

Culture and Tourism

Westminster is known as a global hub for creative industries and tourism, with 25 million tourists visiting the city every year. The borough has over 130 major cultural establishments and hosts a range of cultural activities and programmes in collaboration with artists and galleries locally and across the world. The borough is home to the several world-class shopping hubs, such as Oxford and Regent Street, the vibrant West End, which is a cultural hub for performing arts, as well as being home to several globally renowned museums, galleries and numerous heritage assets of global significance, such as the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. Infrastructure delivery encompassing the city plan period must mitigate the strain on infrastructure caused by tourism, in order to support the continued economic growth of the city as outlined in Westminster's City Plan.

Local cultural infrastructure is facing acute threats from Arts Council cuts to Central London, recent inflationary pressures, skills shortages and shifts in commuter working patterns. The Council delivers a range of cultural programmes in collaboration with the voluntary sector. This includes broadening access and opportunities for cultural and social participation, delivering events that enhance the local visitor offer and enabling career pathways into creative industries.

Planned Projects

Cultural and Social Infrastructure

Cultural activity and infrastructure are funded through MyWestminster reserves up until March 2026, covering the period of the current WCC Cultural Strategy 2021-25. Extending the Council's Culture Fund programme to deliver cultural activity and infrastructure for 2026 – 2031 would require ongoing investment estimated at £5m. Projected costs are based on the current Culture Fund budget plan including some staff resources.

The designation of a North Paddington as a Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) highlights the vision for the area as a place where creative production grows, is sustainable, and where all people are empowered to develop their talent and reach their potential. The CEZ will support existing arts and cultural institutions, as well as connecting and opening opportunities for local people. It will also bolster the council's North Paddington programme which seeks to address the long-standing social-economic and health challenges in the northwest of the borough.

Cultural & Social Infrastructure	
Category	**Details**
Lead	The Council in collaboration with voluntary and arts sector partners and private providers.
Current Provision	In 2022 a Culture Fund was established to take forward WCC Cultural Strategy 2021-25 recommendations to widen participation to culture in the borough and support local cultural infrastructure through the following initiatives: **Culture and Community Grants:** support local cultural and community organisations to develop free cultural events in partnership with local residents, including those from deprived wards or with protected characteristics, both at venues and in community settings

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	Inside Out Festival Grants: encourage cultural partners to programme free events in the streets and open spaces of Westminster as part of festival campaign throughout August to diversify audiences and reduce social, psychological and economic barriers in accessing culture. **Strategic Commissions**: Ambitious partnerships of scale and impact including Donmar theatre tour to over 2,000 Stage 3 schoolchildren in Westminster, creative health community projects by One Westminster, ENO opera performances and workshops delivered in care homes and sheltered accommodation, Dance Westminster competition delivered by Step Studios, gallery/museum lates and public realm activations (in partnership with BIDs) **Local Cultural Education Partnership**: Community-led initiative to improve connections between schools and arts organisations through a new online directory, steering group activities and twilight events for teachers at cultural venues. **City Lions**: Council programme, delivered in partnership with VCS provider, Dream Arts, providing workplace opportunities, mentoring, skills workshops, events, and talks to help schoolchildren aged 13 to 16 towards creative careers. **Investment in VCS properties**: A variety of grant programmes, including Neighbourhood CIL, are guided by a new policy to ensure that when the council invests in improvements to a property used by a VCS provider, that investment is protected for public benefit.
Known Planned Provision	The Culture Strategy identifies recommendations across the following priorities: **Culture for All**: Increase access to culture for all, with a specific focus on reaching residents that encounter physical, social, and economic barriers. **Resilient Communities**: Support health and wellbeing programmes, deepening relationships between the council's Families, Public Health, Adult Social Care, and Libraries services, cultural partners, and health providers. **Open for Business**: Nurture the creative economy to attract new business and investment by increasing opportunities to engage in creative enterprise and the local cultural offer. **Creative Placemaking**: Ensure cultural activations, public art, creative workspaces, and diverse resident programmes are integral to planning, public realm and regeneration activities.
Future Needs	Delivering on City Plan objectives to both diversify and protect Westminster's cultural infrastructure, enhance the visitor economy and support cultural activity in high streets, community hubs and commercial areas that require ongoing investment in cultural infrastructure.
Funding	Cultural activity and infrastructure are funded through MyWestminster reserves up until March 2026, covering the entire period of the current Cultural Strategy. Extending the Council's Culture Fund Programme to deliver cultural activity and infrastructure for 2026 – 2031 would require ongoing investment estimated at £5m. Costs have been projected based on the current Culture Fund budget plan including staffing costs.

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Schedule									
Prioritisation	**Programme / Strategic project**	**Location/s**	**Description**	**Provider**	**Estimated WCC cost**	**Phasing (Start)**	**Phasing (End)**	**Timescale**	**Total Funding gap**
Important	Culture Fund	Borough-wide	WCC Culture Fund to delivers important social infrastructure in the unique global creative and cultural hub that characterises Westminster. The culture grants and strategic commissions funds will invest in local cultural infrastructure to deliver activities that widen access for more residents to cultural and social wellbeing, deliver outdoor arts events that support the local visitor economy, and enable career pathways into local creative industries for marginalised young people. This council programme will deliver WCC Cultural Strategy policy objectives of (a) cultural access for all, (b) resilient communities, (c) creative placemaking and (d) creative economy. These are reinforced by the City Plan cultural placeshaping and WCC Economic Development Plan objectives.	WCC	£5,000,000	2026	2031	Medium	£5,000,000
Important	North Paddington Capital Programme	Paddington	Grant programme to fund capital projects to improve non-council owned buildings and facilities in North Paddington	WCC	£4,500,000	2024	2026	Medium	£0