

Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel

DATE	22/01/2026
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Creativity Strategy – Action Plan 2025 review & 2026 plan
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Creativity Strategy and annual Action Plan support the Council Plan contributing to a stronger economy and stronger communities by supporting business growth, nurturing skills of all generations including building the futures for children and young people and enhancing community interaction. Creativity and telling our story of culture and heritage forms a core part of transforming our town centres into attractive and vibrant places, promotes social cohesion, supports a place where residents and businesses are proud of where they live and work, and enhances our green ambition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Creativity Strategy outlines our aim to use creativity to share our stories in order to celebrate our past and help shape our future. The strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2022 and is delivered through the development of annual action plans. This report highlights progress in delivery against the 2025 Action Plan including creative programming such as Our Future Starts Here, Freedom Festival on Tour and Festival of the Sea. The report also sets out the proposed priorities for the 2026 Action Plan that include a continued focus on accessing funding, collaboration and celebrating the heritage of the area.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The 2026 Action Plan has been submitted at this stage for panel members to consider whether the proposed activities are appropriate to deliver the Creativity Strategy. The panel are also asked to consider how frequently they wish to be updated regarding progress against the Creativity Strategy and Action Plan.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 North East Lincolnshire Council (the Council) approved a new Creativity Strategy in 2022 which celebrates the stories that make Grimsby, Immingham, Cleethorpes and the Wolds distinctive and special. This is being achieved by using creative ways to tell these stories and ensuring that arts, crafts, culture and heritage play an important role in the lives of everyone in Grimsby, Immingham and Cleethorpes.

- 1.2 In order to help deliver the Strategy and Action Plan a Creativity Board was formed following an open recruitment process. Currently, the Creativity Board consists of 13 people, alongside representatives of the Create North East Lincolnshire team. This board provides advice and guidance to the Create North East Lincolnshire team and is currently reviewing its ways of working to provide further support and leadership for culture and heritage activities across our local area. The Creativity Board meeting is also attended by representatives of Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund to support delivery of initiatives as part of North East Lincolnshire's status as a Priority Place and Heritage Place respectively. In addition, the board is attended by representatives from NEL Music Hub as a key local delivery organisation.

2025 Action Plan

- 1.3 The ten priorities highlighted in the 2025 Action Plan were:

Creativity for all

- a. Audience Involvement and Participation (local voice)
- b. Creativity and Young People

Creative Economy

- c. Film and TV
- d. Telling the Story
- e. Climate for Investment
- f. Creative Streets
- g. Maximising Potential – Capacity Building and Talent Development

Creative Working

- h. Amplify and Animate
- i. Parks, Gardens and Landscapes – Connecting with Nature
- j. Explore the Benefits of Technology

It was not intended that this was an exhaustive list of activities delivered by the Council and other organisations, rather it is a set of guiding principles which enabled collaboration and project development.

- 1.4 Delivery of the 2025 Action Plan is highlighted in Annexes 1 & 2 and some of the many positive impacts were:
- 39 successful funding bids by individuals and organisations working in NEL securing more than £2.9m investment levered in from arts, culture and heritage funding
 - Using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, The Create North East Lincolnshire Creative Match programme supported 5 projects access £1.6m of investment (contributing to £2.9m funding above) by providing £19.7k match funding
 - 24 grassroots artists and creatives funded through project grants
 - Diverse programming within The Culture House's Our Future Starts Here, Festival of the Sea and Grim's Great Time Travellers
 - National & regional partnerships with Cement Fields in Kent for Sea Like a Mirror celebrating 200 years of the RNLI, Freedom Trust Hull to bring

Freedom Festival on Tour across the Humber, Kinetika installing over 800 flags in Cleethorpes for Beach of Dreams, Middle Child touring with Biting Point to Garibaldi Street car park and an Opera North performance alongside East Marsh Peace Choir and Foresight Choir.

- All programming activity and events including the above has led to audiences of 16,959, helping make our town centres more attractive and vibrant
- 5,068 people including large number of children and young people have actively participated in creative and heritage activity. 187 people have supported activity in a voluntary capacity
- Paint the Town Proud has created a further 7 murals commemorating Grimsby's minesweeper role in WW2, the Armed Forces in Cleethorpes, playful characters in Weelsby Woods, the Meridian Line and the Garden Wall, the starting of Grimsby with a Viking comic strip and bold colourful iconography reminiscing the memories of the Docks
- Creative Careers Conference with Franklin College, involving over 20 artists and creatives, 6 local schools and Franklin College students
- 2 Children and Young People Programmes of regular heritage-based activity led by Our Big Picture and Unseen Arts, with total participation attendance currently at 970 reimagining heritage stories through TV, film and content creation, theatre making, soundscape creation, illustration and photography
- 27 Heritage Open Days events across NEL in Sept 2025 celebrating the area's heritage and broadened conversation, inviting communities to tell their stories as part of a wider programme of activity
- Steve Dixey's Moments in Time exhibition at the Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre, portraying our natural coastal heritage through photography (previous recipient of Create North East Lincolnshire Development Funding).
- Funding successes have included Unseen Arts receiving £437k Historic England Heritage At Risk Grant funding, What if We Create receiving £114k National Lottery Heritage Funding, GY95 receiving £105k National Lottery Heritage Funding and Evie Henderson receiving £94k Arts Council England Project Grant Funding
- £237k awarded to Cleethorpes Heritage Revealed for NELC to lead the development phase of conservation of buildings in the Central Cleethorpes Seafront Conservation Area
- Project Grant funding has included 5 Create North East Lincolnshire heritage focused commissions reflecting natural heritage, industrial heritage, archaeological findings and community stories. Heritage Place Hidden Stories grants have supported a further 5 applications to act as an enabler for larger grant applications to national funding bodies, with more to follow.

2026 Action Plan

- 1.5 The 2026 Action Plan (see Annex 3) builds upon previous work and provides renewed focus on the priorities outlined in the strategy. Within each of the three themes (Creativity for All, Creative Economy and Creative Working) the following priorities are suggested by the Creativity Board:

- Creativity for all - Involve and support young people & Celebrate the heritage of the area
 - Creative Economy - Develop the next generation of creative people & Secure funding
 - Creative Working - Embed creativity widely & Work in a spirit of collaboration
- 1.6 These are themes taken from the strategy and reflect the significant progress made since 2022 and build upon local opportunities to embed creativity across a range of Council Plan aims. Further details on the 2026 Action plan can be found within Annex 3.
- 1.7 As anticipated, there are not wholesale changes to the 2026 Action Plan and reflect a strategic approach rather than outlining a series of projects which aim to continue creativity to celebrate our heritage. The priorities reflect opportunities highlighted in local strategies and national policies from Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, Historic England, Natural England and other agencies.
- 1.8 The Creativity Strategy was approved in 2022, therefore in 2026 development activity will take place to establish a revised strategy for consideration by Cabinet in 2027. This will build upon positive change since 2022 and recognise the evolution of the local culture and heritage ecosystem locally and highlight ambitious plans for the future. This revision will also take into account changes in the funding landscape, and our local commitment to health equity as a Marmot Place. Strengthening the role of creativity in improving health will be a key focus in updating this strategy.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

- 2.1 The 2026 Action Plan builds upon the strong progress made to deliver the Creativity Strategy and 2025 Action Plan. The 2026 Action Plan prioritises delivery and highlights numerous opportunities to build upon the successful progress highlighted above. From a strategic perspective NEL's status as a Heritage Place (Heritage Fund), a Priority Place (Arts Council England) and a priority for Historic England provides the opportunity to work closely with these funders and others to increase investment. In 2025, there was significant growth in activities especially projects working with regional and national partners highlighting further evolution of the sector. It is important to note that the size and scale of heritage and culture in NEL is still small and fragile, with challenges remaining around capacity and risk around limits in resources.
- 2.2 It is important to highlight that the majority of investment is from external sources, especially from National Lottery funders, which is awarded via competitive bidding processes and on a project-by-project basis so a continued increase in sustainable investment is not guaranteed.
- 2.3 Creativity has the opportunity to help deliver many of the Council's objectives and the 2025 Action Plan contributes throughout the Council's Plan for 2025 to

2028, supporting a stronger economy, stronger communities and a greener future, whilst contributing to an engaging and effective council by continuing to provide a strong support network for the creative and heritage sector. Working with children and young people, telling the stories relating to the environment, green energy and sustainability and digital development continue to be the underlying basis for much of the work that we support. Subsequently, the Action Plan will support attractive & vibrant town centres, boost visitor happiness and satisfaction, preservation of our heritage, nurturing our children and building their future, telling our story of culture and heritage and looking after our parks, public spaces and other landscape.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 An inclusive and clear message to residents and visitors that creativity is for all, where opportunities for working creatively is a positive and should lead to healthier and more fulfilling lives where creativity is a vital part in everyday activities.
- 3.2 A strong and understandable Creativity Strategy and 2026 Action Plan provides a clear rationale for developing culture and heritage activity in North East Lincolnshire. Most importantly it provides a framework for how creativity plays an important role in many aspects of the Council's work.
- 3.3 The Creativity Strategy Action Plan supports the local delivery of Arts Council England's Lets Create Strategy and the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage 2033 strategy which puts North East Lincolnshire in a strong position to prioritise activities and access additional funding.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Creativity Strategy and Action Plan will be used to create an evidence base and local strategy for funding opportunities including Pride of Place, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England. The Council and partners have been hugely successful in attracting significant external funding to deliver the strategy. The approaches outlined in the strategy will also influence the development of a range of activities which the Council and partners deliver. In the last year, NEL creatives have been successful in 39 bids for funding worth more than £2.9m including Heritage Fund grants, Arts Council England project grants.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The Creativity Strategy and Action Plan highlights the importance of creativity for all with a particular focus on children and young people. Many of the activities which follow will have direct benefit to children and young people by enhancing creativity in a range of settings. This is likely to include supporting creative and heritage organisations engage with children and young people within new settings including the Horizon Onside Youth Zone, Our Big Picture, Unseen Arts and What if We Create. This builds on successful activity with children and young people in 2025 such as programmes delivered by the NEL Music Hub, Unseen Arts, the Culture House and Our Big Picture and the Creative Careers Conference at Franklin College.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Two of the stories that the strategy focuses on are green spaces, ecology, biodiversity, sustainable energy and environmental responsibility. These recognise the importance of our natural environment as heritage assets across the Borough and that there are synergies between the green and creative agendas in promoting a sustainable and low carbon future for North East Lincolnshire. The Action Plan for 2026 continues to emphasise the prominence of natural heritage and sustainability, for example the delivery of the DUNE project, with particular focus on connecting with nature via parks, gardens and landscapes, as highlighted in The Council Plan 2025-2028.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The proposed Creativity Strategy and Action Plan aims to improve public health and reduce health inequalities by creating pride of place and supporting initiatives that promote physical and mental wellbeing. This includes widening access to a diverse range of creative activities and events, and creating safe, welcoming spaces where people can connect and participate, key factors in improving mental health and social cohesion. Throughout 2026, we will work closely with the Public Health team to deepen connections within the creative health agenda, building on local good practice such as Creative Start's arts, health and heritage programmes and initiatives like the colouring book commissioned as part of the Cleethorpes Townscape Heritage programme.

8. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

9. WARD IMPLICATIONS

This report covers activities across all wards.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Creativity Strategy Action Plan for 2025 was discussed at the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel on 23 January 2025 [10.-Creativity-Strategy-Action-Plan-2024-2025-1.pdf](#)

The Creativity Strategy Action Plans for 2023 and 2024 were discussed at the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel on 25 January 2024. [Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel | NELC](#)

The Creativity Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 16 March 2022. [Decision-Notice-16th-March-2022.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

The approved Creativity Strategy can be found here. [4.-Creativity-Strategy.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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REF	PROJECT AREA	AIM	THEME	STRATEGIC AIM	ACTIVITIES DELIVERED
1	AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION (LOCAL VOICE)	<p>Support organisations to broaden and deepen audiences, reducing barriers to engagement through co- production, representation, participation and working with communities as equal collaborators.</p> <p>Encourage wider participation in creative projects</p> <p>Apply for a Creative People and Places programme in North East Lincolnshire</p> <p>Broaden the diversity of workforces, volunteers and participants.</p>	CREATIVITY FOR ALL	<p>A. INCREASE THE AMOUNT AND VISIBILITY OF CREATIVITY</p> <p>B. FOCUS ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION</p> <p>D. BRING GENERATIONS TOGETHER</p>	<p>* 57 public facing events delivered as a result of Create North East Lincolnshire grant funding, attracting a total of 17k attendees in 2025.</p> <p>* Creative People & Places application submitted (unsuccessful) by Centre 4</p> <p>* 5,266 active participants involved in projects in 2025.</p> <p>* Increased number of volunteers involved in project activity - 189 volunteers involved in projects in 2025 to date.</p> <p>* Place Partnership meetings with key delivery partners to share audience trends/data.</p> <p>* Evidence of diversity - LGBTQ+ Telf'd Zine heritage project, 176 Oyster Shells Our Big Picture's opportunity for diverse communities and generations to co-create, Creative Match Fund towards Neurodivergent Arts Collective (Lucy's Arts Club).</p> <p>* 5 Large Heritage Project Grants distributed to a wide range of projects reflecting various areas of heritage, all of which stipulate particular audiences and participants and many of which engagement with diverse communities and underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Grim's Great Time Travellers drew in audiences of nearly 4,000 and 282 participants and connected audiences with heritage of many of the key players in Grimsby's heritage story.</p> <p>* Funding recipients demonstrates a broad mix of age ranges, 21% of those supported limited by disability (NEL 20%), 37% male, 47% female and 2% other supported via funding, 11% of funding supporting ethnic minority groups (NEL 7%) and 14% of funding recipients being gay men, gay women, bisexual or other.</p> <p>* Recipients of funding spread across all postcodes, with the highest concentration in DN32 (23%) including East Marsh. Project activity occurs across all postcodes but dominates in DN31 and DN35 (Grimsby and Cleethorpes Town Centre spaces) therefore boosting town centre footfall and DN32.</p> <p>* Commissioned for city actors and children performing in partnership the Culture House to deliver Children and Young People's programme from June 2025. Horizon Youth Development Group were involved in the selection process of the providers. The activities have engaged with 970 young people to date.</p> <p>* Music Hub governance.</p> <p>* Arts and Heritage Co-ordinator at Horizon Youth Zone dialogue with wider sector on opportunities to partner on activities once the Youth Zone is open.</p> <p>* Artsmark session held in March 2025 for schools to find out more about creative opportunities.</p> <p>* Use of Heads newsletter and creative contacts in schools to share information about creative activities</p> <p>* Dialogue with Franklin College regarding ACE bid for Creative Careers Week during June 2025.</p> <p>* Supporting Franklin College with Creative Careers Conference in November 2025.</p> <p>* Freestyle Academy engaged with 53 young participants to produce digital soundscape work for their project 'Voices of the Future'. 88% said they felt the project made them feel heard as a young person and 88% said they would like to be involved in creative projects in the future. The project generated confidence for the participants by meeting other like-minded young people.</p> <p>* Immersive Tales worked with 7 students based in the Hive at Havelock Academy for the Stories of the Docks project. These students are completing a foundation year before entering Year 7 due to low literacy and numeracy levels. The students used inspiration from the memories collected through the project to write their own sea-</p>
2	CREATIVITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE	<p>Ensure that childrens' voices are at the heart of creative decision-making.</p> <p>Deliver the ambitions of the Humber Music Education Hub in NEL</p> <p>Continue to work with partners including schools, community organisations and others to provide more opportunities for young people to experience creativity whether as participants or audiences.</p> <p>Build a network of schools who have knowledge and access to a range of creative provision helping to deliver a range of outcomes that enrich childrens' lives.</p> <p>Build upon Creative Careers Week, especially event at Franklin College to highlight broad range of careers in the creative industries.</p> <p>Continue to engage with NELC Childrens Services to promote creativity to deliver positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.</p> <p>Maximise the opportunity of the opening of new facilities, such as the Horizon Onside Youth Zone to engage more children and young people to participate in creative activities.</p>	CREATIVITY FOR ALL	<p>C. INVOLVE AND SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>F. DEVELOP THE NEXT GENERATION OF CREATIVE PEOPLE</p>	<p>* Commissioned for city actors and children performing in partnership the Culture House to deliver Children and Young People's programme from June 2025. Horizon Youth Development Group were involved in the selection process of the providers. The activities have engaged with 970 young people to date.</p> <p>* Music Hub governance.</p> <p>* Arts and Heritage Co-ordinator at Horizon Youth Zone dialogue with wider sector on opportunities to partner on activities once the Youth Zone is open.</p> <p>* Artsmark session held in March 2025 for schools to find out more about creative opportunities.</p> <p>* Use of Heads newsletter and creative contacts in schools to share information about creative activities</p> <p>* Dialogue with Franklin College regarding ACE bid for Creative Careers Week during June 2025.</p> <p>* Supporting Franklin College with Creative Careers Conference in November 2025.</p> <p>* Freestyle Academy engaged with 53 young participants to produce digital soundscape work for their project 'Voices of the Future'. 88% said they felt the project made them feel heard as a young person and 88% said they would like to be involved in creative projects in the future. The project generated confidence for the participants by meeting other like-minded young people.</p> <p>* Immersive Tales worked with 7 students based in the Hive at Havelock Academy for the Stories of the Docks project. These students are completing a foundation year before entering Year 7 due to low literacy and numeracy levels. The students used inspiration from the memories collected through the project to write their own sea-</p>
3	FILM AND TV	<p>Build on the launch of ABP's Kasbah Film quarter to showcase the area as film and TV location working in partnership to consider all aspects of the supply chain centred on the Port of Grimsby.</p> <p>Use film to promote our place by documenting activity and utilising existing avenues for showcasing our creativity and heritage eg through the Heritage Channel and Create North East Lincolnshire.</p> <p>NELC/Create NEL to create dedicated online resources to support location enquiries.</p>	CREATIVE ECONOMY	G. CELEBRATE GRIMSBY, IMMINGHAM, CLEETHORPES AND THE WOLDS' ROLE IN THE WORLD	<p>* Working in collaboration with Lincolnshire Film Office on filming requests in NEL</p> <p>* Heritage Channel documenting Grimsby Town Centre Regeneration, History of Grimsby Town Football Club, Oral Histories of Weelsby Hall and Lloyds Cars.</p> <p>* Heritage Channel livestreamed Festival of the Sea enabling access for over 11,000 people to those unable to attend/bound to their residence or in care homes.</p> <p>* 2025 Group film project with Rise Film.</p> <p>* Postcards from Cleethorpes film shared on YouTube as part of Cleethorpes Promenades and Grim and Gleeul</p> <p>* Tommy Turgoose working as an ambassadors with Location Lincs.</p> <p>* Acting Lincs delivered 3 masterclasses with film and TV professionals as well as creating showreels for NEL actors to amplify their creative practice in collaboration with Cineshow</p> <p>* Interpretative movement piece filmed in Peterson's smokehouse by contemporary dance practitioner as part of Stories of the Docks project</p>

4	TELLING THE STORY	<p>Work with Create North East Lincolnshire to promote NEL as a creative place with a rich history. Highlighting the internationally significant assets of NEL including our maritime, industrial, social/community and natural heritage as highlighted in the Creativity Strategy.</p> <p>Facilitate the conversation about heritage to create opportunities for everyone to share their own stories, which come together to tell interwoven shared experiences.</p> <p>Maximise the opportunities for engagement throughout projects to enable the community to be at the heart of the stories reflecting our past whilst looking forward.</p>	CREATIVE ECONOMY	<p>E. CELEBRATE THE HERITAGE OF THE AREA.</p> <p>G. CELEBRATE GRIMSBY, IMMINGHAM, CLEETHORPES AND THE WOLDS' ROLE IN THE WORLD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Our Future Starts Here raised awareness of our unique Geography in mitigating the impacts of environmental challenges. * Paint the Town Proud murals evoking key place themes across various destinations across the borough. * Festival of the Sea developed many themes associated with our proximity to the coast. * Heritage project grants covering topics such as LGBTQ+ stories, Lloyds Cars, environmental (coast, climate & beach), Marsh land & drainage and Oyster Shells - audience engagement and participation in reaching those who may have stories to contribute to the project is a key element of delivery. * Beach of Dreams captured the stories of our unique coastal environment and generated a record number of climate commitment pledges. * Untold stories linked to projects, such as 'The Humber Hovercraft'. * NEL Heritage Network met 5 times in 2025 where presentations on various topics such as sharing learnings from the Heritage Network Conference, Heritage Place visit by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and masterclass in filming, interviewing and directing short video content by Hammond House. * Heritage Open Days - broadening conversation and inviting communities to tell their stories as part of a wider programme of activity with 29 events across the borough from the Fitties, Immingham, Stallingborough and the Seaside Girls walking tour in Cleethorpes linked to Tracy Baines books. More places of workshop were featured in 2025 including a tour of the Sir Moses Montefiore Synagogue. * Launch of Heritage Place Heritage Stories Grants. 5 Heritage Place Hidden Stories Grants distributed to date to cover both hidden stories and feasibility work for heritage spaces. * Heritage talk from Dr Kathryn Ferry around seaside architecture, including Cleethorpes over the decades and heritage talk from Andrew Martin around the role of the railway on seaside places. * Historic England funded project 'Stories of the Kasbah' celebrates the stories of those who worked on or visited the Docks and the creative responses to the memories led by Our Big Picture across a range of creative formats. * Steve Dixey's 'Moments in Time' exhibition portraying our natural heritage through across 2025.
5	CLIMATE FOR INVESTMENT	<p>Supporting the submission of ambitious applications to funders such as Arts Council England, Historic England, Community Fund & the National Lottery Heritage Fund to increase investment in NEL.</p> <p>Through grants and commissions develop a ladder of opportunities to support projects at all scales and have the resources to grow in a supportive environment. This will range from first time applicants, to National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and large projects.</p> <p>Make the case for investment in scalable creative projects from more diverse range of funding streams e.g trusts and foundations, health and education public funding and private sector funds.</p> <p>Utilise NEL's Status as a Heritage Place to develop a pipeline of deliverable and ambitious projects.</p> <p>Broaden diversity of investment to improve opportunities for everyone, particularly for under-represented, those with protected characteristics and from disadvantaged socio-economic groups.</p>	CREATIVE ECONOMY	<p>H. SECURE FUNDING</p> <p>I: SUPPORT CREATIVE BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Creative People & Places application submitted by Centre 4 (unsuccessful). Follow-up discussion with Arts Council England to plan the next steps for Centre4 in relation to ACE funding for creative projects. * Unseen Arts received £437,741 from Historic England Heritage At Risk Grant funding for 2 & 6 Auckland Road, Grimsby. * Historic England Heritage At Risk Grant funding of £495,000 for Corporation Road Bridge awarded to NELC * NELC led Cleethorpes Heritage Revealed project funding secured for activity in 2026 with £236,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund * Cleethorpes Townscape Heritage project leveraged freeholder investment of £335,772 for internal fittings to buildings already externally renovated. * Cleethorpes Townscape Heritage project leveraged funding of £140,000 from The Railway Trust for internal restoration for the Mermaid Cafe * Transperine Express contributed £28,000 to a new footwash opposite the Mermaid Cafe to assist in maintaining the footpaths, station and trains from sand * What if We Create receiving £114,810 National Lottery Heritage Funding and GY95 receiving £104,970 National Lottery Heritage Funding * Evie Henderson receiving £34,463 Arts Council England Project Grant Funding * Creative Match process to unlock match funding for larger national funding bids. Since April 2025, 5 organisations/individuals have accessed Creative Match funding totalling £19,700 and leveraging in £1,660,380 * Funding application support session with Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. DYCP support session with Arts Council England. * Since April 2025, 5 organisations have been awarded with £42,598 heritage Project Grant funding and 9 individuals have been supported with Development Funding, equating to £23,201. * Of a total of 138 successful Create North East Lincolnshire funding applications to date, 49% are completely new to the programme team or people who the team were aware of but who had yet to submit an application and 51% were previous recipients of funding from previous programmes. * Recipients of funding spread across all postcodes, with the highest concentration in 1st mainline space in Freshney Place for East Street Arts under licence to What if We Create CIC. * Participating in 2025 Group Pancake Day Race in St James Square commemorating the previously held Choristers pancake race that is etched as a memory in the paving. * 2025 Group Rise Film Project celebrating the positives within Grimsby Town Centre both historic and forthcoming. * Working with national and regional partners on projects: Sea Like A Mirror / Freedom Festival / Beach of Dreams / Biting Point / Opera North with the use of Foresight Car Park. * Festival of the Sea use of Riverhead Square as a new location in addition to Alexandra Dock. * Our Future Starts Here utilising various Cleethorpes spaces for the first time, in conjunction with Beach of Dreams, creating an interconnected event across Cleethorpes Sea Front. * Learning from attendance at CDF symposium with representatives from all 4 CDF rounds of funding. * Go See visit to Huddersfield and follow-up conversations.
6	CREATIVE STREETS	<p>Work with 2025 Group and other initiatives to develop opportunities for the creative and heritage sector to engage in wider positive activity across the borough.</p> <p>Experiences from other areas and places will be considered in the development of activity locally and connections beyond the borough will be encouraged.</p> <p>Maximise the opportunities for creativity in town centres and the Port of Grimsby aligned to major projects and opportunities. This includes when new spaces are completed but also activation, public art and meanwhile activities whilst projects are ongoing. This could include the use of vacant units, events and activities or integrating art into the buildings and streetscape.</p> <p>Ensure that major investments e.g. Cleethorpes Levelling Up schemes, Freshney Place leisure redevelopment, free schools and transport hub provide opportunities for creativity.</p>	CREATIVE ECONOMY	<p>I: SUPPORT CREATIVE BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS</p> <p>O: LEARN FROM OTHERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Participating in 2025 Group Pancake Day Race in St James Square commemorating the previously held Choristers pancake race that is etched as a memory in the paving. * 2025 Group Rise Film Project celebrating the positives within Grimsby Town Centre both historic and forthcoming. * Working with national and regional partners on projects: Sea Like A Mirror / Freedom Festival / Beach of Dreams / Biting Point / Opera North with the use of Foresight Car Park. * Festival of the Sea use of Riverhead Square as a new location in addition to Alexandra Dock. * Our Future Starts Here utilising various Cleethorpes spaces for the first time, in conjunction with Beach of Dreams, creating an interconnected event across Cleethorpes Sea Front. * Learning from attendance at CDF symposium with representatives from all 4 CDF rounds of funding. * Go See visit to Huddersfield and follow-up conversations.
7	AMPLIFY AND ANIMATE	<p>Reflecting NELC's new Council Plan which highlights culture and heritage continue to work across the public sector to advocate for creativity, championing our creative community and their expertise.</p> <p>Develop meaningful connections across sectors to collaborate and positively impact on the creative economy for the benefit of everyone in NEL.</p> <p>Work collaboratively across Greater Lincolnshire and the Humber to collectively make the case for culture and heritage, creating opportunities for co-commissioning and sharing resources and expertise.</p>	CREATIVE WORKING	<p>N. SUPPORT NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL TO BE AN ENABLER</p> <p>P: WORK IN THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * and Helen Featherstone (Director North, the National Lottery Heritage Fund) alongside senior representatives from both organisations. * Artist in Residence opportunities for 3 creatives working in different sectors (technical industry, health and landowner). * Greater Lincolnshire Place Partnership Fund bid - integral part of the creative ecology across Lincolnshire. * Participation in NPO discussions, building relationships and encouraging opportunities for tours in NEL such as Freedom Festival, Biting Point from Middle Child, Zest Theatre, Magna Vitae SO Festival Associate Artist & International School in Denmark, Lincoln Arts Centre Critical Friend * Acting Lincs working across Lincolnshire with hubs in 4 places. * 3 specialist creative networks ongoing throughout 2025. * International literary festival organised and hosted by Hammond House in Grimsby * Case study examples of funding recipients and projects on Create NEL website. * Two NEL based artists' work (Dale Wells and Sophie Dickinson) were accessioned into the collection of the Manchester Art Gallery.

8	MAXIMISING POTENTIAL - CAPACITY BUILDING AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT	<p>Create opportunities and support development and growth in creative careers and business.</p> <p>Develop strong sector leaders to drive cultural led placemaking, through training and development opportunities which meet individuals needs, including those on the Creativity Board, to build resilience, succession planning and creative practitioner development.</p> <p>Encourage the development of new partnerships, especially between local organisations and those based elsewhere to share expertise in both directions.</p> <p>Develop skills and capacity of creative and heritage practitioners particularly those with ambitions for longer term investment programmes such as becoming a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO).</p>	CREATIVE ECONOMY	<p>I: SUPPORT CREATIVE BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS</p> <p>M: RAISE THE BAR</p> <p>O: LEARN FROM OTHERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Creative Match fund encourages organisations and individuals to access external grant funding to support sustainability, resilience and develop partnerships. * Partnerships with Cement Fields and East Marsh United for Sea Like a Mirror, The Culture House and Freedom Festival, La Cuna and Kinetika for Beach of Dreams, Unseen Arts and Lincoln Arts Centre, lowercase theatre, The Culture House and Middle Child. * Billboard showcase delivered by Hammond House aided the professional development of 7 local creative practitioners * 4 x successful Arts Council Developing Your Creative Practice applicants with ongoing development work. * Telford Zine opening up safe space for opportunities for minority group to create their own commissions. * Go and see visit to Huddersfield to drive inspiration. * Bi-monthly networking to encourage showcasing, collaboration and ideas generation. * 114 workshop/development events delivered in quarter 1 and 2 of 2025 associated with Create NEL funding. * Amy Dalton Hardy workshop: Make a living doing what you love - the boring bits, in a fun way! 7 attendees from a breadth of creative/heritage disciplines.
9	PARKS, GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES - CONNECTING WITH NATURE	<p>Increased understanding of natural heritage, internationally significant environment in NEL and the benefits of creative projects in natural environments through initiatives such as Nature Towns and Cities and Beach of Dreams.</p> <p>Encourage appropriate delivery of projects in parks, open spaces and other natural assets to highlight the worldclass natural heritage on our doorstep.</p> <p>Reduce negative environmental impacts of our work and creative & heritage projects (physical and digital).</p>	CREATIVE WORKING	<p>E: CELEBRATE THE HERITAGE OF THE AREA</p> <p>L: ADDRESS OUR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Beach of Dreams including environmental pledges (the most of any place in the country). * Staff Sustainable Travel and options for refreshments to be locally sourced/produced and recently venturing towards meat-free only choices where possible. * Questioning on applications about travel options and being environmentally focused. * Encouraging project applicants to emphasise the environmental advocacy elements of their projects. * Several projects with overt green links such as 'We Are Marshy Folk' from Colour Outside the Lines - linking our planning and development to flood risk and Beach of Dreams (as previously mentioned). * Development Funds focusing on best environmental practice such as Elaine Perkins (upcycling of textiles) and Oli Turpenney (continual investigation of circular materials to use for pottery business). * Coastal Ranger appointed as part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded project 'Dynamic Understanding of the Natural Environment' focussing on the internationally significant coastline and improving people's appreciation and awareness of the natural environment.
10	EXPLORE THE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY	<p>Promote working with digital and using new technology in creative and heritage activity.</p> <p>Explore the use of AI and new technologies to make positive change and engage audiences especially heritage projects.</p> <p>In conjunction with partners, commission a programme of digital exploration for creative and heritage practitioners to understand the possibilities, share knowledge and maximise their influence on their practice.</p>	CREATIVE WORKING	K: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Threshold Studios Exploring Digital training. * Digital commission opportunity awarded to two creatives to develop their ideas and present at Frequency Festival in Lincoln in February 2026 with a later showing in Cleethorpes. * Development Fund to support David Harries' Podcast ventures. * Matterport Scans hosted by NELC for buildings or spaces. * Watkin Trail in Cleethorpes on an app and launched at Parkway Cinema * Digital elements of LEGO Brick Future workshops and exhibition.



Create
North East Lincolnshire

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



Create
North East Lincolnshire

ECONOMIC

BOOST



Economic Boost

39

39 successful funding bids and sponsorships with £2,914,179 investment levered in through arts, culture and heritage funding.



5 successful recipients of national grant funding supported with £19,700 additional funding via Creative Match and levered in £1,660,380.



5 organisations awarded with Large Heritage Project Grant Funding with a total of £47,598

4

In addition, 4 Heritage Place Hidden Stories grants awarded, with a total of £37,852.



“As new work is being made, creating quality content to build my reputation in the coming months. This has grown my confidence to share how, why and what my work is with a wider audience as it develops alongside my ACE DYCP project”

Development Funding Recipient

“I don't think I would have taken these opportunities ordinarily as I wasn't sure where I fit into the creative sphere and if there was space for me. Through meeting other creatives and helping with their projects I have clearer vision of the space I want to carve for myself and others and this has been a vital take away for me personally”

Development Funding Recipient





Create
North East Lincolnshire

SUPPORTING AND NURTURING

LOCAL TALENT



Supporting and Nurturing Local Talent

9

9 creative and heritage practitioners were supported via our Development Funding (round 4), with a total of £22,184 funding.



267 development sessions were delivered as a result of CreateNEL funding.



6 Creative Networking events, attracting 109 attendees in total, of which everyone found useful and beneficial to their practice, met new people, & would attend again.



Supporting and Nurturing Local Talent

This year's Project Grants to date have or are set to provide a total of 614 hours of employment.

Equating to 83 typical working days.

Heritage Place Hidden Stories grants are set to provide 552 hours of employment

Equating to 74.5 typical working days.



“Really enjoyed the evening – I'm autistic and sometimes struggle with things like this/find them overwhelming but it was very welcoming. It's a great opportunity to get people talking about art and works really well if there's a few people wanting to take part.”

“The Create meetings have been valuable for connecting with others in NeLincs – which may have otherwise taken a while to find.”

“The Create meetings have been valuable for connecting with others in NeLincs – which may have otherwise taken a while to find.”

Create North East Lincolnshire Networking attendees





Supporting and Nurturing Local Talent

2

2 Children and Young People Programmes of heritage-based activity, attracting around 970 attendee's



Launch of 3 special networks, engaging attracting total attendee numbers of 235 people to date



1 Creative Careers Conference in partnership with Franklin College, involving over 20 artists and creatives, 6 local schools and Franklin College students.



'One of the girls who attended the TV workshop was incredibly shy and kept saying "this is my worst nightmare". At first, she was extremely reluctant to present, especially on camera but we wanted to create a comfortable environment to make people feel relaxed and comfortable to actively participate. By the end of the session, she was interviewing other participants, filming architecture and confidently presenting the information that she'd learned as part of the 'walk and talk' directly to camera. It was like a transformation and was wonderful to witness',

Landmarks and Legends', Unseen Arts Children and Young People Programme





Create
North East Lincolnshire

REACHING AUDIENCES

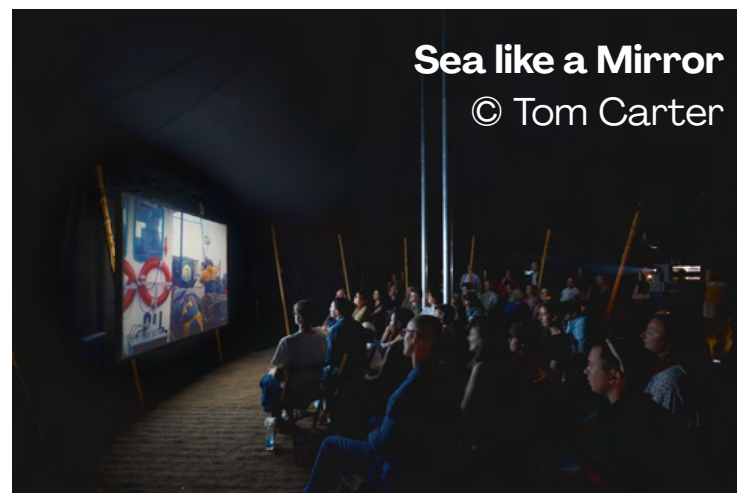


Reaching Audiences



Festival of the Sea

© Emma Gibbon



Sea like a Mirror

© Tom Carter

62 public facing events were delivered as a result of CreateNEL grant funding



Freedom on Tour

© Tom Arran



Our Future Starts Here



Grims Great Time Travellers



Reaching Audiences

16,959

All programming activity and events have led to audiences of

5068

Active participants in creative and heritage activity

187

Volunteers involved in creative and heritage activity funded by CreateNEL



Partnerships & Collaboration

Partnership and collaboration are vital to reaching diverse audiences. By working together, you can share resources, expertise, and networks, creating richer experiences that appeal to a wider community

Collaboration sparks innovation, strengthens visibility, and builds trust, ensuring cultural initiatives are inclusive and sustainable

We have picked out some quotes from recent evaluations that highlight the importance of collaboration.



“It generated great connections! Quite a few members of the group have made new working relationships from meeting each other on the project”

Tell'd NE Lincs – Sharing Queer history and dreams, Tell'd Zine

“Bringing everyone together; The workshops, planning and consultation involved with the nature trail has really pulled all of our service users together, the families/children from Oasis Hub have been involved in the design, volunteers have started to cut trees back, create paths, plant wildflowers etc and students from Catch Apprenticeships created a new fence to mark the memorial area, the craft group are involved with the design of the information boards, flags, bunting and wood carving”

Creating Green Futures', Green Futures





Pride in Place

Being proud of where we are from and as some might say down at Blundell Park” ‘We only sing when we are fishing” is important to continue with our heritage and love for the area.

This year we have seen growth in our sector from national touring exhibitions, welcoming international artists to our area but importantly supporting our own.

Take a look at some of quotes about pride in place from recent evaluations



“The Creative Impact of this project is profound as the legacy can be seen on the streets daily by the general public of North East Lincolnshire. The project has created an almost mural fever in the area. Where there are many people now wanting to commission murals and more artists coming to the area to have a go at painting a mural. The project has shown the worth of the murals and how that art can transform an area and make it a better place to live”

Paint The Town Proud’, Creative Start

“The event reinforced civic pride, encouraged new audiences to engage with local heritage, and provided a model for sustainable, creative-led regeneration”

Grim’s Great Time Travellers, East Coast Pictures



Creativity Strategy Action Plan 2026

THEME	ACTION	2026 FOCUS
<u>Creativity for all</u> Involve and support young people	Place creativity at the centre of how young people learn, develop and express themselves on their own terms, whether in school or outside.	<p>In early 2026 the Horizon Onside Youth Zone and Our Big Picture's refurbished premises on Bethlehem Street will open. These new creative spaces alongside initiatives programmes such as Create NEL children & young peoples' projects, Brick Futures and Brick History at the Grimsby Fishing Heritage provide opportunities for participation. We will build upon these, and other opportunities working with Childrens' Services to ensure that children and young people have access to participate in and lead the development of creative content in spaces throughout NEL.</p> <p>Additionally working with Public Health to ensure that we maximise the health benefits of creativity for our residents, ensuring equitable access for all our young people, regardless of where they live, or the barriers they face.</p>
<u>Creativity for all</u> Celebrate the heritage of the area	Creativity will be used as a way of highlighting and sharing what makes the area special. It will be inspired by the stories, buildings and the people of the past, present and future to help shape how people see and feel about the area. The Heritage Fund definition of heritage "anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations"	We will continue to work with a range of partners including Linkage Trust (Weelsby Hall) and across NELC to deliver a range of Heritage Fund supported projects including Cleethorpes Heritage Revealed and the Dynamic Understanding of the Natural Landscape (DUNE) projects. Since the Creativity Strategy has been adopted, supported by Create North East Lincolnshire grants, many untold and undertold stories have come to forefront and we will continue to work across the Council, with creatives and heritage practitioners to support the development of important local stories.

<u>Creative Economy</u> Develop the next generation of creative people	Support creative businesses and individuals (revised): Ensure creative and heritage practitioners are aware of the support available to them to develop and grow their activities by working with established organisations to provide pathways for creatives at all stages of their careers to flourish.	There is renewed confidence in heritage and creative sector in NEL which continues to evolve with new talent emerging alongside those who have worked in the sector for many years. We will continue to champion high-quality creative work and encourage confidence, reflection and learning across the sector to create the conditions for growth for both individuals and organisations.
<u>Creative Economy</u> Secure funding	Take a coordinated approach to funding creative activity in the area that brings in money from a range of sources, in a range of ways across a long period.	There has been a significant increase in funding for cultural and heritage activities since 2020, including over £10m of support from Heritage Fund. Given the ever growing ambition it is important that further funding is secured by NELC and partners to enable projects to be delivered to achieve our ambition in an impactful and outcome focussed way. Aligned to accessing 'arts' and 'heritage' funding it is equally important to continue to showcase investment in creativity to deliver other outcomes including enhancing childrens' lives, health and wellbeing and civic pride.
<u>Creative Working</u> Embed creativity widely	Embed creativity in the work and lives of everyone. Creativity is now embedded in how people live, work and learn across North East Lincolnshire. It is no longer an add-on, but part of how services are delivered, organisations operate, places are shaped and communities express themselves. The importance of creativity in improving health and wellbeing is widely recognised.	We recognise contemporary practice, including AI and digital innovation, as essential infrastructure for the future of work. These approaches will be used to increase capacity, improve access, strengthen skills, share learning and sustainable delivery, particularly in under-resourced organisations and communities.

<u>Creative Working</u> Work in a spirit of collaboration	Those in the creative and heritage sector will work together in a spirit of partnership and collaboration, openness and positivity, supporting each other. They will look at how they can work with other sectors to integrate creativity into the work and lives of others.	We will continue to promote collaborative partnerships. To sustain this progress, we focus on underpinning collaboration with shared learning, skills and practical tools. We promote openness, trust and encouraging collaboration and supporting organisations to work together with confidence. We actively learn from elsewhere and share insight both within North East Lincolnshire and beyond it, contributing to national conversations while building local confidence, capability and resilience.
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