



Norwich
UNESCO
City of
Literature
Strategy
2025–30

WRITING THE FUTURE





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This strategy was developed by the National Centre for Writing: Peggy Hughes (Chief Executive), Alice Kent (UNESCO City of Literature Manager) and Paula Sanchez (Head of Communications & Development). It was edited by Steph McKenna (Senior Communications & Marketing Manager).

It has been shaped by the insights and expertise of a broad range of contributors, who are gratefully acknowledged in the appendices.

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NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING (NCW)

is a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) for Arts Council England and the literature development agency for the East of England, based in Norwich. It is the Focal Office for Norwich UNESCO City of Literature. NCW promotes, commissions, and supports new writing, writers, and underrepresented voices; inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation; nurtures literary talent; and offers a year-round creative writing programme of courses, workshops, and resources.

nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

NORWICH CITY COUNCIL (NCC)

is the Local Authority and civic body, recognised as the municipality under UNESCO definitions. As the official designation holder, they work in partnership with NCW, who oversee the management and delivery of Norwich UNESCO City of Literature. norwich.gov.uk

NORWICH UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE

In 2012, Norwich became England's first UNESCO City of Literature following a collaborative bid led by Writers' Centre Norwich, Norwich City Council, and the University of East Anglia (UEA). This milestone paved the way for the National Centre for Writing, England's first Literature House, which opened at Dragon Hall in 2018.

With a rich literary heritage spanning over 900 years, Norwich has long been a beacon of creativity and innovation. Today, it thrives as a vibrant hub for writers, a regional publishing centre, and a home to numerous bookshops, libraries, and literary festivals. Norwich City of Literature's ambition is to foster a city built on stories, nurturing reading, writing, and their lifelong benefits for everyone.

THE UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN)

was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The 350 cities around the world which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

unesco.org/en/creative-cities

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**'IT'S HARD TO PUT THE
WORLD TO RIGHTS
BUT LET US AT LEAST
THINK ABOUT HOW WE
CAN PREPARE OUR
OWN SMALL CORNER
OF IT, THIS CORNER
OF 'LITERATURE''**

Kazuo Ishiguro, UEA MA
Creative Writing graduate, from
his Nobel Prize in Literature
acceptance speech

**'THE UNESCO CREATIVE
CITIES NETWORK IS FIRST
AND FOREMOST A SPACE
FOR COLLABORATION
AND EXPERIMENTATION
TO INVENT THE CITY
OF TOMORROW'**

Ernesto Ottone R.,
Assistant Director-General
for Culture, UNESCO

FOREWORD

Norwich has always been a city of ideas, of stories, and of welcome. From Julian of Norwich to the pioneering voices of today, our collective literary heritage has shaped who we are and who we can become. As England's first UNESCO City of Literature, we carry a responsibility and a rare opportunity: to ensure that creativity, reading, and writing are not only celebrated, but accessible and nurtured in every corner of our city. This new strategy sets out a bold and collaborative vision for the next five years, one that places literature at the heart of Norwich's economic, educational, and cultural development. It is a plan shaped by a broad coalition of voices: individuals, communities, and organisations across the city who offer insight, ambition, and commitment. Their contributions reflect a shared determination to unlock the full potential of the UNESCO designation for everyone who lives, works, or visits here.

The result is a roadmap for a city built on stories. A city where every child has the chance to read and write for pleasure. Where local writers and publishers thrive. Where creativity drives regeneration, wellbeing, and skills. Where literature becomes a shared civic asset, anchored in our city's unique identity and integral to its future.

Norwich has been identified as one of the major creative clusters, highlighting its strong potential for future growth and investment. Accordingly, this strategy is also a commitment to social mobility, educational opportunity, and economic resilience. It recognises that creativity is essential to a fairer, healthier, and more vibrant city. The Council is proud to support this strategy and to play its part, working closely with the National Centre for Writing, the University of East Anglia, Norwich University of the Arts, Norfolk Libraries, Norwich BID, VisitNorwich, and many other valued partners.

It is through this spirit of collaboration that we can ensure the benefits of this designation reach every one of our city's communities, creating lasting impact. Now, with this strategy as our guide, we turn the page on an ambitious new chapter.



CLLR MIKE STONARD,
LEADER, NORWICH CITY COUNCIL





'We make the future word by word, and line by line, and brick by small brick', as Anne Enright (herself a University of East Anglia graduate), writes in her extraordinary prize-winning novel *The Wren, The Wren*. That sentiment struck me then and it stays with me now, months later, as we present this new UNESCO strategy to you: our many writers and readers and creative communities, our libraries, bookshops and place-shapers; you, our cherished local partners, schools and families; you, our civic leaders, policymakers and funders. To you, too – our UNESCO network of international friends and peers around the world.

This strategy celebrates strengths, acknowledges challenges, and, by giving us a powerful and shared focal point to unite the city's talents and resources, invites us all to lean forward together into positive solutions. The action plan has been informed by deep conversation and consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders and advocates for reading, writing, education, creativity and place-making, and is underpinned by evidence to guide decisions around key priorities: via our prized UNESCO vehicle we want to change the city's prospects for the better and have conversations together about the things that matter to us all today.

Norwich may be small in geography, but we're very big on collaboration, and a shared ambition for our future, ready to take action for positive change – to shift the dial on access to reading and writing; to be a city of welcome and sanctuary; a city that prizes its literary heritage, and actively supports a thriving contemporary ecology; a happy, healthy liveable city, taking our place on the world stage of our global peers.

Brick by brick, line by line, and word by word: so many people have added their voices and perspectives to this consultation period, and we are so incredibly grateful to you all. It truly takes a village to ensure UNESCO Creative Cities can thrive, and we are proud that together we have built this strategy: a vision and a plan for the next five years, in which our shared UNESCO City of Literature story – England's first! – reaches as many people as possible.

I am personally inspired and galvanised by the themes and priorities that have emerged, and excited to work with and for the city to turn this document into a reality. 'Imagining transformation is a courage': this, from a poem by Norwich-forged poet Hannah Jane Walker, crossed my desk this week. Courage and imagination, indeed; in Norwich, and in this document, we have both. Here's to the shared ambition that will bring transformation. Our story starts (again) here.

PEGGY HUGHES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Here is a vision for Norwich, a UNESCO City of Literature, that dares to dream. A roadmap for a city built on stories, where reading, writing and their lifelong benefits, are nurtured for everyone. Where a multitude of voices and perspectives are actively welcomed. Where we contribute to an ambitious, diverse and creative ecosystem in which writers, readers and artists thrive. Where imagination and creativity are at the heart of local economic and social development, galvanising partnerships, investment and placemaking to support Norwich's ambition to be the happiest, healthiest and most liveable city.

Norwich is known worldwide for its history of pioneering writers who pushed boundaries and aligned creative expression with questions about how to live, and crucially, how to live together. This, then, is a plan for a shared dream and collective endeavour – to build a future literary heritage as rich and impactful as Norwich's inspiring stories of the past.

Getting stuck into a good book at Bugs and Beasts 2024, presented by Norwich Science Festival and The Forum. Photography by Luke Witcomb





This strategy comes at a time of significant opportunity and change: for the creative industries, for arts funding, regional and local government, and the skills and creative education agenda. It makes for an incredibly exciting moment to invite conversations about how Norwich's story could develop, informed by where we've come from, and leaning into the global, political, environmental, social and civic climate which has a bearing on our future steps together.

In 2024 the Government named the creative industries as one of eight priority sectors for growth and in 2025 published its Creative Industries Sector Plan, pointing to a decade of investment (focused on major urban centres). For Norwich as a smaller city to operate in this landscape it is essential that it can define its cultural strengths and that this is grounded in evidence and threaded through local growth strategies.

This is what this strategy sets

out to do, and in so doing shows that creative ambition is not adjacent to positive social and economic change but rather integral to building a city that is cohesive, vibrant, sustainable, equitable and happy. A place that nurtures creativity and attracts new talent, recognises the role of arts and culture in challenging convention, and provides the space to be bold and imagine new approaches.

The Department for Education wants 2026 to be a year that kickstarts a 'reading revolution' via a National Year of Reading campaign. It is well understood that reading for pleasure supports success in school, work and in life, boosts wellbeing, brings people together and expands our knowledge about the world.

Unequal access to these lifelong benefits is a seam that runs through Norwich and hinders the wider skills agenda and growth in the region. While not downplaying the complexities and multidimensional aspect to inequality in the city, 'reading



and writing for pleasure' is an area where a City of Literature could reasonably be expected to play a role. Norwich is the only UNESCO Creative City in the East of England, and this presents an opportunity to consider its role as an anchor for literary ambition across the county and further afield.

The question is, how can Norwich, an urban centre within the Greater Norwich boundaries at the heart of a largely rural and coastal county, maximise the benefit of the UNESCO designation for all those who live, work and visit?

Following a city-wide conversation, over 80 consultations, three surveys, two roundtables and extensive research, this strategy is built on evidence and informed by the guiding principle that culture, reading and writing are for everyone.

THE ANSWER IS BUILT AROUND FOUR THEMATIC PRIORITIES:

1

CITIZENS OF THE WORD

To develop a city built on stories where reading, writing and their lifelong benefits are nurtured for everyone, and a multitude of voices and perspectives are actively welcomed.

2

PLAYGROUND OF AMBITION

To celebrate and raise the visibility of Norwich as a world-renowned centre of literary excellence, while driving an ambitious creative ecosystem where writers, readers, and creatives can thrive.

3

HAPPIEST, HEALTHIEST & MOST LIVEABLE CITY

For Norwich's City of Literature status to be at the heart of local economic and social development and to galvanise partnerships, investment and placemaking agendas to support Norwich's ambition to be the happiest, healthiest and most liveable city in the country.

4

A WORLD CITY

To build on Norwich's international reputation as a literary powerhouse and, through the global Creative Cities Network, maximise the potential of the designation locally and on the world stage.





Here is a plan to support the local economy and communities to thrive as part of a global family of UNESCO cities. We outline how the designation can be activated as a shared opportunity for the whole city, serving as a platform that attracts inward investment and creative talent, addresses social and economic inequality, advances the skills agenda, and supports vibrant cultural tourism.

Norwich was labelled a social mobility 'cold spot' in the 2016 Social Mobility Index and ranked second worst in the country out of 324 areas. Furthermore, Key Stage 2 pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are below the national average for reading and writing attainment in 11 out of 13 Norwich electoral wards (data supplied by Norfolk County Council, relating to children eligible for free school meals). Nationally, 12% of free school meals recipients do not own a book; the largest gap to the UK average (5%) for a decade (National Literacy Trust, Children's Reading &

Writing Report, 2024). Reading and writing for pleasure are associated with lifelong benefits including improved wellbeing, higher earning potential, greater empathy for others and even higher life expectancy. We believe in a Norwich where no child's future is limited by unequal access to reading and writing.

Norwich was identified as one of eight 'Creative Challenger' cities in the Frontier Economics report for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2022, and one of 55 major 'Creative Clusters'. These areas were referenced again in this year's Creative Industries Sector Plan which says, 'The 55 major clusters and 709 microclusters that already exist are a sound basis for further investment and growth.'

The same report highlights that it is in terms of 'Access to Skills' that the East of England performs least favourably across five different measures of growth potential. A City of Literature can of course only play a part in this kind of fundamental change, but

'IN AN INCREASINGLY TRANSACTIONAL WORLD – WHERE AN IMPULSE TOWARDS DESTRUCTION SEEMS CARELESSLY UBIQUITOUS – COMMITTING TO A LIFE OF CREATIVITY AND CONNECTION IS A RADICAL, IMPORTANT ACT.'

Ali Smith, Norwich-based writer and photographer



it nevertheless points to the role Norwich can serve as an anchor city across the East.

The systemic challenges show that addressing literacy is not just a social good, but fundamental to building a pipeline of talent to support growth – not only in economic terms, but also in promoting equality of opportunity.

Unlike short-term place-based investments, the UNESCO Creative City designation is granted in perpetuity. While it does not come with core funding from UNESCO, it provides the stability and credibility needed to build long-term partnerships tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of a place.

This foundation supports the forward-thinking required to address complex issues such as the role of culture in economic prosperity, skills development, a decline in reading for pleasure, and entrenched social inequality. The designation also serves as a valuable focal point to galvanise

partners around a recognised creative specialism and shared ambitions.

PIONEERING LITERARY HERITAGE

Norwich is a city built on stories of social reform and world-changing ambition. The first book written in English by a woman anywhere in the world was written here – Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*. The city was once home to prison reformer Elizabeth Fry and abolitionists Harriet Martineau and Amelia Opie. England’s only medieval Hebrew poet, Meir ben Elijah, writing at the time of the Jewish expulsions in 1290, also lived here. And in the 1700s Norwich was home to Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (James Albert), the first African writer published in Great Britain. Norwich was the first city to adopt the Public Libraries Act of 1850 and is the home of the first MA in Creative Writing, pioneered at the University of East Anglia (UEA).

The city also has a long tradition of welcoming

Rebecca F. Kuang signs books for her sold-out audience at UEA Live autumn 2024. Photography by David Kirkham. Fetebye Images





people seeking sanctuary. The Huguenot and Walloon communities brought valuable skills, creativity, and cultural diversity that enriched the vibrancy of city life. Their impact is still felt today, from Norwich City Football Club's canary symbol to the architecture found across the county.

It is the reforming and radical spirit of these writers, thinkers and activists that this strategy looks to for confidence that the societal challenges of Norwich today can be addressed.

A VIBRANT CITY OF CREATIVES AND CREATIVITY

Literature is undeniably Norwich's cultural specialism. According to the 2021 Census there are more writers, authors, and translators than any other creative profession in the city. With its pioneering role in creative writing education, Norwich's unique spirit naturally draws writers. This literary strength complements other city assets, such as the

emerging branding cluster and innovative storytelling at Norwich University of the Arts' Immersive Visualisation and Simulation Lab in Mile Cross. Additionally, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts' new question-led exhibition programming reinforces the city's approach to aligning creative expression with deeper questions about how to live. Norwich Castle's spectacular medieval keep reopened in summer 2025 following a major transformation, ensuring that centuries of the city's stories are shared in the most compelling way for visitors and residents alike. And on-stage, world-renowned stories are brought to life through dance, theatre, music, and more at Norwich Theatre.

Norwich is a city with a proud spirit of independence, where creativity thrives in everyday life through the tenacity and imagination of its residents. Its beautiful flint medieval churches (more than any other city in northern Europe) draw

tourists and continue to serve as places of worship, yet are also home to much-loved arts centres, skateparks, artist collectives, exhibition spaces and vintage markets. It is a city that proudly 'does different', embracing its distinctive identity and celebrating its 'on the edge' geographical location by continuously showcasing unique and pioneering creative expression.

Innovation is fuelled through the city's two universities, UEA and Norwich University of the Arts, and two thriving city colleges. The city is outward-looking and open to new ideas, connected not only through the UNESCO global network but also via institutions such as the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) and the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC).

Norwich is also a city with libraries at its heart, starting with the Millennium Library in the city centre and extending

across 46 county branches, all vital hubs of community connection and inspiration. It hosts the world's oldest arts festival and the country's newest book festival, alongside beloved bookshops and a thriving independent publishing scene. As a green city of parks that proudly calls itself the City of Stories, it's no surprise Norwich is often voted one of the best places to live in the country.

Norwich is a haven for writers and a city known worldwide for pioneering literature; we push boundaries and genres to celebrate stories that move us and change the world. If this strategy is successful, the UNESCO City of Literature designation will be visible and loved by people living, working and visiting Norwich and an exemplar for how to work in partnership to realise the potential of a Creative City.

SECTION A CONTEXT





WHAT IS A UNESCO CREATIVE CITY?

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which aims to build peace through international cooperation. The ambition is for UNESCO Creative Cities to put culture at the heart of their development plans at a local level and cooperate actively at an international level.

UNESCO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is driven by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which highlight the connections between the environmental, social and economic dimensions to sustainable development (Appendix A). UNESCO stipulates that all creative cities must work to 'preserve and enhance their unique creative field through public engagement, local development strategies and better access to, and greater participation in, the city's cultural life'. Throughout this strategy we highlight where the aims and ambitions of Norwich UNESCO City of Literature align with the relevant SDGs.

HOW DID NORWICH BECOME A UNESCO CITY?

Norwich has long placed culture, creativity, and placemaking at the core of its ambitions, reflecting a national recognition of culture's broader impact on economic development and social wellbeing which was particularly prevalent in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Inspired by Liverpool's successful 2008 European Capital of Culture year, which received £133 million in investment over six years and delivered significant social and economic benefits, the UK government, alongside devolved administrations, launched a nationwide UK City of Culture programme to build on Liverpool's achievements.

Amid the national cultural investment wave from the late 1990s through to the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Norwich submitted a bid to become the UK's first City of Culture. Central to the bid was the ambition to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Literature. Norwich's bid was shortlisted alongside Birmingham

and Sheffield, with Derry-Londonderry ultimately awarded the title. Although unsuccessful, the bid laid the foundation for Norwich's Cultural Strategy and ambitions for the following decade.

The UNESCO City of Literature application was developed in partnership with Norwich City Council, Writers' Centre Norwich, and UEA, with Arts Council England support. The bid, submitted in 2010, placed the ambition for a National Centre for Writing – a physical home for Norwich City of Literature with a broad social, economic, cultural, and tourism remit. The designation was awarded in 2012, and Norwich became England's first UNESCO City of Literature. At the same time, Norwich became a member of the newly established Key Cities Network: a group of 24 cities that are significant urban entities with populations between 100,000 and 600,000. The Key Cities' objective is to influence government policy by showcasing the value of urban

areas in a prosperous society.

Following its UNESCO designation, Writers' Centre Norwich and core partners established the National Centre for Writing (NCW) at Dragon Hall as part of a £2.2 million renovation project. This saw Writers' Centre Norwich rebrand itself as England's first 'Literature House' and become an expanded Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) with a remit beyond regional literature development.

NCW is the physical home and centrepiece of Norwich UNESCO City of Literature, dedicated to audiences passionate about reading and writing, the development of creative writing, and supporting new and emerging writers and literary translators. It warmly welcomes hundreds of Norfolk schoolchildren each year, as well as international writers and translators who stay in the onsite residency cottage.

In 2022, Norwich UNESCO

City of Literature celebrated its first ten years with a year-long programme of activity. Highlights included opening NCW at Dragon Hall to general visitors several days a week, renewing its commitment to global engagement through the City of Literature network and International Literary Exchange, launching a new digital collection of commissions, and committing to a new, five-year ambition and strategy.

THE CHALLENGE

UNESCO Creative City designations do not come with allocated funding, nor do they provide access to funding through the UNESCO programme. This differs from the UK City of Culture scheme run by the DCMS, where successful bids receive substantial grants from public funding bodies to develop their programme. However, one of the opportunities of UNESCO designations is that they are granted in perpetuity and connect the city to a valuable global network of over 300 UNESCO Cities, across 90

countries. Whilst the funding climate is a challenge, the consultation process has also identified creative ways in which the potential of the City of Literature status could be further realised (outlined in Section D). A further challenge is how to make the UNESCO status relevant to people living in the city with lower literacy confidence, or who have had a negative experience of reading and writing in the past. This strategy sets out an ambition to enable communities to realise the meaning of being a UNESCO city at a grassroots level, responding and adapting to the ambitions of different communities.

The first ten-year strategy saw NCW develop a venue and a global network, securing a key position within the UK literary landscape and internationally. While NCW is not directly or exclusively funded to deliver the UNESCO City of Literature designation, it contributes to it as part of its wider remit as an Arts Council England NPO. Over the past decade, NCW

'I WANT NORWICH TO BE RECOGNISED FOR WHAT IT IS: A CENTRE OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY, AS WELL AS A VERY HISTORIC AND BEAUTIFUL CITY TO VISIT. WE HAVE A HUGE AMOUNT TO BE PROUD OF, BUT WE NEED JOINED-UP ACTION AT ALL LEVELS TO UNLOCK IT.'

Alice Macdonald, Labour MP for Norwich North, speaking in parliament



Frozen Light. Photography by JMA Photography





has strengthened strategic partnerships, from UEA to the British Council, welcoming hundreds of international writers to Norwich, raising the city's global profile. It has inspired thousands to engage with creative writing and reading for pleasure. Locally, it has expanded audiences, supported writers, translators and readers, launched a targeted education and community programme, and opened the Literature House at Dragon Hall. The challenge for the next phase is to broaden and deepen this impact locally, and to align the strategy with Norwich's future development during a time of significant change.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Following ten years of significant achievement, driven predominantly by the National Centre for Writing, Norwich City Council, and UEA, this strategy presents a renewed opportunity to build on those strong foundations and work collaboratively to extend the benefits of Norwich's status as a UNESCO Creative City,

creating even greater local impact and contributing to community-informed change.

Norwich's UNESCO designation has been linked to a range of city and county-wide strategic priorities, including international relations, skills development, children and young people, economic development, social inclusion, heritage and culture, and tourism and community cohesion. NCW acts as the arm's-length body leading on the designation's delivery, while Norwich City Council provides grant monitoring and strategic support. This strategy reaffirms this relationship and introduces a new collaborative ambition to safeguard the city's investment in the designation by working on new, shared priorities and initiatives, supported by the City Council's representation on the City of Literature Vision Group and oversight of UNESCO activity through the NCW Board.

Like all UNESCO cities, Norwich is required to attend two

'BEING PART OF THE UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK PROJECTS NORWICH AS A GLOBAL CITY. WE SHARE THE COMMON OBJECTIVE (AND RESPONSIBILITY) OF PLACING CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO TO HELP BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.'

Alan Waters, Chair, National Centre for Writing and former Leader, Norwich City Council

international conferences each year, joining other members of the global network to share best practice and showcase creative projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Attendance at the annual UNESCO conference must include a senior political representative from the city. While the designation covers travel costs, limited in-kind support, such as accommodation, is typically provided by the host city.

The designation and active participation in the UCCN has brought a range of benefits to the city, including:

1. Raised profile of the city and its cultural offer regionally, nationally and internationally.
2. Supported the development of Norwich Business Improvement District's 'City of Stories' brand and campaign.
3. Raised the profile of the city's literary sector and related creative industries, attracting new opportunities and inward investment.

4. Provided a stronger voice in international policy development, particularly in relation to culture and sustainable development, along with opportunities to share best practice.
5. Increased development opportunities for residents and cultural organisations, including international artist exchanges and residencies.
6. Supported the Business Improvement District 'Work in Norwich' agenda, aimed at encouraging professionals to relocate to the city.
7. Led to greater potential to attract new funding into the city for cultural activity.

METHODOLOGY

We have consulted widely, gathered evidence, and analysed data to develop a strategy tailored to the cultural, social, and political landscape of Greater Norwich, within the broader context of the county.

- We adopted the Design Council's 'Double Diamond' approach to strategic

interventions (Appendix C), starting with a 'Big Conversation' (Appendix D), open to anyone who wanted to find out more and contribute ideas.

- This led to the formation of a UNESCO Vision Group, which has met five times during the strategic process.
- The Vision Group has been complemented by an informal partnership network representing over 60 organisations and 150 individuals, including freelance writers and artists (Appendix F).
- We conducted over 80 conversations (Appendix E), held two roundtables with bookshops and publishers, and ran three online surveys, including one specifically for literacy experts.

The Common Lot perform Mousehold to the Marsh. Photography by The Millie Cross-Main



SECTION B PRIORITIES



Capitalising on this renewed focus is important for the arts, culture and heritage sectors. In an increasingly challenging funding landscape, arts organisations continue to position themselves as active partners in tackling local challenges and harnessing opportunities, not only as a social good but as an economic imperative. At the same time, the intrinsic value of arts and culture, nurturing creativity for its own sake, remains vital.

While ideas and perspectives on Norwich's City of Literature potential were plentiful and diverse during the consultation period, the overwhelming sentiment was that this presents an opportunity for Norwich to maximise its cultural ambition and drive positive social and economic change, particularly by addressing unequal access to reading and writing for pleasure and the lifelong benefits these bring. Evidence reveals an educational attainment gap across the

city and county alongside a broader adult skills gap that hinders long-term economic renewal. It also recognises the pockets of persistent deprivation and inequality between neighbouring wards that are regularly highlighted as challenges in Norwich and Norfolk. These issues are also addressed through interventions outlined in Norwich City Council's Norwich 2040 Vision, 'We Are Norwich' community-led plan, the Local Growth Plan and Norfolk Economic Strategy.

Maximising opportunities over the next five years depends on the dedication, ambition, and collaboration of partners at NCW, Norwich City Council, UEA, and the wider Vision Group. This group includes representatives from Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Library & Information Service, UEA, Norwich BID, VisitNorwich, and the City of Sanctuary network. Alongside a growing partnership network of over

60 organisations and 150 individuals, this roadmap represents a collective endeavour – a call to action for all to take ownership of Norwich's future as a globally recognised leader in literature and all that this could mean in terms of strengthening community renewal.

'NORWICH BEING A UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE IS SOMETHING FOR THE WHOLE REGION TO TAKE PRIDE IN. NORWICH IS HOME TO AN ABUNDANCE OF CREATIVITY, WITH A VERY LONG HISTORY OF BEING AT THE FOREFRONT OF CULTURE AND INNOVATION.'

James Allen,
Connected Innovation





AT A GLANCE

Qualitative evidence shows Norwich is excited by its UNESCO City of Literature designation, with many eager to participate but seeking a clearer narrative and easier access. People also want the designation reflected in daily life to take stronger root. The following aims and priority actions emerged from these conversations.

CITIZENS OF THE WORD	PLAYGROUND OF AMBITION	HAPPIEST, HEALTHIEST AND MOST LIVEABLE CITY	A WORLD CITY
<p>AIM ONE: To develop a city built on stories where reading, writing and their lifelong benefits are nurtured for everyone, and a multitude of voices and perspectives are actively welcomed.</p>	<p>AIM TWO: To celebrate and raise the visibility of Norwich as a world-renowned centre of literary excellence, while driving an ambitious creative ecosystem where writers, readers, and creatives can thrive.</p>	<p>AIM THREE: For Norwich's City of Literature status to be at the heart of local economic and social development and to galvanise partnerships, investment and placemaking agendas to support Norwich's ambition to be the happiest, healthiest and most liveable city in the country.</p>	<p>AIM FOUR: To build on Norwich's international reputation as a literary powerhouse and, through the global Creative Cities Network, maximise the potential of the designation locally and on the world stage.</p>
<p>PRIORITY ONE: Increase equality of opportunity for communities across Greater Norwich to actively shape the UNESCO City of Literature designation, fostering the change they want to see.</p> <p>PRIORITY TWO: Actively nurture reading and writing for pleasure – in both traditional and new forms – and promote their lifelong benefits for all children and adults.</p> <p>PRIORITY THREE: Amplify Norwich as a 'welcoming city'. Harness the power of reading and writing to foster empathy and understanding for people seeking sanctuary. Through storytelling, we will nurture a more inclusive and welcoming city.</p>	<p>PRIORITY FOUR: Increase the visibility of Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature designation within NCW's programme and forge groundbreaking new literature projects under the UNESCO remit locally, nationally and internationally.</p> <p>PRIORITY FIVE: Increase the visibility of Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature designation across the city and encourage new artistic projects led by partners with a local, national and international focus.</p>	<p>PRIORITY SIX: Actively pursue partnerships, collaborations, and joint funding and investment opportunities with civic and infrastructure partners to fully realise the potential of Norwich's UNESCO status. The aim is to deliver maximum benefit and positive impact across cultural policy, heritage, regeneration, and skills, for people living and working in Greater Norwich, and where possible, across the wider region.</p> <p>PRIORITY SEVEN: Increase awareness, visibility and perception of the Norwich UNESCO City of Literature designation within the city centre and Greater Norwich for residents and visitors, fostering a sustainable impact on the visitor economy.</p> <p>PRIORITY EIGHT: Boost engagement with, and foster a positive perception of the designation, the city's literary heritage, and the meaning of being a City of Literature among residents and local businesses in both the city centre and surrounding communities, strengthening connectivity, community, and civic pride.</p>	<p>PRIORITY NINE: Explore how we create new opportunities and international partnerships across the city, building on existing exchanges between our Higher Education and Research Institutes to explore shared intellectual and research collaborations across the network of creative cities.</p> <p>PRIORITY TEN: Take Norwich to the world and bring the world to Norwich by maximising international partnerships through the UCCN network, partnering with CreativeUEA and other collaborators, and by expanding residency programmes, international exchange and leveraging global friendships and best practices.</p> <p>PRIORITY ELEVEN: Increase the visibility of Norwich within the UNESCO City of Literature network both nationally and internationally, connecting infrastructure and civic leads to the annual conferences and network collaborations.</p>

SECTION THE PLAN





CITIZENS OF THE WORD

AIM ONE:

To develop a city built on stories where reading, writing and their lifelong benefits are nurtured for everyone, and a multitude of voices and perspectives are actively welcomed.

PRIORITY ONE:

Increase equality of opportunity for communities across Greater Norwich to actively shape the UNESCO City of Literature designation, fostering the change they want to see.



ACTION:

- By 2030, every Norwich and Greater Norwich locality will have at least one dedicated UNESCO City of Literature champion volunteer. We will establish a network of these champions; each aligned with the geography of a local library to tailor activities to their community's wishes. This might include coordinating books groups, supporting libraries to promote The Reading Agency's 'Summer Reads Challenge' with local schools, creative writing activities for young people, inviting speakers, or fundraising for storytelling projects.

'NORWICH MADE ME A WRITER. IT HAS A GREAT SENSE OF HOW LITERATURE AND WRITING IS FOR EVERYONE. PART OF THE BRIEF OF BEING A UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE IS TO WELCOME IN PEOPLE FOR WHOM BOOKS ARE SCARY THINGS AND THEY NEEDN'T BE. WHETHER THEY ARE CHILDREN OR ADULTS, BOOKS ARE THEIR FRIENDS, AND WRITERS ARE THEIR FRIENDS.'

Stephen Fry



Young readers enjoy The Spectacular Suit at the City of Literature weekend. Photography by Luke Witcomb

CULTURE IN ACTION: CITY OF READERS

Norfolk is home to 47 libraries, all vital community hubs that serve as places of connection, inspiration, and practical support. The relationship between Mile Cross Library, Mile Cross Primary School, Bookbugs & Dragon Tales, and the Norfolk Children's Book Centre provides one example of the wider community impact libraries have.

Mile Cross Primary is an 'outstanding' school with one of the highest reading and writing attainment levels in the city at Key Stage 2, particularly for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They have successfully embedded a whole school reading culture through a range of light touch (and easily replicable) measures, as well as deeper strategic decisions. Their library is the first thing you see when entering the school, all the classes are named after children's authors, and they

have a weekly reading raffle for children. They work closely with Bookbugs & Dragon Tales, a local independent bookshop, as well as the Norfolk Children's Book Centre, who support with curating age-appropriate books, providing reading lists and contributing raffle prizes. They work very closely with Mile Cross Library around the Summer Reading Challenge, led by The Reading Agency, over the summer holidays.

NICK HOBBS, LIBRARY MANAGER SAYS:

'At Mile Cross Library we support literacy projects such as the Summer Reading Challenge. We sign up young people who need to read six books during the summer holidays, ideally one a week but we aren't precious about it. Our relationship with Mile Cross Primary is very close and every single class visits the library in the run up to the holidays.

'I personally go to the school for regular assemblies to help motivate the children. We host craft, dance and theatre events throughout the holidays to keep young people focused on the Reading Challenge, they always nod towards the theme of that years' challenge.'

SUZANNE ROBERTSON, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER, MILE CROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL SAYS:

'Working in partnership with Mile Cross Public Library on the Summer Reading Challenge is just one aspect of how we embed a culture of Reading for Pleasure at Mile Cross Primary School. Nationally 9% of children take part in the challenge. At Mile Cross Primary 24% of children took part in 2024. Last year we came second in the whole of Norfolk for the number of sign-ups to the scheme.'



Community book swaps in the Old Library Woods, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich. Photography by Andi Sahey





EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

As trusted individuals with a deep knowledge of specific localities, the new network of UNESCO City of Literature Champions will support the storytelling projects and change that their community wants. This approach is based on Norwich City Council's Community Enabling Team model with a focus on 'Asset-Based Community Development' (ABCD); an approach that builds on existing strengths rather than focussing on problems or needs.

This volunteer network may include multiple individuals in each library area. Volunteers will receive training, resources, and access to a peer-to-peer learning network to share ideas and expertise and support community cohesion across Greater Norwich.

Although the term 'UNESCO City of Literature champion' might initially seem a barrier, consultations with the council's Community Enabling

**'WE NEED A MORE
NUANCED DISCUSSION
ABOUT THE SOCIAL
GEOGRAPHY
OF NORWICH –
PARTICULARLY
THE COMMUNITIES
THAT GET LEFT
BEHIND OR MISS
OUT ON CULTURAL
OPPORTUNITIES.'**

*Amelia Worley
Community Enabling Officer,
Norwich City Council*

Team concluded that using this terminology helps raise awareness citywide and signals that the opportunity is for all. A paid coordinator will be essential to lead this programme, as managing volunteers is a significant responsibility; securing resources for this role is included in NCW's future development plans.

Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) data shows that 1,675 people in Norwich are in paid employment in Arts, Culture and Heritage (ACH) professions based on the 2021 census. This is 2.6% of the Norwich workforce. The local authority with the highest percentage of ACH professionals is Hackney with 8.6% of the workforce, the lowest is Boston, Lincolnshire with 0.5%.

Norwich's ACH workforce isn't distributed equally across Greater Norwich. For instance, in Nelson Ward (often referred to as the Golden Triangle) it is over 200% more than the

Norwich average at 5.5%, whereas the figures in Mile Cross are 1.6%, Old Catton and Sprowston 1.5%, and Bowthorpe 1.3%.

If paid employment in the ACH sectors is concentrated in certain areas, this could impact how funded creative opportunities are conceived of and distributed across the wider city. Data shows that areas with fewer ACH workers often coincide with higher levels of economic disadvantage, as indicated by the Indices of Deprivation report. By establishing a UNESCO City of Literature champion in each area of Norwich, the designation's opportunities can extend beyond the city centre, fostering community-led collaboration on projects that reflect local needs and desires rather than being driven from the top down.





PRIORITY TWO:

Actively nurture reading and writing for pleasure – in both traditional and new forms – and promote their lifelong benefits for all children and adults.



ACTIONS:

- Deliver a shared Norwich UNESCO City of Literature reading and writing strategy, having held an expert roundtable and brought together a taskforce in autumn 2025. It is hoped that this could include a specific and measurable target towards closing the reading and writing attainment gap between Norfolk schools and the national average.
- Explore and advocate for a National Literacy Trust Regional Hub for Norfolk.
- Set a county-wide aspiration for a minimum of 25% of

children in schools to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, developed by the Reading Agency and delivered by Norfolk Library and Information Service with support from the Norwich UNESCO City of Literature partner network.

- Support the Department for Education’s 2026 ‘Year of Reading’ campaign along with its delivery partner the National Literacy Trust.
- Support libraries and schools, especially in Norwich and Greater Norwich, to deliver impactful reading and writing campaigns that leverage Norwich’s connection to a network of 53 UNESCO Cities of Literature. This will maximise opportunities for international learning and innovation in literacy and storytelling interventions.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

Regarding reading, writing, and the education attainment gap in the city and county, the evidence is stark:

- In the 2016 Social Mobility Index Norwich ranked 323rd out of 324 areas for low social mobility.
- In the more recent 2025 ‘Opportunity Index’ from The Sutton Trust, both Norwich South and Norwich North were categorised as ‘below average’ for social mobility.
- 52% of Norfolk pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, which is below the national level of 60%.
- At Key Stage 2 (age 11) children in Norfolk have an attainment rate 8% below the national average for writing and 4% below for reading.
- Research conducted by British Land highlights the link between improving reading habits and achieving wider economic benefits for society. National data shows that if all school-aged children read daily, an additional 1.1 million students could achieve five good GCSEs over a 30-year period. This would boost average lifetime earnings by £57,500 per person and

contribute £4.6 billion annually to the UK’s GDP. It would, in time, particularly benefit the one in eight (12.2%) young people aged 16–24 who are currently Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). Savings would therefore also be realised by the health, welfare, and criminal justice systems.

- 20.5% of Norwich Lower Super Output Areas are in the top decile of deprivation in the country (English Indices of Deprivation Report (IDR) 2019), rising to 36% for ‘Education, Skills and Training’ deprivation. The education figure in the IDR is arrived at through a combination of attainment at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4, entry to higher education, and adult skills. The IDR points to a relationship between Norwich’s reading and writing attainment gap and adult skills, meaning the literacy challenge is far wider than something that can rest with overburdened and under-resourced

schools. It is something businesses, universities and local councils should be working to tackle together.

- Norfolk employers report ongoing difficulty recruiting staff due to a county-wide skills gap, with a lack of soft (communication, interpersonal, teamwork, problem-solving) skills cited as a regular challenge across sectors (Norfolk Chambers of Commerce & Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Norfolk & Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan).

The education attainment gap is something that concerns all businesses and employers in Norwich and Norfolk and how it relates to skills agenda for the local and regional workforce. Bringing this to the City of Literature agenda as a priority, while playing a role in a county-wide strategic initiative, is a key strand of this strategy.

PRIORITY THREE:

Amplify Norwich as a 'welcoming city'. Harness the power of reading and writing to foster empathy and understanding for people seeking sanctuary. Through storytelling, we will nurture an inclusive and welcoming city.

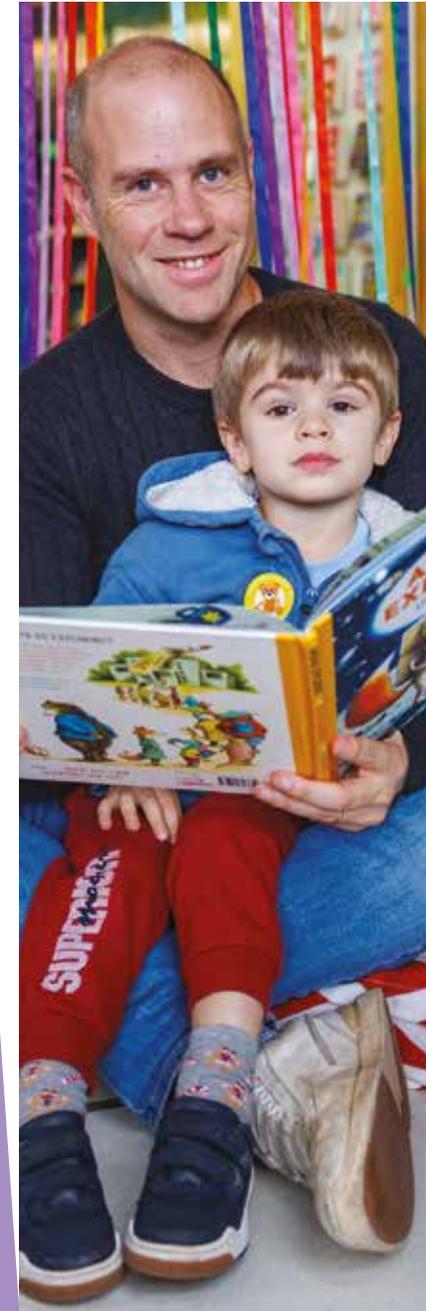


ACTIONS:

- Partner with Anglia Ruskin University and the Norfolk Schools of Sanctuary network to amplify their annual 'A Day of Welcome' celebration. Deliverables could include curated reading lists, classroom activities, educational resources, and live author events and increased national and international partnerships via the UNESCO Cities of Literature Network.
- Continue to work with key community partners and generate new initiatives

'THERE'S A HUGE AMOUNT OF GOOD WORK GOING ON AROUND READING FOR PLEASURE IN NORFOLK SCHOOLS AS WE INCREASINGLY UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT IT CAN HAVE. HAVING A STRATEGY WHICH COORDINATES THIS AND HELPS MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN WOULD BE ENORMOUSLY WELCOME.'

Jon Biddle, Teacher and Reading for Pleasure expert



The Imaginarium at Norwich Book Festival. Photography by Luke Witcomb





that use storytelling to encourage welcome, inclusion and kindness, including with Creative Arts East, Norwich Pride, Norwich Age UK, The Matthew Project, City of Sanctuary UK, New Routes, English+ Norwich, Schools of Sanctuary, Refugee Week, MIND, Inclusive Norwich and other voluntary sector partners.

- Work with partners including local authorities, schools, the Young Norwich Creative Awards, the Youth Advisory Board and young creative leaders to realise more opportunities for Norwich and Norfolk's young people to connect to the local and global opportunities of being a UNESCO City of Literature.
- Build on programmes and projects such as the 'Words of Welcome Poetry Exchange'. This initiative, a collaboration between Creative Arts East, Norfolk Library and Information Service and the National Centre for Writing, celebrates the county's multiculturalism and spirit

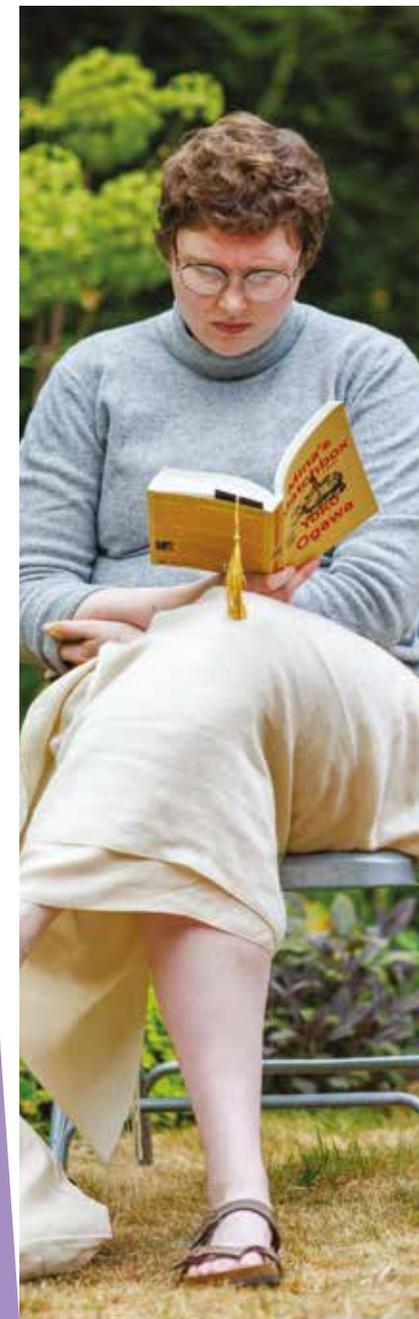
of welcome. Commissioned multilingual poems were shared via postcards in all 47 Norfolk libraries, inviting visitors to contribute their own messages of welcome, fostering community connection through shared words.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

Norwich is a recognised City of Sanctuary, part of the national City of Sanctuary UK network, which promotes a culture of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers settling in the city. Norwich's history is deeply rooted in stories of people fleeing religious persecution. Norwich City Council is currently working towards achieving Council of Sanctuary status. In 2022, the Norwich Millennium Library was awarded Library of Sanctuary status. Additionally, Norfolk Libraries are actively working towards becoming Libraries of Sanctuary, with all 47 libraries aiming to be welcoming and safe spaces for everyone, especially those seeking refuge.

**'A CITY OF LITERATURE
NEEDS TO BE BUILT
ON COMMUNITY, BE
GENEROUS IN ALL OF
ITS INTERACTIONS
AND HAVE AN
ETERNAL CURIOSITY
ABOUT ITS PLACE
IN THE WORLD.'**

David Ryding, Director,
Melbourne UNESCO
City of Literature



Readers gather outdoors for Page Against the Machine. Photography by Luke Witcomb

CULTURE IN ACTION: CITY OF LIBRARIES AND COLLECTIONS

Norwich's dedication and passion for embracing and representing cultural heritage, information, and personal stories is reflected in its cluster of libraries, archives, and collections, including a network of 21 public libraries serving the communities of Greater Norwich.

The Millennium Library, located beneath the glass canopy of The Forum, is one of the most frequented libraries in the country. It also houses the Norfolk Heritage Centre, the American Library, the Norwich Millennium Zine Library, and specialist collections such as the Norwich City Library and the Colman's Collection. The Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, along with the Lisa Sainsbury Collection and the Robert Sainsbury Collection at the Sainsbury Centre, showcase an extraordinary range of works across the city. Norwich Cathedral

Library holds a valuable collection of ancient and modern texts, including rare books dating back to the 15th century.

Additional local historical collections include The Blickling Library at Blickling Hall, which houses over 12,500 books and manuscripts. It is the largest National Trust library and one of the finest private libraries in Britain. The Paston Collection, primarily known as the Paston Letters, is a significant archive of 15th-century English correspondence, held by the British Library.

UEA boasts a substantial library and several specialist collections, including the British Archive for Contemporary Writing (BACW). This archive features manuscripts, correspondence, and rare documents from renowned authors

such as Malcolm Bradbury, Lorna Sage, and J.D. Salinger. Nobel laureate Doris Lessing gifted an archive of 129 boxes containing correspondence, diaries, and working papers.

The BACW works with emerging and recently established writers to understand how the creative process unfolds in a digital environment and the implications and opportunities for archives. The UEA Centre for Contemporary Poetry in the Archive, funded by the Mellon Foundation, amplifies underrepresented voices in British and Irish poetry. This innovative project collects and preserves diverse contemporary poetry, fosters community engagement, and utilises BACW's 'storehouse model' to promote interdisciplinary learning and showcase archives both online and within the UEA Library.



The American Library showcases young Americans that came to East Anglia during World War I. Photography by David Micham





The 'A Day of Welcome' initiative is another Norwich first and was celebrated by over 800 schools across the UK in 2025 (with 27,000 children taking part in a single livestreamed author event). It began in Norwich as a partnership between Norwich educators and Anglia Ruskin University. Since 2024, Norwich UNESCO City of Literature has been developing its partnership with the initiative, amplifying the reach of their work via the UNESCO Cities network and developing an annual school reading list for national distribution.

UEA is recognised as a University of Sanctuary, while Norfolk Museum Services holds Museum of Sanctuary status. Norwich Arts Centre, Norwich Theatre, and more recently NCW's home, Dragon Hall, have also been awarded either Arts Centre or Place of Sanctuary status. Alongside these, a range of schools, small businesses, community projects, and organisations contribute to

'SCHOOLS WANT TO HELP THEIR PUPILS MAKE SENSE OF REFUGEE MIGRATION. TAKING PART IN A DAY OF WELCOME SUPPORTS THEM TO DO THAT IN AN AGE-APPROPRIATE, CONSTRUCTIVE AND MEANINGFUL WAY.'

Jake Rose-Brown, Norfolk Schools of Sanctuary Lead

supporting Norwich's identity as a City of Sanctuary.

Wellbeing is often cited as an important aim in placemaking, enhanced through active participation in and experience of cultural and artistic activities. In a global context the relationship between health, culture, place and wellbeing is increasingly a central theme within policy. This is evident from UNESCO's implementation of the United Nations SDGs (Appendix A) which state that 'placing culture at the heart of development policies is the only way to ensure a human-centred, inclusive and equitable development' (Hosagrahar, 2017).

This growing recognition of the link between wellbeing, arts, and culture also informs our strategy. The intersection of these elements – especially how placemaking connects culture and health – is vital for leveraging the City of Literature designation to drive meaningful impact, change, and growth.

- 16–24-year-olds report the highest levels of loneliness of any age group in the UK (What Works Wellbeing, reported 2023).
- Mental health and anxiety are a problem for young people. The leading concern for young people in Norfolk, according to 16,345 respondents in the 2024 Make Your Mark Survey, was 'health and wellbeing'.
- Norfolk has a larger percentage of NEET young people (age 16) than the national average (4.8% compared to 3.8% nationally).
- By 2040, around 40% of Norfolk's population are predicted to be of dependent age rather than working age. The population aged 85+ is expected to double in size (Age Friendly Norwich).
- In Norfolk, 33% of the population aged 16–64 is disabled according to UK law or have a work-limiting disability, compared to 29% in England. This is estimated to be around 130,000 people in Norfolk (via Norfolk Insight).



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PLAYGROUND OF AMBITION

AIM TWO:

To celebrate and raise the visibility of Norwich as a world-renowned centre of literary excellence, while driving an ambitious creative ecosystem where writers, readers, and creatives can thrive.

PRIORITY FOUR:

Increase the visibility of Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature designation within NCW's programme and forge groundbreaking new literature projects under the UNESCO remit locally, nationally and internationally.



ACTIONS:

The National Centre for Writing will:

- Establish new visitor and audience experiences at Dragon Hall; a place to explore and engage with writing, reading for pleasure, Norwich's literary history and its future.
- Embed the City of Literature designation across its year-round learning & participation programme, raising awareness and increasing engagement with communities,

residents and visitors.

- Develop a new Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Lecture series in which prominent writers alongside Higher Education partners will be commissioned on a theme that is relevant to UNESCO priorities.
- Present a series of high-profile events as a cornerstone of NCW's UNESCO City of Literature programme each year, including the new annual lecture and existing Harriet Martineau Lecture, hosted in venues across the city.
- Expand its Learning & Schools Strategy and programme by enhancing initiatives such as writers in schools, digital resources, and visits to Dragon Hall. These efforts will engage schools throughout Greater Norwich and the wider county, reaching students across all key stages.
- Programme Norwich UNESCO City of Literature into its offer through:
 - Commissioning and

co-commissioning new projects from artists local and around the globe.

- Inviting our partners, local writers and artists to curate, create and perform multidisciplinary takeovers and residencies.
- Focusing on artistic talent development, ensuring opportunities are there for the next generation of writers and story makers.
- Taking NCW's work on tour around the UK, reaching new audiences and collaborating with global creative cities and the wider UNESCO City of Literature network. This also includes receiving new work from other Cities of Literature (for example, most recently with Québec City).

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

NCW was central to Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature bid and acts as the coordinating office responsible for overseeing and delivering the designation citywide.

CULTURE IN ACTION: CITY OF FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Every month in Norwich offers a new opportunity to immerse yourself in writing and connect with writers, thanks to an evolving calendar of festivals and literary events.

The Norfolk & Norwich Festival – the oldest arts festival in the country – has co-hosted the City of Literature weekend with the National Centre for Writing since 2014. A standout feature is the Harriet Martineau Lecture, newly commissioned each year from a distinguished literary figure who uses Martineau’s radical legacy as a launchpad to reflect on the power and impact of writing today.

DANIEL BRINE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL SAID:

‘Festivals play important roles in the cultural lives of communities,

creating a moment for shared experience and celebration. Norfolk & Norwich Festival has been an important cultural focus in our part of the world for over 250 years and we’ve been successful because we engage in arts which are meaningful to the lives of our audiences. The Norwich UNESCO City of Literature designation enables us to further root our festival in our local context and provides a fantastic framework for creative partnerships.’

UEA Live continues a rich tradition of hosting literary giants. Since its inaugural season in 1991, the festival has evolved into a twice-yearly series held each spring and autumn that welcomes over 6,000 audience members. UEA is also home to the Sebald Lecture, presented by the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) since 2017, and the Noirwich Lecture,

which examines the enduring relevance of crime writing.

Newer festivals are also making their mark. The Norwich Book Festival, which launched in October 2024, drew over 22,000 readers and quickly became a major fixture on the city’s cultural calendar.

Beyond dedicated literary festivals, celebrations such as the Norwich History Festival, Norwich Science Festival, Heritage Open Days, Shakespeare Festival, Norwich Pride, and The Autumn Festival of Norfolk all incorporate elements of storytelling, creativity, and literature, reflecting the city’s pride in its designation as a UNESCO City of Literature.



Norwich Pride. Photography by oman...photography





A key element of the bid was the creation of a dedicated venue – a contemporary Literature House inspired by the European Literature Houses – designed to serve as both the focal point and platform for expressing Norwich’s shared status as a City of Literature. After this ambition was achieved in 2018, NCW remains at the heart of Norwich’s UNESCO designation and its delivery.

The benefits of linking writing and reading for pleasure with Norwich’s rich literary heritage and its future are both compelling and significant. This connection serves as a powerful driver in fostering a sense of belonging, civic pride, increased confidence, and stronger community ties.

Year-round opportunities to read and write outside of formal education settings are vital for increasing confidence, vocabulary and enjoyment for young people. Such opportunities include competitions, development

programmes, exchanges and mentoring.

- ‘Only 20% of young people access enrichment activities in schools, yet we know they boost school enjoyment and help build essential skills, such as resilience, independence, teamwork and confidence. These qualities are valued by employers and needed in day-to-day life.’ First Story Impact report, 2023–24
- Audience feedback consistently highlights the value and demand for high-profile events, such as the Harriet Martineau Lecture at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival. These events are not only vital components of the UNESCO City of Literature infrastructure but also play a key role in introducing and reintroducing writers to new audiences. ‘Thank you so much! For the copy of Val McDermid’s (Harriet Martineau) lecture, & for organising the event! It exceeded

my expectations & was brilliant!’ Audience member.

- ‘Writers visiting schools can make a significant difference to children and young people’s attitudes to and enjoyment of writing, offering new perspectives on writing and what it can do.’ Horner, S. (2010).
- Pupils who enjoy writing ‘are more likely, on average, to rate themselves as better writers’. Clark, C., & Teravainen, A. (2017).
- The 2021 Census revealed that Norwich has more writers than any other creative profession. Additionally, the Creative PEC identified that, for a city of its size, Norwich has an unusually high concentration of writers. This creative specialism represents a unique strength that should be nurtured and developed to support the growth of creative industries across the wider city and region.
- NCW has a strong legacy of nurturing new writing and ways of working and is well-placed to bring exciting

opportunities to Norwich for the benefit of the city and local communities.

- NCW recognises its commitment and responsibility to bring audiences bold, joyful experiences, the opportunity to gather and connect, and share in the transformative potential of literature and creative writing in all its forms.





PRIORITY FIVE:

Increase the visibility of Norwich's UNESCO City of Literature designation across the city and encourage new artistic projects led by partners with a local, national and international focus.



ACTIONS:

- UEA to launch a new PhD Studentship, the Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Creative Writing in the Community Studentship (fee-waivered). Launching in September 2025 and thereafter open to application every three years, the candidate will work across one of the UNESCO strategy themes (either literacy, sanctuary, or cultural tourism) with the expectation of a certain number of hours spent

working alongside a relevant community organisation.

- Use Norwich's status as the only UNESCO Creative City in the East of England to support regional social, cultural and economic ambition and advocate for the creative industries offer across the East of England. For example, via new and existing partnerships with regional anchor universities such as UEA, Norwich University of the Arts, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge University, University of Suffolk, University of Essex and University Centre Peterborough.
- To work with cultural partners, the Norfolk Arts Forum and the Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board to increase the impact of literature, reading for pleasure and writing for everyone.
- In partnership with the Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board, establish a freelance network to advocate for freelancers' rights. This network will be shared

- as best practice through the UNESCO network to promote improved support and sustainable practices for the freelance ecosystem that our sector depends on.
- In partnership with Norfolk & Norwich Festival, continue to deliver an artistically ambitious literary programme as part of the annual festival. First introduced in 2010 as a literature strand within the festival, NCW's role expanded in 2014 to co-present a dedicated three-day City of Literature Weekend.
- Continue to commission the annual Harriet Martineau Lecture, written and delivered each year by a nationally recognised author.
- Support Norwich Book Festival, a newly established annual ten-day event presented by The Forum in partnership with Norfolk Library & Information Service, NCW, and other city partners.
- Explore the development of Publish East, a collective of independent publishers working in and out of the East

- of England, with an ambition to support and amplify publishing in the region.
- Support the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT) in leading the development of a new UNESCO Cities of Literature literary translators' network. BCLT remains a positive force and an internationally recognised centre and advocate for literary translation worldwide.
- Continue to develop archive projects with Higher Education partners such as the British Archive for Contemporary Writing at UEA, established in 2023.
- Establish an ambassador network of committed, community-adjacent organisations and interested parties who want to connect the UNESCO designation to their work.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

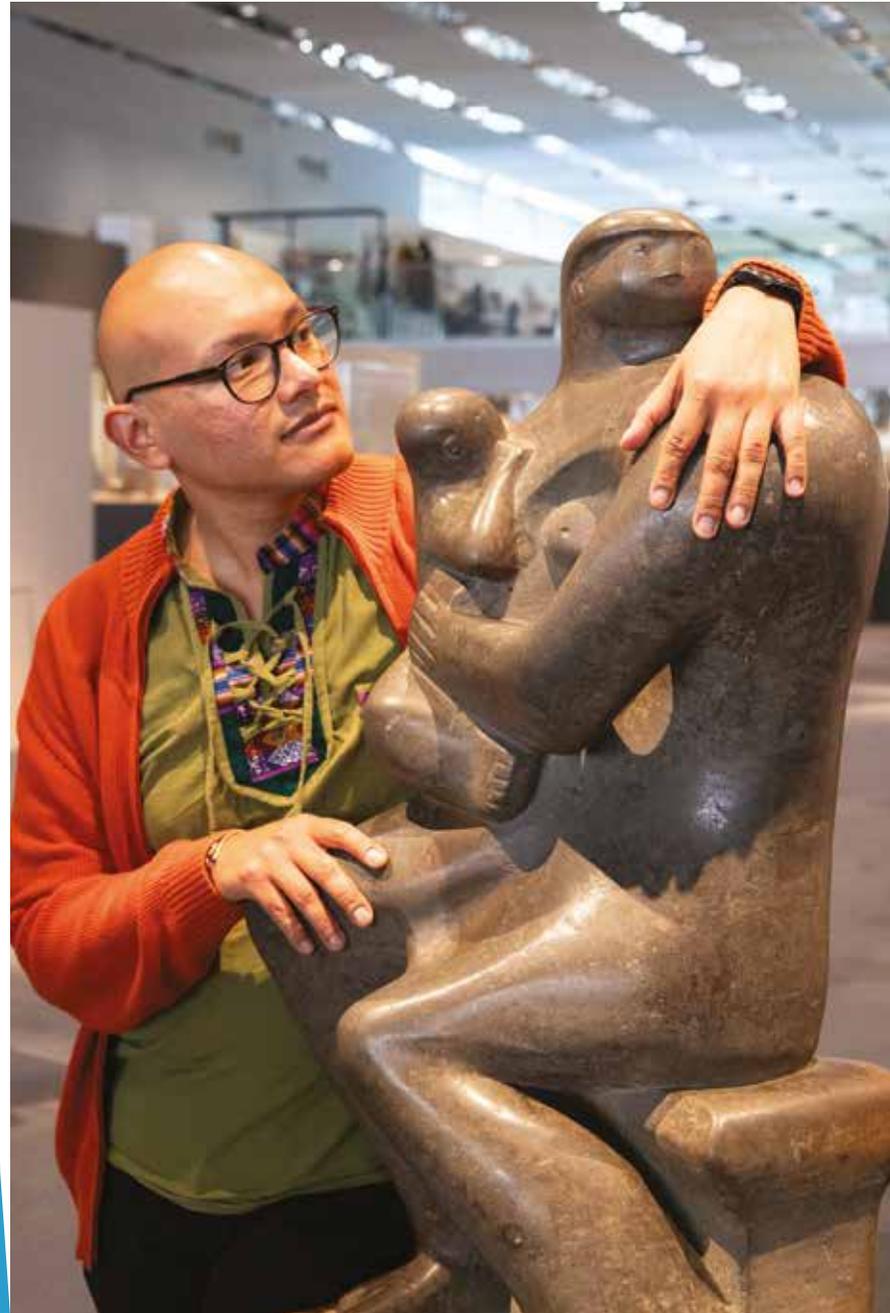
- Arts Council England (ACE)'s Let's Create Strategy sets out 'an ambitious vision for the future of creativity and culture'. By 2030, they 'want

England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish. A country where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.' With six National Portfolio Organisations in Norwich (as of September 2025) we're well-placed to work together across artforms to support and bolster ACE's strategy through a UNESCO lens.

- UEA's Creativity in Action (2025) signals a bold new university-wide strategy for arts, culture and the creative industries, explaining 'how we will build on the research and teaching excellence which spans all our Schools, Faculties, Departments and Institutes, to catalyse new areas of partnership, research and creative enterprise, and to nurture talent and wellbeing across our campus, our region and beyond.' Through UEA, we continue to have a committed, enthusiastic,

'NORWICH IS BUILT UPON CENTURIES OF RADICAL AMBITION CREATING THE IDEAL HOME FOR REVOLUTIONARY CULTURAL ENDEAVOUR. THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL INNOVATION AND SOCIAL TOLERANCE MAKE IT THE PERFECT PLACE TO VENTURE AROUND THE CORNERS OF WHAT IS EXPECTED TO DISCOVER WHAT IS POSSIBLE.'

Dr Jago Cooper, Executive Director, Sainsbury Centre



Visitors hug Henry Moore's Mother and Child at the Sainsbury Centre's Living Art collection. Photography by Kate Wolstenholme





and valued partner in delivering the UNESCO City of Literature designation.

- **Leading the Crowd:** A report on the role of public investment in Crowding In (Arts Council England) demonstrates that ‘public investment in England’s arts and cultural sector plays a pivotal role in attracting further income from private and earned sources – a phenomenon commonly referred to as ‘Crowding In’. This effect underpins the mixed economy model that sustains most cultural organisations in England, combining public funding, private investment, and earned income’; working together with a shared voice in the city will bring greater benefits economically and subsequently artistically to all.
- The government’s new Industrial Strategy recognises the creative industries as a priority sector for the first time: this is important recognition of the role

‘BEING THE FIRST UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE IN ENGLAND GAVE THE PEOPLE OF NORWICH THE CHANCE TO FEEL PROUD OF THEIR LITERARY HERITAGE, WHICH IN TURN MEANT THEY WERE EXCITED ABOUT SUPPORTING THEIR LITERARY FUTURE. THE BOOK HIVE HAS PLAYED A PART IN THAT FROM THE BEGINNING AND FELT THE BENEFITS OF IT FROM DAY ONE.’

Henry Layte, founder and owner of The Book Hive and Propolis Books

creative cities can play in fostering innovation and the need for us to work together to create the conditions for creatives to thrive.

- The government’s new Creative Industries Sector Plan proposes the introduction of a Creative Freelancers Ambassador, addressing long-standing calls for improved support for freelancers amid concerns over unsustainably low pay and poor working conditions. Fostering a better culture for freelancers must be a foundational element in both delivery and strategic planning.
- Norwich and Norfolk are home to many celebrated independent publishers including UEA Publishing, Strangers Press, Galley Beggar, Propolis, Salt, Hinterland and Kurumuru Books, which specialises in bringing diversity to children’s and young adult publishing. The impact of Norfolk’s independent publishing scene could be more widely felt through the development of the Publish East collective.
- UEA was the first university in the UK to establish an MA in Creative Writing and continues to be a creative powerhouse, with alumni that include Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro, Anne Enright, Emma Healey, Sharlene Teo, and Ayanna Lloyd Banwo.
- The BCLT is world-renowned and founded by one of Norwich’s most prominent writers, W.G. Max Sebald. Several other UNESCO Cities of Literature in Europe are keen to establish a literary translation network and so there is fertile ground to build on.
- Norfolk Libraries rank among the busiest services in the country, providing an exceptional platform for events, attracting incidental footfall, and fostering community cohesion and participation.

CULTURE IN ACTION: CITY OF BOOKSHOPS

Bookshops form a vibrant and creative constellation across Norwich's medieval streets – from the treasure trove of second-hand titles at Handcrafted Leather and Books on Norwich Market, to the comic book haven of Abstract Sprocket, and the magical world of Bookbugs & Dragon Tales.

THE BOOK HIVE: A SMALL SHOP WITH A BIG IMPACT

An independent bookshop with an adventurous spirit, a distinctive curatorial approach, and unrivalled knowledge of books and publishers both big and small, The Book Hive has earned national acclaim as a favourite among readers and writers alike. Named Best Small Bookshop in Britain by *The Daily Telegraph* (2011), ranked first in the East in *The Independent's* Top 50 Bookshops in the UK (2012), and twice awarded Best Independent Bookshop in the East of England by The British Book

Awards (2018, 2020), this three-floor treasure trove of literary curiosities regularly hosts events – and even features a private writing booth, where Margaret Atwood completed her novel *The Heart Goes Last*.

The Book Hive also boasts a rich publishing legacy. Its founder and owner, Henry Layte, co-founded Galley Beggar Books. Today, the shop is the base of award-winning imprint Propolis, which includes Poet Laureate Simon Armitage among its authors.

HENRY LAYTE SAID:

'The Book Hive owes its success to the city it resides in, and therefore inextricably to the UNESCO designation. I always knew that the shop would be moulded by the way the city reacted to its presence, and it's been an amazing thing to witness – how a community can feed a business with its own tastes, ideas and politics as much as that

business can serve the community. The Book Hive feels like a treasured part of the lifeblood of Norwich now, and much of that is because we've been able to work with all the other literary organisations in the city, as well as forging our own clear path.'

The Book Hive is the creator of Page Against the Machine, a weekly public reading event. Each May, it joins forces with the National Centre for Writing and Norfolk & Norwich Festival to present a global edition in partnership with sister Cities of Literature around the world. In the autumn, the shop curates the literary festival Mannington Book Bash.



The Book Hive. Photography by Andi Sapay





HAPPIEST, HEALTHIEST & MOST LIVEABLE CITY

AIM THREE:

For Norwich's City of Literature status to be at the heart of local economic and social development and to galvanise partnerships, investment and placemaking agendas to support Norwich's ambition to be the happiest, healthiest and most liveable city in the country.

PRIORITY SIX:

Actively pursue partnerships, collaborations, and joint funding and investment opportunities with civic and infrastructure partners to fully realise the potential of Norwich's UNESCO status. The aim is to deliver maximum benefit and positive impact across cultural policy, heritage, regeneration, and skills, for people living and working in Greater Norwich, and where possible, across the wider region.



ACTIONS:

- Work with the Vision Group to create a framework that facilitates and embeds a cross-disciplinary approach, maximising delivery, funding, and investment. The aim is to ensure the sustainable and positive impact of the UNESCO designation, this strategy, and the SDGs

'IT IS GOOD PEOPLE WHO MAKE GOOD PLACES.'

Anna Sewell, author of *Black Beauty*, born in Great Yarmouth and who lived in Norwich for the last years of her life

across communities of place and interest in Norwich.

- Embed the UNESCO designation and this strategy within the forthcoming Norwich Creative City Cultural Compact, ensuring alignment across its investment priorities, programmes, and key impact areas. These go beyond Intrinsic and Social impact to include Education & Skills, Health & Wellbeing and Communities, Economy, Innovation and Connectivity.
- Work with the Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board on key initiatives including mapping creative health; environmental sustainability, skills gaps and funding sources; cultural tourism and audience development initiatives; and supporting creative freelancers.
- Work with Norwich City Council Community Enabling Teams, Community Conversations Officers and other established community-based organisations to create partnerships that support

embedding the strategy and its ambitions at a local level across communities of place and interest in Norwich.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

Cities are home to more than 50% of the world's population and account for 75% of the world's economic activity, including a significant share of the creative economy. As they grapple with rising inequality, environmental and demographic change, and growing social tensions, cities are increasingly at the forefront of sustainable development.

Creativity matters in cities: they have the scale and influence to shape new strategies, policies and initiatives that position culture and creativity as drivers of sustainable change. This is the opportunity that the new strategy and vision for Norwich City of Literature presents. Through partnerships and collaboration – whether via the forthcoming Cultural Compact, city-wide strategies, or aligned investments – we can connect

this vision to Norwich's residents, communities, and visitors.

- The New Anglia LEP Cultural Strategy Evidence Report 2021 valued the cultural sector of Norfolk and Suffolk as '£272m GVA, the fourth highest of any sector', suggesting growth potential for the creative industries and cultural tourism.
- 98% of bookshops contribute to the 'place marketing' of their towns. Booksellers are involved in collective marketing efforts that encourage people to visit their town centres with a rewarding experience (Institute of Place Management, 2022).
- 99% of bookshops contribute to innovation and experimentation on the high street, where retail is constantly evolving to meet changing customer needs.
- Norwich City Council's Action Plan for Culture (2023) states that by 2040, the city aims to become, 'world

A child tries replica medieval armour for size in the Great Hall at Norwich Castle keep © Norfolk Museums Service





renowned for its creativity a leader in innovation, culture, education and invention’ and recognises that there is opportunity for this to be better understood by the rest of the UK, with 32% of the population not sure where Norwich is (Ipsos Mori, 2018). The UNESCO status provides an opportunity to ‘put Norwich on the map’, working in tandem with the established and recognisable City of Stories brand from VisitNorwich.

The cultural sector in our counties is dynamic and collaborative. Collectively they work with external and internal partners to embed good practice, design social improvement, cement skills and employment, and leverage assets to attract new investment. The sector also works closely with creative industries and higher education and is a key driving force for our visitor economy. In Norfolk and Suffolk alone, it is estimated that the cultural

economy, including commercial and funded organisations, freelancers and sole traders, turns over close to £300m each year.

The cultural sector in Norfolk and Suffolk is experiencing significant growth. Between 2015 and 2018, it expanded by 16%. Over the five years leading up to 2023, the creative and culture sector in West Norfolk was the top-performing sector in terms of proportionate growth across five key indicators: number of businesses, employment, gross value added (GVA), productivity, and sector specialisation (Culture Board Manifesto, 2022 & West Norfolk Economic Vision and Strategy, December 2023).

An Evidence Report was commissioned in 2021 (New Anglia LEP Cultural Strategy, Evidence Report, 2021) to inform and measure the work of the Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board and to demonstrate the cultural sector’s economic value, the impact of the COVID-19

‘NORWICH’S STATUS AS A UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE IS A POWERFUL ASSET FOR OUR CITY’S IDENTITY AND FUTURE AND A CLEAR SIGNAL OF OUR GLOBAL CULTURAL RELEVANCE.’

Stefan Gurney, Executive Director, Norwich Business Improvement District

recession, and the role of the cultural sector in recovery. This research found that the cultural sector:

- Consisted of 1,250 businesses (2% of the overall business base)
- Supported 6,985 jobs (1% of all jobs across Norfolk & Suffolk)
- Was valued at £272m GVA per annum (the 4th highest of any sector)
- Saw a 24% growth in employment between 2016–2021
- Is dominated by micro business, with 95% having fewer than 10 employees. This is higher than the national average
- Has concentrations of activity in Norwich, East Suffolk, Ipswich and West Suffolk
- Plays a significant role in supporting the development of the creative industries, which encompasses a further 12,280 jobs and 3,325 businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk
- Average full-time workers earn £26,700, 16% more than the average for the

rest of the economy

- Participation levels have grown from 2005–6 to 2018–19: in the arts (+7%), heritage (+11%) and museums (+22%)

Despite the current challenges facing the sector, the following findings from the report remain true:

- Culture plays an important role in supporting growth across the region with strong crossovers into other sectors of the economy (e.g. visitor economy, creative industries, higher education).
- Culture positively impacts on community resilience by building social cohesion.
- The region has a range of well-established cultural locations, including Norwich and Ipswich, alongside a range of rapidly emerging areas in which cultural activity is starting to become more prominent e.g. Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn.

PRIORITY SEVEN:

Increase awareness, visibility and perception of the Norwich UNESCO City of Literature designation within the city centre and Greater Norwich for residents and visitors, fostering a sustainable impact on the visitor economy.



ACTIONS:

- Work with city partners, the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and Greater Anglia to animate key gateway access points into the city, from train and bus stations to the airport and main arterial roads. The ambition is to deliver visible, physical, and experiential campaigns, signage, and installations that place the UNESCO designation front and centre for both residents and visitors.
- Work with city and county partners to update existing

UNESCO City of Literature branding on the six 'Welcome to Norwich' road signs.

- Work with Norwich BID and Norwich City Council to build UNESCO City of Literature strands into key public annual events and programmes such as Love Light Norwich, Lord Mayors Celebrations, Norwich Pride, Norwich 12, and Work in Norwich.
- Work with LVEP, the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board and the board's Marketing Consortium, to place the designation as a key delivery strand of Norwich's cultural offer and its cultural tourism plans across the Norfolk & Suffolk Destination Management Plan 2024–2029.
- Develop a new communications & marketing strategy and plan, alongside a new PR strategy for Norwich UNESCO City of Literature.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

In Norfolk and Suffolk, the creative and cultural sector is underpinned by the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board (NSCB),

a diverse and inclusive body of sector leaders coordinated by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, with a track record of success in leveraging funding for collaborative action that generates demonstrable place-based cultural, social and economic impact. It is pertinent to note that Norfolk and Suffolk are currently in government restructures for Devolution and for Unitary reorganisation.

Norwich UNESCO City of Literature is represented by NCW, which holds a seat on the Board as a regional Arts Council NPO. Going forward, this will be formalised to reflect that the NCW Chief Executive also serves as the City of Literature lead across the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board (NSCB).

NSCB has published two strategies since its formation in 2012: Culture Drives Growth (2015) and Culture Drives Impact (2022). Over this time, NCSB has established itself as an authoritative and highly regarded sector voice both





regionally and nationally, and has also proven its ability to deliver by attracting smart and impactful investment for major programmes of growth and change, including Look Sideways East (2014–2018), Start East (2017–2020), Collaboration: Place: Change (2019–2023), and Head East (2019–2023).

Whilst visitor numbers have largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels, the sector continues to be negatively impacted by a series of further national and global events which have seen:

- Stand still or decreased funding from public bodies including local government and Arts Council England.
- Increased competition for funding from trusts and foundations across the charitable sector.
- Increased employer costs (for example, an uplift of minimum wage and NI contributions).
- A decrease in earned

income due to the cost of living crisis which impacts on the spending potential of audiences.

At a pivotal moment for the creative and cultural sectors nationally, and with Norfolk and Suffolk being fast-tracked for regional devolution, alongside the recent establishment of the LVEP, there is a timely opportunity to embed the City of Literature strategy within the broader policy landscape through these key representations.

PRIORITY EIGHT:

Boost engagement with, and foster a positive perception of the designation, the city’s literary heritage, and the meaning of being a City of Literature among residents and local businesses in both the city centre and surrounding communities, strengthening connectivity, community, and civic pride.



ACTIONS:

- Activate the delivery framework developed in Priority Six (p.40).
- Work with Norwich City Council and We Are Norwich, a community-led plan and shared vision for Norwich as ‘a fair and thriving city, full of ambition’, to connect residents and local communities to the designation.
- Work towards establishing a UNESCO City of Literature Community Champions

programme, sharing best practice from a similar delivery model developed by Manchester UNESCO City of Literature.

- Advocate for Norwich’s reputation as a cultural city and its status as a UNESCO City of Literature.
- Continue to facilitate and champion a network of Norwich City of Literature Ambassadors and Partners that will share the activation of the City of Literature brand and use it to grow activities.
- Create a series of local campaigns and assets available through the Ambassador Toolkit for collective use by small and larger organisations and community groups to promote cultural and community programmes and initiatives.
- Curate and manage the City of Literature e-newsletter, growing the number of subscribers and distributing on a bi-monthly basis.
- Use new Norwich City of Literature social media channels to increase

CULTURE IN ACTION: THE CITY OF STORIES

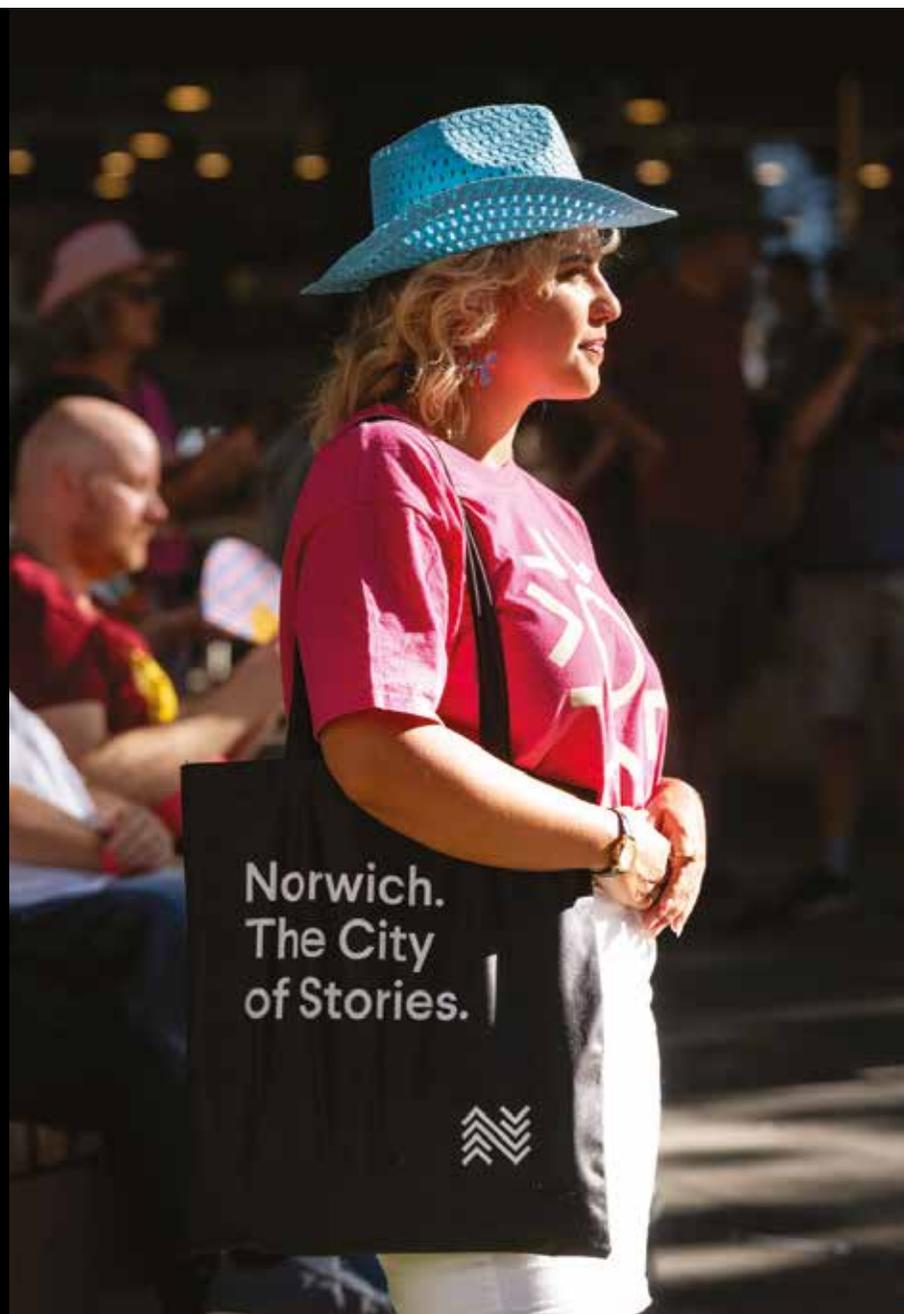
Two years after Norwich earned the title of England's first UNESCO City of Literature, VisitNorwich launched its 2014 destination marketing campaign: Norwich, The City of Stories.

The campaign was inspired by the city's rich tradition of novelists, poets and free thinkers, but it also sought to reach beyond literature. The City of Stories was created to reflect a city with a history of breaking the mould, a city with a reputation for mavericks and speaking out - not being afraid to 'do different'.

In 2019, what began as a marketing campaign evolved into a full destination brand — a bold step away from traditional tourism branding toward something distinct from its peers.

Norwich is a progressive, dynamic city that's unafraid to lead the way or to change with the times. The goal was to animate Norwich's identity through human stories: from the historic city walls and fearless pioneers to modern entrepreneurs and creative trailblazers.

Welcome to The City of Stories. Norwich. Always moving, always innovating, always growing. And always with a story to tell.



Summer Sessions by VisitNorwich. Photography by Chloe Samways





engagement locally, promoting community programmes and linked to wider network activities through campaigns.

- Establish a new 'City of Literature' filter on VisitNorwich's 'What's On' calendar, encouraging members of the partner network to submit their events and activities, so that literature-related programming is centralised, easily visible and accessible to residents and visitors alike.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

In 2020, Norwich City Council was awarded £25m through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to deliver eight key projects under the Town Deal. Developed in partnership with the Norwich Vision Group, local communities, partners and public/private investors, projects represent a major step toward regeneration by providing vital skills infrastructure and jobs at a time of unprecedented challenge to the city's future prosperity.

By aligning the City of Literature designation and this strategy with these and future investments, we can further amplify their impact and long-term value for residents, businesses, and communities across Norwich.

The 'We Are Norwich 2024–30 community-led plan' seeks to build a 'fair and thriving city, full of ambition', achieved through being fairer, prosperous, future proof and environmentally responsive. Norwich City of Literature supports the following priorities outlined in the plan:

A Prosperous Norwich

- Norwich is a great place to live, work, learn and visit. The city is growing sustainably and known for its cultural leadership and vibrant tourism offer. Regeneration brings fair access to housing, jobs, and educational opportunity.
- We have a modern, inclusive, successful economy, which supports local and independent business to

thrive and grow, graduate entrepreneurs and business start-ups are encouraged. Our economy is more diverse, and our businesses and communities enjoy the benefits of great partnership working which supports people to develop skills they need, and we see skills better matched to work opportunities.

A Fairer Norwich

- We have diverse and vibrant neighbourhoods where our streets are clean and safe. Growing numbers of people enjoy creative and culture events.
- People and organisations are working in a joined-up way across the city and in our local neighbourhoods, tackling long standing challenges and inequalities which lead to poverty and disadvantage. More people are digitally included, and people can access advice and support to deal with debt. There is more equality of opportunity.

A Future Proof Norwich

- Our communities are active and strong; they are empowered to act locally to achieve the best local solutions. We partner and work with the public sector, business, voluntary and community organisations to support communities and help lead change.
- We enjoy digital equality and embrace being data-driven to help make joined up decisions. We encourage economic development in our city, have a talent pool matched to need and have better connected communities and businesses.





A WORLD CITY

AIM FOUR:

To build on Norwich’s international reputation as a literary powerhouse and, through the global Creative Cities Network, maximise the potential of the designation locally and on the world stage.

PRIORITY NINE:

Explore how we create new opportunities and international partnerships across the city, building on existing exchanges between our Higher Education and Research Institutes to explore shared intellectual and research collaborations across the network of creative cities.



ACTIONS:

- Continue to work in partnership with UEA and their faculty across a range of opportunities within their Schools, including wider Arts and Humanities, Literature, Drama and Creative Writing, and CivicUEA. This includes UEA Live events, research projects such as Towards a New Centre for Poetry, and the work delivered

by the British Archive for Contemporary Writing.

- Work in partnership with UEA and Norwich University of the Arts, Research Institutes and the wider Norwich-Cambridge Tech Corridor to champion and develop Norwich as a Creative Cluster.
- Work with UEA’s School of Education and Lifelong Learning and key infrastructure partners to develop a shared city Reading and Writing for Pleasure strategy.
- Build on collaborations with Norwich Research Park partners.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

- Since 2004, the UCCN has empowered cities to harness culture and creativity as drivers of inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban development. As highlighted in the recent UNESCO UK Creative Cities Impact Report, the UCCN serves as a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and innovation, supporting SDG localisation

and enabling cities to share tools, practices, and partnerships that future-proof their communities and foster the growth of the Cultural and Creative Industries.

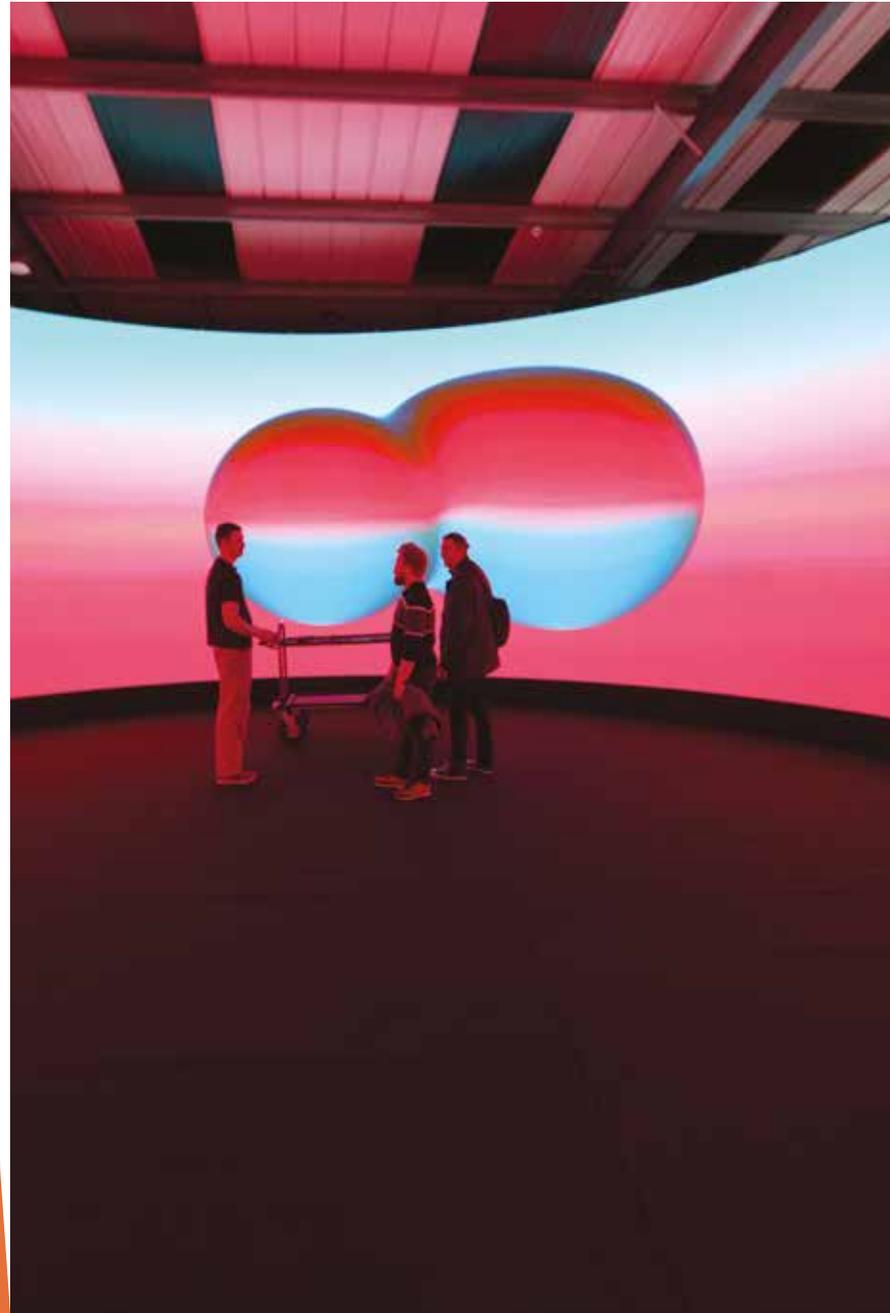
- Creative Cities highlight that quality education is one of the most tangible outcomes of their membership, driven by its participatory approach which encourages synergies between municipal governments and the education sector. This allows municipalities to apply SDG 4, to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’, in local communities.
- Upon their designation as members of the UCCN, cities commit to leveraging culture and creativity in their local development plans. This commitment translates into concrete local actions, strategies and policies aimed at maximising the multidimensional impact of culture and supporting creative economies and

industries, and a commitment to ensuring that this strategy is recognised and embedded in other local planning policies.

- Culture and creativity have increasingly been recognised as a key to sustainable urban development. Cities have evolved into living laboratories, devising actions and policies that further leverage the impact of creativity to make cities better places to live and improve people's lives.
- 'The arts illuminate our world and its people, and they have a vital role to play in the way our world will change, imagining and shaping our possible futures.' UEA, Creativity in Action (2025).

'BUILDING ON AN INCREDIBLE HERITAGE TO FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITIES' FUTURE VIA THIS UNESCO STRATEGY ALLOWS US TO CONTINUE TO OPEN UP GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO US ALL TODAY. WE ARE VERY EXCITED ABOUT THIS WORK, AND CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY OUR PART IN MAKING THE VISION A REALITY.'

Catherine Richardson,
Pro-Vice Chancellor of Arts
and Humanities, UEA



Immersive Visualisation and Simulation Lab NUI, Norwich University of the Arts. Photography by Andi Sapay





PRIORITY TEN:

Take Norwich to the world and bring the world to Norwich by maximising international partnerships through the UCCN network, partnering with CreativeUEA and other collaborators, and by expanding residency programmes, international exchange and leveraging global friendships and best practices.



ACTIONS:

- Through NCW, continue to work with the global UNESCO Cities of Literature network to realise opportunities for writers and literary translators based in Norwich to access, apply and experience commissioning and international residency opportunities.
- Continue to deliver year-

round communications campaigns that promote Norwich’s literary identity, while creating opportunities for Norwich-based writers and translators to increase their presence across international UCCN commissions and residency programmes.

- Deliver a Norwich residency programme that hosts and commissions writers from across the UNESCO City of Literature network, based in NCW’s on-site cottage at Dragon Hall and online. This initiative fosters meaningful exchange between visiting and local writers, enriching Norwich’s literary ecology and supporting a vibrant creative community.
- Engage with and present one new collaborative project annually with the wider Cities of Literature network to continue to showcase and profile Norwich on the world stage.
- Implement a new Communications and Marketing Strategy to

‘NORWICH’S STATUS AS A UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE IS BOTH A RECOGNITION OF ITS RICH LITERARY HERITAGE AND A COMMITMENT TO ITS CREATIVE FUTURE. THIS NEW STRATEGY, SHAPED THROUGH WIDE CONSULTATION ACROSS THE CITY, SETS OUT A BOLD AND INCLUSIVE VISION FOR HOW LITERATURE CAN CONTINUE TO INSPIRE, CONNECT AND TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES.’

Hazel Edwards, South East Area Director, Arts Council England

showcase the impact, reach and value of the designation.

- Share the biennial UNESCO monitoring and impact report with local partners.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

Norwich has continued to build on these priorities across the city and through its partnerships, with NCW serving as both the focal point for the City of Literature designation and a physical space for public engagement. Through the ongoing development of local and international programmes for adults, children, and young people that explore the city’s literary heritage, future potential, and creative talent, we can connect audiences and residents with both existing and emerging Cities of Literature.

Diverse programming allows us to shine a light on Norwich, attracting investment, talent, and partnerships that create meaningful local impact. Building on these achievements and guided by our new City of

CULTURE IN ACTION: CITY OF WRITERS & TRANSLATORS

It's official – Norwich is a city of writers. A 2024 Creative PEC report found more people here list their profession as 'Author, writer or translator' (315) than in any other creative field, confirming the city's distinctive literary character.

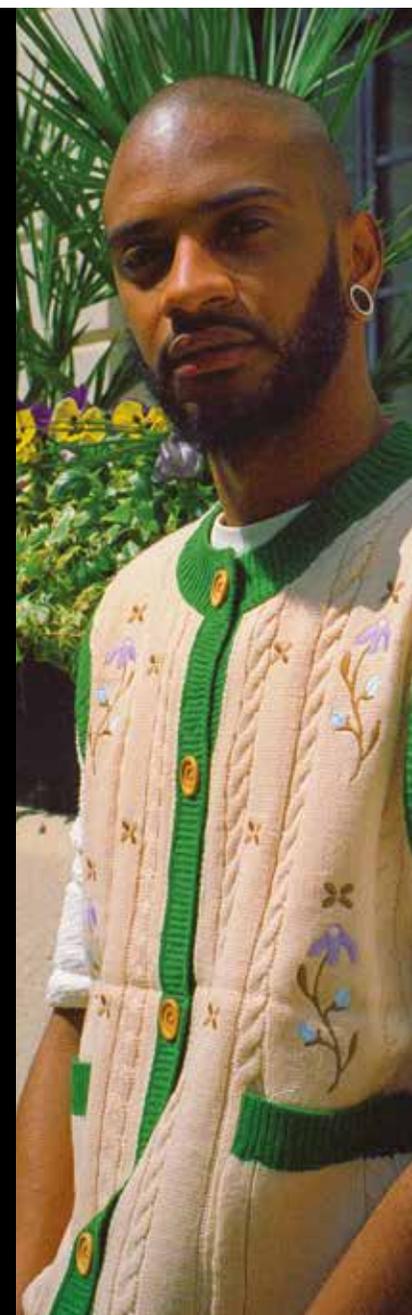
That concentration is no surprise. Norwich is home to the University of East Anglia, where the UK's first MA in Creative Writing was established, and to the British Centre for Literary Translation, the country's leading hub for translation studies. The National Centre for Writing supports emerging talent through initiatives such as the Young Norfolk Writing Prize and the prestigious Escalator Fellowships, while the Young Norwich Creative Awards, delivered with Norwich Arts Centre and partners, spotlight young writing talent.

The city itself, with its rich literary history, medieval streets, and connections to the vast skies of Norfolk, provides an enduring source of inspiration. Novelist, poet, critic and lecturer Ashley Hickson-Lovence embodies this creative energy. His latest novel *Wild East* won Book of the Year at the 2024 East Anglian Book Awards. He reflects:

'Norwich is a city brimming with an exciting creative energy. From UEA to the National Centre for Writing, the city opens its arms wide for practitioners at all stages of their careers. Since making Norwich my home, I have published three books; my latest project, *Wild East*, very much draws on my experience living in this precious pocket that has welcomed me so warmly and continues to be a valued source of inspiration in my work.'

Graduates of UEA's Creative Writing MA, from Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro to Booker Prize-winner Ian McEwan, have defined Norwich's global literary reputation. Many others continue to shape it, including Ayòbámi Adébáyò, Yan Ge, Emma Healey, Ferdia Lennon, Eimear McBride, John Osborne, Sarah Perry, George Szirtes and Naomi Wood.

As a UNESCO City of Literature, Norwich is poised to build on this reputation – celebrating its distinguished literary past while investing in a vibrant, inclusive, and ever-evolving community of writers and translators.



Ashley Hickson-Lovence. Photography by Peter Arkley Bloxham





Literature priorities, we can begin to embed delivery into strategic local planning and investment initiatives. This includes building on successful co-funded projects such as Norwich BID's Book Benches, UEA's Towards a New Centre for Poetry, the establishment of Dragon Hall as England's first Literature House, and international residency exchange programmes.

CreativeUEA is an interdisciplinary research programme at UEA that focuses on the creative arts and innovation. It explores new areas in research, learning, action, and outreach to address local and global challenges, influence cultural policy, boost economic growth, and reach new audiences. CreativeUEA builds upon UEA's long history of creative arts innovation, integrating the university's various creative activities to find innovative solutions for a better future.

- Rooted in Norwich and open

'I REALLY LOVE THE UNESCO CITIES OF LITERATURE NETWORK: IT IS A REAL WAY OF MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FRIENDSHIPS AND FINDING INSPIRATION'

Penny Boxall, poet and children's writer, who took part in a writing residency

- to the world, our position in the East of England offers every opportunity to embed, embrace, and share international perspectives.
- 'Understanding of the role of culture in building and sustaining communities has come into clear focus and will sit at the heart of our work over the decade to come. Artists and cultural organisations continue to benefit from international exchange; at a point when this country is redefining its relationship with the wider world, our increasingly diverse culture is a national asset and gives us an international advantage, encouraging us to converse and collaborate freely across borders.' – Arts Council England, Let's Create.
 - 'One of the powerful effects of participating in global networks of cities of literature is the catalytic effect that comes from participating in a community of practice, enjoying the accreditation of a designation like city of literature, and the expanded

horizons and sharpened sensitivities that come from exposure to other cultures (Robertson & Yeoman, *The Future of Events & Festivals*, 324). This network effect has also been seen to affect the number and type of connections that cultural organisations hold as a result of participating in city of culture type interventions.' – British Council, *Cities of Literature: Initiatives, Impacts and Legacies* (2019).

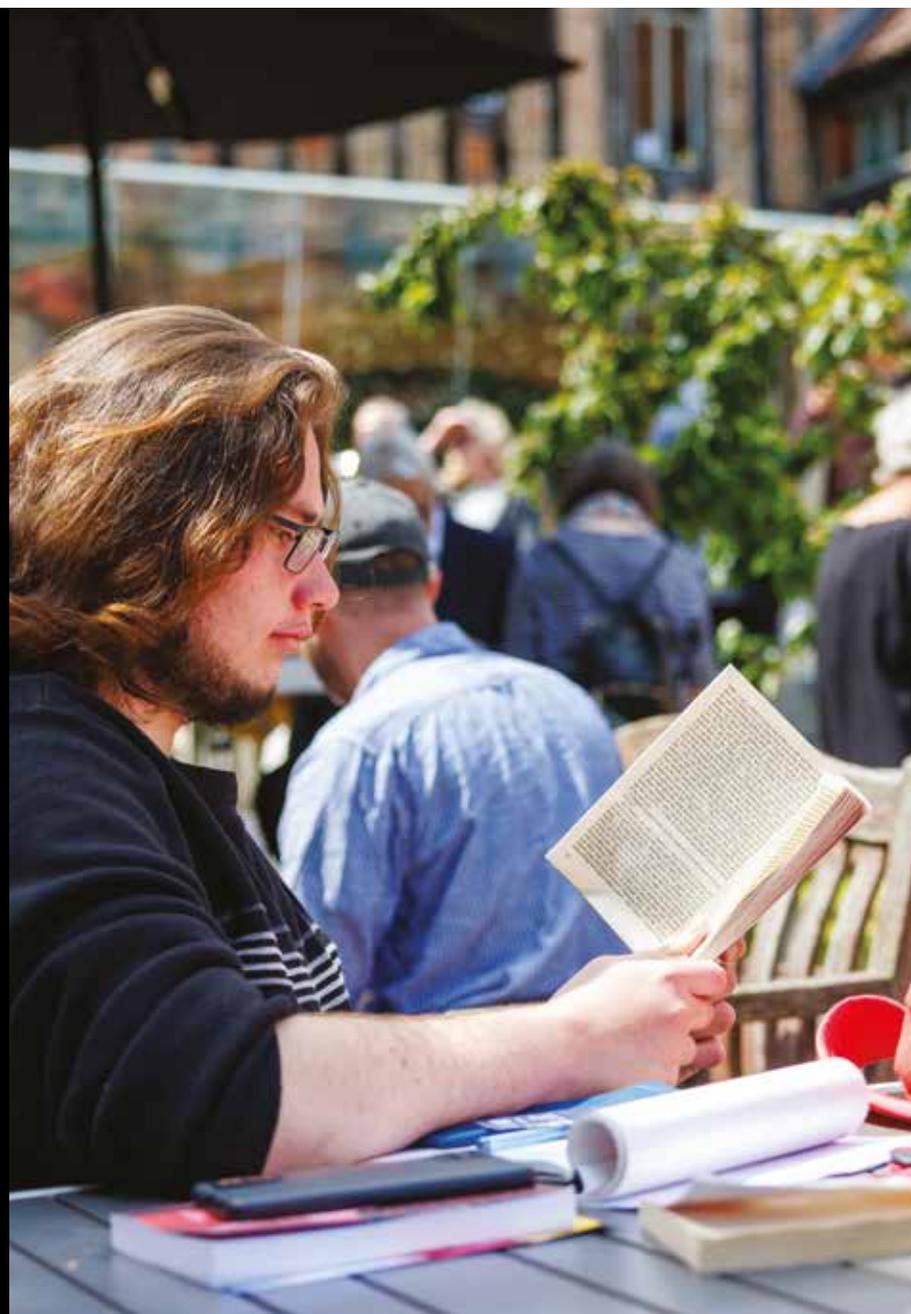
CULTURE IN ACTION: NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) opened its doors in 2018 as the embodiment of Norwich's vision to become England's first UNESCO City of Literature. Conceived as a vibrant hub of inspiration, enjoyment, learning, and transformation, NCW champions creative writing, reading, translation, and education in this world-class literary city.

It has gained an international reputation as a centre of collaboration, innovation, and support for emerging writers and literary translators, while maintaining deep local roots as a welcoming community space where everyone is encouraged to share their story. Celebrated author Ali Smith CBE praised NCW, saying, 'We've long needed a National

Centre, and this combination of place, space, and energy is ideal.'

At the heart of NCW's success is its £2.2 million renovation of Dragon Hall, a cherished 15th-century Grade I-listed trading hall in central Norwich. This thoughtful restoration enabled a vibrant, year-round programme of events, including adult courses, residencies, community workshops, family days, tours, and conferences. Each initiative is designed to celebrate the transformative power of books, words, and ideas, solidifying NCW's role as a beacon of literary culture and community engagement.



Readers enjoying the garden at Dragon Hall, home of the National Centre for Writing. Photography by Luke Wilcomb





PRIORITY ELEVEN:

Increase the visibility of Norwich within the UNESCO City of Literature network both nationally and internationally, connecting infrastructure and civic leads to the annual conferences and network collaborations.



ACTIONS:

- NCW Chief Executive and senior staff, and the Norwich City Council strategic lead to attend the UCCN Conference and the City of Literature Network conference each year.
- NCW to continue UNESCO monitoring and impact reporting as a legal requirement of the designation and to share that report with the wider network to demonstrate the impact of the programme and its partnerships.
- The communications teams at NCW and Norwich City

Council will work together to co-promote the designation, driving impact, awareness and opportunities.

- Work with the five cities of literature geographically closest to us (Dublin, Edinburgh, Exeter, Manchester and Nottingham) to realise shared programmes for young people and artists.
- Seek new partnerships and funding opportunities to resource this work, and to build a credible impact measure to more loudly make the case for international exchange to drive social and economic renewal in the city and county.

EVIDENCE & RATIONALE:

For many cities, the UCCN designation has served as a catalyst, encouraging local governments and partnerships to further invest in and optimise their city's potential in the designated field. It can encourage cities to leverage creativity and cultural industries for sustainable urban development, impacting areas such as

addressing economic inequality and fostering social cohesion through literature and related programmes. Locally our shared ambition for the designation is to be able to create a fertile ground for the development of new local initiatives, partnerships, and collaborations between writers, publishers, libraries, and other literary organisations, strengthening the local literary ecosystem across Greater Norwich.

- UCCN member cities report that joining the network allowed them to contribute to the localisation of SDG 8, 'to promote sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all', as well as SDG 9 'to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation'.
- UNESCO plays a critical role in facilitating municipal and regional government involvement in international challenges and debates,

thereby strengthening the local engagement of actors, communities and individuals.

- In this regard, the Creative Cities network has proven its rapid adaptability and ability to address the local impact of global challenges and to promote widespread dissemination of the organisation's values of international cooperation and solidarity.
- Local authorities are the biggest funders of arts and culture in England. Arts Council England work in partnership with local authorities and their priorities, funding and investment portfolio to ensure culture is successful and sustainable.
- Faced by a challenging financial environment, many local authorities are responding with imaginative and innovative ideas about how they can continue their vital support for arts and culture – the City of Literature strategy is central to this.

SECTION ACTION & DELIVERY





UNESCO Creative City designations provide an opportunity and focal point to bring partners together around common challenges, opportunities, and a shared love of a place. As noted, they are not awarded with any funding via UNESCO, but a commitment and pledge for investment is agreed during the original application and concurrent years in terms of delivering the legal commitments. Beyond the Focal Office commitments, realising the wider potential of the designation relies on a multitude of people and partners working together to imagine and create projects, and where possible, achieve funding for new activity.

Norwich City Council and National Centre for Writing have a shared understanding for the core delivery of the designation, the legal and partnership requirements to maintain the designation year on year, and the investment in terms of time and resources required to keep the baseline of

the designation awarded each monitoring cycle.

Arts Council England do not directly fund the City of Literature designation but acknowledge the importance of NCW's role as the Focal Office within its broader artistic remit, and therefore as part of its National Portfolio Organisation funding.

GOVERNANCE

NCW supports, connects and adds value to existing UNESCO activity in the city, encouraging partnership working and joint fundraising. It has raised the profile of the literature and creative sector in the region and ensured Norwich's active participation as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

NCW has a Board of Trustees that oversees the work that the organisation does and ensures it delivers its charitable objectives and obligations. As required, it has a Chair of the Board, currently Alan Waters, former

Leader of Norwich City Council. Norwich City Council also has oversight of UNESCO activity through the NCW Board.

The newly established City of Literature Vision Group features senior representatives from key partners. The group is chaired by NCW's Chief Executive and supported by the wider NCW staff team across its operations and wider programme initiatives.

CONVENING ROLE

NCW recognises its position, benefiting from a dedicated venue, communications capacity, and strong local, national and international networks. While NCW is not the expert on every issue highlighted in this strategy – such as literacy, publishing, or sanctuary – it can add value through a convening role. By bringing together expertise across academia, education, and libraries, and drawing on the UNESCO network for fresh ideas, NCW can help catalyse collective action. For instance, while they cannot directly address Norfolk's education attainment gap, they

can host a roundtable or ongoing taskforce to explore shared solutions that could inform a city-wide strategy. Crucially, NCW's team and the City of Literature Vision Group will work with cultural organisations, partners and community sector to explore and develop the initiatives outlined in this strategy. The following outlines our three-part plan to 'activate' the UNESCO designation.

1. Core investment and infrastructure. NCW is funded by Arts Council England as an NPO for literature, with a regional, national and international remit to support and develop writers, translators and literary culture. This includes the delivery of year-round Norwich UNESCO City of Literature designation. Norwich City Council supports NCW's year-round and UNESCO work to promote the city's profile, coordinate the UNESCO designation, and deliver literary programming. The Council also owns Dragon

Hall, for which NCW holds a full repairing lease on this Grade I listed building.

- 2. Leveraging existing resources.** Where possible, we will focus on ‘additionality’ – activating the UNESCO global brand at minimal cost to amplify existing projects and programmes across the city, county and region. By aligning with this strategy, we can support partners while also developing an Investment Portfolio and case for support within NCW’s fundraising plans to secure long-term, dedicated resource for UNESCO-related activity.
- 3. Future-facing opportunities and partnerships.** The partnerships identified in this strategy offer opportunities to embed UNESCO City of Literature ambitions within local strategies and development plans, as well as to align with place-based investment initiatives such as the Town Deal, Creative People & Places, Neighbourhood

Renewal Funds, and other central government regional programmes.

By adopting a collaborative Investment Portfolio and shared vision that attracts diverse funding, we believe Norwich is well positioned to galvanise medium- and long-term investment around this shared opportunity.

AN EMBEDDED APPROACH

This strategic process is guided by the City of Literature Vision Group and supported by a wider partnership network of 150 individuals and 60 organisations, helping to embed the designation across stakeholder strategies. For example, Norwich UNESCO City of Literature is referenced in the opening of UEA’s new Strategy for Arts, Culture and the Creative Industries. NCW also represents the designation on the Norwich Cultural Compact, the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board, and the regional marketing consortium. This ensures the strategy and partnership pack are easily disseminated and

Visitors enjoy free science-themed activities at Bugs and Beasts 2024, presented by Norwich Science Festival and The Forum. Photography by Luke Witcomb





encourages other organisations to align their projects with the UNESCO designation, embedding it into the region's wider cultural infrastructure.

Actions:

- Continue quarterly Vision Group meetings to align this strategy with local initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Develop a Theory of Change and an evaluation framework.
- Create a press strategy and action plan.
- Produce a case-for-support intervention document.
- Establish a comprehensive development and fundraising strategy.

INCREASING VISIBILITY

Increasing visibility and understanding of Norwich as a UNESCO City of Literature is a key task which will be spearheaded by NCW. This will be achieved through clearer branding and communications tools such as press releases, e-newsletters and social media. We will work closely with tourism partners through

the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Programme, VisitNorwich, Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board Marketing Consortium and Visit East of England to increase awareness of all the brilliant reading, writing and storytelling events and activities already happening across Norwich and Norfolk.

Actions:

- Curate and coordinate six public facing e-newsletters per year and build a growing subscription base.
- Host and expand the presence of Norwich UNESCO City of Literature on NCW's website, including building a new partners and network section.
- Activate the new brand through media and partner packs, and a wider Ambassador Toolkit.
- Develop City of Literature-specific communications and marketing plans.
- Develop seasonal marketing campaigns that amplify the designation and the cities wider literary assets.

A SHARED OPPORTUNITY

We are committed to making it easy for organisations and individuals to engage with and lead activities under the Norwich City of Literature banner. A Toolkit will support this by offering branding assets, contacts, and guidance on using the UNESCO designation to enhance both existing and new work. The goal is to build a shared understanding of Norwich's designation, celebrate collective pride, and explore its future potential.

Actions:

- Raise awareness and engagement with the Ambassador Toolkit and campaign assets.
- Coordinate an e-newsletter that profiles the extent of the network with opportunities for partners to connect.
- Activate new social media campaigns and collaborations.
- Host one network meeting each year.
- Promote VisitNorwich as a key public facing cultural tourism platform to engage with.

PROGRAMME TOUCHPOINTS

While this strategy aims to expand opportunities for others to engage with the UNESCO designation, it is essential that NCW, as the Focal Office, continues to lead by example. This includes embedding the status across its programming, communications, marketing, and fundraising. The new brand and strategy will strengthen connections to NCW's wider work, increasing visibility and clearly demonstrating the UNESCO link.

Actions:

- Integrate the Norwich City of Literature brand into all existing and new NCW programmes.
- Champion the City of Literature strategy and its goals across NCW's digital platforms.
- Embed UNESCO-related activities across all NCW departments and functions.
- Publish the UNESCO monitoring report in a public-facing format to serve as an advocacy and impact tool for the wider network.

APPENDICES





APPENDIX A: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



APPENDIX B: MAPPING NORWICH TODAY

The following summary of Norwich is drawn from recent research by Caroline McCormick and Achates, conducted for NCW and their Theory of Change project. This research involved mapping existing Norwich policies linked to cultural impact using Achates' 9 Types of Impact of Culture and Heritage[®] framework. This framework identifies how culture can contribute to key city strategies and support priority outcomes across strategic areas. As part of the research, key trends were analysed in line with Achates' 9 Types of Impact of Culture and Heritage, which are:

- Intrinsic (or creative) benefit
- Economic benefit
- Educational benefit
- Social benefit
- Community building
- Physical Health
- Mental Health & Well-being
- Innovation
- Environmental Benefit

Adopting Achates' 9 Types of Impact of Culture and Heritage[®] framework will also support

Kae Tempest performs at Wild Fields. Photography by dog union





future planning, monitoring, and evaluation as we develop a Theory of Change and move into detailed strategy delivery.

Norwich is a city with a population of 143,900 people, 22% of whom are 0–19 years, 63% are 20–65 and 15% of whom are 65+. This represents a larger than average population of young people but not as high a proportion as cities such as Leeds (24%), or Birmingham (28.8%). The working age population of 20–65 is a larger than the national average of 57.3% and a larger proportion than Sheffield, Leeds or Birmingham. The proportion of the population aged 65+ follows the trend of being lower in urban areas and lower than the national average of 17.3% (although cities like Leeds are starting to see a reversal of this trend, with inner city populations starting to age). (ONS, How life has changed in Norwich: Census 2021).

The Norwich population is far less diverse than the national average with 87.1% of the

population identifying as White as opposed to the national average of 81% of people (ONS, Census 2021). This is lower than cities like Hull where 94.1% of people identify as White, and notably only slightly higher than Leeds at 85.1% of people. There is a higher than national average proportion of people from Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups at 3.1% compared with 3% nationally.

From the 9 Types of Impact, we have selected seven key areas across Intrinsic, Education, Economic, Social, Community and Health & Wellbeing for the strategy. As we move into delivery, we may introduce additional impact areas from the remaining three.

INTRINSIC

- Average spend per head by Arts Council England is £32.36 in Norwich (£1.54 North Norfolk, £4.03 South Norfolk, Hull receives £16.86 / head, England average is £12.16).
- There are six NPOs with a combined Arts Council

England income of £3,975,487 (Hull has eight NPO's with a combined income of £1,138,350). However, this figure is somewhat distorted by the inclusion of Norfolk Museums Service which receives £1,375,308 per annum.

EDUCATIONAL

- Early year attainment levels in Norfolk are low; 52% of Norfolk pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics at Key Stage 2, compared to 79% nationally (2022/23 data, via Norfolk Insight).
- Literacy levels are low. 39% of Norwich schoolchildren are below the expected literacy level on entering secondary school (Norfolk Community Foundation, The Literacy Project).
- The proportion of the adult population that holds a higher education qualification is high in Norwich at 50.5% (47.2% nationally, via ONS Official census and labour market statistics).

ECONOMIC

- In 2020, 19.6% of households in Norwich were in fuel poverty, the highest level in Norfolk (Norfolk Office of Data and Analytics, 2022).
- 38.9% of the Norwich population was living in 20% of the most deprived areas in England (Norfolk Insight).
- 2.6% of the Norwich workforce are in paid employment in Arts, Culture and Heritage professions based on the 2021 census.
- Arts, entertainment and recreation in Norwich represent a GVA of £79m in 2021, the highest level for this sector in Norfolk.
- GVA in the creative industries in Norfolk are £0.3bn which is 3% (or £41k per head).
- In 2023, the average wage in Norfolk's creative industries was £37.9k, the fourth highest among sectors. In contrast, the visitor economy had the lowest average wage at £22.6k, alongside the lowest GVA per head, but the highest number of businesses.

SOCIAL

- Norfolk has a larger percentage of NEET young people (age 16) than the national average (4.8% compared to 3.8% nationally).
- Unemployment levels are increasing. Currently at 4.8%, this is higher than the national rate of 3.7%.
- There is a higher proportion of low–medium skilled jobs than the national average.
- 21.7% of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Norwich are in the most deprived decile for Adult Skills (second only to Great Yarmouth, all other areas in Norfolk under 8%).
- Gross disposable income per head is second lowest in Norfolk after Great Yarmouth at £16,980 (2021 data) but growing faster than the UK as whole.
- Norwich was rated the second worst performing local authority in the country in terms of social mobility (Social Mobility Index, 2016).

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- The 2021 Census showed that the population of Norwich had grown by 8.6%, faster than the East of England average of 8.3% and the England average of 6.6%.
- The proportion of the population born outside of England has increased from 15.2% to 19.5% (key growth in EU accession countries including Poland, Croatia, Lithuania, Romania).
- Norwich is the ‘bisexual capital of England and Wales’, with 3.89% of its population identifying as bisexual (ONS, reported by BBC).

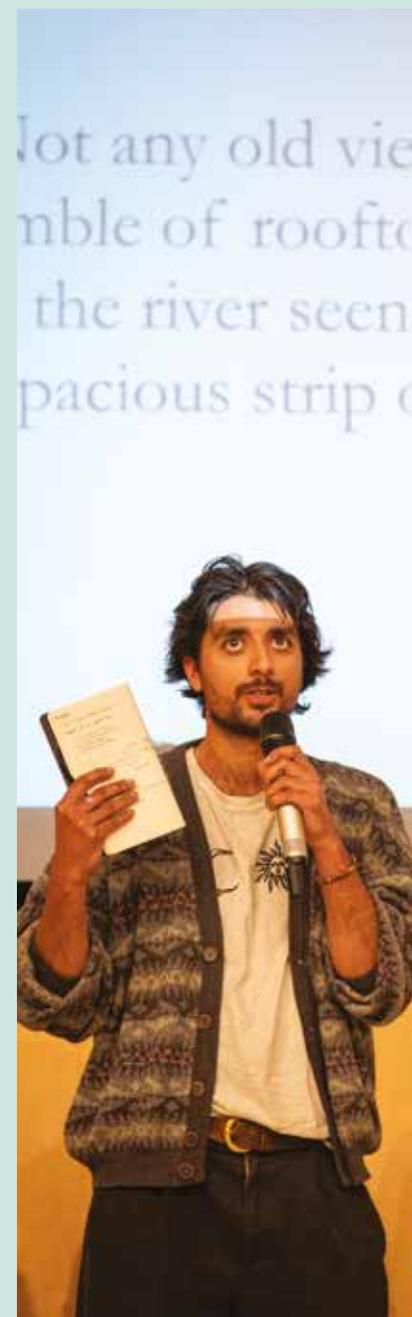
MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- There are high levels of anxiety in Norwich, with an average score of 4.05 out of 10 compared with 3.1 in the UK. This is by far the highest level in Norfolk.
- There are high levels of loneliness, with 8.4% of people aged 16+ reporting they are often or always lonely. This is higher than the UK average of 7.2%.

- Happiness levels in Norwich are 6.85 out of 10 compared with 7.45 across the UK; this is by far the lowest score in Norfolk.
- Life satisfaction in Norwich is low at 7.50 out of 10 compared with 7.55 nationally. This is joint lowest in Norfolk with King’s Lynn & West Norfolk.

INNOVATION

- In 2022–2023 there was £3.06m investment in Norwich by Innovate UK, the UK’s innovation agency which provides money and support to organisations to make new products and services. £4.6m was granted in Norfolk; 8.5% of all investment to date has gone to the East of England.

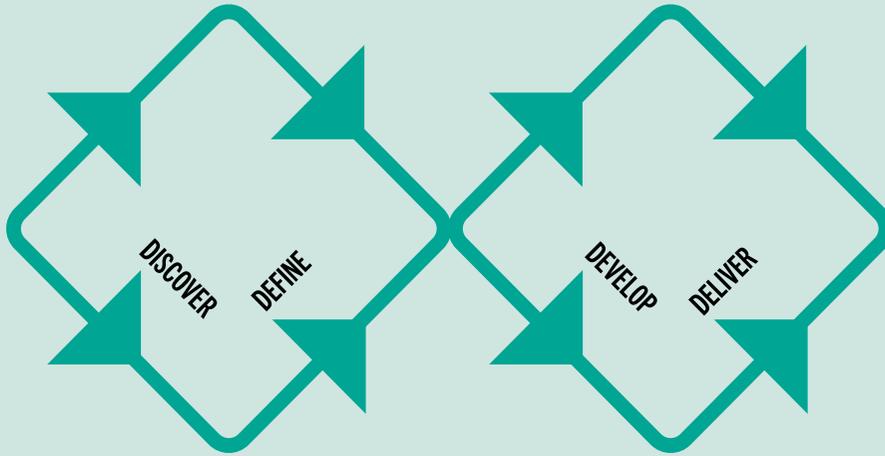


Participants of the BCLT International Literary Translation and Creative Writing Summer School 2025 showcase their final presentations. Photography by Anita Staff





APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY



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DISCOVERY PERIOD:

An online City Conversation event was held and open to anyone interested in learning more about Norwich UNESCO City of Literature and sharing ideas (Appendix D). We asked: ‘What could go right?’, canvassing ideas for a ‘dream City of Literature’ uninhibited by funding or policy constraints.

Following this, we:

- Established a City of Literature Vision Group.
- Held conversations with 80+ people (Appendix E).
- Held two roundtable

consultations with bookshops and publishers.

- Delivered presentations to the Norwich Cultural Compact, VisitNorwich Forum, the UNESCO Creative Cities and NCW board and staff.
- Developed and continue to develop a wider partnership network (Appendix F).
- Established an evidence base using existing data sources, including Reducing Inequality Target Area data, CivicUEA’s charter, and the Youth Advisory Board Consultation.
- Visited each of Norwich City Council’s community enabling areas.
- Conducted three surveys: Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Conversation, Next Steps 2024; Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Stakeholder Core Contacts Survey Summer 2024; Norwich UNESCO City of Literature Literacy Experts Survey 2025.

DEFINING PERIOD

Evidence was collated and the findings were consulted on through additional online

surveys and by sharing the Executive Summary three months ahead of the strategy’s publication.

DEVELOPING PERIOD

Certain projects are set out in this strategy, with several more in development and dependent on successful funding bids. The UNESCO designation is a permanent and permanently evolving opportunity for the city and county.

DELIVERY PERIOD

The initial delivery phase of this strategy runs from 2025 to 2030, with some activities already in motion and others identified as aspirational projects or priority goals for future fundraising and collective action.

APPENDIX D: CITY CONVERSATION ATTENDEES

The following organisations were represented at the online City Conversation on 17 May 2024. Several freelance writers, artists, and researchers also attended.

The Art Newspaper

British Centre for Literary Translation

City of Sanctuary Network

Culture Declares (climate emergency)

The Forum Trust

Future Projects

Galley Beggar Publishing

The Garage

Hinterland Publishing

Jarrold Bookshop

John Jarrold Trust

King St Neighbours

Norfolk Community Arts

Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Arts Services

Norfolk Library and Information Service

Norfolk & Norwich Festival

Norwich Business Improvement District

Norwich City Council, Community Enabling Team

Norwich City Council, Culture Leisure Team

Norwich Theatre

Norwich University of the Arts

Quadram Institute

Read Easy Norfolk

Sainsbury Institute for the Study
of Japanese Arts and Culture

University of East Anglia (UEA), CreativeUEA

UEA, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

UEA, Global Libraries Project

UEA, Literature, Drama and Creative Writing

UEA, Research and Innovation Services

UEA, Vice Chancellors Office

VisitNorwich

Waterstones





APPENDIX E: CONVERSATIONS

During the ‘Discovery’ period, meetings were held with individuals in the following organisations in relation to Norwich as a UNESCO City of Literature. We held consultations with several individual writers, readers, teachers and freelance artists. Inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement of the strategy’s content or aims. We extend our sincere thanks to all who contributed their enthusiasm, goodwill, and expertise

Age Friendly UK

Anglia Ruskin University, Creative Writing

The Association of the City of Norwich Tourist Guides

Bookbanks

Bookbugs & Dragon Tales

The Book Hive

Bucheon UNESCO City of Literature

Business in the Community

City of Sanctuary Network

Climate Museum UK, CIC

Creative East

Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

Eastern Arc

Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature

Essential Sequential Comics

Exeter UNESCO City of Literature

Filigree Communications

Fotograf

Freshly Greated

Galley Beggar Press

The Garage

Global Libraries

Head East

Hellesdon Library

Hinterland Journal

The John Innes Centre

Kurumuru Books

Lillehammer UNESCO City of Literature

Manchester UNESCO City of Literature

Mile Cross Library

Mile Cross Primary School

Moorlands Primary School

National Centre for Writing, Board

National Literacy Trust

Newsquest Media Group

Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library

Norfolk Community Foundation

Norfolk County Council, Adult Literacy Community Librarian

Norfolk County Council, Adult Skills

Norfolk County Council, Children’s Services

Norfolk County Council, Commissioning and Partnerships

Norfolk County Council, Early Years Literacy

Norfolk County Council, Education Achievement

Norfolk County Council, LA Moderation

Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Children’s Librarian

Norfolk County Council, The Virtual School

The Norfolk Reading Project

Norfolk Schools of Sanctuary Network

Norwich Book Festival

Norwich Business Improvement District

Norwich City Council, Arts and Leisure

Norwich City Council, Community Enabling Team

Norwich City Council, Strategy

Norwich MIND

Norwich University of the Arts

Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature

RePattern Ltd

The Royal Society of Arts

The Sainsbury Centre

Salt Publishing

The Science, Artists and Writers (SAW) Trust

The Shoebox Enterprise CIC

Tombland Bookshop

The Wensum Hub

UEA, Arts and Humanities

UEA, Brandland

UEA, CivicUEA

UEA, Creative, Digital and Heritage

UEA, CreativeUEA

UEA, Department of Education

UEA, Library

UEA, Publishing Project

UEA, University of Sanctuary

UEA, Vice Chancellors Office

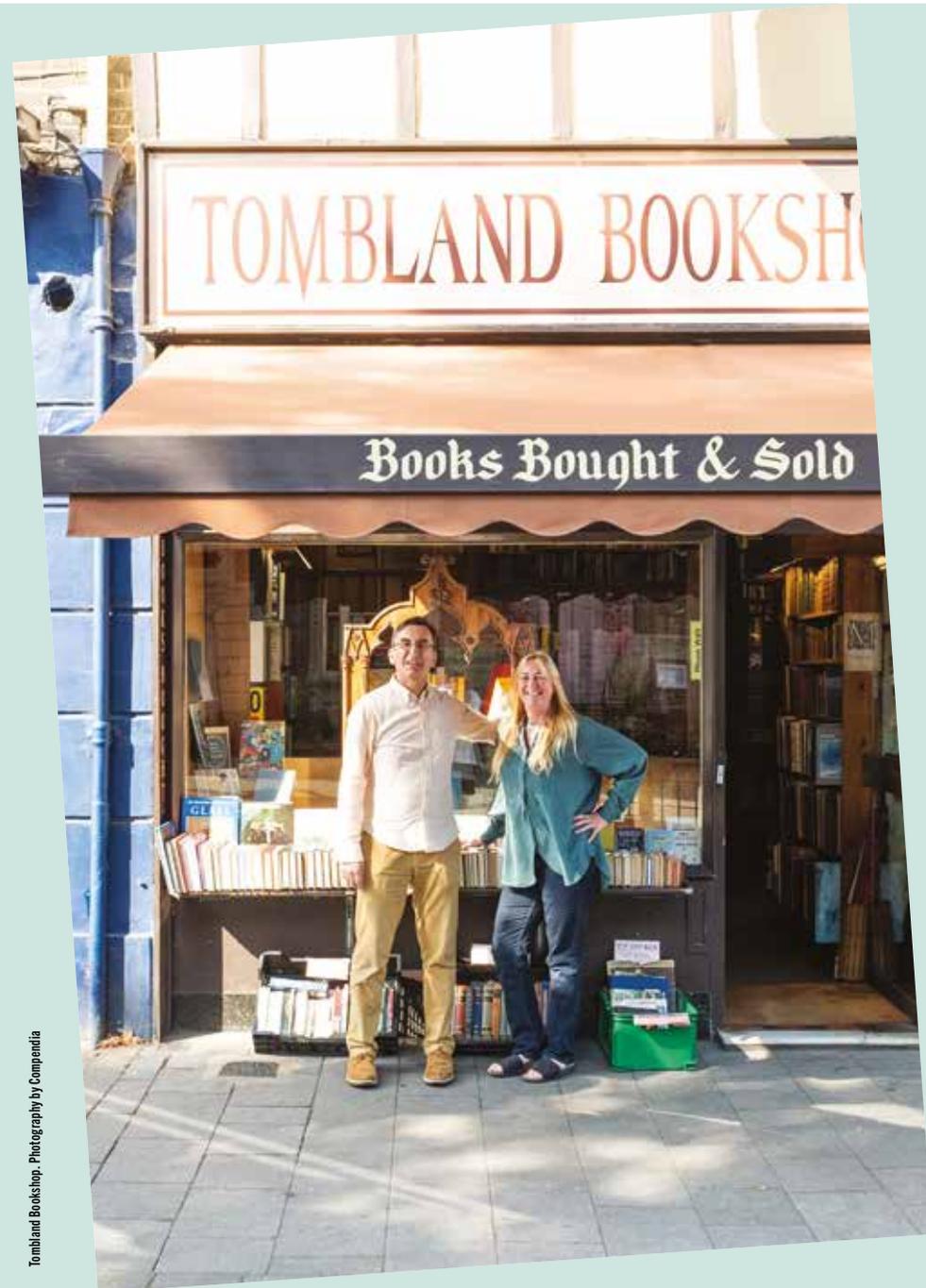
UK National Commission for UNESCO

University Centre Peterborough

VisitNorwich

Waterstones

Tombland Bookshop. Photography by Compendia





APPENDIX F: PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

The following organisations form part of the 'partnership network,' comprising individuals and groups who have participated in consultation events, completed surveys, held meetings, or expressed interest in staying informed about the strategy's progress. This is a fluid and expanding list of those involved at various stages of the strategic process. Inclusion does not imply endorsement of the strategy's content or aims.

Age UK Norwich

Anglia Ruskin University

Bamble Learning Community

Bookbanks

Bookbugs & Dragon Tales

Brandland

Business in the Community, Norwich

City of Sanctuary Network

CivicUEA

Creative Arts East

CreativeUEA

Culture Declares (climate emergency)

Diocese of Norwich Education
and Academies Trust

East Gallery

Essential Sequential Comics

Filigree Communications

Freshly Greated

Frozen Light

Galley Beggar Publishing

Head East

Hinterland Publishing

Jarrolds Bookshop

John Innes Centre

John Jarrold Trust

Kurumuru Books

Lillehammer UNESCO City of Literature

Lillerhammer Kommune

National Literacy Trust

Norfolk and Norwich Festival

Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board

Norfolk Community Foundation

Norfolk County Council

Norwich Cultural Compact

Norfolk Library and Information Services

Norwich Arts Centre

Norwich Business Improvement District

Norwich City Council Community Enabling Team

Norwich Science Festival

Norwich Theatre

Norwich University of the Arts

Original Projects

RePattern

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Salt Publishing

Schools of Sanctuary Network

ShoeBox Enterprises

The Book Hive

The Common Lot

The Forum Trust

The Garage

The Quadram Institute

The SAW Trust

Toast Poetry

Tombland Bookshop

University Centre Peterborough

University of East Anglia

University of Sanctuary, UEA

VNET Education

Waterstones Bookshop

Wensum Trust English Hub

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A summer audience on Hay Hill, Norwich Summer Sessions. Photography by Nick Warner Photography





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