



The Millennium Bridge connecting Bankside Southwark to the City of London (February 2022)

FUTURE CITIES FORUM

Cultural Cities Report

February 2022

With thanks to our contributors:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, The Bodleian Libraries, The British Library, Historic England, Glasgow Life, Leeds City Council, Oxford City Council, Warrington Borough Council, Wigan Council, Exeter Cathedral, Contemporary Art Society, Land Securities, Grimshaw, LDA Design, MICA Architects, Scott Brownrigg, Wright & Wright Architects

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Introduction

The UK is in the process of lifting more Covid restrictions for foreign holiday makers, and the Prime Minister has declared the UK to be 'one of the most open countries in Europe and ready for an international tourism boom'.

February 2022 has seen the £10 million VisitBritain campaign go live in the major European markets of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands and has already launched in the USA. The campaign will spotlight cities across the UK including London, Edinburgh and Cardiff which have been hit hard by lack of international visitors and will encourage them to see another side of Britain promoting new and exciting experiences such as kayaking on London's River Thames, Edinburgh's famous Fringe Festival and sampling some of the world's finest gins at Cardiff Distillery.

The Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries commented:

'There is huge pent-up demand from international tourists to visit the UK...2022 is set to be a blockbuster year with an unmissable opportunity to see world-class sports at the Commonwealth Games, culture and creativity through the Unboxed events and royal pageantry as we mark the Queen's 70-year reign.'

The campaign will build on the government's Tourism Recovery Plan published in June 2021 which aims to get domestic and international tourism back to pre-pandemic levels a year faster than independent forecasts predict. The government has backed tourism, hospitality, and leisure organizations through the pandemic with more than £37 billion in funding and support.



Edinburgh (Visit Scotland)

For hospitality businesses these announcements are a welcome relief. However, with restrictions lifting abroad, will those same businesses be missing out financially if British citizens reject the staycation this year?

The cost of travelling within the UK has gone up due to a rise in energy prices and with the unpredictability of the British weather, the lure of a holiday in the sun further afield might be just too much. The county of Devon is reporting that get-aways to seaside resorts has been slower this half-term.

If tourism is going to survive the ups and downs of not only Covid but the changing economy in the UK, where should investment be made and what are the attractions that will draw domestic and international visitors? Will it be the traditional seaside town, the city with the best cultural venues or the eco-tourist destination?

In this report, Future Cities Forum has held research events with the DCMS, Historic England, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford and Wigan Councils, the British Library, Oxford Playhouse, the Contemporary Arts Society.

This report draws on the research gathered through our forums and will look at:

- the opportunities of using enhanced public realm to bring back visitors to the Cultural Mile in the City of London and to the Strand Aldwych in Westminster,
- new ideas for eco-tourism in the UK, how the high street is developing cultural experience,
- how levelling up investment will help the North celebrate its cultural history
- the role of universities in helping to open up 'culture' to our communities
- how UK professional design expertise is being used to develop new tourism economies abroad.



The Strand looking East to St Mary le Strand: CGI of public realm transformation (LDA Design / Westminster City Council)

London – bringing back tourism post pandemic

Levelling up investment is a core priority for the UK government and in this report, we look at investment in places in the North of the UK – Leeds, Glasgow, Ayrshire, Morecambe and Wigan - but the Mayor of London is concerned that the cultural life of the Capital is not forgotten. This week, he has announced proposals to invest an additional £10 million to attract more tourists back to the capital – including launching a new international tourism campaign. He stated:

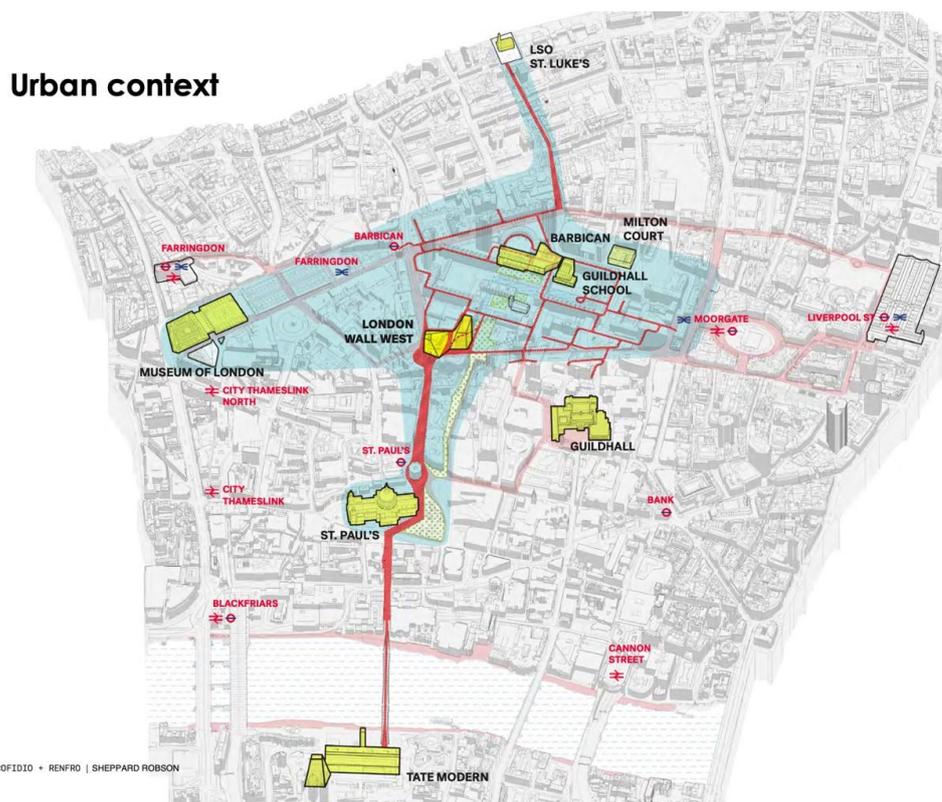
‘London’s culture and creative industries represent a significant part of the capital’s economy and have been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Live performance venues, museums and galleries have experienced huge drops in footfall, theatre shows have been cancelled or postponed and self-employed creatives have experienced immense job instability. The (Mayor’s) ‘Let’s Do London’ campaign was launched last year to champion the capital’s businesses, cultural institutions and attractions and through a range of unique experiences, it has already contributed around £70 million into the economy.’

Before the pandemic, London was the third most visited city on the planet according to the Mayor’s office, driven largely its says by the city’s world-leading cultural and visitor attractions. However, due to the pandemic in 2021, the number of overnight stays made by tourists to the capital more than halved to 60.8 million with a spend of £3.8 billion, compared to 147.4 million overnight visits and spending of £18.8 billion in 2019.

This half-term, the Mayor’s ‘Spring into London’ free programme of outdoor art and performance events is being laid on to encourage Londoners and visitors to rediscover the

Capital's world-class culture safely, and will include immersive light installations by globally-acclaimed artists, and pop-up performances.

One such activity is a light installation trail, 'City Lights' will illuminate the City of London, featuring internationally renowned artists and includes the work 'Colour by Light' which invites the public to transform the City into a colourful canvas with their smartphones. Every night unique and historic City of London sites will be illuminated with vibrant and interactive artworks and include sites such as St Paul's Churchyard, Bloomberg Plaza and Guildhall Yard.



Map showing London Wall West relationship to the Cultural Mile and new Museum of London (Contemporary Arts Society)

The Cultural Mile in the City of London is seen as an opportunity to boost visitors to this area of the capital and connect with a developing cultural quarter in east London.

Re-introducing green spaces around the existing Museum of London is being prioritised because of fears that when the museum re-locates to Smithfield, it might leave a dearth of culture in its wake. London Wall West is a project being led by the Contemporary Arts Society with the intention to create outside spaces where culture can be 'seen to be made'.

Art Producer, Megan O'Shea of the Contemporary Arts Society (who is the lead for London Wall West) and joined our recent 'Cultural Cities' forum told Future Cities Forum:

'London Wall West is part of the Cultural Mile. It is sited where the current Museum of London stands, and we are concerned about a loss of cultural content when the museum leaves to go to Smithfield. There was a plan for a centre of music to replace the existing museum next to the Barbican but that has been lost through the pandemic. Therefore, you have to question what happens to the area. We believe a distinct character for this place can be formed, and in the process a meaningful gateway to the Cultural Mile. We want it to form a connection to other places. The City of London has a lot of cultural content but it is often held within 'fortresses'. We want to help spill that content from inside out and for a range of audiences.

'We want to see how culture and commerce can intersect. The City is known as the Square Mile but we want to transform understanding and these spaces could do that if properly integrated. We don't just want some nice new sculptures in new places, but we want areas where culture can be seen to be made.'



[Garden of the Museum of the Home, Hackney, London \(Wright & Wright Architects\)](#)

'The loss of biodiversity (in the UK) has presented physical, mental and wellbeing issues' commented architect Ronan Morris from Wright & Wright Architects, who joined the conversation, to speak about the importance of good public realm and how the gardens at the Museum of the Home in East London have been extended and designed:

'The museum has great exhibitions but equally important are the outside spaces. It has one of the largest green spaces in Hackney, showing the history of British gardens from Tudor times right up to the modern green roof of today. The gardens can be an educational experience as well as place to rest and enjoy and we chose to retrofit this Grade I building, not demolish it, with two new pavilion buildings bookending the existing gardens.

'The Studio Pavilion we have designed is a multi-functional space and acts as a visual extension of the garden. We planted a green roof which does not need much water and represents part of the 21st century garden that enhances biodiversity across the site.'



Traffic in the Strand, near Somerset House, before public realm transformation (LDA Design)

Cannon Ivers, Director at LDA Design, echoed Megan's thoughts when talking about the development of the Strand/Aldwych project which he is leading. Could this new area of public realm enhance the cultural attractions that border it? Canon said:

'I am deeply excited because by this time next year the public will be able to walk through public realm in this area which has for a very long time been a vehicular route from St Paul's to Westminster Abbey. It will be a place where everyone can mingle', he said.

'The church of St Mary Le Strand which stands at one end of the area has been isolated by traffic for 150 years, but not anymore as two-way traffic now flows around the Aldwych.

'Bush House, King's College London and Somerset House line the route and then there are the museums and theatre land nearby. The footfall is already amazing, and it is buzzing with students - this project will be a massive boost to the area. Historically with all the traffic it was such a hostile area but now people will be able to stop outside, eat lunch and just relax.

'It will also be an area where art is made not just displayed with creativity brought to life and now those institutions that surround it can experiment with just that. It was a major moment when traffic was stopped passing through and that heralded our skateboard area

which was built by the skaters themselves and everyone could watch that creativity taking place', he concluded.



'Museum of the Moon' exhibition at Exeter Cathedral

It is not only in London, that culture is being used to draw back visitors to cities. Visitors have been flocking to Exeter Cathedral this February to see the 'Museum of the Moon', a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram.

The art installation representing the moon, measures seven meters in diameter, and features 120 dpi detailed NASA imagery of the lunar surface. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon's surface.

The organisers say that 'over its lifetime, the Museum of the Moon will be presented in a number of different ways both indoors and outdoors, so altering the experience and interpretation of the artwork. As it travels from place to place, it gathers new musical compositions and ongoing collection of personal responses, stories and mythologies, as well as highlighting the latest moon science. The installation is a fusion of lunar imagery, moonlight and surround sound composition created by BAFTA and Ivor Novello award winning composer Dan Jones. Each venue also programmes their own series lunar inspired events beneath the moon:

'The moon has always inspired humanity, acting as a 'cultural mirror' to society, reflecting the ideas and beliefs of all people around the world. Over the centuries, the moon has been interpreted as a god and as a planet. It has been used as a timekeeper, calendar and been a source of light to aid nighttime navigation. Different cultures around the world have their own historical, cultural, scientific and religious relationships to the moon and yet somehow despite these differences the moon connects us all.'

The touring exhibition started in Kendal, UK in August 2016 and has been to destinations in Europe as well as Hong Kong and Dubai UAE. 'Fallen Moon' was floated down a mile of the Bristol docks in 2019 with hundreds of members of the public waiting along the dockside for the Moon to arrive where a surround sound musical score by Dan Jones was played creating a 'beautiful and eerie ambience'.

Investment for sustainable tourism



CGI of improvements to the Burrell Collection's outside spaces (Glasgow Life)

In this section, Future Cities Forum looks at the growing trend for eco-attractions among domestic and international tourists. The fading seaside town of Morecambe is being brought to life with a new Eden Project, while a development at a disused coalfield in Ayrshire has put education about the circular economy at its heart.

Firstly, we look at how post COP 26, Glasgow is embracing sustainability with low-carbon transport measures to ensure visitors reach the rich collection of museums outside the city centre.

Glasgow Life's Deputy Chief Executive, Susan Deighan, who leads on tourism and visitor strategy to 2023, talked to Future Cities Forum about improving transport to the internationally famous art collection, The Burrell, which lies outside the city in Pollok Park and which is due to open to the public again in March after extensive renovation:

'The Burrell is set in a large and green space off the motorway and hosting the world's biggest conference COP 26 in Glasgow, we have been working on sustainability for some years in preparation. Glasgow has been on the world global destination sustainability index since 2016 - and we are now 4th in the world. The city has a net zero target by 2030, so sustainability and low carbon design was all part of project for the re-invention of The Burrell. We have received just over £68 million in investment, so naturally some of that money has gone into thinking about how you get to The Burrell which stands in a large park.

'We have had over million visitors a year to Pollok Park, and it is connected by really good public transport with signage at train stations. We are now working on sustainable transport when inside the park. We have had to close the park to cars since during the pandemic everyone was driving into it but we are now creating good way finding, electric vehicle charging points, ways to separate out pedestrians and cyclists from cars and allowing electric bikes into the space along with wider woodland management.'



[The Barony, Ayrshire \(Scott Brownrigg\)](#)

The pandemic has increased people's understanding of the value of spending time in outdoor spaces and Neil MacOmish, Board Director at Scott Brownrigg spoke at our 'Cultural Cities' event, of the wider interest in eco-tourism and the development in Ayrshire of The Barony.

'It is built in a disenfranchised part of Scotland and our client asked us to consider using a Maori influence to help 'make a place that makes a story'. We have turned an ex-coal mine into a new place but had to ask questions around what generates the sense of a new place. Part of the site had been overgrown but we noticed a raft of silver birch trees and thought why not push people into the tree canopy where people can then stay and holiday. There are other facilities there - productive landscapes like our market garden which adds and

demonstrates the value to the circular economy and makes the experience of the visitor that much richer.

'Unless we visit and have a tactile sense of where we are, places can fail. There is a big educational side to the project with arts trails and exhibitions of projected ecologies, where mapped out ecologies of the site show significance beyond the UK. There are different types of accommodation with affordable points of entry around our market garden block. There is a mining museum, and also education and wellbeing programmes linked with several universities and trusts. It is about a creating a proper wealth system for the site.'

Scott Brownrigg's design for this new environmentally sensitive eco-therapy wellness park in Scotland was submitted to East Ayrshire Council for planning in November 2021. Designed for [The Barony NP](#) (UK) Ltd – a joint venture between National Pride UK and [Intro Crowd](#) - the 44-hectare masterplan will transform the site of this ex-coal mine and will include 344 villas, a visitor centre and spa areas, alongside ecological sites that will generate produce and research from an ambitious re-wilding programme.



[Eden Project North at Morecambe Bay \(Grimshaw for Eden Project International\)](#)

Our January forum 'Cultural Cities 2022' looked at the growth of eco-tourism and the value to residents as well as visitors in UK towns and cities. One project discussed was Grimshaw's Eden Project North, situated at Morecambe Bay in Lancashire. Architectural firm Partner, Jolyon Brewis, who led on the first Eden Project in Cornwall described how in his view England's seaside towns have suffered for decades from lack of investment:

'Investment should give towns renewed hope and prosperity. Tourism to those places should be part of their economy. It wasn't by accident that those seaside towns attracted visitors in the first place because they had natural assets but today some of the footfall has

gone and they need to be cared for. They can have a new life, but they do need good facilities.'

'It is possible to create new destinations in places that didn't have them before. The Eden project in Cornwall had two million visitors in the first year and it has settled to about a million or more now on a regular basis. It wasn't a popular destination, but it is now.

'We are developing a number of Eden projects in different places around the UK with a different angle for each on connecting people to landscape. We, as humans, rely on plants and that is the educational purpose of Eden in Cornwall. In Morecambe the accent is more on health and wellbeing. Exhibits bring to life how our health is improved by the understanding of the natural world around us.'

Image: Eden Project Cornwall – the Biomes 2001 (Grimshaw)



The role of culture on the high street



Scaffolding banner for the HAZ over the Royal Court Theatre, Wigan (Wigan Council)

Post pandemic work to ensure the survival of the high street continues as Historic England leads the restoration of heritage to entice visitors back to town and city centres. Wigan's cultural history has been overlooked for some years, but now strong leadership is driving a renaissance not only for the historic theatre, but for the independent shops.

Chief Executive of Wigan Council, Alison McKenzie-Folan spoke of the funding that the council has received from the UK government and via Historic England, to restore the quality of the streetscape and the historic fabric of King Street:

'That historic environment is beautiful and important in our place-making for communities. King Street is known as a late-night drinking district and the streets around it haven't been looked after. We are improving the public realm, working with artists and the creative sector so it can be celebrated 24/7. The plans also include creating apartment living, space for business, and late-night entertainment. The centre piece is the Grade Two listed theatre and there will be an array of cultural activity curated around it. By 2024 it will be a go-to place for residents and tourists linking to cultural activities across the borough.

'The 'Fire Within' is our cultural manifesto and we are grateful for the investment we have received from Arts Council England. The Galleries is an unoccupied shopping centre in the

town and the council has brought in artists who took over spaces and put on exhibitions - 50,000 visitors came to see them and so we have made the shopping centre once again a destination people want to come to. There is rehearsal space behind the scenes for musicians and we are keen to explore how artists can bring cultural life to Wigan.'

Historic England's Regional Director (Midlands), Louise Brennan joined the conversation, commenting:

'It is important to say that it isn't just money that helps revive places like Wigan. It comes down to leadership and community engagement which we have in the town. All our research from the HAZ (High Streets Action Zone) programme talks about the value of culture to wellbeing. Our survey in August last year showed that 49% of people were not yet satisfied with culture on the high street, but 51% felt more connected with their high street during the pandemic. Wigan has just such a clear vision and momentum there to keep going. Ian McKellen who played at the Royal Court Theatre Wigan in his early career, thinks it's great too.

'High street is heritage for everyone, as there is no pay barrier. People talked about all the stories they have of where they live and their emotional connections. They probably do not look at the old buildings and think of it as heritage, but they love it for all sorts of reasons. When the shopping malls were built in the 1970s, they were ten a penny and shared a similar approach to architecture. People tend to prefer the independent shops which give them a sense of pride and they are important to the economy.'



[Queen Street entrance to the Westgate shopping centre in Oxford \(September 2021\)](#)

At our recent Future Cities Forum in Oxford, opened by Lord Mendoza, Commissioner for Cultural Recovery at the DCMS, the role of culture in creating sustainable high streets and shopping centres was central to the discussions.

Land Securities Westgate Centre Director, Brendan Hattam spoke of the success of the new Westgate shopping centre in Oxford (owned jointly with the Crown Estate) which replaced a 1960's brutalist and run-down shopping precinct. The Westgate is now thriving and has turned a dreary corner of the city into a busy shopping, eating, and entertainment area:

'The link between shopping centres and culture is a lot stronger than most people imagine. We have a roof terrace which looks over the Oxford skyline, an archaeology trail, a square to hold public events and 20 million visitors per year. It's about the whole city and connecting with that. The Westgate site is very permeable, with many entrances, and we did the same in Leeds at Trinity shopping centre. You need to make spaces that are multi-use and appeal to many. We try to create spaces so the link between culture, tourism and retail is strong. We sometimes regard ourselves as the support act to what Oxford is about, but the support act has to be of a certain standard.'

Ellen Harrison, Head of Creative Programmes and Campaigns at Historic England responded to a question on communities around the UK and how they view heritage on the high street:

'I don't think people view heritage as an entity, rather it acts as a backdrop. I deliver cultural programmes across 67 High Street Action Zones (HAZs), and I was speaking recently to the project leader in Hexham, who said people approach thinking about heritage or culture as an artistic activity, which provides an easy way in to talking about bigger issues around place-shaping. It's almost a kind of leveller as people don't feel as if they are talking about heritage or culture but instead, they are talking about their stories and their roots.'

On Cornmarket, MICA Architects is finishing a project for Jesus College Oxford where at ground floor retail plays a part in the re-shaping of college-owned buildings, and efforts have also been made to open-up Market Street with an attractive and welcoming gateway into the college. Three GP surgeries will be based in the building as well as space for lectures and events for the public.

The opening-up of universities to the community



CGI of view up Oxford's Market Street to Cornmarket with re-modelled buildings and new public entrance for Jesus College (MICA Architects)

Universities have begun to realise the importance of outreach to their communities and nowhere more important for that to take place is in Oxford, which traditionally has presented a front of enclosed private university courtyards.

MICA Director Stuart Cade explained:

'The brief underlined the need for Jesus College to look outwards - to Cornmarket and the city. It's an extraordinary and very busy thoroughfare and it passes the back of the college. The site has the potential of connecting these two worlds. It's about making a back into a front, while making Market Street (which runs down the side of the college from Cornmarket) into a lively street again while reinforcing the presence of the Oxford Covered Market. The project combines education, with retail and other services for the city. We are opening up a medieval street.'

Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism, Cllr Mary Clarkson highlighted the extreme contrasts of wealth and privilege against areas of extreme deprivation and said:

'It is important for buildings to be multi-purpose, the more we have multi-use the more resilient we can be. Westgate is not only about retail as it has cinemas and performance

spaces, but there is huge inequality in the city. On the one hand you have the universities and the success of the vaccine discovery programme, but on the other hand many groups in wider Oxford do not feel the city centre is for them. Culture has to be for everyone, and you do not have to go through the gates of a college or museum to experience it.'



Creative Centre atrium at York St. John University (Tate + Co / Kier)

Rather than 'keeping people' out, York St John University has also been determined to 'open its doors.' An important feature of allowing visitors to experience performance, is now a confident reality in the £17.2m Creative Centre project to York St John University at its Lord Mayor's Walk campus in York City Centre. The Centre was designed by architects Tate + Co (with Kier as construction partner), with sustainability and adaptability in mind, to cater for students needs, community use and the evolution of the University's curriculum.

The centrepiece of the project is the 20-seat auditorium wrapped in prefabricated timber, a three-storey teaching block and 2,600 square meters of flexible, specialist teaching space.

The new 550 square meter atrium has a glass and timber roof to allow natural daylight to enter the building. It acts as an exhibition space, teaching space and theatre foyer to host lectures, performances, and events.

Over the duration of the project, Kier engaged with the local community as part of its commitment to leaving lasting legacies in the areas in which it works. It has achieved six school/college workshops, six work experience placements, 15 weeks given to existing apprentices, one new apprentice and two people progressed into employment.

Dan Doherty, regional director at Kier Regional Building North and Scotland, said:

‘This is a key project for York St John University, putting creativity at the hearts of its campus and creating a new home for music and computer science courses.

‘Bringing our expertise in the education sector to the project and working in collaboration with our client and local supply chain, we have created specialist teaching spaces, which will enhance students learning experience for years to come.’

Chief Operating Officer of York St John University Rob Hickey added:

‘What we set out to achieve was a striking and sustainable building to inspire learning at the heart of our Lord Mayor’s Walk campus, and I would like to thank our partners Kier and Tate + Co for delivering just that. Our new Creative Centre demonstrates our commitment to our students, the wider community, and the creative industries in the region. We look forward to welcoming the public to experience the amazing space for themselves.’

Widening library reach as part of cultural infrastructure



The new building at Lambeth Place Library (interior left, and the ecology pond, right) – Wright & Wright Architects

Following the example of universities opening-up to include a wider audience, Future Cities Forum looked at the development of historic libraries to enhance the cultural experience of the local community.

The importance of opening-up 'fortress' places to communities was described by Stephen Smith, Partner at Wright & Wright Architects, at our Future Cities Forum talking about his recent project for an extension to Lambeth Palace Library:

'In terms of the Library and Archive extension it's a new building. Lambeth Palace is one of the most secure sites in the country and very difficult to get into. The old site of the library collection of the Church Commissioners was sealed off in an old warehouse in Bermondsey but the challenge became how can you offer different ways for people to see the collection and the new library building? The idea for the tower came from a conversation with the local authority who said why don't you show off?

'The new building will be open for people to come in on certain days and that's the most important thing. The top viewing platform of the tower is balanced at the bottom as right opposite the entrance is the Evelina Children's Hospital. Lots of parents and grandparents come in from there to see the view into the archbishop's garden and ecology pond and many say how brilliant it is to come in for quiet respite from the hospital.'



Weston Library, Oxford (Bodleian Libraries) - the colonnade on Broad Street, with public cafe tables, looking towards the Clarendon Building, the Sheldonian Theatre and the Oxford Science Museum

In 2021, Future Cities Forum travelled to Oxford to look at 'the opening out' to the community of one of the most treasured libraries in the UK, the Bodleian.

The Weston Library (as the 'New Bodleian') was built in the 1930s and designed by the architect Giles Gilbert Scott. He is chiefly remembered for his design for the red telephone box, Liverpool's

Anglican cathedral, and London's most famous power stations at Bankside (now Tate Modern) and Battersea.

The library building was re-designed by Wilkinson Eyre and opened in 2015 with new spaces for the public to enjoy business and social events and exhibitions, as well as to showcase the treasures of the Bodleian Libraries' special collections: archives, manuscripts, rare books, maps, printed ephemera and other specialist material.

According to Jim Eyre of Wilkinson Eyre, Scott's New Bodleian was never designed as a public building, but essentially as a storage facility. In 2010 the University opened a new storage base at South Marston near Swindon, and this freed up room in Broad Street. Wilkinson Eyre celebrated the building's heritage by designing voids up through the building that frame the central book stack volume to bring in controlled daylight. The architects also created a spectacular reading room at roof level.

Richard Ovenden OBE FSA FRSA is a British librarian and author, currently serving as Bodley's Librarian in the University of Oxford having been appointed in 2014. He also serves as the Director of the Bodleian Library's Centre for the Study of the Book and holds a Professional Fellowship at Balliol College and described the journey in opening-up the Bodleian Library:

'Before we could do this the fire service had to make it safe and the building had to be preserved to protect what is one of the world's greatest scientific repositories and also for continuing research purposes. The building was part of the Broad Street Plan of 2004 which had benefitted from the appointment of renowned landscape and urban designer Kim Wilkie, and which aimed to revive the street as a social convening space for the city.

'Architect Jim Eyre (of Wilkinson Eyre) developed the building, turning the wall that faces Broad Street into a colonnaded space where today people can gather or sit at tables opposite the Sheldonian Theatre. He also determined that this should open into a big space inside the building where the public could meet free of charge, engage with the library treasures, or simply have a coffee. It acts as an intellectual and social space where programmes are being developed not just for students but for social and business groups. The Oxford Business Forum networks here, people gather in the public space after concerts and wedding breakfasts can be held. It is one of the few big spaces in the city where 400 people can assemble with a glass in their hands and talk to each other.

'I remember the day the renovated library building opened - we had 14,000 visitors over two days. There was one person who came along who had never been in a university building before. It was all worthwhile. It made me think of Eric Klinenberg's book, 'Palaces for the People' which brought forward the notion that libraries are social infrastructure, and we hope at the Weston Library that we have provided that same infrastructure.'



[Future Cities Forum hybrid event at the Weston Library on Broad Street, Oxford with Lord Mendoza of the DCMS giving his address on the cultural recovery.](#)

At our forum in Oxford, we were delighted that Commissioner for Cultural Recovery at the DCMS, Lord Mendoza, gave a speech highlighting the funding work carried out by the government for the cultural recovery of our towns and cities post pandemic.

In his speech, Lord Mendoza, spoke of the difficult time that ensued from lockdown in March 2020 where 90% of income in the cultural sector was lost - a sector that in 2019 contributed to £34.6 billion to UK GVA and exported £10.3 billion of services to the rest of the world. He stated that the £2 billion Culture Recovery Fund had been a huge success in supporting thousands of organisations, large and small in every part of the country, village, town and city. Very few organisations failed he said.

Culture he said can make places vibrant, attractive, as places to live, as drivers of inward investment, jobs and skills. He illustrated this by saying that The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre recently reported that every creative job adds at least a further two non-tradable jobs to the local economy, for instance at Salford where investment in culture and media has seen great results. Salford's creative, digital and technology sector employs 84,575 people across 8,000 companies that contribute to the region's economy which is expected to add £62.8 billion to the UK economy by 2030.

He commented on the wider, more systemic, societal and philosophical change that the pandemic has brought, accelerating the existing trend of our pivot online with the livestreaming of ballet to interactive plays via Zoom, the behind-the-scenes tours of galleries to concerts, with the result that two-thirds of Britons think it is possible to have a meaningful cultural experience online. Libraries he noted have also expanded in an increasingly digital shift with some virtual events drawing up to 10,000 views and registrations of e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers growing.

Lord Mendoza also made important points about the levelling-up that has taken place during the pandemic because of the focus on place and community. He included mention of the Levelling up

fund - £4.8 billion to support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets, and stated that he was:

'.....so pleased that Future Cities Forum has given the 'High Streets' category of its summer awards to The Burges, Coventry, our High Street Heritage Action Zone in collaboration with Historic Coventry Trust and Coventry City Council - delivered through Historic England. If we are to improve living standards, create dynamic and prosperous places to live, build back better after Covid and provide people with a sense of place, identity, purpose and joy then the positive effects of culture must be harnessed - all across the country.'

He stated that the scheme is an early demonstrator of the overall programme and focused on the restoration and upgrading of one of the few remaining medieval/Victorian streetscapes in Coventry.

Lord Mendoza went on to quote the Nobel Prize winning economist, Robert Merton Solow: 'Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any.'

Film production, a booming area for the UK, was also included in Lord Mendoza's discussion of financial support packages from the government: 'The Film and Television Restart Fund is a £500 million fund created to allow productions to go ahead during Covid-19 and this has generated £2 billion of film production in the last year - the industry is booming and now can't find the skills to support the growth. Culture as a sector has also benefitted from the cross-national interventions like the furlough scheme, the self-employed income support scheme, business rates rebates, as well as VAT reduction.

'DCMS has the Culture Investment Fund, a manifesto commitment, amounting to £250 million which includes the Museums Development Fund to help finance capital projects which can be less glamorous, and also the Culture Development Fund providing funding for Local Authorities to make cultural investment in their places outside London. The Heritage Action Zone projects run by Historic England have worked very well too.' (Image below: Turkish barbershop in Hales Street Coventry after restoration – Historic England)





Looking towards Temple Works from the 1943 TWMP building, Leeds South Bank (Courtesy CEG)

Developing culture to aid the levelling up of the North

The importance that the UK government sees in the development of libraries for cultural infrastructure and the levelling-up campaign cannot be underestimated.

Warrington Borough Council's Chief Executive, Professor Steve Broomhead, joined the discussions to talk about the important work he carried out in chairing the Libraries Taskforce:

' Research showed us that libraries contribute enormously to community, social, economic and regeneration improvements with spaces used for many different purposes. It's not just the traditional education and learning aspects as now libraries are being deployed in a much more flexible way. It is now recognised by the DCMS that they have a space in culture. To give you an example, the Story House in Chester has been a tremendous part of cultural regeneration in that city, acting as a theatre, cultural arts and library space all in one in a re-designed cinema building. There has been tremendous support from the DCMS, and the Libraries Investment Fund will be a big boost. Covid-19 has been an opportunity to re-think the digital agenda, and the ambition for the sector.'

In Leeds a new district is being created to the South of the City (Leeds South Bank) with the help of a potential move by the British Library to one of the largest industrial revolution

factory spaces called Temple Works. There has already been a lengthy engagement with the city council, the developer, and local stakeholders to make it a success. Jamie Andrews, the British Libraries Head of Culture and Learning, said:

' We are not new to Leeds, as since 1961 the National Library of Science and Technology had space in Boston Spa, close to the city, which stores two thirds of our collection but is not as accessible for the public as we would like. The opportunity now for the British Library is to be in the middle of Leeds. Temple Works is a former flax mill, 1836 in a historically deprived area. The strongest feature of the area is Temple Works, a massive room of two acres with a roof held up by cast iron columns. The world's first hydraulic lift got sheep up to the roof to graze the grass to keep humidity up, a 'green roof' in effect. Architect and Egyptologist Joseph Bonomi based the front elevation on the Temple of Horus.

' What attracted us was the environment - the perfect conditions for flax production in the 1830s are perfect for knowledge production in 2020s. A huge top lit single room is crying out for use by the library. Another attraction is the location in a deprived area where there no public libraries and few cultural assets. We think we can make a difference. In the way Marshall's Mill / Temple Works had a profound effect on the area in the first industrial revolution, we believe that in the current industrial and knowledge revolution we can have a similar and galvanising effect.'

The Leeds Council cabinet lead for culture, Cllr Jonathan Pryor, added:

'Leeds is going through a massive change. While transformation opens huge opportunities it does present challenges. As a city, we are bigger than Manchester, but we have a smaller city centre and a lot of local centres which are well connected into the centre. However, there is a need for transport investment alongside culture. Our new Metro Mayor, Tracy Brabin (who works alongside council leaders from Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, Leeds and Wakefield) has two main priorities: transport and culture. I think the pandemic has accelerated a lot of trends that were already happening. Go back to the 1960s and we had the arrival of super-markets (which changed shopping habits) but now internet shopping has changed things again. The reasons for people going into city centres is evolving and shifting, and culture has a very important part to play.'



The old rope factory, in the Golden Horn district, Istanbul, awaiting transformation into the Sadberk Hanım Museum (Grimshaw)

Demand for UK expertise on development of overseas cultural attractions

UK architects are in demand overseas for their design vision and to finish our report we feature three different practices involved in expanding cultural assets abroad.

Grimshaw's London Studio Managing Partner, Kirsten Lees, who spoke at our Oxford Bodleian forum, was optimistic about the opportunities ahead for the museum sector. She has been leading the development of a Turkish museum, the relocation of the Sadberk Hanım to the Golden Horn historic dock district of Istanbul, where 'a street' is being created to draw the public in to experience the collection:

'Getting people back to high streets, culture has a really important role. How you create really open buildings is a really consistent theme across our cultural projects. We are working in Istanbul for the Koc Foundation on an old rope factory. How do we convert this to make it open and inviting and showcase everything that is offer? How do you get people through the door in the first place? That's why we have created a 'street' into and inside the museum.

'The pandemic has really made people ask what is a cultural institution and what is it for? I think it's now an opportunity for the sector to embrace society's need for social interaction - the thing we have all been missing - so that museum and gallery spaces reflect this, rather than being repositories for artefacts.'

According to Grimshaw, the Sadberk Hanim museum opened in 1980 as Turkey's first private museum, housing the foundation's collection of Turkish Islamic and archaeological works and artefacts dating from 6000 BC. To accommodate its growing collection and enhanced vision, the museum is being relocated from its current home on the Bosphorus to a listed building in a historical shipyard on the Golden Horn, a fast developing cultural and commercial district.

The new museum, set to open in 2023, will strengthen its position as one of the most important attractions of Istanbul's cultural life, and in addition to the adaption of the listed building, the scheme will also feature a new building and a public event space in between. Alongside the world-class exhibitions and conservation programmes will be a series of supporting facilities, including an academic research platform, education programme, and a multifunction auditorium for performance and conferences.

The project is part of the Tersane Masterplan development which regenerates a former industrial area of coastline to create a new cultural destination for the city, with a mix of uses including hotels, housing, offices and leisure alongside a new marina. The commission represents the next chapter in an ongoing collaboration between Grimshaw and the Vehbi Koç Foundation, following Arter Contemporary Art Museum, which opened in the nearby Dolapdere district in summer 2019.





CGI of Winter Park Library, Florida (Adjaye Associates)

Sited on the northwest corner of Martin Luther King, Jr, Park, Adjaye Associates has designed a new civic and cultural hub which embodies the values of the park's namesake and is envisioned as a space for community and empowerment. The Winter Park Library & Events Center in Florida, USA, is part of an extensive revitalisation of the park with the new hub in harmony with the unique tropical ecology of the site. It is conceived as a micro-village of three pavilions, each of different scale and function. The village is made up of a new two-story library, an event center with rooftop terrace, as well as a new welcome portico that ushers users from the street and unifies the three structures. All three pavilions are composed of rose-pigmented concrete and rest on a raised belvedere that provides views onto Lake Mendon, increasing connectivity to the park's wellness offerings and supporting a new network of exterior green community spaces that run between the three structures.

Arches inspired by both the local fauna and the region's vernacular architecture establish the form of the pavilions, with vaulted rooflines and sweeping windows creating a porous relationship between interior and exterior, drawing natural light deep into the buildings. The library's open plan supports collection spaces accessible to all ages and abilities, interactive youth and children areas, an indoor auditorium, maker-spaces and technology portals, an entrepreneurship centre, and continuing education spaces, extending the means by which the entire community can interact, learn and gather. These open spaces are framed by four timber-lined cores that contain Winter Park's historical and archival collection spaces, support zones and private reading rooms.



Model – by Base Models – of Teatro San Cassiano 1634, Venice (photography: Janie Airey for Teatro San Cassiano)

Post pandemic there have been rumblings again around how to create a sustainable form of tourism for Venice. The 'day tripper' still accounts for a huge swell in visitors to the city, but without drawing in significant spend. Could re-building the 17th century Teatro San Cassiano help to start a new destination for opera lovers, who would be tempted to stay overnight following performances, boosting revenue? Would the theatre bring in new audiences sampling opera for the first time and be of benefit to the Venetian community itself, not just tourists?

In Venice - the city where opera was invented - entrepreneur and musicologist Dr. Paul Atkin is leading the project to re-build what was the city's first public opera house, Teatro San Cassiano 1637, and he is being supported by a team of British architects and academics. This includes Jon Greenfield of Greenfield Architecture – UK, who worked extensively on Shakespeare's Globe in London, and on the Sam Wanamaker Theatre. both being accredited with helping to restore the fortunes of Southwark's Bankside cultural district.

In 17th century Venice and previous to opera performances in Teatro San Cassiano, musical evenings were held in palazzos behind closed doors and only among the Venetian elite. The new theatre, as it was then called, opened up performances to a more diverse audience and the art form was a runaway success. In this decade, could the same enthusiasm prevail if the theatre project goes ahead? Could it compete with La Fenice - the city's established opera venue - without stealing its thunder? Dr Atkin is determined that it should not draw audiences away, but form part of an on-going regeneration of culture in the city.

Some believe that Teatro San Cassiano was destroyed by Napoleon's soldiers, and as the site of the original theatre is now a private garden, there are searches for a new location while fund-raising is taking place to make the dream of Dr. Atkin's theatre re-build a reality. However, both the Italian and English members of the team believe that there is still research to do to ensure that the new building is as close in design to that of the original.

Jon Greenfield explained to Future Cities Forum:

'The idea is to reproduce the opera house as authentically as possible using traditional craftsmanship. There were five or six different versions of the theatre erected over time on the same plot but we want to re-build the original. I think the true description of it, is as a 'theatre of music' but also that of spectacle. Most importantly, the project should restore historically informed Baroque opera to Venice. When the theatre was operating in the 17th century, there was a particular type of stage machinery being designed in Italy at the time with five or six stage flats either side of the performing space, where all sorts of things would emerge, as well as from the ceiling, such as flying gods. It was quite unlike anything we would recognise today and even would have involved water scenes. The theatre itself would have had a small footprint with the audience sitting in five tiers of boxes – not seats – and they would have been entertained by lots of moving sets. The acting was very stylised, involving specific poses and gestures.

'Trees from the Alpine foothills would have been brought to Venice and used in the construction at the time. Plaster work would have decorated the walls with intricate designs painted on them. It would have been very opulent with lots of gold leaf and trompe l'oeil, and lit by oil lamps. The floor would have been made from terrazzo. The Venetians were well ahead of anyone else at that time in decoration. We know a lot about the design from documents handed down through generations of ancient Venetian families, who back in the 17th century, had a stake in the original theatre. It is no good looking at theatre design outside the city. Venice was different to other places and looking at other theatre plans can lead you astray.

'We are now looking for a suitable site for the re-construction of the theatre, somewhere accessible and conversations are on-going around this. We could use pine timbers to construct the building again – timber is very sustainable – but we have to be mindful of

safety and work within Italian regulations. There will be an outdoor space where the performance going on inside can be projected to a wider audience and we are hoping to interest a diverse range of people, not only in the construction, but through our education programme. We have to make sure that in building the theatre again that we can get back to the authentic sounds that would have been produced at that time – the whole project has to be authentic and it is our aim to encourage a new type of tourism, a sustainable one over the day-tripper model at the moment.'

Among the partners involved in developing the project are Instituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, Shakespeare's Globe, Venice Baroque Opera, the Academy of Ancient Music and Sotheby's. Since its launch, the Group has targeted over 25 Venetian companies and the completed theatre will employ around 160 direct and indirect staff. The theatre will be offering apprenticeships and employment to Italy's talented artisans. Singers, musicians and production staff will take opera scenes into schools and the wider community to place the theatre at the heart of a shared Venetian identity.

Conclusions

Head Librarian Richard Ovenden, concluded our 'Cultural Cities' debate in Oxford – and it seems sensible to reproduce it here at the end of this report - by saying:

' Culture is something that grows out of society, it is not separate, and the content of the stacks of the Bodleian show us that - but culture is constantly evolving and developing, enmeshed with society. What the institutions and the players in culture have to do is to have both the long-term vision to step back but also be connected to what is happening right now, to respond, to enable, to engage, to listen back, and - for an organisation like mine - to capture it, to preserve for the future to see where we have come from. One of the key values of museums, libraries and archives is the preservation of cultural record so that it can inform our future cultural development because we need to see the stepping-stones of where we got to today, as we use that culture to be the kind of society we are now, for good or ill.'

Future Cities Forum's conclusions on our research findings through forum interviews and event discussions include:

- The levelling-up agenda is important for the whole of the UK, but London is an important driver for the whole of the UK economy and investment in the capital should not be overlooked.
- It is not enough to invest in well-known institutions – although this is very important – but it is vital to put money into 'touring exhibitions and/or immersive experiences' to draw visitors both domestic and international to our cities and towns.

- The development of public realm is vital post pandemic and used as places where 'culture is seen to be made'. Equally important is how museums extend their public realm offering to draw in diverse audiences.
- Cultural attractions as evidenced by The Burrell Collection in Pollok Park on the edge of Glasgow should be supported by sustainable transport with Net Zero goals in mind.
- New ideas are to be welcomed on how the UK with investment can use its industrial heritage and fading seaside towns to create new and appealing eco-tourist destinations.
- Successful and sustainable culture on the high street is as much about good leadership as investment. It is 'culture for everyone' and preserves the heritage of the UK's towns and cities. The design of shopping centres should create multi-use spaces for events and cultural attractions.
- There is an important transition taking place where universities in the UK are realising the value of opening-up their buildings for the benefit of communities and in architectural terms, often linking the high street to university event spaces.
- Libraries have been shown to be important in creating 'cultural depth' for communities and they have been recognised by the DCMS and the GLA as cultural infrastructure, which can attract further investment and the creation of jobs.
- Investment in sustainable transport in cities like Leeds is an important part of levelling-up the North and creating a strong visitor economy.
- UK architects are in much demand around the cultural development of cities. This has been shown through Grimshaw's work in Istanbul and the development of a new sustainable tourism economy for Venice. Projects such as these rely on long term success by taking an authentic approach to their environment and embracing community.

Watch out for Future Cities Forum's 'Cultural Cities' events which take place throughout the year.

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Image below: Shakespeare's Globe and Tate Modern, Bankside London, in the snow – February 2018

