

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Cultural Strategy

ISSUED _MAY 2026



What is Culture

Our communities, partners and sector told us that **culture** is:



We can experience culture through: Music, dance, comedy, art, film, theatre, heritage, books, gardening, and many more things.

We often experience culture in: our fantastic museums, galleries and art centres, but it also lives at festivals, agricultural shows, in community centres, in parks and open spaces, by the seaside, in our homes, and lots more places besides.

Our Vision

To create a distinctive region where accessible and inclusive **culture** and *heritage* is at the heart of improving people's lives

Our Aims

We have global ambition, with a local focus.

- We will champion and advocate for, cultural entitlement, to ensure that everyone, irrespective of age, location or personal circumstance, should have the opportunity to create, participate, experience and be inspired by a wide range of creative and cultural activities and spaces.
- We will be ambitious, and use our roles to influence policy, ensuring that creativity thrives in every part of our County and that North Yorkshire is recognised as a leader in rural culture and creative health.

North Yorkshire does not have one cultural story, it has many, and this is what makes us distinct, interesting and innovative.

Our geography covering 3,000 square miles of rural and coastal landscapes does present us with challenges, but it is also what makes us unique.

Surviving and thriving in North Yorkshire depends on collaboration, and this is something the cultural sector has a strong history of. Innovation often comes from sharing ideas, working in partnership, and seeing benefit in working together rather than in competition. This strategy has been developed in consultation with cultural organisations, groups and individuals across North Yorkshire and in this spirit of cultural collaboration, is owned by us all.

Our strategy is deliberately undated. We will come together at an annual symposium to reflect on what has been achieved in the preceding year, and then decide together on changes and developments for the coming year. This will keep us focused and better able to be responsive to the needs of our communities and sector, to be more agile in response to opportunities, and flexible to changes in national context and priorities.

Why Culture is Important

Cultural organisations and the creative industries significantly contribute to our region's local economy, both directly through their business activities, and indirectly through wider impact on the domestic and visitor economy.

The sector is growing at four times that of the national average, employing 2.42 million people across the UK, and contributing £124bn to our economy.

Just as importantly, creative and cultural engagement is essential for the health of individuals and has powerful potential in both preventative healthcare and treatment of health conditions.

Culture also cements the wellbeing of communities – providing joy, growth, inspiration and a sense of belonging.

North Yorkshire benefits from a wide ranging and diverse cultural offer – from world class museums, cutting-edge exhibitions, and innovative theatre to interactive and entertaining festivals, events and opportunities to engage in everyday creativity from village to city.

Culture in North Yorkshire contributes to, and forms an integral part of delivery for a number of other strategic outcomes. The diagram below demonstrates the North Yorkshire Council strategies that work in symbiosis with the Cultural Strategy. This is indicative of how and where the cultural strategy will dovetail and work in cohesion with other key strategies, although is not an exhaustive list.



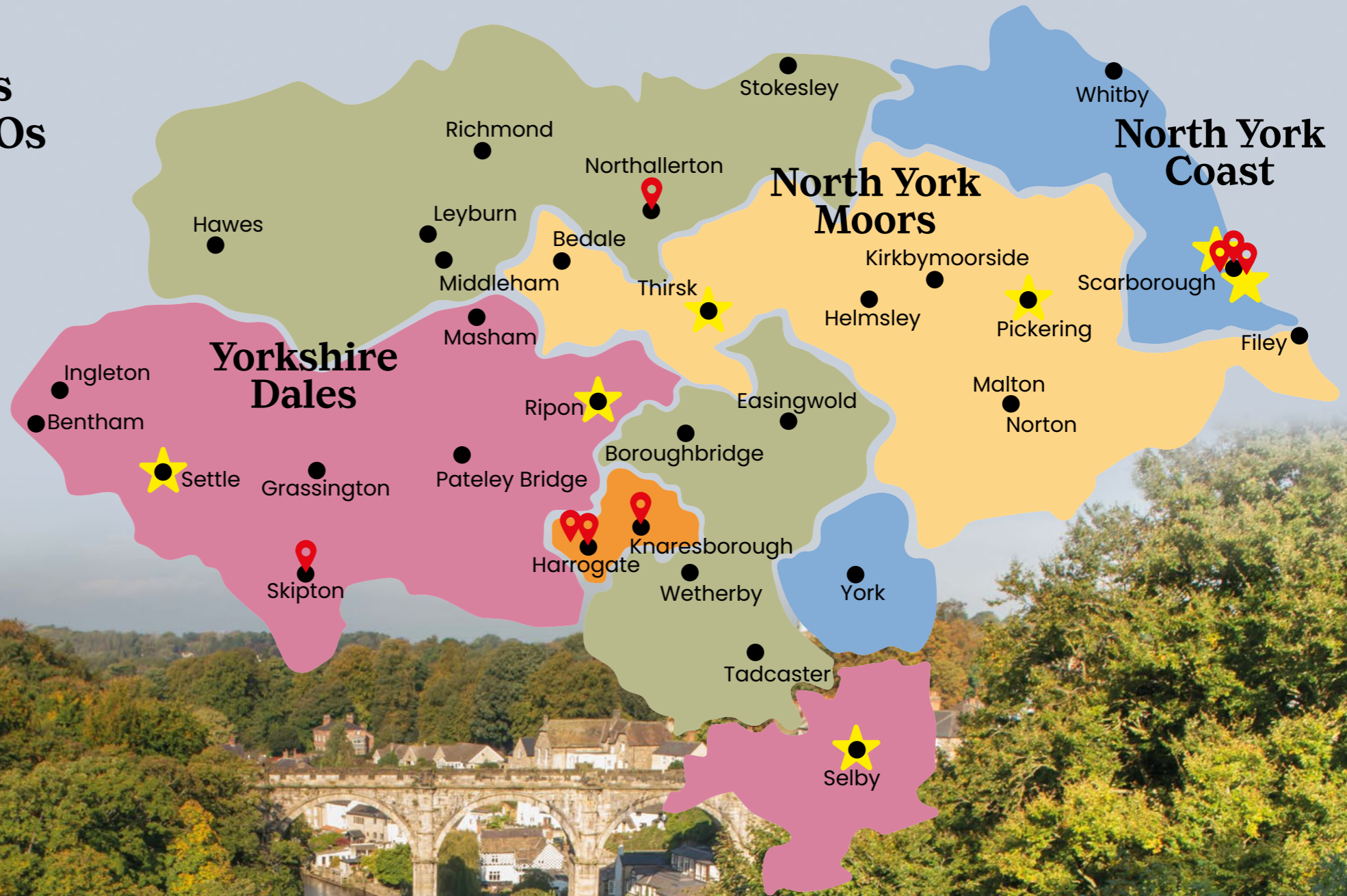
Map of North Yorkshire Council Key Cultural Assets & Arts Council England NPOs

● **Market Towns**

- ★ **NPOs:**
 Settle Stories, Settle
 Ripon Museums Trust, Ripon
 Rural Arts, Thirsk
 Mediale, Selby
 NYMR, Pickering
 Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough
 Crescent Arts, Scarborough

📍 **North Yorkshire Council Cultural and Heritage Venues**

- Skipton Town Hall
 Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate
 Royal Pump Room Museum, Harrogate
 Knaresborough Castle and Courthouse Museum
 Scarborough Art Gallery
 Rotunda Museum, Scarborough
 Woodend Gallery and Studios, Scarborough
 North Yorkshire Archives, Northallerton



NPOs are Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations; arts, culture and heritage organisations that get regular funding from Arts Council England to deliver on nationally important cultural priorities.

National Portfolio Organisations are leaders in their areas, with a collective responsibility to protect and develop our national arts and cultural ecology and will have a key role in supporting delivery of this strategy.

There is a comprehensive digital interactive map of North Yorkshire cultural assets, publicly available at www.culturenorthyorkshire.co.uk

Strategic Priorities



To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to live, work, visit, learn and engage.

Resulting in:

- Increase in accessible space
- Increase in creative & cultural participation
- Increase in participant diversity
- Positive feedback from participants
- Increase in skills, knowledge, experience, enjoyment, creativity, inspiration
- Culture is at the heart of place-shaping and regeneration of market towns and hinterlands across the region.

Embedding culture into city, town and village developments is a shared priority of North Yorkshire and City of York.

We will ensure that culture, arts, heritage and creative health are integral to place-making and reflect the relationship our people have with their places.

Together, and with national bodies, we will work to maximise the value, and ensure the sustainability, of heritage and cultural assets. We commit to increasing our focus on accessibility and inclusion, creating spaces in which everyone feels welcome and can experience culture, heritage and creativity without barriers.

Our work will contribute to the Mayoral Combined Authority's Growth Plan via Key Employment Sector: Visitor Economy, Priority Drivers of Growth: Work, Skills & Health, and Competitive Advantage Sectors: Creative Industries.



To ensure that places, spaces and activities are inclusive and accessible.

Resulting in:

- Increase in accessible spaces in which to create and participate
- Increase in participation and co-creation
- Increase in participant diversity
- Positive feedback from participants
- Increase in skills, knowledge, experience, enjoyment, creativity, inspiration
- Increase in knowledge and understanding of fundamental principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our sector, whilst acknowledging the need for a tailored approach relevant to organisation and/or practice.



Summer Workshops © Matt Cooper

“the creative sector is **growing four times faster** than the UK economy.”



To enable a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.

Resulting in:

- Increase in workforce/volunteers/creative businesses & contributing to government plans to get two million more people into work
- Positive feedback from participants
- Increase in skills, knowledge, experience, enjoyment, creativity and inspiration.

We recognise and embrace the fact that the creative sector is one of the fastest growing economies in the UK, making significant contributions to employment opportunities, export of goods & services, and to tourism.



SOTM © Flinton Photography

Creative and cultural education, skills and sector development is a shared priority of North Yorkshire and City of York.

We will work together across our local authority services, with our creative education networks FORGE & CREATE, within the Combined Authority, and with our sector partners to progress, attract and retain creative talent and a thriving workforce in North Yorkshire.

1 in 14

UK jobs are in the creative industries

2.42 million

employed in 2024

£124bn

contributed to the economy from Jan 2024 – Dec 2024

Around 30% of creative industries jobs are self-employed. In 2024, there were 268,080 creative industries in the UK, an equivalent of 9.84% of all UK businesses.*

We know how important it is to support sector development in North Yorkshire. This starts with access to creative subjects in education, and access to creative and cultural opportunities outside of school for all young people – and continues with routes to employment, support for creative businesses to access training, business development and investment.

Our work will contribute to the Mayoral Combined Authority's Growth Plan via Priority Drivers of Growth: Work, Skills & Health, and Competitive Advantage Sectors: Creative Industries.

*Sources DCMS and Creative Industries Council

Strategic Priorities

CONTINUED

*** To maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region’s cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.**

Resulting in:

- Increase in ‘value’ of cultural assets, by which we mean both non-financial indicators (places used for recreation, learning, engagement, and preservation of local identity), and financial (investment in, and maintenance of assets)
- Increased awareness of cultural offer amongst stakeholders
- Understanding of, and planning for museum & archive sector long-term storage and disposal requirements in North Yorkshire.

*** To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.**

Resulting in:

- New or strengthened partnerships between cultural services & organisations, and health & social care services
- Increased social prescribing of cultural activity
- A bespoke approach to creative health that meets the needs of communities across North Yorkshire.

Transformation of the wellbeing and resilience of our residents and communities is a shared priority of North Yorkshire and City of York.



Gorilla Circus, Sherburn Festival © Kirkpatrick Photography

“Arts, culture and heritage engagement have **tangible, measurable** effects on public health”*

*** To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.**

Resulting in:

- North Yorkshire is recognised as a leader in rural cultural delivery
- Culture & creativity is visible and recognised as an essential component in delivery of economic growth, improvements in health & wellbeing, and progression of education outcomes
- Increase in provision that contributes to other strategic outcomes integral to the success of our region and happiness of our communities
- Increase in collaboration/partnership working
- Increased awareness of cultural offer amongst stakeholders
- Increase in understanding of our environmental impacts and what we can do to mitigate and improve.

* The World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe and its Member States recognise the importance of culture in shaping health and wellbeing throughout the life course. Research undertaken by the Social Biobehavioural Research Group, exploring the relationship between arts and cultural services, and health outcomes, concludes that:

- Arts, culture and heritage engagement have tangible, measurable effects on public health including
- Helping to maintain positive wellbeing
 - Reducing our risk of developing mental health problems
 - Maintaining good cognitive functioning
 - Protecting against age-related physical decline.

*** To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.**

Resulting in:

- Increase in funding accessed
- Increased external investment
- Positive media coverage
- Increased awareness of cultural offer amongst stakeholders.



Hazel Oakes (Nocciola the Drawer)

Creation of a Creative Hub

This has been identified as a key action which will support and enable the delivery of the Strategic Priorities identified above. North Yorkshire Council will facilitate the delivery of the Hub which is a digital platform, supplemented by physical events, and is the main access point for the North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium. It provides:

A shared repository of resources:

- Information, advice and guidance
- Good practice, policies, standards and procedures
- Data collected through mapping, audits and surveys.

Access to:

- Skills, knowledge and experience
- Facilitated partnerships and collaborations
- Training and mentoring.

Support:

- To enable access to funding and resources
- Co-ordinated promotion and marketing
- Advocacy and representation.

Measures of Success

- Increase in collaboration and partnership working
- Increase in funding accessed
- Data collection of – case studies, policies, practice
- Positive feedback from participants
- Positive feedback from sector
- Positive feedback from partners
- Increased awareness of cultural offer amongst stakeholders
- Evidence – both quantitative and qualitative against strategic and aligned priorities – case studies, academic research, evaluation, testimonies.

Success will be achieved through the North Yorkshire Culture & Archives Service working in partnership with individuals and organisations. Delivery will include events, activities and networks on a regional and themed basis. A regional cultural symposium will be held annually to celebrate and share best practice and disseminate information from key strategic partners including funding bodies, as well as to agree the evolving priorities and direction of the cultural strategy.



New York Brass Band, Tadcaster Festival © Kirkpatrick Photography

Delivery of the Strategy

This strategy has been developed in consultation with cultural organisations, groups and individuals across North Yorkshire, in the spirit of cultural collaboration, and is owned by us all.

Progress against objectives has been reviewed at the annual North Yorkshire Cultural Symposium, successes have been celebrated, and adjustments have been made according to participant feedback.

The partnerships developed across sector and the actions delivered by a wide range of organisations are key to the successful delivery of this strategy.

The creation of North Yorkshire Council and the implementation of a single Cultural Service for the County, gives us a great opportunity to build on our current offer, bring partners together, and provide a collaborative way forward to achieve our ambitions to be leaders in provision of excellent quality cultural opportunities in a rural county.

North Yorkshire Council will set out its actions toward the strategic outcomes on an annual basis. For 26/27 these actions are set out in Appendix One.

It is envisaged cultural sector organisations and individuals in the region will use the strategy alongside their organisational and development plans, to identify collaborations, apply for funding, direct their work, and deliver on the priorities set out here.



Craven Museum, Skipton © Hydar Dewachi

Case Studies

A range of case studies have been selected from Cultural Consortium member submissions and from North Yorkshire Council Culture & Archives Service, from partners and collaborators, to demonstrate best practice in cultural delivery.

These case studies are linked to the strategic priorities outlined above and cross a variety of themes/artforms and geographical areas. They form a snapshot of what we currently have and are doing well in North Yorkshire.

Art Happens Here CIC (AHH)

MALTON

Who

AHH CIC is an artist-led organisation supporting community groups and the artist community in Ryedale and the wider North Yorkshire area.

What

AHH Studio Collective is an artist-led initiative with artist studios at its core.

Offering a range of arts-based community programmes, sector development, and networking opportunities for the creative community around Malton and across North Yorkshire. Responding to local feedback, AHH creates opportunities to access creative arts while supporting mental health, wellbeing, and community connections.

Impacts:

- ‘The community at AHH means a great deal to me. The space, the support and the people there have become a real anchor for my creativity and wellbeing’.
- Affordable creative opportunities for Malton and the wider community.
- Championing affordable artist studios for professional artists in Ryedale and North Yorkshire.
- Training, workshops and networking events to reduce rural isolation.
- Greater access to art activities, talks and training to boost cultural capital locally.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to live, work, visit, learn and engage.
- To engage a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.
- To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.
- To ensure cultural engagement is embedded as a health behaviour in the region.

“The space, the support and the people there have become a real anchor for my creativity and wellbeing.”



© Serena Partridge

The Feelgood Collective

SELBY

Who

Feelgood Collective CIO, NowThen! Selby Place Partnership.

What

The Feelgood Collective was a project that gave participants from the Selby community an opportunity to think about how the places they experience and live in can contribute positively to their wellbeing.

To build their awareness we considered three different places around Selby that reflect green, urban and social spaces, exploring them through photography, writing and sound. With the support of three artists and a sound therapist, participants then captured the wellbeing essence of their own unique spaces. The work produced including a final collaborative soundscape was exhibited in three exhibitions, a zine and digital flipbook. The learning and artwork will now help to inspire the development of spaces around the New Selby War Memorial Hospital, building their capacity to be used by visitors, patients, staff and carers to boost their own wellbeing.

Impacts:

- Partnership with local arts charity, mental health charity and the NHS has raised awareness of how place contributes to our wellbeing.
- Participants created a range of highly personal work building their understanding of what aspects of place enhance their wellbeing.
- People across the county have been encouraged to consider and nurture places that contribute positively to their wellbeing.
- Closer relationships between the voluntary sector, the arts and NHS.
- Collaboration across the voluntary sector, the arts and NHS has created a powerful and innovative resource raising awareness of place as an important but underappreciated contributor to positive mental health.

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- To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.
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© Feelgood Collective

Scarborough Studio CIO

SCARBOROUGH

Who
Scarborough Studio CIO

7,500
visitors a year

150+
artists exhibit
each year

What

The Old Parcels Office Artspace (OPO) in Scarborough, is the Yorkshire coast's leading centre for contemporary arts. Run by the Trustees and volunteers of the arts charity Scarborough Studios CIO, it is housed in a Grade II-listed building located at Scarborough Station. The centre provides two large galleries/event spaces and seven artists' studios.

In 2023, Scarborough Studios expanded its operation into the high street, opening two empty shops for artists to use as gallery spaces. A year later, two more empty shops and a disused pub were taken on as part of the charity's strategy to support the development of local artists and to grow an 'Artists' Quarter' in Scarborough's old town. With these new additions, Scarborough Studios now manages five high street gallery spaces and, together with the OPO, provides studios for a total of 24 artists.



18

new studios
created

24

artists share studios

Impacts:

- The Old Parcels Office receives around 7,500 visitors a year.
- Each year, over 150 artists exhibit work at the OPO.
- 18 new studios have been created, shared by 24 artists.
- There are now five gallery spaces in town, providing a wider artistic offering in the town centre.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to live, work, visit, learn and engage.
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Imaginosity

NORTHALLERTON

Who

Mill Hill, Alverton, Applegarth and Romanby Primary Schools in Northallerton work with artist Simon Crook to develop ideas and new creative skills.

What

Established in 2018, at just Mill Hill School initially, Imaginosity is an initiative which develops children's creative thinking and problem solving to support learning, wellbeing, confidence and resilience, and to connect to the wider community and future workplaces.

Alverton School began its Imaginosity journey in September 2023 followed by Applegarth and Romanby Schools joining in September 2024. Mill Hill School has culminated the most recent three academic years with a showcase event, inviting friends, family and the community to attend an event to see the work that they have created.

Impacts:

Imaginosity gives children the opportunity to partake in creative problem solving, working in groups of mixed ages. The skills developed throughout this process can also be applied to any area of the curriculum. Pupils have built confidence and ability while they have been participating in Imaginosity, and Mill Hill School's Ofsted rating has changed from Needs Improvement to Good. Attendance and attainment have significantly improved since Imaginosity began, although other factors may also play a part. A pupil at Mill Hill School has been identified as Gifted and Talented as a direct result of taking part in the Imaginosity project.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to, live, work, visit, learn and engage.
- To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life..



Imaginosity Carnival, Mill Hill Primary School © William Bean

Nature Calling

HOWARDIAN HILLS, NIDDERDALE AND FOREST OF BOWLAND

Who

National Landscapes Association with Forest of Bowland, Nidderdale, and Howardian Hills, Next Door But One, York Dance Space, York Carers Centre, and Chapel FM.

What

Nature Calling is an Arts Council-funded initiative launched by the National Landscapes Association to engage new audiences through the arts, connecting them with National Landscapes in England.

Forest of Bowland led one of six flagship projects, while smaller commissions took place in Nidderdale and the Howardian Hills.

These creative interventions aim to reconnect people with their local landscapes and creative spirit. Projects include **Nature's Caring Call**, where theatre company Next Door But One and York Dance Space co-produced a carers' break for unpaid carers from York Carers Centre in the Howardian Hills.

Another was **New Eyes for Nidderdale**; this vibrant cultural exchange aims to break down barriers to communities accessing the countryside. Artists include asylum seekers, young people and refugees based in both Nidderdale National Landscape and Seacroft, Leeds.

Impacts:

- Increased cultural participation among underrepresented communities.
- Improved wellbeing for unpaid carers through creative engagement.
- Strengthened sense of belonging and connection to local landscapes.
- Fostered intercultural dialogue and inclusion through collaborative arts.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- Ensure that places, spaces and activities are inclusive and accessible.
- Maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region's cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.
- Ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing across North Yorkshire.
- To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.



Nature Calling © Tessa Bunney

Edith's Place at Woodend Creative

SCARBOROUGH

Who

Local Primary and Secondary School students with above average Free School Meal data in the Scarborough area.

What

The curation of a new learning space called Edith's Place in the Woodend site to facilitate alternative provision for students locally. The space completes a wider project called LINE (Learning In New Environments) pioneered by the Learning Team at Scarborough in response to feedback from our teacher network.

The goal was to expand the role of our venues beyond traditional exhibition spaces and school visits to become an active learning environment where students and teachers alike are able to fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum in alternative spaces independently.

Alongside the creation of Edith's Place, other outcomes of the LINE project have included:

- Collaboration with renowned poets and artists over five weeks to produce a 'Celebration of Work' day.
- The development of an outdoor garden space in partnership with a local eco-project group and a mosaic artist.
- The curation of several more loans boxes for KS1/2 and "Travelling Trunks" for KS3 to add to our new "Loans Library" which mobilises collections out into the wider schools community.
- The curation of a new exhibition on "Curiosity and Collection" including a reading space and an accessible handling space.
- Support for our local LCEP with funding for artists to reach into rural schools: CPD for teachers based on specific subjects.

Unique cultural learning activities for Scarborough schools for more than 4,380 local children



Over 1,500 students have engaged with the LINE project so far © Shannon Barker

Impacts:

- Stronger cultural partnership with, and provision for, schools in high deprivation/need areas.
- Routine access for schools to cultural venues to support the curriculum and individuals' needs.
- Collaboration with successful art practitioners, typically inaccessible to students in HD areas.
- Improved engagement with collection resources by students aged 11-16 years.
- Spotlight on oracy as a life skill.
- Improved confidence of teachers and school staff to use venues and resources effectively through CPD.
- Connecting our venues with secondary school libraries via regular and planned outreach resources.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- To enable a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.
- To maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region's cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.

£68,000

arts council investment

1,715

children welcomed

54

workshops

2,217

children engaged with x 31 loan boxes

Thanks to funding from the Arts Council, our Scarborough venues have benefitted from a £68,000 investment into the learning programme during 2025-26 through the Museums & Schools programme. The team have welcomed 1,715 children at 54 workshops on site and engaged with 2,217 children via 31 loans boxes, as well as other special events such as Big Ideas by the Sea and informal family activities in the school holidays.



Woodend Creative, Scarborough © Shannon Barker

Archives Dementia Sessions

**NORTH YORKSHIRE ARCHIVES,
NORTHALLERTON**

Who

North Yorkshire Archives and Dementia Forward.

What

Reminiscence sessions and group visits to the Archives in Northallerton for people living with dementia, facilitated through various Dementia Forward groups.

The Archives host visits for the Dementia Forward Time Out Together groups, for people with young onset dementia, with a behind the scenes tour and themed reminiscence session. Community based Dementia Forward groups such as the Hub Club (a weekly day service) and Memory Café in Northallerton have also benefitted from archive inspired reminiscence sessions.

At the heart of each session are themed resource packs, which have been specifically designed to act as conversation starters and reminiscence aids. The packs are made up of old photographs and documents linked to themes including holidays, school days, sports, pets, and travel. The interests are wide and varied, so there is something to suit individual interests, and keep the conversation flowing.



North Yorkshire Archives Dementia Sessions

Impacts:

Supporting the work of Dementia Forward has helped the Archives to reach new audiences and explore how the collections can be used in different ways to benefit health and wellbeing. It has been possible to promote an engaging experience with archival images and documents used to support reminiscence and encourage the sharing of memories while also helping people learn about the Archives service. At the same time, the collaboration has helped Dementia Forward offer meaningful, inclusive experiences for the people they support.

These sessions created a space where people felt comfortable sharing their stories and connecting with others, and the conversations didn't end when the visits did. As one Dementia Forward team member noted,

"You know it's been a good visit when people are still talking about it the next week - and they were."

Aligned to strategic priorities:

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- To ensure that places, spaces and activities are inclusive and accessible.
- To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.

"I don't have to tell you how much everyone enjoyed it, it was easy to tell with the laughter and smiley faces."

'Out of the Box' Heritage Learning site

ONLINE

Who

Make More Arts, North Yorkshire Council, Museum and Heritage Partners

What

'Out of the Box Learning', is a website sharing engaging content from museums, galleries and heritage sites across North Yorkshire.

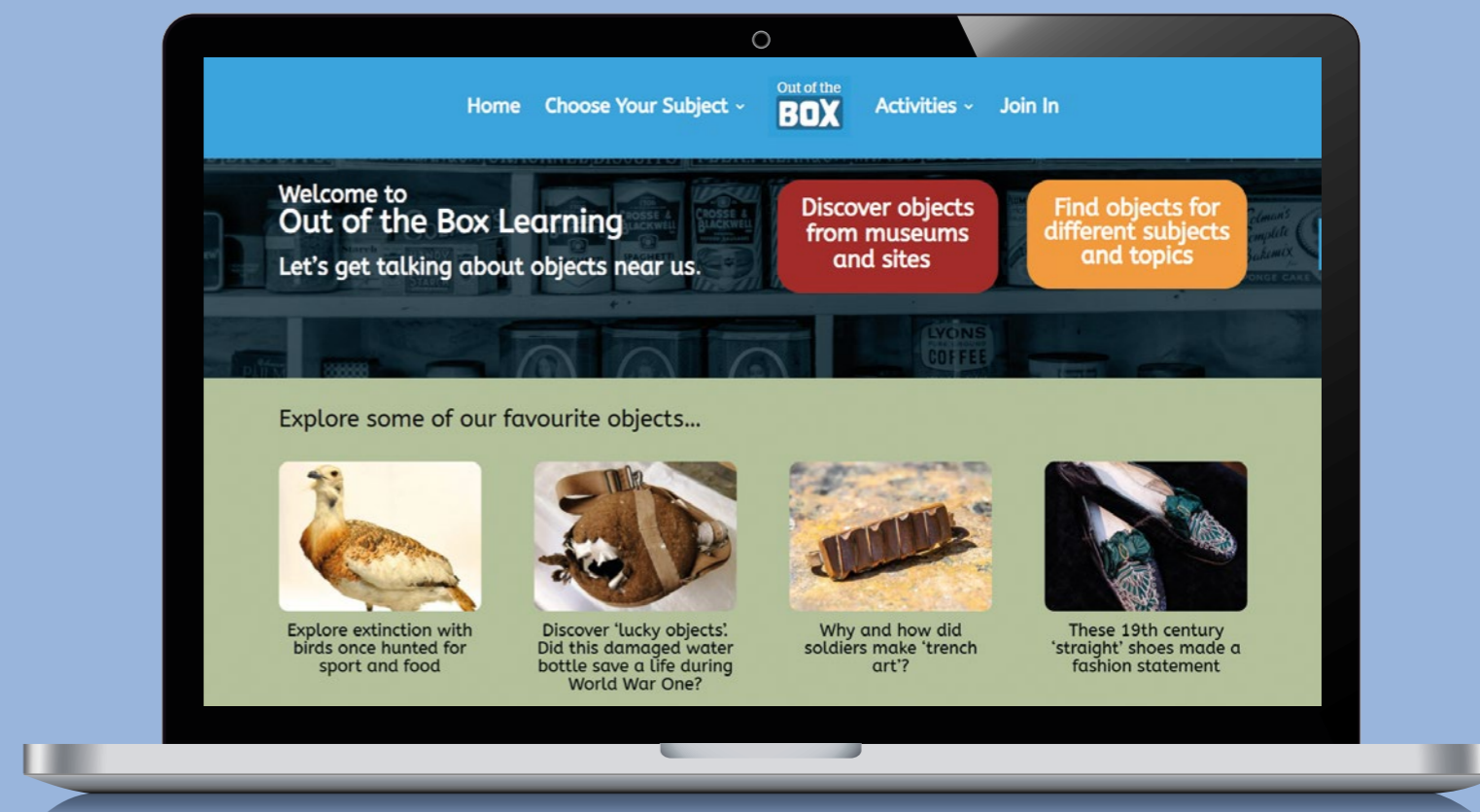
The site responds to calls from communities and schools with ever-tightening budgets struggling to access museum collections across the county. The site was supported with Arts Council England funding in 2024/2025 to increase, expand and develop content. The site is proving popular and there are further plans for development.

Impacts:

- Increasing object-based engagement.
- Providing access to cultural capital and object handling in the community.
- Over 100 objects representing histories, heritage, people and places across North Yorkshire and further afield.
- Learning resources which directly assist with oracy and spoken language development.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

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- To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.
- To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.



This is Our Craven

BRADFORD & SKIPTON

Who

Pioneer Projects, Craven Museum (Culture North Yorkshire), Museum of North Craven Life, Bradford 2025 City of Culture, Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership, Bradford District & Craven MIND, and The VCS Alliance

What

Working in partnership with a wide range of organisations, Bradford 2025 has harnessed the transformative power of culture and creativity to address some of the district's most urgent health and social challenges.

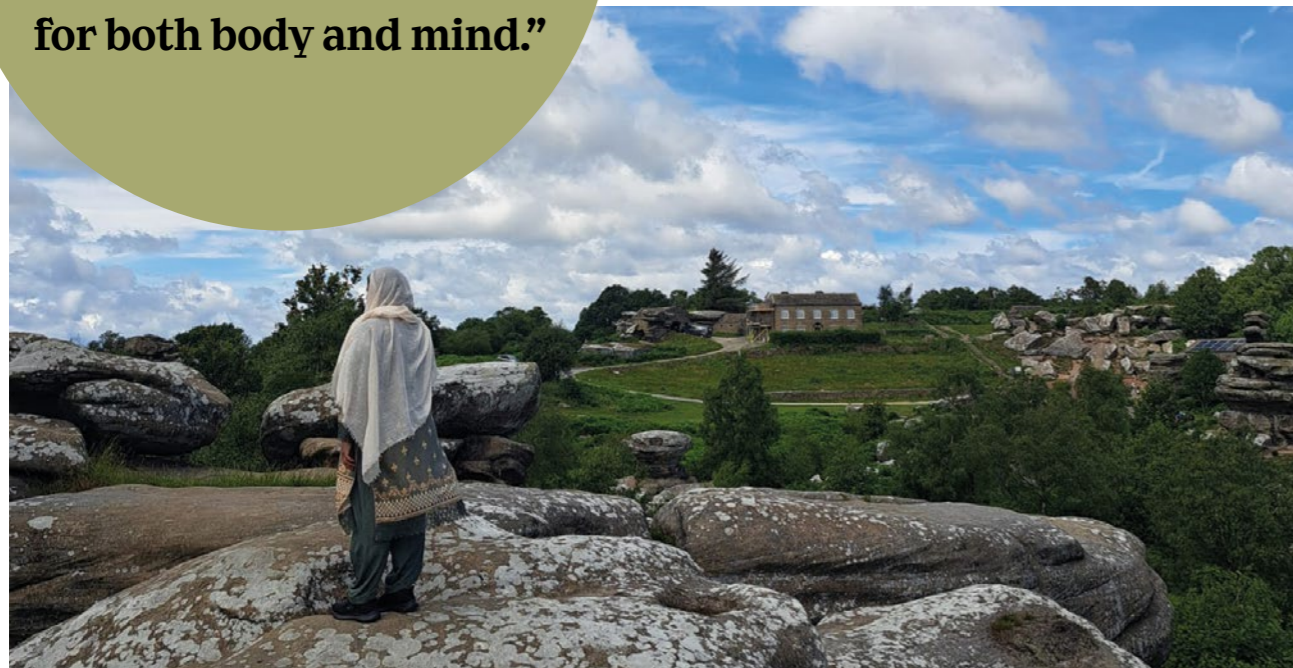
“If the arts were a pill, we would be taking it every single day”, says Professor Daisy Fancourt. Creativity is an “essential medicine for both body and mind.”

In collaboration with local healthcare partners it took a pioneering approach to improving both mental and physical wellbeing across the region.

As part of one of the largest social prescribing initiatives of its kind, Bradford 2025 supported organisations and community projects offering a wide spectrum of creative health activity, from art therapy and singing to nature connection and woodworking. Focused on improving the health and wellbeing of young people 16–25 with dual diagnosis of mental ill-health and autism, and inspired by Bradford 2025's *This is Our Time* tagline, *This is Our Craven* delivered an 8-month programme of sessions, embracing art, music, sound recording, and writing, exploring how participants relate to where they live, what being part of the UK City of Culture means, how creativity impacted on their wellbeing, and how to creatively share their experience with wider communities in Bradford District and Craven.

Unlike Bradford, Craven is deeply rural, with poor public transport, in the lowest 20% of the UK for access to services including health, and with population density too low for specialist service viability. With most services based in Bradford, this can mean costly, and time consuming 86-mile round trips for those in Craven's north. Though numerically smaller than urban cohorts, young people in Craven with dual diagnosis are significantly less able to access health or cultural opportunities to improve their lives.

This project supported access to otherwise out of reach creative health activities, allowing participants to share the benefits of Bradford 2025, whilst establishing a model transferable to other priority groups, e.g. people living with dementia, or adults with long-term conditions.



Impacts:

• Improved Wellbeing and Confidence

Creative health activities supported participants to improve their mental wellbeing, confidence and self-expression, providing safe spaces for creativity, connection and recovery.

• Reduced Isolation and Stronger Community Connections

Projects helped reduce loneliness and social isolation by creating welcoming group environments where participants could build friendships, develop peer support and strengthen their sense of belonging.

• Increased Access to Arts and Culture

The programme enabled many people to engage in creative activity who might not otherwise access arts and cultural opportunities, delivering activity in trusted community settings and removing barriers to participation.

• Strengthened Community Organisations

Participation in the programme helped build capacity, confidence and visibility for local organisations, enabling them to develop new skills, partnerships and approaches to delivering creative health activity.

• Development of a Creative Health Workforce

Through training, peer learning and practitioner support, the programme contributed to developing a confident and connected creative health workforce, supporting artists and facilitators working in health and wellbeing contexts.

• Growing Creative Health Network

The programme supported the development of a Creative Health Community of Practice with nearly 200 members, creating a space for knowledge sharing, collaboration and peer learning across sectors.

• Strengthened Cross-Sector Partnerships

Creative Health projects fostered new relationships between arts organisations, health services, community groups and local authorities, helping to build the foundations of a more integrated creative health ecosystem.

• Raising the Profile of Creative Health

Bradford 2025 has acted as a catalyst for raising awareness and understanding of creative health across the district, demonstrating the role that culture and creativity can play in supporting health and wellbeing.

• Regional Leadership in Creative Health

As a result of this work, Bradford has been recognised as one of five place-based leads in West Yorkshire for the development of a regional creative health system, positioning the district as a key partner in shaping future creative health strategy and infrastructure.

• Learning for Future UK City of Culture Programmes

The Bradford 2025 Creative Health programme provides valuable learning for future UK City of Culture programmes on how creative health can be embedded within cultural programmes, demonstrating how culture can contribute meaningfully to health, wellbeing and place-based partnership working.

• Foundations for Long-Term Creative Health Development

The programme has created strong foundations for continued creative health activity, including partnerships, networks, learning and evidence that will support ongoing development beyond Bradford 2025.

Aligns to strategy points :

- To enable a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.
- Maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region's cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.
- Ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing across North Yorkshire.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.
- To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.

Skipton International Puppetry Symposium

SKIPTON

Who

Skipton International Puppetry Symposium

What

The Puppetry Symposium is England's largest celebration of puppet theatre. The biennial celebration has showcased puppetry from national and international puppeteers since 2005.

In 2025 Skipton took a different approach to previous years, pausing the festival to address the challenges facing the industry, and bringing the sector together for an International symposium, the first of its kind in the UK. The Puppetry Symposium was a two-day gathering of puppetry professionals from the UK and beyond. Organised by North Yorkshire Council and funded by Arts Council England, the event focused on sector growth, early-career support, and international collaboration.

Impacts:

- Sector and professional development opportunities with over 100 delegates attending and 36 organisations represented.
- Peer to peer creative learning and support through open space discussion and debate.
- Performance and public engagement opportunities with over 3,000 visitors to the Town Hall over the weekend and 1,000 attending the performances.
- High demand for further sector development work as part of future Puppetry Symposiums.

Aligned to strategic priorities:

- To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to live, work, visit, learn and engage.
- To maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region's cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.
- To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.
- To enable a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.



Skipton Puppetry Symposium © Stephen Garnett Photography

“The arts are not the cherry on the cake – they are the cake”

MELVYN BRAGG

Culture and creativity enriches and provides fulfilment in people's lives, contributes to good health and wellbeing, and is of benefit to our economy.

By investing our time and resources in Culture we're investing in the future – providing a rounded and healthy life for our communities and giving them opportunities, supporting the growth of our creative industries, and attracting visitors to our region.

As well as the huge contribution culture makes to a range of outcomes that are important to us across health, economy, regeneration and education, to quote one of the initial consultation workshop participants, **culture is also 'everything that makes life worth living'** and it is clear through development of this strategy that access to culture is of paramount importance to us all.

Thanks to...

We would like to thank each and every organisation, group and individual that has participated in consultations for development of this strategy and those who have given their time to attend our subsequent annual symposium to reflect, participate in discussion and offer valuable feedback to move us forward. Your energy, enthusiasm and clarity on what is important to our communities and cultural sector has been infectious and is core to this plan of action.

The North Yorkshire Council Culture & Archives Team were also supported by members of the North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium in the collation of consultation feedback and shaping of this strategy, so many thanks to our steering group.

If you would like to join the North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium network, please email culture@northyorks.gov.uk

Appendix one

North Yorkshire Council – Key actions to support Strategy delivery 2026/27

“Access to culture, and the right to participate in cultural life, is a fundamental human right. Through this collaboratively developed strategy, we are aiming to ensure this for everyone who lives in, works in, and visits North Yorkshire.

From our stunning coast and awe-inspiring national parks to our rich heritage, creative communities and historic sites, North Yorkshire offers an extraordinary cultural landscape. This continues to be an exciting time for our county, and I’m so inspired by what we can achieve together with our partners and communities.”

**DANIELLE DAGLAN, HEAD OF CULTURE AND ARCHIVES
NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**



Mercer Art Gallery © Sam Toolsie



To use culture and creativity to create places where people want, and are able to live, work, visit, learn and engage.

- Continue joint working across the Cultural, Economic Development, Regeneration and Planning Teams to identify opportunities for embedding culture & creativity, e.g. through local area/town planning, discharge of Section 106 commitments, Town Investment Plans, and development/delivery of art in the public realm guidance, including environmental impacts & sustainability.
- Support for Arts Council priority place and national Pride in Place cultural development and project delivery.



To enable a thriving cultural workforce including employees, volunteers and freelancers, where grassroots creativity is nurtured and supported to grow.

- Continue work with the Mayoral Combined Authority to secure funding and commission research into creative & cultural sector data specific to North Yorkshire, and to ensure North Yorkshire organisations are represented by the MCA Creative Delivery Plan.
- Develop a wide-ranging workforce development plan with the above, with North Yorkshire’s Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) FORGE, and with City of York Council, incorporating apprenticeships, internships, work experience and placements, to support the next generation of creative sector workers.



To ensure that places, spaces and activities are inclusive and accessible.

- Continue to map creative and cultural organisations and activity across North Yorkshire, to identify ‘cold spots’ for intervention through partnerships with local cultural organisations.
- Facilitate access to best-practice, training, and ‘how to’ learning for organisations to develop their offer.
- Undertake additional Equality, Diversity & Inclusion development work in relation to North Yorkshire Archives, according to latest industry guidance, and share learning as above.



To maximise the value and ensure sustainability of the region’s cultural assets and promote the cultural identity, wealth and distinctiveness of the region.

- Support sector partners to attract funding and investment to develop cultural spaces.
- Seek funding to further support care, development and resilience of NYC cultural assets, for benefit of communities and users, and share relevant learning and skills.

Key actions to support Strategy delivery 2026/27

CONTINUED



To ensure cultural engagement contributes to improved health and wellbeing of communities.

- Continue to work in partnership with sector specialists and with Public Health and Localities teams, to fund and develop a new way of working between culture and health, for the improved health of our region – specifically to deliver year two of the Creative Health training programme, seek funding for year one cohort proof of concept work, and continue to be an active partner in the Mayoral Combined Authority Creative Health Network for the benefit of North Yorkshire residents.



To ensure cultural activity positively contributes to the delivery of strategic priorities including economic, health and social wellbeing, skills and education, environment, public transport and quality of life.

- Continue to map, in detail, where and how culture and creativity can contribute to wider outcomes across NYC strategic objectives and identify/connect with key contacts to ensure a comprehensive and joined-up approach.
- Continue work with North Yorkshire and York's creative education groups FORGE and REACH.



To identify, support and promote places, spaces, people and activities that can contribute to the vision.

- Commission further Audience Agency research into North Yorkshire's cultural offer and share data and audience segmentation information with sector partners.
- Undertake other baseline research to enable sector to measure impacts.
- Implement use of the social value engine across Culture North Yorkshire activity with a view to supporting others to utilise the tool.
- Work with sector partners, and Tourism, on audience development plans for the region, and ensuring connections to Visit North Yorkshire.

Through feedback you asked us to share success throughout the year with themed case studies, so we will build this into the Creative Hub and our regular newsletter feature.

We will also be committing to a bi-annual review of our progress against objectives by members of the North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium.

All of these key actions will also combine to facilitate delivery of the creative hub on p12



Glossary to Cultural Strategy

Accessible

Easily understood or appreciated.

Accessible Space

Able to be reached or entered.

Accessibility

Ensuring that cultural spaces and activities are available to everyone, regardless of physical, economic, or social barriers.

Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

Arts, culture, and heritage organisations that receive regular funding from Arts Council England to deliver on nationally important cultural priorities.

Aligned

Give support to a person, organisation or cause.

Collaboration

Working with someone to produce something.

Creative Industries

Those industries based on individual creativity, skill and talent, or which have the potential to create wealth and jobs through the development or production of intellectual property.

Combined Authority

Formed of two or more local councils, either led by a directly elected Mayor (Mayoral Combined Authority) or without a Mayor (Combined Authority). North Yorkshire and York is a Combined Mayoral Authority.

Constituency Boundaries

The UK is split into 650 parliamentary constituencies. The voters in each constituency elect one Member of Parliament to represent them in the House of Commons. North Yorkshire is made up of 7 area constituency committees; Harrogate and Knaresborough, Richmond and Northallerton, Scarborough and Whitby, Selby, Skipton and Ripon, and Wetherby and Easingwold.

Creative Health

Creative approaches and activities that prevent ill-health and promote health and wellbeing. The integration of creative and cultural activities into health and social care to improve individual and community wellbeing.

Creative Hub

A place, either physical or virtual, which brings creative people together.

Creative Industries

Economic sectors that involve the creation and distribution of creative goods and services, such as music, film, art, and design.

Cultural Assets

Cultural assets means buildings, locations and other features considered historically or socially significant. Physical and intangible resources that contribute to the cultural life of a region, such as museums, galleries, historic sites, and traditions.

Cultural Collaboration

Working together across organisations and sectors to share ideas, resources, and strategies to enhance cultural offerings.

Cultural Engagement

Cultural engagement refers to the active involvement and participation with cultural activities and experiences. Participation in cultural activities, which can include attending events, creating art, or engaging with cultural heritage.

Cultural Entitlement

The right to take part in cultural activity. The principle that everyone, regardless of age, location, or personal circumstance, should have the opportunity to engage with and be inspired by a wide range of cultural activities.

Cultural Hub

A digital platform and series of physical events that serve as the main access point for the North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium, providing resources, training, and support for cultural activities.

Cultural Identity

The unique characteristics and heritage that define the culture of a region or community.

Cultural Offer

Activities or spaces (online or in person) provided by a cultural organisation.

Cultural Strategy

A plan developed to enhance and promote cultural activities and assets within a region, focusing on accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability.

Cultural Workforce

Those people who work in creative or cultural activities or organisations.

Digital Platform

Online infrastructure to facilitate interactions between groups.

External Investment

Money that comes from outside North Yorkshire Council.

Grassroots Creativity

Creative activities that take place in a voluntary or amateur capacity.

Growth Rate

Basic growth rates are expressed as the difference between two values in time in terms of a percentage of the first value.

Heritage

The history, traditions, practices that exist from the past and continue to be important.

Hinterlands

An area of a country that is far away from cities.

North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium

The consortium will be supported by North Yorkshire Council, Culture and Archives service and will be a network of organisations across arts, culture and heritage, festivals, education sector, music service, libraries, museums, local authority and other relevant organisations and partners.

Participant Diversity

Having a variety of differences and unique qualities among individuals.

Place-shaping

Using culture and creativity to enhance the attractiveness and functionality of places where people live, work, and visit.

Preventative Healthcare

Routine care you receive in order to maintain your health.

Qualitative Evidence

Information which reflects the feelings, thoughts, meanings and understandings of people in order to gain understanding about why and how a situation is unfolding as it is.

Quantitative Evidence

Numerical data or statistics that are used to support an argument or claim.

Repository

A place where or a receptacle in which things are or may be stored.

Social Prescribing

Helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or a local charity. A means of enabling healthcare professionals to refer patients to non-clinical services, such as cultural activities, to improve their health and wellbeing.

Stakeholders

A person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.

Strategic Outcomes

Outcomes are the change we are working towards.

Strategic Priorities

Objectives we aim to achieve over a designated time period. Key areas of focus identified in the cultural strategy to achieve desired outcomes, such as increasing accessibility, supporting the cultural workforce, and promoting cultural identity.

Sustainability

Ensuring that cultural activities and assets can be maintained and developed over the long term, both financially and environmentally.

Symbiosis

A close, prolonged association between two or more different organisations where all parties involved benefit from the interaction.

Symposium

A meeting or conference for the discussion of a subject, in our case, culture in North Yorkshire.

Underserved Communities

Groups that have limited or no access to resources or that are otherwise deprived of rights and privileges.

Wellbeing

The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy, which can be enhanced through engagement with cultural activities.



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