

# CULTURE & HERITAGE

ENRICHING LIFE,  
STRENGTHENING  
THE ECONOMY





# NORFOLK'S CULTURE & HERITAGE — ENRICHING LIFE, STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY

Culture and heritage are at the heart of Norfolk's identity and energy. From internationally celebrated festivals to world-class conservation, from medieval landmarks to pioneering creative communities, this sector shapes the county's lifestyle, wellbeing and global reputation.

Norfolk's heritage and cultural offering enhances the county's distinctiveness, driving visitor spend, supporting thousands of jobs and strengthening year-round tourism.

# THREE THEMES DEFINE NORFOLK'S LEADERSHIP IN CULTURE & HERITAGE

## 1. CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AS IDENTITY

- Norfolk's cultural assets attract **national and international attention**. Norwich alone is home to two cathedrals, a Norman castle (the subject of a recent £27m redevelopment), and historic streets often used by filmmakers, while St George's Guildhall in King's Lynn is the only surviving working theatre in the world that Shakespeare performed in. The county's historic villages and market towns provide a vital link between Norfolk's fascinating history and its exciting future.
- With over 1.1 m visitors in 2025, the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich ranks above museums, including Tate Britain, the Royal Academy of Arts and the Design Museum, in attracting footfall<sup>1</sup>.
- Norwich is England's first **UNESCO City of Literature** and home to the National Centre for Writing.
- Norfolk's **major festivals** attract well over 140,000 visitors each year and generate close to £26 million for the local economy. The historic Norfolk & Norwich Festival (founded 1772) and Great Yarmouth's Out There Festival both showcase the county's creative strengths and distinctive heritage, strengthening Norfolk's reputation as a vibrant, welcoming destination for culture and tourism<sup>2</sup>.
- Norwich Theatre, including the Theatre Royal, Norwich Playhouse and Stage Two, brings **world-class arts and culture** to the region, and takes its own leading productions on tour around the UK and internationally. Award-winning Curious Directive, based in Norwich, creates new theatre through the lens of science, which also tours internationally - flying the flag for the region's creativity.





## 2. CULTIVATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

- Cultural organisations across Norfolk are deeply **embedded in communities**. Many operate as charities, providing free or low-cost programmes that improve wellbeing and widen participation.
- Norwich's emerging Culture Strategy places **inclusion at its core**, prioritising engagement with lower socio-economic groups, global majority communities, LGBTQIA+ residents and people needing wellbeing support.
- **Accessibility** is a sector priority - for example, Norwich Arts Centre has achieved a gold Attitude is Everything accreditation, while the Lord Mayor's weekend has obtained a bronze accreditation, for inclusive music and live events.

## 3. DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE AND COLLABORATION

- The Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board is a unique partnership of cultural leaders, recognised nationally as an **exemplar of regional collaboration**. It helps grow the cultural economy by encouraging investment, developing skills and career pathways that provide essential work experience and placement opportunities, and supporting inclusive, healthy and sustainable communities.
- From award-winning museums to conservation studios, partnerships position Norfolk as a key player in the preservation and promotion of **the UK's most precious and globally significant artefacts**. For example, The Gallery of Medieval Life at Norwich Castle, displaying over 900 nationally significant objects, was created in partnership with the British Museum - the first gallery of its kind outside London.
- **Environmental leadership** is embedded across the sector, from piloting the Green Events Code of Practice to presenting and commissioning work that explores and communicates the climate challenge, like GroundWork gallery in King's Lynn - the UK's only gallery dedicated to art and the environment.
- **R&D collaboration with universities** is establishing Norfolk as a 'lab for culture, health and happiness'<sup>3</sup>, supporting cultural organisations and practitioners to expand their skills to achieve positive outcomes beyond their sector, including health and social care.





**With sustained and increased investment, skills development, infrastructure and cross-sector partnerships, Norfolk can fully realise the transformative power of its cultural assets, delivering economic growth, innovation and environmental leadership.**

# WHAT THE CULTURE AND HERITAGE SECTOR NEEDS TO THRIVE

- 1** Investment in threatened heritage assets and cultural infrastructure including venues, creative hubs and digital platforms, to secure their long-term sustainability.
- 2** Recognition of culture's role in addressing societal and environmental challenges, twinned with incentives for carbon-neutral cultural practices and capital investment.
- 3** Expanded creative education and skills development, including apprenticeships and more collaborative projects linking culture with tech, energy and innovation sectors.
- 4** Strengthened infrastructure to tackle barriers to culture and heritage, such as improved rural broadband and investment in emerging technologies to bolster inclusivity.

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Sources: 1. Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA), 2. Norfolk County Council, 3. Culture Drives Impact report

