

# Great Place Programme Evaluation (England) Final Report

Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund

March 2022



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**BOP**  
Consulting

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>2. Evaluation Framework</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.1 Logic model .....	13
2.2 Evaluation methodology .....	15
<b>3. Process/ Strategy Outcomes</b> .....	<b>18</b>
3.1 Cross portfolio, cross sector partnership and working is significantly improved and extended .....	18
3.2 Communities have greater input and influence in decision-making in the cultural sector .....	23
3.3 Culture is embedded in wider local plans and strategies.....	24
3.4 Culture becomes a wider civic responsibility .....	25
3.5 Community Assets are run, owned, and managed by the community. ....	26
3.6 People have a greater sense of collective efficacy.....	27
<b>4. Cultural Delivery Outcomes</b> .....	<b>29</b>
4.1 Arts events, activities, sites, and facilities are enhanced.....	29
4.2 Heritage events, activities, sites and facilities are enhanced.....	30
4.3 More people, and a wider range of people, engage with arts and heritage .....	31
4.4 Stronger, better networked, cultural sector.....	33
<b>5. Community and Social Delivery Outcomes</b> .....	<b>35</b>
5.1 People have enjoyable cultural experiences .....	35
5.2 Local pride is increased .....	35
5.3 People feel a greater sense of belonging to a place.....	36
5.4 More intergenerational connections are made and understanding increases.....	36
5.5 Participants' mental health improves .....	37
<b>6. Economic Delivery Outcomes</b> .....	<b>38</b>
6.1 Great Places are becoming established as destinations of choice ..	38
<b>7. The COVID-19 Pandemic</b> .....	<b>39</b>
7.1 Projects adapted by delivering new programming .....	40
7.2 Projects adapted by changing the delivery of programming .....	40
7.3 Best practice and key learnings .....	41
<b>8. Conclusions and recommendations</b> .....	<b>43</b>
8.1 A changed strategic context.....	43
8.2 Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic, and cultural outcomes for local partners?.....	45
8.3 How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?.....	46
8.4 How do Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund work together to support these new approaches in the future? ....	48
8.5 Recommendations .....	49
<b>9. Appendix 1: Case Studies</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>10. Appendix 2: Counterfactual Case Studies</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>11. Appendix 3: Focus Group Summaries</b> .....	<b>104</b>
<b>12. Appendix 4: Audience Data</b> .....	<b>121</b>
<b>13. Appendix 5: Project Manager Data</b> .....	<b>125</b>
<b>14. Appendix 6: Relevant delivery outcomes</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<b>15. Appendix 7: Great Place Programme Evaluation Toolkit</b> .....	<b>131</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Key strategic successes across the Great Place programme ..	4
Figure 2 Great Place (England) Awards .....	12
Figure 3 Map showing Great Place (England) awards .....	12
Figure 4 Great Place Programme Evaluation Outcomes.....	14
Figure 5 Great Place Programme Evaluation Tools .....	16
Figure 6 Great Place projects' challenges to creating a shared vision, Year 3, 2021 .....	18
Figure 7 Nature of the new partnerships reported by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021.....	19
Figure 8 Strategic partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (chart).....	20
Figure 9 Strategic partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (table).....	20
Figure 10 Funded partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 .....	21
Figure 11 Funded partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (table).....	21
Figure 12 Methods of community engagement used by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021.....	24
Figure 13 Outcomes of community engagement for Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021.....	24
Figure 14 Approaches to ensuring high quality activities were delivered by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021 .....	29
Figure 15 Approaches to ensuring that Great Place events reached new or larger audiences, Year 3, 2021 .....	30
Figure 16 Approaches to enhancing heritage, both physical infrastructure and interpretation, across Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021 .....	30
Figure 17 Audience deprivation levels across all Great Place projects (chart).....	31
Figure 18 Audience deprivation levels across all Great Place projects (table).....	31
Figure 19 Types of new partnerships created within the cultural sector across the Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021 .....	34
Figure 20 Composition of audience and participants across the Great Place projects, locals vs visitors, 2021 .....	38
Figure 21 To what extent, if at all, do you think the following have either weakened or strengthened as a result of the onset of the pandemic in March 2020? (5 = significantly strengthened, -5 = significantly weakened).....	39
Figure 22 The nature of new activities projects delivered or planned to deliver.....	40
Figure 23 Impact of the pandemic on planned activities .....	41
Figure 24 Changes made to activities by projects .....	41
Figure 25 Case Study Focus Areas .....	53
Figure 26 Type of project, delivery partners, and project details .....	66
Figure 27 Great Place key funded activities by strand.....	76
Figure 28 Sunderland's Great Place projects .....	88
Figure 29 By working together we can bring about change in our local neighbourhood .....	121
Figure 30 'I had a good time;!' .....	122
Figure 31 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Our Great Place Project shared a vision? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, Year 3, 2021) .....	125

Figure 32 Have any of the following types of new partnerships been created between organisations within the cultural sector since May 2019? (Year 3, 2021).....	125
Figure 33 Thinking about any new partnerships within the cultural sector, to what extent did the Great Place programme contribute to the development of this/these partnership(s) within the sector(s)? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021).....	125
Figure 34 Have any of the following types of new partnerships been created between organisations in the cultural sector and other non-cultural sectors since May 2019? (Year 3, 2021) .....	126
Figure 35 If a new partnership has been created, which sector(s) is the non-cultural organisation from? (Year 3, 2021) .....	126
Figure 36 Thinking about any new partnerships within the cultural sector, to what extent did the Great Place programme contribute to the development of this/these partnership(s) between the sector and outside the sector(s)? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021).....	126
Figure 37 How have you engaged local communities in your decision making? (Year 3, 2021) .....	126
Figure 38 To what extent have new ideas been created as a result of engagement with the community? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021).....	127
Figure 39 To what extent have these ideas been implemented? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021).....	127
Figure 40 Number of relevant local policies that include culture (Year 3, 2021).....	127
Figure 41 Have cultural organisations been involved in joint commissioning in your area? (Year 3, 2021) .....	127

Figure 42 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Joint commissioning which includes the cultural sector has increased. (Scale 0 – 10 where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 10 is “strongly agree”, Year 3, 2021) .....	128
Figure 43 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: There is a strong local network between cultural, heritage, and creative industry organisations in my area / key areas (Scale 0 – 10 where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, Year 3, 2021).....	128
Figure 44 Optional outcomes selected by Great Place projects at the start of the programme.....	129
Figure 45 Great Place Evaluation Framework Level 1: Schematic.....	133
Figure 46 Summary list of methods / tools : Process / strategy .....	134
Figure 47 Summary list of methods / tools: Delivery, Cultural .....	135
Figure 48 Summary list of methods / tools: Delivery, Community / Social & Economic .....	135
Figure 49 Methods and Tools by Outcome .....	139

Cover image credit : Graeme Oxby

## Executive Summary

### Programme objectives and delivery

Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Heritage Fund) launched the Great Place scheme in August 2016. The scheme responded to recommendations made in the government's Culture White Paper (March 2016) and aimed to, "pilot new approaches that enable cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to place heritage at the heart of communities."<sup>1</sup>

Great Place aimed to ensure that local investment in arts and culture could make the greatest impact on the economy, jobs, education, community cohesion and health and wellbeing of those areas. It piloted new approaches to local investment, and sought to nurture long-term impact in places by encouraging cross-sector partnerships and raising the visibility of arts and culture for both policy makers and local citizens.

Of the 31 full applications received, 16 projects were awarded across a diverse range of areas, including rural, urban and seaside places. The vast majority of these places are outside of major metropolitan areas<sup>2</sup> and all of them had to demonstrate high levels of socio-economic deprivation and low levels of cultural activity as part of their application process.

By directing support into areas that may have received less direct public investment in culture and have a less well established cultural infrastructure, Great Place enabled the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund to explore and test the placemaking potential of arts and heritage, in contexts marked by inequality and disadvantage.

Since the start of Great Place, placemaking, and the role of arts and heritage, has increased in strategic importance for both funders. It underpins the Arts Council's 2020-30 strategy *Let's Create* whilst the Heritage Fund prioritise community heritage in their 2019-24 strategic funding framework. With this in mind, the findings of this evaluation, which explore the process, strategy, and delivery outcomes achieved by the programme, can help to understand the role that both funders can play in improving access to high quality arts and heritage nationally in areas that have previously been underserved.

Projects were initially scheduled to complete in March 2020. A number of projects requested extensions through to December 2020 and, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, further extensions were granted on a case-by-case basis, ranging from June 2020 to September 2021. In light of these varied extensions, where we refer to "Year 3", this means all activity from May 2019 until projects completed.

### Evaluation objectives

Three core questions were set in the Terms of Reference that have guided this evaluation:

1. How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?
2. Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for local partners?
3. How do the Heritage Fund and Arts Council England work together to support these new approaches in the future?

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk>

<sup>2</sup> Three projects can be considered to be inside major metropolitan areas; the two in London projects and Greater Manchester, whilst Coventry, Sunderland and Reading can be considered adjacent to major areas

In order to answer these questions, we first needed to understand the logic of the interventions in terms of what the projects were hoping to achieve and how this could be realised through the activities and processes that they were engaged with. After a round of consultation with the projects, their local evaluators, and the national co-funders of

the programme, a logic model was developed which focused on three main impact areas: process and strategy; cultural delivery; and community and social delivery. More information about these impact areas and the outcomes associated with each can be found in section 2 of the main report.

**Figure 1 Key strategic successes across the Great Place programme**

<b>Culture as a key part of local strategies</b>	<b>Creating lasting networks and institutions</b>	<b>Supporting COVID-19 recovery</b>
Collectively, Great Place projects have contributed towards embedding culture in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— 10 cultural strategies</li> <li>— 6 health and wellbeing strategies that specifically mention culture</li> <li>— 2 mental health strategies</li> <li>— 4 children and young people strategies</li> </ul>	A number of projects have created legacy networks to continue the work of Great Place, either within the same organisation, or through a new partnership	Coordinating COVID-19 response locally and providing joined up support within their community (e.g. distributing personal protective equipment, distributing creative care kits)
Cultural Compacts have been established in three areas (Sunderland, Coventry, and Morecambe Bay as part of Lakes and Dales) with at least one further (Herefordshire) in discussion	Working with Destination Management Organisations	Delivering funds and training for SMEs
Applications for City of Culture were made by three projects, with one (County Durham) reaching the shortlist	Applications for NPO status are being explored by at least one project as part of their legacy planning	Developing rapid response training programmes to support artists and freelancers
Involvement in Towns Fund Schemes, with Torbay, Hereford and Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft all supporting bids and delivery	-	Involvement in COVID-19 recovery task forces at a local authority level
Involvement in the consultation stage for multiple Local Industrial Strategies across Great Place geographies	-	-

Source: BOP Consulting (2022)

## Responding to the core research questions

### How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?

#### What does the evidence from Great Place suggest?

The experience of the Great Place projects has shown that for culture to be fully embedded in local policy processes, it needs to be considered from the start of the process. In those situations where projects have been secondary considerations, realising impact has taken longer and been more difficult. Conversely, where projects have been able to build relationships and networks across local government and businesses, putting culture at the heart of strategies has been more easily achieved. Evidence of this can be seen in the number of strategies in Great Places that now include culture, and in the involvement of projects in supporting the creation of these strategies.

There have at times been challenges for projects to find a “seat at the table”, with time, resource, workload and understanding of culture all playing contributing factors for different projects. However, once Great Place projects have had that seat, they have been able to communicate the benefit of culture, demonstrate the value the culture can bring locally, and re-position culture within the local narrative.

The counterfactual case studies suggest that it was harder to re-position culture locally, from a policy perspective, without the resources and support that were provided through the Great Place programme. In particular, there was a suggestion that gaining traction with senior stakeholders and decision makers to change local policy around culture is more difficult without clear resources to support this in place.

Lastly, the systemic achievements of the Great Place project are also notable considering the novel nature of the institutions that characterised

most of the Great Place projects. Projects were delivered by newly created organisations, newly formed delivery networks created specifically for Great Place, established organisations taking new approaches, and new outgrowths of legacy programmes.

With hindsight, this pattern suggests that the ‘newness’ of the institutional arrangements of most of the projects delivering the Great Place programme was probably one of the contributory factors to its success. That is, new approaches were likely to be easier to pilot because there were less well-established habits of working and greater flexibility in processes and structures in these organisations. Of course, the ‘newness’ could equally have been a weakness. But the focus on capacity-building in the programme, and giving more time for projects to develop the necessary connections and networks locally, seems to have overcome the weaknesses traditionally associated with new organisational entities.

#### How does this map onto the new strategic context?

With its increased focus on how to increase opportunities for culture and heritage, including funding, in areas with historically low levels of take-up, the setting of priorities around young people and community engagement, and a move to identify and support priority areas across England to increase communities’ sense of place, there are clear synergies between the Levelling Up agenda and the ambitions and achievements of the Great Place programme.

Further, this evaluation shows that it is possible for culture to be an integral part of local decision-making, planning, and delivery. By embracing novel approaches, Great Places have been able to address need in their local areas, respond to local context and reposition culture within the wider place agenda. But, the evaluation shows that it takes time, strong relationships, and an understanding of the wider benefits of culture (and how to communicate this) for it to be fully embedded.

It is therefore timely that many of the projects are now considering their legacy impact. As part of the longitudinal study that will follow on from this report (the equivalent of year 4) we will look to explore the extent to which culture continues to be positioned centrally in local decision-making, planning, and delivery when the coordination and resources provided by Great Place are no longer available.

This last stage of the evaluation will be important as the central idea behind the programme is that if culture can be better embedded in wider local policymaking and investment decisions, it will benefit from a virtuous circle.

### **Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic, and cultural outcomes for local partners?**

Returning to the overall outcomes of the Great Place programme, fundamentally, the new approaches to working in areas and delivering culture that Great Place has created have led to improved social, cultural and economic, and outcomes for local partners.

From a social perspective, Great Places have improved outcomes around local pride, intergenerational relations, people's sense of belonging to an area and their experiences. The projects have increased the diversity of audiences engaging with their activity, most notably in the third year, and are reaching more people and giving them higher quality experiences and access to culture. In particular, projects have been especially successful at engaging audiences from low income areas – with a fifth of participants coming from the 10% most deprived areas – and audiences from Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse groups, accounting for a fifth of all audiences in year 3. This has links to the Pride of Place Mission in the Levelling Up White Paper, and demonstrates the opportunities for improving social capital that cultural interventions can realise.

Culturally, local partners have had opportunities to deliver new, engaging work, that might not otherwise have been realised. Projects have used a range of mechanisms to ensure that they are delivering high quality work, including supporting new organisations and training local people, which will have wider benefits for local partners beyond the lifetime of Great Place.

The economic benefits for local partners as a result of the new approaches taken by the Great Place programme have been both direct and indirect.

- Projects have made a direct economic contribution through their ability to pay local businesses and freelancers as part of their supply chain
- Indirectly projects have increased the visitor economy through the events offered under the Great Place banner
- Additionally there has been a further benefit realised in those places where Great Place projects have been able to support and leverage additional funding.

Great Place projects have also contributed to the economies of the places in which they are based by improving the stock of human capital through the provision of training and development activities. This has included increasing the skills of cultural practitioners, providing training to stakeholders outside of the cultural sector, and offering training and development to target audiences across their local communities.

The counterfactual case studies show that, in the absence of funding for these new approaches, progress to improve cultural, social and economic outcomes locally is slower, with any developments needing to be “as well as” activities, rather than a core focus for activity.



## How do Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund work together to support these new approaches in the future?

All of the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) arms-length bodies (ALBs) are already more actively working together at a strategic level. Whilst not the sole contributor, Great Place can be considered to have been one catalyst for this strategic working, both at a national level and across the regional and area teams within England.

When looking to the future of this collaborative approach, within the current context it is clear that – for the near future at least – this will be based around knowledge and skills transfer and collaboration, not funded collaboration. The mechanisms that enabled the scale of investment seen in Great Place required central government buy in and the creation of a statutory instrument through an Act of Parliament. With no clear directive from the current government that they intend to replicate this kind of funding environment in the foreseeable future, large scale strategic funding of the type typified by Great Place will need to be on pause (although there may be other funds which provide opportunities for joined up working between ALBs).

Taking a focus on knowledge and skills transfer and collaboration will allow ALBs to build on the collaboration that has already been created at this strategic level through the operation of the Place Liaison Group (PLG), which has contributed to decision making on the Stronger Towns Fund, and the Levelling Up Fund. It is also valuable to note that these funds are controlled and administered by different government departments (i.e. not DCMS), creating an additional level of advisory capacity for the ALBs.

Beyond collaboration to support central government priorities, there are also opportunities arising from the collaboration created by the Great

Place Scheme for the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund to support their own priority places<sup>3</sup>. This creates an opportunity for potentially aligning strategies in these areas.

The same applies with Historic England, who also have a place-based lens to some of their work, particularly the Heritage Action Zones, which focus on using heritage to help regenerate over 60 high streets and town centres. It seems likely that there will be some / many overlaps between the local areas prioritised by each ALB.

Unlocking these possibilities may require the ALBs to utilise further learning from the Great Place programme. Specifically, the benefits that can be achieved by working with key place-based strategic decision makers in these places, and the need for some sort of convenor to work across these different bodies. The recent appointment of a strategic lead for place and culture in the north by the NP11 group,<sup>4</sup> a role that has been part funded by ALBs, can be seen as one such example of this in practice.

Ultimately, the lessons from both Great Place and current ways of working show that taking a holistic approach to place needs all of the actors in that area to be joined up and working together. This can be the DCMS ALBs acting together, or a collaboration of ALBs from across government departments (as has been seen in the Thriving Communities Fund), or a collaboration across local government and national ALBs (as in the NP11 group example). While the institutional mechanisms are likely to vary from place-to-place, the underlying principle is the same: by working collaboratively and using shared knowledge to inform decision making, stronger strategic decisions can be made for places.

---

<sup>3</sup> Arts Council England has a list of 54 Priority Places, whilst the Heritage Fund has a list of 13 priority areas.

<sup>4</sup> The NP11 group brings together the 11 LEPs across the North of England

## Recommendations

The Great Place programme has achieved a lot across the lifetime of the programme. There is currently no plan to repeat this programme, but there are a number of key learning points and success factors that can help inform future programmes of this nature, regardless of whether these are funded independently or jointly by the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund. These should be understood in terms of the emerging policy landscape across Government related to levelling up.

### Strategic recommendations

#### ***Continue to be a willing and active partner at both ends of the de-centralisation-centralisation devolution agenda***

In England, the Government's levelling up agenda is tied to plans for greater devolution. The nature of this devolution is, however, a double dynamic of de-centralisation and centralisation. While newly devolved political structures have been created (e.g. metropolitan Mayors and Combined Authorities), money and power has largely not been devolved to these new bodies. Instead, most of the funding and investment that has been directed to the levelling up agenda has been controlled by central government.

Most new, additional public money that will be available for culture and the creative industries will come from sources tied to the levelling up agenda. ALBs need to work at central government level to ensure that cultural projects continue to be in scope with any new Funds. Equally, they also need to work at local authority and Combined Authority (CAs) level to ensure that suitable cultural projects and places are identified and supported to bid for these funds.

#### ***Engage early with any new political entities created through devolution, to support them to place culture at the heart of their agendas***

As the Levelling Up White Paper includes provisions for greater levels of devolution across England, there will most likely be another increase in new political bodies and structures at the sub-national level in England over the coming decade. There are clear lessons to be learned from Great Place here (see section 8.3.1 in the main report). A first lesson is that institutional innovation at the political level opens up an opportunity for corresponding innovation in local cultural provision. Second, it is important to support and work with new bodies early on in order to advance culture within their overall strategies. ALBs should focus on the role that culture can play in increasing pride in place, and contributing to the achievement of many of the other levelling up missions

#### ***Continue to have a two-fold strategy towards place***

The Levelling Up White Paper oscillates between focusing on particular places of need and focusing on all local places in the country. For instance, several missions focus on the ambition to narrow the gap between particular places of disadvantage and the best performing areas. In contrast to these place ambitions that focus on making a big difference in specific places, other missions in the White Paper express their place-based priorities universally: local pride and engagement in culture, but also wellbeing, are targeted for improvement in *all* places in England. Occasionally, the missions mix up these differing place-based rationales, as with the target that all areas will have 'a globally competitive city'.

Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund have also evolved their approaches towards place-based working that contain both a focus on specific places with an overarching focus on local places in general. Going forward this two-fold approach to place needs to be

acknowledged and more formalised within the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund so that it is clear which place-based rationale is being deployed for each intervention being considered. There will be a need for ensuring that inclusive cultural provision has relevance and resonance with all communities. This will require processes by which organisations and cultural funders can listen to, and engage with, these communities, in order to identify their priorities, give them voice, and recognise (and ideally act on) their needs. Also, the explicit acknowledgement of the universal goal of improving all places should help both organisations make the case for investing in places that are not deemed priorities in terms of disadvantage (i.e. London and other metropolitan areas that can now be argued on the grounds of pride of place and creating globally competitive cities).

### **Operational recommendations**

The previous strategic recommendations emerge from a reflection of the findings of the Great Place programme set within the new political and strategic context. In addition to this, there are also a number of more practical and specific operational recommendations that can be made about the design of any future culture programme that aims to engage in creating systemic local change that embeds culture more centrally within wider social, political and economic agendas.

#### ***Think and act more ‘Business to Business’ than ‘Business to Customer’ when designing and delivering projects to embed culture locally***

- Great Place was above all a strategic ‘business to business’ programme. That is, although cultural activities were delivered to audiences and participants (‘business to consumer’ activities) through the programme, the most important element of Great Place was the relationships and partnerships that were forged by the projects locally with other actors, both inside and outside the cultural sector. This was

key to its success. However, whilst this is something that is recognised as being important across the sector, it has generally not previously been a priority in sector-funded programmes. Going forwards, aligning with the levelling up ambition is only going to require more involvement by the cultural sector in local conversations about the benefits of culture to this agenda. This needs to be front of mind when designing any new similar programmes.

#### ***Task projects with setting out a longer term perspective and being part of wider place-based visions, but give them the time to do so...***

- For projects to be successful they need time, and to be a key part of, longer term visions. In Great Place, several projects were able to fit into longer term visions for culture that had already been set through bidding for City of Culture status. Projects need additional time to support the development of strong local relationships, as well as building trust in both the communities that projects seek to engage, and with the local businesses that projects seek to build support networks with.

#### ***...and the freedom to change tactics***

- Allowing projects the flexibility to adapt and change as local and national circumstances change ensures better outcomes. Whilst this was particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, individual projects were changing and adapting before March 2020, allowing them to explore and deliver outcomes that have most relevance to their local place.

#### ***Projects need close connections at the community level but also a broader based vision with sufficient scale***

- There is a balance to be struck between a ‘hyper-local’ ground-up approach, that can ensure connectivity with local needs, and the need to create a place-wide shared vision that looks to longer term growth. Projects that were successful at maintaining this balance generally

took an approach whereby smaller, local projects could feed into and/or contribute to wider strategies and programme elements.

***Projects need to cultivate local strategic advocates for culture from outside the cultural sector, if culture is to be successfully embedded in local plans***

- Developing relationships at a strategic level locally, whether with businesses, local government, or key, non-cultural sector organisations, can help to advocate the wider impact that culture has on a place. This in turn can help to centralise culture within local strategies and plans.

***Projects should hold relationships across multiple points within organisations, to support ongoing longer term collaboration***

- As has been stated, networks and relationships across different organisations and partners are key to the success of programmes like Great Place. Linked with this success is a risk that these relationships are held by a single individual who at any time could leave the delivery organisation. Instead, creating opportunities for institutional learning and having clear lines of reporting into organisational leadership can ensure that these relationships are held by the organisation, rather than one person, creating opportunities for ongoing collaboration and consistent delivery.

***Projects need an open-mind and a method for engaging with communities to find the right mix of cultural activities and delivery methods that generates the most inclusive engagement***

- Diversification of delivery methods and cultural activities can increase the diversity of the communities that engage with activities. By responding to local needs and context, projects were able to reach a broader range of people over the lifetime of their projects than may usually be expected for cultural and heritage engagement. This is key for programmes that seek to support fair and equal access to culture

and heritage within a place, particularly as this becomes an increased priority within the levelling up agenda.

***Having some level of cash to distribute locally is beneficial...***

- Projects found value in being able to distribute small grants locally as this allowed for the testing of new approaches and opportunities to work with new target groups.

***...but expectation management is crucial***

- Not everything that is explored can be funded, and not everything that has been funded can continue once funding is over. This needs communicating at the outset to communities and sector representatives to avoid disappointment or a feeling of being 'let down' in a context of limited funding.

# 1. Introduction

Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Heritage Fund) launched the £15 million Great Place scheme in August 2016. The scheme responded to recommendations made in the government’s Culture White Paper (March 2016) and aimed to, “pilot new approaches that enable cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to place heritage at the heart of communities.”<sup>5</sup>

Due to the scale of the investment, setting up the Great Place Scheme required central government buy in and the creation of a statutory instrument. This required collaboration from the outset between the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund to define the programme, and agreement from the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) to agree the terms of the both the programme and the statutory instrument.

Grants of £500,000 to £1.5 million were available to partnerships in England (separate schemes were later launched for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, run by the Heritage Fund.) After an initial Expression of Interest stage, 31 full applications were received with a total request of £38.1m against a budget of £20 million; 26 were recommended as high or medium priority; following review by a Balancing Panel, 16 projects were recommended for award. Of these:

- 9 were led by local authorities (Barnsley, Lakes and Dales, Derbyshire, Gloucester, Great Yarmouth, Waltham Forest, Reading, Tees Valley, Greater Manchester);

- 3 of these were within combined authorities (Tees Valley, Greater Manchester, and Waltham Forest);
- 4 were in rural areas (Derbyshire, County Durham, Herefordshire, Craven);
- 5 coincided with Heritage Action Zones (Coventry, Barnsley, East Kent, Tees Valley, Sunderland).

No projects were led by delivery-focused (rather than strategic) cultural organisations, though a number of such bids were submitted.

Originally, projects were scheduled to complete in March 2020. However, once they began delivery, a number of projects requested and were granted extensions – with varying end dates to December 2020. The purpose of the extensions was two-fold: to acknowledge the longer than expected time it had taken to develop and establish projects, and relatedly, to enable a better quality of delivery in years 2 and 3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on project delivery, with projects needing to cancel, postpone, and reconfigure activity to make it suitable for and responsive to the various lockdowns and restrictions that have been in place since March 2020. Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund agreed to grant extensions on a case by case basis to respond to projects’ needs and ultimately all 16 projects were extended beyond March 2020. The end dates for projects varied significantly, with completion dates ranging from July 2020 to September 2021.

For ease, projects will be referred to throughout the Report by **area** (e.g. Sunderland), rather than project name (e.g. Sunderland Comes of

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk>

Age). It should be noted that projects typically focused on specific sub-areas within the named geography.

**Figure 2 Great Place (England) Awards**

Project	Area	Region	Award
Vital Valley	Derwent Valley, Derbyshire	East Midlands	£1,285,800
Making Waves Together	Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft	East of England	£737,900
Creative Connections	Waltham Forest	London	£1,355,600
Park Royal in the Making*	Old Oak and Park Royal, Ealing (OPDC)	London	£1,489,200
Sunderland Comes of Age	Sunderland	North East	£1,249,900
Greater Tees	Tees Valley	North East	£1,332,500
Northern Heartlands	County Durham	North East	£1,489,200
Stronger Together**	Greater Manchester	North West	£1,489,200*
Reading-on-Thames	Reading	South East	£558,400
Pioneering Places	East Kent	South East	£1,489,200
Gloucester – A Proud Past	Gloucester	South West	£1,489,200
Torbay – A Place to Feel Great	Torbay	South West	£1,191,400
Coventry – Place, Heritage, Diversity	Coventry	West Midlands	£1,489,200

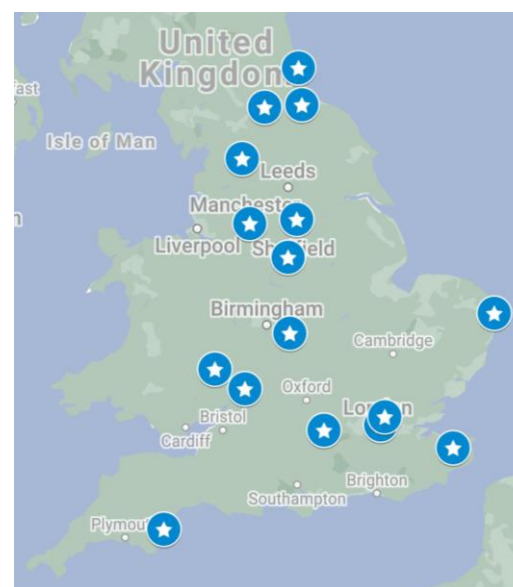
Project	Area	Region	Award
Herefordshire's A Great Place	Herefordshire	West Midlands	£748,200
Seamless	Barnsley and Rotherham	Yorkshire and Humber	£1,264,00
Crossing the Watersheds	Craven	Yorkshire and Humber	£1,340,300

Source: the Heritage Fund

\* New project name; originally 'Made in Park Royal.'

\*\*Note: Since award, Greater Manchester reduced its grant request by 59% (£640,705) to £848,550. The project was still delivered in full, but with greater use of in-house funding and resources.

**Figure 3 Map showing Great Place (England) awards**



Source: BOP Consulting (2022)

## 2. Evaluation Framework

Three core questions were set in the Terms of Reference that have guided the evaluation:

1. How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?
2. Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for local partners?
3. How do the Heritage Fund and the Arts Council work together to support these new approaches in the future?

Questions 1 and 2 were addressed through the development of a logic model and evaluation framework that was created in close consultation with the projects. Question 3 was addressed separately, using formal and informal evidence from the projects, and a roundtable discussion with the funding partners.

### 2.1 Logic model

The logic model for this evaluation was created using:

- the programme plan and evaluation brief from the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund
- initial interviews with all 16 projects
- three workshop sessions testing a 'straw man' framework with project leads and discussing tools and baselines
- internal BOP workshops and input from the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund.

The complete logic model is included below in Appendix 1. There are two elements to the logic model: process/strategy and delivery. Both parts contribute to the programme's impacts.

This division reflected the status of the projects both as **pathfinders for longer term change** in bringing culture to the centre of local planning, and as **deliverers of activities and outcomes** in the short term which need to be measured.

There are three set of outcomes within the logic model and the achievement of these outcomes was considered in terms of both differing timeframes (immediate to longer term) and differing spatial levels, specifically:

- immediate outcomes were assumed to be visible at the project level
- short-to-medium term outcomes visible at the local authority level
- and longer term outcomes visible nationally.

This also gives an indication of where sources of evidence are most likely to be found.

Longer term outcomes (i.e. those occurring beyond the agreed project end dates) fell outside the scope of this programme evaluation, but the achievement of any immediate- and medium-term outcomes provides an indication that the programme is making a contribution towards achieving these longer term outcomes.

**Figure 4 Great Place Programme Evaluation Outcomes**

<b>Impact area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Process/Strategy	Immediate	Cross portfolio, cross sector partnership & working is significantly improved and extended
Process/Strategy	Immediate	Communities have greater input & influence in decision-making in the cultural sector
Process/Strategy	Short-to-Medium	Culture is embedded in wider local plans and strategies
Process/Strategy	Short-to-Medium	Culture becomes a wider civic responsibility
Process/Strategy	Short-to-Medium	People have a greater sense of collective efficacy
Process/Strategy	Short-to-Medium	Cultural assets are owned, managed and run by the community
Delivery: Cultural	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts events, activities, sites and facilities are enhanced</li> <li>• Heritage events, activities, sites and facilities are enhanced</li> <li>• More people, and a wider range of people engage with arts and heritage</li> <li>• Stronger, better networked cultural sector</li> </ul>
Delivery: Cultural	Short-to-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people, and a wider range of people, engage with arts and heritage                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Cultural and creative sector has more capacity and is more resilient</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Delivery: Community / Social	Immediate / Short-to Medium	Stronger, more connected and happier communities
Delivery: Economic	Immediate	Great Places become destinations of choice
Delivery: Economic	Short-to-Medium	Culture has a wider economic benefit for the Great Place
All	Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations will have built sustainable local partnerships, and culture will be reflected in local plans and strategies</li> <li>• Arts, culture, heritage and other local organisations will be more resilient</li> <li>• Everyone has the opportunity to experience arts and culture and to be inspired</li> </ul>



Impact area	Timeframe	Outcome
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local area / community will be a better place to live, work and visit</li> <li>• The local economy will be boosted</li> </ul>

Source: BOP Consulting (2016)

## 2.2 Evaluation methodology

BOP Consulting delivered the Great Place programme evaluation (GPPE) in consort with the projects. This was enabled by strong working relationships and a necessarily flexible approach to the differing needs and approaches of 16 diverse projects, alongside a clear focus on outcomes and the robustness required of the evidence. Each project additionally had local evaluation partners in place, who typically also covered some different/additional outcomes that were particular to the project.

For the programme evaluation, there were four types of data collection:

- data collected by BOP directly (e.g. project manager surveys)
- specific data collection points using BOP tools delivered by projects (e.g. steering group surveys)
- project data collection with elements contributed by BOP (e.g. audience surveys)
- activity tracking (e.g. match funding, number of volunteers) submitted in the Heritage Fund reporting and analysed by BOP.

Projects also collected their own specific data in consultation with their local project evaluators.

### 2.2.1 Operating Principles

- Both BOP and projects had limited resourcing. Only data that was essential to the programme evaluation and reasonable for projects to access was requested.
- Where possible and appropriate, data was collected in line with existing conventions, especially those already in use by the Heritage Fund or the Arts Council.
- Given the range of projects, activities and locations, the shared tools were generic in their design in order to enable data to be aggregated.
- All process/strategy outcomes specified with the logic model were universal outcomes but not all elements of the delivery outcomes (for example outcomes relating to mental health or tourism) were relevant to every projects. Projects were therefore asked to select outcomes relevant to their activity plans and only reported on those outcomes selected. Once a project had opted 'in' to an outcome, that outcome was tracked for that project to the end of the Great Place scheme (even if no further activities / data was produced). Projects were given the opportunity to opt in to further outcomes on an annual basis. This list of outcomes selected by projects is included in Appendix 6 below.
- A GPPE Toolkit was created that detailed all the data collection requirements by outcome, and included the required tools where

relevant (e.g. survey questions in a specific format). This is also included in Appendix 7 below.

- It was up to individual projects and their evaluators to decide how often audiences, visitors, and participants were surveyed and which questions were required from the toolkit. BOP collated and aggregated all data provided.

### 2.2.2 Tools

The evaluation used mixed methods. Whilst quantitative data was an important part of assessing the programme (and in particular the impact of activities), the Great Place scheme’s emphasis on delivering process and strategic change required a perhaps higher-than-usual emphasis on qualitative methods.

In-depth qualitative approaches also helped to offset the low level of existing quantitative data. Projects in general did not have access to quantitative baseline data on audiences/participation in the region or sector skills/networks. In the absence of such quantitative baselines, a more qualitative approach had to be used and the project managers were surveyed regarding existing levels of knowledge.

Tools were finalised with projects across Spring 2018 and put formally into use from May 2018.

**Figure 5 Great Place Programme Evaluation Tools**

Qualitative	Quantitative
Survey of Great Place project managers	Survey of Great Place project managers

Qualitative	Quantitative
Analysis of regional policy/strategies to assess role of culture cross-sectorally	Analysis of regional policy/strategies to assess role of culture cross-sectorally
Establishing interview with each GP project	Quarterly survey of GP steering groups
Annual focus groups on key topics: Arts & Heritage; Culture and Health; Community Empowerment; Creative Economy	Survey questions for: community/volunteer groups; audience/visitor/participants; sector training/networking participants
Case studies x 4 (Gloucester, Herefordshire, Sunderland, and Tees Valley)	Cultural organisations sample survey
Counterfactual case studies x3* (Greater Manchester, Norfolk and North Somerset)	Heritage at Risk register tracking
Interviews with key stakeholders (Arts Council England, the Heritage Fund)	Analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on creative economy
	Regional inward investment tracking
	Media tracking and sentiment analysis (select projects)
	Tourism data (select projects)

Source: BOP Consulting (201)

\* Greater Manchester and North Somerset also participated in follow-up discussions

### 2.2.3 What's in this report

This report covers activity delivered by the 16 Great Place projects from May 2019. Due to the extensions offered to projects and the varied end dates of these extensions, when we refer to “year 3” in this report, we mean all data captured between May 2019 and September 2021 (the end date of the final project).

The data sources that have been used to inform this report are:

- Project managers' survey: carried out with projects at the end of their delivery period, this asked for a combination of qualitative reflections and quantitative data about the impacts of each Great Place project
- Management data: collated data from all projects drawn from a combination of monitoring data and face to face surveys carried out with audiences, participants, volunteers, and community / co-commissioning group participants. Collectively, projects submitted data from 8,278 audience surveys, 580 surveys from participants at skills development and training events, and 581 surveys from volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participants. Not all projects asked all questions in each survey, nor did all projects engage with all three survey groups.
- COVID-19 impact survey: a rapid response survey conducted with project managers in January 2021 to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their Great Place
- Postcode data: postcodes gathered by projects from audiences and participants at Great Place activities
- Case study data gathering: interviews and focus groups with each of the four chosen case study areas
- Counterfactual interviews: interviews with senior stakeholders in two organisations that unsuccessfully applied for Great Place Funding

- Focus groups: findings from four themed focus groups attended by project managers

This first half of this report focuses on the achievements against outcomes. It begins by exploring process and strategy outcomes for Great Place, followed by cultural delivery outcomes, community and social delivery outcomes and finally economic delivery outcomes. In the latter half of this report we explore the impact that COVID-19 had on Great Place projects, and conclude by reviewing the three core research questions set for the programme.

A case study report is provided separately to this document, covering the four case study projects (Tees Valley, Gloucester, Herefordshire, and Sunderland).

### 3. Process/ Strategy Outcomes

The evidence for the outcomes in this section comes from the Project Managers' surveys completed at the end of each project, audience surveys carried out throughout the projects, the focus group discussions conducted in summer 2020, and the case studies.

#### 3.1 Cross portfolio, cross sector partnership and working is significantly improved and extended

##### 3.1.1 Workload provides the biggest barrier to developing a shared vision with partners

Challenges remain for projects' attempts at creating a shared vision. The vast majority of the projects responding to the Project Managers' survey (14) highlighted workload as a challenge for developing a shared vision. This is an increase when compared with the year two Project Managers' survey, where eleven projects highlighted workload as a challenge. In particular, projects commented that strategic stakeholders' workloads impacted on their ability to develop a shared vision, as less time was available for engaging with these stakeholders.

Many reported a lack of evidence for culture's impact (nine) as a barrier, which was three more projects than in year 2. Projects commented that whilst evidence itself is available, this was particularly about having a lack of recognition of the impact of culture, and how the evidence that does exist can be applied to projects' own contexts

Eight projects reported a lack of cultural infrastructure as a barrier, again an increase of three projects compared to year 2.

Whilst only 3 projects highlighted skills gaps as a challenge to creating a shared vision, when prompted 11 projects identified specific

skills gaps, either in their organisation or in others, that have hindered the formation of a shared vision. This is an increase in comparison to year 2, and the most frequent skills gap identified was relationship management, with comments linking this particularly to issues around a lack of commitment from senior stakeholders and the competitive nature of place-based funding. This proved especially problematic for projects spanning larger geographies who found that within their place there were multiple potential applicants for pots of money, both from a geographic perspective and from a cultural perspective (e.g., Towns Fund Scheme, local authority cultural grants). This meant that potential partners needed to actively compete against each other rather than working collaboratively to leverage funding, making a shared vision more difficult to achieve.

**Figure 6 Great Place projects' challenges to creating a shared vision, Year 3, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

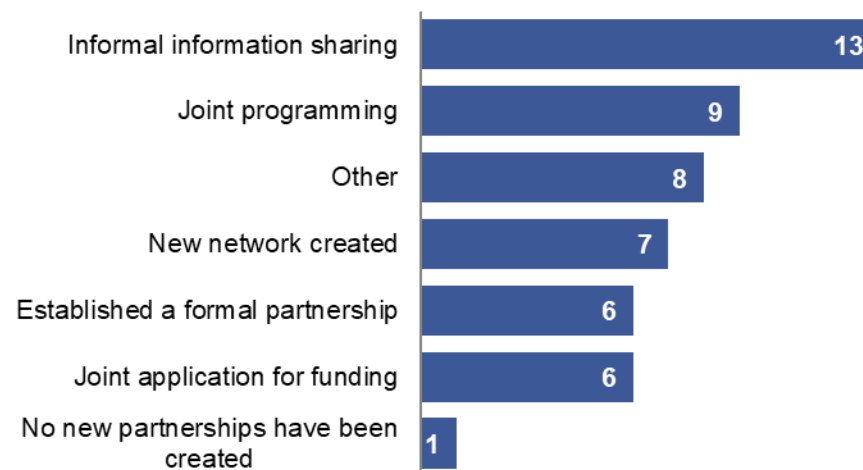
### 3.1.2 Projects have developed a range of different types of partnerships with organisations outside of the cultural sector

Most projects developed some form of partnership with an organisation outside of the cultural sector. Thirteen projects developed informal information sharing partnerships since May 2019, whilst nine projects engaged in joint programming with a non-cultural partner.

There were fewer reports of partnerships developed through the creation of new networks in year 3 (seven compared to nine in Year 2). Although nine projects engaged in joint programming with non-cultural partners, this was a fall of two from the previous year. However, the fall in numbers should not be considered as negative as for some projects the focus in the final year was strengthening existing partnerships rather than creating new ones and so they automatically would have made fewer new partnerships.

Eight projects reported developing “other” partnerships. These included developing community rail partnerships, joining taskforces working across the cultural, visitor, and hospitality sectors, co-creating creative and wellbeing activities with partners for their local communities, and becoming part of their place’s Destination Management Group.

Figure 7 Nature of the new partnerships reported by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

### 3.1.3 Projects are more likely to develop strategic than funded partnerships

Many projects developed strategic partnerships with the cultural sector and all fourteen of those surveyed developed strategic partnerships with local authorities.

Project managers revealed they had developed more partnerships with universities (up by two to twelve projects) and cultural partners (which rose by five to thirteen) in the third year of the projects.

There were fewer reports of partnerships developed with local enterprise partnerships (five compared to nine) and health and wellbeing boards (down two to five in Year 3) compared to Year 2 of Great Place.

**Figure 8 Strategic partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (chart)**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

**Figure 9 Strategic partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (table)**

Partnership type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Local Authorities	14	14	15
Cultural Organisations	11	8	13
Universities	9	10	12
National Portfolio Organisations	10	9	11
Local Enterprise Partnership	8	9	5
Business Improvement District	6	6	6
Health and Wellbeing Board	6	5	3

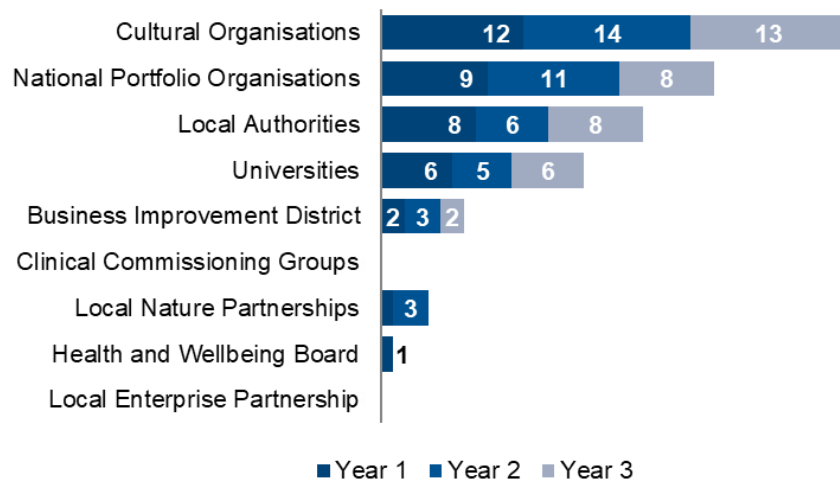
Partnership type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Clinical Commissioning Groups	4	4	4
Local Nature Partnerships	3	4	3

Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

In Year 3, there were fewer instances of Great Place projects having developed funded partnerships rather than strategic unfunded partnerships. This was the same for whether the partnerships were in the cultural sector or outside the cultural sector:

- 13 strategic partnerships were developed with local cultural organisations (Figure 8), but only eight funded partnerships with local cultural organisations were developed (Figure 9)
- 11 strategic partnerships were developed with Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), compared with eight funded partnerships with NPOs
- 14 strategic partnerships were developed with local authorities compared with 8 funded partnerships.

**Figure 10 Funded partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

**Figure 11 Funded partnerships developed by Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021 (table)**

Partnership type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Cultural Organisations	12	14	13
National Portfolio Organisations	9	11	8
Local Authorities	8	6	8
Universities	6	5	6
Business Improvement District	2	3	2

Partnership type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Clinical Commissioning Groups	0	0	0
Local Nature Partnerships	1	3	0
Health and Wellbeing Board	1	0	0
Local Enterprise Partnership	0	0	0

When comparing the Year 3 results with those in Year 2:

- projects reported that they had developed more funded partnerships with universities (up one to six) and local authorities (which rose by two to eight) in the third year of the project; and
- there were fewer reports of funded partnerships having been developed with NPOs (eight compared to eleven in Year 2) and cultural organisations (down one to thirteen in Year 3 of Great Place).

### 3.1.4 Cross-sectoral focus: Culture and Health

As projects entered the final stages of their programmes, we reconvened the focus group on Culture and Health to understand what successes and challenges there were for projects in year 3 along with any plans they have around legacy opportunities for cross-sector working<sup>6</sup>.

All projects agreed that it has been a challenge to navigate the size and complexity of the health and social care sector and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the different ways of working across sectors. As a result, health and wellbeing work has been particularly time and effort intensive in comparison to other strategic ambitions of the Great Place Programme. Having ‘made the case’ for arts and health,

<sup>6</sup> The year 3 focus group was attended by Greater Manchester, Herefordshire and Torbay. The year 2 focus group included Greater Manchester, Sunderland and Torbay, whilst the year 1 focus group was the same as year 2 with the addition of Reading and Waltham Forest.

projects described a perceived pressure for ‘quick wins’ from their partners, which didn’t necessarily take into account the complexities of delivering and evaluating culture and wellbeing work.

All projects agreed that they would have benefitted from a member of staff who had a background in culture and wellbeing who was able to dedicate themselves entirely to this area of work.

Since year 2, Greater Manchester has completed and signed off an outcomes framework to underpin arts and health delivery. The framework was developed through a collaboration between academics, mental health practitioners and the cultural sector. The outcomes are usable by the cultural sector but also speak to the outcomes used by mental health practitioners to record national data. The project hopes that this framework will serve as a building block for the commissioning of creative wellbeing work, removing the barrier of the health sector not being able to measure the outcomes in a way that satisfies their own reporting requirements.

The Torbay Great Place project was invited to partner on an appreciative inquiry with Active Devon, Sport England and others, bringing together two sectors which had previously been regarded as separate in the region. This is an example of a cross-sector wellbeing initiative that has originated from outside of the culture sector, which the project felt was indicative of the way strategic relationships in Torbay have strengthened over the course of the Great Place programme.

Herefordshire regards their completed evaluation as one of their biggest successes in year three, as it gave the arts and health agenda a renewed sense of direction and enabled the project to redirect energy and resource where it could be used most effectively. The evaluation guided them to pivot their approach towards supporting community groups working within the culture and wellbeing agenda through training and bursaries.

Projects identified the establishment of a locally-relevant arts and health evidence base as a key enabler to ensuring the legacy of the programme. Although all projects found that arts and health evaluation poses a unique set of challenges, projects felt that it was important to collect evidence to ‘tell the story’ and to show and understand what works locally.

In general, projects have found an iterative process to be the best way to navigate the complex arts and health agenda, despite feeling some pressure to secure ‘quick wins’. The time and energy that has been invested in relationship building and ‘slow conversations’ is beginning to pay dividends, evidenced by arts and health initiatives that have originated from outside of the culture sector. However, a number of activities and programmes that formed the final stages of delivery were paused or cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenging circumstances, all projects reported that culture has formed part of the public health crisis response in their area, which they felt was a positive indicator of changing attitudes to culture from within the health sector.

### **3.1.5 Culture has become more relevant to stakeholders outside the cultural sector**

Across the projects, there are signs that culture has become more relevant to wider stakeholders as a result of the Great Place programme. There were a wide range of different examples cited by project managers as ways that they have seen this increased relevance.

Project managers spoke of regular meetings and exchanges with stakeholders from across different sectors, including the public sector, higher education, and tourism. Linked with this was a sense that local policy makers – including local authorities, BID teams, LEPs and Non-Governmental Organisations – pledged significant support to projects for



the length of the project. This created a supportive network that could create a shared sense of purpose for the area.

Projects have been involved in local / City Region steering groups, working directly to feed into local strategic plans and ensuring that culture is embedded across local activity. This has included: the creation of Local industrial Strategies; consultations on establishing Cultural Compacts; working with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs); direct involvement with COVID-19 recovery groups; involvement in [Towns Fund Schemes](#); and involvement in city centre commissions. Projects also spoke of working with stakeholders to increase community engagement and communicating the benefits of cultural engagement for health and wellbeing with NHS audiences.

There are challenges that have been faced by projects in achieving this outcome. Time and resources is a recurring factor, both for project teams and for policy and decision makers, with several projects noting that it takes time to build strong cross-sectoral relationships. For example, whilst dialogue was open, some projects struggled to gain access to senior decision makers. This impacted their ability to discuss plans and ideas with stakeholders, creating difficulties in ensuring that the views and input of projects were specifically represented in policies.

Similarly, projects found that there could be a lack of shared language with policymakers. Whilst they could speak about the impact that they were having, a lack of robust data and evidence that could concretely outline the impact of cultural interventions made it more difficult to influence economic decision makers.

There were also some examples given by projects of situations where policymakers positioned cultural initiatives as a secondary consideration to their other policy responsibilities. Project managers reported that housing or transport or health and the environment have all been

variously treated as higher priorities, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In spite of this, there are a range of different enablers given by projects that have helped to mitigate these challenges:

- Leveraging the partnerships already established by the project delivery partners as a mechanism to increase engagement.
- Developing strong messages to contribute to policy initiatives, particularly in relation to the advocacy opportunities and ability for culture to help secure funding through initiatives like the Towns Fund and the Levelling Up Fund.
- Working to create strong interpersonal relationships that are built on trust and a strong track record. It was noted by some project managers that the growth of online networking, webinars and events has further enabled opportunities to build relationships.
- Providing training for stakeholders outside of the cultural sector to help develop their understanding of the benefits of culture.
- Using independent facilitators in sessions to draw out and reaffirm the shared vision and values held across different sectors.

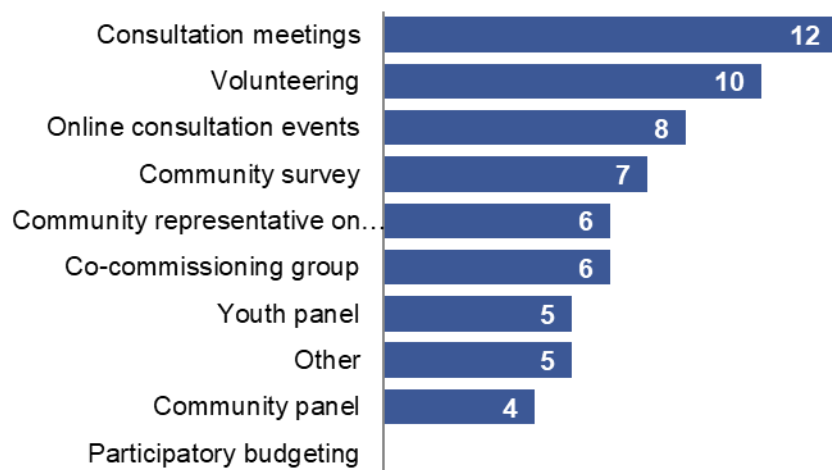
### **3.2 Communities have greater input and influence in decision-making in the cultural sector**

Each of the projects recognised the importance of engaging with community members in the decision-making processes for Great Place. The most common modes of engagement were consultation meetings (twelve), providing volunteering opportunities (ten) and online consultation events (eight).

Year 3 of Great Place saw fewer projects engaging with community panels (four compared to seven in Year 2) and fewer with volunteering projects (down two year-on-year), however this may have been linked to fewer opportunities for these groups to meet as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the third year of Great Place the number of projects making use of online consultation events rose sharply, from two up to eight, most likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 12 Methods of community engagement used by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

However, project managers more strongly agreed that community engagement had led to new ideas in Year 3 compared to the previous two years. Moreover, they felt that the community's ideas had been successfully implemented (see Figure 11).

**Figure 13 Outcomes of community engagement for Great Place projects, Years 1-3, 2021**

Question	Weighted average out of 10 (YR 1)	Weighted average out of 10 (YR 2)	Weighted average out of 10 (YR 3)
Community engagement had led to new ideas	6.3	6.6	7.9
These ideas have been implemented	5.5	5.8	8.7

Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

### 3.3 Culture is embedded in wider local plans and strategies

In the first year evaluation, we explored the extent to which culture was embedded across a variety of different types of local plans and strategies for Great Places.

We have revisited this conversation with project managers to understand to what extent culture is more or less embedded in local areas.

Collectively, Great Place projects have contributed towards embedding culture in:

- 10 cultural strategies
- 6 health and wellbeing strategies that specifically mention culture
- 2 mental health strategies
- 4 children and young people strategies.

None of the projects reported awareness of culture being embedded into care commissioning strategies.

Alongside this there were a series of additional strategies in the process of being revised, developed, or consulted on with explicit mentions of culture. This includes culture and tourism strategies, strategic economic plans, COVID-19 recovery plans, local area plans, partnership strategies, health and wellbeing strategies. 9 of the projects are involved in the revisions and consultations of these strategies out of 11 projects with awareness of developing strategies.

### **3.4 Culture becomes a wider civic responsibility**

To understand the extent to which culture has become a wider civic responsibility, the extent to which projects engaged with local businesses and non-public-sector stakeholders was examined.

Projects reported that stakeholders had an openness to “the new” that was offered by projects, as well an openness to innovative ideas for improving areas. This was crucial in generating interest and visitation to areas from both local residents and visitors from further afield.

Projects found that businesses were more likely to consider investing in the local community where good working relationships had been established and developed over time. This had benefits both financially, for example through sponsorship of Great Place events and activities, and also through advocacy, such as acting as ambassadors for social prescribing and economic recovery.

Alongside this, projects highlighted a range of different forums where they engaged with local businesses, such as their local chamber of commerce, conferences and events, through LEP contacts, and specific local strategic networks, including COVID-19 recovery groups and business networks. Projects also found that they increased their

engagement with business and non-public-sector stakeholders through their supply chain and commissions for local businesses.

Understandably, there were also some challenges encountered from businesses to building this engagement. These were broadly grouped into issues of time and resource, a lack of awareness amongst businesses, developing trusted relationships especially in periods of flux, and the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and their ability to engage with projects.

Although only an impact in the last stage of Great Place, COVID-19 brought a range of challenges to local businesses. Many found themselves furloughing staff, facing financial hardship, and having to quickly adjust their business model to a changed environment. As a result, many projects found that this had an impact on their ability to engage with local businesses. Projects also found that it impacted on their ability to embed culture into local plans and strategies, as economic responses took a priority.

Time and resources were common issues, with projects noting issues around business workload, other priorities for business, and, pressure on staff availability. This made it difficult to get buy-in from businesses, however the increase in opportunities for digital engagement with businesses created by the shift to online working in 2020 and the increased regular use of digital platforms for communication has helped to mitigate this. There were also some cases where project managers found it particularly difficult to meet with the most senior members of local businesses and non-public sector stakeholder organisations. Much of their communication was with more junior staff members.

Developing relationships was a challenge both in relation to the time that it took to develop relationships and build trust, and the impact on those relationships when businesses had staff turnover and established

contacts were lost. Projects spoke about this both in relation to direct business contacts – for example suppliers and sponsors – and also wider networks, for example when staff changes led to different leadership of local BIDs, prompting the need to rebuild trust and understanding with these groups.

Awareness of culture can be low. Projects found that there were challenges in raising awareness of the economic value of culture and the creative industries and the potential benefits of embedding culture. Examples were given of situations where local companies were more focused on the additional benefits that culture brings to wider plans (such as local communication plans) than on the impact culture itself makes in an area. They also faced challenges in changing perceptions about what culture “is” and who it is for.

However, projects have worked to mitigate these challenges through a series of different approaches. The ability of Great Place projects to build a track record over the lifetime of the programme demonstrating the impact culture has in their local area has been key. In being able to show how culture reaches the full breadth of their local area, engages new audiences and participants, and supports the visitor economy, projects have been able to demonstrate their wider local civic value.

Whilst building relationships has taken time, these have been valuable once established. Projects have found that using an existing trusted contact – rather than a “cold call” – can help to kick start relationships. Likewise, highlighting the shared pride in place held by Great Place projects and local businesses has enabled stronger working relationships. Projects also found that providing training and resources that can help businesses understand the relevance and importance of

culture and the Great Place programme to local economies has also helped secure their buy-in.

For some projects, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped rather than hindered their relationships locally. The increased use of digital platforms has made it easier to engage with businesses who might otherwise be too busy to attend meetings, whilst the availability of emergency funding has helped to strengthen relationships and the credibility of the cultural sector amongst local networks.

### **3.5 Community Assets are run, owned, and managed by the community**

Supporting Community Asset Transfer and Asset of Community Value Registration was a stated priority for only one project (Herefordshire, see Spotlight below). However, in the project manager’s survey three projects gave specific examples of ways that they had contributed towards conversations relating to assets of community value:

- Durham commissioned a consortium of researchers to explore the notion, and value of, shared spaces in two local communities, as well as how these could be safeguarded for future use. The resulting report has been published on the Northern Heartlands’ website<sup>7</sup>.
- Gloucester were involved in discussions that resulted in The Olympus, a Grade II listed theatre, being designated as an asset of community value. The project manager noted that the main driver came from volunteers working directly with the City Council to secure the designation.
- Coventry highlighted 22 historic assets that were transferred from the City Council to the Historic Coventry Trust in 2018. The Great Place

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://northernheartlands.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Northern-Heartlands-Shared-Space-Report.pdf>

scheme were involved in the discussions around this transfer and their contribution was a factor that helped secure the transfer.

Two further projects noted awareness that discussions were happening locally regarding asset transfer, however they had not been involved in the discussions.

### **Spotlight: Herefordshire's A Great Place takes a responsive approach to Community Asset Transfer**

Herefordshire's Great Place project included a commitment to transfer two cultural assets into community ownership. This is an area of work directly funded by Herefordshire Council who hope through this to reduce their financial responsibilities over the longer term. This aspect of the programme has changed a lot over the years as, "the policy didn't change but the attitudes did", and this has required a nimble and responsive approach.

Herefordshire's work in this area began in January 2018 with a series of roundtables for council officers from different teams. Two potential assets were identified for transfer: Hereford Town Hall, a listed building owned by Herefordshire Council; and a cluster of sites in the market town of Kington.

Instead of commissioning a feasibility study for the Town Hall as initially planned, the Great Place team followed this up by first commissioning a wider 'Cultural Spaces' research report, to inform future developments and investments made to improve local cultural provision. This aimed to understand the challenges and opportunities of local cultural provision – to help set the buildings into their wider context – as well as to consider potential approaches to spaces including the Town Hall and Museum & Art Gallery. The research supported Hereford in its successful application to the Towns Fund, receiving £22.4m to support post-COVID recovery and enhance economic growth. The Great Place

programme manager now sits on Hereford's Towns Fund board, "making sure culture is represented" and able to, "confidently keep the conversation going".

The approach for the Kington project has been very different. An earlier attempt had been made by the Council to transfer key assets but this had been unsuccessful. However, the partners were keen to keep the conversation alive and so developed a more long-term transformational programme. This was built on local relationships and identifying, "what people want". A new process was therefore set in motion to re-engage the community, starting with a public consultation event which identified a number of priorities, including retaining young people and combatting social isolation. Rural Media's independence from the Council helped in this context. "The lack of previous baggage that local authorities sometimes have means there are fewer blocks in the conversations we want to be having." Nevertheless, the Council remain a critical – and positive – part of the process. Herefordshire subsequently delivered a funding application to Big Lottery's Awards for All, which is funding a project manager post to deliver events to test the community's ideas.

### **3.6 People have a greater sense of collective efficacy**

Collective efficacy is the perception that members of a given group or community can work together to accomplish shared goals. In the evaluation, collective efficacy is assessed by exploring the extent to which audiences and participants feel that they can collectively bring about change. 90% of audiences and participants 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement, "By working together we can bring about

change in our local neighbourhood”<sup>8</sup>. Of these, 54% strongly agreed with the statement and a further 36% agreed with the statement.

In comparison to year two, a larger proportion of respondents strongly agreed (54% compared to 45%), however overall slightly fewer respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (90% compared to 96%). It is possible that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on audience and participants’ abilities to engage with collaborative activities may have contributed towards this reduction.

---

<sup>8</sup> Based on 1,451 responses submitted by 9 projects.

## 4. Cultural Delivery Outcomes

The evidence for the outcomes in this section comes from the Project Managers' surveys completed at the end of each project, audience and participant surveys carried out throughout the projects, and postcode data.

### 4.1 Arts events, activities, sites, and facilities are enhanced

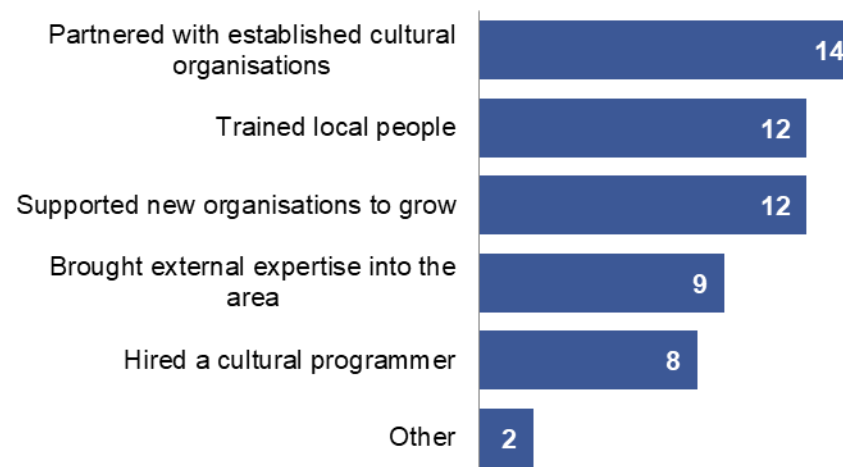
#### 4.1.1 Methods for delivering higher quality activities

Most projects took steps to ensure that they delivered high quality engagement during Year 3 of Great Place. Fourteen projects partnered with established cultural organisations while twelve project managers trained local people or supported new organisations to grow.

In comparison with the Year 2 results, one fewer project reported bringing in external expertise to ensure high quality engagement, while one more revealed that they supported new organisations to grow in their area.

Other ways that projects reported ensuring high quality approaches included working with established strategic touring networks, bringing staffing expertise into their core team, and delivering specific training and development programmes for local practitioners.

**Figure 14 Approaches to ensuring high quality activities were delivered by Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

#### 4.1.2 Methods for reaching new or wider audiences

Projects used a range of different mechanisms to ensure that their events reached a wider range of people. Delivering events with new partners and in new places were the most commonly cited mechanisms employed by projects (**Figure 15** below), reflecting some of the original ambitions of the Great Place scheme. Alongside this, projects worked to develop content that could have relevance to wider audiences. The extent to which this was successful is explored further below.

Additional mechanisms included taking advantage of existing provision for festivals and events in the area, and “piggybacking” Great Place activity under existing banners, taking advantage of digital communication methods, and joint programming across multiple local authorities.

**Figure 15 Approaches to ensuring that Great Place events reached new or larger audiences, Year 3, 2021**



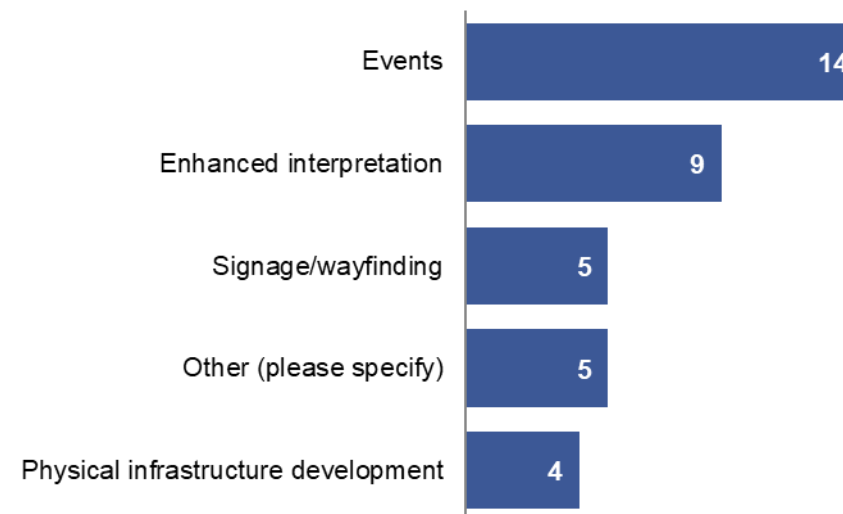
Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

## 4.2 Heritage events, activities, sites and facilities are enhanced

Events were the most common activities undertaken by projects as a means of enhancing heritage. There were also a significant number of projects that enhanced the interpretation that was made available through their programmes.

Additional examples provided by projects included creating in-situ engagement and interpretation activities, providing training for heritage organisations, commissioning public artworks that could specifically highlight disused, abandoned or forgotten heritage sites, and providing sector development opportunities.

**Figure 16 Approaches to enhancing heritage, both physical infrastructure and interpretation, across Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021**

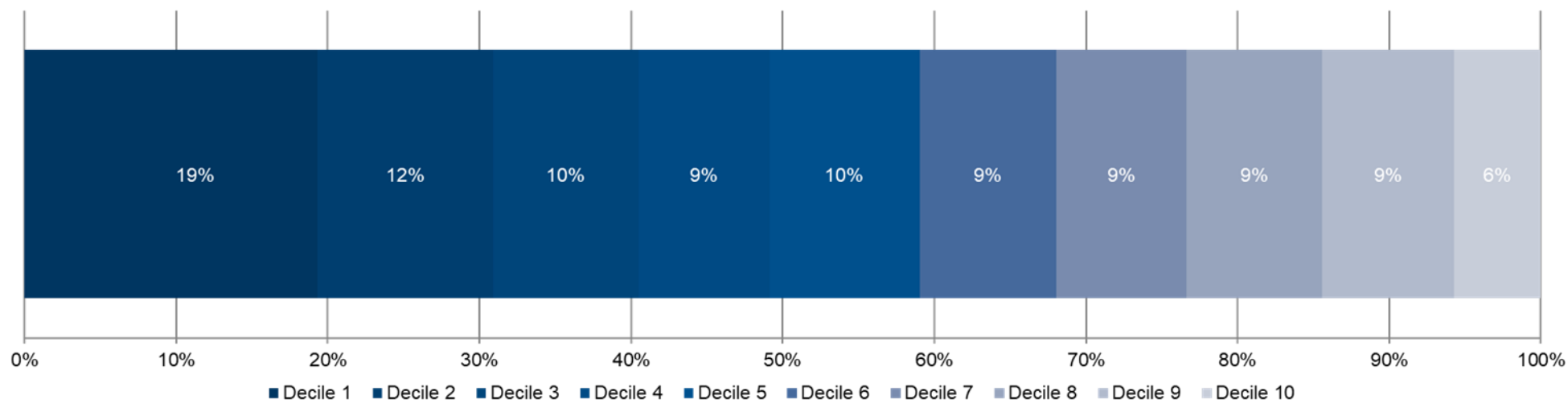


Source: BOP Consulting (2021)



### 4.3 More people, and a wider range of people, engage with arts and heritage

Figure 17 Audience deprivation levels across all Great Place projects (chart)



Source: BOP Consulting / Arts Council England (2021). Postcode data collected in Year 3 based on 14,214 postcodes from 14 projects.

Figure 18 Audience deprivation levels across all Great Place projects (table)

Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Proportion of all audiences	19%	12%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	6%

Source: BOP Consulting / Arts Council England (2021). Postcode data collected in Year 3 based on 14,214 postcodes from 14 projects

#### 4.3.1 Low income audiences

Ten of the Great Place projects stated at the outset of the programme that they wanted to specifically target people on low incomes.

To understand the extent to which this has been achieved, the postcodes of the audiences and participants engaged through Great Place have been analysed against the English Index of Multiple

Deprivation (IMD). The IMD characterises places, at a range of different spatial levels, according to a basket of indicators that measure deprivation. As such, it is a good proxy measure for assessing the degree to which Great Place projects have engaged audiences and participants on low incomes.

Figure 17 shows how the postcodes of people that participated in Great Place events and activities are distributed across areas as they

are classified according to deciles within the IMD. That is, Decile 1 contains the most deprived areas (as defined by postcodes) in England through to Decile 10, which contains the least deprived areas.

There is variation in the levels of deprivation across each of the Great Place areas, as well as variation in the number of postcodes for audiences and participants collected by projects.

- As in year 2, more than half (59%) of audiences and participants providing postcodes to Great Place projects came from areas classed among the 50% most deprived in England.
- A fifth of all these participants (19%) came from the 10% most deprived areas, a noticeable increase from year 2, where only 12% were from these areas.

This suggests that projects have achieved some success with regard to meeting their aim of reaching low income audiences.

### 4.3.2 Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse groups

Reaching Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse groups was a stated objective for 10 projects.

In Year 3, 21% of audiences and participants were from a Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse groups based on survey data gathered by the projects<sup>9</sup>. This is a significant increase when compared with year 2 audiences, where only 9% of audiences and participants came from these backgrounds<sup>10</sup>. Further, across the general population of the

combined Great Place, people from a Black, Asian or Ethnically Diverse groups account for 12%, suggesting that the projects have been particularly successful at reaching these groups<sup>11</sup>.

This suggests that there has been a significant shift in the audiences and participants that projects have engaged with during their third year. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way that projects delivered activity over this period, with a reduction in face-to-face engagement and an increase in online delivery. Some projects also diversified their planned activity. The data suggests that these changes made projects better able to reach a wider range of people and to work with groups who had not previously been engaged in Great Place activity.

### 4.3.3 Disabled people

Across the projects, nine projects had a stated objective of engaging with disabled people.

11% of survey respondents identified as having a health problem or disability which limits their day-to-day activities a little or a lot. Of these, 3% were 'limited a lot', and 8% were 'limited a little'<sup>12</sup>. This is an increase compared to year 2, when 8% of respondents identified as having a health problem or disability<sup>13</sup>. However, this Year 3 figure continues to be significantly lower than the UK average which estimates that 22% of the population have a disability of this nature<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> 5,035 responses from 13 projects

<sup>10</sup> 7,587 responses from 12 projects

<sup>11</sup> Based on ONS GSPREE model 1 estimates 2015 for the following districts: Barnsley, Bolton, Bury, County Durham, Coventry, Craven, Derbyshire Dales, Ealing, Gloucester, Great Yarmouth, Herefordshire, County of, Oldham, Reading, Rotherham, Shepway (now Folkstone), South Lakeland, Sunderland, Tees Valley, Thanet, Torbay, Waltham Forest. These are estimates not ONS official statistics, so caution should be exercised when interpreting the data. For more information, see technical note:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/administrativedatacensusproject/administrativedatacensusresearchoutputs/populationcharacteristics/researchoutputsethnicityestimatesfromsurveyandadministrativedata2015#toc>

<sup>12</sup> 5,141 responses from 13 projects

<sup>13</sup> 6,973 responses 11 projects

<sup>14</sup> Department for Work Pensions; Family Resources Survey, 2018

#### 4.3.4 Tourists

Ten projects identified tourists as a target group for their activities. To understand the extent to which this has been achieved, projects were asked to define which postcodes could be considered as “local” to their area. All other postcodes are then considered to be “visitors” to the area.

31% of audiences and participants across all projects that submitted postcode data were “visitors”<sup>15</sup>. This is broadly comparable to year 2.

Looking at the individual projects’ postcode data, there were only two projects where visitors accounted for a greater proportion of audiences and participants. In comparison, five projects in year 2 saw a greater share of visitors than locals, based on the postcode data. While this may suggest that projects have been more focused on their local populations than visitors, it is also possible that restrictions associated with COVID-19 prevented or deterred visitors from travelling further afield. Again, as the types of activities that were programmed changed in year 3 in response to the COVID pandemic, this may also have made them more appealing to more local audiences.

As in year 2, the proportion of visitors from outside the UK was very small, with both postcode data and survey data showing less than 1% from overseas.

### 4.4 Stronger, better networked, cultural sector

#### 4.4.1 Projects have greater agreement that there are strong local networks

Projects were asked about the extent to which they agreed that there is a strong local network between cultural, heritage and creative industry organisations in their areas. Across projects, the weighted average

response was 7.4 out of 10. This is an improvement on year 2 (6.7 out of 10) which in turn was an improvement on the baseline year (4.9 out of 10). These consistently improving findings point to the benefit of establishing collaborative partnerships in areas and creating opportunities for developing and delivery over the longer term.

When asked specifically about the challenges and enablers of strong local networks, projects gave a range of responses. 11 projects specifically cited workload as a challenge, whilst 7 felt that the competitive funding environment in the cultural sector created challenges. When speaking about competitive funding, projects also highlighted the competition that can exist between organisations of different scales in an area, and that whilst they all have the same ultimate goal, they may have different abilities and ideas about how to achieve this. Linked with this, projects spoke about facing levels of apprehension from organisations in relation to sharing creative ideas, and the challenges of building networks, particularly in areas where these may have not worked in the past.

Several projects were keen to stress that it takes time and effort to set up strong networks, and this is reflected in the majority (12 projects) that specifically cited having time to develop relationships and trust as an enabler to creating strong networks. Several commented on the need for patience to develop and nurture networks, particularly if networks are to continue being successful in the longer term. Two projects felt that the pandemic had contributed to creating this space, enabling networks to find a common purpose (preserving the sector) that has provided focus and galvanised local support.

As well as having increased confidence in local networks, most projects continued to create and develop stronger partnerships with

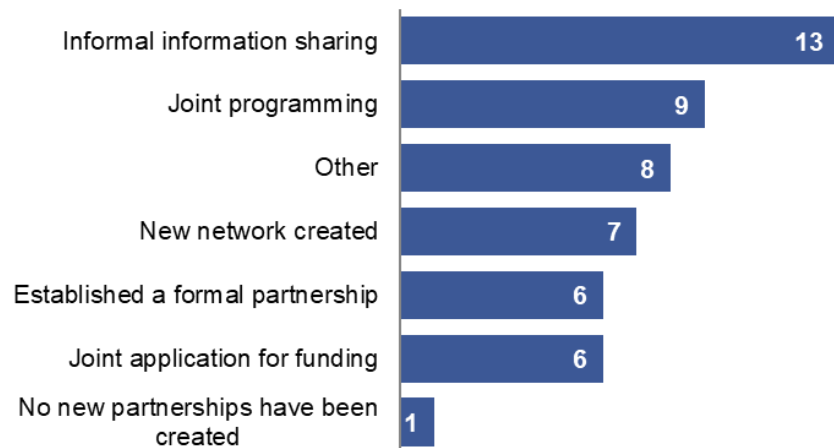
---

<sup>15</sup> 12,154 postcodes across 11 projects

organisations within their cultural sector networks. This included developing new networks, informal information sharing, and approaches to joint programming (Figure 16). Other examples provided included establishing cross-sector taskforces, working informally to co-create wellbeing activities with communities, and working with both cultural organisations and the local transport sector to establish a Community Rail partnership.

There were more reports of both the establishment of formal partnerships and of the creation of new networks in year 3 as compared to year 2. Formal partnerships rose from four to nine, whereas the number of projects that established new networks in the cultural sector increased to fourteen (from nine in Year 2).

**Figure 19 Types of new partnerships created within the cultural sector across the Great Place projects, Year 3, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

<sup>16</sup> 482 responses across 10 projects

#### 4.4.2 Cultural practitioners enhance their skills

Participants taking part in professional skills development or training events were asked about skills development to understand the impact Great Place projects had on their skills and employability.

In total, 5,156 participants took part in 515 professional skills development or training events between May 2019 and the end of projects. Participants who completed surveys were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “I learned a new skill”. 85% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed<sup>16</sup> which is significantly higher than in year 2 when only 41% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Additionally, participants were asked to provide a level of agreement with the statement “the skills I have gained will support my career in the cultural sector”. Once again a large majority of respondents (86%) agreed or strongly agreed<sup>17</sup> compared with just 32% of respondents in year 2.

<sup>17</sup> 540 responses across 9 projects

## 5. Community and Social Delivery Outcomes

Projects had the opportunity to select from a series of optional outcome areas focused around community and social delivery outcomes:

- People have enjoyable cultural experiences (selected by 15 projects)
- Local pride is increased (selected by 13 projects)
- People have a greater sense of belonging to a place (selected by 15 projects)
- More intergenerational connections are made and understanding increases (selected by 4 projects)
- Participants' mental health improves (selected by 6 projects)

The evidence for the outcomes in this section comes from audience, participants, and volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participant surveys carried out throughout the projects. Collectively, the engagement realised through these outcomes demonstrates the increased social capital that projects have delivered in their areas, supporting their places to improve the strength of and relationships between their communities.

### 5.1 People have enjoyable cultural experiences

As an indicator of having an enjoyable cultural experience, audiences and participants were asked to respond to the statement “I had a good time!”. 70% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and a further quarter (26%) ‘agreed’<sup>18</sup>. That nearly three quarters of respondents agreed with this statement demonstrates the success that projects have achieved in

creating enjoyable experiences. It also suggests that activities have a positive impact on audiences and participants. These results are particularly notable as they are a significant increase in comparison to year 2, when just under half (49%) of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and a further 39% ‘agreed’.

### 5.2 Local pride is increased

Audiences and participants were generally likely to agree that Great Place events help increase local pride. Just over half (52%) ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement “today’s event has increased my pride in [Great Place] as an area” whilst a further 35% ‘agreed’<sup>19</sup>. This is broadly comparable with year 2, where the combined figure for ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ was 82%. However, there has been a substantial rise in the proportion of respondents reporting ‘strongly agree’, as this rose from 11% in year 2 to 52% in year 3.

Some of this may be related to Great Place projects saving their “spectacular” events until the final year and these may have increased local pride. It is also likely to be linked to the high proportion of audiences and participants reporting enjoyable cultural experiences, as a good experience is more likely to foster a sense of pride in what an area can achieve.

With the publication of the government’s Levelling Up White Paper, this outcome has taken on additional significance, speaking directly to one of the 12 key missions outlined by the paper. The importance of culture in developing local pride has been evidenced by Great Place, and this provides a key opportunity for advocacy for the sector moving forwards.

<sup>18</sup> 4,826 responses across 13 projects

<sup>19</sup> 3,754 responses across 13 projects

### 5.3 People feel a greater sense of belonging to a place

Projects worked with a total of 10,079 volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participants in year 3. This was more than double the number reported by projects in year 2 (4,834 volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participants).

To understand the impact that volunteering and group participation have on sense of belonging, projects asked a specific set of questions to this group. 90% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that "having the [Great Place] project is part of what makes [the Great Place] special as an area". This was again a significant increase on year 2, where the combined 'agree' responses amounted to 76% of respondents.

Additionally, nearly all respondents (92%) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the local impact statement, "it's important it's happening here", and a large majority (83%) also 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement, "I like living where I live". These questions cannot be compared to the year 2 data as they were not previously asked, however the high level of positivity, particularly for "it's important it's happening here" suggests that the Great Place projects have contributed towards these outcomes.

The final measure used for a sense of belonging is the statement "I have a lot in common with people in my local area". Two thirds of respondents (65%) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this statement, with almost all the other responses were neutral (31% reported they 'neither agreed nor disagreed'; just 4% disagreed to any extent). Given the large areas covered by some of the projects, and the aims of projects to bring together diverse communities, this result is a positive sign of people's sense of belonging to a place.

### 5.4 More intergenerational connections are made and understanding increases

85% of participants and volunteers across eight projects confirmed that they had met new people through their involvement in the Great Place project. Respondents were then asked how their involvement had affected the contact that they had had with a range of age groups, as well as whether they feel that they get on better with people of different age groups since engaging in the project.

Four of the projects asked questions about intergenerational connections and a total of 251 respondents gave an answer in relation to their relations with at least one age group.

The biggest increase was reported in the level of contact respondents had with adults aged 45 – 64. 60% of respondents reported an increase in the level of contact that they would normally have, with 45% describing this as a 'significant increase'. Just under half of respondents reported an increase in their level of contact with adults aged 25 -44, whilst a third (33%) reported an increase in their contact with older people. There was generally no difference to respondents' level of contact with under 25s. No-one reported a decrease in their level of contact with any age group.

Similarly, no-one reported a negative impact on their ability to get on with people from different age groups. The biggest increases in relationships was with adults 25-44, with 39% of respondents reporting that they got on a bit or a lot better with this age group as a result of their involvement with the project, whilst 37% of respondents reported that they got on a bit or a lot better with older people as a result of their involvement in the project.

## **5.5 Participants' mental health improves**

To understand the impact of activities on participants' mental health, we asked projects to use the Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale question set. Only two projects used these questions, and the level of response was very low (a maximum of 13 respondents). Given this very small sample size it is not possible to use this data to comment on the impact of Great Place projects on participants mental health.

## 6. Economic Delivery Outcomes

The evidence for the outcomes in this section comes from the Project Managers' surveys completed at the end of each project and audience surveys carried out throughout the projects.

### 6.1 Great Places are becoming established as destinations of choice

Economic delivery outcomes for Great Place projects explore the benefit created in Great Place areas as a result of the projects, and are focused specifically around the impact of cultural tourism.

Nine projects identified tourism as a stated objective for their Great Place. Baseline data on tourism in Great Place areas was generally limited. However, we are able to compare data gathered across the lifetime of the projects. This shows that:

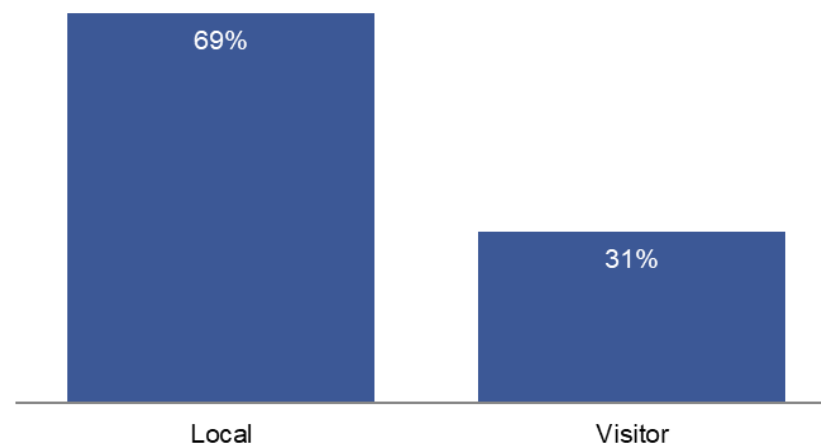
- Around a third (31%) of audiences and participants for Great Place activities are considered visitors to the area by the projects based on supplied postcode data. This is slightly lower than year 2 when 36% of postcodes were visitor postcodes.
- A consistently low proportion of audiences for Great Place activities are from outside of the UK. They account for less than 1% of postcodes and audience surveys.
- Non-local audiences are generally likely to recommend Great Place areas as a destination. In both years 2 and year 3, 93% of respondents from outside the local area 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they would recommend [the relevant Great Place] as a destination to friends and family.<sup>20</sup> The split between 'strongly agree'

<sup>20</sup> Year 3: 2,940 respondents across 8 projects, year 2:1,302 respondents across 5 projects

and 'agree' was also consistent (57% and 36% respectively in year 3 and 56% and 37% respectively in year 2)

The consistent levels of visitors to Great Place areas, as well as the consistent proportion who would recommend those areas to friends and family, suggests that Great Place projects have contributed to building their areas as places to visit. However, the longer term legacy impact of Great Place will be crucial in understanding how much of this becomes sustained and grows the levels of cultural tourism in each of the areas, but these early indicators are encouraging.

**Figure 20 Composition of audience and participants across the Great Place projects, locals vs visitors, 2021**



Source: BOP Consulting / Arts Council (2021). Year 3 Postcode data, based on 12,698 postcodes submitted by 12 projects, with projects self-identifying their local area



## 7. The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the delivery of the Great Place programme, as it did for the wider cultural and creative industries. Several projects planned for year 3 to be a “culmination” year, with the summer of 2020 in particular being a moment for celebration and presentation. Instead, projects found themselves needing to respond swiftly to the changing circumstances, changing formats, having to postpone or cancel work, and work with their local networks to try to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their communities, audiences, and local areas.

The 16 projects were originally scheduled to finish in March 2020 but even before the pandemic a number had been extended as far forward as December 2020. As the realisation of the impact of the pandemic grew, the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund agreed to provide projects with extensions so that they could complete work. Ultimately all projects were extended to some extent from their original completion date of March 2020, with project completion dates going all the way through to September 2021.

To understand the impact of the pandemic further, projects were asked to complete a COVID-19 impact survey at the start of 2021. 14 of the 16 projects responded to the survey.

Projects generally felt that the COVID-19 pandemic had slightly strengthened a range of different stakeholder attitudes and networks. On a scale of -5 (significantly weakened) to 5 (significantly strengthened) they were most likely to think that:

- the attitudes of policymakers had been strengthened (a mean average of 1.9, with the lowest reported score being 0 and the highest score being 5); closely followed by

- cross-sector partnerships that include the cultural and creative sector had been strengthened (a mean average of 1.6, with a lowest score of -1 and a highest score of 4).

The only aspect which projects thought had been weakened by the pandemic were attitudes from local businesses and non-public sector around the value of culture. Even this was only very slightly weakened (an average of -0.2 with a lowest score of -3 and a highest score of 2) demonstrating the strength of networks and attitudes that had been established by Great Place projects ahead of the onset of the pandemic.

**Figure 21 To what extent, if at all, do you think the following have either weakened or strengthened as a result of the onset of the pandemic in March 2020? (5 = significantly strengthened, -5 = significantly weakened)**

Options	Lowest	Highest	Mean
Local network/s within the cultural and creative sectors	-3.00	4	1.4
Partnership working within the cultural and creative sectors	-3.00	4	1.1
Cross-sector partnerships that include the cultural and creative sector	-1.00	4	1.6
Attitudes of policymakers around the value of culture	0.00	5	1.9
Attitudes from local businesses and non-public sector around the value of culture	-3.00	2	-0.2
The legacy of the Great Place programme	-2.00	4	1.2

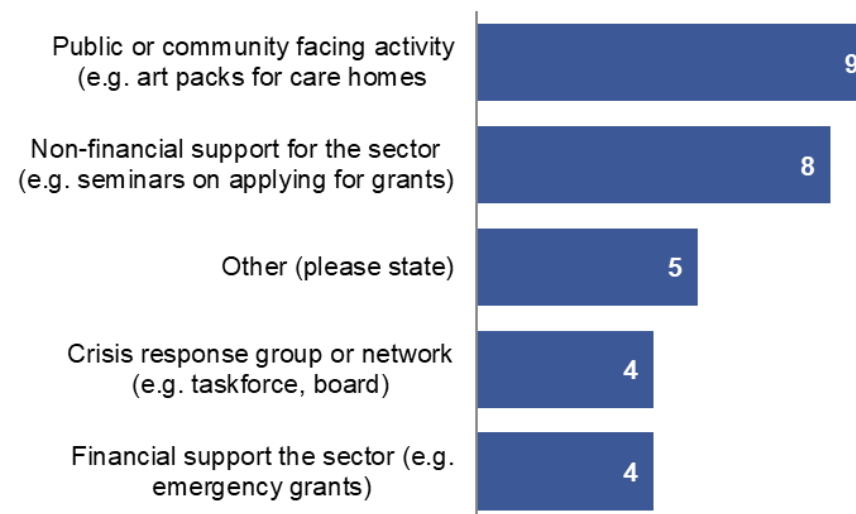
Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

When considering the impact that the Great Place programme had made on the potential resilience of different groups in the face of the pandemic, projects generally reported a slight strengthening. They were more likely to attribute a benefit from Great Place to strengthening the cultural and creative sectors (1.77) and local communities (1.73), though there was still a perception that Great Place had also contributed to strategic stakeholders' resilience (1.08).

## 7.1 Projects adapted by delivering new programming

The majority of projects delivered, or planned to deliver, activities in direct response to the pandemic that would not have otherwise taken place (10 projects compared to 4 projects who did not). These included creating public or community facing activities (9 projects) and non-financial support for the sector (8 projects).

**Figure 22 The nature of new activities projects delivered or planned to deliver**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

## 7.2 Projects adapted by changing the delivery of programming

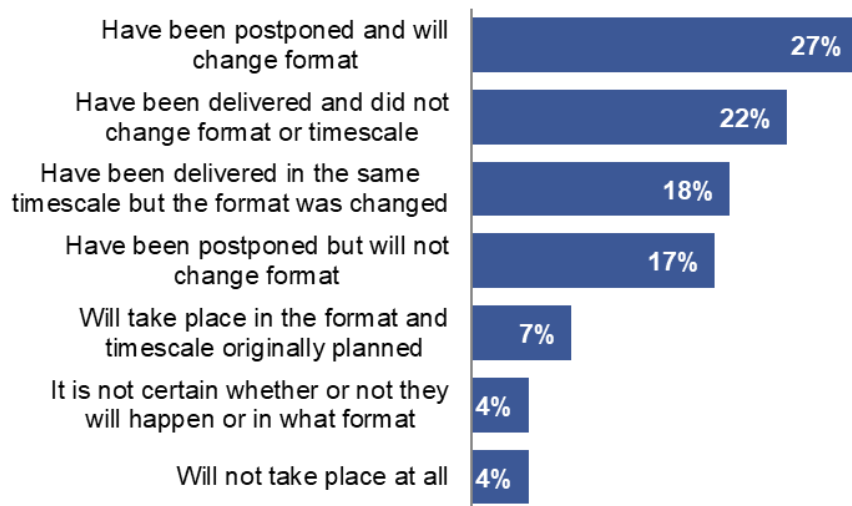
There were large scale changes to planned programming:

- 27% of activities were postponed and changed format;
- 18% were delivered over the same timescale but in a different format; and
- 17% were postponed but without a change of format.

Whilst a fifth of activities (22%) were delivered without a change to their format or timescale, as the question asked about changes since May 2019 this was not necessarily surprising (as this period included nine

months of pre-pandemic activity). Rather remarkably, only 4% of activities that had been planned were completely cancelled.

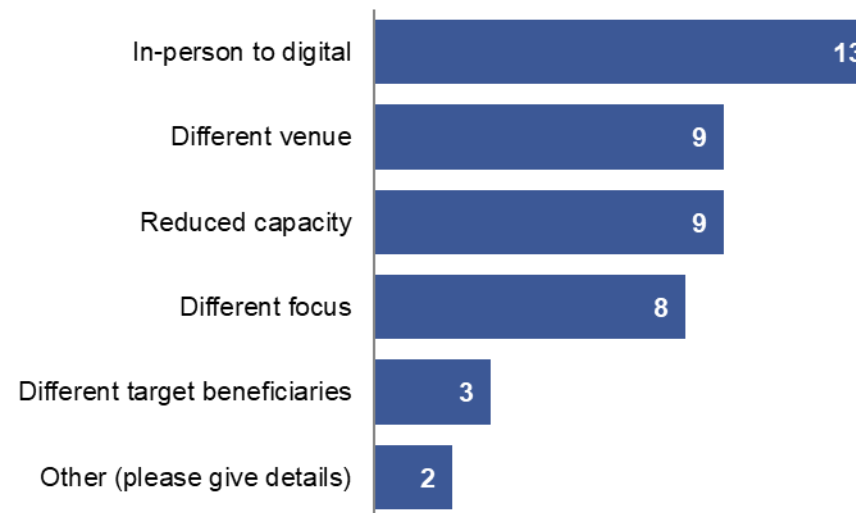
**Figure 23 Impact of the pandemic on planned activities**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

Projects made a range of different changes to activities to counter the impact of the pandemic. All respondents had made a shift to digital delivery from in-person events. It was also common for projects to be operating on a reduced capacity (9 projects), at a different venue (9 projects) or with a different focus (8 projects). Only 3 projects changed their target beneficiaries, although details of these changes were not captured. For the two projects listing other changes, these were moving to digital following the sale of a venue, and changing the priorities for their activities to support wellbeing and ensure greater access.

**Figure 24 Changes made to activities by projects**



Source: BOP Consulting (2021)

## 7.3 Best practice and key learnings

Through the rapid response survey and the project managers' survey, projects identified a range of best practice examples and key learnings in relation to the pandemic:

- Online working became key through the crisis and has significant benefits for building relationships with partners and stakeholders. Projects have been better able to find time for collaboration, advocacy, and strategic planning across their networks.
- The move to online activity has also helped some projects to increase their audience reach, both in terms of numbers of audiences and diversity of audiences. However, projects highlighted that digital access is not universal, particularly amongst older people and people

experiencing social, economic, and health inequalities. In these cases, extra effort is needed to reach and engage audiences when “normal” activity is not possible.

- Maintaining visibility throughout the pandemic has been vital for projects to ensure that all the work that was done in developing relationships with both partners and the wider community during the first two years of the projects was not lost as activity changed. This reinforces the importance of building and maintaining relationships over the longer term for place-based interventions to be truly successful. Examples included hosting network meetings online in place of physical meet-ups, and providing care kits to create artworks that could be brought back to physical spaces as they reopened.
- Being forced to change plans quickly created a level of agility and refocused priorities. For example, a number of projects created rapid-response training programmes that could support artists – particularly freelancers – in their areas. There were also examples of programmes working to deliver funds and training for SMEs, working with new partners to explore different delivery methods for activity, and developing new activities that could engage their local communities.
- The enforced stop created by a combination of lockdown and staff furlough meant some projects found they had additional time available to explore development opportunities. For some, this time was used to create strategic future plans and consider how best to be involved with (and support) the local pandemic response. Others found that the time allowed for deeper engagement by building meaningful relationships with target audiences and embedding activity and practice in local places and communities.
- As organisations that had connections across a wide range of sectors in their local areas, Great Place projects were well positioned to

provide joined up support to their communities. Examples included distributing personal protective equipment and related supplies to facilities to make them better able to welcome visitors back, and working as a strategic enabler across multiple cultural and non-cultural partners, volunteers, community response hubs and the private sector to distribute creative care kits to a wide range of different target audiences depending on the project (including primary school children, vulnerable young people, low income families, and old people isolated and digitally excluded by the lockdowns).

- The flexibility of the Great Place funders was also integral to the success of projects to respond to the pandemic. Without the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund agreeing to extend project activity (significantly) beyond planned end dates, the achievements and impacts made by projects in their communities would have been lost. Projects were keen to acknowledge the benefit of this flexibility.

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation concludes by summarising the evidence against the three core research questions that were set by the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund at the outset of the Great Place programme, namely:

- Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic, and cultural outcomes for local partners?
- How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?
- How do Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund work together to support these new approaches in the future?

However, before doing so, it is important to situate this thinking within the current wider strategic context, as this has changed substantially the programme's inception and will have a major bearing on what the two funders should do going forward.

### 8.1 A changed strategic context

Since the inception of Great Place, both the two programme funders and wider government have developed an even greater focus on place, specifically through the lens of the 'levelling up' agenda.

#### 8.1.1 Central government

The term 'levelling up' has been the big idea behind the current Government's domestic agenda since being elected in 2019. However, it was not until the publication of the February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper earlier this year<sup>21</sup> that flesh was put on the bones of the idea. Prior

to this, the Government nevertheless made a number of policy announcements and funding streams that were aimed at 'doing' levelling up, including the Stronger Towns Fund. Collectively this amounted to £3.6bn of investment for 'struggling' towns across England to support local economic growth. Subsequently to this, the self-titled £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund was launched in 2021. Designed to fund infrastructure projects that 'improve everyday life across the UK', there has already been one round of funding announced, with the second round due to go live in the summer of 2022. Crucially, there are three themes to the Levelling Up Fund, one of which is culture and heritage, providing significant opportunities for the sector.

The Levelling Up White Paper focuses on 12 'missions' for the UK, taking in all sectors of our economy and society, that are each designed to create to a more equal country by 2030. Culture is explicitly part of one of the 12 missions: increasing people's pride in the places in which they live and increasing their engagement in local cultural activities, in every area of the UK. However, it is clear that culture has a strong claim to also be able to contribute to the achievement of many other missions, in particular, those relating to well-being, health, skills and education.

Additionally, the White Paper includes some specific commitments on culture, all for the Arts Council including:

- 100% of the additional funding for Arts Council England that was agreed in the recent Spending Review must go to supporting culture and creativity outside London
- Another £40m for a second round of the Cultural Investment Fund that focuses on supporting culture and creative industries interventions that drive economic development in the regions

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

- Identifying over 100 ‘levelling up priority places’ outside of London that will be the focus for additional Arts Council England engagement and investment.

There are also specific commitments in the White Paper that relate specifically to the creative industries. These include an expansion of the Creative Scale Up programme to support high growth creative enterprises outside London, more funding to the UK Games Fund for start-ups, and there will be a Creative Industries Sector Vision published later this year in 2022, in which Westminster will collaborate with the devolved administrations to create a UK-wide strategy to support the creative industries.

Other major announcements within the White Paper relate to how the Government envisages levelling up will be achieved. Specifically, there is a commitment to build on the programme of devolution that has been in train since 2010, with a commitment that every area of England that wants a devolution deal will have one. This holds out the prospect of the creation of more combined authorities and arguably this will incentivise further restructuring within local government.

### **8.1.2 Arms-Length Bodies for culture**

One of the consequences of central government’s evolving approach to place-based investment and policy has been that all of the DCMS arms-length bodies (ALBs) are already more actively working together at a strategic level.

This was largely triggered by the need to ensure that cultural projects would be funded via the Stronger Towns Fund in 2019. The delivery of the Towns Fund created a series of culture working groups at both area and national levels that meet regularly (at least monthly) to coordinate delivery strategically across the ALBs. The different groups are each chaired by different ALBs, ensuring that the liaison and convening role

necessitated of chairs is spread and shared, and all of the ALBs are able to play their part in the delivery of the Fund. The working groups are also critical for the sharing of knowledge between ALBs, allowing for consistency and understanding across the board. Further, the working groups were subsequently asked by central government to comment on the Round 1 bids to the Levelling Up Fund in 2021.

Moving forwards, the expectation is that greater collaboration between ALBs at a national and local level will continue to be encouraged and required to realise positive outcomes and improve cultural infrastructure for communities across England. Indeed, closer working between the DCMS ALBs is not just restricted to place-based policies as it has also been required in relation to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, via the management and delivery of the Culture Recovery Fund.

Individually, the increased focus on place has impacted the way that each funder is delivering on their wider strategic aims. For the Arts Council this takes the form of a three pronged approach: universal access programmes accessible to all parts of England, ensuring that investment in places of high investment works harder to deliver public benefit, and increasing financial investment and staff resource in 54 Priority Places (areas of greater need and opportunity for increased cultural investment). Increasing staff resource in Priority Places will include development conversations to understand the needs and aspirations of people in each place as well as advice giving for funds including National Lottery Project Grants. It is anticipated that this will lead to an increase in fundable applications to a range of funding programmes. Additionally a Place Partnerships strand has been created within Project Grants specifically for place-based consortia that are seeking to do more joined-up, place-based working at scale. The Arts Council's Priority Places outside London are included within the 109

Levelling Up for Culture Places that were signalled in the White Paper and then announced by the DCMS Secretary of State<sup>22</sup>.

For the Heritage Fund, as a predominantly project-based funder (in comparison to the Arts Council's role as a core funder for a large number of organisations), the emphasis on place is slightly different. As with Arts Council England, place is a theme in the Heritage Fund's current strategy, which runs until 2024. However, for the Fund, this is being manifested through a shift towards working with organisations to understand what is the key priority for their place at the time of funding (e.g., addressing health and wellbeing as a priority) rather than viewing all projects through a centralised set of key performance indicators.

Alongside this, the Heritage Fund is currently working on a piece of research to specifically explore how collaboration across its funded projects can improve a place, particularly in areas where there may have been a concentration of projects receiving funding. Evidence suggests that giving heritage assets new and vibrant uses will increase the attractiveness of that area to businesses, the local population, and visitors. As the place increases its attractiveness, a ripple effect can be created, creating wider socio-economic benefits. Understanding the extent that heritage has been a catalyst for these place-based changes will help the Heritage Fund to understand the difference its funding makes and signpost good place-based practice to potential applicants.

## **8.2 Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic, and cultural outcomes for local partners?**

Returning to the overall outcomes of the Great Place programme, fundamentally, the new approaches to working in areas and delivering

culture that Great Place has created have led to improved social, cultural and economic, outcomes for local partners.

From a social perspective, Great Places have improved outcomes around local pride, intergenerational relations, people's sense of belonging to an area and their experiences. The projects have increased the diversity of audiences engaging with their activity, particularly in the third year, and are reaching more people and giving them higher quality experiences and access to culture. This has links to the Pride of Place Mission in the Levelling Up White Paper, and demonstrates the opportunities for improving social capital that cultural interventions can realise.

Culturally, local partners have had opportunities to deliver new, engaging work, that might not otherwise have been realised. There have been opportunities created for creative partnerships that have strengthened the local cultural sectors and activities to support heritage across Great Places. Projects have used a range of mechanisms to ensure that they are delivering high quality work, including supporting new organisations and training local people, which will have wider benefits for local partners beyond the lifetime of Great Place.

The economic benefits for local partners as a result of the new approaches taken by the Great Place programme have been both direct and indirect. Projects have made a direct economic contribution through their ability to pay local businesses and freelancers as part of their supply chain, and indirectly by increasing the visitor economy through the events offered under the Great Place banner. There has also been a further benefit realised in those places where Great Place projects have been able to support and leverage additional funding, for example, through applications to the Towns Fund and other funds made available

---

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/LUCPs#section-1>

through the levelling up agenda, as well as smaller grants and funding applications.

Great Place projects have also contributed to the economies of the places in which they are based by improving the stock of human capital through the provision of training and development activities. This has included increasing the skills of cultural practitioners, providing training to stakeholders outside of the cultural sector, and offering training and development to target audiences across their local communities. This also supports local partners to address skills gaps, making them more effective in delivering their own aims and objectives.

The counterfactual case studies show that, in the absence of funding for these new approaches, progress to improve cultural, social and economic outcomes locally is slower, with any developments needing to be “as well as” activities, rather than a core focus for activity.

## **8.3 How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?**

### **8.3.1 What does the evidence from Great Place suggest?**

Great Place projects have worked with a wide variety of stakeholders and have embedded themselves into their local ecosystems by demonstrating the value they bring and the impact that they can achieve in ways that are understood by those outside of the cultural sector. This includes demonstrating economic and/or quantifiable impacts that have been achieved as a direct result of the Great Place programme and that would otherwise have been missed opportunities.

The experience of the projects across the three / four years has shown that for culture to be fully embedded in local policy processes, it needs to be considered from the start of the process. In those situations where projects have been secondary considerations, realising impact

has taken longer and been more difficult. Conversely, where projects have been able to build relationships and networks with local authorities, cross sector partnerships, local businesses and business networks such as Business Improvement Districts and Local Enterprise Partnerships, putting culture at the heart of strategies has been more easily achieved. Evidence of this can be seen in the number of strategies in Great Places that now include culture and in the involvement of projects in supporting the creation of these strategies.

There have at times been challenges for projects to find a “seat at the table”, with time, resource, workload and understanding of culture all playing contributing factors for different projects. However, once Great Place projects have had that seat, they have been able to communicate the benefit of culture, demonstrate the value the culture can bring locally, and re-position culture within the local narrative.

Whilst in many ways the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption, out of the disruption came opportunities for culture to be re-positioned in decision-making, planning and delivery. Many projects were involved in COVID-19 recovery groups and strategic steering groups in their areas to address the impact of the pandemic, ensuring that culture was at the heart of decision-making. Several projects took leading roles in coordinating strategic networks to deliver cultural interventions that could support the wellbeing of a wide range of different target audiences. Meanwhile a number of projects used the opportunity created by the pandemic to work strategically across their local area, reconsidering future plans and placing culture as part of the longer term recovery solution.

Again, the counterfactual case studies suggest that it was harder to re-position cultural locally, from a policy perspective, without the resources and support that were provided through the Great Place programme. In particular, there was a suggestion that gaining traction



with senior stakeholders and decision makers to change local policy around culture – and the role of culture more widely – is more difficult when there isn't clear resource in place and existing perceptions held by these stakeholders towards the cultural sector may be negative.

Lastly, the systemic achievements of the Great Place project are also notable considering the novel nature of the institutions that characterised most of the Great Place projects. Projects were delivered by:

- newly created organisations (Sunderland Culture, Coventry City of Culture Trust, and Tees Valley Combined Authority)
- newly formed delivery networks created specifically for Great Place (East Kent, which drew together three cultural organisations)
- established organisations taking new approaches (e.g. Torbay which was led by the local economic development agency diversifying into culture)
- new outgrowths of legacy programmes (e.g. Reading – which built on a City of Culture bid – and Northern Heartlands, which evolved from the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership).

With hindsight, this pattern suggests that the 'newness' of the institutional arrangements of most of the projects delivering the Great Place programme was probably one of the contributory factors to its success. That is, new approaches were likely to be easier to pilot because there were less well-established habits of working and greater flexibility in processes and structures in these organisations. Of course, the 'newness' could equally have been a weakness. But the focus on capacity-building in the programme, and giving more time for projects to develop the necessary connections and networks locally, seems to have overcome the weaknesses traditionally associated with new organisational entities.

### 8.3.2 How does this map onto the new strategic context?

With its increased focus on how to increase opportunities for culture and heritage, including funding, in areas with historically low levels of take-up, the setting of priorities around young people and community engagement, and a move to identify and support priority areas across England to increase communities' sense of place, there are clear synergies between the White Paper and the ambitions and achievements of the Great Place programme. Indeed, the mission in the White Paper that focuses on Pride in Place, feels particularly pertinent. The Great Place programme has shown that a localised approach to cultural provision, developed over time, and with the opportunity for culture to become embedded across multiple sectors, providing a link between business, organisations, local government, and healthcare and education providers, can increase people's pride in their local place.

Further, this evaluation shows that it is possible for culture to be an integral part of local decision-making, planning, and delivery. By embracing novel approaches, Great Places have been able to address need in their local areas, respond to local context and reposition culture within the wider place agenda. But, the evaluation shows that it takes time, strong relationships, and an understanding of the wider benefits of culture (and how to communicate this) for it to be fully embedded.

It is therefore timely that many of the projects are now considering their legacy impact and how to continue to build and strengthen the position of culture as the programme comes to its conclusion. As part of the longitudinal study that will follow on from this report (the equivalent of year 4) we will look to explore the extent to which culture continues to be positioned centrally in local decision-making, planning, and delivery when the coordination and resources provided by Great Place are no longer available.

This last stage of the evaluation will be important as the central idea behind the programme is that if culture can be better embedded in wider local policymaking and investment decisions, it will benefit from a virtuous circle. That is, that the cultural sector will be able to tap into more resources and deliver on more joint priorities, which will make a range of stakeholders better aware of the value of culture to their local areas, which will in turn, generate greater investment into the sector.

## **8.4 How do Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund work together to support these new approaches in the future?**

In the new strategic context outlined above in 8.1, all of the DCMS arms-length bodies (ALBs) are already more actively working together at a strategic level. Whilst not the sole contributor, Great Place is considered to have been one catalyst for this strategic working, both at a national level and across the regional and area teams within England.

When looking to the future of this collaborative approach, within the current context it is clear that – for the near future at least – this will be based around knowledge and skills transfer and collaboration, not funded collaboration. The mechanisms that enabled the scale of investment seen in Great Place required central government buy in and the creation of a statutory instrument through an Act of Parliament. With no clear directive from the current government that they intend to replicate this kind of funding environment in the foreseeable future, large scale strategic funding of the type typified by Great Place will need to be on pause (although there may be other, smaller, funds which provide

opportunities for joined up working between the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund).

Taking a focus on knowledge and skills transfer and collaboration will allow ALBs to build on the collaboration that has already been created at this strategic level through the operation of the Place Liaison Group (PLG) (explored at 8.1.2 above), which has contributed to decision making on the Stronger Towns Fund, and the Levelling Up Fund. It is also valuable to note that these funds are controlled and administered by different government departments (i.e. not DCMS), creating an additional level of advisory capacity for the ALBs, where they can help direct decision-making across government departments to ensure that proposals to utilise public funding are of the highest quality (and do not overlook the cultural sector).

Beyond collaboration to support central government priorities, there are also opportunities arising from the collaboration created by the Great Place Scheme for the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund to support their own priority places. Arts Council England has a list of 54 Priority Places<sup>23</sup>, whilst the Heritage Fund has a list of 13 priority areas. This creates an opportunity for potentially aligning strategies in these areas. In particular, exploring how, in these places that are government priorities, collaborative working between the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund can be used to make an impact greater than the sum of its parts. This learning could then be rolled out more widely to inform strategies across all the ALBs, and potentially beyond.

Unlocking these possibilities may require Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund to utilise further learning from the Great Place programme. Specifically, the benefits that can be achieved by working with key place-based strategic decision makers in these places, most

---

<sup>23</sup> These 54 places all feature on the Levelling Up White Paper's list of 109 priority places which, as per the White Paper, must be the focus of all the additional funds allocated to the Arts Council in the 2021 Spending Review.

notably local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, but also the need for some sort of convenor to work across these different bodies. The recent appointment of a strategic lead for place and culture in the north by the NP11 group,<sup>24</sup> a role that has been part funded by ALBs, can be seen as one such example of this in practice, where a convenor can act as a catalyst to drive forward a collective focus on culture in place. Similar opportunities are likely to exist in other areas, particularly in relation to groups like the Midlands Engine and some of the Combined Authorities and emerging new devolution deals facilitated by the Levelling Up White Paper.

Ultimately, the lessons from both Great Place and current ways of working show that taking a holistic approach to place needs all of the actors in that area to be joined up and working together. This can be the DCMS ALBs acting together, or a collaboration of ALBs from across government departments (as has been seen in the Thriving Communities Fund), or a collaboration across local government and national ALBs (as in the NP11 group example). While the institutional mechanisms are likely to vary from place-to-place, the underlying principle is the same: by working collaboratively and using shared knowledge to inform decision making, stronger strategic decisions can be made for places.

## 8.5 Recommendations

The Great Place programme has achieved a lot across the lifetime of the programme. There is currently no plan to run a programme like this in the immediate future, but there are a number of key learning points and success factors that can help inform future programmes of this nature, regardless of whether these are funded independently or jointly by the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund. These should be understood in

terms of the emerging policy landscape across Government related to levelling up.

### 8.5.1 Strategic recommendations

#### ***Continue to be a willing and active partner at both ends of the de-centralisation-centralisation devolution agenda***

In England, the Government's levelling up agenda is tied to plans for greater devolution. The nature of this devolution is, however, a double dynamic of de-centralisation and centralisation. While newly devolved political structures have been created (e.g. metropolitan Mayors and Combined Authorities), money and power has largely not been devolved to these new bodies. Instead, most of the funding and investment that has been directed to the levelling up agenda has been controlled by central government.

To-date, ALBs in culture, particularly Arts Council England, fit this double dynamic of devolution well. They operate at central government level, are trusted to advise on some of the new national funding streams and are also charged with administering some discretionary investment in this area (e.g. the Cultural Development Fund). Yet both the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund also have more intelligence at local level than the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (LHC) or the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

It is vital that ALBs continue to play this 'intermediary' role. Most new, additional public money that will be available for culture and the creative industries will not come from culture-dedicated budgets, but instead from sources tied to the levelling up agenda, such as the forthcoming Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund. ALBs need to work at central government level to ensure that cultural projects continue to be in scope with any

---

<sup>24</sup> The NP11 group brings together the 11 LEPs across the North of England

new Funds. Equally, they also need to work at local authority and Combined Authority (CAs) level to ensure that suitable cultural projects and places are identified and supported to bid for these funds.

Also, ALBs need to be alert to the developing agendas of the still young Combined Authorities. The COVID Recovery Plans of the Combined Authorities provide a good 'way in' for the cultural sector. Already, five of the nine Combined Authorities (Liverpool City Region, West of England, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands) feature culture and / or the creative industries prominently within their COVID Recovery Plans. The evidence from the Great Place programme, about the cultural sector's effectiveness as part of local COVID responses, should clearly be leveraged to engage with the remaining four Combined Authorities regarding their COVID Recovery Plans.

***Engage early with any new political entities created through devolution, to support them to place culture at the heart of their agendas***

As the Levelling Up White Paper includes provisions for greater levels of devolution across England, there will most likely be another increase in new political bodies and structures at the sub-national level in England over the coming decade. There are clear lessons to be learned from Great Place here (see section 8.3.1 above). A first lesson is that institutional innovation at the political level opens up an opportunity for corresponding innovation in local cultural provision. Second, it is important to support and work with new bodies early on in order to advance culture within their overall strategies. This will not be easy for any new devolved structures as there will be huge demands made on these new institutions across all sectors. ALBs should focus on the role that culture can play in increasing pride in place, and contributing to the achievement of many of the other levelling up missions. However, the

evidence from Great Place also shows is that it is much easier to engage new partners in place-based working if they are incentivised, in the first instance, through the availability of some cash resource (even if this is relatively modest).

***Continue to have a two-fold 'big 'P' / small 'p' strategy towards place***

The Levelling Up White Paper oscillates between focusing on particular places of need and focusing on all local places in the country. For instance, several missions focus on the ambition to narrow the gap between particular places of disadvantage and the best performing areas. In contrast to these place ambitions that focus on making a big difference in specific places, other missions in the White Paper express their place-based priorities universally: local pride and engagement in culture, but also wellbeing, are targeted for improvement in *all* places in England. Occasionally, the missions mix up these differing place-based rationales, as with the target that all areas will have 'a globally competitive city'.

Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund have also evolved their approaches towards place-based working that contain both a focus on specific places with an overarching focus on local places in general. Going forward this two-fold approach to place needs to be acknowledged and more formalised within the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund so that it is clear which place-based rationale is being deployed for each intervention being considered. There will be a need for ensuring that inclusive cultural provision has relevance and resonance with all communities. This will require processes by which organisations and cultural funders can listen to, and engage with, these communities, in order to identify their priorities, give them voice, and recognise (and ideally act on) their needs. Also, the explicit acknowledgement of the universal goal of improving all places should

help both organisations make the case for investing in places that are not deemed priorities in terms of disadvantage (i.e. London and other metropolitan areas that can now be argued on the grounds of pride of place and creating globally competitive cities).

### 8.5.2 Operational recommendations

The previous strategic recommendations emerge from a reflection of the findings of the Great Place programme set within the new political and strategic context. In addition to this, there are also a number of more practical and specific operational recommendations that can be made about the design of any future culture programme that aims to engage in creating systemic local change that embeds culture more centrally within wider social, political and economic agendas.

#### ***Think and act more ‘Business to Business’ than ‘Business to Customer’ when designing and delivering projects to embed culture locally***

- Great Place was above all a strategic ‘business to business’ programme. That is, although cultural activities were delivered to audiences and participants (‘business to consumer’ activities) through the programme, the most important element of Great Place was the relationships and partnerships that were forged by the projects locally with other actors, both inside and outside the cultural sector. This was key to its success. However, whilst this is something that is recognised as being important across the sector, it has generally not previously been a priority in sector-funded programmes. Going forwards, aligning with the now fully fleshed out levelling up ambition is only going to require more involvement by the cultural sector in local conversations about the benefits of culture to this agenda. This needs to be front of mind when designing any new similar programmes.

#### ***Task projects with setting out a longer term perspective and being part of wider place-based visions, but give them the time to do so...***

- For projects to be successful they need time, and to be a key part of, longer term visions. The pre-existing Creative People and Places programme, which asks projects to have a 10-year strategy, even though funding is only allocated in 3-year rounds, whilst delivery focused, is a good example of this in practice. In Great Place, several projects were able to fit into longer term visions for culture that had already been set through bidding for City of Culture status. Projects need additional time to support the development of strong local relationships, as well as building trust in both the communities that projects seek to engage, and with the local businesses that projects seek to build support networks with.

#### ***...and the freedom to change tactics***

- Allowing projects the flexibility to adapt and change as local and national circumstances change ensures better outcomes. Whilst this was particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, individual projects were changing and adapting before March 2020, allowing them to explore and deliver outcomes that have most relevance to their local place.

#### ***Projects need close connections at the community level but also a broader based vision with sufficient scale***

- There is a balance to be struck between a ‘hyper-local’ ground-up approach, that can ensure connectivity with local needs, and the need to create a place-wide shared vision that looks to longer term growth. Projects that were successful at maintaining this balance generally took an approach whereby smaller, local projects could feed into and/or contribute to wider strategies and programme elements.

***Projects need to cultivate local strategic advocates for culture from outside the cultural sector, if culture is to be successfully embedded in local plans***

- Linked with this, developing relationships at a strategic level locally, whether with businesses, local government, or key, non-cultural sector organisations, can help to advocate the wider impact that culture has on a place. This in turn can help to centralise culture within local strategies and plans, with several projects noting a shift in the focus of local plans to include culture as a result of the success of their Great Place project.

***Projects need to avoid vesting local knowledge and relationships in one job role***

- As has been stated, networks and relationships across different organisations and partners are key to the success of programmes like Great Place. Linked with this success is a risk that these relationships are held by a single individual who at any time could leave the delivery organisation. Instead, creating opportunities for institutional learning and having clear lines of reporting into organisational leadership can ensure that these relationships are held by the organisation, rather than one person, creating opportunities for ongoing collaboration and consistent delivery.

***Projects need an open-mind and a method for engaging with communities to find the right mix of cultural activities and delivery methods that generates the most inclusive engagement***

- Diversification of delivery methods and cultural activities can increase the diversity of the communities that engage with activities. By responding to local needs and context, projects were able to reach a broader range of people over the lifetime of their projects than may

usually be expected for cultural and heritage engagement. This is key for programmes that seek to support fair and equal access to culture and heritage within a place, particularly as this becomes an increased priority within the levelling up agenda.

***Having some level of cash to distribute locally is beneficial...***

- Projects found value in being able to distribute small grants locally as this allowed for the testing of new approaches and opportunities to work with new target groups.

***...but expectation management is crucial***

- Not everything that is explored can be funded, and not everything that has been funded can continue once funding is over. This needs communicating at the outset to communities and sector representatives to avoid disappointment or a feeling of being 'let down' in a context of limited funding.

## 9. Appendix 1: Case Studies

### 9.1 Case Studies methodology

As a key element of the programme-level evaluation, four of the 16 Great Place projects were selected as longitudinal case studies to provide further insight into the process and practices involved in delivering change.

These were selected to provide a variety of different governance models, geographic environments and locally specific needs and aims:

**Figure 25 Case Study Focus Areas**

Project	Geography	Lead organisation	Locally-specific core aims
<b>Herefordshire</b>	Rural, West Midlands	Local media skills charity	Partnership development with the Council and across sector organisations
<b>Tees Valley</b>	Urban, Semi-rural, North East	Tees Valley Combined Authority	Creating a shared, positive sense of place/ identity across the area and enable cultural collaboration across old boundaries
<b>Gloucester</b>	Urban, South West	Gloucester Culture Trust (charity, devolved	Embedding skills in partner organisations,

Project	Geography	Lead organisation	Locally-specific core aims
		from the Council in 2016)	improving city marketing, regeneration and audience engagement
<b>Sunderland</b>	Urban, North East	Sunderland Culture (charity, founded by the Council, Sunderland University, local Music, Arts and Culture Trust)	Improving community cohesion, supporting health and wellbeing, supporting the creative economy, improving availability of cultural opportunities to children and young people

Source: BOP Consulting 2021

For each location, an initial case study was undertaken following year one of the Great Place programme delivery in 2019. These were based on desk research; an initial semi-structured phone interview and research visits including interviews with policymakers, delivery teams, partner organisations and beneficiaries alongside visits to key organisations, localities and events.

In 2021, the case studies were once again approached for interviews with the programme managers as well as interviews and/or focus groups with key partners, stakeholders or participants. Together with updated desk research including review of the external project-level final evaluation reports, this research fed into the final, updated case studies included here.

In addition to updating the sections included in the initial case studies, new sections have been added, exploring the impact of and reaction to COVID as well as the programme's legacy outcomes for each project.

## 9.2 Herefordshire's a Great Place

### 9.2.1 Key facts

**Area:** Rural, West Midlands

**Grant:** £748,200

**Lead organisation:** Rural Media, a local media skills charity, as lead of the Hereford Cultural Partnership Consortium (HCP)

**Programme summary:** With a focus on placemaking, sector and community engagement, Herefordshire's Great Place programme included grant schemes, networking, and capacity building for the cultural and creative sector. A further aim centred around improving the availability of cultural data. A key focus lay on building relationships between sectors and actors across the area. All activities funded through the programme were guided by a dedicated outcomes framework.

**Programme legacy:** The programme has resulted in ongoing activity and networking through the HCP, which has become a formalised entity, supported by Arts Council England Cultural Compact funding. Meanwhile, Herefordshire's new Cultural Strategy provides an enduring tool to guide activity and to hold the Council to account with regard to developments in this area. The existence of Great Place also helped to secure further funding, including from the Towns Fund; the Great Place programme manager now sits on the Towns Fund board, demonstrating an increased understanding locally of the cultural sectors' strategic role. Moreover, there are plans to maintain several elements of the Great Place programme, such as the *The Shire* website.

### 9.2.2 Strategic context of the programme

The *Herefordshire's a Great Place* programme was developed in response to several local strategic contexts:



- Herefordshire Council was forced to make significant budget cuts to its cultural services between 2016 and 2020, following funding reductions from central government. This led to the phasing out of the Local Authority’s position of Cultural Development Officer and the controversial announcement to divest its Museums-Libraries-Archives service.
- In response, the Council began seeking ways of supporting its services in new ways to ensure ongoing provision of quality cultural facilities. This was done via the dual approach of:
  - making key investments in existing cultural assets such as the Library, Archive & Record Centre, and local museums to improve the venues’ financial sustainability and independence; and
  - becoming increasingly community-led, reflected in a policy of encouraging Community Asset Transfers. This for example led to the handover of the operation of the Courtyard Centre for the Arts to a Trust and of the management of some smaller facilities to community groups.
- In 2017, Hereford unsuccessfully bid for the UK City of Culture 2021. Whilst initiated by the Council, the process created the Hereford Cultural Partnership Group (HCP) as a way to establish a shared vision for culture in the region. The consortium consists of representatives from major heritage, arts and cultural organisation, local government and businesses. The members decided to retain their partnership going forwards, based on a shared vision to develop Herefordshire as a county which is “*internationally recognised as a beacon for inspirational arts and culture that enhances wellbeing*”. It was this group which saw and pursued the opportunity of the Great

Place programme for Hereford in 2016, managed by charity Rural Media on behalf on HCP.

- A new university dedicated to STEM subjects – the New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMiTE) – launched in 2015 and opened its doors to new students in 2021 as the UK’s first new university in 40 years. With a focus on technology, engineering and employability skills including innovation and creativity, it aims to transform engineering education and address a shortfall in graduates. It is planning to benefit and link in with existing infrastructure in Hereford by working alongside local companies in the sector, bringing in and retaining students and young people, and making use of existing buildings and sites in town.

### 9.2.3 Key aims and activities of the programme

In response to this context and HCP’s vision and mission, the local Great Place programme was born, with a focus on “*working with diverse communities, volunteers and professionals to put culture at the heart of life in Herefordshire*”. This was based on four core aims<sup>25</sup>:

1. Placemaking – “Cultivate sustainable partnerships with non-arts, heritage and culture sectors”: making Herefordshire a better place to live, work, visit; and reflecting Herefordshire’s arts, heritage and culture in local plans and strategies.
2. Economic and policy development – “Build capacity of arts, heritage and cultural organisations”: boosting the county’s local economy; and providing people with increased skills and knowledge to deliver high quality arts and heritage opportunities.
3. Community development – “Facilitate opportunities for groups and individuals to explore a sense of place through culture and heritage”:

<sup>25</sup> ER Arts, 2021, *Evaluation Report, Herefordshire’s A Great Place programme*

widening participation and inspiration through arts, culture, and heritage; with people having experienced and been inspired by arts, heritage and culture.

4. Arts, culture, heritage, and creative sector development – “improve opportunities for cultural creatives within our communities”: helping the sector become more resilient.

To achieve this, a programme was designed with 18 activity areas, including: public events; an annual cultural conference; grant schemes; the provision of information and tools to support local cultural organisations’ resilience; the creation of new partnerships and working groups to strengthen links between culture, health and wellbeing and economy; and capacity building through e.g., cultural apprenticeships, workshops and grants.

In many ways, Great Place has given capacity for the consortium to do the strategy and the governance. But it also gives tangible examples and activity, so that it’s not just about talk. When you start to have a programme of work with its own funding, it means that it’s real and then it’s worth doing all the paperwork. *(Lauren Rogers, Rural Media)*

Finally, the programme included supporting community asset transfer in order to explore new ideas, with an aim to transfer two cultural assets into community ownership. This area of work was directly funded by Herefordshire Council, which saw this as a good investment in reducing their financial responsibilities over the longer term.

Underlying these activities, a key focus lay on consultation with the sector and public and building relationships between sectors and actors across the area through brokerage and networking.

All activities funded through the programme were guided by a dedicated outcomes framework and were required to achieve outcomes across two or more areas.

We wanted to see whether there was an opportunity for Herefordshire, given the local authority stepping back from culture, to put a programme of new cultural settlement into place. And that underpins the programme. Through Great Place we realised we could do more in terms of raising the understanding and aspiration of communities for Community Asset Transfer. *(Lauren Rogers, Rural Media)*

## Reacting to COVID

In finding a way to work around the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in Spring and Autumn 2020, Rural Media’s Great Place programme manager Lauren Rogers reported that the extension provided to the grantees was essential. It enabled the piloting of new, digital ways of working and galvanised the project through providing it with a few “*bonus months*”.

While the first lockdown in March 2020 meant that some events had to be cancelled<sup>26</sup> and others postponed, it at the same time allowed the team to deliver new online events with the Young Creatives Board as well as a series of workshops exploring best practice for inclusion and accessibility of cultural sites.

---

<sup>26</sup> Final ‘Pride of Place’ national conference; a multi-venue exhibition curated by the Young Creatives Board

In working around the new challenges, the intensive networking that had been set up as part of the programme over the past years proved extremely valuable, providing a space to have conversations with various sector members over the course of the crisis. One HCP board member for example created a new Collective for performing artists, while community organisations such as volunteer networks responded quickly to provide support where needed. The introduction of a small Great Place-funded grant was considered to provide creative people with “*some space to take stock and consider what to do*”; however, upon consultation with existing grant recipients, efforts were refocused on supporting third parties to deliver revised community activity, such as digital participation, instead. Meanwhile *The Shire* was used to provide information about COVID national COVID support grants. “*The key aim*”, says Lauren Rogers, “*was to provide bespoke and tailored advice and support*”.

Nevertheless, there is ongoing anxiety about the future of local cultural organisations and sector members, with many at risk of not being able to survive, which would inevitably have an impact on the local cultural ecosystem.

## 9.2.4 Programme highlights across the years

Across the funding period, the programme achieved a number of highlights across its priority areas.

### **Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector networking and support**

Key highlights focused on bringing together the local CCI sector in a number of ways:

- The development of the HCP has gone from strength to strength. Started as a “*loose, informal consortium*”, it has become more

formalised as a Not-for-Profit through the Great Place programme and “*was key to the programme’s delivery and a big success*”, according to Lauren Rogers. It successfully applied for an Arts Council England Cultural Compacts grant of £20,000 in September 2020 to contribute to its development to become “*the body it needs to be*”; the funding period runs until March 2022.

- HCP together with other partners in 2018 launched Herefordshire’s first Cultural Strategy 2019-2029. Designed to be an accessible document for all, this was officially endorsed by Herefordshire Council’s Cabinet in October 2020. This means that “*it will still be there even if there is political change*”, and that the public can hold the Council to account over its stated commitments.
- A local cultural sector news website, *The Shire*, was launched to promote, celebrate and challenge perceptions of the cultural sector in Herefordshire. This provided a step-change for the previously disconnected cultural and creative industries. The website offered different ways to engage: it promoted Great Place events and programmes as well as providing a general ‘What’s on’ guide to local cultural events; featured profiles of local creative talent; and acted as a tool to make Hereford’s creative community aware of grants and creative employment opportunities. *The Shire* lives on, initially supported by funding through the Cultural Compacts grant until March 2022.
- In 2018, Great Place hosted Civic Fabric, Herefordshire’s first national cultural conference with a programme of keynotes, workshops and panels focusing on skills and sustainability of the cultural sector, based on feedback from the sector. The conference attracted over 200 delegates and allowed the local cultural sector to interact with and learn from experts from the National Trust, Herefordshire Council, and the British Museum. The following year, the conference took

place under the name Create/Fuel 2019, with a focus on highlighting creative pathways for under 30s. This included workshops, speeches and networking; the Young Creatives Board was established through the 2019 conference. The third conference, Pride of Place 2020, was cancelled due to COVID.

- A variety of training opportunities and schemes supported capacity building of the local cultural sector, based on research to understand what skills were lacking. These included:
  - The *Go and See* grant scheme, which provided bursaries of £300 – £500 for Herefordshire-based creatives to learn from best practice in other places of the UK, thereby breaking down the insularity of living in rural areas. Recipients were required to translate that knowledge back within Hereford upon completing their trip and typically became involved in other Great Place programmes from this starting point.
  - Workshops and small bursaries focusing on health and wellbeing activities; and bringing in mid-career professionals to serve as judges for one of the grant schemes, providing training on how to approach such a role.

### Spotlight: ‘The Big Conversation’

A key focus of the Herefordshire programme – with one of the smallest Great Place grants – was its prioritisation of building relationships, i.e., partnerships, brokerage and connections. This was a carefully chosen tactic, in contrast to a more delivery-focused approach: *“We thought about something high profile like a community opera, but decided it just wasn’t so important for legacy.”* Rural Media were very conscious that Great Place was about establishing the foundations of a new approach

that will last beyond the project period. The approach was ideological as well as practical: not being the direct deliverers meant *“this is not about hand-holding but about empowering communities.”*

In-person networking was highlighted as particularly important in a rural area, where spending time in different towns and villages was vital to forge trust. Digital communications was also seen as key in a context where physical access can be a major issue. This resulted in the creation of *The Shire* website to *“whet the appetite”* of potential cultural audiences and create a virtual networking-point for sector members.

The project team thus spent a significant portion of time each week attending events and meetings organised by others, both as speakers but also as participants. These ranged from community discussions in local pubs to formal consultation events, covering culture, employment and skills, neighbourhood planning and health.

This approach was also successful in building connections with other sectors and contributed to embedding culture across agendas: *“I attended an intelligence sharing event with health practitioners, and when the event began, people asked if this would be relevant to me as I was from ‘culture’. But at the end I had seven business cards and lots of ‘why haven’t we had this conversation before?’ comments.”* Connection-building and brokerage led to several successful collaborations, such as the Health and Wellbeing Evaluation Bursaries, which were accessed by health practitioners, and the Business and Culture Working Together project: a collaboration between Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, the Herefordshire Business Board, Great Place and Rural Media, which saw the creation of three short films which profile Herefordshire *“as a great place to live, visit and invest in”*, as well as a series of seminars about the power of cross-sector partnerships.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> [Business & Culture Working Together | The Shire \(the-shire.co.uk\)](#)

At the same time, the delivery team were clear that connecting and brokering work best where they are connected with the ability to offer funding opportunities: “grants [and seed funding] bring people in.”

### Supporting local arts and heritage facilities

Some activities specifically contributed to the resilience of local arts and heritage facilities:

- The *Hidden Gems* grant scheme funded creative projects that brought the arts and heritage closer together, got local communities involved in cultural activity and embraced the use of digital technology to “raise the profile of Herefordshire’s lesser-known heritage” ‘gems’. createROSS, a community group and one of the *Hidden Gems* grant recipients, involved communities and schools in recreating historic sites around Ross on Wye using augmented reality.
- An ongoing partnership was developed with the National Trust to activate their property Berrington Hall in Leominster. This included collaborative planning of three programmes of activity, co-designed and run by young people and delivered in 2019-20. The Trust may roll these projects out to other properties if considered successful.
- Meadow Arts and Hereford Cathedral received financial support for their commission of internationally acclaimed artist Yinka Shonibare. Shonibare worked with local art college students and a disability arts group to create a new artwork responding to the Mappa Mundi, the largest existing medieval world map, held in the Cathedral. Shonibare attended the launch and held an ‘in conversation’ event for the public, garnering significant press coverage for the city as a cultural centre.

### Community engagement

Community engagement and consultation were key features throughout the programme. The opportunity to ‘test out’ activities provided by the funding “meant that [we] were able to work with communities who might not identify as ‘cultural groups’”, says Lauren Rogers. Highlights included:

- Large-scale consultation events and public meetings about the county’s cultural needs, held in the regional centres of Hereford, Ross on Wye and Leominster.
- The programme worked with the Marches Children and Family Network around access and inclusion, and “had some real success making our spaces accessible to all” (e.g., for audience members with disabilities that may hinder access). This included running online workshops on inclusion, which were funded by Great Place. As a result, there is now a cohort of a dozen or so *inclusive culture champions* in the county, who identified themselves and are continuing to act beyond the end of the programme – something that the programme manager feels would have been unlikely to happen without the Great Place programme.
- 28 people attended a ‘Discussion Night’ event co-ordinated for members of the public, health professionals and arts professionals to discuss the potential for culture to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes. Speakers from Ledbury Poetry Festival and ArtsLift<sup>28</sup> introduced their activities, strengths and challenges, and led discussions about how such activity could be developed further locally. This led to new partnership potential amongst participants as well as information published on *The Shire* about Arts on Prescription.

<sup>28</sup> a long-standing organisation which provides arts learning programmes for those with mental or physical illnesses

- Some of the *Great Place* funding was funnelled into the creation of a Creative Careers network for the county aimed particularly at younger creatives. This work also saw the creation of a *Young Creatives Board*, whose members contributed to the development of a local cultural programme for young people, as well as the *Create/Fuel* event for people aged 16-30 in the early stages of a creative career. The latter aimed to provide inspiration, practical advice, networks and support on how to start a career in the creative industries.
- Throughout, the programme maintained an ‘on the ground’ relationship with the new NMiTE, with students for example helping to design local spaces and programme elements, including getting involved in the Young Creatives Board.

### Spotlight: Engaging and supporting young people

As part of the *Great Place* programme, the delivery team introduced several programme elements targeted specifically at Herefordshire’s younger people, in particular those with aspirations to develop careers in the creative industries. This included the development of the *Young Creatives Board* as well as the *Create/Fuel* conference, an event for 16–30-year-olds interested in creative careers in Hereford. Young people got involved with these opportunities in a variety of ways, often through initial engagement with other activities organised under the banner of the *Great Place* programme. Most of those who engaged regularly in the *Board* had existing creative interests.

At an initial planning session with Rural Media, the *Board* members were asked what they would like to see happen locally. The *Board* then received funding through *Great Place* to develop events and collaborations, for example running regular ‘First Friday’ events. These were based on an open call for young artists to create performances, which the *Board* members selected: “*we were responsible for choosing*

*the piece that we through the rest of Hereford would like to see*”. The events were initially held in person, with the idea of creating collaborations between young people and artists from different areas. They were later transferred to online activity during the COVID-19 lockdown, with performances recorded and broadcast. These were successful: “*everyone being at home gave people an opportunity to join in and see talent.*” Among others, the members also delivered an event at a local school, to “*show the pupils about ways to go about the arts – it was fun to get them [to be] creative!*”.

The young members felt that their involvement was hugely important in the programme: “*it acknowledged that young people have voices and opinions and want to have a say in what we see in our homes.*” They felt that their decision would be based on different criteria: “*we didn’t decide because of name value etc., but because we liked the artists’ suggestions*”. Moreover, it provided a way to show young people that a career in the creative sector is possible: “*you need to have access to other people who share the same headspace. It can be quite daunting to be the only [artistic] person surrounded by young people focused on their careers*”.

On a personal level, members reported having an enjoyable time, “*learning a lot*”, and meeting other likeminded people. One of the participants subsequently decided to go to Hereford College of Arts (dropping a previous history course), which he “*never thought would happen*”. Another member ended up doing more media work for Rural Media, having been “*given opportunities to do things and pushed into areas she’d never have tried*”. She has now moved to London to work for the University of the Arts London, using some of these skills on a day-to-day basis. Meanwhile, a third member – an aspiring poet – reported that his involvement helped him with organisational skills and gave him confidence to apply for a course with Soho Theatre, spending a year

writing a play: *“a really good starting point for me”*. As someone who is blind, he has also become one of local area’s inclusive culture champions recruited during the Great Place programme.

### 9.2.5 Programme legacy

Lauren Rogers feels that throughout the programme, *“one thing has led to the next”*, with a legacy that *“there is not going to be a cliff edge”* once the programme has ended. The programme manager highlighted that there is still silo working happening in the area and that this will take more than three years to change: it is an ongoing job, *“there is always networking to be done”*. It is felt, for example, that the arts sector is better connected than the heritage sector at present, which is more reliant on volunteers, who *“connect in different ways to [the] freelancers”* who make up a large part of the local arts sector.

However, *“things are moving together”*. Where *“Great Place was about laying the foundations after X years of neglect, now that we are coming to an end, we are seeing some of those foundations coming to fruition. [The funding] allowed us to try things without the Council being burdened with the testing”*.

Most importantly, the HCP has continued to grow and evolve during the programme and has now become formalised as a Not-For-Profit with *“some capacity”*: as the programme manager summarised, *“basically, Great Place has been great in terms of developing the HCP”*. Ongoing funding through the Cultural Compact grant and the Council (which has agreed to invest £9,000 to support the consortium) means that *“there is a clear path forward for the HCP”*, with available funds to support the partnership to become *“the body it needs to be”*. This is also testament to the fact that overall, the sector’s relationship with the Council *“has improved immeasurably”*.

HCP is in the process of taking on new partners - Ledbury Poetry Festival is now a HCP member, and other local leaders such as Sidney Nolan Trust and Hay Festival are also engaged - and is in conversation about changing to charitable status. It has also been able to bring other local major partners to the table, such as the National Trust and Hereford Cathedral. In 2020/21 those HCP members who are also Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations established regular NPO networking: *“vital for smaller NPOs in a rural county”*, according to Rogers. HCP members also continue to engage with the West Midlands Cultural Recovery Unit and are forging new relationships with neighbouring councils such as Shropshire and Worcester City Council, to share best practice and tools for strategic cultural development.

The ongoing existence of HCP means that looking forward, *“there is a body that can build on past work rather than having to work from scratch”*, which can continue its *“glue, not do”*-activity of *“matchmaking, seeing the golden threads and connecting the dots”*. HCP has ongoing plans, for example in moving forward the local arts and health agenda and in consulting with other LEPs (Anglia, Cornwall, Cumbria) about their local shadow culture boards – something that does not currently exist locally.

In addition, the new Cultural Strategy for Herefordshire, which will last until 2029, provides a key guideline around which decisions and activities can be based going forward, as well as a tool for the public to hold the Council to account. HCP is now working to *“put the meat on the bones”* of the Strategy, enabled by the Compact funding and the willingness of members to turn strategy into action. An HCP Investment Plan is for example being published in 2022 to identify further investment in cultural development. To support this, a Great Place-funded and HCP-commissioned independent report into growth potential of Herefordshire’s CCIs, published in February 2022, will provide, for the

first time, data on the scale of the local CCI sector along with recommendations for specific interventions to stimulate the sector.<sup>29</sup>

Other elements of the Great Place programme are also still in existence. *The Shire* website is continuing, initially supported by Cultural Compact funding until March 2022. It is also a key part of HCP's submission to Arts Council England's Volunteering Futures funding scheme in December 2021. In going forward, the website has been reorientated as the online home of HCP, with a regular "*Herefordshire Culture*" newsletter from *The Shire* launching in April 2022. HCP and the young people involved in the *Young Creatives Board* and the *Create/Fuel* conference have also had conversations about how to continue these activities. Whilst "*the momentum has petered off a bit*" (with some key participants moving away from Hereford) it has proved to be a valuable piloting opportunity for how to undertake cultural activity with children and young people at the fore and can "*inform actions developed under the Cultural Strategy's CYP priority*", says Rogers: "*people have realised that things can be done!*" For example, the success of the Board and *Create/Fuel* conference have contributed to shaping new activities such as Rural Media's new Point of View creative youth voice programme<sup>30</sup> as well as Ledbury Poetry Festival's submission to the Arts Council's Volunteering Futures fund, which centres on creating hybrid and digital volunteering opportunities for under 30s.

### **Spotlight: A responsive approach to Community Asset Transfers (CAT)**

Herefordshire's Great Place programme included a commitment to transfer two cultural assets into community ownership. This area of work was directly funded by Herefordshire Council, which hoped through this

to reduce their financial responsibilities over the longer term. This aspect of the programme has changed a lot over the years, as "*the policy didn't change but the attitudes did*" and has required a nimble and responsive approach.

Great Place's work in this area began in January 2018 with a series of roundtables for council officers from different teams. Two potential assets were identified for transfer: Hereford Town Hall, a listed building owned by Herefordshire Council, and a cluster of sites in the market town of Kington.

Instead of commissioning a feasibility study for the Town Hall as initially planned, the Great Place team followed this up by first commissioning a wider 'Cultural Spaces' research report, to inform future developments and investments made to improve local cultural provision. This aimed to understand the challenges and opportunities of local cultural provision in order to help set the buildings into their wider context, as well as to consider potential approaches to a wider number of spaces including the Town Hall and Museum & Art Gallery. The research supported Hereford in its successful application to the Towns Fund, receiving £22.4m to support post-COVID recovery and enhance economic growth. The Great Place programme manager now sits on Hereford's Towns Fund board, resulting in being able to "*make sure culture is represented*" and "*confidently keep the conversation going*".

The approach for the Kington project has been very different. Based on an earlier unsuccessful attempt by the Council to transfer key assets there, the partners were keen to keep the conversation alive, and developed a more long-term transformational programme. This builds on local relationships and identifying "*what people want*". A new process was set in motion to re-engage the community, starting with a public

<sup>29</sup> *Get Creative: 9 ways to supercharge Herefordshire*

<sup>30</sup> Funded by Esmee Fairbairn Foundation until 2023



consultation event which identified a number of priorities, including retaining young people and combatting social isolation. Rural Media's independence from the Council helped in this context. *"The lack of previous baggage that local authorities sometimes have means there are fewer blocks in the conversations we want to be having."* Nevertheless, the Council remain a critical – and positive – part of the process. Great Place subsequently delivered a funding application to Big Lottery's Awards for All, which is funding a project manager post to deliver events to test the community's ideas.

### 9.2.6 Success factors

Throughout the programme, the programme manager identified a number of factors that have been key to the programme's success:

1. Programmes and concepts need to be adapted for rural areas. 'Diversity' has a different meaning in a rural context to an urban one, being predominantly about geography, not ethnicity. Challenges around connectivity and digital access require specific approaches, and time needs to be planned in to access different locations.
2. Each of the Great Place team members has significant expertise in communications, including journalism, marketing and digital engagement. This is critical for connecting people with culture in a rural context and in amplifying the effect of all activities.
3. The creation of a Cultural Strategy, supported by Great Place, was important in giving substance to the plans and activities throughout the programme and moving forwards.
4. To make the most of the available funds and build on what is there as opposed to 'parachuting in' new activities, the programme was principally about creating added value, making more of what is

already happening through amplification, connectivity or bringing a cultural slant.

5. To be effective, training has to be based on research and an understanding of what skills are lacking locally. It requires scheduled, long-term opportunities rather than one-off activities to be successful.
6. Expectation management was crucial given the nature of Great Place as a pilot programme – this allowed for trying things out, but at the same time meant that not everything may work and not all problem could be solved at once.

*With a high level of expectation when you're working on many things simultaneously, you won't be able to please everyone all of the time. So, for the project team, that means having a thick skin and negotiation skills. (Lauren Rogers, Rural Media)*

## 9.3 Great Place Tees Valley

### 9.3.1 Key facts

**Area:** Urban; Semi-rural. North East

**Grant:** £1,332,500

**Lead organisation:** Tees Valley Combined Authority, leading a consortium of five Local Authorities<sup>31</sup>, cultural organisations and Teeside University

**Programme summary:** The programme's key aim was to use culture to create a shared, positive sense of place and identity across the Tees Valley, as well as to support local economic regeneration, by growing CCI sector capacity and contributing to the spread of good practice. To achieve this, the programme funded local and regional cultural and heritage projects.

**Programme legacy:** The programme contributed to the creation of networks and models of working and improved Local Authorities' understanding of the relevance of culture to constituents. Whilst there was an initial feeling that more may have been done to create a cohesive programme and share learning and resources, the area's COVID response provided new insight into the programme's legacy. The existence of Great Place Tees Valley (GPTV) helped to quickly bring together the sector to create a response programme, providing a renewed sense that Great Place helped the cultural sector to be better connected as well as be recognised as having strategic influence.

### 9.3.2 Strategic context of the programme

The Great Place Tees Valley programme was designed to respond and contribute to a number of local strategic developments:

- The creation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016 brought about a new opportunity to work across geographic boundaries and crystallise the emerging spirit of collaboration between the five local authorities. While there were previous structures for collaboration, the creation of the Combined Authority added impetus to these efforts. Although the new governance layer added new complexity in terms of management, it also created additional capacity and led to a strong awareness of new structures being tested and evolved. Great Place thus came into an enabling environment seeking change and growth.

*The title 'Great Place' singular was helpful and fortuitous, marking this as a single area. The habit of working together is important even if individual elements don't work. The growing awareness of shared ambition – not of five different sets of challenges and assets – is important. (Combined Authority)*

- With the development of the Combined Authority came an increased appreciation of the potential role that the cultural and creative sector may have in the region. The Tees Valley Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan (2016-2026) for the first time sought to foreground the cultural and creative sector in a discussion about the region's future. Indicatively, all strategic areas were asked by the Director of Investment about their contributions to culture.
- This linked to a growing sense of regional identity, developing in line with political structures and drawing on both contemporary reality and

---

<sup>31</sup> The Tees Valley Combined Authority was created in April 2016 and is a partnership of five authorities: Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

heritage narratives. The idea of ‘Tees Valley’ as a region had previously felt like a construct. However, at the point when Great Place started, the concept was being brought to life, beginning with the core challenges of providing coherent infrastructures, including transport, across the region.

This is a region that’s currently trying to understand itself as a region. The questioning of authentic identities and pluralities is something only arts and heritage can do. (*Cultural organisation*)

- At the point when Great Place started, discussions were underway regarding a local bid for City of Culture 2025. In this context, Great Place was seen as ‘action research’ for the bid, developing a shared set of objectives, finding a voice for the cultural sector, working on a cultural strategy from the ground up and providing learning to feed into a potential City of Culture proposal.

### 9.3.3 Key aims and activities of the programme

The programme’s overriding goal was to use culture to create a shared, positive sense of place and identity across the Tees Valley, as well as support the area’s economic growth and regeneration. In doing so, the programme had a number of underlying objectives focusing on sector development and community engagement, including:

- to grow capacity in the cultural and creative sector and
- increase partnership and collaboration in the CCIs and spread good practice and delivery across geographic borders within the Combined Authority; and
- to engage all communities in the Tees Valley in its offer – including ‘hard to reach communities’ – thereby increasing audience

participation and enhancing community confidence through engagement with culture and

- increase a positive sense of place and belonging, in particular among children and young people, and challenge the image the of Tees Valley as characterised by industrial decline and post-industrial problems.

To achieve this, the programme brought together the five Tees Valley Local Authorities, as well as Teesside University and key local cultural organisations Stockton Arts Centre (ARC), Theatre Hullabaloo, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (Mima), Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF), The Northern School of Art as well as Tees Valley Arts in a consortium, led by the new Combined Authority (TVCA). Each of the five local authorities as well as TVCA provided £25k match funding, totalling £150k, in addition to “*significant in-kind match funding*”, according to programme manager Christopher Batstone. Together, the partners organised and led a series of projects, including four ‘Settlement Projects’ that took place within a Local Authority as well as a range of Tees Valley-wide projects. The projects were connected by central management and a shared model: a central cultural organisation embedded in an in-need area, building capacity with its local community and taking its expertise and practice across geographic borders. All worked closely with their local communities, involving community members through participatory activities in order to deliver on a series of outcomes such as empowerment, personal development, creative skills and collective voice.

The projects included a range of arts, heritage and cultural engagement activities, with many focusing on audience engagement and sector capacity building (see table below). While embracing and celebrating local heritage and history played a role in many of the projects, overall, the programme aimed to reflect the values of Tees Valley today and its

ambitions for the future. Through this varied approach, the programme aimed to develop and extend existing cultural activity, practice and strengths of work in the Tees Valley in a way that responded to local needs and contexts.

**Figure 26 Type of project, delivery partners, and project details**

Type of project	Delivery partners	Project
Settlement Project	Darlington Borough Council	Heritage on Track: work between artists and schools/communities to build engagement in heritage in lead up to bicentenary of Stockton and Darlington railway
Settlement Project	Hartlepool Borough Council & Northern School of Art	Creative Hartlepool: Community engagement events around town centre regeneration schemes with focus on heritage and cultural assets; creative industries events for young people
Settlement Project	Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art	The Middlesbrough Settlement: Long-term model of collaborations with local residents and organisations to make creative projects around the Settlement model, retelling story of the Boosebeck settlement

Type of project	Delivery partners	Project
Settlement Project	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council / Tees Valley Arts	Community-led heritage programmes based on local steel making history: The Black Path, Celebration of the historic Black Path in South Teesside; Reimagining the annual Steel Gala; Social Life of Steel: enable the public to tell their own story
Tees Valley-wide projects	Middlesbrough Council	Creative Factory: Building relationships between institutions and creative practitioners to support sustainability of local practitioners
Tees Valley-wide projects	ARC Stockton	Greater Tees Practitioner Training: training programme for creative practitioners with focus on community engagement including with socially excluded groups
Tees Valley-wide projects	Stockton Borough Council/ Stockton International Riverside Festival/ Theatre Hullabaloo	SIRF shared its professional experience and skills with community groups and cultural organisations across Tees Valley, creating a high quality, vibrant community carnival model + Two new productions by Theatre Hullabaloo drawing

Type of project	Delivery partners	Project
		on its pioneering child-centred artistic model through dialogue between artists and children
Tees Valley-wide projects	Tees Valley Arts/ Real Tees Valley	Young people worked with professional film makers to create short films about young people's views on place and identity
Tees Valley-wide projects	Tees Valley Museums	Consortium of five Local Authority museum services developed three pilot projects to test new approaches to reaching and engaging visitors

## Reacting to COVID

Great Place Tees Valley was considerably affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, given in particular the fact that most projects involved close working relationships with local communities. However, rapid contingency planning meant that some projects were able to move to digital/ online provision, whilst others postponed their activity to a later date.

More widely, the Combined Authority, local LEP and Local Authority partners approved a £1m Recovery Programme<sup>32</sup> of stabilisation, recovery and development funding for the area's Visitor Economy and Cultural Industries sectors, with the aim of *"supporting Tees Valley sector recovery in-line with other parts of the country and create the*

*conditions for future growth"*. Headed by a Task Force made up of representatives of the culture/ visitor economy sectors and chaired by Annabel Turpin, Chief Executive of ARC (one of the Great Place delivery partners), this was a core way to involve the culture and visitor economy in decision-making. Whilst the Task Force's primary job focused on supporting the recovery programme, they have also been invited to consult on the broader local investment agenda. In this, the Task Force *"recognises that the culture sector has a critical role to play in supporting the recovery and wellbeing of communities, rebuilding confidence and routes to participation, engagement and attendance."*<sup>33</sup>

The Recovery Programme thus aimed to balance short-term support with interventions which create longer-term conditions for growth. Activities were funded through six core programme strands, of which one was the Great Place Tees Valley 'Reconnecting Communities' programme. Funded through a re-deployment of an £80k Great Place underspend, the programme was a new strand of the Great Place Tees Valley programme, sitting under the banner of the Recovery Programme. Building on the best practice established through the wider Great Place programme, it aimed to support the recovery of cultural venues and freelancers by developing new ways of reaching and engaging audiences and communities during the ongoing social restrictions. To achieve this, the programme funded projects, pilots and audience development initiatives to re-engage local communities with Tees Valley culture and heritage venues, both through extending existing Great Place projects as well as through new activities. Activities ran until the end of March 2021.

According to Task Force lead Annabel Turpin, the existence of Great Place helped considerably in getting the Task Force and Recovery

<sup>32</sup> [Visitor Economy and Culture Industries COVID-19 Recovery Programme - Tees Valley Combined Authority \(teesvalley-ca.gov.uk\)](https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk)

<sup>33</sup> GPTV Reconnecting Communities Final proposal

Programme off the ground: it meant there was existing trust between partners, which enabled the members to “*get going straight away*”. Moreover, Great Place offered an existing “*trusted and effective ‘brand’*” for supporting community engagement and audience participation, which local communities already knew about.

### 9.3.4 Programme highlights across the years

Great Place Tees Valley achieved delivery of a wide range of public and community events, workshops, training and volunteering opportunities, thereby “*bringing communities together to celebrate local heritage, culture and identity*”. In total, delivery ran across 18 different projects, involving 320 local artists and SMEs as well as around 12,000 local children and families.<sup>34</sup>

#### CCI sector capacity development

The programme successfully helped to support skills and confidence among sector participants, as well as led to increased collaborative working across the Tees Valley among cultural, creative and heritage sector representatives. In total, 102 community training opportunities were delivered to artists, practitioners and volunteers; 48 artists attended training programmes; 125 took up mentoring opportunities; and 235 local artists or SMEs offered employment via 30 placements.<sup>35</sup> The programme enabled development of successful models of training, providing practitioners with new skills, confidence and the ability to secure new work through Great Place or other avenues. Highlights included:

- In response to a realisation that it was hard to find local artists to lead community sessions, ARC ran a series of cohorts of practitioner

<sup>34</sup> Great Place Tees Valley Evaluation Summary, Teesside University ([https://research.tees.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/25196564/Great\\_Place\\_Tees\\_Valley\\_Evaluation\\_Summary.pdf](https://research.tees.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/25196564/Great_Place_Tees_Valley_Evaluation_Summary.pdf))

training using national contacts. These provided participants with new skills to work with particular audience groups or communities. According to GPTV project manager Chris Batstone, this “*gave practitioners the skill sets to deliver the kind of projects we were offering through Great Place*”. Courses for example included learning around arts and disability, how to work with young groups, and working with asylum seekers. There was high demand for the project and learning was brought together with learning from other projects developing artist practitioners, in order to explore how these might be extended and combined. ARC reported that the programme “*demonstrated a strong impact on practitioners’ subsequent employment, confidence and skills*”.

- Middlesbrough Local Authority’s *Creative Factory* supported local visual arts practice through providing opportunities for pop-up work etc, focusing on building sector members’ ability to commission work and build their business models. While the Local Authority has not been able to continue their support to Creative Factory, the project has created a “*model for building relationships between independent practitioners and the Local Authority*”, according to Chris Batstone.

#### Spotlight: *Creative Factory*, Middlesbrough Council

Original plans for the Middlesbrough-based element of the GPTV programme focused on developing a physical space for creative practitioners. Between the bidding process and programme start, however, property prices rose and a clearer need was identified for artist capacity development. The resulting change of delivery model alongside a consistent aim of supporting creative enterprise proved hugely positive. “*Saying that this project wasn’t a building, but an umbrella has*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

*been the best thing! Spaces are actually popping up organically. [...] If the project had started as a building that would have squashed things.”* The day-to-day priority thus shifted from a physical space to connecting people: the majority of budget spend was on salary, and this allowed for time which leveraged significant resources in-kind as well as developed individuals and created networks.

A key realisation behind the change of project was that what artists most needed was an understanding of creative enterprise: that their work has value, should be paid for and that burn-out is a major risk. Artists were thus supported to establish sustainable working practices, potentially combining other paid work (e.g., in one case, as a postman) with paid artistic work. For example, an apprenticeship scheme was devised with a local manufacturing plant on the docks to train 15 artists, allowing them to work part-time there and part-time on their creative practice. In addition, a bursary scheme supported the import and export of creative practice knowledge into and out of Middlesbrough.

As an example of the success of the *Creative Factory*, a local market established by artists prior to Great Place, Orange Pip Market, which was supported through *Creative Factory* activity, has had a regenerative effect on the town centre and boosted community connectedness. While an original aim was to develop 30 artists, in the first year alone 90 artists received training and mentor support. Meanwhile, community groups collaborated with artists to create a series of new flags for the town hall, raising the profile of arts and culture and celebrating the communities involved.

A further critical element to the *Creative Factory* project was the aim to connect creative practitioners more closely with the Council, helping to network a series of creative practitioners who also work in council roles.

This led to new energy and ambition created by a critical mass of creatives able to navigate council procedures and participate in discussions. This has been able to go some way to providing a corrective to the dramatic drop in arts development officers at the Council (from three to five FTEs, to one). *“Being in the Council, I’ve got a level of access and can make these arguments very quickly. I’ve been completely enthused by the willingness to change and do things differently. We’ve done things in two years that would have taken ten.”*

Overall, whilst it was felt that this model of delivering practitioner support (as opposed to the creation of a specific site) was at greater risk of not attracting ongoing funding – and Middlesbrough Council has indeed been unable to provide ongoing support – the approach felt right and for example received attention as a model of good practice from the Artists Research Group at Leeds University.

### **Increased collaboration across the sector and local borders**

While it took some initial work to get cultural organisations to make time to attend collaborative meetings, this was gradually overcome by the sense of opportunity that the overall programme provided. This was supported through an e-newsletter for the cultural sector, set up to share news and events. According to the project evaluation, collaboration between cultural organisations and other public sector agencies increased on average 12% across the programme period, and 70% of partners reported collaboration as key to success. *“Professional artists have worked extensively as a team, new networks and bonds have been formed and artists have collaborated on projects”.*<sup>36</sup>

- One successful project was that of Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) and Stockton Council, which took SIRF’s expertise and shared this with different target groups across the Tees Valley.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Volunteers were recruited to help develop celebrations, with a small number provided with professional development support as community leaders and creative practitioners, including one refugee. SIRF also collaborated with other cultural organisations, for example a small festival based in Hartlepool, to deliver a carnival in a former retail space on the waterfront. This was kept small-scale to allow the local organisation to rerun activities the following year with less support from SIRF. The small event received good turnout and subsequently resulted in bringing audiences from Hartlepool to the main SIRF event, many for the first time. A bus was hired to facilitate the journey.

- Middlesbrough's *Creative Factory* developed new working partnerships with Mima School of Art and other new partners including Northern School of Art, Start Studio, Basecamp and Conversations in Painting. Tees Valley Arts reported that *"professional artists have worked extensively as a team, new networks and bonds have been formed and artists have collaborated on projects away from the Real Tees Valley through meeting each-other in this project"*.
- The Great Place *Heritage on Track* project – run to support the local Stockton and Darlington railway Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) – provided insight into the challenges and opportunities of bringing together two major funding opportunities and the organisations delivering them locally.

#### **Spotlight: 'Heritage on Track' - combining Great Place and Heritage Action Zone**

The Stockton and Darlington Railway HAZ supported by Historic England (2018 – 2023) was established to rejuvenate and restore 26 miles of historic railway, in preparation for its bicentenary in 2025. As one of the main Great Place Tees Valley 'Settlement' projects, *Heritage*

*on Track* aimed to support the HAZ, raising awareness of their heritage with local communities.

All partners saw this as an ideal match, with each programme *"reinforcing"* the other, both practically and politically – the combination brought about extra attention from key sectoral figures. Both complemented and worked alongside each other, with the HAZ focusing on the infrastructure and assets and GP working on telling the story of the assets. Whilst the key criteria for a HAZ are plans to improve the physical environment (there must be buildings on the At Risk Register), there is a strong awareness that a HAZ also needs intangible heritage: a strength of the Great Place programme. Likewise, while a successful HAZ must show that physical assets are conserved, these also need to be sustainable. *"You need local people to feel they own, care about and value that heritage"* – a process which could be activated through Great Place. Culture breaks down perceptual barriers: *"the majority of local people wouldn't go into a 'heritage building' so we have to find ways of involving people, for instance through oral histories or photographic displays or partnerships with MIND groups."*

The coincidence of the HAZ and Great Place funding marked a change from the historic under-investment in culture in the area. This was hugely welcomed, but not without challenges. An investment deficit led to high levels of need, which do not necessarily fit within the funding structures: *"place-based programmes should start with the needs of a place and respond to that – launching schemes and having criteria goes against this."* There were also challenges around funder expectation, while working within two major schemes brought questions as well as opportunity: *"it is heritage? Is it engagement in culture? A chimaera, but an exciting thing to work our way around."*

In working together, timescales were a further issue: Great Place took place across three years; the HAZ works for five years, with a growing



recognition that areas can't demonstrate change within that timeframe. The ambition of both schemes was thus to develop long-term change with short-term funding: more investment will certainly be required. An ongoing key aspect of discussion is therefore how to leverage this. At a senior level, this is about engagement: *"Fundamentally, people who aren't convinced of culture's value will ask for evidence and remain unconvinced – and vice versa. So it's not about the evidence – it's about hearts and minds. The feedback loop of 'buzz' is enough and real."* But at an administrative level, practical issues in unlocking investment persist, not yet adapted to cultural use: *"Internal processes essentially use LEP models and require a lot of evidencing, e.g., expecting business cases and job creation. It's an interesting dialogue for us, how we make economic outputs from projects that don't have economic outputs."*

While *Heritage on Track* ended in late 2019, it was agreed that the team would keep their seats around the table until 2025, in order to be involved in the engagement around the bicentenary. Progress paused during COVID-19 but has now picked up again. Overall, programme manager Chris Batstone is positive about the collaboration: Great Place brought new priorities to the HAZ through focusing on engagement with communities and developed a number of models of good practice in the process.

## Reaching out to 'all' audiences

Teesside University's project evaluation found that *"the project had real reach, especially with harder to reach communities"*, including among diverse population groups and across geographies. The research for example found strong involvement from participants from areas of high multiple deprivation across all local authorities: almost 50% of participants came from decile 1-3 and 26% from decile 1, *"surpassing national trends of engagement with arts and culture among lower socio-economic groups"*. Moreover, a significant number of participants (40%) reported that their engagement with a Great Place event marked the first time that they had attended a cultural activity or venue. Such levels of attendance were brought about for example by projects taking their activities into local communities:

- SIRF's Theatre production *'The Glass Ceiling'* toured each local authority area with a specific story for each town visited, thereby creating local interest. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council reported growing awareness of their project *'The Black Path'* due to *"the continuation of well-promoted workshop opportunities"* and an open day held at a local community centre. ARC Stockton meanwhile exceeded their targets for delivery with disadvantaged community groups, reporting that many groups and participants took part in creative sessions for the first time.
- Tees Valley Arts and Groundwork North East ran the *Heritage on Track* project as a curtain-raiser to the bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington railway in 2025. Great Place significantly increased their available capacity to work with communities by allowing them to appoint a curator for two years with programming and community experience. This expertise is now being built into the organisation. As part of the process, an artist was commissioned to work with local communities along the track, allowing them to share stories of their

rail heritage. This fed into a general ambition to reshape the local story from a declinist narrative as a former iron-producing area to a richer narrative centred around the local cultural heritage.

The project evaluation moreover found that participation in the programme supported increased community confidence. However, the report also found that while culture and creativity proved a successful way to *“coalesce the Tees Valley despite the area’s varied geography”*, with participants showing a willingness to travel across the area, participation was uneven. Though participants were not confined to major conurbations, these did make out a substantial proportion of participants, with over 50% coming from Darlington and Hartlepool. Moreover, projects found that some communities were significantly harder to engage than others<sup>37</sup>, despite targeted initiatives, meaning that some initial programme aims had to be modified.

### Impact on children and young people

Lastly, across the programme, the projects resulted in around 3,100 experiences for children and young people. The project evaluation reported a *“transformational”* impact on children and young people. Highlights included:

- the *Real Tees Valley* programme, which brought together young people with professional film makers to create short films about young people’s views on place and identity. Two of the created films came in the last four out of 100 films in the Middlesbrough International Film Festival. The project had a significant impact on participants’ confidence, ambition and positive sense of place. Feedback provided evidence that the project assisted participants in *“using creative processes to advocate for a positive narrative about their local place”*.

- Again, projects took their work to their target audiences. Darlington Borough Council for example achieved engagement among young people with the heritage of the local Stockton and Darlington railway through running performances in schools and community settings.
- Mima worked with a local youth group and reported witnessing *“young people’s growing confidence and pride in their community”*.

While GPTV programme manager Chris Batstone thus identified an emerging *“strong narrative about what place is and what it means to them”* among young participants, he cautioned *“vulnerability on some of these projects as funding comes to an end”*.

### 9.3.5 Programme legacy

Overall, it is felt that the programme has led to the rise of a shared vision as well as an increased willingness among the involved Local Authorities to support and develop an infrastructure for culture. As programme manager Chris Batstone summarised, *“we have made steps in the right direction”*.

Success included the creation of stronger networks for organisations and independent practitioners and the identification of new ways of working which may be used going forward. In the case of Middlesbrough’s *Creative Factory* for example, while the Local Authority was not able to continue its financial support of the project, it has created a model for building relationships between independent practitioners and the Local Authority, which can be built on. ARC Stockton in turn developed a successful model for practitioner training, not only giving practitioners skills and confidence which will last, but creating a model which could be taken up again in the future. Great Place has thus laid a foundation, *“giving permission for organisations to expand their practice*

---

<sup>37</sup> Roma communities and re-settled groups proved particularly difficult to engage with.

and [providing] resource for them to expand”, according to Batstone. It also helped to “mobilise the freelance sector: Tees Valley has lots of independent practitioners that we were not aware of – we are in the process of building stronger networks”. Moreover, Middlesbrough now has its own Cultural Partnership.<sup>38</sup> While not a direct result of Great Place, the programme helped to bring about the conditions in which it could be set up.

A real joy is seeing people still working together once the funding has been withdrawn – being a connector rather than at the centre is really useful. (Steering group)

Looking back, Chris Batstone feels that many of the activities undertaken during GPTV were very local, in part due to areas starting off at different points and activities thus requiring adaptation to suit local needs. This approach had significant advantages from a community-engagement perspective, “enabling strong local authentic connectivity – particularly for the Local Authorities: they could clearly see the local relevance and impact for their constituents...long-term relationships, engagements, volunteering... [of a] strong heritage or other cultural offer”.

On the other hand, Batstone feels that this hyper-local approach to delivery “may have hindered cohesive direction”, leading to a situation in which connecting up the local infrastructure “did not work as well as it could have” and where “there could have been more resources shared, more shared learnings”. Furthermore, there is a clear sense that many of the activities and new collaborations will not be able to continue without some form of ongoing funding. There is also a growing realisation of the

need for more effective mass public transport across the region to enable audiences to travel to cultural events and thereby support cultural regeneration efforts. Connected to this, the area’s City of Culture aspirations, which the Great Place programme had hoped to inform as part of its legacy, have been paused for the time being, with the leadership at the various Local Authorities considering the (financial) commitment as too high at present. Chris Batstone suggests that perhaps, it was “too big too soon: authorities are still trying to understand where culture fits with regard to their strategic priorities”. In combination, these factors led to the legacy of the programme feeling “quite fragile” pre-COVID-19.

However, although the pandemic has clearly presented a huge, ongoing challenge for the sector, the efforts to address these challenges have now led to new momentum and a new understanding of the programme’s legacy. The speedy creation of the Task Force and the ‘Reconnecting Communities’ programme demonstrated the legacy and value of Great Place in paving the ground by creating an atmosphere of collaboration and trust. Moreover, it helped form quick consensus around what was needed and wanted, says Task Force lead Annabel Turpin:

I don’t think there would have been the same level of openness, trust and generosity without Great Place – the spirit wouldn’t have been the same – less collaborative. I also don’t think we’d be as clear about what we wanted to do and what the shared needs and agenda for Tees Valley are and should be. (Annabel Turpin)

---

<sup>38</sup> A collective of arts, heritage & culture organisations, businesses and freelancers “on a mission to Make Middlesbrough the Most Creative Town in the UK”, who “came together as a group of artists, arts and culture organisations and professionals to be a voice for creativity in Middlesbrough”. (<https://www.boroculture.org.uk/>)

This was echoed by Chris Batstone, who noted that “Great Place is hardwired into the legacy of the COVID-19 recovery work”. The COVID-19 recovery programme “galvanising [the sector] to get on with stuff”, while the Task Force has resulted in “a clear need rather than a nebulous cultural vision”: it is now also in the position to make recommendations about larger investments needed in the long run.

Paradoxically, the pandemic has ensured that Great Place has had a stronger legacy – it has forced people to look at some of things the programme was already active in doing and has offered a solution and a way forward – we have people around the table who have experience of Great Place. *(Chris Batstone)*

The cultural sector having a seat at this table is thus seen as a key result of the Great Place programme – and one which may have real implications. In this sense, Chris Batstone feels that the programme and its legacy should be seen as a process rather than a discrete project: Great Place was one way of funding an ongoing process of increasing engagement.

This is a big shift for us – [the cultural sector] is now seen as a sector with strategic influence rather than behind closed doors. Structurally, we have a stronger position to be able to build connections and support the emergence of networks and bring localised partnerships together thanks to Great Place. It has had a development role and there will be a good legacy, as long as there is understanding of what the benefit is. *(Chris Batstone)*

### 9.3.6 Success factors

Throughout the programme, the programme manager and steering group identified a number of factors that have been key to the programme’s success, as well as learning points to consider in developing future activity:

1. Money was key to bringing people together around the table. While the habit of collaboration is expected to endure beyond the programme, it is felt that further investment will be required to support this and build on the achievements of the Great Place programme.
2. Echoing this, placemaking requires multiple sources of investment over a sustained period. This brings challenges of matching expectation, evidence and approaches across different agendas and organisational norms. Among others, it is important to be honest and ensure awareness of funding realities to ensure communities do not feel let down (when funded activities end).
3. A central management point ensures collaboration and that the programme is more than the sum of its parts. However, the strategic partnerships and agreements linking out from this, which help deliver the programme, take time to put into place: it took around six to twelve months preliminary work to develop the required strategic partnerships with, as well as buy-in from, the Local Authorities and LEP.
4. A ground-up approach brings a focus on individuals and local groups and with it, creates incremental capacity-building for long-term growth. In this, community ownership is very important, allowing communities to see their work as part of a bigger project. Young people are often engaged around a key cause.
5. This goes hand-in-hand with avoiding pre-conceived ideas at the beginning of a programme – it is important to understand the baseline

from which activity is setting out. Needs analysis should be an ongoing part of delivery.

6. Relationship building – with partners and communities – should be seen as an ongoing effort and to ensure this, building trust should be considered as an explicit outcome of projects.
7. Cultural producers and artist practitioners delivering on social agendas are a key ingredient in delivering cultural work in other sectoral contexts. Great Place Tees Valley invested in training and supporting these people and in demonstrating their influence within organisations.
8. Linked to this, repetition is important to embed: learning needs to be applied and reapplied. How ways of working could be recorded in order to be distributed and kept for future use should be considered.

## 9.4 Gloucester – A Proud Past

### 9.4.1 Key facts

**Area:** Urban, South West

**Grant:** £1,489,200

**Lead organisation:** Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT)

**Programme summary:** Building on its new Cultural Strategy, the Gloucester Great Place programme had seven strands of work corresponding to local strategic priorities. These were focused around the themes of sector development; city marketing; regeneration through heritage; and engaging communities. An eighth strand – ‘interconnectedness’ – drew the other seven strands together to ensure that the programme achieved more than the sum of its parts.

**Programme legacy:** There is significant positivity around the programme’s legacy, including the creation of lasting new offers (e.g., a new cultural entrepreneurs’ hub) and improved networking; as well as strategic impacts around the Council’s recognition of the value of culture. The latter is evident in for example the formalisation of culture in strategies including the Council’s Economic Development Strategy and the identification and recognition of the role of the new Culture Trust as ‘connector and enabler’.

### 9.4.2 Strategic context of the programme

Gloucester’s Great Place programme responded to a number of contextual factors that shaped the programme’s aims and delivery:

1. Gloucester City Council’s Cultural Vision and Strategy 2016-26, which had just been introduced when Great Place began, aims to “*put culture at the heart of Gloucester for the good of all.*” Work on this ten-year vision was underway prior to Great Place, but the Great

Place programme is seen as having “turbo-charged” delivery by acting as a delivery agent. Key aspirations from the Strategy became the strands of the Great Place programme.

2. The Strategy laid out ambitions for cultural activity to be joined-up, for the sector to develop a new model of leadership and to explore new models of governance, strategy development, fundraising and delivery, with the outcome of broadening the local cultural offer and developing a vibrant city that put Gloucester on the map. Out of this ambition, the strategic body Gloucester Culture Trust was created in 2016. In March 2018, it became a formal entity as a charitable incorporated organisation and assigned lead body for the Great Place programme.
3. At the point when Great Place started, Gloucester was considering bidding in the next round to become UK City of Culture 2025. The work of Great Place was thus seen as a proving ground for that ambition and a chance to demonstrate that change is already happening. The bid was seen as a way to change perceptions of Gloucester and to drive economic regeneration.

We often ask ourselves ‘would a credible candidate for the City of Culture do this?’ *(Cultural partner)*

### 9.4.3 Key aims and activities of the programme

Gloucester’s Cultural Strategy provided the Great Place programme with an overarching framework, enabling the project to hang together and providing a useful reference point, according to the GCT team.

Programme activity was based around seven main strands, which focused on developing and harnessing local cultural and heritage talent, engaging communities, developing the festivals and outdoor events

programmes and improving destination marketing. A number of key activities were funded by Great Place within each of the seven strands.

**Figure 27 Great Place key funded activities by strand**

Strand	Key Activities
1. Develop city’s capacity for cultural leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Development of Gloucester Culture Trust</li> <li>— Young trustees programme</li> </ul>
2. Develop and support local culture sector infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Partnership and exchange between Roundhouse and Gloucester partners: The Music Works, Strike A Light, Guildhall and Your Next Move. Co-funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation)</li> </ul>
3. Creative commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Working and co-creating with communities, especially Culture Matson</li> <li>— Cross-sector partnerships around maximising social and well-being impacts</li> <li>— Led by Create Gloucestershire</li> </ul>
4. Destination marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Commission for destination marketing delivered</li> <li>— Led by Marketing Gloucester/ Visit Gloucester</li> </ul>
5. ARCH: Achieving Regeneration in the City through Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Collaboration with the Council and Gloucester Heritage Forum to develop the city’s first Heritage Strategy</li> <li>— Application for a Heritage Action Zone</li> </ul>

## Strand

## Key Activities

---

6. Revising festivals and events programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>— Marketing, programming and development support for key city Festivals, e.g., Gloucester History Festival</li><li>— Included major new commissions for the city, e.g., Of Earth And Sky</li></ul>
7. Cultural entrepreneurs' hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>— Known as 'Jolt'</li><li>— Delivered by Gloucester Culture Trust with connections and support from University of Gloucestershire</li></ul>

---

An 'eighth strand' of interconnectedness aimed to bring the seven strands together, while the aim of widening access to cultural activity ran across all project strands and activities, including both public-facing and sector-facing activity.

Indicatively, according to the project evaluation<sup>39</sup>, the project partners decided on a number of indicators of success that related to the seven strands:

- Residents and visitors view Gloucester as culturally distinctive and exciting, with a diverse, high-quality arts, heritage and creativity offer.
- Arts and heritage are valued and engaged with throughout Gloucester, including among those in 'non-arts' roles, with recognition of their economic, social as well as cultural benefit.

- Residents from neighbourhoods that have not traditionally taken part in arts activity feel more engaged in the cultural life and feel confident to lead it.
- The city's young people have more opportunities to take part in shaping local creative activities, and to realise their own ambitions in the CCIs.
- Cultural practitioners and organisations feel more confident, inspired and connected.
- The ongoing regeneration of the historic city centre has been enhanced by strategically connecting arts and culture with city partners.
- Arts and heritage in Gloucester attracts investment and support from a wider variety of channels.
- The visitor economy is strengthened through the appeal, diversity, quality and coordination of the city's heritage venues, cultural festivals and events.
- New, collaborative and people-led methods of delivering and evaluating culture are established and embraced in the city.

## Reacting to COVID

The delivery partners were able to quickly adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown periods, adjusting their activities to the new circumstances. According to GCT, "*we really pivoted over the summer*". This was aided by the existence of the project's widening access programmes (e.g., Strands 3 and 6), which meant that the team

---

<sup>39</sup> Annabel Jackson Associates, 2020  
<https://democracy.gloucester.gov.uk/documents/s53669/Appendix%201%20Great%20Place%20Evaluation%20Summary.pdf>

had well-established connections with to different neighbourhoods and community groups.

For example, 14 artists were commissioned to create 25 different art packs and then worked with community partners to distribute 850 of these to different groups including families, teenagers and care homes. *“It was a nice thing to do very quickly and very positively. Sticking to our values and outcomes, but delivering them in a different way”.*

Some of the project’s sector development activity was also adapted, with the creation of a specialised marketing online training course for 20 arts and heritage organisations across the city. These were run by a professional arts marketer, who spent additional time mentoring six of the organisations, looking at their marketing plans while keeping the consequences of the pandemic in mind. This was a good way to *“keep one eye on resilience and the long-term”*. It helped the organisations to understand the importance of marketing and how to most effectively utilise time efficient methods.

#### 9.4.4 Programme highlights across the years

Over the four years, the programme resulted in a number of highlights and impacts across the seven strands, which have here been grouped into the two key areas of i) audiences, participation and community engagement and ii) sector development.

##### **Audiences, participation and community engagement**

Overall, the findings from the project evaluation suggest that local residents not only valued and perceived an increase in cultural activity during the Great Place programme but also that more audiences attended events. This indicates both increased availability as well as awareness. For example, all local festivals reported increased attendance between 2019 and 2020, and across the same period there

was a slight increase in the proportion of local survey respondents who agreed that ‘there was more to do in the city centre than a year ago’.

A number of projects across the seven strands successfully increased collaboration between communities and the arts sectors, actively bringing in local community members to engage with, support or even run cultural activities. For example:

- Create Gloucestershire, a network of arts and cultural sector partners, was funded by Great Place to test new ways of working with local communities. It brought together professionals and local people *“to make positive change”* in equal and evolving partnerships that *“respected the skills and knowledge of all involved”*, according to the project evaluation. Among others, Create Gloucestershire helped to set up *Culture Matson* on the Matson estate, looking at finding ways in which culture can help tackle key issues around social deprivation. This was a huge success and has morphed into a regular community forum, leading to the creation of a new neighbourhood festival run by two residents.
- GCT launched the Creation Fund, an initiative that provides small grants up to £2,000 for local artists and creatives to create new events and projects with communities. Following Great Place, Gloucester City Council have financially supported this initiative.
- Create Gloucestershire received £200k from the NHS to work with five arts organisations to focus on audiences with health or special needs, including young people with diabetes or chronic illness, and those with learning disabilities. These projects were overseen by a new Arts and Health board.



### **Spotlight: Culture Matson – actively engaging local neighbourhoods**

The neighbourhood of Matson is home to Gloucester's largest area of social housing, but until recently it lacked significant funding for arts and culture. Pippa Jones from Create Gloucestershire was asked if she could bring in artists to the area and began engaging by meeting local teachers and parents and bringing in NPO and cultural event organisers Strike a Light. *"Very organically, people started to meet"*, and *Culture Matson* started off as a group of 3-4 people who wanted to set up an after-school arts club locally.

*"It wasn't set up as a culture board, there was no strategy – it was a group of people within and outside the community making steps to bring in culture and taking it step by step – it arose organically from what the group wanted and needed."* The group talked about how to create a generational shift in programming arts and culture, aiming to reach parents who were engaging through their children. A 'common thread' was the lack of hierarchy: the shared value was that everyone wanted to make Matson a better place.

Increasingly, the group linked in with the community via local schools, libraries and other festivals, connecting and working collaboratively and thereby adding value. The team also built-up social capital by providing cooked food at a youth club each week.

*Culture Matson* organised three projects with local audiences, all supported by Great Place, including a dance project across six schools; a '*Culture Bank*' which provided vouchers, as well as a volunteer to accompany people to cultural events; and a leadership programme which aimed to diversify who sees themselves as leaders. One huge success story was *Culture Matson*'s support, in partnership with Strike A Light, of two local mothers who started promoting shows through their engagement in *Culture Matson*, and subsequently decided to set up a

local independent contemporary theatre festival, GL4. This is now Arts Council England-funded and programming ongoing work across the estate. According to Pippa Jones, this is *"a fantastic legacy: it's extraordinary for people to see theatre programmed by people from the estate"*. This is exemplary of the infrastructure *Culture Matson* provides, which is helping local people *"do more if they want to do more"*: it provides *"a lot of the stuff you need that takes time"*, such as getting to grips with child protection, safeguarding, in-kind support on the producing side, etc.

Great Place provided crucial initial investment over for years to provide capacity on the ground, and a catalyst in the shape of Pippa's role, who was able to bring in a variety of partners and begin a conversation. The group was *"able to embed itself and consolidate and prove the potential of arts and culture to generate positive change"*, including to investors. *"Community forums are so important – that's what we've proven through Culture Matson and Great Place"*. Moreover, it provided seed funding for some of the enterprises that have come out of *Culture Matson*, like GL4: *"we've been able to use GP funding carefully to level in additional funding – it was always used to leverage additional funding and investment"*.

Going forwards, Pippa had some capacity from Great Place to *"argue and advocate"* for *Culture Matson* to provide an alternative commissioning model with police, social care, the NHS, etc. which is under consideration. To do so, funding was being sought to understand *"what Culture Matson need to do better"* in order to match service's requirements. In any case, *"the richness of connectivity is a really important legacy - relationships have been built which means now there is a real ecosystem rather than just a set of buildings"*.

- Artist Luke Jerram was commissioned by the city to work with local spoken word artist JPD and thirty Gloucestershire poets (from over 80 entries) to create ‘*Of Earth and Sky*’, lines of poetry in 31 locations across the city. This resulted in a “*really high-profile event and has become a really big community event*”. 30 volunteers were involved in the installation and its maintenance. The team was able to adapt and maintain the project over lockdown, with 11 funding partners from the culture, heritage, sport and retail sector supporting the commission.
- As a further example of aiming to diversify the cultural offer to bring in new audiences, grant funding supported the ‘*King’s Jam*’ urban hip hop music festival as part of a wider mission to embed an understanding of diversity more widely across cultural organisations.
- Young people were successfully involved in helping to shape the city’s cultural offer; through programmes such as the Future Producer’s programme, which for example had a central role in developing two of the period’s flagship festivals. Indicative of its perceived value, the programme successfully managed to raise additional funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to continue. In addition, the Culture Trust established a Young Creatives Network for emerging artists (based on feedback from young people), which feeds into the Trust’s strategic planning. Two members have led on the creation of a new magazine (*Skella*<sup>40</sup>) for the city’s young & diverse audiences, with contributions from the wider network and communities. The group is now supported by Jolt, and meets monthly as Jolt Co-Lab.
- A member of staff at Gloucester Cathedral created a new educational online resource<sup>41</sup> bringing together the local heritage/ history offer for

schools and parents to help make information about ‘what is out there’ more accessible: previously, “*you had to know what you were looking for – you would have to call the Cathedral, etc.*”.

In addition to the above, the programme enabled a real development of the volunteer sector for the local culture and heritage sector. This was galvanised by bringing in a new member of staff at Gloucester Cathedral to pull together a new volunteering portal, *Engage in Gloucester*. This enables prospective volunteers to work across a number of organisations rather than focusing on one particular organisation. This successfully brought in many new volunteers for heritage organisations, including younger volunteers. According to the project evaluation, it for example led to 12 volunteers carrying out a local listing process, which generated a list of 147 places and 130 buildings.

### **Spotlight: Engaging the city’s young people and supporting young creatives**

A key issue for the city – and for its Great Place programme – was its high percentage of young people, matched with a cultural offer that does not meet their needs: “*opportunities for culture for young people haven’t been that great in the past.*” For the Great Place programme, a focus on young people was therefore not a separate area of work but a ‘lens’ through which to view everything they did.

Creative consultation activity thus focused on young people. To ensure that young people’s voices guided the programme, a group of young trustees were recruited as well as a *Young Creatives Network* to help steer the Cultural Trust’s direction. A partnership with the Roundhouse brought learning around how to bring on and support the young trustees and leaders. This activity fed into the wider ambition to

<sup>40</sup> *Skella* magazine link: <https://www.desertcitynews.com/about>

<sup>41</sup> Available under: <https://gloucesterculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Gloucester-City-Education-Brochure-version-1st-Nov-2019.pdf>

develop cultural leadership in the city, and to look towards the future and a City of Culture bid: *“they are part of the investment we are making into the future as well as challenging our work now.”* The young trustees were equally clear that their role was to challenge the status quo: *“Gloucester needs to put on events that young people want to go to. We have an audience development problem. Gloucester is culturally timid.”*

In committing funding to local cultural activity, Great Place prioritised either events which already focused on youth audiences, such as Strike A Light’s year-round programme, King’s Jam Festival, or on events which were able to develop an offer for young people, such as Gloucester History Festival. Neither approach was straightforward: collaboration between the professional marketing organisation funded to promote the youth festivals initially struggled to build a working relationship, and a young trustee described working on the History Festival as *“hard work”*. It took time to break down differences in perspective: *“people say things like ‘1970s isn’t history’ but we are living in a city where 25% of people weren’t born in 1998!”*

As well as a cultural offer, the programme worked to develop cultural infrastructure for young people. This process in many ways had to start from scratch: *“every creative person in Gloucester has to go elsewhere to develop their skills”*. A new music studio and hub, run by The Music Works, was thus supported in Gloucester as a starting point to try and ensure a consistent offer. This was part-funded by Great Place, but also awarded an ACE small capital grant and significant other funding.

Similarly, the programme initiated the development of a creative enterprise hub as a place for young people to create and grow their creative industry businesses. Based on research with university students and other residents to find out what young people need to develop

creative enterprise in the city, the core requirement identified was confidence: *“There is a massive lack of confidence and self-belief and a lack of understanding of that being normal.”* With this learning, the programme took a two-phase approach to developing a creative enterprise hub (chiefly for) young people with the aim of developing Gloucester’s next generation of artists and creatives. Working initially out of temporary space provided by the University and now installed in a town centre location on a 20-year peppercorn lease from the Council, the hub, *Jolt*, continues to support young creatives through the provision of space and support, including e.g., business support, training programmes and networking.<sup>42</sup>

Overall, it is a process not a project: *“we’re not sure what Gloucester’s place and strengths are in the creative industries yet – we are finding its place.”*

### **Sector professionalisation, networking and investment**

The programme also supported the local cultural and heritage sectors in a variety of ways. Across various activities, this has had an impact on the city’s ability to market itself as a cultural hub as well as to improve evaluation. A core way in which this has happened was to support new networks and partnership working across Gloucester. Great Place enabled the Culture Trust to bring together cultural organisations of varying sizes, including new collaborations between heritage, arts and culture; as well as to strengthen connections to other sectors, such as health. In doing so, the project evaluation found that *“Great Place has created a network of artists, businesses, local authority officers and*

<sup>42</sup> <https://gloucesterculture.org.uk/projects/jolt/>; <https://joltgloucester.com/>

cultural and heritage organisations, and created structures for and a habit of collaboration”<sup>43</sup>. Highlights in this area included:

- The Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange project, a partnership between Gloucester Culture Trust, the Roundhouse in London, Strike A Light, The Music Works, Guildhall/Gloucester City Council and Your Next Move, which received an additional investment of around £500,000 from Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
- Support to the Gloucester Heritage Forum, which gives a collective, cohesive and higher profile approach to heritage planning and delivery, including enabling the History Festival to expand. Meanwhile, the programme helped put Gloucester Cathedral in touch with “people working in really creative ways, not just heritage – this really helped us with [...] promotion and attracted a different kind of visitor to the Cathedral.”
- Great Place also enabled the Trust to create the new post of Strategic Creative Producer, to connect across a range of festival organisations and support joined up planning, training and delivery, and to raise confidence, ambition and quality. In addition, the Trust supported commissioned an consortium to write an Audience Development & Participation Report plan, which provided the impetus for a range of new joined up activities.
- As outlined above, *Jolt*, a co-working and acceleration space for (young) culture and creative practitioners, has been established; home to co-working spaces, meeting rooms, rehearsal spaces and 24 incubation studios. The 6500ft<sup>2</sup> hub was obtained on a 20-year peppercorn lease, thanks to Gloucester City Council, to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the creative sector in Gloucester. The

physical hub acts as the vehicle for the *Jolt Programme*, a creative acceleration offer that supports start-up creatives through the process of building sustainable independence businesses and organisations. The programme includes One-to-one business mentoring, workshops, networking events and access to opportunities that help build capacity in the new ventures.

- Visit Gloucester emerged in early 2020 as a new body for the city’s place marketing function. Great Place investment has helped to significantly improve the promotional platforms available, including a new Visit Gloucester website and digital signage – now managed by Gloucester Business Improvement District – around the city.

We can be proudest of the partnerships. It felt like the work of Great Place enabled us to work with partners cross-sector across the city. A lot of Great Place has been as partnership: we have set up a festivals and events forum through Great Place, we meet monthly to talk about what everyone is doing. That network didn’t exist previously. (*Cultural partner*)

### Spotlight: The Roundhouse Relationship

Great Place and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation jointly funded an innovative initiative to partner London’s Roundhouse – the well-known Camden-based arts venue and centre for young creatives – with Gloucester’s cultural sector. Participants included the Roundhouse and Gloucester Culture Trust, Strike A Light, The Music Works, Guildhall/Gloucester City Council and Your Next Move

The aim of the partnership was “*genuinely two-way*”: for the Roundhouse, it was about understanding a different environment for

<sup>43</sup> Annabel Jackson Associates, 2020  
<https://democracy.gloucester.gov.uk/documents/s53669/Appendix%201%20Great%20Place%20Evaluation%20Summary.pdf>

developing new talent and managing projects, while for Gloucester it was about benefitting from the chance to learn from an established youth-focused organisation. Overall, the collaboration was considered as *“a potential game changer as to how arts organisations work together.”*

The first year of the partnership created both some great delivery and some great learning. The Rooftop Festival – music and performance events which took place on a car park rooftop in the city centre – was *“the first public presentation of what is meant by the Roundhouse exchange and what it actually delivers.”* The event was well-received as a sign of new vigour in the youth culture scene. Ticket sales were *“fine – but they weren’t great.”* Feedback and discussion identified three issues: that Gloucester doesn’t have a reputation as somewhere you go to for high quality cultural events; there are negative perceptions about safety in the city centre; and publicity could have been more effective.

Going forward, the focus shifted to developing capacity and skills firstly in the Guildhall, and in developing a stronger infrastructure to support activity. Skills needs analysis was undertaken to support the Guildhall’s professionalisation, alongside consideration of appropriate governance for the venue and the pros and cons of Council ownership / management. A complementary demand analysis, undertaken through monthly partnership meetings, considered the potential for an additional cultural venue in Gloucester. This intended to ensure that the activity was *“really embedded in people’s priorities and that there is collaboration between lots of different organisations.”*

Overall, the Roundhouse activity was considered as a clear example of *“the relationship between activity and strategy”*, which the GCT were keen to explore throughout the Great Place programme.

In addition, cultural and heritage sector members and organisations were supported in building their capacity in a variety of ways:

- Gloucester History Festival was professionalised. With investment from Great Place, moved from being volunteer-run, managed by the Council, to hiring an experienced curator and being run by the newly-established Gloucester History Trust. This also enabled the Festival to finance a new business plan, which has helped to spark the idea that it is something to invest in. The Festival has now begun fundraising. Meanwhile, the programme has been enhanced with greater support for bottom up, community-led elements (‘City Voices.’). Throughout the Great Place period, the Festival has grown each year, and has seen its ticket sales quadruple. Indicative of its successful development, since the pandemic, it has received emergency funding from Historic England, enabling it to produce online talks and commissioning artists for new works. With a small, committed team combining heritage and arts, *“this is a real legacy of the programme”*.
- Great Place supported artists through activities such as the Creative Leadership Programme; shadowing and mentoring through e.g., the Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange; training in for example marketing, fundraising, business skills, environmental sustainability and responses to COVID-19; and the creation of shared systems such as that for volunteer recruitment and support.

What has transformed things for me has been the marketing training that was offered to organisations across Gloucester – a series of online sessions learning about marketing – I didn’t know anything about that and haven’t been supported before – it was really helpful to learn a lot more. *(Participant)*

The mentoring opportunity has transformed what we’ve been able to do with the History Festival and will be something that will continue to make a difference in Gloucester. *(Participant)*

- In some cases, organisations received funding to pay for additional posts, including for example Guildhall’s Marketing Apprentice and four ‘Creative Leadership Trainees’, year-long placements based at city arts organisations: Three Choirs Festival, Art Shape, Gloucestershire Libraries and Gloucester Culture Trust.
- The Culture Trust developed a range of tools to support festivals and events, including a cross-city evaluation strategy; audience development strategy; fundraising strategy; and an innovation and commissioning fund.

Finally, a number of key programme elements have contributed to improving the city’s heritage sector and its role in city centre regeneration, as well as to improving visitor access:

- New capacity to achieve regeneration in the city centre through heritage was delivered in the form of a full-time post at the Trust with a remit to reach out to volunteers and make wider connections between heritage and other cultural organisations.
- The Council drafted its first Heritage Strategy, and with support from the Culture Trust enabled a consultation process and broadened the definition of heritage used in the first draft to include culture/arts. A HAZ application was successfully made, securing £2m for the Gloucester Cathedral Quarter High Street Heritage Action Zone; and the regeneration plan for Kings Quarter has shifted from retail- to culture-led.

#### 9.4.5 Programme legacy

The team at Gloucester Culture Trust cautioned that building trust and understanding between organisations and in particular strategic alignment in the face of differing strategic objectives between partners *“takes so much more time than you think. It takes time to research; the*

*partners coming together takes time; [for partners] to understand the value of Great Place and being part of a collaborative project like this”*. They felt that the extension they received for their activities helped to secure relationships, but highlighted that the complexity of delivering developmental grants needs to be recognised by funders.

That being said, there is significant positivity around the legacy that the Great Place programme has left in Gloucester. The team describes Great Place as an *“action learning programme – we had all these words on a page, but Great Place was the funding to test these. It has helped demonstrate what the Strategy means... and [was] a chance to say look what can be done, look what’s out there”*. Thinking of the Strategy as the first step, Great Place was ‘Phase 2 of the Strategy’. The actions based on the Strategy were reviewed and updated in 2021 and *“Great Place helped us to think ‘what do we need to consider and what do we need to update’.”* For the Trust, the legacy of Great Place - how to continue partnerships as well as engaging in fundraising from the Council and others to maintain the Great Place team - is now ‘Phase three’ of the Strategy.

The project evaluation summarised the impact of the programme as creating a *“cultural offer that is more coherent, joined up and high profile”*. It has brought the cultural sector closer together and supported the creation of more strategic activity, including a more strategic approach to targeting audiences. This was based on consultations with a variety of groups, and the commissioning of new research, such as on local festivals’ strengths and weaknesses. This has been supported by activities with lasting effect, including supporting artist and organisations’ professionalisation and skills; creating new audience groups including young people; and creating lasting collaborations. One of the main objectives of Strand 7 to create a new cultural entrepreneurs’ hub has also been met with the creation of Jolt, *“Gloucester’s dedicated hub for*

*arts, creativity and collaboration*”, whose long-term future has been secured by being granted a 20-year peppercorn lease from the Council. Meanwhile, the volunteer sector has been galvanised, providing existing and prospective volunteers with easier ways to engage.

In terms of strategic impact, the programme enabled the creation of ongoing Action Plans and Strategies. Linked to this, the value of culture has been more clearly and formally recognised by the City Council, which, according to the project evaluation, in turn has strengthened its commitment to the cultural and heritage sectors. This is for example demonstrated by the new Heritage Strategy, which has been recognised by the Council and provides an ongoing direction of travel for the sector as well as a way for it to demonstrate its contribution to wider city priorities. Culture is now also mentioned in the Council’s Economic Development Strategy (which was not previously the case) while the Local Industrial Strategy references Gloucester’s culture offer as an asset. Moreover, the Culture Trust now sits on the Council’s City Centre Commission on regeneration as well as on the Culture and Visitor Economy Recovery Group. As the Trust summarised, the City Council now consciously plays an enabling role, aiming to create the conditions for culture to thrive and *“that’s becoming embedded in the Council and will be a vehicle for legacy – this will be a really crucial enabler”*.

Meanwhile, the Culture Trust, now five years old, was able through the Great Place programme to identify and strengthen its key role as connector, enabler and champion, focusing on delivery only where needed, while keeping *“one eye on the city-wide long-term vision”*. This has created a strategic organisation at relatively little cost. According to the team, *“the legacy is the learning that we’ve got and the experience we’ve had about what it means to be a connector, enabler – there has been a lot of learning that will help to deliver the Strategy going forward”*. At the time of the final round of interviews for the case study in 2021,

they were still considering moving ahead with a City of Culture bid, but this did not go ahead, as it was felt by partners that resource needed to develop a bid was better invested into the recovery of the city following the challenges of the pandemic. However, bidding for 2029 remains on the table. *“Great Place helped us to lay the groundwork for a successful bid – it’s helped us broaden our reach, raise aspirations, there is more joined up working”*.

There is something about the ambition [...]. It feels like Gloucester is on a journey now. It feels like there is momentum built through Great Place that is continuing: culture-led recovery is really high up on the recovery agenda for the Council – seeing the value of culture has been really key. That partnership working is transformational – arts, heritage, sports, community – we are all talking to each other now in a way we weren’t before *(Cultural partner)*

#### 9.4.6 Success factors

Over the years, the team identified a number of success factors and learning points from their delivery of the programme:

1. A close partnership between Gloucester Culture Trust and the Council was important, developed through conversations over time, overcoming false starts and catalysed by shared strategic deliverables. However, the fact that the Trust is not the local authority but independent, was a critical distinction.

Getting the Great Place money proved to the Council that there is money in culture: people sit up and pay attention. *(Cultural partner)*

2. Gloucester Culture Trust was able to find clarity about its role: it established that it is a strategic, not a delivery body, and is building relationships of trust with partners who will deliver. This is balanced by a recognition that in some cases, the Trust will need to deliver directly, but only where no suitable partner already exists locally.

The Cultural Strategy was very clear that the Trust should be an enabler, not a delivery body. What Great Place has done is to test that and find how it actually works. (*Cultural partner*)

3. Partnership with an established national cultural organisation such as the Roundhouse has been an effective way to develop local capacity.
4. In making change in the sector, it is vital to go where the energy is, irrespective of whether these are independents or council-run organisations; people who identify as artists and producers and those who perhaps do not, yet.
5. One-on-one conversations are the best way to identify the people who can make things happen.
6. The focus on young people was not a separate set of projects but a lens across everything they did.

## 9.5 Sunderland Comes of Age

### 9.5.1 Key facts

**Area:** Urban, North East

**Grant:** £1,249,900

**Lead organisation:** Sunderland Culture

**Programme summary:** Sunderland's Great Place programme focused on four delivery areas, cutting across the themes of creative economy development; improving community cohesion; supporting health and wellbeing within socio-economically deprived communities and improving the availability of cultural opportunities for children and young people. Each had a different geographical priority focus. A fifth strand of work developed communications and capacity (i.e., networks, partnerships, funding) around a city-wide vision for culture.

**Programme legacy:** Great Place impacted on Sunderland Culture's capacity, enabling it to embed the principles learned during the delivery of Great Place and supporting its fundraising, communications and relationship building. This helped to shape the Trust into a resilient organisation with reach and impact. Furthermore, impact and organisational development were achieved across the priority areas, which can be built on going forward, while engagement in Great Place also helped to tap into additional, ongoing funding.

### 9.5.2 Strategic context of the programme

Sunderland's Great Place programme was shaped within and responded to the context of a number of key local developments:

1. A new Sunderland Cultural Strategy was published by the Sunderland Cultural Partnership in October 2014 to set a "a clear direction for the



*city's cultural development for a 12-14 year period*". Recognising the social, educational and economic role of culture, including its value to the city's sense of pride, the Strategy focuses on the three connected aims of raising awareness and understanding of the city's diverse cultural offer; developing audiences and 'confident consumers' of culture; and of developing and expanding the cultural offer and assets to enhance its economic and social benefits and *"use culture to create an enterprising, creative and innovative local economy"*.

2. Sunderland made a bid to become the 2021 City of Culture. While not successful, the process of bidding became a touchstone for a change of mindset locally and catalysed conversations around culture and the potential to take pride in the city. Whilst the initial local response to the idea of bidding for City of Culture had been sceptical, the process of bidding galvanised local people.

If you're not in the cultural sector you might not ordinarily consider that health and wellbeing were part of the cultural brief, but since '2021' these conversations are happening.  
*(Sunderland Culture)*

3. The creation of Sunderland Culture out of a partnership between Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and the Music, Arts & Culture Trust<sup>44</sup> in 2016/17 was not just about efficiencies but also about raising ambition. The new organisation is independent and can take risks and be agile in a way that some larger institutions cannot. But the local authority is *"in the new organisation's DNA"* and is still critical, for example in relation to town centre development or flagship events (e.g., the 'Tall Ships' event). Sunderland Culture's receipt of both Great Place and NPO funding marks a step change for

arts investment in the city and enabled the new organisation to trial new forms of governance.

*We're not seeing Great Place as a separate project, it is integral to what we do. We would struggle to make Sunderland Culture the viable organisation that it is with a place-based, city-wide vision without Great Place.  
(Sunderland Culture)*

4. 'Cultural Spring', Sunderland's nine-year programme funded by Arts Council England's 'Creative People and Places' programme, was formed in 2014 to help more people in Sunderland and South Tyneside to experience and be inspired by arts and culture. As such, it provided a model of practice for how to build participation in the arts, a network of community contacts and several key team members which Great Place could build on. Both programmes shared two core partners: the University and MAC. However, whereas *Cultural Spring* focuses on building an appetite for arts and culture, the local Great Place programme was *"about asking people what culture they want"* and understanding how residents feel culture can address local challenges.
5. In 2017, the Council established Sunderland's Historic High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) after a successful bid to Historic England. This focuses on sustaining the historic city centre and addressing various properties on the Heritage at Risk register; thereby providing a catalyst to stimulate the area's wider economic growth.

---

<sup>44</sup> Charitable organisation catalysing music, arts and culture in Sunderland. <https://www.mactrust.org.uk/>

### 9.5.3 Key aims and activities of the programme

The Sunderland Cultural Strategy was already in place when the Great Place programme was developed. The advance work on the Strategy both helped the Great Place team to “*get up and get going sooner*”, according to the Creative Director of Sunderland Culture and Great Place programme manager Rebecca Ball, as well as providing a common vision on which to act.

The Great Place programme centred around four core strands, which focused on creative economy development (‘Unlock’); improving community cohesion (‘Unify’); supporting health and wellbeing within socio-economically deprived communities (‘Unleash’); and improving the availability of cultural opportunities for children and young people (‘Uncover’). Each of these strands focused on a particular geographical focus area where a key need had been established, as well as feeding into the Cultural Strategy’s interconnected aims of audience and cultural sector development. Alongside the four core strands, a fifth strand of work focused on improving communications and capacity-building (i.e., networks, partnerships, funding) around a city-wide vision for culture. This included four large-scale marketing campaigns based around cultural events.

**Figure 28 Sunderland’s Great Place projects**

Project	Theme	Geographic focus	Issue
Unlock	Creative Economy	City Centre Heritage Action Zone (HAZ)	Sustainability of the local creative economy; opening up underused spaces for cultural activity

Project	Theme	Geographic focus	Issue
Unify	Community cohesion	Southwick, Castletown, Millfield, Pallion	Need to create community relationships enabled by new bridge opening
Unleash	Health and well-being	Coalfields	Socio-economically deprived area with high levels of social isolation, mental health issues, obesity and holiday hunger
Uncover	Education and schools	Washington	Lack of cultural opportunity for children and young people, with little within curriculum or links to local arts offers

### Reacting to COVID

While the programme was intended to wrap up in September 2021, COVID-19 meant that an extension was necessary to complete the planned work. In finding ways to support the sector during the pandemic, Rebecca Ball felt that “*our response has definitely been better thanks to Great Place*”. Support work focused on two areas: artist development and wellbeing. In terms of the former, the ‘Unlock’ strand of the programme provided resources, which enabled the provision of support to artists and freelancers. The team were able to move planned artist development work “*really nicely online*”, which provide a valuable resource: “*it enabled us to talk to the creative community and say: ‘what is it you really need now, how can we support you’*”. As a result, they rethought the programme, putting on seminars on adapting to change and on the use of the Cultural Emergency Fund. “*We were able to be*

*really reactive and that felt really good*". This online work tapped into the programme's 'Unify' strand, which had the aim of bringing communities together.

In terms of wellbeing (the 'Unleash' strand), this carried on with work with groups that were shielding or less likely to be able to meet on zoom. With the help of producers who *"have an expertise and interest in wellbeing and broader ways to engage"*, takeaway packs and downloadable packs were created, which were available to everyone. However, while the wellbeing work during lockdown was a success, Ball noted that they were not able to undertake all activities that had been identified as important, due to difficulties in engage partners during the pandemic.

### 9.5.4 Programme highlights across the years

Over the four years, the programme resulted in a number of highlights and impacts across the five strands.

#### Creative Economy ('Unlock')

Activity in this area focused on supporting the sustainability of the local creative economy including through opening up underused spaces for cultural activity. This area of activity was strongly aligned with the aims and activities of the local Heritage Action Zone. Successes included:

- Initially, to successfully align the Great Place and HAZ project ambitions to focus on reactivating city centre heritage buildings for cultural use. As Rebecca Ball summarised, *"having that alignment with the HAZ around heritage buildings needing regeneration – the alignment with our priorities to highlight CCIs in the city has been really valuable"*.

- Through this partnership, Mackie's Corner, a Grade II listed city centre building which had been lying derelict since the early 2000s and for which it was a priority for HAZ to help the landlord find a new way to activate the building, was turned into a pop-up gallery for emerging artists. 'Unlock' programmed pop-up galleries here throughout 2019, *"providing space and support for 37 artists, collectives and organisations in the city to show their work and hold workshops and events"*<sup>45</sup>. This had a big impact on emerging artists as well as *"galvanising the search for the next [business on site]"*, so Ball. Sunderland Culture also created a connection with Sunderland University, using the site to host the end of year exhibitions by Fine Arts students, thereby providing them with 'real world' experience. According to the final evaluation, *"this 'meanwhile' type of provision for performance and exhibitions has proved very successful, clearly meeting a need and bringing arts and culture into the civic world and to audiences in the centre of the city"*. With grant support from HAZ, the building has now been restored and a number of new businesses have moved in, with plans by the landlord to gradually bring the whole building back into use as a mixed-use property.
- The partnership collaborated on bringing creatives into the Athenaeum Building, originally opened in 1841 as the town's first museum and later home to the Sunderland and North Durham Liberal Club. Funding was found to pay for capital works to redevelop the building; it is now home to new gallery and studio space Abject Gallery, run by Breeze Creatives, and includes studios, creative workspace, offices and an exhibition space for local artists and creatives.
- The partnership collaborated on the HAZ's theme of 'People power', looking at *"what other stories could be told about the city's heritage"*.

<sup>45</sup> Great Place Evaluation, Final Report July 2021, ERS Research & Consultancy

This was used to focus on the ‘Rebel Women of Sunderland’ as part of the Heritage Open Day 2019 celebrations. Following an open call, two artists were commissioned to tell a number of stories about local women, including about the first female MP and a woman who set up the first pharmacy school. The resulting exhibition toured local community venues and was also used to mark International Women’s Day in March 2020. Enabled by the partnership, the programme was highly successful: *“it has run and run and become part of our ongoing programme”*.

### **Spotlight: The value of partnerships within the Heritage Action Zone**

Sunderland’s ‘Historic High Streets’ was one of the first 14 areas to be granted Heritage Action Zone funding by Historic England, with a grant of £881k. The Council committed up to an additional £566k, whilst the Heritage Fund made a significant investment in a building project within the zone. The HAZ is being led by the Council, whose conservation team has proactively used their power to prosecute landlords in the zone for buildings neglect and are working with a range of chiefly private landlords to develop the area. Whilst one key landowner (of landmark building Mackie’s Corner) is a local family and highly dedicated to the area, other landlords are less interested.

Great Place funding enabled Sunderland Culture to dedicate resources (including a 0.6 staff post) to developing creative enterprise within the HAZ, both bringing in new activity (such as pop-up events in meanwhile spaces facilitated by Great Place) and increasing visibility of what is already there through new signage, networking events for creatives and public-facing activities.

A key anchor organisation for this project was Pop Recs, a community interest company run by entrepreneurial musician and community organiser Dave Harper and his bandmate Michael McKnight

(of band Frankie & The Heartstrings). Harper set up the original Pop Recs – a record shop, café, gallery, drop-in centre for MIND and event space – five years ago in response to a feeling of negativity about the city: *“I read about people’s views about the city and it’s not the same as mine.”* The venture was supported by local, national and international talent (such as photographer Keith Patterson, and band Badly Drawn Boy) and has become a key feature of the local arts scene.

During the programme period, Pop Recs was supported in relocating to a new (cheaper, larger) location in the HAZ – a Grade 2 listed building which used to house Binn’s first department store. The move was a tribute to networks and partnership: Pop Recs was suggested as a potential new occupant for the previously derelict High Street West buildings by the Sunderland 2021 bid team to the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT). It was subsequently supported to get a ‘Fresh Ideas’ grant from the Northern Rock Foundation, which included capital funding and support for business planning. Sunderland Culture meanwhile ensured that the plans for the High Street West buildings aligned with HAZ plans. In 2018, TWBPT, supported by the Great Place programme, successfully secured £45,000 funding from the Coastal Revival Fund for a ‘Living Classroom’ project in High Street West, partnering with Sunderland College to supply trainee labour for the building renovation, which Harper himself is also working on.

The project has required personal passion and dedication from a determined individual; the networking resource from Sunderland Culture’s Great Place; and the opportunity to tap into institutional funding and support from a range of organisations.

### **Community cohesion (‘Unify’)**

Activities focused on the areas of Southwick, Castletown, Millfield and Pallion to the north and south of the new Northern Spire Bridge across

the River Wear, with the aim to create new community relationships enabled by the opening of the bridge in 2018. The new bridge means that communities on either side of the river for the first time have easy access to each other. Projects were based on collaborations with *Cultural Spring*, Sunderland's nine-year Creative People and Places project, which aims to build engagement in the arts. According to Rebecca Ball, "*having that [existing] capacity within the city to lead on that participatory [element of the programme] has been really valuable – there is a sharing of best practice and support, [and] a lot of shared objectives. It was a really valuable partner*". Highlights included:

- As a key community commissioning/ community-led activity under this strand, the partners worked together on the *Wonderlooper* project. This saw participants jointly produce a brief for an artist and putting out calls to community groups, asking 'would you like to work on a partnership': "*it felt more community-led rather than community-commissioned*". The resulting project saw artist Di Mainstone work with communities on both sides of the Wear to create musical instruments out of leftover materials from the new bridge's steel cable casings.<sup>46</sup> Fourteen instruments were installed on the new bridge for visitors to interact with, "*inviting people to 'play' the bridge in a unique way*". A thousand tickets for the event were bought within hours of being made available. According to the artist, "*the Wonderloopers will channel, mix and meld the dreams, hopes and visions of Sunderland's people via the city's newest futuristic beacon. Once the visitor is inside the Wonderlooper, they will see the bridge fragmenting and hear magical soundscapes, created from interviews with members of the community*".<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> The instruments were manufactured by FabLab Sunderland following two hackathons hosted by the artist and attended by musicians, engineers and technologists.

However, while the opening attracted considerable media attention, reviews of the project among volunteers and visitors were mixed. Some volunteers felt that it didn't quite end up as they had expected based on their own work at the community workshops, while visitors felt they would have preferred a closer link to Sunderland's industrial heritage or the bridge's construction. Reflecting this, resident feedback at the interim evaluation "*indicated [that] projects to improve connectivity and cohesion across the city should be at a more relatable scale, relevant to local communities*".<sup>48</sup> This feedback resulted in subsequent 'Unify' activities focusing on smaller, community-led projects.

- The '*Who do you want to meet?*' project, which took account of the feedback from *Wonderlooper*, aimed to engage groups not normally reached. Projects were community-led, asking people who they would like to meet and what they would like to do through an inclusive call-out process and promotional drop-in sessions. Sunderland Culture offered awards of £3,000 to successful projects and offered practical help in the delivery, thereby providing training and experience for community groups and "*creating a legacy of increased capacity for planning and delivering projects amongst local groups*". Across two rounds, selected projects included: collaboration between an over 65's dance group and an asylum seeker support group; joint writing created by a local writers' group and asylum-seeking men; social housing residents collaborating with young adults from Young Asian Voices; a watercolour painting group collaborating with a mental health support group and members of a photography club for deaf photographers and the over 50s users of the Sunderland Deaf Centre co-producing a book about the local deaf community.

<sup>47</sup> <https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/countdown-to-wonderlooper/>

<sup>48</sup> Great Place Evaluation, Final Report July 2021, ERS Research & Consultancy

### Spotlight: Learnings in community engagement

The 'Unify' project focused on Sunderland's new river bridge, the Northern Spire, which for the first time created a connection between the communities living on either side. This was a highly anticipated new landmark development and the opening in 2018 provided an ideal focal point for the Great Place themes of building pride in the city and empowering communities. The project was in many ways a big success: the community commissioned, site-specific *Wonderlooper* project saw communities on both sides of the bridge collaborate with an artist to mark the bridge opening through the creation of musical instruments installed on the bridge. This generated considerable local and national press coverage as well as many hours of commitment from a large group of volunteers, who participated in the events both operationally and artistically.

Sunderland Culture, however, also felt there were things which could have gone better and in response, reflected on and refined their approach to community commissioning. Their key learnings:

- Early attempts to recruit volunteers through workshops, drop-in sessions, social media, etc. by Sunderland Culture were unsuccessful. But when they passed information on via one-to-one contact with existing community leaders (e.g., church groups) and gave them time, these contacts were able to leverage their relationships of trust across their networks, leading to successful recruitment.
- The ambition of the community commissioning group in selecting an innovative, nationally-known artist was exciting – but such commissions also bring challenges, as projects adapt to developing visions and circumstances. Following the commission, ongoing conversation was needed for the group to stay involved with changes and to manage their expectations.

- Whilst the choice of the ambitious project proposal belonged to the community, there was a tension in the resulting project between artist-led work and genuinely grassroots, accessible activity. *"The artist got community consultation but not 360-degree community engagement"*.

Subsequent projects built on this learning, moving to a different practice model to achieve more on Sunderland Culture's ambition for community-led arts. At a practical level, this included use of the project's (highly protected) contact database, noting the interests, needs and abilities of community members. This database has been a key tool, for example identifying one woman as keen and able to develop a community arts centre. Contingency funds in the project budget were used to pay for her training in essential skills.

The key issue for the community engagement strand was time: *"Five years would have been more comfortable."* But the project remained confident of achieving lasting change in community expectation around arts provision within the timeframe. This was helped by the groundwork laid by – and collaboration with - Sunderland's parallel-running nine-year Creative People and Places project *Cultural Spring*.

### Health and well-being ('Unleash')

This strand focused on cultural activity in the Sunderland Coalfield villages, with the aim of creating a relationship and trust with isolated examining communities in the area through linking with existing organisations. A focus lay on younger and older generations through the themes of food, heritage and creativity, with the goal of positively impacting on health and wellbeing. The strand consisted of a wide range of varied activities, with highlights including:

- Collaboration on the Hetton Lyons Country Park Carnival – a longstanding event which was relaunched in 2016 by a local events company after an absence of 20 years – to change the model of

community-commissioning to make it more community-led. According to Ball, *“maybe we would have made the transition more slowly, but it felt like a necessity to ensure legacy. The driver for this has been that we need to ensure legacy. It’s a little early to say what the outcome has been.”* In 2018 and 2019, Sunderland Culture established a ‘Culture Village’ on one side of the carnival site featuring interactive arts, culture and health-related activities, which included hens for cuddling, baby vegetables to care for and actors as ‘doctors’ offering ‘cultural health checks’. They aim is for Culture Village to become community-led as part of Great Place’s exit strategy, with the transition supported by the creation of a community group which should be able to apply for funding going forwards.

- Sunderland Culture helped set up a Young Carers arts club, which enabled young carers to get involved in a glass-blowing project at a local library and the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, allowing them to try out new art techniques. The Group was also involved in Hetton Carnival, where they engaged with the general public. Feedback suggested that participants gained confidence and new skills through an opportunity they would not otherwise have had. In addition, the project strengthened the links between Sunderland Carers’ Centre and local cultural institutions, *“providing an opportunity [for the Centre] to introduce young carers to local arts and culture experiences”*.<sup>49</sup>
- A partnership project with charity Hetton New Dawn to address food poverty through work on an allotment and the creation of relationships with community pharmacies, which have stepped forward as the best partners for trialling social prescribing, given their existing relationships with local people and available time to spend with them.

The aim of this project was to trial culture and health projects with a view to demonstrating their value to local GPs.

- Project ‘Looking Out, Looking In’ responded to COVID-19 restrictions, with two artists setting the community a series of creative lockdown challenges (e.g., origami), with instructions and a video tutorial as well as hard copy resources for those without online access. The resulting art was shared at an outdoor exhibition.

### Education and schools (‘Uncover’)

The Great Place programme also aimed to create new cultural opportunities for children and young people who have few existing opportunities to engage in local arts offers, working mainly through local schools. The project evaluation reported that *“interviews and observations indicated that [these activities] and the approach adopted by Sunderland Culture has widened access to arts and creative activities and provided tangible benefits for children and young people’s health and wellbeing”*. Activities included:

- Three schools (one primary, one secondary, and one SEN school) were recruited for a pilot scheme to develop each school’s capacity in arts and culture, including CPD for teachers, activities for children, and links with the city’s arts organisations. Although the primary school was struggling for funds and has a very high percentage of pupils on the at-risk register or with special needs, they leapt at the opportunity, seeing arts and culture as the best way to provide enrichment for the children. For the secondary school, the pilot provided a corrective to the squeezing out of arts from the curriculum in favour of STEM subjects.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

The most important thing isn't the staff training or the money or the funded activity, it's the widening experience and aspiration for the kids. (*Primary School*)

- *ArtsFix*, a digital toolkit was developed, focusing on three hubs: schools, teachers and school staff; children and young people; and families. The toolkit provided resources for teachers to help them improve or add to their school's arts offer; information on local cultural opportunities and creative careers for young people; and a “*one stop for creative family activities*” including information on local creative activities and venues, for families. The project evaluation reported that the lasting benefits of *ArtsFix* were considered ‘expansive’, providing a more intimate relationship for children and young people with arts and culture, either through their own activity or via their teachers and care givers.
- CPD opportunities for school staff focused on how to embed creative practices in the classroom, whilst an audit of local cultural venues assessed organisations’ capacity for working with schools and helped them make changes. These focused in particular around working with young people with autism or other additional needs.

### Communications and capacity building

Lastly, the cross-cutting fifth strand of work, which aimed to build links and capacity across the city around a city-wide vision for culture, resulted in a number of campaigns and activities. A key aim here was to address a previous issue of a lacking clear communication of the city's cultural offer and to raise and improve Sunderland's profile and reputation. Overall, Rebecca Ball reported that “*Great Place allowed us to tell a more holistic story about cultural life, opportunities and impact. It*

*enabled us to take our marketing up a level to a more strategic level – we have raised the bar.*” (Rebecca Ball)

- Sunderland Culture as a new key organisation is now ‘at the table’ with strategic leads from a wide range of local organisations and institutions, including the Council, University, BID, the local social housing provider, local shopping Centre, Public Health, etc. Together, they have worked to develop the ‘city brand’ across arts and culture, health and wellbeing and the economy.<sup>50</sup> Alongside this, the Great Place team led on or participated in a wide range of city-wide groups including e.g., the Vibrancy Group (made up of eight local businesses who share their marketing budgets to improve the city's vibrancy), Active Sunderland, Sunderland Cultural Education Partnership, and worked with the full range of Council departments, including health and regeneration, throughout the programme period.
- Three major campaigns were delivered with the aim of promoting Sunderland's cultural identity and bring people into the city centre. These hooked around the ‘*Tall Ships*’ event (in the Summer of 2018) and a major Da Vinci exhibition, *Leonardo*, on loan from the Royal Collections Trust to 12 locations across the country to mark the 500-year anniversary of the artist's death. Connected to this, the project evaluation found that “*the investment in partnerships and developing joint-up activity paid off*”, with Sunderland Culture's partners for example cross-promoting the event to their own audiences. Over 22,000 tickets were sold, and almost 4,500 children and young people under the age of 18 attended. Following the event, Sunderland Culture became a National Partner (NPP) with Arts Council England for the national collection, bringing in a group of local residents as ‘Art

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



Champions' to work on the development of the three-year NPP programme.

- The delivery organisation received small but significant funding from a number of partners including Public Health, the Business Improvement District and Tyne and Wear metro (Nexus).

They're not huge sums but they represent commitments and recognition – reassurance that it's not entirely on our shoulders. (Sunderland Culture)

- Great Place facilitated the trialling of new governance models for arts and culture, following a long period of austerity. Through doing so, *“it enabled an innovative governance model to be developed [for Sunderland Culture], between the local authority and the University and, more unusually, a philanthropic business group via the MAC Trust, to support the creative sector to thrive and grow.”* While the partnership and ambition existed before Great Place, Great Place *“provided the resource to help test and establish the model – so it was really timely”*, explains Ball. According to the project evaluation, *“there is considerable positivity amongst strategic partners about the governance model's efficacy, particularly in terms of its overarching approach to arts and culture in the city.”*

### 9.5.5 Programme legacy

Looking back, programme lead Rebecca Ball feels that the programme delivery has shown that *“seeing change takes a long time”* – an insight that was heightened further in the difficult period when the COVID pandemic started. As such, *“if we could do it again, having five years would be better”*.

Nevertheless, she feels that the programme has had a significant and lasting impact on the city, both in terms of capacity-building generally and across the strands of activity/ priority areas.

Most fundamentally, the programme – set up at the same time as Sunderland Culture was being established – has had a *“significant impact on [the organisation's] capacity”* in the long term. It enabled Sunderland Culture to test priority areas, spark projects as well as to develop the organisation, through capacity-building, fundraising, marketing and comms. Says Ball: *“Sunderland Culture was set up as a long-term organisation. It was about building something that was resilient and had reach and impact”. Set up as it is now, “it is absolutely fundamental – a driver in the city. It is a long-term partnership [between the founding members] to bring about cultural change.”*

Beyond that, Ball feels that the programme has had a *“massive impact”* in terms of its breadth, with lasting results across the priority areas of the development of the local creative industries, arts and health, and creative learning. Great Place enabled the delivery team to *“build on all of these areas”*, leading to organisational development across the board. Community capacity has also been improved, with communities better able to lead on practice themselves – here, *“partnerships that have developed through Great Place will still be in place”* going forward. Supporting this, Sunderland Culture used the time to create, through the ArtsFix platform on their website, *“an emporium of resources”*, providing a pathway for families, young people, schools and any other organisations interested in arts for young people, with the hope that this will enhance their reach. Across the priority areas, then, *“the way we take our ambitions forward will be different – we hope to embed the principles we've learned from Great Place – e.g., the way we work with schools, the scale and the reach.”*

Throughout, relationships on the ground have been key to this success. COVID-19 led to some challenges for the planned strategies for legacy, says Rebecca Ball, meaning that *“the way we had seen the ending/ handing-over [of the programme] has changed significantly”*. Partner organisations in the communities such as Public Health have had to prioritise differently, leading to more challenges in maintaining partnerships. Similarly, partnerships with schools were strained by the rules around limiting access from third parties into schools and not undertaking cultural trips. However, the fact that relationships had been established during Great Place has helped to maintain them to some degree during the pandemic: *“although conversations are difficult, those relationships are already there. The Local Cultural Education Partnership have kept meeting, and we have been having honest conversations about what they need.”*

In addition, the Great Place period also helped bring in additional funding which will run beyond the Great Place programme. Sunderland Culture took the decision to hire a new Development Manager who has hugely supported their ongoing fundraising efforts, for example bringing in new income sources for the creative economy support strand (‘Unlock’). Additional funding was also successfully applied for from the Coastal Communities Fund, although a bid to the Cultural Development Fund to support town centre regeneration was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, *Cultural Spring* also successfully applied for a further funding round of two years, although the money allocated by Arts Council England was dramatically tapered down from the previous funding round, leading to some challenges.

Together, these various successes mean that *“Great Place strengthened our core and has enabled us to test a number of areas for our values and mission”*, according to Rebecca Ball.

### 9.5.6 Success factors

Throughout the programme, the delivery team identified a number of success factors and learning points:

1. The independence and cultural focus of Sunderland Culture are critical in giving it freedom, flexibility and the ability to forge partnerships that would not be available other larger institutions.
2. Great Place is a process not a project: it’s about capacity building for the long-term.

*We have always seen Great Place as capacity building. [...] Great Place is £1.5 million over three years but it is basically part of a £60 million vision over seven years. (Sunderland Culture)*

3. The project is built on a recognition of the importance of ‘bodies on the ground’: human resources who can build trust and put people in touch with funders, arts organisations, other groups, artists etc, creating networks which will endure after project funding is past.
4. Many of the key staffing roles are held by ‘cultural producers’, individuals with expertise both in artistic practice and in project management.
5. Great Place funding is a tool for bringing culture to the fore, which works best when used in conjunction with other funding and opportunities, as seen with the HAZ or the collaboration with *Cultural Spring*, providing a platform to share best practice and support.
6. In creating the programme, the articulation of headline ambitions at the outset was *“really valuable”* in providing a direction of travel; however, the detail sitting underneath these ambitions needed to be local, developed with partners in the city as the programme

developed, in order to *“really respond and adapt to the needs of communities and partners”* that the programme worked with.

## 10. Appendix 2: Counterfactual Case Studies

### 10.1 North Somerset, Weston Super Mare's 'Great Weston'

#### 10.1.1 Bid Summary

Weston-Super-Mare is a classic Victorian seaside town, undergoing rapid transformation to become a significant urban centre by the sea. Banksy's Dismaland achieved international profile, confidence is growing and has been matched by significant investment in the town's regeneration. Weston has a vibrant, but often hidden, cultural sector. It has a significant built heritage, recognised with Heritage Action Zone status. It has the potential to build participation from existing communities and from those that form as the town grows. The "Great Weston" programme was intended to focus on cultural development led by local people, local organisations and local businesses. It aimed to harness the creative talent and skills of the town to position it as a centre of cultural opportunity. The aspiration was to forge partnerships between cultural organisations, philanthropists and business and for the Great Place programme to be the catalyst to making the ambitious vision a reality.

The bid was led by North Somerset Council who requested £1.2 million in grant funding.

#### 10.1.2 Strategic developments since the application

The application that was made to Great Place in late 2016 was made on the basis that there is an opportunity for Weston Super Mare in terms of cultural development. Although the application was unsuccessful, it

created more structured conversations for Weston with Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Arts Council England about how to develop the town.

In October 2018, the Arts Council offered Regional Development Funding to North Somerset Council to undertake a piece of work about what a regional delivery vehicle for Weston might look like. Through this, an arts development company in Dorset was commissioned to undertake the work. Originally, the plan for Weston had been to create an external body that could undertake cultural development. However, ultimately the decision was made by the partners that it would be more sustainable to develop the initiative within an existing organisation.

In October 2019, the Arts Council, the Heritage Fund and Historic England agreed to support 'Culture Weston' which was to be delivered by Theatre Orchard (Weston's first National Portfolio Organisation). There was a major commitment from all parties, and an aim to raise £180,000. Investment came from a combination of Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) money, Arts Council England, the local authority and Culture Weston. Additionally the Heritage Fund financed a new exhibition space, and the British Museum have loaned an object for that space.

Within Weston, there has been a lot of work around developing a long term strategy for Heritage, Arts, and Culture in the town. Preparing the Great Place bid required the team in Weston to undertake significant groundwork which contributed towards the partnerships now working in the town and created a catalyst for continued working. This also meant the cultural strategy was already around 80% complete when, in 2019, there was a change in political leadership at the local authority level. In January 2020, the Council adopted a 10-year strategy for Heritage, Arts and Culture, the first time that this has happened, which includes a new executive function for culture (again a first for the area) and particular

focuses on raising participation, creative learning opportunities, placemaking, and raising the profile of Weston nationally.

Alongside North Somerset Council, the district Council (Weston Town Council) also play an important strategic role in the town, running the theatre and the museum, and convening a Heritage, Arts and Culture committee. Additionally they have taken an active part in the development of the West of England Combined Authority , securing a place within that strategic environment.

Meanwhile, Culture Weston been working in partnership through Weston hospital. This has led to the Arts and Health agenda becoming a priority, and Culture Weston being recognised by the NHS as a leader for the Arts and Health agenda.

The involvement of Arms-Length Bodies has also been key to progress for the town. Having the Arts Council involved gave Weston access to politicians and other key stakeholders, whilst the Historic England investment in the HAZ programme has supported wider placemaking work and provided resource to move Culture Weston forwards.

Additionally, the team feel that there is a level of expertise in the sector that has contributed to the ambition of Culture Weston. This, coupled with the team continuing to work together and focus on the opportunities for culture in the town, meant that the ideas put together for the bid could remain live and progress forwards.

### **10.1.3 The impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has proved a barrier and raises many questions for the project moving forward, and the infrastructure as it currently stands is at risk. There are challenges for the Town Council around continuing to fund the breadth of infrastructure they manage, and the wider impact on

the town centre is still to be confirmed. However, there are some opportunities, including a commitment to fund a dedicated development post, which will be recruited next year.

From a delivery perspective, the approach taken in Weston has not been building focused, which meant that in the initial period of the pandemic a lot of activity could be taken online. This helped the town to create a profile within digital culture. They have also been able to trial a series of outdoor socially distant performances trialled, which have been successful.

Strategically, COVID-19 has not changed any of Weston's ambitions, and indeed the pandemic has highlighted how important placemaking is. Recovery work for culture in the town is being channelled through Culture Weston, and bids have been made to the Cultural Recovery Fund, although the outcome remains unclear, which could be a significant setback for the town. There are also concerns about the town's heritage buildings, with a fear that, if the organisations running the buildings don't survive the pandemic and the Local Authority isn't able to step in, it could be the start of a cycle of long-term decline.

There have been opportunities around community response, with a high level of community-based support activity. There is an expectation from the team that a lot of this will be sustained long term, and that it can also provide an opportunity to connect into the social prescribing agenda.

### **10.1.4 Final thoughts**

Whilst unsuccessful in their bid, the level of achievement that has been realised even without the funds suggests to Weston that the fundamental ideas behind the Great Place Scheme are the right ones. The work that has been achieved in the three years has also demonstrated how much lead time is required to make these sorts of changes. Having a 'year

zero' in these sorts of projects is key, as it can take a long time to build relationships, establish joint working and develop delivery plans, institutions, and resources.

Additionally, the strategic collaboration between the Arts Council and the Heritage Fund is one that Weston would like to see continue. They feel that the heritage angle of Great Place brought people on board from a heritage background who would otherwise have felt that it “wasn't for them”. The wider holistic framing of arts and heritage together in the Great Place bid created a platform for talking about heritage, arts and culture together.

## **10.2 Salford, 'Great Place: Salford Life'**

### **10.2.1 Bid Summary**

The Salford Culture and Place Partnership (SCPP) sought funding for 'Great Place: Salford Life' –a long-term strategy and investment for embedding arts, culture and heritage into the urban fabric and everyday life of Salford, which would have taken account of the city's transition from a traditional industrial base to a modern, creative and competitive service based economy. The partnership aimed to use innovative new approaches, particularly in digital and media, that could optimise the understanding and perceived value of arts, culture and heritage, increase the size of, and nurture, the sustainability of the creative economy, and incorporate cultural spaces and activities into the fast changing city landscape. In summary, the SCPP would have committed to making arts, culture, archives and heritage a highly distinctive feature of the changing city, the focal point for identity and civic pride, characterised by an authenticity that could reflect the culture of the people and diverse communities and businesses of Salford.

The bid was collectively submitted by SCPP who requested £1.5 million in grant funding. As a collective, SCPP drew together a wide range of organisations in the city, including an independent artist cluster, small emerging arts organisations, established arts organisations, universities, the city council, and large scale developers.

### **10.2.2 Strategic developments since the application**

The Great Place bid opportunity in 2016(?) arose at a time when the SCPP partnership was still new and had been able to work through its overarching ambitions. There appeared to be a good fit between the aspirations for SCPP and the criteria for the Great Place fund. This meant that when the bid was unsuccessful it did not diminish SCPP's

aspiration and focus. But the lack of funding opportunities did require focusing down on what could be taken from those aspirations and covered without funding support. This had the added benefit of requiring partners to genuinely buy-in to the vision for the city of Salford, and the value of collective partnership. Whilst harder, and taking more time, the team feel this has created a tighter partnership overall.

The partnership takes a value approach. Decisions are taken collectively that may not have been taken individually, for example supporting low paid workers in the sector, and there is a sense of shared ownership and engagement. Salford is a Living Wage City, and was one of the first to sign up to the scheme. Whilst this has been impacted by COVID-19, having that shared sense of values as a partnership has underpinned individual organisational responses to challenges.

Since bidding for Great Place, a Culture, Creative and Place Strategy for Salford has been developed and launched, and an Executive has been appointed to support the partnership, things that were key aspirations for the original bid. However, the progress towards realising these outcomes took much longer without the funding, and there were lost opportunities, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Strategy was launched the week before lockdown in 2020(?), which led to a sense of lost momentum, and although the partnership continues and there have been some successful funding bids, the overall opportunities feel fewer compared with what could have been realised had Great Place funding been awarded.

However, the Great Place bid did provide a stimulus to activating partnerships in the city, as well as increasing the involvement of Salford City Council. This has enabled SCPP to bid for funds from the local authority to support the local Strategy, funds which were bolstered by further contributions from the University of Salford and the Lowry. This

created a galvanising effect for the Partnership and wove the partnership more closely together.

As well as funds for the Strategy, SCPP also bid for and raised funds to cover an Executive to lead the partnership. This has brought benefits as without this role the Partnership was reliant on organisations' own capacity, with a risk to the Partnership that it would be perceived to be "owned" by one of the organisations rather than the city as a whole.

Beyond its own functions, SCPP has bid successfully for a number of funds and identified opportunities for the city. This included a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for developing a creative programme at RHS Bridgewater, the success of which allows many of the major cultural organisation in the city to have a stake in the RHS, collectively doing work with the garden in its opening year. SCPP have also received Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) funding to found a Cultural Education partnership as an offshoot of the cultural partnership.

Additionally SCPP began networking with other cultural destinations internationally, and have been invited and participated in the Global Cultural Districts Network. This helped the Partnership to accelerate their learning as to how other cultural districts internationally have developed their offer, and had additional benefit at the start of the pandemic as there were conversations and events held virtually where other districts were very generous in sharing their experience of living through and coming through the pandemic.

As well as funding, SCPP have been able to leverage support on behalf of strategically significant institutions, most notably making Islington Mill a home for independent artists in the city. Islington Mill is a space with c.200 artists studios that was in need of capital investment. They had made several unsuccessful capital bids and had been lobbying and advocating on their own behalf. But through the Partnership, the lobbying opportunities were increased – most notably to Nick Serota –

and the Mill made bids to the Heritage Fund which were confirmed as successful three months ago.

The Partnership has been a significant part of making this happen to save the Mill. As an artist collective in independent ownership it has been saved in perpetuity, compared to other collectives working in buildings where the artists do not have ownership of the building. It means that the area can never be fully taken over by commercial developers as the land has been saved for now and for the longer term.

### 10.2.3 Barriers and challenges

There have been barriers experienced by SCPP in becoming established which are in part related to the nature of the Partnership. There is a sense from the team that building a sense of trust around the Partnership took longer as partners needed to develop an understanding of each other's culture, appetite for risk, and capacity for support. There are also risks related to the pace that each organisation works at, particularly the contrast between commercial partners and higher education partners. There is some concern that these differences in the pace of working may lead to some in the Partnership becoming tired and lessening their engagement. Having check points helps to understand how committed each partner is to the collective approach, and the next check on this will come in January 2022. At this point, the funding for the Executive role will run out and the Partnership will need to generate funds to sustain the role.

Salford is a changing city with many opportunities but those opportunities are not naturally available to all of its population, and there is a disconnect between the opportunities and the day-to-day realities of a city that scores poorly on many indices. Within the cultural participation agenda, these challenges remain and are compounded by policy

changes in the education sector which have seen a reduction in the provision for arts education.

The biggest challenge for the Partnership is around breaking perceived barriers to cultural engagement as well as actual barriers to cultural engagement. For example, the experience of the Partnership is that taking a focus on price and providing free events will not necessarily attract local audiences in the same way that can be expected elsewhere. This can be particularly challenging for some of the partners from the more commercial end of the spectrum who are used to free tickets being an incentive for increased engagement.

### 10.2.4 The impact of COVID-19

SCPP was able to provide support locally during the pandemic, and were invited to be part of the COVID-19 task force, where they sit alongside hospitals and the volunteer sector. This put cultural partners in a better position to understand week-to-week the impact of the pandemic locally, and it has enabled SCPP to shape programmes in a way that can support and be responsive to the pandemic recovery.

Practically, during the most significant part of lockdown, the Partnership made creative activities for those in the city, particularly on the front line. The first exhibition at the Lowry in November 2021 was by Salford residents and their experience of the time in lockdown, based on these activities. They have also made work to celebrate and thank key workers across the city, and used their buildings as beacons to signal support of initiatives such as the NHS and Black Lives Matter.

Despite the immediate usefulness of the Partnership and the individual work of organisations as part of the city's overall COVID response, the pandemic inevitably placed huge pressures on organisations and created many challenges for the Partnership. The impact of COVID-19 on SCPP has been profound with every member



organisation facing a different set of challenges, which has at times felt overwhelming. The biggest issue for SCPP is that each organisation has been fighting for its survival, and partners have therefore not been able to get into the mindset of using the network for support, or to achieve its wider ambitions.

There are concerns about what the pandemic means for cultural participation in the longer term, particularly in relation to funding, audience behaviour, audience expectation about safety, and the willingness to engage with activity. However there are some positives, with outdoor events recommencing and audiences coming back for performances.

The relationship with commercial bodies has also changed, with historic “funders of last resort”, such as The Peel Group, who developed and own Media City, no longer having the ability to take a risk with culture, instead having to focus on the needs of shareholders. This makes it all the more important for SCPP that the strength of the partnership is there – without that shared belief in the importance of culture in Salford, the challenges faced are so severe that it would have fractured by now.

There are other broader challenges the city faces. During the pandemic, the city’s economic challenges have been increased as Salford relies heavily on low income work in areas that have been particularly affected by the pandemic. Access to the internet and educational engagement during the pandemic has also been an issue. This meant that moving work online, which the whole sector was being encouraged to do, exacerbated some of the challenges, and a blended approach that includes face-to-face was needed.

There are additional long term challenges and long term implications from the pandemic. Initially, at the start of lockdown, the focus was on the here and now. As time progresses, the longitudinal aspects become

more of a concern. It remains unclear what the long term impacts will be, both for SCPP and the organisations that make up the Partnership.

# 11. Appendix 3: Focus Group Summaries

Four focus groups were carried out in April 2020, each with a different thematic focus. Projects could choose which focus groups they wanted to attend, and were able to attend multiple groups where they felt this had alignment with their project aims. Whilst there was an aim for consistent attendance for each group across the three years, there was variance year on year, due to a combination of scheduling conflicts and changing project priorities. The projects participating in each of the focus groups summarised here are indicated at the start of the summaries.

## 11.1 Arts and Heritage

*Participating Projects: Barnsley, East Suffolk, Kent, Reading*

### 11.1.1 How and why are you using Arts and Heritage, and what has happened since last year?

In **Reading** arts and heritage are embedded across the work that they do, with the focus on culture rather than distinctions between the different disciplines. They work with people and creative practitioners from across the arts and heritage sectors, and consider heritage to be something that encompasses both the activity and the physical site within each they work.

Their use of arts and heritage falls into two strands. The first is around co-commissioning, for example using museum collections to help patients with dementia. Additionally, they have been delivering festivals focussed on creative and visual arts in cultural heritage sites. Where they have found that they are not able to take people with them to physical heritage sites they have been going into the community,

particularly with isolated communities. This is something they think will become even more important as a result of the current pandemic.

**East Suffolk** have been working across their heritage action zone, as well as developing a bank of volunteers to help with conversation and research. They've had a specific focus on supporting museums to develop their family offer, as historically there has been a focus on older generations.

Their projects have given organisations a new way to develop, which has helped to open up other funding streams and build a reputation for East Suffolk to be a place where both arts and heritage come together. For example, they have seen local dance companies interpreting local history, and heritage open days providing arts and crafts workshops.

For **Barnsley**, any activity that is delivered needs to be a question of how arts and heritage are working together, exploring what elements of each are being used. In the last year they have been building upon the large scale event delivered in year 1, with an aim to continue to deliver outdoor activities.

A contributing factor to their focus is the shared historic story between the heritage sites in the partner areas, particularly the Wentworth Woodhouse estate which is currently at the beginning of a major redevelopment. A fundamental question for the Great Place scheme is how can they get new audiences to those sites?

One mechanism the team have used is large scale events that can introduce audiences to the sites, which took the form of WE Wonder events. The summer edition made use of creative outdoor art works, inviting audiences to curate their own experiences. By collecting stories from the place and working with the heritage of the place, they found they had little hooks of history that could draw in audiences, which were

then coupled with art as a mechanism to translate this out for wider audiences.

Barnsley also noted that prior to Great Place that had observed patterns of behaviour across heritage that they have tried to challenge through this project, encouraging rule breaking. Partners are seeing the benefit of this to reach their strategic aims, bringing in new audiences and allowing greater risk taking.

The **Kent** project works across four sites, each with their own story to tell. Three of the four delivery partners are arts and cultural organisations, whilst for the fourth partner there has been a lot of learning.

Each site is centred around the particular heritage of a place, and they are also utilising heritage action zones to unlock the potential of heritage.

A key question for the project is how you use arts and culture to activate left behind places; in Folkestone they are working with 2.5 acres of brownfield site, in Dover they're working with the fort which is a big space that has been largely forgotten and never opened to the public. Through walking tours, schools programmes, and commissioning of public art works, all of which has had involvement from the public, they are seeing a shift in attitudes towards spaces. They're now starting to think about the legacy of this project and using heritage spaces in the future; how do the community respond to and create responses to heritage?

### 11.1.2 What key elements of success have you identified?

In **Reading**, each partner has delivered a strand that aims to build Reading's reputation as a place of culture, with heritage at the centre.

This has included new branding for Reading and using heritage sites as a platform for creating art.

By bringing together producers, practitioners, organisations and communities, and getting them to all work together, the team are working to change the perception of Reading away from it as a generic city and towards one where arts and heritage are booming.

**Barnsley** have seen benefits through the programme, with the community coming to recognise arts and heritage as being under the same banner of culture. They have tried to explore how they can enhance what is already there, such as working with the Heritage Action Zone to engage artists.

More widely, culture has not been on the agenda for the Sheffield City Region historically, and Great Place has been a catalyst to commission work looking at the economic benefits of the arts and heritage to the region. This has helped to get people to think about working together, rather than a siloed approach, and they anticipate that it will inform wider cultural strategies.

For the **Kent** project, a key success factor has been the realisation that if a focus is on regenerating the seaside, you need to make the best use of seaside sites. Culture and creativity have a role to play in this, helping to reposition them as attractive to modern users and challenging more traditional barriers to the heritage sector.

By working with artists to create audience awareness of sites – such as Dover fort – and address whether it's an arts space, a venue or a destination, they have been able to think creatively about the context of what their communities need, balancing the heritage aspects with the regenerative potential.

### 11.1.3 What are the benefits of Arts and Heritage working together?

Strong partnerships have emerged in **Reading** between the University, the Borough council and organisations that have historically had different objectives, including three distinct NPOs. This has created a cultural base and enabled the team to now explore the longer term legacy of the project.

A key ambition has been for Reading to be seen as a cultural destination, that responds to culture. The team have found that by bringing together arts and heritage they can reach new communities – particularly in more deprived areas – and get communities to engage more deeply. Some of this has been around addressing barriers, such as transport, whilst other aspects have involved adapting the approach that is taken such as avoiding jargonistic language. The responses have been good, suggesting that they are now reaching a larger, more diverse audience than previously.

For **Barnsley**, their approach has been to view the whole project – and wider arts and heritage – as a single ecology, where smaller projects are just as important as the larger ones. In particular they have focussed on rural communities outside of towns, exploring how they can connect people together.

This has been as useful for providers as audiences, by shifting to co-creation activities and exploring opportunities to make meaningful interventions, particularly for young people in the local area.

The challenge that they face is the length of time available, and a concern that they will not be able to embed key learning before the end of the funding period. Whilst Creative People and Places projects have a 10 year vision, the three years for Great Place has been perceived as too short, with the project already wrapping up, before they have been

able to inform town plans and realise the role of arts and culture in the region.

Within **Kent** the successes are around co-commissioning and opportunities for communities and arts organisations to work closely together, rethinking their role in those communities. This has been particularly marked for the Marlowe Theatre, for whom Great Place has challenged what they do.

The Kent project have also seen benefits in Margate and Ramsgate, where the Turner Gallery have had the opportunity to build and grow their presence outside of the building, challenging historic tensions between the two towns. The key learning has been that it is about developing and establishing connections, not parachuting in briefly and then claiming a job is done.

### 11.1.4 What are the challenges? What are your plans moving forward?

Whilst one of the smallest Great Place schemes, **Reading** feel that they have been able to deliver a high volume of activity. Moving forward they want to put in place a legacy that enables Reading to be viewed as a place for culture, with policy making aligned across the city.

The team are aiming to be coordinated in what they deliver, and are exploring the possibility of a digital platform so that they can support the communities they have been working with. Challenges include how they can realign delivery to support communities to apply for funding to make sure that they are recognised and supported after the project ends.

**Barnsley** are having conversations about the legacy of the project, and feel that Rotherham's recent award of CPP status – with Wentworth a main partner – is part of the ripple effect from this. They are also

putting in a bid to fund three further WE festivals and are awaiting permissions for commissions at National Trust sites.

Within the existing projects, some are becoming autonomous – for example the cinema – whilst others are being passed on to NPOs in the region to continue their legacy. For the Great Place project it is then a case of moving into a role of being a point of information and support for other organisation, supporting local artists to secure funding and working with the wider Sheffield City Region to ensure that culture is at the heart of their activities.

Each of the four sites in **Kent** have their own legacy; Dover has learnt from the tools and techniques that have been used and expect to continue, the Marlowe in Canterbury are extending their lease on the pop-up site, in Ramsgate public art has been installed, and in Folkestone the Gas Works site is going to be developed. The aim of the central team over the next year is to act as advocates, exploring how the learning from the programme can be distilled, shared, and embedded at a local council level.

Additionally, now that the partnerships have evolved, they will be used as case studies to demonstrate the role arts organisations can have within heritage sites, working to unlock inward investment, engage communities further, and contribute to local strategies at a council and LEP level.

## 11.2 Co-commissioning and Community Empowerment

Participating Projects: Greater Manchester, Herefordshire, Kent, Northern Heartlands, Reading, Tees Valley

### 11.2.1 What work have you undertaken around community empowerment this year?

**Northern Heartlands** have two projects that are specifically focused on the community empowerment agenda. The first of these looks to work with a collection of former pit villages with a combined population of 3,000. Category D villages, they have all been designated as non-viable, with no investment and high levels of deprivation. They commissioned work that explored what people wanted from their place, and what they wanted to see in terms of improvements. A key point of interest was around growing, and using planting to make the area look better. Working with Incredible Edible, and engaging with residents, the parish councils, and the local MP they were able to apply for funds of money and develop community trust to lay the groundwork for an intervention. This is on hold at the moment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however there is willingness within the community, including interest from a community café who want to have food supplied from the project.

The second project takes a very different approach, and is about creating one large intervention with the community, taking advantage of a natural amphitheatre to create and programme a series of events across the summer. At this stage in the process it's early days and there are complicating factors presented by COVID-19. There has been a lot of hard work both in terms of building trust and building confidence in the area, especially where things haven't happened before. However, these relationships and the trust is so fragile, there are concerns the lockdown will undo the work achieved to date. .

**Reading** have found that grassroots organisations for older people have historically been disengaged with the programme. To address this, they commissioned groups of older people to speak with other older people in a bid to increase engagement, with an aim to create cultural exchange groups that can draw together over 60 community groups. Whilst this has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hope is that once people are out of isolation it can take place.

Reading also commissioned participatory action research in South Reading, an area with high deprivation, with the help of the University of Reading. Working with 55 different organisations, particularly grassroots organisations, they worked to understand how to engage older people with cultural activity. This highlighted a lack of communications availability and explored how to engage with these groups. It has had national interest as a piece of research, and been presented at parliament.

Within **Herefordshire**, Great Place has enabled a grant scheme called “My Place” which supported communities to commission artists, and is seen as key for community empowerment. It takes the position of helping communities identify what they want to do, think about how to be inclusive, and appeal to audiences across their community who may not engaged before. Funded examples included a festival for people experiencing homelessness, and working with a social group in a care home to create a mixed media arts week. The steps taken are small, and it will take time until a legacy is fully realised, but they are facilitating the community to go above and beyond, and encouraging to take the next step forward in their development.

Alongside the hyper local focus of My Place, across Herefordshire there has been a county wide focus on tourism investment. In addition to involvement in higher level conversations with strategic decision makers, Herefordshire has also utilised their position within local communities to

ensure that the conversation is joined up and that people across Herefordshire can have a sense of involvement in strategic tourism.

**Tees Valley** has identified a series of structural issues around engaging and empowerment. Whilst all their programmes are about engagement, they have found empowering communities to be a different matter. Levels of engagement were historically low and so establishing that contact and building engagement has taken time. It is only now, as they enter the third year, that they can begin to empower communities.

In spite of this, there are three programmes within Tees Valley that have connections to the idea of community empowerment and have been able to build on existing activities that have varying levels of public engagement: the Stockton International River Festival; the Steel Gala in Recar; and the Middlesborough Settlement, a long-term collaboration with Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art. Although all taking different approaches to community empowerment, varying from working with community members to programme activities through to launching a community opera, all three are currently on hold as a result of COVID-19.

In **Greater Manchester**, there is a strong community and voluntary sector, building out of a strong left wing political landscape that is grounded in activism and co-operatives. The Great Place project has been looking at how they can use culture as a way for local residents to be meaningfully involved in discussions that affect them, such as town centre regeneration. One element of this has been to work with young people in different districts to understand what they want from the future of their highstreets, in part predicated on the idea that these young people will be the ones using the high streets in the future. These ideas are being presented to town planners and arts officers simultaneously, in a bid to open up the conversation. Alongside providing young people with a voice, this work also looks to give arts officers a greater role, and

providing them with the skills to be more empowered at that level and more engaged in discussion.

Additionally, Greater Manchester have been continuing an established project that works with older people, transforming it into an activism project that can work to make change. Across five different groups, each with a different model based on different types of organisations, older people have been trained to do their own cultural productions and tasked with creating an offer that is age friendly and age appropriate. As with other Great Places, this has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Greater Manchester have made the difficult decision not to reschedule the showcasing element of this work as, in the current climate, they don't expect lockdown to be lifted for older people this year. However, the groups are still working on their projects even without the showcasing opportunity.

The **Kent** Great Place programme is active across four different towns and cities (Folkestone, Ramsgate, Dover and Canterbury), and, despite there being different approaches taken in each place, the fundamentals of how the projects are doing things have been similar. This has seen projects working through a process of discovery about heritage sites, getting the community involved with that site, and then building engagement from there. At the heart of all of this work is the idea of people powered planning, and an exploration of how best to involve the community in planning its future.

Within Folkestone, this has focused on an abandoned and disused gas works. The gas works are of particular interest as they have a strategic position, being close to the train station and on the edge of the creative quarter. By delving into the history of the place, and exploring the ways that the community felt connected to the site through shared ideas and memories, the programme was able to identify strong community links, particularly in relation to a community centre that

operated on the site until 2000. This was then the catalyst for a range of work, including with local primary students around architecture and planning, a memory café with older generations, and consultations with the community about what the space could be used for. All of this has been presented back to the community to identify a broad vision of the future for the site. Whilst the land is owned by the power grid, this work has prompted the council to decide to purchase the site, and they are now considering what it could be used for.

Like Greater Manchester, Kent have worked with young people to develop a child-led planning approach in Ramsgate. This has seen a collaboration between the Turner Contemporary with local schools over the last three years to understand the heritage of their place and develop young people as young arts and heritage leaders. This culminated in the commissioning of new public art for the town harbour which will be unveiled in the summer.

### 11.2.2 What have you learned?

Language and its use was a key learning point for several of the Great Places. Both **Greater Manchester** and **Herefordshire** spoke about the importance of the language that is used when working with community groups. They questioned the use of the term “community empowerment”, suggesting that “community co-production” was a better encapsulation what they were trying to achieve, namely building things from the ground up, with the inclusion and involvement of the community. Both noted that, where they have used the term co-production, they've had stronger responses from their communities. Whilst “empowerment” carries connotations of work being done to communities, “co-production” gives more space for collaborative conversations and giving communities the change to have a role in supporting and establishing themselves.

For **Reading**, lessons have been learnt about the importance of using community groups to reach previously disengaged communities. Each of the different strands across their co-commissioning and community empowerment work has been run by a different group, which has allowed the research to access areas and groups that may not have been otherwise accessible. This has created opportunities for experiences beyond groups' own communities, increasing community empowerment.

Reading also highlighted the need for a partnership process within commissioning. By working with partners from cultural and non-cultural backgrounds they have been able to embed commissioning in communities, increasing the buy-in of those communities.

Within **Kent**, this work has enabled a process of discovery. At the start of the programme they hadn't been certain about what would be possible, and had concerns about artificially raising expectations within their communities about what might be possible. By going out and working with the communities, they've been able to make things happen, and have discovered that this work can yield results.

As part of this process, Kent have also identified a need to demystify processes and procedures at a local government level for community groups, particularly around consultation that affect those communities. They highlighted the need to bring the community into and along with any process of consultation to ensure that what gains are made in community empowerment are not brought to a sudden stop due to a missed deadline.

The experience within **Tees Valley** has highlighted that in comparison with the third and health sectors, the cultural sector has a lot to learn around community practice. This has helped them to identify the next stage of their work in this area. They have found that a key barrier to empowering communities is the strength that the sector has at a

grassroots level, so by providing development and upskilling opportunities, there are opportunities for them to create longer term successes. Tees Valley are also keen to make the case for communities being more closely involved with the policies that affect them, and see this as the next phase of work beyond the lifetime of Great Place.

### **11.2.3 How are you working to ensure there is a genuine legacy from this programme rather than a hard stop at the end of the funding?**

With the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown impacting on the ability for projects to deliver their activities, there are some uncertainties about what legacy might look like.

For **Reading**, whilst they have seen successes around community empowerment, there is still work that needs to be done. Importantly none of the groups that Reading have worked with are at the point where they can continue without the support of Great Place. This creates a legacy implication for Reading as whilst the council have recognised a need for some sort of facilitator or convenor post, that can help to facilitate community engagement, without someone in that post bringing people together it won't happen, particularly when grassroots organisations are looking for consistent contact. They are working to try and mitigate this, but are uncertain about whether it will be resolved.

In **Greater Manchester**, whilst overall they can start to see impact emerging, they have found that you cannot create an ethos of co-production in two years. They also do a lot of work with older people, and given the current lockdown and the circumstances in the care sector, they expect that after COVID-19 there will be a moral obligation to explore further how older people can co-produce work. They see this as an opportunity and are looking at ways that this can be realised.



For **Tees Valley**, the key mechanism for securing the legacy of the Great Place work is to get all of the key stakeholders together in a single place. As a body of practice, they see a need for this to be pulled together properly so that there are clear understandings about what has and can be achieved. The fear at the moment is that where the programme currently is will be forgotten as there is so much else going on within the COVID-19 context. The cultural sector needs to be advocated for and this needs to be pushed back to government at a local and national level.

## 11.3 Creative and Cultural Economy

Participating Projects: Derwent Valley, Gloucester, Lakes and Dales, Reading, Tees Valley, Torbay

### 11.3.1 What do you consider to be your greatest achievement since last year?

The biggest achievement for **Derwent Valley** has been the ability to start their work. Previously they were still in the programme development stage, having only just recruited their creative producer. Since then, their producer has delivered a multi strand creative programme that has included a big exhibition, as well as providing funding for smaller venues and smaller community groups.

Derwent Valley have been aiming to engage people with the heritage of the area in different ways in different locations. This has included working with adult community education services, exploring ways of connecting with urban audiences in Nottingham and Derby, and working with peers in education to connect young people with artists and heritage sites to identify something that could create a product that could potentially be sold. The latter project has resulted in actual products with some very successful sales achieved.

Alongside this, Derwent Valley have completed a large piece of audience research that gives a picture of the whole World Heritage Site audience, exploring their motivations, desires, background, and location.

In general, they've found that the level of interest and engagement with the creative economy programmes across the region is really high. All of the artists they've engaged with have identified surprising, innovative and exciting ideas, and these are popular with visitors, attracting a different audience to the normal visitor group that would come down to the site.

On paper, the whole of the **Tees Valley** Great Place should be about cultural economy as, coming out of Combined Authority, they are essentially the economic regeneration organisation, and the Combined Authority has culture and tourism in its strategic economic plan. However, there have been challenges to do work that can have a big structural impact, in part as a result of the complexities of the underlying governance structures.

Tees Valley have had good outcomes around engagement and working with communities, as well as tourism and attracting cultural visitors to the area. At the same time, there have been difficulties in getting buy-in for the notion of culture as part of the economic regeneration of the area. They have been able to make interventions around training and developing artists, and have good evidence and evaluation that shows a lot of the work around supporting sector confidence leads to sector employment and contracts. Yet in terms of making that step change and structural change, it has been difficult. Currently Tees Valley are trying to go through all of the strategic planning for COVID-19 recovery and are working to make sure that culture is seen as an element of business regeneration, not just something that the Arts Council is going to sort out without business support. As part of this, Tees Valley are trying to wrap, culture, tourism, venues, visitors, and attendance into that part of the sector, so that it is seen as an area that needs development as much as other sectors.

**Torbay** look at the question of cultural economy from two perspectives: the economy in Torbay and how culture plays a role in this; and the resilience of the cultural sector itself. They have been working closely with the regeneration team at the Council, particularly around putting culture into regeneration plans and placemaking, and policy around that. They also have a project running with the tourism business improvement district to develop new cultural tourism products. One of

these was launched this year and the other one is ready to go when and if it's relevant in light of the changing COVID-19 landscape.

Alongside these activities, Torbay have been doing cultural programming. They have a year-long cultural programme with two main strands, one was in June last year, which was based around an art week whilst the other was Wavelength, a sound and light technology festival that took place in November. Wavelength has been the biggest achievement as, having never had anything like this in Torbay, over 45,000 people experienced the event over the course of three days. The visibility of the event and the buzz generated by it was huge and it made a big impact on the communities and residents who attended. Importantly for Torbay, it created an environment for people in positions of power to pay attention and listen to what was happening in the town, leading to an appetite for more activities and a desire from local government to support this.

Like Vital Valley Torbay have been doing audience research, in their case focused on a Bay-wide audience across the town, to know who is coming to the different cultural offers in the town. They have also run a volunteer programme for art organisations to give local people a voice in advocating for art and culture and generally trying to build connections and mutual support. Additionally, through the lens of cultural sector resilience, they have been rolling out a skills development programme which is focused on leadership within the cultural organisations in Torbay and building a sense of collaborative leadership. This is a big achievement for the Great Place programme as it is the first time the directors and the managers of Torbay's venues and organisations have been brought together in a room to work on developing their own leadership practice. For Torbay it's been important to build this space where people feel that they can collaborate and trust each other. Historically, because tourism is a big driver locally, it can feel

very competitive between each of the organisations and venues, and this programme has taking steps towards addressing this.

**Gloucester's** programme has been focussed on kickstarting the cultural economy in the city, which has been reasonably poor. In year 2 they had found a building to open as a cultural entrepreneurs hub, however the process to actually get into this building has taken longer than expected. The big achievement for Gloucester is that they are now in the building and have managed to get the council, who own the building, to give them a 20 year lease on the floor. This creates an excellent legacy opportunity for Gloucester, and, once lockdown ends, the building should be only four weeks away from opening.

Additionally, Gloucester have been running a cultural development programme aimed at developing entrepreneurs in the cultural sector. To date 144 people have engaged with this programme.

Last year, **Reading** did evaluation work around the Reading and Thames festival. The idea of the festival was to be a tourism push and also engage with local artists from harder to reach communities, linking them up with international artists. Reading felt that possibly those targets weren't being met.

The last year has seen the formation of a collaborative festival group in Reading, something that's a first for the area. The Great Place team worked with this group to look for an alternative option to the Reading and Thames Festival. They recognised that this group were able to reach a lot of the audiences that Reading were looking to reach, and the variety of content was also attractive. This has been impacted by COVID-19, however, the team still consider this a success as, for the first time in Reading, they are seeing the cultural sector coming together to have a unified voice. They've also seen more activity around culture because of the funding that has been received, and feel that people are starting to take notice. Through this strand of work Reading has found

that their visitors are a lot more engaged, their communities are a lot more engaged and they've seen audiences grow.

For the **Lakes and Dales** scheme, there have been several opportunities for creative interventions. One key example was a 48 hour takeover of unique spaces across the Lakes and Dales by young creatives, including a bar, and a GP surgery. The team found that the artists valued the time to be in a space to research creative ways for collaborating and getting together. Additionally, they have seen successes with The Fold, a creative placemaking programme for younger people that looks at how spaces and towns are used, and why people might want to live there.

Currently, Lakes and Dales are planning for Ariel, a contemporary art and word festival in Grasmere and Ambleside. This was originally planned for last month, but has been postponed until the end of September in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 11.3.2 What developments have you seen in the cultural and creative economy in your area since we last spoke?

For **Derwent Valley**, Great Place was experimental, looking for new ways of working, and as a result they've been very creative with their brief. The team have been open with the work that has gone out and played with the identity and sense of what it was about. The opportunities that have been created have been valuable for the area, and the team are keen to explore how to maintain and unlock this interest.

The team wanted to discover what people thought about their areas, with a particular remit to look at making the World Heritage Site relevant for a broader range of our communities. What they've learnt is that the creative interest is there and it can play a huge part. In particular, the audience research highlighted how much people were aware of the

existence of the World Heritage Site, particularly within the residents' survey. This has led on to the question of how to build on that knowledge, moving from valuing to being involved with it.

**Tees Valley** have been working across local authorities in a wide and newly defined geographic area. This has created a challenge around creating a cohesive approach, particularly when these local authorities are still quite used to operating in their own areas. The key thing Tees Valley have learnt has been that perception of what a culture sector or cultural industry might be differs greatly. Whilst there might be a good understanding about tourism or the creative digital sector, a lot of the subsidised or independent cultural sector tends to conceptually fall between those cracks. Working to build a narrative that pulls all of this together has been a key challenge.

This has been particularly the case for Tees Valley in areas where there may be very capable cultural officers, but the political leadership has held a different way of conceptual thinking that doesn't necessarily encompass the value of culture. This creates a challenge as whilst the team are trying to work on policy and evidence they are finding that it is frequently personality and politics that actually decides whether or not something happens.

Within **Torbay** there have been three key developments: demand, the importance of connectors, and the importance of timing and flexibility.

The Great Place scheme has given Torbay a chance to try out new things, and, with these initiatives they have been able to prove that there is a demand for activity and culture. Reflecting on the Wavelength experience, against a target of several thousand people they actually had 45,000 people experiencing the event, demonstrating the appetite in the area for cultural events.

Across all of their work, Torbay have seen the real importance of connectors, and the role those connectors play at all levels. There is a need to have people in the wider strategic conversations, who have the ability to take part, attend meetings, and align priorities. This has been difficult historically where representation has been done by people whose main job is to run a venue (for example), so they can't necessarily be flexible and ready to engage with the conversation at the right time.

Similarly, in terms of the economy, in Torbay this is driven by a tourism focused BID company and the economic development company, both of whom have their own priorities and are shifting and changing in response to their own beneficiaries. Whilst stakeholders from these groups might come to Great Place steering groups, it takes second place if there is anything more business critical for them at the same time. However, there is a need to demonstrate impacts to these stakeholders, particularly where they may not have much knowledge about the cultural sector in order to drive things forwards. This has created a need for flexibility, and an ability to be proactive in making approaches.

In **Gloucester**, the last year has demonstrated that the demand is there, but the opportunities are lacking. Generally they have found that younger creatives tend to not really believe in Gloucester as a creative space, leading to them leaving the city and creating a talent drain. The team have established that there is a demand there and, if it can be addressed properly, there is greater likelihood this talent will stay.

To combat this, Gloucester have targeted their marketing and branding towards this group of people, finding that any generic branding doesn't work as it reduces expectations of quality. Alongside this, the city council has a significant regeneration programme and have appointed the lease on the cultural hub building. However, change is slow going and the council still lack an understanding in terms of how improving the cultural economy can benefit the wider economy going forward.

### 11.3.3 Have you heard from any of your local cultural and creative producers that there is a need for creative workspace?

**Torbay** piloted a production hub that was open for 12 months until November of last year. Originally this space had been an empty shop. By creating the hub, it created a safe space where people could pop in, try something creative, even if they'd not participated before, and contribute to Torbay's larger projects. They found that the space was well used, and it ended up being primarily a production base for making things as well as a venue for workshops with the community.

There are conversations continuing about what can be learnt from the pilot to create something similar in future. Whilst that specific space wasn't ideal for the long term due to a lack of facilities some kind of democratic space, would definitely be valued.

**Tees Valley** have seen enormous success around the use of pop up spaces, with them being used for gallery space, maker spaces, and temporary spaces. To the team it seems to be a real growth area, which seems to be a win-win for a lot of local authorities in terms of being able to do low cost Town Centre regeneration, without the artists having to commit to leases, rents, and long term commitments. The team are hopeful that moving forward they can explore something more strategic in this area.

Whilst creative workspaces have not been part of the **Derwent Valley** scheme, they have worked with and alongside existing spaces. A lot of this has been creating work spaces and shared production areas which can be shared where people couldn't afford to take on their own space.

**Lakes and Dales** carried out research with younger people and discovered that the main challenge they have in terms of their creative industries and working and living in the Lakes and Dales is lack of

physical and digital space to be heard in. As a result, there are now a range of initiatives that the scheme has funded and worked with to create co-working spaces, artists studios, and flexible spaces. They have also worked closely with a range of developers to explore how creative spaces can be included in developments.

The proximity of **Reading** to London means that workspaces for artists are expensive and at capacity, with a very real need from the sector for space. The collaborative spirit, which they have seen develop over the last year, is incredibly important, and so they are currently developing a panel of local arts organisations to solidify that change for the future.

Importantly, Reading have felt that locally there has been an assumption that if they create the opportunities, the artists will come, which hasn't necessarily been the case. This has helped them realise that that they need to adopt more of a collaborative approach to encourage artists to come forward.

### 11.3.4 What have been the key enablers for growth and legacy of the creative and cultural economy?

Having funding has been a key enabler for **Torbay**, enabling them to go to partners and say "we could achieve this, and we've got money to do it". They have found that often this acts as leverage for the other organisation to provide match funding, even when this hasn't been planned. Without having any funding on the table, it's difficult to get a serious conversation going, and, alongside this, having people who are able to make connections, attend meetings, and keep track of the changing agendas is vital.

Torbay are also trying to keep the message alive around the wider benefits and the wider arts and heritage. It looks likely that their legacy is going to be based around the relationships that have built over the last

three years, and the projects that have been done together, that can show what culture can achieve.

A key enabler for **Derwent Valley** is being able to tap into what is happening locally. This has been reinforced by what they have seen in terms of how communities are coming together, and how some local businesses, the cultural venues, and particularly the creative programme, have been flexible and adaptable to different ideas raised by these communities

The planned legacy for Derwent Valley has always been looking at ways of giving the World Heritage Site evidence and showing what is needed and what can be done. This means that, with the audience research commissioned, there is now a huge piece of information that didn't exist before. However, there have been challenges around timing for the scheme. Three years has only begun to start activity, and some aspirations – like reviewing and developing the management plan of the World Heritage Site – have been out of sync with the programme, creating missed opportunities.

In spite of this, there will be a legacy for Derwent Valley with the existence of a partnership that will carry on working in the World Heritage Site. By building links and showing what can be done, the scheme have been able to demonstrate how you can build relationships and have audiences respond to them, which in turn drives ideas for further work.

**Tees Valley** identified that one of the enabling and success areas in culture is working with communities, something they consider to be well known. What they feel is less known is that this can be a conduit for getting the political decision making and biggest structural changes moving. The legacy in Tees Valley is helping the culture sector be able to shape its own narrative, rather than try and fit anyone else's.

This means that rather than taking an approach of “how do we make you sound more business like”, the approach is about having an authentic voice that is reflected in the communities that Great Place represents and works with. For Tees Valley this feels like it has real meaning for regeneration beyond the economic argument. A lot of the challenges are to do with the non-economic challenges of communities, including isolation, perceptions, and aspirations. Within this is something that can be a focus for culture to work on, rather than trying to turn the culture sector into a business arm.

Ultimately, as with other projects, Tees Valley would like more time for development. The experience of Great Place is that not only do things take time, often they follow a non-linear process. There is a need for a consistent longer-term approach if the opportunities created by the scheme are to be embedded in the longer term.

For **Gloucester**, there are conflicting enablers of needing more local authority buy in at the same time as needing an economy that can act independently from the local authority to create a robust creative base. What the scheme has been trying to achieve with the creative space programme has been less about getting people to sign long term leases and more about a programme of development. Additional support from the local authority will allow the scheme to be more independent, attract more people and build on progress so far.

The legacy for **Reading** is that people are starting to see culture as less of a “nice to have” and more of a necessity. There’s a new cultural team at the Council, who are collaborating with the scheme on economic development. This has created a strong partnership which will be an important legacy going forward.

**Lakes and Dales** identified two key enablers that have supported their growth: being adaptable and flexible, and facilitating collaboration, particularly with younger people. They found that by facilitating

meaningful relationships, they can help build the confidence of younger creatives. This has had the added benefit of creating collaboration between those who do plans for places and those who actually live and work in them.

With things changing all the time – and not just in response to COVID-19 – the freedom to be adaptable has allowed them to respond to change as needed. A large part of the activity for Lakes and Dales is concentrated between now and September, resulting in them currently spending a lot of time contingency planning.

For the team, the lack of certainty about the coming months creates a challenge for legacy and positioning. The governance structures that have been created through the scheme are still in relative infancy, and there is a need for the equivalent of Great Places Part 2 to continue to raise this profile to prevent being left in the lurch without any support to carry on. This is important both for the projects and the communities they serve.

## 11.4 Health and Wellbeing

*Participating Projects: Greater Manchester, Herefordshire, Torbay*

### 11.4.1 Overview

This year, projects began to reflect on the legacy of the Great Place scheme for the arts and health agenda in their area. Project delivery has been focused on embedding the strategies and relationships that have been established as part of the scheme. This looks different for each project. In **Greater Manchester**, the possibility of creating a new, substantive Culture, Health and Social care post, with a transition period at the end of the Great Place scheme funded by the healthcare partnership, is being explored. In **Torbay**, the project has been working hard to implement and embed the Torbay Care Charter across the area. **Herefordshire** have been focused on strengthening the networks and capacity of those working in culture and wellbeing in the county.

Projects identified the establishment of a locally-relevant arts and health evidence base as another key enabler to ensuring the legacy of the programme. Although all projects found that arts and health evaluation poses a unique set of challenges, projects felt that it was important to collect evidence to ‘tell the story’ and to show and understand what works locally. The interim evaluation commissioned by Herefordshire has been a significant project milestone, catalysing a pivot in their approach to arts and health delivery in the final year of the scheme. In **Torbay**, despite an initial delay, the evaluation undertaken has fed into the Arts and Health South West framework: a wider policy that looks at how can culture and creativity can improve health and wellbeing, both in general, in the region and with a specific Torbay focus.

In general, projects have found an iterative process to be the best way to navigate the complex arts and health agenda, despite feeling

some pressure to secure 'quick wins'. The time and energy that has been invested in relationship building and 'slow conversations' is beginning to pay dividends, evidenced by arts and health initiatives that have originated from outside of the culture sector. However, at the time of writing, a number of activities and programmes that formed the final stages of delivery have been either paused or cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to have an impact on the legacy of the scheme. Despite these challenging circumstances, all projects reported that culture has formed part of the public health crisis response in their area, which they felt was a positive indicator of changing attitudes to culture from within the health sector.

#### 11.4.2 What has been your biggest success in health and wellbeing since last year?

Since last year, **Greater Manchester** has completed and signed off outcomes framework to underpin arts and health delivery. The framework was developed through a collaboration between academics, mental health practitioners and the cultural sector. The outcomes are usable by the cultural sector but also speak to the outcomes used by mental health practitioners to record national data. The project hopes that this framework will serve as a building block for the commissioning of creative wellbeing work which removes the barrier of the health sector not being able to measure the outcomes in a way that satisfies their own reporting requirements. If the framework proves successful, Greater Manchester are hoping that it can be shared nationally.

Another success for the project has a the pilot project completed with CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service), a pioneering scheme which has seen creative activity form part of a statutory mental health service.

The **Torbay** Great Place project has recently been invited to partner on an appreciative inquiry with Active Devon, Sports England and others, bringing together two sectors which had previously been regarded as separate in the region. This is an example of a cross-sector wellbeing initiative that has originated from outside of the culture sector, which the project felt was indicative of the way strategic relationships in the bay have strengthened over the course of the Great Place programme.

This year also saw the completion of the evaluation of the the test and learn pilot projects conducted in the first stages of the programme, which is helping to craft a coherent narrative around arts, health and wellbeing, linking together the different towns that make up the unitary authority.

**Herefordshire** also regards their completed evaluation as one of their biggest successes in year three, as it gave the arts and health agenda a renewed sense of direction and enabled the project to redirect energy and resource where it could be used most effectively. The evaluation guided them to pivot their approach towards supporting community groups working within the culture and wellbeing agenda through training and bursaries.

#### 11.4.3 What were the challenges to delivering health and wellbeing work?

All projects agreed that it has been a challenge to navigate the size and complexity of the health and social care sector and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the different ways of working across sectors. As a result, health and wellbeing work has been particularly time and effort intensive in comparison to other strategic ambitions of the Great Place Programme. Having 'made the case' for arts and health, **Herefordshire** and **Greater Manchester** described a perceived pressure for 'quick wins' from their partners, which didn't necessarily



take into account the complexities of delivering and evaluating culture and wellbeing work. In **Herefordshire**, this came from different understandings of culture and wellbeing outcomes across different partners, which has been an ongoing challenge.

All projects agreed that they would have benefitted from a member of staff who had a background in culture and wellbeing who was able to dedicate themselves entirely to this area of work.

#### 11.4.4 Legacy enablers and barriers

Cross-institutional understandings and partnerships, supported by locally relevant strategies and evidences, were identified as a key enablers to ensuring the legacy of the Great Place project. Projects found that slow, repeated conversations with partners were the most effective approach to embedding this understanding. **Greater Manchester** gave the example of a local public health team which the project has built a close relationship with over the course of the Great Place Programme. At the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the Director of Public Health took a creative response, commissioning an arts organisation to put together a creative pack. While the initiative was not directly delivered through Great Place, the project felt that it was, at least in part, a product of the conversations and work that preceded.

Other partnerships and institutions have proved to be more challenging when it comes to thinking again about legacy. In **Torbay**, short-term buy-in has not always translated into long term, institutional 'muscle memory'. **Herefordshire also** discussed the challenges they have faced in building relationships that go beyond the individual level to the institutional level.

Projects felt that having policies- and supporting evidence- in place can go some way to overcoming this. However, ongoing political commitment is needed to implement them effectively.

**Greater Manchester** also described their decision to avoid using the Great Place brand within their health and wellbeing work, in an effort to fully embed the initiatives and give them longevity that lasts beyond the programme finish.

#### 11.4.5 Social prescribing

Last year, the projects identified a growing need for quality assurance processes as arts becomes embedded within the health sector. In many ways, these challenges have persisted this year. In **Torbay and Herefordshire**, while most stakeholders felt positively towards social prescribing, the projects didn't feel that there were still not adequate resources and/or safeguarding measures in place to confidently pursue the social prescribing agenda.

**Greater Manchester** found that local arts organisations were also initially suspicious of getting involved with social prescribing, fearing additional regulation and administrative burdens. To overcome this, the project contracted someone to map local organisations and activities, initially engaging them in a very open conversation around social prescribing. The project sought to find out how they could support these organisations, either directly or indirectly, to build their capacity for safely delivering social prescriptions.

#### 11.4.6 Arts / Heritage

**Torbay** is currently undergoing a heritage strategy review, with a view to incorporating both health and wellbeing and climate change, both policy areas which had not previously been considered from a heritage perspective.

In general, however, both **Torbay and Herefordshire** have found it more difficult to engage the heritage sector and heritage professions in the arts and health agenda. At the outset of the project, **Herefordshire's**

Heritage and Wellbeing Hub explored areas of wellbeing connected specifically to heritage. However, they found that in general artists were more aware of the cultural wellbeing agenda and felt more comfortable engaging with the opportunities presented.

Despite these challenges, a stand-out partnership for **Herefordshire** has been with the National Trust in the county, working with young people and artists to interpret and reimagine a Georgian property. The partnership helped the project to reach new audiences and young people.

## 12. Appendix 4: Audience Data

### 12.1 Notes on data collection

In year 3, 14 projects reported a total of 1,576 public facing events reaching a total audience of 712,403. There was significant variation in the number of public events each project delivered, ranging from 8 to 377, whilst total public audiences reached range from 143 to 342,562. The total number of completed surveys received from 13 projects ranged from 270 to 1,200.

In year 2. 15 projects reported a total of 1,299 public-facing events, reaching a total audience of 515,952. Again, there was great variation in the number of public facing events each project delivered, ranging from 4 to 1,213, whilst total public audiences reached ranged from 172 to 309,901. The total number of completed surveys received from 13 projects ranged from 4 to 1,637, and one project provided a large amount of demographic data that was collected not through surveys but through schools

While some questions were optional in accordance with the aims and objectives of individual projects, core demographic and experience feedback data was compulsory for all public audience surveys. Some projects, however, did not successfully manage to collect demographic data from their audiences. This was reported to be due to delivery partners either not collecting the data or not providing it to project managers. Therefore, the following demographic profiles and survey data cannot be considered to be representative across all 16 projects and will be skewed towards projects who delivered larger programmes and conducted more extensive data collection. It can, however, provide a snapshot of some of the activity that has taken place across years 2

and 3 of the Great Place Scheme, the kinds of audiences that have attended and various ways it has been received.

### 12.2 Audience data against outcomes

#### 12.2.1 Outcome 1: Cross portfolio, cross sector partnership & working is significantly improved and extended

Projects worked with a total of 10,079 volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participants in year 3. This was more than double the number reported by projects in year 2 (4,834 volunteers or community / co-commissioning group participants).

#### 12.2.2 Outcome 5: People have a greater sense of collective efficacy

**Figure 29 By working together we can bring about change in our local neighbourhood**

Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree
Year 2	45%	51%	3%	1%	0%
Year 3	54%	36%	8%	1%	0%

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. Year 2 audience data collection survey, 995 responses submitted by 7 projects. Year 3 audience data collection survey, 1,451 responses submitted by 9 projects.

## 12.2.3 Outcome 9: more people, and a wider range of people, engage with arts and heritage

### 9.1 People have enjoyable cultural experiences

**Figure 30 'I had a good time;!**

Year	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree
Year 2	49%	39%	10%	1%	1%
Year 3	70%	26%	3%	1%	1%

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. Year 2 audience data collection survey, 7676 responses from 11 projects. Year 3 audience data collection survey, 4,826 responses from 13 projects

### 9.2 Participation from under-served / marginalised / disadvantaged audiences is increased

- In year 3, 21% of audiences and participants were from a Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse group based on 5035 responses submitted by 13 projects. In contrast, in year 2, 9% identified themselves as belonging to Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse groups, based on 7,587 responses submitted by 12 projects
- 11% of survey respondents in year 3 identified as having a health problem or disability which limits their day-to-day activities a little or a lot, based on 5,141 response submitted by 13 projects. In comparison in year 2 8% of survey respondents identified as having a health problem or disability, based on 6973 responses submitted by 11 projects.

## 12.2.4 Outcome 10. Stronger, better networked cultural sector

### 10.2 Cultural practitioners enhance their skills

- Of those who attended skills or professional development training events, 85% strongly agreed or agree that they had learnt a new skill, based on 482 responses submitted by 10 projects. In year 2 41% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, based on 534 responses submitted by 7 projects.
- When participants were asked if they thought any skills they had gained would support their career in the cultural sector, 86% agreed or strongly agreed, based on 540 responses submitted by 9 projects. In Year 2, 32% agreed or strongly agreed. based on 509 responses submitted by 5 projects.

## 12.2.5 Outcome 11. Stronger, more connected and happier communities.

### 11.1 Local pride is increased

- When asked the extent to which “today’s event has increased my pride” in the respective Great Place, 52% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and 35% ‘agreed’, a combined total of 87%, based on 3,745 responses across 13 projects .In Year 2 82% agreed or strongly agreed, with 11% respondents strongly agreeing and 71% agreeing, based on 2,291 responses submitted by 8 projects.

### 11.2 People feel a greater sense of belonging to a place

- 90% of respondents in year 3 ‘agreed’ (38%) or ‘strongly agreed’ (52%) that “having the [Great Place] project is part of what makes [the Great Place] special as an area”, based on 2,664 responses submitted by 8 projects. In year 2, 76% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ (18%) or ‘agreed’ (58%) based on 1,144 responses submitted by 5 projects.

### **11.3 People feel their community has been brought together**

- 19% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 46% 'agreed' that they had a lot in common with people from their local area, based on 1,491 responses submitted by 9 projects. A further 31% neither agreed nor disagreed. In year 2, 10% of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 76% 'agreed' with this statement, based on 718 responses submitted by 4 projects.

### **11.4 More intergenerational connections are made and understanding increases**

- 85% of participants and volunteers across eight projects confirmed that they had met new people through their involvement in the Great Place project based on 478 submitted responses.
- Four of the projects asked questions about intergenerational connections and a total of 251 respondents gave an answer in relation to their relations with at least one age group
- The biggest increase was reported in the level of contact respondents had with adults aged 45 – 64. 60% of respondents reported an increase in the level of contact that they would normally have, with 45% describing this as a 'significant increase'. Just under half of respondents reported an increase in their level of contact with adults aged 25 -44, whilst a third (33%) reported an increase in their contact with older people. There was generally no difference to respondents' level of contact with under 25s. No-one reported a decrease in their level of contact with any age group.
- Similarly, no-one reported a negative impact on their ability to get on with people from different age groups. The biggest increases in relationships was with adults 25-44, with 39% of respondents reporting that they got on a bit or a lot better with this age group as a result of their involvement with the project, whilst 37% of respondents

reported that they got on a bit or a lot better with older people as a result of their involvement in the project.

- In year 2 only two projects chose to ask questions about intergenerational contact, leaving inadequate data for comparison.

### **11.5 Participants' mental health improves**

- In year three only two projects chose to use the Warwick-Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale, and only one project chose to do this in year 2. Given the very small sample sizes involved, it is not possible to use this data to comment on the impact of Great Place projects on participants mental health.

## **12.2.6 Outcome 12. Great Places become destinations of choice.**

### **12.1 Cultural tourism at Great Place sites/events is increased**

- In year 2 and in year 3 less than 1% of all audiences who responded to audience surveys came from outside of the UK, based on 8,870 responses submitted by 10 projects in year 2 and 4,842 responses submitted by 11 projects in year 3.
- 31% of audiences and participants for Great Place activities were considered visitors to the area based on their postcode data in year 3 based on 12,698 postcodes submitted by 12 projects, with projects self-identifying their local area. In year 2, 36% of audiences were 'non local' based on 12,358 postcodes submitted by 16 projects, with projects self-identifying their local area.

### **12.2 Visitors' perceptions of sites/events improve**

- Audiences who were defined as 'non-local' by projects were asked whether or not they would recommend the Great Place in question to friends and family. In both years 2 and year 3, 93% of respondents

from outside the local area 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they would recommend [the relevant Great Place] as a destination to friends and family, based on 1,302 responses submitted by 5 projects in year 2 and 2,940 responses submitted by 8 projects in year 3. The split between 'strongly agree' and 'agree' was also consistent (57% and 36% respectively in year 3 and 56% and 37% respectively in year 2).

# 13. Appendix 5: Project Manager Data

## 13.1 Notes on data collection

Survey responses were received from all 16 projects, however not all respondents answered all the questions.

Project Manager Surveys were completed as projects came to their conclusion, with results received between July 2020 and November 2021.

Although the sample size represents all of the projects, due to the low number, percentages have not been used.

## 13.2 Data against outcomes

### 13.2.1 Outcome 1: Cross portfolio, cross sector partnership & working is significantly improved and extended

#### 1.2 A shared agenda and vision is developed among relevant stakeholders

**Figure 31 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Our Great Place Project shared a vision? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	1	2	3	6	1	2

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 5 were received, 15 projects responded

#### 1.3 New partnerships have developed between cultural organisations and those outside the sector

**Figure 32 Have any of the following types of new partnerships been created between organisations within the cultural sector since May 2019? (Year 3, 2021)**

Type of partnership	Count
Established a formal partnership	9
Informal information sharing	13
Joint application for funding	8
Joint programming	12
New network created	14
Other	9
No new partnerships have been created	1

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 16 projects

**Figure 33 Thinking about any new partnerships within the cultural sector, to what extent did the Great Place programme contribute to the development of this/these partnership(s) within the sector(s)? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	1	1	1	5	4	3

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 5 were received, 15 projects responded.

**Figure 34** Have any of the following types of new partnerships been created between organisations in the cultural sector and other non-cultural sectors since May 2019? (Year 3, 2021)

Type of partnership	Count
Established a formal partnership	6
Informal information sharing	13
Joint application for funding	6
Joint programming	9
New network created	7
Other	8
No new partnerships have been created	1

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 16 projects responded.

**Figure 35** If a new partnership has been created, which sector(s) is the non-cultural organisation from? (Year 3, 2021)

Partnership sector	Count
Education	9
Health	6
Social care	3
Tourism	7
Education	9
Other	5

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 13 projects responded

**Figure 36** Thinking about any new partnerships within the cultural sector, to what extent did the Great Place programme contribute to the development of this/these partnership(s) between the sector and outside the sector(s)? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021)

Score	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	2	3	3	5	2

Source BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 6 were received, 15 projects responded

### 13.2.2 Outcome 2: Communities have greater input and influence in decision-making in the cultural sector

#### 2.1 Communities feel validated and listened to

**Figure 37** How have you engaged local communities in your decision making? (Year 3, 2021)

Engagement method	Count
Community representative on steering/working group	6
Community survey	7
Consultation meetings	12
Online consultation events	8
Participatory budgeting	0
Volunteering	10
Youth panel	5
Other	5

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 14 projects responded.



## 2.2 New ideas generated by communities are tested and implemented

**Figure 38 To what extent have new ideas been created as a result of engagement with the community? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	1	1	3	5	1	3

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 5 were received, 14 projects responded.

**Figure 39 To what extent have these ideas been implemented? (Scale 0 – 10 where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “great extent”, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	1	1	0	7	1	3

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 5 were received, 13 projects responded.

## 13.2.3 Outcome 3: Culture is embedded in wider local plans and strategies

**3.1 Culture is included in local authority / LEP / Combined Authority plans for Economic Development, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health, Care Commissioning, Children and Young People, etc.**

**Figure 40 Number of relevant local policies that include culture (Year 3, 2021)**

Local policy type	Count
Care commissioning	1
Children and young people	4
Cultural strategy	10
Health and wellbeing	6
Mental health	2

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 12 projects responded.

## 3.2 Cross portfolio joint commissioning is increased

**Figure 41 Have cultural organisations been involved in joint commissioning in your area? (Year 3, 2021)**

Response	Count
Yes	10
No	4

Source: BOP Consulting 2021, 14 projects responded

**Figure 42 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Joint commissioning which includes the cultural sector has increased. (Scale 0 – 10 where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 10 is “strongly agree”, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	2	0	0	1	1	3	1	2	2	1	1

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. 14 projects responded.

### 13.2.4 Outcome 10: Stronger, better networked cultural sector

#### 10.1 Local networks between culture, heritage, and creative industries organisations are better developed

**Figure 43 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: There is a strong local network between cultural, heritage, and creative industry organisations in my area / key areas (Scale 0 – 10 where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree, Year 3, 2021)**

Score	6	7	8	9	10
Number of responses	1	9	5	1	0

Source: BOP Consulting, 2021. No responses below a rating of 6 were received, 16 projects responded.

## 14. Appendix 6: Relevant delivery outcomes

Figure 44 Optional outcomes selected by Great Place projects at the start of the programme

Project	9.1 (same as 13) – People have enjoyable experiences (Delivery – Immediate)	9.2 Participation from target underserved / marginalised / disadvantaged audiences is increased (Delivery – Immediate)	10.1 Local networks between culture, heritage and creative industries organisations are better developed (Delivery – Immediate)	10.2 Cultural practitioners enhance their skills (Delivery – Immediate)	10.3 New entrants progress into local CCI organisations (Delivery – Immediate)	11.1 Local pride is increased (Delivery – Immediate & Medium Term Community /Social)	11.2 People feel a greater sense of belonging to a place (Delivery – Immediate & Medium Term Community /Social)	11.3 People feel their community has been brought together (Delivery – Immediate & Medium Term Community /Social)	11.4 More intergenerational connections are made and understanding increases (Delivery – Immediate & Medium Term Community /Social)	11.5 Participants' mental health improves (Delivery – Immediate & Medium Term Community / Social)	12.1 Cultural tourism at GP sites/event s is increased (Delivery – Immediate Economic)
Barnsley	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
County Durham	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Coventry	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Craven	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Derwent Valley	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
East Kent	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gloucester	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Herefordshire	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Waltham Forest	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
OPDC	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Reading	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Sunderland	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Tees Valley	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Torbay	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

Project	12.2 Visitors' perceptions of sites/events improve (Delivery – Immediate Economic)	12.3 Places generate more positive external press & media coverage (Delivery – Immediate Economic)	14.1 Arts, heritage & creative businesses grow in number and size (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Cultural)	14.2 Arts, heritage & creative businesses employment is increased (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Cultural)	14.3 Arts, heritage & creative organisations have a more diverse mix of revenues (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Cultural)	15.1 Heritage tourism increased (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Economic)	15.2 Arts tourism increased (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Economic)	15.3 Visitors' perceptions of local area improved (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Economic)	15.4 External press & media recognise culture as part of the core narrative of GP places (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Economic)	15.5 Inward investment is increased (Delivery – Short-to-Medium Economic)	TOTAL SELECTED
Barnsley	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	9
County Durham	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8
Coventry	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	9
Craven	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	9
Derwent Valley	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	14
East Kent	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	12
Gloucester	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	16
Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	13
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	21
Herefordshire	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	14
Waltham Forest	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
OPDC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Reading	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Sunderland	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	11
Tees Valley	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Torbay	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	

Source: BOP Consulting, 2019

# 15. Appendix 7: Great Place Programme Evaluation Toolkit

## 15.1 Principles of Operation

BOP Consulting will deliver the Great Place programme evaluation (GPPE) in consort with the projects.

Each project will additionally deliver its own project and local programme evaluations, which may cover different and additional outcomes and use additional tools and measures.

For the GPPE, there will be four types of data collection:

- Data collected by BOP directly (e.g. programme manager surveys)
- Specific data collection points using BOP tools delivered by projects (e.g. steering group surveys)
- Project data collection with elements contributed by BOP (eg audience surveys)
- Activity tracking (eg match funding, number of volunteers) submitted in NHLF reporting and gathered by BOP

In addition, projects will collect their own specific data in consultation with their project evaluators.

Both BOP and projects have limited resourcing. Only data that is essential to the GPPE and reasonable for projects to access will be requested.

Where possible and appropriate, data will be collected in line with existing conventions, especially those already in use by NHLF or Arts Council England.

Given the range of projects, activities and locations, shared tools will need to be as generic as possible to enable data to be aggregated for the GPPE.

Four case studies and three counter-factual case studies will be created by BOP in support of the GPPE. These will be addressed with relevant projects separately.

## 15.2 How will this work?

This toolkit should be used in conjunction with the Great Place Programme Evaluation Framework.

Programme outcomes are divided into Process/Strategy and Delivery.

The Process/Strategy outcomes are universal and apply to all projects.

Delivery outcomes 7 and 8 are universal; Delivery outcomes 9 – 16 are project-specific (marked \*), and not all outcomes will be relevant to all projects.

All projects need to select the outcomes that are relevant to them based on the activities they are planning to carry out and inform BOP of their selection. Once a project has opted 'in' to an outcome, that outcome will be tracked for that project to the end of the Great Place scheme (even if no further activities / data are produced). Projects will be given the opportunity to opt in to further outcomes on an annual basis.

This toolkit lists both all the evaluation tools in use for the GPPE (slides 6 – 8), and all evaluation tools relevant to a particular outcome (slides 13 – 25). (NB Counterfactual case studies are not included in this document.) Projects should work through and check they are familiar with the data collection requirements for all universal outcomes and those relevant to their project.

Where BOP is responsible for gathering data directly (eg project managers survey), we will be in touch in due course and no further information is included here.

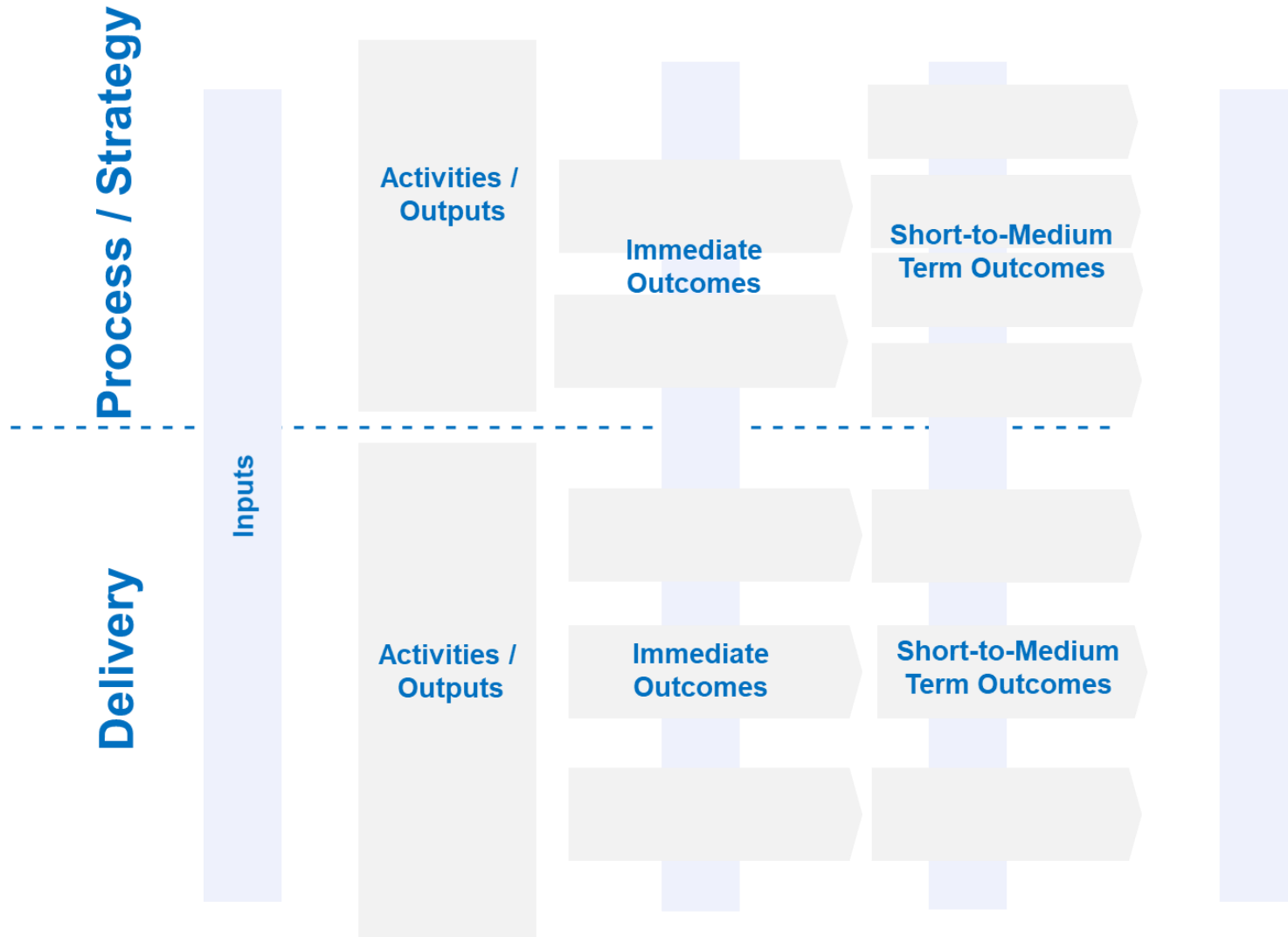
Where we are asking you to carry out a specific data collection task (eg the steering group survey), information and the tools required are included here.

Where the GPPE requires a specific question or question format to be used in surveys, the information is included here.

Projects will determine which of their activities contribute to which outcomes and which survey tools are required. Both your project evaluators and BOP Consulting can provide support and advice.

It is up to individual projects and their evaluators how often audiences, visitors, and participants are surveyed and which questions are required from this toolkit. BOP will collate and aggregate all data provided; additional information as to survey approach may be required.

Figure 45 Great Place Evaluation Framework Level 1: Schematic



Source: BOP Consulting

**Figure 46 Summary list of methods / tools : Process / strategy**

<b>Method</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Reporting tool</b>	<b>Who?</b>
“Quarterly” survey of steering and working group partners	BOP to provide survey and hold data; project managers to distribute and return after every meeting	Ongoing	Paper submission or online survey	All
Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer, project managers complete	Annual	Project manager’s survey	All
Four topic-based focus groups with project managers: — Health — Cultural and creative economy — Co-commissioning and community empowerment strategies — Arts & Heritage collaboration	BOP to convene, project managers participate	April, annual	Complete	All (one group per project)
Cultural organisations sample survey	BOP to create survey, projects to nominate 5 major partner organisations and distribute survey	Baseline and final	Cultural organisation survey	All
Case studies	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing		Tees; Sunderland Herefordshire Gloucester
Survey questions to co-commissioning groups / volunteers	BOP to provide questions	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	All

Source: BOP Consulting



**Figure 47 Summary list of methods / tools: Delivery, Cultural**

<b>Method</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Reporting tool</b>	<b>Who?</b>
Audience / event participant / visitor surveys	BOP contribute questions	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	All
Arts venue / event attendance figures	Projects collect, BOP collate	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	All
Heritage venue / event visitor / participant numbers	Projects collect, BOP collate	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	All
Number and character of sites repaired / enhanced	Projects collect, BOP collate	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	Self selected projects
Number of entries on Heritage at Risk register	BOP to research	Baseline and Final	Desk research	Self selected projects
Skills training / networking event participant numbers and feedback	BOP contribute question, projects administer, BOP collate	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Management and data collection survey	Self selected projects
Postcode data analysis from visitors / participants	Projects to collect and arrange analysis (cf Arts Council England)	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually	Postcode data spreadsheet	All

Source: BOP Consulting

**Figure 48 Summary list of methods / tools: Delivery, Community / Social & Economic**

<b>Method</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Reporting tool</b>	<b>Who?</b>
NOMIS data research on local employment and businesses	BOP to research	Baseline and final	Project manager's survey, desk research	All
Participant and volunteer survey (answers to be compared)	BOP to contribute questions	Ongoing; BOP collate annually	Management and data collection survey	Self selected projects
Media tracking and sentiment analysis	Projects collect and analyse media, BOP collate results	BOP collate baseline and final	Project manager's survey, desk research	Self selected projects
Visitor feedback surveys	BOP to contribute question, projects collect	BOP collate annually	Management and data collection survey	Self selected projects

Method	BOP / Project role	When?	Reporting tool	Who?
Bed occupancy rates and % of overnight visitors	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and final	Project manager's survey	Self selected projects
Summed value of announcements of inward investment into area within last 6 months	BOP research and collect	Final	Project manager's survey, desk research	All

Source: BOP Consulting

## 15.3 Frequently Asked Questions

### — Why are we surveying Project Managers?

- Shortage of baseline data (eg arts participation levels) across the projects.
- Focus on process and strategy.
- Critical data for example therefore not 'what is the level of arts participation in your region' but 'what do you know about arts participation' and 'do you have the information that you need'.

### — Who takes part in the Cultural Organisation Sample survey?

- Each project to select their five major cultural partners.
- If you have fewer than five, so be it; if you have more, choose those most closely connected to the project.
- What counts as an organisation? Based on **public perception**; if audience would see a separate organisation then it is distinct, irrespective of ownership at organisational level.
- Data collection will include audience and financial data as well as perceptions.

- Completion will be mandatory and it will be the task of project managers to chase participants.
- The survey will take place twice, at baseline (May 2018) and final point.

### — When do we survey our audiences?

- This is for projects to determine with their evaluators; there are no set sample sizes or frequency (this would be unworkable across 16 diverse projects).
- BOP will collate all data collected by all projects and ensure robustness.
- Key thing is to use shared questions in correct format so that data can be aggregated.

### — Who are audiences, participants and visitors?

- Audiences: whoever attends an event put on in association with the Great Place project (ie funded by or marketed as Great Place).
- Participants: whoever takes part in a workshop, training session or similar activity put on in association with the Great Place project (ie funded by or marketed as Great Place).

- Visitors: people who do not live in your Great Place area, measured using postcode data and according to appropriate local definition of your area / what counts as a visit. This visitor / distance definition will differ widely according to location – for a London project, this could include those who live less than a mile away whereas for rural projects ‘visitors’ will be those who have travelled from much further afield. Our standard recommendation is a ‘drive to work’ definition (ie, your local area includes the surrounding area from which people typically commute into a central point), but in view of need for this to be relevant to your local tourism partners you and your evaluators should decide on a suitable definition and apply the rule consistently across the project.
- How do we get partners to administer the survey for us?
- Contributing data to your project evaluation and the programme evaluation will be part of your agreements with partners, whether they are funded or simply using your ‘Great Place’ brand.
  - Your partners may need to add question/s to their existing surveys, and in some cases to substitute Great Place question wording for their standard wording.
  - They will also need to collect demographic data in a format such that it can be collated with the project’s demographic groups (which are those currently in use across Arts Council funded projects).
- Do I have to use the same audience response scale for questions?
- People respond differently to questions according to how they are asked, including the type of scale used, whether positive or negative responses come first, and how many options there are.

For this reason, we ask that all projects use the same scales. We have therefore suggested basic scales which can easily be incorporated into a variety of documents.

- For those using ‘Culture Counts’ or other prepared / online tools, you may have the option to use sliders or have other response scales already in place. We will work with you to ensure that alternative scales can be matched to the core response scales given here; please let us know in any such case and we will agree an appropriate route with you.
- Do I have to collect postcode data? What about GDPR issues?
- Postcode data is the single most effective and reliable way to learn about who has taken part or benefitted from a project. As a key outcome for Great Place projects is new or larger audiences - especially those from specific target groups - this data is essential to the GPPE. It is expected that this data will also be required for your own project evaluations.
  - Under new data protection regulations, it remains completely legitimate to collect postcode data.
  - The two key factors to note are ‘consent of the subject’ and the requirement that personal data, once obtained, is stored securely (ie encrypted).
  - By voluntarily completing a form, survey participants are performing a “clear affirmative action” signifying their agreement to the processing of their personal data, in line with recommendations from the Information Commissioner’s Office.
  - For a belt-and-braces approach, we have also included specific wording relating to GDPR for inclusion on survey forms.
- Do we still have to separate ‘arts’ and ‘heritage’ events?

- After feedback from project that the division of ‘arts’ and ‘heritage’ events goes against the spirit of the programme’s pioneering ambition to work with ‘culture’ and bring arts and heritage, as well as being a painful administrative burden, the funders have decided that data reporting no longer needs to be split between arts and heritage outcomes and can be reported as a whole.
  - Data from Years 1 and 2 that was split will be aggregated to contribute towards conclusions for the final report.
- When do we select outcomes for our project?
- Projects will need to select from the optional (\*) outcomes below at baseline point in April 2018.
  - Only select those outcomes towards which you are dedicating specific resources; for example, whilst to some extent all cultural projects contribute to improved mental health and wellbeing, we would only expect outcome 11.5 to be relevant to those delivering specific, targeted activities in these areas.
  - Once you have selected an outcome as relevant to your project, we will continue to track your project across this outcome til project close (even if your project changes and activity is discontinued).
  - There will be an opportunity to ‘opt in’ to an outcome area at each annual review point (April).
- How do we distribute the Steering / Working Group survey?
- The survey should go to all members of all steering or working groups with role in Great Place project governance
  - NOT to co-commissioning or youth panels where these have role in governance of specific, smaller project elements (separate surveys for these groups).
  - Ideal: Survey Monkey link shared following each meeting
- Where are the questions for artists?
- There are no questions / survey additions for artists in this evaluation framework. (Though BOP will interview artistic stakeholders for the Case studies.)
  - For outcome 7, regarding quality and innovation of artistic production, projects interested in this area are urged to consider using Arts Council’s ‘Quality Metrics’ to provide more detailed data for their own evaluations.
  - <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-metrics/quality-metrics#section-1>

**Figure 49 Methods and Tools by Outcome**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>
Outcome 1 (Compulsory)	Quarterly survey of steering and working group partners	BOP to provide survey and hold data; project managers to distribute and return after every meeting	Ongoing
Outcome 1 (Compulsory)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer, project managers complete	April, annual
Outcome 1 (Compulsory)	Four topic-based focus groups with project managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Health</li> <li>— Cultural and creative economy</li> <li>— Co-commissioning and community empowerment strategies</li> <li>— Arts &amp; Heritage collaboration</li> </ul>	BOP to convene, project managers participate	April, annual
Outcome 1 (Compulsory)	Cultural organisations sample survey	BOP to create survey, projects to nominate 5 major partner organisations and distribute survey (online)	Baseline and final
Outcome 1 (Compulsory)	Case studies	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 2 (Compulsory)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer, project managers complete	April, annual
Outcome 2 (Compulsory)	Topic-based focus group with project managers: Co-commissioning and community empowerment strategies	BOP to convene, project managers participate	April, annual
Outcome 2 (Compulsory)	Assets of community value and Community Right to Bid data (applications and bid) from local authorities; other mechanisms tracked as nominated by projects	BOP to collect (project managers advise via survey)	Baseline and Final
Outcome 2 (Compulsory)	Survey questions to co-commissioning groups / volunteers	BOP to provide questions	Ongoing; BOP collate annually

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>
Outcome 2 (Compulsory)	Case studies	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 3 (Compulsory)	Identify key local / regional strategies which include culture	BOP analyses documents from list compiled by project managers (data gathered via project managers survey)	Baseline and final
Outcome 3 (Compulsory)	Project managers survey (online) tracks joint commissioning	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 4 (Compulsory)	Cultural organisations sample survey tracks level and type of income	BOP to create survey, projects to nominate organisations and distribute	Baseline and final
Outcome 5 (Compulsory)	Build survey out from Great Place audiences to wider audience pool and compare answers	Projects only, where resourcing permits	Final
Outcome 6 (Compulsory)	Assets of community value and Community Right to Bid data (applications and bid) from local authorities; other mechanisms as nominated by projects	BOP to collect from local authorities	Baseline and Final
Outcome 7 (Compulsory)	Participant surveys	BOP contribute questions (from Arts Council England / Audience Finder survey). ** Projects for whom innovation is a key outcome are encouraged to use relevant questions (Distinctiveness, Challenge) from Arts Council's Quality Metrics.**	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually
Outcome 7 (Compulsory)	Arts venue / event attendance figures	Projects collect, BOP collate	Annual
Outcome 7 (Compulsory)	Case studies (stakeholder testimony)	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 7 (Compulsory)	Cultural organisations sample survey	BOP to create survey, projects to nominate organisations and distribute	Baseline and final
Outcome 7 (Compulsory)	Postcode data	Projects to collect, BOP collate data after analysis by IMD	Annual
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Participant surveys	BOP contribute question (from Arts Council England / Audience Finder survey). ** Projects for whom innovation is a key outcome are encouraged to use relevant	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>
		questions (Distinctiveness, Challenge) from Arts Council's Quality Metrics.**	
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Postcode data	Projects to collect, BOP collate data after analysis by IMD	Annual
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Case studies (stakeholder testimony)	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Heritage venue / event visitor / participant numbers	Projects collect, BOP collate	Annual
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Number and character of sites repaired / enhanced	Projects collect, BOP collate	Annual
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Number of entries on Heritage at Risk register	BOP to research	Baseline and Final
Outcome 8 (Compulsory)	Cultural organisations sample survey	BOP to create survey, projects to nominate organisations and distribute	Baseline and final
Outcome 9 (Optional)	Participant surveys	BOP contribute question (from Arts Council England's Quality Metrics – Enjoyment)	Ongoing; BOP collate data annually
Outcome 9 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online) nominates target audience(s)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 9 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 9 (Optional)	Cultural organisations sample survey: Demographic breakdown of adult visitors / participants at cultural sample sites (ONS definitions)	Projects collect, BOP collate	Annual
Outcome 9 (Optional)	Postcode data analysis from visitors / participants	Projects to collect and arrange analysis – using joint approach to Audience Agency via Arts Council	BOP collate data
Outcome 10 (Optional)	Cultural organisations sample survey	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and Final
Outcome 10 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 10 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address with case study projects	Ongoing
Outcome 10 (Optional)	Skills training / networking event participant numbers and feedback	BOP contribute question, projects administer, BOP collate	BOP collate annually

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>
Outcome 11 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 11 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address separately	Ongoing
Outcome 11 (Optional)	Participant and volunteer survey (answers to be compared)	BOP to contribute questions (including from NHLF Social Impacts research)	Ongoing; BOP collate annually
Outcome 11 (Optional)	Topic-based focus group with project managers: Health Co-commissioning and community empowerment	BOP to convene	Annual
Outcome 11 (Optional)	Participant and volunteer surveys (answers to be compared)	BOP to contribute questions (the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale)	Ongoing, BOP collate annually
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Cultural organisations sample survey	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and Final
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address separately	Ongoing
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Topic-based focus group with project managers: Cultural and Creative Economy	BOP to convene	Annually
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Media tracking and sentiment analysis	Projects collect and analyse media, BOP collate results	BOP collate baseline and final
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Visitor feedback surveys	BOP to contribute question, projects collect	BOP collate annually
Outcome 12 (Optional)	Postcode data	Project to collect, analyse by visitor / non-visitor (via collective approach), BOP collate	BOP collate annually
Outcome 13 (Optional)	Cultural organisations sample survey	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and Final
Outcome 13 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 13 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address separately	Ongoing
Outcome 14 (Optional)	Cultural organisations sample survey	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and Final
Outcome 14 (Optional)	Project managers survey (online)	BOP to design and administer	April, annual
Outcome 14 (Optional)	Case studies	BOP to address separately	Ongoing
Outcome 14 (Optional)	NOMIS data	BOP to research	Baseline and Final



<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>BOP / Project role</b>	<b>When?</b>
Outcome 15 (Optional)	Case studies (including tourism stakeholder interviews)	BOP to arrange with projects	Baseline and Final
Outcome 15 (Optional)	Bed occupancy rates and % of overnight visitors	Projects collect, BOP collate	Baseline and final
Outcome 15 (Optional)	Summed value of announcements of inward investment into area within last 6 months	BOP research and collect	Final
Outcome 15 (Optional)	Sentiment analysis of top ten media pieces on an area, looking for role of culture	BOP research and collect	Final

Source: BOP Consulting)

# BOP

## Consulting

BOP Consulting is an international consultancy specialising in culture and the creative economy.

BOP convenes the World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF), an international network of more than 35 cities. [www.worldcitiescultureforum.com](http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com)

London

Henry Wood House, 2 Riding Street, London W1W 7FA

Birmingham

Cornwall Buildings, 45 Newhall Street, Birmingham B3 3QT

Web

[www.bop.co.uk](http://www.bop.co.uk)

Twitter

@BOP\_Consulting

News

[www.bop.co.uk/articles](http://www.bop.co.uk/articles)