

**CRF0005**

## **Written evidence submitted by Kirklees Council**

Kirklees Council is the local authority for the metropolitan borough of Kirklees in West Yorkshire, encompassing the towns of Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Holmfirth, and Batley.

Kirklees Council is submitting evidence to the enquiry based on questions asked when the elected mayors met with Lord Mendoza and Caroline Dinenage MP.

### **Our experience of the Culture Recovery Fund and what impact it has had on communities in our area**

For those who were successful, the CRF has given them more confidence about the future and belief that they will survive until they can be fully operational again. It has also provided funding for them to be able to develop their delivery model and experiment digitally. We do believe though that rather than keep giving grants to organisations to keep them afloat, it would be better to fund commissions so we can stimulate the creative economy again by creating work opportunities.

Unfortunately, we only get to hear about the successful applications, so we don't know how many organisations applied from Kirklees, what the percentage success rate was and how this compared with the rest of the country. It would be useful if DCMS and ACE shared more data with us. There seems to have been an unfair distribution of funds with London based organisations and those in the South benefiting from the scheme more than those in the North thus perpetuating the inequality of cultural funding between the north and south.

The scheme seems to have benefited larger organisations with capacity to write an application. In Kirklees, we have lots of small cultural organisations who struggled to make applications or believed they did not meet the criteria. Those who are struggling most to recover from the impact of Covid-19 are volunteer led, community arts organisations for which there have been no suitable funding streams. And yet they are the heart and soul of their communities and so if they suffer demise, those communities will be impacted and struggle to recover. There needs to be a version of CRF for

those local organisations. Its impact would be heightened if local authorities were awarded money to distribute to these types of organisations as they know their communities well.

From a local authority point of view, there were some confusing messages in Round 1. The criteria made it sound like local authorities would not be eligible as we couldn't prove that we were at risk of closure but, in the end, some were funded. Because of this, more local authorities made applications in Round 2 and we are grateful that Kirklees Council's Museums and Galleries service was awarded its full request as this will enable the service to adapt to be Covid-safe when able to re-open and address some of the problems caused by Covid such as pest infestations in our collections and much reduced income which funds a third of our expenditure.

It would also be beneficial if there was funding for the role that local authority cultural services play integrating cultural activities into other services to achieve outcomes such as learning, skills development, combating isolation, tackling inequalities etc which are essential if communities are going to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

In Kirklees, culture has been integrated into regeneration and growth. Our approach is not about culture-led regeneration and growth but recognising that culture has equal value with other forms of regeneration and growth and depending on the needs of a community or target sector, culture should be considered alongside other forms to find the most appropriate/effective means to achieve outcomes. We understand that we cannot rely on retail alone for the future vibrancy of our town centres and so we are developing a balanced offer of retail, residential and culture. This means significantly improving our culture and tourism offer within our town centres.

Through culture we are promoting Kirklees to investors and visitors. Music and textiles are strong elements of our heritage and so we are using these to build a reputation and showcase our diversity and heritage. The textile industry was the basis of Huddersfield's global reputation, as the quality of its cloth was widely praised and it is why we have such diverse communities, as people from the Caribbean and South Asia came to work in the industry. A cultural festival WOVEN is all about promoting our enduringly innovative textile industry; making links between creative people, education, and textile businesses; and attracting new people into the industry as we reinvent its image as one which is at the forefront of innovation and tackling the climate emergency.

Moving forward, it would help if the Government stimulated growth in the Cultural Sector through the funding of projects which enabled the workforce to be creative again and earn money. This funding could support the testing of the feasibility of cultural projects, develop business plans and get projects to the point whereby they are investment ready to be able to apply to other Government funding programmes such as the Towns Investment Programme and Levelling Up Funds. Many cultural teams do not have the capacity to do this and so cultural projects are often not ready when funding opportunities are announced. The DCMS could help by making the case for not using some of the present measures such as BCR when assessing projects for Government funding. Cultural projects have much more value than just economic and so they should be assessed as to their social, educational, and cultural value too. The DCMS could also help by funding pilot projects to test new cultural approaches to regeneration and growth such as WOVEN mentioned above.

### **Our ambitions and vision for the coming year (or years) as we look to deliver on the levelling up agenda**

In Kirklees, we are developing a cultural strategy, but we already have a very clear vision about what this will cover. Our priorities are:

1. **Creative Ecology** - support the creative ecology to recover from the impact of Covid-19 and evolve so that it can respond to changes such as how people have begun to access culture digitally which has led to global audiences (we presently have people in Australia and across Europe knitting squares to help create an artwork in Huddersfield this Summer)
2. **Creativity with our Heritage** - conserve and repurpose our heritage ensuring that we use this heritage to tell the story of Kirklees worldwide
3. **Creative Communities** - engage our communities with culture either as participants, producers or audiences plus use cultural activities to improve well-being, learning, skills development and other outcomes
4. **Creative Places** - establish a global reputation for Kirklees for its creative approach to music and textiles. As part of these plans, we aim to apply for UNESCO Creative City status for Music; deliver a Year of Music in 2023 to complement Leeds' Year of Culture which will increase engagement with music across all our communities and showcase our diversity and innovation; and build new cultural facilities in Huddersfield town centre

including a new music and events space, museum and gallery and National Rugby League Museum as part of our regeneration plans.

Government investment in these ambitions would support the levelling up agenda and recognise the innovation and great work taking place outside major cities. Huddersfield is proud to be a town with cultural ambitions and innovatory work to match any city. We are proud of the on-line productions created by Lawrence Batley Theatre which led to reviews in the New York Times, ticket sales across the world and its director being recognised as one of the top cultural influencers in 2020.

We know that with further investment we can make even more of a difference to the people who live, work, and play in Kirklees, celebrating our diverse heritage, promoting inclusivity, and creating a great place to live, work, play, and invest. And at the same time, we can create work for the cultural sector which means that cultural organisations and creative practitioners are no longer reliant on Government programmes funding them until they can work again.

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