

## Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent 2023-2026

Reading's Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent has been created in collaboration with the Culture, Heritage and Creative sectors as well as key stakeholders. We recognise that Culture and Heritage has always been a conduit for delivering positive social benefit but that it has become even more important since covid19. This Statement of Intent recognises the importance of Culture, Creativity and Heritage in the following areas of work.

- Placemaking
- Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Celebrating the diversity of Reading's communities
- Economic Development
- Sustainability

Culture, Creativity and Heritage both drives and contributes to the above areas through innovative partnerships and co-produced projects but also recognises the importance of creating cultural events, activities and experiences where the main driver is not social benefit, but enjoyment, shared experiences, experimentation and celebration of practice.

The shape of the Statement is derived from the Culture and Heritage Strategy's 3 Strategic Priorities; these have formed the main headlines of the document.

The objectives have been developed from the Place Branding project completed in partnership by REDA, University of Reading and Reading Borough Council in consultation with key stakeholders and 1600 members of the community. The outcome of the work can be seen [here](#).

The place branding project recognises the importance of culture in creating a sense of place, as such it is placed front and centre in the [toolkit](#) under the theme 'Cultivating Tomorrow's Culture'.

This is a living document and will be updated on a yearly basis to ensure that it remains relevant to the partners who work together to deliver each intent.

### What we mean when we say Culture, Heritage and Creativity:

We use 'culture' in this Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent as an umbrella term. *It includes the creative industries, arts and cultural organisations, and sectors from visual and digital art, to theatre, film, music, dance, literature and fashion.*

*Cultural organisations play a key role in defining the character and identity of the places we live, work and visit. They bring us together, help us to enjoy our cities and flourish personally. They also foster creativity and innovation, provide jobs and celebrate heritage.*<sup>1</sup>

*We use ‘creativity’ to describe ‘the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art, or a reimagining of an existing work.’*<sup>2</sup>

*We use ‘heritage’ to describe ‘all that has been passed to us by previous generations. It is all around us. It is in the houses we live in, our places of work, the transport we use, our places of worship, our parks and gardens, the places we go to for our sport and social life, in the ground beneath our feet, in the shape of our landscape and in the placing and arrangement of our fields, villages, towns and cities.*

*Heritage is also found in our moveable possessions, from our national treasures in our museums, to our own family heirlooms, and in the intangible such as our history, traditions, legends and language.*

*Whilst everything we inherit is strictly our heritage, the term has become synonymous with the places, objects, knowledge and skills we inherit that are valued for reasons beyond their mere utility. In other words, they have a value to us that is over and above their functional use.*<sup>3</sup>

## 2025 Context

Reading has secured significant capital investment through both the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and the Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF), enabling the development of a new theatre and library. This achievement in funding has occurred despite an increasingly competitive funding environment, compounded by rising operational costs. Consequently, the town’s cultural sector has faced significant challenges, including a contraction in capacity and difficulty in delivering large-scale events.

As we look ahead to 2026 and the creation of the next Statement of Intent, the potential impact of devolution on our local cultural sector is considerable. We are also committed to enhancing the representation of diverse voices in decision-making forums. We recognise that our journey toward inclusivity requires ongoing reflection, learning, and growth across the sector and remain committed to ensuring our continued development in EDI practice.






	<b>Strategic Priority One: Enhance Identity – Being Reading/Made in Reading</b>
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<sup>1</sup> [improving places - culture and business improvement districts.pdf \(london.gov.uk\)](#)




<sup>2</sup> [Our vision | Arts Council England](#)




<sup>3</sup> [Introduction to the Heritage Protection Guide: Heritage Conservation Defined | Historic England](#)

Objective	Intent	Partners	Cross reference with other strategic plans	RBC Corporate Plan				Arts Council Let's Create Strategy		
				Equal Communities	Economic & Cultural Success	Sustainable and healthy communities	Health and Wellbeing	Creative People	Cultural Community	Cultural Country
<b>Community of Communities</b> A place powered by its people, built of vast, diverse communities, rich with culture and stories.	Year 1									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase participation and engagement in culture and heritage by celebrating Reading's diverse arts, culture and heritage. And understand how this is going to be measured. (Add to Yr 3)</li><li>Recognise the demand for cultural hubs and cultural spaces bring together case studies of how other places in the UK support cultural organisations with space. and advocate for Cultural Organisation occupation of empty or new spaces as opportunities arise. (Add to Yr 3)</li></ul>		Reading 2050 Vision  Tackling Inequalities Strategy							
	Year 2									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Support the development of capacity within our diverse cultural sector through Shared Prosperity Funding, which ends in 2025. Legacy and evaluation to be shared.</li><li>Consult on the creation of a sector wide EDI intention inspired by the</li></ul>		Social Inclusion  Reading 2050 Vision							





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Creative Lives and economic impact report to share with community. Share recommendations and embed in Year 1 of Statement of Intent 2026 - 2030.</li> <li>Commence delivery of the CEP 2024-2027 Action Plan.</li> </ul>		Tackling Inequalities Strategy  Public Health Strategy							
			CEP							
<b>Custodians:</b>	<b>Year 1</b>									
A place proud to look after its people, its heritage and its landscape. Carefully protecting today, so we all have a tomorrow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a sustainability audit of local Reading Festivals funded through the Shared Prosperity Funding to support RCAN's target of zero waste and circular festivals (<a href="#">please see R13 of RCAN strategy for more detail</a>).</li> <li>Work in partnership with key partners to bring Luke Jerram's Gaia to the Town Hall for the Reading Climate Festival, to help inspire Climate Action and demonstrate the power of Culture to support positive change.</li> </ul>		Reading Climate Change Partnership Strategy (R13)							

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver Climate Anxiety training to embed learnings and understanding into our cultural programming.</li> <li>Decarbonise assets where possible and share best practice.</li> </ul>									
	Year 2									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability Forum started led by Jelly and Reading Rep</li> </ul>									
	Year 3									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cultural sector organisations and individual practitioners will continue to strengthen and grow the impact of the Sustainability Forum, which brings together professionals from across the culture and heritage sector to champion environmental responsibility. The forum will meet quarterly and invite expert guest speakers who will share insights and innovations, helping to inform and inspire action. It will continue to provide a collaborative space for organisations to exchange best practice, build confidence, and support one another in embedding sustainability into their operations, programming, and long-term planning</li> </ul>									
Strategic Priority Three: Celebrate Reading										
Objective	Intent	Partners		RBC Corporate Plan				Arts Council Let's Create Strategy		





