



OUR NATIONAL PORTFOLIO, 2018-22

Rural Narrative



People living in rural areas make up 17 per cent of England's population, engage more with the arts than people in urban areas, and are just as likely to engage with museums.¹

The Arts Council has a vital role in supporting the cultural sector in rural areas. In the current investment round from 2015-18, 120 of our National Portfolio Organisations, 18 per cent of the total, have been based in a local authority area defined as rural. In 2017/18 these organisations will receive £44.6 million.

Touring is an important way to support rural cultural opportunities. National Portfolio Organisations based in urban areas tour work directly to rural communities.

Our investment helps rurally based organisations improve their resilience in the face of particular challenges, such as increased transport costs or broadband accessibility.

Over the next four years we will invest on average an annual £50.1 million into 142 organisations based in rural areas to strengthen the cultural sector in rural England. This will increase our investment in National Portfolio Organisations based in rural areas by 12 per cent (compared to the 11 per cent increase for the portfolio as a whole).

We are bringing in 22 new organisations in rural areas to our National Portfolio, including a number in locations where there are currently gaps in our portfolio.

Organisations we are funding for the first time with a significant impact in rural communities include Somerset Art Works, the Jerwood Gallery (Hastings), Vamos Theatre (Worcestershire), Rural Media Company (Herefordshire), Arts&Heritage from Hexham, and Pocklington Arts Centre in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

This is the first time that libraries have been applicants for the National Portfolio and we are pleased to welcome four library services that work with rural communities – Libraries Unlimited in Devon, Inspire Nottinghamshire, Suffolk Libraries and Cambridgeshire Libraries.

Several current Major Partner Museums serving rural communities will join the new National Portfolio. These include the Cornwall Museums Partnership (which will receive an uplift in its funding), the Cumbria museums cluster, The Bowes Museum and Beamish, an important museum in County Durham, and Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

Rural areas will also be served by the inclusion of museums that are receiving National Portfolio funding for the first time. These include Compton Verney, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Motor Industry Heritage Trust in Warwickshire, the Bronte Parsonage and Ripon Museums in Yorkshire, the Museum of East Anglian Life, Newmarket's National Horse Racing, and the Buckinghamshire County Museum. The Museum of English Rural Life also joins; it is based in Reading, but tells the story of rural communities. We also increased our support for the Humber Museums Partnership led by Hull City Council which benefits rural areas of North Lincolnshire, and the East Riding of Yorkshire which is part of our contribution to the legacy of Hull UK City of Culture 2017.

¹ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/community-and-place/rural-evidence-and-data-review>

We will continue to support a strong network of rural touring organisations, including Live & Local who work across the Midlands, Artsreach in Dorset and the HOUSE Network, part of Farnham Maltings in Surrey. The National Rural Touring Forum remains in our portfolio, supporting touring across the country.

Rural touring organisations coming into the portfolio for the first time include Applause Rural Touring who will work across Kent and Sussex.

We are investing in organisations that work in places where there have been few opportunities to engage with arts and culture – particularly true of some coastal towns and areas. The uplift to the SeaChange Trust will enhance cultural opportunity in Great Yarmouth, as will new National Portfolio Organisations like Jerwood in Hastings and Creative Foundation in Kent.

Sustained investment in arts and culture can build strong communities and regenerate local economies. Our new investment in museums will strengthen the tourist offer in many rural areas, while our new investment in libraries, museums and touring infrastructure will allow more people to access high quality arts and culture no matter where they live.

MORE INFORMATION:
[artscouncil.org.uk/npo](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npo)

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