



# **Cultural Action Zones: Rationale, process, evaluation, and Learnings**

**A practical report on running Cultural Action Zones for those who want to set one up:**

- **How this CAZ pilot was set-up and run**
  - **Evaluating its impacts and outcomes**
  - **Lessons Learnt – the good and the bad**
  - **What does the perfect future CAZ look like?**
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# Cultural Action Zones Report: Rationale, process, evaluation and Learnings

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## 1.0 Introduction by Anita Bhalla, Chair, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership & Chair, B: Music

Balsall Heath, Birmingham *Second Saturday* Cultural Action Zone



Creativity and cultural activity enrich our human condition. It defines who we are. It changes and reshapes our world. It inspires us, helps us build stronger, more cohesive communities. It also drives placemaking and economic development. We know that an effective cultural and creative economy will reach *all* parts of the city and its region, bringing economic growth and driving the quality of life and wellbeing of our citizens.

Our cultural offer in Greater Birmingham & Solihull is life affirming, life changing and lifesaving. It is this intrinsic value of creative and cultural expression that sparks our imagination, drives innovation and provides opportunity. Creativity has a largely untapped role in delivering wider community solutions to many of the issues we face. Education, mental health, physical wellbeing, and community cohesion all do better when our artistic, cultural and creative talents are engaged together.

But we face real challenges bringing the promise of these benefits to all our citizens. Public funding for culture has been especially hard hit in recent years; with many organisations facing an uncertain future. Currently, the education of our children involves less mandatory creative activity than is arguably healthy for the future of our society. Careers advice doesn't always express the full excitement and potential of creative jobs to our children or their parents.

Fortunately, we are at a moment in time not to be missed. Our region is more on the map today for its cultural potential than ever before; with legacy funding from the Commonwealth Games, a new devo deal and the potential of a new regular bi-annual cultural festival.

GBSLEP has been playing its part, and the nine cultural action zones we have run so far have proven a significant part of renewal across many of our towns and local centres. They have been shining a light on new ways to use vacated retail spaces, enrich the local cultural offer, provide opportunities for our citizens and increase pride in where we live.

This report sets out the rationale, process and evaluation of GBSLEP's cultural action zone programme, and sets out the learnings and best way forward to design and run new Cultural actions zones across the region for the benefit of even more of our local places and citizens.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

*Making Spaces, Northfield, Birmingham, Cultural Action Zone*



Cultural Action Zones (CAZs) are a genuine building block for shaping the identity of a place, sustaining footfall, drawing in visitors and renewing our high street business models. They deliver positive economic, and well-being impacts as well as bringing communities together and providing new opportunities for young and old alike.

CAZs were born out of GBSLEP's collaboration with Culture Central, the collective voice of the cultural sector across the West Midlands. They wrote a toolkit for the LEP, which recommended how publicly funded bodies like LEPs should invest in culture as a public funder. Suggestions included CAZs, capacity building grants and refining our approach to investments in culture through wider collaborations, all of which we then went on to adopt.

GBSLEP has always been about "unblocking blockages". These funding streams were never about the LEP itself deciding specifically what cultural experiences our citizens should or shouldn't get, they were about enabling greater access to culture for our local communities. Other LEP cultural funding was targeted at making cultural organisations and major venues more sustainable long-term and better able to support artists as well as provide access to a broader range of audiences.

In summary, cultural action zones convene multi-agency action and usually multi-agency funding too. They are community led cultural and arts programmes, led by local people for local priorities. GBSLEP has funded nine CAZs in this pilot programme, with each receiving between £22K to £70K in revenue grants, with varying and usually in-kind match from nil to an unusually high £100K. The average CAZ grant was £40K. CAZs can be started for many reasons:

- In response to the many challenges around the decline of our high streets and local centres
- Giving local communities a shared project and goal to bootstrap collaboration, catalyse activities and provide new opportunities.
- In recognition that no two places are the same, and so a more nuanced local response is needed.

At this stage these CAZs are pilot and test actions, exploring ways that the government's levelling up agenda can be actioned in practice.

CAZs are highly versatile and scalable, so can be led by anyone, as long as they are firmly rooted within a local community. In this pilot we had CAZs led by Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) local authorities, theatres and art galleries.

With CAZ there is no "doing it alone", because the goal is collaboration and cross-pollination. All projects establish a steering/working group through which the project is coordinated and where learnings can be shared and acted upon. Many have a consortium of local organisations taking the lead.

**So, what does a CAZ do!?** It can reanimate and transform how people interact with local centres, by running monthly festivals, pop-up markets, trails, exhibitions, showcasing and arts or craft workshops. It can install street or public art and engage all parts of our communities, including families, children, young people and older people. It can begin to combat social isolation through "meanwhile use" by supporting community centres in vacant shops. It also provides a wide range of volunteering opportunities, the creation of safe spaces, stimulation of the local economy and much more.

In round 1, The first two CAZs funded were in the Jewellery Quarter and Southside in Birmingham. They were more focused on planning and engaging with the neighbourhood and working very strategically to bring about change.

In round 2, the seven CAZs were focused on supporting immediate practical activity to re-animate and begin to transform places; including Balsall Heath, Small Heath, Soho Road, Northfield and Digbeth in Birmingham, and further afield, Kidderminster and Solihull.

A key idea was to try things out and learn what activities and actions will work best for the future. For example, Solihull MBC launched its *Cultural Moments programme* because of CAZ and have learnt a lot through it, enabling them to plan a future programme outside of CAZ support. Further impacts included Southside CAZ, which leveraged in £1.23m; £350K towards new CCTV to make the area safer and £887K to start initial works on street changes that will enable regular pedestrianisation of the Chinese Quarter. On the Soho Road in Handsworth, 'On Our Way' focused on bus stop art to build community cohesion, and helped leverage in over £300K from Transport for West Midlands to renew the bus stops in their centre. Each CAZ has many stories and impacts to tell.

Overall, there have been at least:

- 12,000 participants
- A further 633 under 18s taking part
- 208 businesses and organisations engaged
- 208 volunteers
- 178 small events
- 42 larger events
- 2 recurring events
- 10 temporary artistic displays created
- 16 permanent displays and 142 artists commissioned.

An economic analysis was run that showed a Gross value added (GVA) uplift could be proven because of CAZ activity. Alongside which, it especially generates a wide range of social value outcomes and non-quantifiable benefits.

Each CAZ delivered above its agreed targets and expectations in most measures. It is important to remember that although these headline figures are impressive and show projects can deliver, these are not the only focus of our funding. What is equally important is the legacy activity, what is left

behind once CAZ funding has ended. Some aspects of projects, such as a recurring festival, can carry on with the continuing collaboration and resources of local partners.

CAZs also had important broader objectives:

- To establish a strong collaboration between local stakeholders, with a view to CAZ activities running on beyond CAZ funding
- To genuinely broaden opportunities, such as by engaging young people in confidence building activities

Even though LEP funding has now ceased, for many of these CAZs output numbers, outcomes and impacts for their local centres and citizens will continue. This is because:

- CAZ has functioned as seed money which has now established local partnerships with their own pooled resources – with 2 of the 7 round 2 projects able to continue indefinitely.
- All projects have reported successes exceeding their expectations and are very interested in carrying on where possible.
- Another is progressing well in securing alternative funding to continue.
- 5 of the 7 have established local forums as a legacy of CAZ funding to provide a platform to develop future activities.

In the project evaluation section we have analysed all the various outcomes across our 9 CAZs and have come up with 6 broad outcomes that they all have in common:

- [1] Increased Pride, Cohesion and Activity
- [2] Increased awareness & Support of local artists
- [3] Business revenue & Partnerships
- [4] Visitor Experience, reputation & cultural offer
- [5] Talent Development and Engagement of young people
- [6] Repeatability, permanence & legacy

Building on this finding, a crucial aspect of CAZ is that the programme and its outputs and outcomes align very closely with the government's levelling-up agenda and the funding parameters for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the central government funding that replaces EU monies.

This pilot programme has enabled a detailed set of learnings so that a more perfect CAZ can be developed in the future, some of the key ones include:

- Successful CAZs need a strong steering group with a highly collaborative lead organisation able to develop a wider stakeholder group responsible for delivery of project goals and outcomes.
- A micro-grant scheme is essential to drive initial interest and engage partners - £500 grants up to £6,000 max have worked well, in various combinations.
- Businesses must be engaged at inception of the CAZ, to ensure they are bought in to the benefits for them. Long term survivability of CAZ is hampered without them.
- CAZs must be shaped locally, with a clear understanding of local challenges and opportunities.
- CAZ projects must have a clear rationale, outputs and outcomes as part of a larger vision. In the absence of this vision, projects can lack direction and struggle to gain momentum.
- While CAZ funded project managers can work well, once their funding expires, projects can struggle to exist independently.
- So, survivability is enhanced by a lead person who is funded outside of CAZ and is thus able to continue to provide support post CAZ funding to develop the broader stakeholder group and drive new activities and plans.



- “*Meanwhile use*” of office spaces is incredibly valuable within CAZ, but can be a double-edged sword if the CAZ becomes too invested in one space, as success increases the likelihood of the space being let commercially so they lose it. Flexibility is necessary to be willing and able to bounce between available spaces.
- Collaboration between different CAZs is incredibly desirable and when done produces good results. Due to their size and relative lack of experience, CAZs can lack the impetus or determination to make collaboration happen under their own steam.
- It is helpful to build in an element of bid writing in the CAZ funding package, to facilitate continuation of projects when the core funding ends.

The next iteration of CAZ funding is exploring the inclusion of capital funding, as this is more readily available than revenue and can enable a more sustainable legacy within local centres.

## 3.0 Context

### 3.1 The Problem (that this pilot seeks to address)

The rationale behind Cultural action Zones has been to begin addressing a wide range of issues and opportunities locally, including:

#### **Re-animating a place**, addresses:

- A lack of vibrancy, footfall, and economic activity within many of our high streets and local centres during the day and at night.
- A reduced demand for local shops, in part because of increased use of on-line purchasing, but also because what they offer is no longer interesting enough or worthwhile for citizens.
- Empty retail spaces, by providing meanwhile users so new ideas can be tested and new business models applied that will bring at last some high streets back into use.
- People are demanding something different locally and this requires experimentation.
- Unrealised opportunities around infrastructure, organisation of local places and potential of local people.

#### **Providing opportunities**, addresses:

- The lack of opportunity for many people, young and old, to engage with others, many being isolated and lacking access to their peers.
- Lack of opportunity to get a good job, where for some the simple opportunity of volunteering work, or gaining confidence working and interacting with others locally, can empower them to get into education or jobs that they never thought were possible for them
- The lack of cultural and community activities in local centres that can bring communities together and enable citizens to interact with others and thus improve what can be poor wellbeing and mental health across many of our citizen groups.

#### **Improving sustainability**, addresses:

- A lack of customers and reduction in sales combined with increasing costs and risks.
- The failing mix of traditional retail, coupled with empty shops, that often adds up to a ‘not worth visiting the centre’ message for local people.
- A lack of places for community activities to happen at reasonable cost

#### **Empowering local leadership and stakeholders**, addresses:

- A lack of local collaboration and leadership which results in opportunities not being realised,
- A lack of purpose for local stakeholders to engage with each other, without which synergies, collaborations and opportunities are not discovered and meaningful change does not happen.
- A lack of ways that individual local citizens can engage and truly ‘have their say’.

**Strengthen the reputation of our local places**, addresses:

- The reality of decline across many of our high streets and local centres, with empty shops and a lack of reasons for local people to regularly visit.
- A lack of anchor or 'flagship' events (such as festivals, markets etc), without which places move 'out of the headlines' and off the agenda of 'nice places to visit'.
- A lack of community cohesion amongst local citizen groups.

Each CAZ can begin to address some of these issues and opportunities from each of these sections, although CAZs contribute to what can be a long journey of change and renewal.

### 3.2 Alignment with GBSLEP's Strategic Plans

The principles setting out the value of Cultural Action Zones were developed by Culture Central<sup>1</sup>, a collective voice for culture across the West Midlands region. GBSLEP commissioned them to write an independent study that outlines the way publicly funded bodies like LEPs should be investing in and supporting culture.



This study, **A Toolkit for Smarter Cultural Investments in our towns, cities and regions**<sup>2</sup> explains the rationale for CAZs alongside an under-pinning framework of cultural investment characteristics:

- Characteristic 1: Builds on regional distinctiveness.
- Characteristic 2: Extends or creates new 'place-leading' assets.
- Characteristic 3: Takes an innovative approach to cultural investment.
- Characteristic 4: Contributes to a cluster / ecosystem-based model.

GBSLEP set out its approach following this report in its **Cultural Action Framework**<sup>3</sup> - which accepted Culture Central's argument that the LEP should build capacity within cultural organisations, develop CAZs, heritage assets and new cultural funding models.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.culturecentral.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gbslep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CC-CULTURAL-REPORT-Dec19-FINAL-web-friendly-Hyperlinked.pdf> page 22

<sup>3</sup> <https://gbslep.co.uk/upload/files/NewFolder/GBSLEP-Cultural-Action-Framework-2020-2030-FINAL-Dec19.pdf>



This specific framework compliments GBSLEPs overall principles as set out in its **Strategic Economic Plan 2016-2030**<sup>4</sup>, which works towards:

- Stronger Conditions for growth – *by spreading opportunity and prosperity to all sections of society*
- Improving Quality of life for our citizens – *from jobs and economics to cultural offer and personal opportunity*
- Developing thriving local and town centres – *by supporting the regeneration of our High Streets through new approaches, a new mix of businesses and activities all driven by new local collaborations*
- Enhancing and harnessing the potential of our creative and cultural assets – *by piloting new business models and opportunities for investing differently in our cultural activity and creative heritage*

Armed with this rationale for investment in culture, GBSLEP decided to fund a two-phase pilot for Cultural Action Zones. Each project being intended to run for one year, followed by an evaluation.

## 4.0 How the call was run

### 4.1 Call Process

Cultural Action Zone projects were commissioned through two contestable calls. The first round in Spring 2020 was part of a broader 'Towns & Local Centres Call' and was thus slightly more focused towards planning and the development of actionable plans. From this call £120K was allocated to cultural action zones.

The second round in June 2021 had £250K available, with awards in the range £10K to £100K. The average award was £40K of grant with no specific match required, but in-kind match was strongly encouraged to ensure buy-in to the project.

Applicants to these pilot funding rounds were given significant freedom in determining their own activities and outputs so long as they broadly aligned with GBSLEP's strategic approach – as set out in the previous section. Applicant projects also needed to fulfil at least some of the LEPs cultural characteristics, which in a little more detail are as follows:

- Characteristic 1: Builds on regional distinctiveness. Successful projects will be able to articulate and demonstrate how they capture, reflect or create a strong sense of distinctive identity that contributes to a broader narrative about the qualities of a place.
- Characteristic 2: Extends or creates new 'place-leading' assets. Successful projects will seek to learn from, and extend, best international practice. Project leaders will be able to self-determine the 'place-leading' nature of their proposal, whatever its scale or location.
- Characteristic 3: Takes an innovative approach to cultural investment. Successful projects will clearly display an innovative business model, including an approach to sustainability that goes beyond that of merely extending or enlarging their existing business practice.
- Characteristic 4: Contributes to a cluster / ecosystem-based model. Successful projects will contribute to an existing, or catalyse a new, geographic 'cluster' of cultural institutions, with a view to leveraging audiences, visitors, communities, supply chains, and future market growth.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://gbslep.co.uk/strategy/strategic-economic-plan/>

In pursuit of characteristic 4, the importance of demonstrable collaboration was heavily emphasised to applicants. They were encouraged to form new partnerships with organisations working together, combining their ideas, revenue streams, assets and opportunities to create a sustainable impact.

This high level of freedom was to account for significant variations in local conditions and needs, and to allow for the greatest variation in types of activities by local communities, so that the most effective activities could be prioritised in future rounds. As a guide to what CAZs might look like, projects were given examples of the kinds of activities which could be supported:

- Reconfiguring the use of high street retail space, such as experimenting with ‘meanwhile use’
- Piloting new festivals, markets, and other activities
- Testing traffic re-routing and other activities which require consultation and planning
- Making better use of heritage and other unique features, such as canals
- Developing branding, tourism, communications, and VR/AR apps
- Installing street art and other attractions
- Improvements to the night-time economy

In line with GBSLEP’s Cultural Action Framework, underutilised heritage assets had been identified as a key opportunity for Cultural placemaking within the region. It was anticipated that heritage assets could become an anchor within a place; bringing together multiple commercial and non-commercial uses, enabling businesses and culture to flourish, and provide opportunities around tourism and skills development. Applicants were therefore also invited to deliver outputs specifically focused on heritage.

To allow for the greatest flexibility in location and delivery partners, while match funding was encouraged, it was not mandated. There were therefore significant variations in match funding from nil to the largest, from a local authority, of £100,000. Whilst there was no fixed requirement for match funding, there was an expectation that all proposals would come with some form of match, usually in-kind. This flexibility has been a strength of the CAZ model as it has allowed projects to be delivered by a wide variety of partners, from Metropolitan Borough Councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to arts focussed CICs and community groups.

The call was promoted on GBSLEP’s website with a broad outline of expected activities and principles. Potential applicants were invited to make informal Expressions of Interest, upon which they would be given access to a further page which provided a fuller explanation of requirements. This also enabled all those interested in applying to be kept informed of all questions being asked and answers given from all applicants, to ensure a fair and level playing field.

To ensure potential applicants understand the level of work involved, the application form was available to look through in its entirety before they started, with guidance notes included against each question, see Appendix A, page 36.

Alongside email contact with the LEP team directly, potential applicants were invited to an in-person workshop hosted by GBSLEP to further explain the call, outline expectations and to answer questions. This workshop was very well attended. As part of the application form, applicants were asked to describe:

- Description of project aims.
- Which partners and stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the proposal.
- How the project will contribute to delivering the objectives of GBSLEP.
- Whether the project adds value to any existing projects in development or delivery across the GBSLEP area.
- How the project will contribute green economic recovery and growth.
- How the project will contribute to inclusive recovery and growth.
- Necessity of funding.

- What alternative approaches to deliver the required outcomes have been considered, and why were they dismissed.
- Project milestones
- What are the key outputs and outcomes, and how these will be monitored and assessed.
- State-aid related due diligence (this has now become subsidy control post-EU funding).

In line with our ambitions for the call to be highly inclusive, increased bid-writing support was given to applicants in hard-to-reach areas/communities/neighbourhoods or where they may not have the experience of filling in what can be very daunting funding forms.

**Learnings:** GBSLEP learnt for future rounds of CAZ that it would be better to simplify the application process still further, eg., more tick boxes, with more ways of learning about the CAZ, eg., adding webinars and increased, possibly multi-language, support for applicants. 90% of grant funds up front should be considered.

In line with GBSLEP policy, all projects were commissioned using a milestone payment schedule, with 50% at the beginning, 40% upon the delivery of an agreed amount of outputs (usually half way or before half way) and the final 10% delivered following the completion of the project and project evaluation.

## Assessing applications

Following submission of applications, an internal panel was convened consisting of representatives from cultural bodies alongside the LEPs cultural and programme teams. An overall rating (A-D) was provided for each eligible application against the following criteria:

- Does the project proposal articulate a strong case and demonstrate a clear rationale for investment?
- Is the strategic case well defined?
- Is the project fit for purpose?
- Does it clearly align with the LEP's cultural and heritage objectives?
- Are there clear outputs and outcomes?

The panel scored the applications with an appropriate rating (A-D) to form a recommendation regarding the application. Scores were made on the following basis:

- A – Meets all the criteria (strategic fit, clear outputs and outcomes etc) and is deliverable within the agreed timescales.
- B – Meets most of the criteria with some minor queries
- C – Does not meet the criteria fully with additional clarity required
- D – Ineligible

Where further clarifications were required on applications, the LEP Executive liaised with the applicant for further information. This was then, if required, presented to the assessment panel for a final decision.

Projects were then presented in summary to the LEP's Place Board for endorsement / comments, with issues resolved if required. The LEP Executive then contacted the applicant with the outcome of the application. If the application was successful, the applicant organisation entered a contracting process with the LEP. During this process the activities, outputs and outcomes expected from the project would be discussed and finalised.

Because this CAZ programme was a pilot, GBSLEP provided some discretion on holding project managers to the outputs and outcomes they had agreed. This flexibility was important, as it enabled projects to respond to changing circumstances and find differing ways of maximising their impacts

and value to their local communities and citizens. This was especially important because of the resurgence of Covid part way through projects, which impacted all of them to varying degrees

## 4.2 Summary of awards



Hi-Vis 'Street Culture', Digbeth Birmingham, Cultural Action Zone

**In the second round of CAZ**, (June 2021) which is the main focus of this report, 18 applications for 'Cultural Action Zone (CAZ)' funding were received with total project budgets of £1,218,722 and a funding request to GBSLEP of £826,409 against our allocated budget of £250K. The total cost of the 7 bids awarded funding was £247,550 with mainly in-kind match provided by them totalling £25,428, a £497,978 programme cost. This match figure was inflated somewhat by a high match of £100K from a local authority.

The following projects received funding:

Project name	Project summary
<b>High Vis Street Culture Birmingham</b>	<p>A project to help establish Birmingham as the Street Art capital of the UK by working with businesses to show the positives and the love for Street Art from people all around the world, and by empowering and helping Street artists to paint murals to create a Street Art trail around Birmingham and surrounding areas. Show how art on a large scale can transform and energize places, pulling tourists in. Plus link artists together and promote them and work with local independent businesses.</p> <p><u>Core Activities:</u></p>

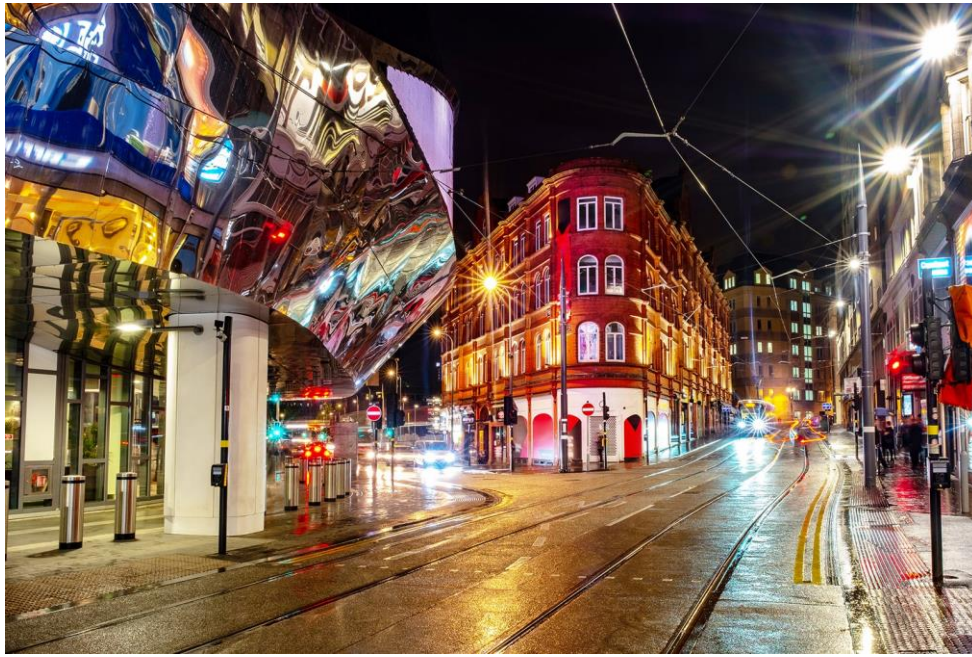
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of several street art murals around city</li> <li>• Hosting of street art festival</li> <li>• Establishment of support network for local artists including delivering support workshops</li> <li>• Establishing Street Art Trail</li> </ul>
<b>B10 Street Festival Small Heath</b>	<p>A project to pilot activity along Small Heaths Coventry Road which involved piloting a new cultural and markets festival. The B10 Street Festival, which aims to bring together local creative partners, community groups and local independent store owners to engage in arts and heritage within the target area and champion local commerce, culminating in a celebratory festival for community in early 2022. Facilitating legacy activity was key to this project.</p> <p>Core Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot cultural and markets festival</li> <li>• Establish Heritage trail and heritage archive</li> <li>• Set-up B10 Cultural Heritage &amp; Commerce Forum</li> <li>• Cultural outreach activities in local schools</li> </ul>
<b>Making Spaces Northfield</b>	<p>This project focussed on recognising, and celebrating existing, as well as creating new, local culture, arts and heritage. Making Spaces tested ways to create spaces for people to grow and develop as well as help transform physical spaces across Northfield/ Longbridge/Weoley/Kings Norton. It sought to help residents be at the heart of its own regeneration and foster a new love for the area. To support existing and encourage new small and independent businesses to thrive. To create safe spaces for dialogue and be supported to develop new skills.</p> <p>Core Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish 'Meanwhile use' community space on high street.</li> <li>• Create murals in collaboration with local people.</li> <li>• Run a series of markets for local businesses</li> <li>• Provide volunteering opportunities to local people</li> </ul>
<b>Moseley Road Monthly (Running as Balsall Heath Second Saturday)</b>	<p>A consortium bid by the leading arts, heritage and community organisations based on Moseley Road to come together drawing on shared values of raising the profile of the neighbourhood, increasing visitor numbers, bringing people from different faith and ethnic backgrounds together and bringing business to a deprived area of the city. Bringing community organisations and businesses together for a regularly recurring event as a deliberate move to put an often-overlooked neighbourhood on the map, celebrate the diversity found here and promoting community cohesion. 50+ organisations supported.</p> <p>Core activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recurring cultural festival established, with large scale buy in from local businesses and community stakeholders.</li> <li>• Festival to be organized so that it may continue indefinitely beyond the end of funding period.</li> <li>• Pilot further cultural activity in centre.</li> </ul>
<b>74 Bus Stops (running as On our Way)</b>	<p>A project to increase footfall, draw in visitors, and invigorate a local centre by: Transforming High Street bus stops into public works of art created by community members. Activity will have low barriers to access and will connect into Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme.</p>

	<p>Core activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a series of artworks in local bus stops co-created with local people</li> <li>• Large scale of community engagement especially with young people to ensure activity is authentic to the community</li> </ul>
<b>Solihull Festival of Cultural Moments</b>	<p>Through a combination of commissions and grant funding, the council aimed to kick-start a cultural impetus in Solihull that will run through to the spring, into the Commonwealth Games cultural programme, and beyond. Delivering a range of artistic, cultural and heritage forms, in both Solihull's main town centres but also its rural areas, with regular performances and experiences over a seven-month period,</p> <p>Core Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practically support the recovery of the cultural sector in Solihull.</li> <li>• Build the capacity of Solihull's cultural infrastructure, developing networks between the council and local artists and organisations.</li> <li>• Promote Solihull as a destination.</li> <li>• Enable residents and visitors to participate in and/or engage with cultural activity, with particular opportunities for young people and minority groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+).</li> <li>• Create a cultural legacy on which the council can build, providing pilot data, skills and knowledge for future events.</li> <li>• Build towards the Commonwealth Games cultural programme.</li> <li>• Support Solihull's retail and leisure economy recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Light Up Kidderminster</b>	<p>A project that sought to weave together and engage the artistic talent, cultural spaces and cultural organisations in Kidderminster through the themes of light, place and sound. It further aimed to create a Cultural Hub where those involved in the arts (in its widest sense) can come together to meet, share ideas and knowledge, create partnerships and learn new skills.</p> <p>Core Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an illuminated trail through the town by lighting up key heritage and modern structures and spaces</li> <li>• Exploring the importance of sound and place for young people through music workshops and performances</li> <li>• Young People and new talent created an Immersive UV Exhibition which will be displayed at the Town Hall.</li> </ul>

**FIRST ROUND CAZ** (April 2020) – these were funded through GBSLEP's Towns and Local Centres Call, which was more focused towards strategic planning. Two CAZs received funding with grants totalling £120K plus £32,300 of match, making a programme cost of £152,300.



Birmingham city centre near Southside Cultural Action Zone



Project name	Project summary
<b>Jewellery Quarter Cultural Action Zone</b>	<p>The project focused on under-utilised buildings and capacity. It aimed to bring together the traditional and emerging Jewellery Quarter skills bases and foster creative industry and key partner investment in training and employment. It intended to stimulate activity that showcases our unique collection of creative assets to the world.</p> <p>Key outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3x development studies for more ‘neglected’ parts of the Jewellery Quarter in order to stimulate and direct investment whilst safeguarding the built environment. The studies will be proposals which view each of the identified areas holistically and may include recommendations for physical, cultural, environmental, or other interventions.</li> <li>• The Development of a robust evidence base for a Creative Incubator and identification of potential models to take this forward, helping to ensure jewellery and allied trades remain at the heart of the Quarter and lead our economic growth.</li> <li>• Development of options for activity that will see the Jewellery Quarter utilise its heritage and jewellery sectors to stimulate the visitor economy and tourism. This would be achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Convening the Heritage sector following an analysis of Jewellery Quarter-wide strategies and plans, to develop an action plan to ensure full integration of the heritage sector into the areas plans.</li> <li>○ The development of a biennial festival of national and international significance with a big tourism pull would accrue significant benefits to our leisure &amp; hospitality and hotel sector.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Southside Cultural Action Zone</b>	<p>A project to allow Southside BID to firmly position Southside District as a premier cultural destination, investing in master plans and projects that will bring to life the BID's commitment to a safer, smarter and greener District.</p> <p>Key outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning a Southside Cultural Action Plan including a Commissioning Strategy, Delivery Plan and Festivals Plan.</li> <li>• Produce a costed &amp; deliverable plan for permanent festival infrastructure</li> <li>• Commissioning an Access Master Plan with an aim to Reduce congestion and improve air quality, Re-route traffic, Increase opportunities for hospitality and cultural venues to change how to offer their products by facilitating alfresco pavement dining and Improve wheelchair and pedestrian access</li> </ul>
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### 4.3 Programme delivery & management

Ongoing project management for these CAZ programmes was handled by the Strategic Lead for Creative and Cultural Industries with assistance from a Policy Coordinator within the GBSLEP Executive.

The LEP Board agreed to light-touch monitoring, with the application form mandating that monitoring information would be submitted by the applicant to the LEP Executive at least every 6 months. As this project was using a milestone payment structure, a project progress report which reported against the grant agreement was a prerequisite for all payments. Given that all activities supported by CAZ were new and running as pilots, this allowed for ongoing feedback and support to be given to projects from the LEP executive while also serving as a stopgap against project drift.

A summary of activities across the projects can be found in the table within Appendix C, page 40.

#### Facilitating collaboration

Bi-monthly online meetings were organised by the LEP executive with the intention of bringing all projects together, providing opportunities for collaboration and to allow for the best circulation of best practice. While these meetings were well attended, they were of little value due to pandemic disruption meaning all projects were in various stages of delivery and they did not provide enough space for true dialogue between projects. These were therefore stopped after 3 meetings as there was an anxiety within the LEP team that project managers may be attending only as they believe them to be mandatory rather than useful.

A later in-person workshop was held toward the end of project delivery to discuss next steps and to allow projects to make suggestions on what future stages might look like. This workshop was well attended and was tremendously useful in allowing projects more breathing room to make proper introductions. Several projects subsequently collaborated after this meeting. Given that cross-pollination of ideas across projects is eminently desirable, in future Cultural Actions Zones, it is recommended that an in-person meeting/workshop be held soon after commissioning and on a regular (at least quarterly) basis, but the agenda should always be led by the needs of the CAZ projects.

#### Covid Pandemic Impact

The concept of CAZs and the awarding of round one all happened before the covid pandemic, whilst round 2 was run and completed at what cautiously was hoped to be the end of the pandemic in July

2021. However, Covid flared up again in Autumn 2021 and so project plans were considerably disrupted. This was particularly true for projects which intended running activities within schools. As these obstacles were outside of their control, these projects were not penalised for this and instead found other means of securing community engagement with young people. Others were impacted where their activities that involved audiences or participants within restricted inside locations. In addition, most projects had some stakeholder partners who were very wary of engaging with activity and this meant that project delays were inevitable across the board. For that reason, completion for many was moved to March 2023.

Several the projects wanted to continue beyond the end of grant funding, as the partnerships formed were able to carry on at least some CAZ activity using their own resources. This sustainability of CAZ projects, once funded for a year, is a key and useful finding from the pilot. On average 2 in 7 projects could run for a year, 2 in 7 projects could carry on in some form long-term (potentially 5-years), two more could be sustained for two years in some form and the remaining project could continue in some form for more than 2-years, due in part to the amount the project needed grant resources to pay for project management.

## **Monitoring performance**

While the necessity of cultural interventions to help kickstart urban and social regeneration was clear, these pilot phases were commissioned explicitly to understand what the priority activities, outputs and outcomes were of our neighbourhoods and local centres. Commissioning as varied a range of activity as possible was anticipated and desired so that the LEP would be able to evaluate these and be able to make better-practice recommendations for potential future funding rounds.

While projects were expected to attempt to deliver their contractually agreed outputs and outcomes, their payment was not contingent on the success of all activities. Cultural Action Zones were especially keen to support pilot activities in areas which historically have lacked developed cultural assets or a cohesive cultural offer. As such it is understood that some projects may initially struggle to deliver against some outputs. Projects were consistently reassured that failure was a valid outcome of an activity so long as they could demonstrate they had made a good-faith attempt at delivering that output and that challenges or failures were properly outlined in evaluation reports. This reassurance was offered so as not to penalise projects for taking risks nor to incentive projects to misrepresent the efficacy of some activities.

As a result of these outputs and outcomes freedoms, across the seven projects there were 32 unique outputs and 15 unique outcomes. An unavoidable challenge emerged around how to standardise this monitoring to make recommendations for future activity without missing out on nuances of projects or misrepresent their intentions.

Evaluation of these pilot phases would operate on two levels. Projects would only be expected to report against their contractually agreed outputs and outcomes, not against a standardised model. The LEP executive would build out an evaluation model from this reporting which would be able to be applied moving forward while still allowing sufficient freedom for future phases to continue to experiment or adapt to changing circumstances.

## **4.4 Outputs:**



MAKING SPACES, NORTHFIELD, BIRMINGHAM, CULTURAL ACTION ZONE

During the pilot phase, projects tested these outputs - note that the outputs of CAZ round 1, commissioned through Towns and Local Centres funding, have been omitted for the sake of clarity:

- Meetings convened
- Steering groups formed
- Large murals created
- Local creatives engaged
- Volunteering roles create
- Apprentice roles created
- local education spaces engaged
- Local businesses engaged
- Attendees at events
- Pop-up markets formed/held
- Showcase events held
- Concluding reports commissioned
- Festivals (quantified by days)
- Special events held
- Organisations Supported/connected/included
- Project manager roles supported
- Permanent legacy planning
- Develop night activities
- Film Screenings held
- Safe spaces created
- low carbon activities trailed
- Free events held
- artist workshops held
- Cultural Trails created
- promotional videos created
- "selfie trails" created
- Exhibitions held
- Young people engaged
- Street/public art created
- Online presence established
- Permanent Public art created
- Artist Support Network established
- Networking events held

The flexibility of activities and outputs remained a core strength throughout the programme. While this flexibility was initially a means of allowing the maximum number of activities to be tested, as projects progressed it became apparent that this flexibility itself was an intrinsic strength of the CAZ model. While projects were expected to report against the outputs as stated above and were monitored as such,

at programme level, the LEP executive condensed these into the following outputs:

### **Headline outputs as monitored by LEP Executive:**

- Organisations engaged broken down by:
  - Number of local businesses engaged
  - Number of Local Community Organisations Engaged (inc. schools)
- Number of Smaller local events or activities supported (e.g. workshops)
- Number of Larger local events or activities supported
  - In future this should be further broken down by festivals days, markets held, microgrant schemes ran as these are activities we particularly encourage.
  - Other larger activities may be kept as none-standard.
- Number of Temporary Artistic Displays Created
- Number of tourism, culture or heritage assets created or improved.
  - It is anticipated that this output will be able to be further broken down based on the demand demonstrated at application phase
- Number of re-occurring events established
- Number of volunteering opportunities supported
- Total Number of Participants at events
- Number of under 18-year-old participants
- Number of community interest Groups established (inc steering groups)
- Number of Local Artists Commissioned/ engaged

For future funding rounds, while projects would still have freedom to determine their activities, it is anticipated that the majority should sit underneath one of these headline outputs. If there is sufficient evidence of missing outputs, then these will be added in later.

## **4.5 Outcomes**

Despite the large number of outcomes proposed, there was still a broad coalescence around six 'headline' outcomes. This may reflect universal issues which impact all areas regardless of local identity and/or shared conceptions of what better practice may look like going forward.

To ensure there was no misrepresentation, these headline indicators were proposed to the commissioned projects who agreed in discussion that they reflected their intentions well. While projects were allowed to continue to report against their non-standard outcomes, projects were consulted on potential standardised survey questions which may be used for future funding rounds to streamline outcomes assessment.



Balsall Heath, Birmingham *Second Saturday* Cultural Action Zone



Outcomes as stated by CAZs	Proposed Simplified outcome indicator
Increased pride in local heritage/culture	<b>[1] Increased Pride, Cohesion and Activity</b>
Increase in local community cohesion	
Increase awareness of local artists	<b>[2] Increased awareness &amp; Support of local artists</b>
Support local creatives	
Increase footfall	<b>[3] Business revenue &amp; Partnerships</b>
Develop new partnerships	
Increase revenue for local businesses	<b>[4] Visitor Experience, reputation &amp; cultural offer</b>
Improvement of visitor experience	
Improvement of cultural offer	
Improvement of local reputation	<b>[5] Talent Development and Engagement of young people</b>
Increase skills and apprenticeships	
Youth cultural engagement	<b>[6] Repeatability, permanence &amp; legacy</b>
Repeatability	
Permanent displays	
Plans for legacy	

## 4.6 Logic Model and alignment to Levelling Up and UKSPF

Upon analysing the above outputs and outcomes, the LEP executive designed a logic model to succinctly demonstrate the logical cascade of activity from project call to delivery. See Appendix B, page 39.



This logic model is both descriptive, in that it demonstrates how the potentially disparate activities of Cultural Action Zones all align to deliver against the same key themes, and proscriptive in that it demonstrates the kinds of activities which can deliver against key themes.

Note that this logic model contains some outputs and outcomes which have not been tested in pilot phases but are anticipated to be a part of future phases should the balance of capital and revenue funding shift. As it is proposed that some versions of future CAZ could include up to two thirds capital monies alongside revenue.

In addition, it is essential that the CAZ pilot programme be aligned with current government thinking around the levelling up agenda through the **Levelling Up White Paper**<sup>5</sup>, which sets out five key levers for levelling up:

- **Physical capital** – infrastructure, machines and housing
- **Human capital** – the skills, health and experience of the workforce
- **Intangible capital** – innovation, ideas and patents
- **Financial capital** – resources supporting the financing of companies
- **Social capital** – the strength of communities, relationships and trust

Individual CAZ projects can be regarded as the microcosm of this over-arching levelling-up approach, as each contains activities that support a number of these levelling up levers.

One of the key new funding streams that supports levelling up is **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**<sup>6</sup>, which is intended to replace EU funding. Thinking about the future funding of Cultural Action Zones requires us to look at the alignment of CAZ programmes to the above government policies. The table below sets out relevant UKSPF interventions alongside relevant UKSPF outputs and relevant UKSPF outcomes. It will be seen that these UKSPF measures are very close to the outputs and outcomes from the CAZ programme to date. Future iterations of CAZ will need to be aligned to the demands of funding streams such as this one:

Relevant UKSPF Interventions:	Relevant UKSPF outputs:	Relevant UKSPF Outcomes:
<p>E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.</p> <p>E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs.</p> <p>E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.</p> <p>E4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage</p>	<p>Amount of green or blue space created or improved</p> <p>Amount of public realm created or improved</p> <p>Amount of rehabilitated land or premises</p> <p>Number of events/participatory programmes</p> <p>Number of facilities support/created</p> <p>Number of local events or activities supported</p> <p>Number of local markets supported</p> <p>Number of neighbourhood improvements undertaken</p> <p>Number of organisations/freelancers receiving financial support other than grants</p>	<p>Improved engagement numbers</p> <p>Improved perception of events</p> <p>Improved perception of facilities/amenities/attractions/infrastructure/markets</p> <p>Improved perception of safety</p> <p>Increase in number of businesses engaged in new markets</p> <p>Increase in visitor spending</p> <p>Increased affordability of events/entry</p> <p>Increased amount of investment</p> <p>Increased business sustainability</p> <p>Increased footfall</p> <p>Increased number of organisations/freelancers supported</p> <p>Increased number of web searches for a place</p> <p>Increased take-up of energy efficiency measures</p>

<sup>5</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1052706/Levelling\\_Up\\_WP\\_HRES.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

<p>institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.</p> <p>E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'. (an example project is improvements to streetlighting)</p> <p>E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.</p> <p>E8: Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.</p> <p>E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.</p> <p>E11 Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups</p> <p>E15 Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities</p> <p>E16 Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around business support</p> <p>E17: Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally.</p> <p>E23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks</p> <p>E26: Support for growing the local social economy, including</p>	<p>Number of organisations/freelancers receiving grants</p> <p>Number of organisations/freelancers receiving non-financial support</p> <p>Number of people attending training sessions</p> <p>Number of people reached</p> <p>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready</p> <p>Number of projects</p> <p>Number of Tourism, Culture or heritage assets created or improved</p> <p>Number of trees planted</p> <p>Number of volunteering opportunities supported</p> <p>Number of meetings of local stakeholders</p>	<p>Increased use of cycleways or paths</p> <p>Increased users of facilities/amenities</p> <p>Increased visitor numbers</p> <p>Jobs created</p> <p>Jobs safeguarded</p> <p>Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative assets as a result of support</p> <p>Number of decarbonisation plans developed</p> <p>Number of facilities with improved digital connectivity</p> <p>Number of meetings of local stakeholders held</p> <p>Number of new businesses created</p> <p>Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support</p> <p>Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity</p> <p>Reduced vacancy rates</p> <p>Volunteering numbers as a result of support</p>
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The systematic application of social value measures and their outcomes was not applied to this pilot CAZ programme, but it is felt they need to be apart of future CAZ programmes. CAZs deliver considerable additional value and impact for local centres and align to Birmingham City Council's social charter<sup>7</sup>. This charter is itself based on the National TOM's Framework for Social Value (2021 + 2022 updates)<sup>8</sup>

TOM's is a universal standard in the UK for measuring social value outcomes. It may therefore be better if future CAZ programmes align first to the National Tom's Social Value framework, and then are cross-referenced to the relevant funding stream being used, such as UKSPF.

Analysis to date suggests the following are the most relevant outcomes for future CAZs:

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11222/social\\_value\\_policy](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11222/social_value_policy)

<sup>8</sup> [https://socialvalueportal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/TOMs\\_Framework\\_2021.pdf](https://socialvalueportal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/TOMs_Framework_2021.pdf)

<b>Out co me</b>	<b>Outcome description</b>	<b>Outcome quantity</b>	<b>Method of independent verification</b>
1	Increased business revenue and GVA	£	Survey of CAZs and economic impact assessment based on survey results
2	Increased footfall	% increase	Evaluation by CAZs
3	Increased visitor numbers and spend	% increase	Evaluation by CAZs
4	Creating a healthier community	Survey, case studies	Evaluation by CAZs
5	More working with the community	% increase	Evaluation by CAZs
6	More local people in employment	% increase	Evaluation by CAZs
7	More opportunities for disadvantaged people	Survey, case studies	Evaluation by CAZs
8	Increased Business Sustainability	survey data	Evaluation by CAZs
9	Jobs created or safeguarded	GVA proxy	Evaluation by CAZs
10	Social innovation to enable healthier safer and more resilient communities	Survey, case studies	Evaluation by CAZs
11	Develop and implement a sustainable EZCAZ legacy plan	30	Evaluation by CAZs
12	Improved perception of facilities /amenities /attractions /infrastructure /events /markets / safety	survey data	Evaluation by CAZs
13	Increased pride in place	survey data	Evaluation by CAZs
14	Crime is reduced	survey data	Evaluation by CAZs

For completeness, there are two additional measures that could be considered to assess CAZs, these are land value uplift and reducing carbon emissions, However, both of these fall outside of the scope of this report.

Thus, the rest of this report, on evaluation and learnings, reverts to talking about the outputs and outcomes as used in GBSLEP's CAZ pilot programme itself.

## 5.0 Evaluation

Balsall Heath, Birmingham *Second Saturday* Cultural Action Zone



In round 1, The first 2 CAZs funded, in Jewellery Quarter and Southside in Birmingham, were more focused on planning, engaging with the neighbourhood and working very strategically to bring about change.

In round 2, the seven CAZs were focused on supporting immediate practical activity to re-animate and begin to transform places; including Balsall Heath, Small Heath, Soho Road, Northfield and Digbeth in Birmingham, and further afield, Kidderminster and Solihull.

A key idea was to try things out and learn what activities and actions will work best for the future. For example, Solihull MBC launched its *Cultural Moments programme* because of CAZ and have learnt a lot through it, enabling them to plan a future programme outside of CAZ support. Further impacts included Southside CAZ, Birmingham, which leveraged in £1.23m, £350K towards new CCTV to make the area safer and £887K to start initial works on street changes that will enable regular pedestrianisation of the Chinese Quarter. 'On Our Way', Soho Road, Birmingham focused on bus stop art to build community cohesion and helped leverage in over £300K from Transport for West Midlands to renew the bus stops in their centre.

The core findings from this CAZ programme are that all projects achieved higher outputs than originally predicted, with a wide range of outcomes progressed alongside a number of additional social value impacts.

Overall, there have been at least 12,000 participants, plus a further 633 under 18, 208 businesses and organisations engaged, 208 volunteers, 178 smaller events run, 42 larger events, 2 recurring events, 10 temporary artistic displays created, 16 permanent displays and 142 artists commissioned. An economic analysis was run that showed a Gross value added (GVA) uplift could be proven as a result of CAZ activity, alongside which, it especially generates a wide range of social value and non-quantifiable benefits.

A business survey was conducted at the end of this pilot programme with analysis by BOP Consulting. The activities of these CAZ zones engaged a diverse range of businesses - within various

sectors (cultural and creative, hospitality, retail and other) and of different scales (micro and small businesses).

Surveying these businesses indicated that the presence of the CAZ had improved the revenue-generation of these businesses. This revenue generation was incremental, i.e., went above and beyond what the businesses would have otherwise generated. 58 businesses provided survey responses that indicated that these incremental gains varied by business sectors and scales. The strongest revenue gains were experienced by hospitality and retail businesses – rather than cultural and creative businesses. These gains for hospitality and retail businesses derive from CAZ activities increasing footfall, dwell time and spending by visitors to these localities.

These findings have some consistency with new research published by the BBC that shows, “the changing face of the British High Street from a place to buy things to a place to do stuff - like get your nails done and meet friends for a coffee or a cocktail”.<sup>9</sup> CAZ activities increase the sense that a high street is a place to do stuff and through such activities, the CAZ helps to attract more people and spending to these localities.

However, it is very difficult to measure for certain economic gain from programmes like this, as long-term value can be difficult to measure as local centres require projects like this to run for a sustained period of years to show a real impact.

To enable a truer economic assessment of CAZ performance BOP Consulting constructed a model around Gross Value Added (GVA). Whilst this was built for the primary purpose of future CAZ funding applications, it does enable this report to evidence strong economic value for the programme. The method used to run this model is as follows:

1. Each project collected their own set of output and outcome data as set-out in their grant agreement with GBSLEP. This collection data is summarised in Appendix C, page 40.

This data set was then analysed to derive the average number of outputs against a ‘standard’ CAZ programme with a ‘standard’ cost – the sum of grant plus match, as below:

### Average Outputs per CAZ

Output	Output description	Output quantity	Beneficiaries	Strategic Alignment
1	Local businesses engaged	38	Businesses	Business Growth
2	Local Community Organisations Engaged	5	Community Organisations	Civic pride and social capital
3	Number of Smaller local events or activities supported (e.g., workshops)	34	Cultural groups and participants	Civic pride and social capital
4	Number of Larger local events or activities supported (e.g. festivals days, markets held, microgrant schemes)	6	Cultural groups and attendees	Civic pride and social capital
5	Number of Temporary Artistic Displays Created	4	Artists	Artistic development
6	Number of tourism, culture or heritage assets created or improved	9	Tourist, cultural and heritage sectors	Civic pride and social capital
7	Number of re-occurring events established	1	Event organisers and attendees	Civic pride and social capital
8	Number of volunteering opportunities supported	39	Volunteers	Civic pride and social capital

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63799670>

9	Total Number of Participants at events	2,469	Participants	Civic pride and social capital
10	Number of under 18-year-old participants	122	Under 18 participants	Civic pride and social capital
11	Number of community interest Groups established (inc steering groups)	1	Community groups	Civic pride and social capital
12	Number of Local Artists Commissioned/engaged	28	Artists and community groups	Civic pride and social capital

2. A survey of businesses near each CAZ was run, which enabled the following questions to be answered:

- Average incremental revenue gain for businesses engaged by CAZ (£ over 12 months)
- Average incremental GVA gain for businesses engaged by CAZ (£ over 12 months)
- Average business base per CAZ (workers)
- Average incremental, non-displaced GVA gain for businesses engaged by CAZ (£ over 12 months)
- Average incremental, non-displaced GVA gain for businesses engaged by CAZ - with multiplier (£ over 12 months)
- Average incremental, non-displaced GVA gain across business base engaged by CAZ - with multiplier (£ over 12 months)

This survey data set was broken down into the following four categories:

- Culture and Creative businesses
- Hospitality Businesses
- Retail Businesses
- Other

This data set was then applied to a theoretical longer CAZ programme, which assumed that instead of 9 CAZ projects across two years there would be 30 projects across six years. The longevity of each being based on the actual findings from the current CAZ pilot programme. The model assumes that:

- 5 projects are funded in each year for 6 years
  - Two of these projects run for one year only
  - Two more run for 5 years without further funding. *(which is consistent with the findings to date, that in some areas CAZ money acts as a seed catalyst to enable the existing stakeholders to work together effectively, such as in starting a regular monthly festival and street market)*
  - final one runs for 5 years but requires 2 years of funding
- In year 2 to year 6 - 5 more projects are funded in each year
  - with one of the existing ones receiving an additional year of funding
- Many of these CAZ projects will continue without funding through to year ten

Using this methodical approach it is then possible to calculate a Gross Value added uplift against the overall programme. In this example, it showed that a programme of this nature could generate £12m in GVA uplift over 10 years which equates to a Benefit Cost ration (BCR) of 5.2. using the standard proxy for jobs created against GVA that would mean CAZ will generate 300 jobs across the ten years.

Whilst this statistic does not directly relate to the current CAZ pilot programme under review it does show that the ingredients of CAZ will deliver a valuable economic gain for their localities.



As stated earlier in this report, CAZ projects deliver a considerably larger benefit than the economic one alone, and future CAZ projects will consider a far larger dimension around social value impacts, probably based around the National Tom's Framework.

However, social value outcomes have not been evaluated in this pilot, as this pilot programme was designed to test the range of possible outcomes and values derived from CAZs so that a more refined programme, with a more highly developed evaluation methodology against it, could follow in the future.

This CAZ pilot programme has achieved its over-arching objective, that in supporting local centres and communities a CAZ model has been tested and fully understood that can now be refined and re-worked for a further iteration of CAZ programmes, which can better articulate the essential outputs and outcomes needed to maximise CAZ success and ensure its future sustainability for the benefit of our local high streets, local centres, communities and citizens.

## 6.0 Learnings

Balsall Heath, Birmingham *Second Saturday* Cultural Action Zone



Through the evaluation reports and discussions with the CAZ projects a number of key learnings have been compiled that will make it easier to run future CAZs effectively, whilst avoiding some of the pitfalls that have been discovered along the way, these include:

- Successful CAZs need a strong steering group with a highly collaborative lead organisation able to develop a wider stakeholder group responsible for delivery of project goals and outcomes.
- Lead organisations have significant power to influence the success of a wider project. Effective leadership of a CAZ has reciprocal responsibilities, lead organisations must hold wider group responsible for delivery of project goals and outcomes while also fulfilling a pastoral role of supporting and encouraging partners through difficulties.
- CAZ projects must have a clear rationale, outputs and outcomes as part of a larger vision. In the absence of this, projects can lack direction and struggle to gain momentum. When working with grassroots organisations the purpose of their activities must remain abundantly clear else there is a risk of project drift.

- CAZs must be shaped locally, with a clear understanding of local challenges and opportunities. CAZs should seek to directly address these while integrating the spirit and interests of the local area. There is a risk of parachuting in ideas from outside the area that provide an imperfect solution as the local challenges and community priorities have not been sufficiently understood.
- It's imperative that businesses are engaged at inception of project to have the direct and intangible benefits outlined to them. Lack of bedrock local business support significantly hampers effectiveness of events and impairs long-term survivability of projects.
- There is a degree of ideological buy-in necessary from partnered organisations. Given inherent self-interest of sustaining a business, it is inevitable that some prospective partners will struggle to understand the value of collaborative working, these should be filtered out.
- While funding of project managers works well initially, once their funding expires, projects can struggle to exist independently. This can be a scapegoat for authentic collaboration as then stakeholders basically become delivery partners, its worse value for money as well because it makes it less personal.
- survivability is enhanced by a lead person who is funded outside of CAZ and is thus able to continue to provide support post CAZ funding to develop the broader stakeholder group and drive new activities and plans.
- A micro-grant scheme is essential to drive initial interest and engage partners - £500 grants up to £6,000 max have worked well, in various combinations.
- *Meanwhile* use of office spaces are really valuable, but can be a double-edged sword if the CAZ becomes too invested in one space, as success increases the likelihood of the space being let commercially so they lose it. Flexibility is necessary to be willing and able to bounce between available spaces.
- Collaboration between different CAZs is incredibly desirable and when done produces good results. Due to their size and relative lack of experience, CAZs can lack the impetus or determination to make collaboration happen under their own steam.
- Much greater collaboration is necessary between CAZs, LAs and the LEP in terms of removing institutional barriers to success (eg. Earmarking walls to not be painted over, connecting CAZs to relevant LA departments, on street furniture etc.)
- It is helpful to build in an element of bid writing in the CAZ funding package, to facilitate continuation of projects when the core funding ends.

The learnings from some of these key aspects of CAZ projects need expanding:

**Consortia leadership** has been an effective method of ensuring active inclusion of local stakeholders and community leaders. A key mechanism of action of CAZs is to ensure that interventions are born out of and organised within the communities they wish to serve. Consultation and/or direct involvement of key local stakeholders is essential so that activities can authentically represent the interests and priorities of local people. This is particularly important when seeking to deliver interventions within communities which traditionally have struggled to engage with public sector support.

From our pilot learnings, an effective method of guaranteeing grassroots support has been the formation and regular meeting of steering groups with oversight for the whole project. These steering groups have been comprised of grant holders, key local stakeholders, and delivery partners. As such, evidencing this consultation and grassroots involvement on applications should be a prerequisite to receiving funding.

**Microgrants** are an effective method of bringing local creatives together and kickstarting activity, especially in areas which lack formalised creative communities. An effective microgrants model may consist of:

- An open call for EOIs for commissioned cultural work.
- The establishment of a local creative network – if it doesn't already exist – to better support all local creatives, whether they applied for grant funding or not.
- Microgrants awarded will typically be in the range £300-£1000, although some may be up to £6000.
- A range of artistic, experimental and community works and activities will then be delivered locally, with the networks maximising the value and impact of each.

In the pilot phase, these cultural/artist network meetings have been hugely popular and have been able to continue long after the microgrants have been awarded. Other commercial opportunities have begun to be circulated in several of these groups as synergies emerge quickly through networking activity of this type.

**Meanwhile Use** has worked well when implemented during pilot phases. This is particularly true when spaces have been established within shopping centres. The temporary conversion of vacant shop fronts into community cultural spaces has symbiotic benefits to the community, the landlord and to the cultural and community organisations involved. For the community, it provides non-commercial space on their high streets which can help fulfil social needs, and it removes a vacant unit from their local centre, helping to address high street decline. For the cultural organisation, it provides a highly central, cost-effective base for their activities, increasing their profile and giving a central point to coordinate activities.

#### **Case study: Northfield Arts Forum, Birmingham**

*The NAF Shop is a community arts 'meanwhile space' in the heart of Northfield Shopping Centre, where we run workshops, events, community meetings and small business markets. We also rent the space out to pottery, storytelling, stitching, coding and toddlers' groups (amongst others!), and our exhibition space is used by local artists to showcase their work. The Shop has given community members access to inclusive creative activities within their locality, and we have signposted and supported many community members in accessing support with housing, food and other fundamental needs. NAF events and workshops have also invited people into the shopping centre, from Northfield and beyond, who would not usually use it. We obtained the space in 2022, with the help of East Street Arts, as part of our Making Spaces (CAZ) project. The renovation took a month.*

For landlords, *meanwhile spaces* demonstrate the value of the space to prospective future leasers, helps to increase footfall in the area, and can help reduce the maintenance burden. Where productive relationships with landlords have been established, upon a paying tenant being found, the group can transfer to another vacant unit. A large degree of flexibility is necessary to be willing and able to bounce between available spaces. Demonstrable ability to flexibly occupy spaces - and increase their rentability - can build strong relationships with local landlords.

**Artistic creation as a facilitator** is another best practice recommendation. Rather than focussing solely on the produced art itself, applicants will be invited to consider how the production and delivery

of their activities/assets can impact change. Examples of this in practice include; using commissioning as a means of teaching about professionalisation for “hobbyist” artists and embedding arts activities from different cultural backgrounds into businesses and venues popular amongst other groups to help break down barriers within communities and increase community cohesion.

#### **Case Study: Street Culture – Hi-Vis, Digbeth, Birmingham**

*Hi-Vis provided a business support service for mural and street artists, who did not always realise there was a way to expand their hobby to become a significant income generator for them through commercialisation. This CAZ project provided bursaries to create street art, run festivals around it, and the team at Hi-Vis have now established a network for street artists, who regularly meet for support and discussion, underpinned by a simple What’s App group.*

### **Redefining the Strategic fit of Cultural Action Zones**

The evaluation and learnings from these two rounds of Cultural Action Zone funding have led us to redefine the strategic fit of CAZs, which now:

1. Re-animate local places with a new mix of cultural, experiential and community activities and facilities to drive footfall and improve community and visitor experience.
2. Improve the sustainability of local businesses, organisations, and community groups by building out their revenue generating capacity.
3. Provide opportunities for citizens to participate, volunteer, develop their skills and improve their wellbeing and future life chances.
4. Empower local stakeholders and leadership so they can develop sustainable activities, improve community cohesion, reshape the identity of their place and develop a legacy plan.
5. Support creative and cultural (CC) practitioners so they can deliver a diverse range of activities, experiences, and artifacts.
6. Strengthen the reputation of our local places because of improvements in facilities, cultural offer, community activities, safety alongside an overall increase in pride for the local area.

### **Final Learnings from our CAZs – including some challenges and obstacles**

There are always obstacles and issues to overcome, and the final part of this review allows our CAZ managers to set a few down. Each project had a confidential evaluation and a more public summary, with many elements to be used for promoting the CAZ idea and leveraging new monies and support for them in the future.

This CAZ programme was always about testing and experimenting, where failure was not only an option, but an essential part of learning and refining what would be a better approach to CAZ in the future. Here are a few final thoughts from our CAZ project managers:

#### **Solihull Festival of Moments:**

- The process of commissioning allowed artists to respond freely requiring minimum information to begin with and supporting three artists to work up full proposals developed meaningful relationships with all artists not just the artist selected.
- The scope of stories collected on a relatively raw theme required careful handling and consideration.

- The nature of the selected commission meant the story contributors were a little cautious of what they were coming to as many had not experienced an installation before - if the web version and installation had been developed at the same time some of these fears may have been avoided.
- Developing a micro-commissioning programme-built trust in the council from the sector and made creatives more willing and able to come to the table to discuss sector needs. Additionally, it enabled officers to understand the work of our creatives and understand what systems of support may be beneficial.
- Working with local businesses to identify areas of need enabled an area of weakness to be developed into an area of strength and charity shops to be celebrated. Aligning it to COP 26 captured both the imagination of the young people and locals.

### **Hi-Vis Street Culture:**

- The project has enabled some very strong and secure partnerships, with very strong outcomes that will last.
- Networking street artists via *Whats App* was an unexpected hit.
- We prioritised the 40 artists work over paying ourselves to manage the project – we will be clearer on this in the future.
- A number of opportunities came up during the project which we took, so a degree of flexibility running a CAZ is important.

### **B10 Street Festival**

- The project has created the B10 Cultural Heritage and Commerce Forum to champion the partnerships within the area and to develop a legacy programme.
- The Caz project made a larger than anticipated impact across Small Heath and along the Coventry Road.
- The Forum for many members has been a new way of creating business, ideas and networking. Many had successful businesses on the Coventry Road, but few had actually spoken about their plans and begun to collaborate with each other before the CAZ.





### **Light Up Kidderminster**

- CAZ has acted as a catalyst to bring many cultural organisations and creatives together to form our Kidderminster CAZ. This has been fantastic for the area and has been instrumental in a greater 'joined up' thinking of cultural delivery across the town.
- The greatest challenge to the Cultural Action Zone has been the lack of job security for the two lead officers throughout the project. Kidderminster Town Council has been through a tumultuous twelve months with changes in senior personnel and this alongside funding challenges has impacted the project and its future.
- After initial funding was spent it was difficult to galvanise ongoing network support, it definitely helps to have discrete pots of grant money to enable tangible activity

### **Making Spaces, Northfield Arts Forum (NAF), Birmingham**

- We have found that arts activities on Northfield High Street have been beneficial both in increasing NAF's community presence post-pandemic and in increasing footfall for local businesses.



- Having a physical base in the shopping centre has meant that more community members have been able to access our arts activities and support, particularly for members of the community who hadn't been able to access NAF in the past.
- Having improved the garden, we now see this as a huge asset to NAF and we are looking to hire it out for birthday parties and events in order to generate future independent revenue.
- Partly as a result of the success of this project, Northfield Arts Forum is in the process of applying for charity status (CIO) in order that we can collect donations to continue our work; have access to a wider pool of funding; increase the involvement of our Board in our activities; and properly reflect our missions and ethos through our organisation status.
- We did not predict that we would have a total of over 3000 people attending our CAZ events and workshops, partly as a result of having our shop space, and feel that in future we can set higher targets for event attendees, given recent evidence.
- We found further relationships were needed to be made in order to ensure we're connecting with the whole constituency.
- Taking over the project as a brand new team came with challenges. After Covid, NAF had lost contact with many of the participants we had previously worked with and *The Making Spaces* project gave us the space and time to be able to establish this and contact and attract new and previous participants back to the high street.
- We are looking to develop a method of collecting feedback and Equality and Diversity information from participants without disrupting their activities and without them feeling we are being intrusive. This is particularly sensitive given the numbers of vulnerable individuals who we work with on a regular basis, but we feel it would be useful to the development of NAF.
- Although we met our output target in terms of volunteers, we noticed (along with other similar organisations in our network) that community members are less willing to volunteer time than they might have been before the pandemic, making the sustainability of our work much harder to achieve. We are looking to improve our volunteer outreach system, and consider in future projects how we support volunteers and what we can offer them to make their experiences as worthwhile as possible.
- Schools have been much more difficult to get in touch with than anticipated - one might assume this is due to the immense pressure on teachers in the current climate. As with volunteers, in future projects, we will be carefully considering what we can offer schools to make a collaboration hassle-free and worthwhile for them.
- We were pleased to discover that Northfield Stakeholders already operate as a local steering group for businesses in Northfield and continue to take a proactive role in their meetings. We hosted one of them in the NAF Shop, and plan to do so again in the future.

## On Our Way-74 Bus Stops

- Bus stop art on the 74 Bus Stop down Soho Road in Birmingham generated considerable community engagement and led – through CAZ and the BID - to the bus stops being renewed – something that had been asked for across many years - at a cost of c. £300K to Transport for West Midlands.
- One of the key strengths of the CAZ steering group was the bringing together of individuals from multiple stakeholders who hadn't previously had an opportunity to share their thinking face-to-face.

- The bus stop trail developed a more desirable environment to visit and dwell within.



*On Our Way, 74 Bus Stops, Birmingham, Cultural Action Zone*

GBSLEP's Cultural Action Zone pilot has provided a wealth of learning and insights for future CAZ programme and other cultural and community work, as well as already making a significant and lasting impact across the high streets and local centres involved in CAZ, from Birmingham and Kidderminster to Solihull.

**Report compiled by: Tom Lewis & David Furmage for GBSLEP**

# Appendices

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# Appendix A



## Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Enabling Fund Culture and Heritage Projects Application Form

**Deadline for the submission of applications is noon on XX/YY/ZZ.**

<b>1. Summary Project Details</b>	
Project name	
Location / area covered by the project	
Applicant organisation	
Applicant address	
Lead officer at applicant organisation (please include name, job title, telephone number, and email address)	
Short summary description of what the project will do	(150 words max)
Project start date	
Project end date	
Estimated total project cost	
Amount of revenue funding required from the SEP Enabling Fund	
Which partners and stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the proposal?	
<b>2. Strategic Fit</b>	
Which of GBSLEP's cultural investment priorities will this project support? How will it support these priorities?	
How will this project contribute to low or zero carbon recovery and growth?	
How will this project contribute to inclusive recovery and growth?	
How will your project's activities help to mitigate the impact of Covid-19?	
<b>3. Case for funding</b>	
Why is the SEP Enabling Fund required to deliver this project? What would happen if this support was not forthcoming?	

What alternative approaches to deliver the required outcomes have been considered, and why were they dismissed?	
<b>4. Project management</b>	
Please describe the procurement processes (if applicable) that you will use for any SEP Enabling Fund monies that are awarded to the project.	
What are the key outputs for your project? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC.	
What are the key outcomes for your project? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC.	
How will you monitor and evaluate the contribution you have outlined above? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC.  (Please be aware that grant recipients are contractually required to provide a short evaluation report after the completion of the project.)	
What are the governance arrangements (e.g. steering group, project board, delivery team, etc) for the project?	
<b>5. Due diligence</b>	
What is the legal status of your organisation? Please provide evidence of this status along with the completed application form.	
If your application is successful, we will use DocuSign to complete the appropriate grant forms. The DocuSign process will require TWO AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES from within your organisation to sign the form. Please provide their names, job titles, and email addresses.	
Should your project be approved are you able to provide 3 years of accounts?	Yes [    ] No [    ]
Are there any State aid implications to be addressed? Please give a brief explanation for your answer. Please also note that it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they are compliant with State aid regulations.	
Is your organisation / anyone within your organisation:	

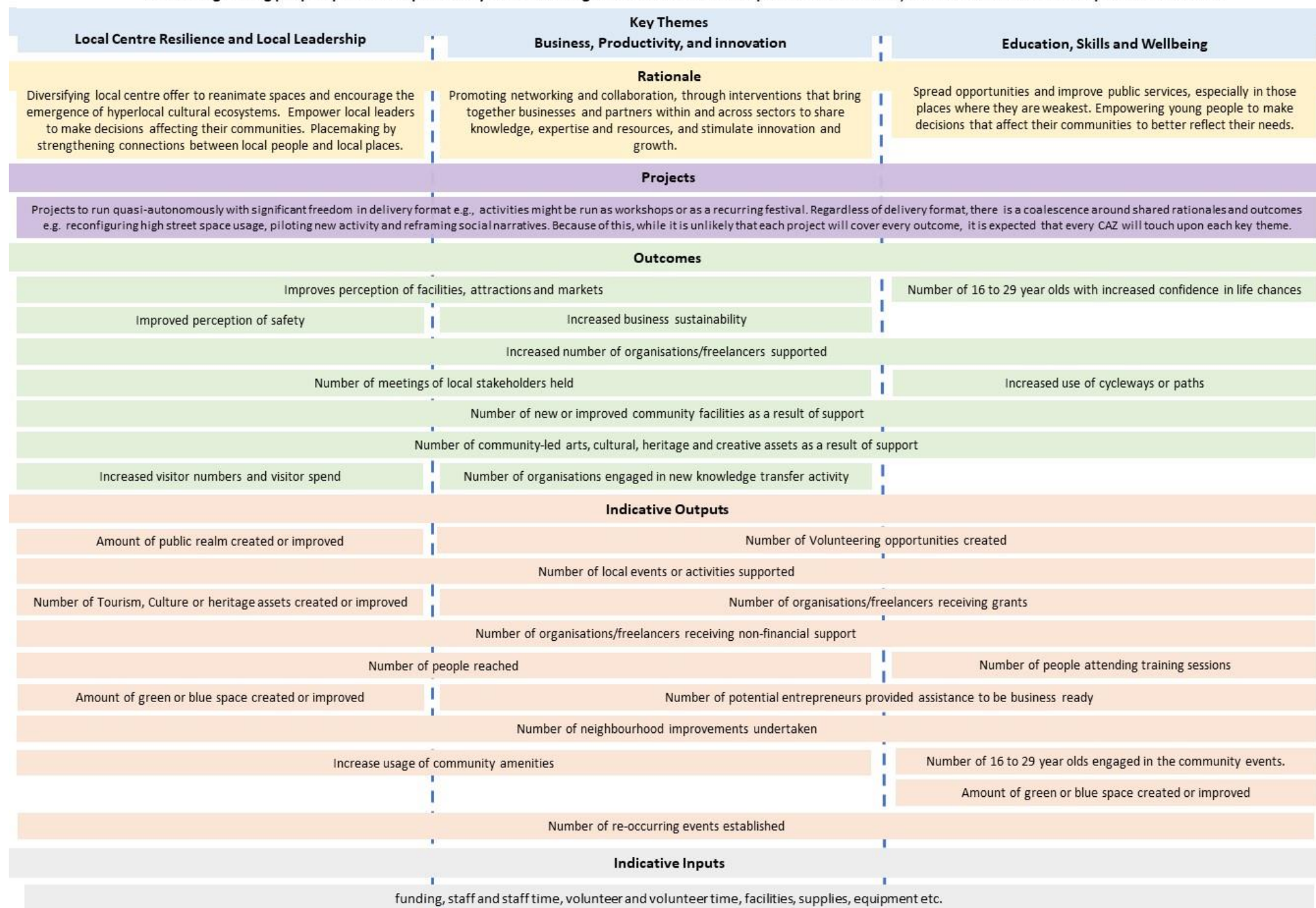
1) Involved in the running of the LEP 2) An existing supplier of the LEP 3) A relative of any LEP staff or board members Please state yes or no in the box to the right. If your answer is yes to any question, please provide further details.	1) 2) 3)														
<b>6. Finance</b>															
Please indicate below the SEP Enabling Fund required, as well as match funding secured (or in train). Please remember that SEP Enabling Fund is <b>revenue funding</b> . All SEP funds must be spent by 31 March 2022.															
<table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="2">GBSLEP funding requirement</th> </tr> <tr> <td>SEP Enabling Fund</td> <td>£</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Match funding secured or applied for</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Public Sector</td> <td>£</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private Sector</td> <td>£</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>£</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total project cost</b></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		GBSLEP funding requirement		SEP Enabling Fund	£	Match funding secured or applied for		Public Sector	£	Private Sector	£	Other	£	<b>Total project cost</b>	
GBSLEP funding requirement															
SEP Enabling Fund	£														
Match funding secured or applied for															
Public Sector	£														
Private Sector	£														
Other	£														
<b>Total project cost</b>															
N.B. When you submit this application form, please also provide evidence of confirmed match funding if it is identified above.															
<b>7. What happens now</b>															
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications will be assessed during week beginning 21 June, and further clarification sought if required.</li> <li>• Projects will be notified of the outcome of the assessment by early July, with delivery expected to begin from August 2021 onwards.</li> <li>• Projects must be completed by 31 March 2022, with evaluations provided to GBSLEP by 31 March 2023.</li> </ul>															



## Appendix B

### Cultural Action Zones Logic Model

**Aim: Strengthening people's pride in the places they love and seeing that reflected back in empowered local leaders, resilient local centres and improved life chances**



## Summary of Activity

			These columns are inclusive of data in Columns G, H & I							This column includes Column L			
	Organisations engaged		Number of Smaller local events or activities supported (e.g. workshops)	Number of Larger local events or activities supported (e.g. workshops)	Number of other non-standard outputs (e.g. Micro-grants, websites, and pilot activity)	Number of Temporary Artistic Displays Created	Number of Permanent Artistic Displays Created	Number of re-occurring events established	Number of volunteering opportunities supported	Total Number of Participants at events	Number of under 18 year old participants	Number of community interest Groups established (inc stakeholders)	Number of Local Artists Commissioned/engaged
	Number of local businesses engaged	Number of Local Community Organisations Engaged (inc. schools)											
B10 Street Festival Agreed		1	2	3	2			2		100	100	2	
B10 Street Festival Delivered	74	3	3	1	1			0		266	192	2	
High Vis Street Culture Agreed	40		7	7		9	3					2	12
High Vis Street Culture Delivered	21			5			4					1	3
Making Spaces Northfield Agreed	20	8		13			4	1	48	400		2	15
Making Spaces Northfield Delivered	8	0*		6	1		4	0	56	1255		2	20
Moseley Road Monthly Agreed	50		24	6	4			1	36				
Moseley Road Monthly Delivered	30		91	7	5			1	21	632		1	
74 Bus Stops Agreed			24	1			8			200	24		1
74 Bus Stops Delivered	5	6	17	1	1		8			333	192		1
Light Up Kidderminster Agreed		10	14	4	2	10				195		1	
Light Up Kidderminster Delivered		16	17	16		10				603	249	1	
Solihull FOCM Agreed			28	2		1		1		3000		1	100
Solihull FOCM Delivered	45		50	6	1			1	131	8532			118
Agreed total	129		99	36	8	20	15	5	84	3895	124	8	128
Delivered total	208		178	42	9	10	16	2	208	11621	633	7	142

This table pulls together a set of raw output data from CAZ round 2 pilot projects, showing some of the quantitative measures surveyed.

## Appendix C



## **Appendix D**

# **CULTURAL ACTION FRAMEWORK FOR GBSLEP**

**2020-2030**



## Cultural Action Framework for GBSLEP 2020-30

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## Foreword

Creativity and cultural activity enriches our human condition. It defines who we are. It changes and reshapes our world. It inspires us, helps us build stronger, more cohesive communities. It also drives placemaking and economic development. We know that an effective cultural and creative economy will reach *all* parts of the city and its region; bringing economic growth and driving the quality of life and wellbeing of our citizens.

Our cultural offer in Greater Birmingham & Solihull is life affirming, life changing and lifesaving. It is this intrinsic value of creative and cultural expression that sparks our imagination, drives innovation and provides opportunity. Creativity has a largely untapped role in delivering wider community solutions to many of the issues we face. Education, mental health, physical wellbeing and community cohesion all do better when our artistic, cultural and creative talents are engaged together.

But we face real challenges bringing the promise of these benefits to all of our citizens. Public funding for culture has been especially hard hit in recent years; with many organisations facing an uncertain future. Currently, the education of our children involves less mandatory creative activity than is arguably healthy for the future of our society. Careers advice doesn't always express the full excitement and potential of creative jobs to our children or their parents.

Fortunately, we are at a moment in time not to be missed. Our region is more on the map today for its cultural potential than ever before; with Coventry City of Culture in 2021, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the investments we are seeing alongside these, such as the first large-scale 5G network across an English region.

This then is the context within which GBSLEP launches its first 'Cultural Action Framework', setting out its approach to supporting culture across its geography and playing its part in reversing those recent challenges and capitalising on the huge potential that is ahead.

### **Anita Bhalla**

Board Director for Creative & Culture, GBSLEP  
Chair, Performances Birmingham

## 1.0 Executive Summary

GBSLEP's 'Cultural Action Framework' is the first time the LEP has set out its approach to investing in and developing culture across its geography. Previously, cultural projects were seen as 'one-off' capital interventions, usually with an underlying objective to enable greater sustainability by reducing dependence on grant funding. But these investments tended to be reactive rather than pro-active.

With the publication of this Framework, GBSLEP is now able to make its own strategic priorities clearer and work in more effective, long-term partnerships with cultural actors and our other stakeholders, as we enable change for the long-term good of economy and wider geography.

GBSLEP is making this change at a timely moment. Last year it published its 'Towns and Local Centres Framework' and this is now beginning to underpin master-planning and town centre development work, which always includes cultural, community and heritage considerations.

Central government have made the importance of placemaking and cultural development abundantly clear in recent years too. Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) are being rolled out first across three 'trail-blazer' regions, including the West Midlands. These plans include 'place' as a key theme. The West Midlands LIS includes a Creative Sector Action Plan, which has an action to develop long-term investment around place and develop existing and new 'cultural action zones'. The government currently has more than £4 billion available for place-based investments across the country. GBSLEP must ensure it is well placed to understand the opportunity and support regional bids effectively for our share of those resources.

To ensure GBSLEP's strategy is aligned with the needs and opportunities identified by our cultural and business sectors, Culture Central was commissioned to write a report that would present recommendations to the LEP and, more broadly, to other public funders with a similar economic growth remit. Culture Central are Birmingham's 'Development agency for culture'. A membership organisation, they are tasked to promote, advocate and develop new responses to the sector's challenges and opportunities. Whilst mainly Birmingham based at present, Culture Central is increasingly working across our regional geography.

Culture Central's report, 'A Toolkit for Smarter Cultural Investments in our towns, cities and regions' was published in November 2019<sup>10</sup>. GBSLEP have adopted all of the recommendations within their report and have started implementation by adopting a 3-step cultural development framework:

1. Supporting innovative cultural investments and funding models
2. Supporting capacity building of cultural organisations and cultural consortia
3. Developing and identifying funding for a pipeline of investible Cultural Action Zones

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<sup>10</sup> <https://gbslep.co.uk/cultural-investments>



GBSLEP will step up its activities by working with partners to test and develop new funding models involving, for example, asset transfers, community interest companies and new commercial approaches to culture.

It will adopt Culture Central's four cultural characteristics, ensuring that all new investments in cultural assets and projects incorporate a mix of all four of them, ensuring they:

- Build on regional distinctiveness
- Extend or create new 'class-leading' assets
- Take an innovative approach to cultural investment
- Contribute to a cluster/ecosystem-based model

As part of its responses, GBSLEP will launch a 'Cultural Capacity Development Fund', providing small grants to cultural consortia and will open a call for 'Cultural Action Zones' across its geography, both to identify where new zones should be and extend existing cultural quarters, such as the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. Crucially, an important part of these actions will be to apply equal weight to smaller local centres, from Balsall Heath in Birmingham to towns like Solihull or Sutton Coldfield. We will celebrate the 'smaller and unexpected' as much as the large scale and high-profile.

GBSLEP will use its modus operandi of 'agitate, enable, commission' to work more effectively with central government, local authorities, partners like Arts Council England and cultural organisations to bring forward new projects and new funding into the region, extending the scope of what we can achieve together.

Over the coming months, GBSLEP will welcome further discussion and feedback on its new investment approach through its 'Cultural Action Framework'. The LEP regards this as a 'living document', currently in draft 1.0, that can be tested through the coming pilots and funding calls and then refined into a publishable plan in 2020.

## **2.0 Investing in Culture is about the economy and more**

Culture plays a crucial role in great places and is a vital part of a successful economy.

Birmingham has the most diverse population in any of the UK core cities, with 40% of citizens 25 or under. This opens up huge potential to develop and grow our talented people. The city is also, arguably, the strongest cluster of major arts organisations in any English city outside London. It includes organisations such as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Ikon Gallery.

A strong recognition of culture, in all its aspects, builds a clear sense of cultural identity, drives creative vibrancy, innovation and underpins well-being and an improving quality of life. It is an important factor for all of our citizens, from families and students to those thinking of moving into the area for work. It brings many other benefits too, such as giving us a sense of pride, enriching our lives and improving our mental health and wellbeing.

Central government have made the importance of placemaking and cultural development abundantly clear in recent years too. The government currently has more than £4Bn available for place-based investments across the country. These funding streams include; a Future High Street Fund, Heritage High Street Fund, Arts Council England Funding, Cultural Development Fund, Towns Fund, Libraries and Museums Fund and New Development Corporation Competition<sup>11</sup>. GBSLEP must ensure it is well placed to understand the opportunities these funds can bring and support partners and regional bids to access our fair share of these national resources.

Many of these funding streams form part of government's local industrial strategies (LIS). These strategies have 'place' as a key theme aimed at helping region's drive growth and seize their unique opportunities for the future. The West Midlands is one of three 'trail-blazer' regions who are already implementing these locally developed plans. The West Midlands LIS includes a 'Creative Sector Action Plan', which has a specific action to develop long-term investment around place, including developing 'cultural action zones' and a region-wide festivals strategy.

There is a big prize to be won just considering tourism and the visitor economy alone, which was worth a record £12.6 billion across the West Midlands 3-LEP geography in 2018, up 6.7% on the previous year<sup>12</sup>. Our visitor economy is already anticipating the huge boost it will get from two huge one-off events; as the country welcomes 'Coventry City of Culture' in 2021 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

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<sup>11</sup> £4.5Bn aggregate available funding at November 2019, not an exhaustive list

<sup>12</sup> Source: West Midlands Growth Company – these figures relate to the 3-LEP West Midlands geography which includes the geographies of GBSLEP, Black Country LEP and Coventry & Warwickshire LEP

However, our vibrant cultural offer goes far beyond the city centre, as it extends across our towns and local centres. Places like Kidderminster and Lichfield see the importance of their own cultural heritage, assets and offer as a vital driver of distinctiveness and activity. This helps underscore the value that culture brings, which includes:

- Shaping a distinct and desirable identity - which can stimulate investment, activity, sponsorship and media coverage
- Sustaining footfall and drawing visitors – which can re-invigorate high streets and stimulate business and retail activity
- Enhancing economic and social value – which can encourage developers, boost property values and invigorate local centres
- Stimulate knowledge transfer and innovation in business – which is often driven by the growth of our cultural and creative industries

To make the most of these opportunities GBSLEP published its 'Towns and Local Centres Framework' last year and this is now beginning to underpin master-planning work and future town centre development; which includes consideration of factors such as culture, heritage, community, diversity and inclusiveness.

But despite all the great work and abundant opportunities, GBSLEP and its geography is facing real challenges bringing the promise of these benefits to all of our citizens. Public funding for culture has been hit especially hard in recent years; with many organisations facing an uncertain future. This underscores an important emerging role for public funders like LEPs; to support cultural organisations and local authorities, helping them overcome capacity and sustainability issues and build stronger long-term alliances and projects for the long-term benefit of the future of the city-region.

All of these factors together mean it's never been more important than now to make the most of culture across the region. This is why GBSLEP have a clear leadership role, making sense of what actions should be taken to overcome the challenges of the past and rise to the opportunities of the future.

It is within this context that GBSLEP has launched its first 'Cultural Action Framework', setting out its approach to supporting culture across its geography and beginning to play its part in reversing those recent challenges and capitalising on the huge potential that is ahead.

## 2.1 The role of Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership in cultural investments

The Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) is a partnership of business, public sector and further and higher education leaders with a mission to create jobs and grow the economy – and, in so doing, raise the quality of life for all of those that live and work here.

GBSLEP covers the nine local authority areas of Birmingham, Solihull, East Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, Tamworth, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest, which have a combined population of just over 2 million people, an economy worth £46.8bn billion and an estimated 1,038,000 jobs.

GBSLEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out a vision and strategy for delivering smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive growth for the benefit of its geography, the wider West Midlands city region and the UK as a whole. It includes a target to 'Enhance and harness the potential of our cultural and creative assets' as well as its target to become the 'Leading Core City LEP for Quality of Life'.

GBSLEP's recent launch of its 'Towns and Local Centres Framework'<sup>13</sup> underscores the importance of placemaking to the LEP and the way it's joining the dots between current high street issues, future opportunities and potential solutions, including the way that cultural investment can act as a glue in the mix, building a stronger, sustainable and brighter future for our cities, towns and local centres.

The West Midlands' Local Industrial Strategy<sup>14</sup> identifies the importance of place and regional distinctiveness as well as proposing long-term investment into 'cultural action zones', not only as important placemaking investments and drivers of economic growth but also to make the region more desirable for people to live, work and study in - a key part of inward investment, wellbeing and quality of life.

Developing a strong talent and skills pipeline is also an important target for GBSLEP. Careers advice in schools doesn't always express the full excitement and potential of creative jobs to our children or their parents. Similarly, the school curriculum does not always provide appropriate levels of creative

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<sup>13</sup> <https://gbslep.co.uk/news-and-events/news/gbslep-unveils-framework-support-regeneration-towns-local-centres>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/industrial-strategy/> Major Market Opportunity: Creative Content, Techniques and Technologies p35-38

activity. So, part of GBSLEP's role is to advocate for change in schools to central government – as requested by our many cultural and business partners. We must also help develop a stronger and more diverse talent pipeline through our further and higher education institutions, ensuring that courses are fit for purpose and future proofed. We are also tasked to increase apprenticeship numbers and our work on creative sector specialist apprenticeships indicates that they require special structures to be effective, for example, by using multi-employer models.

GBSLEP has already invested significantly in culture. It has spent £28m of its capital funding on cultural projects, with a pipeline of further cultural projects under development. It already works closely with national government, the West Midlands Combined Authority, other regional LEPs and a wide range of cultural and other stakeholders. It understands the need to show leadership in the way a LEP can make a difference in developing and implementing innovative new approaches to placemaking and cultural funding. However, GBSLEP can do more by being more effective and focused in its approach

To improve the quality and effectiveness of GBSLEP's response to the opportunities and issues around culture and creativity it commissioned Culture Central<sup>15</sup> (Birmingham and the region's 'Development Agency for Culture') to set-out the approach that funders of economic growth, like LEPs, should take in maximizing the value and impact of their cultural investments in both economic and social terms. Culture Central's report: 'A Toolkit for Smarter Cultural Investments in our towns, cities and regions', makes specific recommendations for GBSLEP and provides timely advice for other public funders too.

This 'Cultural Action Framework' is GBSLEP's response to their recommendations. GBSLEP proposes to adopt all of the recommendations, and over the coming months, will explore exactly what that means in the context of the prevailing political landscape and what can be achieved within available resources. This is a draft response, with current proposed actions set out in Section 3.0.

At this stage, the LEP is in a 'learning and piloting' stage – so further feedback and suggestions from cultural organisations or wider stakeholders will be very welcome over the coming months. In addition, the LEP has set-up an Industry Forum covering creative industries and culture. New members will be welcome. It is informal and ad-hoc, responding to issues and opportunities as they arise<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.culturecentral.co.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> To provide feedback to GBSLEP on creative & cultural matters or to request joining the forum please email [hello@gsblep.co.uk](mailto:hello@gsblep.co.uk) and mark the email 'attention cultural lead'

## 2.2 What do we mean by culture?

The word ‘culture’ means different things to different people. For some it conjures up something they regard as ‘high-brow’ – perhaps ballet or opera. For others it embraces the idea of family, heritage and background. In a very real sense culture *is* ‘everything we do and everywhere we go’<sup>17</sup> – from a community art class to a walk in the park.

GBSLEP’s ‘Cultural Action Framework’ will use the Cultural Cities Enquiry’s<sup>18</sup> definition, which does not seek to define the boundaries of culture:

*‘Our remit has encompassed arts institutions, museums, libraries, the historic environment and cultural festivals, popular and grassroots culture. But we have been aware that culture is a social expression that will take many different forms and is ever evolving. We have been particularly interested in the relationship between culture and the wider creative industries, in the knowledge that distinctions between ‘cultural’, ‘creative’ and ‘digital’ enterprises are fast eroding.’ (Cultural Cities Enquiry, 2019)*

Thus, GBSLEP’s partners, stakeholders and applicants for funding, can be flexible in their interpretation of culture and the value that proposals bring to GBSLEP’s geography; in terms of placemaking, inclusive growth and overall economic gain.

## 3.0 GBSLEP’s Cultural Investment Approach

GBSLEP’s ‘Cultural Action Framework’ is the first time the LEP has set out its approach to investing in and developing culture across its geography. Previously, cultural projects were seen as ‘one-off’ capital interventions, usually with an underlying objective to enable greater sustainability through less dependence on grant funding. But these investments tended to be reactive rather than proactive.

With the publication of this Framework, GBSLEP is now able to make its strategic priorities clearer and work in more effective long-term partnership with cultural actors to enable change for the long-term good of our economy and wider geography.

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<sup>17</sup> Cultures broadest definitions <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-culture.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.corecities.com/cultural-cities-enquiry/read-report>



GBSLEP proposes to base its cultural approach on the recommendations within Culture Central's 'Toolkit for Smarter Cultural Investments in our towns, cities and regions.' These recommendations were proposed by Culture Central following a detailed analysis of best practice globally and consultation, nationally, internationally and across the Greater Birmingham geography.

As part of this approach, GBSLEP will use its leadership voice, and its investment capabilities, in a way that both amplifies and extends the existing cultural landscape in the region and is aligned with its core economic development purpose. It will do this in a way that complements and adds value to the other agencies and agendas in play, including the critical investments of Arts Council England, the historic and emerging agendas of local government, and the strategies of the sector itself, at both organisational and cluster level.

GBSLEP will maximise its impact using its role as 'agitator, enabler and commissioner' to build new thinking, new consortia and bring multiple funding sources together into new cultural solutions. In practical terms, this means working with grassroots cultural organisations, helping to build their capacity and find ways to bring their visionary thinking and future plans into reality. It will support them in the development of an investable pipeline of cultural projects within cultural action zones, some able to access immediate funding from different sources, others forming part of a longer-term ask for future funding from a variety of government and other sources.

GBSLEP will make its own strategic investments in place-making, capacity-building and individual project levels by adopting all of the recommendations within Culture Central's report. It has made a start by adopting a 3-step cultural development framework, this includes:

1. Supporting innovative cultural investments and funding models
2. Supporting capacity building cultural organisations and cultural consortia
3. Developing and identifying funding for a pipeline of investible Cultural Action Zones

There is one minor change to Culture Central's recommendations. This 3-step process is in a different order to that recommended by Culture Central. After careful consideration, the LEP felt that the above order was more logical in terms of implementing interventions that have the greatest capacity to achieve change.

However, this development framework will evolve over time. The actions and approach stated in the following sections should be regarded as our 'learning and piloting' stage, with this entire 'Cultural Action Framework' a living document, which will develop over time.

### 3.1 Supporting innovative cultural investments and funding models

GBSLEP will be an active participant in developing new thinking around future cultural funding and funding models. It will focus on culture in terms of new investment strategies, business models, innovative collaborations and the way cultural development drives placemaking, inward investment and wellbeing, and in so doing, can 'join-the-dots' across our capital and revenue programmes, which focus on interventions that drive economic growth.

GBSLEP has contributed to the Cultural Cities Enquiry<sup>19</sup>, Birmingham City Council's Cultural Investment Enquiry<sup>20</sup> and collaborated with Arts Council England<sup>21</sup>, DCMS<sup>22</sup>, cultural organisations, third sector, developers and many more as new approaches are developed and pilots established.

GBSLEP's areas of interest include encouraging property and asset transfers into new investment vehicles, from Community Interest Companies to Endowment Funds. Successful implementation of these ideas across the country show the way cultural consortia and their activities can stimulate transformational change; often utilising Local Authority property assets in ways that empower and sustain cultural consortia whilst delivering significant impact and value across our towns and cities.

GBSLEP is also focused on the development of hybrid funding models that combine commercial monies with cultural and third sector resources to increase the impact and long-term sustainability of our cultural assets.

GBSLEP has also been supporting the understanding and exploitation of cultural intellectual property (IP) rights. We have brokered and supported the current collaboration between the Intellectual Property Office<sup>23</sup> (IPO) with Arts Council England (ACE), who are together piloting how intangible value can be better understood and exploited across cultural organisations of all sizes.

GBSLEP will work with its stakeholders and partners, developing new thinking further and supporting pilot projects wherever possible. It will continue to seek out a greater understanding of cultural funding and investment models. It will support and participate – where resources allow – in pilots and new projects that can test the underlying mechanics and legal structures needed to deliver impact on the ground, both within cultural organisations and for the broader economy.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.corecities.com/cultural-cities-enquiry>

<sup>20</sup> <https://greaterbirminghamchambers.com/latest-news/news/2016/7/21/report-into-funding-for-birmingham-culture-calls-for-collective-action/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

<sup>22</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office>

## Four Characteristics of Cultural Investments

GBSLEP will adopt Culture Central's four cultural characteristics, which ensure that every new cultural investment includes a mix of these and:

- Builds on regional distinctiveness
- Extends or creates new 'class-leading' assets
- Takes an innovative approach to cultural investment
- Contributes to a cluster/ecosystem-based model

These four criteria will complement and extend the generic project requirements for GBSLEP investment and not replace them. The normal project decision-making process (officer analysis followed by panel review and approval) will take these additional criteria into account as part of their project-scoring criteria. The four characteristics will be addressed collectively, rather than independently, to create a matrix of impact and innovation to support the full potential of future policies and interventions. These criteria - along with GBSLEP's broader policies – will help to differentiate its investments from those of others (such as Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

Most funding from GBSLEP comes from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy<sup>24</sup> (BEIS) and is subject to economic 'green book' criteria from central government<sup>25</sup>. This means that cultural investments made by GBSLEP do not generally have the same funding criteria attached to them as, for example, Arts Council England, which gets funding from DCMS.

The four characteristics in more detail will include the following:

### Characteristic 1: Builds on regional distinctiveness

Successful projects will be able to articulate and demonstrate how they capture, reflect or create a strong sense of distinctive identity that contributes to a broader narrative about the qualities of a place.

### Characteristic 2: Extends or creates new 'class-leading' assets

Successful projects will not just be seeking to copy an existing asset or 'catch up' with a similar project elsewhere, but rather seeking to learn from, and extend, best international practice. Project

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

leaders will be able to self-determine the 'class-leading' nature of their proposal, whatever its scale or location.

**Characteristic 3: Takes an innovative approach to cultural investment**

Successful projects will clearly display an innovative business model, including an approach to sustainability that goes beyond that of merely extending or enlarging their existing business practice.

**Characteristic 4: Contributes to a cluster/ecosystem-based model**

Successful projects will contribute to an existing, or catalyse a new, geographic 'cluster' of cultural institutions, with a view to leveraging audiences, supply chains and future market growth.

## **3.2 Supporting capacity building cultural organisations and cultural consortia**

There is a clear relationship between development capacity and the ability of a sector to progress, transform and realise its potential. But, across the board, this capacity has been seriously squeezed and under-invested in over recent years. There is also a clear recognition that building stronger ecosystems and clusters are key factors in enabling organisations to overcome the barriers that so many of them face.

Cultural capacity within the sector was traditionally the responsibility of local government in close partnership with government departments such as DCMS, but reductions in public funding have significantly reduced this provision and the model now needs reinventing.

GBSLEP recognises these challenges and understands that organisational capability needs to be restored so that cultural organisations can become the confident architects of their own future ambitions with a clear view of their role in shaping the future of their towns, cities and local centres. To help facilitate the restoration of this capability, GBSLEP will support capacity building within cultural organisations and consortia, in the first instance by running a pilot action with small revenue grants.

*Capacity building (or capacity development) is the process by which individuals and organisations obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to do their jobs competently. It allows individuals and organisations to perform at a greater capacity (larger scale, larger audience, larger impact, etc). "Capacity*

*building" and "Capacity development" are often used interchangeably. Community capacity building is a conceptual approach toward social and behavioural change and leads to infrastructure development. It focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organisations, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from realising the goals that will allow them to achieve sustainable results<sup>26</sup>.*

GBSLEP recognises that 'capacity building' needs may vary considerably between different organisations, groups and places. Sometimes this work might be very much a 'first step', bringing a group of organisations together around a shared objective. Other times it may be building on considerable previous effort and resources where plans are well developed.

It is clear that success for cultural organisations in the future does depend on them thinking in new ways, being more commercial, more collaborative with partners and taking a sector led and often place-centred approach.

GBSLEP is very clear that we do not consider ourselves a new funder of artistic works and activities like the Arts Council or Cultural departments of local authorities. This means a simple proposal to fund a one-off festival or event – with no strategic thinking, multi-agency or collaborative future planning – will not be funded through this route.

### **3.3 Developing and identifying funding for a pipeline of investible Cultural Action Zones**

GBSLEP has adopted the concept of developing 'cultural action zones', as recommended by Culture Central, included within the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy and already recognisable in our many existing 'creative quarters, from Digbeth to the Jewellery Quarter.

Each zone can have many component actions, interesting projects, and multiple outcomes. It is, in essence, a system change proposition, often involving social, wellbeing, heritage and inclusive growth criteria which, at first glance, may not appear purely economic.

These zones will be able to exist at various scales, from city centre to local high street, and can involve projects of all sizes, from major redevelopments to smaller community-led initiatives. They

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<sup>26</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity\\_building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity_building)

will enable the development of a ground-breaking approach to cultural infrastructure that looks at the entire ecosystem investment model to understand how each investment contributes to a wider system that is highly contemporary (in design, connectivity, cultural practice and business sustainability) and in so doing places equal value on small scale interventions, non-city centre regeneration activity, 'meanwhile' use, etc. at a local level. They should be as relevant to Redditch, Lichfield, Bromsgrove or Solihull as they are to Birmingham.

These Action Zones will be brought to life through the project activity they support. This is where the interaction between the place-making approach (cultural action zones) intersects with the decision-making criteria for individual projects and initiatives, and the new investment cycle is initiated. The intention here is to move away from a project assessment approach that is artform- or location-specific, towards a set of criteria that ensure each project contributes explicitly to the wider intent of the Action Zone, and in so doing disrupts the cycle of atomised project proposals.

Examples of cultural action zone projects might include:

- Major development sites such as Smithfield in Birmingham
- Anchor project sites arising from other investments such as High Speed 2 or a town centre regeneration scheme
- Commonwealth Games delivery and adjacent sites
- Towns and local centres that have a current, or latent, set of cultural assets and organisations, such as Sutton Coldfield, Lichfield or Redditch
- Smaller local centres, such as Balsall Heath in Birmingham
- Unexpected places and ideas that disrupt our normal thinking

### **The role of cultural action zones in talent development**

An important function of cultural action zones will be to facilitate the development of new talent and the reskilling of existing workers, ensuring more inclusive access to creative and cultural jobs and activities by a more diverse range of people.

### **The Future**

Over time, GBSLEP will seek to develop its cultural action zone approach into a long-term investment programme that makes the capital assets of the cultural sector fit for purpose and act as 'anchors' for associated development activity in a clusters (ecology) based model.



To help facilitate this objective, as GBSLEP receives applications for cultural action zones and new ideas for existing ones, it will work with stakeholders to create an overview of the current economic development landscape for the region and begin to identify priorities for cultural development hotspots. In the long run, GBSLEP may develop a proposed set of preferred ‘cultural action zone’ sites.

## **4.0 Next Steps**

GBSLEP will continue to refine its response to the cultural sector and the place agenda across its geography.

It will deliver its first pilot action by using small revenue grants to capacity build cultural organisations and consortia. Then, through discussion with the sector and tracking results as they emerge, will refine its revenue programmes and approach for the future.

GBSLEP will use its cultural action zone call to better understand where cultural investments can make the most economic difference across its geography. It will ‘agitate, enable and commission’ to maximise the LEPs connections and influence, with both central government and other key partners. Through this approach it will be able to step up its activities by working with partners to test and develop new funding models and new commercial approaches.

GBSLEP will continue to make capital asset investments into the cultural sector, but it will make them in a more strategic way, using the feedback and new understanding that this framework will enable.

GBSLEP will use the coming months as a test-bed and consultation period, to review all of Culture Central’s recommendations in real world situations. This will lead to the LEP publishing a final version of its Cultural Action Framework later in 2020.

## Appendix A:

### Culture Central Recommendations and GBSLEP's response

This table lists the recommendations around cultural investments that Culture Central made in the report that GBSLEP commissioned, 'A Toolkit for Smarter Cultural Investments in our towns, cities and regions'. The right-hand column then shows the response that GBSLEP has made or plans to make.

Recommendations from Culture Central	Response from GBSLEP
<b>Step 1: Creating Cultural Action Zones</b>	
GBSLEP should create an overview of the current economic development landscape for the region and begin to identify cultural development hotspots	<p>GBSLEP will put out a call to develop an investible pipeline of Cultural Action Zone projects. Both to create new zones and to extend activities in established creative quarters, such as Digbeth.</p> <p>In the process of developing and strategically prioritising this pipeline GBSLEP will carry out the suggested landscape mapping, understanding what zones we have and where the immediate priorities are for the future.</p>
GBSLEP should identify key ways to leverage projects that show evidence of serious attempts to address the barriers to entry into the cultural sector faced by new talent from BAME and other disadvantaged backgrounds	GBSLEP will apply its delivery plan actions within the creative sector and skills to enable change for the cultural sector within this framework document.
GBSLEP should consult with business/industry, including launching an 'Industry Forum' to include a mix of cultural players to take existing conversations further	GBSLEP has launched a Creative & Cultural Industries Forum, to learn more about this contact <a href="mailto:culture@gslep.co.uk">culture@gslep.co.uk</a> marking the title of the email Cultural Industry Forum
<b>Step 2: Building Cultural Development Capacity</b>	
GBSLEP should facilitate the creation of appropriate cultural development vehicles within action zones, by providing capacity-building support for a range of project development, leadership and administration functions	GBSLEP will explore best practice around delivery vehicles during its cultural capacity call by monitoring all approaches submitted within applications and consulting with the cultural sector, Birmingham Cultural Compact, the Cultural Leadership Board of the West Midlands Combined Authority and other key stakeholders.
<b>Step 3: Refining Cultural Investment Criteria</b>	
GBSLEP should publicise and implement cultural investment criteria for new projects alongside explaining the value of strong collaborative clusters	GBSLEP has adopted the 4 cultural investment characteristics recommended by Culture Central, it will embed the use of these in all of its funding programmes, revenue and capital, that involve cultural projects and assets.