TOGETHER WE MAKE THE CITY

Stoke-on-Trent - Losing the Bid but Winning with Culture
“We are Stoke-on-Trent. We make things. We make art from dirt.

What we make here reaches the 4 corners of the globe, nowhere else like us in the UK. The city is uniquely polycentric – 6 distinct towns, 1 city – a radical idea of place.

We are the place where art, technology and commerce create beauty through craftsmanship. Collective production, once of industry and now of culture, is our hallmark. Innovation is our watchword.”

Opening lines from the Stoke-on-Trent bid to be UK City of Culture 2021
In autumn 2015, a small group of people tested the idea of Stoke-on-Trent bidding to be UK City of Culture 2021. The idea became a reality, and when the competition opened in early 2017, Stoke-on-Trent put itself forward. Our bid expressed the newfound confidence of the city in its cultural life and its future as a centre of art, craft and contemporary culture. The development of the bid brought the city’s cultural organisations together to reflect on the remarkable cultural assets of the six towns and to define a cultural vision for the city for both the medium and long term.

From the very beginning our bid was based on the views and aspirations of our communities, we listened to their comments and built a programme around their interests and hopes. We conducted a market research public survey of over 2,000 residents which showed that 8 out of 10 were fully in favour of the city’s bid.

We ensured the cultural programme was rooted in Stoke-on-Trent with a strong local flavour but we also made the most of our national and international connections to guarantee the highest artistic quality. The announcement that we had been shortlisted in summer 2017 opened the city’s eyes to our potential, as bidding to be UK City of Culture in 2021 provided a timely catalyst for our cultural ambitions. The process of bidding provided an opportunity for all partners to have wide ranging conversations about the role culture plays in developing a thriving city. Bidding has set us on a path of reconfiguring the way we work together. The bidding process amplified and accelerated our delivery plans.

Although ultimately unsuccessful in winning the title, through the process we have been able to acknowledge that culture and the cultural sector is vital to the future growth and success of the city, and hope that this case study around our bid can act as an exemplar for other cities interested in the process.
Bidding for the title of UK City of Culture maximised opportunities to develop and broker lasting partnerships that still continue to deliver activities and events which are accessible to everyone, with emphasis on collaboration, diversity and reaching under-represented groups. A detailed action plan is set out in the new 10 year cultural strategy which is a major legacy product of the bidding activity.

Bidding for the designation of UK City of Culture 2021 raised the profile and changed the perception of the city locally, regionally and nationally. The marketing campaign that ran in tandem with the bid showcased Stoke-on-Trent as a place of rich cultural heritage and a city where the arts and cultural activity can thrive.

The experience has galvanised our city, enabling the local authority to work in new ways, developing sustainable collaborations, partnerships and networks.

Although Stoke-on-Trent did not win, we clearly submitted a robust and sincere bid, one that was embedded in the character of our city; creative, skilled, practical, innovative, ambitious and one that captured the energy of our people.

Let’s look at some of our strengths:

- We gained tremendous momentum and stakeholder support with tangible enthusiasm for the bid set within the context of a city that is reinventing itself, building on the past and looking forward to a future.
- Our marketing campaign was strong, nationally distinctive and steeped in the breadth of our culture….from the Oatcake to Houte Couture we reinforced our positioning, re-told our story loudly and clearly in the national, noisy marketplace!
- Recent capacity building and audience development initiatives such as Appetite, BCB and ArtCity provided great evidence to the judging panel of the commitment regarding arts & culture within the city.
- Notably, our clear commitment to capital investment and organisational development was a real asset to the bid – we’re transforming the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, the city centre and key heritage assets across the six towns. This is still ongoing as part of our legacy programme.
It’s difficult to assess the full economic impact of bidding for the coveted title. Certainly the national media coverage alone that the city enjoyed throughout the competition would be worth millions and had a massive and positive impact on the perception of our city’s story and cultural offer.

Interestingly, the Key 2017 headline figures from the Stoke-on-Trent Economic Impacts Assessment show a marked increase in visitor figures and visitor spend during the bidding year:

**WHAT ECONOMIC IMPACT DID BIDDING TO BECOME UK CITY OF CULTURE HAVE?**

- **4.9 million day trips**
  - +2% against 2016 figures

- **0.2 million overnight visits**
  - Static headline figure but actual increase of 0.9% when not rounded up to headline figure

- **0.7 million nights**
  - in the area as a result of overnight trips

- **A total of 5.1m trips undertaken in the area**

- **£255m spent by tourists to the local area**

- **Increase in jobs from 6425 in 2016 to 6489 in 2017**
  - +1% against 2016

**Total value* of £349 million. An increase of 1.1% from £346 million spent in 2016.**

*taking into account the tourism multiplier effect
Positively, we have evidence that the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery saw an increase in visitor figures of 24% as a result of all the extra publicity that the City of Culture attracted, putting it in the top ten free visited attractions in the West Midlands. The City of Culture bid also included a Capital Development Programme to re-develop and update the galleries at the museum to maximise the interpretation of its world class collections such as the Staffordshire Hoard, Ceramics collections and ensure the museum is fit for the 21st Century.

The profile of the project and the fundraising required to deliver it was helped by the leverage provide by the City of Culture bid.

Major events and cultural activity can add massively to the visitor economy for example over 120,000 visitors came to Middleport Pottery to view the immensely popular Poppies: Weeping Window installed to commemoration of the centenary of the end of the Great War in late 2018.

With an estimated visitor spend in Stoke-on-Trent of £32.97 per person, the impact on the local economy of hosting Weeping Window was £4m.

In kind contributions from partners and stakeholders can not be underestimated but is very challenging to quantify as many of our partners invested a huge amount of their time in the development of the bid and associated marketing/ championing of Stoke-on-Trent’s strengths, assets and potential throughout the competition.

Likewise, many officers and elected members invested considerable amounts of time developing and platforming our bid over a period of 15 months and of course the UK City of Culture legacy programme is still ongoing.
Importantly, the bid did not stand on its own but built on the city’s wider vision and cultural strategy which sees Stoke-on-Trent emerging as a place where artists and creative people can find a home, work and be inspired by its creative past and cultural future. This ensured that the UK City of Culture bidding activity created a long term legacy for the city, its organisations, businesses and people.

Cultural Strategy – “Making the Creative city 2019-2028”

The new cultural strategy for Stoke-on-Trent, launched in early 2019, builds on the work done to prepare the UK City of Culture bid and represents a major legacy output.

The energy, enthusiasm and optimism that informed the bid is embedded in the strategy ensuring the post bidding legacy is valued and sustained.

The strategy promotes cultural engagement and inclusion, strengthens culture in communities, fuels the creative and visitor economies and advocates the role of the arts in delivering positive health outcomes.

The strategy describes the diverse ways in which culture matters to the city and its people and sets out an action plan to maximise the outcomes of investment in culture not only for the city’s cultural life but also for its health, wealth and well-being. Cultural renewal has the potential to promote economic development, improve community cohesion, support education, and transform the city’s identity and image.

The strategy is informed by the UK City of Culture bid and by the findings of the wide-ranging consultation that fed into it, which included workshops, an online survey, and face-to-face meetings with organisations and residents.

This strategy operates alongside and in conjunction with the “Destination Management Partnership” programme that looks more specifically at the tourism offer in the area but has similar aims and objectives to the City’s strategy.
Light Night Stoke-on-Trent

Light Night was developed as the principle UK City of Culture legacy event and took place in Burslem between 31 January and 2nd February 2019.

The programme was developed in partnership by the New Vic led Appetite team, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the cultural forum and the cultural champions.

Created by a host of local, national and international artists, Light Night Stoke-on-Trent was a free event that transformed Burslem Town Centre with an experience that was suitable for all the family. Thousands of residents experienced Burslem Town Centre spectacularly lit up as a programme of light artworks, projections and illuminated performances took over the town centre’s buildings and streets.

In the countdown to Light Night, local residents, community groups and businesses were encouraged to take part in The Light Night Challenge. Created by “Up for Arts”, a partnership between Voluntary Arts and BBC Radio Stoke, The Challenge enabled people across the city to get involved in arts activity. Through public workshops and free DIY kits, participants created their own pieces of illuminated art which they used to light up their windows in an effort to get the whole city glowing during the dark month of January.
**UK CITY OF CULTURE LEGACY GROUPS**

**Cultural Advisory Board**
Members of this group include the local LEP and industry representatives alongside cultural, political and religious leaders of the city and the wider conurbation. The board ensured active participation in the UK City of Culture 2021 bid and beyond and continues to reinforce the potential of arts and culture as a key driver for change. This includes the impact on place-making, tourism, visitor economy, regeneration and social cohesion.

The Advisory Board is chaired by Cllr. Abi Brown – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Partnerships, Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

**Cultural Forum**
The Cultural Forum was developed as part of the Stoke-on-Trent bid to become UK City of Culture 2021.

Moving forward, with the emergence of the new Cultural Strategy for Stoke-on-Trent, the Cultural Forum is the mechanism to enable stakeholders, organisations and individual artists to come together to develop strong partnerships and robust collaborations. Membership involves organisations that support and enable cultural activity but the partnership itself will be independent of public bodies. The forum takes responsibility for sharing best practice and insight, delivering a professional development programme for the city’s artists and taking collective responsibility for the bidding and commissioning of large scale and international works.

The Cultural Forum continues to play a central role in articulating, debating, and communicating cultural strategy within the city.

This group is chaired by Keele University, Pro-Vice Chancellor David Amigoni and is facilitated by Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s Culture and Events Manager.

**Cultural Champions**
The proposal to develop a network of Cultural Champions, each representing one of the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent is set out in the city’s cultural strategy and is now in place.

In addition to representatives of the six towns a Champion for Heritage and a Champion for Newcastle-under-Lyme was created following the excellent levels of co-operation achieved between the two local authorities during the UK City of Culture bidding period.

The champions role is voluntary and all the champions have been selected from the Cultural Forum membership.

The champions are developing and enhancing the cultural capacity and connectivity of the cultural infrastructure of Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. Their activities range from advising and assisting in the development of established projects to developing a vision and strategy for shaping new creative opportunities to expand and enhance cultural capacity as set out in the cultural strategy.

As cultural leaders the Champions will continue to increase the visibility of the existing cultural offer, break down barriers to participation and support diversity of cultural representation within the cultural calendar.

**Local Cultural Education Partnership**
The Cultural Education Partnership North Staffordshire brings together arts organisations, individuals and representatives from the Education sector, to ensure arts and culture continue to be a key part of a child’s learning. The partnership is supported by Arts Connect West Midlands but the development of the group was greatly advanced by the momentum generated during the UK City of culture bidding process.

The partnership believes passionately that every child should have the opportunity to be creative, dance, make music and be exposed to the learning that creative subjects can offer.
The Cultural Education Partnership continues to grow with the support of innovative schools and a wide and expanding cultural sector.

The group will continue to engage with partners and children and by working together, will aim to ensure every child has a positive learning journey, being inspired to think creatively and to develop talents and skills.

SoTogether CAN (Community Advisory Network)
SoTogether CAN is a group of people who live, work or study in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire who are interested in supporting the development of cultural activity and improving access to arts across the city. The network was formed as part of Stoke-on-Trent’s UK City of Culture bidding process and is independent of the cultural sector in Stoke-on-Trent, although many members have a personal interest in arts and culture.

The group will support the implementation of the cultural strategy through a range of roles and activities, including community advisors for the strategy, ambassadors for cultural activities in the city, volunteers and community researchers. The group will ensure the cultural strategy reaches and maintains relevance and impact for a diverse range of communities across the city and support the cultural sector to understand its impact at a local level.

Cultural Destinations
Cultural Destinations is a 3 year (2017-2019) Arts Council England funded programme that aims to enable arts and culture organisations working in partnership with destinations organisations to increase their reach, engagement and resilience through working with the tourism sector.

The objective is to work towards a stronger year-round cultural offer with seasonal highlights to attract more and different types of visitors, especially staying visitors spending more money locally.

The Cultural Destinations project will programme high profile signature cultural events and visitor packages, special itineraries and training opportunities for both sectors. This will raise Stoke-on-Trent’s profile as a national and international cultural destination.

The Cultural Destination Project will support the vision of the 2016 – 2019 Visitor Economy Strategy which states that we will lead with ‘Cultural Tourism and in particular ceramics because that is the City’s unique positioning for tourism. Ceramics and pottery is synonymous with Stoke-on-Trent. It has shaped the City and is integral to our history.’

Stoke-on-Trent’s vision is to achieve a more joined-up approach to cultural tourism, developing not only sustainable and creative working partnerships between the public and private culture and tourism sectors, but also a connected and cohesive message about the city is essential to position Stoke-on-Trent as a credible, distinctive cultural destination. The aim is to work towards a stronger, more resilient and environmentally sustainable year-round cultural offer.

The following partners are involved in this programme:
Potteries Musuem & Art Gallery
Stoke-on-Trent City Council Tourism and Culture Teams
Visit Stoke
Trentham Estate
World of Wedgwood
Middleport Pottery
Barts
Appetite
British Ceramics Biennial
A key action point of the Cultural Strategy within the cultural capacity pillar is to develop and deliver a Festivals and Events Action Plan.

A key activity within the plan is to develop a Festival and Events Forum with member’s representative of the current city wide festival and events programme, including Appetite, Stoke-on-Trent Classical Festival, Etruria Canal Festival, Hot Air Festival, The Art of Made, British Ceramics Biennial, North Staffordshire Dance Festival and Live Age.

The remit of the group is to encourage a strategic approach to partnership working inspiring the development and delivery of an ambitious programme of sustainable work across the city in 2019, 2020, 2021.

The group is keen to maximise investment in the city wide festival and events programme via shared resources and ambitious external funding applications.

Festival and Events Fund
Stoke-on-Trent City Council invests £30,000 each year into the Community Festival and Event Fund. The fund supports Stoke-on-Trent based voluntary and community groups, non-for-profit organisations and charities looking to establish arts and cultural events in public spaces across Stoke-on-Trent.

The Community Festival and Events Fund was established with the objective of raising the ambition and quality of the festival and event offer within the city, increasing organisers’ capacity and confidence.

To deliver the fund Stoke-on-Trent City Council works in partnership with the Creative People & Places programme, Appetite, who administer the fund on behalf of the city council. Applications are assessed by a specially selected panel consisting of members from Appetite, members of Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s local matters and culture teams, a local community member and the Cabinet Member for Greener City, Development and Leisure.

The panel make 4 awards to a maximum of £5,000 and 10 awards to a maximum of £1,000 annually.
**Poppies: Weeping Window**

Between the 2 August and the 16 September 2018, Middleport Pottery, the only working Victorian pottery in the country, hosted the 14-18NOW touring installation Poppies: Weeping Window.

The total number of visitors to the sculpture was an amazing 122,612, two and a half times the number expected at the start of the project and a 17-fold increase in annual visitors to Middleport Pottery.

Sixty head teachers followed a CPD programme which resulted in 59 schools and 2,469 students engaging with Weeping Window. Given that the majority of the event took place during the long summer holiday, successfully engaging the schools was a tremendous achievement and more than met the education targets set by 14-18NOW.

The high visitor numbers at the event were supported by a large team of 300 volunteers, recruited from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Middleport Pottery’s long-term volunteer pool, the private sector and the local community.

With an estimated visitor spend in Stoke-on-Trent of £32.97 per person, the impact on the local economy of hosting Weeping Window was £4m. A number of campaigns, such as ’Stoke-on-Trent Remembers’, ’Burslem Summer of Art’, the Historic England Heritage Open Days and the Cultural Destinations led ‘Summer in Stoke’ were also run in conjunction with the event to encourage visitors to other areas of the city.

Although led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the United Kingdom Historic Building Preservation Trust the event benefitted from high levels of local community and business support, as well as voluntary sector support from the Canals & Rivers Trust, all building on the relationships developed during the UK City of Culture 2021 bid.

Notably, the Middleport Poppy: Weeping Window installation won “The Best Tourism Experience” category at the prestigious “Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism Awards” held at the National Memorial Arboretum in November 2018.

**Poet Laureate Competition**

The designation of Stoke-on-Trent’s first Poet Laureate was developed during the UK City of Culture bidding process and the inauguration took place on June 8th 2018 as part of the Emma Bridgewater Literature Festival (Festival in a Factory).

The designation was designed to platform major events in the city as part of the UK City of Culture legacy programme.

The main purpose is to further develop our Libraries as cultural gateways and promote a cohesive and authentic cultural identity that is recognisable to our residents.

The Poet Laureate will raise the profile of literature in the city and will receive four paid poetry commissions during the two year tenure.

The competition was open to anyone aged 18 or over who lives, works or studies in the city.

The first commission “The Poppy” commemorated the hosting of the world famous poppies at Middleport Pottery.

The second commission in 2018 called “Armistice” reflected on the centenary of the end of the Great War (1914 – 1918) and was first read at Stoke Minster as part of the Armistice Day service.

The laureate’s first poem in the 2019 season “Alight” celebrated the legacy “Light Night Stoke-on-Trent” event in January/February.
**World War 1 Silhouettes**

UK City of Culture legacy budget supported the commissioning of 6 World War 1 silhouettes that were installed as part of the very successful “Stoke-on-Trent Remembers” campaign to commemorate the centenary of the end of the Great war.

The six stunning 8ft tall silhouettes designed by world renowned local artist Andy Edwards and made by PM Training have been installed in each of the six towns where they will serve as an additional point of reflection and remembrance for the residents of Stoke-on-Trent.

The silhouettes have been permanently installed at the following locations:
- Tunstall – The Boulevard
- Burslem – Swan Bank
- Hanley – Bethesda Gardens
- Stoke – Kingsway
- Fenton – Baker Street
- Longton – Baths Road

**Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**

The Potteries Museums & Art Gallery (PMaG) is home to the foremost collection of North Staffordshire ceramics, joint home to the Staffordshire hoard and home to our own Spitfire the RW388. The PMaG saw an increase in visitor figures of 24% as a result of all the extra publicity that the City of Culture attracted, putting it in the top ten free visited attractions in the West Midlands. The City of Culture bid also included a Capital Development Programme to re-develop and update the galleries at the museum to maximise the interpretation of its world class collections such as the Staffordshire Hoard, Ceramics collections and ensure the museum is fit for the 21st Century.

This included the restoration of the city’s Mk XVI Spitfire. The project was given a boost by the news of a competitive grant of £210,000 awarded by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in conjunction with the Wolfson Foundation to provide state-of-the art interpretation of the new gallery.

This was also made possible by the generous fundraising by Operation Spitfire, the Friends of the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery and funds raised by staff on-site via donations. In total this adds an extra £45,000 to the gallery display project. The profile of the project and the fundraising required to deliver it was helped by the leverage provided by the UK City of Culture bid.

**Keele Deal/ Culture**

Keele Deal | Culture is a landmark agreement between Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and local partners setting out shared ambitions to realise the full potential of the university’s cultural resources and assets for the benefit of the local area. Being a part of the bid for the UK City of Culture title enabled the university to focus attention towards the role of cultural anchor, developing key partnerships and using the momentum to drive forward the Deal.

Creativity and culture play a huge role in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire’s economic and social futures. The Deal is a commitment from the University and its partners to invest in the growth of the local economy by supporting and helping to advance our cultural offer to the local community, through research, an exciting events programme, student recruitment and retention and business support.

Over the next decade, the Deal will boost student numbers to the region, by bringing over 350 new students to the university to study creative programmes, while at the same time placing 250 students in local creative organisations while studying. The Deal will also increase student retention by keeping 15% more graduates in the area by improving student experience and supporting the creative economy.