



**CULTURE  
BURNLEY**

**OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE**  
A Cultural Reimagining of Burnley



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Produced by Burnley Leisure and Culture on behalf of the borough of Burnley. We would like to thank the many contributors, community members and cross sector colleagues locally and regionally that have helped to shape this framework.



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# VISION

**A high quality, people and place focused, cultural offer which drives social and economic development.**

# MISSION

- **Creative engagement, cultural placemaking, and narrative building to promote local pride and raise aspirations.**
- **A cultural offer that values, reflects and responds to diversity and that empowers our people to lead happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.**
- **Collaboration across sectors to be ambitious, to attract investment and to generate economic prosperity.**
- **Investment in our cultural infrastructure, organisations and creative community to enable them to thrive.**



## INTRODUCTION

With a rich history rooted in its industrial past Burnley is renowned for hardworking, innovative and entrepreneurial people. Today, change continues to be driven by a growing and diverse population and thriving business community.

An "Outdoor Town" with award winning green spaces and a varied cultural programme, Burnley is a borough with much to be proud of and to share with residents, as well as an annual 2.6 million tourism visitors.

This framework encompasses the towns of Burnley and Padiham and the surrounding villages which make up the borough. It reflects the voices

and perspectives of a broad range of local and regional stakeholders and the general public. It has been informed by consultations with over 400 groups, individuals and organisations. It promotes a shared vision for culture as a catalyst for social and economic development.

It is a commitment to putting the people living, working and visiting Burnley at the heart of everything that we do. By delivering high quality cultural activity, removing barriers and tackling fundamental challenges at their root, we will create opportunities for learning and enjoyment, supporting employment, generating local pride and enhancing residents' daily lives.

To create a sustainable infrastructure for cultural development, throughout 2024-2026 the foundation blocks needed to achieve success are cultural leadership, cross sector collaboration, funding and resources and community engagement.

This development phase will culminate in a largescale festival programme in 2027 which will showcase Burnley and its cultural offer, bringing sectors, organisations and communities together from across the towns and villages of the borough, building from our past, to create exciting new futures.



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# THE CONTEXT FOR REDEFINING BURNLEY

## DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Culture shapes who we are as individuals and how we define our place in the world - our sense of belonging to a place or group of people.

Culture is central to all of our lives and includes our heritage and traditions, arts and creativity, dance, music and theatre, clothing and fashion, pastimes, the places we visit, food, films and TV programmes, books, religion, beliefs and customs, events, celebrations, and language.

The focus of this framework is to develop the capability and capacity of our core cultural providers, whilst generating connections and encouraging cross sector partnerships to support and influence a broader ecology of cultural development and creative expression.

Burnley continues to be heavily defined by its industrial past. Whilst a source of great pride and importance to the local and global heritage story, it no longer has a relevant identity for the people and place of contemporary or future Burnley.

Burnley's population has risen by 8.7% over the 10 years to 2021, reaching 94,646. Whilst the population is predominantly white British, there are communities from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, a growing international student population, refugees and asylum seekers. Understanding and engaging diversity is key to helping unlock Burnley's new narrative.

Burnley people are renowned for a strong sense of community, humour, radicalism, inventiveness and innovation. Economically there is a thriving commercial sector and Burnley is known nationwide as an enterprising tech town with significant growth in digital job opportunities.

The borough retains a strong community spirit and following the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a growing grassroots and multi-agency movement to support and empower communities.

There are significant social and economic differences across the borough in terms

of wealth, education and health, with areas of the borough still ranking in the top 10% of deprivation nationally.

Typically, high deprivation is coupled with low engagement in mainstream cultural activity. The Active Lives Survey 2015-17 ranked Burnley as the 30th lowest out of 326 local authority areas in England in relation to cultural engagement. Similar low scores in neighbouring boroughs highlight a broader challenge within East Lancashire that needs to be addressed.



In a 2022 survey by the Office for National Statistics, Burnley scored lowest of the East Lancashire boroughs for life satisfaction and feelings of how worthwhile residents felt things they did in life were.

Burnley is often perceived as a place of low aspiration and limited opportunities, particularly for young people. Large, vibrant cities such as Manchester and Liverpool provide a more visible and attractive proposition for cultural experiences and employment opportunities.

Barriers and challenges to cultural development include:

- A lack of relevant contemporary identity and narrative to define the place and what it has to offer, both culturally and beyond.
- Culture's value in defining people and place has not been harnessed.
- Culture is not embedded into policy, limiting investment from strategic government funds.
- Fragmentation across the cultural sector leads to competition rather than collaboration.
- Poor connectivity has created a lack of local awareness within the wider sector.
- Cultural organisations have limited staff capacity and resources.
- Projects and initiatives can be low risk with limited ambition and impact.
- Cultural activity often relies on grants or other short-term funding.
- Promotional activity can often be limited and low key.
- Audience and participant numbers can be low.
- Diversity is not represented in terms of providers or audiences.
- Young people are often unaware of opportunities for cultural activity and career potential.



Momentum for change is growing across the borough. Recent large-scale regeneration schemes are reframing perceptions of Burnley and Padiham town centres, attracting new businesses and opportunities.

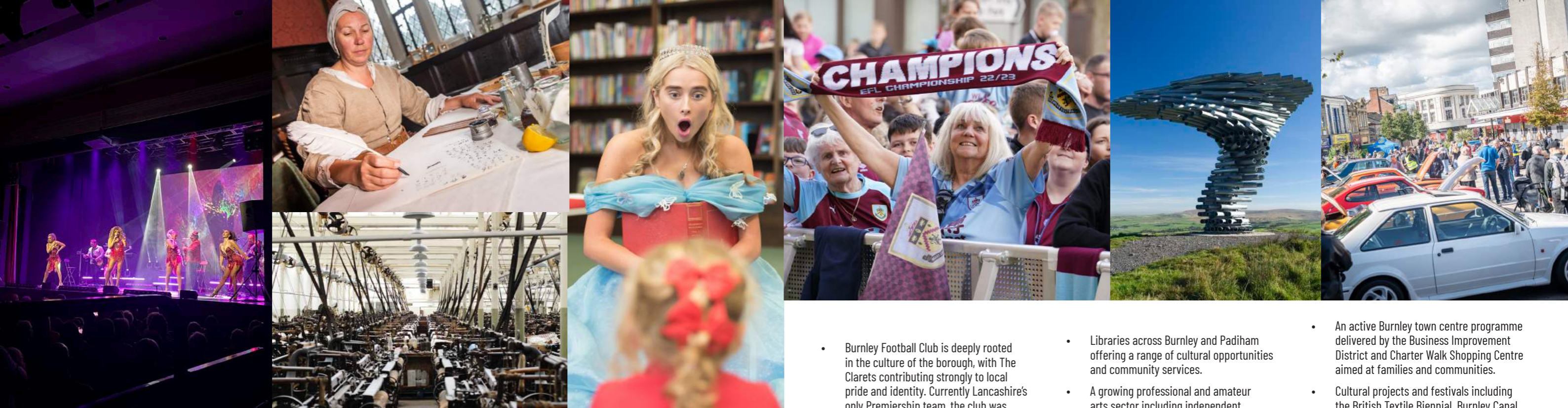
This has included:

- Padiham Townscape Heritage Initiative regenerating the high street.
- Sandygate Square and Finsley Gate Wharf redevelopments
- Town centre pedestrian area public realm refurbishment
- Lower St James's Street Heritage Action Zone
- Pioneer Place cinema and eateries

£20 million in Levelling Up Funding is currently supporting three major developments:

- University of Central Lancashire Newtown Mill campus expansion with a target of attracting 4,000 students by 2025.
- Investment in Manchester Road railway station to better connect the platforms and cater to those with access needs.
- Public realm works to create a mile long promenade connecting the UCLan campus, retail core and Turf Moor football ground.

This regeneration is a sign of ambitions being raised and of the confidence and value placed on Burnley by investors.



# CULTURAL ASSETS

Burnley has an active, though understated cultural sector. Our cultural offer is delivered by a range of providers from large scale organisations including Lancashire County Council, the National Trust and Burnley Council, to charities, grass roots community and volunteer led organisations.

Our creative workforces have knowledge, expertise and passion for delivering quality programmes of activity for the people of the borough and beyond. Burnley is home to world class heritage sites, award winning parks and more including:

- Queen Street Mill Textile Museum, the last surviving operational steam powered weaving mill in the world.
- Towneley Hall historic house, art gallery and museum, located in over 400 acres of parkland.
- Local historical and heritage societies and Friends groups.
- Gawthorpe Hall historic house, home to displays of the world renowned Gawthorpe Textiles Collection.
- The Leeds - Liverpool canal including the Straight Mile - one of the Seven Wonders of the British Canal system.
- The Weavers' Triangle Visitor Centre and Oak Mount Mill engine house.

- Sculptures and outdoor artworks, including the multiple award-winning Tonkin Liu Singing Ringing Tree voted in the top 20 landmarks that define Britain in the 21st Century by The Independent.
- Mid Pennine Arts, based in Burnley since 1966, responsible for collaborative projects from the Singing Ringing Tree to the award-winning Burnley Canal Festival and for leading the cultural partnership for Burnley's high street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) programme.
- New collaborative arts spaces created within the HAZ, led by Creative Spaces Burnley including The Salon at 160 and the forthcoming 123 St James Street.

- Burnley Football Club is deeply rooted in the culture of the borough, with The Clarets contributing strongly to local pride and identity. Currently Lancashire's only Premiership team, the club was a founding member of the Football League in 1888. Turf Moor is one of the oldest football grounds in the world, and attracts 20,000 fans on match days.
- Burnley Youth Theatre with a reputation as the best in the country and currently the borough's only National Portfolio Organisation.
- Blaze, a youth led arts organisation nurturing young producers and delivering youth led cultural activity across the borough and wider Lancashire.
- Burnley Mechanics theatre, a focal point of Burnley's cultural activity since opening in 1855, providing a range of entertainments and home to Burnley Light Opera Society and Burnley Pantomime Society.
- The Edwardian Empire Theatre saved by a community group in 2018, and the only surviving purpose-built theatre of its kind in the region.

- Libraries across Burnley and Padiham offering a range of cultural opportunities and community services.
- A growing professional and amateur arts sector including independent artists, creatives and performers, bands, choirs, dance groups, music production, film and photography.
- Night-time economy venues delivering a range of music events and a new town centre cinema complex.
- Photographic and archival collections maintained by Burnley Civic Trust and Padiham Archive Museum. A new archive of material relating to Burnley Football Club at Burnley Library promises to be a popular addition to the cultural offer.
- A range of large and small outdoor music events, performances and outdoor cinema, as well as community led festivals and activities across the borough.
- Creative education opportunities through Burnley College and the University of Central Lancashire and collaboration through the Local Cultural Education Partnership.

- An active Burnley town centre programme delivered by the Business Improvement District and Charter Walk Shopping Centre aimed at families and communities.
- Cultural projects and festivals including the British Textile Biennial, Burnley Canal Festival and the Burnley Words Festival, delivered with regional arts partners Super Slow Way and Culturapedia.
- The proposed Linear Park development will invest in cultural activity and public realm along the canal, linking East Lancashire's towns from Blackburn to Pendle.

By building on the exciting work that is already happening locally, we will increase the visibility, connectivity, reach and ambition of Burnley's cultural providers over the period to 2027.

Through work with Arts Lancashire and Creative Lancashire we will support organisations to become more sustainable and grow the number of National Portfolio Organisations in the borough.

We will also continue to collaborate with our neighbouring boroughs to identify shared priorities and programmes which cross borders and cater to audiences more widely in the region.



# BURNLEY 2027 PROGRAMME



Burnley 2027 will be a redefining moment for the borough, scheduled to tie in with the end of major regeneration schemes.

It will bring together new activity as well as pre-existing annual or bi-annual programmes such as Beat the Street, Burnley Words Festival, and the British Textile Biennial.

Programming will ensure that each ward has a focus of activity to create localised access, as well as encouraging the movement of people around the borough.

Going beyond a showcase of culture, enterprise and community, it will be a festival of pride, strength and resilience.

Lending from the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of Burnley's past and present, it will raise ambitions and set out our future direction as a borough, shaping how we want the world to see us and launching the next phase of Burnley's cultural journey.

It will deliver significant placemaking, artistic and creative commissioning projects to reimagine our cultural heritage, co-create new public art, theatre, film, music, literature, digital and more.





# FRAMEWORK THEMES





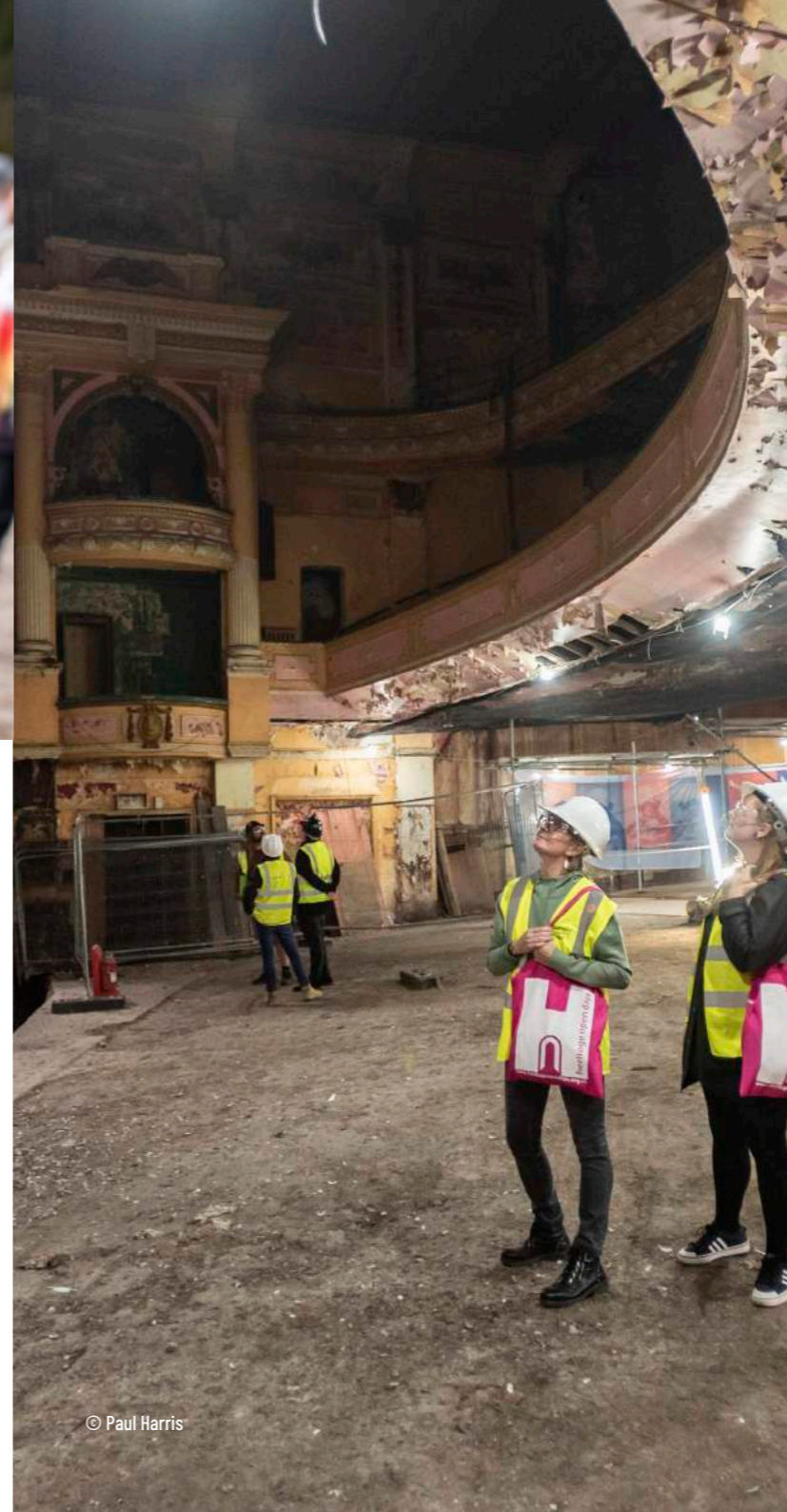


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## NURTURE & CREATE

To create great work we must support and invest in the people who are developing it, both now and in the future. We will commit to:

- Creating opportunities for young people to co-design cultural activity, to inspire and equip them to become active cultural producers and consumers.
- Maintaining and developing the Local Cultural Education Partnership as the champion for cultural education and skills.
- Supporting local cultural professionals, artists and creators to grow professionally and showcase excellent work.
- Identifying affordable and appropriate creative work and collaboration spaces.
- Investing in cultural activity that benefits local creatives, as well as external.
- Attracting artists, creative thinkers and entrepreneurs, growing a distinctive and innovative sector.
- Supporting voluntary and non-profit organisations delivering cultural activity to boost capacity, share resources and expertise.
- Building opportunities for volunteering, apprenticeships and work experience to support workforce development.
- Equipping the sector with the skills and knowledge to work with, and respond to, the needs of diverse audiences.
- Community participation and co-creation to create a well-informed, inclusive and diverse cultural offer that is reflective of, and relevant to, people's lives.
- Developing a comprehensive cultural wellbeing and social prescribing offer.
- Working in partnership with organisations and communities to capture new perspectives, tackle challenges, build confidence and increase participation.



© Paul Harris

## GROW & INNOVATE

Burnley has a strong foundation of cultural organisations and programmes on which to build its future activity. Developing infrastructure and connecting across the cultural sector and beyond will strengthen opportunities and enable culture to be embedded within every area of Burnley's future growth. We will commit to:

- An ethos of saying yes to new cultural activity, taking risks and experimenting.
- Cultural placemaking initiatives which challenge, provoke, inspire and develop a new narrative and identity for Burnley.
- Bringing investment into the borough and working in partnership to drive forward regeneration, making Burnley a place that people feel proud to call home.
- Building cross sector relationships to increase connectivity.
- Developing borough wide programmes which connect the urban and the rural, working across towns, villages and green spaces.
- Advocating for improved transport and directional signage, enabling better access to cultural activities.
- Understanding current and potential audiences better, bringing new voices and perspectives into decision making.
- Growing the ambition of programmes of activity, providing dynamic and challenging experiences which have lasting impacts.
- Using derelict and underutilised spaces in creative ways for delivering culture.
- Developing cutting edge research and development programmes in partnership with local universities and sector professionals.
- Working with the local digital sector to scope, fundraise and deliver mutually beneficial sector leading projects which deliver culture in new and innovative ways.



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# COMMUNICATE

Sharing success and promoting Burnley's cultural identity is fundamental to attract growth and development. There is much for the borough to be proud of and a need to reframe outdated perceptions. We will commit to:

- Increasing the visibility and reach of our national and internationally significant cultural offer through campaigns and promotional strategies.
- Understanding and making best use of the communications channels favoured by our current and future audiences.
- Developing a clear cultural identity which feeds into the place brand for the borough, celebrating what makes it unique and distinctive and framing the future narrative.
- Telling the proud story of our past, present and future, creating a destination that visitors and businesses want to come to, that is an exciting, dynamic and forward-thinking place to be.
- Improving digital communications usage and skills within our cultural organisations.
- Engaging a diverse body of volunteer cultural advocates to help build relationships with communities.

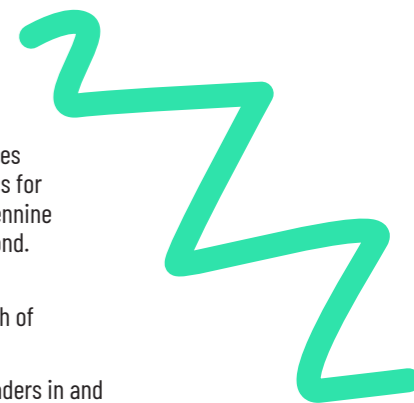


# SUSTAIN

In order for Burnley's cultural programme to continue to grow and develop, funding and infrastructures will be put in place to create an environment for current and future cultural providers to thrive. We will commit to:

- Supporting the sector to develop business models and infrastructure to become resilient.
- Uniting the cultural sector behind mutually beneficial, common goals.
- Mapping cultural activity and assets to ensure that new programmes and investment is distributed across the region for the benefit of all communities.
- Planning and securing investment to conserve and preserve our heritage buildings and collections for the benefit of current and future generations.

- Collaborating across borough boundaries to develop complementary programmes for the benefit of the people of Burnley, Pennine Lancashire, wider Lancashire and beyond.
- Expanding and consolidating Burnley's cultural tourism offer to support growth of the local and regional visitor economy.
- Challenging cultural providers to be leaders in and promoters of environmental responsibility.
- Programming culture in outdoor spaces, including our award-winning parks and countryside to encourage greater use of the outdoors in line with the Outdoor Town initiative, helping residents to be more active and lead healthier and more fulfilled lives.



# INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Mapping sector plans and activities against the following priorities will pave the way to creating change. We will consult, review and refine priorities throughout the lifespan of the framework to ensure relevance.

**FUNDING** COMMUNICATION AUDIENCE  
**ADVOCACY** **YOUNG** DEVELOPMENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL **PEOPLE** SECTOR SUPPORT  
SUSTAINABILITY **CROSS SECTOR** VOLUNTEERS  
& #OUTDOORTOWN **DEVELOPMENT** **CREATECH**  
IDENTITY, FUTURE NARRATIVE & PLACEMAKING

# CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACEMAKING TOOLS



# WHAT WILL SUCCESS ? LOOK LIKE ●

## COMMUNITY CHANGE OUTCOMES

By 2027 the cultural sector will be better connected, more visible and sustainable. The cultural offer will be dynamic, high quality and high profile, fulfilling local needs and creating a borough that residents feel proud to call home. Putting people at the heart of our plans will deliver the following outcomes:

- **Increased pride in place and people.** People's perceptions of Burnley will be overwhelmingly positive, with greater awareness of what the borough has to offer. There will be an increase in the number of Burnley residents who engage in cultural activity and feel its positive impacts in their daily lives. Residents will report greater feelings of pride and connection to our cultural assets and programmes.
- **Diversity and inclusivity in arts and culture.** Culture will be delivered by a diverse workforce with programmes co-created and aligned with inclusivity agendas to meet local need. More people, including those with complex needs, will have the opportunity to access culture and see activity led by and involving people like them. Programmes will benefit both local residents and visitors to the borough.
- **Empowered communities.** Community members will help to shape the cultural programme. People will feel informed and able to develop their interests and aspirations. More people will feel empowered to lead and participate in cultural activities and there will be an increase in volunteering.
- **Sustainable grass roots initiatives.** Organisations, groups and individuals will be actively meeting, planning and delivering activities in collaboration, supporting each other to build sustainable programmes through sharing resources and collaborating around investment.
- **Creative economy growth and job opportunities.** Burnley will have a thriving cultural programme which supports job creation and provides opportunities for skills development and employment in the creative sector. Burnley will be a place that nurtures, attracts and retains talent.
- **Social engagement and community development.** Meaningful and proactive relationships will exist with our communities, allowing us to understand and respond to local need. Barriers to access will be tackled and opportunities promoted to all. We will be inclusive, respect differences and celebrate unity.
- **Reduction in anti-social behaviour.** Collaboration with colleagues across sectors will increase understanding of anti-social behaviour and allow us to adapt approaches to delivering culture which supports positive engagement. Providers will feel greater confidence in delivering activities and interventions across the borough.
- **Improved health and wellbeing through culture.** Social prescribing schemes will be in place and demonstrating the health and wellbeing benefits of cultural activity. More people will be enjoying the wellbeing benefits of participation in activities such as craft and singing as part of a sustainable toolkit for managing their health.



## SYSTEMS CHANGE OUTCOMES

Influencing the way that culture is viewed at a strategic level to embed it within local policy and planning within the borough will support change at a fundamental level, with the following outcomes:

- **A clear narrative and identity for Burnley.** A new narrative for Burnley will have been identified through public consultations and creative activities. This will feed into the place brand and development of Burnley's local and visitor economy. This relevant and contemporary identity for Burnley will help to build local pride and promote connectivity across communities and organisations.
- **A "yes to culture" ethos.** Clear plans, evidence base and growing successes will provide confidence in the value of the cultural offer and the capabilities of cultural producers. This will create a willingness to take risks and to support investment in culture as part of Burnley's placemaking toolkit. Cultural opportunities will be factored into investment planning.
- **Community focused regeneration and investment in place.** Culture will be embedded into regeneration schemes through creative consultation and engagement. With shared priorities and focus, people will feel pride in place and value the lifestyle opportunities that the borough provides. Investment will increase and businesses and entrepreneurs will see the benefits of working here.
- **Audience development tools and systems.** Tools and training will be in place to ensure that cultural providers can understand and respond to the needs of audiences and non-attenders, to grow engagement with venues and activities.
- **Strategic planning and coordination of cultural programmes.** Borough wide priorities will be identified, and the case built for investment in cultural sector buildings, organisations, projects and activities. Strategic investment in culture will provide an inclusive and cohesive approach to the delivery of major schemes which align with local need.

- **Investment in cultural projects of scale and ambition.** Ambition will be raised to deliver large scale projects and initiatives which are high profile, with far reaching benefits and meaningful, sustainable impacts for local communities.
- **Youth engagement infrastructure.** Collaboration across youth providers and the Local Cultural Education Partnership will drive connectivity and the development of youth led infrastructure that values the input of young people and their roles as the consumers and producers of the future. We will promote access to schemes which broaden cultural participation and create opportunities for children and young people to engage with culture throughout their development.
- **Established education and skills pathways.** The Local Cultural Education Partnership will highlight and support development of cultural education opportunities to help narrow the gap between education and employment. People will be better able to visualise their journey from education into a creative career.
- **Growth of cultural volunteering.** More volunteering and work experience opportunities will be available across the range of cultural provision. Opportunities will be better promoted and organisations supported to recruit, retain and manage volunteers.
- **Ecology that nurtures talent and grows the cultural sector.** Infrastructure, relationships and investment will be in place to identify and nurture talent and to create opportunities for progression and growth. Creatives from outside of Burnley will see the benefits and be attracted to work here.
- **Professional and organisational development and training.** Robust professional development and business support systems will be in place to ensure that cultural organisations and individual creatives at all experience levels and from all backgrounds, can access support when needed. Mentoring and relationship building will create a stronger creative community which promotes resilience.



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## MEASURING SUCCESS

Data will be gathered from across the sector to measure success, including:

- Evaluations of creative programmes, projects and activities.
- Sector surveys and consultations.
- Qualitative and quantitative audience engagement data (attendance numbers, postcodes, demographics, satisfaction levels, online trends).
- Numbers of new partnerships and connections that have been formed.

- Numbers of people undertaking training and support programmes, new jobs created, volunteers, apprentices and work experience placements.
- Monitoring the amount of funding secured.
- Community consultations.

We will regularly review progress and consult with communities and stakeholders to ensure our activity remains relevant and impactful.

# OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE

## A CULTURAL REIMAGINING OF BURNLEY

### CHALLENGE

When integrated into wider policy and planning, culture plays a vital role in enriching lives and generating local pride, identity, sense of place and community. A lack of confidence, awareness of opportunity and joined up thinking has limited integration, investment and ambition in culture. There is a need to reframe collective thinking about place and people. By developing cross sector and community planning around culture, people and place, Burnley can create and unite behind a new, relevant and forward-facing narrative for the borough, building infrastructure and embedding culture as a tool for social and economic development.

### GOAL

Collaborative cultural placemaking, narrative and identity building that reimagines Burnley for the future, feeding into social and economic development plans, strengthening Burnley's cultural offer and supporting our people to lead happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

### CONTEXT

Projects and activities will be people focused, responding to local need, community demographics, local, regional and national plans and policies, cultural and community assets and green spaces.

### INPUTS

**Leadership | Cross Sector Collaboration  
Funding & Resources | Community Engagement**

### THEMES & ACTIVITIES

Cultural placemaking strategies and infrastructure development will help to develop Burnley's people, places and cultural assets through four key themes:

**Nurture & Create, Grow & Innovate,  
Communicate, Sustain**



### INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SHAPED THROUGH:

- Identity, future narrative and placemaking activity
- Advocacy
- Audience development
- Communications
- Cross sector collaboration
- Environmental sustainability & Outdoor Town
- Funding development
- Sector support and sustainability
- Volunteering, work experience and apprenticeships
- Young people
- Createch

### CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACEMAKING TOOLS:

- Creative community consultation & engagement
- Empowered communities, co-creation & grass roots development
- Cultural education & skills programmes
- Creative business development
- Placemaking seminars & events
- Wellbeing through creativity programmes
- Public art / interventions
- Festivals & showcases
- Artist residencies
- Performances
- Spaces for culture

### SYSTEMS CHANGE OUTCOMES:

- A clear narrative and identity for Burnley.
- A "yes to culture" ethos.
- Community focused regeneration and investment in place.
- Audience development tools and systems.
- Strategic planning and coordination of cultural programmes.
- Investment in cultural projects of scale and ambition.
- Youth engagement infrastructure.
- Established education and skills pathways.
- Growth of cultural volunteering.
- Ecology that nurtures talent and grows the cultural sector.
- Professional and organisational development and training.

### COMMUNITY CHANGE OUTCOMES:

- Increased pride in place and people.
- Diversity and inclusivity in arts and culture.
- Empowered communities.
- Sustainable grass roots initiatives.
- Creative economy growth and job opportunities.
- Social engagement and community development.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- Improved health and wellbeing through culture.



# FURTHER READING

## Local & Regional Reports

**In This Place Where We Belong: Our People, Our Place, Our Creativity Altogether Different**, Anthony Preston, 2022

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