

THE UK CITIES OF PROJECT:

TOWARDS A
RESEARCH-INFORMED
APPROACH



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This AHRC-commissioned review, led by the University of Warwick, presents the case for a research-informed UK City of Culture programme. This is the first release from the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project* and will be followed by a series of events and publications later in the year.

As the UK City of Culture programme matures, it is important to establish a foundation of evidence-led learning to guide future iterations and secure continuity of learning and investment.

A key driver for the UK City of Culture programme is to invest in places that have a clear ambition and evidenced plan for culture-led city transformation. This requires a research-led approach to how culture might lead to impacts that address the specific needs of a place and its diverse communities.

The focus of the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project* series is on the distinctive role that arts and humanities researchers, in collaboration with other disciplines, can play in place shaping and in the success of the UK City of Culture programme.

UK Cities of Culture are invaluable sites of cultural inquiry: research and

evaluation provide evidence of 'what works', from different perspectives, as well as capturing unintended outcomes and learning from less successful aspects of the delivery plan.

From accounts of lived experiences and hyperlocal cultural impacts, to large scale social and economic benefits and increased civic pride, research and evaluation can enhance the understanding of the conditions for success and sustainability of the UK City of Culture programme.

This review includes an analysis of findings and learnings from the extensive monitoring and evaluation of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, and the experience of establishing a research-intensive, multi-disciplinary programme in collaboration with local partners, spanning planning, delivery and legacy of the City of Culture year.

With support from its local university and the AHRC, Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 can plan ahead for a comprehensive place-led research programme.

Connecting this programme with the Department of Culture Media and Sport's wide ranging Areas of Research Interest will highlight national cultural evidence priorities that DCMS, Lottery Funders and other government departments will require in the coming years to help develop and deliver policies.

The review includes a series of interim proposals to drive a more strongly research-informed approach to the UK City of Culture programme.

The Appendices to the review give an overview of geo-demographic and other data for four rounds of shortlisted and title cities and places.