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## THE CREATIVE QUARTER PROJECT



CULTURAL STRATEGY YOUTH  
ECONOMIC CREATIVE INDUSTRIES TRAINING  
LOCAL PLANNING PARTICIPATION CROSS-SECTORIAL  
EMPLOYMENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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### 1. Context

Nottingham is an English post-industrial city, governed by a unitary local authority. In 2013, Nottingham had an estimated population of 310,837 residents, with the wider urban area having a population of 729,977, making it the largest in the East Midlands. 28% of the population are aged 18 to 29, with university students making up 1 in 8 of the population. The 2011 Census shows 35% of the population being from BME (non-white communities).



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Nottingham is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> most deprived district in England in the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. In the face of these challenges, Nottingham is a major tourist destination, sporting centre and cultural city; in 2011, visitors contributed over £1.5 billion to the city's economy. The City also has an award-winning public transport system including a very successful tram system.

In December 2015, Nottingham was named a UNESCO City of Literature. The city is currently experiencing a renaissance, focussing on the growth potential of the creative & digital industries. Greater Nottingham's cultural and creative industries comprise 1,600 companies, employing over 15,000 people.

THE GENERAL AIM OF THE PROJECT IS TO RESTRUCTURE THE CITY'S ECONOMY BY INVESTING IN THE CULTURAL, CREATIVE AND DIGITAL INDUSTRIES, IN ORDER TO GENERATE WEALTH, JOB AND PROSPERITY.

In 2011, an Economic Review of Nottingham identified that the business birth rate had declined sharply since the recession of 2008. The city's unemployment rate of 14.1% was one of the highest among the eight major UK regional cities. Higher proportions of residents had very low levels of qualifications and earnings of all UK regional cities.

However, the research also identified that Nottingham had already become home to a growing concentration of businesses specialising in important emerging knowledge-intensive industries: creative industries, digital content, and clean technology.

## 2. Nottingham and culture

Culture is embedded throughout the Nottingham Plan and is a cross-cutting theme. The establishment of The Creative Quarter through the City's Economic Growth Plan was a key statement of the City's commitment to embedding culture in its economic and cultural plans.



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The Creative Quarter has also been instrumental in catalysing the cultural organisations and the City Council into developing a Cultural Strategy & Investment Framework. The Creative Quarter, as a member of the City's Strategic Cultural Partnership and of many of the city's networks, is galvanising this process. The ambition is for culture to become embedded across all fields of activity – planning, urban design, public realm, education & training, events & festivals, neighbourhood planning, economic development and regeneration – and to draw on the principles and tools offered by Agenda21.

Culture and creative industries are a central pillar of The Creative Quarter Project.

- Support the cultural and creative industries business to maximise their contribution to wealth, job creation and economic development (**Economy**), by funding the cultural and creative industries through a diverse range of income sources, ( Nottingham Investment Venture Capital Fund, business rates schemes and EU funding schemes (ERDF)).
- The Creative Quarter is leading the city's Cultural Education Partnership, 'guaranteeing' that every child and young person participates in cultural experiences, and to engage in dialogue with other ethnicities and faith groups (**Human Rights**)
- An inclusive and diverse group of cultural organisations, advocating for the use of public spaces as cultural spaces, for a better quality of urban design and making a case for celebrating the diverse cultures of the city through the city's year-round events and festivals programme. (**Sustainability & Territory**)
- The strategic plan was forged through conversations and dialogue, with local residents, businesses, BME representative groups, and University representatives. It is subscribed to the cooperative and accountability principles of Agenda21. (**Governance**)

### 3. Objectives and implementation of the project

#### 1.1. Main goal

The general aim of The Creative Quarter Project is to restructure the City's economy by investing in the cultural, creative and digital industries, in order to generate wealth, jobs and.

#### 1.2. Key stages

To achieve a higher skilled workforce and reduce worklessness levels, developed structures to simplify the process of connecting people to jobs in the creative and digital economy.

- Working with local creative and digital businesses and supporting them to access City Council's incentive schemes to employ apprentices and provide internships.
- Developing ENTER – The UK's First festival of Youth Entrepreneurships and a new programme for enterprise education in schools
- Delivering over 50 peer-to-peer creative and digital industry-led learning and knowledge exchange events annually to create a supportive learning environment for the city's creative community

## CULTURE IS NOW EMBEDDED WITHIN THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PLACING CULTURE AS PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.]

The Creative Quarter Project has developed the following collaborations with civil society entities to achieve its strategic aims:

- The Social Enterprise Nottingham Consortium: a group of organisations working together to promote the development of social enterprise across the City, with particular emphasis on the cultural and creative economy.
- The Nottingham Cultural Education Partnership (NCEP): a collaborative network of education, cultural, heritage and arts organisations, providers and agencies, who are working together to address the inequities in access to culture among children and young people in the city.

850 businesses have been supported to grow and become more sustainable. 242 young people aged 16 – 24 resident in the city have been supported to develop their employability skills and create employment pathways into the creative and cultural industries. 2,500 of them participated in the first ENTER festival of youth entrepreneurship in 2015. Over 2 million visitors come to the city annually and their experience of the city has been hugely enhanced by the cultural vibrancy and rich heritage offer of The Creative Quarter. The 310,000 residents of the city have benefitted from the transformation of The Creative Quarter streetscape and improved public realm and cycleways. This has resulted in it being a more accessible place for local residents, and a more attractive place to walk, cycle, and enjoy leisure time.

## THE CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP ENSURES THAT THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GAINS MADE IN CAN BE CONTINUED INTO THE FUTURE.]

### 4. Impacts

#### 1.1. Direct impacts

##### Impacts on the local government

The project enabled Nottingham City Council to establish new ways of partnership between the public, private and third sectors. This has led to developing innovative approaches to new cultural practice and business growth; contributed to reaching the targets the City had set for itself in its 2012 Growth Plan, and improved the regional and national perceptions of the city as whole. As a result, Culture is more embedded within the policies and practices of local government, and the value placed on culture as a pillar of sustainable development has increased.

##### Impact on culture and local cultural actors of the city/territory

The Creative Quarter project has galvanised the cultural actors of the city by providing a central focus to cultural activity, connecting practitioners to new ideas, knowledge and practice, and



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facilitating new partnerships and consortia. Cultural organisations are now more willing to work collaboratively on projects like the Cultural Education Partnership, Unesco City of Literature & the Strategic Framework for Culture in the city. This has a democratising effect, creating opportunities for smaller organisations to collaborate with larger organisations and access funding for projects on a larger scale.

### **Impact on the territory and its population**

The project has had a significant effect on the city's urban population. It has been instrumental in implementing Free Public Wi-Fi for all in the city centre; redesigning pedestrian access to key retail and leisure areas; greening the city through a programme of business led consultations; creating jobs, apprenticeships and internment opportunities; helping establish many new businesses and grow existing ones in the independent, creative and digital sectors, and encouraged sustainable transport innovations. It contributes to Nottingham becoming of the top five cities in the UK to work, live and play in.

THE PROJECT IS CONTRIBUTING TO NOTTINGHAM BECOMING OF THE TOP FIVE CITIES IN THE UK TO WORK, LIVE AND PLAY IN.

#### **1.2. Transversal impacts**

The Creative Quarter Project has benefitted from the work of the Disability Involvement Group from the beginning, who informed the public realm improvements programme and ensured it was disability-friendly. The project has also had a significant effect on promoting gender equality. Enabled many more women entrepreneurs to startup and grow their business. The Cultural Education Partnership means that we will be able to disseminate this practice to young people in local schools and ensure that the social and cultural gains made in the can be continued into the future.

#### **1.3. Continuity**

The sustainability of the project is secure because the Creative Quarter Company has received ongoing investment from Nottingham City Council in the form of an annual Service Level Agreement.

A new business plan for 2017 – 20 secures this sustainability for the second major phase of delivery of the Strategy 2014 - 2023

## 5. Further information

The city of Nottingham was a nominated candidate for the second 'UCLG International Award – Mexico City – Culture 21' (January – May 2016). The awards jury produced a final report in June 2016 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to promote this project as a practical example for the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture.

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