



Consultation on Visit England's Growth Strategy
Response from Arts Council England
May 2015

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries - from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.

Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018 we will invest just under £1 billion in 664 National Portfolio and Bridge organisations and £22.6 million in Major partner museums. Over the same period, alongside this regular funding, Arts Council England will invest £210 million in Grants for the arts, our open-access funding programme and £104 million in strategic funding, designed to help us to target particular challenges and opportunities in achieving our mission of great art and culture for everyone.

1. Thinking of the strategy as a whole, to what extent do you agree or disagree with its general direction? I.e. is it taking the industry on the right path for current and future challenges/opportunities?

Arts Council England agrees with the direction of the strategy as a whole. We recognise the value of arts and culture to the tourist economy and we want to work to ensure that our world class cultural sector continues to help make England a world class destination. This is good for the country's visitor economy, but it is also good for the cultural sector, as it opens up new sources of revenue which can underpin the sector's sustainability and potential for growth. We are pleased to have an effective partnership with Visit England that reflects not only both organisations' commitment, but also that England's world class tourist offer relies in large part upon our world class cultural offer.

Arts Council England recognises a number of shared challenges and opportunities and requests that in refreshing your strategy you consider how it will enable us both to respond to the following external factors;

- Further reductions in local authority budgets, a rise in combined authorities, devolution and public sector reform. How will the strategy ensure that cultural tourism remains a priority and that growth is achieved in an increasingly pressured environment?
- Potential vulnerability of cultural organisations in light of further cuts. If a culturally significant organisation becomes unsustainable, how will the strategy support mitigation of negative impact to the tourism offer in the affected area?
- Continued political endorsement of the Northern Powerhouse. How does the strategy allow Visit England to maximise cultural tourism opportunities arising from this agenda while limiting negative impact to cultural tourism in areas not included.
- Creative economy and apprenticeships. Skills developed in the cultural sector, particularly in creative industries will be useful in the delivery of the strategy.

2. Thinking now about the objectives and priorities outlined in the strategy, to what extent do you agree or disagree that they are the right ones to target future growth of the industry?

We recommend that the partnership between the tourism and cultural sectors is strengthened as we build on the objectives and priorities outlined in the strategy to ensure that arts and culture are embedded in local destination offers. Practice emerging from, and the evaluation of, the Cultural Destinations programme can inform this. We would like to see this explicitly referenced in the strategy. At a national policy level we should continue and develop our partnership.

3. What are the 3 most important actions for your business or those you represent, under each priority?

Investing in tourism products and experiences in line with market trends and strategic needs

- **Increasing the personalisation of tourism products and services**
- **Developing locally differentiated products and experiences**
- **Developing cultural assets and iconic buildings and attractions in response to changing visitor trends and behaviours**

As Arts Council England investment and expertise is vital to the delivery of this action we would welcome specific reference to working in partnership with Arts Council England.

Attracting and retaining motivated people and developing their skills

- **Repositioning the image of the industry as an employer and career of choice**
Incorporating culture in messaging could help achieve this action, highlighting high-quality careers in the cultural sector, not just employment in the hospitality industry.
- **Increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships**
As above – considering the cultural workforce as part of the wider destination workforce could help achieve this action
- **Increasing digital skills and capability in the industry**

Increasing the visibility and understanding of England's tourism offer

- **Increase understanding of product-market fit and identifying innovative and creative ways to target consumers – including digital channels**
- **Capitalising on major events and seeking to attract more of them into England, building stronger links with inward investment**
- **Strengthening domestic marketing and promotion to highlight the breadth of the product and local distinctiveness**

Overcoming barriers to business competitiveness and investment

- **Strengthen business support for SMEs**
- **Strengthening tourism businesses use of, and access to, IT and digital solutions**
- **Increasing awareness of tourism growth benefits and opportunities amongst development bodies e.g. planners, economic development and transport professionals**

Investing in the infrastructure and environment on which tourism growth relies

- **Support conservation and improve access in natural landscapes and heritage sites**
- **Promoting regeneration of urban, seaside and rural town centres and investing in the future of the high street and public realm**

Building upon the long established practice of investing in culture to drive regeneration, e.g. the Sea Change programme, Turner Contemporary, M Shed and in Liverpool following 2008. Arts Council England has a key role in the place of culture in regenerating places, as the strategic national agency working and investing with local partners to encourage and empower the cultural sector to play its role in building local cultural offers within destinations.

4. Are there any gaps or areas in the growth strategy that you feel have been missed? These could be overall objectives or individual actions.

Arts Council England welcomes the inclusion of the priority focussing on the development of cultural assets.

Arts Council England provides funding to artists and cultural organisations who deliver must-see cultural events which attract inbound and domestic tourism. These events, which take place throughout the country, encourage visits outside the capital, stimulating more equitable distribution of visitor spend.

5. Do you think this strategy is one you could get behind and mobilise your organisation to actively support?

Arts Council England is supportive of Visit England's 10-year strategy. At the appropriate point, in line with learning emerging from the Cultural Destinations Programme, we would welcome the opportunity to revise and refresh our partnership to deliver both organisations' shared strategic priorities as regards tourism.

6. What do you think your organisation, business or those you represent, could deliver to contribute towards the refreshed strategy?

Arts Council England and the artists and cultural organisations we support have a key role to play in the delivery of this strategy. Alongside funding in partnership with VE, through schemes like Cultural Destinations, National Portfolio Organisations (NPO), Major Partner Museums (MPM) and Grants for the arts (Gfta) recipients use Arts Council England funding to programme and deliver a broad range of cultural activities that form an integral part of England's year-round tourism offer.

Culture is vital in shaping and defining the wider UK brand, making England an attractive tourism prospect for inbound visitors. Culture also plays a key role on a more local level adding to the diversity and distinctiveness of the tourism offer throughout the country and encouraging domestic tourism.

Alongside NPO, MPM and Gfta, strategic funding programmes like Creative People and Places are helping to strengthen the offer in traditional tourism destinations like Blackpool and future hot spots like Hull. Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence fund will further develop England's cultural offer, creating spectacular large-scale events attractive to domestic and international visitors.

7. Other than VisitEngland, who else would you need to work with to do this?

We would wish to work with national stakeholders who influence cultural and tourism policy including LGA, DCLG, DCMS and BIS and at a local level, local tourism bodies, the private sector and local authorities, alongside our partner agencies such as English Heritage Trust, Historic England, Heritage Lottery Fund

8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the refreshed growth strategy?

No

9. How much do you know about the growth strategy launched in 2010 – The Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010-2020?

Arts Council England has a clear understanding Visit England's growth strategy and looks forward to continued partnership working at national level and with area colleagues.