



Report of Town Clerk

North of Tyne Combined Authority's Cultural and Creative Zones Project

Access Public

Background

1. The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NoTCA) has [launched a prospectus for Culture and Creative Zones](#). Each Local Authority within the Combined Authority area will be expected to develop and co-produce a designated Zone (that is to say, an area within its boundaries) which seeks to deliver services to support the growth of the cultural and creative industries in the North of Tyne.
2. Taking inspiration from other UK and international cities 'Culture and Creative Zones' will seek to bring together the right mix of advice, guidance and expertise to work alongside our region's creative and cultural businesses and organisations. Each Zone will be expected to be developed to reflect the challenges and opportunities of its locality – with Local Authorities and the sector working together to co-produce action plans for 5-year pilot projects.
3. Each Zone is eligible for up-to £500,000 in the first year with action plans setting out the evidence base and rationale for additional investment. The time-line suggests these plans will be reviewed together with the NoTCA in early 2022.
4. The NoTCA announcement has been supported by County Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of Northumberland County Council (NCC), whose role within the Combined Authority includes responsibility for Culture, Creative and Rural matters.
5. The announcement lays emphasis on co-production, led by Local Authority's and supported by NoTCA, to develop the priority areas for investment which will support the sector to recover from the pandemic and emerge more resilient.

Issues

6. The emphasis on co-production appears to highlight a desire on the part of NoTCA to receive proposals from communities that lay stress on engagement and the involvement of all the community.
7. We recognise co-production, in its widest sense, as meaning that the process should be *'plac[e] public and residential communities on an equal footing with artists, city authorities and planners, [so that] cultural placemaking strengthens connections between people, place and community.'* (Quote from Dr Cara Courage, Head of Tate Exchange, in *engage 32: Citizenship and Belonging*, 2013, Karen Raney (ed.). London).
8. Berwick is well placed both geographically, to access cultural communities regionally and nationally, and culturally, in terms of its existing portfolio of nationally and

regionally recognised events, facilities and cultural organisations, and its tradition of allowing arts to develop from below, such as our support for emergent events, like the Music Series, as well as established successes.

9. While the arts, and artistic practice, should be the focus of any cultural zone, it's important to recognise, as Cara Courage and Anita McKeown do, that creative placemaking, of which the cultural zone may be an example, is also a physical activity; to quote McKeown "*the majority of creative placemaking projects were artists' live-work spaces, cultural quarters, landmark arts centres or monumental public artworks.*"
10. Bearing in mind the remarks quoted in paragraphs 7 & 9 above we would argue as officers that the Town Council should be engaged with this project both as an organization with considerable experience of working across the cultural sector in Berwick, and as the most local form of democracy and therefore capable of bridging the divide between cultural organisations and the community.
11. We would also argue that the proposed cultural zones are congruent with officers repeatedly expressed view that Berwick needs to move beyond being a stage for cultural performance, and to become a hub of cultural production and education.
12. We would also suggest, as officers, that any attempt to establish a cultural zone in Berwick should not overlook the point made in (Background) paragraph 2, that a cultural zone will need to demonstrate its ability to provide professional and technical support to cultural activities, and that this might provide an opportunity to grow Berwick's already active professional services sector in areas such as law, finance and accounting and the like.

Recommendations

1. That the Town Council expresses its support for any bids to locate a cultural zone, as envisaged by the prospectus, in Berwick, and
2. That officers be instructed to engage relevant parties to explore this opportunity.

Author	GD	Town Clerk sign off (if required)	GD
Checked by	SC	Finance Officer sign off (if required)	N/A