



2026 - 2031





The Lost Species Mural
By Shaun Gillon With thanks to Sustain Video, Fields to Fabric and the local community.



Foreword

From the high opera of the Buxton International Festival to the classical strings of the Glossop Music Festival, and a little bit of everything from New Mills based High Peak Community Arts, we are lucky already to have a strong cultural presence across the High Peak.

These events and activities, alongside a range of fantastic venues, help to link our cultural heritage and traditions, from well dressing to clog dancing to our fine brass bands, bringing together our communities, whether as artists and performers or just part of the crowd. Culture shapes how we connect, remembering the past but also setting forth a future where creativity is a part of everyday life.

Our strategy seeks to set out a vision in which the various strands of activity can be used to enhance connections between people and places, heritage and innovation, well-being and opportunity, ensuring culture can flourish across the borough (and whatever comes next) over the coming years.

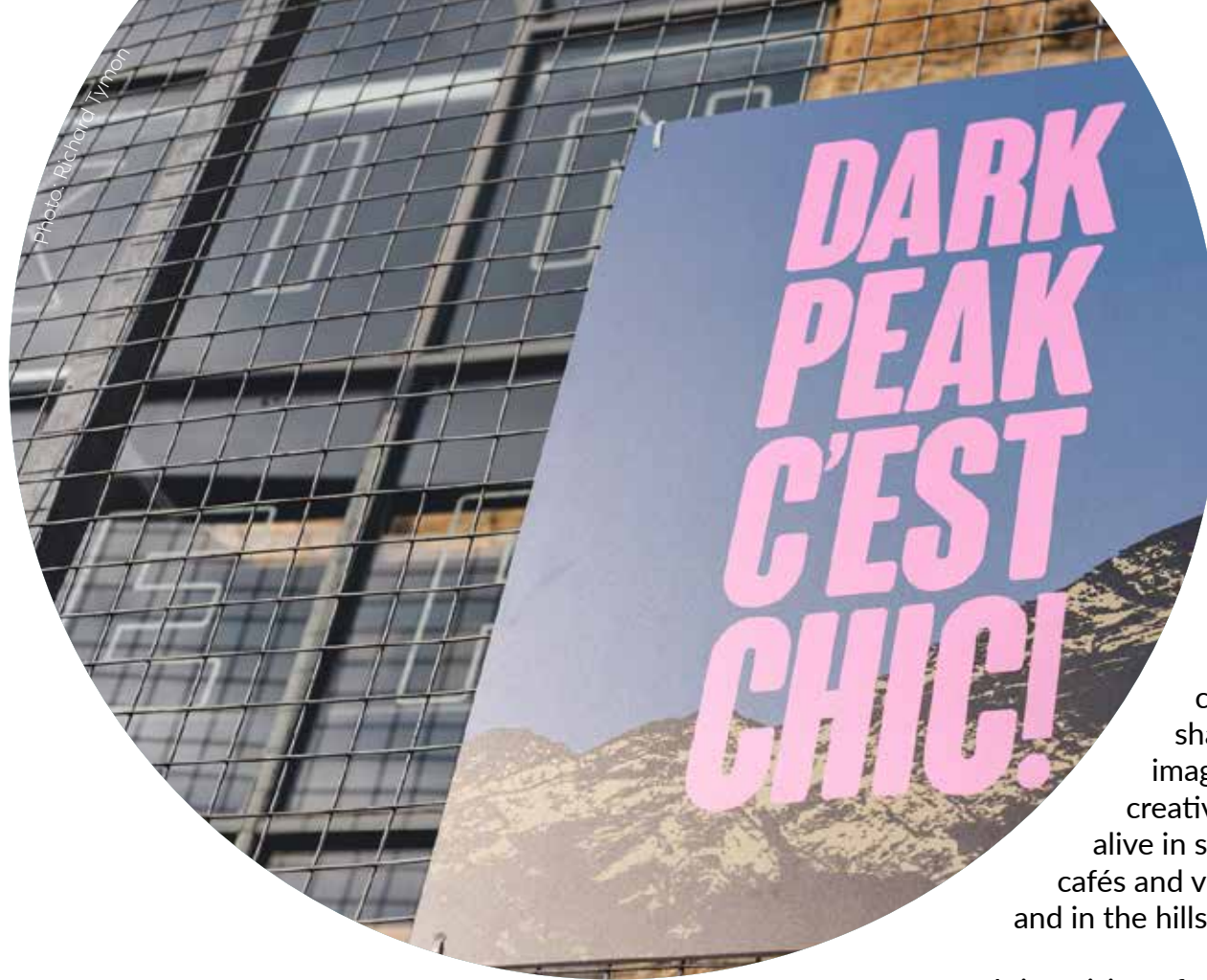
Cllr Anthony E. Mckeown
Leader, High Peak Borough Council



Mural artist: Shaun Azrak

Our Vision

Culture rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people.



Creativity in the High Peak connects us - to each other, to where we live, and to what we can become. This vision, shaped by community voices, imagines a borough where creativity is part of everyday life: alive in schools and theatres, in cafés and village halls, on high streets, and in the hills that define our skyline.

It is a vision of a place where:

- Culture strengthens wellbeing, confidence, and belonging through shared experiences and creative expression.
- Artists, educators, community groups, and partners in health, regeneration, and the environment work together

to make creativity visible and accessible for everyone.

- Cultural activity reanimates our heritage, revives our town centres, and brings new life to underused buildings and public spaces.
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience, learn, and grow through culture.

Here, creativity is both a right and a shared resource, a way of connecting people and place, enriching daily life, and shaping a confident, sustainable future for the High Peak..

Why culture matters in High Peak

Culture in the High Peak is wide-ranging, from Buxton's theatres, festivals and historic architecture, to the creative communities of Glossop, New Mills, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Hope Valley. It lives in the landscape, in the legacy of the mills, quarries and railways, and in the shared stories that have shaped both town and countryside.

Culture is part of what makes the High Peak unique. It strengthens local pride, creates shared experiences, and connects people to each other and to the place. Culture is also a powerful tool for:

- Wellbeing - supporting good mental health, reducing isolation and building connection.
- Skills and careers - helping young people find creative pathways and supporting practitioners at all stages

- Economy and regeneration - strengthening local high streets, attracting visitors and enhancing civic pride.
- Environment - linking creativity to the Peak District landscape and promoting sustainability.
- Community cohesion - encouraging participation, collaboration and a shared sense of belonging.

Across the borough, there is a strong appetite for culture and creativity, with engagement levels that exceed regional and national averages. Yet access and opportunity are not evenly spread.

The strategy aims to reduce these inequalities and ensure that the benefits of culture reach every part of the High Peak.



Photo: Richard Tymon



Our place

High Peak is defined by its landscape, heritage and creativity. From the market towns of Glossop and New Mills to the spa and festival heritage of Buxton, and the rural valleys of Chapel-en-le-Frith and Hope Valley, heritage and culture is part of everyday life.

It's in the music, theatre and community festivals, in the creative reuse of historic buildings, and in the pride people take in the place they call home. Culture here is both professional and everyday, from international festivals and touring performances to volunteers running village events, workshops and creative clubs. The borough's mix of industrial legacy, artistic talent and natural beauty provides a strong foundation for cultural growth.

Culture gives people a reason to stay, and a reason to come back.

It's what makes living here feel alive.

The landscape shapes how we think, how we make things, and how we feel about home.

High Peak's heritage is one of its greatest cultural strengths.

Heritage is not only about preservation: it is a living cultural resource that inspires creativity, supports tourism, strengthens belonging and connects people to place.



What people told us

Consultation revealed a borough rich in creativity, heritage and community energy.

People across the High Peak see culture as a unifying force that connects past and present, uplifts wellbeing, and builds pride of place.

It gives people a reason to come back.

It's the fact that we know we're all holding each other up – really supporting one another to grow this creative community.

The landscape tells our story. Nature connects us and gives context to what we create.

Craft is our heritage – making things with our hands connects us to who we are.

99%

of respondents said culture and creativity are important to them.

97.5%

agreed culture makes the High Peak a better place to live.

These findings confirm that while participation is high, access is uneven.





Strategic objectives

Increase Participation and Access:

Broaden opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take part in cultural life, wherever they live. Reduce barriers linked to cost, transport, confidence and communication, ensuring that culture reaches even the most isolated and deprived areas. Take creativity to where people are, schools, libraries, community centres, care homes, youth clubs, parks and public spaces.

Strengthen Spaces and Infrastructure:

Support a network of affordable, welcoming creative spaces, from town halls, theatres and libraries to pop-ups and outdoor venues. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant buildings and meanwhile use schemes to create hubs for making, learning and performance. Embed culture within planning, regeneration and asset-management processes so that creative use of space is recognised and prioritised.

Nurture Collaboration and Connectivity:

Encourage stronger partnerships across towns and sectors, linking artists, community groups, schools, health services, environmental organisations, and local businesses. Coordinate communication and marketing so that cultural activity is visible, connected and easy to find. Create opportunities for shared programming, co-commissioning and peer-to-peer support between organisations large and small.

Champion Visibility and Pride of Place:

Celebrate the distinctive character of each town and village, its people, stories, landscapes and creative traditions, while promoting a shared sense of belonging across the High Peak. Raise the profile of local creativity through shared branding, storytelling and district-wide events that reflect pride, identity and aspiration. Position the High Peak as a creative destination within Derbyshire and the wider region.

Build Skills, Capacity and Fair Support:

Invest in training, mentoring and leadership development to strengthen the borough's creative ecosystem. Support grassroots and community organisations to access funding and build sustainable business models. Champion fair pay and recognition for creative practitioners and volunteers, and nurture pathways into creative careers through education and lifelong learning.

Sustainability and Care:

Care for people and places through sustainable practice that reuses buildings, reduces waste and inspires creative responses to environmental change. Sustainability also means looking after those who make culture possible, supporting volunteers, preventing burnout, and helping small organisations and informal networks to thrive. By valuing time, care and creativity equally, the High Peak will sustain a resilient, environmentally responsible cultural sector for the future.



Photo: Richard Tynan



Our future High Peak

When this vision is realised, High Peak will be recognised as a borough of creativity, connection and care.

Culture will be visible and accessible everywhere: in schools and theatres, in cafés and care homes, in high streets, village greens and open landscapes. Every resident, regardless of age, background or postcode, will have the chance to take part, create, and feel pride in where they live.

Collaboration will be the norm. Artists, educators, volunteers, businesses and public services will work together to bring life back to underused buildings, animate town centres and connect people through shared experiences. Cultural activity will sit alongside regeneration, health, education, tourism and growth work as a key driver of community wellbeing and economic vitality.

Local spaces will be reused and reimagined for creativity; small organisations and volunteers will feel supported, confident and connected; and young people will see a future for themselves within the creative industries.

From grassroots initiatives to nationally recognised festivals, creativity will flow through the borough's daily life, strengthening belonging and building resilience.

High Peak will be a place where culture connects people and place, rooted in its landscapes, shaped by its people, and open to everyone..