

Cabinet

11 October 2023

Culture Reserve

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy & partnerships

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To highlight the activity following County Durham's bid for UK City of Culture 2025.
- 2 To outline a 2024-2026 high level cultural development programme and associated funding sources.

Executive summary

- 3 Durham is committed to culture-led regeneration and culture plays a vital role in our visitor economy and our wider inclusive economy.
- 4 The council established a new culture reserve of £2 million following County Durham's bid to become UK City of Culture 2025
- 5 This reserve will leverage a substantial amount of match funding, anticipated to be at least double its value, supporting an ambitious programme for the county, with regional, national and international impact
- 6 The UK City of Culture project is led by the UK Government through the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). The title of UK City of

Culture is awarded every four years following a competitive bidding process.

- 7 New guidance was issued in May 2021 to allow for wider geographies to bid for UK City of Culture status, making County Durham eligible.
- 8 A partnership of Durham County Council, Durham University and Culture Durham Partnership came together to develop a bid, based on distinctive cultural assets and attributes and ambitious plans to support economic and community development through culture and creativity.
- 9 From an unprecedented field of 21 initial bidders, County Durham was announced on the final shortlist of four in April 2022 along with Bradford, Wrexham and Southampton. Bradford was announced as the winner by the then Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries on 31 May 2022.
- 10 The bidding process developed a strong evidence base, and an ambitious outcome-driven cultural programme co-produced by local people; as well as a marketing campaign and PR opportunities which provided £8million of value.
- 11 The bid process also built significant momentum and support for culture and creativity in the county, recognising it as a source of intense local pride, a driver for economic growth and community development as well as a means to promote the county nationally and internationally.
- 12 A grant of £125,000 was provided by DCMS in September 2022 to the bidding partnerships in the 3 losing cities.
- 13 Between September 2022 and March 2023 activities took place to further develop key project ideas originally developed for the bid, along with activities to support the embedding of increased ambition within the cultural infrastructure of the county.
- 14 At the same time the evidence base and key features of the bid were embedded in County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy, ensuring a long-term strategic legacy that directly connects culture to economic and community growth.
- 15 These two strands of work will intersect in a proposed Culture County programme to run from 2024-2026, with key highlights taking place in 2025. It will be designed to offer a combination of extraordinary events, deep community engagement, education and skills development, key infrastructure development and embedded research and evaluation.
- 16 The additional programme will connect to and enhance existing events such as Lumiere, and support the resilience of the wider current and

planned capital infrastructure, including The Story and the DLI Museum and Art Gallery

- 17 The cultural reserve stands at £2 million and successful delivery of the programme requires allocation of this reserve.
- 18 The reserve will help leverage further funding and applications have been submitted to or are being prepared for Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. A wider fundraising strategy is in place, including trusts and foundations and the private sector.
- 19 The resulting programme will also support and enhance the existing infrastructure of events and venues beyond DCC and support the visitor and creative economy in the county and the wider region
- 20 An associated marketing campaign will significantly raise the profile of County Durham, its cultural ambitions and its commitment to culture-led regeneration.
- 21 The cultural programme will be managed and monitored within the council, and an advisory governance structure including external partners will support its delivery.

Recommendation(s)

- 22 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) note the progress of the bid and subsequent activity;
 - (b) approve the use of the £2m culture reserve to contribute to the programme set out in paragraphs 55-66;
 - (c) delegate authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy & Growth in consultation with the portfolio holder for Economy & Partnerships to approve the detailed programme in respect of the councils funding
 - (d) receive a final evaluation report following the conclusion of the programme in 2026/27.

Background

- 23 UK City of Culture is a designation awarded to a UK city every four years, through a competition, administered by the government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).
- 22 The competition for the 2025 title was announced in summer 2021 and for the first time, wider geographies were able to apply. This extension of the criteria along with a building evidence base on winning cities and an understanding of the benefits of entering the competition, meant that a record number of 21 places submitted bids.
- 23 A consortium of the Culture Durham Partnership, Durham University and the council came together to develop a bid that would be evidence-based, authentic and compelling.
- 24 The bid was based around 3 themes and 3 step changes, using a narrative that took the Durham Miners motto as its title and starting point 'The Past we inherit the Future we Build'.
- 25 The quality and authenticity of the bid was testament to the substantial engagement with local communities, business and education as well as cultural organisations and artists locally, nationally and internationally.
- 26 This quality was borne out by the feedback from the expert judging panel which stated: *You presented a positive brand that made excellent use of your cultural assets and persuaded the Panel that cultural placemaking could have a county-wide impact. Your ability to centre the county in your bid and marketing campaign impressed, as did your development of local Place Labs. The city, of course, has a world-class offer, but it was agreed that this did not unduly dominate your bid. You responded well to the Panel's previous feedback on making more of the potential of the whole county's natural, built and cultural landscape. The promotion of your mining heritage, which has global resonance, moved the Panel. The narrative of your bid was authentic and your programme was one of the most creative.*
- 27 County Durham's bid achieved the remarkable success of making the final shortlist of four; along with Bradford, Southampton and Wrexham.
- 28 The 2025 holder Bradford was announced as the UK City of Culture 2025 on 31 May 2022 live on BBC's *The One Show*.
- 29 In submitting the bid for City of Culture status, the Council needed to demonstrate a commitment to match funding and making significant investment in culture related activities. To support the bid, it was proposed that a city of culture reserve of £5 million would be

established in order to make provision for Council contribution to the programme.

- 30 Following the outcome of the bidding process and as part of the review of Earmarked Reserves undertaken and agreed last year as part of the development of MTFP13, a £2 million reserve has been retained for investment in a DCC funded cultural programme. This funding, together with any additional grants and contributions from outside bodies that will form the budget to meet the costs of the proposed programme
- 31 In line with the councils commitment to culture-led regeneration the bid and its key strategies are now embedded in the county's Inclusive economic strategy (IES) ensuring a firm basis for policy alignment.

Runners Up Process

- 32 City of Culture runners up were provided with a grant of £125,000 that should be spent on realising elements of the bid, developing the aims and outcomes identified in the bidding process and supporting the development of cultural strategy.
- 33 Following discussion with the bidding partners, it was agreed to take forward 4 areas of the bid for further development:
 - (a) Place Labs: commission feasibility for a network of neighbourhood or high street spaces for communities to lead place-shaping activity using culture and creativity as tools, developing people, place and the local cultural and creative infrastructure as a result.
 - (b) Creative Programme: commission further development on key projects identified in the original list of 15 featured in the bid.
 - (c) Community Engagement: build on and extend the Culture Club, a group of community cultural champions and local advocates which developed as a result of the bid.
 - (d) Research and Evaluation: further develop the proposed Durham Evaluation and Insights Hub, for practice evaluation for the region and advancing the science of evaluation for the creative and cultural sector nationally and internationally.
- 34 A business case was submitted to DCMS in July 2022 and approved in September 2022, with a requirement for spend by end of March 2023.
- 35 A working group from across the partnership oversaw the progress of the programme set out in the business plan and concluded in March as planned.

- 36 A brochure detailing the outcome of a community sharing session is attached at appendix 2.
- 37 The creative programme and festival for the bicentenary of the railways in 2025 has been subject to ongoing development over the same time period, although this sat outside of the DCMS grant-funded activity.

Marketing and branding

- 38 Following the announcement of the UK City of Culture 2025 winner, it was necessary to move away from Durham 2025 messaging, whilst capturing the momentum and raised profile achieved through the bid.
- 39 Becoming the only county to ever make the shortlist was identified as an accolade that could help set us apart and became the core element of the new proposition – Durham, The Culture County.
- 40 An evolution rather than a reinvention, The Culture County enables Durham to continue to inspire the culturally-engaged audience captured through the Durham 2025 campaign, and grow it even further.
- 41 With the council's commitment to culture-led regeneration, being the home of the UK's Light Art Biennial, Lumiere, and with significant cultural development on the horizon, this is a statement that can be confidently made by County Durham.
- 42 The Durham 2025 social media channels have been renamed and are now managed by Visit County Durham, with the enhanced web platform soon to be launched as a channel site of thisisdurham.com. This approach ensures that the considerable existing audiences of the This is Durham channels (88,000 social media followers and over 1m annual unique web users) can be reached, whilst also making efficiencies through the use of content and collateral already obtained by VCD's marketing, communications and information team, which lead marketing and communications for the county's UK City of Culture bid.
- 43 Capacity within the team will be boosted further through an initial one-year fixed term position for a marketing executive whose main focus will be on the Culture County and maximising the impact of cultural projects, developments and events for the destination.
- 44 The Culture County proposition is already being woven into destination marketing activity and utilised within the council's festivals and events programme. Going forward, The Culture County will be a sector identifier, utilised by Durham County Council, Visit County Durham and cultural organisations across the county, through 'badging' appropriate developments, venues and events, and incorporating key messages

into marketing and communications activity, to generate an impact greater than the sum of its individual parts.

- 45 The proposition will be further embedded with residents through a rebrand of the cultural and events content on the Durham County Council website and within the resident magazine, Durham County News.

Programme 2024-2026

- 46 Outlined below is a high-level programme plan, identifying the main strands that the culture reserve investment will contribute to over the period 2024-2026, building on the development work progressed through the DCMS grant and supported by marketing and branding activity.
- 47 The creative programme will be timetabled to optimise visitor economy impact and again link closely to the IES, delivering primarily on the promotion and place strands.
- 48 The overall Culture County programme aligns with and will contribute to the culture, creative sport, and tourism theme of the current draft North East devolution deal. The alignment of these key county and regional strategies ensures that the programme is fundamentally connected to the success of the county and the region.
- 49 The programme will connect to the existing cultural ecology in the county, working closely with and some cases directly commissioning, in order that the legacy of the programme is evidenced in a stronger, more resilient and ambitious sector.
- 50 This report deals primarily with the proposed programme that has specific call on the culture reserve, but its important to note the wider infrastructure connectivity during the period.
- 51 Between 2024 and 2026 a number of DCC culture and leisure capital projects and strategic site projects will be open or significantly progressed, including Aykley Heads Innovation District, DLIMAG, and The Story,
- 52 Significant new venue openings and completed developments from public and private sector partners during the programme period Locomotion, The Auckland Project, Raby Estates Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, Redhills Miners Halland Durham County Cricket Club

- 53 The culture county programme will support the use and profile of the current and planned infrastructure, and the amplified marketing campaign will support its initial profile-raising and longer term resilience.
- 54 Working with key stakeholders we will explore opportunities to further maximise options for the programme and its role in amplifying local and regional developments with a focus on the 'spotlight' year of 2025.
- 55 This approach will further support the delivery plans related to the promotion strand of the Inclusive Economic Strategy and wider regional priorities for regeneration through culture.
- 56 The programme is set out at a necessarily high level at this stage as budget certainty is required to progress artist briefs, commissions partnership engagements and supplier contracts. This is in line with sector norms.

Creative Programme:

- 57 Lumiere 2025 – this will be the 9th edition of the event, establishing its status as the UK's Light Art Biennial, showcasing international contemporary artists, new practice and creative exchange.
- 58 S&DR 200 – A Celebration of the bicentenary of the railways, to include major commissions, a special edition of the Bright Ideas Gathering, and additional activity linked and maximising the visitor economy impact across the wider region. This programme will animate and support the infrastructure developments supported by the Levelling Up Fund, including Locomotion's new exhibition space, New Hall, and the new walking and cycling routes along the original 26-mile route. The programme will link to the national celebration, Railway 200
- 59 Finding the Light – a major programme of events, exhibits and experiences that explore what the latest science and technology tells us about the universe we live in – and how art and culture help us to make sense of it. This series of events will bring together Art and Science, helping to animate Durham's growth in the space sector, the expansion of NetPark and the global expertise in this Field in Durham University. Its anticipated that this programme will result in a longer term or regular programme strand in the county.
- 60 An International partnership and residency with Isango, leading performance company that will explore the shared history of mining, its diaspora and its communities

Place Labs

- 61 Feasibility work has been undertaken to establish the model of Place Labs, community-centred cultural place-shaping hubs that formed a key part of the original city of culture bid.
- 62 Pilots have been established to test approaches and the culture county programme will support the rollout of the programme across the county.
- 63 In addition further feasibility work will be undertaken to identify how the programme model can be rolled out beyond County Durham

Research and insights including evaluation

- 64 Durham University will support a dynamic approach to evaluation that continually assess' ongoing projects for maximum socio-economic impact on the county and supports research into the inclusive economic impact of cultural and creative activity

Skills & Education

- 65 A comprehensive creative programme with schools will be developed, building on the findings of the [Durham Commission on Creativity and Education Durham Commission on Creativity and Education | Arts Council England](#)
- 66 The evidence base for the city of culture bid identified skills gaps in the creative and cultural industries and underdeveloped leadership pathways as well as limited opportunities for young people to gain experience and training in those sectors.
- 67 A partnership programme across the creative and cultural sector will create opportunities for skills and training, including work experience, cultural leadership and creative and cultural apprenticeships.

Staffing

- 68 The council manages a substantial cultural infrastructure and where possible the culture county programme will be delivered through existing teams or through partner organisations via a commissioning process.
- 69 However additional capacity will be required to deliver the programme and ensure it's benefits are embedded for the longer term. 4 fixed term roles will be established within the Culture Sport and Tourism team, including Visit County Durham
- Creative Lead
 - Creative Producer/Cultural Policy Co-ordinator

- Place Lab Project Manager
- Marketing Executive

70 Some additional duties will be required within the existing tourism team and a re-evaluation process will be undertaken where appropriate.

Impact

- 71 The original city of culture bid identified significant economic and social impacts, based on expenditure of £41.5 million. The prime driver was growth in the visitor economy which would result in 15.7m more visitors in total, including 4m more overnight and 3.5m more international visitors, £700m more visitor spend and 1,800 more jobs.
- 72 Our core festivals undergo external evaluation to assess their impact. The most recent Lumiere evaluation (2021) showed an economic impact of £3.47 million.
- 73 While the culture county programme is of a different scale to the city of culture, there is good evidence from the ongoing evaluation of our festivals that this programme will bring additional economic benefit to the county, and that additional profile and marketing opportunities will increase the impact beyond the level expected in the current core programme.
- 74 Once the programme is finalised the visitor economy impact will be revised, and our festivals evaluation brief extended to take account of the expanded programme.
- 75 Social and community benefit will be measure through benchmarked survey data and guided by an updated theory of change model.

Match Funding

- 76 Additional funding is required to achieve programme ambitions, alongside the council's annual culture budget and existing culture serves set aside for Lumiere and S&DR 200. Funding applications are in preparation. It's anticipated that match funding of 100% will be achieved to create a minimum programme budget of £4 million.
- 77 If additional resource isn't found, a scaled version of the programme will be presented for approval under the recommended delegation set out in 20c.

Governance

- 78 The original bidding partnership has continued to work closely on The Culture County and wider cultural developments in the county. Strategic culture and creative partnership activity is undertaken under the

auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Durham University and Durham County Council

- 79 A partnership agreement between DCC, Durham University and Culture Durham is required for ACE place partnership fund, and it's anticipated that this grouping and sub groups for key areas such as research and development will maintain an overview function as an advisory board, while an internal DCC project board will undertake the formal project management function, with oversight from the REG major programmes board.
- 80 It's proposed that Place Labs will have additional governance through a steering group, given the wider range of stakeholders involved and the potential roll-out beyond the county. The steering group will report into the project board referenced above.
- 81 The sign off for the final programme in relation to DCC funding will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth, who will consult with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships and Council leader.
- 82 The programme will have oversight from the Regeneration Economy and Growth Major Programmes Board.

Conclusion

- 83 Use of culture reserve as outlined will leverage a minimum of £2 million match.
- 84 The proposed use of the reserve is based on strong evidence, extensive development and strategic alignment with the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy, the draft North East devolution deal and UKSPF, as well as sectoral strategies from partners such as the local cultural education partnership, Durham University and Culture Durham.
- 85 The proposed use of the reserve will provide capacity to leverage or support wider inward investment and growth opportunities, for people and communities as well as place development.

Background papers

- none

Other useful documents

- none

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

N/A

Finance

In submitting the bid for City of Culture status, the Council needed to demonstrate a commitment to match funding and making significant investment in culture related activities. To support the bid it was proposed that a city of culture reserve of £5 million would be established in order to make provision for Council contribution to the programme. Following the outcome of the bidding process and as part of the review of Earmarked Reserves undertaken and agreed last year as part of the development of MTFP13, a £2 million reserve has been retained for investment in a DCC funded cultural programme. This funding, together with any additional grants and contributions from outside bodies that will form the budget to meet the costs of the proposed programme

Costs associated with these schemes will be monitored by the Cultural Services Manager using a new Culture County cost centre and reported as part of the budget monitoring process within the service

Consultation

The proposed high level programme has undergone considerable consultation either as part of the bid or the subsequent research phase

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

N/A

Climate Change

Events will make use of best practice guidance from A Greener Festival and Julies Bicycle

Human Rights

N/A

Crime and Disorder

Text.

Staffing

Additional capacity will be required to deliver the programme and ensure it's benefits are embedded for the longer term. 4 fixed term roles will be established within the Culture Sport and Tourism team.

Any other additional staffing requirements will be covered by partner organisations and/or freelance staff

Accommodation

N/A

Risk

All events will be subject to well-established risk assessment and management procedures

Procurement

N/A at this stage

Appendix 2: Congregate Booklet

Attached as separate document.