

Cultural Strategy 2023-2026



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

1. Introduction

We aim for South Kesteven to be the best district to visit, live and work in. We invest in culture because we know it plays an important role in improving people's lives. As well as ensuring quality of life for residents and the economic benefits of attracting more visitors, culture is vital for health and wellbeing, employment, learning, and building a sense of place.

What we provide:

- South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) funds extensive programmes of events and activities at Guildhall Arts Centre in Grantham, Stamford Arts Centre, The Bourne Corn Exchange and across the district through outreach work and projects.
- We pay professional companies, touring theatre groups and orchestras, to perform in the venues. We also hire out our spaces to professional groups as well as community organisations to put on public performances. In this way, residents across South Kesteven have access to theatre, films, talks, dance and music across the district all year round.
- The Music in Quiet Places programme brings performances to some of the district's historic churches. We make sure that all of South Kesteven benefits from this.

- We support the Lincolnshire Live & Local Touring Scheme across the district's local community centres.
- Guildhall and Stamford Arts Centre are part of the Lincolnshire One Venues network, which provides collaboration opportunities and aims to reach those who have not previously engaged.
- We programme specifically with schools and education in mind, offering professional performances linked into curriculum subjects. We also fund and facilitate half-term workshops.
- We support up and coming artists and performers with advice and opportunities.

South Kesteven had the biggest economy and strongest growth pre-pandemic of Lincolnshire's seven districts. Our population grew 7% between 2011 and 2021, with an extra 7,000 people living here – by 2036 that could rise by another 18,000.

We want to make sure this continues, even in times of great challenge as we build back from the Covid-19 pandemic and with resources much scarcer thanks to the worldwide economic situation. We will need to make the most of what we already have, seek new resources to develop more, and supercharge our partnership working. Our cultural strategy will help us do that.

The Music in Quiet Places programme brings performances to some of the district's historic churches.



2. Consultation

We think of culture as including the arts, heritage, towns and villages, sport and leisure activities, whether you're a participant, in the audience or make your living from it. And people in South Kesteven think culture is important – our engagement shows a majority of residents strongly agree that.

Participating in culture has a positive impact on health and well-being

Culture has a strong role in making the district a great place to live, work and visit

Culture has a positive impact on businesses, jobs and services in South Kesteven

From November 2022 to February 2023, a series of consultation events were carried out:

1. Public survey – available online and in paper copy on request (1,432 responses)
2. Two conversation cafes with residents in Stamford and Grantham
3. Individual conversations with the councillors for Bourne and Market Deeping, and an offer of conversation cafés
4. A series of one-to-one discussions with key stakeholders
5. An online focus group with staff from the three SKDC cultural venues
6. Online survey to collate member views



YOU SAID: Culture is highly important to people and has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

WE WILL: Continue to find ways to invest in culture across the district.



YOU SAID: Culture means different things to different people, and we need to deliver what communities want.

WE WILL: Identify communities that don't use our cultural offer as much and find out what they would like to see.



YOU SAID: Improved communication, cooperation and consultation would be beneficial to increasing participation and widening audiences.

WE WILL: Develop a strong communications plan to make sure everybody knows what is on offer.



YOU SAID: Outreach work is a priority to overcome barriers: everyone should be able to access culture and be involved.

WE WILL: Make sure our programmes and events reach all areas of South Kesteven.



YOU SAID: SKDC could develop a convening role to strengthen collaborative working and kickstart cultural projects.

WE WILL: Develop a network of cultural providers and community groups, convened by the council.



YOU SAID: Culture has a hugely significant role in building the visitor economy and making South Kesteven a tourist destination.

WE WILL: Work closely with tourism to make sure our cultural offer has maximum exposure.



YOU SAID: There is a huge potential for maximising the use of volunteers in a wide range of roles, including enhanced roles at the venues.

WE WILL: Develop a district-wide volunteer programme and increase the number of volunteers.

3. Why we're proud of culture and why we're investing

There is so much to be celebrated in South Kesteven. We have one of the best places to live in Britain – Stamford, according to the Sunday Times. But it's about more than one town. Our wealth of parks and open spaces, our cultural and sporting venues, and our local organisations, all make for a fantastic quality of life. Heritage attractions – Stamford and Grantham town centres, Grantham Canal, Belton House, Woolsthorpe Manor and many others – are among the reasons more than two million people visit the district every year.

It is widely recognised that people who engage in culture enjoy better health and quality of life, and culture brings economic opportunities through employment, self-employment and skills development.

Culture helps place-making and is central to it, giving people reasons to live, work and play in their communities, with benefits to the environment and community cohesion. Culture builds civic pride and a sense of place. Nationally, people value arts, heritage and culture, and want to see more of it.

“Society is not complete without arts and culture.”

Quote from public survey 2022



People who attend cultural events are **60%** more likely to report good health compared to non-attenders, as well as improved mental health and impacts on specific illnesses such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, and physical disabilities - Arts Council.



According to a recent UK research project, people who engage in arts, sport and heritage activities have greater life satisfaction (Understanding Society).



Historic England found that historic buildings were in the top three things people said foster pride in an area.

“Cultural activities are critical to well-being, diversity and inclusiveness in communities, particularly in hard times.”

Quote from public survey 2022



The Department for Culture, Media and Sport costed the well-being benefits of participation in culture and sport at over **£1,000** per person per year.

“I agree that culture brings opportunities for all areas of our community and well-being. It provides citizens with information, entertainment and education.”

Quote from public survey 2022

South Kesteven residents also see the importance of culture to the district:



We want everyone to have opportunities to take part in culture – arts, heritage and sport. Although participation in arts and heritage is at or above national averages, some groups and communities are less likely to be involved, and we have a less physically active, as well as an aging, population.

We want to do more through enabling partnerships and investing where it's right, as well as attracting more external funding to the district. Collaboration is key, and there is appetite from our residents – the public survey received 145 comments relating to collaboration opportunities.

4. Where we want to make an impact

The Covid-19 pandemic has had long-lasting effects. Income, funding and audiences were all reduced significantly by the pandemic and have taken a long time to build back. We want to make sure that we identify new opportunities for culture to make up lost ground, whether it's new sources of funding from government or the private sector, or improved collaboration between culture and sports organisations in South Kesteven. Culture can make a real impact on the local economy, health and well-being, and in the locality and place, and these are the areas we will focus on through the strategy.

At the same time, projected increases in population, and an aging population, will place additional demands on cultural provision, just as they do in other services. Working with our partners, we want to ensure these needs are identified and addressed so that everyone can access culture. This will also help take-up by under-represented groups, with a special focus on children and young people.

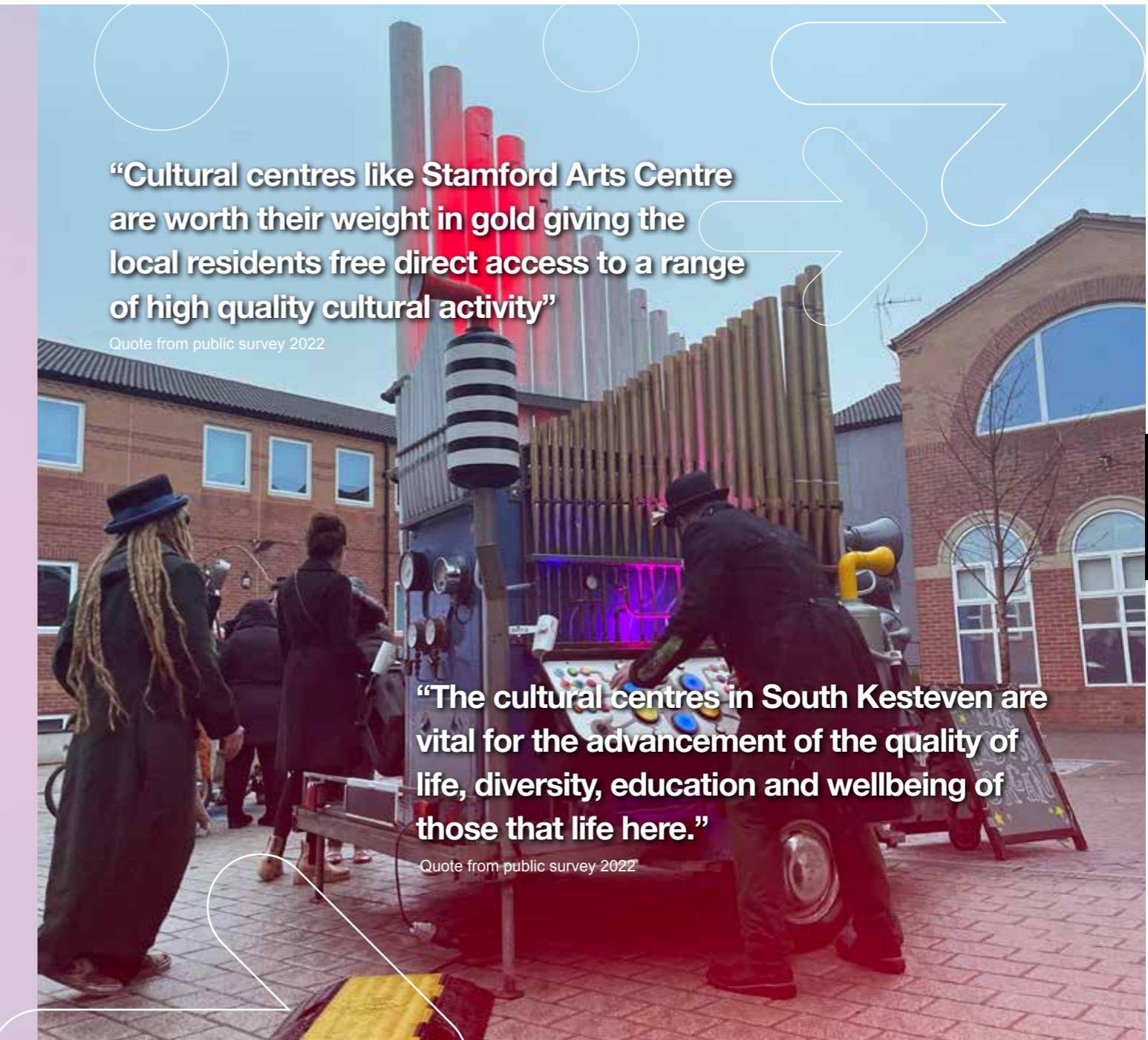
We have already made good progress – our

programming is back at pre-pandemic levels and our audiences are steadily increasing and are approaching pre-pandemic levels. We are now seeking to use our limited resources in more innovative ways: expanding our audience and engaging with people in different and exciting ways.

One of these areas is digital engagement. The pandemic brought dramatic changes with increases in streaming of theatre, music, dance, online projects, talks and courses. We want to continue to find innovative ways to bring culture to people. Although the Council has less money to spend than ever, and some other public sources of funding have been reduced, there are good examples, in the district and elsewhere, such as Music in Quiet Places, Lincolnshire Live and the Local Touring Scheme that reach rural areas. These show how innovative ways of thinking and partnership working can make better use of resources or unlock new investment, and the cultural strategy will help guide us in this.

“Cultural centres like Stamford Arts Centre are worth their weight in gold giving the local residents free direct access to a range of high quality cultural activity”

Quote from public survey 2022



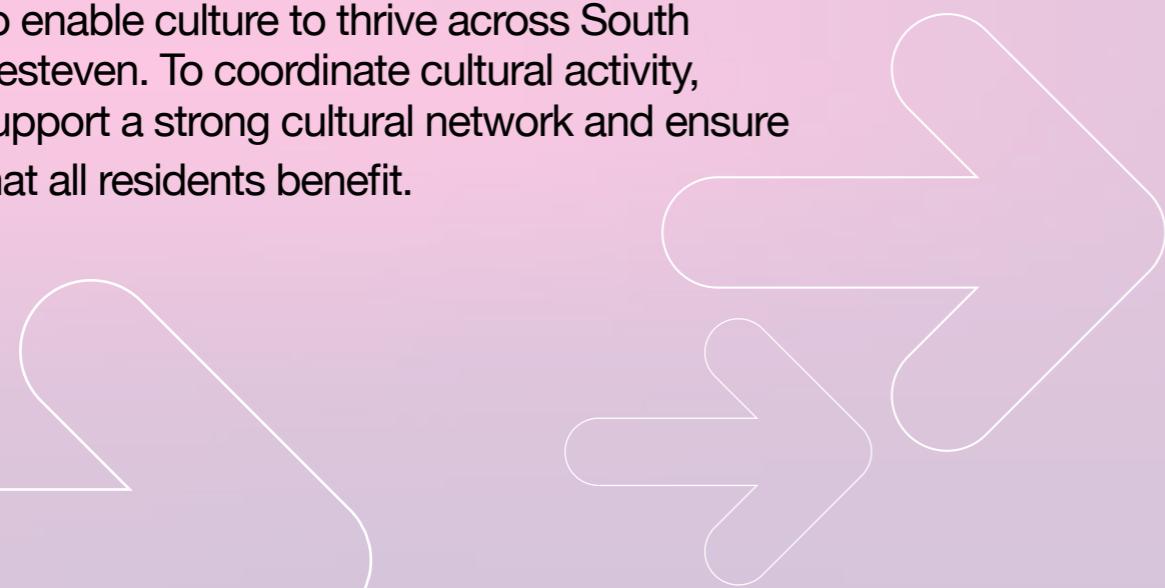
5. The Strategy

Our Vision

SKDC is a place that people want to live, work and visit - where culture and creativity are valued, accessible to all and given the chance to flourish.

Our Mission

To enable culture to thrive across South Kesteven. To coordinate cultural activity, support a strong cultural network and ensure that all residents benefit.



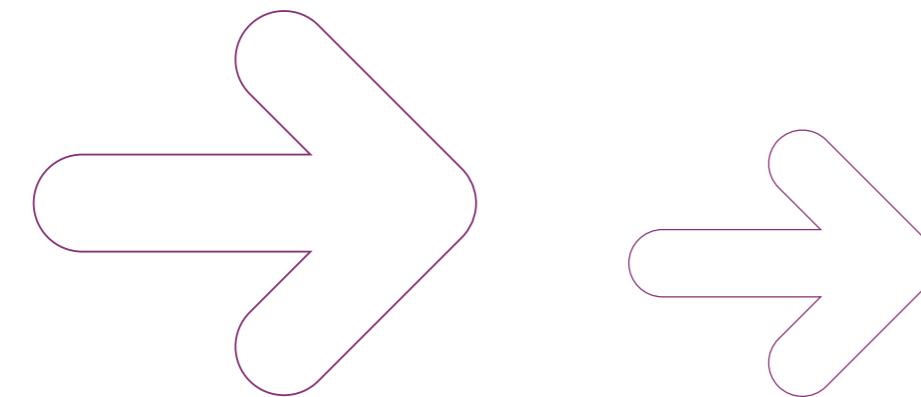
Priorities

Key theme	Priority	Why this is important
Economy and Growth	Increased participation in culture	Culture can help the council achieve its vision of South Kesteven as a place that people want to live, work and visit
Partnership and Collaboration	A strong and joined-up cultural and creative community	<p>There needs to be a central point of contact, a network. This way, events and opportunities can be promoted, planned and funded in partnership with others and people can learn from each other.</p> <p>The Council has previously funded a huge range of cultural activity from the programmes at the venues, outdoor events and festivals. SKDC are now seeking increase their role a facilitator - supporting and promoting community run arts and culture in the towns and villages, sports and physical activity and working with the artists and cultural practitioners who live in the districts.</p> <p>Collaborative working across the district, in attracting external funding, could enable, for example, the sustainability of outdoor festivals.</p> <p>There are many synergies between arts, heritage and sports. This strategy should align with all of the Council's strategy and development work, for example the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and the Heritage Action Zone.</p>

Key theme	Priority	Why this is important
Equality and Inclusion	New and diverse audiences	South Kesteven has a good and varied cultural offer but not everybody uses it. The council needs to look at attracting wider audiences, such as young people and those from areas where there is less involvement.
Placemaking	Improved cultural and visitor economy	Culture can regenerate towns and villages, bringing tourism and economic development. The SKDC population is set to grow significantly over the next decade. Cultural activity plays a key role in bringing communities together. The impact of festivals and outdoor events can be significant and SKDC wants to support communities to build future events and cultural activities.
Health and Wellbeing	Improved health and wellbeing in the district	Culture benefits health and wellbeing of a place and its people. Creativity and physical activity improve the general health of the population
Value for Money	Financial sustainability, value for money and fair access to opportunities	SKDC spends above the average on arts and culture. As finances become tighter, the council needs to ensure both value for money and fairness of opportunity.
Cultural venues and Programmes	Excellent cultural facilities and programmes	The Council runs three primary venues and a range of programmes across the district. It is vital that they are run effectively and deliver programmes to meet the needs of all communities

Key theme	Priority	Why this is important
Partnership and Collaboration	Enable strong links, collaborations and partnerships between cultural organisations in SKDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strong network of cultural providers, practitioners and groups, convened by the council Build strong links and partnerships with neighbouring districts and regional and national funders. Work closely with all Council and other services to maximise benefits for residents.
Placemaking	Increase opportunities for people to take part in or experience arts and culture in the towns and villages of South Kesteven Make South Kesteven the best district to work, live and visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support communities to run outreach, event and festival programmes at a range of locations across SKDC – including helping organisers to identify alternative funding streams Maximise the opportunities at the three key venues with the joined-up management and programming team

Key theme	Priority	Why this is important
Health and Wellbeing	Increase awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits of culture in terms of reducing isolation, combatting mental health issues and promoting positive activity and enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to tackle health inequalities in areas with the highest need Design a promotional campaign on the benefits of culture and its impact on health and wellbeing Work with sports and health partners to facilitate social prescribing of cultural activity
Economy and Growth	<p>Identify the areas for growth and positive impact on the local economy.</p> <p>Working within the framework of the Local Plan, ensure culture is reflected in development within the district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with economic development and tourism services to ensure that the benefits of culture are incorporated and maximised
Equality and Inclusion	<p>Increase audiences from underrepresented groups</p> <p>Increase equality, diversity and inclusion for people participating in arts and cultural activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify target areas and groups. Focus a percentage of programming at target audiences, especially young people Ensure that programmes are accessible to rural communities



Key theme	Priority	Why this is important
Value for Money	<p>Enable maximum utilisation of external funding streams for cultural activity</p> <p>Maximise the reach of SKDC funding for culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a central point for information about funding Provide support for funding applications and signpost to existing funding streams such as SPF and others Working with the cultural network to identify, promote and support the securing of external funding streams Explore alternative delivery models for cultural venues and activity
Cultural Venues and Programmes	Ensure that venues are run effectively and that programmes attract and cater for a range of audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop volunteering opportunities to help expand the cultural offer as well as providing opportunities for individuals to gain skills and experience Explore digital events and activities to supplement the physical and reach people in different ways Improve promotion and awareness of cultural events and activities across SKDC by developing a cohesive communications strategy using existing platforms and channels Identify financial investment (or external funding) opportunities to improve customer experience, financial performance, or environmental sustainability of venues Maximise the impact of cultural venues in SKDC by developing individual asset management plans for each venue. Establish a coordinated approach to programming and income generation between the SKDC venues



Contact Details

Alternative formats are available on request:
audio, large print and Braille

South Kesteven District Council
01476 40 60 80

✉ communications@southkesteven.gov.uk
🌐 www.southkesteven.gov.uk

03760RT_523



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL