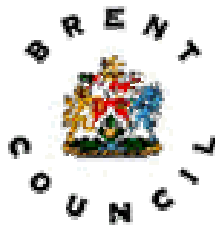


# **A Cultural Strategy for Brent**

## **2006-2009**



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## Summary of Brent's Cultural Strategy

### Our Cultural Strategy

Our Cultural Strategy provides an overview of culture in Brent and outlines a series of priorities for the area in the coming years. It also outlines Brent's vision of culture as a key factor in ensuring community cohesion in one of the most diverse boroughs in Europe.

The term 'Culture' includes: Arts, creative activity, sports, libraries, museums, heritage, architecture/design of the public realm, children's play, parks and other forms of recreation.

The strategy has been developed through a range of discussions with the public and service suppliers.

### Our Vision

Brent believes that:

- Culture is an essential ingredient of a thriving and confident borough and contributes to ensuring a safe, healthy and cohesive community.
- Culture in Brent provides ways to include the excluded, create new pathways to learning, engage with disenfranchised/disadvantaged groups and provides the basis for positive local action.

Culture is provided by many organisations and individuals within the borough, including the Council, the voluntary sector, private companies and individuals. Our Strategy should act as a guide for all providers.

We have developed through consultation with a wide range of groups and organisations the following priorities for culture in Brent.

### Civic Pride:

Brent is changing and the new National Stadium at Wembley is symbolic of the direction that the Borough is taking. The Council is committed to taking forward the principle of excellence that the National Stadium represents and maximising a sense of local ownership amongst residents and businesses alike. All new developments in the Borough will have the potential to add to a sense of civic pride and the Council will ensure that at all times opportunities such as the regeneration of Wembley are relevant to and accessible by local people. Renewal and change will bring both rewards and challenges to the Borough's many communities and the task for Brent is to act strategically and build a coherent approach to cultural development that leaves room for the opportunities stimulated by the creativity of local people.

- Maximise on new developments, including Wembley and London Olympics 2012, to ensure that locally recognised cultural products and opportunities are included at an early stage.
- Raise the profile of Brent through effective marketing of the Borough's new image locally, regionally and nationally
- Improve communication on cultural opportunities in the Borough to ensure local people and visitors to the Borough know what is happening and how they can get involved.

- Work with the Borough's diverse communities to ensure that Brent's rich cultural landscape is seen as a source of celebration and esteem.
- Build opportunities to work regionally/sub regionally through initiatives that enable individuals and local cultural organisations to participate in London's wider cultural life, and provide access to services elsewhere.
- Improve quality and efficiency through a process of engagement.

**Safe, Healthy, Cohesive Communities:**

Widespread access to cultural benefits, a broad sense of cultural entitlement and a popular commitment to cultural activity, are all indicators of safe, healthy and cohesive communities. A major strength of cultural participation is its ability to provide new and innovative mechanisms to include the excluded - disadvantaged groups such as those with mental health problems - create new pathways to learning, engage with disenfranchised groups and provide the basis for positive local action.

- Develop networks between those who provide cultural services, ensuing consistently high quality, equity and coordinated provision.
- Ensure children and young people are central to the development of a vibrant cultural landscape in Brent.
- Promote the health benefits of an active lifestyle.
- Enable cultural access at all levels – both socially and physically – to promote cultural entitlement that is appropriate, including 'hard to reach' communities.
- Ensure new Cultural venues are managed in an inclusive manner, and are in suitable and accessible locations
- Involve local people in the design and development of cultural programmes and projects.
- Ensure Cultural Services contribute to raising educational standards

**Employment - Building a Cultural Economy**

A strong, active and inclusive cultural sector in Brent will in turn help to build a successful cultural economy. The cultural industries are a major employer across London. West London is home to a significant proportion of the creative industry sector, and major attractions such as the National stadium and the area offer the opportunity for local employment at these sites, and in related support industries.

The Councils intervention in new cultural employment opportunities, through the growth of the sector, will focus on opportunities for individuals from identified deprived communities.

- Maximise the employment generating impact of cultural activity by finding ways to intervene to assist practitioners to develop the skills required to succeed in economically.
- Build capacity for sector growth, focusing on improving access to appropriate workspace and improving networks.

- Identify cultural employment opportunities for those from deprived communities and work with partners to ensure access to suitable opportunities.
- Capitalise on the distinctive potential of specific localities to operate as concentrations for cultural industries activity – with a focus on Wembley, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn
- Build a strategic sub regional approach to cultural and creative industries, ensuring an overview and coordination of activities and funding bids.
- Encourage the digital media/film/broadcasting as key sub sectors for the borough.

**The role of Brent Council**

The Council needs to adopt different approaches for the delivery of specific services, and a programme of ongoing review will result in changes to delivery methods alongside changing circumstances.

In the case of libraries, sports centres, the museum, the archive, major festivals and parks the Council is a deliverer of service, providing core finance, managing assets and staff, or contractors.

The Council role in heritage, the arts, creative industries, and public realm work, is mainly as a developer of infrastructure, partnerships and interventions that assist others to deliver services within the borough.

These many roles necessitate a range of partners and other delivery agencies, with no area of responsibility seen as belonging exclusively to the Council.

- The Council will be the main or sole provider of libraries, parks, the museum, the archive, sports and the core festivals programme for Brent.
- The Council will be the main strategic coordinator or developer of infrastructure for the heritage, arts, creative industries and public realm in Brent.
- The Council will work with others to deliver cultural services in the borough.
- The Council will work where required through sub regional means to improve efficiency and the range of accessible services.
- The Council will use and encourage the use of new media in the delivery of Cultural Services.

# A Cultural Strategy for Brent 2005-2009

## 1 Introduction

The London Borough of Brent is an ambitious borough, striving both to be excellent and relevant to all sections of our diverse community of residents. Brent sees culture as a key factor in developing community cohesion; by bringing together different communities in joint celebrations, by widening life chances, by offering access to and participation in a range of life enhancing cultural activities.

This strategy draws together existing research and consultation to provide an overview of the cultural assets, opportunities and challenges of Brent, and a framework for supporting cultural activity, enlivening cultural experience and ensuring equality of access.

The scope of 'Culture' as defined in this document is "Arts, creative activity, sports, libraries, museums, heritage, and architecture/design of the public realm, children's play, parks and other forms of recreation.

This cultural strategy is informed by a period of intensive research and consultation, through a series of exercises and interlocking policy developments such as the Wembley Public Art Strategy, the Playing Pitch Strategy and the strategy for the Western Wedge Cultural Partnership. The overarching policy framework has also changed, with a greater emphasis on the regions, and in London an emphasis on sub regional working, with new Planning Frameworks emerging nationally.

This strategy is therefore timely, offering a collation of existing cultural policy, an opportunity to contribute to work underway, and a framework for effective future action.

It provides an appraisal of:

- The cultural assets of the Borough, with an analysis of how these assets can be built-upon
- The relationship between 'supply of' and 'demand for' cultural provision – including services, projects, infrastructure and events
- The strategic position of cultural support and provision relative to wider Council services and objectives, plus the overall strategic context for the Borough – including the position of the London Development Agency, Arts Council England and the West London Partnership.

This strategy provides a way forward for culture-led intervention in Brent and identifies ways Council Departments and other partners can work collectively to improve cultural provision, widen access, advance quality, and ensure that the distinctive assets – the talents, ideas, infrastructure and initiatives – of Brent are explored and supported to their full potential.

Three core themes arose via the consultation process, and they underpin this strategy, each attending to the existing assets and future potential of Brent as a distinctive and gratifyingly cultural place to live and work:

**Civic Pride:** Ensuring that local and incoming people recognise the unique cultural assets of Brent, supporting them to build strong senses of place through processes of cultural exchange, and encouraging civic pride in a Borough that is genuinely going places

**Safe, Healthy, Cohesive Communities:** Social and environmental regeneration working to develop safe, healthy, cohesive communities with cultural expression, participation and consumption at the fore.

**Employment:** Building a strong cultural economy that benefits from the diverse assets of Brent's grassroots cultural sector, with locally generated creativity and activity translated into local jobs in the Cultural Industries.



## **2 Brent in Context**

### **2.1 Brent and Culture**

Brent is not currently renowned as a particularly 'cultural place': its assets are understated, its opportunities under-explored, much of its potential still to be tapped. Part of the reason for this is the extraordinary diversity of the Borough: in demography (it has the most number of diverse groups within the population); in geography (it shares characteristics of both inner and outer London and is bisected by major arterial routes); in provision (it mixes huge venues of national importance, with a rich mix of community-driven initiatives); and therefore in identity (a proliferation of very different communities and locations).

This diversity is the major strength of Brent and provides the necessary starting point for any strategic approach to supporting the development of cultural activity in the Borough. Through improving cultural programmes and initiatives, a mix of landmark and grassroots opportunities are underway that taken collectively show that Brent is going places. Key factors that determine the quality of life in a place – such as liveability, conviviality and inclusivity – are the ongoing products of improving cultural provision. Significant challenges remain, with low level aspirations, and some negative perceptions of identity and place, continuing to test the commitment of the community, Council and partners.

### **2.2 Geography – a Landscape of Contrasts: Town Centres, Suburbs, Business areas and Open Spaces**

Geographically, Brent presents a range of different faces to the world. Major routes bisect the Borough and the North Circular separates the open spaces of commuter belt housing from the more intensively developed and relatively deprived areas to the south. There are parks and open spaces – in areas such as Fryent, Northwick Park, Sudbury, and Dollis Hill – around which are areas of relative affluence; whilst in the south of the Borough are the major regeneration areas of Park Royal and Wembley.

Brent is at once suburban and 'inner city', residential and industrial, affluent and deprived; it is a Borough of contrasts that combine to create unique senses of place, distinctive opportunities, and of course very specific challenges.

### **2.3 Demographics: a Borough of Diversity and Cultural Difference**

The diverse population of Brent is its most obvious feature: not only are there proportionately more people who describe themselves as being from diverse communities, the diversity of these cultural backgrounds are unparalleled. Almost 55% of Brent residents are from black and minority ethnic communities. Many are long-term residents, with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation populations. Others are more recent residents in Brent, it is estimated that approximately 5% of the Borough's total population are refugees and asylum seekers. There is also a growing population of economic migrants, with Eastern European connections particularly strong.

Whilst in other areas of the UK the majority of the population in Brent would be described as 'hard to reach', in Brent most of these communities use services locally which have been designed and delivered to match the diversity of need.

In addition Brent has a 'young' population, nearly 25% of people in Brent are under 19 years of age; 9% are between 20 - 29 years old; and 43% are under 30 years old. 73% of pupils in Brent schools are from ethnic minority communities and over 130 different languages are now spoken in Brent schools.

This diversity demands that provision is supplied through an intercultural approach that makes the most of the connections between different communities, rather than appeal to those attributes that keep communities apart.

## **2.4 Economy**

Brent has a very mixed economy, with a range of sectors providing employment to residents and incomers. Brent is also characterised by a mix of relatively affluent suburbs and areas of under-employment and associated deprivation:

The economic profile of Brent includes a mix of manufacturing and leisure with Europe's largest business park - Park Royal, and developments around the new National Stadium.

The Brent Regeneration Action Plans and Regeneration Strategies show that the growth rate of VAT-registered firms in Brent is poor compared to the rest of London, but new growth points are attracting increasing numbers of skilled workers while introducing career path development opportunities for local people.

## **2.5 Sub Regional Context**

The sub region of west London includes the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. Together the scale of the population and GDP is comparable to Dublin or Frankfurt. The area is as diverse as Brent itself; whilst Brent is the most diverse borough in the area, the diversity, pockets of deprivation and affluence are shared.

The West London Alliance (WLA), was formed in 1998, and is a loose partnership of the sub regions boroughs. The WLA aims to promote the economic, environmental and social well being of the West London community. Sports, arts, and libraries work in collaborations across this sub region, identifying shared priorities and in some cases undertaking joint programmes and strategic action.

## **2.6 The Strategic Significance of Culture**

The distinctive geographical, demographic and economic landscapes of Brent position it as an increasingly important place within a wider London context - it's transforming possibilities and challenges. Culture in Brent is not just significant in the sports centres, libraries, parks, and community centres; it is a significant theme across the life of the Borough, and has a major influence on the policies and actions of the Borough Council and partners.

It influences key strategies and policies including, The Councils corporate strategy, sub regional strategy (WLA – Strengthening our Communities and the Economic Development Strategy), West London Tourism Strategy, The Regeneration Strategy, The Community Plan, and the 10 year Strategy for Park Royal. Culture is also represented in Regional strategies such as the GLA London Plan, the GLA London Cultural Strategy, The LDA Creative Communities plans, London 2012 and The Mayor's Sustainable Development plans.

### 3 Consultation process

The council undertook extensive consultation on the Cultural Strategy with the public local cultural sector, stakeholders and via various disability, faith and ethnic groupings. The strategy and related issues within it have also been through a series of internal debates and discussions. Methods ranged from discussion groups to presentations and workshops, via specially set up sessions and to existing forums.

The consultation programme included a public debates programme (Brent: Cultural Capital?), a public survey of current levels of use and a series of workshops with young people (Culture Shot).

The underlying issues from most discussions related to local people needing a positive identity and the benefits of culture for people.

As a result three core themes were identified:

- **Civic Pride**
- **Safe, healthy, cohesive communities**
- **Employment.**

Key findings from the research are summarised below, and support the principles throughout this strategy.

#### 3.1 Youth issues:

There is a gap between what young people think they can expect and what may be out there for them to experience; they are very concerned by safety, personal and that of their community and this appears to inhibit them from being able to experience more culturally.

Teenagers also wanted somewhere for them to 'hang out', so they don't get stopped by the police, and where they 'do their own thing'.

#### 3.2 Public debates programme:

- there are divisions within the borough - defined as north/south and economic, and divisions in the sector, and a vocal and sometimes hostile minority
- Brent lacks a clear cultural profile, with pride in belonging to the borough mixed with frustration at its lack of profile
- a recognition that Brent has untapped resources and some surprise at the range of Brent's resources - and a lack of knowledge information and networks within the borough
- little sense of Brent's relationship to other parts of London, and lack of knowledge about particular sectors and standards outside of Brent
- acknowledgement of Brent's cultural diversity - generally conceded to be an asset but with some caveats about unfairness - an agreement that the diversities together could be a cultural catalyst
- concern at the lack and perceived lack of cultural resources for young people
- frustration at the lack of affordable, facilities - a particular issue for rehearsal, performance or exhibition spaces
- frustration at the relative lack of ability to source funding and other resources
- Wembley Stadium - ambivalence as to its value and place within Brent's cultural life but a willingness to engage with the issues implied in the development.

### 3.3 Survey results:

- Cultural activities which are available more constantly and freely from a number of different locations were used more often on a weekly or monthly basis. (Parks, Libraries, Leisure). Services which require 'timed' visits or services with a single or few service points were used on a less frequent basis every six months or annually. (Galleries, Museums, Festivals).
- Most responders don't use faith activities, however those that do, do so on a very regular and frequent basis.
- Whether people choose to undertake cultural activity in Brent depends on how frequently they do it, and varies according to sector.
- Some activities are more likely to be used in the borough when used frequently, but people who use these services only occasionally were more likely to do so outside of Brent - Parks, Libraries, Leisure, Outdoor Sports, Children's activities and faith.
- Other activities are more likely to be used outside Brent when undertaken frequently, whilst those who are not regular or habitual users are more likely to use them inside the borough – Festivals, Theatre, Museums, and Galleries. Therefore Festivals, Theatre, Museums, and Galleries within the borough are likely to be the main access points for local people who do these things only occasionally or are first time users.
- Generally more people thought cultural activity in Brent was good, than bad.
- Lack of information was quoted frequently as the reason for non use in Brent. This was particularly high for festivals, theatre, museums and galleries.
- Some anticipated barriers scored very low, and are clearly not a concern for most people.
- There were no significant issues around transport and parking, access to buildings, or cost of activities. Safety concerns were low, with a slight rise registered for parks. Opening hours and location were not seen as major problems, with slightly higher figures quoted for Libraries (Opening Hours) and Leisure (location of services).

## 4 Brent's Cultural Assets: what we have and what's been done

### **Audit Commission Inspection of Cultural Services 2004**

In July 2004, the Audit Commission conducted a Best Value Inspection of Brent's delivery of cultural services to residents. The inspection covered Sports Service, Parks Service, Cultural Services (Arts), Heritage Service, Library Service and Out of School Support Service (Children's Play). The Audit Commission assessed Brent Council's cultural services as:

***'Providing a good (two star) service that has promising (two star) prospects for improvement'.***

Inspectors assessed cultural services in Brent as good based on several factors including; extensive consultation with local stakeholders, improvements in access to buildings and the website, significant improvements in the sports service; and the quality of service in parks and libraries was judged as strong.

The inspectors found promising prospects for improvement because of the clear leadership from councillors and senior managers; effective joint working; increased capacity in budgets; sound performance management systems; the mainstreaming of equality and diversity issues into service planning; and the effective link of cultural services with corporate and other plans through the strategic planning framework.

However, it was noted that there is a need to improve satisfaction levels particularly in the sports service; the pace of improvements in sports needs to be maintained and the marketing of services, particularly sports should be improved, The Council should target activities and actions that will improve the existing levels of customer satisfaction and the outcomes/impacts of local projects need to be measured. In addition, the inspectors found that the quality of building stock is deteriorating and improving the infrastructure for cultural services will require significant levels of investment.

Many Brent residents take part in cultural activities in the borough on a regular basis, and their satisfaction levels are high. For example, Parks and Libraries in Brent are widely considered to be 'good', with levels of use high (for example, over 33% of respondents to the 2004 Brent Cultural Survey use parks at least 1-2 times per week), and Festivals are playing an increasingly important part in the cultural lives of local people.

However, there is still much to be achieved, with opportunities for raising standards, widening reach, and broadening activity paramount. For example, the quality of some of the building stock is deteriorating; and the connectedness of different delivery remains disconnected. In addition, many local people leave the Borough for many of their cultural activities as there is less local choice – in particular cinema and theatre.

The extent, to which this should be considered a problem or unavoidable in a large city such as London, provides a key question for Brent. What is clear is that many local people do not leave the Borough very often. For such groups, local provision is more important, in some cases as an entry point to the wider range of opportunities in London as a whole. Future provision must continue to respond to the variations in use and outlook of different local people.

However, it is important first to consider some of the major assets of the Borough – the points of strength from which new opportunities can be forged. Introduced below are some but by no means all of the most prominent cultural assets of Brent. Following sections show how these assets and the myriad other cultural assets and processes – real and potential – can lead processes of change in this distinctive and transforming Borough.

#### 4.1 Services for Children and Young People

Cultural services in Brent are already working with the Children and Families department to deliver outcomes against the five key priorities for 'Every Child Matters', the government's vision for services to children which became the Children Act 2004. In particular, there are specific targets for sports, libraries and other cultural services in the '**Staying healthy**' and '**Enjoying and achieving**' outcomes.

Brent Council's cultural services will also work closely with the Children and Families department to respond to the government's green paper: 'Youth Matters' published in July 2005, where the vision for services to young people is set out in the following statement:

'We want young people to have more things to do and places to go in their local area'

Many children and young people undertake cultural activities via school or youth services, whilst additional targeted provision is supplied independently by the Council, professional independent suppliers and the voluntary sector. The quality of these services varies, whilst there is some excellent provision cultural providers are often unaware of the full range of provision, their position in the local market place, best practice or relevant opportunities.

#### 4.2 Museums, Galleries and Heritage Buildings

Brent does not house any national museums or collections, galleries or a landscape of significant heritage buildings. Its position close to central London places it at the doorstep of some of the finest museums and galleries in the world, which reduces the imperative of having a high level of local provision. A number of unique and significant heritage buildings are hidden within the mixed landscape of the Borough, and some newer buildings such as the Swaminayan Hindu Temple are truly of national significance.

Yet despite proximity to central London, Brent does have an important heritage sector and there is a real need for provision given the low levels of mobility of many local people. From 2006, the newly relocated and improved museum will provide a high quality, regularly changing programme of temporary exhibitions which will cover a range of themes (some of these will be of a regional or even national importance). The museum's new permanent displays include a range of objects, documents and interactive exhibits which tell the story of Brent and of the diverse range of individuals who have lived here over the last 150 years. The museum also provides educational sessions specifically for schools; holiday activities for children and families; a historical enquiry service, advice on the historic importance of proposed development sites; online history related learning resources, and a touring exhibition programme around the borough utilising spaces in libraries, youth centres, community centres and other cultural facilities.

Other heritage assets include:

- Brent Archive at Cricklewood Library - offering a rich resource of maps, photographs and other artefacts about Brent
- The waterways of Brent – including the Grand Union Canal, River Brent and the Welsh Harp reservoir, providing spaces and places for leisure, entertainment, and an introduction to the industrial and cultural heritage of the borough
- Dollis Hill House, Gladstone Park - the remains of the house are in a poor condition following a number of arson attacks. To date the Council has been unable to identify capital funding or affordable and appropriate use to enable the restoration of the building.

The Council will continue to work with bodies to find a solution within the context of the overall park setting and development.

However, Brent does have notable absences compared to other London boroughs. For example, it does not have many dedicated gallery facilities for touring or local artists, with only three non-commercial spaces with changing visual programmes, all of which have less than perfect attributes - at Willesden Green Library Centre, the Stables Arts Centre, and The Tricycle Gallery. The borough has just one private sector art gallery, on an industrial estate in Dudden Hill. This low-level provision is an impediment to local visual arts development, with recent research in Brent showing that local people relish the notion of high quality visual arts on their doorstep. Furthermore, whilst the Borough will have a high quality museum from Spring 2006, it will still not have a high profile visual/heritage/museum visitor attraction, such as a major museum or, more realistically, a branch of a major museum. Such a facility would be a major focus for cultural activity and would advance an overall cultural sense of place for Brent.

### **4.3 Arts - Organisations and Venues**

Brent has a thriving local and community arts environment, with a spread of provision that covers many art forms and activities, reflecting the diversity of the Borough. There are a small number of nationally recognised arts organizations and institutions located in the Borough, with perhaps the Tricycle Theatre being the most notable. The most recent cultural building to be developed in the Borough is the new home for the Federation of Patidar Associations in London Road. This purpose built centre houses a 250 seat performance area, conference hall and workshops for dance and music. It will provide a year-round programme of work of Asian cultural events but aims to be a valued resource for all of the communities in the Borough.

Carnival is well represented in Brent with a number of Carnival arts organisations such as Fusion, Scarlibis and Genesis working throughout the year and beyond the Borough boundaries. The Notting Hill Carnival is, naturally, the highlight of the year for these organisations, but the increasing value of Carnival as an art form requiring year-long attention is reflected in the work of organisations such as Mahogany Arts, which has a purpose built workspace in Harlesden and provides workshops and events throughout the UK and beyond. Indeed, Carnival has the potential to provide the entry-points into the wider Creative Industries, with skills such as costume design and manufacture requiring skills-sets applicable to sectors that range from fashion to product design.

The borough has a limited number of venues for presentation, rehearsal and performance. The internationally renowned Wembley Arena is the largest performance space in the Borough, and following its refurbishment and re-opening in January 2006 will be one of London's premier high capacity venues; The Tricycle Theatre provides a key hub of high quality activity; and a range of community halls, libraries and sports centres provide opportunities for grassroots activity. However, the lack of high quality, affordable and accessible spaces for cultural activity is a major development issue for the Borough, with facilities not of the standard and range of those in other London Boroughs. New spaces as part of the broader National Stadium development will help to address this, but without a sustained strategic push to open-up and improve more existing spaces and introduce new spaces, Brent will not have an acceptable standard and supply of venues and buildings for the production and display of creative activity.

*'Assets, Challenges and the Way Ahead'* - a recent study for the 'Western Wedge' group of boroughs (Brent, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Ealing, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster) has identified that cultural activity is dispersed and generally unfocussed across west London. There are few clusters of cultural activity other than in some of the 'town centre' areas and through a small number of emergent partnerships. Arts and cultural organisations show little inclination to cluster or to develop collaborative approaches to delivery.

This contributes to and is a product of a 'weak sense of place' for West London and its constituent parts as a 'cultural proposition', with a resultant disinclination to foster networks that extend beyond very local contexts. The report additionally highlights the fact that across west London the following issues can be identified:

**Scattered distribution; a marginal 'sense of place':** The research has uncovered few clusters of cultural activity, with provision scattered across both the Western Wedge and specific Boroughs.

**Information poor and lacking in confidence:** Many arts and cultural organisations have a low level awareness (and lack the capacity to increase awareness) of opportunities for collaboration, professional development, funding, showcasing, touring, and so on.

**Under-supply of creative workspace:** Many cultural organisations, projects and initiatives across the Western Wedge are operating in inappropriate workspace – be it substandard studios, cramped performance spaces, or inflexible and expensive office space.

These issues all have a particular relevance to Brent and point to the opportunities that exist to provide focus, leadership and direction in the development of its cultural capacity. The Arts Council England (London) is a key partner in both in Brent and for the Western Wedge partnership. Several organisations in Brent have received Arts Council funding support (e.g. Patidar House) either directly or through Grants for Arts. The Arts Council are also supporting Brent Council in ensuring arts and creative activities are built into the Wembley regeneration.

Opportunities for creative participation abound in the Borough, with many amateur arts organisations and an increasing number of professional arts organisational and artists' working closely with the Borough's many communities. With the advent of the Seer website ([www.theseer.info](http://www.theseer.info)), Brent residents can access an online database of detailed information about artists and arts organisations working across the Borough. From South Asian dance to community choirs, ceramicists and photographers, Brent is increasingly seen as place in which artists can base themselves and do business, despite the low level of provision of suitable spaces, and limited funding.

Creative Partnerships (round 3) is a government funded creative curriculum initiative based in schools and is due to begin in 2005-6. The initiative is shared across Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham and Ealing. Local partnerships across this area are good, and it is intended that the project is used to open up links between creative practitioners, the local cultural business sector and young people

Brent Council support for the arts is managed through a small unit established in 2003, which works in partnership with a range of external agencies to develop infrastructure, new networks, local initiatives to provide the best environment for the arts to flourish and to meet local needs. Additional recent initiatives have included sub regional and regional partnership work, developing and supporting the music dance and visual art sectors.

#### **4.4 Sports - Organisations and Venues**

Brent's sports community uses a variety of facilities, both indoor and out provided by a mix of public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The major indoor public sports provision in the Borough is to be found at 3 centres – Vale Farm Sports Centre, Charteris Sports Centre and Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre. In 2006 a new purpose built centre will open in Willesden (Willesden Sports Centre) providing new facilities including a 25m pool, teaching pool, sports hall, health and fitness facilities, dojo, indoor running tube, indoor 5 a side pitches and a



six lane floodlit athletics track. Between them these centres form the backbone of a wider network of facilities, both indoor and outdoor, that are increasingly connected to the Borough's parks and open spaces and include facilities in schools as well as the commercial operations run by organisations such as Goals, Fitness First and Canons.

Brent residents have the opportunity to engage in a variety of sporting activities, from swimming and athletics to tennis and football. The Council is committed to improving these opportunities and linking them to the healthy living and diversity agendas. It is estimated that there are over 150 voluntary sports clubs in the Borough catering for all ages and abilities, often using council facilities and providing opportunities for participation, coaching and competition. The Council recognises the need to work with these organisations to ensure their long term sustainability by helping them to increase membership levels, develop a skilled volunteer base and implement relevant structures, policies and procedures which will also increase opportunities for funding.

Of the many sporting assets in Brent, by far the most prestigious and significant will be the 90,000 seat National Stadium in Wembley that is due to open in 2006. This facility which will also host final events for the London 2012 Olympics will raise the profile of professional sporting activity in Brent to a global audience, and will undoubtedly act as a catalyst to stimulate interest and activity in grassroots sports.

#### **4.5 Libraries**

Brent's libraries are engaged in a process of continual change and improvement in order to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction and service delivery. As one of the most prominent and visible of the Borough's cultural services, the Council recognises the need to ensure that its role as a frontline provider is valued and connected to other cultural activities. 55% of the Borough's residents use the libraries, and through the provision of longer opening hours and a diversification of books and other resources, customer satisfaction has risen to 85.3% in 2003. Brent has a policy of continuing investment, with three library refurbishments undertaken since March 2002.

The Council currently offers 12 library buildings, a mobile library and an outreach service, and they serve as access points for a wide range of Council resources. The role of promoting literacy within a diverse community is key to the success of the Library Service, and the need to work across languages and formats informs much of the service's thinking. The Library Service won national recognition for its reader development initiative *ImaginAsian*, which promoted Asian literature through a partnership with other local authorities and the private sector. The work of black writers has been supported through two anthologies produced by the Black Inc. Writing Group based at Willesden Green Library.

Brent's Libraries are a cornerstone of the Borough's cultural services and in the recent cultural survey came second only to parks and open spaces when rated by local residents. The 2004 Public Library Position Statement for Brent identifies a number of strengths, constraints and challenges in public library provision, including:

#### **Key Strengths**

- Willesden Green Library Centre (opened in 1989) incorporates a cinema, bookshop, one stop shop, gallery space, meeting spaces as well as library and will house the borough's museum in 2006
- Ealing Road Library was imaginatively refurbished in April 2003 with community involvement – to reflect diversity in this vibrant shopping area
- Refurbished children's libraries at Kilburn and Kingsbury libraries
- DDA accessibility in all libraries and mobile library

- 99% of the population within one mile of the twelve static libraries and mobile library stops at sites 1 mile from local library
- Chartermark accreditation for excellence in customer services

**Constraints**

- Most library buildings are in need of enhancement ranging from redecoration to more extensive modernisation
- Size/layout/condition of buildings/patterns of opening hours are not always appropriate for modern usage or conducive to partnership working

**Challenges**

- Meeting the recommendations of the strategic review of library buildings

Amongst the most significant developments for the Borough’s Library Service has been the refurbishment of Ealing Road Library. This has been designed as a facility to reflect as much as possible the needs of the local community. Through an extensive consultation process, the refurbishment was managed to ensure that the redesign was community-led; resulting in a dramatic increase in usage and loans, with Ealing Road Library now being the Borough’s busiest library in terms of visitors, with 75% of customers from Asian backgrounds.

Whilst Libraries are well supported by many local residents, there are a significantly low number of independent general-purpose bookshops within the borough, with a higher number of specialist faith bookshops.

**4.6 Parks and Open Spaces**

The extent and quality of Brent’s parks and open spaces are one of the Borough’s greatest assets and counteract the impact of the major transport routes that bisect the borough. With approximately 455 hectares of public open space including natural informal areas, such as Fryent Country Park and The Welsh Harp Reservoir, and grand formal Victorian Parks, such as Roundwood Park and Gladstone Park, the Borough is a green resource for residents across north and west London. Parks are used by the widest cross section of the population, are free at the point of access, have a high satisfaction rating in public surveys and have increasingly been aligned to the sports, healthy living and environmental agendas. The breakdown of open spaces in Brent is as follows:

PARKS	NUMBER
District Parks	3
Local Parks	9
Small Local Parks	44
Sports Grounds	11
Pocket Parks and Play Areas	25
Country Park and Nature Reserve	2

In addition, the Council manages housing amenity land, allotments, local schools outdoor space and grass verges and roundabouts.

With an estimated 16 million visits each year, Brent recognises the popularity and value of the borough’s parks and open spaces. They are increasing popular as venues for a wide range of cultural activities and organised annual events as well as venues for schools and colleges to support curriculum activities and lifelong learning for the whole community. The Council is keen to widen access by promoting parks as venues for sporting events, music, play and

entertainments, whilst maintaining the environmental and historical value and ensuring that enhancements are sympathetic to their existing context

Ensuring communities have access to their local park and open space with scope for a diverse range of cultural facilities is a key priority evidenced by such project as the Gladstone Park Restoration Programme – a £1million project delivered in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Since 2003, Brent's Parks Service has established a baseline audit position that identifies those areas that require improvement and allowed for a comprehensive development strategy to be put in place. Many improvements have been undertaken in recent years. These include:

- Introduction of a Parks Warden Service
- Improvements to 42 children's play area sites
- Dog control, graffiti and vandalism issues increasingly addressed
- Introduction of a Customer Care Officer, a Customer Charter and attainment of Chartermark
- Attainment of grant funding to make improvements to targeted sports and park facilities at key sites.
- Introduction of an Allotment Development Plan and Playing Pitch Strategy, targeting future improvements and resources.

Most significantly, the Parks Service has worked with across departments in the Council and with external partners to ensure that there is continuity and consistency in the level and quality of service experienced by users and stakeholders. In 2002 – 2003, Brent Council was awarded Beacon Council status for Improving Urban Green Spaces, a measure of the Borough's achievement in making Brent one of London's leaders in greenspace development.

Overall, there is an imperative to build upon the success of Brent's parks and open spaces and place them within the context of an overall level of cultural provision. The Borough's open spaces are the most evident example of Brent's cultural landscape. They are the places that are home to festivals and sports activities of all kinds; they contribute to a quality of life that sets an example to other Boroughs, and they provide opportunities for presentation and display in many forms. As a resource, Brent's Parks and open spaces can, by continuing to establish stronger cross cultural links with Council departments and other stakeholders, make even better use of the opportunities on offer for cultural expression and enjoyment by the Borough's residents and visitors.

#### **4.7 Play**

Within the borough, there are a wide variety of agencies that are involved in children's play. These include Brent Council, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

Within the local authority, many departments contribute to the range of play opportunities available and others work in areas that impact on play opportunities as play is a cross-cutting issue. Children's services in Brent have been reorganised into a Children and Families Services department in 2005.

Most of the children's play areas in Brent are provided either within public open spaces or on housing estates. Many of the more recent open space acquisitions in the south of the Borough are being used primarily for children's play. Despite the laying out of new play areas and the improvement of many more, a large number of the play areas in Brent are poor, lack modern

equipment, safety surfaces and not all are fenced to make them dog free. Some residential areas do not have any reasonable access to play areas.

All Brent's children's play facilities meet with Health and Safety regulations, OFSTED standards, and a schedule of work is in hand to raise standards to meet recommended European Community Safety Standards. Brent's Park Service has undertaken a recent audit of existing play facilities. The Green Flag Award Standard was used as a demanding and independent benchmark against which to judge play areas. Scores are out of a potential 10 with the pass mark for Green Flag being 6.5. Brent's play areas score an average of 8 across the Borough.

There are currently about 40 'out of school' clubs in the borough. Many sites deliver breakfast clubs, after school and holiday schemes at different times of the year. The largest single provider is Brent Play Association - a charitable company that runs 9 sites based in schools. Other clubs are run by private providers, schools or charities or religious groups. After school and out of school provision has been rapidly expanded by the New Opportunities Fund 'new places' programme and the infrastructure is now supported by the Brent's Surestart programme.

Within Brent, at the last audit in December 2004, there are 72 OFSTED-registered nurseries and playgroups run by private, voluntary or neighbourhood groups providing full day care. A further 18 provide part-time care with three full-time nurseries run by Brent's Children's Social Care Team. Fifteen registered crèches operate in colleges, fitness centres and shops. There are about 30 unregistered parent and toddler groups. There are about 310 registered childminders in Brent and one new Children's Centre in Stonebridge.

Specialist provision is provided by a range of services/agencies: from P.A.Y.P (Positive Activities for Young People) providing services to young people at risk, the 'John Lyon' - a Narrow boat owned by a local charity and based at Alperton on the Grand Union canal, the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre, the 'Magical Starship' a multi-sensory room for children with disabilities, to the Middlesex House Play Centre which runs special projects for refugee children, children from homeless families and for children with special needs.

Brent Youth Service manages three centres, Granville Youth Arts & Training Centre, Chalkhill Youth and Community Centre and the Roundwood Club, each with a different programme aimed at young people. They also run part-time youth projects at 14 other sites, including community centres and schools. The Youth Service runs a Summer University which also provides some limited specialist activities for children with special needs

Two mobile facilities operate within the borough, the Sure Start Play and Learn bus providing a free service for children under the age of 4 years and their parents/carers residing in the Sure Start Central Brent catchment area, and the Equipped 2 Go Bus equipped to provide a young person friendly environment.

Sports, Libraries and Creative Development also run activities specifically for children and young people.

There are several holiday schemes and services for children with special needs, including those supplied by Brent Mencap, the Carlton Handicapped Club, and the Gateway Club. Brent's Children's Support Team refer children 'in need' onto play schemes and after school clubs supported by the Children's Play Service. In addition the Service runs a holiday scheme for children at risk of offending. This includes a summer camp away. Referrals are taken from head teachers and social workers. This service provides a significant early intervention for a number of children with very challenging behaviour.

The Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Project provides support services for children in this group. It runs a play project at Brent's traveller's site in Neasden.

#### **4.8 Festivals and Events**

Brent delivers a vibrant and diverse festivals programme. Council-supported events include: Hanukkah, Eid, Black History Month, Diwali, Navratri, Christmas, Saint Patrick's Day and the RESPECT festival. Budgets have increased in recent years to ensure the festivals programme has a higher quality and relevance to the increasingly diverse local population. Community consultation and involvement is strong to ensure that relevance is maintained, and each event has an increasing proportion of attendees that are not traditional visitors to these events in other places. These aspects are being further encouraged through marketing strategies to ensure that each event receives a cross section of communities, maintaining the key role of festivals as a means of enhancing community cohesion.

The RESPECT event is important as a single platform for all local communities - offering the potential for truly intercultural expression. Surveys undertaken at all events indicate that those who attend are highly satisfied with their experience.

However, a number of challenges emerge for the festivals programme. These include:

The challenge of 'representation': the diversity of Brent is such that it is not possible for every community to have a festival that is Council-supported. The RESPECT festival provides a way forward, as long as the opportunities for including a wider cross section, more local people and opportunities to create shared arts product, is maintained. Ensuring that there is wide spread participation whilst sustaining high quality is a fundamental challenge for all of the festivals, as is maintaining a balance of specific religious requirements, whilst providing a 'cultural experience' to those who do not follow that faith.

The challenge of connecting the festival sector to broader cultural development and Creative Industries initiatives: festivals provide a breeding ground for ideas and new types of practice, and can be connections to organisational development initiatives and creative business generation.

The challenge of complementing other festivals in the sub-region: Boroughs adjacent to Brent have strong festivals programmes that draw audiences and participants from Brent, and provide attendees to Brent's programme. It is important to recognise these processes and avoid unnecessary competition: complementary inter-Borough festival provision is a desirable approach.

The increasing scale of each of the festivals, as a number of events will immanently outgrow their traditional venues, and the equal spread of festivals across the borough, whilst ensuring that suitable and appropriate locations close to the 'homes' of traditional communities are used.

The inaccessibility of other public funds into many of the events. The 'faith' base for many of the events means that most other public funding is unavailable. For many Brent people there is no division between their cultural/creative activities and their faith activities, which means that it is appropriate to undertake creative festivals as part of faith originating events such as Eid and Diwali. Meanwhile the traditional European split between state and faith means that most public funders will not support cultural activities that they see primarily in the context of faith

As the boroughs diverse make up changes with time the programme of events and festivals should change in order to retain its relevance and ability to contribute to the cohesion of the transforming borough.

#### 4.9 Public Realm and Public Art

A forward-thinking and creative place is one that prizes its public realm and promotes the value of high quality and innovative design. This applies not just to landmark locations but to neighbourhoods, open spaces and even individual features in the landscape. The high profile provided by the new National Stadium provides Brent with an international symbol of high quality design in the public realm. The area developing around the stadium, with refurbished stations and improved road networks is planned to be an innovative and welcoming public realm.

Public art is vital here. The recent Wembley Public Art Strategy outlines a process for public art intervention that could also be followed across the borough, which will:

Signal change, supporting a positive image for the town centre and new developments  
 Support regeneration through investment in the highest quality art and design  
 Stimulate community involvement/participation in the process of influencing their environment  
 Engender civic pride and community well being

The introduction of a Public Art Trust for Wembley will help to develop a series of focused, appropriately funded, high quality interventions in and around Wembley. Further work will be needed to enable Borough-wide initiatives, particularly in areas where the quality of the public realm is poor. Within the Revised Deposit Replacement Unitary Development Plan, Brent acknowledges the benefits of public art can bring to suitable developments. The main emphasis in Brent is on improving the public realm of the Borough, particularly in town centres.

#### 4.10 Creative Industries

The last 10 years has seen the rise and rise of the Creative and Cultural Industries as key drivers of change for the UK economy. The government's two White Papers of the late 1990's "Opportunity for All in a World of Change" and "Our Competitive Future; Building the Knowledge Economy" set out clearly an emerging recognition that nurturing creativity and enabling the growth of the Creative economy would be a critical element in the UK's economic success in the emerging new knowledge based economy:

"In the global marketplace, knowledge, skills and creativity are needed above all to give the UK a competitive edge. These are distinctive assets of a knowledge driven economy."<sup>1</sup>

The Creative Industries refers to:

*"Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have their potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. These have been taken to include the following key sectors: advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio" (DCMS 1999).*

In Brent, the potential exists to develop a larger and more productive Creative Industries sector. The concentration of film and media-related activities in Park Royal, strong distribution presence close to Wembley, and emergent activities of small business content creation across the Borough, all point to the growth potential of the sector. Moreover, the very strong and diverse cultural activities of the Borough provide a rich array of talent and aspiration, some of which can

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Competitive Future: Building the Knowledge Economy*, DTI, 1998

be connected directly into commercial Creative Industries development opportunities. This relatively 'untapped potential' remains to be developed in the Borough.

The Creative Industries sector in Brent consists of a mixture of high growth, relatively young and early stage companies, and emergent social enterprises and organisations with close links to the not-for-profit and subsidised 'arts sector'. The commercially orientated part of the Creative Industries includes activities in a range of sub-sectors, with design, film, television and music prominent. Larger companies are orientated towards distribution, equipment and facilities (such as props companies in Park Royal and Fountain Studios in Wembley); smaller companies are orientated towards content creation, with the digitalisation of content a prime concern and factor of growth.

However, key challenges remain, with much of the sector across the UK led by a predominantly white male workforce, highly skilled, internally (but not externally networked), and this liable to establish trading and recruitment patterns that are exclusive and an affront to social inclusion. Brent's existing creative economy includes a number of more diverse work forces and emerging black led initiatives. Providing, if supported, the opportunity for new types of creative product and workforce, more diverse than its traditional form elsewhere.

**4.11 Table of Cultural assets**

More than almost any other Borough in London, Brent is currently undergoing significant change. This not only refers to high profile major developments such as the National Stadium at Wembley and its surroundings, to significant new housing developments and improvement schemes, and to institutional changes such as the upgrading of library provision. Major cultural interventions, projects and developments that are driving this change are introduced below. During the public debates programme and in other consultation exercises stakeholders and members of the public often referred to disappointment in some initiatives, this often originated from a misunderstanding of the purpose or intended target recipients for these initiatives. Therefore the items below are clarified into different groups according to their intended or likely significance. This does not preclude things of international significance having a positive impact on a more local level.

Sector/ status	International Significance	National Significance	London/ sub regional Significance	Brent Significance	Neighbourhood/ Local Significance
<p><b>Public Realm – new capital developments</b></p>	<p>Swaminayaran Hindu Temple</p> <p>National Stadium at Wembley</p>	<p>The new Wembley Arena</p> <p>New leisure and cultural facilities at Wembley</p>	<p>Refurbished Tube Stations</p> <p>State Cinema</p> <p>Trowbridge Houses</p> <p>Welsh Harp</p> <p>Kensal Green cemetery.</p> <p>Wembley Park Station</p> <p>Danny Lane sculpture at Wembley Park</p> <p>Grand Union Canal</p>	<p>Key faith centres</p> <p>Brent Town Hall</p> <p>A potential new Civic Centre at Wembley</p> <p>Fawood Children’s Centre</p> <p>New public art</p> <p>Fryent Country Park</p> <p>Canal / waterways</p>	<p>Pumping Station</p> <p>Local Parks</p> <p>BT Research Centre</p>



<p><b>Education</b></p>			<p>University of Westminster</p> <p>Creative Partnerships</p>	<p>Adult Education-BACES</p> <p>Further Education-CNWL</p> <p>Welsh Harp Environmental Education centre</p> <p>Tricycle Theatre programme</p>	<p>Adult Education-BACES</p> <p>Activities of schools, nurseries (after schools) etc.</p> <p>Community-driven literacy programmes</p>
<p><b>Museum/ History</b></p>			<p>Potential Museum 'annexe'</p> <p>New Willesden based Museum (Grange replacement)</p>	<p>Grange Museum (Closed 2004)</p> <p>Archive resources</p>	<p>Archive resources</p>
<p><b>Performance spaces film and music</b></p>		<p>Wembley Arena</p> <p>Tricycle Theatre</p>	<p>Patidar Centre (Wembley)</p>	<p>Brent Orchestra</p> <p>Parks – for festivals</p>	<p>Local clubs/groups etc.</p> <p>East Lane Theatre Club</p> <p>Live music-Pubs</p> <p>Restaurants</p> <p>Performances-Schools</p> <p>Willessden Cinema</p>

<p><b>Galleries/Exhibition Space</b></p>			<p>Experiment</p>	<p>Willesden Gallery Tricycle Theatre</p>	<p>Local community spaces, cafes and schools  Stables Gallery</p>
<p><b>Faith</b></p>	<p>Swaminayaran Temple</p>		<p>Buddhist Temple  Iranian Cultural centre  Black Madonna in Willesden  Spiritualist University</p>		<p>Local Faith Centres</p>
<p><b>Festivals</b></p>			<p>Diwali  Respect</p>	<p>Navratri  Hanukkah  Xmas  St Patrick's  Eid  Chariot festival  Fireworks</p>	<p>Carnival workshops  Local events</p>

<p><b>Artist Groups/Networks</b></p>			<p>Bigga Fish Mahogany</p>	<p>BAR BAC  Joyful Noise Willesden Green Writers Mas Camps</p>	<p>Local practice</p>
<p><b>Studio and Rehearsal space</b></p>			<p>Tricycle New Patidars centre</p>	<p>Dance studios at Bridge Park</p>	<p>Local multi use community centres  Local theatre schools  Dance at Vale Farm and sports Centres</p>
<p><b>Sports/Leisure sites</b></p>	<p>National Stadium</p>		<p>Willesden Sports Centre (Opening 2006)</p>	<p>Vale Farm Sports Centre  Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre  Private Leisure Facilities  Sports pitches</p>	<p>Charteris Sports Centre  School Sports facilities  Local parks and parks facilities  Private Leisure Facilities</p>

#### 4.12 Levels of Use

The Brent Cultural Survey 2004 provides an overview of patterns of cultural use by Brent people. A sample of approximately 1,000 local people provided feedback. Major findings include:

**Levels of user ship in free and widely available services such as libraries and parks are higher than for services that rely on a greater degree of planning to visit** – such as museums. This is in part due to the relatively small number of museums, limited opening hours and geographical location.

**Examples of frequency of use in and out of the borough** - Parks, Libraries, Leisure, Outdoor Sports, Children's activities and faith centres are used by some people frequently. Whilst Festivals, Theatre, Museums, and Galleries are used less frequently in Brent... These have a more regional focus, and regular users seem to be more prepared to travel some distance to access them. However people who only rarely use these types of service are far more likely to do so in Brent than outside of the borough.

**Lower levels of activity can be linked to the poor availability of services** (such as cinema) and **a lack of information on available services** (which is in part the problem of weak networks).

**Faith activities provide a major social and cultural role for some local residents.** Most local people don't attend faith activities, but those that do are likely to attend very frequently.

**Satisfaction levels for cultural activities are generally high** – even for non-frequent attendees. High satisfaction rates ranged from 53% to 91%. However, a large proportion of respondents reflected a lack of awareness of the quality of provision – for example, 25% 'did not know' the quality of outdoor sports provision in the Borough.

Where satisfaction levels are lower, reasons include the inaccessible location of the service (9%), a perception of poor safety (12% for parks), inappropriate opening hours (15% for libraries), and cost (7% Leisure).

**This Survey shows that for services to improve, a focus on the following is vital:**

- **Information** – improving knowledge of opportunities, focusing on networks, connecting to harder-to-reach groups
- **Quality** – maintaining a long-term focus on improving services, responding to changes in demand.
- **Accessibility** – improving provision in parts of the Borough where it is absent, improving connectivity.
- **Safety** – improving the public realm to advance senses of safety and engender civic pride.

## **5 Brent - a place of change: cultural priorities for the borough**

Brent Council has responsibility for substantial cultural assets that are held in public ownership, particularly open spaces for recreation, libraries, sports and leisure facilities. In addition, it works with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners to secure cultural activity in the Borough. The Council recognises that a vibrant cultural sector is an aid to business and residential growth, and that to maximise the Council's contribution to the cultural agenda, strong crosscutting themes need to be adopted by departments and directorates that reflect the Council's corporate strategic priorities of:

- **Supporting children and young people**
- **Promoting quality of life and the green agenda**
- **Regeneration and priority neighborhoods**
- **Tackling crime and community safety**
- **Achieving service excellence.**

The approach that the council takes to achieving improvement and identifying priorities will vary between sub-sectors.

### **5.1 Sports**

Brent Council's Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2004 – 2009 is built upon the principle that sport has a necessary role to play in improving the quality of life for local residents and contributing to the achievement of a number of social targets including health improvement, education and lifelong learning, crime reduction and community safety, social inclusion and community cohesion, regeneration and the environment. It further recognises that to achieve coherence in the borough-wide sports provision a partnership approach is necessary, with the Council taking a lead on improving co-ordination between internal and external organisations.

The Audit Commission report of August 2004 recommended that Brent Council make improvements to the marketing of its cultural services, with particular regard to sport. The Council will take forward this recommendation and address it in relation to the key themes above.

#### **Strategic Priorities for Sport in Brent:**

- **Promote the health benefits of an active lifestyle**
- **Increase awareness of sports opportunities**
- **Ensure sports facilities are 'fit for purpose'**
- **Reduce barriers to participation**
- **Support and develop local sports clubs**
- **Increase opportunities for young people**
- **Increase participation levels within five identified target groups: older people, disabled people, black and ethnic minority people, young people, women and girls.**

## 5.2 Arts and festivals

The work of arts organisations and artists active in the Borough is generally increasing and in recent years there have been stronger levels of co-ordination and co-operation between the council and local providers, playing a strategic role in provision and as a mechanism for social cohesion. Brent Council recognises the need to provide a structured level of service to both producers and consumers of the arts and creative activity in the Borough.

The breadth of arts activity in the Borough is international, and the Borough's diversity is in an understated asset and one that has the potential to raise the Borough's regional profile through the promotion of its unique identity. By building strong links with communities and artists across the Borough, Brent council will be able to act as both advocate and advisor, providing co-ordination to what has historically been a relatively unstructured assembly of individuals, organisations and activities.

### **Strategic Priorities for the Arts and Festivals in Brent:**

- **Increase the opportunity for participation in a wider range of high quality arts and creative activity, including festivals and public realm based work.**
- **Continually improve quality through a process of engagement, enabling the creation of contemporary practice by the merging of traditional art forms.**
- **Build enduring links, and clusters of activity between artists, creative businesses and local communities, using networks such as theseer.info website, and programmes such as Creative Partnerships.**
- **Develop mechanisms for local people to take better advantage of London's cultural opportunities by ensuring improved levels of regional information, communication and access.**
- **Maximise the availability of accessible spaces, places and platforms for the production, presentation, exhibition and display of creative activity across the Borough.**
- **Develop processes and mechanisms to encourage additional commissioning of quality art and design for the public realm.**
- **Ensure the Council maximizes external and alternative funding opportunities to support the arts**
- **Ensure that public safety considerations are a priority for all events.**

### 5.3 Parks and Open Spaces

Brent has adopted a process of managed park and open spaces that mark the borough out as being greener than its neighbours, with high levels of usage and access. They are a reflection of the overall quality of life for borough residents and visitors, impacting upon social policy measures such as cohesion, diversity, crime reduction, community safety, young people and leisure. The linking of sports, parks, greenspace and heritage is a valuable step in the process of integrating council services to maximise their benefit and impact. Brent has adopted a strategic plan for the management of Brent's Parks and Open Spaces. This plan impacts upon social policy issues such as cohesion, diversity, crime reduction, community safety, young people and leisure.

#### Strategic Priorities for Parks and Open Spaces in Brent:

- **Provide green space for the benefit, enjoyment, health and well being of Brent's residents, visitors, and wildlife.**
- **Ensure that Brent has a diverse array of park settings and recreation opportunities**
- **Provide Allotments for the benefit, enjoyment, health and well being of Brent's residents and wildlife**
- **Maintain green space through economic, creative and collaborative means to achieve clean, safe, inviting and inspiring spaces for people and wildlife**
- **Promote and strengthen community participation in the planning, creation, management, use and stewardship of our parks, open spaces, recreational facilities and streetscapes.**

### 5.4 Play

Brent has a range of play provision and a diverse mix of service suppliers. In order to progress services further a stakeholder's forum is to be created to monitor the implementation of play services, and make recommendations for future development.

Developing a coherent, cohesive and co-ordinated approach to the development of play opportunities will require focus and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each service provider and each service commissioner. The number of current sites designated and suitable for 'Play' need to be increased in line with the increasing population, with a specific need to create more spaces which are accessible for children with disabilities, wherever possible ensuring that these provide social opportunities for all children to meet and mix.

**Strategic Priorities for Play in Brent:**

- **Create a Stakeholders forum to ensure coordination of services.**
- **Promote the importance of play to children, parents, carers and those working with children.**
- **Create, develop and maintain a variety of safe, local, and high quality play spaces and play provisions, and that all provision aims towards becoming fully inclusive.**
- **Support schools, childcare providers and other children’s services to develop opportunities for play within their provision.**
- **Work to ensure that play providers actively seek to address the needs of children from “hard-to-reach” communities and those at risk from social exclusion.**
- **Work with agencies to develop activities to divert children from anti-social behaviour.**

**5.5 Heritage**

Brent is not a Borough of richly significant historical architecture, although it does have a range of examples of pre- and post-war planning – both good and bad. There is a mix of distinctive individual features (such as cemeteries and old cinemas), as well as unique housing developments in the north of the borough. In addition, some of the Victorian town centre architecture is of as high a standard as is commonly found elsewhere in London. It is important that these buildings and developments are supported and complemented by new developments in their vicinity, rather than their importance being overlooked.

In terms of Brent’s built heritage, some of the Borough’s biggest assets are the architecturally unique buildings which have been built here in the last 20 years. Whilst it is important to ensure that these (and the older architectural developments and buildings) are maintained and protected in the years to come, a challenge for the long-term heritage of the borough will be to build on these examples in order to encourage and stimulate excellent architectural design amongst the future developments. After all, it is the presence and mix of these buildings and open spaces that creates the distinctive heritage landscape of Brent; and it is the multiple layers of different uses, changing over time, that inform how this landscape is read.

In order to qualify as one of Brent’s historic and/or architecturally important buildings worthy of special consideration and attention by Brent Council over and above the council’s basic statutory responsibilities towards its Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II listed buildings, a building will need to comply with all of the following criteria:

- Be on Brent’s Buildings At Risk Register
- Have the potential for the existing building to be used as a viable community space without the need to resort to extensions / additions etc.
- Be of significant architectural importance / uniqueness, either in terms of its general appearance or as an early example of the techniques used in its construction



- Retains its structural integrity, or at least the integrity of the elements considered to be worthy of special interest
- Be appropriate for its proposed purpose
- Be close to major transport links if the proposed future use of the building will involve the throughput of significant numbers of people at any one time.

#### Strategic Priorities for Heritage in Brent

- **Maximise the benefits gained by the relocation of the Grange Museum to improve the Borough's historical and contemporary identity and build a stronger sense of place and location for the Borough's residents.**
- **Utilise the historical collections of the Grange Museum and Brent Archive which are not on display as a means of inspiring and stimulating a sense of the importance of local and cultural identity through a range of projects and activities.**
- **Increase access to the Borough's key heritage sites through the provision of comprehensive information and partnership working (see criteria worthy of special attention/consideration above)**
- **Work with potential new developers (large scale and also community/religion based) in advance of proposals being developed to encourage unique and innovative design wherever appropriate and affordable. Develop a clear set of criteria which outlines what constitutes 'unique and innovative design', and which will contribute to the long term built heritage of the borough.**
- **To improve public access to museums and archives within the borough through identifying and pursuing potential new sites of existing provision, and developing partnerships with others to bring in additional high quality museum provision.**

#### 5.6 Libraries

Brent's Library Service is in the process of modernisation that has seen the refurbishment of Ealing Road Library and the introduction of a number of improvements that increase public access. The government's vision for the future of public libraries was published in 2004 (Framework for the Future) and outlines the following key priorities for library services:

- **Building capacity to deliver transformation**

Develop and promote the role and contribution of public libraries through a clear vision  
 Build libraries' capacity to improve through better quality of leadership and workforce skills  
 Implement innovative solutions to achieve maximum impact from available resources  
 Achieve excellent planning and quality assurance systems to ensure sustained improvement

- **Books, reading and learning**

Promote literacy skills and an appetite for reading and learning

- **Digital citizenship**

Provide access to the services people need through effective use of ICT  
 Contribute to achievement of e-government (UK online) targets for service take-up and audience engagement

▪ **Community and civic values**

Deliver an inclusive service that reflects and helps build cohesive communities  
Provide library premises that meet the needs of twenty first century communities

Brent has taken steps to ensure that its residents do not fall behind in gaining opportunities to online resources and activities. The increasing web-based presence of the Council and the role of e-government are challenges that the Library Service will continue to address by ensuring all residents have access to appropriate technology and wherever possible will work to enable skills acquisition and training for both staff and customers.

Links between the Library Service and the Education Service are well established, and the key objectives of widening participation and levels of achievement in lifelong learning and providing opportunities for participation in cultural, creative and community activity are being increasingly met. Links between the Council's One Stop Service have recently been strengthened with the introduction of Brent Council self service points in all twelve library branches.

The integration of services is demonstrated by Willesden Green Library Centre, which incorporates cinema, bookshop, one stop shop, gallery space, meeting spaces as well as a library and in 2006, the borough's museum. This approach is a reflection of the Library Service's commitment to continually improving access, increasing a more diverse customer base and breaking down traditional barriers to usage through the extension of opening hours, rethinking library locations to increase accessibility and a more flexible approach to acquisitions and project based activities.

**Strategic Priorities for Libraries in Brent:**

- **Ensuring that library buildings meet the objectives of 'Framework for the Future' – modern, comfortable, safe spaces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**
- **Increase reader and audience development**
- **Ensure the library service contributes to raising educational standards for all ages in the borough**
- **Encourage the effective use of libraries by children, to encourage reading habits from an early age**
- **Continue with the process of extending opening hours and increasing stock levels**
- **Increase levels of online and internet access to digital content within libraries**
- **Continue to develop programmes of work that address cultural diversity and Library access within the Borough**

## 5.7 Creative Industries

To grow an innovative and locally impacting Creative Industries sector, it is vital that not-for-profit activities are better connected to commercial activities, that the potential for career paths are clear to local people, and that effective partnerships are formulated to enable these connections. Vital here will be the sub-regional overlap between the Western Wedge Partnership (of Arts and Culture officers across West London) and the newly formed West London Creative Industries Steering Group (a high level partnership of major sector development partners across the sub-region). There is need for a network which shares information to allow for initiatives and interventions to be progressed sub regionally in a strategic and coordinated manner.

Particular areas for further growth include Park Royal (part of the Western Arc City Growth Strategy, in which Creative Industries development is a major concern), Wembley (with workspace and showcase potential in new capital developments), and the finer-grain town centre environments to the south of the Borough (where opportunities exist to nurture micro enterprises, with a high proportion led by BME creatives).

### **Strategic Priorities for the Creative Industries in Brent:**

- **Ensure that the opportunities for creative sector investment in the regeneration areas of Wembley and Park Royal are maximised to the benefit of creative sector businesses, and sites are suitable for creative use.**
- **Establish links between the commercial creative and not for profit creative sectors, to enable clustering of activity with routes for local people into potential employment, and cross fertilisation happens.**
- **Ensure routes into the industry for BME Creative entrepreneurs are clear.**
- **Focus on the potential for a strong digital media/film/broadcasting sub-sector, and other sub-sectors where digitalisation is key.**
- **Identify key growth opportunities for Brent.**
- **Continue to build the network of sub regional providers to ensure a strategic and coordinated approach is taken.**

## 5.8 Wembley

Brent is intensely aware of the immense opportunities that the regeneration of the Wembley area in the wake of the new National Stadium will offer to both Brent residents and to visitors. The Council's and the Mayor of London's ambition for the area is encapsulated in the document: 'Destination Wembley' which identifies Wembley as a regional, national and international destination with the potential to attract many thousands of visitors each year as well as offering hundreds of employment opportunities and increased housing. Brent wants to ensure that the offer in Wembley is enhanced with cultural opportunities to complement the Stadium and Arena. The creation of a cultural quarter with creative industries, high quality public art and animated

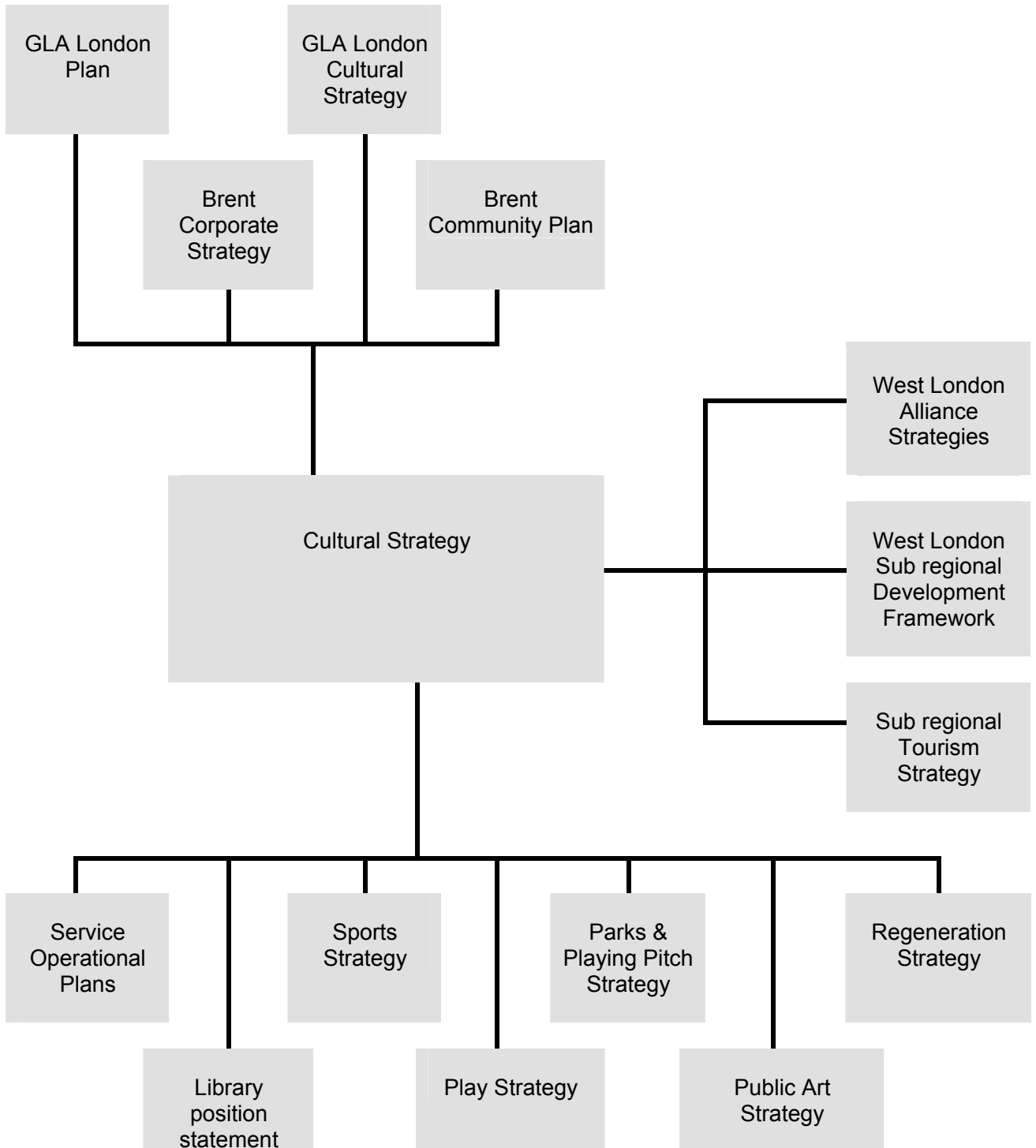
spaces could add to the offer. From 2011, 1% of the Stadium turnover will be used for good causes. Brent is determined to work towards ensuring a significant amount of that funding will be available for the benefit of Brent residents; for example to provide community sports activities and facilities.

**Strategic Priorities for Wembley:**

- **Work with developers and partners such as Sport England, Arts Council England, the London Development Agency and practitioners to ensure the cultural regeneration of Wembley impacts positively on the lives of our residents as well as 'Destination Wembley'.**

**6 A Cultural Vision for Brent**

The London Borough of Brent has achieved a great deal in recent years by improving its existing cultural assets and services, securing significant improvements to its libraries, parks and open spaces. The challenge now is to lead the way in building a new municipal landscape and in nurturing alternative cultural spaces, pathways and forms of expression and to ensure that culture permeates relevant Council strategies. Links are shown in the following table:



### 6.1 Role of the Council

The Council needs to adopt different approaches for the delivery of culture. Ongoing reviews of services will result in changes to delivery methods alongside changing circumstances.

In the case of libraries, sports centres, the museum, the archive, major festivals and parks the Council is a deliverer of service, providing core finance, managing assets and staff, or contractors. These are delivered with the support of partners, sometimes via contractors, and with input from the local community.

The Council role in heritage, the arts, creative industries, and public realm work, is mainly as a developer of infrastructure, partnerships and interventions that assist others to deliver services within the borough. The borough does not hold or manage assets for these sectors, with the exception of the museum and archive. A developmental role is an important part of the Council's libraries, sports and parks services, although these services relate mainly to assets provided or managed by Brent.

These many roles necessitate a range of partners and other delivery agencies, with no area of responsibility seen as belonging exclusively to the Council.

#### **The role of Brent Council:**

- **The Council is a major provider of libraries, parks, the museum, the archive, sports and the core festivals programme for Brent.**
- **The Council will be the main strategic coordinator or developer of infrastructure for the heritage, arts, creative industries and public realm in Brent.**
- **The Council will work with others to deliver cultural services in the borough.**
- **The Council will work where required through sub regional means to improve efficiency and the range of accessible services.**
- **The Council will use and encourage the use of new media in the delivery of Cultural Services.**

This report has been underpinned by three core themes, identified through the consultation process:

- **Civic pride**
- **Safe, healthy, cohesive communities**
- **Employment.**

### 6.2 Civic Pride

Brent is changing and the new National Stadium at Wembley is symbolic of regeneration across the borough. The new Brent landscape – including a revitalised Park Royal, the new Willesden Sports Centre, the new Museum and the Patidar Centre, are all demonstrations of the reasons why Brent can take pride in its locality.

The Council is building upon these achievements with ambitious but realistic plans for a new Civic Centre at Wembley. When complete the Centre will not only serve to improve the Council's level of service, but will provide a practical demonstration of what is possible in the Borough. It will underline the unique qualities that Brent has to offer.

The Wembley development will take many years to be fully realised and local expectations as to what it can deliver will depend upon careful consultation and communication. The Council is committed to taking forward the principle of excellence that the National Stadium represents and maximising a sense of local ownership amongst residents and businesses alike. All new developments in the Borough will have the potential to add to a sense of civic pride and the Council will ensure that at all times the opportunities for local people are maintained and emphasised. Renewal and change will bring both rewards and challenges to the Borough's many communities and the task for Brent is to act strategically and build a coherent approach to cultural development that leaves room for the opportunities stimulated by the creativity of local people.

To enable this sense of civic and cultural inclusion Brent Council and partner agencies will adopt the following measures:

#### **6.2.1 Engaging our community**

Wherever there is change and development in the Borough, Brent will aim to create a sense of local ownership. This should be reflected in the planning and design of places where people work live, learn and play. The quality of public, municipal and cultural spaces, the imagination and vitality of new businesses and the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of development are all vital signs of healthy, stable, vibrant and welcoming communities, and Brent will promote these as a priority.

#### **6.2.2 Marketing and Communications**

As a major supplier of services and resources Brent Council is able to advocate a unified vision of the cultural opportunities in the Borough and work with other public, private and voluntary sector agencies to promote these to a wide audience. By sharing information and resources at a strategic level and making these accessible in a variety of formats to the Borough's diverse communities, the Council will promote its many cultural opportunities and institutions.

The Council will engage with local users to inform, consult and debate on its cultural development. Increasing access to different forms of digital communication offer opportunities to widen dissemination and extend opportunities for public involvement in the design of services. When relevant marketing programmes and communication systems will be sub regional, to spread information and the available offer.

#### **6.2.3 Diverse Communities**

Brent's diversity is one of its major assets. Cultures from around the world are represented in the Borough and these are expressed through faith, art-form and ethnicity. Each cultural community is unique, and each brings to Brent an individual perspective on culture, creativity and self-expression. Throughout the Borough there are groups and organisations of all kinds building cultural traditions, making connections between communities, and contributing to a new sense of place and local identity.

Brent will continue to encourage collaborations, developing better forms of communication, and supporting new cultural initiatives that are shared across different diverse communities to engender a growing sense of civic pride and self-esteem.

#### **6.2.4 Beyond Brent**

Brent is playing an ever more visible role in the cultural life of London. With the opening of the National Stadium, the spotlight will be on the Borough as never before. This alongside other opportunities such as 2012 provides a chance to work in wider collaborations outside of the borough, to ensure that Brent people gain access to London wide and national programmes and platforms.

The variety of diverse needs in Brent outweighs the resources available to meet its every need. Through working with others in the sub region and region we aim to provide excellence in what we deliver in eth borough and links to other excellent activities elsewhere. We will liaise with local borough partners in the sub region to ensure that we avoid unnecessary duplication or repetition of specialist services. Where possible we will share information on activities across borough boundaries.

#### **6.2.5 Tourism**

The detailed approach to tourism is not part of this report as at this point options are still being considered. For special consideration in Brent is the implications and management of visitor numbers to specific sites and events, in particular the Wembley development area, and possible interactions to ensure that people are retained in the area to maximise the economic impacts.

#### **Strategic Priorities for Civic Pride:**

- **Maximise on new developments, including Wembley and 2012, to ensure that locally recognised cultural products and opportunities are included at an early stage.**
- **Raise the profile of Brent through effective marketing of the Borough's new image locally, regionally and nationally**
- **Improve communication on cultural opportunities in the Borough to ensure local people and visitors to the Borough know what is happening and how they can get involved.**
- **Work with the Borough's diverse communities to ensure that Brent's rich cultural landscape is seen as a source of celebration and esteem.**
- **Build opportunities to work regionally/sub regionally through initiatives that enable individuals and local cultural organisations to participate in London's wider cultural life, and provide access to services elsewhere.**
- **Improve quality and efficiency through a process of engagement.**

#### **6.3 Safe, Healthy, Cohesive Communities**

Cultural activity is an essential ingredient of a thriving and confident Borough. Engagement in creative activities and the opportunity to enjoy a range of cultural opportunities are sources of social enrichment. Widespread access to cultural benefits, a broad sense of cultural entitlement and a popular commitment to cultural activity, are all indicators of safe, healthy and cohesive communities.



A major strength of cultural participation is its ability to provide new and innovative mechanisms to include the excluded, create new pathways to learning, engage with disenfranchised groups and provide the basis for positive local action.

### 6.3.1 Children and Young People

The young people of Brent are its future and should be given access to cultural experiences at the earliest possible opportunity. Whether it's in a school, a youth club, a community centre, in a park, in a sports centre, theatre or at home, young people are entitled to high quality cultural opportunities that are relevant and accessible.

The Government published report 'Every Child Matters' outlines the government aims for children.

- **being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- **staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
- **enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- **making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- **economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

In Brent a cultural dimension will add to the achievement of these in formal and informal settings.

A commitment to the cultural excellence of young people is required to motivate strong partnerships of education providers, training bodies, facilities and network managers and creative employers. Brent has recently become part of Arts Council England's Creative Partnerships programme that promotes creative excellence in schools. This scheme will provide new opportunities for the Borough's young people to engage both locally and across London.

In recent consultation undertaken by the Council it is clear that young people see cultural activity in its broadest sense as being important to them and that they value cultural activity. Cultural providers will work with education providers and others that support children and young people to integrate coordinated high quality cultural activities to the lives of young people.

### 6.3.2 Accessible places and spaces

The regeneration of the Borough is an opportunity to increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of cultural places and spaces. It is likely that only a proportion of these will be owned or maintained by the Council. There are a number of priorities for consideration including the management models, shared spaces, DDA, transport links, the relationship to residential areas, and the appropriateness of design and function.

On a regional basis there is strong policy support for cultural development to be embedded within regeneration. The Mayor's Cultural Strategy, the London Plan and the London Development Agency's Economic Strategy all place value on the need to increase access to culture for recreation, leisure, learning, skills, employment and wealth creation. Central to these policies is recognition of the need to locate cultural resources in the right places and in clusters, with appropriate support to ensure access and sustainability.

Models of management of new sites which have significant Council investment in cash or time, should include mechanisms which actively reach out across communities; whilst they may serve a specific cultural purpose, such as music or pitch games, they should not intentionally or unintentionally exclude geographic, social or ethnic groups. This will not exclude activities which at times undertake targeted programmes to encourage underrepresented groups.

The Disability Discrimination Act is placing an increasingly high standard for physical access and access for those with mental health problems within the built environment. All new buildings must be DDA compliant, and in areas of regeneration and construction the Council will ensure that statutory requirements are met. In addition environmental considerations and the functionality and quality of design will be considered and valued. New cultural buildings and facilities should be fully accessible – socially as well as physically – in order for the many communities of the borough to feel that they have an entitlement to engage and participate.

The community use of the Brent's green spaces is a key cultural asset, and the borough's parks and open spaces are of high civic value. Their significance in an era where the quality of the public realm is under considerable scrutiny and the need to ensure the sustainability of local ecologies and maintain biodiversity is paramount, whilst ensuring that this does not restrict or inhibit use. Where possible the borough will improve the quality and range of provision at key sites, including looking at a range of compatible uses at these sites, such as specific sports developments at suitable locations.

In particular Brent requires:

**Strategic Priorities for Accessible places and spaces:**

- **Additional sports pitches in East and South Brent**
- **Improve or provide indoor sports facilities across the borough**
- **Additional workplace, exhibition and rehearsal spaces for the creative sector, with Wembley seen as the prime opportunity site**
- **An improved Archive facility**
- **Improvements and change of locations of key Library sites.**
- **Suitable spaces to hold events and festivals as attendees increase**
- **Increase and improvement to Play spaces, with a focus on the north**

New sites for public use should be located in or near centres of commercial activity, with good public transport links both across and into the borough. All sites for any cultural activity should be designed and identified to generate additional activity and community presence in places we want to animate, whilst ensuring that less positive disruption to others is limited.

### **6.3.3 Networks**

Networks that build on the Borough's cultural assets will be an essential part of Brent's development. They enable individuals to become part of a wider community and where there are opportunities for development and growth. The Council will work with partners and stakeholders to ensure effective local, sector specific and community networks are set up that encourage cultural participation, engagement and the prevention of social isolation.

Networks can be web-based, and new technology will be exploited where relevant. Networks will be developed in line with local need, and where added value will be gained they may be of a sub regional, regional or wider basis.

#### **6.3.4 Public realm**

The range of local development is extensive with a number of areas and sites undergoing major change. These offer opportunities for public involvement alongside professional practitioners in the creation of distinct landscapes.

High quality architecture, street design, open spaces and the inclusion of public art will be an indicator of strong local involvement in the process of physical change. This not only demonstrates the uniqueness of the borough but will reflect those communities that will use the space; building a sense of pride and ownership.

Cultural provision which takes place in outdoor spaces or impacts on the public realm will be required to add to the diverse and high quality landscape of the borough. Therefore public cultural sites when undergoing change, refurbishment or complete new build should be reflective of the aims we aspire to. Architecture, design, landscaping and open spaces should be challenging, and fit for purpose.

The environmental impact on the public realm of cultural venues, uses and activities should be considered. In the case of some cultural services such as parks this will mean actively promoting environmental management and bio diversity. All Council led services will adhere to ISO14001, partners and sub contractors will either be obliged or encouraged to adopt similar accreditation systems.

#### **6.3.5 Quality and community involvement**

The Council recognises the value of ensuring that local communities have access to cultural practitioners with the very highest calibre. Central to their skills will be the ability to bring diverse viewpoints together – from different communities, cultures and backgrounds – and enable vibrant and innovative cultural activities. Quality of services needs to be secured and sustained at all levels, requiring that the Council sustains a commitment to improving the quality of professional cultural providers and support that is available.

Partnerships are crucial to the quest for quality. At the core of the Council's cultural services are strong and sustained partnerships with the communities of the Borough. By using improved networks, a sustainable relationship between the Council, users of its cultural services and the professional practitioners employed by them will drive up standards and ensure quality at all levels.

#### **Strategic Priorities for Safe, Healthy, Cohesive Communities:**

- **Develop networks between those who provide cultural services, ensuing consistently high quality, equity and coordinated provision.**
- **Ensure children and young people are central to the development of a vibrant cultural landscape in Brent.**
- **Promote the health benefits of an active lifestyle.**
- **Enable cultural access at all levels – both socially and physically – to promote cultural entitlement that is appropriate, including 'hard to reach' communities.**
- **Ensure new Cultural venues are managed in an inclusive manner, and are in suitable and accessible locations**

- **Involve local people in the design and development of cultural programmes and projects.**
- **Ensure Cultural Services contribute to raising educational standards**

#### **6.4 Employment - Building a Cultural Economy**

A strong, active and inclusive cultural sector in Brent will in turn help to build a successful cultural economy.

The cultural industries are a major employer across London. West London is home to a significant proportion of the creative industry sector, and major attractions such as the National stadium and the area offer the opportunity for local employment at these sites, and in related support industries.

These priorities complement the strategic priorities of the Brent Regeneration action Plan 2004-06

The Councils intervention in new cultural employment opportunities, through the growth of the sector, will focus on opportunities for individuals from identified deprived communities. Including refugees – many are cultural practitioners in their country of origin, and could continue to have an active cultural role whilst gaining other basic skills.

Developing links between community activity and business development will be essential to success in Brent. West London has a number of creative specialist training and support organisations, which work with diverse populations and make links to cultural and creative business creation. These have not previously seen a coordinated approach across the sub region.

Greater coordination of programmes, an overview on gaps in provision and a coordinated approach to progression routes will increase the level of local involvement and the scale of the sector.

More specific targeted advice and support is needed by Brent's emergent cultural industries, many of which could be operating on a far more commercial footing. In addition, as shown from Boston USA to Helsinki Finland, a strong cultural industries sector brings new highly-educated and high income residents to an area – attracted by the employment opportunities and the 'ambiance' introduced by concentrations of active people.

A successful borough and specifically the new Wembley development will depend on a mix of stakeholders and activities, each working to create something economically sustainable. As evidenced elsewhere, cultural industries activity can advance the distinctiveness and interest in landmark projects by keeping an area animated for longer hours than other businesses, creating a unique sense of place and building connections with local communities through cultural activity.

It is the balance and connections between grassroots cultural development activity and commercial cultural activity that provides the greatest opportunity for regeneration through culture.

A number of neighbourhoods in Brent are already operating as the seed-bed for new creative ideas. Their mix of ad hoc properties, good transport links, and diverse populations are providing some of the workspace infrastructure and distinctive cultural identities required for a successful

cultural industries sector However, currently these ideas are often expressed as not-for-profit cultural activities. Therefore, the cultural industries potential of these neighbourhoods is under-valued. For example, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn benefit from very diverse and culturally active populations and a mix of relatively affordable small workspaces (such as above shops, in railway arches etc.) and Park Royal provides larger, flexible and accessible space ideal for distribution and some production activities (such as props storage for film and television). However, the lack of specialist business support, weak networks and under-developed commercial skills are hampering cultural industries growth in these areas of high potential. An opportunity exists to develop a series of distinctive though connected concentrations of cultural industries activity in Brent.

**Strategic Priorities for Employment - Building a Cultural Economy**

- **Maximise the employment generating impact of cultural activity by finding ways to intervene to assist practitioners to develop the skills required to succeed in economically.**
- **Build capacity for sector growth, focusing on improving access to appropriate workspace and improving networks.**
- **Identify cultural employment opportunities for those from deprived communities and work with partners to ensure access to suitable opportunities.**
- **Capitalise on the distinctive potential of specific localities to operate as concentrations for cultural industries activity – with a focus on Wembley, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn**
- **Build a strategic sub regional approach to cultural and creative industries, ensuring an overview and coordination of activities and funding bids.**
- **Encourage the digital media/film/broadcasting as key sub sectors for the borough.**

**Consultation List**

The council undertook extensive consultation on the Cultural Strategy with the public local cultural sector, stakeholders and via various disability, faith and ethnic groups. None of these organisations highlighted any concerns regarding negative impact.

The strategy has also been through a series of internal debates and discussions.

Methods ranged from discussion groups to presentations and workshops, via specially set up sessions and to existing forums.

The consultation programme also included:

- A stakeholder focus group and public debates programme. - resulting in the report – Brent: Cultural Capital?
- A public survey of current levels of use of culture by Borough residents. 1000 responses.
- A live consultation and cultural aspiration programme with young people. – resulting in the report Culture Shot
- A Schools questionnaire.

**Presentations/discussions:**

- Brent Area Consultative Forums
- Brent Council BME Forum
- Head teachers, Schools Arts and Sports Coordinators via short letters and surveys.
- Brent Association for Disabled People
- Brent Arts Forum including Brent Artists Register and Brent Arts Council
- Thinking Party – Cultural think tank
- Tricycle Theatre
- Mahogany Carnival Costumes
- Arts Council England
- Sub regional partners (Western Wedge): Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Hillingdon, Harrow, Hounslow (CiP) Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing,
- Barnet, Haringey (Sub regional group Three Greens)
- Thames Gateway Cultural Group – Lead officer
- West London Alliance – via officers
- Brent Council service units, including Parks, Sports, Diversity Team, Heritage Services, Libraries, Children's Play, Youth Service, Brent Adult & Community Education Service, Regeneration, Planning and Education partners
- Brent Council Corporate Management Team
- Community and Faith Leaders/Organisations including Brent Hindu Council
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Heritage
- Creative Industry Stakeholders. – Sub regionally

The information gathered feeds into the strategy document, and has been consistent throughout the development process. The two main consultation reports plus survey results are available on-line via the Brent Council website: [www.brent.gov.uk/creativedevelopment](http://www.brent.gov.uk/creativedevelopment).

**Related documents**

**Brent/West London documents:**

A Regeneration Strategy for Brent 2001-2021  
A Strategy for Brent Parks 2004-2009  
A strategy for Sport and Physical Activity in Brent 2004-2005  
Below the Surface – Cultural industries development report 2004  
Brent Corporate Strategy 2002-2006  
BRENT: Cultural Capital? Debates programme 2004  
Brent Cultural Survey 2005  
Brent Regeneration Action Plan 2004-2006  
Brent Non-User Research Report (Libraries, Sports, Parks) 2005  
Community Plan 2003-2008  
Creative Industries Framework for West London (draft)  
Cultural Services assessment 2004 – Audit Commission  
Culture shot – the Cultural aspiration of Brent youth – 2004  
Destination Wembley 2003  
Equality Impact assessment Local Cultural Strategy 2005  
Library Position Statement 2004  
Our Vision for a new Wembley 2002  
Park Royal Strategy 10 year Strategy 2002 onwards  
Playing Pitch Strategy 2003-2008  
Play Strategy 2005  
The Western Wedge: Assets, Challenges and the way Ahead 2005  
Unitary Development Plan Replacement 2000-2010  
Wembley Master plan 2004  
Wembley Public Art Strategy  
West London 2012 Creative Offer 2005  
Wembley – Delivering the Vision 2005  
What Young People Want Best Value Review 2003

**Other sources:**

BMER Young People Big Issues 2003 GLA  
CI Hub investment plan 2005  
Creative Industries and Cities a brief review 2005  
Creative London 2004 LDA  
Creative Partnerships, National delivery Plan 2004-2006  
Every Child Matters 2003  
Framework for the Future 2003 DCMS  
London Cultural Capital 2004 GLA  
The London Plan 2004 GLA  
World City, World Knowledge 2004 LDA