based solutions and the mechanism for a shared prospectus approach to culture, as well as a mechanism for knowledge exchange, peer learning and shared purpose.

The new Arts Council England NPO demonstrates the value of working together. It will in turn help to coordinate and facilitate cultural activities across South and East Lincolnshire and beyond.

Support from Arts Council England to monitor and evaluate progress and build a stronger evidence base through a Cultural Audit across the SELCP, will also enable the impact of this Strategy to be measured and for benchmarks to be developed with other places.

Partnership with a portfolio of agencies such as Destination Lincolnshire, Empowering Health Communities, RSPB, education and research institutions, and the range of cultural, community and social assets across South Holland, will assist in the process of culture-led change which is already underway.

Robust and innovative partnership is difficult to initiate and even more difficult to maintain. By working together in new ways and by having an honest and evidence-based assessment of what is working, or not, partners in South and East Lincolnshire are faced with a compelling opportunity for culture to deliver a significant and sustained impact on the communities of this fantastic District.



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