

GLOUCESTER GREAT PLACE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & SUMMARY
EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Place was a three year £20 million 16 programme supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, aiming to put arts and culture at the heart of communities. Gloucester's project, "Gloucester – a proud past: Culture at the heart of an ambitious future," received £1.49 million (£3.1 million including matched funding) and was led by Gloucester Culture Trust. The project was launched in August 2017.

Great Place enabled the Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) to create a partnership that made culture in Gloucester more strategic. The partnership included arts and heritage organisations spanning sizes and artforms with sector bodies and community groups. Overall, Great Place has created a network of artists, businesses, local authority officers and cultural and heritage organisations, and embedded structures for regular collaboration. The strategic activity and outcomes included:

- Carrying out consultations (with audiences, residents, and artists).
- Commissioning research (on demand for a new venue, on City of Culture, on the strengths and weaknesses of festivals etc.).
- Creating strategies (e.g. Heritage Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Festivals and Events Action Plan, Audience and Participation Development Plan, and Creative Entrepreneurship Business Plan).
- Developing flagship festivals such as Rooftop and Kings Jam as well as supporting the Gloucester Heritage Forum, which developed a strong community offer for the History Festival, called City Voices.
- Working with the arts and heritage sector and local communities to fill gaps in arts provision (e.g. contemporary arts for the Tall Ships festival, a Winter trail and lantern festival to connect the Docks and the City Centre).
- Appointing a Strategic Creative Producer to join up planning, training and delivery and bringing in specialist producers to support the development of new city-wide events (e.g. *Of Earth and Sky*).
- Creating a shared platform to recruit and support volunteers, Engage In Gloucester, which brought a new cohort of younger people into volunteering.
- Building the capacity of arts organisations through training, mentoring and funding for additional posts. This has included support from the Roundhouse in London.
- Supporting artists through programmes such as the Creative Leadership Programme, Jolt, Upsurge and Future Producers.
- Forming a Youth Advisory Board which morphed into a Young Creative Network for emerging artists.
- Building evaluative capacity through surveying residents and using conceptualisation to evaluate intangibles such as partnership and capacity building.

The result is a cultural infrastructure that is more coherent, joined up and high profile.

Changing the cultural landscape of a city is a long-term endeavour and Gloucester has made exceptional progress in a short amount of time. The impact is evident to residents. The percentage of respondents who said the festivals, arts and culture make Gloucester a better place to live increased from 67% in 2019 to 74% in 2020. The percentage of respondents who said there is more to do in Gloucester city centre than a year ago increased from 32% in 2019 to 38% in 2020. The percentage of respondents who said Gloucester city centre is welcoming rose from 31% in 2019 to 37% in 2020. The survey also asked about awareness of, and engagement with, different arts festivals. Every festival increased in reported attendance between the two years. In the residents' survey, the percentage of respondents who said that they feel proud to live in Gloucester rose from 52% in 2019 to 61% in 2020.

The evaluation report gives detail on the activities, outcomes and lessons from Great Place. The overall lessons are:

- The need to balance objectives of raising ambition with those of embedding community ownership; and the importance of continuously communicating this dynamic, both by exciting residents about the calibre of what is being delivered and reassuring them of its relevance to them.
- The value of connecting arts and heritage, using the arts to demonstrate that heritage is not fixed, and heritage to connect to a deeply felt local identity.
- The need to balance provision in the town centre with provision on the periphery, understanding that there is a broad appetite for the arts but barriers to access need to be removed (rather than assuming people will travel to the town centre).
- The importance of investing in developing the infrastructure, both physical, intellectual, social and economic.
- The importance of having multiple routes for community voices including youth panels, a residents' survey, co-production and partnership.
- The value of taking a systematic approach to partnership, starting with a core group centred on the arts and gradually expanding to embrace a wider range of organisations in terms of size, geography and remit; and the need to ensure this approach is transparent and welcoming.
- The need to ensure strong governance in projects, including managing conflicts of interest.
- The value of having structures to systematise communication over strategy, delivery and learning.
- The value of having funding to create a more level playing field where different sizes of organisations can engage with the partnership, but also the need to ensure partners are committed to the vision rather than being solely attracted by the funding.

Gloucester is at a crucial point. Much has been achieved, but many projects, for instance the physical projects, have yet to be launched and will arrive on a landscape scarred by Covid-19. It is vital that the partners continue their commitment to culture and appreciate that the arts are an essential part of restoring individual, social and community wellbeing. Given the level of need, and the vulnerability of the sector, judgements about value for money will have to be made. However, the experience so far suggests that a strategic, collaborative approach enhances value for money because of the scope for targeting, synergy and clarity in messaging.

My recommendations going forward are:

- The partnership should continue to apply and develop its strategic approach to cultural planning and delivery. This includes ensuring that culture is integrated into physical regeneration in Gloucester.
- The partnership should take the lessons from Great Place into the revised Cultural Strategy.
- The partnership should disseminate learning from Great Place including information on model projects like City Voices, the Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange, Culture Matson and the Gloucester Heritage Forum.

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Great Place was a three year £20 million 16 programme supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, aiming to put arts and culture at the heart of communities. Gloucester's project, "Gloucester – a proud past: Culture at the heart of an ambitious future," received £1.49 million (£3.1 million including matched funding) and is being led by Gloucester Culture Trust. The project was launched in August 2017.

Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) was set up in 2016 to deliver the city's ten-year cultural vision and strategy, which has six objectives:

- Develop artists and arts organisations so as to build the cultural and creative industries.
- Broaden the cultural offer to support social and economic development.
- Develop a vibrant city centre full of cultural activity and things to do.
- Develop audiences who enjoy the new cultural opportunities being created.
- Put Gloucester on the cultural map by developing high profile events.
- Make things happen to continue the momentum for change.

The partners decided that Gloucester Great Place would be considered a success if:

- Gloucester is viewed as a culturally distinctive and exciting city by residents and visitors, where a diverse, high quality arts, heritage and creativity offer are a part of everyday life.
- This excitement has led to a shift in the way arts and heritage are valued and engaged with throughout Gloucester. The hearts and minds of people in 'non-arts' roles value culture as much for its economic and social impact as its cultural benefit.
- As a result, arts and heritage in Gloucester attracts investment and support from a wider variety of channels.
- New, collaborative and people-led methods of delivering and evaluating culture are established and embraced in the city, harnessing a range of skills and talents.
- The city's young people (up to age 30) have more opportunities to take part, to shape Gloucester's creative activities, and to realise their own ambitions in creativity and cultural enterprise.
- Residents from city neighbourhoods that have not traditionally taken part in arts activity feel more engaged in the cultural life of the whole city and feel confident to lead it.

- The continued regeneration of the historic city centre such as the Gate Streets and Kings Quarter has been enhanced by strategically connecting arts and culture with city partners.
- The visitor economy is strengthened through the appeal, diversity, quality and coordination of the city's heritage venues and cultural festivals and events
- Cultural practitioners and organisations feel more confident, inspired, creatively bold and connected.

EVALUATION BRIEF

I was appointed in August 2018, after the beginning of Great Place. The brief was to deliver an evaluation that:

- Measures the progress towards meeting the six objectives in the City's cultural vision and strategy, listed above.
- Connects to the wider programme evaluation.
- Connects to other projects e.g. Gloucester Roundhouse evaluation.
- Lays the groundwork for a credible City of Culture 2025 bid.
- Works in a participative way with the Trust and its partners which builds evaluative capacity.
- Evaluates each strand of the programme but also the synergies between the seven strands.
- Produces reports tailored to different audiences.
- Is proportionate and makes the best use of interviewees' and respondents' time.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

My methodology consisted of:

- Review of documentation.
- Conceptualisation of the programme with logic models produced for each strand.
- Review and advice on GCT's KPIs.
- Conceptualisation and creation of a value analysis for GCT.
- Creation and analysis of residents' survey which received 636 responses in 2019 and 553 in 2020.
- Modelling of Create Gloucestershire's model of community engagement in order to capture the skill in its work.
- Survey of the strand leads using our Partnership Diagnostic Tool in 2018 and 2020.

- Facilitation of a series of learning workshops and captured lessons from Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange and the Great Place partnership.
- Creation of a capacity building Diagnostic Tool for Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange and tracked change over time.
- Conceptualisation of the work of the Gloucester Heritage Forum and creation of a value analysis to capture the achievements of the partnership.
- One-to-one interviews with 18 artists and writing up of case studies to explore any impacts from Gloucester Great Place on their practice, and their views on Gloucester.
- Analysis of audience data and writing up of case studies for Kings Jam Festival 2019, Rooftop Festival 2018, and Museum of the Moon 2019.
- Observation at one of the training sessions for Strand 7, and analysis of feedback from participants.
- A staff survey of GCT.
- A survey of volunteers' training, which received 38 responses.
- A survey of volunteers, which received 25 responses.
- A survey of eight Festival Managers to capture trends over the Great Place time period.

Consistent with the principle of proportionality and capacity building in the brief, my overall approach was to work through key methods and case studies and responding to Strand Leads' requests, rather than attempting to compile data on every activity in Great Place.

KEY FINDINGS

RESIDENTS VALUE GLOUCESTER'S ARTS AND HERITAGE AND PERCEIVE AN INCREASE IN ACTIVITY OVER THE TIME PERIOD OF GREAT PLACE

Respondents were asked to rank the best things about Gloucester. In 2019, 42% put history/heritage first, and 59% put it in the first two places. In 2020, history/heritage had increased slightly to 44% in first place, and 61% in the first two places. The scores are even higher for long-term residents. These figures are a strong endorsement of the principles of Great Place, (and of Strand 5: Heritage).

The percentage of respondents who said the festivals, arts and culture make Gloucester a better place to live increased from 67% in 2019 to 74% in 2020. The percentage of respondents who said there is more to do in Gloucester city centre than a year ago increased from 32% in 2019 to 38% in 2020.

The residents' survey asked questions about attitudes to the city centre because fear of coming into the centre would prevent respondents from experiencing the arts and heritage offer. The percentage of respondents who said Gloucester city centre is welcoming rose from 31% in 2019 to 37% in 2020. The survey also asked about awareness of, and

engagement with, different arts festivals. Every festival increased in reported attendance between the two years.

RESIDENTS' PRIDE IN GLOUCESTER HAS INCREASED OVER THE TIME OF GREAT PLACE

In the residents' survey, the percentage of respondents who said that they feel proud to live in Gloucester rose from 52% in 2019 to 61% in 2020.

In the residents' survey, respondents were asked to describe Gloucester in three words. I classified each response and the results suggest an increase in positivity over the two years: in 2019, there were 611 responses: 43% were positive, 28% were negative, and 29% were mixed; in 2020, there were 533 responses: 48% were positive, only 18% were negative, and 34% were mixed.

INFORMATION BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE HAVE REDUCED OVER THE TIME OF GREAT PLACE, ALTHOUGH MORE IS NEEDED

The residents' survey asked about any barriers to engaging with arts or culture in Gloucester. By far the major barrier was information - mentioned by 51% of respondents in 2019, and 43% in 2020, suggesting some level of improvement. The main activities of Strand 4: Marketing – website and city branding – have yet to be launched, so impact on this work will be lagged.

GREAT PLACE STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIP IN GLOUCESTER

Great Place enabled GCT to bring together cultural organisations of different sizes and artforms and strengthen connections with other areas like health. GCT supported Gloucester Heritage Forum, which gives a collective, cohesive and higher profile approach to heritage planning and delivery, including enabling the History Festival to expand. Overall, Great Place has created a network of artists, businesses, local authority officers and cultural and heritage organisations, and created structures for and a habit of collaboration.

Great Place supported the Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange project, a partnership between Gloucester Culture Trust, the Roundhouse, Strike A Light, The Music Works, Guildhall/Gloucester City Council and, latterly, Your Next Move. Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange is seen as having raised the status of Gloucester in and beyond the city. The financial investment from Paul Hamlyn Foundation (some £500,000) was itself a strong outcome for the city.

“Roundhouse has been a great advocate for more support for culture in the city. I believe their influence has brought about conversations on our venue, and wider city plans, that would not have otherwise been possible.” Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange Partnership Diagnostic

“Having the Roundhouse as a partner means we are immediately punching above our weight and thinking creatively and ambitiously.” Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange Partnership Diagnostic

“I didn't ever think we would be in a position to work so collaboratively with the other Gloucester partners. In Gloucester I always felt a tension in the community. It is really nice to be able to work together, properly work together and understand what the partners are doing. That never used to happen before.” Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange Evaluation of Learning

GREAT PLACE SUPPORTED COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO CREATIVITY

Great Place funded Create Gloucestershire in its work with communities in Gloucester (Strand 3: Cultural Commissioning). This model is special, bringing professionals and local people with energy together in an equal and evolving partnership to make positive change using a highly practical, problem-solving methodology that respects the skills and knowledge of all involved.

“The people in the room bring the collective resources of the group to bear on each issue. People either solve the issue in the room or identify who can solve it and one person takes responsibility for the next steps. There is a belief that pooling people’s skills, networks and connections is sufficient to solve most problems, or move them to the next stage.”
Modelling of Create Gloucestershire

“This isn’t resident led. It isn’t led by Create Gloucestershire. It is a partnership. It is about reciprocal exchange.” Modelling of Create Gloucestershire

Strand 5: Heritage organised 12 volunteers to carry out a local listing process, which generated a list of 147 places and 130 buildings.

“The local listing process is showing that heritage isn’t just about buildings but also about how local people think about a building, giving a more grassroots approach.” Gloucester Heritage Forum Values Analysis

Great Place enabled GCT to create the post of Strategic Creative Producer, which didn't exist before in Gloucester, to connect across a range of festival organisations and support joined up planning, training and delivery. GCT has also brought in specialist producers to support the development of new city-wide events. Events such as *Of Earth and Sky* have drawn contributions from multiple arts and heritage organisations, large and small, as well as local residents.

GCT supported a consortium to write an Audience Development plan, which created, for example, the concept of First Fridays and provided the impetus for other joined up activities instead, such as a magazine and online activities.

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HELPED SHAPE CULTURE IN GLOUCESTER

Great Place supported the first year of the Future Producers' programme which, with help from GCT and Strike A Light, was able to raise funding from Paul Hamlyn to continue. The cohort of Future Producers had a central role in developing the flagship festivals – Rooftop and Kings Jam.

GCT trialled a Youth Advisory Board which, following feedback from participants, morphed into a Young Creative Network for emerging artists. The Young Creative Network is producing a magazine for Gloucester to reach young audiences. It also meets regularly to help inform the strategic planning of GCT, and is a standing agenda item on GCT Board meetings.

The Engage In Gloucester system has engaged a new cohort of younger volunteers. More than half of registered users are under 30. The Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange has enabled Gloucester-based partner organisations to learn from the Roundhouse's expertise in youth engagement and governance.

THE ARTS AND CULTURE OFFER HAS BECOME MORE STRATEGIC

GCT has:

- Carried out consultations (with audiences, residents, and artists).
- Commissioned research (on demand for a new venue, on City of Culture, on the strengths and weaknesses of festivals etc.).
- Written and supported strategies (e.g. Heritage Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Festivals and Events Action Plan, Audience and Participation Development Plan, and Creative Entrepreneurship Business Plan).
- Created partnerships (e.g. a Festivals and Events Forum).
- Worked with the arts and heritage sector and local communities to fill gaps in arts provision (e.g. follow on activities such as the community choir that came out of Rooftop Festival in 2019, contemporary arts for the Tall Ships festival, a Winter trail and lantern festival to connect the Docks and the City Centre, changed date of the Carnival to allow schools to participate). Strand 1 supported GCT, but this activity cannot be entirely attributed to Great Place.

The result is a cultural offer that is more coherent, joined up and high profile. One of the learning points from Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange was how each of the partners could be more strategic (e.g. planning collaboratively, coordinating commissioning, sharing publicity, sharing resources and defining joint progression routes).

ARTISTS PERCEIVE A POSITIVE CHANGE IN GLOUCESTER

The 18 artists we interviewed described Gloucester as bustling, creative, and welcoming. Case studies evidence strong progression as a result of activities supported by Great Place, such as Kings Jam Festival, Rooftop Festival, Upsurge or Future Producers. The experiences of the interviewees also demonstrate that the support for artists has been well coordinated.

However, interviews suggest that more needs to be done to support artists, build an audience and engage the media. As one artist explained, the support has helped to raise up the local artists, but now the agencies need further funding so that they can raise the bar again.

“Gloucester is a wonderful bustling place to be and it becoming more and more of a creative force. Its notoriety is becoming more all the time. It is becoming more of a player in terms of arts. There is always something going on. It isn’t a place where you need to be particularly affluent, you are welcome.” Artist interviews

“Kings Jam is a crucial moment for the development of music in Gloucester. I have never seen anything of that scale in the area. It was great to see there were a lot of young people in town all there for the music. To see local artists having a platform supporting bigger acts.” Artist interviews

“Being supported by these agencies makes me think I am of a calibre worth being supported, I am a legitimate artist. I can’t say enough about how much it has helped me find my own direction. Taking the pressure off me so I can find my voice and make the art I want to make.” Artist interviews

“Festivals like Rooftop and Kings Jam are a step in the right direction that help to give a community feeling. But they are summer events and you need to keep the momentum going over the winter.” Artist interviews

“The tide is definitely turning. People are starting to turn up to events. Rooftop is a perfect example. Some of the acts were incredible and they are local people. You would go to Bristol to see them. The calibre of the acts here is becoming real. The workshops are nurturing music on an organic level.” Artist interviews

“A few years back, it felt as if everyone was doing their thing. Now there is more of a community feeling, which is essential for any musician to grow.” Artist interviews

ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANISATIONS HAVE BUILT THEIR CAPACITY

Great Place has supported artists through programmes such as the Creative Leadership Programme, Jolt, Upsurge and Future Producers. The festivals that Great Place supported have benefitted artists as well as audience members.

Through Great Place, arts and heritage organisations received:

- Shadowing and mentoring (e.g. Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange).
- Training (e.g. marketing, fundraising, business skills, environmental sustainability and responses to Covid-19).
- Received funding for additional posts (e.g. Guildhall’s Marketing Apprentice, Creative Leadership Trainees).
- Created shared systems (e.g. for volunteer recruitment and support).

One of the main objectives of Strand 7, which was to develop a new Creative Hub, has been amply met with the opening of Jolt. The long-term future of the centre is (somewhat, given Covid-19) secured by being granted a 20-year peppercorn lease from the Council. Strand 7 has also organised a programme of training and mentoring to support new and established creative entrepreneurs.

VOLUNTEERS ARE MORE SUPPORTED

Great Place funded a post and software for a shared volunteering system (Engage In Gloucester). By June 2020, this had hosted 377 volunteering opportunities (“challenges”) at, an average of 150 live at any one time before lock-down (54 during lockdown). As at June 2020, there were eight organisations and 353 open individual accounts on the site: 68% female, 30% male; 66% GL1 postcodes; 51% under 30.

A survey of volunteer training found that 95% of respondents said they felt more confident taking on the role of festival and events volunteer. 95% of respondents said they would recommend the training to other potential volunteers. A programme end survey of volunteers found that 92% of respondents said they feel valued. Volunteering has increased wellbeing for 76% of respondents.

THE COUNCIL HAS STRENGTHENED ITS COMMITMENT TO CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN GLOUCESTER

Evidence of the status of culture includes:

- Culture is mentioned in the GCC Economic Development Strategy, where it was not before.
- Going forward, the Council has committed £100k over three years from 2020, on a tapering basis, 50% from regeneration, 40% from culture and 10% from community budgets, which demonstrates the Council’s appreciation of the breadth of impact of culture.
- GCT coordinated the cultural sector to advise on planning for Kings Square which resulted in a flexible structure rather than a fixed stage.

- GCT will sit on Council's City Centre Commission on city centre regeneration and Culture and Visitor Economy Recovery Group.
- The Local Industrial Strategy, LEP, references Gloucester's culture offer as an asset. The LEP has said it will back a City of Culture bid as part of their industrial strategy.

GREAT PLACE HAS BUILT EVALUATIVE CAPACITY

The evaluation built evaluative capacity among strand leads by:

- Showing how conceptualisation can be used to evaluate intangibles such as partnerships (Gloucester Culture Trust, Gloucester Heritage Forum) and capture tacit knowledge (Create Gloucestershire's model of creative change). These documents have been used to help explain the value of these approaches to funders and other stakeholders. Gloucester Heritage Forum was sufficiently engaged by the review as to include evaluation as one of the very first activities in its Looking Up new project.
- Providing a performance measurement structure and commenting on KPIs at Gloucester Culture Trust.
- Creating tools that have been embedded in some of the programmes e.g. feedback forms for training, audience feedback forms for festivals.
- Showing how systematic observation can support quality control e.g. in training.
- Creating a methodology to survey residents. Gloucester Culture Trust has committed to continuing this survey in future years, subject to funding, which is evidence of its priority to evaluation.
- Writing a series of evaluation notes for Strand Leads and partners during the programme, so supporting just-in-time learning and reflection.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, there is evidence that Great Place has:

- Developed artists and arts organisations so as to build the cultural and creative industries.
- Broadened the cultural offer to support social and economic development.
- Developed a vibrant city centre full of cultural activity and things to do.
- Developed audiences who enjoy the new cultural opportunities being created.
- Put Gloucester on the cultural map by developing high profile events.
- Made things happen to continue the momentum for change.

Great Place has supported partnerships and funded a large number of activities and actions that have worked synergistically to bring the arts sector together in Gloucester, make activity more strategic and more targeted on new audiences especially young audiences,

strengthen the pathways for artists, and begin to raise the status of culture in Gloucester and Gloucester in culture. Relationships and impacts are naturally uneven, more evident between and in some organisations than others. However, the overall impact on Gloucester is positive and demonstrable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The partnership should continue to apply and develop its strategic approach to cultural planning and delivery. This includes ensuring that culture is integrated into physical regeneration in Gloucester.
- The partnership should take the lessons from Great Place into the revised Cultural Strategy.
- The partnership should disseminate learning from Great Place including information on model projects like City Voices, the Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange, Culture Matson and the Gloucester Heritage Forum.