



MEANWHILE USE

West Yorkshire

Creative Space
Management

West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

EAST ST ARTS

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Executive Summary

This report and an associated programme of work has been commissioned by West Yorkshire Combined Authority, funded through the One Public Estate (OPE) programme. The purpose is to review and apply the recommendations of the previous OPE funded 'Public Assets, Temporary Use' (2020) project from the perspective of economic, social and cultural recovery post-COVID-19. It also aims to encourage local authorities' meanwhile use of vacant buildings to support business, culture and regeneration. Alongside this report, the project has involved creating a promotional website to act as a focus for meanwhile projects across West Yorkshire and a resource pack to assist local authorities when working with partners on delivering relevant projects.

Following our work with the districts over the course of 2021, it has become clear that the need to strategically develop meanwhile uses has occurred because empty buildings, shops and offices are symptomatic of social and economic change. We have explored some of the underlying reasons for those changes both in this report and its predecessor.

Simply addressing these symptoms with short-term projects, whilst helpful, has a number of disadvantages. In fact, if you look carefully at the long-term initiatives being taken in many of the town centres (take Halifax, Wakefield and Huddersfield for example) all of these local authorities have invested in or are actively developing cultural facilities which will deliver highly engaged programmes of events to attract multiple audiences. Culture (in its broadest sense) is becoming a fundamental function for how people experience and get value from their urban centres.

Examples elsewhere in the UK that are explored in this report demonstrate how other Combined Authorities are seeking to address similar initiatives at regional level. Indeed in West Yorkshire there are highly relevant examples of initiatives that have operated across multiple districts and whilst these were culturally focused, utilising resources from Arts Council and European Regional Development Funds, it would seem pragmatic to consider regionally-focused activity in the context of the Combined Authority, both as a funding conduit and a way of increasing the combined capacity of the districts to step up the scope and level of delivery.

The following are therefore alternative approaches that West Yorkshire Combined Authority should evaluate, not simply to address the proliferation of empty spaces in our town centres but to undertake actions and initiatives that address the causes of these problems. It is clearly feasible to try to aggregate solutions for temporary use of public sector buildings as well as private sector owned retail units, offices or other sites, but the suggestions we have made go considerably beyond this. The heart of the challenge lies in the importance of creating more sustainable and resilient places and this will not be achieved through a temporary fix or a short-term solution.

The potential actions that we propose as next steps resulting from this work are:

- Develop a regionwide initiative for Creative Action Zones

- Explore Creative Land Trusts as a regional delivery vehicle
- Develop a regionwide cultural streets programme
- Coordinate and promote cultural urban destinations
- Deliver regionwide creative industries acceleration

Each one of these can include workstreams dedicated to reducing under-utilised spaces and assets and to animating and attracting new footfall to areas where the over-supply of retail has resulted in dead or sterilised locations. The intention is to deploy meanwhile and interim use as a tool for long term change and for this reason the above proposals seek to address some of the economic and social issues underlying the structural change affecting our town centres.

Develop a regionwide Creative Action Zone initiative

Our work across the districts reveals a very high level of adoption of culture as a tool for town centre re-animation. Therefore, it is logical to seek to consolidate and build on this and, combined with a clear focus on tech, digital and creative industries, develop initiatives that are part of a regionwide strategy and will act as a stimulus to coordinate additional interventions across the subregion. This approach will:

- Stimulate and support creative industries across West Yorkshire
- Generate destination focused cultural programmes and events
- Ensure that high streets (large and small) play a centre-stage role in programming and events with local authorities able to define their own priorities and local themes
- Specifically address under-performing units and buildings
- Deliver a three-year programme that enables medium term planning and scope to generate sustainability

The project would require a combination of capital and one-off revenue funding for the three-year project from multiple sources and has potential (by being at regional scale) to attract considerable additional private sector investment and sponsorship.

Explore Creative Land Trusts as a regional delivery model

A Creative Land Trust operating either at West Yorkshire regional level or for designated partners would specifically help locations where the objective is to transform larger vacant buildings (such as former department stores or town halls) into locations where there is market failure. This form of intervention by a non-profit distributing asset owner, working to achieve regeneration, social and cultural impacts, can also overcome local capacity issues (not just of local authorities but other potential stakeholders) to deliver new functions that support regeneration objectives.

A Creative Land Trust has the potential to operate across a wide remit, addressing over-performing locations (such as locations where property prices and the demand for residential development is impacting on opportunities for stimulating start-up businesses) as well as

(more commonly across West Yorkshire) locations where there is market failure and buildings and sites are sterilised, blighting further investment and contributing to a cycle of neglect and under-performance.

The Creative Land Trust model would require capital funding to enable it to acquire, invest in and manage assets to achieve clearly defined economic and cultural objectives. By being regional, it is more likely to be able to achieve economies of scale that will ensure long-term sustainability, reflect the strong regional connections between urban centres and provide a collaborative resource base that will have strong marketing and communication leverage. It will also have potential to leverage future funding and to scale up its operation to ensure that its regeneration objectives can be sustained.

Develop a regionwide ‘cultural streets programme’

The meanwhile use project has been concerned with addressing over-supply of retail and the restructuring of many of the region’s high streets, a process accelerated by the global pandemic. Local authorities such as Kirklees, working closely with University of Huddersfield, have successfully initiated activity to provide artists’ studio and gallery spaces (Temporary Contemporary) and, during 2021, Bradford has initiated two new projects that will focus on animating parts of their city centre with curated and participatory cultural projects.

Across all the local authorities that have participated in the meanwhile use project, there is recognition that there is significant scope to attract new users, participants and ‘audiences’ as part of a strategy to re-energise locations that are experiencing severe market failure with empty shops and less active business locations. In some areas it may not be possible to attract occupiers for empty premises even for temporary periods but, nevertheless, the shopfronts can provide a backdrop for public art or for temporary hubs for regular weekend programming and interventions. This demonstrates that meanwhile use is not necessarily the only way to reactivate high street locations. There needs to be more systematic programming and activity of public spaces as part of a cohesive plan to attract participants and end users.

Coordinating this at regional level would significantly improve the capacity of local authorities to deliver specific initiatives harnessing local talent and addressing specific challenges in their local centres. What will work in Dewsbury may not be appropriate for Hebden Bridge and the purpose of a multi-annual programme should both facilitate delivery and create opportunities for cross-over marketing that will add to the scale and impact of what can be delivered.

Requiring a combination of capital and revenue funding, a one / two-year programme of cultural animation coordinated across the region which specifically focuses on high streets, on empty premises and on low-footfall, could increase take-up of empty premises, attract new audiences, drive-up footfall and lever new marketing and communications opportunities. The initiative also has the potential to be delivered as a specific theme or work package within a wider regional initiative (such as a Creative Action Zones initiative) or as a stand-alone project

Coordinate and promote cultural urban destinations

It has become evident that many of the districts have invested significant resources in establishing their own cultural identity reflecting the towns and communities to whom they provide services. However, it is much harder for them to coordinate and market the mix of cultural, leisure and retail infrastructure that differentiate or complement these locations. As local authorities invest in initiatives to attract customers back to urban centres, these are rarely coordinated at regional level and given the strong transport links which exist between many of them, we see potential to invest in initiatives that celebrate the differentiating qualities of urban destinations across the area. The focus on high street regeneration, on attracting more independents to smaller shop units and on increasing support for local service providers means that the changing profile of these locations requires communication in a different way. They are no longer 'clone towns' with the same shops in each high street or urban centre. They are highly differentiated locations with specialist retailers, unique cultural organisations and multiple heritage and leisure alternatives for visitors.

Therefore, a project that celebrates the differences and unique qualities of West Yorkshire's towns and destinations is a way of converting the energy and creative opportunities provided by multiple meanwhile initiatives into a communicable network of locations for day-visits and destination tourism. We see this principally as a communications platform, a social media and web strategy that generates promotional content to drive visits to local urban centres both to participate and experience the temporary projects and initiatives as well as the longer-term transition (new independent retailers and businesses), closely linked to local authority communications plans but providing an extra resource base to drive up awareness and to provide quantifiable benefits across the region.

Deliver regionwide creative industries acceleration

Now an established part of UK policy, the importance of stimulating creative industries remains a key part of our economy, not least because of the strong connections to high value sectors such as computer software, gaming and content production that form a very significant part of the high value growth sectors in our regional and national economy.

As a vital component of the sector, the arts remain a source of creativity, innovation and challenge as well as making an important contribution to mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, an initiative that seeks to work with local authorities to explicitly grow the sector; to provide co-ordinated business support and development advice and to try to bring more activity into our high streets and former retail locations both temporarily and on a long-term basis should be encouraged.

Focusing on existing hubs and working closely with local authorities to support them in addressing gaps in provision or specific market opportunities is potentially a three-to-five-year project to double the size of the sector across West Yorkshire. With particular focus in smaller town centres, rural market towns and under-performing locations such as Wakefield

and Bradford city centres, there is significant potential to attract capital and revenue funds to dramatically grow the number and scale of creative industries businesses across the region.

Implementation

It should be noted that all of the above suggestions are based on case studies emerging out of initiatives in other parts of the UK or from within West Yorkshire where there has been a strong tradition of innovation around regeneration and economic development. We recognise that these ideas go somewhat beyond a simple scaling up of meanwhile and interim use co-ordination and management. They do reflect the 'transition uses' articulated in the 2020 report¹ in that they see meanwhile use as part of a longer-term evolutionary process. All of the authorities that we have engaged with on the project understand this and are concerned that time, effort and resources are not simply targeted at temporary interventions which melt away, leaving the same underlying problems. It is equally an issue for the businesses, organisations and individuals that are inspired to try out their projects and activities in former shops, redundant transport hubs or supermarkets. They want to see long-term outcomes and the possibility of losing access to such spaces undermines their own plans and ambitions.

Such buildings and locations must become a stepping-stone for the ongoing reinvention of how these spaces are used with a new set of functions that will have sustainability and longevity. This requires coordinated action that goes beyond the mechanical reuse of buildings. It must have clear social, cultural and economic direction and in doing so is more likely to achieve the objectives of reinventing these places so that they have meaning and resonance in our increasingly digitally-focused lives.

¹ Public Assets, Temporary Use Creative Space Management / East Street Arts 2020

1 Introduction

1.1 Brief

This report has been commissioned by West Yorkshire Combined Authority, funded through the One Public Estate (OPE) programme. The purpose is to review and apply the recommendations of the 2020 OPE funded 'Public Assets, Temporary Use' project from the perspective of economic, social and cultural recovery post-COVID-19. The project seeks to support local authorities' meanwhile use of vacant buildings to support business, culture and regeneration.

The project was carried out between January and November 2021. The brief was developed in response to consultation with officers from the authorities to identify what practical tools and information would reduce obstacles to supporting more temporary use projects. The project includes three components (i) a public-facing website promoting work in the authorities and across the subregion (ii) a pack of online resources to aid officers in initiating projects (iii) this report, focussed on informing future policy recommendations.

1.2 Team

Creative Space Management and East Street Arts are leading organisations in the operation of themed workspace for the creative & digital industries sector in the north of England, providing business accommodation for, respectively, commercial creative & digital businesses and a wide-ranging community of arts practitioners. Both organisations have been pioneers in stimulating large-scale interim use projects over the last fifteen years and have acted as advisors and consultants to a wide range of public and private sector asset owners.

Creative Space has devised meanwhile use strategies for numerous locations including Royal Docks in London, Porth Teigr in Cardiff and produced the interim use strategy for Fruit Market in Hull in 2009 before working with the local authority to operationalise the first phase of this large-scale project that would later evolve into a permanent use.

East Street Arts is the largest UK operator of meanwhile space for the creative industries outside of London. In West Yorkshire, East Street Arts has operated its meanwhile space for artists programme for ten years, accommodating over 500 artists in over 100 buildings. Locally, the not-for-profit organisation operates meanwhile space in Kirklees, Harrogate, Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield. In total, East Street Arts has supported over 20,000 artists to build sustainable careers, reinvented 500 temporary spaces, created 79 permanent studio spaces for artists, and developed a pop-up Art Hostel at the heart of Leeds' historic Kirkgate, kick-starting regeneration of the oldest street in the city.

1.3 Methodology

Desk-based research was used to produce evidence of successful temporary use and to build a rationale for authorities to look for opportunities to address local priorities. Evidence is gathered from open access academic research and commercially available data. A sub-regional workshop was held in April 2021 to propose and refine the brief for the project. For local perspectives, senior officers working in culture & place were interviewed. We are grateful for the help and support of the numerous officers engaged in supporting development of content for this report and the supporting website and resource materials.

2 Culture & economic development

Since the 1990s, it has been globally recognised that investment in culture, and more specifically the arts, has a quantifiable economic impact. A wide range of methodologies have been explored from multiple perspectives illustrating how the economic impact of investment in culture can be measured. In some cases, these tried to look at the multiplier impacts on associated industries as well as employment, skills and exports – whilst others (such as Richard Florida's work) explored how cities could be classified in league tables reflecting their attractiveness to creative networks and individuals. The underlying idea is that whilst art and culture have their own inherent value and importance within society, there are other tangible benefits that provide a secondary rationale for investing in a wide range of cultural activities and initiatives. Such systems of evaluation have been varied both in quality and level of adoption, but what has become mainstream since this period is that many governments (at national and regional levels) now recognise the multi-layered social and economic benefits of investing in arts and culture.

Over the last twenty years, the UK Government has sought to develop a more consistent methodology and now regularly produces reports quantifying the scale of the sector and its economic value to the UK. The DCMS regularly commissions and publishes research on the economic performance of the sector (extracting data from outdated classification sources such as SIC codes), demonstrating that in 2019 (for example), culture added £34.6 billion to the national economy, contributing twice as much as sport and over double the value of agriculture to the UK economy.²

Consequently, over the last twenty years, Creative Industries have become progressively recognised as a key driver in the UK and many other global economies both for creating high quality and high value jobs but also for their potential to contribute to exports as a key component of the knowledge economy, underpinning many technology-driven sectors from digital publishing, entertainment media, music, games and other forms of content distribution.

² Contribution of arts and culture industry to the UK economy | CEBR ACE June 2020

The relevance of this project, considering the recommendations of the 2020 ‘Public Assets, Temporary Use Report’³, is that as a result of a sudden change in the vitality and dynamism of our urban and cultural infrastructure due to the impact of COVID-19, there needs to be an equally proactive response. A large number of publicly and privately owned assets on our high streets and on the edges of our town and city centres have been profoundly affected by the accelerated post-pandemic transition, and which will have to find new uses not just on a temporary basis but as permanently refreshed functions.

This restructuring of once-familiar locations and sectors is occurring now and is likely to be subject to continuing flux over the foreseeable future. Whilst this is a threat to the previously assumed status quo in terms of our assumptions about the functions of high streets and urban centres as well as our expectations about the role of arts and culture in our places, there is now a new landscape for economic regeneration and cultural development. The pandemic has both accelerated an inevitable transition (from physical to online retail) but also disrupted cultural participation in physical events on a scale that could not have been previously conceived.

2.1 Context post-pandemic

Following a period of stop-start lockdowns and the end of the furlough scheme, there appears to be a cautious sense of optimism in the face of potential increased occurrences of illness albeit with less hospitalisations. High Street tracking data produced by Centre for Cities shows that smaller retail centres such as Huddersfield and Wakefield are outperforming many other areas in the UK (top three for increased spend compared to pre-pandemic levels)⁴, albeit footfall is not performing so well. After a slow start, Leeds and Bradford are also beginning to see significant improvements in their performance but Leeds was historically one of the strongest performing core city centres and Bradford one of the weakest, reflecting that any interventions will need to overcome long-standing under-performance and not simply a post-pandemic quick fix.

But footfall and spend indicators do not necessarily reflect the actual (continuing) impact on our communities and town centres. The business disruption and loss of jobs has affected both large and small enterprises in a way that has not yet fully manifested itself. The Grimesy Report from June 2021 records that there have been 149 major retail failures since 2018 (including Carluccios, Top Shop and Zizzis) affecting 227,000 jobs and 11,500 shops.⁵ During the pandemic, online sales went from 20.2% of total retail sales to 32.8% in March 2021, having peaked at 36.4% in January 2021 at the start of the third national lockdown. With many independent businesses operating on a knife-edge (high levels of borrowing alongside

³ Public Assets, Temporary Use, Creative Space Management / East Street Arts, 2020

⁴ Centre for Cities <https://www.centreforcities.org/data/high-streets-recovery-tracker/>, October 2021

⁵ Against all Odds: We are still open – A Grimsey Review Research Paper. How independent Retail, Hospitality and Services Businesses have adapted to survive the pandemic, July 2021

disrupted trading performance), this represents a continuing challenge to viability which can have severe ramifications for reinvigorating a sense of place in our urban centres.

However, the post-pandemic context is much broader than an analysis of towns and cities and footfall. Buried within the 'recovery' data are new patterns of behaviour for which there is still limited quantitative data, but we (as operators of 25,000 sqm of workspace across major conurbations in the north of England), are seeing patterns of office occupancy at 50% of pre-pandemic levels. Thus whilst take-up in serviced offices for example, has in many cases almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, the actual number of people coming into work in those offices is about half of pre-pandemic levels.

This reduced density of occupation has implications for the amounts of people buying services during the working week particularly in larger towns and cities where previously high ratios of Grade A office provision tended to result in better performing town centres.⁶ In the future, other factors may result in new catalysts for local services and footfall. For example, proximity to meeting and collaboration venues where remote working team members and office-based colleagues can meet up or locations closer to public transport hubs making it easier to integrate remote and physical collaboration, may become more significant, replacing much larger conventional offices.

There have also been other profound changes to leisure and entertainment sectors, for example, cinema and film. Cinema exhibition as an inherently physical experience has been decimated by the impact of the pandemic. Whilst there are some signs of improvement partly as the result of the new James Bond movie (August to October 2021), admissions are still barely more than 35% of pre-pandemic levels⁷, with significant associated impacts on eating out and town and city centre footfall. Combined with the associated acceleration of the consumption of digital media distribution into the home (by the end of 2020, there were 32 million subscribers to the three most popular video streaming services in the UK).⁸ Even niche digital distribution operators such as MUBI (independent films) saw their subscriptions double during 2020 and there has been worldwide growth in computer gaming, with substantially increased sales of online streaming services as well as consoles.⁹

Another important factor has been the wider awareness of mental health and wellbeing. The impact from the pandemic has had a widely reported impact on people's resilience and ability to cope with enforced isolation. A report produced by the Mental Health Foundation, tracks the declining resilience between April and August 2020¹⁰. During this period there was also widespread recognition of the increased importance of public spaces (e.g. green spaces, parks,

⁶ <https://www.centreforcities.org/data/building-blocks-data-by-city/>

⁷ www.cinema.uk.org

⁸ Netflix, Amazon and Disney+ who now have more than double the number of subscribers to cable-TV providers such as Sky and Virgin.

⁹ Cultural and Creative Industries in the face of COVID-19: An economic impact outlook, June 2021, London

¹⁰ Mental Health Foundation in collaboration with University of Cambridge, Swansea University, University of Strathclyde and Queen's University Belfast.

improved air quality, safe spaces for cycling and recreation) that can make an active contribution to improving physical and emotional wellbeing. This too is part of the changing landscape for interventions in urban centres with new markets and clusters of pop-up retailers reflecting plants, planting and green spaces (e.g. Pollen Market in Sheffield¹¹, instigated following an urban greening programme in Castlegate, a failing former retail area on the end of the city centre) which are proving to be both commercially successful and attractive to urban populations in search of new ideas, wellbeing and inspiration.¹²

This challenging context is therefore already beginning to stimulate new patterns of behaviour and adapting the physical infrastructure and resources will be an integral part of the challenge to generating new activity, animating places and attracting new audiences to real-time, physical experiences in our town centres.

2.2 Regional snapshot

Across West Yorkshire there have (over the last twenty years) been multiple initiatives reflecting a highly innovative and culturally ambitious range of projects, festivals and activities that have sought to utilise and re-engage with redundant buildings and infrastructure. It is not a recent phenomenon and nor is it one that reflects any one successful methodology or approach. However, it should be noted that each era has brought its own challenges and realisations. The following are not intended to be catalogues of historic or current activity, merely a snapshot to illustrate how diverse each of the districts is and how meanwhile uses have taken diverse forms sometimes resulting in permanently reframed uses and sometimes simply closed down, recalled and applied in other parts of the region or the country.

Bradford

Bradford, like many fine industrial cities, has had to adapt to new uses for an extraordinary and diverse range of mills, factories and warehouses. From the vast expanse of Salts Mill to Little Germany or Manningham Mills, or the conversion of what was once the city's general post office into a leading arts centre, Kala Sangam, culture has played a key role in the transition of former retail and commercial uses into brand new functions that attract new audiences and engagement. During the current challenging period, the city has launched a 10-year cultural strategy (Culture is our Plan) and has been shortlisted for City of Culture 2025. They have specifically introduced a Creative High Streets Programme, Springback (a post-pandemic recovery initiative with strong cultural elements) and a pop-up animation programme all of which will involve a wide range of meanwhile uses intended to help re-energise and re-animate urban centres across the city. Not restricted to the city centre, locations such as Keighley have also focused on community led arts activity and these temporary uses are now resulting in the

¹¹ <https://www.pollenmarket.co.uk/>

¹² See Improving access to greenspace A new review for 2020 Public Health England 2020

development of permanent assets based on a successful track record of engagement and delivery.¹³

Calderdale

With multiple pioneering projects that have seen temporary and then permanent conversions of locations such as Dean Clough and Piece Hall in Halifax, Calderdale is using creativity to support its Town Centre recovery and is initiating projects that will seek to reenergise its market hall and tackle empty shop units. Calderdale MBC is committed to exploring creative solutions to showcase artists work in new and surprising formats. The authority is working with members of CalderdaleCreates, Halifax Borough Market, Calderdale College and other partners to and develop existing projects further and identify new meanwhile locations in Halifax and across the valley.

Craven

Craven aims to find creative solutions for meanwhile use spaces and actively supports independently-led projects, with recent success in partnership with the Craven Arts Hub in the centre of Skipton. Craven is currently working with partners to find creative uses for a key vacant retail site in Skipton and exploring meanwhile use across the District linked to making Craven Museum fine art collections more visible. The council has previously supported the above visual arts charity to agree successful temporary use of the empty former TSB premises on High Street as a small studio and exhibition space and is keen to encourage new responses to these larger vacant buildings. Current project work is focussed on enabling further affordable studio and workshop space in vacant public sector assets and seeking to stimulate reuse of empty department store premises on the high street.

Kirklees

As one of the original European-funded Creative Towns, Huddersfield has a long-standing track record of innovation and economic diversification, developing pioneering workspace for cultural industries in its town centre and working closely with Huddersfield University across what were initially temporary uses to become permanent initiatives. More recently Kirklees has been building on its work around Temporary Contemporary, an initiative to provide artist studios, retail and exhibition space in an empty market and shopping centre. This highly successful intervention is continuing to deliver activity and, post-pandemic, the authority is exploring how this or equivalent initiatives could be deployed not just in Huddersfield but other locations such as Dewsbury and Batley which have also seen imaginative conversions of former textile mills into new leisure destinations.

¹³ <https://keighleycreative.org/>

Leeds

Over the last decade, Leeds has supported numerous independently-led meanwhile use projects. Notable successes achieved in partnership with East Street Arts and two of these projects have resulted in significant meanwhile interventions transitioning to become permanent long-term businesses based in city centre fringe areas (see Appendix B). In the wake of recent changes to the way people are using space and accessing retail, Leeds is now working with partners to address and activate vacant retail units across the city centre. As the city prepares the way for Leeds 2023, it is also exploring how meanwhile activity can help to seed new projects that will play a key role in this landmark year of culture.

Wakefield

Wakefield has established a vibrant creative community via its Creative Wakefield network and has seen in recent years increasingly inventive initiatives occur in vacant shops, the former market hall and in historic warehouses and factories adjacent on the waterfront of the River Calder where pop up events, shows and markets have complemented the award-winning Hepworth Gallery. With a world class Sculpture Park, created experimentally when Bretton Hall was home to an education college, the district is now the cornerstone of Yorkshire's Sculpture Triangle and with exceptional transport links to Leeds and across the region, the city is actively exploring how it can transition from market town to be both a cultural and creative industries destination.

2.3 Strengths & weaknesses

The following table reflects our analysis of some of the strengths and weaknesses across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area. Following the online meeting with arts and cultural officers and subsequent follow-up conversations as well as work arising from the previous project workshop in 2020, it was clearly demonstrated that there were significant areas of expertise and good practice across the region.

All of the districts have developed Recovery Plans most of which feature issues relating to town centre re-activation and how to handle the patchwork of empty retail properties and reduced footfall, although the degree to which cultural regeneration is identified as a key resource does vary considerably.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Post-industrial restructuring meant that many of the districts have a rich heritage of innovative, temporary and transitional uses from one era to another. There is much to be learnt from this in re-looking at empty and under-utilised locations and how they can be re-energised.	The resources and capacity to deliver the changes that have occurred in the last 40 years have taken towns and districts in West Yorkshire much longer than in the south of UK (for example). The importance of levelling up reinvestment is to ensure that such a lag on reinvestment does not happen again.

<p>The districts have identified many unique local characteristics (e.g. contemporary visual arts in Kirklees, or destination cultural events in Leeds). Aligned with local cultural strengths in textiles, sculpture, technology, performance (for example), there is potential to build clearly differentiated creative resources as part of meanwhile uses transitioning to long-term re-purposing.</p>	<p>There is a lack of capacity for aggregated collaboration on marketing, strategic collaboration and region-wide audience development initiatives. The districts are operating at significantly lower resources than before as a result of continuing reductions of local authority budgets. This means that districts are much less able to resource and support new initiatives as they might have been at the end of the twentieth century.</p>
<p>The liveable scale of the urban centres (and close proximity of residential communities) across the region should provide sustainable opportunities for diversification of functions in formally retail only locations and many local authorities have identified potential projects to take advantage of the potential for more mixed uses including housing, leisure and more specialised, service-orientated retail.</p>	<p>This has been an exceptionally rapid period of change and the speed of adaption is extremely difficult to accommodate. Whilst additional, competitive funding is available, it requires time and effort to bring partnerships together and to develop effective proposals, in itself a resource intensive and challenging process that is (sometimes) wastefully duplicated across all the districts.</p>
<p>The very diverse range of arts and cultural organisations across the region and a rich supply chain of associated creative organisations and promoters means that there is a highly capable talent network which, subject to resources, can play a key role in assisting local authorities to support transformative uses.</p>	<p>A key challenge (articulated in multiple reports) is that there now needs to be less focus on new buildings and more on re-using and re-purposing existing infrastructure. The need to work towards net zero carbon targets is a key obligation and needs to be built into all initiatives to reanimate our urban centres, balancing economic regeneration with minimising environmental impact.</p>

2.4 Role of culture and creativity in regeneration

In the context of this report, it is evident that on-line retail will continue to grow and is highly unlikely to revert to physical other than boutique, specialist, leisure and experiential retail. It is widely predicted¹⁴ that independents will play an increasingly important role and that those businesses actively participating in the circular (local) economy are more likely to be sustainable in these locations. Combined with more flexible and less dense use of workspaces in town centres, this means that the context for activating our urban centres is radically different from what it was even five years ago.

There is much greater emphasis now being placed on experiential consumerism, where experience, skills and new ideas are instrumental in enriching our feelings rather than the

¹⁴ Local Data Company, 2021 <https://www.localdatacompany.com/blog/press-release-independent-retailers-more-resilient-than-national-chains>

objects that we purchase. As illustrated in 'Stuffocation: Living More with Less' which charts a move from possessions to experiences. "The big change to what I call experientialism is more about finding happiness and status in experiences instead."¹⁵ It is this trend that reinforces the importance of culture as a driver for change in which passive consumerism is no longer a model for our urban centres and where a more layered and complex set of interactions and experiences need to be discovered.

What appears to be required is a revitalised approach to urban locations which engages people, encourages them to participate, attracts multiple audiences at different times of day and during the week and which in many ways needs to be curated more like a cultural venue than a retail-led metropolitan destination where culture is merely one segment of a multi-faceted experience.

For the last fifteen years, many major shopping centres in the UK have increasingly relied on cultural events (and enhanced services) to attract new or repeat footfall into their facilities. Locations such as Westfield (East and West London), Meadowhall, Bluewater, Trinity Leeds, have all proactively promoted a diverse range of events, activities and participatory opportunities to more directly engage with shoppers and to provide them with experiences and a reason to revisit physical stores which otherwise would seem increasingly irrelevant in the face of home delivery and free returns.

With sophisticated programming these centres have used seasonality as a key engagement tool, wrapping cultural and engagement programmes around key retail seasons (Easter, back to school, Halloween, Christmas). What has been happening is that culture has already become a tool for these most commercial of operations and now that they themselves are threatened by further industrial change, it is logical that culture and creativity should play a much more assertive role in our town and city centres.

Our view is that in West Yorkshire there is a profound and wide-ranging recognition of this change. There are multiple examples where a new level of innovation is being applied not purely for the short-term but in recognition that long term creative investment will ultimately have the greatest impact on the necessary transformation and revitalisation of our urban centres ¹⁶.

From a policy perspective we now need to look at our urban centres as cultural and creative hubs because it is from these activities that new ideas, new content and new opportunities will emerge. It is from this approach that a re-invigorated community of independent businesses and service providers will be able to build new networks of customers, buying from them on-line and visiting their stores. Combined with actively curated events and activities and much greater recognition that our communities want independents, differentiated retailers and

¹⁵ Stuffocation: Living More with Less, Wallman, Penguin 2015

¹⁶ See £210 million 'cultural heart' investment for Huddersfield <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/huddersfield-will-doomed-radical-cultural-22187458>

service providers to bring vitality and energy to their community centres, there is greater potential than ever for this transformation to be positive.

3 Combining cultural and economic development

3.1 Overview

This section profiles projects and initiatives from across the UK that relate to stimulating both cultural and economic development in West Yorkshire. All of them have some connection to reenergising underused or vacant space.

As this section demonstrates, elsewhere in the UK we are seeing the emergence of coordinated initiatives that support local councils to deliver local economic development from a distinctive local creative and cultural identity.

Over the last four years, the development of Creative Enterprise Zones in London has stimulated and harnessed ambitious plans and activity within individual London boroughs. These local creative sector development plans feature property interventions but go far beyond the built environment, providing a combined set of actions relating to people, place and economy. In late 2021, we see this approach being adopted by North Tyneside Combined Authority. Similarly, the development of a Creative Land Trust in London in 2019 is now producing longer-term approaches to the protection of affordable workspace for the creative sector and this too is being extended to other UK locations with Margate's future investment plan incorporating formation of a similar new vehicle. These examples demonstrate an array of initiatives and resources that are being deployed.

For West Yorkshire, these examples may uncover possibilities for more ambitious initiatives than previously envisaged but which address some of the underlying economic and social issues.

3.2 Creative Enterprise Zones

In 2017, Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs) were developed as part of London's Cultural Plan, with grants offered to London boroughs to 'provide the conditions to help artists and creative businesses to put down roots in the areas they have helped regenerate'. 25 London boroughs applied for the full funding package and six were selected in 2018. The six winning CEZs span the disciplines and areas commonly grouped together as the Cultural and Creative Industries, each focussing on different specialisms e.g. fashion, advertising or the visual arts. The means by which these zones were 'mapped' is very varied (some are circles, some are irregular shapes or are focussed on a high street).

“They are unique in bringing together approaches to creating new affordable workspace, supporting culture at risk, offering business development and testing new approaches to policy, as well as leading the way in engaging communities in the zones’ work.”¹⁷

At the heart of CEZ’s is the idea of clustering or bringing together those with similar interests in an area to benefit from improved links to supply chains, customers or consumers, peer support and a shared knowledge base. Locating them in a geographical area can give the CEZ a sense of identity and helps engage those who already live and work in the locality with a renewed sense of purpose.

In practice, CEZ’s have stimulated waves of activity beyond the scope of what was originally envisaged. The requirement to develop distinctive local proposals helped to create an expression of the creative identities for individual boroughs. This developed into a focus for differentiated area branding and, over time, the attraction of further like-minded businesses. It also raised the profile of niche creative workspace within the individual borough councils, influencing briefs for mixed use development in local areas and creating a new pipeline of supply of creative-themed workspace.

A second call for new CEZ applications in London was made by the Mayor in July 2021 with six new zones expected to be announced in December 2021, to be created over the next two years.¹⁸

Below are some examples of projects across the boroughs that demonstrate the scope of activity that has spun out of CEZ activity in London.

Waltham Forest

The borough commissioned a feasibility study to form a CEZ based on the theme of growing the maker economy on Blackhorse Lane in 2017. This work established a mini-directory of the maker businesses in the area, effectively branding the borough as maker-friendly, and produced a vision that became adopted by the local authority at senior level and embedded within the planning, business support and housing agendas¹⁹. Flowing out of this work, Waltham Forest was named London’s (first) Borough of Culture 2019, securing funds in advance of this to press forward a range of projects to celebrate creativity, grow the maker sector, brand the area through public art, expand the provision of affordable workspace and generate meanwhile use opportunities.



¹⁷ Mayor of London, Enterprise Zones Prospectus 2021, p.4

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/creative_enterprise_zones_prospectus_final_2021.pdf,

¹⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-to-invest-nearly-3m-in-creative-enterprise>

¹⁹ <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/blackhorse-lane-masterplan>

Hackney Wick & Fish Island

The Community Development Trust (CDT) is operating as a community-led social enterprise with a purpose to secure ownership of, or long-term leases on, building assets in perpetuity²⁰. The aim is to create active and valued cultural and community spaces as part of a diverse and sustainable economy. It aims to protect and manage spaces on behalf of the community to ensure that they are inclusive of, and relevant to, the neighbourhood. In May 2021 the CDT commissioned mapping of the major buildings of the area as the first stage to understanding which spaces to target for cultural and community uses.



Lambeth

International House, Brixton²¹ operates under a 'BuyGiveWork' structure; for every desk sold on commercial terms, one is given away rent free to support charities and social purpose organisations. The 70,000 sf building is split into five 'Buy Floors' and five 'Give Floors'. The Buy Floors house a range of occupiers from individual freelancers to a company with 100 employees. The Give Floors accommodate users at risk of displacement due to changing market conditions.



3.3 Culture & Creative Zones

In July 2021 North of Tyne Combined Authority instigated Culture and Creative Zones (CCZ) across the subregion, building on the positive momentum created by the North of Tyne Culture and Creative Investment Programme. The first phase of the project is seeking a proposal from each authority of an area to form a CCZ. Successful projects are to be supported with an initial investment of £500,000 to work up a business case and pilot activity. The projects must reflect collective priorities, ambitions and challenges specific to their localities.

The suggested scope of the CCZ's includes creation or adoption of workspace, offering business support to emerging and existing enterprises, creating financial incentives to appeal to sector

²⁰ <https://www.wickcdt.org/>

²¹ <https://www.httpspaceinternational.co.uk/>

audiences, exploring the changing role of places (e.g. high streets), enhancing skills, or creating new opportunities for community engagement. Each proposal must consider:

- Sustainability. Zones must have financial sustainability considered from the beginning, business cases must investigate the on-going revenue requirements for each Zone and develop proposals which seek to deliver financial self-sufficiency within five years of a Zone’s launch. Business cases must provide a clear explanation of how the model will be sustained in future years.
- Additionality. Zones must add value to existing programmes, infrastructure and networks avoiding duplication and ensure that use of public funding is maximised.
- Partnerships. Zones offer an opportunity to consider how strategic partnerships are developed, sustained and grown. Proposals must consider how expertise in finance, HR, export, Intellectual Property and innovation is leveraged to the advantage of cultural and creative industries and whether Zones can act as a regional testbed for new forms of partnership working within the sector.²²

The combined authority, consisting of Northumberland County Council, Newcastle City Council and North Tyneside Council, will have active role in learning from the process of co-development and will support emerging workstreams that resonate beyond any one local authority to ensure that, where appropriate, economies of scale can be delivered throughout the programme.²³ After the initial phase, it is planned for proposals to be supported for up to 5 years, attracting investments from the DCMS Cultural Development Fund among others, and helping them to establish and become self-funding.

The first pilot CCZ was announced as Berwick, Northumberland in October 2021 and has a confirmed award of £500,000. It is anticipated the emerging project in Newcastle upon Tyne will be focussed on unlocking the potential of spaces above current retail centres on a key high street in the city centre, brokering between landlords of vacant property and creative end users to incentivise a mix of workspace and exhibition space.

3.4 Creative Land Trusts

The first Creative Land Trust (CLT) was established in London in 2019 with the ambition of providing artists with permanent and affordable space to work and create without the distraction and upheaval caused by temporary use. Their mission begins with a single, ambitious sentence:

Over five years we will secure 1000 studio spaces that otherwise wouldn’t exist and make them available for studio providers to rent to artists and makers.²⁴

²² P.4 <https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NTCA-Culture-and-Creative-Zone-Prospectus.pdf>

²³ P.7 <https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NTCA-Culture-and-Creative-Zone-Prospectus.pdf>

²⁴ <https://creativelandtrust.org/about-us/>

In 2021 the CLT signed their first property in Hackney Wick on a 999-year lease, starting their portfolio with 33,000 sf at Stone Studios and appointing Cell Studios to manage the space. Their second property is Grade II listed Alice Billings House in Stratford, with a grant of £250,000 from Newham Council to convert the disused building into 30 studio spaces.

Alongside their work in supporting artists and creative networks with space, the CLT have positioned themselves as a gateway to reaching a diverse range of makers and creatives. In 2020 they were appointed to administer the Mayor of London's Creative



Workspace Resilience Fund via Greater London Authority, distributing £1.6m of funding directly to studios and organisations, 80% of which were led by women, people from a BAME background, the LGBTQ+ community or people with disabilities.

The CLT also commission research to support their work, initially around proving the value artistic communities can bring to an area in terms of increased community spirit and real estate value. In 2021 a piece of research was commissioned with King's University. From this they will create a framework by which the financial and non-financial benefits of providing studio space can be measured, with the aim of influencing developers to include creative spaces in their work.

Registered as a charity, Creative Land Trusts fall under the same umbrella as Community Land Trusts and are eligible to apply for funding streams not available to councils. The CLT act as owners of the spaces provided (either through purchase, long lease or asset transfer) and tender for a studio manager to oversee the day-to-day operation of the site. This approach supports specialist creative workspace providers and limits the scope of work that the CLT needs to directly manage.

Establishing a Creative Land Trust or other form of Socially Oriented Property Management Company (Soc-PMC) could enable a local or combined authority to take a portfolio approach to managing local assets with clearly defined, social and commercial goals, addressing affordability and targeting specific groups or locations. Assembling available assets under one property manager allows the operation to benefit from economies of scale. A council agrees a range of leases with the Soc-PMC, with a Service Level Agreement, guaranteeing income to the local authority and setting out the social and economic impacts to be delivered.²⁵ This enables access to charitable funding, with social impact reporting available for authorities to evidence the success of initiatives which feature in local or regional plans.

²⁵ <https://www.futureoflondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/delightful-downloads/2021/06/1088-FoL-Better-use-of-public-assets-FINAL-DIGITAL.pdf>, p.18

Expanding beyond London

Over recent years Margate has seen a growth in demand from the creative community, cemented by the arrival of Turner Contemporary in 2011. However, this popularity, alongside the resultant flock to the seaside from the pandemic, has led to the area outperforming other non-creative areas by 7%.²⁶ In autumn 2021 Margate Town Deal Board commissioned WorkWild Ltd and PRD Ltd to help set up a Creative Land Trust and provide a business case for operation. Funding is currently being pursued by the partnership as part of the Town Investment Plan.

The expansion of CLT's outside of London may lead to a flurry of such groups being established across the country as councils seek to provide longer-term assets that underpin the creative and cultural economy. These longer-term assets can either provide stepping-stones out of meanwhile space for creative end users or can be curated to provide a sequence of meanwhile opportunities in a protected long-term set of spaces. This overcomes some of the problems faced by artist studio operators such as East Street Arts where successful studios and galleries are established with a thriving network of enterprises, only for their lease to come to an end and the asset owner to commence redevelopment. Of course it may be that such private sector led investment will be welcomed in the absence of other operators or functions and the temporary use has fulfilled a valuable purpose. The point is that there should be options for those organisations who take many risks to establish new initiatives. They need to be confident of obtaining longer-term tenure. Equally a council may want to stimulate one kind of use over another (e.g. start-up space for creative industries rather than student accommodation).

3.5 Mixed use of former retail store: Rock House, Hastings

This nine-storey building in central Hastings has undergone a complete redevelopment in the past few years. The basement provides a café (most recently used as a community food hub during the pandemic), the ground floor is a co-working space with desks available to hire on a monthly rolling contract, four floors have a range of SMEs, creative companies and artisanal makers, two floors are given over to residential accommodation and the final three floors are still undergoing development.



²⁶ https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/210047_210915_CreativeWorkspace_FinalReport_LowRes_Spreads-1.pdf, p.22

The ethos of Rock House is to provide 'co-habitation' space with co-housing, co-working, collaborative creative space. Those who live and work there must meet certain criteria of need, enthusiasm and contribution to the building and the wider community.²⁷

Working through a phased approach to repurposing the building means the community ethos can start from the first day and quality conversations can begin happening, rather than builders hoarding and constant works risking irritating those already living and working in the area. A café venue is included to enable the community to use the space as a social meeting place and provide means of interaction.

White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures Ltd (WRNV), own and manage Rock House, a partnership between Jericho Road Solutions, Meanwhile Space CIC and Heart of Hastings Community Land Trust. Having interest from each of these three areas (residential, artistic and community) means that collaborative decisions can be made which are to the benefit of all parties. With the Heart of Hastings CLT listed as the owner, access to charitable funding sources is possible and the property can be listed at affordable rents to avoid squeezing local people out of the area.

WRNV are now embarking on their second project to revitalise the Observer Building in Hastings, which has sat empty for 35 years. The redevelopment (granted planning permission in autumn 2020) will include:

- Alley level: 1066 CrossFit Gym and a brewery-
- Mezzanine: 11 shops/workshops
- Ground Floor: a cafe, 6 recording studios and a live room
- 1st Floor: 14 offices and co-working studios
- 2nd & 3rd Floor: 15 capped rent flats for those struggling to find housing
- 4th Floor: roof terrace and a bar
- A fully restored frontage, alley exterior and south-facing wall, constructed with sensitive, attractive and sustainable materials²⁸

3.6 How might these examples be applied to West Yorkshire

The examples described above provide an insight into how other regions and projects are tackling related issues. They illustrate how culture is playing an increasingly important role in both large scale regional development initiatives and in more complex projects to find appropriate uses for significant former department stores. Many of these projects have temporary uses as part of their delivery and, for those that are occurring post-pandemic, that will continue to be an important component as high streets and secondary retail zones experience increased churn.

²⁷ <https://www.rockhouse.org.uk/about/>

²⁸ <https://theobserverbuilding.org.uk/our-plans/>

But there are also other factors at play. Work patterns are changing with more people seeking to work closer to home, to work more flexibly (shared workspaces – not necessarily travelling to a major city every day) and more people wanting to actively support a local economy. Furthermore, we can see (from Section 2) that there is an impressive track record of delivery and capacity both within and outside local authorities which suggests potential to scale-up and increase the impact of what have been largely fragmented initiatives in the districts. There is now scope to scale up the level of creativity and capability with much more ambitious programmes, marketing and delivery both to better harness the diversity of our communities and to increase the levels of local engagement in our high streets and urban centres.

We understand that resources will be challenging and within the delivery suggestions outlined in Section 4, there are options that require different levels of funding; some more weighed to capital, others to revenue. The key point is that within each of these case studies there are specific, relevant opportunities for West Yorkshire. These can either be facilitated at regional level or they can be delivered by local authorities under the aegis of a joined-up intervention. In each of the proposed next step concepts, there is scope to build on initiatives already being taken by the districts and to aggregate them into something that could deliver considerably more than the sum of its parts.

4 Next steps: maximising regionwide impact

The suggested next steps are options or alternatives for West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Following our work with the districts it has become clear to us that the need to strategically develop meanwhile uses has occurred because empty buildings, shops and offices are symptomatic of social change, and we have explored some of the reasons for those changes in this report and in its predecessor.

Simply addressing these symptoms with sophisticated, short-term projects, whilst helpful, has disadvantages. The initiatives being taken in many of the town centres (Halifax, Wakefield and Huddersfield for example) demonstrate that authorities have invested in or are actively developing cultural facilities which will deliver highly engaged programmes of events to attract multiple audiences. Culture (in its broadest sense) is becoming a fundamental function for how people experience and get value from their urban centres.

We have also tried to reflect the extent of activity across the region that is specifically seeking to harness interim and meanwhile uses and its importance in re-instilling confidence and a sense of a more 'normal' post pandemic environment within our communities. However, it is recognised by those local authorities undertaking this work that there is barely the capacity to deliver further economic and cultural actions arising from them and that they are stretched to the limit to be able to sustain both short and long-term initiatives.

All of the ideas articulated below are predicated on initiatives that have a track record from other locations. Whilst some might seem challenging in terms of deliverability or ambition, our view is that West Yorkshire Combined Authority is in a unique position to act as a facilitator to support districts to accelerate recovery, to innovate and drive change and, in short, to help to make things happen by attracting resources and making the case to UK Government about the challenges across the region.

There are examples elsewhere in the UK (see Section 3) that demonstrate ways in which other Combined Authorities are seeking to address similar initiatives at regional level. Indeed, in West Yorkshire there are highly relevant examples of regional initiatives that have operated across multiple districts. Whilst these were culturally focused (utilising resources from Arts Council and European Regional Development Funds), it would seem pragmatic to consider regionally focused activity, both as a funding conduit and a way of increasing the combined capacity of the districts to step up the scope and level of delivery.

4.1 Regionwide creative action zones

Pioneered in London with six pilot projects, early activity demonstrated was that it was feasible to develop multiple initiatives focused on the unique characteristics of each Borough. This allowed districts to determine their own specialist themes. For example Waltham Forest created a strong focus on artisans and making, based around existing facilities and set out to further build on existing clusters. Others (such as Croydon) were more focused on reanimating high streets albeit with strong creative enterprise components. A number of the successful awards covered multiple Boroughs (Hackney & Tower Hamlets for example) and working across Boroughs enabled these projects to aggregate resources and work collaboratively. West Yorkshire has also, in the relatively recent past, contributed to a regional and national co-ordinated cultural programme (Photo98) and Transpennine Arts Festivals between Liverpool and Leeds (1998, 2003 and 2008). These events attracted very substantial numbers of visitors to cities and towns over a wide area with high levels of local engagement from local communities (urban and rural).

Therefore, we believe that there is potential to develop a concept much more ambitious than simply a strategy to occupy and animate redundant spaces, ensuring that these under-utilised resources are part of a region-wide coordinated initiative that seeks to deliver multiple benefits. Such an initiative could deliver multiple benefits.

- Stimulate and support creative industries across West Yorkshire.
- Generate destination focused cultural programmes and events.
- Ensures that high streets (large and small) play a centre-stage role in programming and events.
- Deliver a three-year programme that enables medium term planning and scope to generate sustainability.

- Deliver clear economic impact (jobs and business growth), tackling retail restructuring and illustrating how 'programming' (curating and management) of formerly retail-led functions can attract a new cohort of local independent businesses such as makers, artisans, artists, designers, performers and digital innovators.
- By operating at regional level it is possible to overcome capacity and delivery issues by establishing a delivery team that can co-ordinate and drive the initiative working closely with Local Authorities and providing resources and capacity to enable local priorities and needs to be addressed as part of the wider programme.

Our view is that whilst this is an ambitious and challenging it has the potential to overcome competitiveness caused by initiatives such as City of Culture and develop something that plays to the specific strengths of the region and its communities. By including creative industries as a key element it is equally focused on business and enterprise providing an inspiring and regionally distinctive programme that would stand apart from any other region in the UK.

To explore the potential of the approach it would be necessary to commission a feasibility study and business model to provide clear budgets and an organisational structure (governance & executive delivery) to fully establish the investment requirements, quantify the benefits and the long-term impact as part of a business case. The three-year project would require a combination of capital and one-off revenue funding from multiple sources and has potential (by being at regional scale) to attract considerable additional private sector investment and sponsorship.

4.2 Creative Land Trusts

As illustrated in section 3, there are pioneering initiatives that are seeking to use the Community Land Trust model as a vehicle for attracting resources and capacity to provide long term ownership of redundant buildings. The key weakness with meanwhile use initiatives is that considerable resources (time and money) can be invested in properties that may ultimately find other uses or be developed by the asset owner (public or private sector), often benefiting from the renewed use and function delivered by the meanwhile use occupiers. Whilst this may be a desired outcome in some contexts (e.g. former edge of centre retail centres where the challenge is partly to achieve new, private sector investment in the assets), this can also be a barrier for delivering the longer-term transition to higher quality end-uses.

A Creative Land Trust operating either at West Yorkshire regional level or for designated partners would specifically help locations where the objective is to transform larger vacant buildings (such as department stores) into locations where there is market failure and where intervention by a non-profit distributing asset owner, working to achieve regeneration, social and cultural impacts, can overcome local capacity issues (not just of local authorities but other potential stakeholders) to deliver new functions that support regeneration objectives.

A Creative Land Trust also has the potential to operate across a wide remit, addressing over-performing locations (such as where property prices and the demand for residential

development is impacting on opportunities for stimulating start-up businesses) as well as (more commonly across West Yorkshire) locations where there is market failure and buildings and sites are sterilised, blighting further investment and contributing to a cycle of neglect and under-performance.

In a number of locations there are established artist workspaces which are vulnerable to asset-owners changing their approach and which limit the scope for long-term growth and investment (e.g. Westgate Studios in Wakefield and Bradford's Space Service²⁹). These could form the basis of an ambitious culturally led workspace operation across the region, identifying target assets (both in public and private sector ownership) and developing sustainable, long-term model to deliver new facilities, activity and life to these locations. In some places there may well be a case for more complex mixed-use schemes (such as in Hastings at Rock House, see section 3.5) which include residential and retail in addition to studios and gallery spaces. Locations such as Huddersfield have also seen projects such as Creative Lofts, adjacent to The Media Centre, deliver mixed use environments where there are strong crossovers between urban regeneration, cultural programming and new town centre living initiatives.

There is also evidence from a number of projects across the UK (and some within West Yorkshire) that such initiatives can be themed to focus on specific sectors, e.g. artists, makers, design or social enterprises and the voluntary sector. There should be scope for local authorities and stakeholders to reflect local priorities and to obtain the maximum impact from initiatives that will have a long-term (and therefore) stable benefit to the local community.

The Creative Land Trust would require capital funding to enable it to acquire, invest in and manage assets to achieve clearly defined economic and cultural objectives. By being regional, it is more likely to be able to achieve economies of scale that will ensure long-term sustainability, reflect the strong regional connections between urban centres and provide a collaborative resource base that will have strong marketing and communication leverage. It will also have potential to attract future funding and to scale up its operation to ensure that its regeneration objectives can be sustained.

To establish the feasibility for such an initiative, a business plan would need to be developed (ideally) identifying specific assets that local authority partners saw as having potential for becoming part of the Creative Land Trust. This could start with just one or two specific buildings and ideally these would be assets already in public sector ownership but where an aggregated, non-profit distributing ownership model is more likely to attract the necessary capital to invest in and reanimate these assets.

4.3 Culture Streets Programme: cultural animation on high streets

The meanwhile use project has been concerned with addressing over-supply of retail and the restructuring of many of the region's high streets, a process accelerated by the global

²⁹ A partnership between Brick Box and East Street Arts to provide studio spaces in Bradford City Centre

pandemic. Local authorities such as Kirklees, working closely with University of Huddersfield, have successfully initiated a project to provide artists' studio and gallery spaces (Temporary Contemporary) and during 2021 Bradford has initiated two new projects that will focus on animating parts of their city centre with curated participatory cultural projects.

Across all the local authorities that have participated in the meanwhile use project, there is recognition that there is significant scope to attract new users, participants and 'audiences' as part of a strategy to re-energise locations that are experiencing severe market failure with empty shops and less active business locations. In some areas it may not be possible to attract occupiers for empty premises even for temporary periods but, nevertheless, the shopfronts can provide a backdrop for public art or for temporary hubs for regular weekend programming and interventions. This demonstrates that meanwhile use is not necessarily the only way to reactivate high street locations but in addition that there needs to be more systematic programming and activity of public spaces as part of a cohesive plan to attract participants and end users.

Coordinating this at regional level would significantly improve the capacity of local authorities to deliver specific initiatives harnessing local talent and addressing specific challenges in their local centres. What will work in Dewsbury may not be appropriate for Hebden Bridge and the purpose of a multi-annual programme should both facilitate delivery and create opportunities for cross-over marketing that will add to the scale and impact of what can be delivered.

Requiring a combination of capital and revenue funding, a one / two-year programme of cultural animation coordinated across the region which specifically focuses on high streets, on empty premises and on low-footfall, could support local authorities to deliver coordinated initiatives through cultural engagement aimed at maximising impact from curating these locations intensively as part of a recovery plan. The aim should be to stimulate new uses that increase take-up of empty premises, attract new audiences, drive-up footfall and lever new marketing and communications opportunities. The initiative also has the potential to be delivered as a specific theme or work package within a wider regional initiative (such as a Creative Action Zone) or as a stand-alone project.

4.4 Co-ordinating cultural urban destinations

It has become evident that many of the districts have invested significant resources in establishing their own clear cultural identity reflecting the towns and communities to whom they provide services. However, it is much harder for them to co-ordinate and market the mix of cultural, leisure and retail infrastructure that differentiates these locations. As local authorities invest in initiatives to attract customers back to urban centres, these are rarely coordinated at regional level and given the strong transport links which exist between many of them, we see strong potential to invest in initiatives that celebrate the differentiating qualities of urban destinations across the area. The focus on high street regeneration, on attracting more independents to smaller shop units and on increasing support for local service providers

means that the changing profile of these locations requires communication in a different way. They are no longer clone towns with the same shops in each high street or urban centre. They are highly differentiated locations with specialist retailers, unique cultural organisations and multiple heritage and leisure alternatives for day visit and staycation destinations.

At locations across the UK such as Folkestone, Margate, Saltaire, Great Yarmouth, Derby and Whitby, a focus on creating a strong sense of an alternative place, attracting independents, makers and artists is helping to reframe their vitality and attractiveness as leisure destinations.

Therefore, a project that celebrates the differences and unique qualities of West Yorkshire's towns and destinations is a way of converting the energy and creative opportunities provided by multiple meanwhile initiatives into a communicable network of locations for day-visits and destination tourism. Whilst Welcome to Yorkshire provides a very strong brand to attract non-Yorkshire visitors, there is scope to reflect and communicate the rapidly changing profile of our urban centres to ensure that the energy and creativity of animation and engagement initiatives finds local audiences across the region and not simply from within the immediate town or community.

We see this principally as a communications platform, a social media and web strategy that generates promotional content to drive visits to local urban centres both to participate and experience the temporary projects and initiatives as well as the longer-term transition (new independent retailers and businesses), closely linked to local authority communications plans but providing an extra resource base to drive up awareness and to provide quantifiable benefits across the region.

4.5 Delivering regionwide creative industries acceleration

Now an established part of UK policy, the importance of stimulating creative industries remains a key part of our economy, not least because of the strong connections to high value sectors such as computer software, gaming and content production that form a very significant part of the high value growth sectors in our regional and national economy.

As a vital component of the sector, the arts remain a source of creativity, innovation and challenge as well as making an important contribution to mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, an initiative that seeks to work with local authorities to explicitly grow the sector; to provide co-ordinated business support and development advice and to try to bring more activity into our high streets and former retail locations both temporarily and on a long-term basis should be encouraged. In many cities in Europe, small offices and studios sit side by side with retailers and there is (now) much more scope to see that happen not least because it is easy to achieve from a planning perspective but also because with changing work patterns and better life-work balance, there is scope for many more small businesses to operate from local hubs and facilities rather than commuting into major cities Monday to Friday.

Focusing on existing hubs, providing support and working closely with local authorities to support them in addressing gaps in provision or specific market opportunities is potentially a three-to-five-year project to double the size of the sector across West Yorkshire. With particular focus in smaller town centres, rural market towns and under-performing locations such as Wakefield and Bradford city centre, there is significant potential to attract capital and revenue funds to dramatically grow the number and scale of creative industries businesses across the region.

This is not simply a question of providing workspace and start-up support but demands a co-ordinated team of advisors working with specific sectors to support companies to grow, addressing barriers to growth (e.g. export) and attracting and retaining talent. It would target scaling up locations where there are already strong or growing clusters (Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford) and provide start-up support where there is a desire to build that capacity (e.g. Wakefield both in city centre and Tileyard North). It would also be important to map the clusters of businesses providing a much stronger awareness of the talent and capacity in the region which in itself acts as a driver to attract inward investment and to stimulate relocations around these clusters. At the moment, apart from national reports such as Tech Nation³⁰ there is not a strong sense of the creative, digital, tech and life-science clusters across the region, and yet in world leading locations such as Eindhoven³¹ they have established an exceptionally strong regional brand to reflect their clusters and this is providing a very strong identity for job creation and growth at the regional rather than local level.

4.6 Implementation

It should be noted that all the above suggestions are based on case studies emerging out of initiatives in other parts of the UK or from within West Yorkshire where there has been a strong tradition of innovation around regeneration and economic development. We recognise that these ideas go somewhat beyond a simple scaling up of meanwhile and interim use coordination and management. They do reflect the 'transition uses' articulated in the 2020 report³² in that they see meanwhile use as part of a longer-term, scoping initiative. All the authorities that we have engaged with on the project see this and are concerned that time, effort and resources are not simply targeted at temporary interventions which melt away, leaving the same underlying problems. It is equally an issue for the businesses, organisations and individuals that are inspired to try out their projects and activities in former shops, redundant transport hubs or supermarkets. They also want to see long-term outcomes as the possibility of losing access to such spaces undermines their long-term plans and ambitions.

Such buildings and locations must become a stepping-stone for reinvention of the spaces that they occupy and a new set of functions that will have sustainability and longevity and as such

³⁰ <https://technation.io/report2021/>

³¹ <https://brainporteindhoven.com/int/>

³² Public Assets, Temporary Use, Creative Space Management / East Street Arts 2020

this requires co-ordinated action that goes beyond the mechanical reuse of buildings. It has to have clear social, cultural and economic direction and in doing so will be more likely to achieve the objectives of reinventing these places so that they have meaning and resonance in our increasingly digitally-focused lives.

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Appendices

A. Bibliography

B. Leeds case studies

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Appendix A: Bibliography

Reference material that has been used in research for this report is noted below, along with weblinks where these are available.

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Art Hostel | Leeds

Placemaking / Residential / Pilot Business

In 2016 Leeds Art Hostel was formed by East Street Arts in a derelict three storey building in Kirkgate, the oldest street in the city. Kirkgate was then a neglected and unattractive part of Leeds city centre with only minutes' walk from the central train station and a stones throw away from all major town centre activity and amenities.

The two-year long temporary project, delivered in premises owned by a private sector developer, was intended to test the business proposition whilst helping to encourage local neighbourhood regeneration.

The process of renovating the premises included commissioning artists to design each of the individual rooms and common areas in the hostel, producing a highly distinctive alternative for visitors and tourists. The 'boutique hotel on a budget' generated significant national and local media interest.

East Street Arts raised an investment package of £85,000 from various funding streams and sponsorships to renovate the building. The hostel provided 11 private rooms and 23 beds in mixed dormitories. For its first and second year of operation it was a commercial success, gaining profit on 62% occupancy rates.

Following the initial period at Kirkgate, the Art Hostel relocated to permanent premises in Magbate, Leeds, less than a mile away from Kirkgate. East Street Arts were successful in fundraising for this acquisition following the successful pilot and now have plans to replicate this model in various cities across the UK.

As a legacy, development of Kirkgate has markedly accelerated, a number of independent leisure and retail businesses have been attracted to neighbouring properties and East Street Arts was able to secure permanent premises for the business alongside its flagship visual arts studio space at St Patricks.

