

The Mayor of London's Culture Strategy

19 June 2018

Executive Summary

Heart of London Business Alliance serves as the voice for 500 businesses and 100 property owners in the Piccadilly & St James's and Leicester Square areas. We represent some of London's most iconic cultural organisations and businesses, including the Royal Academy of Arts, the National Portrait Gallery and the Courtyard Societies that are hosted in Burlington House, as well as famous theatres, cinemas and independent galleries. The creative economy is also well-represented in our areas, with members operating at the top of the film, architecture, advertising and marketing industries. These institutions make a significant contribution to the West End's reputation as a world-class destination and cultural powerhouse.

While we broadly welcome the Mayor's ambition to make culture accessible for all Londoners, the strategy's focus on outer London boroughs does not always adequately recognise the cultural offer that already exists in the West End. This is not a zero sum game; there is room for both the West End and outer London to be celebrated for the different types of cultural experiences they offer. Both require positive support from the Mayor

We would like to see an expansion of London's cultural offering, supporting informal and off-peak culture through the continuation of festivals and events, and the better management of London's streets. The Mayor should work to remove barriers which prevent Londoners from accessing culture and entering creative jobs. These include high travel costs, poor disabled access in some historic buildings and parts of the TfL network, and a lack of opportunities in the creative industries for training and apprenticeship opportunities.

There are a number of opportunities for Heart of London and other BIDs to work with the Mayor on culture, and we look forward to exploring the possibilities for working in partnership. Our response sets out a number of suggestions that the Mayor should consider to further improve Culture Strategy, including:

- That the strategy recognises the importance of the West End to London's cultural economy.
- That the Mayor advocates for better visa arrangements for Chinese tourists and High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs).
- That the Mayor advocates for improved airport capacity in the South East.
- That the Mayor works with Westminster City Council and businesses to ensure that reformed licensing policies allow for a culturally-led ENTE to become a reality in the West End.
- That the Mayor considers appointing Heart of London as the BIDs champion on his Cultural Leadership Board, to enable the sharing of best practice about collaboration between business and cultural institutions.
- That the Mayor considers how to tackle high travel costs as a barrier to culture.
- That the Mayor considers how London & Partners can best work in partnership with businesses and institutions to promote culture.

Our response to the Draft Culture Strategy for London

1. What impact does the capital's culture have on quality of life for Londoners? What could the Mayor do to amplify and support these areas?

Heart of London is committed to the notion that culture is vitally important for Londoners and should be accessible to all. While we welcome the strategy's focus on improving access to culture on people's doorstep, it is essential that the cultural offer of central London and the West End in particular, continues to be recognised and invested in.

The strategy often fails to recognise the importance of the West End in driving tourism to other parts of the capital. The West End is the home to a large majority of London's tourist attractions, and has an international reputation as a hub of cultural and creative activity. The area acts as the 'shop window' for tourists, with almost all first-time visitors coming to experience the West End in the first instance, before exploring the rest of London and the UK on repeat visits. It is increasingly likely that luxury travellers will visit outer London boroughs in search of authentic London experiences, but only once they have visited central London and its cultural offerings.

It is important to recognise that when the West End thrives, this creates knock-on economic growth across London. Addressing the challenges for the cultural economy in central London would have major benefit for the rest of the Capital.

We welcome the Mayor's focus on the principles of Good Growth and creating conditions for cultural institutions to grow alongside the residential and commercial developments that are vitally needed in London. Heart of London supports many of the policies enacted by the Mayor for the protection of cultural venues and the night-time economy, including the introduction of an 'agent of change' principle. With regards to planning policy, the strategic functions of the Central Activities Zone must be prioritised, particularly in the commercial core of the West End.

2. Do you agree that London must embrace a broad definition of culture that includes less formal places and spaces? If yes, what could the Mayor do to best support informal culture?

There are a number of opportunities in the West End for broadening the definition of culture. A number of major infrastructure projects coming forward will unlock cultural opportunities across the West End, including any future plans for Oxford Street. Underground stations, for example, could be better utilised to provide a cultural gateway into the West End. The introduction of culture-specific signage at Green Park and Piccadilly Circus could be used to advertise cultural experiences that are otherwise less-well known, and help with wayfinding, pointing visitors in the direction of a broader range of attractions.

We welcome the Mayor's support for festivals and events in London, as these have the potential to offer a great range of informal cultural experiences. Heart of London is supportive of events which provide Londoners and tourists with free access to world-class art and entertainment. A good example of this is the second Lumière London event in January 2018, which was a great success at bringing customers to the West End, and wider, in the post-Christmas slump. Heart of London is proud to have worked alongside the GLA to make this happen with funding, marketing and organisational support. However, it is a shame the strategy does not recognise the major financial backing from Heart of London and other BIDs in delivering these events.

Street performance has the potential to provide an informal, non-ticketed cultural experience for Londoners and attract visitors to an area. However, there are a significant number of irresponsible street performers operating in the West End, and there is a need for more effective street management to tackle this problem. Irresponsible street performers can be noisy and intimidating, and competition for performance space often results in

overcrowding, with pavements and public spaces blocked. This has obvious public safety implications. Noise, particularly from amplified performances, has a negative impact on our business members and is a major irritant for local residents. The quality of most of the acts acting in an antisocial manner is poor and is combined with aggressive touting for money. Responsible, longstanding performers can be subject to intimidation, while new performers find it difficult to establish themselves. The problem is acute around Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus, although not limited to these locations.

Attempts at voluntary codes of conduct have consistently proved ineffective, and are widely ignored by the more problematic performers. Heart of London would like to work with the Mayor and Westminster City Council (WCC) to rectify this, and would advocate the introduction of a licensing system for street performers or a more regulated pitch based system such as exists in Covent Garden or on the Underground network. While we have supported the Mayor's Busk in London Scheme in the past, over time it has proven not to address the fundamental issue, and we will not support this financially at this time without stronger street management measures being put in place.

Heart of London represents the most mature night time economy area in London and some of the world's most important cultural institutions. While the introduction of the Night Tube facilities the Mayor's vision for a culturally-led Night Time Economy (NTE), what is often a challenge is finding the basic 'daytime' services, like a cup of coffee or a healthy meal at night or a doctor's surgery or library. While there is broad agreement around later opening for galleries and museums, and even some night-time retail, this still only covers a very restrictive set of activities. A sustainable night time economy, accessible and inclusive to all, needs greater diversity than what our city currently offers. Heart of London would like to see an increase in authentic off-peak experiences on offer in the West End. Several of our member organisations have expressed an interest in working with sponsors to host late events, but a wider ecosystem needs to be established to drive visitors to the area and support this. We would ask that the Mayor works with Westminster City Council to ensure that their licensing policies allow for a culturally-led NTE to become a reality in the West End. As it stands highly restrictive local policies make the Mayor's welcome vision for a 24-hour city no more than an aspiration.

3. How could the Mayor help to remove barriers that prevent all Londoners from securing creative jobs? What examples of good practice are you aware of in this area?

Heart of London welcomes the Mayor's ambition to remove barriers to creative jobs, and agrees that further investment in skills is required to enable all Londoners to take advantage of London's world-class cultural and creative economy. The devolution of the adult education budget from 2019/20 will provide the Mayor with an excellent opportunity to tackle London's skills shortages, particularly in the construction, digital, retail and hospitality sectors.

We welcome the Mayor's investment in Further Education through the Skills for Londoners capital fund, and the development of Creative Industry Skills Plans. The draft Culture Strategy emphasises the Mayor's work to create opportunities in London's film and fashion industries. While we welcome the focus on these sectors as a starting point, it is important that the Mayor extends this work to address the broader skills shortages facing other key parts of London's creative and cultural economy, such as tourism and hospitality, which are heavily reliant on European Economic Community workers.

While we welcome the Mayor's acknowledgement that Brexit may cause an issue for recruitment, the strategy does not explicitly recognise the challenge facing the hospitality sector, one of the sectors under most acute threat. We want to work with our members, the Greater London Authority and Government to ensure that we promote the hospitality sector as a desirable career for Londoners, boost the skills of those entering the industry and retain staff through a clear and aspirational career path. Heart of London already works with Recruit London, managed by the Cross River Partnership, to offer a job brokerage service for our members. They give jobseekers a route back into work and fully prepare candidates for the interview process and the job,

and carefully match them to the right employer. Recruit London have built up a strong track record helping over 1,600 central London jobseekers find work since 2009, many of them in the cultural and creative economy.

We support the principle of a Good Work Standard for businesses; although it is important for the Mayor to acknowledge that creative businesses may struggle to meet this standard immediately due to increasing financial pressures. A relentless focus on tackling the rising cost of living in London, particularly housing and transport is essential for London to remain a competitive place to start, grow and conduct business. Ever-increasing rent payments and huge hikes in business rates, particularly in the West End, have meant that many businesses are struggling to remain profitable. With so much of the burden of paying for new infrastructure and regulatory change falling upon business it is more important than ever that the Mayor creates a competitive environment for growth.

4. How can the Mayor increase participation in the arts and cultural life of the capital, particularly for people who don't currently have access to it? Who should he be partnering with?

Ensuring that all Londoners are able to access arts and culture is vital to the sustainability of the creative economy and improving the quality of life of London's residents.

Central London is home to some of the UK's most important cultural institutions. The diverse range of galleries, museums and creative activities creates a cultural offering that is second to none. Unlike many other global cities, several of these attractions do not charge an entry fee and there are a range of discounts available for ticketed events.

It is our view that actual ticket costs are not the main barrier to accessing arts and culture, but rather high travel costs and a lack of information about what is on offer and how to access free and discounted tickets. We strongly welcome the Mayor's proposed pilot schemes with TfL and Team London to remove some of the barriers to culture, and look forward to learning about both schemes in more detail. We are happy to offer our support and to work in partnership to identify discounted and free cultural opportunities in our area and discuss where there are volunteer opportunities within the creative industries among our member businesses.

Communication should be a priority to increase participation. Information needs to be made available about scheduled events and activities, and this should be communicated in such a way that it reaches as many Londoners as possible. This is an area where partnership working can have a real impact, and the Mayor should build on the work already being done by London & Partners, BIDs and individual businesses and attractions in marketing London's excellent cultural offer to both London residents and visitors to the capital. There is significant room for improvement in the coordination and effectiveness of the Mayor's marketing of London, and we welcome creative ideas such as promoting the authentic London and off-peak times.

The strategy rightly acknowledges that cultural institutions should be accessible for all, including those with disabilities or mobility issues. Completing the upgrade and step-free access work across the TfL network will be important to unlocking cultural access for many, and the opening of the Elizabeth Line will create more accessible links in to central London. Access should also remain a key consideration for public realm and infrastructure projects, in line with the Healthy Streets approach that the Mayor and TfL have adopted. Many of London's iconic cultural institutions are housed in historic buildings, and improving accessibility will be more challenging in this context. Designing buildings that are accessible to all should remain a focus of the Mayor's design champions and Good Growth fund.

While we welcome the Mayor's ambition to enable more Londoners to access culture on their own doorstep, removing some of the barriers, such as high travel costs, would enable and encourage people to access cultural experiences across the capital including the world class offering in the West End.

5. What other opportunities are there to support culture in the capital?

The policies and programmes set out in the strategy are a step in the right direction towards making cultural experiences more accessible for Londoners. However, the strategy focuses almost exclusively on local culture outside of central London, and we remain concerned that the West End's existing world-class offer will be neglected and fail to receive the proactive support it requires to continue thriving. For instance, we welcome the London Borough of Culture competition which aims to celebrate communities and "hidden cultural gems". However, this initiative was primarily intended for outer London boroughs, and there are few policies in the plan focused on supporting the central London cultural offer. The Mayor needs to better recognise the contribution that the West End's cultural and creative economy makes to the rest of London and the UK.

One way to support culture in the capital would be to make it easier for international tourists to access the UK by increasing visa access and improving airport capacity in the South East. The UK is falling behind many other countries in providing visas for international tourists, especially those from China and the Middle East, and this risks damaging our reputation as a world-class tourist destination.

From tour groups on their first trip to London to High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) who pick and choose which cities they visit; these customers need the easiest possible access to the UK. HNWIs contribute significantly to London's economy by spending on luxury brands and hotels, and they also wish to access and contribute to culture and the arts. Heart of London runs campaigns to target these individuals and encourage them to the UK, but if it remains difficult to get to the UK they will choose other destinations. As part of the Westminster BIDs community, we have worked for many years with the UK China Visitor Alliance to push for more flexible and easy to access visas for Chinese tourists. We are pleased to see that steps have been taken in this direction, however much more needs to be done.

Airport capacity in the South East is also poor, and difficulties in accessing central London from airports can discourage international tourists from travelling to the capital. We call on the Mayor to advocate strongly for action on these issues, understanding his long-term opposition to the expansion of Heathrow, as failing to do so could have long-term damaging effects for London's economy.

6. How can you or your organisation contribute to the Mayor's vision for culture and pledge to support the final strategy?

Heart of London are happy to work with the Mayor and other partners to implement the policies contained in the draft Culture Strategy, and support the strategy as a whole. We are strong advocates for the cultural and creative economy in the West End, and have worked with the Mayor on a number of projects in the past, such as the #LondonIsOpen campaign, Pride in London and the Lumière festival.

As we have noted in our responses to the Mayor's London Plan and Economic Development Strategy, we support the Mayor's vision for the Evening and Night Time Economy, and want to work with the Mayor to keep London, and the West End in particular, as the world's best place to do business, and a destination for people around the world to invest, visit, work and live.

We welcome the Mayor adopting the recommendation of the 'Improving Places' report by Arts Council England and King's College London, and supporting BIDs to develop cultural strategies. This will help enable BIDs to champion culture and support high streets. We hope the Mayor will also consider the other major recommendation of the report; that a BIDs champion be appointed to his Cultural Leadership Board to share best practice about collaboration between business and cultural institutions. As the BID at the 'Heart of Culture' given the organisations we represent, Heart of London would welcome the opportunity to be considered for this position.

7. Do you agree with the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) conclusion that the draft Culture Strategy contributes positively to every IIA objective in some way? (Yes / No)

Not relevant

8. Is there anything else that could be considered in relation to the IIA?

Not relevant

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