



REFRESHING THE NORTH EAST CASE FOR CULTURE

BACKGROUND

The North East Case for Culture (C4C) was developed through region-wide consultation in 2014 and launched in 2015 with the support of the North East Local Authorities.

Case for Culture is a statement of ambition for the development and celebration of the region's arts and heritage sector over a 15-year period from 2015 to 2030. C4C was built on five priorities: *Participation, Children and Young People, Talent and Workforce, Distinctiveness, and Economic Value.*

There have been cross-regional initiatives delivered by a diverse range of individuals and organisations that have been designed expressly for children and young people and there is greater understanding of the barriers to greater participation that reflects the diversity of the region's population. Significant progress has also been made in celebrating local pride and the distinctiveness

of the region's cultural offer, through a series of major heritage events of international standing such as Tall Ships, Lindisfarne Gospels and the 2025 Passenger Rail Bi-centenary. There has also been major capital investment in new cultural facilities and culture and creative zones, which are playing an important role urban regeneration and community enhancement.





A REFRESHED NORTH EAST CASE FOR CULTURE

As the region works to recover from the pandemic and addresses the challenges of the economy we want to ensure that our Case for Culture is able to realise it's full potential and we must take into account the ever-evolving environment in which the cultural sector operates. For example:

- Local government has become more politically diverse, and we have welcomed the creation of Mayoral Combined Authorities with a key remit to foster economic growth with culture playing a key role;
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion have become central to the work of individuals and organisations in the sector and people have become more confident in holding cultural organisations to account.
- Environmental thinking has shifted from awareness of Climate Change to recognition that there is a Climate Emergency, which is already having a significant impact at a strategic and practical level, which demands creative solutions.
- The economic outlook is challenging: the sector has yet to fully recover from the impacts of Covid and is now facing the significant impact of the cost-of-living crisis, which is having multiple impacts on the NE cultural sector in terms of rising costs and diminishing income for organisations and economic hardship for many communities.
- Internationalism: Key parts of the NE's international cultural exchange developed during EU membership and, for some, the loss of EU funding and partnerships has yet to be replaced by new structures or funding initiatives.

But we must recognise that fresh opportunities have also emerged: the North East Devolution Deal and the Levelling Up agendas offer scope for a shift in resources from central government, and from agencies such as Arts Council England who has begun to level up it's funding to priority places across the country.

Whilst the recent partnership with the BBC and investment in the film and television sector offers potential new markets for the arts and heritage sectors we believe there is more to achieve with Levelling Up and that the North East needs to make a coherent and positive case to government around increasing funding and investment into the region.

OUR COMMITMENTS FOR THE REFRESHED NORTH EAST CASE FOR CULTURE

Following an extensive programme of consultation, embracing over 500 individuals and organisations, and culminating in our Annual Forum held at Sage Gateshead in July 2022, we believe that the following five themes should drive our North East Case for Culture to 2030:

1. Equality, Equity and Audiences

NECP will continue to make the case for greater equity, diversity and opportunities for our audiences including working class communities and people with protected characteristics.

NECP will

- **celebrate and showcase positive projects which improve equality and diversity of audiences across the arts and heritage sectors in the North East.**
- **encourage initiatives to increase the equality and diversity of Boards.**

2. Economy

We need to harness the opportunities of devolution and Levelling Up funding and encourage Poverty Proofing of cultural buildings to ensure they can engage with families and children. We recognise that the sector is still grappling with the impacts of Covid and is now experiencing a cost of living and energy crisis.

NECP will

- **establish a strategic Economic Sub-group to make the economic North East Case for Culture.**
- **champion cultural leaders who are committed to social responsibility and social justice for our North East communities.**
- **promote initiatives where our arts and heritage organisations are supporting and nurturing our communities during challenging economic times.**

3. Cultural Workforce & Skills

NECP will work on the idea of 'Making the North East the best place to be a cultural worker' and develop initiatives to improve the terms and conditions for those working in the arts and heritage sectors.

NECP will

- **work with NE Cultural Freelancers to publish a Freelancers Checklist for organisations and individual freelancers to use.**
- **advocate for a NE Culture Skills Academy linked to entrepreneurialism and business development.**
- **work with our Universities to make the positive case for more young people to study creative subjects and advocate that this can lead to excellent careers and work opportunities in the culture sector.**

4. Climate Emergency

NECP supports the NetZeroNE initiative and the opportunity for arts and heritage organisations to raise awareness of the Climate Emergency as well as improving their buildings and carbon impacts.

NECP will

- **push for a North East Green Investment Funding for Culture;**
- **advocate for an Artists' Research and Development Fund, to explore more sustainable practices and media.**
- **make the case for a Creative Climate Programming Fund, to encourage wider public engagement with critical climate-related issues.**

5. NE Partnerships and International Links

NECP will bring together the sub-regional culture groups to share and collaborate - particularly on children and young people, equity, and health. NECP will work with others to showcase the region's cultural excellence and innovation.

NECP will

- **build on our partnership with West Sweden and encourage others in making North East international connections.**
- **work with regional Destination Development Partnerships to promote our distinctive cultural tourism offer to national and international tourism markets.**
- **work with our Universities to demonstrate the impact of their international partnerships and student exchanges, and will explore new international networks and links for culture in the region.**

OUR VISION

Equality, Equity and Audiences

This embraces a commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion as the foundation which underpins our arts and heritage organisations in the region. There is evident goodwill across the sector for improvement but there is also demand for practical support for cultural organisations to ensure that people who are the intended beneficiaries of services play an active role in designing and prioritising the services on offer, and that their participation in the management and governance of cultural organisations is supported.

NECP will support this work in two ways. First, it will work with bodies such as Historic England, English Heritage, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England to ensure that individuals and organisations can have access to a comprehensive toolkit to aid the development, delivery and assessment of services offered, from a variety of perspectives. For example, poverty-proofing their offer to ensure that people are not unwittingly excluded on account of their socio-economic status; that the interests of children and young people are considered, and that cultural offers are relevant to all – regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or belief. NECP will work to celebrate and showcase success in the area of EDI so as to build on positive achievements and inspire the sector.

Economy

The culture sector has an important role to play in the wider economic development of the region. The North of Tyne Combined Authority is harnessing the power of the culture sector to revitalize urban centres through its Culture Creative Zones, with similar approaches having been adopted by individual local authorities such as Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Durham who made a strong bid for City of Culture in 2022. NECP wishes to see investment for culture as a means of animating urban and rural centres and stimulating economic development extend across the entire region.

We also recognise that whilst the culture sector has yet to fully recover from the impacts of Covid on its business models, it must also meet the challenges of inflation, fuel costs and the “cost-of-living” crisis. If we do not have a robust, viable culture sector, the NE will lose a key generator of economic growth and social benefits which can help to retain talent and attract others to the region.

Therefore, NECP will partner with the universities and economic development sectors to establish a North East Cultural Economy Group which will develop a prospectus for investment in the sector.



Cultural Workforce and Cultural Skills

There is a need to focus on practical initiatives which will better equip and support individuals and micro-businesses. NECP wants the NE to be the best place in the country to be a cultural worker, and wants to ensure that the NE cultural workforce has the respect, skills, attitude and resources to thrive within the region and develop national and international audiences for it's work. To that end NECP will:

- Bring together cultural freelancers and their representatives and key employers of their services in the NE to produce a checklist to ensure Freelancers are engaged and supported and enable the region to work towards becoming the best place to be a cultural worker.
- Advocate for the creation of a NE Cultural Skills Academy with a tailored offer across organisations to enable individuals to enter and advance in the cultural workforce.
- Advocate for investment to support business start-up and entrepreneurial support for the cultural sector to develop micro-businesses and SME start-ups.
- Advocate for investment in skills training in winning grants and sponsorship, donations and in-kind support for the cultural sector.
- Advocate for investment in the development of ancillary services to support the sector, such as administration, management, agency and promotion, starting with pilot projects covering a representative sample of culture firms.

Climate

There are three distinct strands of activity where NECP will advocate for:

- Creation of a NE Green Investment Fund to equip cultural buildings/enterprises to respond to climate change (heating, lighting and green public transport for example) and testing and implementing new ways of working.
- Artists R+D to explore more sustainable practices and projects.

- Creative Climate Programming Fund to harness the ability of the arts and heritage sector to develop and deliver content in their programmes that helps increase public awareness and engagement with critical climate-related issues in the North East.

“NECP wants the North East to be the best place in the country to be a cultural worker”

North East Partnerships & International Links

The North East now benefits from a wide range of Sub-regional cultural partnerships, providing a voice for and in their local communities. NECP will continue to promote their work and to bring them together with meetings and forums. NECP will build on existing international partnerships, such as that with Västra Götaland, (in Sweden) and underpin the work of town twinning identifying cultural opportunities for international partnerships. NECP will seek ways to assist the region's cultural creators and facilitators to explore and develop new international links and partnerships.

The growth of film and television production in the North East, and the increasing importance of domestic and international tourism, offer opportunities for the cultural sector in terms of skills, programming and also as part of the offer to attract visitors.

NECP will facilitate dialogue between the widest possible range of stakeholders across the cultural, social, educational, economic, and governance of the NE and beyond, to ensure the voice of the sector is heard and action is taken.



REFRESHING THE CASE FOR CULTURE

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