



**Birmingham**  
big city culture



# BIG CITY CULTURE 2010-15



**Birmingham's  
Cultural  
Strategy**



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## Foreword

Birmingham is a strong city with a proud heritage. It is a diverse and youthful city, like no other in Europe, and although we have our challenges we are able to draw upon many more strengths to help us overcome them. Collectively we can achieve a huge amount when we pull together and are ambitious.

We have taken care in developing our strategy and have involved many people across all parts of Birmingham. We've used our bid to become UK City of Culture to help draw-up this new cultural strategy for the city - a strategy that will serve the city well for years to come. So we have a very tangible outcome from that process with a shared vision and aspirations.

We will deliver world-class cultural activity to demonstrate Birmingham's credentials as a global city with a local heart - which we call 'Big City Culture' a programme which balances the promotion of Birmingham as a global city with the need to serve and nurture its local heart - and we will build upon work already started by the Birmingham Cultural Partnership and the cultural sector to achieve this.

We will celebrate our diversity and champion the unique character of Birmingham - often described as a "cultural melting pot" - raising the visibility of our very diverse contemporary culture.

We will inspire, engage and nurture the next generation. We are proud of the young people of Birmingham and they have already played a central role in helping us to design and deliver our plans.



We will seek to change the image of the city by building upon and raising the profile of our existing high quality infrastructure as well as providing truly outstanding events of national and international interest.

Our strategy provides a shared vision of where we want to be but we will be flexible, given the current financial climate, about how we can achieve this. We are building on our past success and 'Big City Culture' is our joint commitment to ensuring that culture continues to play a key role in the development of Birmingham.

**Birmingham Cultural Partnership**



## Introduction

**Our vision is for Birmingham to be a continually surprising city where the vibrancy and diversity of culture inspire the people who live, work in and visit the city, and bring economic success and international recognition.**

This strategy is owned by the Birmingham Cultural Partnership and expresses the shared priorities of the partners for the development of the cultural sector. For the purposes of the strategy, we define culture as including arts, museums, heritage, sport, sporting events, libraries, archives, creative industries, film and tourism<sup>1</sup>.



Participation in culture is inherently a good thing – it challenges perceptions, prompts feelings of happiness, sadness, anger and excitement, creates moments of personal reflection and enables people to understand the world they live in, its possibilities and the cultures of others more profoundly. Cultural activities encourage self and group expression and provoke reactions at an emotional, spiritual and intellectual level,

improving the quality of life in the city and a sense of identity and belonging. Cultural activities can also deliver a range of other outcomes including health and wellbeing, social and community cohesion, civic engagement, economic impact, development of transferable skills and improved environment.

Following on from Culture at the Heart 2007-2010, Big City Culture has been developed as the cultural component of Birmingham 2026, the sustainable community strategy for the city and sits alongside other key documents, including the Big City Plan (Birmingham's masterplan). We believe it has the potential to set a new standard for the planning, delivery and promotion of culture in a global, post-industrial, multicultural city. Big City Culture is a concept that captures both the outward looking – seeking to promote Birmingham's cultural credentials nationally and around the world, and inward facing – building better connections within the community and between the local population and culture.

This strategy enables effective strategic planning at citywide and local level to support the development of the cultural sector and address the needs of local people. It is organised under four chapters and is deliberately high level. Members of the Birmingham Cultural Partnership and other organisations in the city will develop actions within these strategic themes.

1. Culture on your doorstep
2. Next generation
3. Stronger cultural and creative industries
4. A great international city of the future

The strategy will ensure that culture is at the heart of the continued development of Birmingham and will improve engagement with people who live and work in the city and increase participation by residents in the full range of cultural opportunities on offer. It will enable the city's young and diverse population to flourish and at the same time make the city one of Europe's most attractive tourist destinations.

Birmingham represents the future face of cities, not just in the UK, but across the continent. The city has the youngest profile of any in Europe and it is also the second most diverse, after Amsterdam. The Birmingham Cultural Partnership (BCP) will demonstrate a way forward in cultural provision for a modern multicultural urban centre. During the life of this strategy we will develop a new measure for participation, fit for purpose in a modern multicultural city and able to influence evaluation and service planning in other cities into the future.



<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this strategy, unless stated otherwise, the term "culture" is inclusive of sport.



CULTURE ON  
YOUR DOORSTEP







**Culture on your doorstep**  
Birmingham has the youngest population of any major city in Europe and within twenty years it may cease to have a single ethnic majority. These factors make it an exceptionally exciting place to live and Birmingham's diversity is vitally important to the people who live and work here<sup>2</sup>.

Birmingham has a range of world class cultural institutions and programmes which residents can enjoy. Many residents would like to engage more in cultural activity but encounter a range of barriers including time, transport, price, availability of information and familiarity. In a young and diverse city, access to forms of culture relevant to the local population is important. Residents would like more localised facilities and activities which can best be addressed by working with trusted partners in the community. Black-led and young people-led activities need to be increased.

Our ten constituencies serve on average 100,000 people each but do not have the venues and facilities which would be associated with towns of a similar size. In order to improve access to cultural activities, we need to improve cultural facilities in the outer city and, where there are no fixed cultural centres, to deliver programmes at a neighbourhood level, using facilities in the community.

Participation levels are currently low, reflecting both the socio-economic status of our resident population and the lack of cultural infrastructure outside of the city centre. Culture on your doorstep will help to drive up participation by providing relevant and localised activities in a range of traditional and non-traditional cultural spaces and developing the capacity of our participatory arts and voluntary sports sectors.

We must communicate the range of cultural activities available so that everyone knows what is on offer. The youthful and diverse population are enthusiastic users of digital technology and this can be exploited in new delivery and engagement mechanisms. Technology can also

be used to cross fertilise and to build cohesion between micro-communities. Contemporary audiences want active engagement in creating and shaping events and are no longer satisfied with passive consumption.

Birmingham has identified 31 Priority Neighbourhoods which also have low levels of cultural participation which has implications for the wellbeing, employment and cohesion of these communities. They are also the areas with the largest concentration of young people. Given the levels of socio-economic deprivation in these areas (Hodge Hill and Ladywood are the sixth and tenth most deprived constituencies nationally), the Priority Neighbourhoods will require additional attention and resources, and a long-term approach.

The scale of the city puts many residents outside the normal drive-time for our major cultural attractions. It is important that we connect city centre cultural resources with neighbourhoods and work with the public transport sector so that more people access this high quality offer. We will build on the proven model of the Arts Champions, and use of mobile provision, to increase access to our world class cultural flagships for all.

Our residents play an invaluable part in the running of cultural venues, sporting organisations and activities through voluntary work and memberships. Local people value this opportunity to make a contribution engaging in cultural opportunities is beneficial in developing individuals' confidence and transferable skills as well as creating stronger communities. People who actively participate in cultural activity are more likely to take a role in shaping their

communities in other spheres too<sup>3</sup>. More people could benefit if volunteering opportunities, and the chance to shape local areas and local cultural activity, were formalised and widely promoted.

People need to feel they belong in their neighbourhood and that they get along with their neighbours. Culture can be the key to cohesion and has a unique role to play in providing opportunities for people to have fun together, to reflect on their heritage and their future, and to get to know one another in a non-threatening environment.



## Aims

*Culture on your doorstep* will provide and promote good quality cultural facilities and activities, relevant to residents and accessible in local neighbourhoods, in order to increase participation. It will enable local people to make a difference in their community and develop transferable skills through engagement in amateur and community activity and by supporting the voluntary, faith and community sector as volunteers.

It will bring local people together with their neighbours to experience cultural activities, creating bonds between residents and improving cohesion in the community.

<sup>2</sup> Consultation findings from The Birmingham City Centre Masterplan: The Visioning Study European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University 2007

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Public Policy Research, Culture and Civic Renewal, 2006.



## Key Actions

1. Improve cultural infrastructure (including local organisational capacity) to ensure all residents have access to good quality and relevant cultural opportunities in their neighbourhood
  - Promote unique heritage sites located in local neighbourhoods (eg Community Museums) and develop their use as venues for a wide range of cultural activities
  - Build on proven models for connecting city-centre based resources to local neighbourhoods, eg Champions, and develop new models
  - Build on proven models of participation, eg Be Active, and develop new models
2. Capitalise on use of technology to enhance and widen participation and engage a variety of audiences
3. Improve communication of full range of opportunities for cultural participation at neighbourhood level
4. Promote the membership of Friends groups and constituency networks, culturally based social enterprises, and volunteering at cultural events
5. Support events which bring local residents together to share cultural experiences
6. Build capacity amongst local people to develop and deliver projects linked to the USA and Jamaican Olympic teams, as part of the Cultural Olympiad
7. Embed culture in new models of place based budgeting, coproduction and shared services



## Current Position 2010

The Active People Survey 2009 shows that Birmingham is in line with the English average for library usage. It is in the bottom 25% of local authorities for museum and gallery attendance, for engagement in the arts and participation in sport and active recreation. In particular, non-white attendance at museums and galleries and engagement in the arts are significantly below average (-12% and -11.8% respectively). 16-34 year olds are also less likely to engage than elsewhere in England (-11% and -11.2%) although this age group's use of libraries is above the national average (+4.6%).

## By 2015

We will have reduced the gap between the constituencies with the highest and lowest participation rates across the city

We will have increased participation across the city

We will have increased the number of cultural volunteering hours in the city

We will have helped increase resident satisfaction with the local area





# NEXT GENERATION





## NEXT GENERATION

Birmingham's youthful profile means that nurturing the 0-19 year old population is extremely important to the city's future success. With more students than any other UK city outside London and more under-15s than any other major European city, Birmingham is young at heart, and young in outlook. Children outnumber pensioners in the city with 37% of the population under 24 years old. As a result, our vitality, exuberance and energy are in evidence everywhere you look. Birmingham is proud of its young people.

Participation in culture plays an important part in providing young people with positive activities and transferable skills. It enriches their quality of life, provides enjoyment and self-fulfilment, and offers opportunities for them to share their experiences with others, helping to build a cohesive society for the future. Participation in culture is also vital in ensuring the health and wellbeing of our young people.

Birmingham has developed a strategy for cultural entitlement - A Creative Future II. The Creative Future strategy has grown through consultation with artists, professionals working in a range of settings, and young people themselves. It identifies four key roles in which young people engage with culture - as creators, participants,

audiences and leaders. The Creative Future roles are broken down into core elements which 0-19 year olds in Birmingham should be able to experience. The strategy seeks to provide opportunities in each role, linked to progression routes, so that children and young people can develop their skills, knowledge and understanding from a wide range of first time experiences, through a choice of organised activities and into independent engagement<sup>4</sup>.

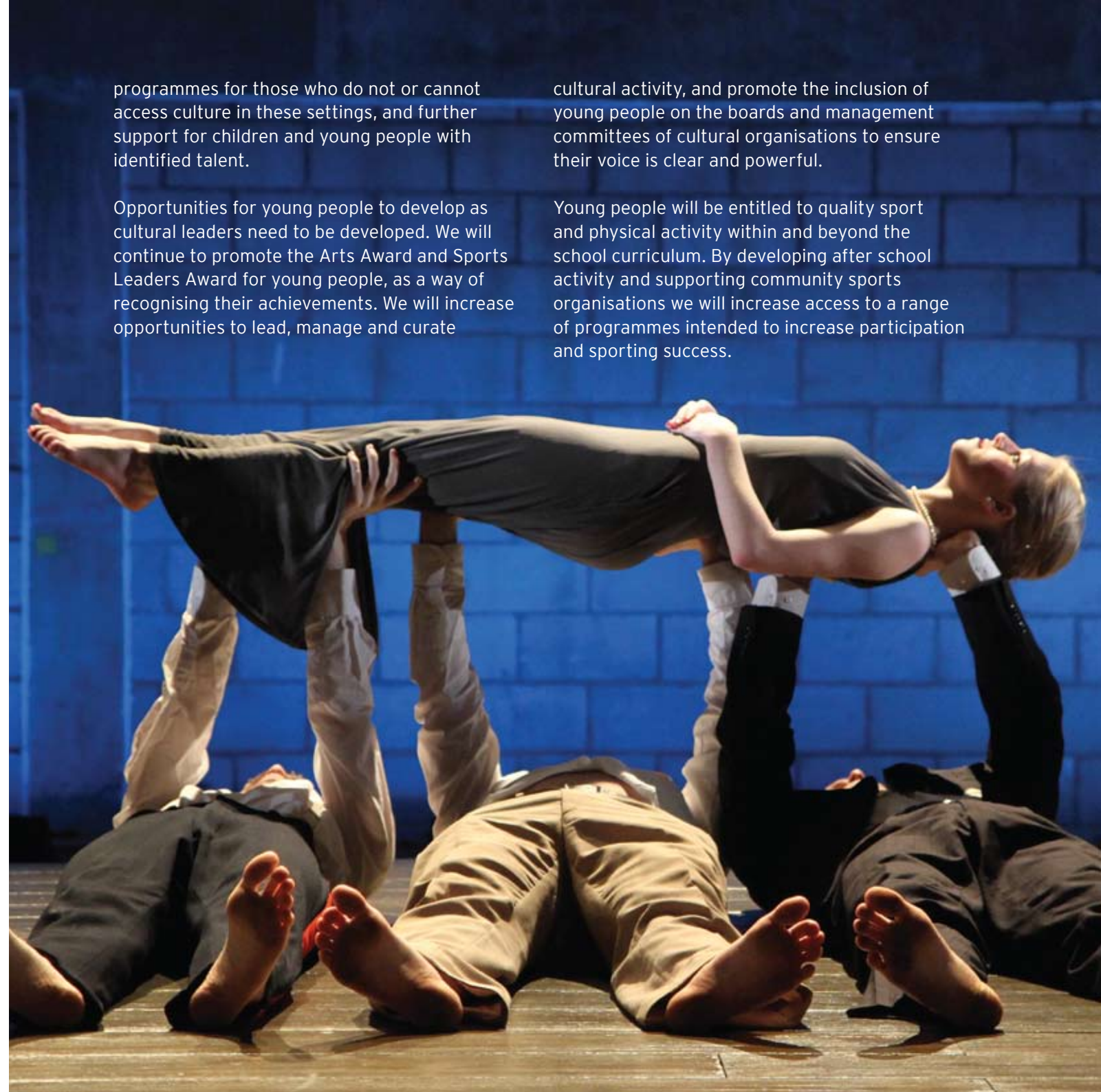
To provide this entitlement, a wide-ranging partnership between the relevant parts of the public, private, voluntary, faith and third sectors, as well as residents themselves, is required. The basic entitlement will be through the provision of school and college based services, with additional

programmes for those who do not or cannot access culture in these settings, and further support for children and young people with identified talent.

Opportunities for young people to develop as cultural leaders need to be developed. We will continue to promote the Arts Award and Sports Leaders Award for young people, as a way of recognising their achievements. We will increase opportunities to lead, manage and curate

cultural activity, and promote the inclusion of young people on the boards and management committees of cultural organisations to ensure their voice is clear and powerful.

Young people will be entitled to quality sport and physical activity within and beyond the school curriculum. By developing after school activity and supporting community sports organisations we will increase access to a range of programmes intended to increase participation and sporting success.



<sup>4</sup> See Creative Future II for more detail showing the definitions used, the roles and their component elements, and the progression based model.



## Aims

To provide access for young people to high quality opportunities to experience the Creative Future roles, within a framework which is quality-assured. To provide and signpost progression routes so that young people develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of culture. To



ensure the voices of young people are heard effectively in cultural planning. To provide a sports offer with partners that secures a lasting legacy from 2012 with more young people enjoying and excelling in sport and physical activity.

## Key Actions

1. Work with partners, providers, community groups and families to ensure an entitlement to cultural provision for 0-19s in keeping with the Creative Future II model and commission activities to fill gaps in the entitlement
2. Develop ways of mapping the uptake of cultural programmes by 0-19s as well as continuing to map provision
3. Improve links between schools and accredited community sports clubs and target 16-24 year olds' engagement of in sport
4. Support the delivery of the physical education and schools sport strategy and the sports offer by helping to develop community sports organisations and co-ordinating after school activity for young people
5. Ensure young people's voices are central to cultural planning and delivery in Birmingham through increased representation of young people on boards of cultural and sporting organisations and encouragement of youth panels
6. Support programmes designed, led and curated by young people
7. Improve information for young people about where and how to access culture and sport and how to remain safe while participating



8. Develop the workforce, especially those new to working with children and young people, those pursuing specialisms in shortage areas and those at the leading edge of practice
9. Build confidence and improve understanding of culture amongst gatekeepers to children and young people's engagement (families, children's services and third sector organisations)
10. Capitalise on the 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games in London to inspire young people to take part in physical activity and to build a legacy of volunteering, coaching and club development

## Current Position 2010

In 2010 78% of 5-16 year olds participated in at least 3 hours/week of high quality physical education and sport at school during curriculum time

## By 2015

We will have increased the percentage of young people receiving three hours of high quality physical education. We will improve the recognition of the achievement of young people through the number of Arts Awards and the representation of the voices of young people in cultural planning and delivery by the number of young people under 25 years registered as directors of cultural organisations. We will monitor the provision of the entitlement and address gaps in provision.





# STRONGER CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES





## STRONGER CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Birmingham's creative industries (like other cities around the world) have a tendency to cluster and form "cultural quarters" close to the city centre. This concentration of creative businesses has added value to Birmingham because it has increased the visibility of culture and encouraged the growth of the visitor and experience economies eg visitors can enjoy exhibitions, festivals and performances in the city's two creative quarters (Jewellery Quarter and Eastside). Birmingham is also driving innovation and excellence in content creation and cross-media collaboration.

Our main strengths are in partnerships and organisational capacity. The creative and cultural sector in Birmingham is underpinned by a strong partnership designed to maximise resources and build capacity in a sector that is nationally recognised as being fragmented and difficult to nurture. Partnership support goes beyond single-issue, single agency engagement to support individual and industry growth, infrastructure, audience and market development. A new creative industries strategy for the city is needed to include development plans for the identified growth sub-sectors, fashion, jewellery, music and gaming.

### Aims

To support the continued development of the cultural and creative industries sector.

### Key Actions

1. Develop a new creative industries joint investment strategy and draw up action plans to progress the development of key growth sectors.

## Current Position 2010

An analysis of Birmingham's creative economy compared to the other English "Core Cities" (Bristol, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Liverpool and Nottingham) revealed that, in 2007, Birmingham had the second-largest absolute number of creative jobs, behind Leeds. Birmingham has launched a number of policy initiatives in recent years aimed at micro creative businesses. This has strengthened the creative economy in two specific sub-sectors: audio visual and visual arts and design which, between 2003 and 2007 saw increases in number of

businesses of 9% and 68% respectively. In terms of employment there was growth of 10% in audio visual and 40% in visual arts and design for the same period<sup>5</sup>.

The city has a significant existing creative economy on which to build. In 2007 there were 3,450 creative businesses (10% of the city's total number of firms) and 18,720 employed. The creative industries employ more than either construction or the manufacture, sale and repair of cars and similar numbers to the legal, accountancy and management consultancy professions combined. Creative industry



<sup>5</sup> Why the Creative Industries Matter to Birmingham: An Analysis of the City's Creative Economy (Burns Owen Partnership 2010)





employment as a share of total employment is 3.9% and creative industries produce more than £660 million of gross value added (GVA). The city produces the greatest number of creative graduates, through higher education institutions such as Birmingham City University, outside of London.

### By 2015

We will have increased the turnover of the creative and cultural sector and increased the numbers of people working in the sector<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>6</sup>Why the Creative Industries Matter to Birmingham: An Analysis of the City's Creative Economy (Burns Owen Partnership 2010)







A GREAT  
INTERNATIONAL  
CITY OF THE  
FUTURE





## A GREAT INTERNATIONAL CITY OF THE FUTURE

Birmingham is a global city, an exciting, thriving cultural centre, with modern architecture sitting alongside gems of the Victorian era like the newly restored Town Hall and a year round programme of world class quality. Birmingham boasts the busiest theatre in the UK, and one of the best concert halls in the world, and it has an international reputation for its digital development. The city has hosted more world, international and European sports events than any other European city. However, it is often still regarded as the poor relation of British cities (especially amongst people who have not recently visited) and its national and international image needs to be improved so that it is not just a great place to live, but is seen as one of the world's most attractive cities for living, working and visiting. We therefore need to focus on promoting the city and raising its profile.

Birmingham is one of the cities most affected by the economic downturn with the highest unemployment rate. Our remaining manufacturing industries which had withstood the 1980s recession, have now been significantly reduced. Key to the future prosperity of the city are changes to the economic fabric, continuing our move from manufacturing to a knowledge based economy. Birmingham has always been a city of innovation, at the heart of industrial revolutions through the ages. We need now to become a location of choice for the new business sectors.

A key factor in the decision-making process for businesses when they are considering relocation, is the perception/image of a place, which includes perceptions about the quality of life on offer. The West Midlands Regional Observatory<sup>7</sup> surveyed 1,800 businesses across England about their perception of investing in the different English regions. The three most important elements that formed business perceptions of the English regions were transport and accessibility, quality of life and reputation and availability of facilities.

<sup>7</sup> Regional perceptions indicator West Midlands, West Midlands Regional Observatory, November 2009







Connected to business perceptions are the perceptions of the graduate workforce forming the highly-skilled talent pool vital for the knowledge economy. Graduates feel that the standard of living is important to them, in addition to salary levels, safety and having a 'buzz' about the place. As this group tends to display a higher interest in culture and since a lively arts scene generates the vibrancy they are looking for in deciding where they live and work, culture is a vital determinant to our future success. The importance placed on the attractiveness of local environment, including culture, places it amongst the most important factors in business location decisions. The West Midlands priority sectors (business and professional services and the creative industries) rate the attractiveness of the local environment and lifestyle as being even more important to them than the average business.

The trend for uniformity of city centres is at odds with attracting visitors and retaining residents. There is a range of distinctive opportunities for Birmingham's residents to enjoy the public realm, from jogging on the paths of the city's canal network to visiting historic buildings. We need to animate our public spaces so they become a cultural resource<sup>8</sup>. It is essential that our unique built heritage and open spaces are maintained and used inventively so that they can act as venues for cultural activities such as the screening of film. Installing public art and inventive lighting also transforms these spaces.

Our reliance on the visitor economy makes it vital that we also improve perceptions of Birmingham as a leisure and business tourism destination. In the 1980s and 1990s, Birmingham led the UK in culturally driven regeneration, reinventing itself

as a business tourism destination and building key cultural infrastructure including the National Exhibition Centre, National Indoor Arena and the International Convention Centre, including Symphony Hall (which is still one of the top concert halls in the world). In 2013, our magnificent new Library of Birmingham, which will adjoin the Birmingham Rep, will open to the public and we anticipate will be the catalyst for further city centre regeneration. Ikon Gallery has engaged a feasibility study for a contemporary art collection and gallery in the City.

We are, in the Big City Plan (city centre masterplan), creating a city centre which can better serve our cultural offer and help identify new places for culture to grow and change. Eastside is the city's major regeneration focus and is the home of our creative sector. The Birmingham Ormiston Academy, a unique 14-19 academy school for the performing arts, creative and digital media opens in 2011. Digbeth Institute, a listed building on Digbeth High Street, has been reopened as a revived music venue. Our science museum, Thinktank, and Imax cinema at Millennium Point have helped regenerate Eastside. Our award-winning Big City Plan will act to amplify the creative cluster in Digbeth, to help it thrive and shout out its successes.

Our historic Jewellery Quarter is a truly unique asset and one which adds character and depth to the visitor offer. The enlarged and enhanced Museum of the Jewellery Quarter is already open and was recently placed in the top three free attractions in Europe<sup>9</sup>. We need to complement developments in the city centre with better promotion of these unique assets and a more effective celebration of our heritage - telling the Birmingham story.

<sup>8</sup> The Birmingham City Centre Masterplan: The Visioning Study European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University 2007

<sup>9</sup> www.TripAdvisor.com. The museum was also named 'Best Small Visitor Attraction' Enjoy England Awards for Excellence 2010



## Aims

To mark Birmingham out through improved creation and promotion of unique assets. To tell the Birmingham story more effectively and to celebrate the city's heritage. To fill gaps in the world class infrastructure and develop and promote major international and niche events. To improve public perception of Birmingham as a great place to visit.

## Key Actions

1. Deliver the Library of Birmingham, opening in 2013
2. Promote the development of key sports and events facilities that underpin Birmingham as the international city of sport eg 50m pool
3. Deliver the Birmingham History Galleries and a new permanent gallery for the Staffordshire Hoard at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery by 2013
4. Ensure the plans for the redevelopment of Paradise Circus post 2013 enhance the architectural setting of Chamberlain Square and its surrounding cultural institutions
5. Promote the Jewellery Quarter as a significant heritage site and centre for contemporary designer makers
6. Promote Digbeth/Eastside as a creative quarter and centre for digital innovation
7. Establish new eight week Autumn Festival and support the development of significant smaller "niche" events in accordance with Festivals Joint Investment Plan
8. Develop a joint investment approach for major events exploring the costs and benefits of the city bidding for international events which have a significant impact on the local economy and the profile of Birmingham



<sup>10</sup> Mercer's 2009 Quality of Living Survey [http://www.mercer.com/qualityofliving#Key\\_features\\_and\\_benefits](http://www.mercer.com/qualityofliving#Key_features_and_benefits)

9. Explore a city endowment to support the commissioning of new works to be premiered in Birmingham
10. Create new ways of interpreting and promoting the city's distinctive heritage through new trails, events, bus tours etc
11. Develop Birmingham branding which promotes the Big City Culture concept and has maximum impact on visitors, reinforcing the quality, diversity and reach of the cultural offer
12. Explore feasibility of a collection based contemporary art gallery

## Current Position 2010

The number of visits to the city stand at 33m (2009) and positive tourist perceptions of the city is improving at 77%. The Mercer Index<sup>10</sup> is used to support business relocation decisions. Birmingham currently achieves well in most of the measures which public policy can influence. In spite of our strong cultural offer, there is room for improvement in the leisure sections, scoring between 7 and 9 (out of 10), and it is therefore important that we improve on this in order to raise our overall score.

## By 2015

We will have increased visitors numbers

We will have improved visitor perceptions

We will have improved the city's ranking in the Mercer index



# CONTACT DETAILS

Further information about Big City Culture and the Birmingham Cultural Partnership is available from:-

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