



## 4. An international city of culture



Southampton is a thriving and growing city with a diverse and dynamic population. In July 2007, Southampton was identified as the third fastest growing city in the UK in terms of economic growth, population growth and skills of local residents<sup>4</sup>. With the opening of West Quay the city has become a major retail destination. It is currently ranked 13th for shopping in the UK (Experian). The new Ikea and Phase 3 of West Quay will only enhance this reputation.

230,000 people live in Southampton of which 50,000 are aged 0-19 years and 40,000 are over the age of 60. This population is also culturally diverse with non-white ethnic groups making up 7.6%. The rich mix of cultural backgrounds, ages and interests within a maritime city creates a rich mosaic of cultural heritage showcased through flagship projects such as the Mela Festival, Chinese New Year, Black History Month and the Weston Shore initiative.

7,500 businesses operate in the city. Several of these companies employ more than 500 people, including Skandia Life Business Services, Carnival plc, HSBC and National Westminster Bank. Lloyds Register Group will relocate their Marine section from the City of London to Southampton in 2010. Capita are building their new regional business hub in Northern Above Bar. Southampton is also at the heart of South Hampshire, one of the 9 sub-regions for growth identified in the SE Plan.

There is a significant private residential development programme in the city, particularly in the Old Town and Ocean Village areas. Urban living spaces have been springing up across this part of town.

The University of Southampton is the flagship in a strong higher education sector, and is one of the top 10 research-led universities in the UK. Southampton Solent University has a strong creative industries

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Cities research, July 2007



profile, and between them the universities attract a student population of over 40,000 to the city.

However, Southampton is also a city with challenges. These include:

- The economic generators of the city are concentrated in selected geographic areas – on the waterfront in the commercial docks and in the West Quay retail area for example. Other areas in the city centre and neighbourhoods fail to perform and require significant investment to re-vitalise their economic and civic role. Prime candidates for regeneration activity include Northern Above Bar, Old Town and the Waterfront
- There are significant pockets of economic and social deprivation, reflected in the city's position of 96th in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2006). Of particular concern is the fact that this reflects severe Education, Skills and Training deprivation. Lower than national average performance regarding educational attainment, teenage pregnancy rates and school attendance help to reinforce this conclusion
- Most people visit Southampton to shop and to embark/ disembark from cruise liners<sup>5</sup>. The retail sector in particular is by its nature transient and ubiquitous<sup>6</sup>. The city is not perceived as a cultural destination where people spend time and money, and currently lacks the critical mass of product offer to compete effectively in a highly competitive regional and sub-regional market<sup>7</sup>



It has been proven in many other parts of the UK and Europe<sup>8</sup> that the role of cultural regeneration, rooted in the people of the city and a sense of place, is a vital ingredient in the sustainable economic and social regeneration essential to address wider questions of deprivation.



<sup>5</sup> Locum 2007

<sup>6</sup> Southampton has recently dropped from being ranked 7th for shopping in the UK to being 13th.

<sup>7</sup> Competitors include Portsmouth, Brighton, London, Stonehenge and the New Forest. Collaboration with these cultural attractors within the context of Urban South Hampshire is likely to be key in the future.

<sup>8</sup> Newcastle, Liverpool, Barcelona, Brighton, Torino for example



Culture is critical to Southampton's economic development, health and wellbeing and to the creation of an attractive city image as a place in which people want to live, work and play. Cultural activity working across communities and generations will inspire greater understanding and community cohesion. A strong profile and high quality cultural product within the city centre will act as a major attractor of visitors into the city and will provide the cultural entitlement local people expect. It will re-activate tired yet strategically vital locations including Northern Above Bar, Old Town and the Waterfront. We have a strong story to tell about the global importance of our city – to a local, regional, national and international audience. Current cultural infrastructure significantly restricts our ability to do so.

Without a vibrant cultural soul, Southampton becomes a divided, anonymous, modern and transient settlement with little civic pride or unique sense of place, and without an attractive, sustainable and stimulating environment that people value.



Section 3 of this strategic vision outlined the rich local, national and international cultural assets available to the city within its existing arts and heritage portfolio. The building blocks are in place but are currently fragmented and their full potential unrealised.

The City has a fantastic opportunity over the next twenty years to transform its cultural offer and create an overall vibrant cultural soul, a sense of identity and uniqueness that connects people to each other and to Southampton as place. Its internationally important heritage story and nationally dynamic visual arts and creative industries scene provide an inspirational resource for exploitation. The significance of Southampton within PUSH will ensure that this potential can be realised particularly within the context of the Living Places agenda.

By transforming Southampton into a truly international city of culture by 2026 at the heart of Urban South Hampshire we would re-energise its soul, and in doing so the lives of the people who live, work and visit here.

Our vision for a city of culture will build upon existing strengths to create a national destination city, ideally in partnership with Portsmouth and the wider region, with local neighbourhood communities at its heart. Southampton's cultural transformation must reflect and energise the rich diversity and local talent of the

city. It must work directly for and with the people of Southampton, engaging their participation and enriching their lives.

It will also inspire us to develop stronger international partnerships and cultural dialogue particularly within the context of the Cultural Olympiad and in anticipation of Titanic 2012 and other key international milestones identified earlier.

There are many individuals and organisations across Southampton, and regionally, nationally (and ultimately internationally), that have a significant role to play if we want to realise this vision for arts and heritage in the city. Southampton City Council sees its role as a key organisation providing leadership and strategic facilitation and creating, with others, the right culture and environment within which the essential partnership working can flourish to deliver the bigger picture. Other key players will include the Southampton Partnership, the University of Southampton, Southampton Solent University, SHAPe, PUSH and regional cultural agencies.



## 5. Who is this vision for?

The vision for Southampton as an international city of culture must be centred on its citizens and draw upon their individual talents and collective diversity if it is to be realised. In summary, our vision must encompass:

- Local people and families of all ages and backgrounds who live in the city centre or neighbourhood 'villages communities', and people who work and study here
- Our neighbours in Portsmouth and urban south Hampshire



And be shared with:

- Regional visitors from the south, south east and London
- National and international visitors attracted to this area for the sea, the New Forest, and the cultural tourism offered by Southampton, Portsmouth and Winchester





## 6. How will Southampton City Council contribute?

### Strategic priorities

1. Place people and their rich cultural heritage at the heart of this vision, joining up existing activity and empowering more local people to get involved in and actively generate arts and heritage activity

#### Proposed Projects (2008-2012) to include:

- Champion and facilitate the work of SHAPe in bringing together arts and heritage practitioners from across the city (amateur and professional) to enhance impact of existing work through targeted collaboration
- Inspire Southampton's arts and heritage community via SHAPe to 'show off' their work to local, regional (and ultimately national and international) audiences on an annual basis helping to transform wider perceptions of the city as a cultural backwater
- Prepare and implement an audience development plan and inclusive volunteering and trainee programme for the city museums, art gallery and archives
- Develop cultural learning and outreach activities in conjunction with Find Your Talent and supporting Local Area Agreement priorities
- Facilitate audience consultation regarding major arts and heritage projects and ongoing arts and heritage developments
- Establish a programme of 'Peoples' Choice' exhibitions



#### Neighbourhood Connections

- Empower community-based cultural clusters located in city neighbourhoods to engage in arts and heritage activities which harness and celebrate the diverse traditions and identities of local people
- Build stronger connections between neighbourhood cultural activity and city centre programming to create a city-wide rich, distinctive and diverse offer
- Target neighbourhoods currently include Bevois and Bargate, Thornhill and Weston, Outer Shirley and the emerging community hubs proposed for Portswood and Woolston





**2. Champion the significant role of culture in taking forward Southampton's economic, tourism and social regeneration programme and the city's aspirations of national excellence**

**Proposed Projects (2008-2012) to include:**

- Lead on developing cultural clusters at Northern Above Bar and Old Town, including the development of a new arts complex, heritage museum and re-development of Tudor House
- Support plans to develop cultural assets by others including Solent Sky, maritime port visitor centre, berthing for historic vessels, the creative campus at University of Southampton
- Lead on the integration of cultural thinking and product into city and neighbourhood master planning and development projects including North-South Spine and West Quay Phase 3
- Develop programme of cultural exhibitions and festival in partnership with key partners
- Develop partnerships with national and international cultural providers to support delivery of above projects
- Look to relevant examples of cultural regeneration elsewhere in UK and Europe and build upon these experiences in our own work

**Northern Above Bar Cultural Quarter**

- An arts and heritage celebration par excellence extending from Southampton Central railway station and the Mayflower Theatre in the West to the Millais Gallery in the East
- To include the Southampton new arts complex, Southampton City Art Gallery, the Central Library, Guildhall, a rejuvenated Guildhall Square, City Park and potentially a heritage museum and major temporary exhibition gallery in the Old Magistrates' Court
- Key national-regional strategic partnership initiatives that should be investigated include Tate, the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, the National Museum of Science and Industry, the National Maritime Museum and the National Archives. Perhaps a New York – Southampton connection could also be explored?





### Old Town 'Historic Quarter'

- Covering the area defined by the medieval town walls and ditch
- A vibrant, specialist retail, eating and heritage/ arts experience in the heart of the Old Town to complement existing and planned residential development, and connected into the West Quay commercial retail zone
- Develop the public arts and ArtVaults concept and maximise the use of medieval walls, buildings and open spaces as features in the landscape, backdrops to cultural activity and venues for events use
- The Tudor House will provide a focus for the Old Town heritage experience by acting as a 'visitor centre' and jumping off point for exploring the Old Town area, as well as interpreting the house itself and providing an attractive eating venue
- Develop the role of public art lighting schemes to strengthen the geographic definition of the Old Town. The West Quay Phase 3 redevelopment provides an important opportunity to enhance the interpretation of the town walls and to create strong yet sensitive connectivity for customers between the modern retail city and the Old Town experience

- **Solent Sky:** redevelop as a state-of-the-art interpretation of Southampton's internationally important aviation heritage – the birthplace of the Spitfire, the first international airport, the Schneider Trophy

- **The Waterfront:** redevelopment of the Royal Pier area provides a unique opportunity to create a dynamic maritime cultural experience connected to the water – key elements are proposed as: a modern viewing area and interpretation centre (including brief history), public berth area for display of historic floating vessels, large-scale public art statement inspired by Southampton's maritime history and dramatically visible to maritime visitors

- **North-South Spine:** a well-developed planning concept connecting Above Bar, Old Town and Waterfront clusters. It should also become a dynamic interpretative concept creating story-telling links that explore the city's arts and heritage traditions through quality performance and street art, public art trails, audio and podcast tours, interconnected exhibition and event programming. Supported by joint ticketing and marketing initiatives. How realistic is it to include a length of tram track along part of the N-S Spine to provide an experience, and assist visitors with mobility difficulties?







- **Itchen and Northam Bridges:** connect two halves of the city cut physically and psychologically by the river Itchen. Could a creative approach to public art transform these vital connectors into cultural spaces in their own right making powerful statements regarding their role and significance in the city – past, present and future?
- **City gateways:** can dramatic public art statements and enhanced signage located at key strategic entry points into the city, including the maritime port, inspire visitors to explore Southampton's rich cultural heritage?



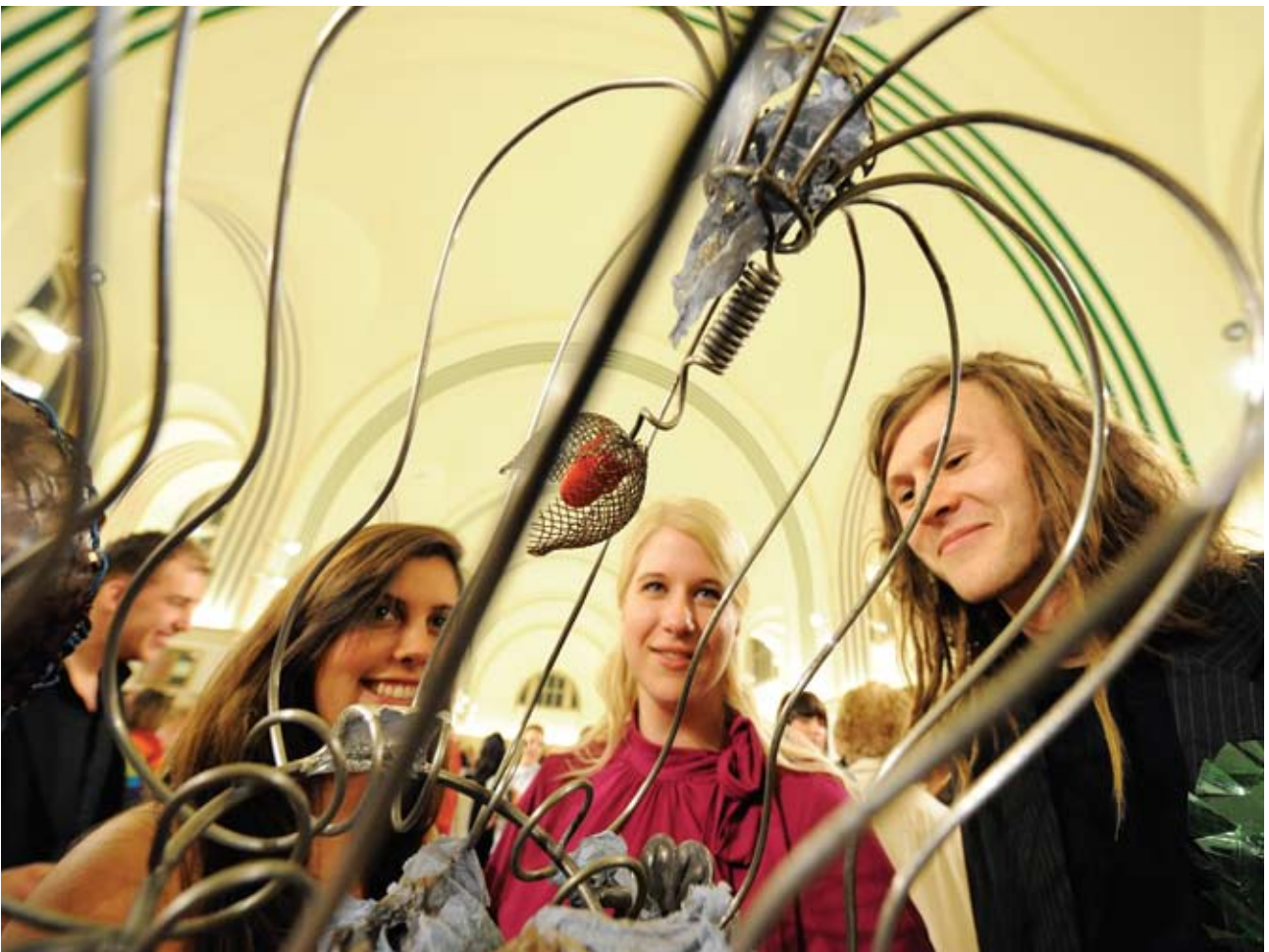
## Cultural exhibitions and festivals

- **Exhibitions towards 2012:** Development of a regionally significant programme of arts and heritage exhibitions utilising existing venues to raise Southampton's profile and develop audiences for the planned new facilities post 2012
- **Titanic 2012 exhibition:** delivery of an internationally significant exhibition in Southampton to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Titanic disaster
- **Exhibitions post 2012:** development of a nationally significant programme of arts and heritage exhibitions in the new facilities created as part of developing the Above Bar Cultural Quarter
- **Towards 2012 cultural festival programme:** development of a sustainable cultural festival programme through partnership working that builds upon existing achievements, including: Mela, Chinese New Year, ArtVaults, Heritage Open Days, Archives Month, Black History Month and Film Week

**3. Promote the role of arts and heritage activity in raising educational attainment and aspirations of people in Southampton through creative approaches to learning**

Proposed Projects (2008-2012) to include:

- Lead on Southampton element of Find Your Talent pathfinder, advised by SHAPe Education Working Group
- Deliver range of learning activities for schools and lifelong learning groups based on gallery, museum and archive collections and historic buildings, in partnership with education and community providers and supporting Local Area Agreement priorities
- Develop enhanced learning centre facilities in the Old Town and Northern Above Bar areas as part of Cultural Cluster activities

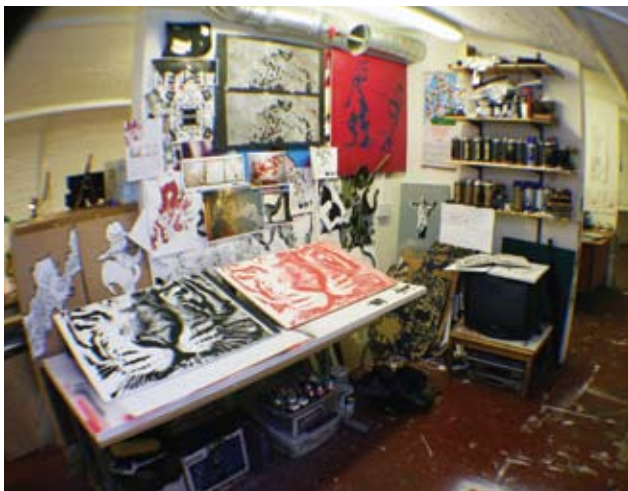




**4. Support the creative industries as an important part of the local economy by inspiring creative learning, skills development and innovation to support emerging creative industry sectors**

Proposed Projects (2008-2012) to include:

- Support the work of SHAPe Creative Industries Working Group in facilitating the strengthening of key creative industry sectors in Southampton
- Develop learning partnerships with key creative industry training providers, in conjunction with Find Your Talent
- Promote the arts and heritage resource as a source of inspiration for the creative industry sector



**5. Modernise delivery of existing services to ensure resources available effectively support these wider initiatives**

Proposed Projects (2008-2012) to include:

- Undertake a 'Fit for Purpose' review of staff, budgets and venues
- Identify and exploit sustainable business development opportunities, particularly in the areas of retail and venue hire
- Undertake a full review of collections, including review and revision of the service collection development policy (acquisition and disposal policy) and collection storage review
- Develop an integrated collection documentation and online catalogue programme to improve public access to and professional stewardship of collections
- Develop a strategic approach to historic building conservation management and maintenance
- Investigate partnership working opportunities with regional colleagues





## 7. Acknowledgements and Further Information

Southampton City Council approved this vision in September 2008, and would like to thank all those individuals and organisations that commented on earlier drafts of this Strategic Vision. We are very grateful for your time and thoughts, and look forward to working with you all to take forward this important and exciting vision for our city.

The heritage components of this vision have been informed by the work of the Heritage Advisory Group during the period, October – December 2007.

The emerging work and aspirations of the Southampton Heritage and Arts People (SHAPe) and its participants have fundamentally inspired the thinking contained within this document, SHAPe has endorsed the final report.

A summary resource delivery plan is available online at [www.southampton.gov.uk/leisure](http://www.southampton.gov.uk/leisure). Further information can be obtained by contacting:

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