

# Great Place Programme Evaluation (England): understanding the programme's legacy

Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund

Final report

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# Executive Summary: Understanding the programme's legacy

## The long-term strategic aims of Great Place

Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund launched the [Great Place](#) scheme in August 2016. The programme aimed to support new approaches to local investment in culture and heritage, in order to impact regions' local economy, education, community cohesion, and health and wellbeing (see section 'The original Great Place programme and evaluation (2016-2021)', p.7).

At its heart, Great Place was a strategic programme, aiming to achieve long-term systemic change, rather than focusing only on the immediate impact of funded activity. The programme set out to shift culture's role in local decision-making and policy implementation, by supporting cross-sector partnership work and raising the visibility and understanding of the value of culture to a variety of local policy agendas.

Given this, there was from the start an ambition from its funders to gain an understanding of what longer-term impact may have been achieved through the programme. The evaluation has therefore run beyond the end of the programme to investigate (i) what has continued to happen in the funded places due to Great Place; and (ii) which elements of the programme and subsequent mechanisms have helped projects to achieve ongoing impact. Qualitative research with half of the funded projects (eight) and two counterfactual projects was undertaken to assess this (see section 1. Aims and approach of the legacy evaluation, p.11, Figure 3 for a list of the interviewed projects and appendix 5.4 for a list of the interviewees.)

Below, we summarise the key findings of the legacy research in reference to the two research questions of the legacy evaluation, and relatedly, two of the three key evaluation questions of the original Great Place evaluation.

## The projects since Great Place: ongoing activity

**Legacy question 1: Did the programme result in any lasting activities, or affect any lasting change? If yes, of what kind?**

*Relates to original research question 1: Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for local partners?*

Projects reported on a wide range of lasting activities resulting from their Great Place programme, which, depending on the type of activity, are leading to ongoing social, cultural and economic outcomes locally. Whilst activities varied considerably across the projects, they can be grouped under three core categories:

### Ongoing cultural provision

All eight interviewed projects highlighted some elements of the cultural provision that was initiated during Great Place as continuing, having turned into permanent activities or having led to spin-off activities.

This included both ongoing cultural activities and events as well as the maintenance of artist support structures; with significant variety in terms of approaches and themes across the projects (see section 2.2., p.15).

### Ongoing community engagement activity

All projects reported that community activity funded under Great Place continues to be present, again either in the shape of ongoing activities or through spin-off activities. The link between these ongoing activities and

the local Great Place programme is essentially through one of two policy mechanisms<sup>1</sup> (see section 2.3, p.17):

- ‘Policy learning’: tools, approaches and practice developed through Great Place remain in place and ongoing, in the form of:
  - community activities of lead organisations and partners with specific communities (e.g., young people, elderly residents, specific geographical communities);
  - use of (online) engagement tools; and
  - approaches to consulting communities.
- ‘Policy diffusion’: practice developed through Great Place has been replicated in new arenas, or brought to new areas or beneficiaries, including:
  - practice transferred to new groups or communities; and
  - communities pro-actively continuing activity that was initiated through Great Place themselves.

### Ongoing partnership and network activity

All projects reported that partnerships and networks developed during Great Place have been maintained or built upon since the end of the programme (see section 2.4, p.20). Equally, all highlighted that maintaining such partnerships requires ongoing work and resources. While a few projects highlighted challenges in maintaining some links

due to staff changes, the ambition to re-build ties where possible remains. Ongoing partnerships included:

- partnerships among the core delivery partners of the Great Place programme (in many cases including Local Authority culture departments, including as lead delivery organisation)
- relationships with a wider range of local cultural partners
- lasting local cultural sub-sector networks
- relationships with representatives of other sectors; particularly in education, housing and regeneration, and health and wellbeing; including outside and within local government (non-culture Local Authority departments).

## Achieving legacy: mechanisms and variations

***Legacy question 2: Which elements of the programme particularly helped to achieve or maintain lasting change? What ‘pathways’ have projects found to maintain momentum?***

*Relates to original research question 2: How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?*

Alongside achieving lasting change in the form of introducing ongoing activities, all eight projects also spoke of achieving lasting strategic change in some form, which has helped to re-position and raise culture in the area, thereby in turn supporting the ongoing provision of activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Gilardi, F. and Wasserfallen, F. (2018). ‘The Politics of Policy Diffusion’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58 (3). See also Shipan, C. and Volden, C. (2008), ‘The mechanisms of policy diffusion’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(4): 840-857

## **Lasting sector influence across local government and non-culture stakeholders**

In the majority of places, this strategic repositioning of culture was visible in particular in the form of increased influence within local government.

Projects reported that Great Place had largely achieved its aim of supporting the cultural sector to gain influence and representation within local policy development and delivery, beyond a pure focus on culture (see section 2.5, p.24). Six out of the eight projects painted a strong picture of their local Councils now understanding the wider economic and social value of culture, at least in part due to Great Place.

The projects mentioned a number of elements as important to building and maintaining this influence (see section 2.5.1, p. 24):

- demonstrating success and achieving visibility through the delivery of Great Place
- ongoing cross-sector partnerships, both within and outside of the local government context
- provision of locally-specific evidence on the value and impact of investing in culture in the area
- changes in local government leadership, which have led to both opportunities and challenges in maintaining influence
- involvement in national evidence gathering and conversations beyond the locality, to share experience and insight more widely.

Projects were also able to evidence and articulate what stronger sector influence in a local authority setting looks like (see section 2.5.2, p.26):

- involvement of culture representatives (of Council culture teams and independent cultural organisations) in non-culture Council meetings, and requests for support from the cultural sector from non-culture departments

- continuing financial support for culture by councils, including from non-culture departments
- the personal involvement of senior council leaders in supporting culture
- the creation of both new cultural strategies and the inclusion of culture within non-culture local strategies
- culture representatives' making a contribution to new non-culture strategies and large national funding bids.

## **Achievements across different delivery bodies**

Feedback from the projects hints at some differences in terms of where the strongest strategic legacy impacts lie. This suggests that the type of organisation acting as Great Place delivery body may have resulted in different types of strategic legacy (see section 3.1., p.29):

- Four Council-led projects reported achieving both strong local partnership working within the Council and between the Council and other culture and cross-sector stakeholders.
- Two projects run by newly established, small, cultural organisations developed cross-sector partnerships and worked with the Council during Great Place but reported challenges in maintaining influence thereafter. Here, the main strategic impact of Great Place lies in the creation of two locally embedded and now regularly-funded cultural organisations in areas with a low cultural infrastructure (with both having obtained Arts Council NPO status).
- For two projects led by strong existing cultural organisations, the strategic impact appears to have echoes of both of the above, with stronger links achieved into the Councils, coupled with a strengthening of the organisations as confident, well-networked strategic local leads.

## **The value of place-based funding to achieving longer-term change**

Interviewees highlighted a number of elements as particularly valuable in achieving long-term change (see section 3.2, p.30). Whilst some are specific to Great Place, others are more generally characteristic of place-based funding:

- providing capacity to deliver change quickly
- allowing for regional and local differences whilst linking to national conversations
- providing time (and funding) to build partnerships
- providing a vehicle for development in areas with low cultural infrastructure
- enabling the capacity to experiment and test out new approaches
- supporting the creation of a local evidence base for culture
- allowing for flexible budgeting.

## **Mechanisms required to ensure ongoing legacy**

All projects also alluded to mechanisms which they believe (will) allow them to continue to maintain momentum and deliver in such a way as to ensure the ongoing legacy impact of the Great Place programme (see section 3.3, p.33). These mechanisms are:

- continued revenue funding to cover the organisational overheads required to engage in strategic activity
- ongoing interest and support in ‘the place’ from the core national cultural funders, focused on shared objectives
- ongoing mutual, trusting connections among partners
- ongoing ability to evidence impact at local and national level

- prioritising certain activities, rather than trying to do everything
- avoiding the loss of institutional knowledge
- where applicable, pursuing agendas by moving culture staff and knowhow into other Council departments/ related local organisations.

## **Conclusion**

The broader politics of ‘place’ may shift or change going forwards. However, a number of key points can be observed from the Great Place evaluation, which will remain relevant whichever political context we find ourselves in over the coming years. (see p.36)

### **Achieving lasting social economic and cultural outcomes (Relates to legacy question 1 and original research question 1)**

Overall, the Great Place programme achieved significant sustained success in the eight localities that were the focus of this final phase of the evaluation, leading to a variety of cultural offers, sector support and community engagement activities, which remain ongoing and/or have inspired related new activities. Supporting this, lasting partnerships and networks have been created.

Projects showcased that some of the long-term intended social, economic and health outcome areas of Great Place continue to be reached through these activities. This has led delivery organisations to understand what works locally and enabled them to evidence the impact culture can have on these outcomes; benefitting future delivery.

### **Achieving and maintaining lasting structural change (Relates to legacy question 2 and original research question 2)**

All eight projects felt that the programme resulted in lasting change and ‘started something’ that raised understanding, aspirations and

opportunities for culture and heritage locally. Whilst strategic activities and outcomes again varied between projects, some patterns emerged:

- **Flexibility is required to support experimentation, risk taking and responsiveness:** Flexibility allowed projects to shape activities and distribution mechanisms to effectively fit the needs of their area. It also allowed them to learn what worked locally through experimenting and risk-taking, supported by the Great Place grant. This has provided a valuable basis for future activity.
- **A thematic focus can drive change:** Two of the eight projects chose to take an approach based on a strong thematic focus. Both were very successful in embedding their agendas. As a funding model that is increasingly prevalent across government and NGOs, other place-based programmes could consider a more thematic or ‘challenge-focused’ approach in the future (without precluding flexibility in approach or delivery).
- **Maintaining systemic influence requires ongoing organisational resources:** Maintaining systemic change – through partnership work and maintaining culture’s ‘seat at the table’ – requires ongoing visibility and engagement, which comes with organisational overheads. A few places exemplified that core funding (e.g., through the Arts Council NPO portfolio) provides organisations with the required resources to invest in maintaining strategic influence.
- **Different types of delivery organisations lead to different legacies:** The research suggests that the choice of the lead partner (council, independent) may affect longer-term strategic outcomes. However, various factors constrain or enable the type of organisations that can get involved with place-based cultural programmes, the type of activities that can take place and the resulting outcomes. Alternately, local priorities may vary. Funders should therefore remain agnostic as to what type of organisation

should take the lead, whilst being aware that there may be trade-offs in legacy related to the choice of lead body.

- **Strategic programmes can be used to refresh funders’ main investment portfolios:** Great Place resulted in some innovation and change for the Arts Council in terms of their NPO portfolio, with two of the eight delivery organisations becoming new portfolio organisations. In future, it may be productive to think more consciously about the relationship between strategic programmes and the main investment portfolios. It may be easier to support experimentation and innovation in strategic programmes; these can then be supported with a view to transferring resulting lessons, outcomes and practice into the main portfolio.

### **A word on evaluation**

The research highlighted the value of allowing for capacity to undertake legacy research: it provides a deeper understanding of whether programmes were ultimately successful, as well as bringing a wealth of additional insights into why and how this may be the case, what shape it takes and ‘what comes next’.

## The original Great Place programme and evaluation (2016-2021)





# Introduction to the Great Place programme and evaluation

## The Great Place Programme (2016-2021)

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 [culture and] heritage at the heart of communities.*”. More specifically, the programme aimed to support new approaches to local investment in culture in order to impact regions’ local economy, education, community cohesion, and health and wellbeing. Key to this were the strategic ambitions to encourage cross-sector partnerships within regions, and to help raise the visibility and understanding of the value of arts and culture among policy makers, other sectors and citizens in the participating regions.

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) on the terms of 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 a 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 organisations focused purely on the delivery of a cultural programme (rather than strategic cultural organisations), though a number of such bids were submitted.

For ease, projects are referred throughout the report by area (e.g., Sunderland), rather than project name (e.g., *Sunderland Comes of Age*). It should be noted that projects typically focused on specific sub-areas within the named geography.

**Figure 1 Great Place (England) projects**

Project name	Area	Region	Award
<i>Vital Valley</i>	Derwent Valley, Derbyshire	East Midlands	£1,285,800
<i>Making Waves Together</i>	Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft	East of England	£737,900
<i>Creative Connections</i>	Waltham Forest	London	£1,355,600
<i>Park Royal in the Making</i>	Old Oak and Park Royal, Ealing	London	£1,489,200

Project name	Area	Region	Award
<i>Sunderland Comes of Age</i>	Sunderland	North East	£1,249,900
<i>Greater Tees</i>	Tees Valley	North East	£1,332,500
<i>Northern Heartlands</i>	County Durham	North East	£1,489,200
<i>Stronger Together</i>	Greater Manchester	North West	£848,550
<i>Reading-on-Thames</i>	Reading	South East	£558,400
<i>Pioneering Places</i>	East Kent	South East	£1,489,200
<i>Gloucester – A Proud Past</i>	Gloucester	South West	£1,489,200
<i>Torbay – A Place to Feel Great</i>	Torbay	South West	£1,191,400
<i>Coventry – Place, Heritage, Diversity</i>	Coventry	West Midlands	£1,489,200
<i>Herefordshire’s A Great Place</i>	Herefordshire	West Midlands	£748,200
<i>Seamless</i>	Barnsley and Rotherham	Yorkshire and Humber	£1,264,000
<i>Crossing the Watersheds</i>	Craven	Yorkshire and Humber	£1,340,300

Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Figure 2 Map showing Great Place (England) projects



Source: BOP Consulting (2022)

Originally, projects were scheduled to complete in March 2020. However, following independent requests, ultimately all projects were granted extensions with varying end dates to December 2020.

The purpose of these extensions was two-fold: to acknowledge the longer than expected time it had taken to develop and establish projects, and to enable a better quality of delivery in years 2 and 3. The COVID-19 pandemic furthermore had a significant impact on project delivery, with projects needing to cancel, postpone, and reconfigure activity to

make it responsive to the various restrictions that were put in place from March 2020. Arts Council England and the Heritage Fund agreed to grant extensions on a case-by-case basis to respond to projects' needs. The end dates for projects varied significantly, with completion dates ranging from July 2020 to September 2021.

## Objectives of the 2016-2021 evaluation

BOP Consulting was commissioned in 2017 to undertake a programme process and impact evaluation of the programme, taking place alongside delivery. The evaluation was guided by three core questions:

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?*

To answer these questions, a logic model was developed, which set out a number of immediate, short-to-medium term and longer-term outcomes across three main impact areas: process and strategy; cultural delivery; and community and social delivery. While activities and focus on outcomes differed across the 16 projects, the logic model allowed the evaluation to look at the summative impact of the programme across all funded projects. The logic model alongside a more detailed description of the programme and its outcomes can be found in the [final Great Place Programme evaluation report](#), which was published in April 2022 (p.14).

## Findings of the 2016-2021 evaluation

The summary of findings from the final Great Place Programme evaluation report was structured based on the three overarching research questions mentioned above. *The full summary of the evaluation*

*findings against the first two questions can be found in the appendix (section 5.5).* In brief, the evaluation highlighted the following:

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

Based on feedback from the 16 projects, Great Place successfully supported and promoted the re-positioning of culture in local decision-making processes, “*demonstrating the possibility for culture to be an integral part of local decision-making, planning and delivery*”. Key to this was the initial building of networks across culture, local government and other non-culture stakeholders. Projects reported that ‘finding a seat at the table’ could be challenging and took time. It was found that bringing culture into local decision-making worked best where cultural representation was included from the start. This implied that lead-in time to build connections and trust was crucial to ensuring inclusion in local policy processes from the start. Where successful, projects were able to demonstrate the benefits of culture and re-position culture in the local narrative; evidenced for example through participation in local cross-sector networks or meetings; the delivery of new cultural strategies or integration of culture into other local area strategies; or involvement in new funding bids or policy developments.

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

The 16 different projects put particular focus on different outcome areas and included a wide range of different activities and delivery mechanisms. However, considering the programme’s overall impact across the 16 projects, the Great Place programme across the years that it was active successfully realised its intended social, cultural and economic outcomes. This was achieved through the delivery of high quality, innovative cultural, creative and heritage activities; community engagement activities; sector upskilling; networking and partnership work; and awareness-raising activity.

## Understanding the programme's legacy: the Great Place projects a year after funding ended (2023)



# 1. Aims and approach of the legacy evaluation

## 1.1 The long-term strategic aims of the Great Place programme

The initial aims of the Great Place programme as set out in the programme logic model included a range of immediate, short-to-medium and long-term impacts across three main impact areas: process and strategy; cultural delivery; and community and social delivery (see section on the ‘original Great Place programme and evaluation’ above). Importantly, the programme was at its heart a strategic programme, aiming to achieve long-term systemic change, rather than focusing only on the immediate impact of funded activity. Alongside the cultural, social and economic outcomes that projects were required to deliver, the programme set out from the start to shift the role of culture in local decision-making and policy implementation – and with it, to increase the wider support to the cultural sector within the funded regions.

In order to achieve this long-term strategic ambition, the Great Place programme supported and enabled projects to develop lasting local cross-sector partnerships; build civic responsibility for culture; increase the visibility and understanding of the value of culture to a variety of local policy agendas; and become involved in the development of wider local policy plans and strategies.

Given the programme’s place-based nature and long-term strategic aims, there was from the start also an ambition among its funders to understand what longer-term impact may have been achieved by the programme.

## Changing external context

It is now around one and a half years ago since the last of the Great Place projects completed their funded activity in September 2021. In the years since Great Place first started, much has changed. The Covid pandemic was at its height during the final year of programme delivery, leading all projects to extend, but has over the past year become more manageable, allowing organisations to resume ‘normal’ activity. In another major contextual change, the government published its Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022, with a focus on “*spreading opportunity more equally across the UK*”, leading to the availability of major grants through Levelling Up funding, alongside other major regional funding opportunities such as the Shared Prosperity Fund and Towns Fund. And in 2020, Arts Council England published its new 10-year strategy, focusing on extending cultural and creative opportunities to everyone in the country.

## 1.2 Aims of the legacy evaluation

Given the above, the evaluation has therefore run beyond the end of the programme. It is the ambition for systemic change in the role of culture in the funded regions, which is now particularly relevant to the review of the longer-term legacy impact of the Great Place programme. To gain an understanding of this, the evaluation investigated:

- firstly, what has continued to happen due to Great Place: *Did the programme result in any lasting activities, or affect any lasting change? If yes, of what kind?*
- secondly, why this impact has continued to happen following the end of Great Place: *Which elements of the programme particularly helped to achieve or maintain lasting change? What ‘pathways’ have projects found to maintain momentum?*

In addition, the evaluation aimed to investigate the particular value of the programme's place-based funding approach (as opposed to a focus on funding one project or organisation) in achieving lasting, strategic impact.

### 1.3 Approach of the legacy evaluation

The approach to assess the above research questions focused on in-depth qualitative research. Key elements of the methodology were:

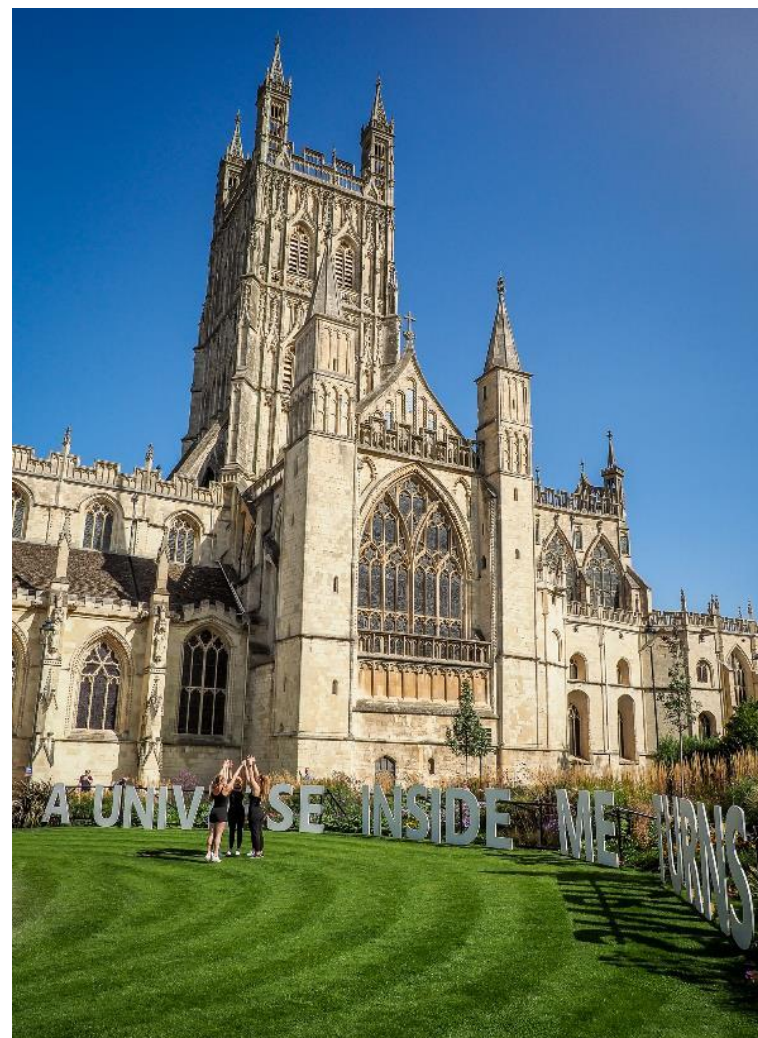
- In-depth phone interviews with half of the funded projects (eight) and two counterfactual regions, which applied for but did not receive Great Place funding. The eight funded projects were chosen at random: all 16 projects were initially contacted, with interviews set up with the first eight that responded. The included projects resulted in a good cross-section, including projects delivered by local authorities and independent organisations; rural and urban-based projects; variation across grant sizes and projects across England (see Figure 3 below). *We are very grateful for the time and insights provided by the interviewees (see appendix 5.4 for full list of interviewees).*
- Desk-based research into major area funds that have been received by the 16 regions following Great Place (see Appendix).
- Internal workshops with each of the two programme funders, including a wider stakeholder group beyond the programme leads. The aim of this was to present the findings from the legacy research and support the funders in discussing the implications of the findings for their respective strategy and programme development.
- Development of a report summarising the findings.

**Figure 3 Great Place (GP) and counterfactual projects interviewed for the legacy research**

Project	Area/Region	Delivery area	Great Place lead delivery organisation	Current situation of GP lead team
<i>Northern Heartlands</i>	County Durham/ North East	Rural	Independent organisation (newly established for GP with Visit Durham initially acting as accountable body) – <a href="#">Northern Heartlands</a>	Continues as independent organisation led by the same staff member who delivered GP. Became an independent community interest organisation (CIO) in 2019, trading since May 2020, is now an Arts Council NPO
<i>Stronger Together</i>	Greater Manchester/ North West	Urban	Local authority	GP lead in Council culture team is now creative health lead seconded to NHS Greater Manchester
<i>Reading-on-Thames</i>	Reading/ South East	Urban	Local authority	GP leads continue to be based in Council culture team
<i>Pioneering Places</i>	East Kent/ South East	Urban	Independent organisation – <a href="#">Creative Folkestone</a>	Continues as independent organisation with same staff members who delivered GP
<i>Gloucester – A Proud Past</i>	Gloucester/ South West	Urban	Independent organisation	Continues to exist as independent organisation now an

Project	Area/Region	Delivery area	Great Place lead delivery organisation	Current situation of GP lead team
			(newly established) – <a href="#">Gloucester Culture Trust</a>	Arts Council NPO; lead of one GP strands continues to lead legacy of this and is now interim CEO
<i>Herefordshire's A Great Place</i>	Herefordshire/ West Midlands	Rural	Independent organisation – <a href="#">Rural Media</a> for the <a href="#">Herefordshire Cultural Partnership</a>	Herefordshire Cultural Partnership continues as independent Arts Council-funded Compact, with key staff who delivered GP involved
<i>Seamless</i>	Barnsley & Rotherham/ Yorkshire and Humber	Urban	Local authority	GP lead continues to be based in Council culture team
<i>Crossing the Watersheds</i>	Craven/ Yorkshire and Humber	Rural	Local authority	GP lead continue to be based in Council managing Great Place Lakes & Dales (GPLD) activity
<i>Counter-factual project</i>	North Somerset	Rural	Local authority	Key bid writing member continues to be based at Council culture team
<i>Counter-factual project</i>	Salford	Urban	Partnership led by independent organisation	Key bid writing member continues as anchor member of ongoing partnership

**Figure 4 Art installation at Gloucester Cathedral**



Source: Gloucester Culture Trust (2023)

## 2. The projects since Great Place ended: ongoing activity

This section sets out the activities and achievements that have taken place as a result of – or influenced by – Great Place across the eight interviewed projects since Great Place funding ended in December 2020.

As an initial positive reflection on the role that the programme played for the funded projects, when we approached the 16 projects over a year after funding ended to request time for an interview, around three-quarters responded – suggesting at the very least a lingering positive presence of the project’s activities in these regions. This was further confirmed by our interviews. Across the eight projects we spoke to, all interviewees were highly positive about the lasting impact the programme had had. All spoke in some way of Great Place as being considered the beginning of something that was intended to set new approaches in motion that were hoped to last beyond the funding period. In this, all clearly see culture, heritage and creativity as not only a goal in itself, but a road to wider local outcomes.

“ There was a sense that we were in a good place and there was loads more that we could do. (Barnsley & Rotherham)

“ Post-Great Place, it always felt that work was nowhere near done, Great Place had started something that felt pretty significant. (Northern Heartlands)

“ There was a real aspiration to continue it ‘as is’. (Craven)

In evidence of this, interviewees cited a wide range of ongoing cultural, creative or community engagement activities; continuing partnerships

and networks of various types; and/ or lasting increased sector influence across local government and non-culture stakeholders, which they felt was (at least in part) a result of Great Place.

Since funding ended, such activity has been supported through a variety of means, including subsequent project grants and portfolio funding from the core cultural funders; grant funding from foundations and institutions; major regional government grants as well as direct support from Local Authority budgets and organisation’s own funds.

### 2.1 Planning for legacy

All interviewed projects viewed Great Place as the “*beginning of something*”. Underlining this, most of the eight projects referenced dedicated consideration and planning of legacy outcomes in the final year of Great Place (supported, according to some, by the extensions to delivery they received). Planning for legacy took different forms across the projects (see below).

While some projects pointed to the development of dedicated legacy plans that they continue to refer to, others appear not to have set out dedicated ‘legacy plans’ for ongoing activity. This does however not seem to have had strong implications on what has been achieved since the end of Great Place in practice.

Key example projects:

- **Barnsley & Rotherham:** At the end of the programme, the project partners created a **Legacy Action Plan** and a prospectus detailing how the partners would continue to work together in practice.
- **Northern Heartlands:** As a small independent organisation set up to deliver Great Place, Northern Heartlands put together a **business plan** “*that tried to enable us to [continue our activity] with much reduced resource*”.



- **Greater Manchester:** Towards the end of the programme, plans for legacy were brought together in a **report detailing the state of the creative health sector of Greater Manchester** and formulating next steps. A key element of the final six months of the programme was “*starting to think*” about a new **Creative Health Strategy** for the area.
- **Hereford:** The programme extension enabled the delivery partnership to “*start planning resources for carrying on*”, leading to direct ongoing funding via Arts Council England’s **cultural compacts**, “*the formal path that we wanted to take*”.

## 2.2 Ongoing provision of cultural sector activity

As a programme focused on delivering change *through* culture as well as change *to* the role of culture in the regions, two key elements of Great Place in terms of cultural sector activity lay in:

- the creation and delivery of innovative, high-quality creative, cultural, arts and heritage experiences for communities in the funded regions, and
- the creation of new support structures for local sector members.

Across the eight interviewed projects, all highlighted some elements of such activities as ongoing, having turned into permanent offers, or led to spin-offs. Responding to the different contexts and needs of the places, activities took on a variety of themes and approaches across the projects and during the programme’s lifetime. Examples include both ongoing activity through the project delivery leads and partners themselves, as well as cases of ongoing activity through local organisations that received devolved funding through their local Great Place project.

*The following two sections reference key example projects of ongoing cultural activity and ongoing sector support structures. Further examples of each can be found in the appendix (5.1.1 and 5.1.2).*

### 2.2.1 Ongoing cultural activities and events

All projects highlighted some elements of cultural provision that were first initiated during the Great Place programme, and which continue to bring cultural engagement opportunities to communities in the region.

#### Key example project: East Kent

Cultural activities initiated during Great Place have been maintained or resulted in spin-offs across the four sites in which Great Place was active in East Kent:

- In Dover, delivery partner Land Trust first opened up local heritage site [Fort Burgoyne](#) to the public during Great Place, which “*the project manager didn’t think would have happened without Great Place*”. Due to its success, the Land Trust is now continuing opening the site up to the public through events – these are listed on the website and the [Fort’s facebook page](#), funding ongoing activity and considering further funding applications to build on the Great Place activity. In March 2023, the fort was for example open for the [official opening of the West Wing Battery](#), now host to a sound installation; this was followed by an open day including performances and activities attended by over 200 adults and children.
- In Folkestone, Great Place allowed Creative Folkestone to animate a derelict site during Great Place, which culminated in its use for the Triennial Festival in 2021. Since then, the Council has bought the site – “*a major win for us*” – and Creative Folkestone continues to be involved in planning for a mixed-use development on site, financially supported by the Council; “*an important legacy*” of Great Place. They are now also working with the Council on a new greenfield site.
- In Canterbury, delivery partner Marlowe Theatre refurbished a 12<sup>th</sup>-century building which formerly housed a museum as location for their learning and engagement programme during Great Place. Now named [The Marlowe Kit](#), this continues to be used for the theatre’s

work with young people, with ongoing considerations as to how to allow the site to bring in funds to support the activity long-term (e.g., by opening a restaurant or café).

- In Ramsgate, an outdoor art piece commissioned during Great Place and installed in 2021 – [Beacons](#), developed by Conrad Shawcross and formed of sculptures commissioned by local primary school children – continues to be on display, with strong local support to maintain it. Partners Turner Contemporary are now in discussion with another ‘coastal partner organisation’ to move the artwork to a new permanent site in 2023.

**Figure 5 Artworks included in the Gas works site as part of the Folkestone Triennial, 2021**



Source: Thierry Bal (2021)

*Further examples of ongoing cultural sector activity can be found in section 5.1.1 of the appendix. These for example include the ongoing*

*delivery of large-scale outdoor events in Barnsley & Rotherham and Northern Heartlands, an ongoing programme of intergenerational work in Greater Manchester, a growing mobile-phone app-based ‘museum without walls’ in Herefordshire, and several ongoing festivals in the Lakes and Dales (Craven).*

### **2.2.2. Maintenance of artist support structures**

Three projects in particular – Gloucester, Craven and Barnsley - highlighted a focus during Great Place on activities to support the local art and cultural sector, resulting in structures or activities that have continued since.

#### **Key example project: Gloucester**

A key element of Gloucester’s Great Place programme was the initiation, planning and development of a new local cultural entrepreneurs’ hub.

[Jolt](#) opened shortly after Great Place ended in a 6,500 sqm town centre site that was provided by the Council for a 20-year peppercorn lease. It is run by Gloucester Culture Trust Studio, a subsidiary of Gloucester Culture Trust. Jolt, “*the most visible legacy of the programme*”, was a cornerstone of the Trust’s successful NPO application, with an aim to drive it towards financial sustainability.

Jolt’s key focus lies in attracting a young demographic, acting as a “*business incubator in disguise*”, breaking down barriers by avoiding “*obvious business language*”. Co-working spaces can be used free of charge, supported through NPO funding. Membership, at a small charge, provides access to studio spaces. The format provides free business support, incubation and mentoring and allows creatives to work together.

The long-term plan is for Jolt to encourage a journey from student to setting up a business and eventually being able to run independently, acting as mentor for new members in return. So far, the model is showing success: those who come in for free co-working space tend to

become members, with a waiting list for studio spaces. Currently, the space is incubating 25 businesses, with some having moved on to other sites, or starting to get commissions for paid work or engaging in local events. According to the interviewee, “we are confident that this will have an impact on the Gloucester culture scene”.

*Further detail on ongoing sector support activities in Barnsley & Rotherham and Craven – focused on the creation of permanent workspaces for practitioners and on ongoing support through local sector networks and programmes respectively – are included in appendix 5.1.2.*

**Figure 6 Cultural entrepreneurs’ hub Jolt in Gloucester**



Source: Gloucester Culture Trust (2023)

## 2.3 Ongoing community engagement activity

In many cases linked with the cultural activities described above, the eight projects also described the delivery of specifically community-focused (cultural) activity during Great Place. This had the goal of engaging communities with culture, encouraging pro-active support by communities of local culture, and bringing a variety of related benefits to communities.

Again, all reported that community activity funded under Great Place continued to be present, either in the shape of ongoing activities, or through influencing spin-off activities. The link between these current activities and Great Place essentially exists through one of two policy mechanisms: ‘policy learning’ (i.e., new practice remaining ongoing) or ‘policy diffusion’ (i.e., new practice replicated in new areas), with the latter describing a process whereby “policies in one unit (country, state, city, etc.) are influenced by the policies of another unit”.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3.1 Policy learning: learning resulting in continued practice

Policy learning describes the mechanism of tools, approaches and practice developed through a programme or activity remaining in place and ongoing. Considering the legacy of Great Place, this has taken a number of forms across different projects.

*The following section references a number of key example projects across the different forms of policy learning identified; further examples can be found in appendix 5.1.3.*

<sup>2</sup> Gilardi, F. and Wasserfallen, F. (2018). ‘The Politics of Policy Diffusion’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 58 (3). See also Shipan, C. and Volden, C. (2008), ‘The mechanisms of policy diffusion’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(4): 840-857

## Ongoing work with specific communities

As a key example of ‘policy learning’, a number of project lead organisations and partners have continued to maintain or support activities in collaboration with specific local communities and groups that were first initiated during Great Place. This in particular features examples of engaging particular age groups, such as children and young people and elderly residents (Barnsley & Rotherham, East Kent, Reading, Hereford, Craven and Greater Manchester). Other examples focused on bringing cultural activity directly into specific geographical communities (Northern Heartlands, Gloucester).

### Key example project – working with specific age groups: Barnsley & Rotherham

In Rotherham, Great Place supported a big drive to involve young people in cultural activity, seen as particularly important given Rotherham’s recent child exploitation cases. This has culminated in the current development of local [Children’s capital of culture](#) – “*the world’s first Children’s Capital of Culture, [...] created by children and young people, for everyone, right here in Rotherham*”, to take place in 2025. According to the interviewee:

“ The momentum of work from Great Place led to [this] cultural renaissance linked to young people. Great Place really accelerated that, gave it proper focus.

### Key example project – working with geographical communities: Northern Heartlands

Northern Heartland’s ‘bottom-up’ approach to working with a deprived community in the Dean Valley, which had no prior cultural provision, has continued since Great Place ended. Five years after the activity started, “*we are now at a point where we are able to let go – [the community] has set up their own organisation and is doing their own cultural activities*”,

with some ongoing handholding and support from the organisation (see more under ‘Communities pro-actively continuing activity’, *appendix 5.2.2*).

*Elsewhere, ongoing community activity is focused on working with young people in schools, including via Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) (East Kent, Barnsley & Rotherham, Reading, Hereford); as well as with specific neighbourhoods (Greater Manchester, Gloucester), see appendix 5.1.3.*

## Ongoing use of engagement tools

In other areas, projects developed new community information and engagement tools during Great Place, which have been maintained and expanded since (Reading, Hereford) – or which, in the example of Gloucester, resulted in ambitions to build new tools going forwards.

### Key example project: Reading

During Great Place, Reading Council built a digital platform, Reading Culture Live, in reaction to the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic, which allowed them to upload and broadcast content produced by Reading artists. This was so “*spectacularly successful*”, that it has now been incorporated into the existing [What’s on Reading website](#), which has over 230 partners and over 1m individual usage sessions. A “*step change*” for the site and an “*amazing resource for the sector*”, it has broadened local artists’ audiences beyond Reading.

The Council has now added a ‘[cultural and community resources](#)’ feature to the website, to act as a resource for the local community, “*with a heavy slant on culture*”. This provides information e.g., on spaces to hire, available funding streams for community groups, opportunities for volunteering, in a bid to “*create an accessible, more user-friendly experience than the Council website*”. The activity is currently run and funded by Reading Council in partnership with REDA, Reading’s Economic and Destination Agency.

“ Before Great Place, we had an issue of culture happening and people not knowing about it. The Reading Culture Live platform helped. It's become more user-friendly for the sector. It's built based on feedback from the community.

*In Hereford, Great Place enabled the building of the [Shire](#) website, which included a 'what's on' feature for the area and continues to be in use. Similarly, the [Visit Gloucester](#) website created with Great Place funding remains in place whilst plans are forming for a new online guide focusing on championing local culture (see appendix 5.1.3)*

### Ongoing approaches to consulting communities

Three projects (Reading, Barnsley & Rotherham, East Kent) also highlighted ongoing approaches to consulting with communities in order to ensure that the cultural offer they provide fits the interests and needs of their target audiences.

#### Key example project: Reading

Reading Council together with programme partner Reading University has put a strong focus on working in collaboration with local communities. A key ambition in their work lies in providing communities with a voice, respect and understanding. This approach was first brought in during Great Place. It then continued through the delivery of local [High Street Heritage Action Zone](#)<sup>3</sup> (HSHAZ) activity, with the delivery leads focusing on “*learning what the community wants and needs*” and taking a “*doing it 'with you'*” approach.

The main Reading HSHAZ Community Engagement and Cultural Programme aims to give more opportunities to individuals or small

organisations that have not had the opportunity to apply and lead funded projects. The project team encourage the community project leads to involve their resident participants in each stage of their process and keep them well informed and engaged. Listening to small communities' groups, Reading HSHAZ simplified their call out grant application process and provided mentoring support from experienced cultural organisations, such as NPO organisations, to both community groups and artists/creative practitioner applicants who would like support with their application and project planning ([HSHAZ@reading.gov.uk](mailto:HSHAZ@reading.gov.uk)).

This approach is now embedded in the Council's strategy.

“ We really believe in co-commissioning and co-creation. We offer funding, but we don't lead – activity is community-led. We do a lot of community consultation. Proper face-to-face engagement, rather than just going out with a survey. [It's about] creating connections. All of the projects we finance are community engagement-based.

*See appendix 5.1.3 for further information on Barnsley & Rotherham and East Kent's ongoing community consultation activities.*

### 2.3.2 Policy diffusion: transporting practice into new areas

Policy diffusion describes a mechanism by which practice developed through an intervention (in this case Great Place) is replicated in new arenas or brought to other areas or beneficiaries. Considering the legacy of Great Place, this has taken the form either of practice transferred to new groups, or groups pro-actively continuing activities themselves.

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<sup>3</sup> A £95m government-funded programme delivered by Historic England to help unlock the potential of high streets across England to support local economic, social and cultural recovery.

*The following section references a number of key example projects of policy diffusion; further examples can be found in appendix 5.1.4.*

### **Practice transferred to new groups or communities**

Alongside continuing community engagement activities initiated during Great Place, some lead delivery organisations and partners have also taken the learning gained during Great Place and transferred successful activities or practices to new groups or communities, in an example of 'policy diffusion'. Examples of this were mentioned by Northern Heartlands, Gloucester, Hereford and East Kent.

#### **Key example project: Northern Heartlands**

According to the delivery lead, *“place-based approaches to working have remained fundamental and inform everything we do”*: given the poor local cultural infrastructure, *“doing activity in places makes more sense”*. Great Place activity provided the organisations with a reputation among local communities; this fed into subsequent activities funded through the Heritage Fund, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council's Thriving Communities programme.

During Great Place, Northern Heartlands took a 'bottom-up' approach to working with a community in Dean Valley; based on its success, a further community – a small category D village which has struggled since the local pits closed – has now been identified to work with in the same vein as part of Northern Heartland's NPO activity.

*In Gloucester, the approach to working with a community in the Matson neighbourhood is now being transferred to six other local areas. In a different example, work with a Young Creatives Board in Hereford informed the approach of a subsequent youth empowerment programme (see appendix 5.1.4)*

### **Communities pro-actively continuing activity**

In another example of policy diffusion, a number of projects (Craven, Gloucester, Northern Heartlands, Hereford, Greater Manchester) also mentioned communities themselves pro-actively continuing activities that had first been initiated by the delivery organisations during Great Place (with or without continued support from the delivery organisations).

#### **Key example project: Craven**

The Great Place Lakes & Dales (GPLD) team continues to act as a *“facilitator and influencer”* for the creation of new community groups and platforms. These do not receive ongoing funding through GPLD and largely run activities by themselves, although some require occasional 'handholding' alongside managing activity independently.

Groups for example include a Young Creatives community, for whom GPLD provided mentoring and coaching: *“we facilitate the narrative, but it is not ours – it's a balance of facilitating and letting them lead and create. We have given them permission to have a voice and network”*. Other examples include a Creative Champions network and new local creative networks such as the [Craven Creative Network](#), set up to establish *“a connected and supportive creative community in Craven”*.

*In Northern Heartlands meanwhile, community engagement activity in Dean Valley led to the local community setting up their own organisation; similarly, in Gloucester, work in Matson led to two local residents setting up their own non-profit organisation (see appendix 5.1.4).*

## **2.4 Ongoing partnership and network activity**

A core ambition of the Great Place programme from the start was to encourage and support the development of lasting local partnerships between the cultural sector as well as cross-sector, with local government as well as other stakeholders.

Given this, most projects delivered Great Place through a small group of (in many cases cross-sector) core partners, with one organisation taking the lead. These have in all eight cases been maintained to some degree. In addition, other ‘third party’ partnerships were developed through Great Place-funded activities which were delivered by local organisations or communities with support from the core partners, again with lasting connections being made. Lastly, in some cases, Great Place resulted in the formation of local sub-sector networks, which continue to function either with or without involvement of the delivery partners.

Whilst all projects reported ongoing relationships based on activity during Great Place, some projects also mentioned challenges in maintaining links due to link staff moving on, or changes in leadership resulting in a re-focusing of activity. In these cases, the ambition to re-build ties where possible remains, with a strong sense that partnerships require ongoing engagement and time to be maintained.

In particular the presence of strong cross-sector partnerships was seen as a key element in developing and maintaining stronger influence of the cultural sector across all policy fields: this is further explored in section 2.5.

*Alongside the key example projects mentioned here, further examples of the different types and levels of ongoing partnership and network activity can be found in appendix 5.1.5.*

#### **2.4.1 Ongoing partnerships among the core delivery partners**

Where relevant, all projects reported maintaining or further building on the partnership between the core partners (cultural or non-cultural) who were involved in the application for and delivery of Great Place.

##### **Key example project: Hereford**

Hereford’s [Herefordshire Cultural Partnership](#) (HCP), which delivered Great Place, consists of six Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations

(Rural Media, Meadow Arts, The Courtyard, Open Sky Productions, Ledbury Poetry, Arts Alive), plus Hereford Cathedral, National Trust and Herefordshire Council. The partnership was first set up to bid for City of Culture; though unsuccessful, the partners continued, subsequently receiving Great Place funding. Since then, the partnership “*is still going strong*”, now in the shape of an Arts Council Cultural Compact. This has enabled capacity-building, including a dedicated coordinator with the aim of continuing to build the partnership and reach into other sectors.

“ Great Place considerably strengthened the partnership. The funding for 3-4 years brought capacity and enabled our Compact to stand out in the Compact landscape.

*Elsewhere, Barnsley Council has for example worked on a number of subsequent activities in particular with one partner; a new partner has also joined the fold. Likewise, Reading Borough Council continues to have a strong working relationship with its partners, based on regular meetings at various levels of office (see appendix 5.1.5).*

#### **2.4.2 Ongoing relationships with a wider range of local cultural partners**

Beyond the core partners, many projects mentioned collaborating with a wider range of local cultural partners during Great Place, resulting in ongoing communication, collaboration and/or feeling as ‘part of a group’.

##### **Key example project: Gloucester**

While Gloucester Culture Trust took the lead in the delivery of the Great Place programme, it worked closely together with a number of local cultural organisations, resulting in some ongoing relationships. This included collaboration with local cultural and heritage organisations. A strong working relationship has been maintained with partner Strike a Light, while work is underway to re-establish the strong relationship that

was developed with Gloucester Cathedral during Great Place, after the key partner there left their post.

“ A big legacy of Great Place is that it allowed us to bring cultural partners in the city together, everyone was feeling so siloed, Great Place helped them to talk regularly. It’s what allows us to develop going forwards.

Three of the partners recently gained NPO status (Gloucester Culture Trust, the Guildhall and Gloucestershire Libraries) whilst Strike a Light succeeded in getting an uplift to its NPO grant. The interviewee felt that the increased partnership work since Great Place is likely to have supported the partners in these achievements.

*In another example, in Craven, a Creative Board convened during Great Place has emerged as a smaller but stronger group of partners, while in Greater Manchester, collaboration with the association of GM local authority arts officers during Great Place has led to several further collaborations and plans to jointly support artist development (see appendix 5.1.5).*

### 2.4.3 Creating lasting local sub-sector networks

Several Great Place projects (Gloucester, Reading, Greater Manchester, Craven) set up local sub-sector networks, which continue to be active. These in some cases, though not all, include the project delivery leads.

Key benefits of such networks mentioned by the interviewees were the provision of ongoing mutual support (both in terms of knowledge exchange and the exchange of materials); higher joint visibility; a way to find partners to collaborate with; and reduced competition for funding, limiting the ‘suspicion’ among organisations all vying for the same funding by creating more openness and opportunities for joint applications. Key example projects include:

- In **Craven**, Great Place Lakes & Dales (GPLD) led and continues to support the creation of a host of local creative networks, which receive ongoing (non-financial) support and encouragement at various levels from GPLD. This includes the new Craven Creative Network; young creatives network Creative Champions; creative careers peer-to-peer network The Artery; a regional place marketing group; local placemaking group and Young Voices steering group.

**Figure 7 Craven Creative Network, first session in January 2023**



Source: Great Place Lakes & Dales (2023)

- **Greater Manchester’s** Great Place activity led to the establishment of two lasting local networks. [Live Well Make Art](#), a network of cross-sector practitioners and organisations interested in the creative health agenda, continues strong and is sponsored by NHS Greater Manchester (NHS GM). A Creative Aging forum and network, founded during Great Place, has just restarted after stopping during the pandemic. Again, it includes practitioners as well as policy



makers, focusing on the role of culture and the creative industries in 'aging well', including a focus on dementia and isolation.

*Meanwhile, in Reading, a group of local festivals has come together to form a joint organisation, first supported by Great Place, while in Gloucester, a heritage forum convened during Great Place continues to meet (see appendix 5.1.5).*

#### 2.4.4 Ongoing relationships with representatives of other sectors

Lastly, most projects (East Kent, Barnsley, Reading, Hereford, Gloucester, Northern Heartlands, Greater Manchester) also mentioned forming strong relationships with local partners outside the cultural sector, including within and outside local government. These are presented below by sector rather than project and play a key role in projects' ability to raise the visibility and influence of the cultural sector, explored in more detail in Section 2.5.1. *Further examples across each sector can be found in appendix 5.1.5.*

#### Education

— As seen previously, a **number of projects** provided examples of ongoing work between cultural and education partners. In the case of the [Turner Contemporary](#) in Margate (East Kent), this took the shape of an ongoing, formalised relationship with a local primary school for which the gallery's Head of Engagement now acts as vice chair. In other areas, it took the shape of strong local LCEPs (Barnsley, Reading, Hereford). In Hereford, Rural Media's Great Place lead continues to be on the LCEP's steering group and working group for creative careers, while Reading's LCEP has a *"solid action plan and is really well attended"*. Meanwhile, the University of Reading continues to be a core partner of the Council's culture department.

#### Health and wellbeing

— A core focus of **Greater Manchester's** Great Place activity lay on creative health and creative ageing, with more than 50% of activities contributing to these strands. During Great Place, the lead delivery team spent considerable time building partnerships within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, across local Councils and the city region health sector, leading to a *"huge number of partners cross-sector – and they have endured"*. They for example continue to work closely with the Public Health lead at Salford Council; NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care; the skills, ageing and public service reform departments at GMCA; the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); and the local [I-Thrive team](#), which works towards improved mental health outcomes for children and young people. In a significant development, work initiated during Great Place has led to the development of social prescribing for children and young people in Greater Manchester. A college pilot created two link worker posts with access to commissioning budgets for creative activity and this model has been expanded by localities with support from NHS GM. A second Great Place project developed an approach to social prescribing in schools in partnership with the [#BeeWell programme](#). This is an [annual survey](#), co-designed by young people with researchers of Manchester University which more than 160 schools and 40,000 young people took part in its first year. The #BeeWell Social Prescribing model trains young people as RSPH Health Coaches, for which they receive a level 2 qualification. In a cluster of schools, they then go on to work across their neighbourhood, working with local activity providers to programme activity that will meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of their peers in and outside of school. To the interviewee, a focused approach on issues of key importance to Greater Manchester has proven very effective in making a compelling case for investment in the cultural sector and Great Place has contributed

to GMCA's sustained commitment to investment in cultural organisations, despite the climate of austerity.

**Figure 8 Dance workshop, Company Chameleon: NHS GM are exploring the role of creative health in staff wellbeing and retention**



Credit: Joel Chester Fildes (2023)

## Housing and regeneration

— In **Gloucester**, a key partnership that has been maintained is that with local property development company REEF, who focus on regeneration and building projects in the town. The company was recently responsible for the regeneration of [King's Square](#), a large open space which was “*designed with culture and events in mind*”. The Council now runs the space and whilst cultural activation is yet to begin (due to a lack of available funding), considerations are taking place on how this can happen going forwards. This is happening in collaboration with REEF, who recognise the value of cultural activation of the square as an attraction for a new hotel, offices and flats now being built around it. As a sign of the company's engagement in supporting local culture, one of its directors now acts as trustee for Gloucester Culture Trust. In addition, links continue

with a further related Great Place partner, the local Gloucester Business Improvement District (BID). In **East Kent** and **Reading**, meanwhile, activity begun during Great Place has resulted in lasting relationships between the Great Place leads and the local Council housing departments.

*Further examples of ongoing relationships with other sectors included Northern Heartlands' collaborations with a local nature charity and Visit County Durham and Reading's partnership work with local economic and destination agency REDA (see appendix 5.1.5).*

## 2.5 Lasting sector influence across local government and non-culture stakeholders

In parallel to the development of strong local culture and cross-sector partnerships, a second (and connected) core strategic and long-term aim of the Great Place programme lay in the local cultural sector gaining increased visibility, influence and representation within local policy development and delivery, beyond a pure focus on culture.

All eight interviewed projects feel this aim has been achieved at least to some degree and is continuing to develop and bear fruit. Six out of the eight projects in particular painted a strong picture of their local Councils now understanding the wider economic and social value of culture, and at least in part due to Great Place (Reading, Hereford, East Kent, Craven, Greater Manchester, Barnsley). All interviewees furthermore see it as a key aim to sustain and continue building this influence moving forward.

*Alongside the key project examples mentioned below, further examples of lasting sector influence are provided in appendix 5.1.6 and 5.1.7.*

### 2.5.1 Ways to sustaining continued sector influence

First of all, projects mentioned a number of elements as important to building and sustaining this influence and representation within local policy development and delivery both during and since Great Place.

#### Demonstrating success and achieving visibility

Several projects referred simply to the value of Great Place having allowed them to evidence success – both in the ability to attract funding and deliver area-wide cross-sector projects, and in achieving a variety of outcomes for the area. This resulted in an increased visibility of the delivery team and/or the cultural sector in the area.

- “ Great Place helped us show what culture can do for key Local Authority themes such as economy, health, anti-social behaviour. It gave us [the culture team] a much higher profile. Great Place played a part in raising the role of culture and what it can achieve, at regional and local level. (Barnsley)
- “ We were able to show people on the Council what value you can bring by working with creative people in that way...It made them feel they could trust us. (Kent)
- “ We are known and taken seriously now, because of Great Place. (Northern Heartlands)
- “ (On being involved in conversations about the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling UP): The ability to manage some of the government grants schemes is quite skilful business. Great Place was successful in managing partnerships. (Hereford)

#### Ongoing cross-sector partnerships

Above all, projects highlighted that the development of cross-sector partnerships both within and outside a local government context has been and continues to be crucial in building sector influence. This appears to result in a feedback loop whereby the creation of partnerships leads to the cultural sector gaining visibility and influence among cross-sector partners – and increased visibility and influence again leading to more cross-sector partnerships, in some cases pro-actively initiated by the non-culture partner.

As seen in the previous section, ongoing successful cross-sector partnerships, which, as projects highlighted, require continued work to maintain, have most commonly included those with education partners; housing and regeneration partners both at local government and with private businesses; with the health sector, and (less commonly mentioned) with local economic or destination organisations.

#### Provision of locally specific evidence

A further element that was pointed to by a number of projects (Barnsley & Rotherham, Gloucester, Reading, Hereford) as valuable in building and maintaining sector influence is the ability to provide locally specific evidence of the value and impact of investing in culture for the area. Projects highlighted that being able to provide local examples of impact – even where national evidence exists – helps to influence policy makers and other local sector stakeholders who are focused on their work in the local area. Projects reported that local impact evidence created during Great Place continues to be used, updated and referenced.

#### Key example project: Barnsley & Rotherham

In Barnsley & Rotherham, "*Great Place funded a brilliant piece of research about the value of the arts and cultural sector to the city region's economy*," sponsored and supported by then mayor Dan Jarvis. This was used by Barnsley and Rotherham Council's Heads of culture

and the chair of WW preservation trust for lobbying and highlighting the economic value of culture to the region: "*I think that was one of the really big successes of the project, the report and the profile it brought. Politicians are [now more] aware of culture's contribution to the local economy; it's growth potential*". The report "*gave us facts and figures that are useful when you are making the case for culture*". Since then, the report has been updated once, and continues to be "*very much referred to and used*".

*Further examples of the ongoing use and building of locally specific evidence first initiated during Great Place in Reading, Gloucester and Hereford can be found in appendix 5.1.6.*

### **Changes in local government leadership**

The experience of projects highlights the impact of senior staff and leadership changes at local government on the maintenance of sector influence. While a few positive examples were mentioned of projects encountering ongoing or increased interest and influence with the arrival of new senior staff members and/ or leaders, two projects also highlighted the challenges that this brought in maintaining relationships and influence once key staff left their posts.

### **Involvement in national evidence gathering**

Lastly, as a way of supporting the building of awareness and evidence of the economic, health or community impact of culture more widely, several projects reported being involved in national conversations or evidence gathering activities, and/or keen to share the experience gained during and subsequent to Great Place more widely going forwards (Reading, Greater Manchester, Hereford, Northern Heartlands, Craven).

#### **Key example project: Hereford**

Hereford was invited by the DMCS's place lead for arts, heritage and tourism to present at a working group focusing on tourism, place

investment etc. The team "*talked about what Great Place taught us about place-based investment*". The presentation has now been referenced in a select committee report. The team have also been involved with the Southampton Institute of Art and Humanities on a piece of national research into culture's role in placemaking and civic pride. The interviewee highlighted that they "*were invited because of Great Place*", and that this was a way to contribute to ongoing knowledge exchange.

*Reading meanwhile responded to a parliamentary call for evidence for 'cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda', while Greater Manchester's delivery lead now sits on several national panels (see appendix 5.1.6)*

### **2.5.2 The shape and impact of continued sector influence within a local government context**

Alongside pointing to key mechanisms through which to build and strengthen cultural sector influence, projects were also able to evidence and articulate what stronger sector influence looks like – effectively bringing new funding and opportunities to the cultural sector and creating better outcomes for local areas. Examples of sector influence were most visible within a local government context – which this section focuses on – but also included wider non-government examples, as seen in Section 2.4.3 on cross-sector partnerships (including pro-active approaches from cross-sector partners).

Considering the local government context, six out of the eight interviewed projects painted a strong picture of their local Councils understanding the economic and social value of culture to the area, at least in part due to the delivery of the Great Place programme and legacy activities. This included both projects that had been run out of Council culture or economic development departments (Reading, Barnsley, Greater Manchester, Craven) and projects that were delivered

by local cultural organisations (Kent, Hereford). These Councils are continuing to actively support and involve the cultural sector, including the Councils' culture teams, in future policy planning and delivery across a variety of areas, with increased influence being described as taking a variety of shapes, including:

- involvement of culture representatives (of Council culture teams and independent cultural organisations) in non-culture Council meetings and requests for support from non-culture departments;
- Council budget allocations to culture, including from non-culture departments;
- the personal involvement of senior Council leaders in supporting culture;
- the creation of new cultural strategies and inclusion of culture within non-culture strategies;
- culture representatives' contribution to new non-culture strategies and large national funding bids (see Appendix 5.3 for a list of funds received by the areas in which the projects took place).

*Alongside the below two examples, detailed examples of the shape and impact of lasting sector influence for Barnsley & Rotherham, Greater Manchester, Craven, Hereford and Gloucester are in appendix 5.1.7.*

### **Key example project – Council-run project: Reading**

Overall, Reading's Great Place representatives described a legacy of Great Place in the shape of...

“...a strong use of arts, culture and heritage as a vehicle to achieve social and economic benefits at the Council and the partner organisations: the political leadership sees the strength of culture and what it can do, the role it can play.

A big change in the Council structure in 2019 led to the creation of an Assistant Director of Culture, with an ability to raise the profile of the department's work. This has greatly increased the knowledge of what the department does: *“the fact that we have a ‘director’ with culture in the title has helped have high-level conversations with ‘directors’ of other departments”. At the Council, “culture and heritage sit at the table at discussions, at the top of the organisation – culture and its impact are being discussed, how it contributes to shaping our town. This happens at a strategic level now.”*

Culture, heritage and cultural placemaking are embedded within the council's corporate plan. Following the end of Great Place, a paper was initially taken through committee setting out the achievements of Great Place and a legacy plan based on a one-year response (limited to one year due to the ongoing upheavals of the Covid pandemic). This has now been followed by a three-year Culture and Heritage plan that is going to committee in March 2023, and in setting out the delivery plan for Reading's Culture Strategy 2015-2030, which *“builds on the foundations of Great Place and adds a whole level of ambition”*.

As a sign of the strong role of cultural placemaking at the Council, a key legacy of Great Place has been the creation of a permanent position of cultural placemaking officer at the Council. This post is part-funded by the culture team and the Council's housing and communities team, responsible for the town's Council housing, in order to *“engage with residents and take cultural activity out into the estates.”*

Evidencing the overall increased visibility, the culture team also gets approached by other departments to support them, and now has strong links with the health service and planning department: *“they talk to [us] about what to put on their contracts. We are there, we are featuring now”*. The culture team for example acted as consultees providing input into the Council's new autism strategy. The culture team has also been involved in the development of successful key regional funding

applications post-Great Place, which are bringing further funds to Reading to support the local cultural infrastructure:

- Levelling Up Round 2: Reading put in both a transport-focused and culture-focused bid and was successful with the latter, which will support the development of a new library and theatre. The interviewees, who were involved in shaping the culture-focused bid, felt that Great Place was a key element in leading to this success: *“[This] speaks volumes about the Great Place legacy, we would not have been so strong without it. We went through Great Place, built on it, got through Covid, it spurred us on. We are more agile and responsive. Lots of projects have led to Levelling Up, Great Place set the foundation. The relationships and confidence in our ability to deliver are there.”*
- One of the team members involved in the delivery of Great Place is now also involved in Reading’s High Street Heritage Action Zone project, which is *“putting culture and heritage at heart of Reading’s economic development”*.
- Reading also received £1m from the Cultural Recovery Fund, which is supporting key cultural institutions (museum, theatre, library), while part of the Shared Prosperity Funding for the area will be funnelled into arts, culture and heritage activity.

#### **Key example project – cultural organisation-run project: East Kent**

East Kent’s Great Place lead at Creative Folkestone felt that Great Place had contributed to a strengthened relationship between Creative Folkestone and the district Council, describing it as a *“definite ongoing development”*. Ongoing activity has focused on Creative Folkestone’s engagement by the Council in new housing developments – the Council *“has highlighted that they see cultural activation as part of development processes and are holding up their end of this. [...] This suggests that they want to maintain how we as an arts organisation would feed into*

*this process.”* Alongside ongoing involvement in the development of the Ship Street site from derelict former industrial site into new mixed-use development; Creative Folkestone has been invited to contribute to the development of a new greenfield site outside of the town, bringing in artists to work alongside the architects and planners. The interviewee felt that Great Place had played a key role in this: *“it’s not just Great Place, but I really think it played a role. [...] They didn’t have to be working with us”*.

At [Ship Street](#), the site is a complex one, with commercial problems – Creative Folkestone supported an approach to *“thinking outside the box, keeping the community alongside”*. This work has for example included a consultation process where the arts organisation worked with master planners to think about the future potential and development of the site, which was attended by the head of the Council. As described above, there is a sense that *“the Council can see the way we do consultation with the local population is different; [I think they] see it as an example of best practice. It’s allowed them to think about it without the constraints of a completely Council-led project”*. At the new greenfield site, the arts organisation has commissioned artists, giving them key areas on the site to think about:

“ The Council and wider project team are supporting this, working with the artists, and financially supporting this work. We still have the worry that this could be withdrawn, but the Council is recognising that artists can think about real world problems, seeing that you can bring artists with specialised knowledge into a housing development. Great Place project ‘Pioneering Places’ was an ongoing part of this process with them.

### 3. Ways to achieving legacy: mechanisms and variations

This section explores the conditions and structures which the interviewees highlighted as contributing to achieving longer-term change as set out in the previous section and going forwards; and considers the impact of contextual differences in achieving legacy.

#### 3.1 Strategic legacy: a summary of achievements across different delivery bodies

The review of activity that has taken place in the projects since Great Place ended (Section 2) showed that overall, all projects were able to both deliver ongoing activity informed by Great Place and achieve some strategic successes in their area. However, the pattern of feedback from the projects hints at some differences in terms of the strongest strategic legacy impacts of projects, suggesting that the type of Great Place delivery body may have resulted in different types of strategic legacy.

The **four council-led projects** (Barnsley & Rotherham, Greater Manchester, Craven, Reading) reported achieving both strong local partnerships working within the Council and between the Council and other culture and cross-sector stakeholders. All four described Great Place as having contributed to a raised understanding of the value of culture to a variety of local themes (e.g., health, economy, housing) across the Council – including at leadership level and within non-culture Council departments.

In contrast, **two projects were run by (at the time) newly established, small, independent cultural charitable organisations** – one set up to apply for Great Place; the other set up immediately prior to Great Place (Gloucester, Northern Heartlands). Noticeably, while both reported successes in achieving cross-sector partnerships, worked with the

Council during Great Place delivery and continue to have some links to the Council (particularly in Gloucester's case), both reported challenges in maintaining or building their influence and achieving Council buy-in and funding thereafter. Key reasons for this were challenges resulting from staff and leadership changes at the Council as well as a lack of resources within the organisation following the end of Great Place to pursue strategic/ influence-building activities alongside the delivery of funded projects. Both struggled to deliver on a project-by-project basis following the end of Great Place, with some suggestion that delving immediately into Great Place delivery upon being founded may have left the organisations more vulnerable once funding ended. According to one: *“if we had been able to set up the organisation six months earlier, it might have helped. Great Place happened immediately once the Trust was set up, so when it ended, it left a gap. If we had been more established originally, we would have been able to carry on a bit more smoothly after Great Place perhaps.”* However, both were successful in obtaining Arts Council England NPO status in the most recent round, a major statement of success.

“ Without NPO...I don't know whether we would have had the energy to keep going. Having unrestricted funds from NPO...it's impossible to find otherwise. Small bids [...] are too time consuming, there is no income for overheads. (Northern Heartlands)

Where the main strategic impact of Great Place thus lies for these two projects is in the development of two new, locally embedded and now well-funded cultural organisations in areas with a low cultural infrastructure. Both are continuing to work based on the place-based, cross-sector partnership-based and community-informed approach taken during Great Place. They now see their new NPO status as an opportunity to build on the innovation that Great Place allowed and to

reallocate resources towards continuing with the more strategic activities – partnership building, networking, joining local and national conversations – they were able to undertake during Great Place.

“ We are an Arts Council priority place...[and] we are the conduit to delivery on [this], it would have been a lot harder otherwise. (Gloucester)

“ We are aiming to build up strategic level work at a national level with support from NPO and Esmée Fairbairn grants. During Great Place we worked on national networks...we would love to pick that up again; those strategic, ambitious projects that came out of Great Place. How does place-based work translate into decision-making and policy? [We are] looking for national conversations. (Northern Heartlands)

The final two **projects were led by strong existing local cultural organisations** (Creative Folkestone in East Kent, Rural Media in Hereford) with local networks, a track record of project delivery and existing income/ funding streams. Here, strategic impact appears to have echoes of both of the above, with stronger links achieved into (and increased sector influence developed within) the local Councils, coupled with a strengthening of the organisations as confident, well-networked strategic local leads.

While a small sample, this pattern raises some interesting questions around the merit of allocating funding to different types of institutions, and the different impacts this may achieve in the long run. However, while this suggests some potential to influence aimed-for strategic outcomes through the type of organisation funded, it is important to bear in mind the different contexts of local areas. Council-led projects led to increased sector influence across the relevant Councils – however, they

were at the least initiated by Council culture departments that were able, interested and provided with capacity to do so, suggesting some measure of pre-existing support within the Council, which does not exist in all places. Likewise, not all areas have strong existing cultural organisations that could take the lead. In other words, what type of organisation to invest in is not purely a matter of choice: not all scenarios will work for or have the conditions to be implemented (or may indeed be most relevant to achieving the desired outcomes) in all areas.

### 3.2 The value of place-based funding to achieving longer-term change

Interviewees were asked about the mechanisms that helped them achieve sustainable impact as well as about their insight into the benefits of place-based funding specifically to bring about longer-term change. Across these questions, a number of key elements were highlighted as particularly valuable in achieving the long-term changes seen above. Whilst some of these points are specific to Great Place, others are more generally characteristic of place-based funding – i.e., funding focusing on a defined geographic area – often in the shape of a package of support structures – as opposed to project- or organisation-based funding.

#### Capacity to deliver change quickly

Interviews with the two counterfactual projects which developed Great Place applications but were not successful (*see appendix 5.2 for more detail*) suggest that in both cases, the act of bringing partnerships together and jointly developing the proposal created some long-term impact. This included building stronger, sustainable partnerships (in Salford's case) and drawing the attention of the council leadership and/or cross-sector partners to the value of culture and heritage (reported to some degree for both Salford and North Somerset). In both cases, this has led to some elements of the planned Great Place to be



delivered, including both strategic developments – in the shape of subsequent strategies for delivery – as well as in the shape of activities.

However, both interviewees highlighted that where the lack of Great Place funding had a serious impact was on the speed with which activities could be implemented. Both areas had to redesign approaches to take a more staged approach and feel they would be considerably further down the line in their journey with Great Place funding.

“ It would have created acceleration – by the time Covid hit, we would have been further along. I think that working on the Great Place bid galvanised us in such a way that not all was lost and much was gained in terms of partnership and collaboration. We were able to create the strategy, we are still here. So I have to say that bid was instrumental, but we would have progressed further [with the funding in place]. (Salford)

“ What it would have meant is achieving what we achieved earlier. Getting different ways of working engrained, perceptions etc, takes time and patience, takes people skills. We would have had a few more years to imbed all that stuff, but we feel that we have done the best we could. (North Somerset)

Beyond this, the funded projects pointed to a number of elements of (the place-based funding approach) of Great Place, which they felt were important in supporting them to achieve longer-term changes.

### **Allowing for regional and local differences whilst linking to national conversations**

Across all interviews, there was a sense of the value of being able to create activities which address local problems; which *fit* to the local area.

This was summarised by one interviewee, who highlighted the importance of funding approaches that are adapted to local contexts, whilst linking to national conversations and best practice.

“ I think it's essential. Not only are all areas different, but even inside Herefordshire, places are different. [...] How culture is accessed and valued is very different in a rural to an urban context. Without that it's just 'one size fits all'. But you have to be aware that if it's all place-based, you might miss out on best practice and [...] national conversations. [It needs to be] place based by national direction. (Hereford)

This sense of locally specific activity informed by national conversations was reflected in other projects by reports of pro-active engagement in national conversations and evidence-gathering. It also shone through in one project highlighting the value of Great Place programme-wide networking among the projects to share knowledge and experiences, as *"if something works in one setting, it's worth sharing and trying it out."*

### **Providing time and funds to build partnerships**

As seen above, all projects highlighted the value of the place-based Great Place funding in promoting approaches based on partnership working and providing the time to build lasting partnerships and networks between different local partners – including across sectors, and across Council borders. This resulted in the generation of mutual goals and joint approaches, instead of an atmosphere of competition.

“ The ethos of collaboration that was at the heart of GP – that has absolutely stayed. The County Council adopted this “we are all in this together” approach, especially in very competitive funding environment. We have shared

responsibility, ambition, a “we are in this together attitude”.  
(Hereford)

There was a sense from this project that a partnership approach to working made ‘sense’, reflecting real activity and life within a region:

- “ The way everything is going is place-based. Place-based...is how you create coalitions across different sectors. People don’t live in silos, they live in places. That’s how you have to think about public services including culture and health and wellbeing. (Greater Manchester)
- “ This was our first experience of working on a place-based project. The idea of the boroughs and boundaries we work to, [that] we can’t work in the village across the boundary...to me it was a revelation – communities don’t see place as we in local government and funding organisations do. (Barnsley)

### **Providing a vehicle for development in areas with low cultural infrastructure**

The value of place-based funding – i.e., locally specific and supporting a partnership approach to delivery– was particularly highlighted for areas with a limited cultural infrastructure, which may not have key cultural institutions to lead large projects on their own.

- “ Place-based [approaches] – force people to work together for mutual goals. It builds relationships; the Council is motivated by money, so they listen. [It’s a mechanism that] makes partnership working much easier, much more doable. In a city like Gloucester which was underrepresented for culture, it’s even more profound. [...] It galvanises people, gives us a stronger voice. (Gloucester)

- “ Place-based [approaches are] particularly valuable in place like Durham where there is a very poor cultural infrastructure with limited building-based provision. It has created recognition that "you don't have to be an organisation with a building, it's about place, not the building" (Northern Heartlands)

### **Enabling capacity for experimentation and testing**

Many projects highlighted the huge value they saw in gaining (revenue) funds that could be distributed according to locally-specific needs, with a relatively broad approach (therefore) by the funders with regard to what could be funded. This provided valuable capacity for experimentation, testing and piloting of new, innovative activities and approaches, and based on that, allowed delivery organisations to understand what works locally, and use this insight to inform subsequent activity.

- “ It was an amazing programme, because it had this flexibility and sense of experimentation and being able to pilot new things - what would work in terms of our public programmes, joint working. It is so hard to get revenue [funding] at that scale to experiment with. It was a huge opportunity to inform [the] master planning for the Elsecar site. (Barnsley)
- “ We were able to test out two different approaches. [...] Great Place enabled us to take that risk because we had the finance and brand to try it out. It enabled us to spend time with people on the ground. (Northern Heartlands)
- “ It allowed us to work in four really different places, the criteria was broad enough that everybody fitted the criteria. It would have been difficult to get other sources of funding to do

something like this, I couldn't think of another funding stream that would have supported what we did in Ship Street. (East Kent)

### Supporting the creation of a local evidence base for culture

As seen above, a further key element that Great Place in its place-based approach allowed areas to do was the creation of local evidence bases in response to local need, for example developing key pieces of evidence required to help make the case and build sector support (e.g., economic impact study in Barnsley) or to inform subsequent activity (e.g., venue mapping study in Gloucester).

“ The importance of LOCAL impact evidence – it's an easier argument to have if you can point to local examples, both for Council colleagues and elected members. (Reading)

### Flexible budgeting

Lastly, one project highlighted a more practical element of the Great Place grant that they felt was key to allowing them to deliver efficiently (and thereby contributing to the sustainability of funded activity) – allowing projects to roll over funds into successive years. This was felt to be important in a longer-term funding programme given the contextual changes that are likely to happen within the funding period – in this case including Covid leading to delivery backlogs:

“ Funders were [...] flexible – what we said in 2017 wasn't the same as what we delivered in 2021. They let us change some outcomes, move budgets around and extend the project by a year. We [...] wouldn't have been able to deliver without that flexibility. (Reading)

## 3.3 Mechanisms required to ensure ongoing legacy

Similarly, all projects alluded in some way to mechanisms which they believe (will) allow them to continue to maintain momentum and deliver in such a way as to ensure the ongoing legacy impact of the Great Place programme. Most of these have been referenced in some form in the preceding sections. In summary, these mechanisms included:

- **Revenue funding for organisational overheads to cover strategic activity**, to allow delivery organisations to act strategically, beyond a cycle of applying for and delivering funded projects. Pure reliance on the latter means not only to a certain extent having to 'go where the money is', rather than being able to pursue longer-term strategic goals, but such funds also rarely provide funds for overheads which would allow organisations to engage in 'strategic' activities such as networking, partnership development, attending key meetings etc. This was particularly relevant for the (smaller) independent organisations funded through Great Place; however, likewise holds true for Council-based culture teams who have to deliver in the face of limited available budgets.

In developing applications for larger funding programmes that may provide some flexible revenue funding (such as Great Place), it is worth noting that one counterfactual project highlighted the considerable challenges in finding the capacity to go through the intense application requirements when there is no guarantee of success. The interviewee felt that a broad, place-based approach

made this harder as there was less guidance as to what was expected from applicants.<sup>4</sup>

- **Ongoing interest and support in ‘the place’ from the core cultural funders**, based on strong and trusting relationships between the funders and the local delivery bodies, and ideally focused on shared objectives for the place.

“ Regular touch points with all funders in the same place at the same time – having a group of funders together was really powerful. When they are all in a room together, you are collaborating around one single objective, the funders are aligned, it’s really helpful. [...] Having funders coalesce around a place with shared objectives; having goals around a place: it creates a foundation upon which additional successful bids were built. The partners coming together is key. (Reading)<sup>5</sup>

- **ongoing mutual, trusting connections among partners**; as crucial to the future of local activities and a strong local cultural sector as they have been to date to achieving current successes. Partners highlighted that this takes continued effort to maintain, not least to create new links where key staff in partner organisations move on: *“It relies on individuals, when they move on, there is a danger if it isn’t systemic that it will disappear with a few passionate individuals”*. Ongoing partnerships require regularly connecting in a variety of forms to maintain interest, focus, shared objectives and clarity about

what is expected of partners and what partners can expect from engaging. Some described regular meetings, others a more ad-hoc approach, or a variety of mediums through which to connect.

“ Having the digital platforms in place...helps keep the Great Place Lakes & Dales vision. The website, quarterly newsletter – the communications, that has to continue. It gives us a golden thread. The networks, the steering groups – they just focus us, bring us together. (Craven)

In maintaining partnerships, one interviewee pointed out the crucial role of a strong ‘anchor institution’ (or a small number of strong anchor partners) in taking responsibility for ensuring ongoing connections.

- **ongoing ability to evidence impact at local and national level**; given the value of this to gaining sector influence so far, this was similarly considered as important in maintaining impact going forwards. Whilst evidence with a *local* focus was seen as valuable and projects highlighted ongoing use and development of this, there was also a sense of places keen to tap into wider/ national evidence-building activities as part of their strategic activity to raise awareness and understanding of the role of culture to a range of outcomes.
- **prioritising certain activities, rather than trying to do everything**. This was mentioned by a couple of projects, which suggested that whilst there might be an ambition to cast the net wide, the reality of funding and capacity on the ground means this is not always

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<sup>4</sup> “The [failed] Great Place application made us think that we can’t rely on this model of competitive fund application because we don’t have the resources to spend months and months to put a bid together. The government saying “you have to achieve these outcomes with this allocation” is more straightforward. It creates an interesting balance between open, place-based funds and more structured but easier to apply for funds.”

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that instead of this, one other project reported finding “*separate conversations [with the funders] about resourcing legacy*” post Great Place.

possible – and more impact may be achieved by focusing on a few key areas.

“ Patient investment...slowing down. Being more practical with your ambition, not trying to do too much. (Craven)

— **avoiding loss of institutional knowledge** – a crucial element to maintaining ongoing impact, relevant both to partnership work as seen above, as well as to avoiding the loss of knowledge of past projects, achievements, evidence, etc. The interview for this research for example prompted one interviewee to consider summarising recent achievements to ensure they are known more widely: *“Who else would know it – makes me think about where we are in terms of the legacy action plan, to show that impact. It’s been huge. My boss wasn’t here when we did this.”*

— **where possible or applicable, pursuing local social or economic agendas by moving culture staff and knowhow directly into other council departments or related local organisations.**

Reflecting Greater Manchester’s creative health lead’s move from the culture department into the city region’s Integrated Care System, the interviewee highlighted the value of this move as enabling closer working relationships with the voluntary sector, rather than being *“culture knocking on the health door”*.

## 4. Conclusion

The broader politics of ‘place’ are, at present, in flux. Whilst there has been a strong steer with regard to ‘levelling up’ places in recent years, it is not fully clear what shape this ambition will take from a policy perspective going forwards. This may likewise have implications for both Great Place funders, who are reviewing their approaches to supporting ‘places’ in a way that aligns with their own core objectives. However, whilst these broader politics of ‘place’ may shift or change, a number of key points can be observed from the legacy evaluation, which will remain relevant whichever wider political context we find ourselves in over the coming years. Below, we reflect upon these key points in reference to the two research questions of the legacy evaluation, and relatedly, two of the three key evaluation questions of the original Great Place evaluation.

### Achieving lasting social, economic and cultural outcomes

***Legacy question 1: Did the programme result in any lasting activities, or affect any lasting change? If yes, of what kind?***

*Relates to original research question 1: Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for local partners?*

Overall, the Great Place programme achieved significant success in the eight localities that were the focus of this final phase of the evaluation. Whilst varying considerably in detail from place to place, at a summative level, the programme has led to the creation of high quality, community-focused cultural offers, sector support, and community engagement activities across the areas, which remain ongoing and/or have inspired related new activities. Supporting these, enduring partnerships and networks have been created, which continue to actively engage and develop new projects.

Projects moreover showcased that some of the long-term intended cultural, social and economic outcome areas of Great Place continue to be reached through these activities. Whilst these vary depending on the activities and focus of the eight projects, we heard examples of activities that provide ongoing improved outcomes, such as:

- raising the quality, diversity and quantity of the local cultural offer
- bringing joy and local pride to residents
- enthusing and enabling people to engage with culture and heritage
- tackling challenging societal subjects through culture
- improving local regeneration and capital projects
- supporting, building and promoting the local creative workforce and local creative organisations.

Through these outcomes, the Great Place programme has moreover enabled the eight delivery organisations to *understand* what works locally, allowing them to shape future offers based on real insight and evidence. And, connected to this, it has allowed the projects to evidence the impact that culture can have on social, economic and health outcomes; to make connections into these sectors; and to gain new visibility, responsibility and opportunities by doing so.

### Achieving and maintaining lasting structural change

***Legacy question 2: Which elements of the programme particularly helped to achieve or maintain lasting change? What ‘pathways’ have projects found to maintain momentum?***

*Relates to original research question 2: How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?*

All projects interviewed for the legacy research felt that the programme had resulted in lasting change in their area. Across the eight projects, delivery leads were clear that Great Place ‘started something’ that raised

understanding, aspirations and opportunities for culture and heritage locally, and continues to do so.

Key to this was Great Place acting as a vehicle that helped to drive increased visibility and understanding of the value of culture to other sectors and Local Authority areas. In detail, activities and strategic outcomes around the repositioning of culture again varied from place to place according to need and focus. Nevertheless, some clear patterns emerged from the research. These highlighted the importance of strong, enduring local partnerships and networks; and of opportunities for the cultural sector to test, showcase and evidence the effective and efficient role it can play in addressing local social, economic and health requirements.

### **Flexibility is required to support experimentation, risk taking and responsiveness to local needs**

All interviewees highlighted the value they saw in the funders taking a flexible approach to what the projects could fund within their place and to how projects were able to distribute funds locally. This flexibility meant that the projects were able to shape activities and distribution mechanisms to effectively fit the needs of their local area. It was also a huge aid when projects had to change their approaches due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic. It allowed them to adapt so that activities could continue in another form, or to redirect funds to new urgent local needs.

Considering long-term impact, this in effect meant that activities were more likely to be successful, and as a consequence more likely to yield longer-term impact and/or be maintained post-Great Place. Specifically, this flexible approach to what and how projects could fund allowed delivery organisations to experiment and try out new activities and approaches – including for example seeking collaboration beyond the cultural sector, working in new ways with community groups, bringing in

new cultural offers, etc. Inevitably, such ‘experimentation’ carries risk of failure, which the organisations would have struggled to justify without the funding from Great Place. However, as mentioned above, projects remarked on the value it has brought longer-term in providing delivery organisations with new insights into what works locally and what doesn’t, on which they can now build further activity.

### **A thematic focus can drive change**

Two of the eight projects chose to take an approach based on a strong thematic focus – one to integrate culture and health, the other to promote their local creative industries in order to retain and attract young people to the area. The legacy research showed that both were very successful in embedding these agendas in their areas.

While Great Place embodied a very open model of place-based funding (with obvious successes as we have seen), other place-based programmes could consider more thematic or ‘challenge-focused’ approaches in the future. Indeed, challenge-based funding is increasingly prevalent across various levels of government and NGOs. This approach does not preclude flexibility in approach or delivery, it simply asks projects to be more tightly focused on desired outcomes.

### **Maintaining systemic influence requires ongoing organisational resources**

A key point clearly observed was the fact that achieving and maintaining systemic change is an ongoing effort, and one that comes with an organisational overhead. Partnership working requires continued effort and with that, time and resource. Likewise, continued influence – maintaining culture’s ‘seat at the table’ – requires maintaining visibility and engagement, not least to find ways to limit the fall-out when individuals (including those in leadership positions) leave.

Being able to carry out such activity requires overhead resource beyond successive project delivery grants. Finding such resource on an ongoing basis may be easier within a local authority context, but this is not always the right or even possible answer (see more below). A few projects in this final phase of the evaluation exemplified that the presence of core funding (through the Arts Council NPO portfolio) provides organisations with these required resources to retain the necessary skills, expertise, knowledge as well as capacity and time to invest in maintaining their strategic influence.

### **Different types of delivery organisations lead to different legacies**

The research suggests that the choice of the lead partner may differentially affect longer-term strategic outcomes, with council-run projects appearing to be particularly successful in achieving council-wide influence. This is not perhaps a surprise: if you invest in a council to run a project (which at least has shown enough interest to apply), it ought to be easier to achieve wider influence on that council, because you are investing in the same organisation you are aiming to influence. The same does not hold true for an independent organisation, which will need to engage with the council as a separate and distinct institution.

However, it is not as simple as saying: if influencing councils is an important objective, invest in councils as lead delivery organisations. The baseline from which a programme such as Great Place starts off will be different in each place. The precise institutional makeup of local actors will vary from place to place, as will existing skills and capacity of stakeholders, local needs, and the prevailing politics of the area (including the status of culture in relation to other local agendas).

All these factors constrain or enable the type of organisations that can get involved with place-based cultural programmes at the local level, the type of activities that take place and, in consequence, the outcomes that

each area achieves. In some places, it will make most sense to invest in a council, whereas in others it will not, as the political or institutional context may simply not be conducive. Alternately, there may be other priorities which are more urgent, such as the need to establish / build-up arts and heritage organisations to fill gaps in local provision; something the research has also shown was successfully achieved by Great Place.

Therefore, national funders should remain agnostic as to what type of organisation should take the lead in place-based programmes. But equally, they should be aware that there may be trade-offs in legacy related to the choice of lead body.

### **Strategic programmes can be used to refresh funders' main investment portfolios**

Great Place was designed to support innovation at the level of the local projects. It has also resulted in some innovation and change for the Arts Council in terms of their NPO portfolio, with two of the eight delivery organisations becoming new portfolio organisations. This is an unintended outcome of the programme.

In future, it might be productive for national funders to think more consciously about the relationship between their strategic programmes and their main investment portfolios. It is likely that it is easier to support greater experimentation and innovation in strategic programmes than in portfolio investments. But these strategic programmes can be supported with a view to transferring the positive lessons, outcomes and practice that arise from these strategic programmes back into the main portfolio.

### **A word on evaluation**

Finally, a word on evaluation. Legacy research is not often accommodated within evaluations due to tight timelines, limited resources, and political and policy change. Neither is it always useful or necessary, when projects aim primarily for more immediate impact.



However, time and again we see that programme impacts – in particular of programmes of a more strategic nature – take time to fully manifest themselves.

This research has shown that allowing for capacity to undertake such legacy research provides a deeper understanding of whether programmes were ultimately successful or not, as well as bringing a wealth of additional insight into why and how this may be the case, what shape it takes, and ‘what comes next’.

Given the latter, and reflecting comments from some of the projects, we would recommend providing an opportunity for the projects to reconnect at this point. This would provide projects internally with an impetus to review what has been achieved on the back of Great Place and where they are with regard to their legacy plans. It would also enable projects to share and discuss their ongoing approaches to maintaining momentum in embedding culture as a key local strategic player.

## 5. Appendix

### 5.1 Ongoing activity: further examples of activity

#### 5.1.1 Ongoing provision of cultural sector activity: cultural activities and events

##### Barnsley & Rotherham

Great Place has played a key role in informing delivery lead Barnsley Council's ongoing public culture programme. This has included an ongoing focus on connecting art with the local history and landscape. In shaping this ongoing activity, the interviewee highlighted the value of Great Place in allowing them to 'experiment' in order to understand what worked locally, and what was achievable:

“ There is a sense of Great Place informing our public programme, which was really important; establishing what that could be. So Great Place was good in raising the standard and quality of the work we bring to the town.

Testament to their success, Barnsley Museums and Libraries recently resecured their place as Arts Council NPOs for 2023-26, *“in recognition of both organisations' excellent work in developing high quality and accessible cultural programmes”*.

In a bid to continue bringing accessible, large-scale outdoor events to the area following the success of events during Great Place, the Council's events team has signed up to an ongoing collaboration with outdoor events company Without Walls, first started during Great Place. In a further example, it helped to bring [‘Little Amal’](#), a 3.5m tall puppet of a young Syrian refugee child that has visited countries across Europe and was developed by Good Chance in collaboration with Handspring Puppet Company, to Wentworth Castle Gardens in November 2021.

Figure 9 ‘Little Amal’ at Wentworth Castle Gardens



Source: Barnsley Council (2023)

In Elsecar meanwhile, a masterplan has been created to turn this previously unsuccessful heritage attraction around, which builds on *“lots of strands and activities of Great Place”*. Work to connect local people to their mining history through art has continued, for example through a large-scale art installation event of a robotic miner which first happened during Great Place. Visitor figures in Elsecar have *“gone through the roof”*, and the interviewee felt that *“a lot of that is down to profile raising during the Great Place programme”*. As an £18m Levelling Up application to implement the new masterplan for the site *“in one fell swoop”* was unsuccessful despite positive feedback about the bid, a *“more phased approach”* will now be taken to continue taking the site forward.

## Northern Heartlands

The Northern Heartlands charity that was set up to apply for and deliver Great Place continues to exist, developing community-based cultural activities based on the experience gained during Great Place. Initially set up as an organisation with Visit County Durham acting as arm's length accountable body, it became a legal entity in the form of an independent community interest organisation (CIO) in 2019 and has been trading since May 2020. Whilst having to work on a funded project-by-project basis since the end of Great Place, the charity recently gained Arts Council England NPO status. This is allowing it to now continue the work begun during Great Place based on a more strategic and consistent approach. The organisation has also successfully applied for an Esmée Fairbairn grant, which will support a new role of creative producer.

Northern Heartlands adopted two different approaches to bringing cultural activity to underserved local communities during Great Place. In one case, this involved bringing a large event to local town Willington, which had had *"nothing like it before"*. Since Great Place, this has been followed up with another big event around heritage and wellbeing, which was delivered by Emergency Exit Arts and supported through a Heritage Lottery grant as well as the local Council. According to the Great Place delivery lead, the event at Willington influenced the local Council, which is keen to create an outdoor performance space [and] continue to bring big events into the space going forwards: *"They saw that it was a good thing to do, nobody had thought of that before – that anyone would come to anything in Willington"*.

## Greater Manchester

As part of Greater Manchester's focus on creative aging, the delivery lead collaborated with a contemporary art gallery on a programme called "Bolder", which was designed to support older, professional artists and stimulate more intergenerational work, in turn attracting new audience groups. Whilst Great Place funded the first iteration of the programme,

two further iterations have since taken place supported by ERDF funding and involving a total of 45 artists. The event *"changed the way the gallery thinks about audiences, [they] do more intergenerational work [now]"*.

## Hereford

Hereford's lead organisation cited a number of Great Place activities run by them, delivery partners or third parties funded through the programme that are continuing. In one example, a theatre piece with a focus on Hereford has been expanded thematically based on national research since Great Place and toured the country. One project located in Ross on Wye, which received funding through Hereford Great Place's "Hidden Gems" programme, developed an augmented reality phone app to show visitors what local heritage sites used to look like. This has continued to grow, now including nine artefacts as part of the [Museum without Walls](#). The project has been adopted by the local Council as a key element of their tourism strategy.

In Hereford, a project which brought contemporary artist Yinka Shonibare to the cathedral, *"illustrated how demographics around the cathedral could be introduced to contemporary art."* This has stimulated enthusiasm at the cathedral for showing other art works and caused a shift in their engagement approach. This has for example led to the introduction of an [Escape Room](#) at the cathedral, *"an interactive clue-cracking and decoding game located in the Old Chapel in the Cloisters"* with support from the Heritage Fund and other donors.

A key element of Hereford's Great Place project was its 'delegated grants programme', which distributed grants locally and included training for participations to design, deliver and evaluate programmes as a way to invest in community skills. Though this ended when Great Place funding came to an end, the approach continues to attract interest, with the Local Authority now interested in continuing the programme through

the Shared Prosperity Funding. Similarly, the delivery organisation has been in conversation with Lankelly Chase Trust and Foundation to discuss the approach with them in their bid to design a new equity funding approach.

### Craven

The Great Place Lakes & Dales (GPLD) delivery team continues to be based at and funded by Craven District Council (now North Yorkshire Council), working in partnership with the former Great Place partners to strategically nurture creativity and youth voice in the region under the GPLD brand name.

Several festivals that were set up in collaboration with partners in the region as part of Craven's Great Place project have continued to take place. These are now led by partners with (non-financial) support from GPLD. One example is [Hinterlands](#), an international rural film festival in Skipton, which first took place in 2019. Since then, it has taken place in 2021, 2022, and again in March 2023. In another example, arts and literature festival [Aerial](#) was first funded by Great Place and is continuing to develop, as is the youth-led [Forge Festival](#), which has received funding from Arts Council England and for which the Great Place team continues to act as partner.

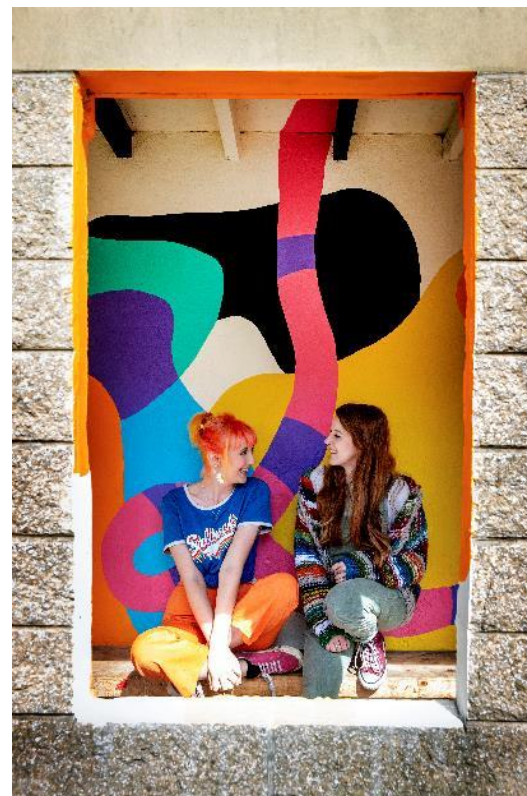
In another example, GPLD started a youth partnership group in Skipton and Craven called Fresh Perspective, which creates outdoor murals and runs workshops to make the town more vibrant. They have received some HAZ funding to continue their work independently, with (non-financial) support from GPLD.

### Gloucester

Gloucester Culture Trust recently achieved Arts Council England NPO status, allowing it to employ four staff members, including the role of strategic producer, which existed during Great Place. The role has oversight over the city's festivals and event offer, connecting the cultural

sector with the Council and the city's cultural strategy, etc. Alongside the Trust's NPO status, key Great Place delivery partner Strike a Light recently succeeded in getting an uplift to its NPO grant, while Gloucestershire Libraries and the Guildhall both newly received NPO status – meaning that Gloucester has gone from having one NPO pre-Great Place to now four. The Trust is continuing to deliver a number of activities begun during Great Place – including with partner Strike a Light – see sections 2.2.2. and 2.3.

**Figure 10 Fresh Perspectives mural in Skipton**



Source: Great Place Lakes and Dales (2023)

## 5.1.2 Ongoing provision of cultural sector activity: maintenance of artistic support structures

### Barnsley & Rotherham

A key element of the Great place project was its “*ethos of supporting a creative ecology, supporting new and emerging artists*”, led by delivery partner RAW (an Arts Council NPO). According to the interviewee, this has had a lasting impact on Barnsley Council’s practice of how many artists and freelancers they work with and how the Council supports them, leading to lasting relationships.

A major focus of this is the Council’s work to raise funds for the development of a Cultural Hub for Practitioners at Elsecar, which has “*come out of Great Place thinking*”. During the programme, a number of successful artist residencies were supported at Elsecar, which have led to current work to deliver permanent workspaces for artists on site. Design and funding are already in place, with building work scheduled to begin in 2024 and revenue-funded activity already taking place. “*Great Place helped us establish that track record – we’d done the thinking, we successfully delivered, it’s all connected*”.

### Craven

An overarching focus of Craven’s Great Place activity lay on creating new support structures and skills development opportunities for the creative sector, “*all of which continue*”. Most pertinently, the Great Place Lakes & Dales ‘brand’ (GPLD) continues to exist, with an ongoing focus on supporting creative careers and amplifying young voices.

This has taken a variety of forms, from the ongoing support of festivals (see above) and creative networks (see below) to the creation of spaces and tools. Core since the end of Great Place has been the delivery of an Arts Council England funded project called Nurturing Creativity, which has recently wrapped up. Developed tools include the [Create Your Future](#) website, which provides information about creative careers in the

region, and digital platform [Folded Zine](#), which is produced by a young peoples’ collective and receives ongoing support from GPLD. GPLD also supported the development by two local creatives of ‘Skipton’s first Co-working Space’, [Qworkery](#), which continues to thrive; and brought to life the ongoing [Watch this Space](#) project, which “*helps people working in the creative industries experiment and test different spaces*”.

## 5.1.3 Ongoing community engagement activity: policy learning

### Ongoing work with specific communities

#### East Kent

In Ramsgate, Turner Contemporary worked with two primary schools during Great Place – a new partnership formed through the programme. Close relationships have been maintained with one of the schools, with the gallery’s Head of Engagement becoming vice chair of the school. The gallery and school continue to trial and deliver projects together.

#### Barnsley & Rotherham/ Reading/ Hereford

Across these areas, LCEPs were strengthened during Great Place and continue to be used as key vehicles to engage local pupil communities. Great Place for example supported the development of LCEPs in Barnsley and Rotherham, which have since gone “*from strength to strength*” and have “*helped to develop [the local] education offer*”. Barnsley’s LCEP now has “*a huge range of partners*”, is working to develop the cultural offer for schools and is looking at creating its first Childrens’ ‘Festival of Joy’ in 2024.

#### Greater Manchester

Since Great Place, Greater Manchester has launched an ‘[Ageing in Place Pathfinder](#)’ programme with a multi-million pound commitment from a range of stakeholders to establish resident-led partnerships in eight neighbourhoods to improve the quality of life for local residents as

they grow older. The Great Place delivery lead “ensured that culture is part of” this programme, in a legacy of the creative ageing work undertaken during Great Place.

### Gloucester

Gloucester Culture Trust during Great Place engaged local organisation Strike a Light to work in Matson, a neighbourhood marked by socio-economic deprivation. This work continues and has spawned a CIC run by local residents with support from Strike a Light (see more in appendix 5.2.2).

### Ongoing use of engagement tools

#### Hereford

Great Place enabled the partners to build the [Shire](#) website, which included information about the programme and a ‘what’s on’ feature for the area. While available resource to add content to this has been limited since the end of Great Place, the Shire was then folded into the area’s subsequent Arts Council England-funded Creative Pathways volunteering project, which is “drawing much more people to the website”. It is now a locally known and used website.

Local NPO and lead Great Place partner Rural Media continues to maintain the ‘what’s on’ feature in their own time (supported by Cultural Compact funding from Arts Council England and DCMS), but there is a sense of “what it could be with more money”.

#### Gloucester

As one strand of its Great Place activity, Gloucester introduced an online volunteering data base, ‘Engage Gloucester’. Having already struggled, this fell apart after Great Place ended, once the team member who ran it left her post. There are aspirations to bring the data base back in some form particularly among the local heritage sector, currently inhibited by a lack of funds.

A key issue in Gloucester continues to be the absence of a joined up ‘what’s on’-type resource that brings together all cultural activities happening locally to ensure communities are aware of opportunities. The best tool at present is the [Visit Gloucester](#) website, which was created with Great Place funding, but is focused on visitors rather than locals. In part to address this, Gloucester Culture Trust as part of its NPO activity is planning to introduce an online guide that focuses on ‘championing culture in the city’ through celebrating existing activity and providing an artist guide (similar to the [‘Made in Plymouth’](#) website). This may ultimately evolve into a regularly updated ‘what’s on’ guide.

### Ongoing approaches to consulting communities

#### Barnsley & Rotherham

A key focus of Barnsley’s Great Place work lay in the development of the Elsecar industrial heritage site. This is ongoing, with subsequent plans and funding to continue the work. Given the strong local interest in the site engendered by activities that took place during Great Place, the Council is keen to continue supporting local peoples’ engagement with the site and to undertake ongoing community consultation at Elsecar. For the recent unveiling of a new film about the site, residents of the local village were invited; an opportunity taken up by around 200 people.

For the third example, see appendix section 5.5.2. on policy diffusion, [East Kent](#).

#### 5.1.4 Ongoing community engagement activity: policy diffusion

### Practice transferred to new groups or communities

#### Hereford

During Great Place, the partners set up a Young Creatives Board. Whilst this ended with the end of Great Place (and with participants moving away), the partners have since gained funding through the Esmée

Fairbairn youth empowerment programme, with activity “*directly informed by some of the successes we had with Great Place*”.

### Gloucester

In Gloucester, Great Place supported local cultural organisation [Strike a Light](#) to work in depth with a community in Matson, an area marked by high socio-economic deprivation. As an extremely successful project that is ongoing, Gloucester Culture Trust is now planning to transfer the same approach to six other areas as part of their NPO work, again working in partnership with six ‘cultural connectors’ from the local community, who are able to engage with these communities, and help them “*be cultural deliverers themselves*”.

“ Culture Matson was extremely successful in showing how that sort of community outreach worked, it helped show that culture is relevant to them, that cultural provision is created with them in mind.

### East Kent

In Dover, the Land Trust for the first time opened heritage site [Fort Burgoyne](#) to the public during Great Place. Given its’ success, they are now continuing this. This has been accelerated by a new housing development in the vicinity, providing a new permanent community for the Trust to focus their activity on. They are now considering turning one area of the Fort into a community garden or similar, allowing people in the new neighbourhood to have some ownership over the site.

Meanwhile, Creative Folkestone has been invited by Folkestone and Hythe District Council to work with them in the development of a new greenfield development site outside of town, following their activity during Great Place at Ship Street: “*the Council can see the way we do consultation with the population is completely different; [the way we] work with schools and young people*”.

**Figure 11 Official opening of the West Wing Battery in March 2023**



Source: <https://thelandtrust.org.uk> (2023)

### Communities pro-actively continuing activity

#### Northern Heartlands

Five years after the Great Place community engagement activity in Dean Valley started, “*we are now at a point where we are able to let go – [the community] has set up their own organisation and is doing their own cultural activities, with some handholding from us*”. “*But it took a long time to build and raise aspirations*”. Developments are based on ‘granular baby steps’, which introduced creative activity (e.g., helping with the delivery of a winter lights parade) and engendered a sense of ‘we can do this’ among the community. The work is driven in particular by one individual, who has now joined the Northern Heartlands board.

“ They’ve now set up their own community group with the aim of putting on events, bringing the community together. That would not have happened without Great Place, I can say that categorically.

**Figure 12 Lantern making for Dene Valley Winter Light Parade**



Source: Northern Heartlands (2021)

### **Gloucester**

The activities in Matson during Great Place inspired and supported two local residents to start a non-profit organisation, [GL4](#), which organises local live events, youth participation and community engagement through a range of activities. GL4 is now a community interest company with four team members (including one of the Strike the Light directors

who led on the Culture Matson project) and the stated vision to “*break down barriers that people feel when they think of visiting the theatre*”.

“ We’ve only just begun our journey. Our dream is to have our own arts centre in our community. (GL4 Vision)

### **Hereford**

Hereford referenced awareness of several communities supported during Great Place, which have continued activity. In one example, youth work supported in Kington has continued with further funding from other sources. In another example, online sessions about inclusion and accessibility run during Great Place helped to inspire some of the participating individuals to launch an independent CIC, which lobbies for accessibility and inclusion (extending beyond the cultural sector).

### **Greater Manchester**

In response to Covid restrictions, some of the Great Place budget was repurposed to create ‘creative care kits’ for 53,000 people who were isolated and digitally excluded during the pandemic. This has led to a legacy of volunteering, with people who volunteered for the first time for this programme continuing to do so.

## **5.1.5 Ongoing partnership and network activity**

### **Ongoing partnerships among the core delivery partners**

#### **Barnsley & Rotherham**

The core delivery partners consisted of delivery lead Barnsley Council, Rotherham Council, Elsecar Heritage Centre, Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust (WWPT), and local NPO RAW. Much of these contacts were initiated by Great Place, and the lead at Barnsley Council now “*acts as continuity*”. Based on a prospectus setting out their ongoing partnership post-Great Place, the partners are committed to continuing



to meet regularly and remain in frequent dialogue. This includes agreement on “*presenting a joint sense of place for the city region*”, and ongoing efforts to market the two places together. The strongest ongoing partnership is between Barnsley Council and WWPT; the latter is also exploring opportunities for a joint event with Elsecar. Barnsley has also continued to work with Rotherham’s Museum Service on a number of joint projects, while RAW is involved in Rotherham’s youth work.

A further relationship has developed with Wentworth Castle Gardens - the first National Trust property in South Yorkshire: “*We now have a formal partnership with them as we own the site and they run it. This has led to building stronger opportunities with WWPT to present the destinations jointly as the Greater Wentworth Landscape triangle*”. Barnsley is also in conversation with Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the Mayor of South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire with regard to setting up a partnership between the Council and the Sculpture Park.

### **East Kent**

Great Place was delivered by an existing partnership, the East Kent Cultural Transformation Board, including Creative Folkestone, Marlowe Theatre and Turner Contemporary. The partnership continues to exist, with occasional meetings and subsequent projects between Creative Folkestone and Turner Contemporary.

While the Transformation Board was already well connected when Great Place started, the programme brought the Land Trust (as owners of Fort Burgoyne) into the fold, with whom links continue on a non-formal basis.

### **Reading**

The Reading Great Place lead partners included Reading Borough Council, Reading University and Reading’s economic and destination agency, REDA. Alongside this, the core partners worked with other local cultural and community delivery partners. A core ambition lay in consolidating the partnership between the three core partners, which

was highly successful and is seen by Council representatives as “*the foundation of everything else*”.

The partners continue to meet regularly at various levels of office, including senior level. In particular the relationship between the Council and University has continued to grow, with collaboration on two key areas of work. The first, which spun out of Great Place, focuses on developing a cohesive place brand for Reading and has included piece of work that engaged around 1,600 organisations in town. The second is a focus on the climate emergency – a leading subject area for Reading University. This includes an annual public [Reading Climate Festival](#), which first happened during Great Place (though it was not directly related to Great Place).

### **Craven**

Great Place Lakes & Dales core partners consisted of Craven District and South Lakeland District Councils, the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks Authorities. Council structures changed in April 2023, with Craven District Council moving into North Yorkshire Council and South Lakeland District Council moving into Westmorland and Furness Council. The partners are hoping to continue to work together, with the GPLD lead now employed by North Yorkshire Council.

Support from the partners for the GPLD activity and ‘brand’ have continued since the funding ended, with a joint agreement to work strategically across the area. Whilst the GPLD post has continued to be funded by Craven District Council (now North Yorkshire Council), the other partners have provided support and some match funding for activity and continue to be engaged with GPLD at a senior level. GPLD reports to the consortium board four times a year, agreeing a joint action plan and business plan. They have also produced an interim plan to align with interim cultural delivery of the new North Yorkshire Council.

## Ongoing relationships with a wider range of local cultural partners

### Greater Manchester

Among a wide range of other partners, Greater Manchester's delivery lead collaborated with GM Arts (the association of GM local authority<sup>6</sup> arts officers), jointly commissioning touring visual arts programmes with nationally renowned artists.

Whilst working across all 10 partners was found to be challenging as they are all *“very different, with diverse populations, a mix of rural and urban and have a joint population almost the size of Wales”*, this initial work has resulted in several collaborations between the 10 and plans to jointly support artist development across Greater Manchester.

### Northern Heartlands

Northern Heartlands had a wide range of cultural and non-culture sector partners on their Great Place programme Advisory Board<sup>7</sup>. Whilst partners no longer have an advisory capacity, key relationships have continued since: *“what Great Place enabled us to have, is the ability to pick up the phone and say ‘hi, it’s me’ – they know you, know they can trust you to deliver”*.

### Craven

GPLD convened a Creative Board for Great Place of 10 local cultural organisations, which continues to exist and has since gained two further

partners<sup>8</sup>. Whilst it never *“quite felt”* that the Board delivered on Great Place as originally intended, the Board collaborated during Great Place and has since emerged as a smaller but stronger group of partners who jointly supported the delivery of the subsequent Arts Council-funded [‘Nurturing Creativity’](#) project, including Brewery Arts, Craven Arts, Settle Stories and Skipton Town Hall. The partners continue to meet and are all *“great advocates for GPLD”*, with a smaller group of collaborating organisations at its core.

## Creating lasting local sub-sector networks

### Gloucester

In Gloucester, a heritage forum convened through Great Place continues to meet regularly. Led by the Cathedral, it includes all local heritage organisations who share information and deliver knowledge exchange sessions (e.g., a recent one on ‘hiring spaces’).

### Reading

In Reading, a festival group including a variety of festivals around the town was established. Whilst they previously did not share a common platform, *“Great Place funded a way for them to have a more elaborate partnership format”*, with e.g., workshops and an acting chair. They are now set up as a joint organisation, [Reading Independent Festivals Forum \(RIFF\)](#), with shared objectives, shared learning, a system of

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<sup>6</sup> Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Salford, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan

<sup>7</sup> Organisations represented on the Advisory Board included: Durham Culture Partnership, Opera North, Natural England, Durham County Council (Cultural Engagement; Culture, Tourism and Sport), Active Durham, Anglican Diocese, Wear Rivers Trust, Newcastle University, People into Enterprise, North Pennines AONB Partnership, Co Durham Community Foundation, The Bowes Museum, Upper Teesdale Agriculture Support Service, Visit County Durham. With all but two, Northern Heartland holds ongoing relationships; these two are still seen as supporters with whom contact may be re-established in the future. Further relationships with independent partners continue

with an independent consultant who was formerly Head of Learning for Northern Heartlands during Great Place, and an independent freelance ambassador.

<sup>8</sup> Made up of the four GPLD partners (Craven District Council, now North Yorkshire Council; South Lakeland District Council, now Westmorland and Furness Council); Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authorities) plus Brewery Arts, Lakeland Arts, Kendal College, Settle Stories, Craven Arts, Skipton Town Hall; in addition to two freelancers representing Yarndale and Aerial.

sharing materials and equipment and regular meetings. The group is a key delivery partner of the local Shared Prosperity Fund.

“ That was a step change – the idea of bringing together different organisations to work collaboratively. There was a bit of tension around who gets funding – fighting for scarce resources, pitting organisations against each other. This network is a step change in the dynamics and collaboration – they are stronger together.

### Ongoing relationships with representatives of other sectors

#### Housing and Regeneration:

— In **East Kent** and **Reading**, activity begun during Great Place has resulted in lasting relationships between the Great Place leads and the local Council housing departments. In **East Kent**, a strong relationship has formed between Creative Folkestone and Folkestone and Hythe District Council, with a focus on bringing culture into new building developments. The Council is now involving Creative Folkestone in shaping a new mixed-use development both on the Ship Street site used during Great Place and a new greenfield site on the border of the town, with the cultural organisation’s Chief Executive for example on the interview panel for the architects of the Ship Street site; Creative Folkestone having run public consultations and consultations with master planners for the Ship Street site; and bringing artists to work on the new greenfield site. Meanwhile, the Council sits on Creative Folkestone’s regeneration sub-committee. In **Reading**, the Council culture team have formed a strong relationship with the planning department, in a bid to bring cultural activity into the Council housing estates, which are among some of Reading’s most deprived wards (see section 2.5.2 for more detail).

— **Northern Heartlands** meanwhile reported that the local Town and County Planning Association, which they worked with during Great Place, is “*still in touch - we could pick up the conversation again.*”

#### Health & wellbeing:

- In **Barnsley**, the Great Place delivery lead in the Council’s culture department now sits on the local health and wellbeing strategy board alongside other Council representatives and e.g., Barnsley hospital, and works closely together with the local culture health and wellbeing alliance, which receives support from Arts Council England.
- Following the end of Great Place, **Northern Heartlands** gained funding through the Arts Council England’s [Thriving Communities](#) programme, which, with its focus on health and wellbeing, has “*helped us develop a relationship with [the health sector]*”.
- In **Reading**, the interviewees pointed to relationships between the Council’s cultural department and departments responsible for adult social care, health and young people. These were “*strengthened by Great Place*”, supported by the more evidence-based approach that is now “*engrained in the way we work*”. This includes a set of current mental health and wellbeing programmes for children and young people that “*builds on existing work delivered during Great Place*”. These include Starting Point and Real Time’s young person-led creative digital agency CIC Action Media, working with SMEs to create marketing assets; and Dance Reading in partnership with Sport in Mind who have continued to run dance programmes for new mothers suffering with or at risk of post-natal depression as well as young people in schools to help them achieve Arts Awards.

### Other cross-sector partnerships:

- **Northern Heartlands** reported that “*various relationships and activities with local non-culture organisations<sup>9</sup> are ongoing, with organisations getting in touch with us and vice versa*”. The organisation’s rural strand of work is continuing in partnership with a local nature charity, “*who asked us for help*”. Similarly, they were recently approached by Great Place partner Visit County Durham, who are interested in “*picking up the conversation during GP around communities and tourism again*”.
- In **Reading**, local economic and destination agency REDA similarly continues to be a core partner of the Council’s culture team.
- Another partner of **Gloucester** Culture Trust in the delivery of Great Place was the Gloucester Community Building Collective, a community development and support organisation, with whom links continue.

### 5.1.6 Lasting sector influence across government and cross-sector stakeholders: ways to sustain sector influence

#### Provision of locally-specific evidence

- **Reading** Council’s culture team places a key focus on the creation of strong town-wide evidence bases for the work of the cultural sector, building on the evidence of the impact of Great Place and follow-on projects. Monitoring and evaluation is “*embedded in everything we do now*”, leading to the development of a joint evaluation framework which brings together frameworks from various projects into one overarching framework for the cultural sector. A key aim of this is to make the evidence “*more accessible to a variety of people*”, allowing

the team to better evidence impact when talking to others, and to create “*better joined impact*”. The interviewees highlighted the importance of local evidence in making the case to other teams:

- “ It is a much easier argument to have, if you can point to a local example. That goes for Council colleagues and elected members. When we talk to public health, to be able to show them the evidence, it’s an easier conversation.
- **Gloucester** as part of Great Place undertook an analysis of local cultural venues, in order to inform future investment decisions. This evidenced that they did not at that time need a new venue, but that investment was required in existing venues. As a legacy of this work, the Culture Trust is now as part of its NPO programme planning a more detailed audit of the city’s venues to gain a better understanding of the city’s existing and potential culture and heritage venues; “*what we do have and what could be improved*”.
- **Hereford’s** delivery lead felt that while they had not used Great Place to create new evidence, the programme had been useful in highlighting existing evidence gaps “*that need more [research] work*” (e.g., on local volunteering skills or culture and health); and expressed an ambition to deliver some of this. They are now in conversation with a number of universities to “*look at if we can partner on research initiatives, because it is hugely important.*”

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<sup>9</sup> See partners listed on p.48

## Involvement in national evidence gathering and conversations

- **Reading**'s culture team along with their Great Place core partners responded to a [parliamentary call for evidence](#) for 'cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda', which "*drew heavily*" on evidence submitted by Reading. They also submitted a case study to the Local Government Association's 2022 [commission on culture and local government](#).
- **Greater Manchester**'s Great Place delivery lead, now the lead for creative health, sits on several national panels and has worked with a number of national partners. This has for example included collaboration with the National Academy for Social Prescribing "*who are aware of what is going on in Greater Manchester and interested in collaboration*", and involvement with the [National Centre for Creative Health's](#) programmes.
- The delivery lead at **Northern Heartlands** reported that they have had little time to engage in strategic-level work including evidence gathering and knowledge exchange since the end of Great Place due to a lack of overhead funding and time being taken to deliver funded projects. However, they had worked with a national network of artists and planners and the Town and Planning Association during Great Place and are keen to pick up "*those strategic ambitious projects that came out of Great Place*" again. The hope is that new funding received through the NPO status and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation will free up the delivery lead's time to undertake more such work going forwards, joining national conversations to contribute to "*translating [place-based work] into decision-making and policy*".
- **Craven's** The Fold and Folded Zine projects were selected as case studies in 2022 by the Northern Culture Network when they met with Lord Mendoza to discuss culture and investment in culture in the North. Out of 50 submitted case studies, they were then included in a

selection of eight case studies in a final presentation alongside the National Ballet, the Tetley and the Great North Museum. The GPLD case studies were particularly chosen to represent skills, young people and place in the North.

### 5.1.7 Lasting sector influence across government and cross-sector stakeholders: shape and impact of continued sector influence

#### Barnsley & Rotherham

According to the Great Place delivery lead in Barnsley Council's culture team, Great Place gave them a "*seat at the table, a much higher profile, [...] it had a big impact on getting culture on the agenda for the city region*" thanks to "*helping us show what culture can do for key LA themes such as economy, health, anti-social behaviour*" – a situation that did not previously exist.

In an example of this increased prominence and perceived role of culture, the new city region mayor who came in subsequent to Great Place mentioned arts, culture and heritage as key priorities in his open letter upon appointment, with "*evidence that this is directly linked to the report [on the value of the cultural sector to the city region's economy, commissioned during Great Place], the conversations and lobbying that took part during Great Place*". It has also led to the permanent appointment of an Officer of Culture for the city region, with whom Barnsley Council's culture team work closely together. The culture team's business unit has moreover been renamed as a result of the report, from 'Culture, housing and regeneration' to the more specific 'Culture and regeneration', a sign, according to the interviewee, that "*culture has been put right up there*".

The business unit now sits on the Council's strategy and health and wellbeing board, are invited into discussions on local capital development programmes and have been asked to look at the level of

cultural activity across different communities within the Council boundaries. It was also recently contacted by the department responsible for public infrastructure, interested in developing approaches to building public art and creativity into new projects (e.g., bridge building) from the start. The interviewee saw this as an example of Great Place activity *“having driven those sorts of conversations”*.

The interviewee felt that Great Place also to some degree informed the development of a number of subsequent major funding applications:

- Whilst unsuccessful, the Council’s application for Levelling Up funding to develop the Elsecar Heritage site built strongly on activities during Great Place.
- The interviewee’s manager is the main lead for the Council’s Shared Prosperity Fund, with the interviewee feeding into the proposal, which focuses on town centre events and Barnsley’s development as a visitor destination, with *“a lot of that relating back to conversations with city regions that happened as part of the economic reporting done during Great Place”*.
- The Towns Fund grant to Goldthorpe has a big cultural element to it, and the interviewee is working with the people delivering it. Whilst there is no direct link with Great Place, it was felt that Great Place may have had some influence in creating a *“light bulb moment with regard to the value of culture – it showed the possibilities”*.
- Some activities trialled during Great Place are now being taken forward through the local High Street Heritage Action Zones (in Barnsley, Rotherham also received a grant), as *“learning has remained in the service”*.

### Greater Manchester

With its focus on creative health and creative ageing, activity that took place during and since Great Place has led not only to a wide range of

networks and projects, but also to continued support of the subject *“right at the top of our health system and political system”*.

The last six months of the Great Place programme were focused on looking in particular at creative health and social prescribing, resulting in the report [A Social Glue](#), which reviewed the state of the creative health sector of Greater Manchester, and in starting to think about the development of a [Greater Manchester Creative Health Strategy](#). This led to the programme lead being asked to stay on leading on creative health, seconded from the culture team to the Integrated Care System (ICS). In parallel, she was asked to lead on one of the mayor’s ‘live well’ commitments to expand social prescribing, resulting in the inclusion of culture and creativity as a recognised key element to *“living happy and healthy lives”*. This signals support at mayoral level, with *“the mayor starting to talk about creative health”*. Among the leaders of the local authorities, support varies; however, both the elected lead for health (the Mayor of Salford) and the elected lead for culture are *“really behind it, they get it and will advocate for it”*.

Going forward, the interviewee’s position has been secured as full time Greater Manchester lead for creative health from April 2023, based in the ICS rather than the GMCA culture team; with separate funding to cover her previous part time role for ‘live well’. According to the interviewee, the fact that she is now based in the ICS is a key sign of the increasing value seen in creative health; and an important step along the way of building up creative health in Greater Manchester:

“ I’m in health, rather than culture knocking on the health door. I had to get there first, and that is what Great Place enabled us to do – it created relationships of trust. It takes a while to create relationships and mechanisms to work together and dismantle some of the narratives. At the beginning, I was employed by the GMCA culture team, then moved to health

in the last six months [of Great Place]. I started talking, explained the processes, started some social prescribing work for children and young people, so then got seconded to look at creative health from the health point of view. Now I'm there full time.

In addition, with some further Arts Council England funding, the Creative Health Strategy was launched; this is owned by NHS Greater Manchester, rather than the Combined Authority, and was launched by the Chair of the integrated care board, *“a big win for us”*. This highlights *“a commitment to becoming the first creative health city region, [...] and is the result of the creative health strand of Great Place Greater Manchester”*. NHS Greater Manchester are also now acting as the clinical sponsors of the ongoing Creative Health Network.

Since Great Place, further funding was secured from the AHRC to fund a research project around community assets, with another application currently in the pipeline to undertake research to understand the economic impact of the local creative health offer.

The university meanwhile is putting forward funding to develop a creative health research centre. Key to moving forwards will be understanding *“where the funding comes from”* for creative health activity. As part of that, work is ongoing to help filter the approach down to individual practices and create better relationships between the cultural and voluntary sector: *“it will have an impact on people’s lives, but it will take a while. It is a long-term ambition”*. Greater Manchester is also receiving a Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling UP grant, for both of which the combined authority culture department led on the cultural aspects. However, initial focus lies mostly on the creative and night-time economy and capital developments, and so they are not immediately connected to the Great Place activity in Greater Manchester.

In the meantime, the work in Greater Manchester is also garnering significant external interest. The creative health lead is working in partnership with national organisations such as the National Centre for Creative Health and the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) as well as other city regions, particularly London. NASP are in discussions with Greater Manchester around investment in their work with children and young people. Interest is also high with regard to the Creative Health Strategy, which was published in November 2023, and Greater Manchester is leading on the development of an international network of creative health city-regions.

**Figure 13 The Greater Manchester Creative Health Strategy**



Credit: NHS Greater Manchester (2023)

### Craven

In Craven, a key sign of the recognition of the value of the work undertaken during Great Place lies in the ongoing existence of Great Place Lakes and Dales as a brand and support structure. Since the end of Great Place, the GPLD team (programme lead and programme

officer) have continued to be employed by Craven District Council, with ongoing support from the project partners South Lakeland District Council and the two national parks, all of whom are *“keen to continue”*. Indicatively, the partners agreed to maintain *“the vision of looking strategically”* at GPLD’s work to support creative careers and young voices locally, continue to meet regularly and provided match funding to support an Arts Council England funded project, Nurturing Creativity.

The GPLD lead feels that this commitment stems from the Councils recognising the working model, and the confidence it is engendering in young people: *“the Councils know that we need more young people, GPLD is here to influence young people living and working here. [...] GPLD has helped show that culture and creativity are an attractor”*. In achieving this, GPLD provided *“a cohesive approach [which was] not there before”*.

The area is also receiving funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund, which will provide funding to some projects initiated by GPLD, with input provided on key sections by the GPLD lead. Similar activity was also included in the areas Levelling UP application; however, this was not successful.

Big changes are now happening with a re-structuring of the Councils through local government transformation, with the two Councils moving into separate combined authorities (North Yorkshire Council and Westmorland and Furness Council). Whilst this poses significant challenges particularly in the context of governance, it also opens up opportunities with new rural communities and creative industries. The partners are all keen not to lose what has been built up. A brand exit strategy has been developed to aid the transition, and the GPLD team are currently working based on a one-year interim plans, with current meetings taking place to discuss how the partners will work together (and fund the activity) going forwards.

The GPLD lead is confident *that “the 10-year vision will happen, but the how will be different”*. Highlighting the value partners see in GPLD’s work, the ambition among all is to continue GPLD’s work, with the team employed by North Yorkshire Council. Ultimately, the aspiration is that GPLD’s work will be rolled out across Yorkshire and Cumbria eventually (while a known brand by now, this may require GPLD to be re-named); however, while *“the opportunity to extend is there, we have to be careful not to spread ourselves too thin”*.

### Hereford

In a sign of the stronger influence of the cultural sector in Hereford, the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership which delivered Great Place has continued to strive, now in the shape of an Arts Council England Cultural Compact. Through this partnership, and the variety of joint projects that happened during and since Great Place, Herefordshire Council, the Partnership and Rural Media have now developed a strong working relationship.

The Council’s commitment is seen not only in its ongoing involvement in the Partnership, but in a variety of ways, pointing to an overall raised role of the cultural sector locally. The interviewee felt that *“the value of culture is being talked about very differently in high level meetings. The Cultural Strategy has been cited left, right and centre. When Great Place started, it was a bit like banging on the door, shouting into the wind – that has shifted a lot”*. The cultural sector is now actively invited to engage in conversations.

This for example includes an ongoing working group to consider the future of Hereford’s Town Hall and Rural Media’s involvement in the *“strategies and ambitions for the county’s museum service”* (including discussions around the future of the ‘Viking hoard’ with the Council’s head of museums). Other Council departments are also approaching the partners for advice – this has included communication with the community directorate and adult social care to inform local ‘Talk



Community' hubs, as well as with the economic department, who have involved the partners in establishing a local 'big economic plan', for which the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership members have been invited to join the board of.

“ This didn't exist before Great Place, the Compact is asked for advice and involved in designing and shaping county-wide bids. So major sustained cultural projects [such as those funded by Great Place] just shifted the pendulum towards culture being seen as a key part of overall economic plans.

Indicatively, the Partnership has also been involved in shaping some major grant applications for the region. This includes playing a key part in informing Herefordshire's UK Shared Prosperity Fund application and subsequent activity plan for the SPF spend on cultural activity, including grant schemes; and the delivery of the £7m Levelling Up grant and its contribution to the local cultural sector: *“we went back to Great Place and some of the approaches, management admin of the scheme, to look at how we could work more closely with the council now, drawing on Great Place – the Local Authority highlighted in interest in the delegated grants programme”*. Rural Media also now sits on the board of the local Towns Fund and was chair of the Towns Fund town investment plan; the organisation has a capital work envelope within the fund.

While the Council is not investing financially in the partnership, the interviewee saw the overall direction as a *“big shift”*, exemplified both by the increased involvement of the cultural sector in the strategic regional development, as well as in investment decisions the Council has been making. When Great Place started, all cultural funding had been removed – now, the Council is heavily investing in reviving the museum and library service, with the former being redeveloped and the latter moving onto a new site: *“I think the drip-drip of ‘this is the value of*

*culture to our community, our wellbeing’ galvanized this vocal, public shift in how the county talks about its cultural assets”*.

## Gloucester

Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) reported an overall good relationship with the City Councils cultural service but felt that *“lots of work can be done with regard to advocating for culture across other Council departments, so that they can realise the value of culture in regeneration”*. The interviewee felt that while Great Place enabled them to identify relevant policy areas, they had not been able to influence that policy yet, which they believe has the potential to unlock Council funds. There was a sense that other similar culture trusts are getting more financial support from their Councils. At present, financial support to GCT by the Council is limited to the in-kind support provided in the shape of a 20-year pepper corn lease for the building that houses Jolt.

However, there is a sense that Great Place successfully raised the city's and the Council's aspirations for culture: *“they expect more culture, and more from it”*, but *“it is still see it as nice to have rather than a place making tool”*. This is reflected to some extent in the 'cultural focus' of major grant applications since Great Place. Gloucester received a High Street Heritage Action Zone grant, which *has “got a cultural bolt on it – we made sure there was cultural offer in there”*, which Gloucester Culture Trust is administering. Moreover, the Council put in an unsuccessful bid to Levelling Up Round 2, which focused on the conversion of a disused shopping centre into a space for cultural and leisure activity, with key involvement in the bid by the Reef Group CEO (one of Gloucester Culture Trust's trustees).

## 5.2 What has happened since: the counterfactual projects

The following two areas put in unsuccessful applications to the Great Place programme. The short case studies below consider the impact of applying to but not receiving funding through Great Place in the longer run and highlight how the areas were able to drive on some of the plans expressed in the Great Place programme through other means.

### 5.2.1 North Somerset

Since the Great Place application was developed, North Somerset Council's chief executive has changed, contributing to significant change at the Council: *"arts and heritage are now a strong element and foundation of our corporate ethos and identity – people now are more positive that we can use arts and heritage to attract wider funding to help support wider economic regeneration. From our point of view that is a big change – understanding that arts, heritage and culture can be as much an economic driver as other sectors"*. As a result, *"you can see the change [over the last five to six years] in terms of levels of engagement and who sits at the table"*.

This change, according to the interviewee, has come from all the work that was done subsequent to the Great Place application, rather than as a direct consequence of going through the application process. Nevertheless, the interviewee felt that *"doing the Great Place application was an early part of elected Council members seeing arts and heritage as not just 'nice to haves'"*. Moreover, it provided a platform to start thinking about how they wanted to develop existing assets for the future: *"It was a good way of enabling us to think about the different strands we wanted to take forward, which we wanted to drop, what had already been achieved"*. The interviewee also suggested that going through the process may have improved the Council's skills in producing *"the right*

*sort of bid now – in 2017, it was still slightly loose. We would be tighter, more specific now."*

Not gaining the Great Place funding essentially meant that *"we were not able to do what we had intended to do"*. Instead, the team focused on developing the Council's profile and their work with organisations such as NHLF and Historic England. Elements included in the Great Place application were separated out, then developed in more detail as individual strands, with individual fundraising and implementation approaches. Once successful, the strands were brought back together again and merged with the emerging Western Placemaking Strategy. It was *"a massive amount of work, with few people"*. Placemaking strategies are now also in development for other settlements, alongside the current development of a new Arts and Heritage Strategy.

Activities undertaken as part of this work have for example included arts and health projects funded via Heritage Action Zone funding, which have led to the establishment of an annual Health Heritage Day. The Council has also strongly collaborated with, connected and supported local cultural organisations, *"helping them to grow and develop; they can now take some stuff on themselves, can fundraise more themselves – they need us less, this frees us up to focus on other stuff"*. This includes Culture Weston, which has transitioned from a small community arts group into an Arts Council NPO in recent years and was part of the Heritage Action Zone activities.

Fundamentally, it was felt that much of what has happened since could have been achieved a few years earlier if the Great Place funding had been received: *"what it would have meant is achieving what we achieved earlier, that's the main difference. Getting different ways of working engrained, perceptions etc, takes time and patience. We would have had a few more years to imbed all that stuff, but we feel that we have done the best we could."*

## 5.2.2 Salford

The interviewee felt that it was *“quite tricky to unpick the impact or non-impact of the fact we didn’t get Great Place”* – not least due to the complicating patterns of the Covid pandemic and worsening funding landscape. However, she confirmed that the work to develop the application contributed to the development of a strong local partnership, which subsequently led to the launch of a new local Culture, Creative and Place Strategy and fundraising activities.

The partnership was set up immediately prior to the Great Place application on the back of feedback from Arts Council England – previously there was no city-wide partnership approach. It was set up *“to become ready to step into the space and develop bids when the funding environment moved”*. Great Place was the first major bid the partnership worked on jointly and it *“galvanised the partnership and helped scope out strategic partnerships – it helped form the thinking of the partnerships at an early stage”*. Today, the partnership is still in pace and *“as strong as it ever was”*. It has continued with the same anchor institutions – Council, university, The Lowry, a local commercial developer and the broader arts ecology – with the elected city mayor acting as chair. The major chairs partnership meetings, also attended by a number of other Council executives, allowing the partnership to become *“a vehicle for broader conversations”*: *“if culture is sitting at the table with various drivers of policy, then there is opportunity for things to flourish and develop”*. Salford now works towards eight priorities (The Great 8), one of which is Place, which features culture strongly.

Alongside the ongoing partnership, the interviewee felt that the *“ability to think strategically around the bid galvanised the Local Authority to make commitments”*. This has included the Culture, Creative and Place Strategy as well as continued funding for a Head of Partnership post, and recently signing off on a shared permanent post for Culture Director, funded by the Local Authority but based at The Lowry. The remit of this

post will be to lead cultural work on behalf of the city, which the interviewee felt will help to address occasional *“disconnects between political will and making things happen”*.

A number of successful activities have taken place, supported by the partnership. This includes a new biennial free weekend festival, instigated by local landowner and developer Peel and also supported by the Local Authority. The interviewee felt that this was a *“sign of maturity of the value of cultural activity recognised by partners like Peel, who are wholly commercial”*. Other project-based work has also taken place, including projects supported by Arts Council England, with an application to Arts Council in the pipeline for a partnership bid. The partnership was also instrumental in creating a local LCEP and supported the development of a Youth Performance Partnership bid to Arts Council, implemented by the LCEP, which has been *“incredibly successful”*.

Overall, while the partnership has been highly successful and commitment to the Strategy is ongoing and has led to a number of successful activities, the interviewee felt that the move from strategy to delivery was difficult: *“implementation and operation has been slower, partly because securing funding has been really challenging”*. Progress has been slower than hoped, but this was *“not just due to the failure of Great Place, there were other factors, too”*. Great Place funding would have *“created acceleration – by the time Covid hit we would have been further along”*.

“ I think that working on the Great Place bid galvanised us in such a way that not all was lost and much was gained in terms of partnership and collaboration. We were able to create the Strategy, we are still here. So I have to say that the bid was instrumental, but we would have progressed further had we been further in terms of delivering on the strategy and the Great 8 [by the time Covid hit].

## 5.3 Key funding drawn to areas following Great Place

The following table lists major grants that have been attracted to the Great Place areas following the end of the programme. While it is noticeable that many have a cultural element to them (see orange highlights), it is not always possible to draw a line between Great Place activity and the projects funded by these grants. In some cases, Great Place delivery leads were involved in the development of bids, see Section 2.5.2 for more detail on where this was the case for individual areas. The below includes successful bids only, where we are aware of involvement in unsuccessful bids, this is included in Section 2.5.2.

**Figure 14 Key funding drawn to areas following Great Place**

Great Place area & lead delivery organisation	Arts Council priority place/ Levelling Up for Culture place	Levelling Up Round 1 (announced 2020)	Levelling Up Round 2 (announced January 2023)	Towns Fund	Future High Streets Fund	High Street Heritage Action Zone
<b>Gloucester / Gloucester Culture Trust</b>	Priority Place: Yes Levelling Up for Culture Place: Yes	Gloucester City Council: £20m to “transform perceptions of city centre”, through: — New digital innovation hub — 4-star hotel — Higher Education courses located in city centre through University of Gloucestershire  Gloucestershire County Council: £12.8m for transport and cycle routes, including in Gloucester	No value	No value	No value	Gloucester City Council: £1.9m for Gloucester Cathedral Quarter “investing in historic buildings; converting vacant upper floors for new uses; support for businesses in historic properties; improved streetscape; cultural activities, from community archaeology to performing arts; attractive evening and night-time offer”

Great Place area & lead delivery organisation	Arts Council priority place/ Levelling Up for Culture place	Levelling Up Round 1 (announced 2020)	Levelling Up Round 2 (announced January 2023)	Towns Fund	Future High Streets Fund	High Street Heritage Action Zone
<b>Herefordshire / Rural Media &amp; Cultural Partnership</b>	Priority Place: No Levelling Up for Culture Place: No	<i>No value</i>	Herefordshire Council: £19.9m for transport improvements	Herefordshire Stronger Towns Partnership (including Rural Media): £22.4m for projects that boost skills and learning, the visitor experience and living well locally. Potential projects include <b>new world class museum, community and gallery spaces</b> , accessibility to sports facilities, electric busses, redevelopment of shopping centre into a <b>library, information and cultural hub</b> , etc.”	<i>No value</i>	Leominster High Street Heritage Action Zone: facades, traffic, central square improvements to enhance area’s vibrancy
<b>East Kent (Folkestone, Ramsgate, Canterbury, Dover) / Creative Folkestone</b>	Priority Place: Dover Levelling Up for Culture Place: Dover	Thanet District Council: £19.84m for Ramsgate for investment in port infrastructure; <b>creation of new public realm to create a new town square</b> ; new training and employment support structure	Dover District Council: £18.1m to transform brownfield site into education campus, business centre and park (Dover Beacon)  Canterbury City Council: £19m to “revitalise economic and cultural engagement in Canterbury through <b>heritage-led regeneration</b> ”	<i>No value</i>	Dover District Council: £3.2m to enhance <b>Dover’s cultural and creative offer</b> and better connect High street and waterfront  Thanet Council, Ramsgate: £2.7m to provide <b>workspace for creative industries</b> and improve street scene	Ramsgate High Street Heritage Action Zone: transform historic buildings, High Street improvements, <b>re-purposing of buildings for creative and community use</b>

Great Place area & lead delivery organisation	Arts Council priority place/ Levelling Up for Culture place	Levelling Up Round 1 (announced 2020)	Levelling Up Round 2 (announced January 2023)	Towns Fund	Future High Streets Fund	High Street Heritage Action Zone
			Kent County Council: £45m for Dover port access improvements  Folkestone & Hythe District Council: £19.7m for town centre improvements and public realm			
<b>Barnsley &amp; Rotherham / Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council with strong involvement from Rotherham Council</b>	Priority Place: Barnsley, Rotherham No Levelling Up for Culture Place: Barnsley, Rotherham	<i>No value</i>	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council: £10.2m for Barnsley Futures for new outdoor activity park, revamped youth centre, new music facility for young people, development of Barnsley Civic arts centre	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council: £23.1m to Goldthorpe, Thurnscoe and Bolton upon Dearne for road improvements; local park development; development of cultural hub; refurb of Dearne Playhouse; new space for community activity	<i>No value</i>	Barnsley High Street Heritage Action Zone: revitalising historic Eldon Street including reinstatement of historic entrance to Barnsley Civic Theatre
<b>Reading / Reading Borough Council</b>	Priority Place: No No Levelling Up for Culture Place: No	<i>No value</i>	Reading Borough Council: £19.2m for improvement of Hexagon Theatre and creation of new Central Library	<i>No value</i>	<i>No value</i>	Up to £700,000 through HSHAZ, matched by Reading Borough Council, taking place in three conservation areas to improve public realm, engage communities and provide a cultural programme creating

Great Place area & lead delivery organisation	Arts Council priority place/ Levelling Up for Culture place	Levelling Up Round 1 (announced 2020)	Levelling Up Round 2 (announced January 2023)	Towns Fund	Future High Streets Fund	High Street Heritage Action Zone
<b>Craven / Craven District Council, with strong involvement from South Lakeland District Council</b>	Priority Place: No Levelling Up for Culture Place: No	<i>No value</i>	<i>No value</i>	<i>No value</i>	<i>No value</i>	opportunities with local artists and practitioners  Skipton High Street Heritage Action Zone: new uses for empty buildings, creation of public spaces for cultural activities, development of youth markets and a cultural programme and festival led by GPLD.
<b>Greater Manchester / Greater Manchester Combined Authority</b>	Priority Place: No Levelling Up for Culture Place: No	Manchester City Council: £19.8m to transform buildings and railway arches into spaces for the tech and creative industries	Trafford Borough Council: £18.3m for redevelopment of Partington Sports Village	<i>No value</i>	Multiple to different areas within the region including Rochdale, Stretford, Wigan, Farnworth, Stockport	High Street Heritage Action Zones in Stalybridge, Tyldesley, Wigan
<b>Northern Heartlands</b>	Priority Place: County Durham Levelling Up for Culture Place: County Durham	Durham County Council: £20m to develop heritage railway line	North East Combined Authority: £19.6m for transport decarbonisation	Durham County Council: £33.2m for Bishop Auckland to transform town into world-class heritage visitor destination	Multiple to Bishop Auckland, Stockton	<i>No value</i>

Source: BOP Consulting (2023)

## 5.4 List of interviewees

BOP would like to thank the following interviewees for their time and insight in developing this report.

- Barnsley: Lynn Dunning, Group Leader Heritage and Arts, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Craven: Lindsey Hebden, Programme Manager, Great Place Lakes & Dales
- East Kent: Fiona Kingsman, Deputy Chief Executive, Creative Folkestone
- Gloucester: James Garrod, Interim CEO, Gloucester Culture Trust
- Greater Manchester: Julie McCarthy, Strategic Lead: Live Well and Creative Health, Greater Manchester Integrated Care
- Hereford: Nic Millington, Chief Executive and Lauren Rogers, Development Producer and Project Manager, Rural Media
- Northern Heartlands: Jill Cole, Director, Northern Heartlands
- Reading: Christelle Beaupoux, Culture and Heritage Manager and Donna Pentelow, Assistant Director for Culture, Reading Borough Council
- Salford: Julia Fawcett, Director, The Lowry
- North Somerset: Christine Ward, North Somerset Council



## 5.5 Findings of the Year 1-3 evaluation

The summary of findings from the final Great Place programme evaluation year 1-3 was structured based on the three overarching research questions. The full summaries of the evaluation findings against the first two (external) questions can be found below.

### 5.5.1 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 (see Figure 15).

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.

#### Figure 15 Key strategic successes across the Great Place programme

##### Culture as a key part of local strategies

— 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
- 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
- Applications for City of Culture were made by three projects, with one (County Durham) reaching the shortlist
- Involvement in Towns Fund Schemes, with Torbay, Hereford and Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft all supporting bids and delivery
- Involvement in the consultation stage for multiple Local Industrial Strategies across Great Place geographies

#### **Creating lasting networks and institutions**

- 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
- Working with Destination Management Organisations
- Applications for NPO status are being explored by at least one project as part of their legacy planning

#### **Supporting COVID-19 recovery**

- Coordinating COVID-19 response locally and providing joined up support within their community (e.g. distributing personal protective equipment, distributing creative care kits)
- Delivering funds and training for SMEs
- Developing rapid response training programmes to support artists and freelancers
- Involvement in COVID-19 recovery task forces at a local authority level

#### **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.

#### **5.5.2 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, 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.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations of the final Great Place programme evaluation Year 1-3**

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. 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.