

THE ECONOMIC SPILLOVER OF CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES

FIVE CASE STUDIES

OCTOBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme provides funding to develop arts and cultural engagement in places where current involvement is below average. Funded projects work with local people to grow an arts and culture offer rooted in each locality and its community. Projects tend to emphasise local decision-making and delivering new projects that engage more communities with arts and culture

Whilst the aim of this programme is to encourage more people to engage with high quality arts and culture, there is growing evidence that it has had other, indirect, or 'spillover', economic effects. In particular, the way in which some Creative People and Places projects have worked with local partners and businesses, made use of public spaces, and built the skills of local people, has contributed towards local economic goals.

These five case studies show how, in some places, developing arts and cultural engagement through Creative People and Places has also had a spillover economic benefit. The case studies cover the Creative People and Places projects in Stoke-on-Trent, Hounslow, East Durham, Luton, and Boston and South Holland. Their approaches range from working with shopkeepers in Luton and a seed factory in Lincolnshire, through to a market for new artists on the north east coast and high streets that transform into outdoor theatres.

ARTS

PLACEMAKING

APPETITE, STOKE-ON-TRENT AND NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

In Stoke-on-Trent, less than half of residents are typically involved in the arts, in comparison to the national average of 60%¹. Appetite was formed by a consortium of organisations² led by The New Vic Theatre in the first round of Creative People and Places in 2012. Their remit was to increase arts engagement and infrastructure in Stoke-on-Trent and subsequently the neighbouring borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme in 2020. With a joint total investment of £4.5 million since its inception, Appetite's programme will run up until 2022 in Stoke-on-Trent and 2023 in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Stoke-on-Trent is home to a growing economy with the UK's main ceramics industry and a large student population at its two universities. In the past 10 years, its economy has increased and unemployment has reduced³. However, it remains

¹ 47% of residents had 'attended an arts event or spent time doing and arts activity in the past 12 months) compared to 60% on average in England. Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey, 2018 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Active_Lives_18%20Month_Dataset.xlsx

² Consortium members since the projects beginning are:
2012- 2016: New Vic Theatre in partnership with B Arts, Brighter Futures, Partners in Creative Learning and Staffordshire University. Supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. **2016-2019:** New Vic Theatre in partnership with Partners in Creative Learning, Staffordshire University and 6Towns Radio. Supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. **2019 - current:** New Vic Theatre in partnership with Partners in Creative Learning, Staffordshire University, 6Towns Radio, Go Kidsgrove, Newcastle-under-Lyme BID and Keele University. Supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and Aspire.

³ Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Strategic Economic Plan, 2018. <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2019/01/SSI-EP-Strategic-Economic-Plan-April-2018-pdf>

an area with much variation in wealth and poverty⁴, and suffers from some perceptions that the city has a limited offer. Appetite's reputation for delivering high quality arts experiences in the area's public spaces has contributed to changing this.

When first setting up their programme, Appetite chose to focus on using public space for events. Not only would this add something distinctive to the existing arts offer, but it would also take them to the places where they were most likely to reach new audiences: parks, local high streets and the city centre.

Since then, Appetite, working always with local people to shape the offer, has delivered several series of outdoor events such as *The Big Feast*, *The Homecoming*, *Roundabout* (with Paines Plough), and *Light Night Stoke-on-Trent*. By working with local and national partners to maximise the impact of these large-scale, public events Appetite has created important economic benefits for the city and its surrounding areas.



Crowds at The Big Feast, 2019

Increasing footfall

Looking at the most recent years of audience data, it's clear that Appetite's public events have given people a reason to go into Stoke-on-Trent city centre when they might not otherwise have done so. In one example, since 2016 *The Big Feast*

⁴ Stoke-on-Trent ranks 14th. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

has had over 54,000 attendances^{5 6}, and in the last three years at least 8 in 10 audience members reported that they came to the city centre specifically for the event^{7 8}.

In the opinion of the Stoke-on-Trent Business Improvement District (BID), people are drawn to the city because Appetite's work makes it a destination:

"The city centre becomes the destination for things to take place . . . it keeps the city centre renewed and it's another way to use the city centre."
(BID Representative)⁹

In addition to the work taking place in central Stoke, Appetite has a programme of work in the towns that surround the city such as Burslem and Longton. These events also draw a crowd, many of whom have not visited the towns before. The Project Director at Appetite cites one example where members of a local historical society visited an event in Burslem for the first time and couldn't believe they hadn't ever explored the history of this part of the city. They've since returned, and are just a small example of how the programme encourages residents to explore beyond the areas they already know:

"You experience something new, but you also find out where to park and know you feel safe in that place and that it's not as bad as people were making out - or you found a nice cafe that you didn't know existed. It's a nice experience and now you want to go back" (Director, Appetite)

In addition to attracting new audiences from within Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, there is growing evidence of a visitor offer that brings people from outside of the local area. Postcode data for a range of ticketed events in 2018/19 showed that 34% of bookers came from outside of the Stoke-on-Trent area¹⁰, and audience comments support this:

"Raised [the] profile of Stoke-on-Trent to external visitors who haven't visited but base their opinions on hearsay and assumptions. Friends from outside the city are amazed at what's on offer" (Appetite audience member)¹¹

⁵ Audiences of 10,968 (2016), 16,538 (2017), and 11,877 (2018) cited in Appetite, Phase 2 Self Evaluation Report 2016-2019, 2019.

⁶ Audience of 15,392 at The Big Feast quoted in The Audience Agency, Appetite Interim Evaluation Report, 2019/20, 2020

⁷ 81% in 2018 and 79% in 2017 said 'The Big Feast was the main reason they came into the city centre' cited in Appetite, Phase 2 Self Evaluation Report 2016-2019, 2019.

⁸ 92% in 2019 cited in quoted in The Audience Agency, Appetite Interim Evaluation Report, 2019/20, 2020

⁹ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹⁰ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹¹ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

Increasing spend

Greater footfall in the city centre is likely to have some impact on spend in local businesses. Appetite has examined this in detail for the most recent year of *The Big Feast*, where researchers estimated spend of over £220,000 by the 15,000 visitors in attendance. According to their data, visitors spent an average of £14 per head in both in the city centre and at the event itself¹².

Evidence from evaluation of the programme quotes a sample of businesses that agree there is an impact on their businesses, for example one local bistro owner who reported a *“correlation between the festival taking place and the positive impact it had on my business”*¹³.



Performance at The Big Feast, 2019

Changing perceptions of people and place

The evidence of additional spend and footfall over the last five years shows how the impact of the arts can spill over into the local economy, but a key question is whether this can be sustained in the longer term. There is some evidence that, at least amongst audiences and stakeholder, Appetite’s work is beginning to change perceptions of Stoke-on-Trent.

Surveying audiences of *The Big Feast* in 2019 showed that the proportion of the audience reporting positive perceptions of Stoke-on-Trent increased by 20 percentage points after their visit for the event, and similar sentiments are found

¹² The Audience Agency, Appetite Interim Evaluation Report, 2019/20, 2020

¹³ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

in audience data from other events¹⁴. Several audience comments reinforce this message¹⁵:

"Appetite has helped me to appreciate Stoke-on-Trent more - the city has a lot going for it!"

"Show that Stoke-on-Trent is now a forward-thinking city, willing to do new things and get rid of its old 'dull dirty industrial city' image"

(Appetite Audience members)

As one local Member of Parliament commented in 2018¹⁶, the arts approach has helped residents see Stoke-on-Trent in a new way:

"Appetite gives voice and substance to all the things that we know are good about Stoke-on-Trent [it] provides a positive story that people can engage with. It shows Stoke-on-Trent always has been an exceptionally challenging, complex place but in a way that demonstrates that those challenges and its complexities are a strength rather than a weakness"

(Member of Parliament for a Stoke-on-Trent constituency)

Putting placemaking at the heart of Appetite

Appetite's evaluation shows that many local stakeholders have come to recognise the role that arts plays in economic growth. In fact, the role of the arts and culture sector is now recognised in Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's strategy, where it's described as essential to underpin Stoke's future development into a core city¹⁷. The regularity of the events that Appetite has held, for example the annual Big Feast which takes place on the same weekend each year, has provided a stable basis for developing relationships with other organisations working in the town centre.

Accordingly, placemaking has become a defining element of Appetite's own work. They now sit on the Stoke-on-Trent BID's Place Marketing subgroup and have provided expertise and advice to both the City Council and the BID in Newcastle-under-Lyme enabling them to begin developing their own arts and placemaking projects.

¹⁴ 73% of audiences at The Big Feast and Museum of the Moon agreed that "my perception of the city has improved after my visit to this event" cited in Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹⁵ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹⁶ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹⁷ Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Strategic Economic Plan, 2018.

<https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2019/01/SSI-EP-Strategic-Economic-Plan-April-2018-.pdf>

Many stakeholders reported that the expertise that Appetite's team brings to working with arts and culture has been instrumental in drawing people into the city centre and building local capacity. It is widely recognised that Stoke-on-Trent's bid to become the UK City of Culture 2021 would never have happened without Appetite's work as the 'forerunners' of a cultural change:

"[Appetite's work] inspired partners and stakeholders to confidently bid for the coveted title of UK City of Culture 2021 . . . they made a lot of arts organisations realise that you can make a difference to people's lives and the cultural offer for the city". (representative of Stoke-on-Trent City Council)¹⁸

And despite losing out to Coventry in the 2021 competition, the ambitions raised by Appetite's work are evident in other nationally significant projects. One MP reflected on how this confidence supported their proposal to be host to Channel 4's new site in 2018:

"People are taking Stoke-on-Trent more seriously. We now have a lasting engagement with Channel 4 following the bid. By shifting the narrative of Stoke-on-Trent, that enabled us to have a conversation with Channel 4 and get through the front door. With this and the City of Culture work, we're starting to be taken seriously as a potential place to do good stuff" (Member of Parliament for a Stoke-on-Trent constituency)¹⁹

It is clear that Appetite's work bringing arts to Stoke-on-Trent's public spaces has encouraged greater footfall and spending in the city, and with it perceptions about the place are shifting. Perceptions of the power of arts and culture are also shifting and as a result of Appetite's work there is greater confidence in arts and culture amongst public bodies in Stoke-on-Trent. Arts and culture has now become an important force in the city's continuing economic development.

Acknowledgements

Images of The Big Feast courtesy of Phil Radcliffe Photography

Interviewees from Appetite

Appetite's project evaluators - University of Staffordshire, and The Audience Agency

¹⁸ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

¹⁹ Staffordshire University, Appetite End of Year 6 Report 2018-19, 2019

ANIMATING THE TOWN CENTRE

CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACES HOUNSLOW

The London Borough of Hounslow extends west from the wealthy neighbourhood of Chiswick to the less advantaged areas Brentford and Feltham and out to where Heathrow Airport sits at its border²⁰. The borough is ethnically very mixed, with large and well established Indian communities as well as several new communities from across the globe. The population is highly mobile and, in 2017, the borough estimated a population turnover of 43,477 people every year amongst its 270,000 residents²¹. In this varied and dynamic population, only just over half of residents have experienced the arts in the last 12 months. This is one of the lowest participation rates in London²².

Creative People & Places Hounslow was successful in the second round of Creative People and Places funding made by Arts Council England. Their work began in 2013 and has received £1.9 million of investment since then.

Creative People & Places Hounslow's focus on inclusive outdoor programming in the town's dedicated performance space, Bell Square, has created a positive focus for the town centre and contributed to the borough's prosperity and cohesion at a time when physical redevelopment of the town hasn't been possible.

²⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

²¹ LB Hounslow, The Hounslow Story Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2017 https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1042/the_hounslow_story_-_jsna_summary_document.pdf

²² 54% of residents had 'attended an arts event or spent time doing and arts activity in the past 12 months) compared to 60% on average in England. Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey, 2018 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Active_Lives_18%20Month_Dataset.xlsx

Animating the town centre

Hounslow town centre had been perceived as neglected and lacking investment for several years, with research for the borough's 2011 Local Economic Assessment suggesting that investment in reviving the town centre was needed to improve the area²³. In fact, the 2018 Future Borough Strategy sets out clearly to regenerate the Hounslow town centre: *"The high street will recapture its civic role ... supported by a transformed public realm and new cultural and leisure attractions"*²⁴.

The installation of Bell Square: a purpose built performance space in the centre of the town was part of this work to revive the town centre. Hounslow council was initially interested in programming a handful of festivals, but Creative People & Places Hounslow suggested a regular programme because, as their Director describes, this could better support the town's businesses and residents:

"It would be better in terms of animating the town centre and supporting the council's economic aims and building regular engagement if we went for a regular programme rather than 'bumper' festivals. Because it would build up a regular audience that would come back. All agreed. It now has an event every other Saturday from May until October." (Director, Creative People & Places Hounslow)



Cie Bilbobasso performance in Bell Square

²³ SQW, Hounslow Local Economic Assessment survey of businesses, 2011
https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/downloads/download/50/local_economic_assessment

²⁴ LB Hounslow, Future Borough Strategy 2018-35, 2018
https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1710/future_borough_strategy_2018.pdf

This events programme has been running now since 2014 and attracts large, diverse audiences. Creative People & Places Hounslow have been mindful in their programming choices to bring work that is accessible and does not use text and promotes common ground and shared experiences amongst the many different communities in Hounslow. Data on audience ethnicity suggests that it has so far been successful in reaching these different groups.

Increasing footfall

From its inception, Creative People & Places Hounslow's programme for Bell Square had the aim of supporting *"the regeneration of Hounslow Town Centre, increasing visitor numbers and contributing to the local economy"*²⁵. Not only has its inclusive approach to programming increased arts audiences in the town, it has also led to a shift in town centre use.

Across 2018 and 2019, there were 41,200 attendances at Bell Square performances, with an average audience of 660 per performance. This represents additional footfall to the area that they might not otherwise expect: audience surveys in 2018 found that for 72% of these audiences, the event was the main reason for their visit to the town²⁶. Surveys in 2018 and 2019 consistently show that the programme in Bell Square plays a role in encouraging use of the town centre, with 78% attending a performance reporting that it has encouraged them to visit the town centre again^{27 28}.

Given such large numbers of additional footfall, it's likely that attendance at Bell Square performances is having a spillover effect into the town centre economy. Audience surveys in 2018 and 2019 suggest that around 60% of people attending Bell Square events were also going to visit a shop or somewhere for food and drink^{29 30}.

Changing perceptions

Hounslow centre had been perceived as a no-go area in the evenings but Bell Square appears to have directly impacted upon use in the evenings. The programme includes many evening and night time events, for example their packed-out, first performance in 2014 started at 10pm. The increase in use of the town in the evenings, and the corresponding change in atmosphere was noticeable enough that Hounslow borough council requested more evening and

²⁵ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2018, Final report

²⁶ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2018, Final report

²⁷ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2018, Final report

²⁸ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2019, Headline analysis of attendance, demographics and additional activity.

²⁹ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2018, Final report

³⁰ Creative People & Places Hounslow, Bell Square 2019, Headline analysis of attendance, demographics and additional activity.

night time performances to help shift the sense that the town was not safe after 6pm.

Bell Square has also had an affect on how people perceive the town and how comfortable they feel being there outside of the performances. A research report on community cohesion³¹ in Bell Square concluded that:

“A recurring theme in the vox pop interviews is how the artistic performances and installations, ..., add positively to the atmosphere of the Square. A real transformation has occurred ... The events programme has created an atmosphere that is new to Bell Square, distinct from the performances.”



Audience for Cie Bilbobasso at Bell Square

Working with businesses

A further effect of their work at Bell Square has led to new ways of working between Creative People & Places Hounslow and businesses in the town centre. This includes things as simple as using the The Bell pub on the square as a venue for stakeholder receptions, through to gaining access to the private spaces that exist in the town centre to support the spectacle of the programme:

“The shopping centre has loading bays and we might need space to store 10 meter tall puppets before they come striding-out into the town centre...”

³¹ COaST, Bell Square community cohesion research project.

shops see the value, and we always worked together in that way.”
(Director, Creative People & Places Hounslow)

Whilst these are day to day interactions for the team behind Bell Square, they are a further way that the programme involves the business community and secures partnerships and their support for the programme.

Physical redevelopment is once again happening in Hounslow, with potential to expand the outdoor arts programme around the town centre and continue not only the built the arts and community outcomes of the programme but also bring economic benefits to the town.

Acknowledgements

Images courtesy of Vipul Sangoi

Interviewee at Creative People & Places Hounslow

BUILDING LOCAL ARTS BUSINESSES

EAST DURHAM CREATES, COUNTY DURHAM

East Durham Creates works in the east of rural County Durham, covering the local towns of Seaham and Peterlee, and the many smaller villages that stretch from the city of Durham toward the coast. County Durham experiences significant deprivation overall and nearly half of its wards are in the most deprived 30% nationally. Some of the most deprived areas in the county are found in East Durham Creates' patch³².

Data for County Durham suggests that just over half of residents have experienced the arts in the past 12 months, which is less than the national average of 60%³³. There is likely to be an even bigger gap between rates of participation in the east of the county where there are few arts organisations and venues.

East Durham Creates became part of the Creative People and Places programme in 2013 and has received £2.5 million investment from Arts Council England so far to build arts engagement locally.

³² County Durham ranks 62nd in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, and 151 of its 324 wards are in the most deprived 30% nationally. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

³³ 52% of residents had attended an arts event or spent time doing an arts activity in the past 12 months compared to 60% on average in England. Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey, 2018
https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Active_Lives_18%20Month_Dataset.xlsx

East Durham Creates' long term vision is to have '*created ways for the arts to contribute to the cultural wellbeing of local people and made a difference to the area*'. So far they've done this by bringing artists together with specific groups, such as families, older adults and younger people, to create events that have provided new opportunities to experience and take part in the arts. Their smaller, local commissions have included original musical theatre, a creative age project and the arts market that this study focuses on. In 2020, East Durham Creates completed a new community venue, the Arts Café, which is intended to serve as a community base for the arts for years to come.

Developing local creative enterprise

East Durham Creates recognised that it was important to support local artists and creatives to produce, show and sell their work. A strong network of people doing creative work would underpin sustainability of the local arts ecology, for both artists and audiences, in the longer term.

However, developing local creative enterprises had proved one of the most challenging parts of East Durham Creates' programme. This was partly because of the fairly small number of professional artists working in the area and the limited networks connecting them. And yet, East Durham Creates knew that many local people were doing arts as a pastime and they saw that with some support, these individuals might explore the possibility of showing, selling and developing their artistic work.

With this idea in mind, East Durham Creates was approached by two local artists working as Creative Pop CIC with a proposal for a programme of mentoring and development for new and established artists. This would build towards an arts market put on in the town of Seaham. Knowing there was interest in having an arts market in the east Durham area, Creative Pop wanted to 'test the water' to find how the Seaham community would respond to an arts event in their town. Recognising how well this aligned with their own aims to develop skills and find new spaces to show work, East Durham Creates provided funding to get the group started.

Creative Collective mentoring sessions



Creative Pop attracted 31 people to form the Creative Collective. Some members were well established artists, whilst for others their artistic work had been a hobby which they were now setting up to share for the first time. To help these artists, particularly those newer to selling their work, to make the most of the market opportunity, they had access to expert mentoring sessions, which included advice on pricing and marketing.

The first Seaham Arts Market took place in September 2019, with 17 artists from the collective taking up stands and some held workshops and taster sessions. Despite torrential rain, the market attracted over 400 people and feedback gathered from the artists that participated reported that all had made sales or taken commission on the day and had a chance to connect with a new audience for their work³⁴:

“A very supportive environment for my first arts market, a good range of different art styles, great foot fall due to amazing location and it really helped there was no costs to pay to be part of the market.”

“This has been the best market experience I have had so far! I sold more items at this event than any other event I have been to. Met some amazing people that were able to talk about art. Really made me feel that all the effort I had put into my work was worthwhile.”

“It has been a great opportunity to increase awareness of my work in my hometown. Not everyone uses social media which is my main way of advertising usually. It was also wonderful not to have pitch costs and worry about getting orders to cover it.”

These comments suggest that the success in terms of sales at this event was in part because of its accessibility: the ‘amazing location’ at Terrace Green in the centre of the town meant it was open and accessible to visitors and residents. It was also recognised that the arts market attracted a different audience, and in particular people who might not typically buy online where many artists previously sold their work.

These comments show, it was also important that having a table at the market was free as this reduced the financial risk for artists taking part. In the future, Creative Pop recognise that they will need to gradually introduce pitch fees, but to do so in a way that retains the accessibility of the market to local artists and offers them a balance of risk and return.

³⁴ Wavehill, Evaluation of the East Durham Creates Programme Final Report, 2020

Growing and sustaining local arts events

The success of the September arts market confirmed the ambitions of Creative Pop and they began planning for a bigger event to be held in Seaham. The Shoreside Festival was intended to combine the existing arts market with more opportunities for visitors to take part in the arts.

Developing a wider arts offer would not only attract a bigger audience to experience the arts, but it could have a bigger spillover effect on the town and its local businesses. Creative Pop contacted local businesses about how they could be part of the event and benefit from the extra footfall it would generate. This was important to Creative Pop who were aware that some businesses might feel less positive about their plans than they did and wanted to find ways to bring them on-board.

Having tested the initial model of the arts market with East Durham Creates as a funder, the Shoreside Festival was part funded by Seaham Town Council. This is indicative of the deepening, positive relationship between Creative Pop and the local authority who saw that an arts festival could add variety to events in Seaham town centre and provide a new offer for residents and visitors to the town.

Unfortunately, Shoreside Festival, which was planned for May 2020 could not go ahead in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, it took place virtually and with a number of artists commissions made, it continued to bring economic benefits to the local creative community.

Moreover, members of the Creative Collective have continued to work together, with many taking part in projects during lockdown such as Creative Pop's *Exploration into Isolation*, where many Collective artists have run online workshops. This project builds towards the planned return of the festival which is intended to bring even more arts activities and opportunities to participate to the town in 2021.

Seaham arts market, 2019



Acknowledgements

Images courtesy of Creative Pop CIC

Interviewees at East Durham Creates and Creative Pop CIC

East Durham Creates' project evaluators, Wavehill

SUPPORTING ENTERPRISE AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS REVOLUTON ARTS, LUTON

Just 48% of Luton's residents have attended or taken part in the arts in the past 12 months, much lower than average³⁵. Revoluton Arts was funded in the third round of Creative People and Places to address this inequality, and received its first investment in 2014. So far, it has received just under £1.7 million of investment from Arts Council England.

Luton's demographics set it apart from similar towns in the South East: it is known as a 'super-diverse' place with no single ethnic group forming the majority of the population³⁶, and it has a younger population than the rest of the UK³⁷. The town experiences considerable social and economic disadvantage as more than a third of its local wards are in the most deprived 30% nationally³⁸.

³⁵ 48% of residents had 'attended an arts event or spent time doing an arts activity in the past 12 months compared to 60% on average in England. Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey, 2018 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Active_Lives_18%20Month_Dataset.xlsx

³⁶ Mayhew Harper Associates Ltd, The growth and changing complexion of Luton's population, 2011 <https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Observatory/Growth%20of%20Luton%20Population.pdf>

³⁷ Luton Business Intelligence, Mid-year population estimates, 2017 <https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Observatory/Mid-year-population-estimate.pdf>

³⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Revoluton Arts' work is closely linked to the town's local economy, developing both skills and enterprise as well as challenging traditional perceptions of the area and its businesses.



Colour of Light performance in Luton town centre

Developing creative skills and enterprise

Recognising that no single person or organisation could reflect the diversity of Luton, Revoluton Arts has a 'dispersed leadership' model for its artistic work. They seek and develop new creatives through their Producer Hub, delivered with 1Degree East, which supports local people and artists to develop new, large-scale public works.

Revoluton Arts and 1DegreeEast work with local people who have the potential to develop creative ideas into high quality work that will speak to new audiences. As Revoluton Arts' Director describes this, they are *"not interested in one hit wonders"* and the Producer Hub represents intensive investment in Luton residents who can benefit from *"long term, confidence building"* that would not otherwise be on offer to them.

In 2018/19 the Producer Hub supported five local producer-led projects, investing around £13,500. These five projects alone levered over £190,000 in additional cash and in-kind support from funders, such as Arts Council England and from commercial bodies including radio stations, the Luton Mall, the local BID, and

through raising pitch fees at events. This represents a large return on Revolution Arts' initial investment in the creative skills of new producers .

In addition to the Producer Hub, Revolution Arts also runs Kickstarter mini-commissions which are small-scale and aimed at individual local people. Revolution Arts' Director describes these as their “‘Yes’ economy”:

“In areas where there are multiple disadvantages and a lack of participation, there is often not access to opportunities, these are places where you get a lot of ‘No’s. We wanted this to be the door that said ‘yes, we want to grow you, yes we trust you” (Director, Revolution Arts)

Revolution Arts has so far made 14 mini-commissions of £400 each, and in many cases they have been important in opening doors to creative careers. For example, one commission was made to a Grime artist whose Kickstarter investment supported the launch of her EP, and which helped her win a further external commission. Whilst these Kickstarters are suitable for anyone, Revolution Arts has promoted them through partners that serve the most disadvantaged groups to ensure this opportunity is open to those least likely to receive support elsewhere.

Kickstarter commissions have been a success particularly with young people, some of whom have now found paid work through Revolution Arts during the COVID-19 crisis. Recognising the digital skill that existed in their network of young people but were lacking in many local organisations, Revolution Arts has just set up a Digital Services social enterprise which employs and trains young people to provide digital capacity to local organisations and events.

They have already received three commissions in the short time since they set up and are looking at partnering with other creative, digital agencies to expand their training and skills offer. The Director describes this as *“a direct response to the lack of jobs and opportunities right now. So many young people would have fallen through the cracks”*.

Changing perceptions of Luton

In addition to their work on skills, Revolution Arts' is working with business communities to change perceptions of Luton's town centre and its neighbourhoods. The Luton Business Improvement District (BID) has been an active partner with Revolution Arts on its programme of public events. This includes commissioning and promoting festivals and events. , One of the BID's key aims is to address the perception that Luton is an unappealing and unsafe town centre. They see Revolution Arts' festivals and events as an effective way to combat this negativity and bring new people into the town.

Whilst the BID had previously put on its own events, their Manager recognised that what Revoluton have done is create events that are “*spectacular*” and “*too good to miss*”. The quality of these events draws people into the town where they see that “*these events are run safely, properly, security guards, police presence, and that they can see there are ambulances - I think once they have seen that, they feel comfortable about coming back for other events*”

Although change is gradual, the BID Manager thinks that the work of Revoluton Arts has helped shift perceptions of Luton and make the town centre feel both a safe and exciting place to experience the arts.

Outside of the town centre in Bury Park, work begun by Revoluton Arts has explored the creativity of local businesses. On this busy high street, where there is little existing arts infrastructure, artists challenged shopkeepers to consider what spaces - from shop fronts to wall space - could be made available and what kinds of arts activities they could offer their customers.

Since then, a calligraphy session, film screenings and children’s performances have been held in the high street and local shops and this has created a different experience of Bury Park. Whilst project evaluation suggests that business benefits were felt by some shops, it concludes that this project went beyond the transactional and gave businesses a new way to engage and serve their local communities. The groundwork laid with Bury Park shopkeepers supported further funding of £50,000 for work, in partnership with the Wellcome Collection. This explored the idea of touch during lockdown with the Bury Park community in 2020.

The Emperor’s Lost Gems in Bury Park



Revoluton Arts recognised the need for Luton residents to lead the way in reaching new arts audiences. As a result they have developed the confidence and skills of local people and provided them with access to creative careers that they may not otherwise have had. At the same time, working in high streets and the town centre, Revoluton Arts' approach to animating public spaces is changing residents' perceptions of what Luton and its businesses have to offer them.

Acknowledgements

Image of *Colour of Light* courtesy of Melissa Sandoval.

Image of *The Emperor's Lost Gems* courtesy of Revoluton Arts.

Interviewees in Revoluton Arts and the Luton Business Improvement District.

Revoluton Arts' evaluators, Dr Ruth Melville and The Audience Agency

SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH TRANSPORTED, BOSTON AND SOUTH HOLLAND

The areas of Boston and South Holland, sitting in the south east of Lincolnshire on the North Sea coast, cover rural areas and the more populated towns of Boston, Spalding and Holbeach³⁹. Both localities experience some degree of disadvantage⁴⁰ and this is reflected in the 1 in 5 wards locally that are in the top third of disadvantaged areas.

Although this disadvantage is reflective of economic challenges, the area is also host to a well-developed agricultural and food industries⁴¹. This has made it attractive to workers from countries such as Poland, Romania and Latvia who have settled in growing numbers in the area since the early 2000s.

³⁹ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authority Districts and other higher level geographies for statistical purposes, 2014
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539132/RUC11_LAD11_ENv2.ods

⁴⁰ Boston ranks 85th and South Holland is 144th, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

⁴¹ Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Strategic Economic Plan 2016-2030, 2016.
https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/assets/documents/Strategic_Economic_Plan_2016_Refresh.pdf

However, as a resident of Boston or South Holland, you're less likely than average to attend or take part in the arts⁴². Transported was one of the first projects to receive investment from the Creative People and Places programme in 2012 to address this disparity. It is currently funded until 2022, by which point it will have received a total of £3.7 million of investment from Arts Council England.

The programme is led by the University of Lincoln with Boston in Bloom and Boston College. These lead organisations sit amongst a broad coalition of other local partners that work to weave quality arts experiences into the fabric of everyday life in Boston and South Holland. In doing so, the programme has forged relationships that have strengthened key local businesses and leveraged in nearly £312,000 of investment from partners since 2015^{43 44}, whilst also making contributions to Lincolnshire's growing nature tourism economy and the life of its town centres.

Connecting agri-food businesses and communities

From the beginning of their programme Transported looked outward to non-arts partners to help reach new arts audiences in Boston and South Holland. The area is host to a range of food and agriculture businesses, and developing the competitive advantage of their highly advanced agri-food sector features as a pillar of Greater Lincolnshire's future economic development⁴⁵.

Transported immediately recognised the importance of the food industry. Not only because of its role and influence in the place and communities of South Lincolnshire, but also as it employed many of the groups they wanted to reach with the arts. Some of the first partnerships Transported established were with large businesses in the agri-food sector: the hauliers FreshLinc, and Elsoms seeds.

Building empathy at Elsoms

Elsoms is a leading vegetable seed specialist with a 175 year history in Spalding. The team at Transported initially wanted to involve Elsoms' staff in consultation about their experience of local arts. This led to a contemporary dance residency based in the Elsoms' employee canteen. The resulting work made such an emotional connection with the Elsoms team that a second project followed, developed with Elsoms' Chairman in 2016. After consulting with Elsoms staff,

⁴² 56% in Boston and 55% in South Holland of residents had attended an arts event or spent time doing an arts activity in the past 12 months compared to 60% on average in England. Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey, 2018
https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Active_Lives_18%20Month_Dataset.xlsx

⁴³ £42,000 cited in MB Associates, T2 Interim evaluation, 2017

⁴⁴ £270,000 cited in MB Associates, Phase 3 Year 1 Evaluation, 2020

⁴⁵ Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Strategic Economic Plan 2016-2030, 2016.

Transported delivered 17 photography workshops with staff, and an exhibition of their work was installed around the Elsoms premises.

The chair of Elsoms had championed this project and hoped that doing creative workshops together would increase empathy between colleagues and allow interactions outside of usual teams and roles. As the evaluation of this project found, there was an increase in understanding of other's roles (+18%) and fewer people feeling dissatisfied with life (also +18%) amongst participants. The evaluators judge this to be a 'good indication of a building sense of empathy and communal spirit in the workplace' and estimate that just this element of the programme as representing a £4,000 return to Elsoms⁴⁶. Whilst not an explicit aim of the work, the project evaluation also cites the potential knock-on effects of empathy and trust on business productivity, which could add an even greater return⁴⁷.



Art on Lorries, 2014

Changing perceptions of haulage

Hauliers such as Spalding-based FreshLinc play a vital role in distributing fresh produce nationally and internationally, but have felt a lack of recognition for the skills of their staff and contribution of the business locally. Transported saw the opportunity to use FreshLinc's fleet of lorries as canvases for large scale artworks inspired by the local landscape and demonstrating the company's roots in place. Given the very nature of haulage, this work would reach a wide audience locally and further afield. The idea was brought to life by an artist, selected by

⁴⁶ MB Associates, Transported Evaluation Report, 2016

⁴⁷ Tony Simmons, *The high cost of lost trust*, Harvard Business Review, 2002

Transported and FreshLinc, who spent time with farmers, pickers and drivers to produce several scenes of 'Lincolnshire loveliness'.

FreshLinc has since reported that drivers were more motivated and enjoyed driving the art lorries, in part because of the positive reactions they received on the road. Art lorries were also better looked after and had lower maintenance costs than those without the art works. As well as visually showing FreshLinc and its lorries' role as a part of the south Lincolnshire community, this innovative project also gained the company recognition amongst its peers in northern Europe.

Eight years of partnership

It is now one of Transported's strategic objectives to develop the morale of local workers, which could be expected to have a knock-on effect on staff retention. Several further projects have taken place with Elsoms and FreshLinc, which have only been possible as a result of eight year relationships established with both businesses. The Transported Director meets on an annual basis with each of the two Chief Executives to agree the plan for the coming year and the resources to be made available, often including a nominated project producer from within each company's own ranks.

Although, as the Director of Transported sees it, the businesses are not putting cash into the work of Transported, what they can do is provide space, equipment and people. They continue to make these investments in return for the workforce and public perception benefits that working with Transported brings to them, their workforce and their staff.

Growing nature tourism

Working with business isn't the only way in which Transported's work has had a knock-on effect on the local economy. In May 2015, they worked with RSPB Frampton Marsh in Boston to commission and install *Reflector*. This public art work sits on the edge of the marsh, which has always been a popular site for bird watchers and is increasingly becoming a destination for the more casual visitors.

Reflector represented an important development for the RSPB who were looking to diversify their visitor offer, both to attract new visitors and to offer more to the 60,000 they already receive annually. The Senior Site Manager at Frampton Marsh reports that both visitor numbers and dwell time are increasing at the site and that the arts offer has been important to this growth.

Working with Transported has not only inspired the RSPB to consider further investment in the site, but also given them the confidence and experience to seek economic development funding for two further arts installations. Both the

RSPB and the local authority hope that this arts investment can enhance the nature tourism offer developing around Lincolnshire's coast, and attract new visitors to the area. This offer is key for regional economic growth, as the nature-based tourism and leisure sector is already estimated as worth up to £325 million annually in Greater Lincolnshire⁴⁸.

Visitors at the launch of Reflector, 2015



Enlivening the town centre

The success of economic growth in the county's new and existing industries is dependent on building exciting towns and places to live, and this places the arts front and centre in Lincolnshire's economic success. This was recognised in the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership strategy in 2014, at which point Transported had already begun to animate the town centres of South Lincolnshire with experiences that brought the arts into the everyday lives of shoppers, workers and residents.

Illuminate is a festival that draws on the story of the Mayflower and has taken place in Boston town centre every year between 2015-19 (interrupted only by COVID-19 in 2020). It began as part of the town's Christmas lights switch-on and has grown in popularity since. *Illuminate* culminates in the event in the town centre, but is preceded by workshops with local communities and schools which create connections to the work and encourages them to attend. The event

⁴⁸ GNLP, "Nature tourism research" <https://glnp.org.uk/projects/nature-tourism-research>

regularly draws around 6,000 people into the town and the associated spend that brings with it.

For Boston Borough Council, *Illuminate* is a prime example of how Transported's work has helped animate the town. The Assistant Director for Support Services & Partnerships reflects that:

"it has brought thousands of people into the town, meaning that residents and visitors were also spending in the shops, the pubs, the cafes ... coming along and supporting the town, it was just amazing to see"

Since then the event has gathered local support, including the Council's members who fully support the investment they make in it. The Assistant Director also sees Transported's other work in the town as making the area a more appealing place to live, which again supports the area's economy.

"This is a place where young people do tend to leave following University- so by working with our communities and education sectors, we're also investing in our young people who will hopefully see reasons to stay here instead" (The Assistant Director for Support Services & Partnerships at Boston Borough Council)

In fact, arts development has offered several opportunities for funding in heritage and public realm-based projects. The local authority expects that these will have lasting, placemaking benefits for Boston and potentially more widely across the region.

All in all, the work that Transported has done to engage new audiences in their workplaces, natural spaces, and town centres has provided a range of economic spillovers that contribute to the wider economic growth of Greater Lincolnshire.

Acknowledgements

Art on Lorries and Reflector images courtesy of Electric Egg

Interviewees from Transported, RSPB Frampton Marsh & Boston Borough Council
Transported project evaluators, MB Associates.

ANNEX: METHOD

These studies have been drawn primarily from existing monitoring and evaluation data collected and analysed by places and their evaluators since the beginning of the Creative People and Places programme. This evidence was reviewed and then supplemented with:

- semi-structured interviews with a representative in each project, and local stakeholders where relevant.
- contextual data including local economic plans and national datasets such as The Active Lives survey (2018), and the Indices of Multiple deprivation (2019).