

# GREATER GRIMSBY BOARD

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Upstairs Abbeys Restaurant Conference Room  
Abbeygate Grimsby, DN31 1NB

10.00am – 12.00pm followed by Networking Lunch

## AGENDA

	Agenda Item	Supporting Papers	Allocated Time
1.	Welcome, Introductions	verbal	10.00am
2.	Declarations of interest	verbal	10.05am
3.	Last Meetings Minutes	Paper in pack	10.10am
4.	Pride in Place sub group update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Future proposal for next phase of work</li> <li>• Open House 9-10 March</li> </ul>	Paper in pack	10.15am
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town of Culture application update - DJW</li> <li>• Next steps</li> </ul>	Paper in pack	10.45am
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Centre Update - DJW</li> </ul>	Verbal update	11.30 am
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking Lunch</li> </ul>		12.00pm
8.	<b>Date &amp; Time of Next Meetings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24<sup>th</sup> April 1000-1200hrs Microsoft Teams</li> <li>• 25<sup>th</sup> June 1000-1200hrs TBC</li> <li>• 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1000-1200 Microsoft Teams</li> </ul>		



## **Greater Grimsby Board**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 10 a.m.**

#### **Attendance:**

- Chair - David Ross (The David Ross Foundation)
- Julian Free (University of Lincoln)
- Leo Hammond (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Humberside)
- Melanie Onn (MP for Grimsby and Cleethorpes)
- Councillor Stan Shreeve (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Emma Toulson (Orsted)

#### **Also in Attendance: –**

- Amil Boudjabeur (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government)
- Emily Bolton (Our Future)
- Carolina Borgstrom (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Max Burnett (ABP)
- Spencer Hunt (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Damien Jaines White (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Kassim Qureshi (Office of Martin Vickers MP)
- Paul Windley (North East Lincolnshire Council)

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Philip Jackson (North East Lincolnshire Council), Professor David Petley (Hull University), Sharon Wroot (North East Lincolnshire Council), Jonathon Evison (Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner) and Deborah Williams (Historic England).

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from any Board member in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting

### **3. Minutes of last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of this Board on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. Governance Review - Board Membership Applications**

The board considered applications for Board membership and the appointment of a Deputy Chair.

The Chair welcomed the applications and commented on the importance of representation of local residents on the Board. He proposed that Chris Carr and Mark Webb be accepted onto the Board and requested SH hold discussions with Rebecca Darnell and feedback at the next board meeting.

The Chair suggested that Chris Carr be appointed as Deputy Chair of this Board. This was agreed by the Board.

RESOLVED –

1. That Chris Carr (Housing), Mark Webb (Retail/High Street) and be appointed as members of the Greater Grimsby Board. That SH hold discussions with Rebecca Darnell and feedback at the next board meeting.
2. That Chris Carr be appointed as the Deputy Chair of the Greater Grimsby Board.

### **5. Pride in Place**

The Board received the draft Pride in Place 10-Year Vision.

The Chair noted that he had been in discussions with government departmental representatives and they continued to express the view that Grimsby was at the front of the pack and they were looking forward to receiving this document. He felt that represented the vision of Grimsby as a thriving place, with a focus on new jobs coming into the community. He hoped for as much community engagement as possible and hoped this would be owned and led by local people. The next phase would involve establishing the entity. He welcomed feedback from the Board.

The Board were fully supportive of the document and impressed by the level of work that had gone into its development. While it was felt that an independent funding vehicle was needed, it was noted that this Board also needed to have a valid role.

The Chair felt that an appropriate scheme of delegation needed to be in place to ensure that this Board maintained an overview. He commented that the document represented Grimsby putting its best foot forward for investment and he thanked the team for the work

and energy that had been put in.

RESOLVED – That the draft Pride in Place 10-Year Vision be supported.

## **6. Pride in Place Sub Group Update**

The board received an update from the Pride in Place Sub Group focusing on lessons learnt from the process and next steps.

Ms Bolton introduced the paper in the context of making sure that the Board was comfortable with the direction of travel. It was anticipated that funding would arrive from the government in April 2026 and there would continue to be collective testing of delegated funding approaches while the legal entity was being set up. A further meeting was due to be held by the end of the month to draw up a prospectus for Grimsby.

RESOLVED - That the update be noted.

## **7. Urgent Business**

The board received an item of urgent business around the new DCMS funding for towns of culture, with a query around who was best placed to take the lead.

The Chair felt that this was something that this Board should start to develop.

Miss Bolton commented that the prospectus for the funding had yet to be issued but felt that there was an opportunity for joint working to develop a local 'town and culture' pitch.

The Chair suggested that a paper be submitted to the next meeting of this Board setting out for review the different funding opportunities that were available. This would be with a view to delegating work to sub-groups to ensure a joined up approach.

RESOLVED - That a paper be submitted to the next meeting of this Board setting out for review the different funding opportunities that were available.

In concluding the meeting, the Chair requested that a schedule of meetings for this Board in 2026 be arranged as soon as possible.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 10.33 a.m.



## Grimsby Together 2026 Programme of Work

February 2026 – DRAFT

### Summary

Our Future has been working for four years in Grimsby bringing together and supporting a collective of people and organisations to work in the common good, understanding the opportunities and potential but also the infrastructure gaps that are blocking change.

'Grimsby Together' came out of this work. Our focus was on understanding how a government funding programme could serve the hopes and ambitions of people across Grimsby. The work we have done together aligns with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government's Pride in Place programme objectives, placing the citizens of Grimsby at the heart of shaping the town's future, through a collaborative and structured process.

During 2024 and 2025, Our Future worked with people and organisations across Grimsby alongside North East Lincolnshire Council and the Greater Grimsby Board to:

- Create a shared vision for the future and thematic priorities
- Understand how money could work better for the town
- Create a collective of people who contributed to developing the plan for the town
- Develop an understanding of the current and future opportunities linked to Grimsby's eight missions
- Develop strategic priorities for the funding and governance model to support sustainable, citizen-led change

All the outputs from these modules culminated in an agreed ambition from the people of Grimsby, the Grimsby Together Sub Group and the Greater Grimsby Board to set up a fund for North East Lincolnshire and Grimsby. This will incorporate but be *more* than the Pride in Place funding alone. The decision to establish a fund is a milestone in progressing over four years' work in Grimsby and will be fundamental to putting in place the long-term infrastructure to enable everyone to contribute to a thriving future in the town.

Our Future, working with NELC and the Greater Grimsby Board, is keen to incubate the creation of this infrastructure which will be owned by the people of Grimsby and NEL. We look forward to continuing to work with many partners across the town bring it to life.

The ambition of the people of Grimsby is bigger than the Pride in Place funding and so it is crucial that:

- the fund works for a variety of funders – not solely the requirements of the Pride in Place policy
- additional infrastructure and support are put in place that go beyond the scope of the Pride in Place policy to support citizen ownership and participation in the change underway in the town.

Given the breadth of this work and the alignment with the Our Future mission, we propose doing this work as a joint endeavour bringing together Our Future and Pride in Place resources to co-fund the work.

The detail in this proposal focuses on three workstreams, which reinforce each other to support the long-term sustained change in Grimsby:

1. **Workstream 1: Sustain and grow the collective of people and organisations working in the common good** - Building on the work to date to embed a collaborative, cross-sector approach that harnesses local talents, drives action, and supports the town's shared ambitions

2. **Workstream 2: Trial key elements of the fund with the first year Pride in Place funds** – to deploy money fast, test the citizen-led decision making approaches and inform the eventual fund development
3. **Workstream 3: Design a citizen-led, Grimsby Fund** – driving sustainable change and establishing a long term legacy that is owned by the town

This paper outlines the next phase of work for the Grimsby Together project to enable operational delivery of the Pride in Place policy. The end result of this work will be to establish a citizen-led delivery vehicle to back people across the town to create a thriving future.

## The 2026 Programme of Work

The three proposed workstreams for 2026 explicitly build on last year's work:

### **Workstream 1: Sustain and grow the collective of people and organisations working in the common good**

The purposes of this workstream are to:

1. Continue engagement with those individuals who have been involved in the change in Grimsby to date, so that they remain actively involved in driving forward this work
2. Support those who have been involved so far to engage others in this work
3. Sustain and evolve a collaborative way of working that is cross sectoral, harnesses the talents and ambitions of the town, drives action and is working in the collective long-term good of Grimsby – particularly as funding arrives and the Grimsby Fund is established
4. Communicate and engage support to deliver on Grimsby's priorities

*Component 1: Continued engagement with those who have been involved, to remain actively involved*

#### Objectives:

- For citizens and local organisations to lead and drive change in Grimsby
- To ensure ongoing collaboration in the common good of the town

#### Activities:

This work cuts across the entire programme, ensuring that Grimsby Together – and the processes that support it - is led by people across the town, they can contribute to it, and they feel in the loop about the change.

Activities will continue to engage people to collectively propose and design positive improvements for the town, support them to drive change in Grimsby, and to feel active ownership. They include:

- Facilitation and support of the monthly Grimsby Together sub group
- Support as needed for working group chairs in each of the 8 themes to develop thematic ideas as needed
- In-person and online meetings with thematic groups (either full working groups or sub-sets of the working groups)
- Regular communication to stakeholders to support momentum and sustain collective energy
- Maintenance of offline and online routes for citizens to engage in the Grimsby Together work, make connections and input ideas

### *Component 2: Involve others in the work*

#### Objectives:

- Support those who have been involved to get others involved
- For new people to hear about and want to join the Grimsby Together collective / activities
- For the reputation of this work to spread and attract wider interest and engagement

#### Activities:

This work is also cross-cutting, as success in other endeavours – such as the creation of outputs that can be used to promote engagement and understanding (component four) – will support and be supported by the ongoing process of making sure that the collective of people who are actively engaged in Grimsby is as wide as possible

#### To do this we will:

- Actively consult – on an ongoing basis – with people about how to spread the word, and widen the net
- Use practical opportunities to seek to engage people who are not yet engaged, such as targeting specific sectors / areas of interest in the development of funding proposals
- Work with a subset of citizens to shape the development of products that can be used to engage others (see component 4)
- Develop the Grimsby Together online web pages so that they better support people who want to get actively involved in work underway – or suggest new avenues of activity

### *Component 3: Sustain a collaborative way of working that is cross sectoral, drives action and is working in the collective long-term good of Grimsby*

#### Objectives:

- To ensure that work across a diverse range of people is consistent, there is a shared ethos to the work and a shared understanding of how we are doing it
- To evolve historic 'infrastructure' that has supported Grimsby Together – such as the thematic working groups and Grimsby Together sub group - so that the town retains the power of community-led, collective groups that support and bring together passionate individuals, while transitioning to a longer-term operating model that involves the Grimsby Fund and associated formal governance

#### Activities:

This work builds on that of the sub-group, fund and governance taskforce and working groups whose steer on principles and approach has underpinned activity so far. Over this year we will work with these structures to develop the long-term governance of the NEL/Grimsby Fund. We will:

- Continue to convene the sub-group on a regular basis to discuss and uphold the principles that matter in this work
- Review the application of the 'charter' that was developed to guide how stakeholders work together, in the best interests of the town
- Feed into the detailed design of the Grimsby Fund, with respect to how the Fund interacts with and involves citizens in its operations, governance and delivery of change.

### *Component 4: Communicate and engage support to deliver on Grimsby's priorities*

#### Objectives

1. Agree the tone and approach to communicating about the work in Grimsby, that can be used across channels and outputs for a consistent, clear approach (this includes the development of a new local name)
2. Produce a set of outputs or products that effectively communicate activity and intentions of the work in Grimsby, and can be used by and for a range of stakeholders to engage others
3. Agree and support mechanisms for communicating and engaging support to deliver on Grimsby's priorities – whether that is through external funders (local or national), supporters (businesses or individuals), or mobilising local people

#### Activities:

After the feedback from the Grimsby Together working groups in 2025, a task and finish group have volunteered to input into the development of a Grimsby prospectus, ensuring that it captures the shared ambition, change underway in the town and is authentically in the voices of the town. Our Future will work closely with this group, as well as with the sub-group, in order to:

- Co-produce a Grimsby prospectus, that encompasses the scale and range of ambition in Grimsby, summarises the progress already and outlines the plan for the future
- Co-produce a set of more detailed thematic summary documents, that can be circulated alongside the overarching prospectus, with content that will be relevant to specific interest groups
- Develop a local brand – associated with Our Future and the work that has gone before – but that creates a shared identity as a new phase of work begins
- Consult on an ongoing basis about other communication needs and gaps that might require physical or digital outputs

### **Workstream 2: Trial key elements of a citizen-led funding model with initial Pride in Place funds, to inform the Grimsby Fund**

The purpose of this workstream is to test and learn from an initial interim phase, exploring participatory funding mechanisms to inform the eventual design and implementation of the full Grimsby Fund. Through this initial phase, we will understand how the approach can leverage the Pride in Place funding and support sustainable change.

Funding processes for this interim phase will be designed to **enable funding to be deployed at pace from the start**, maintaining momentum and confidence following the Grimsby Together process, and demonstrating early, visible action. It will be a pilot, recognising that we will be learning to ensure that the final fund design works for the town. We will create structured opportunities to learn what works well — and what does not — in practice, including around participation, decision-making, operational delivery and assurance.

Finally, the workstream will also ensure that funding **looks and feels different from the outset**, embedding principles of transparency, local ownership and collaboration, while laying the groundwork for the Full Fund by building shared understanding locally of what it takes to deliver this type of fund and preparing all parties — communities, partners and institutions — for its longer-term operation.

We propose partnering with a third-party fund administrator, Key Fund, to assist in the delivery during the interim phase. They will bring additional capacity to ensure the fund can rapidly get up to speed, a strong track record with co-funders, experience in conducting due diligence on sustainable models of change and a first tranche of leverage funding (£45,000 of funding from a grant funder).

#### Activities include:

- Ensure that initial MHCLG funds are **disbursed at pace through agreed interim arrangements**, observing the duties on North East Lincolnshire Council as accountable body and meeting MHCLG assurance requirements, while capturing learning on operational delivery to inform the Full Fund
- Design and implement an **interim operating model** for the Fund, working with a third-party funding administrator to enable safe, compliant and timely delivery, while operating in an interim context ahead of the establishment of the Full Grimsby Fund.
- Design, recruit for and trial a **set of participatory decision-making mechanisms**, including training and support for participants, in order to test suitability, appetite and effectiveness within the Grimsby context.
- Involve the community in the **development and testing of initial funding criteria and policies**, ensuring these reflect local priorities and generate learning to inform the policies and approaches of the full Grimsby Fund.
- Design and coordinate **communications and engagement activity** around the interim phase, including launch communications and ongoing engagement, to maintain momentum from the Grimsby Together process and ensure the Fund looks and feels different from the outset.

### Proposed role of the Fund Administrator

To enable rapid deployment in the interim phase we propose contracting with Key Fund to provide administration and operational support focused on the technical and assurance-critical elements of fund delivery. This support would include:

- managing application processes, including initial screening and eligibility checks for interim mechanisms
- undertaking assessment and proportionate due diligence, including financial and organisational checks;
- supporting Our Future to service decision-making panels, such as advice on conflicts of interest and compliance;
- administering funding agreements, payments and financial administration with appropriate audit trails;
- providing input to Our Future on monitoring, reporting and data to support North East Lincolnshire Council in its role as accountable body and to meet MHCLG requirements;
- supporting in exploring co-funding from other sources as well as working to make available additional money via their own funding mechanisms where necessary

In addition to these delivery activities, Key Fund would provide input to a set of establishment and transition and activities to support Our Future in developing designs for the Full Fund. To this end the Key Fund proposal allows for **ongoing programme support equivalent to approximately half a day per week**, focused on supporting the transition to a fuller model with **greater local ownership and governance** over time.

### Workstream 3: Design a citizen-led, Grimsby Fund – driving sustainable change

The purposes of this workstream are to:

- Build on the recommendations of the Funding and Governance Taskforce, and the learnings from the interim phase to develop a full, detailed design of a Grimsby Fund
- Ensure this design is consistent with the mandate from the people of Grimsby, aligned with the requirements of Pride in Place funding, and will leave a lasting legacy for Grimsby

- Lay out a robust approach to setting up a new legal entity that is a legacy institution, supports good stewardship of money, builds local institutional capacity and delivers on the brief for citizen-led change.

By the end of this programme of work, North East Lincolnshire Council and the Greater Grimsby Board will have detailed proposals and plans which will allow them to oversee the creation and operationalisation of a new legal entity that can be trusted to deliver on the local mandate and national requirements, while bringing decision making back to the town.

**Activities include:**

- Agree and deliver on a comprehensive work plan for this workstream, including stakeholder engagement and governance reporting that works with the key stakeholder bodies relevant to this work (Grimsby Together sub group, NELC, the Greater Grimsby Board, and MHCLG)
- **Capture, analyse and apply learning from the interim phase** (Workstream 2), including learning on participation, pace, risk, assurance, decision-making and operational delivery, to inform the design of the full Grimsby Fund's governance, participation model, funding offers and operating arrangements.
- Consult with experts and with national and international best practice as part of the design of an effective and robust community-led fund, building a network of good practice that can be sustained as well as ensuring that lessons are built into a local design that delivers on the mandate from the people of Grimsby for a locally-driven entity
- Bring together and facilitate a national Fund Advisory Group alongside the North East Lincolnshire Fund and Governance Taskforce to inform the development of the Grimsby Fund, giving assurance as well as national and local best practice to support the process
- Design and develop the **proposed legal, governance and operating model** for the full Grimsby Fund, including:
  - o options for legal form and constitutional arrangements
  - o governance and committee structures
  - o participation mechanisms and routes into decision-making
  - o funding offers and decision-making frameworks

Work with North East Lincolnshire Council and MHCLG to **scope and prepare** the contractual, legal and assurance arrangements required for the establishment of the Grimsby Fund, including exploring a possible long term role for third-party fund administration.

## Timeline

### **February 2026 - Milestone: Approve interim approach**

Greater Grimsby Board: Approve the approach to the interim phase and high-level launch plan

#### *Activity to support...*

- Engage with the Grimsby Together collective, Sub-Group and working groups
- Incorporate citizen priorities, themes and principles into the fund design
- Design principles for interim arrangements, including focus areas and participation approaches
- Define scope and responsibilities of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party fund administrator
- Gather initial external learning from peer funds and national practice
- Prepare formal proposal, roles and costs for design and development process

### **Q2 2026 - Milestone: Authorise release of first tranche of money via an initial interim funding mechanism, review proposed additional interim mechanisms and key elements of design for full Grimsby Fund**

Greater Grimsby Board: Approve ongoing interim approach and endorse the emerging design of the Fund and confirm direction of travel.

#### *Activity to support...*

- Deliver initial interim funding activity
- Work with citizens to develop additional mechanisms to broaden funding activity in interim phase
- Capture initial indicators of impact and learning on participation, pace, risk and assurance from interim arrangements
- Continued engagement with citizens, working groups and partners (Workstream 1)
- Development of options for:
  - legal form and governance of the full Grimsby Fund
  - decision-making structures and participation
  - operating model and relationship with any external providers
- Early design of the Grimsby Fund's funding offers

**Q3 2026 – Milestone: Add interim mechanisms & establish structure of full Grimsby Fund**

Greater Grimsby Board: Authorise disbursement via additional interim mechanisms & agree structure for establishment of full Fund entity

*Activity to support...*

- Finalise additional interim mechanisms to disburse funds for wider range of objectives
- Finalise and incorporation of the legal entity
- Agree governance structures, Board role and committee arrangements
- Recruit and appoint the Chair and Board
- Agree the full Grimsby Fund operating model, including which functions are outsourced
- Refinement of funding offers and decision-making routes based on learning

**Q4 2026 – Milestone: Approve Grimsby Fund launch**

Greater Grimsby Board: Approve plan for launch of the full Grimsby Fund

*Activity to support...*

- Set up transition of interim mechanisms into full Grimsby Fund structure and systems
- First Board and committee meetings and governance operating in practice
- Prepare and test final Fund processes
- Develop the full range of funding offers
- Plan for agreed processes moving in-house, and the role of any external providers
- Ongoing communications, engagement and applicant support
- Continue learning and adaptation of processes

**Budget**

The overall cost of Our Future’s delivery of the work is £199k<sup>1</sup> - Our Future will bring 50% of this funding recognising the wider programme of work beyond Pride in Place that is aligned with the overall objective of this work and Our Future’s mission.

Therefore, the contribution requested from the Pride in Place budget for this work is £99,961 +VAT. The allocation of spend to each of the project workstreams is laid out below:

<b>Workstream 1: Sustain and grow the collective of people and organisations working in the common good</b>	<b>61,495</b>
<b>Workstream 2: Trial key elements of the fund with the first year Pride in Place funds</b>	<b>69,067</b>
<b>Workstream 3: Design a citizen-led, Grimsby Fund</b>	<b>69,360</b>
	<b>199,923</b>

<sup>1</sup> This cost does not include the costs of recruiting or any legal costs associated with establishing a new entity and any charitable registration or other regulatory approvals required.

Alongside the work outlined in this proposal Our Future will be supporting the wider citizen-led change across the town through a range of complementary initiatives such as:

- An offsite for leaders from every sector across the town (held in January)
- Regular lunches to bring together people in the town who want to be part of the positive change
- Supporting the Our Future Home Wins network - people who love North East Lincolnshire, have left and want to contribute to the town
- A leadership development programme with the Relationships Project
- Hosting Open House – a two-day celebration of the change underway in the town bringing together local and national partners to support the action and learn from the approach (March)
- Launching the Prospectus – an event to launch the citizen-owned prospectus for the town
- Bringing together national and local partners behind specific initiatives in the town

Alongside Our Future's cost the cost of the fund administrator, Key Fund, is £57,800, covering both delivery activity and establishment and transition support. This figure is based on a bottom up costing for the volume and complexity of activity anticipated. It is equivalent to around 9–10% of the c£590,000 expected to be distributed during the interim phase and provides assurance that the Fund can be operated safely, compliantly and at pace, provides the opportunity to bring in co-funding and will ensure there is practical learning to inform the development a locally-led Full Fund.

## Appendix: Our Future Team

Our team brings expertise in social impact, finance, governance, and place-based change:

*Emily Bolton, CEO & Co-founder* – A social impact leader experienced in designing and scaling innovative models of change. She has co-founded numerous initiatives that have transformed how stuck social issues are addressed and funding is used - from the first Social Impact Bond in Peterborough prison, a new approach to addressing perpetration of domestic abuse and a new model for tackling Black Mental Health inequalities. These have influenced global practice, transformed policy and mobilised hundreds of millions of pounds. She is also an experienced board member having been a trustee of the Henry Smith Foundation with over £1bn in assets and Matthew Bourne's New Adventures bringing joy, creativity and wonder to communities across the country.

*Trupti Patel, COO* – Former Head of Social Investment at Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, managing a £45m portfolio. Previously at Social Finance and Citigroup, she specialises in finance, investment, and funding collaborations.

*Janette Powell, Operations Director* – A senior leader with 30+ years' experience delivering transformative projects across criminal justice, social care, and inclusion. She has a long standing track record of overseeing the operational delivery of social investment funds to deliver positive social outcomes and set them up for sustainable ongoing delivery.

*Ed Robinson, Fund Design Lead* - previously at BCG and CHAI, with extensive experience in health, finance, strategy and programme management. Recently, with Social Finance, Ed has been helping to set up, run and establish two new entities to deliver community supported health services backed by social investment financing from Macmillan Cancer.

*Angela Francis, Head of Scaling* - previously Head of Innovation at The National Lottery Community Fund. She brings 15+ years' experience in scaling models, programme design, innovation, and systems change, including senior roles at Plan International, Elrha, and the UN World Food Programme.

*Killian Troy-O'Donovan, Data & Insights Manager* – Formerly at Social Finance, supporting local and central government, social investors, and community groups. Brings expertise in data, evaluation, and partnership-building.

*Crystal Ness, Operational & Governance Lead, Grimsby* - Crystal is local to North East Lincolnshire, and has extensive experience in community leadership, engagement and finding meaningful ways for people to connect and work together – including previously at the University of Hull.

*Jose Davies (nee Stewart), Communication consultant*, A sales, marketing and communication consultant with direct experience supporting the place-based change in Grimsby as former Ambassador for the 2025 Group.

*Florence Miller, Advisor* – Former Director of the Environmental Funders Network, where she helped grow environmental philanthropy nearly six times over in the UK. Previously led a £20m U.S. conservation grant-making programme.

### Our Board

Our engaged board brings expertise in local government, investment, and economic development:

*Derrick Anderson* – Former Local Authority Chief Executive with 30+ years' experience in public services and community partnerships.

*James Perry* – Impact investment leader, co-founder of B Lab UK and Project Snowball, with expertise in responsible business and investment.

*Lucia Keijer-Palau* – Expert in green industries and investment, with a deep network in the green economy.

*Dr. Majdi Osman* – Cambridge scientist focused on public health and youth wellbeing, from Grimsby and engaged in initiatives supporting change in the town.



## **Greater Grimsby Board**

**27<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

## **UK Town of Culture 2028**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This report sets out the ambition to submit an Expression of Interest to the UK Town of Culture 2028 competition.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Grimsby submits an Expression of Interest to the UK Town of Culture 2028 competition and a subgroup of the Greater Grimsby Board is established, including co-opted members with creative expertise, to help develop an ambitious and high-quality application

### **3.0 Background to UK Town of Culture**

Liverpool hosted the European Capital of Culture in 2008. This was a Europe-wide competition to highlight one city based on its cultural offer. This proved such a huge success for the city and the reason that a UK-specific City of Culture initiative was launched in 2013 to give more cities in the UK a chance to hold a title that draws attention to their cultural offering and brings economic and cultural benefits into the winning city. Every four years, a new UK City of Culture is chosen, with the most recent being Bradford in 2025.

Further expanding this model, the first UK Town of Culture programme was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025 by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) . The winning town will receive £3 million to deliver a cultural programme in 2028 (two runners up will receive £250,000). Three shortlisted towns will receive £60,000 to help deliver their full bids for the competition. The UK Town of Culture competition is targeted at small, medium and large towns, enabling them to tell their unique story and shining a spotlight on the important role that towns play in our national life.

Applications for the competition will be judged on three main criteria:

- Your story - the unique story of the town
- Culture for everyone - how the town will design a cultural programme for all
- Making it happen - how the town will then deliver a successful programme

Source: [New Town of Culture competition to shine a spotlight on the contribution of towns that tell national story - GOV.UK](#)

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 further details were released regarding the application process.

Source: [First ever UK Town of Culture competition to restore pride in communities - GOV.UK](#)

#### 4.0 Why is Grimsby applying?

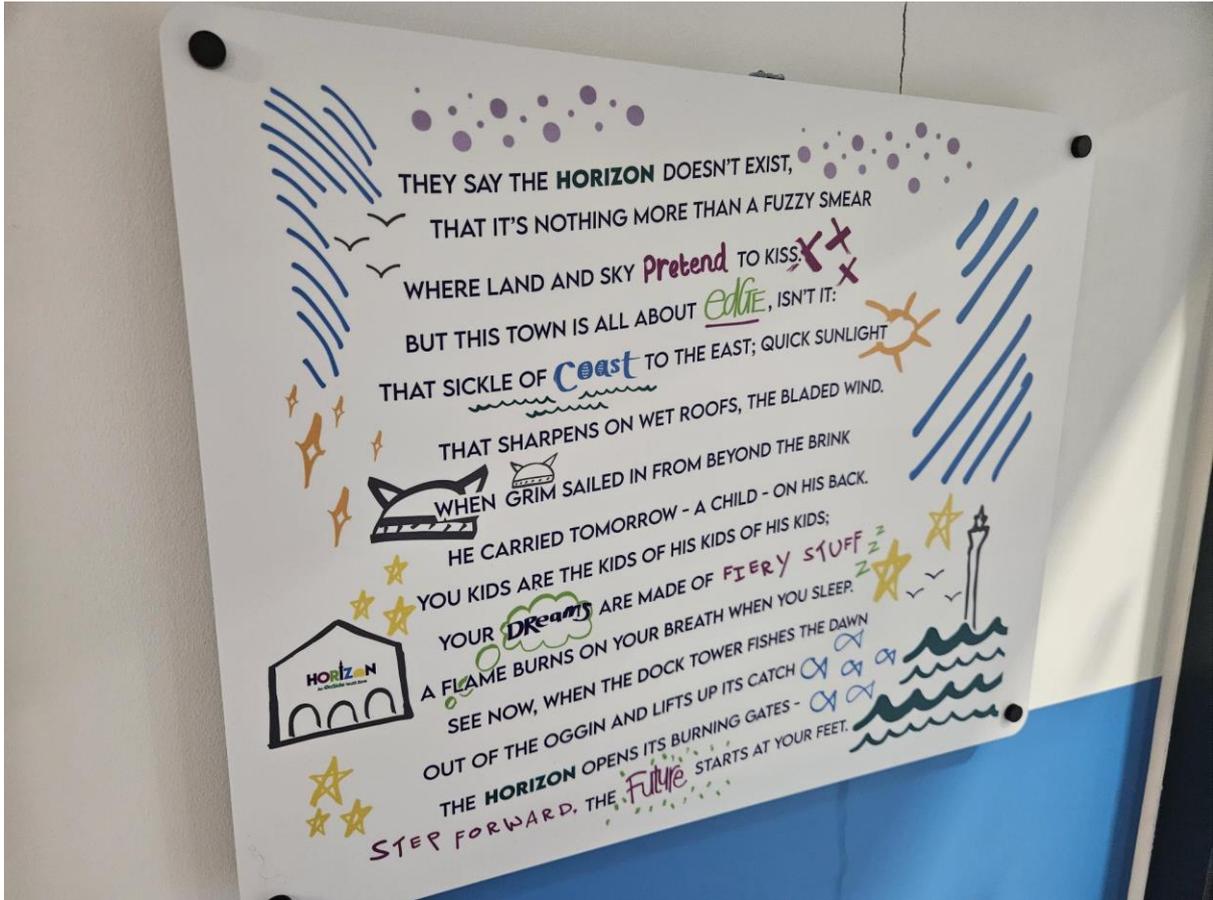
A town of culture approach offers a powerful vehicle for improving the lives of people in Grimsby, particularly social connection, place, environment, aspiration and thriving communities. This will be achieved by:

- Tackling inequalities through participation – by embedding high-quality and ambitious cultural experiences in everyday life it supports numerous strategies to narrow gaps in life experiences, wellbeing and opportunity. Cultural activity is a proven route to improving mental wellbeing, reducing loneliness, increasing physical activity and improved community cohesion.
- Strengthening pride in place – improving the physical and social environment through cultural activity aligns directly with ambitions around healthier places, regeneration and positive perception of the town. Developing opportunities to build social networks, reduce anti-social behaviour and create positive, inclusive and community led activities. Leading to supported thriving connected communities.
- Empowering children and young people – A cultural programme linked to locally used community venues / projects can improve outcomes, voice and ambition of children and young people.

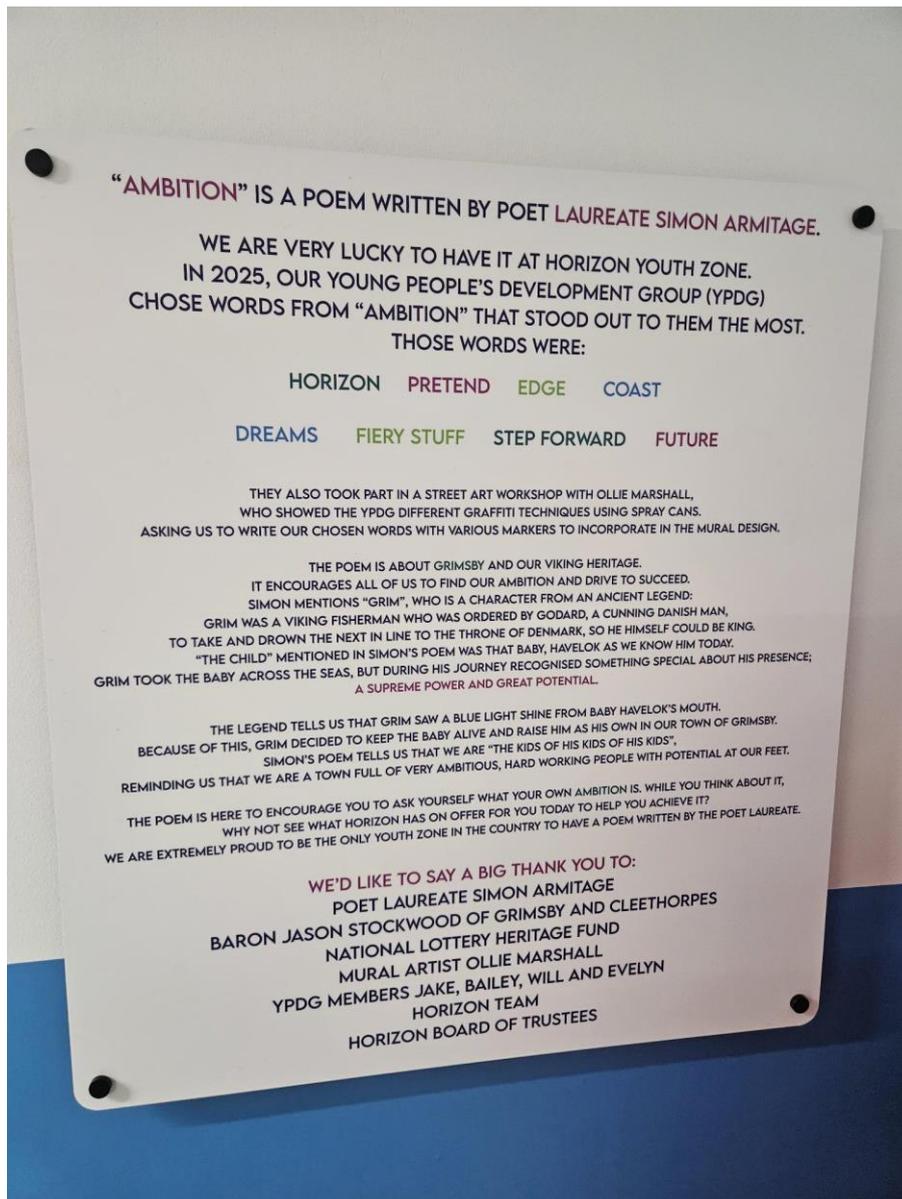
The ambition to apply for UK Town of Culture is supported by Cllr Philip Jackson, Leader of NELC; Melanie Onn, MP for Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes; and David Ross, chair of the Greater Grimsby Board.

#### 5.0 Ambition

Commissioned to celebrate the opening of the Horizon Onside Youth Zone '*Ambition*' by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage provides a vision for young people in Grimsby and highlights some of the potential themes for a Town of Culture programme. This timely work places young people, working in collaboration with an internationally recognised creative, at the forefront of aspirational creative thinking in Grimsby. This ambitious approach can be expanded upon in UK Town of Culture, with Horizon Onside Youth Zone being a key partner to deliver our shared goals.



Ambition by Simon Armitage.



Ambition by Simon Armitage additional information

## 6.0 Building on successes

There is a positive story to tell, which is important for any bid, and we can draw upon some of the following from the Create North East Lincolnshire Programme which since June 2023 has contributed (data up to December 2025):

- Major creative and heritage programming activity such as Our Future Starts Here, Paint the Town Proud, Edible Grimsby, Festival of the Sea, Beach of Dreams, Grim’s Great Time Traveller’s, Sea Like a Mirror, Freedom Festival on Tour and Opera North performance, with leadership from local creative organisations.
- 123 public facing events supported. Audience numbers of 83,627 across all funded project activity.
- 15,333 active participants across all funded project activity.
- 707 volunteers supporting all funded project activity.

- A further 14 murals as a result of The Paint the Town Proud Programme.
- Project grants have contributed to 4,672 hours of employment (equivalent to 631 days).
- 110 successful funding/sponsorship bids to national bodies, leveraging in £9.45m investment.
- Funding support for 135 creative and heritage organisations and practitioners via Project Grants, Development Fund, Creative Match and Heritage Place Hidden Stories.
- Enhanced offer for children and young people included 2 Children and Young People Programmes of heritage-based activity, with total participation attendance currently at 970, 2 Creative Careers Conferences with Franklin College and engagement with children and young people to deliver wraparound LEGO Brick Future workshops and exhibition to accompany Brick History exhibition, all raising aspiration and inspiring creative people to flourish in North East Lincolnshire.
- An increasingly collaborative creative and heritage landscape aided by 15 Creative Networking sessions, 9 Heritage Networking sessions and 3 specialist networks. We have had over 220 conversations with practitioners at our monthly drop-in's which has led to connecting together multiple numbers of individuals and organisations.

## 7.0 Application process

Milestone	Deadline
Expression of Interest Deadline	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026
Shortlisted places announced	Spring 2026
Full application period	Spring 2026 – Autumn 2026
Panel visits	Autumn 2026
Finalists and winner announced	Early 2027
Delivery Period	2028

## 8.0 Development Activities

The development of a successful Expression of Interest has two strands of work:

- 1) Submission of high-quality Expression of Interest (see above)
- 2) Showcasing there is widespread support for Grimsby becoming the Town of Culture through public engagement and activities.

To achieve these goals a project working group has been established with officers across NELC including representatives from public health, children's services and regeneration.

It is anticipated that a public campaign will commence in early March to enable everyone to 'Back the Bid' to highlight the extensive excitement and buzz about Grimsby's ambition to be the first UK Town of Culture. Key engagement opportunities include:

- 2025 Group event on 3<sup>rd</sup> March
- Our Future events on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> March
- Great Grimsby Day on 11<sup>th</sup> March
- Love Grimsby event on 21<sup>st</sup> March
- Industrial Connections on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Attendees at these events will be encouraged to 'Back the Bid' on social media through photographs and videos supported by marketing materials. In addition to these gatherings, everyone in Grimsby will be encouraged to 'back the bid' through widespread engagement with schools, businesses, the voluntary & community sector, artists and creative & heritage organisations.

To oversee the development of a high-quality expression of interest, it is recommended that a working group is established as a sub-group of the Greater Grimsby Board. It is suggested this includes representatives of the board and other co-opted members to bring a range of expertise together.

## **10.0 Potential Impact**

A successful Town of Culture bid would likely lead to the following, linked to the 'stronger economy and stronger communities' ethos of the North East Lincolnshire Council Plan:

- Unprecedented national acclaim and coverage.
- Greater chance of securing further investment into arts, culture and heritage
- Build the foundation for a cultural centre/art gallery showing locally relevant and nationally significant work.
- A platform to develop new national and international partnerships
- Further opportunities for our creative and heritage sectors, developing their skills as well as other businesses buying into the title.
- Complement the breadth of capital regeneration taking place across our towns, including preservation of our heritage.
- A significant boost the reputation of North East Lincolnshire and the Council, as an engaging and effective place.
- Enhanced health and wellbeing of North East Lincolnshire residents and sense of pride in place, by telling our story.
- Increased visitor numbers, town centre footfall and trade, further developing town centre vibrancy.