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Investing in Creative Delivery

A report from the Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce and recommendations for a sectoral development and investment strategy

July 2023

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Foreword

Dame Rotha Johnston DBE
Chairperson: Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce

It's time to deliver in Northern Ireland.

We have complex social, economic and environmental challenges. We continue to navigate turbulence and trauma from a difficult past. Amid ongoing uncertainty, there is urgency for transformative change. We need to invest in creative delivery and the means to inspire, catalyse and move from what is now, to what can be.

Our region has creative talent, ideas, organisations and places which deliver and can amplify innovative solutions and better ways of working together. This report provides Government with recommendations to catalyse and support transformation. It encourages a shift in mindset and collaboration to strengthen, connect and innovate through creative delivery.

During 2021, I chaired a Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce which shaped emergency assistance for sectoral practitioners, organisations, venues and places during the COVID-19 pandemic. These sectors were disproportionately impacted by the necessary restrictions of that period. Yet they provided the connection and hope we craved. They creatively adapted, reached and supported us. Perhaps that has been too quickly forgotten. Culture, arts and heritage has intrinsic value to society but the sectors, practitioners and places which provide it here are undervalued and insufficiently supported by Government.

Before the complete collapse of the Executive in Autumn 2022, stakeholders were asked by the

Department for Communities to help “*articulate, catalyse and embed a shift in how these sectors are more fully recognised, harnessed and supported as key enablers of equality, inclusion, innovation and social and economic change*”¹.

I have been privileged to chair a Strategy Taskforce which has brought together a diverse range of insights over recent months. I thank all Members and other participants in this process for their contributions and unwavering commitment to and passion for realising the potential and ambitions of people, communities and places.

Our goal is to realise a ‘whole of government’ approach which invests in and strengthens the very sectors which underpin our region’s innovation ecology, fuel our creative industries, drive our tourism offering, and enhance pathways to employment, well-being, and thriving places and communities.

We map out a strategic approach for ***Investing in Creative Delivery***. It is one which can be led by the Department for Communities and connect with and amplify the ambitions, impact and reach of cross-cutting departmental and local government goals for people, planet and prosperity. It is premised on partnership and underpinned by the logic of removing barriers and imbalances inhibiting outcomes which naturally flow from thriving culture, arts and heritage sectors.

The analysis set out in this report includes a total of 36 recommendations and conclusions. These

¹ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/culture-arts-and-heritage-way-forward

have shaped a proposed sectoral development and investment framework and draft action plan to address historic challenges and current barriers facing the sectors, and to catalyse a necessary shift in the machinery of Government. It is an approach which sets out to work with the large and diverse range of sectoral organisations, arm's length bodies, local councils, and existing and planned strategies which are supporting culture, arts and heritage, and aims to help these organisations and sectoral bodies realise their ambitions.

The Taskforce believes the NI Executive should collectively champion and invest in culture, arts and heritage. While a future Minister for the Department for Communities must spearhead this, Ministers of all departments need to recognise and value the key contribution these sectors make to their departmental priorities and to the well-being of society. The Taskforce presents this report to support Government in finalising a strategy and action plan which can be brought forward for wider public consultation.

However, right now the sustainability of these sectors in Northern Ireland is perilous. Long-standing structural underfunding; a stagnated post-COVID recovery, and cost-of-living crisis is risking closure of organisations, venues and loss of heritage, including physical and historic infrastructure. Local talent, innovators and creative entrepreneurs are compelled to leave these sectors and our region in increasing numbers.

As Chairperson, it is imperative to highlight this was the state of play when the Strategy Taskforce began its work in late 2022. The Northern Ireland budget for 2023-24 means many organisations and practitioners across these sectors have received further devastating reductions in support and investment. Regrettably, where we are now is also symptomatic of an ingrained strategic disconnect across wider government

here on the value these sectors already provide, and that which they can bring.

Pre-existing, prolonged and detrimental sectoral baselines must inform decisions on budget allocations. These must be redressed, along with regional imbalances. Additional ways should also be explored to increase investment and realise the full benefits of a strong creative ecology. There is clear evidence from our neighbours and across the world which shows what can be achieved from investing to realise such potential.

The culture, arts and heritage sectors here form part of and contribute to a wider creative ecology which includes creative and cultural industries and shared heritage which spans and provides economic, social and cultural returns for Northern Ireland, the UK and the island of Ireland. That role, and important contribution, should be acknowledged and reciprocated through tripartite commitments and investments connecting and supporting ambitions across these islands.

The sectoral development and investment focus of our recommended approach provides a framework to help identify, advance and deliver such opportunities. Initial key actions will expedite progress, but it is the intersections, joint working and investment arising from this approach, and across organisational and geographic boundaries, which will create transformational possibilities not yet imagined.

This should be reflected in the sectoral development and investment ambition of a strategy Government brings forward. Northern Ireland pales in comparison to the focus and intent of our neighbours. For example, government investment in the Arts through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is £5.44 per capita (based on 2022/23 budget²) in contrast to Wales at £10.35 (cited by the ACNI as an

² Source – Arts Council of Northern Ireland

appropriate comparator) and the Republic of Ireland at £25.90.

Fiscal circumstances may be a contributing factor elsewhere but governmental policy in these jurisdictions is also clear on the rationale for such investment.

Furthermore, current comparisons should not deflect from the significance of historic trend. Government investment in the arts through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has fallen from £14.1 million in 2011–12 to £10.2 million in 2021–22. When inflation is considered, this represents a 40% cut in funding for arts organisations³. Over a decade (2011/12 to 2022/23), investment in our public libraries reduced by approximately 38% after inflation⁴. Over a similar period (2011/12 to 2019/20), baseline investment in our National Museums reduced by around 35%, and this was before the impact of COVID on self-generated income⁵. In 2014/15 the Department for Communities was able to issue grants totalling over £4 million to repair listed buildings and heritage at risk. This has dropped to £0.3 million in 2023/24.⁶

The Taskforce believes collective effort, regionally, must be on realising the full potential of our culture, arts and heritage sectors. Our shared ambition should reflect that, and for Northern Ireland to be put on par with sectoral investment across the UK and Ireland over the lifetime of a strategy.

This is about investment to strengthen, connect and innovate ways to bring about transformative and sustainable change in our society.

It is about recognising wider benefits and the catalytic power of our culture, arts and heritage sectors and how they contribute to government policies and priorities including for the economy, sustainability and climate change action, education, social inclusion, peace building, health and societal well-being.

It's time to invest in creative delivery for Northern Ireland.



³ Source – Arts Council of Northern Ireland

⁴ Source - Libraries NI

⁵ Source – National Museums Northern Ireland

⁶ Source – Department for Communities

Introduction and report structure

This is a report from the **Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce** to the Department for Communities (DfC). It addresses the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce and makes recommendations on the core approach and key components of a sectoral strategy that DfC can subsequently bring forward to:

- **provide definitive policy affirmation by the Northern Ireland Executive, and support a whole of government approach** which recognises and enhances the direct contribution and stimulus provided by culture, arts and heritage across wider social, economic and environmental policy areas;
- **support the culture, arts and heritage ecosystem** and tackle imbalances & barriers;
- **align and amplify** other sectoral strategies and initiatives being taken forward by local government and by public bodies which form and support the region's culture, arts and heritage infrastructure;
- **engage people and communities** in building momentum for the extent of policy affirmation and whole of government approach to which a strategy will aspire.

The report is structured as follows:

Section 1

Background to the work of the Taskforce

- The Taskforce
- Starting Point
- Approach to strategy development

Section 2

Recommendations for the structure, key content, oversight and publication of a draft strategy

- Overview
- Draft Policy Commitment
- Draft Vision and Mission
- Draft Guiding Principles
- Draft Strategic Investment Goals
- Draft Development Focus and Priority Actions
- Delivery
- Next Steps
- Summary of recommendations and conclusions

Section 3

List of Annexes and additional information

(Full documentation is collated separately)

- Annex A - Taskforce Terms of Reference
- Focus Group Reports - available on request
- Taskforce submission to the Independent Review of Education - available on request

Section 1

Background

The Taskforce

Purpose

The Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce was established in October 2022 to support the codesign of a vision and strategy for these sectors. It met five times over November 2022 to June 2023 in both in-person and on-line formats.

Focus groups

Members also volunteered to convene focus groups and events to examine issues in more detail. These covered:

- Heritage
- Music
- Theatre and Dance
- Arts and Business
- Festivals
- Community Arts
- Venues
- Community Arts (minority ethnic/global majority communities)
- Digital
- Freelancers
- Arts and Disability sector
- Literature and Storytelling

Members engaged with their networks and over 200 people have been involved in this process. Insights from Focus Group reports are available as accompanying documentation. Findings can be grouped into themes which include *Value, Investment, Structures, Skills, Diversity and Inclusion, and Research and Evidence.*

The Taskforce recommends that findings and key insights from its focus group reports are utilised now by relevant public bodies and agencies to improve current support to the culture, arts and heritage sectors, as well as inform actions as part of a finalised strategy.

Feedback highlighted a continuing funding crisis and organisations and practitioners “*doing more with less*”. The cost-of-living crisis, BREXIT, reduced post-COVID audiences, inflationary rises and budget cuts place many in a more adverse situation than when the Taskforce was convened in October 2022.

Submission to the Independent Review of Education

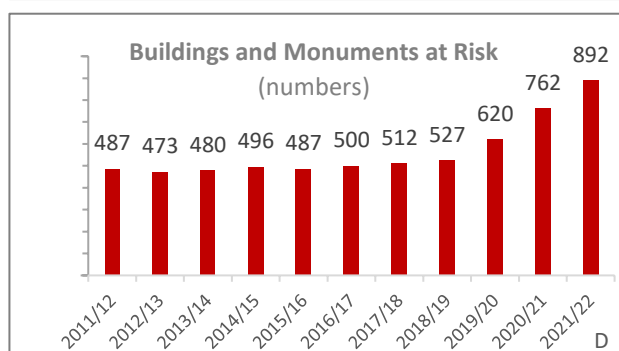
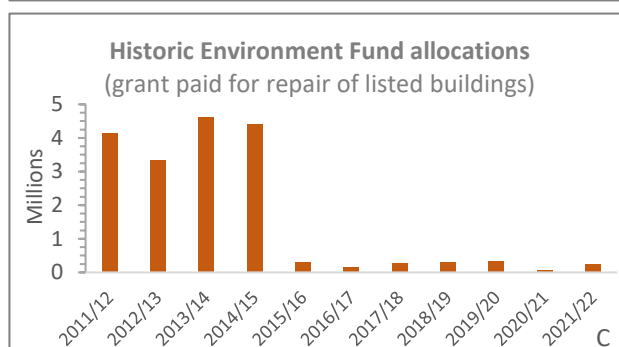
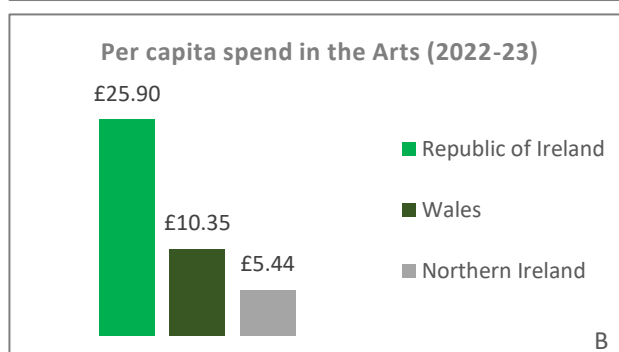
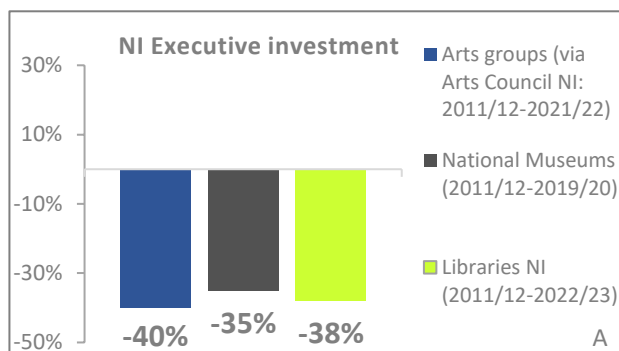
The Taskforce instigated a separate piece of work when Dr Johnathan Dalzell, Director of the NI Museums Council, highlighted that the interim report of the Independent Review of Education made no reference to culture, arts and heritage, or the significant contribution made by many sectoral organisations and practitioners. The Taskforce provided a submission titled *Mind the Gap* (see appendices). The Review Panel subsequently met with a Taskforce delegation on ways to support excellent education and lifelong learning.

Starting Point

The Taskforce strongly encourages the NI Executive and local government to reassess the value they place on culture, arts and heritage and its intrinsic importance to people, communities and in place making. We recommend Government invests in strengthening sectoral organisations and supporting practitioners who already deliver and catalyse economic, social and environmental benefits for this region. We want Executive departments, local councils, arm's length bodies and other agencies to increase and align investment to fully recognise and support the impact and potential of our sectors.

The Taskforce evolved from recommendations of a sectoral Recovery Taskforce which helped shape emergency finance during the COVID-19 crisis. This previous work also highlighted structural/systemic failures, fragilities and under-investment which existed long before the pandemic. This is evidenced by a track record of declining investment and long-standing disparity with other jurisdictions⁷.

This disinvestment reduces benefits and life opportunities for people, places and communities. It strangles transformative possibilities for this region. It limits delivery by our museums, libraries, arts, languages and cultural bodies. It restricts the potential of creative practitioners and emerging talent. It hinders access and participation, and capacity to protect and enhance our built, archaeological and landscape heritage and address spiralling Heritage at Risk numbers.



⁷ Graph sources:

- A) Arts Council of NI; Libraries NI; National Museums NI (note: baseline funding from DfC/DCAL and inflation adjusted)
- B) Arts Council of NI – figures based on funding to the arts councils in these jurisdictions.
- C) The Historic Environment Fund is allocated by the Department for Communities (DfC)

- D) www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2023. A listed building or structure is at risk when its condition and management is deemed to be poor and unsustainable, placing the building or structure under threat of deterioration and/or demolition.

This demonstrates need for a strategic plan which recognises and invests in the value and central role culture, arts and heritage already plays, and what can be achieved on cross-departmental missions for people, planet and prosperity. Other governments are doing this across Ireland, Britain and elsewhere. But not here. Why not?

The Taskforce believes the value, impact and relevance of culture, arts and heritage is not sufficiently recognised, understood nor supported across Executive departments and aspects of Local Government. This fundamental barrier must be addressed as it fuels decisions which directly lead to decreased investment, lack of strategic alignments, reduced benefits for people, communities and places, and missed opportunities for this region.

This strategic disconnect across government undermines operational and strategic support to the practitioners, organisations, art forms, venues and places which comprise these sectors. It fails to respond to the relevance of these sectors to the challenges and opportunities facing Northern Ireland.

Paradoxically, these same regional and local government institutions already benefit extensively from culture, arts and heritage. Launching this codesign process, the Department for Communities stated:

“Even a brief examination of activities advanced across central and local government will observe direct and catalytic contribution in areas such as mental health and well-being; tackling educational underachievement; tourism; wider economic and industrial/sectoral innovation; reengagement with training and employment; volunteering; good relations, racial equality, cultural identity and expression; attracting inward investment; High Street regeneration; addressing rural isolation; tackling violence against women and girls; and supporting sustainable development and practices as part of green growth and climate change action”⁸.

Yet the culture, arts and heritage infrastructure of people, organisations and places providing such cross-cutting value to government and society here has been pushed to the fringe of investment priorities. This is evidenced by a track record of decisions continually reducing investment in the sectors over a prolonged period. It is compounded, in areas such as built heritage, by spilt responsibilities and at times inconsistent or contradictory actions across local and central government.

The culture, arts and heritage sectors in Northern Ireland have been under resourced for many years, and insufficiently recognised across government for the contribution and potential these sectors provide. This is the starting point for a strategy that must also tackle a systemic barrier and challenge which exists across government.

⁸ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/culture-arts-and-heritage-way-forward

Approach to strategy development

The Taskforce strongly supports and recommends development of a strategy that will champion culture, arts and heritage across government and guarantee an investment focus and framework to increase and align long term support to the sectors.

This shapes the Taskforce's approach to the type of strategy that can achieve this. It involves several key considerations:



Making the systemic case for the culture, arts and heritage sectors

There's a great story to be told and one which is backed by evidence of life changing and place shaping impact and potential. And it is one of hope, imagination and inspiration which must be told in a finalised strategy to build momentum for its vision and deliver a whole of government approach. But it's not a story for this report. A fundamental barrier must first be addressed.

A strategic disconnection across government remains despite the case for these sectors being consistently and firmly made by numerous public and sectoral organisations in Northern Ireland and by those working in and benefiting from culture, arts and heritage. Narratives conveyed over a long period, by the varied constituent components of the sectors, have highlighted importance to a wide range of government priorities. Yet there is a track record and ongoing reality of disinvestment and, seemingly, peripherality of the sectors within government decision making.

The Taskforce recommends a systemic approach to how the culture, arts and heritage sectors are perceived and engaged with across government. This means being championed in a way which forges partnerships and investment alignments across Executive departments, with local government and with other potential regional, cross-border, national and international investors.

The potential of these sectors, and benefits for this region, cannot be fully realised without the focus and investment intent displayed elsewhere. This must be secured here.

The Taskforce believes the role and collective impact of the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be recognised and embedded as an enabling element and recipient of strategic investment across government.

Major investment drivers over the long term include those already indicated by cross-cutting issues such as climate change, the environment and Green Growth; innovation and the 10X strategy; infrastructure priorities via the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI); and emerging models such as Community Wealth Building. Government investment will continue to prioritise education, health and other areas such as tackling division and social exclusion.

A systemic approach is more than paper-based narrative and needs an enabling framework which reorientates ways of working across departments and public bodies. It must drive actions based on the logic of core investment in the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and not just additional but short term and sporadic programme-based funding.

The Taskforce recommends collectively positioning, across government, the culture, arts and heritage sectors as the foundation of an innovative and region-wide physical and people-based infrastructure which delivers and amplifies outcomes for government and society. This supports the business case argument for investment through the organisational strategies and ambitions of its constituent components.

This region wide infrastructure is not just conceptual. It includes:

- 98 public libraries and 16 mobile libraries
- 36 local museums
- 3 national museum sites
- 9 arm's length bodies
- 95 organisations and 6 major festivals supported annually by the Arts Council
- 2 cross-border language and cultural agencies (Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency) supporting and working with community and voluntary groups, delivery partners, schools, businesses, local councils, youth programmes, festivals, summer camps, and music, drama, arts and heritage groups
- 3 Creative Learning Centres and 3 film and television festivals supported annually by NI Screen
- >3 million documents held by the Public Record Office of NI (PRONI), among archives of historical, social and cultural importance
- >200 community festivals jointly funded annually by local councils and DfC
- 1 architecture & design review body supporting high quality urban and rural places
- 1 Observatory and Planetarium
- 19 organisations supported through DfC sign language partnership funding
- 2 advisory bodies covering historic building and monuments
- 187 state care monuments
- >9,000 listed buildings
- >50,000 recorded heritage sites including historic wrecks, battlefield sites, defence heritage, historic parks, landscapes and gardens
- and a suite of historic houses and industrial, maritime and waterways heritage sites open to the public and bringing benefits to local communities and contributing to the tourism economy.

This is the tip of a culture, arts and heritage sectoral iceberg. Other examples can be added from cultural and community venues, sporting heritage and other assets and resources supported by local councils, arm's length bodies, other departments, other sectoral investors and philanthropy, and through cross-border and international initiatives.

It is important to emphasise the people, practitioners, volunteers, staff, independent creatives and freelancers, and participants who also form this infrastructure and who support and are supported by programmes, venues, organisations and places within this creative ecology. It includes community groups, youth and amateur sectors, among others, and highlights that creative ambitions for this place will only be possible if we enable people from all backgrounds and circumstances to experience, engage with and participate in culture, arts and heritage throughout their lifetimes.

The Taskforce believes the culture, arts and heritage sectors, government and other partners need to continue to work together to capture and proactively convey the true breadth and depth of this creative ecology.

We do know that in 2012 the historic environment generated circa £532 million of output per year, sustaining a total of circa 10,000 FTE jobs and generating circa £250 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) each year⁹. Relevant indicators point to significant increases in the interim period¹⁰. And there are 33,000 people employed in the creative industries here, delivering an annual GVA of £1.3 billion¹¹.

Collectively this provides the foundation of an innovative and region-wide physical and people-based infrastructure which delivers and amplifies outcomes for government and society.

⁹ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/study-economic-value-northern-irelands-historic-environment

Returns on investment

Having said that a great story will be told at another time, it is vital to give a sense of the comprehensive returns from the investment which a strategy seeks to secure. They include driving job creation and economic growth across this region, as demonstrated by stated statistics. But, crucially, investment in culture, arts and heritage automatically generates a wealth of additional social and environmental returns.

The people, organisations, museums, libraries, creative businesses, collectives, venues, artforms, festivals, archives, languages, and heritage and historic environments embedded within and across localities catalyse and deliver lifelong opportunities and innovative approaches in areas such as education, place making and health and well-being. They help realise the potential of people and communities from all backgrounds, including those born here and new to this place.

These sectors are the foundation of the creative industries clusters, tourism and innovation goals which are already loudly and rightly prioritised by Government. They nurture creative skills, provide development pathways to creative careers, and give us the stories and environments which make this place interesting to visitors and attractive to international organisations wanting to locate and invest here.

This creative ecology is the fuel of the night-time economy, and provides the interactions which enable our cities, towns and rural areas to be perceived and experienced as vibrant, creative, culturally interesting and attractive places by those who live, work, visit and study here. This creative ecology intersects with how we spend and enjoy our lives, with almost three out of every five adults (57%) in Northern Ireland having engaged with the arts during 2021/22; and nearly

¹⁰ www.niheritagedelivers.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NI-Heritage-Statistics-2019.pdf

¹¹ www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/creative-industries-economic-estimates-northern-ireland-2022

half (48%) having visited a place of historic interest¹².

The NI Executive uses an annual Nations Brands Index to assess and monitor Northern Ireland's international reputation¹³. This ranks 60 nations across dimensions which include culture, people, and tourism (NI is currently ranked overall at 24). Key attributes focus on Creative Place; Cultural Heritage; Contemporary Culture; Historic Buildings; Vibrant Cities; and Quality of Life. It is Northern Ireland's creative ecology and culture, arts and heritage sectors which contribute to how we are perceived on the world stage.

Governments and society are mobilising to tackle existential challenges with climate change and green growth. Our region is at risk from warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, and more frequent extreme weather events¹⁴. This would impact on and damage our historic environment, but it also highlights the role the culture, arts and heritage sectors can play in delivering green growth ambitions through sustainable place making and place shaping, use and reuse of existing built and cultural assets, and creative and artistic responses to the climate change emergency which can inspire common purpose and behavioural change.

The culture, arts and heritage sectors have made and continue to make a key contribution to peace building. They enable people and communities to connect with each other and explore the historical facts, complexities and influences which shape who we are today, and to understand and respect that different interpretations exist.

These sectors provide the creativity and means to promote understanding, empathy and reconciliation, and to imagine and realise better ways of living and working together. Their creative delivery encourages respect for the

rights and choices of a contemporary plurality of identities, backgrounds, traditions and ambitions.

Recent events marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement highlighted that signatories committed to the "*achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust*". Today requires reaffirmation and renewal of these aspirations and creative endeavour to achieve them.

Investment in culture, arts and heritage means financial resources, support, alignments and partnerships which enable development, preservation, promotion, democratic access, inclusive participation, and experience of such activities and opportunities. It is investment which recognises the intrinsic value of culture, arts and heritage, and the significant additional impacts and returns which deliver for people, the planet and the economy.

Continued disinvestment will reduce these returns and strip these benefits. This will manifest in Nations Indexes, closure of venues and organisations, increased heritage at risk or lost, creative talent leaving, or this region becoming less attractive, interesting and fulfilling for those who want to live, work, study or invest here. But it will certainly be felt in local communities and places through diminished creative returns in education, health and well-being, good relations, and the innovation required for this region to move from what is now to what can be. The Taskforce recommends a strategy rooted in the logic of investing in the culture, arts and heritage sectors to realise the exponential returns which automatically flow from strong, sustainable and thriving sectors, and the constituent organisations, people and places which provide the creative delivery this region needs.

¹² www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/engagement-culture-arts-heritage-and-sport-by-adults-northern-ireland-202122

¹³ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/nation-brands-index>

¹⁴ www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA3-Briefing-Cultural-Heritage.pdf

Investing through cultural institutions

The culture, arts and heritage sectors in Northern Ireland are underpinned, at devolved government level, by a range of Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and departmental and statutory responsibilities. Most are under the remit of the Department for Communities (DfC):

Arm's Length Bodies and activities (overseen and/or funded by DfC)

- Armagh Observatory and Planetarium
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Foras na Gaeilge
- Libraries Northern Ireland
- National Museums Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Museums Council
- Sport Northern Ireland
- Ulster-Scots Agency
- Northern Ireland Screen (screen culture and education activities)

DfC delivery/responsibilities and secretariat functions

- Historic Environment Division
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
- Language Strategies
- Sign Language Framework
- Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture and the Built Environment
- Historic Buildings Council
- Historic Monuments Council

In other jurisdictions, such ALBs are collectively positioned by government as 'cultural institutions' which drive delivery of national strategic priorities. This supports the rationale for government to strengthen this underpinning investment infrastructure and in turn the people, groups, venues, programmes and places such institutions support.

The Taskforce is of the opinion that the Department for Communities must secure and increase investment to and advocate for its arm's length bodies and related departmental responsibilities and be the key enabler of systemic change required across NI Executive

departments and in developing partnerships with local government. The Taskforce believes such change includes within the Department itself, and significant connections and opportunities which can be advanced across policy areas such as, for example, regeneration, housing, social inclusion, and the community and voluntary sectors.

Investment in the priorities and ambitions of these cultural institutions, and departmental responsibilities for culture, arts and heritage, will drive transformative impact in communities and for the organisations, practitioners, people and places these sectoral bodies and departmental operations invest in and support.

Investing with local government

The 11 local councils across Northern Ireland lead on community planning and place-based approaches. Many have strategies for culture, arts and heritage or plan to revise or develop them. These reflect the codesigned input and ambitions of urban and rural communities across each place. The councils are major funders of sectoral organisations, venues and projects in their localities. Some have clear ambitions to drive cultural-led regeneration, as evidenced by relevant Regional City Deal projects and planned cultural investment programmes.

The Taskforce believes a regional developmental and investment strategy for the culture, arts and heritage sectors should partner with, build on and support collaborations and alignments with and across the strategic plans and ambitions of local government.

As with the region's cultural institutions, joint and aligned investment between and across local councils, Executive departments and public bodies can amplify transformative impact in communities and for the organisations, practitioners, people and places all these organisations invest in and support.

The Taskforce has no doubt that partnership between DfC, its ALBs and local government can deliver transformative support to the culture, arts

and heritage sectors, and be a key driver in addressing regional imbalances and historic underfunding, such as in the North West and elsewhere, which inhibit region-wide and equitable and inclusive growth.

Defining the sectors

Culture, arts and heritage means different things to different people. Various explanations are deployed in corporate plans of organisations, funders and public bodies across Northern Ireland and elsewhere. These include local government and place-based strategies which have been developed through extensive codesign and significant public engagement.

The Taskforce recommends that the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be broadly defined for the purposes of an NI Executive development and investment framework, and for advocacy of their regional impact and reach. This should include the remits and activities supported by relevant ALBs/cultural institutions and departmental and statutory responsibilities:

- **Art forms** such as music, literature, drama, dance, circus, craft, community arts, theatre, traditional arts, visual arts, and the individual artists, practitioners, freelancers, organisations, festivals, community groups and venues working, practising and volunteering in these and related fields.
- **Museums**
- **Libraries**
- **Observatory and Planetarium**
- **Languages**, including those being supported through the development of an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy; and Sign Language – both British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign

Language (ISL) - and promotion of Deaf culture and identity.

- **Archives** which receive, preserve and make available public records and privately deposited materials.
- **Creative Industries**, which include advertising; architecture; arts and antiques; computer games; crafts; design; designer fashion; film; TV and radio; music.; performing arts; publishing; software/digital media.

Some of these areas and wider creativity are also supported by screen culture and education initiatives led by NI Screen.

- **Historic Environment** which includes Historic Monuments, Buildings, Parks, Gardens and Landscapes; Maritime and Waterways heritage; Industrial heritage, Defence heritage, and Archaeology.

Aligning investment, forging intersections and removing barriers

Others ALBs and agencies in other parts of government provide relevant funding to the sectors, such as the NI Environment Agency which supports the natural heritage functions of area-based heritage bodies. Other Executive departments provide programme-based funding to organisations and practitioners in the culture, arts and heritage sectors. Added to these are the sectoral strategies developed by the 11 councils, and their community plans and place-based approaches. Other major funders of sectoral organisations, projects and places include Lottery Funds and philanthropic organisations.

Other strategies for specific sub-sectors, localities and themes will be developed in the near future, and codesign of others, such as an Irish Language strategy and an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture strategy, are currently being advanced. Legislative change for Sign Language is

a commitment within the *New Decade, New Approach Deal*, as well as a framework, resourcing and public appointments supporting cultural expression and “celebrating Northern Ireland’s diversity of identities and culture and accommodating cultural difference”¹⁵.

Absence of strategy documents isn’t the problem. Instead, it is systemic barriers, imbalances and missed opportunities which limit investment in and the potential of these organisational, sectoral and place-based strategies. The Taskforce believes a sectoral development strategy must stimulate intersections and alignments which increase investment and amplify the impact of relevant sectoral strategies, sectoral bodies and the corporate plans of organisations and community and place-based ambitions across this region. This should be the goal rather than displacement, dilution or distraction.

Strategic alignments and forging intersections extend to North/South and East/West opportunities. Peace Plus, Shared Island, Levelling Up and future initiatives provide possibilities but there is a need for a coordinated approach which widens and deepens the involvement of the culture, arts and heritage sectors in shaping, accessing and contributing to these initiatives.

The Taskforce highlights structural issues and barriers including, for example, spilt responsibilities across local and central government and the impact this can have on, for example, built heritage. It notes the absence of a Heritage Act for Northern Ireland and need¹⁶ to review and update longstanding protections (e.g., Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995) to ensure appropriate and sustainable protection, management and development of the historic environment and its use and reuse in ways that support people and address community needs, and which enable continued experience of and learning from our region’s unique heritage assets.

The Taskforce strongly advocates a review of legislative protections and enhancement of regulatory arrangements, guidance and cooperation between departmental and local government responsibilities for the historic environment.

Other barriers include those arising from BREXIT. Increased costs, uncertainty and restrictions impede local organisations and practitioners in developing new markets across the European Union (EU) and elsewhere, and in collaborating with and attracting artists and partner organisations to Northern Ireland. Loss of access to EU programmes and international exchange and development initiatives compound these barriers and will, if unchecked, have longer-term detrimental impact. The Taskforce calls on a restored NI Executive to work with the UK and Irish governments, and EU institutions, to support mobility and cultural exchange for sectoral organisations and practitioners.

A developmental approach but rooted in the reality of the here and now.

Policy will reinforce the strategic imperative across government to work with and invest in these sectors. It will mobilise effort to strengthen these sectors because of acknowledged derived value. A sectoral development strategy can join other cross-cutting approaches shaping government action over the longer term. But this creative ecology is fragile having been starved of investment for a prolonged period. The Taskforce strongly recommends an immediate phase of increased reinvestment to ensure viability and capacity of organisations and practitioners to pivot to a developmental sectoral approach.

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/government/news/deal-to-see-restored-government-in-northern-ireland-tomorrow

¹⁶ www.archaeology2030.org – Archaeology 2030: A Strategic Approach for Northern Ireland (Recommendation 3.1)

Section 2

Recommendations

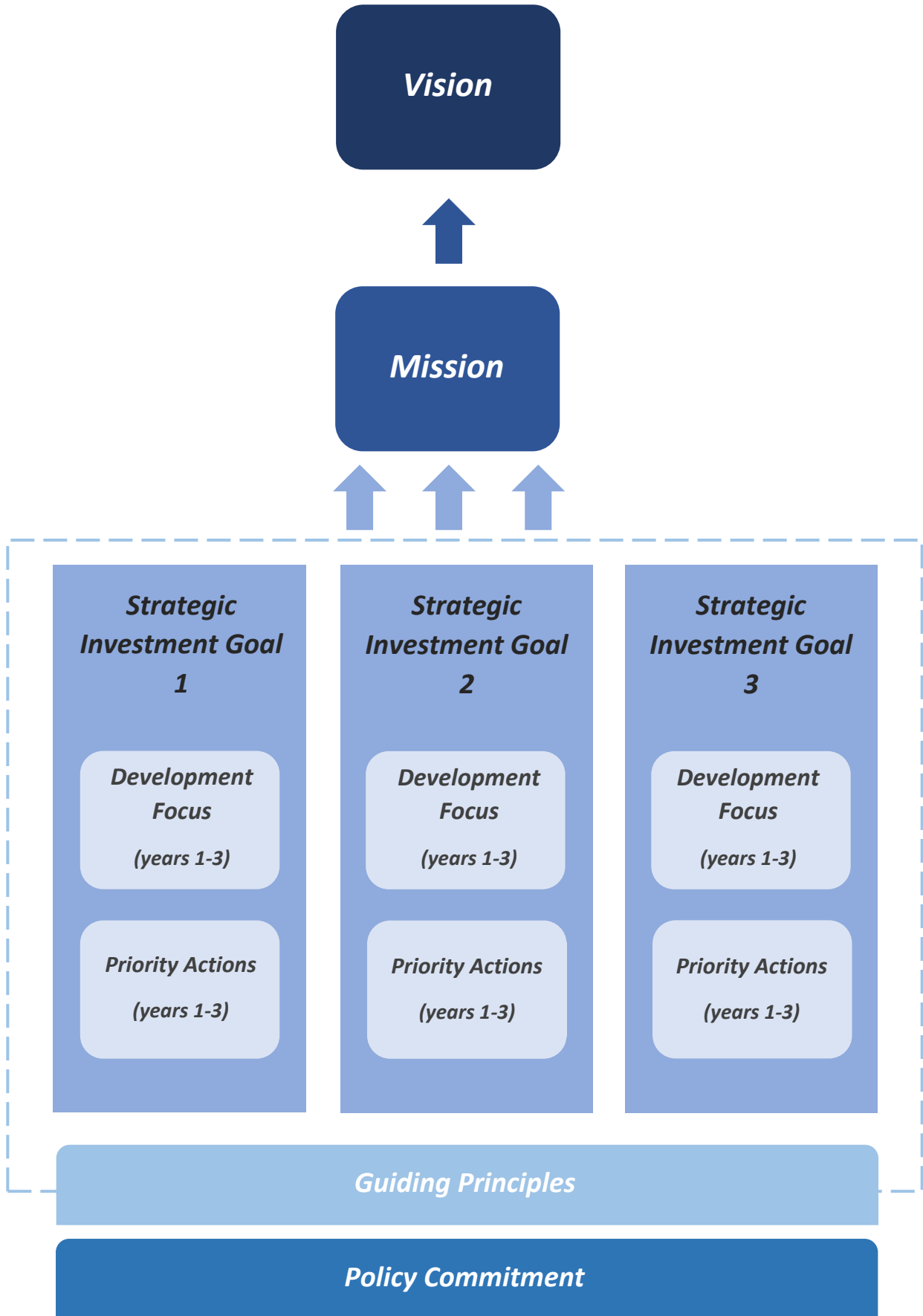
Overview

The Taskforce recommends that the NI Executive collectively champions investment in culture, arts and heritage to realise the full economic, social and environmental potential of these sectors. While the DfC Minister, under current statutory arrangements, will lead on this, we believe a strategic approach must enable Ministers of all Departments to commit to the value and key contribution these sectors make to departmental priorities. As a result, we urge appropriate investment, more joint and cross-departmental working, and more engagement with the sectors.

- We believe the NI Executive and local government should forge and deliver on meaningful commitments which align and amplify investment in and remove barriers impacting on the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
- We endorse and recommend enhanced partnerships on a cross-border basis and between these islands, as well as building on international goodwill and seizing opportunities to enhance investment in Northern Ireland's culture, arts and heritage sectors.
- We recommend a stronger focus on inclusion and participation, particularly of people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds; as well as communities and places which have felt locked out of peace dividends from the Good

Friday/Belfast Agreement. We believe the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be recognised and better supported for their proven and continuing impact in promoting social inclusion and peace building, and this should underpin major programmes and strategic approaches in the years ahead.

- We believe the prolonged and declining investment in the culture, arts and heritage sectors must be redressed, along with regional imbalances.
- We strongly support and recommend an approach that sufficiently invests in the strategies and ambitions of ALBs/cultural institutions, local councils and other sectoral bodies, and for these to be supported by the NI Executive as key components and enablers of a regional culture, arts and heritage infrastructure critical to the economic, social and environmental ambitions of Northern Ireland. To support this, and encourage behavioural change and drive delivery, the Taskforce maps out the spine of a strategy structure with indicative text to communicate the function of a sectoral development strategy and its vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic investment goals, initial development focus and priority actions.



Draft Policy Commitment

The Taskforce believes only a NI Executive wide strategy can provide a unified and coherent sectoral development and investment framework for the culture, arts and heritage sectors and deliver transformational change. This strategy should be led by the Department for Communities, be supported across Executive Departments and provide the basis of partnerships with local government and other investors. It must drive collaborative approaches which increase and align investment and support to the sectors.

It is important for this strategy to be among key cross-cutting strategies which set the direction of the NI Executive over the longer term. These include 10X Economy, the Environment Strategy and Green Growth priorities, and the Investment Strategy of Northern Ireland. An indicative Policy commitment by the NI Executive, and function of the strategy, could be:

Investing in Creative Delivery is the cross-cutting policy framework of the Northern Ireland Executive which recognises the value of our culture, arts and heritage sectors and supports their key contribution and role in achieving our goals for people, planet and prosperity.

It gives shared purpose and a developmental focus to mobilise and guide partnerships, planning and investment across and with Executive departments, local government, public bodies and wider stakeholders.

It connects to and amplifies delivery of a diverse range of public bodies supporting and benefiting from the culture, arts and heritage sectors.

Draft Vision and Mission

The Taskforce recommends an explicit, public and accountable commitment to investment and collaborative delivery across Government and on ways the culture, arts and heritage sectors are recognised, valued and supported.

This aligns with other jurisdictions which have positioned culture, arts and heritage as critical to delivery of their Programmes for Government and long-term success and societal well-being.

A vision should recognise the intrinsic value of culture, arts and heritage and its importance to society, and a mission set out the approach to achieve it.

While it is a matter for DfC in consultation with the NI Executive, an indicative vision and mission is outlined.

The Taskforce urges DfC to commence a public consultation on a draft strategy in autumn 2023, with the launch of an approved strategy in early 2024. A 10-year vision will therefore extend to 2034.

Vision:

Culture, arts and heritage is valued, promoted and cherished by all in Northern Ireland for the inspirational experiences, creativity, learning, enjoyment, diversity, connection, well-being and hope it gives to people living, working and visiting here.

Mission:

We increase and align investments and partnerships in and with the culture, arts and heritage sectors to help deliver transformational change for people, places and communities across Northern Ireland.

Draft Guiding Principles

The Taskforce concludes it is necessary to change perceptions, across the public sector, of the value of the culture, arts and heritage sectors and to embed behavioural change across the whole of government.

Guiding Principles are those the NI Executive and individual Ministers should consider advocating

within and across their departments and the ALBs/public bodies they oversee.

“We” in the Guiding Principles refers collectively to Ministers in the NI Executive and the Departments they lead. Indicative Guiding Principles are included overleaf.

We value culture, arts and heritage for what it means and what it does for individuals, communities and places; and we value the people, practitioners and organisations who make this possible.

We build the capacity of these sectors to catalyse transformative and sustainable change and to support our collective future well-being and shared goals for people, planet and prosperity.

We invest to realise the ambitions, strategies and corporate plans of organisations, practitioners, venues and places comprising and supporting the culture, arts and heritage sectors. We do this to strengthen capacity and amplify their impact and reach.

We create connections, partnerships and investment opportunities and alignments across regional and local government and wider society to enable these sectors, and those involved in and those benefiting from them, to thrive.

We think of place, big and small, and the heart, soul, history, vibrancy, authenticity and possibilities the culture, arts and heritage sectors can bring or revitalize.

We are inclusive, and relentless in ensuring access, participation and opportunity for people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds, difficult circumstances or from areas with a history of disadvantage. We refuse to discount those considered by some as the hardest to reach or easiest to ignore.

We ask people and communities what they want and involve, support and help them realise their full creative potential and ambitions.

Draft Strategic Investment Goals

The Taskforce recommends a strategy that provides a framework and impetus for investment. Three indicative Strategic Investment Goals are the recommended pillars of a developmental approach.

We **strengthen**

We invest to improve ways to build the resilience, grow the capacity and ensure the sustainability of the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and to enable practitioners, organisations, venues, places and beneficiaries to thrive.

We **connect**

We invest to forge better ways of realising the full potential of creative connections, intersections and partnerships across and with the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and in support of shared goals for people, planet and prosperity.

We **innovate**

We invest in more effective ways to fuel innovation and propel the growth, impact and reach of the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and to enable diffusion and benefits of such creativity and innovation across society, the environment, and the economy.

Draft Development Focus and Priority Actions

The Taskforce wants government to expedite strategic alignments and quickly realise investment opportunities to increase support to the sectors in the short to medium term. The Department for Communities should develop an initial 3-year Delivery Plan which details the Development Focus and Priority Actions in support of the recommended three Strategic Investment Goals.

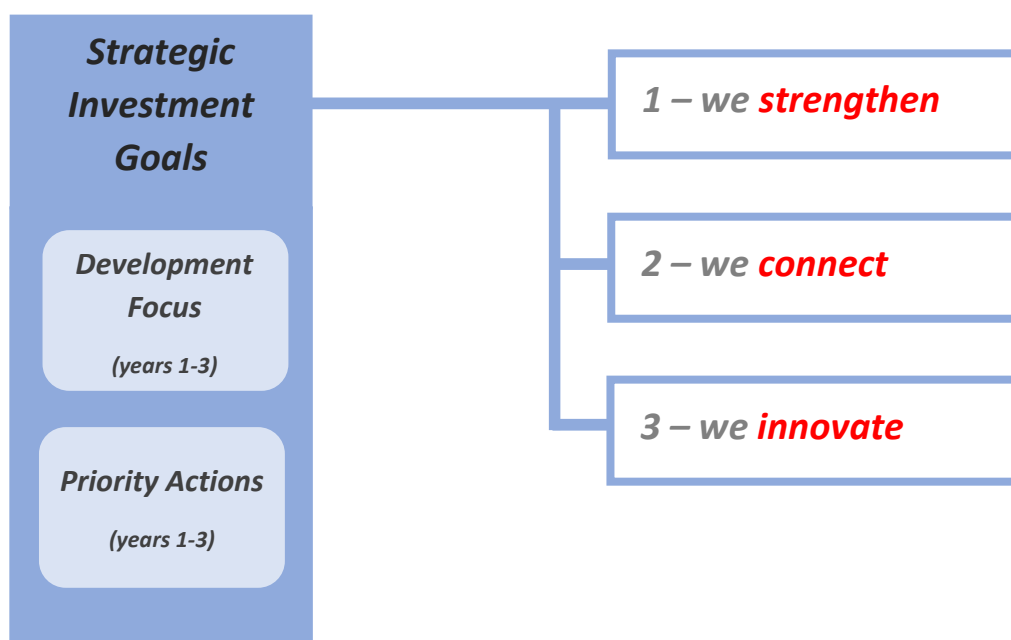
A finalised Plan will identify the organisational lead/s or mechanism to take forward each action. Investment targets should link to outputs. The Taskforce is mindful that performance indicators need developed in conjunction with relevant sectors and comprise both financial and non-financial measures. DfC should formally review and report on the plan annually and adjust as required.

Further high-profile launches of subsequent 3-year Delivery Plans will maintain momentum during the 10-year period, with the final year of the strategy involving continuation/bridging

actions during a full strategy review and planning for a successor sectoral approach.

Indicative Development Focus and initial Priority Actions for each Strategic Investment Goal are attached overleaf. These are specifically based on themes and issues highlighted through Focus Group reports and Taskforce discussions. However, it is not intended as an exhaustive or exclusive listing, as further and wider engagement with other sectoral stakeholders, ALBs, councils, departments and other bodies may add to, adapt or combine recommendations. Stated areas of focus, priority actions and indicative text provide a starting point, but they do highlight issues, challenges and opportunities of substance and importance to stakeholders involved in the codesign process to date.

It is important to note that priority actions do not comprise nor suggest a one size fits all approach. Some capacity building measures, on diversification of income streams for example, will be relevant to many but not all organisations.





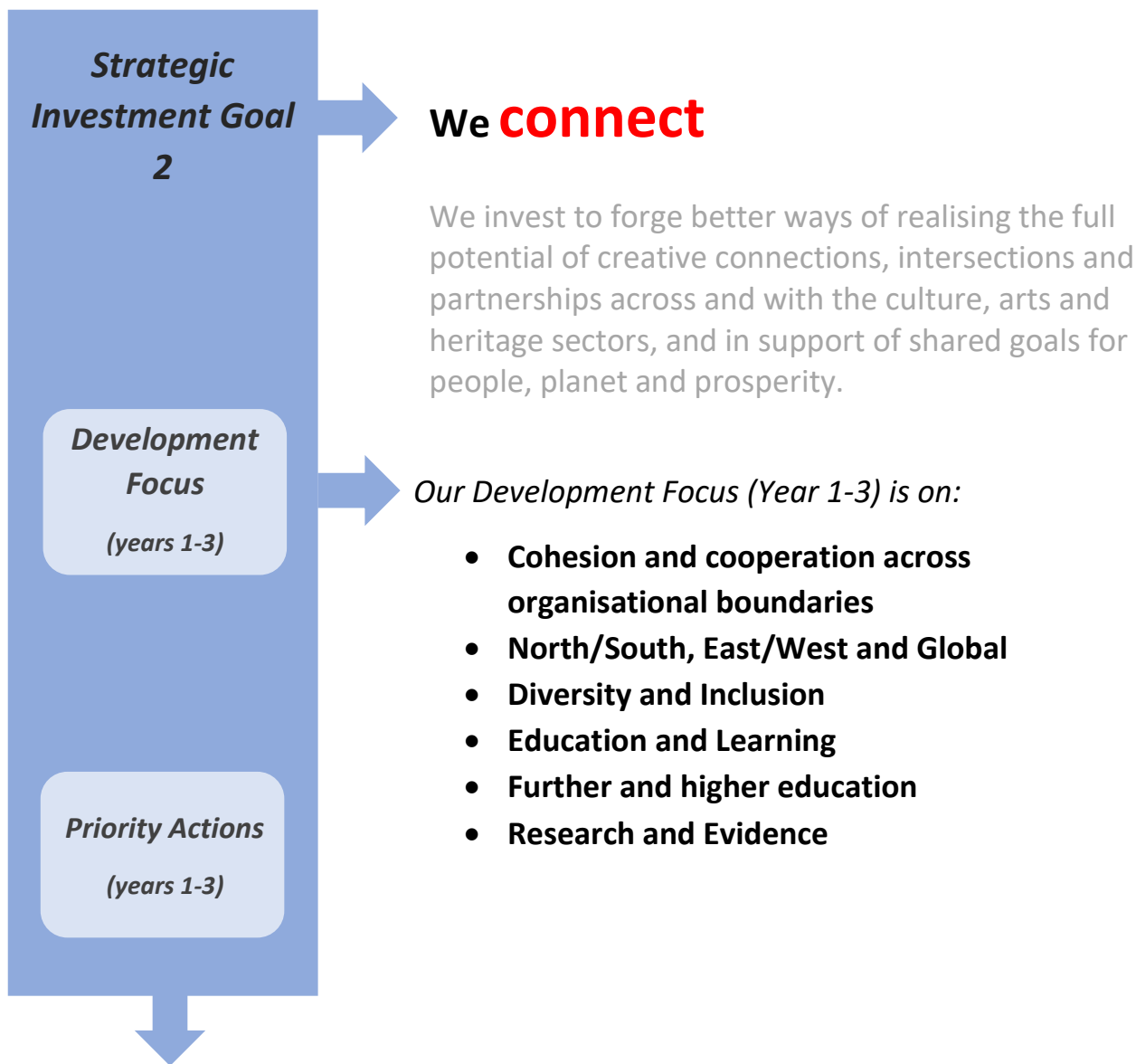
Priority Actions support this Strategic Investment Goal and align with its Development Focus:

Programme for Government		Years 1-3
1	Embed the importance of the culture, arts and heritage sectors within a new Programme for Government, including dedicated targets and indicators; and in the delivery and investment plans for commitments arising from the <i>New Decade, New Approach</i> deal and those linked to restoration of the NI Executive.	
Core and multi-year investment		Years 1-3
2	Significantly increase the NI Executive’s core annual investment to DfC to fund its arm’s length bodies and deliver on its responsibilities and statutory duties in culture, arts and heritage.	
3	Tackle investment disparity against benchmarked national comparators, building longer term approaches and partnerships to enable Northern Ireland to be put on par with sectoral investment across the UK and Ireland over the lifetime of the strategy.	
4	Tackle investment disparity and inequities on a regional basis, including in the North West and elsewhere when evidence highlights barriers to equality and region-wide inclusive growth.	

5	Make multi-year investment commitments (3-5 years) across the culture, arts and heritage sectors to support sustainable planning and delivery by organisations and practitioners.
6	Review and improve the scheduling of relevant investment calls across public bodies, departments and local government to provide the culture, arts and heritage sectors with consistency and appropriate lead in times and, when relevant, to harmonise funding application and evaluation processes.
7	Provide a single point of online access to relevant investment calls by public bodies, departments, local government and other relevant organisations making investment and support available to the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
Capital Investment Strategy	
Years 1-3	
8	Develop a Capital Investment Strategy to support strategic investment across the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and prioritise use and reuse of existing assets, both built and cultural, in support of the priorities and goals of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI). This will include buildings and heritage at risk and the preservation, conservation, use and reuse of heritage and the historic environment, and leveraging capital investment for transformational and major projects, improvements, archives and collections, improving access, participation and audience safety, driving green growth and reducing the region's carbon footprint.
Capacity Building	
Years 1-3	
9	Expand access, for relevant organisations, to a capacity building and financial growth support programme/model across the culture, arts and heritage sectors, to assist more organisations in taking long-term and sustainable approaches to income generation.
10	Augment initiatives that help relevant organisations develop more business/private sector and philanthropic partnerships and investment from non-public sector sources.
11	Help more organisations become or grow as social enterprises where relevant, and support growth and entrepreneurship more widely across the sectors, including for those organisations, practitioners and collectives looking to develop or expand existing activities regionally and beyond Northern Ireland.
12	Review and enhance the scope of relevant public bodies to support sectoral organisations in developing sustainable business models through, for example, additional routes to income generation and involving partners with diverse financing approaches; as well as through use of financial tools and innovative approaches such as, for example, a social enterprise/sectoral loan fund.
13	Develop a client approach by relevant agencies to support sectoral organisations with the ability to grow cultural tourism audiences, generating additional revenue and income.
14	Expand and develop sectoral initiatives which enable boards to fulfil organisational purpose and ambition, underpinned by visionary leadership and good governance.
15	Augment mentoring and skills exchange programmes within and across sectors.
16	Develop and enhance initiatives to support the contribution and role of volunteers in sectoral organisations and activities.
17	Create platforms and initiatives to exchange learning and signpost practitioners and organisations to resources and support available from departments, councils and other bodies.

18	Enhance support to sectoral organisations for audience and market development.
19	Advance the role of the sectors in Community Wealth Building (CWB) and access to support on the 5 pillars of CWB - 1) plural ownership of the economy; 2) making financial power work for local places; 3) fair employment & just labour markets; 4) progressive procurement of goods & services; and 5) socially productive use of land & property.
20	Deliver support to sectoral organisations and practitioners on climate change awareness, mitigation and adaptation.
Sectoral employment and skills	
Years 1-3	
21	Work with sectoral bodies, agencies and investors to support the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland and develop and deliver a strategic approach and long-term sectoral plans for continuing professional development, providing learning and training pathways for people throughout their careers in the culture, arts and heritage sectors. This will include clear, distinctive, and viable career pathways for the cultural and creative skills needed to enable and sustain vital industries such as live performances, and delivery outside of traditional education pathways.
22	Review learning from multi-year COVID Recovery Employment and Skills Programmes and options for extension and expansion, including scope for mid-career positions/opportunities, and in support of wider sectoral plans for continuing professional development.
23	Review ways to enhance heritage skills and training pathways to sustain heritage trades and services and establish pilot training pathways for identified priority skill areas.
24	Recognise the key role of independent creatives and freelancers within the region's creative ecology and wider economy, and strengthen ways to ensure they are supported, paid appropriately and valued as innovative members of and contributors to the regional workforce and civic society.
25	Promote the role of fundraising positions within organisations across the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and develop and enhance skills, training and career paths.
26	Develop and expand initiatives that promote and enable fair access to careers in culture, arts and heritage sectors.
Well-being within the sectors	
Years 1-3	
27	Develop and enhance initiatives supporting the mental health and well-being of those working or volunteering in the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
28	Review the pilot Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) scheme recently adopted in the Republic of Ireland and consider options for similar initiatives in Northern Ireland.
29	Review good practice on Dignity at Work approaches for the culture, arts and heritage sectors and support, coordinate and invest in local initiatives that support all sectoral places of work to be safe and inclusive environments.
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	
Years 1-3	
30	Increase the role of and support to the historic environment and the culture, arts and heritage sectors in government efforts to lower emissions and balancing of climate, environment and economy priorities through associated Climate Action Plans.

31	Enhance the targeting of regional investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation to protect and conserve the historic environment and ensure it is used and reused in ways that support people and address community needs and which enable continued experience of and learning from Northern Ireland's unique heritage assets. Identify risks and impacts and plan to adapt for inevitable change.
32	Enable reuse of vacant historic building stock, particularly buildings at risk, to contribute to 2050 net zero emissions target.
33	Develop local, regional and multi-jurisdiction initiatives which recognise and strengthen the role of arts and cultural organisations and practitioners to deliver creative responses to the climate change emergency in ways which engage, educate and encourage behavioural change, and which foster stewardship towards our natural, built and cultural heritage. This includes development of dedicated programming and extending the scope of existing programmes to encompass these themes and activities.
Regulatory and legislative change	
	Years 1-3
34	Support regulatory change and review grant conditions to improve the lives of artists and creative workers through better rates of pay and working conditions.
35	Review and enhance procurement processes and Buy Social clauses in public sector contracts to support local sectoral organisations/practitioners and Community Wealth Building ambitions.
36	Consider reintroducing 'investment in art schemes' as part of capital projects, and include ways to increase innovation in delivery through, for example, community based participatory activity to build local ownership of capital investment, in addition to options for commissioned art work or purchases.
37	Enhance economic development and foreign direct investment (FDI) practice by encouraging companies/investors in Northern Ireland to engage with and partner with the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
38	Review the balance of regeneration powers between central and local government so that places can better integrate culture, arts and heritage into planning policies and active place making strategies and delivery.
39	Develop and consult on a Heritage Act for Northern Ireland and updating of longstanding protections. Review best practice in operational delivery and oversight arrangements in other jurisdictions across the UK and Ireland.
40	Enhance regulatory arrangements, guidance and cooperation between departmental and local government responsibilities for the historic environment.
41	Urgently engage with UK devolved administrations and Westminster government to advocate repeal of VAT on repair and reuse of listed buildings.



Priority Actions support this Strategic Investment Goal and align with its Development Focus:

Cohesion and cooperation across organisational boundaries		Years 1-3
42	Embed the visibility and importance of the culture, arts and heritage sectors to key cross-departmental strategies such as, for example, 10X Economy, Environment strategy, Green Growth, Circular Economy, Skills Strategy, Mental Health strategy, and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI); and integration within respective delivery and investment plans.	
43	Develop and maintain Creative Delivery Frameworks for each Executive Department and Local Council, providing ongoing evidence of the impact of the culture, arts and heritage sectors on departmental and local government activities and priorities. This will also help identify and advance new opportunities and advance joint investment programmes between and across the Executive and local councils.	
44	Establish a Sectoral Advisory Body and inclusive and region wide mechanism to support oversight and delivery of the strategy.	

45	Disseminate (across Departments, Local Government and ALBs) relevant learning and insight from focus groups convened by the Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce.
46	Enhance strategic planning and collaborative investment and delivery across ALBs/Cultural Institutions, and with departmental responsibilities for the historic environment, languages and public records.
47	Encourage development and learning opportunities and the skills and experience of staff across the NI Civil Service to engage with, support and deliver in partnership with the culture, arts and heritage sectors. This should include sectoral secondments into the NICS.
48	Establish the means to enhance strategic planning and collaborative investment/delivery with other major investors and non-public sector stakeholders in Northern Ireland's culture, arts and heritage sectors.
49	Expedite cross-departmental and public sector collaboration to support the application of culture, arts and heritage initiatives and approaches in health and social care, including in areas such as mental health and social prescribing.
50	Create a meaningful cultural tourism policy and investment delivery framework that properly reflects Northern Ireland's rich, varied and diverse cultures, heritage, landscapes, languages, traditions and creativity. This should be integral to the ongoing development and subsequent delivery of a Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland.
51	Extend the pilot Heritage Officer model at Derry City and Strabane District Council (jointly supported by the Council and DfC) to all 11 councils; and consider similar staffing partnerships/working arrangements for culture, arts and heritage personnel across regional and local government.
52	Enhance strategic approaches to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) through partnerships with the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
North/South, East/West and Global	
	Years 1-3
53	Maximise North/South and East/West and international creative connections and sectoral initiatives, partnerships and investments, including inter-governmental approaches and agreements which can access multi-jurisdiction investment.
54	Work with the UK and Irish governments, and EU institutions, to counter mobility and cost barriers arising from BREXIT and those which inhibit sectoral and cultural exchange and partnerships across borders.
55	Develop inter-governmental/agency partnerships and align support for touring and showcasing of cultural work, collections and archives on a North/South, East/West and global basis, and consider scope for a dedicated fund/programme.
56	Support cultural exchange, collaborations with and advocacy of NI's culture, arts and heritage. Review learning from approaches elsewhere such as the Scottish Government's survey on international aspirations and potential of Scotland's culture sector.
57	Develop partnerships with the Executive Office and relevant agencies to support Northern Ireland's international relations including with the USA, European Union and other targeted countries.

58	Develop cross-departmental initiatives in response to annual findings of the Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index, and how Northern Ireland is viewed internationally in relation to dimensions including culture, and on attributes such as Creative Place; Cultural Heritage; Contemporary Culture; Historic Buildings; Vibrant Cities; and Quality of Life.
59	Embed strategic alignments and sustainable long-term outcomes for cross-border and other collaborative initiatives and ensure these initiatives, such as the planned establishment of a new all-island Dance Company, provide additionality for relevant sectors, organisations and practitioners from Northern Ireland.
Diversity and Inclusion	
Years 1-3	
60	Develop and enable joined up partnership approaches to enhance delivery of current and planned social inclusion strategies including, for example, the Disability and Work Strategy; Racial Equality Strategy; Active Ageing, Anti-Poverty, Gender, Disability, Sexual Orientation, and other <i>New Decade, New Approach</i> commitments.
61	Develop and enhance sectoral specific initiatives supporting employment, training, access and participation by d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people, and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds.
62	Review, improve and harmonise the pre-application and post-award monitoring and evaluation processes of funders to the culture, arts and heritage sectors, as experienced by d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse applicants, and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds. This includes investment enabling pre-application support to applicants, and an underpinning accessibility and capacity building model to support applicants with pre-application and post-award monitoring and evaluation processes.
63	Explore opportunities for sectoral organisations to be involved in the design and delivery of research and evaluation activities on equity, diversity and inclusion issues.
64	Enhance support for audience / participant access requirements in sectoral programmes, venues, events and the historic environment.
65	Monitor data on participation and on funding and support to d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists/creative practitioners, and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds; establish baselines and publish an annual sectoral report for measuring progress and success across the duration of the strategy.
Education and learning	
Years 1-3	
66	Promote, support and further develop the role, delivery and impact of the culture, arts and heritage sectors and practices in early years provision; and strengthen sectoral collaborations involving relevant agencies and the voluntary and community sectors to ensure access for and participation by all children and young people in formal and informal learning environments and ways to fully support their creative potential.
67	Increase the presence of the arts, creativity, languages and heritage in the primary and secondary education curriculum, including, among others, art & design, craft, dance, drama, circus, film, music and traditional arts, as well as experience of heritage, historic environments, geography, history and languages to enhance learning and promote understanding and respect for different traditions and cultural diversity in Northern Ireland.

68	Integrate sectoral initiatives into action plans supporting recommendations and investment arising from the Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland, and related Department of Education approaches to improve learning outcomes and support schools and teachers.
69	Work with the Department for the Economy to ensure delivery of the NI Skills Strategy is enhanced by promotion of arts and creative subjects, and to support the culture, arts and heritage sectors in helping young people develop essential skills and technical competencies, critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, and social and behavioral skills needed to navigate the velocity of change across all industrial areas and wider society.
70	Promote the Arts as complementary to and as important as initiatives on the STEM agenda (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), and advance inclusion of the arts into the STEAM agenda as required.
Further and higher education	
	Years 1-3
71	Enhance strategic partnership working with all institutions of further and higher education across Northern Ireland, including aligning and adapting research, teaching and learning provision with current and future skills and training needs across the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
72	Develop and maintain a Creative Delivery Framework for FE/HE institutions, establishing skills, training and qualifications pathways enabled by FE/HE across Northern Ireland, and gaps. The Framework will also capture the wider cultural, arts and heritage impact and 'footprint' of these major institutions and their role and contribution to, and partnerships with, Northern Ireland's culture, arts and heritage sectors. This will help identify and advance new opportunities and joint investment programmes between FE/HE and Executive departments, ALBs, local councils and other relevant investors, including business and philanthropy.
73	Develop and enhance partnerships with FE/HE institutions and the culture, arts and heritage sectors to widen access to and participation in further and higher education, and to augment community engagement and civic initiatives led and supported by these institutions.
Research and Evidence	
	Years 1-3
74	Develop a Sectoral Research and Evidence work-strand, bringing together departmental, local government, ALB and sectoral organisational data, evidence and insights, and identifying gaps and commissioning new research. This includes capturing and proactively conveying the true breadth and depth of the region's creative ecology.
75	Coordinate, and when relevant harmonise, evidence gathering and evaluation approaches across departments, local government and public sector bodies providing investment to the culture, arts and heritage sectors. This includes, for example, on thematic areas such as health and well-being.
76	Enhance sectoral research and policy development partnerships with NI's universities, relevant sectoral organisations, and their national and international networks, including, for example, the UK's Creative Industries and Policy Evidence Centre; and other research institutions, public bodies and sectoral bodies on an all-island and East/West basis.



Priority Actions support this Strategic Investment Goal and align with its Development Focus:

Digital Innovation		Years 1-3
77	Continue to support research and innovation involving new technologies and opportunities to strengthen and intersect with the culture, arts and heritage sectors. This includes research and capacity building initiatives which develop educational and training models, and strategic partnerships with the Arts Council, NI Screen and libraries, museums, public record/archives and other bodies.	
78	Support organisations and practitioners across the culture, arts and heritage sectors in developing and implementing plans to deploy technology and innovation in reaching and building audiences, and in maximising commercial/social enterprise, educational, environmental, social inclusion and health and well-being outcomes	
79	Explore development of an internship programme which supports digital development and innovation in sectoral organisations.	

Creative Industries		Years 1-3
80	Explore development of a Creative Industries Innovation Fund to catalyse innovation across and between art forms and to boost entrepreneurial potential and skills/training pathways. This can include fostering innovation and partnerships with public bodies as well as the heritage sectors, including archives, museums, libraries, and sensitive and sustainable re-use of heritage buildings and climate change adaptation and mitigation.	
Creative Spaces		Years 1-3
81	Enhance programming integration and capacity of sectoral venues and spaces, including libraries, to develop as creative hubs and community-based centres of gravity for a wide range of cross-departmental and local government services and initiatives. This can include partnerships with owners /building preservation trusts and historic buildings.	
82	Increase the use of Community Asset Transfer and other financial tools to identify and secure public sector buildings and sites (and other owned properties) which can be utilised for creative space for artists, collectives and creative practitioners, and more widely in approaches to culture-led regeneration.	
83	Strengthen the role of culture, arts and heritage in DfC's regeneration and place making responsibilities and delivery, as well as in other departmental and local government initiatives and strategies for regenerating communities and animating places and high street/retail and visitor/tourism focused spaces. This will include exploring and implementing legislative changes to ensure that planning, regeneration, and place making strategies prioritise the use and reuse of existing assets, both built and cultural, to enhance the region's authentic character and ensure that the distinctive qualities of our cities, towns, villages and townlands are rooted in the contemporary expression of their culture, arts, and heritage.	
Content and Talent Development		Years 1-3
84	Increase and target investment for the development and creation of new artistic works, and support sustainable touring and showcasing of cultural work locally, across the island, between the two islands and beyond.	
85	Develop Pipeline and Accelerator programmes and partnerships with relevant agencies, sectoral bodies and local government to help individual artists realise their commercial ambitions – including matching creators and business to collectively achieve their goals.	
86	Improve entrepreneurship and innovation across the sectors and provide support to those developing new ideas for growth, expanding existing ventures or developing creative enterprises in local, national and international markets.	
87	Develop creative content, exhibitions and ways of improving storytelling, interpretation and engagement with the historic environment, archives, collections and intangible heritage across the region; and support viable career pathways for the cultural and creative skills needed to enable and sustain such approaches, and vital industries such as live performances, and explore delivery outside of traditional education pathways.	
88	Incentivize local venues to facilitate more NI based touring and showcases of cultural work by local artists. This will build new audiences and a culture of R&D and content/product development which strengthens the capacity of local artists to successfully tour and export to national and international markets.	

Challenge Funds		Years 1-3
89	Support the 10X Economy advocacy of Challenge Funds to design, test and scale innovative culture, arts and heritage solutions to economic, social, environmental challenges.	
Creative Insights		Years 1-3
90	Deliver an ongoing programme of Creative Insight events, conferences and showcases demonstrating the impact of culture, arts and heritage on PfG outcomes, and the sectors' key contribution to innovation and delivery in Northern Ireland. This will be informed by a Research and Evidence work-strand.	

Delivery

The Taskforce wants a strategy delivered and its investment mission and vision realised. It has spent many hours reflecting on the relationship, barriers and opportunities between the culture, arts and heritage sectors and government. It is abundantly clear that these sectors have been under resourced for years. The sectors are ready to work with Government to achieve the mission and vision of a development and investment strategy. The sectors are and always have been a catalyst and enabler of the economic, social and environmental priorities of Government at regional and local levels and across these islands. It is Government here which must engage with, champion and invest in the creative infrastructure which can deliver transformative outcomes for this region.

Ministerial Leadership

A strategy for *Investing in Creative Delivery* must be an NI Executive wide strategy. It still needs a focal point and champion. Under current political and sectoral governance arrangements, a future Minister for Communities will be that champion and lead oversight and drive delivery.

Departmental structures

The starting point for the Taskforce was to tackle the historic trend of disinvestment in the culture, arts and heritage sectors, which is fuelled by insufficient recognition and understanding of the value, impact and relevance of culture, arts and heritage to cross-cutting government priorities.

Some members of the Taskforce believe that Northern Ireland needs a Department for Culture, Arts and Heritage. In other jurisdictions, these major responsibilities are not subsumed into larger departmental structures with wider ranging remits and disparate functions. Arguably, the outcome of departmental restructuring in

recent years has exacerbated a squeeze and/or push of the sectors to the fringe of investment priorities. By way of counter argument, some on the Taskforce highlight that the historic decline in sectoral investment can be traced back to the smaller Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

Views advocated during discussions included an innovative, agile and delivery focused Department for Culture, Arts and Heritage to help realise the full potential of these sectors. A Minister for such a department would have the strategic and operational focus to spearhead the innovation role it plays across government, as well as in developing investment opportunities across these islands and on the world stage.

Other suggestions included a Junior Minister role, with a similar dedicated sectoral focus; or a Commissioner or Commission appointed by and supported within the Department. The Taskforce strongly and unanimously advocates that current or future departmental structures need urgently strengthened to address the disinvestment barriers and challenges outlined in this report, and to advance the strategic and operational priorities and ways of working mapped out in this report.

Delivery of the strategy

There are established inter-departmental arrangements and governance mechanisms for existing programmes and issues which extend beyond the organisational boundaries of Executive departments. Undoubtedly there will be action/project specific or work-strand implementation groups bringing relevant officials and other stakeholders together. This will become clearer when the strategy is finalised and action plans fully developed. The Taskforce recommends strategy oversight and delivery arrangements which promote effective

collaboration and reflect a strategy's mission and transformational focus. This should involve all Executive Ministers; the Head of the Civil Service and senior cross departmental officials; senior local government officers; and a sectoral advisory group which includes links to stakeholder forums across local councils:

- Ministerial Oversight Group, with all Executive Ministers having membership.
- Local Councils are key partners, and effective partnership with Executive departments is crucial. Structures must enable senior officers from councils to be fully invested in planning, delivery and oversight of the strategy. Existing structures in Community Planning and Regional City Deal mechanisms may be relevant and complementary to implementation.
- Establish a Sectoral Advisory Group to support oversight and delivery of the strategy. This should include mechanisms which directly link to and involve the sectoral stakeholder groups which many local councils have already established. This would reflect the strategic importance of partnering with and building on the ambitions of area-based plans which have been codesigned with sectoral stakeholders and communities across these localities.
- There are useful lessons from the Delivering Social Change (DSC) programme, launched over a decade ago to enable a cross departmental approach on key challenges. Review of that initiative advocated incentivizing and rewarding collaborative behaviours rather than relying on structures. It included 'pooling' of funding between departments, which gave shared ownership and increased commitment to programme oversight and delivery.
- A Strategic Delivery Group of senior departmental officials will be pivotal to the oversight approach. Given the innovative and transformational focus of the strategy, the Taskforce recommends that the Head of the Civil Service has a leading role in oversight and advocacy.
- This report has highlighted the importance of forging and facilitating more effective operational and strategic connections and linkages across DfC itself. This includes with its ALBs and, for example, effective coordination and integration of place making responsibilities with culture, arts and heritage; and sectoral collaborations across other areas of DfC's remit such as housing, sport, social inclusion, and the community and voluntary sector. The Department needs to strengthen collaborations with other departments and local government; enhance engagement with the culture, arts and heritage sectors; and improve cross-border, national and international linkages. The Taskforce encourages DfC to expedite recalibration of strategic focus and operational purpose within the Department, and an outward looking and innovation and delivery focused remit for relevant branches, divisions and officials to support a strategy. The Department should also consider secondments from the sectors to support this.
- The work of this Taskforce exemplifies sectoral stakeholders passionate about and committed to unlocking the full potential of culture, arts and heritage. The expertise, insights, forums and networks brought to this Taskforce are those which can continue to support the design, planning and delivery of key actions. Maintaining, harnessing and embedding such partnership approaches will help transform governance arrangements into creative delivery.

Next Steps

Finalising a strategy

The Taskforce wants momentum maintained. Submission of this report fulfils the Taskforce's Terms of Reference and provides the Department for Communities with an informed and structured basis to engage internally and with wider government stakeholders in finalising a draft strategy and initial 3-year action plan.

The Taskforce recommends that the Department engages more widely across the sectors to share the thrust of this report's recommendations, and to do so prior to the launch of a public consultation on a finalised strategy document in the Autumn.

Partnership with Local Government has firmly been positioned by this Taskforce as crucial. The Department has liaised with council officers throughout this process and should now secure the endorsement of each council.

There should be further engagement by the Department with the ALBs it oversees and provides investment to. Many of these have been actively involved with the Taskforce. However, the Taskforce has detailed a level of ambition which necessitates a collective and coordinated delivery role by these organisations. It is an ambition based on investing in their corporate strategies and longer-term ambitions.

The initial 3-year actions proposed by the Taskforce should be considered by cross-departmental, local government and ALB partners to identify potential gaps and alignments which can further develop an inaugural delivery plan.

Telling the full story

This Taskforce purposely focused on mapping out an underpinning sectoral development and investment framework to provide the strategic purpose and operational intent to address

historic disinvestment and tackle an ingrained disconnection across government on the value, impact and relevance of culture, arts and heritage. But a fuller story still needs to be told.

Wider engagement and partnership working across departments and local councils, including on Creative Delivery Frameworks, will be catalysed and advanced by fully conveying current impact on areas such as health, the environment, peace building, the economy and education.

The Taskforce recommends the Department, working with its ALBs, involves the sectors on task and finish groups to help collate examples of current delivery and to articulate underlying models of practice relevant to and supportive of cross-cutting departmental and local government priorities; as well as ways to communicate to a wider audience, in a finalised strategy document, the impact, value and importance of culture, arts and heritage.

Consultation

The Taskforce recommends the Department reconvenes and updates the Taskforce in advance of the public consultation exercise.

The Taskforce recognises there may be ongoing political uncertainty but in the absence of a restored Executive (and possible barriers to initiating a statutory consultation period) the Department should consider alternative ways of taking the views of the public more widely across the region. The Department must be creative with such engagement and harness the creative infrastructure readily available to it. There is indeed a great story to be told, and this will build and sustain momentum for the extent of policy commitment and whole of government approach which a strategy must deliver.

Summary of recommendations and conclusions

Investment ambition	
1	The Taskforce believes collective effort, regionally, must be on realising the full potential of our culture, arts and heritage sectors. Our shared ambition should reflect that, and for Northern Ireland to be put on par with sectoral investment across the UK and Ireland over the lifetime of a strategy.
Focus Group reports	
2	The Taskforce recommends that findings and key insights from its focus group reports are utilised now by relevant public bodies and agencies to improve current support to the culture, arts and heritage sectors, as well as inform actions as part of a finalised strategy.
Starting point for a strategy	
3	The Taskforce strongly encourages the NI Executive and local government to reassess the value they place on culture, arts and heritage and its intrinsic importance to people, communities and in place making. We recommend Government invests in strengthening sectoral organisations and supporting practitioners who already deliver and catalyse economic, social and environmental benefits for this region. We want Executive departments, local councils, arm's length bodies and other agencies to increase and align investment to fully recognise and support the impact and potential of our sectors.
4	The Taskforce believes the value, impact and relevance of culture, arts and heritage is not sufficiently recognised, understood nor supported across Executive departments and aspects of Local Government. This fundamental barrier must be addressed as it fuels decisions which directly lead to decreased investment, lack of strategic alignments, reduced benefits for people, communities and places, and missed opportunities for this region.
Approach to strategy development	
5	The Taskforce strongly supports and recommends development of a strategy that will champion culture, arts and heritage across government and guarantee an investment focus and framework to increase and align long term support to the sectors.
6	The Taskforce recommends a systemic approach to how the culture, arts and heritage sectors are perceived and engaged with across government. This means being championed in a way which forges partnerships and investment alignments across Executive departments, with local government and with other potential regional, cross-border, national and international investors.
7	The Taskforce believes the role and collective impact of the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be recognised and embedded as an enabling element and recipient of strategic investment across government.

8	The Taskforce recommends collectively positioning, across government, the culture, arts and heritage sectors as the foundation of an innovative and region-wide physical and people-based infrastructure which delivers and amplifies outcomes for government and society. This supports the business case argument for investment through the organisational strategies and ambitions of its constituent components.
9	The Taskforce believes the culture, arts and heritage sectors, government and other partners need to continue to work together to capture and proactively convey the true breadth and depth of this creative ecology.
10	The Taskforce recommends a strategy rooted in the logic of investing in the culture, arts and heritage sectors to realise the exponential returns which automatically flow from strong, sustainable and thriving sectors, and the constituent organisations, people and places which provide the creative delivery this region needs.
11	The Taskforce is of the opinion that the Department for Communities must secure and increase investment to and advocate for its arm's length bodies and related departmental responsibilities and be the key enabler of systemic change required across NI Executive departments and in developing partnerships with local government. The Taskforce believes such change includes within the Department itself, and significant connections and opportunities which can be advanced across policy areas such as, for example, regeneration, housing, social inclusion, and the community and voluntary sectors.
12	The Taskforce believes a regional developmental and investment strategy for the culture, arts and heritage sectors should partner with, build on and support collaborations and alignments with and across the strategic plans and ambitions of local government.
13	The Taskforce has no doubt that partnership between DfC, its ALBs and local government can deliver transformative support to the culture, arts and heritage sectors, and be a key driver in addressing regional imbalances and historic underfunding, such as in the North West and elsewhere, which inhibit region-wide and equitable and inclusive growth.
14	The Taskforce recommends that the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be broadly defined for the purposes of an NI Executive development and investment framework, and for advocacy of their regional impact and reach. This should include the remits and activities supported by relevant ALBs/cultural institutions and departmental and statutory responsibilities.
15	The Taskforce believes a sectoral development strategy must stimulate intersections and alignments which increase investment and amplify the impact of relevant sectoral strategies, sectoral bodies and the corporate plans of organisations and community and place-based ambitions across this region. This should be the goal, rather than displacement, dilution or distraction.
16	The Taskforce strongly advocates a review of legislative protections and enhancement of regulatory arrangements, guidance and cooperation between departmental and local government responsibilities for the historic environment.
17	The Taskforce calls on a restored NI Executive to work with the UK and Irish governments, and EU institutions, to support mobility and cultural exchange for sectoral organisations and practitioners.
18	The Taskforce strongly recommends an immediate phase of increased reinvestment to ensure viability and capacity of organisations and practitioners to pivot to a developmental sectoral approach

Overview of strategy	
19	The Taskforce recommends that the NI Executive collectively champions investment in culture, arts and heritage to realise the full economic, social and environmental potential of these sectors. While the DfC Minister, under current statutory arrangements, will lead on this, we believe a strategic approach must enable Ministers of all Departments to commit to the value and key contribution these sectors make to departmental priorities. As a result, we urge appropriate investment, more joint and cross-departmental working, and more engagement with the sectors.
20	We believe the NI Executive and local government should forge and deliver on meaningful commitments which align and amplify investment in and remove barriers impacting on the culture, arts and heritage sectors.
21	We endorse and recommend enhanced partnerships on a cross-border basis and between these islands, as well as building on international goodwill and seizing opportunities to enhance investment in Northern Ireland's culture, arts and heritage sectors.
22	We recommend a stronger focus on inclusion and participation, particularly of people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds; as well as communities and places which have felt locked out of peace dividends from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. We believe the culture, arts and heritage sectors should be recognised and better supported for their proven and continuing impact in promoting social inclusion and peacebuilding, and this should underpin major programmes and strategic approaches in the years ahead.
23	We believe the prolonged and declining investment in the culture, arts and heritage sectors must be redressed, along with regional imbalances.
24	We strongly support and recommend an approach that sufficiently invests in the strategies and ambitions of ALBs/cultural institutions, local councils and other sectoral bodies, and for these to be supported by the NI Executive as key components and enablers of a regional culture, arts and heritage infrastructure critical to the economic, social and environmental ambitions of Northern Ireland. To support this, and encourage behavioural change and drive delivery, the Taskforce maps out the spine of a strategy structure with indicative text to communicate the function of a sectoral development strategy and its vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic investment goals, initial development focus and priority actions
Policy commitment	
25	The Taskforce believes only a NI Executive wide strategy can provide a unified and coherent sectoral development and investment framework for the culture, arts and heritage sectors and deliver transformational change. This strategy should be led by the Department for Communities, be supported across Executive Departments and provide the basis of partnerships with local government and other investors. It must drive collaborative approaches which increase and align investment and support to the sectors
Vision and Mission	
26	The Taskforce recommends an explicit, public and accountable commitment to investment and collaborative delivery across Government and on ways the culture, arts and heritage sectors are recognised, valued and supported.

27	The Taskforce urges DfC to commence a public consultation on a draft strategy in autumn 2023, with the launch of an approved strategy in early 2024. A 10-year vision will therefore extend to 2034.
Guiding principles	
28	The Taskforce concludes it is necessary to change perceptions, across the public sector, of the value of the culture, arts and heritage sectors and to embed behavioural change across the whole of government.
Strategic Investment Goals	
29	The Taskforce recommends a strategy that provides a framework and impetus for investment. Three indicative Strategic Investment Goals are the recommended pillars of a developmental approach.
Development focus and priority actions	
30	The Taskforce wants government to expedite strategic alignments and quickly realise investment opportunities to increase support to the sectors in the short to medium term. The Department for Communities should develop an initial 3-year Delivery Plan which details the Development Focus and Priority Actions in support of the recommended three Strategic Investment Goals.
Delivery and Next Steps	
31	The Taskforce strongly and unanimously advocates that current or future departmental structures need urgently strengthened to address the disinvestment barriers and challenges outlined in this report, and to advance the strategic and operational priorities and ways of working mapped out in this report.
32	The Taskforce recommends strategy oversight and delivery arrangements which promote effective collaboration and reflect a strategy's mission and transformational focus. This should involve all Executive Ministers; the Head of the Civil Service and senior cross departmental officials; senior local government officers; and a sectoral advisory group which includes links to stakeholder forums across local councils:
33	The Taskforce encourages DfC to expedite recalibration of strategic focus and operational purpose within the Department, and an outward looking and innovation and delivery focused remit for relevant branches, divisions and officials to support a strategy. The Department should also consider secondments from the sectors to support this.
34	The Taskforce recommends that the Department engages more widely across the sectors to share the thrust of this report's recommendations, and to do so prior to the launch of a public consultation on a finalised strategy document in the Autumn.
35	The Taskforce recommends that the Department, working with its ALBs, involves the sectors on task and finish groups to help collate examples of current delivery and to articulate underlying models of practice relevant to and supportive of cross-cutting departmental and local government priorities; as well as ways to communicate to a wider audience, in a finalised strategy document, the impact, value and importance of culture, arts and heritage.
36	The Taskforce recommends the Department reconvenes and updates the Taskforce in advance of the public consultation exercise.

Section 3

List of Annexes

- **Annex A - Terms of Reference**
- **Focus Group Reports and the Taskforce submission to the independent review of Education are available on request by email to ARCI@Communities-ni.gov.uk**

Available in alternative formats.

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