

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: The Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 3/2/2026

Subject: Culture Update

Report author: Val Birchall, Assistant Director, Culture Tourism & Sport

Responsible Director: Mark Raisbeck, Director of Public Realm

SUMMARY

This report updates the committee on the delivery of activities by the Council and the Cultural Compact in support of the Cultural Strategy, Where Culture Connects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The cultural strategy includes measure to grow the cultural, creative and visitor economy, and the work under way includes support for skills and employment.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	The programme of events and activities includes activities for and by residents across the Borough with different backgrounds and interests.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The strategy and delivery programme include support for community cultural activities designed by and with residents. The Cultural Compact is the delivery board for the strategy and is a stakeholder partnership with three sub-groups including a wide range of local people determining and delivering activities.

Being ruthlessly financially efficient	All activities are delivered within agreed budgets, partner contributions and grant funding. The Compact partners contribute both time and expertise, and venues for activities.
Taking pride in H&F	The strategy aims to establish H&F as a destination for visitors, and to develop local pride through a high quality and relevant programme that celebrates the local distinctiveness.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Active travel and public transport to activities are promoted, and plans are in place to develop more sustainable approaches adopting best practice in greening events.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. The Cultural Strategy, 'Where Culture Connects', was adopted in October 2023 by the Council and with it the Cultural Compact of the same name was established as a delivery board. The Compact is the Borough's principal stakeholder partnership for culture and visitor economy. It has three sub-groups which mirror the three thematic strands of the cultural strategy – Destination (the 'Visit H&F Destination Management Partnership'), Creativity (the 'Creative Pathways Partnership') and Inclusion (the 'Heritage & Inclusion Partnership').
2. Each partnership has a wide range of members reflecting its purpose, including private sector partners (hotels, hospitality and retail businesses), education (further and higher education, schools, cultural education professionals) and voluntary sector (cultural and community not-for-profit organisations). The Destination Management Partnership and Creative Pathways Partnership are both formally constituted, while work on the Heritage & Inclusion Partnership is at an earlier stage (an early stage working group has been established and has focussed to date on progressing the Black History Community Collecting and Engagement work).
3. Council officers are working to deliver the Foundation Actions of the strategy, including establishing a more robust evidence base to inform and focus in on the actions likely to have greatest impact on its aims and deliver the best outcomes for our local residents and economy. This work includes a Joint Cultural Needs Assessment being delivered with the Business Intelligence team, a Creative Ecology map being delivered with University of the Arts, and a Cultural Vitality lab gathering information from communities concerning their day-to-day cultural lives. The Borough is one of only three Cultural Vitality labs

nationally, delivered by the Centre for Cultural Value.

4. In accordance with the strategy's underpinning principle of Working Together, Council services are both delivering activities directly (in Libraries & Archives and Events) and providing services to support the Compact and to service the partnership work on the visitor economy and arts development.
5. The following section describes activities undertaken since the last update to the Committee.

DESTINATION

6. The Destination Management Partnership, Visit H&F, meets regularly and has commissioned work on a Destination Plan which will support the development of tourism product, analyse market opportunities and create a basis for management of the visitor experience. The plan will be finalised in March and will provide a clear framework for activity, together with Key Performance Indicators. It will inform a business case for investment from the partners.
7. Visit H&F delivered its second Christmas marketing campaign in 2025, promoting H&F as a festive destination. The "West is Best" campaign aimed to retain local residents and friends & family visitors and to attract the wider London visitor market. It included borough-wide Christmas activations, hosted on a dedicated campaign website alongside a series of partner-led competitions. The campaign was promoted across partner channels, including newsletters, social media, BT screens and digital billboards in shopping centres, and also benefited from additional exposure through Visit London's Instagram page. Performance was strong in terms of local take-up and national reach. Competition entries were received from 472 unique postcode areas, with 35.7% originating from London and the remaining 64.3 % coming from outside London.
8. Alongside the marketing campaign, the DMP supported the planning and delivery of community and town centre Christmas lighting. Working closely with Highways and Economic Development teams, this included the coordination of Christmas trees, lighting schemes and switch-on events in key locations including Shepherd's Bush, Parsons Green, North End Road, Brackenbury Village, Askew Road and Fulham Road.
9. Footfall data indicates a positive overall trend for the Borough, in keeping with national tourism recovery rates. Total visitor footfall increased by 1m visits in the year to 1 December 2025. Visitor data shows encouraging growth in key markets; Hammersmith and Fulham experienced a 2% increase in domestic visitors and a 16% increase in international visitors compared to 2024 while Shepherds Bush alone recorded a 5% increase in footfall, reflecting increased interest in an area that the Council has invested in heavily. However, total visitor spend in 2025 declined by 5% compared to 2024, attributed to cost of living pressures on disposable income.
10. Visit H&F has built on partnership discussions with The Boat Race to exploit opportunities, positioning the event as the launch point for a wider Summer of

Sport campaign for 2026, working with wider sports stakeholders. Other partnership activities include promotional opportunities for local restaurants, cafés and attractions, and bespoke offers and discounts for London Tech Week attenders.

CREATIVE PATHWAYS

11. The Creative Pathways Partnership brings together Council services for young people and adult learners with further and higher education partners, and the education specialists within the Borough's cultural sector. It is working on a submission to Arts Council England for a Place Partnership programme to support the development of cultural activities for children and young people which will include an expansion of last year's successful pilot School Arts Week, a scheme for young people to propose cultural activities in their local neighbourhoods and a programme of creative careers pathway support in conjunction with local employers.
12. The Council's King's Coronation Youth Fund invested £400,000 in grant funding in 2025 to support cultural activity across the Borough for young people aged 0–25 (Appendix One). Grants of between £10,000 and £50,000 were awarded to cultural organisations based in Hammersmith & Fulham and funded activity will include public-facing elements delivered between March and September 2026 in a festival format that will be enhanced in the event that the Arts Council England bid is successful.
13. Libraries delivered pioneering robotics workshops engaging children with STEM learning including Explore Learning educational sessions, "Cat and Hutch" creative events for families with young children and a STEM engagement event with Highways Team, demonstrating real-world engineering.
14. Libraries also delivered a six week series of creative writing workshops under the title Telling Tales. Participants developed narrative techniques, character development, and creative expression to build confidence in creative writing and support aspiring writers.
15. Officers are currently exploring a Civic Innovation Lab with the creative education sector. This would bring together artists with researchers and policy makers to test creative approaches to solving policy problems.

HERITAGE & INCLUSION

16. VE Day 80th Anniversary activities were delivered across Events, Libraries and Archive services, in partnership with the community and cultural sector. These included a curated display of archive photographs of local street parties and official civic celebration records to bring our past to life and stimulate debate about our collective future. This aimed to support community cohesion and local pride and included residents' stories from the time, re-enactments that brought to life what it was like in the trenches and on the home front, military crafts, performances from historical impersonators including Vera Lynn and

Winston Churchill, music from the era, and dance classes. There was a strong presence on underrepresented groups during the war including the Black and Commonwealth effort, LGBTQ soldiers, and the impact on youth.

17. An exhibition of the work of Clive Cobb, an artist known for his works reflecting war-time experience in the Borough during the Blitz, was funded by Arts Council England. It took place at Fulham Library 16 October – 15 December 2025 with 280 local children participating in creative workshops led by professional artists.
18. An Irish Heritage Trail project was led by local young people between November-December 2025 in partnership with the Irish Cultural Centre and Sacred Heart School. Archives service provided research support and access to local studies collections. Students used primary source documents to make connections with Irish diaspora history.
19. 120 Years of Hammersmith Library was celebrated on 24 July 2025 with a Mayoral visit to acknowledge volunteers at the library for their contribution to the community, and mark the civic importance of libraries. Commemorative merchandise was available.
20. This year's Black History Month was marked by a striking lamppost banner exhibition along King Street. Throughout October, banners celebrating influential historical figures such as Fanny Eaton, Eartha Kitt and Marcus Garvey were displayed. In addition, a Black History Month 2025 competition invited local residents to take centre stage, with three winners selected to have their own banners proudly displayed as part of the exhibition. In libraries, Black History month was marked with a Portrait Workshop, an Author/Storyteller and Drumming session, a curated display celebrating Black British history and culture and a multi-artform programme with the National Caribbean Monument Charity accompanying an exhibition "Loyalty to the Crown."
21. The Victorian Treasures exhibition of the Borough's Pre-Raphaelite art collection from the Cecil French bequest took place at nearby Leighton House Museum between May and September 2025. It showcased 52 artworks, including selected works from the Council's collection and drew over 15,900 ticketed visitors, in addition to more than 11,500 free visits and 72 per cent of respondents to the visitor survey indicating a strong likelihood of repeat visits.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

22. Professional author visits have taken place in libraries promoting both literacy, and learning for pleasure. 2026 is the National Year of Reading, which will develop these activities across the Borough and will also see an expanded Summer Reading Challenge programme for children to maintain their reading progress through the school holidays.
23. Libraries deliver a range of learning programmes including weekly ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), monthly creative writing, class visits from schools, monthly Mandala art sessions, Beginner Italian, Work

Experience for Home Schooled children and through schools. Shepherds Bush Library staged Absent, a professional site-specific theatre production using the library space as a flexible cultural venue.

24. A variety of health and wellbeing activities take place in libraries. For example, the Talking Therapies service made library visits for mental health support and the launch of an Art Therapy for Adults programme. A post-Covid awareness stall was delivered by the Community Healthcare Trust. A Smoking Cessation pop-up by Hammersmith-based Turning Point took place in October. Regular Baby Yoga and Baby Massage classes are delivered through partnership with children's centres. Cost of Living information stalls and access to support for managing personal finances are provided.
25. Volunteering and Social Value are also a focus, for example, last summer libraries hosted Action on Disability work placements. They hold monthly Volunteer Centre pop-up sessions.
26. Local artists Yati Sharma and Lisa Pfeiffer were commissioned to deliver two new public artworks for the Macbeth Street and Nigel Playfair underpasses. The commissions transformed key pedestrian routes through site-responsive mural programmes addressing areas of ageing infrastructure and long-standing public realm challenges. Artists were selected through a competitive process involving experts from Arts Council England, Koestler Arts and The William Morris Society. The works drew on Hammersmith's cultural heritage, including the legacy of William Morris.
27. The Borough is an established filming location, from major feature films to high-end television dramas, commercials, and streaming productions. The dedicated film office facilitates filming across the Borough, including driving income for the service itself and for services from Parks to Highways, Housing and Education. In 2025, the Borough has hosted major productions featuring well-known actors including Benedict Cumberbatch, Brad Pitt, Keira Knightley, Jack Whitehall, Gary Oldman and David Duchovny. Screen Tourism is an important and growing opportunity, linked to the work of Visit H&F.
28. The Events team supports many community, civic and cultural activities throughout the year in addition to those above. In 2025, the Events team worked with the West London Queer Project, the Refugee Team, the Joy disability festival, the Polish Social and Cultural Association, Bulgarian Folk Fair and many others. Annual calendar fixtures, the Boat Race, Polo in the Park, Taste of the Caribbean, Hannukah and Parsons Green Fair were amongst the programme that attracted 125,000 people to attend.
29. Armed Forces Day included archival and historical stalls with information on the borough's connection to past conflicts, displays by borough regiments such as the Coldstream Guards, Cadet displays, live entertainment, British Legion fundraising and information stalls on help available to veterans living in the Borough.
30. A new event, the London Pumpkin Patch on Parsons Green in October transformed trees into an enchanted woodland where families could explore Trick or Treat Lane. It attracted more than 6000 families. A survey of 30 local

businesses showed revenue increased up to 50% during what is typically a quiet halfterm week, with several businesses opening earlier to benefit from increased footfall as a result of the event.

31. The first one-day market showcasing young entrepreneurs aged 7–17 in Lyric Square, which included pupils from Fulham Boys School and Queen's Manor Primary School in partnership with the Children's Business Fair. Participants researched, planned, and launched their own businesses — designing products, setting prices, managing stock, and serving customers. Products included 3D-printed toys, dog treats, festive gifts and decorations.
32. Across year the Council supported 125 thirdparty bookings across 60 parks and open spaces. Work continues to identify new outdoor event spaces; the space under the flyover has hosted Oktoberfest, and outdoor cinema screening are planned.

CONCLUSION

33. In H&F each year, 95% of people engage with the arts in person and 72% visit Heritage sites. 18% of employees are in the cultural and creative sectors and the cultural and creative sectors account for 30% of GVA. Evidence shows cultural activities make a strong contribution to child social development and creativity, to reducing social isolation and tackling discrimination.
34. The Borough's cultural strategy, Where Culture Connects, has formed the basis for developing a strong and inclusive partnership of stakeholders to deliver a activities, complemented by the Council's own delivery. This has added value through increased activity and a wider range of opportunities which enable a more inclusive programme, helping to involve people who are less likely or less able to take part. This approach has increased partnership funding and establish an evidence-based approach that has driven up local and regional footfall, and raised levels of attendance.

Appendix One – Summary of Kings Coronation Youth Fund cultural projects