

BRISTOL CITY CENTRE AND HIGH STREETS RECOVERY AND RENEWAL: CULTURE AND EVENTS PROGRAMME



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
4. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCUSION
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE, PARTICIPATION,
PUBLIC SPACE, REGENERATION, ATTRACTIVENESS,
INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, ACCESS, PROMOTION



1. Bristol and culture

Bristol city centre is the regional centre for employment, shopping, culture, healthcare, education and transport. It provides 45% of the city's jobs. A sustainable location for future growth, the city centre is an increasingly important focus for new homes, the population having increased by over 14,000 since 2008. Bristol is a cultural and creative powerhouse and an exemplar creative economy with a highly creative ecology, and has been a UNESCO City of Film since 2018.

Bristol suffers from high levels of inequality in terms of access to culture, particularly for citizens living in areas of higher deprivation. The city of Bristol is committed to placing culture at the centre of local development and regeneration plans for a more inclusive, democratic and sustainable city.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The programme pursues long-term changes to support the city centre and high streets to reconnect communities with their local centres and build back better. It also aligns with and will deliver on a range of national, regional and local priorities.

It aims to co-design and deliver a diverse, inclusive and experiential interventions which support priorities for economic growth, diversification, environmental sustainability, climate and ecological emergency and for economic inclusion, facilitate localised access to jobs and skills development, by re-animating and re-imagining the city centre and high streets.



THE PROGRAMME PURSUES LONG-TERM CHANGES TO SUPPORT THE CITY CENTRE AND HIGH STREETS TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES AND BUILD BACK BETTER.

2.2. Development of the project

The programme designed and delivered cultural interventions through working with communities to develop and deliver cultural events, to build skills and ultimately vibrant, resilient city centre and high streets. It has the ambition of putting local citizens, businesses and stakeholders at the heart of the process, and working collaboratively with them through undertaking meaningful engagement and consultation to co-design interventions to meet local needs and aspirations.

The first stage of the programme comprised a comprehensive community and business engagement to establish people's needs and aspirations, allowing the programme to be co-designed and inclusive. All events were free of charge, family friendly, open to all and environmentally sustainable.

The main actions carried out were:

- » Cultural Development Officer & Sites Permission Officer recruited.
- » Database of stakeholders (community and businesses groups, accessibility, equality, environmental, heritage, climate) compiled.
- » Survey and online focus groups.
- » Engage with businesses, residents, community groups and the cultural sector to establish aspirations and ideas.

- » Undertake creative engagement sessions on street with passers-by and targeted community groups to gather thoughts from the local community, businesses and local stakeholder groups in each high street to develop ideas and key criteria.
- » Grant application and commission process, including procurement mechanisms, application forms and guidance.
- » Large commission and smaller grants programme marketed with online information and 1-2-1 sessions held.
- » Procurement and grant applications reviewed, approved or rejected by officers and a panel of internal and external stakeholders.
- » High streets expression of interest application forms developed.
- » Standardised monitoring and evaluation forms developed as part of grant or commission agreements.
- » Work with internal and external partners to build on existing city assets such as Light Festival, Harbour Festival and UNESCO Creative City of Film status to maximise benefit to the city's diverse communities and visitor footfall.
- » Deliver events and cultural programme for the city centre and nine high streets.
- » Monitoring and evaluation collated.

The budget for the city centre was £798,073, for the nine high streets the combined total was £530,483, amounting to a total of £1,328,556.

THE PROGRAMME DESIGNED AND DELIVERED CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS THROUGH WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP AND DELIVER CULTURAL EVENTS, TO BUILD SKILLS AND ULTIMATELY VIBRANT, RESILIENT CITY CENTRE AND HIGH STREETS.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

In addition to delivering against specific UN SDGS, the project provided an opportunity to assess the impact of a project that used cultural activity to achieve economic impact, employment growth and social cohesion. It has also provided Bristol City Council and stakeholders with a greater understanding of the economic and social benefits of culture.

Specific impacts include:

- » 46 culture activities delivered in the City centre.
- » 66 culture activities delivered across nine high streets
- » Additional £2,097,136 total day visitor spend in City centre or high streets
- » Additional £2,655,045 total resident spend City centre or high streets
- » 945 paid employment opportunities for artists/creative practitioners and event professionals
- » 216,577 residents and visitors reached
- » 47,534-day visitors attending culture and event activities



Wider impacts include environmental innovation and capacity building for cultural organisations. For example, Bristol Cycle Cinema engaged participants in curating a film programme through a series of community workshops. Energy used to power the cinema screen was offset by audiences generating power by cycling.

The programme supports and promotes climate and environmental priorities and reducing impact on the environment by:

- » Engaging with diverse range of communities and groups to collaborate and co-design cultural and meanwhile programmes that are accessible to all, locally distinctive, culturally sensitive and celebrate and meet the needs of the city's diverse population.
- » Designing events which promote an inclusive city centre including a focus on families and celebrating cultural dates and festivals, to increase visitors from a range of communities and experimental uses and to increase footfall. Celebrating cultural diversity, family focused and supporting economic recovery.
- » Considering carefully where to host and promote events to encourage greater participation from key target equalities groups.
- » Focusing activity on centres that support large proportion of BAME business and communities.

The project is framed in national priorities, regional and local priorities (with the [West of England Combined Authority Recovery Plan](#) and the [Bristol's One City Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy](#)) by building resilient high streets, supporting innovation and economic growth, creating jobs, fostering inclusion, promoting green recovery, and aligning with UN SDGs to enhance community well-being.

3.2. Evaluation

All funded or commissioned organisations were required to monitor and submit data so that we could report against the specific project targets. A standardised evaluation report was created for essential data to be recorded specifically for the following:



ALL EVENTS WERE FREE OF CHARGE, FAMILY FRIENDLY, OPEN TO ALL AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE.

- » Visitor numbers
- » Number of paid employment opportunities

A standardised monitoring form was developed for the whole programme to collect quantitative data in: visitor, postcode, spend, and equalities information.

Qualitative data was collected in the form of questions using a Likert Scale capturing:

- » Visitor event satisfaction and likeliness to attend a similar event
- » Visitor perception questions covering event inclusivity, if the event improved their perception of the area, increased a sense of pride in place and feeling of wellbeing and belonging.

3.3. Key factors

Key factors of success include:

- » Attracting £4.725m of funding from Bristol City Council and the West of England Combined Authority.
- » The level of community and business engagement carried out early in the programme.
- » Dedicated resources employed to oversee the culture and events programme within a cross cutting City centre & High Streets team, working closely with Culture service and externally with key stakeholders.
- » The number of community, culture and events organisations who put together proposals to deliver activities which met local aspirations. The programme has helped to build capacity within local communities and created a legacy, with some events continuing after our grant funding has come to an end.
- » Many of the events have improved the perception of the city centre and high streets as a place to visit and for cultural activity.

3.4. Continuity

The evaluation, lessons, and best practice from the delivery of the programme is being shared across the city, regionally and nationally, including through the National High Streets Task Force and the Institute of Place Management.

The programme has created a legacy in the city with some of the events continuing after our grant funding has ended e.g. the [Light Festival](#) and [Grand Iftar](#) to celebrate month of Ramadan.

Information on equalities and demographics were collected, and it was used to assess programme reach and to help inform the types of events commissioned or funded and as a baseline for any future interventions.

4. Further information

Bristol was a candidate for the sixth UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 – International Award (November 2023 – March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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