



Culture & Creativity for all



High Peak -Culture Strategy

Commissioned through Support Staffordshire and written by The Hamilton Project on behalf of High Peak District Council

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1. Executive Summary

The High Peak Culture Strategy (2026–2031) sets out a shared vision for a creative, connected and confident borough, one where culture is *rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people*.

Culture is part of what defines the High Peak: from its industrial heritage and spectacular scenery to the creative energy of its people, festivals and grassroots organisations. It lives in its towns and villages, in pubs, theatres, schools, libraries, green spaces and streets, and connects residents and visitors alike to a powerful sense of place and belonging.

This first borough-wide Culture Strategy has been shaped through extensive consultation with residents, artists, community groups, educators, volunteers, young people and strategic partners. It draws on Creative Forum discussions in Buxton, Glossop and New Mills, survey responses, and interviews with cultural, education, regeneration and health leaders. National and regional evidence from Arts Council England's *Culture & Place Data Explorer*, the *High Streets Task Force*, and the *Derbyshire Cultural Framework* also informs the case for action.

The strategy recognises culture as a driver of wellbeing, learning, regeneration and sustainability, not an optional extra but a shared force for community life. It aligns with High Peak Borough Council's Corporate Plan, Growth Strategy and Tourism Strategy, as well as Derbyshire County Council's Cultural Framework, Library and Museum Strategy, and Climate Change Action Plan. Together, these frameworks position culture at the heart of a thriving, inclusive, and low-carbon future.

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 imagines a future where creativity is part of everyday life, visible in schools and libraries, on high streets and village greens, in theatres, care homes, and the hills and valleys that define the borough.

It is a vision of connection between people and places, heritage and innovation, wellbeing and opportunity.

Our Values

Five shared values guide the delivery of this vision:

- **Accessibility and Inclusion** - Creativity belongs to everyone. Barriers linked to cost, confidence, disability, transport, or geography will be removed so that all can take part.
- **Collaboration and Connection** - Culture will thrive through partnership across health, education, regeneration, business and the voluntary sector, coordinated by a new Place Partnership.
- **Community Pride and Belonging** - The borough's distinctive towns, villages, festivals and traditions will be celebrated, strengthening local identity and shared purpose.

- **Sustainability and Care** - Cultural growth will support both people and planet, reusing buildings, reducing waste, promoting climate creativity, and supporting volunteers and small organisations to thrive.
- **Lifelong Creativity and Opportunity** - Creativity will be nurtured from early years to later life, with education, training and career pathways for artists, teachers and creative professionals.

Inclusion and Access at the Heart

Access and inclusion are the defining priorities for culture in the High Peak. Consultation made clear that while participation is high, opportunity is uneven. Many residents in more rural or less affluent areas face barriers of cost, transport, and visibility.

The strategy therefore focuses on ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, background, or location, can take part in, contribute to and benefit from culture.

The borough's two National Portfolio Organisations, Buxton Opera House and Buxton International Festival, play a leading role in the area's cultural identity. Working alongside local cultural partners and the Creative Forums, there is an opportunity to help make culture visible and accessible across the whole borough. By collaborating with grassroots networks, schools and community organisations, the reach can be extended, support new voices, and deliver shared outcomes that strengthen wellbeing, learning and pride of place.

Delivering the Vision

The strategy proposes a new Place Partnership, connecting High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council, National Portfolio Organisations (Buxton Opera House and Buxton International Festival) and local cultural organisations and networks.

It will bring together partners from regeneration, health, education, the visitor economy, business, and the voluntary sector to align culture with shared priorities for wellbeing, economic growth and sustainability. By working across sectors, the Partnership will ensure that creativity is embedded in how the borough grows, learns, cares for its people and celebrates its identity.

The Partnership will guide implementation, oversee investment, and ensure culture is embedded in health, regeneration and education planning, and remains visible through the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Creative Forums in key towns, linked through a hub and spoke model to surrounding villages, will ensure local ownership and grassroots participation. Each forum will receive modest resources to support and coordinate meetings and activities.

The strategy also recommends appointing a Culture Champion at High Peak Borough Council to coordinate policy, advocate for culture across departments, and chair the Partnership. (See Appendix E for further details).

Key Proposals

- Introduce a **Percent for Culture** mechanism so new developments contribute to creative life.
- Create an **Assets of Cultural Value Register** to protect key community spaces such as Victoria Hall and other local landmarks.
- Develop a **Cultural Spaces and Meanwhile Use** programme to animate underused buildings.
- Launch a **Year of Culture** to showcase local creativity and celebrate the people and places that make the High Peak distinctive.
- Pilot the **11 by 11 programme**, ensuring every young person experiences 11 creative activities by Year 11.
- Expand **Teaching for Creativity** and scope a borough-wide Arts Council England bid to grow capacity. (See Appendix C - Case Studies)
- Establish **creative apprenticeships, mentorships and residencies** to help local talent thrive.
- Maintain strong **regional collaboration** through a future North Derbyshire Cultural Partnership, inspired by the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board model.

Investment and Impact

Funding will combine local authority commitment, prospective Arts Council England Place Partnership investment (with match funding from HPBC), grant funding, trusts and foundations, planning mechanisms and business sponsorship.

There is also potential to draw on regeneration and local government funding streams by embedding culture in town-centre renewal, heritage restoration and place-based investment programmes.

A Shared Future

By embedding culture across policy, planning and community life, the High Peak will become a place where creativity drives regeneration, wellbeing and opportunity.

This strategy offers a framework for collaboration and renewal, ensuring that as governance evolves under Local Government Reorganisation, High Peak's creative identity remains visible, confident and connected.

Culture will continue to grow as a shared force for wellbeing, pride and prosperity, *rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people.*

2. Foreword and Introduction

Foreword from the Leader of the Council

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.

The strategy has been developed and shaped through consultation with residents, cultural organisations, parish councils, young people, volunteers, and local businesses. Their input has been invaluable in ensuring this strategy reflects the real strengths, needs and aspirations of our communities, and I place on record my thanks to the members of our advisory committee who have steered its development.

From work on schemes to secure a better future for heritage assets like Melandra Castle and the Opera House, to art on our streets like Deggy's work in Glossop and the tourist hotspots of Castleton and Buxton's caves. Our strategy recognises the vital role that culture plays in improving our well-being, supporting our local economy, attracting visitors, and building pride in our place. It can grow opportunities for everyone to participate, create and be inspired.

The action plan within our culture strategy seeks, as we take this strategy forward, to strengthen our links with other policies across the council and our partners, such as health, transport, and environment, to ensure culture contributes fully to the broader life of the High Peak.

As a council, there are a range of issues that we cannot solve alone, and must work in partnership to make progress, this strategy aims to enhance the role we and our partners can play in ensuring culture, is not a by chance add-on, but an essential part of life in the High Peak – connecting us to each other, to where we live and to what we can become, with creativity a part of everyday life.

Cllr Anthony E. Mckeown

Leader, High Peak Borough Council

2.1 Purpose of the Strategy

The High Peak Culture Strategy sets out a shared vision for how culture will thrive in the borough over the next five years. It provides a roadmap for how the Council, cultural organisations, community groups and residents will work together to unlock the potential of culture for everyone who lives, works in and visits the High Peak.

The strategy is both practical and ambitious. It highlights what makes the borough distinctive, identifies the barriers that hold culture back, and sets out a clear Action Plan to address them. It shows how culture can support wider goals for health and wellbeing, education and skills, regeneration and placemaking, the environment, tourism, and the economy.

As this strategy looks ahead to a five-year period during which Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is expected, it has been intentionally designed to be flexible and resilient. The proposed governance structure, including Creative Forums and a borough-wide Place Partnership, ensures that cultural leadership, coordination and delivery can operate effectively under any future arrangements and continue to represent High Peak's cultural identity and priorities.

2.2 Why Culture Matters in the 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. Some of the most deprived or isolated communities still face barriers linked to transport, cost, visibility, and confidence. The strategy aims to reduce these inequalities and ensure that the benefits of culture reach every part of the High Peak.

2.3 How the Strategy Was Shaped

This strategy has been developed through consultation during 2025. We heard from:

- Residents and young people - through a public survey and postcards distributed in markets, colleges, youth clubs, youth theatre, book clubs and pubs.
- Cultural organisations, community groups, volunteers and creative practitioners, through creative forums in Buxton, Glossop and New Mills, as well as online sessions.
- Interviews with key cultural partners such as Buxton Opera House, Buxton International Festival, High Peak Community Arts, New Mills Festival, Torr Vale Mill, Hope Valley Climate Action, Glossop Creates and Buxton Fringe Festival.
- Local partners and council services, including Regeneration, Cultural Services, Growth and Libraries & Museums.

These conversations highlighted both the strengths to build on, such as strong grassroots creativity, active cultural organisations and engaged communities, and the challenges that need addressing, including limited spaces, uneven access, reduced funding and a lack of coordination and visibility.

High Peak benefits from having two National Portfolio Organisations, Buxton Opera House and Buxton International Festival, that contribute greatly to its cultural life and visibility. The strategy aims to build on this foundation, supporting these organisations to broaden participation, work more closely with local partners, and strengthen their impact across all communities, especially those who currently have less access to culture.

The strategy also recognises the vital role of partners in health, education, transport and the environment. Building closer connections with these sectors will be an important part of the next stage of work, ensuring that culture contributes fully to wider priorities for wellbeing, learning, access, and sustainability.

2.4 Defining Culture and the Role of the Advisory Group

At the outset of developing this strategy, High Peak Borough Council established a Cultural Strategy Advisory Group to guide its development and ensure it reflected the diversity and creativity of the area. The group brought together councillors and representatives from across the borough, recruited through an open call to ensure a fair mix of voices, including artists, community leaders and practitioners from heritage, education and creative industries.

The Advisory Group met regularly throughout 2024-25 to review findings, test emerging priorities, and ensure that the strategy remained rooted in local experience and ambition. Their collective insight has been vital in shaping a vision that is both aspirational and achievable.

Together, the Council and Advisory Group agreed that culture in the High Peak should be defined broadly, recognising both professional and everyday creativity. It includes:

- The arts (visual and performing)
- Architecture and design
- Archaeology and heritage
- Literature, libraries and museums
- Crafts, creative businesses and digital media
- Heritage - Historic buildings, industrial heritage and landscapes
- Music, performance spaces and voluntary cultural organisations
- The contribution of volunteers and community-led creativity

This definition aligns with Arts Council England's *Let's Create* framework and reflects the distinctive character of the High Peak, where creativity, heritage and community life are deeply connected to both the landscape and its industrial legacy. Culture here lives in the peaks, mills and market towns, in the stories of the people who stayed and those who left and returned.

3. Methodology

3.1 How the Strategy Was Informed

The Culture Strategy for High Peak has been developed through a creative and participatory consultation process combining workshops, forums, surveys, interviews, and desk research. This ensured that the voices of local people, practitioners, and partners shaped the strategy at every stage.

Central to this approach was a series of Creative Forums held in Buxton, Glossop, and New Mills, alongside an online forum to ensure accessibility for those unable to attend in person. Each session combined imaginative activity with structured reflection, so participants could both express their creativity and identify priorities for action.

The consultation also included:

- A public survey distributed online and through community networks, local press, and social media.
- Postcards, out in the community at venues such as pubs, youth clubs, the college and local community venues.
- Interviews with key cultural leaders, local authority officers, National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), and partners in education and regeneration, including former Headteacher Alice Littlehales and representatives from Derbyshire County Council, to understand opportunities and challenges in greater depth.
- Desk research drawing on local data, relevant strategies, and national frameworks such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create*, and insights from the Culture Data Explorer and Local Insight reports.

3.2 Who Was Engaged

The process was inclusive and sought to reflect the diversity of the borough's creative and community life. Those engaged included:

- Artists and creative practitioners, across artforms including visual arts, crafts, design, performance, music, and literature.
- Cultural organisations and venues, such as Buxton Opera House, Buxton International Festival, Buxton Fringe, Babbling Vagabonds, High Peak Community Arts, Glossop Creates, Partington Theatre, New Mills Festival, Torr Vale Mill, BANANA and others working across the borough.
- Community and voluntary groups, who sustain much of the borough's grassroots cultural activity.
- Young people, engaged through consultation postcards distributed via Buxton & Leek College, New Mills Youth Club, and Buxton Opera House's Youth Theatre, ensuring their perspectives and creative ideas helped shape the strategy.

- Residents, from across High Peak's towns, villages, and rural communities, through open forums and survey responses.
- Stakeholders and partners, including teams from High Peak Borough Council (Culture, Regeneration, and Communities), Derbyshire County Council, and national funders.

3.3 Creative Process - Ideation Workshops Facilitated by Devlin Shea

A distinctive feature of the methodology was the use of creative ideation sessions facilitated by artist Devlin Shea.

Each participant brought two personal images:

- One representing what creativity means to them individually.
- One symbolising their vision of a thriving creative community in High Peak.

Through guided discussion and co-creation, participants developed a shared collective image representing their combined values, aspirations, and ideas for the future. These collective artworks provided a powerful visual and emotional anchor for each town's priorities.

The resulting images reveal both the individuality of place and a shared vision for a connected, confident and creative High Peak.

3.4 Structured Workshops

Following the creative phase, participants took part in structured discussions exploring:

- Their vision for the future of culture in High Peak.
- Shared priorities and values.
- Challenges and barriers to participation and growth.
- Opportunities for collaboration and progress.

This process allowed communities to translate creative expression into actionable priorities, forming the foundation of the strategy themes and action plan.

3.5 Approach

The methodology was guided by three principles:

- **Inclusive:** welcoming people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, with accessibility and openness as core values.
- **Participatory:** privileging co-creation and active involvement over top-down consultation.
- **Place-based:** rooted in the distinct identities of Buxton, Glossop, and New Mills, while recognising shared ambitions and connections across the wider borough.

4. Consultation Findings

4.1 Overview

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. They also identified practical barriers that hold culture back, such as limited funding, lack of accessible spaces, and uneven visibility of what already exists.

More than 250 people contributed through creative forums, public surveys, and stakeholder interviews. Their insight and lived experience have shaped the strategy's vision, values, and priorities for action.

4.2 Headline Themes

Theme	Summary of Shared Insight
Inclusion and Belonging	Culture should be open to everyone, removing social, financial, and physical barriers. It must reach those who currently feel excluded or unaware of what is available.
Spaces and Infrastructure	There is an urgent need for affordable, accessible, and welcoming cultural spaces; from formal hubs and studios to informal “third spaces” where people can meet, make and connect.
Collaboration and Connectivity	A strong appetite exists for joined up working and clearer coordination between towns, networks and local authorities. A shared calendar and communication platform were frequently suggested.
Visibility and Pride	Culture should be visible in everyday life; on the streets, in schools, in town centres and online. Residents want to celebrate local stories, heritage and creativity.
Skills and Sustainability	Volunteers and practitioners need investment, training, and fair pay to avoid burnout and ensure the sector's long-term sustainability.
Youth and Education	Creativity should be embedded in schools, with visible career pathways into the arts. They need opportunities to participate, lead and create locally.

4.3 Community Voices

Participants expressed a deep belief that creativity connects people, builds confidence and brings meaning to everyday life:

“It gives people a reason to come back.” (Buxton)

“It’s the fact that we know we’re all holding each other up – really supporting one another to grow this creative community.” (Glossop)

“The landscape tells our story. Nature connects us and gives context to what we create.” (Hope Valley)

“Craft is our heritage – making things with our hands connects us to who we are.” (New Mills)

These reflections capture the balance of heritage and experimentation that defines the High Peak’s creative identity: rooted in landscape and industry, but open to change and new voices.

4.4 Public Survey Highlights

The public survey ran from June to August 2025 and received 121 responses, giving valuable insight into local attitudes, participation patterns and barriers.

Importance of culture

- 99% of respondents said culture and creativity are important to them.
- 97.5% agreed culture makes the High Peak a better place to live.
- Many respondents linked cultural participation to wellbeing, learning and local pride.

Sample responses:

“It connects us as a community and gives people confidence.”

“Creativity helps us see our landscape and ourselves in new ways.”

“Arts and culture make High Peak feel alive again.”

Participation and aspiration

Most respondents already take part in local creative activity, from music, theatre and festivals to visual arts and volunteering. However, there is a clear desire for *more opportunities* to learn new skills, attend performances, and join creative groups.

Respondents identified Buxton, Glossop and New Mills as the main cultural hubs, but engagement was reported across villages and rural areas. Participants travel regularly to Manchester, Sheffield and Stockport for larger-scale events, showing strong outward links but also an opportunity to strengthen local provision.

Barriers

The most frequently cited barriers were:

- **Awareness:** difficulty finding out what’s on locally.
- **Cost and affordability:** rising prices for tickets, transport and childcare.
- **Transport and accessibility:** limited evening services and rural connectivity.
- **Volunteer capacity:** a small number of individuals holding large responsibilities.

These findings confirm that while participation is high, access is uneven. Respondents called for better communication, affordability, and shared infrastructure to make culture truly inclusive.

4.5 Stakeholder Insights

Stakeholders and partners echoed community priorities and emphasised the need for coordination, sustainability, and advocacy.

They highlighted opportunities to:

- Regenerate empty and heritage spaces for cultural use.
- Strengthen collaboration between Buxton Opera House, Buxton International Festival and grassroots organisations.
- Embed creativity in education and lifelong learning through partnerships with schools, colleges, and community groups.
- Link culture with regeneration, health, tourism, and the environment to maximise shared outcomes.

Local authority partners and creative organisations also stressed the importance of practical mechanisms to make it easier for creative projects to take root.

“We have the creativity and the will; we need the infrastructure and support to make it happen.” (Stakeholder interview)

4.6 Learning from Elsewhere

As part of developing this strategy, members of the Advisory Group and representatives from High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council (Libraries and Museums), and local partners visited *Stockroom* in Stockport. The visit provided valuable insight into how culture can be integrated into regeneration and placemaking.

The group explored how flexible design, community co-production, and joined-up planning between culture and regeneration teams can transform a library into a cultural and social anchor for a town centre. The experience highlighted lessons for High Peak, including the importance of:

- Designing spaces that are accessible, welcoming, and adaptable for multiple uses.
- Embedding culture in local planning and regeneration frameworks.
- Building long-term cross-sector partnerships that sustain community participation.

These insights have directly informed this strategy’s recommendations for cultural hubs, partnership working, and inclusive design.

4.7 Conclusion

The consultation confirmed a shared vision: a High Peak where creativity is visible, valued, and accessible to everyone. Communities are ready for connection, collaboration, and investment. The findings demonstrate both the vibrancy of existing cultural life and the urgent need to strengthen its foundations, through space, visibility, and support.

*Further detail, including full forum notes, survey analysis, and stakeholder feedback, is provided in **Appendix A: Consultation Findings (What We Heard)**.*

5. Local Context and Case for Culture

5.1 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. The spa heritage of Buxton to the industrial valleys of Glossop and New Mills, from limestone landscapes to gritstone market towns, the borough's identity is shaped by stories carried in buildings, artefacts, traditions and the natural environment. Heritage is not only about preservation: it is a living cultural resource that inspires creativity, supports tourism, strengthens belonging and connects people to place.

5.2 Why Culture Matters

Culture in High Peak touches every part of life. It:

- Strengthens wellbeing: "It connects us as a community and gives people confidence."
- Supports learning and skills: "Creativity helps us see our landscape and ourselves in new ways."
- Drives regeneration and tourism: "If we use our old buildings for art and music, it brings the towns back to life."
- Connects people to place: "The landscape here isn't just beautiful, it's creative – it tells our story."
- Encourages sustainability: "Nature and art go hand in hand here. The Peaks make you want to protect what you love."

Culture is not an add-on. It's part of what makes High Peak a great place to live, work and visit.

5.3 Our Cultural Strengths

High Peak has strong cultural foundations to build on. Creativity here is both professional and everyday, found in the artists, performers and makers who share space with volunteers, teachers and community organisers.

Rich heritage and traditions: From the Crescent and Pump Room to the mills and chapels of Glossop and New Mills, heritage is part of daily life. Local traditions, storytelling, crafts and well dressing connect people to their past while inspiring new work.

Heritage and Learning Assets: The Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust, Poole's Cavern and the Buxton Civic Association all help connect creativity, conservation and community learning. Through exhibitions, guided walks and volunteering, they show how history and place can inspire creativity. The closure of Buxton Museum and Art Gallery was raised repeatedly during consultation as a significant loss to local cultural life. For many residents, it represented a welcoming and inclusive space for families, learning, and creativity. The strong community response reflects both affection and a desire to see the museum's spirit continue in a new form. The reopening of the collection in the Kent's Bank interim space, supported by Arts Council England funding, and its proposed long-term integration within The Springs redevelopment, provide an important opportunity to reimagine a shared museum and library hub. This could once again anchor Buxton's cultural identity, connecting heritage, education, and creativity at the heart of the town centre.

Archaeology and hidden histories: Sites like Melandra Roman Fort in Glossop reveal the deep time-layers of the High Peak. Recent community excavations, research projects and volunteer-led interpretation have brought new attention to this nationally significant site, showing how archaeology can spark local pride, support learning and inspire creative responses. Melandra exemplifies the borough's potential to connect heritage, landscape and community storytelling in powerful ways.

Vibrant creative networks: Community groups, festivals, creative collectives and independent professionals bring people together to learn, make and celebrate. From youth theatre and choirs to open studios, design studios and grassroots enterprises, creativity thrives across the borough. Artists, makers, musicians, producers and creative entrepreneurs contribute not only to local culture but to the wider economy, showing how participation and professional practice can grow side by side. (See Appendix C - Case studies for Glossop Creates)

Accessible venues and informal spaces: Theatres, churches, libraries, village halls, pubs and cafés all play a role in supporting creative activity. These are places where people meet, share ideas and build confidence through performance, exhibitions and workshops.

Creative Educators: Educators and creative specialists, such as local school leaders and college course heads, play a vital role in nurturing creativity from an early age, helping young people to see culture as something they can shape, not just experience. Their work strengthens links between schools, communities and cultural organisations, ensuring that learning and creative opportunity remain connected across the High Peak.

Exceptional landscapes: The moors, valleys and waterways of the Peak District inspire both outdoor creativity and wellbeing. Artists, makers and communities use these landscapes as living studios and stages, exploring how creativity can support nature, climate awareness and sustainable tourism.

"We're all holding each other up – that's what makes Glossop strong."

"Making things by hand connects us to who we are."

"Art doesn't need a building; it just needs a reason and a few people who care."

Nurturing High Peak's Cultural Ecology

Together, these strengths form a living cultural ecology that connects heritage with contemporary practice, creativity with community, and people with the distinctive landscape of the High Peak.

Heritage organisations across the borough already play a central role in cultural life. Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust safeguards internationally significant collections and historic assets including the Pump Room and the Crescent, while Poole's Cavern and Grin Low Country Park connect geology, ecology and storytelling for thousands of visitors each year. Local societies, from civic and historical groups to archive volunteers, sustain deep community knowledge and provide vital hands-on stewardship. These organisations are also anchors for learning, volunteering and intergenerational activity.

Consultation emphasised how strongly residents value this shared heritage. Many highlighted the loss of the Green Man Gallery and Buxton Museum and Art Gallery as a reminder of the need for visible, accessible spaces where heritage and culture can be experienced in everyday life. The planned co-location of museum and library services within The Springs redevelopment offers a major opportunity to reconnect communities with collections, narratives and creative interpretation, making heritage part of daily experience rather than something separate or specialist.

Heritage and creativity are closely intertwined in High Peak. Festivals such as Well Dressing, GlossFest and the Buxton Fringe blend tradition with contemporary practice. Industrial and rural sites inspire makers, performers and outdoor artists. Walking trails, local archives and community-led history groups support wellbeing, storytelling and local pride. These forms of heritage-led creativity help animate town centres and support the visitor economy, while strengthening the character that makes High Peak distinctive.

By embedding heritage fully within this Culture Strategy, as a resource for creativity, learning, identity and renewal, High Peak can ensure its past continues to shape a confident, connected and imaginative future.

5.4 Opportunities and Strategic Alignment

While creativity is flourishing across the High Peak, consultation highlighted clear opportunities to strengthen coordination, visibility and access.

Embedding culture in regeneration: Participants saw potential for creativity to transform underused spaces: *"Empty buildings could have new lives if we used them for arts, workshops and small gigs."*

Investing in space and skills: There is a shared need for affordable, flexible places to make, rehearse and share work: *"We need space that helps us grow, not just rooms to hire."*

Connecting sectors: Culture can play a greater role in health, education, tourism and the environment, embedding creativity in how places evolve and communities thrive.

Strengthening cultural education: Education leaders and practitioners called for stronger coordination between schools and cultural organisations. With the closure of regional bridging organisations such as Mighty Creatives, there is currently no single body connecting schools, artists and NPOs in the High Peak. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure children and

young people benefit from creative learning and can access opportunities on par with those in larger urban areas.

Celebrating everyday heritage and creativity: *“There’s so much talent hidden here; we just need to join the dots.”* Strengthening networks and communication between towns and villages will help raise visibility and build confidence in the borough’s cultural identity.

Deepening inclusion: Consultation highlighted the importance of reaching those with least access, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, age or geography can take part in creative life.

Aligning with Public Policy

These priorities align with the High Peak Borough Council Corporate Plan (2023–2027), Growth Strategy (2025–2028), Tourism Strategy (2024–2028), and Climate Change Action Plan (2023–2030), as well as Derbyshire County Council’s Cultural Framework and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024–2030). Together, they frame culture as a shared driver of wellbeing, regeneration and sustainability.

The strategy also closely aligns with the Council’s Parks Strategy (2021–2031), which recognises green spaces as vital community assets supporting wellbeing, biodiversity and civic pride. Parks and cultural spaces share the same guiding principles, accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement and together they create opportunities for outdoor creativity, festivals, learning and social connection. Future cultural programming will work alongside the Parks Strategy’s ambitions to make parks vibrant, inclusive and well-used spaces for everyone.

Alignment with National Cultural Funders

High Peak’s cultural and heritage ambitions strongly align with the priorities of Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), and other lottery distributors. The strategy’s emphasis on participation, place-based collaboration, creative education, cultural democracy and heritage storytelling reflects ACE’s *Let’s Create* strategy and NLHF’s 2024–2030 Framework. This creates strong opportunities for:

- **Place Partnership investment** and cross-district cultural coordination.
- **Heritage-led regeneration**, including museum development, conservation, interpretation and digital access.
- **Community-led creativity**, volunteering and skills development.
- **Landscape and nature-based projects**, outdoor creativity and environmental engagement.
- **Creative People and Places–style models**, where participation and co-creation drive long-term impact.

Together, these alignments position High Peak competitively for future investment from Arts Council England, NLHF, Sport England, National Lottery Community Fund and cross-sector funders supporting health, climate and placemaking.

*Full policy mapping and the supporting evidence base are set out in **Appendix B: Local Context and the Case for Culture**.*

5.5 Looking Forward

High Peak's cultural future builds on strong foundations of heritage, talent and community spirit. The next step is to connect these strengths so that creativity is visible in everyday life and accessible to everyone.

In the High Peak of the future, empty buildings are repurposed as creative spaces, young people are inspired through schools and community projects, and everyone, including those in the most deprived areas can take part and feel represented. Cultural organisations, creative professionals and volunteers work together to bring energy to town centres, animate landscapes and strengthen wellbeing.

Culture becomes part of how the borough grows, learns and looks after itself, enriching daily life, celebrating identity and ensuring that creativity belongs to all.

5.6 Interpretation

High Peak shows consistent high levels of participation across all forms of cultural activity, with in-person engagement, heritage visits and library use all above regional and national averages. This reflects a population that values creativity, heritage and community connection.

However, the picture also reveals that while enthusiasm is strong, access is not equal everywhere. Some residents, particularly those in smaller rural settlements or areas of higher deprivation, face barriers linked to transport, affordability, and awareness of opportunities.

Per capita investment in the borough remains modest compared with the scale of local ambition. Although major cultural organisations and festivals play an important role in raising High Peak's national profile, there is potential to deepen engagement across the borough as a whole. Strengthening local networks, building capacity, and supporting collaboration between professional and community-led activity can help ensure that creativity reaches everyone.

Culture also has the power to connect across sectors, from regeneration and education to health and the voluntary sector. By working together, these partners can unlock wider social and economic benefits: revitalising town centres, supporting learning and wellbeing, and nurturing pride and belonging in every community.

High Peak's creative sector is powered by volunteers, practitioners, educators and cultural entrepreneurs who contribute daily to the borough's vitality. With more coordinated support, sustainable investment and shared leadership, this energy can translate into a stronger, more connected creative ecosystem, one that offers opportunities for participation and expression in every part of the High Peak.

6. Vision and Values

6.1 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.

6.2 Our Values

These five values reflect what people across the High Peak said matters most: belonging, access, connection, collaboration, sustainability, and opportunity. They align with High Peak Borough Council's Corporate Plan, Derbyshire County Council's Cultural Framework, and the wider ambitions of the Derbyshire Place Partnership.

Each value expresses a shared commitment that will guide how culture is planned, delivered, and supported across the borough.

1. Accessibility and Inclusion

Culture belongs to everyone. We will remove physical, financial, digital, and social barriers so that all residents can take part and feel that creativity is for them. We will widen access through affordable spaces, fair pay for artists, and activities that meet people where they are in schools, care homes, libraries, parks, pubs, and village halls.

2. Connection and Collaboration

Culture thrives on connection between people, ideas, and places. We will strengthen communication across the borough, linking creative practitioners, grassroots groups, and institutions. Through the Place Partnership, we will build relationships across regeneration, education, health, business, and the environment so that culture becomes a shared tool for local renewal.

3. Pride and Belonging

We will celebrate what makes each town, village, and valley distinctive: its stories, heritage, dialects, and creative energy, while nurturing a shared identity across the High Peak. Creativity helps people see where they live, and one another, in new and hopeful ways.

4. Sustainability and Care

We will care for our places and people through sustainable practice that reuses buildings, reduces waste, and supports creative responses to environmental change. We will also sustain the people who make culture possible by supporting volunteers, preventing burnout, and valuing the time and energy they give.

5. Lifelong Creativity and Opportunity

We will champion creativity at every stage of life, from children and young people discovering the arts for the first time to adults developing skills or returning to creative practice. By investing in training, mentoring, and pathways for creative professionals and educators, we will help local talent grow.

6.3 Strategic Objectives

To turn this vision into action, the High Peak Culture Strategy sets out six strategic objectives that will guide delivery and provide a framework for evaluation. Each objective reflects what people across the borough said matters most: connection, inclusion, opportunity, pride, sustainability and care.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

6.4 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.

7. Delivery Model

7.1 Overview

High Peak's delivery model is rooted in collaboration, local leadership and shared responsibility. It recognises that creativity flourishes when communities are empowered to act locally but supported strategically through clear coordination, partnerships and investment.

Delivery will be structured around a High Peak Place Partnership, supported by a network of Creative Forums in each town and a cross-cutting Education and Skills Group led by Teaching for Creativity. Together, these bodies will connect artists, residents, educators, businesses and councils in a joined-up approach to planning and delivery.

This model provides a framework for cultural growth that is practical, inclusive and resilient, able to adapt to future opportunities, including potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and to align with wider county and regional cultural structures.

7.2 The High Peak Place Partnership

High Peak's cultural ecosystem is collaborative by nature, powered by creative individuals, voluntary networks, educators, businesses and heritage partners. The new Place Partnership will bring these voices together, ensuring that culture is recognised as a shared responsibility across all sectors.

The Partnership will be co-designed during 2025–26, guided by the existing Advisory Group, HPBC, and existing local convenors. It will draw together partners from across Buxton, Glossop, New Mills, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Whaley Bridge to coordinate delivery and investment.

At the local level, Creative Forums will act as place-based hubs connecting towns and their smaller neighbouring villages in a hub-and-spoke model, for example, Glossop Forum supporting Hayfield and Chinley, and Buxton Forum connecting with the Hope Valley. Where capacity allows, additional Forums may emerge in Whaley Bridge or Chapel-en-le-Frith to ensure borough-wide reach.

By linking these local networks, the Partnership will:

- Strengthen coordination and reduce duplication between towns and festivals
- Encourage shared programming and communication
- Amplify visibility and joint promotion
- Connect community priorities to strategic planning and funding

Education and skills will form a key cross-sector strand. The Education and Skills Group, will align with the Place Partnership to embed creative learning across schools, youth settings and lifelong learning, effectively functioning as a Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) for High Peak.

7.3 Local Creative Forums

Local Creative Forums (CFs) will operate as place-based hubs connecting artists, organisations, and communities in their towns and surrounding villages. Each will reflect its local character and priorities while feeding into the wider Partnership.

- Existing convenors can play a coordinating role, hosting meetings and acting as connectors between practitioners and the Partnership.
- Additional Forums are expected to develop in Buxton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Whaley Bridge and the Hope Valley, depending on capacity and local energy.
- Each Forum will adopt a hub-and-spoke model, linking with smaller neighbourhoods and villages, for example, New Mills supporting Hayfield and Chinley.
- A rotating rural forum will ensure that remote communities across the borough also have a voice and access to resources.



7.4 Governance and Leadership

The Place Partnership will meet quarterly to coordinate delivery, monitor progress and steer shared priorities.

Indicative membership will include:

- High Peak Borough Council (culture, regeneration and community leads)
- Derbyshire County Council (Libraries and Museums Service)
- National Portfolio Organisations (Buxton Opera House and Buxton International Festival)
- High Peak Community Arts, Teaching for Creativity and local convenors (e.g. Glossop Creates, Rock Mill Centre)
- Representatives from the voluntary, health, education, business and environmental sectors
- Advisory Group members and Creative Forum leads
- Partners involved in regeneration and place-based development (e.g., Capital and Centric, The Springs project)

To anchor leadership and continuity, HPBC will explore appointing a Culture Champion. This dedicated role would coordinate cultural policy and advocacy across council departments, support partnership development, and chair the Place Partnership. Acting as a bridge between policy and delivery, the Culture Champion would ensure that culture remains visible, connected and prioritised within the borough's wider agendas for regeneration, wellbeing, tourism and climate action.

7.5 Roles and Responsibilities

High Peak Borough Council (HPBC): Acts as enabler, advocate and connector, embedding culture within regeneration, wellbeing, education and sustainability strategies.

Derbyshire County Council (DCC): Ensures alignment with county priorities for culture, education, health and libraries, and links to the Derbyshire Cultural Framework. The Libraries and Museums Service will play a central role in the delivery of this strategy, ensuring that culture remains accessible, educational and community-led. Through their collections, learning programmes and local partnerships, they bring deep experience of connecting people with place. Their planned integration of library and museum services in Buxton's new town-centre development offers a model for collaboration between culture, regeneration and education, strengthening access and visibility across the borough.

Community and Cultural Organisations: Lead on creative delivery, participation and innovation, offering local insight and co-creation with residents.

Parish and Town Councils: Play a vital role in sustaining cultural life across smaller communities, maintaining venues, supporting festivals and acting as connectors between neighbourhood priorities and borough-wide planning.

Creative Forums and Convenors: Act as place-based anchors, co-designing and testing initiatives locally, sharing learning, and ensuring delivery reflects lived experience and local need.

Regional and National Partners: Including Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Peak District National Park Authority, Historic England, universities and business partners, provide funding, expertise and knowledge exchange.

7.6 Partnership and Cross-Sector Collaboration

Cross-sector working will underpin the strategy. Collaboration between culture, health, education, regeneration, business and the environment will:

- Build shared capacity and resilience through joint skills and resources
- Unlock in-kind support and new investment streams
- Enable creativity to address wider social and economic priorities
- Strengthen innovation and co-production in inclusion, sustainability and placemaking

7.7 Embedding Inclusion and Accessibility

Inclusion is central to this strategy and will be embedded in every aspect of governance and delivery. The Partnership will adopt an inclusion-by-design approach, ensuring that all communities, including those in rural, deprived or underrepresented areas can access and shape cultural life.

Key commitments include:

- Ensuring diverse representation across partnerships and forums
- Collaborating with schools, youth and health services to reach those facing barriers to engagement
- Embedding physical and digital accessibility standards
- Supporting outreach and transport initiatives to enable participation in remote areas
- Using evaluation to track and improve inclusive practice over time

7.8 Communications, Visibility and Shared Identity

A shared communications framework will link culture, tourism and community networks under a unified High Peak Cultural Identity.

This will:

- Promote culture as a driver of tourism, wellbeing and pride of place
- Connect programming across towns and reduce event clashes
- Support joint campaigns, storytelling and shared “What’s On” information
- Build community marketing skills and encourage user-generated content
- Align with wider tourism marketing through Visit Peak District & Derbyshire and HPBC’s communications channels

The re-emergence of Buxton’s museum and library within The Springs redevelopment offers a flagship opportunity to strengthen the cultural identity of the town. By co-locating heritage, learning and creative activity in a visible, accessible space, it will reconnect residents and visitors with the borough’s stories and collections. This new hub can act as both a physical and symbolic anchor for High Peak’s cultural offer, celebrating its past while creating space for new voices and experiences.

To celebrate and amplify this shared identity, partners will explore launching a “Year of Culture” for High Peak. Modelled on successful county and regional examples, this initiative would bring together local organisations, schools, festivals and communities in a year-long celebration of creativity, heritage and participation.

It would:

- Showcase local talent, venues and volunteers
- Encourage collaboration between towns and sectors
- Stimulate tourism and local business
- Create a legacy of stronger networks and shared visibility

The Year of Culture could be funded through the mechanisms proposed in this strategy, including the Percent for Culture model, partnership investment and national grant programmes and the recently announced Town of Culture competition through DCMS.

7.9 Regional Alignment and Collaboration Across North Derbyshire

The Place Partnership will collaborate across borough boundaries, working with neighbouring areas such as Derbyshire Dales, Bolsover and Chesterfield to strengthen shared priorities, increase cultural visibility and enhance access to funding.

As this strategy spans a five-year period during which Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is anticipated, regional collaboration will be developed with flexibility. While the final governance arrangements for Derbyshire have not yet been determined, the strategy recognises that future structures may create new opportunities for joint cultural planning, shared investment models and strategic coordination across North Derbyshire.

To prepare for this, High Peak will explore with partners and funders the potential for a North Derbyshire Cultural Partnership, an approach inspired by models such as the Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board. These place-based cultural alliances demonstrate how collective vision and shared advocacy can amplify regional identity, attract increased investment and support culture to thrive at scale.

A future North Derbyshire partnership could:

- champion cross-area cultural policy and shared priorities;
- support learning and best practice across diverse rural, urban and heritage contexts;
- present a unified case for regional and national investment;
- strengthen networks across creative communities from Hathersage to Glossop, Buxton to Matlock, and New Mills to Chesterfield;
- align cultural activity with wider ambitions for regeneration, health, skills, and environmental sustainability.

By developing this collaborative foundation now, the Place Partnership will ensure High Peak’s creative voice remains strong and distinctive, while also positioning the borough as an active contributor to any future regional cultural ecosystem, regardless of the final outcomes of Local Government Reorganisation.

7.10 Investing in Cultural Growth

Delivering the ambitions of the High Peak Culture Strategy will require long-term, coordinated investment. No single organisation can achieve this alone. The Place Partnership will act as the borough's primary coordination mechanism for aligning funding streams, identifying opportunities and ensuring that investment in culture contributes directly to wider goals for regeneration, health, education, tourism, and environmental sustainability.

A mixed and sustainable funding approach will combine local, regional and national sources, from planning-linked mechanisms and cultural funds to cross-sector partnerships and community-led models.

Planning and Regeneration Mechanisms

High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) will explore new ways to embed culture within regeneration and planning policy.

Proposals include:

- **A Percent for Culture Fund:** introducing a planning mechanism similar to the “Percent for Art” model, ensuring that new developments and regeneration projects contribute meaningfully to High Peak’s cultural life. This could be supported through Section 106 agreements or community infrastructure levies, funding artist commissions, festivals, creative apprenticeships, and community engagement projects.
- **Assets of Cultural Value:** expanding the Assets of Community Value register to include culturally significant venues such as Victoria Hall, ensuring they are recognised and protected as part of the borough’s long-term cultural infrastructure.
- **Cultural Space Reuse and Meanwhile Use Schemes:** regenerating empty or underused spaces for cultural purposes through planning tools, High Street Auction Schemes, and partnership models that support artists, small organisations, and community initiatives.
- **Creative Space Inventory:** developing an inventory of existing and potential cultural spaces, businesses, and empty premises to inform investment and planning decisions.

These initiatives will ensure that culture is embedded in the physical, social and economic regeneration of High Peak’s towns and high streets.

Investing in Cultural Access and Opportunity

Investment will also focus on access and participation, ensuring that all residents, particularly those in areas of higher deprivation, can take part in, and benefit from, cultural life.

Key proposals include:

- **11 by 11 Programme:** Ensuring every young person in High Peak experiences at least eleven different cultural activities by Year 11. These may range from reading a book or attending a performance to creating an artwork or visiting a museum. The programme will be delivered through collaboration between schools, cultural organisations, and National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs).

- **Reducing Barriers to Events:** simplifying council processes to make it easier for community groups to deliver cultural events in public spaces, supported by HPBC's proposed coverage of liability insurance for activities in parks and open spaces.
- **Data Collection for Cultural Tourism:** building a clearer picture of cultural visitation and its economic contribution, helping evidence the value of culture to the visitor economy.

Leadership and Coordination

HPBC will appoint a Culture Champion to coordinate policy across departments and champion culture's role in regeneration, wellbeing, and community development. This post could also chair or co-chair the Place Partnership, ensuring a consistent voice for culture in local decision-making and in collaboration with partners such as Arts Council England, DCC Libraries and Museums, and Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust.

Funding for Place Partnerships (Arts Council England)

Arts Council England's Place Partnership Projects (within National Lottery Project Grants) present an important opportunity for strategic, place-based investment. These grants support long-term cultural development by strengthening infrastructure, improving access and participation, and embedding creativity within systems such as health, education, and regeneration.

A Place Partnership project must:

- Be strategic and designed to create sustainable, place-based change;
- Be led by a consortium (for example, HPBC, local cultural organisations, schools, and health partners);
- Be informed by local strategy, such as this Culture Strategy; and
- Include at least 15% cash match funding

Funding typically ranges from £100,000 to £1 million, covering feasibility, participation, programming, commissioning, and limited capital works. Projects are expected to demonstrate impact under one or both of Arts Council's "Let's Create" outcomes:

- Cultural Communities - increasing access, inclusion and wellbeing through culture.
- Creative People - growing participation, skills and creative career pathways.

For High Peak, a Place Partnership bid could focus on embedding the cross-sector delivery model proposed in this strategy, connecting culture with health, education, environment, regeneration, and tourism priorities.

Broader Investment Priorities

Beyond planning and Arts Council mechanisms, the Place Partnership will:

- Work with national funders such as Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England to secure sustained, place-based investment.
- Encourage business, tourism and philanthropic contributions, positioning culture as a driver of economic vitality, town-centre renewal, and wellbeing.
- Support grassroots organisations and creative leaders through training in fundraising, governance and business development to improve sustainability.
- Align cultural investment with national and regional programmes such as the Future High Streets Fund, Levelling Up Fund, and Towns Fund, drawing on successful examples such as Stockport's Stockroom project, which placed culture at the heart of major

regeneration and community development.

Celebrating and Sharing Success

As investment grows, the Place Partnership will coordinate a “Year of Culture” for High Peak, showcasing creativity across towns, villages and rural areas. This initiative, inspired by county-wide models, will celebrate local talent, enhance pride in place and act as a catalyst for future partnerships and funding bids.

7.11 A Live and Collaborative Framework

The High Peak Cultural Strategy is a living framework designed to evolve through collaboration and shared learning. The Place Partnership will ensure priorities stay responsive to community needs, working with Creative Forums, HPBC, and partners across Derbyshire to link vision with delivery.

Creative Forums will act as local hubs, connecting towns and surrounding villages in a hub-and-spoke model so that creativity and opportunity reach every part of the borough.

The framework will be reviewed annually through open consultation, supported by shared evaluation, regular reporting, and public engagement.

By keeping collaboration at its core, this approach will remain adaptive, inclusive and resilient, ensuring the strategy grows with the people and places it serves and continues to represent local voice through future changes in governance.

8. Action Plan

8.1 Introduction

This Action Plan sets out how the High Peak Culture Strategy will be turned into action. It has been shaped by the voices of residents, artists, volunteers, young people and partners, and reflects our shared vision of culture rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people.

The plan below is designed for everyone: community groups, schools, creative organisations, businesses and residents, to see how they can get involved and what the next steps will be.

It focuses on six key areas for delivery over the next five years. A more detailed version, including specific timescales and leads, is provided in **Appendix D: Detailed Action Plan**.

That working document will guide the Place Partnership, Creative Forums and Council teams, and will be reviewed annually to stay live and responsive, especially as new local government structures develop across North Derbyshire.

8.2 Action Plan

Making Culture Accessible to Everyone:

- Take creativity to where people are schools, libraries, community halls, care homes, high streets and parks.
- Support free and low-cost activities that welcome everyone, including in more deprived or rural areas.
- Make it easier to travel to and take part in events through local transport partnerships.
- Work with health and wellbeing partners so creativity supports happiness, confidence and connection.
- Embed inclusion and accessibility from the start of every project, removing barriers linked to cost, confidence, or mobility.

Connecting People and Places:

- Create a Place Partnership for Culture, bringing together councils, NPOs, education, health, business and community representatives.
- Support and resource Creative Forums in each town and surrounding villages, linking places through a hub-and-spoke model so smaller communities such as Hayfield and Chinley can connect to their nearest forum.
- Appoint a Culture Champion at High Peak Borough Council to coordinate culture across departments and chair the Partnership.
- Strengthen collaboration with neighbouring districts through a North Derbyshire Cultural Partnership, inspired by the Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board model.
- Maintain cultural continuity through the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation, ensuring High Peak's creative voice remains strong within the new Northern Derbyshire authority.

Celebrating Local Identity and Pride:

- Animate town centres and public spaces through creativity, murals, performances and cultural reuse of underused buildings.

- Designate Assets of Cultural Value to protect key community venues and local landmarks.
- Champion the heritage, festivals and stories that make each town and village unique.
- Launch a Year of Culture to showcase local creativity and celebrate the people and places that make the High Peak distinctive.
- Promote culture as part of the visitor experience through shared marketing and storytelling.

Supporting Creativity and Skills:

- Offer training, mentoring and leadership support for volunteers, artists and organisers to prevent burnout and strengthen sustainability.
- Support creative entrepreneurs and social enterprises to grow the local creative economy.
- Work with Teaching for Creativity and schools to expand their successful model of creative learning, piloting new work in secondary schools and developing a borough-wide 11 by 11 programme (11 creative experiences by Year 11).
- Establish creative apprenticeships, mentorships and residencies to help local talent thrive.
- Encourage collaboration between grassroots and professional organisations, ensuring all communities benefit from NPO activity.

Culture, Climate and Care:

- Make sustainability part of every creative project, from reusing buildings to using low-carbon materials.
- Work with environmental groups and the Peak District National Park to link creativity with climate action and outdoor wellbeing.
- Celebrate the borough's green spaces through outdoor arts and storytelling.
- Care for the people behind culture by supporting volunteers and small organisations with fair funding and wellbeing initiatives.

Investing in the Future:

- Develop a Percent for Culture approach so that new developments contribute to cultural life through planning gain.
- Explore Meanwhile Use schemes and high street regeneration projects to bring empty spaces back into creative use.
- Work with Arts Council England on a Place Partnership funding bid, building cross-sector collaboration and securing long-term investment.
- Attract national and philanthropic funding and encourage business sponsorship and local giving.
- Record and monitor the economic impact of cultural tourism to strengthen the case for continued investment.

8.3 Monitoring, Review and Accountability

Delivery of the Culture Strategy will be led by the Place Partnership, supported by the Culture Champion and Creative Forums.

Together they will:

- Review the detailed Action Plan each year and report progress to Council quarterly through Community Committee meetings.
- Publish an annual Culture in the High Peak - Year in Review summary for the public.
- Refresh priorities to respond to new opportunities, partnerships, and funding.

Accountability and Transparency

High Peak Borough Council will act as the lead accountable body, responsible for governance, financial oversight and alignment with wider council policy. The Executive Member for Culture and Culture Champion will provide visible leadership and democratic accountability.

The Place Partnership will be accountable for coordinating delivery, maintaining oversight of progress, and ensuring commitments are met. It will report formally to HPBC and share updates publicly.

The Creative Forums will hold local accountability for community engagement and participation, ensuring lived experience continues to shape delivery.

To strengthen openness and trust, the Partnership will invite external observers, including Arts Council England and Derbyshire County Council, to participate in an annual open meeting focused on evaluating progress and identifying future priorities.

The Action Plan will evolve alongside new governance structures, ensuring that as High Peak transitions toward a unitary council, its creative identity remains visible, confident and connected.

Culture in the High Peak will continue to grow as a shared force for wellbeing, pride and opportunity, rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people.

9. Measuring Success

9.1 Introduction and Indicators

Measuring success in culture is about more than numbers; it is about people, places, and the quality of connection between them. This framework proposes flexible, proportionate indicators to help partners understand what is changing and where progress is being made. It balances data with stories, ensuring evaluation remains meaningful to the people who make and experience culture every day.

The framework will evolve through the Place Partnership and Creative Forums, allowing partners to shape measures that reflect their priorities, resources, and lived experience. It will also help make the case for continued investment by showing how culture contributes to wellbeing, learning, regeneration, and sustainability across the High Peak.

Participation and Reach

- Participation rates across arts, museums, heritage and libraries (ACE/DCMS Participation Survey).
- Demographic reach, including engagement with young people, older residents, disabled audiences and rural communities.
- Geographic spread of cultural activity across towns and surrounding villages.
- Qualitative evidence from participants about wellbeing, pride, connection, and belonging.

Visibility and Coordination

- Number of listings and partners using a shared cultural calendar or “What’s On” platform.
- Reduced duplication and stronger joint marketing through coordinated programming.
- Increased recognition of the High Peak as a creative and visitor destination in regional and national media.
- Uptake of shared branding and messaging across partners, businesses, and tourism networks.

Capacity and Sustainability

- Growth in creative networks, training opportunities, and enterprise activity.
- Retention and satisfaction of volunteers supporting cultural activity.
- Number of successful funding bids and cross-sector projects developed through the Place Partnership.
- Evidence of new or repurposed venues providing sustainable creative space.

Investment and Sector Health

- Annual per-capita cultural investment (Arts Council England, NLHF, local authority and private sources).
- Increase in creative employment and business start-ups (ONS BRES, local datasets).
- Value of match funding secured through regional, health, regeneration and education partnerships.
- Improved financial sustainability of grassroots organisations and independent venues.

Inclusion and Access

- Participation by people with disabilities, care-experienced or isolated residents, and communities in areas of higher deprivation.
- Number of activities delivered in accessible or non-traditional spaces such as libraries, community halls, and outdoor settings.
- Evidence of projects designed through co-creation and inclusive practice.
- Qualitative feedback from youth, community and equality networks on accessibility and representation.

Education and Learning

- Number of schools and youth settings engaged in arts, culture and heritage activities (including Artsmark and the 11 by 11 programme).
- Uptake of professional development, training and mentoring opportunities.
- New creative pathways for young people into education or employment, supported by Teaching for Creativity and local partners.
- Evidence of creativity embedded across lifelong learning settings.

Environment and Climate

- Projects adopting sustainable event and production standards (e.g. Julie's Bicycle Creative Green Tools).
- Evidence of creative reuse of spaces and reduced carbon impact through cultural activity.
- Creative projects linking communities with local landscapes, biodiversity, and climate action.
- Annual review of sustainability practice and environmental learning.

Governance and Partnership

- Attendance, diversity and representation within the Place Partnership and Creative Forums.
- Annual partner survey assessing collaboration, leadership, and shared learning.
- Cross-sector projects demonstrating alignment with wider regional and national frameworks (ACE, NHS, education, regeneration).
- Evidence that culture continues to influence local policy, planning and wellbeing outcomes through LGR and beyond.

Appendix A - Consultation Findings (What We Heard)

1. Introduction

This appendix summarises the key findings from consultation with residents, artists, volunteers, cultural organisations, young people and stakeholders across High Peak. It draws on the series of Creative Forums, the public survey, stakeholder interviews, and ongoing postcard and youth engagement.

The consultation process was designed to be creative, inclusive, and reflective of the borough's rich cultural life, from its market towns and post-industrial landscapes to its rural communities and distinctive festivals. Participants were invited not only to share opinions, but to explore and visualise what a thriving cultural future for High Peak might look like.

Discussions revealed a place rich in creativity, pride, and resilience. People see culture as central to wellbeing, identity and community life, but also identified barriers such as limited funding, access to affordable space, and uneven visibility across the borough.

These findings have directly shaped the strategy's vision, values, and priorities.

2. Creative Forums

A promotional poster for Creative Forums. The background is light blue. On the left, there are logos for 'Culture & Creativity for all' (a grid of colored dots) and 'High Peak Borough Council' (a crest). The main text reads: 'Calling all creatives, heritage champions, cultural organisations and community leaders!'. Below this, a yellow box says 'Join one of our upcoming Creative Forums:'. The event details are: 'Pump Room, Buxton • 3 June, 2pm - 4pm', 'Partington Theatre, Glossop 3 June, 6.30pm - 8.30pm (networking event follows forum)', 'Spring Bank Arts Centre, New Mills • 4 June, 2pm - 4pm', and 'Online • 9 June, 6pm - 7.30pm'. A 'Book now!' link is at the bottom left. On the right, there is a stylized illustration of a man in a suit with a large eye for a head, surrounded by colorful circles and lines. At the bottom, a dark teal banner says 'Your voice matters.'

Culture & Creativity for all **High Peak Borough Council**

Calling all creatives, heritage champions, cultural organisations and community leaders!

Join one of our upcoming Creative Forums:

Pump Room, Buxton • 3 June, 2pm - 4pm

Partington Theatre, Glossop
3 June, 6.30pm - 8.30pm
(networking event follows forum)

Spring Bank Arts Centre, New Mills • 4 June, 2pm - 4pm

Online • 9 June, 6pm - 7.30pm

Book now!

Your voice matters.

Five Creative Forums were held during summer 2025 across High Peak; in Buxton, Glossop, New Mills, through an online session, and with the High Peak Cultural Advisory Group.

Each in-person forum and the Advisory Group session combined creative exploration with structured discussion, and were designed and facilitated by local artist Devlin Shea. Using image-making and collective reflection, participants were encouraged to express their ideas visually and collaboratively. Each session produced a shared artwork, a symbolic representation of local creative identity, values and aspirations.

The online forum, held via video session, was structured around open discussion rather than image creation. Participants explored priorities, barriers, opportunities, and how culture could connect across the borough's towns and rural areas. This format enabled wider participation from those unable to attend in person and provided valuable insight into digital access, collaboration, and communication.

Participants across all sessions included artists, cultural practitioners, volunteers, educators, councillors, business owners, representatives from Buxton Opera House, Buxton International Festival, High Peak Community Arts, Glossop Creates, and a wide range of community groups and residents.

Together, the forums revealed both what already works well in High Peak's cultural ecosystem, its strong grassroots activity, distinctive festivals, and deep creative talent, and what is still needed to make culture more visible, inclusive and connected.

3. Overview and Participation

In total, around 80 participants took part in the five forums, with many representing larger networks, creative collectives and community organisations. Their insights were complemented by over 150 survey and postcard responses, ensuring a diverse mix of perspectives from across the borough.

The five forums and their focus were:

- Buxton – Creative Catalyst (focusing on place, identity, and access to cultural infrastructure)
- Glossop – Cultural Tapestry (celebrating diversity, independence, and collaboration)
- New Mills – Creative Current (exploring grassroots energy, volunteering, and sustainability)
- Online Forum – Shared Horizons (linking towns, exploring priorities, barriers and digital connectivity)
- Advisory Group – Weaving the Vision (strategic alignment, shared values and ambitions for High Peak's cultural future)

Each in-person and Advisory Group forum generated a shared artwork that visually captured local experience and aspiration. The online session, while discussion-based,

reinforced these insights through open dialogue.

Together, they represent a borough-wide snapshot of creativity in action: a community ready to collaborate, confident in its identity, and ambitious for a stronger, more connected cultural future.

4. Advisory Group – The Open Weave



The Advisory Group session brought together councillors, creative practitioners, community and cultural leaders to shape the vision and values of the High Peak Culture Strategy. Facilitated by artist Devlin Shea, the session used collective image-making and reflection to explore what creativity means in the High Peak, and how culture can be made accessible, confident, and connected.

The resulting artwork, *The Open Weave*, brought together two key symbols: a woven bowl balanced on an open wooden structure set within a wooded landscape, and a transparent switch positioned subtly in the corner. Together they represented how culture in the High Peak must balance structure and freedom, heritage and experimentation, confidence and invitation.

“The switch represents the action it takes to engage, how do we give people the confidence to flip that switch?”

The woven bowl showed the threads of connection between the range of different activities that make up culture across the High Peak. Each thread represented a story, a relationship, or an act of participation, some bright and direct, others loose and wandering. There was enough structure to hold everything together, but enough chaos to allow for discovery and individuality.

“There’s a perfect shape holding it all, but when you look closely it’s full of gaps and colours, everyone follows their own thread.”

The group described this balance as a metaphor for the kind of creative infrastructure the borough needs: organised enough to support, but flexible enough to invite experimentation. Members agreed that culture should not be confined to polished, formal venues, but take place in accessible, welcoming spaces that encourage “*organised chaos*”, places where people can explore, play, and make mistakes without judgment.

“It’s not a shiny or pristine space, it’s natural, evolving, and invites ambition and messy play.”

The discussion around the switch captured the emotional and psychological barriers to participation. While creativity builds confidence, participants noted that it also *requires* confidence to begin. The image prompted a shared reflection on how we can create the conditions, the trust, safety and permission, that give people the courage to switch on their creativity.

The *string and paper cups* connecting different parts of the image symbolised communication and collaboration: the flow of ideas, stories, and relationships that amplify culture across the borough. Participants spoke about how these connections can help to strengthen identity — drawing together the multiple creative voices that make up the High Peak and helping residents to feel proud of where they live.

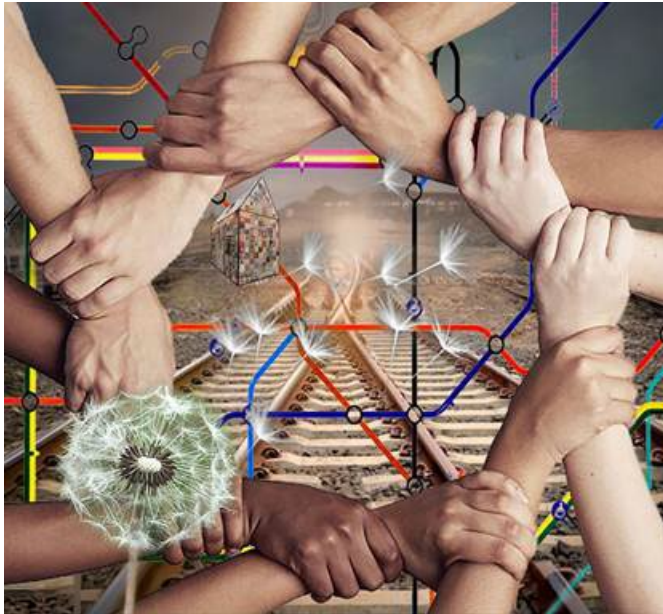
“These stories are what tether people to the place, even if they move away, the thread remains.”

“For me, it’s in every conversation, every gig, every bar where you see art on the walls or hear live music, these are all cultural threads.”

The session concluded with a sense of optimism and shared purpose. Participants described *The Open Weave* as a living metaphor for the borough’s creative future: a structure that holds, but never confines; a culture that welcomes new voices, supports risk-taking, and celebrates both heritage and innovation.

“We’re not always great at tying the threads together, but that’s what this strategy is for, to help us see the bigger picture of who we are.”

5. Glossop – Holding Together



The Glossop Creative Forum took place at the Partington Theatre, hosted by Glossop Creates, bringing together artists, musicians, writers, educators, and independent businesses to explore what connection and collaboration mean for the town's creative future.

Facilitated by Devlin Shea, the session combined collective image-making with discussion, resulting in an artwork titled *Holding Together*. The image intertwined interlocking arms and a network of coloured lines and junctions, resembling a tube map of people, groups, and creative themes. Each line represented a strand of cultural activity such as music, textiles, visual arts, performance, or science, and each intersection showed a point where collaboration, ideas, and community energy meet.

"It's not just a quick 'well done'. It's about holding each other up and saying, we can do this together."

"Glossop has a strong foundation. It's a place where people can grow, thrive, and count on each other."

The interlocking arms expressed the town's collective strength, showing how creative people and organisations support one another to sustain activity and momentum. Participants spoke of mutual respect and coordination, sharing volunteers, aligning event schedules, and lending time and space. This sense of reciprocity was described as Glossop's defining strength.

"We're all trying to find spaces for creativity, but it will only happen when we work together."

The coloured lines and stations mapped the connections between creative tracks, showing how different artforms and groups intersect through shared projects, community hubs, and informal

networks. The image resembled a living mind map of Glossop's creative ecosystem, where every line contributes to a bigger, interlinked picture.

"Culture thrives on interchange. It's not just about doing your own thing, it's about opening your space to others."

Participants reflected on Glossop's layered identity, rooted in its industrial past and independent spirit, yet continually renewed by newcomers bringing fresh perspectives. Many spoke about the importance of openness and exchange, where local heritage and global ideas can meet on equal ground.

"I grew up here, left for London and New York, and came back to raise my children. This place is deeply rooted, but it can also be open."

Through the discussion, dandelion seeds emerged as a recurring symbol of creativity, representing resilience, adaptability, and renewal. Participants spoke about how creativity supports mental health, confidence, and belonging, especially for young people, and how access to arts and culture can change lives.

"People see dandelions as weeds, but they're vital for bees, just like creativity is vital for society."

"Access to creativity builds self-belief and resilience, it's life changing."

On the horizon of the artwork sat a collaborative house, representing a shared aspiration for a creative hub or community arts space in Glossop. Participants described it as handmade and full of care, a place that could bring together making, learning, and belonging under one roof.

"You can imagine standing beneath it, looking up, and feeling wowed. It's handmade, full of love and care."

The group agreed that Glossop's creative future should not aim for a fixed destination but a shared direction, moving collectively toward greater inclusion, confidence, and connection.

"The destination isn't the point, it's about moving toward the light, together."

Holding Together captured Glossop's identity as a creative town built on trust and collaboration, a community of people and ideas, each supporting one another and moving forward through shared purpose and creativity.

6. New Mills - Flowing Connections



The New Mills Creative Forum took place at The Spring Bank Arts Centre, bringing together artists, makers, historians, volunteers, and residents to explore how creativity connects people, place, and heritage. Facilitated by Devlin Shea, the session produced an image titled *Flowing Connections*, inspired by the town's rivers, railways, and industrial landscape. The image showed a canal splitting and re-joining, crossed by bridges and threads of linen and wool, symbolising both the divides and the shared currents that shape community life.

"Our waterways and railways have always been vital arteries for ideas, culture, and trade."

"They connect us, not just geographically but culturally, tying our towns together and opening us to the wider world."

Participants reflected on how infrastructure mirrors community. The canals and railways once brought prosperity and exchange; now they stand as metaphors for connection and inclusion.

The conversation asked how similar bridges could be built between people and histories, especially across divides of access and opportunity.

"If we think of the canals as a map of connection, how can we apply the same principle to the divides in our communities?"

This theme of bridging divides ran throughout the discussion. The Transhipment Warehouse in Whaley Bridge was highlighted as a positive example of how heritage spaces can bring people together across generations and backgrounds. Participants imagined a cultural landscape that welcomes everyone, where creative activity is part of everyday life, not something distant or exclusive.

"There was a time when almost everyone in town made things. Now, there's a gap, and we can close it by creating open, welcoming spaces."

The conversation turned to craft and heritage as living sources of identity. Textile traditions such as linen and wool were described as symbols of local ingenuity and care, reminders that creativity is hands-on and communal. Participants shared stories of recent projects reviving flax growing and linen making — the first in New Mills since 1788 — with plans to create a community embroidery using handmade linen and local wool.

"Craft is our heritage, skills passed down through generations. They remind us that creativity isn't elite or separate. It's something anyone can do, and we can do it together."

Environmental awareness was central too. Many participants drew inspiration from walking in nature, describing how the landscape fuels both personal creativity and tourism. Yet they also noted challenges, from over-tourism to neglected mills and heritage sites. The group discussed ways to channel the influx of visitors into education, stewardship, and regeneration, using culture to foster respect for place.

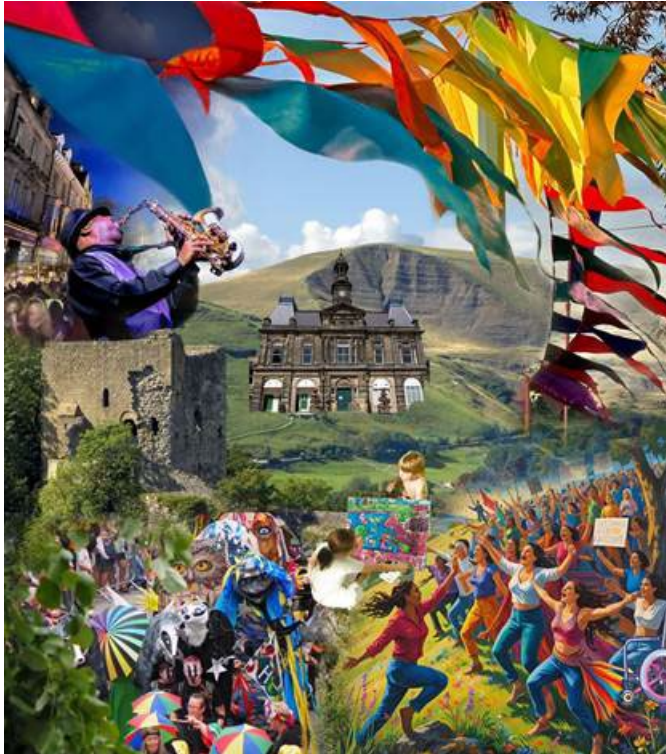
"People come for the views, but they don't always know the stories behind them. We need to share those stories, and protect what makes this place special."

The image's flowing water symbolised continuity and renewal — creativity as a living current sustained by people who make, care, and share. The conversation closed with reflections on how making art builds self-belief and purpose.

"When I make something with my hands, I feel most alive. It connects me to others, to nature, and to myself."

Flowing Connections captured the essence of New Mills: a place where creativity is part of the landscape, rooted in heritage yet always moving forward. It showed a community determined to bridge divides, revive its stories, and let creativity flow freely for everyone.

7. Buxton - The Creative Heart



The Buxton Creative Forum took place at The Pump Room, bringing together local artists, performers, educators, volunteers, and residents to explore the role of culture in the town's future. Facilitated by Devlin Shea, the group created an image titled *The Creative Heart*, a vibrant composition of flags, carnival scenes, and a central circle representing Buxton's creative core.

The discussion began with connection, exploring how culture brings people together and provides vitality and purpose.

"Culture is the thing that provides vibrancy, life and connection. Creativity and culture are the strength that hold us together, and that connectivity is vital."

Around the edges of the image, colourful flags danced in the air, representing celebration, visibility, and unity. Inspired by the Hay Festival, participants described them as symbols of joy and belonging, connecting people with ideas and with each other.

"The flags show that connectivity and strength. They surround our image, holding everything together."

In the background, Peveril Castle and the surrounding landscape framed the image, acknowledging Buxton's heritage and natural environment as foundations for creativity. Participants spoke about how nature fuels imagination and wellbeing.

"The landscape is a big asset for us."

"It's what connects people here, what inspires us."

The group reflected on how Buxton's landscape and historic sites, from its hills to its crescent, form part of a shared identity that links creativity with place, heritage, and health.

At the heart of the discussion was a call for a Creative Hub: a welcoming, intergenerational space where creativity can flourish and everyone can participate. The closure of the Green Man Gallery and Buxton Museum has left a gap in provision. Participants emphasised the need for a visible, accessible centre where people can make, exhibit, learn, and connect.

"A creative hub is a vital space that brings people together. It offers free, welcoming access for all ages and abilities, encourages participation, and fosters intergenerational exchange."

The central circle of the image represented this hub, the heart from which creativity radiates. Around it, smaller shapes and lines symbolised the flow of ideas, collaboration, and communication between individuals and groups.

"Everything revolves around the heart of creativity. Each part of the community has its own role, but everything connects and communicates. It's alive."

This living ecosystem captured Buxton's creative energy and the importance of openness across all levels of cultural life. Participants spoke passionately about the need for inclusivity and empowerment. Creativity should not be confined to professionals or visitors, but belong to everyone.

"You don't have to be an artist to make something beautiful or to tell a story."

The lower half of the image featured Buxton Carnival, with lanterns, umbrellas, and handmade costumes. This represented the joy of community celebration and the potential of outdoor creativity to reach new audiences.

"The carnival shows how art can leave the stage and fill the streets. That's where people connect."

Participants also spoke candidly about loss. Many of Buxton's historic buildings are decaying or being repurposed, and the town risks losing spaces that once supported creativity. The group considered leaving a corner of their image "crumbling" to symbolise this fragility but instead chose to fill it with colour and movement, a hopeful gesture toward renewal.

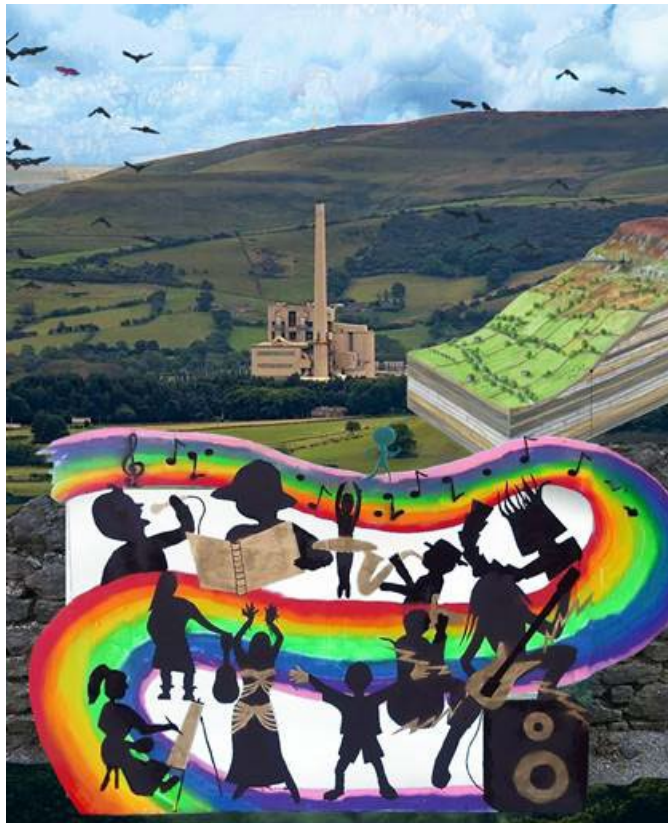
"It's powerful to see that space filled with something festive, because that's what people want for arts and culture here."

The forum highlighted children and young people as central to a sustainable creative future. They are already shaping culture through schools, youth theatre, and festivals, but need more opportunities to learn, lead, and participate.

"Children are the future of a sustainable community. They're already part of the story."

The Creative Heart captured Buxton's dual character, a town of extraordinary heritage and creativity that must also nurture grassroots participation and connection. It called for renewed spaces, shared ownership, and collective energy to keep culture alive at every level of the community.

8. Online Forum – Layers of Place



The online Creative Forum, held via Miro, brought together artists, cultural organisations, volunteers, and residents from across the High Peak. Although virtual, it was lively, visual, and deeply reflective — exploring how people experience their environment and how creativity grows from place itself.

Participants created a shared digital image, inspired by a mural made by a local youth group, depicting a sweeping rainbow filled with movement, colour, and figures dancing, painting, and

singing. Behind it stood the outline of Hope Cement Works, anchoring the image in the High Peak's industrial heritage. The combination of vivid creativity and working landscape captured the character of the borough: shaped by nature, industry, and imagination.

"When you say you live in the Peak District, people imagine a chocolate-box village but it's a quarrying village. That's what's so interesting here: the beauty and the grit exist together."

The discussion centred on the psychogeography of the High Peak — how the landscape shapes emotion, identity, and creative energy. Participants reflected that the Peaks are not untouched wilderness, but a *living, marked landscape*, where every valley, mill, and woodland carries the traces of human labour and change.

"The woods around Solomon's Temple were planted to hide the lime kilns, yet now they feel natural. It makes you ask, is nature ever really natural?"

This idea of layered history resonated throughout the session. People described how walking the same paths that once carried stone, cotton, or coal now brings reflection and inspiration. The hills and waterways were seen as "creative currents," carrying stories from the past into the present.

"I don't separate the built environment from what we call the natural one, both hold the marks of those who came before us."

The group viewed these layers not as barriers, but as *resources*, sources of story, meaning, and artistic material. The High Peak's physical and emotional landscape was seen as both muse and mirror, shaping creativity through its contrasts: beauty and decay, solitude and connection, freedom and containment.

Priorities

Participants identified shared priorities for culture and creativity rooted in this deep relationship with place:

- **Protecting and reimagining heritage spaces** - saving disused mills, halls, and chapels by bringing them back into community and cultural use.
- **Recognising the value of the working landscape** - celebrating the stories of labour and craft, and connecting them with new creative practice.
- **Creating flexible, inclusive hubs** - spaces for making, meeting, and experimenting that reflect the "grit and grace" of the area.
- **Better coordination and visibility** - linking towns and villages through shared promotion and networks.
- **Engaging young people** - in creative education and careers that connect artistic expression with environmental awareness.

"Nature here has grit. It tells the story of both beauty and labour, and that's what makes creativity thrive."

Challenges

The conversation highlighted barriers that limit creative activity:

- Loss of accessible, multi-use spaces, particularly following the closure of key venues in Buxton and elsewhere.
- Short-term funding, which makes planning and coordination difficult.
- Transport and infrastructure gaps, limiting access across rural areas.
- Volunteer dependency, leaving projects fragile and unsustainable.
- Economic pressures and red tape, preventing community use of historic buildings.

Participants also noted the danger of overlooking everyday creativity, the quiet, informal, and local making that connects people to their surroundings and each other.

“These towns exist because of industry, mills, quarries, the need to house workers. The creative future should be built on that same sense of purpose.”

Ambitions

The group’s vision for the future was of a High Peak where creativity, nature, and heritage are seen as one continuous landscape. They imagined a place where walking, making, storytelling, and performance are all expressions of belonging.

Key ambitions included:

- Establishing a Creative Hub in Buxton as a central, accessible space for making and collaboration.
- Encouraging community-led regeneration of heritage buildings through flexible ownership and support.
- Developing cross-town networks that share resources and amplify visibility.
- Strengthening creative education pathways in partnership with schools and colleges.
- Using art and storytelling to reconnect people with the landscapes around them.

“Our landscape holds stories, botanical, historical, political and those stories offer endless possibilities for reflection.”

Participants agreed that success would mean creativity visible in everyday life: in disused mills reborn as studios, in artwork that honours the land, and in people feeling empowered to create.

“The Peaks are not just a backdrop. They’re alive with memory, and every act of creativity is part of that ongoing story.”

9. Shared Insights Across All Forums

Despite the distinct character of each town and group, strong common themes emerged across all the High Peak Creative Forums. Participants consistently expressed pride in their places, a belief in the value of creativity, and a desire for greater connection, visibility, and support.

Theme	Shared Insight
Inclusion and Belonging	Creativity should be for everyone, reflecting the diversity of the High Peak's communities. Participants called for culture that is open, welcoming and rooted in lived experience, not just for those already engaged.
Spaces and Infrastructure	There is a pressing need for accessible, affordable and flexible creative spaces. From Buxton's call for a cultural hub to New Mills' hopes for community use of heritage buildings, participants want spaces that feel owned by and for local people.
Collaboration and Connectivity	Across all sessions, people spoke about the importance of connection between towns, groups, and sectors. A coordinated cultural network, shared promotion, and regular forums were seen as essential to sustaining creative life across the borough.
Visibility and Identity	Culture should be visible in everyday life; in public spaces, schools, and town centres. Many felt that while the High Peak has vibrant creativity, it is not always recognised or celebrated, and that stronger communication could build shared identity and pride.
Skills and Sustainability	Artists, volunteers, and organisers need fair support and investment to avoid burnout. Training in fundraising, project management, and digital communication were highlighted as priorities for building long-term resilience.
Youth and Education	Young people should be central to cultural life. Participants called for more creative education in schools, stronger links with colleges, and opportunities for young people to see culture as a viable and rewarding career path.

Landscape and Heritage	The High Peak's landscape and industrial heritage are both creative assets and sources of identity. Forums described the landscape as a living archive of stories, inspiring creative practice and connecting communities past and present.
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These forums confirmed a shared vision across the High Peak: a borough where creativity is visible, valued and connected to place, where everyone can take part and feel ownership of its cultural life.

Together, they expressed a collective ambition:

A High Peak where culture is open to all, rooted in its landscape and communities, and alive with collaboration, pride and possibility.

10. Public Survey Results

An online public survey ran from June to August 2025, promoted through local networks, press, and social media, alongside postcard distribution in community venues. It received over 120 responses, providing valuable insights into local attitudes, participation patterns and barriers to cultural engagement.

Importance of Culture

Responses across the High Peak were overwhelmingly positive.

- **99 %** of respondents said that culture and creativity are important to them.
- **97.5 %** agreed that culture makes the High Peak a better place to live.

Respondents described creativity as central to wellbeing, identity and quality of life, something that connects people across the borough's towns, villages and landscapes. Culture was also seen as a powerful way to tackle loneliness, foster inclusion and strengthen community pride.

"It brings townsfolk and communities together."

"Opportunities to widen horizons."

"They create positive and harmonious communities and foster friendships and opportunities for people of all ages."

"I enjoy sharing and socialising with other creative people."

Participation and Aspiration

Engagement in local creative activity is high, but aspirations for deeper, more diverse

and inclusive opportunities are even higher. Respondents expressed a desire for more music, performance, visual arts and creative workshops, alongside affordable, intergenerational and social activities.

Current Participation vs Aspiration

Respondents identified both well-established areas of cultural activity and clear gaps where demand exceeds current provision.

- Strong current and future demand: Visual arts and community events show consistently high participation and continue to attract strong interest.
- Significant aspiration gaps: Workshops and classes (+20%), creative activity in the landscape (+20%), and museum/heritage experiences (+15%) were all highly desired but less accessible at present. Film screenings (+10%) were also frequently mentioned as something respondents would like to see more of.
- Stable or oversupplied areas: Performing arts participation currently exceeds aspiration (–13%), while festivals (–8%) and volunteering (–1%) remain steady but show limited growth in interest.

“There’s not enough music etc. going on. We need a communal arts hub.”

“Children’s crafty activities, particularly nature-themed.”

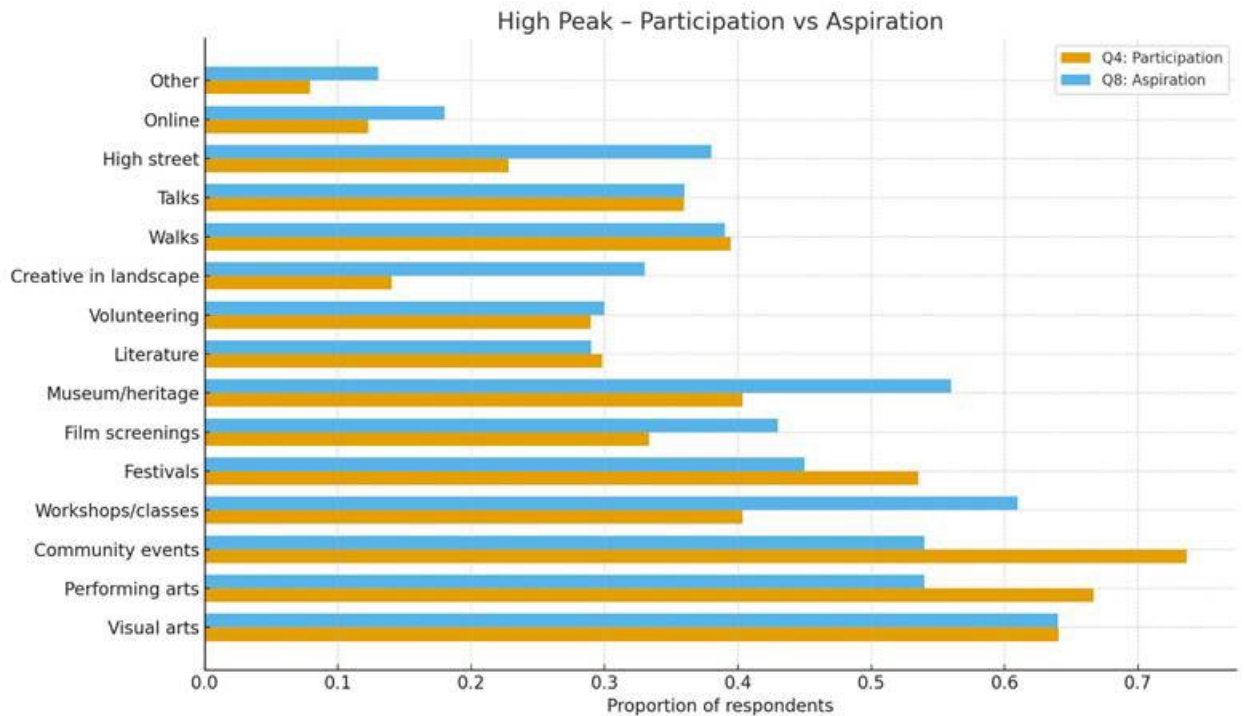
“Needs more DJ nights, burlesque and things for young people to do.”

“LGBT-focused activities.”

“Courses have closed at Glossop Adult Education Centre.”

“Need more visual arts venues and Buxton Museum to re-open.”

These comments reveal a strong appetite for accessible, community-led creativity and highlight how much people value informal, grassroots and affordable opportunities to participate.



Graph 1: Current participation vs aspiration in cultural activities

These findings highlight that while the High Peak already enjoys a thriving cultural scene, there is strong demand for hands-on, participatory, and affordable creative experiences, particularly those that make use of the area's landscapes and heritage.

Where People Engage in Culture

Most respondents participate in cultural activity locally within the High Peak, demonstrating strong community-based engagement and a deep attachment to place.

Buxton emerged as the most active hub, with its Opera House, Pavilion Gardens, and year-round festivals drawing participants from across the borough. Glossop's Partington Theatre, Victoria Hall and grassroots groups such as Glossop Creates also play a central role, offering a vibrant blend of music, theatre, and maker activity.

New Mills stands out for its artist-led regeneration and the New Mills Festival, which continues to connect culture with community identity. Smaller towns and villages such as Chapel-en-le-Frith, Whaley Bridge and Hayfield contribute through creative networks, local halls, and independent initiatives that sustain everyday participation.

Residents also travel to neighbouring centres such as Macclesfield, Stockport, Sheffield, Manchester and Leek for larger-scale cultural experiences, specialist workshops, or a wider range of creative opportunities.

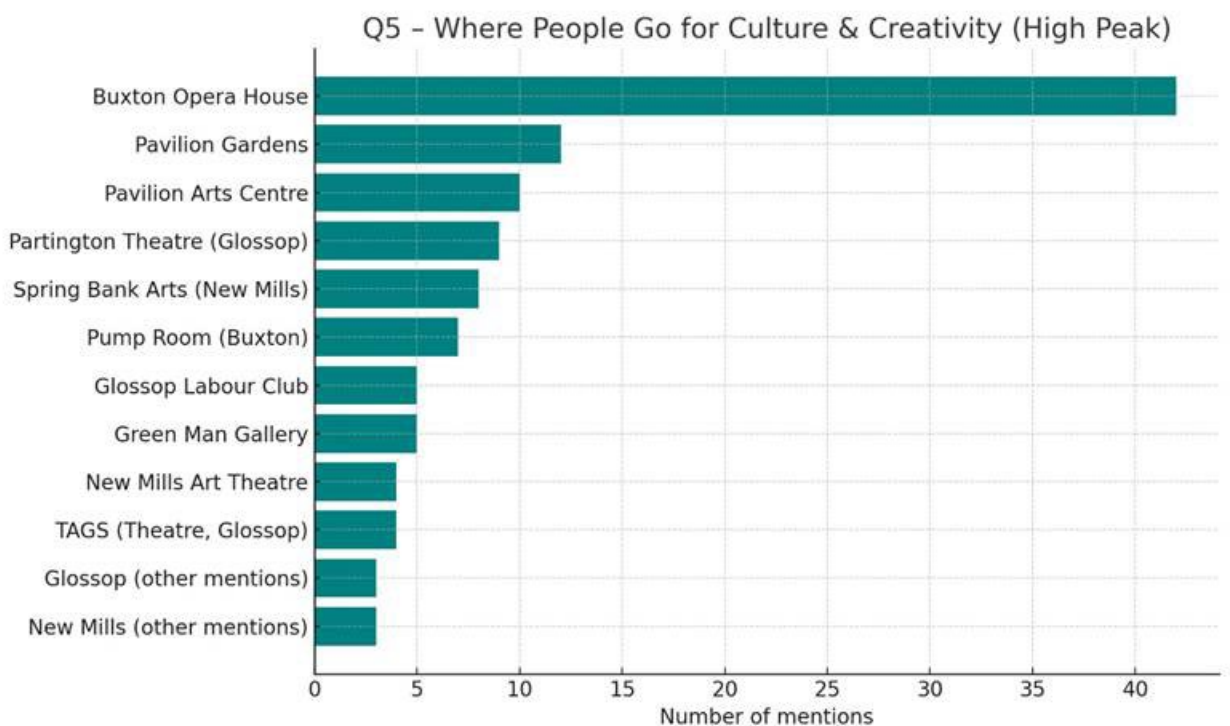


Chart 2: Where people participate in culture and creativity (High Peak)

This shows that while there is pride and participation locally, many also look beyond the borough for large-scale experiences, highlighting both a challenge and an opportunity.

This pattern represents both strength and potential. The High Peak's towns already act as cultural anchors, each with a distinctive offer, yet there is a clear appetite for more connected, visible, and year-round opportunities across the area.

Rather than competing, towns can complement one another, each with its own identity and creative strengths, forming a network of places that together create a coherent cultural map of the High Peak.

For the strategy, this suggests three key priorities:

Cultural Connectivity – Strengthen links between towns and rural areas through shared promotion, joint programming and cross-marketing to encourage audiences to explore across the borough.

Scaling Local Strengths – Build on Buxton's established cultural infrastructure while supporting emerging activity in Glossop, New Mills, Whaley Bridge and smaller rural hubs, reflecting the strategy's value of equity across place.

Attracting and Retaining Audiences – Develop events and experiences that reduce “cultural leakage” to neighbouring cities by offering distinctive, high-quality, and accessible programming locally.

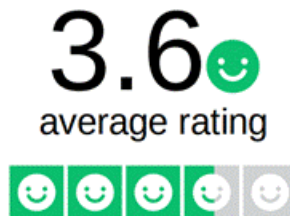
Together, these insights reinforce the need for a joined-up, borough-wide approach, one that links towns and villages, celebrates local distinctiveness, and strengthens High Peak’s position within the wider Derbyshire and Peak District cultural landscape.

Access and Barriers

While most respondents described taking part in creative and cultural activity as “somewhat easy” (average rating 3.6/5), barriers remain significant for some groups, particularly those in rural or more deprived areas, and for younger people or those with access needs.

Q6 On a scale of 1 to 5, we would like you rate how easy it is to take part in cultural and creative activities in the High Peak?(1 = Not easy at all, 5 = Very easy)

Answered: 114 Skipped: 6



Graph 3: Barriers to participation (High Peak)

Survey and forum responses revealed several recurring challenges:

Awareness and Communication

Many residents said they simply do not know what is on. Local activity is strong, but information is fragmented and often confined to word of mouth or social media. Smaller groups lack capacity or confidence to promote events widely, meaning opportunities are easily missed.

“Awareness can sometimes be an issue, I miss events because organisers aren’t good at promoting, or don’t have the resources.”

“Very fragmented supply of information. No coordination between individuals and

groups.”

This points to the need for a shared communications approach that improves how people hear about creative events, funding, and opportunities to take part.

Cost and Affordability

Around one in five respondents identified cost as a limiting factor. While many cultural experiences are free or low-cost, families and young adults felt even modest ticket prices could exclude them.

“Events and activities that are free or offer a sliding scale fee make all the difference.”

“We need to support volunteers and small organisers so they don’t have to give everything away for free.”

This reinforces the value of free and low-cost creative activity in community spaces such as libraries, schools, halls, and outdoor settings, keeping engagement equitable and sustainable.

Access and Transport

The borough’s geography continues to pose challenges. Isolated villages, limited evening bus services, and costly rail fares restrict participation, especially for young people, older residents, and those without cars.

“Transport is unreliable and irregular.”

“It’s difficult to get to things in the evenings, by the time the event finishes there’s no way home.”

Improving connectivity and exploring partnerships around transport and cultural access pilots will be important steps forward.

Space and Infrastructure

The lack of affordable, multi-functional creative spaces is a recurring theme. Respondents frequently mentioned the closure of venues such as the Green Man Gallery and Buxton Museum as a blow to local engagement.

“No dedicated venue or facility for creating and displaying visual art.”

“Buxton Acutely Needs A New Arts Hub, somewhere everyone can use and feel welcome.”

Participants across the borough stressed the importance of flexible, accessible spaces, from small workshops to community-run hubs, that can host creativity at every level.

Volunteer Fatigue and Capacity

Many cultural groups rely on the same core volunteers, who are overstretched. The desire for coordination, paid support roles and mentoring opportunities was clear.

“Not enough organisers or volunteers, the same people end up doing everything.”

“People think these events will always happen, but they only last if we support the people behind them.”

Inclusivity and Representation

Some respondents expressed concern about perceived “cliques” or exclusive networks in the arts scene, particularly in New Mills. This underlines the importance of maintaining an open, inclusive approach that encourages collaboration and diversity.

“If you’re not part of the group, you can feel cut out of what’s going on.”

Together, these findings show that participation in culture across the High Peak is strong in spirit but uneven in access.

They highlight three clear opportunities for the strategy:

- **Visibility and Communication** – creating a coordinated borough-wide approach to marketing and information.
- **Affordability and Everyday Creativity** – embedding free, inclusive creative activity in community settings.
- **Accessibility and Connection** – integrating creativity into transport, wellbeing, and digital initiatives.

These insights reinforce the strategy’s guiding values of Inclusion, Connection, and Visibility.

Addressing these barriers will require not only better communication and affordability, but also coordinated infrastructure so that culture reaches every town, village, and community in the High Peak.

11. Stakeholder Insights

Alongside the community voices heard through the Creative Forums and survey, structured interviews were carried out with cultural and community leaders, funders, council officers (High Peak and Derbyshire County Council), and education and heritage partners.

These conversations built a shared picture of the opportunities and challenges for culture across the High Peak and identified practical ways to strengthen coordination, visibility, and sustainability.

Planning, capacity and investment

Stakeholders agreed that culture should be woven into planning and regeneration policy rather than treated as an add-on. They highlighted the importance of aligning creative work with town-centre renewal and sustainable growth, noting that a clear planning framework could help secure long-term cultural benefits. Some partners suggested that planning tools and asset registers could be used to protect or repurpose spaces of cultural value. Others stressed the need for better evidence of culture's economic and social impact to inform future investment.

There was broad consensus that small organisations and volunteers shoulder much of the delivery without consistent funding or coordination.

Respondents called for a borough-wide cultural network or coordinating role to connect activity, share information and reduce duplication.

Participants emphasised that modest, consistent support would have a transformative impact on capacity and confidence.

Spaces and regeneration

Re-use of under-occupied or heritage buildings was repeatedly cited as a key opportunity. Stakeholders saw potential for short-term or “meanwhile” occupation schemes and for mapping empty premises that could host exhibitions, workshops or rehearsals.

They also underlined the value of creative use in animating town centres, drawing visitors and supporting independent businesses.

Heritage sites such as Buxton Crescent and the Transhipment Warehouse in Whaley Bridge were seen as exemplars of how cultural activity can help breathe new life into historic environments when supported by sensitive planning and community partnerships.

Education and inclusion

Partners expressed concern that many children and young people in the High Peak have limited access to arts experiences in or outside school. Teachers, youth leaders and creative practitioners all emphasised that participation in culture builds confidence and aspiration, yet opportunities are patchy and often depend on individual champions.

There was enthusiasm for a joined-up approach linking schools, colleges and creative organisations, and for programmes that guarantee access to a range of cultural experiences throughout education. This directly reflects the strong community desire for equitable creative access across towns and rural areas.

Health, wellbeing and connection

Many partners drew attention to the link between creativity, health and social connection. They described cultural activity as a route to improved mental health, reduced isolation and stronger neighbourhood ties.

Libraries and community venues were viewed as trusted, low-cost spaces where this work can thrive, though staff capacity and funding remain constraints.

Stakeholders called for stronger links between cultural, health and community services to reach residents who might not otherwise take part.

Leadership and coordination

Stakeholders agreed that sustained cultural development will depend on clearer leadership within the council and consistent dialogue with the sector. They emphasised the value of ongoing political support, coordination across departments, and visible recognition of culture's contribution to regeneration, tourism and wellbeing. Local councillors expressed commitment to advancing this joined-up approach and exploring future mechanisms to sustain it.

These could include dedicated coordination roles, a borough-wide cultural partnership and clearer routes for community groups to access support.

Summary

Across all interviews, partners echoed the themes voiced by residents: the High Peak is rich in creativity but stretched for resources and coordination.

They agreed that the next phase must focus on embedding culture in policy, supporting those who deliver it, and connecting efforts across sectors so that creativity can flourish everywhere.

12. Learning from Elsewhere

As part of developing this strategy, members of the High Peak Cultural Strategy Advisory Group took part in a learning visit to Stockport's Stockroom project, alongside representatives from High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council Libraries and Museums team, and partners from Capital & Centric. The visit aimed to understand how cultural investment and community development can be embedded within wider regeneration plans, and to learn directly from another place undergoing transformation.

Stockroom, Stockport: a model of cultural regeneration

Stockroom is a major town-centre project that reimagines Stockport's library, a repurposed large retail space on the high street, as a flexible community and cultural space. It is part of a wider regeneration strategy to revitalise Stockport's high street, reconnect communities with the town centre, and strengthen civic identity.

The space is designed to be inclusive, multi-use and adaptable, with areas for reading, digital activity, performance, and creative learning. The project has been positioned as a “library of the future” and as a civic space where culture, learning and everyday life come together.

During the visit, the High Peak group explored how Stockroom has balanced its dual role as a community facility and a driver of economic regeneration. Discussions covered the funding and design process, partnership working between the council, the library service and external developers, and the operational lessons learned from construction to delivery.

What we learned

The group identified several lessons relevant to the High Peak:

- Culture as a catalyst for regeneration - Stockroom demonstrates how culture can play a central role in shaping the identity and renewal of a town centre. It highlighted the value of integrating cultural spaces into broader economic and urban planning, rather than treating them as standalone projects.
- The importance of inclusive design - accessibility, adaptability and a sense of pride were built into Stockroom’s design from the outset. This inclusive approach ensures the space feels open to everyone, something participants agreed is essential for any future creative or community hub in the High Peak.
- Collaboration and shared purpose - Stockport’s project brought together a wide range of partners; regen, archives, libraries, communities, designers and makers, united by a shared vision. For High Peak, the visit reinforced the importance of cross-departmental collaboration and early engagement with local communities to ensure buy-in and sustainability.
- Operational sustainability - The group also reflected on the practical challenges discussed by Stockport colleagues, including long-term funding models, governance arrangements, and the balance between free and commercial activity. These insights will help inform planning for any future cultural infrastructure projects in the High Peak.

The visit offered inspiration and practical insight into how the High Peak might approach similar challenges:

- how to repurpose underused or heritage buildings for community and cultural use;
- how to design inclusive, flexible spaces that meet a range of community needs;
- and how to align cultural development with regeneration and economic growth strategies.

It also reaffirmed the role of culture as a unifying force; connecting people, place and purpose and the value of partnership working. The learning from this visit will continue to inform conversations about cultural infrastructure, planning and investment within the High Peak, ensuring that future development is both community-led and strategically aligned with the borough’s regeneration ambitions.

13. Limitations of the consultation

While the consultation was broad and inclusive, it is recognised that the findings may reflect a degree of participant bias. Those who engaged in the creative forums and the online survey were often already active participants in, or supporters of, culture and creativity. This is a common feature of cultural consultations, as networks and word of mouth tend to reach people who are already engaged. Around 250 people engaged in the process in total with 70 of those attending the Creative Forums, whom often represented groups and larger communities.

The online public survey received 121 responses. While this provides valuable insight, it represents a small sample size and should be understood as indicative rather than fully representative of the district population. Its strength lies in the depth of qualitative responses - which highlight themes of wellbeing, belonging, and identity - rather than in statistical generalisation.

To mitigate these limitations, the methodology included multiple approaches:

- **Youth engagement** through local youth groups to capture younger voices.
- **Stakeholder interviews** with funders, partners, and local authority teams to balance grassroots views with strategic perspectives.
- **Postcard consultations** in community spaces (planned and in progress) to reach residents less likely to engage online.

These additional steps ensure that the strategy is informed not only by those most connected to cultural activity, but also by groups and individuals whose voices might otherwise be absent.

Evidence from comparator places demonstrates how coordinated leadership and targeted investment can unlock culture's wider benefits.

Appendix B – Local Context and Case for Culture

1. Introduction

Across the UK, culture is increasingly recognised as a catalyst for wellbeing, learning, regeneration and environmental sustainability. National strategies such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create* (2020–2030), the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Strategic Framework (2024–2030), and the Government's Levelling Up White Paper highlight the power of culture to strengthen identity, build social connection and contribute to economic resilience.

This strategy for High Peak aligns with those ambitions, translating them into local delivery and responding to the distinctive character and opportunities of this landscape—from the mills and markets of Glossop and New Mills to the festival and heritage assets of Buxton, and the rural creativity of the Hope Valley and Chapel-en-le-Frith.

Culture here is both an economic driver and a way of life. It sustains tourism, shapes wellbeing, connects generations and keeps the borough's towns and villages vibrant. The strategy builds on existing strengths while addressing gaps in visibility, coordination and access, ensuring that creativity is a shared right and resource across all communities.

2. Regional and Local Strategic Alignment

At a regional level, Derbyshire County Council's Cultural Framework (2024) and the Derby and Derbyshire Framework for Growth establish culture as a key enabler of economic resilience, regeneration and wellbeing. These frameworks recognise that creativity drives local pride, skills development and a sense of belonging, all vital to the county's future sustainability.

At district level, the High Peak Culture Strategy aligns with and supports several key plans and policies:

- High Peak Borough Council Corporate Plan (2023–2027) – prioritising wellbeing, sustainable growth, and strong, connected communities.
- Growth Strategy (2025–2028) – identifying creative and visitor economies as catalysts for regeneration, skills and investment.
- High Peak Tourism Strategy (2024–2028) – positioning the borough as a distinctive visitor destination rooted in heritage, festivals and landscape.
- Climate Change Action Plan (2023–2030) – committing to sustainable practice and low-carbon initiatives; this strategy complements it through creative climate engagement and sustainable events.
- Parks Strategy (2021–2031) – recognising parks and green spaces as shared community assets that support wellbeing, biodiversity and civic pride, and using them as accessible, sustainable settings for outdoor creativity, festivals, learning and social connection.
- Derbyshire County Council's Library and Museum Strategy (2024) – embedding libraries and museums as inclusive, creative community anchors that support learning and wellbeing.
- Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024–2030) – recognising the role of cultural participation in improving mental health, reducing loneliness and strengthening social connection.

Together, these frameworks create a shared foundation in which culture is not an optional extra but a vital tool for regeneration, connection and community life.

3. Insights from National and Regional Evidence

National research continues to show that culture can transform places and lives. The High Streets Task Force and Institute of Place Management identified four interdependent pillars for successful place transformation:

- Local leadership and long-term capacity building.
- Inclusive partnership and shared governance.
- Creating identity and visible experiences that build civic pride.
- Youth engagement and co-creation shaping the future.

These findings resonate strongly with the High Peak context: dispersed settlements, limited cultural infrastructure and strong grassroots creativity. Consultation shows that residents value culture deeply but want stronger coordination, investment and visibility.

Regional evidence from *Creating Connections* (Culture Derbyshire, 2024) reinforces these messages: creativity is a shared resource that delivers health, regeneration, education and climate goals when embedded in local systems.

The High Peak strategy builds on these principles, focusing on:

- Leadership and coordination through a future Place Partnership.
- Cross-sector collaboration linking culture with regeneration, education, health and environment.
- Skills and sustainability to support creative practitioners and volunteers.
- Access and inclusion so that creativity thrives in every town and village.

4. Local Assets, Creative Activity and Cultural Ecology

High Peak has a distinctive cultural ecology shaped by its industrial heritage and creative energy. The borough's landscape of mills, market towns and moorlands has always been shaped by making, performance and storytelling.

Culture in the High Peak is rooted in place. From the industrial valleys of New Mills and Glossop to the upland villages of the Hope Valley, creativity and landscape are deeply intertwined. Outdoor creativity, walking festivals, heritage trails and site-specific art projects all reflect the connection between people, place and imagination.

Key assets include:

- Buxton Opera House and Buxton International Festival (BIF), both National Portfolio Organisations.
- High Peak Community Arts, Glossop Creates, Babbling Vagabonds and The Tent People, connecting creativity with wellbeing and local enterprise.
- Buxton Civic Association and Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust (BCHT), protecting and activating heritage assets including the Crescent, Pump Room and Buxton Museum collections.

- Festivals including Buxton Fringe, New Mills Festival, GlossFest, and Well Dressing traditions.
- Venues such as Spring Bank Arts Centre, Partington Theatre, The Pump Room, Torr Vale Mill, Pavilion Gardens, independent galleries, pubs and cafés.
- A network of libraries, village halls, churches and community centres across the borough.
- Heritage and environmental bodies such as the National Trust, Derwent Valley Mills WHS, and Peak District National Park Authority.

Despite this vibrancy, consultation highlights a gap between enthusiasm and infrastructure. Many creative practitioners and organisers rely on volunteer energy, short-term projects and informal venues.

Key needs identified include:

- Affordable, flexible spaces for making, rehearsal and performance.
- Better coordination across towns to prevent duplication.
- Stronger advocacy for culture in planning and regeneration.
- Visible, meaningful opportunities for young people.
- Support for independent venues and hospitality spaces.
- Integration of creativity with natural and built heritage, particularly in the Hope Valley.

The stakeholder visit to Stockroom in Stockport offered insight into how co-design, sustainable business models and creative reuse of heritage buildings can revitalise towns. This learning informs emerging plans for The Springs redevelopment in Buxton, which could provide a shared home for library, museum, community and creative activity.

An appreciative mapping of High Peak's cultural ecology will be an early action of the delivery plan.

5. Collective Opportunity

By aligning with national, regional and local frameworks, the High Peak Culture Strategy positions culture as a shared driver of wellbeing, regeneration, learning and environmental sustainability.

Consultation reveals that while the borough is rich in creativity, this potential is unevenly realised due to gaps in coordination, visibility and infrastructure.

Key opportunities include:

- Embedding culture in regeneration through planning policy and asset management.
- Revitalising vacant and underused spaces for meanwhile use and creative hubs.
- Building a joined-up cultural network across towns and villages.
- Supporting sustainable cultural tourism.
- Championing education and lifelong learning.
- Expanding cross-sector partnerships.
- Fostering inclusive participation.
- Strengthening cultural leadership within HPBC.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is currently under national consideration, and final decisions about future governance arrangements for Derbyshire have not yet been made. This

strategy does not assume any particular outcome or model. Instead, it has been intentionally designed to remain neutral, flexible and adaptable, ensuring that: - cultural priorities are protected under any future structure; - partnership models (Place Partnership and Creative Forums) can operate at different geographic scales; - High Peak's cultural identity continues to be represented during and beyond any transition.

This neutrality ensures that culture remains a stable and unifying force, regardless of administrative changes.

6. Local Data at a Glance

To understand the cultural landscape of High Peak in context, the following summary draws on the Arts Council England Culture & Place Data Explorer, a national evidence platform that brings together over 200 datasets from government, cultural funders and national statistics agencies.

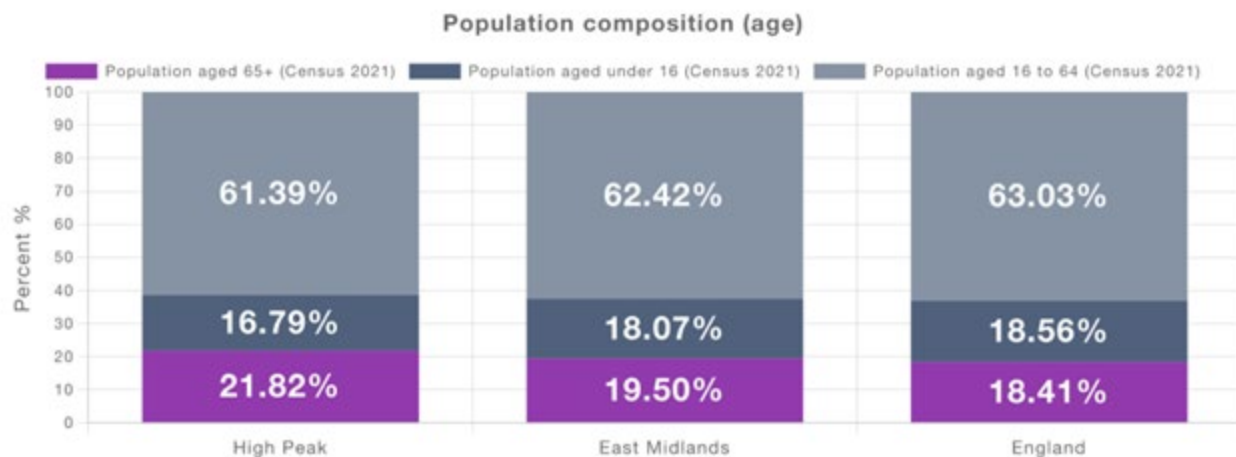
The Explorer combines sources such as the DCMS Participation Survey, ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund grant data, Census 2021, and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

This multi-source approach enables direct local comparison with regional and national averages, providing insight into participation, investment, cultural infrastructure and socio-economic context.

The data below reflects the most recent available indicators for High Peak (June 2025), benchmarked where possible against East Midlands and England averages.

Indicator	High Peak	East Midlands	England	Notes / Source
Population	90,930	4,880,054	56,490,048	Census 2021
Arts participation (in-person, 12 months)	94.4%	89.6%	90.4%	DCMS / ACE Participation Survey
Arts participation (online, 12 months)	38.0%	34.7%	36.4%	DCMS / ACE Participation Survey
Visited heritage site (12 months)	79.3%	65.0%	66.2%	DCMS / ACE Participation Survey

Visited museum or gallery (12 months)	44.6%	37.4%	43.1%	DCMS / ACE Participation Survey
Visited library (12 months)	25.9%	21.8%	25.0%	DCMS / ACE Participation Survey
ACE investment per head (2024/25)	£6.97	—	—	Arts Council England Funding Data
Total ACE awards (2024/25)	£635,165	—	—	Includes NPOs and project grants
Creative and cultural employment	960 (3.1%)	2.95%	5.05%	ONS BRES 2024
Creative and cultural businesses	325 (7.0%)	3.4%	9.3%	ONS Business Register
Gross Value Added (GVA) per head	£19,718	£28,315	£37,004	ONS GVA 2024
Population aged 65+	21.8%	19.5%	18.4%	Census 2021
Economically inactive (retired)	29.5%	22.1%	21.5%	Census 2021 / JSNA
IMD average rank (2019)	20,095	17,182	16,356	MHCLG IMD 2019
Tourism day visits (annual average)	2.59m / £68.9m spend	2.06m / £74.5m	3.63m / £157.4m	VisitBritain GBTS
NLHF awards (per 1,000 population)	£11,512	—	—	National Lottery Heritage Fund 2023
Population growth projection (2025–2040)	+4.7%	+7.5%	+5.3%	ONS Projections 2025



Graph 4: Population composition (age) Source: Census 2021

7. Interpretation

High Peak shows consistently high cultural participation, above regional and national averages. This strong engagement sits alongside structural challenges - limited investment, infrastructure gaps and reliance on volunteer-led activity.

The data demonstrates:

- high enthusiasm for arts, heritage and libraries;
- lower-than-average creative employment and investment levels;
- strong volunteer culture and local pride;
- uneven access between larger towns and smaller rural communities.

These insights reinforce the need for:

- sustained, equitable investment;
- regeneration of underused spaces;
- stronger cross-sector partnerships;
- coordinated leadership through a Place Partnership;
- visibility and joined-up communications.

Overall, cultural participation outpaces the borough's physical and financial infrastructure. With focused investment, strategic coordination and strengthened partnerships, High Peak's cultural sector can flourish across all towns and villages.

Appendix C - Case Studies

To demonstrate how culture in the High Peak is already making a difference, here are three case studies from grassroots festivals and creative networks to innovation in education. Each case study outlines what the project is, how it operates and is funded, the partnerships that support it, and what has been learned.

Together they demonstrate the range and strength of cultural activity across the borough:

- **Glossop Creates** – a creative network building collaboration between artists, businesses and the wider community, strengthening the town’s cultural identity and economy.
- **New Mills Festival** - a long-standing grassroots celebration that brings residents together through art, light and performance, showing the power of volunteer-led creativity.
- **Teaching for Creativity** - a partnership model connecting schools, cultural organisations and educators to embed creativity in teaching and inspire the next generation.

Collectively, these examples illustrate the diversity of creative practice in the High Peak, professional and community, urban and rural, educational and entrepreneurial and demonstrate how culture connects people, places and opportunity.

Case study: Glossop Creates

A grassroots model for creative placemaking in the High Peak

1. Overview

Glossop Creates is a community-led cultural programme established in 2017 to support, connect and celebrate the creative community in Glossop. Initiated by Local’s Director Claire Tymon after identifying untapped creative potential and limited cultural infrastructure, the project has evolved from a self-initiated campaign into a long-term programme that champions the town’s artists, makers and cultural identity.

2. How It Works

Glossop Creates builds creative ecosystems from the ground up, using a test-and-learn approach rooted in Creative Civic Engagement principles. Key activities include:

- **Creative networks & mentoring** - connecting over 325 local creatives through meet-ups, drop-ins and tailored support.
- **Residencies & commissions** - pairing artists with local history, places and organisations, generating new work such as *Longdendale Tales* and textile collections inspired by Glossop’s industrial heritage.
- **Community programmes** - public events including the Winter Story Trail, creative walks, family workshops and high-street activations.
- **Spaces for making and gathering** - piloting studio, retail and pop-up cultural spaces, including KIN.DER, temporary “urban-room” style hubs and heritage building partnerships.
- **Storytelling & advocacy** - weekly press features, zines and online platforms amplifying local creative voices and civic pride.

3. Funding & Partnerships

Glossop Creates is delivered by Local Creative Project Ltd and now supported by Local Creative Lab CIC. Investment has been secured through Arts Council England, High Peak

Borough Council, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and local partners, alongside business sponsorships and earned income. Collaboration with local creatives, cultural organisations, independent businesses and public-sector partners underpins the initiative.

4. Impact & Outcomes

- 325+ creatives engaged, with mentoring and pathways into professional practice.
- 75+ commissions and new cultural enterprises, including the Dark Peak Photography Festival and KIN.DER print studio.
- Strengthened town identity and confidence through storytelling and visible creativity.
- New cultural infrastructure and investment secured, inspiring similar models in Derbyshire and beyond.

“It felt like hidden nuggets of talent rose to the surface - for the first time I could see the creative potential on my doorstep.” Local creative participant

5. Challenges & Learning

Sustaining capacity for place-based culture requires dedicated coordination, long-term investment, and accessible space. Glossop Creates shows the importance of grassroots leadership coupled with strategic support.

6. Looking Ahead / Strategic Relevance

Glossop Creates demonstrates how a small town can build a thriving creative ecosystem - strengthening civic pride, revitalising the high street and supporting the cultural economy. Its continued development will contribute to year-round cultural life, community ownership, creative jobs, and cultural identity across the High Peak.

7. Policy Takeaway: What This Model Unlocks for Rural Places

Glossop Creates demonstrates how **small towns can build big cultural ecosystems** when creativity is community-led and structurally supported.

Key Ingredients

- Long-term vision and trusted local leadership
- Space to test, learn and scale
- Investment in talent, not just events
- Embedded partnership with local authority
- Creative storytelling that builds civic pride

What it Achieves

- Local cultural workforce development
- Year-round creative activity
- Youth pathways into the creative economy
- Strong identity and visitor appeal
- Investment readiness and partnership confidence

Why It Matters

This is a blueprint for rural creative growth, proving that with the right ecosystem, culture can drive regeneration, belonging and economic resilience in market towns, not just cities.

Case Study: New Mills Festival

A volunteer-led celebration of creativity and community in the High Peak

1. Overview

The New Mills Festival is one of Derbyshire's longest-running community arts and culture festivals, a two-week programme of music, art, performance and participation held every September. Entirely volunteer-led, it was established to celebrate local creativity and bring residents, businesses and visitors together through shared cultural experiences.

Over more than two decades, the festival has become a defining feature of New Mills' identity, attracting thousands of visitors and showcasing the town's distinctive character. Central to its success is the annual Lantern Procession and Street Party, which transforms the town centre into a spectacular display of light, collaboration and civic pride.

2. How It Works

The festival is coordinated by a small volunteer committee supported by local helpers, artists, schools and community groups. Events are hosted in venues across the town, from the Town Hall and Torrs Riverside Park to cafés, churches and high-street spaces.

Local artists lead workshops, exhibitions and performances, and residents contribute ideas, time and creativity to each year's theme. This grassroots model keeps the programme diverse and relevant, blending art, heritage, sustainability and wellbeing. The committee also works closely with the Town Council, schools and community organisations to deliver a safe, inclusive and dynamic festival.

3. Funding and Partnerships

Funding is drawn from small grants, sponsorship, ticket income and donations, alongside in-kind support from local businesses. The festival benefits from a constructive partnership with the New Mills Town Council, which underwent a major change in leadership two years ago. This shift created new opportunities for collaboration, openness and joint planning, an important foundation for future resilience and shared responsibility for culture in the town.

4. Impact and Outcomes

The festival generates significant cultural, social and economic benefit. It brings residents together across generations, increases civic pride and supports local artists and independent traders. Schools and families take part in lantern-making and creative workshops that build confidence and connection.

Volunteers describe a strong sense of purpose and belonging through their involvement. The event's continuity and quality are direct results of this community energy, a living example of culture as collective effort.

5. Challenges and Learning

While the festival's volunteer-led nature is its greatest strength, it also creates vulnerability. The core team's dedication has sustained the event for years, but *volunteer burnout and capacity pressures now pose real risks* to its continuity. Maintaining motivation, recruiting new members and ensuring knowledge transfer are essential for long-term sustainability. Building succession planning and volunteer wellbeing into future models will be key to sustaining this valued community asset.

6. Looking Ahead / Strategic Relevance

New Mills Festival exemplifies *community ownership, creativity and connection*, core principles of the High Peak Cultural Strategy. It shows how volunteer-led culture can strengthen identity and belonging, while also highlighting the need for investment in capacity, coordination and leadership development. Future ambitions include deepening collaboration with the Town Council, diversifying funding, and building mechanisms that support volunteer resilience so the festival can continue to flourish.

7. Policy Takeaway: What This Model Unlocks for the High Peak

New Mills Festival demonstrates the transformative potential and fragility of community-led culture in small towns.

Key Ingredients

- Volunteer-led planning and delivery rooted in civic pride
- Partnership with Town Council enabling shared resources and programming
- Programming across local venues and public spaces
- Intergenerational participation through schools and families
- Cultural, social and economic benefits delivered on modest resources

What It Achieves

- Builds belonging and civic pride
- Strengthens volunteer skills and community leadership
- Boosts local economy and visitor appeal
- Creates a unifying moment of celebration for the town

Why It Matters

- Illustrates both the strength and risk of volunteer-led cultural infrastructure
- Shows how local government support can safeguard community creativity
- Aligns with High Peak priorities for *Connection, Participation, Resilience and Sustainability*

Case Study: Teaching for Creativity

Embedding creative teaching practice across High Peak schools

1. Project Overview

Teaching for Creativity is a school-led programme established in the High Peak to embed creative pedagogy across primary and early years settings. Designed and led by former headteacher Alice Littlehailes, the initiative supports teachers to become confident, reflective practitioners who use the arts to enhance learning, wellbeing and oracy. First piloted with seed funding from The Mighty Creatives, the project went on to secure major investment from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England.

2. How It Works

Eight High Peak schools, including nurseries, small rural schools and one-form entry primaries, partner with a local artist for up to two years. Together, they explore creative approaches linked directly to school improvement priorities, ensuring the work is integrated, relevant and sustainable.

Mentors (experienced former headteachers) provide structured support, reflective practice sessions and CPDL for staff, helping teachers develop new skills and confidence. Artists evolve from workshop leaders into co-designers and creative consultants, working weekly in school to build teachers' creative capacity across the curriculum.

3. Funding and Partnerships

The programme has been funded through the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Teacher Development Fund, with subsequent support from Arts Council England. It has also drawn on local creative practitioners and school leadership networks, strengthening connections between education and the cultural sector.

4. Impact & Outcomes

The programme has delivered significant educational and cultural benefit:

- Increased teacher confidence and leadership in creative practice.
- Whole-school planning changes, with creativity now embedded in curricula and school improvement plans.
- Improved pupil confidence, communication, collaboration and problem-solving - particularly among quieter or neurodiverse learners.
- Stronger artist development, with practitioners reporting new skills and deeper understanding of school environments.

As one teacher reflected: *"I feel like I've grown as a leader. This has transformed how I teach and how our school thinks about creativity."*

5. Challenges and Learning

Sustainability depends on leadership buy-in, time for reflection and ongoing mentorship. The project highlights the need for structured roles, not just individual passion, to embed culture in education.

6. Looking Ahead / Strategic Relevance

Teaching for Creativity offers a scalable model aligned with High Peak's ambition for inclusive cultural access, workforce development, creative skills and strong school community links. The long-term vision is to expand the model to all High Peak schools, including secondary settings, ensuring every child experiences creativity as central to learning and belonging.

Dissemination Video:

<https://vimeo.com/1080631246>

Teaching for Creativity - at a glance

Focus	Embedding creative teaching practice across schools
Schools involved	8 schools across High Peak (nursery, infant & primary)
Teachers engaged	Lead teachers + whole-staff CPDL in each school
Artists	6 local freelance artists (visual & drama)
Mentors	2 former headteachers & school improvement specialists
Duration	2-year delivery period
Funding	Paul Hamlyn Foundation (Teacher Development Fund) + Arts Council England
Model	Weekly artist residencies, structured reflection, CPDL, school-improvement focus
Key Outcomes	Increased teacher confidence & leadership, improved pupil confidence & oracy, creativity embedded in school planning

Legacy

- Model now adopted in a second cohort of High Peak schools
- Schools continuing creative practice beyond funded phase
- Potential to scale to every High Peak school, including secondary pilots

7. Policy Takeaway: What This Model Unlocks for High Peak

Teaching for Creativity shows how investing in teachers as creative leaders can transform schools into cultural hubs that nurture confidence, curiosity and belonging. In a rural district where access to cultural experiences can be limited, embedding creativity in everyday learning offers a long-term, equitable route to cultural participation.

Why this matters

- 60%+ of children in the High Peak will first, and sometimes only access culture through school.
- Teacher confidence and creativity have a compounding impact: each trained teacher reaches hundreds of children over time.
- Rural schools often struggle to access artists and cultural CPD - this model brings expertise *into the classroom and stays there*.

What it unlocks

Strategic Priority	Contribution
Cultural Access & Inclusion	Creativity becomes core, not optional - all children benefit, including neurodiverse and quieter learners.
Local Cultural Workforce	Artists develop practice in education, opening up new employment pathways.
Community Connectivity	Stronger school–arts partnerships create a pipeline into local events, festivals and creative spaces.
Belonging & Confidence	Children build agency, voice and aspiration - key to rural retention and future talent.
Education as Cultural Infrastructure	Schools act as everyday cultural spaces, reducing access barriers in dispersed communities.

Policy Implications for High Peak

- Treat schools as anchor cultural institutions in rural placemaking.
- Invest in creative CPD, mentoring and artist-teacher networks as core cultural infrastructure.
- Support scaled and sustained roll-out across High Peak (including secondary pilot).
- Develop pathways between schools and community hubs, festivals and creative industries.

This model proves that creativity is not an “extra” - it is a foundation for aspiration, resilience and local pride. Long-term investment in teacher creativity builds the cultural life of a place from within, ensuring every child sees creativity as part of their identity and future in High Peak.

Appendix D - Action Plan

This Action Plan translates the High Peak Culture Strategy into a practical, phased delivery framework. It sets out what will happen, when, and who will lead it, ensuring the vision of *Culture rooted in our landscapes and shaped by our people* becomes real through joined-up action.

The plan builds on consultation, local ambition and partner capacity. It will be co-ordinated through the People & Place Partnership, the Creative Forums, and HPBC.

Actions are grouped under six cross-cutting themes:

1. Leadership & Coordination
2. Spaces & Places
3. Inclusion & Wellbeing
4. Skills & Sustainability
5. Visibility & Communication
6. Youth & Lifelong Creativity

It is structured across three phases:

- **Short-term foundations (0–2 years)** – coordination, pilot projects and securing early wins ahead of Local Government Reorganization (LGR).
- **Medium-term embedding (3–5 years)** – scaling successful pilots and establishing long-term programmes.
- **Long-term sustainability (5 + years)** – embedding culture in local identity, systems and governance.

The Plan is a live, evolving framework. Following Executive approval, it will return to the Creative Forums and stakeholder networks for activation and review.

Each action is RAG-rated to indicate readiness:

- = Ready to progress within existing capacity or early-phase funding
- = Achievable but needs additional resource, partner buy-in or development
- = Dependent on policy change or external approval; longer-term priority

Short-Term (0–2 Years)				
Indicative Action	Theme	Lead / Partners	Expected Outcome / Measure	RAG (Status & Rationale)

Prepare LGR Cultural Transition Plan	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC Culture & Regeneration, DCC Libraries & Museums, Place Partnership Advisory Group	Cultural priorities embedded in “One Derbyshire, Two Councils” submission.	● Green – Fits within existing workloads; ensures continuity during LGR.
Appoint Culture Champion at HPBC	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC Leadership Team	Designated lead officer to coordinate policy and chair Place Partnership.	● Green – Low-cost action with high impact on visibility and leadership.
Establish Place Partnership	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC, DCC, Advisory Group & partners	Partnership membership confirmed; quarterly meetings commenced.	● Green – Strong partner support; ready to progress.
Launch Creative Forums with Start-Up Funding	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC, Local Convenors (Glossop Creates, Rock Mill Centre, etc.)	Town-based forums established with resource for meetings..	● Green – Small funding pot required; quick win for engagement.
Cultural Asset and Space Mapping	Spaces & Places	HPBC Regeneration, Creative Forums	Inventory of venues, empty premises and creative businesses completed.	● Green – Feasible within existing planning tools.

Appreciative Mapping of the Cultural Ecology	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC Culture and Regeneration Teams, Place Partnership, Creative Forums, DCC Libraries & Museums	Comprehensive mapping of creative practitioners, organisations, venues and networks across the borough. Shared open resource to inform investment, funding bids and advocacy.	● Green – ready to progress. Builds on consultation findings and existing data. Can be delivered collaboratively through Creative Forums with minimal additional resource.
Scope Percent for Culture Policy (S106)	Planning & Investment	HPBC Planning & Finance	Policy options developed for Cabinet; consultation begins.	● Amber – Requires cross-departmental coordination and political buy-in.
Pilot Meanwhile Use / Empty Space Scheme	Regeneration & Reuse	HPBC Regen, Capital & Centric, Place Partnership	Two pilot spaces activated for creative use.	● Amber – Dependent on property availability and funding.
Assets of Cultural Value Register	Planning & Heritage	HPBC Assets Team, Creative Forums	Initial list of priority buildings designated.	● Green – Aligns with existing Assets of Community Value framework.
Develop Access & Inclusion Policy	Inclusion & Wellbeing	Place Partnership, Disability Networks	Policy drafted and tested with target groups.	● Green – Within current capacity; high public priority.

Pilot 11 by 11 Cultural Programme for Schools	Youth & Education	Teaching for Creativity/LCEP, HPBC Education Lead, NPOs	Each young person accesses 11 creative experiences by Year 11.	● Green – Pilot feasible with local partners.
Scope Teaching for Creativity Expansion Bid	Education & Skills	Teaching for Creativity/LCEP, HPBC, ACE	Funding proposal developed to scale teacher training and school capacity.	● Amber – Dependent on ACE bid approval.
Launch Cultural Tourism Data Pilot	Tourism & Evidence	HPBC Tourism Team, Visit Peak District	Data framework for cultural visitors developed.	● Green – Achievable within current tourism workstreams.
Streamline Event Licensing and Insurance	Community Support	HPBC Legal & Parks	Simplified process and HPBC-covered liability insurance for community events.	● Green – Operational change with broad support.
Year of Culture Feasibility Study	Visibility & Identity	Place Partnership, HPBC Comms & Tourism and Creative Forums	Proposal for borough-wide celebration developed.	● Green – Early planning within communications budget.
Prepare ACE Place Partnership Bid (15% match)	Investment & Partnership	HPBC Finance, ACE, Place Partnership and Creative Forums	Bid submitted to Arts Council with secured cash match (£10–20k).	● Amber – Requires match funding approval but high feasibility.

Medium-Term (3–5 Years)				
Indicative Action	Theme	Lead / Partners	Expected Outcome / Measure	RAG (Status & Rationale)
Embed Place Partnership and Culture Champion within New Northern Derbyshire Council (post-LGR)	Leadership & Coordination	HPBC, DCC, ACE, Future Unitary Council	Cultural structures secured within new governance.	● Amber – Dependent on national LGR timeline (2028 transition).
Adopt Percent for Culture Policy	Planning & Investment	HPBC Planning	Policy embedded in planning frameworks.	● Red – Politically sensitive; requires Executive sign-off.
Deliver Creative Space Regeneration Projects	Spaces & Places	HPBC Regen, Developers, NLHF	Three underused spaces repurposed for culture.	● Amber – Needs capital funding and partners.
Expand Teaching for Creativity Programme (Secondary Pilot)	Education & Skills	Teaching for Creativity/LCEP, ACE, DCC Education	Secondary school pilot launched and evaluated.	● Green – Strong school and ACE support anticipated.
Launch High Peak Year of Culture	Visibility & Identity	Place Partnership, Creative Forums, HPBC Comms & Tourism	Borough-wide cultural programme delivered; visitor numbers increased.	● Green – Builds on early feasibility work and funding mechanisms.

Volunteer and Leadership Development Phase 2	Skills & Sustainability	Place Partnership, VCS Partners	Retention and training improved by 25%.	● Green – Feasible using regional training offers.
Establish Creative Health Partnerships	Inclusion & Wellbeing	NHS ICS, HPBC Health Leads, Place Partnership	Creative health projects embedded in care and wellbeing plans.	● Green – High alignment with health priorities.
Develop Creative Business & Enterprise Programme	Skills & Economy	Place Partnership, Chamber of Commerce	50 creative businesses supported through training and networking.	● Green – Matches regional growth objectives.
Cross-Boundary North Derbyshire Cultural Partnership Pilot	Regional Alignment	Future Unitary Council	Joint manifesto and funding framework developed.	● Amber – Requires multi-authority agreement.

Long-Term (5 + Years)				
Indicative Action	Theme	Lead / Partners	Expected Outcome / Measure	RAG (Status & Rationale)
Sustain Place Partnership and Creative Forums	Leadership & Coordination	Future Unitary Council, Place Partnership	Structures fully embedded with shared governance.	● Green – Feasible through established practice.

Maintain Percent for Culture Funding Mechanism	Planning & Investment	Future Council Planning	Culture investment normalised in development projects.	● Red – Requires long-term political commitment.
Creative Infrastructure Investment Plan	Spaces & Places	Future Council, Place Partnership, ACE, NLHF	Sustained capital and revenue funding secured.	● Amber – Dependent on future funding cycles.
Embed Cultural Health and Education Partnerships	Cross-Sector	NHS ICS, Schools & Colleges	Culture integrated into curriculum and social prescribing.	● Green – Supported by national policy trends.
Evaluate and Refresh Culture Strategy	Leadership & Coordination	Place Partnership, Future Council	Five-year review published with new priorities set.	● Green – Built into monitoring cycle.

This framework is intended not just as a plan, but as a shared tool - evolving over time through feedback, partnership and lived experience. As the plan rolls out, the Creative Forums and wider community will remain central to shaping and refining action. We expect this to be a journey of adaptation - so while the priorities here provide direction, the details may shift with new opportunities, resources and insights. Together, through Place Partnership working, we will steward this strategy into a responsive, collaborative future for culture across the High Peak.

Appendix E - Culture Champion Role

The Culture Champion will be an independent, external facilitator, convenor and connector, appointed to support High Peak Borough Council and the borough-wide cultural ecosystem during the implementation of the Culture Strategy (2026 - 31).

Acting as a bridge between policy, practice and place, the Culture Champion will:

1. Provide Strategic Coordination & Leadership

- Chair and facilitate the High Peak Place Partnership, ensuring strong cross-sector collaboration between culture, health, regeneration, education, environment, and business partners.
- Maintain momentum, clarity and shared purpose as the cultural system evolves and as the borough transitions toward new governance structures under Local Government Reorganisation.

2. Support the Culture Team & Creative Forums

- Work closely with HPBC's Culture Team to align activity, unblock barriers, and ensure culture is represented effectively across departments.
- Support Creative Forum leads in Glossop, Buxton, New Mills and additional emerging hubs, enabling local priorities to feed into borough-wide planning (hub-and-spoke model).

3. Act as Convenor & Connector

- Bring together partners who may not traditionally collaborate, strengthening relationships between grassroots organisations, major cultural institutions (including NPOs), education partners, and community groups.
- Facilitate shared programming, co-commissioning opportunities, and new cross-borough initiatives.

4. Drive Cultural Placemaking

- Champion the integration of creativity within regeneration, planning and development - mirroring successful models such as the Bolsover Culture & Place Board.
- Support mechanisms such as Percent for Culture, the Assets of Cultural Value Register, and Meanwhile Use schemes, ensuring culture is embedded in spatial planning and town-centre renewal.

5. Identify Opportunities & Strengthen Investment

- Lead research and horizon-scanning for new funding opportunities (Arts Council Place Partnerships, Heritage Fund, Levelling Up, Towns Fund, philanthropic and private sector investment).
- Develop proposals that align with the Council's Corporate Plan, Growth Strategy, Parks Strategy, Tourism Strategy and the wider Derbyshire Cultural Framework.

6. Champion Inclusion, Access & Community Voice

- Ensure that inclusion-by-design principles are embedded in all cultural planning and delivery-from rural outreach and cost barriers to visibility, disability access and youth engagement.
- Advocate for equitable creative opportunity across towns, villages and remote communities.

7. Strengthen Communication, Visibility & Shared Identity

- Work with partners to coordinate shared messaging, develop a unified cultural identity for High Peak, and support the activation of a shared "What's On" platform.
- Help shape flagship initiatives such as a future Year of Culture, borough-wide festivals, or cross-border collaboration through a North Derbyshire Cultural Partnership.