

# GREAT PLACE TEES VALLEY

Great Place Tees Valley, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, is a partnership involving Tees Valley Combined Authority, Teesside University, all five Local Authorities and local cultural organisations. The programme uses culture to create a shared, positive sense of place and identity across Tees Valley, supporting the area's economic growth and regeneration.

## EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

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**Great Place Tees Valley (GPTV)** is a large- scale cultural programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, managed by the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The programme combines five 'settlement' place-based projects, working closely with local communities and five 'cross-cutting' programmes of arts, heritage and cultural engagement activities, taking place across all five boroughs.

Through this varied approach, the programme aims to develop and extend existing cultural activity, practice and strengths of work in the Tees Valley in a way that is responsive to local needs and contexts.

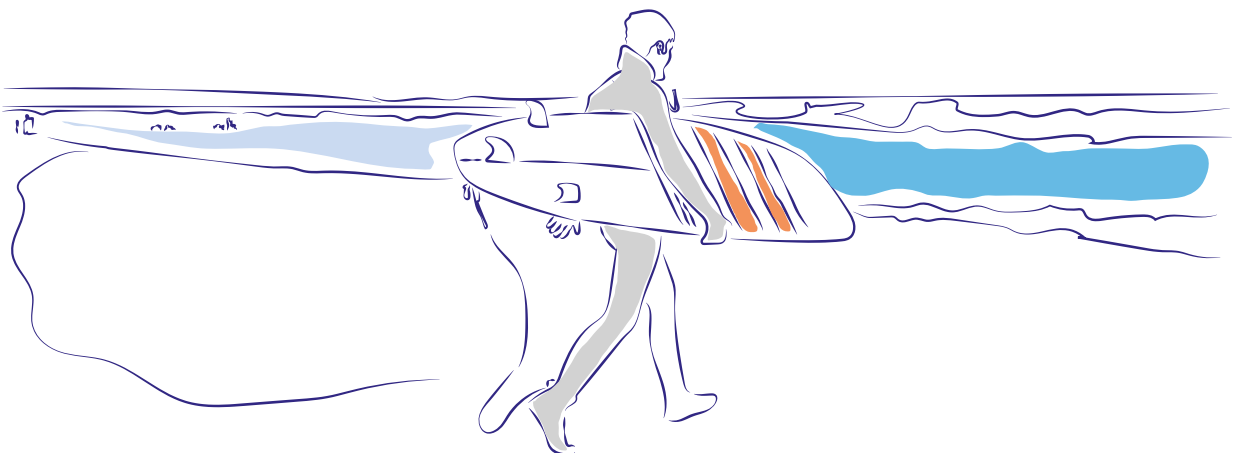
The programme ambition to increase audience participation and enhance community confidence through engagement with culture took its cue from the Tees Valley Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan (2016-2026), that for the first time sought to foreground the cultural and creative sector in a discussion about the region's future. The Great Place programme partners shared an ambition with the newly formed Combined Authority to challenge the image the Tees Valley as characterised by industrial decline and post-industrial problems. While embracing landmark heritage assets, such as the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the Great Place programme aimed to reflect the values of Tees Valley today and its ambitions for the future, whilst also representing and celebrating the past with sensitivity and integrity.

**The context for Great Place Tees Valley provided the programme with a unique set of opportunities and challenges that have informed the evaluation research and analysis:**

1. How would the five Tees Valley boroughs bring together arts, culture and creative practices working with the new Combined Authority?
2. How would communities engage with the re-visioning of the area through culture, tourism and heritage?
3. How would this benefit them and be meaningful to them?

The University's role was to evaluate the overarching outcomes of the Great Place Tees Valley projects across the five local authorities and to disseminate the findings within the context of the Combined Authority's economic regeneration agenda. This remit was focussed on understanding the impact of the programme on communities and engagement. This work led to a number of exciting new projects and collaborations between the University, the Combined Authority and partners in the Great Place programme.

The University's evaluation is supported by a companion study: ARC Stockton (Stockton Art Centre) and Thinking Practice have led a Most Significant Change evaluation, focusing on the impact of sector training and capacity building work upon Tees Valley artists and creative practitioners. Whilst both evaluations are stand-alone studies, their findings complement each other and demonstrate the importance of investing in the sector to achieve better outcomes with participants and communities.



# GREAT PLACE PARTNERS AND PROJECTS:

## ARC Stockton

### Greater Tees Practitioner Training

ARC created and delivered a training programme for creative practitioners to ensure that the Tees Valley has a skilled and experienced workforce to lead community engagement and participatory activity with socially excluded groups.

## Darlington Borough Council

### Heritage on Track

Groundwork North East and local artists worked with schools and communities in the Red Hall and North Road areas of Darlington, building engagement in heritage in the lead up to the 2025 bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington railway.

## Hartlepool Borough Council & The Northern School of Art

### Creative Hartlepool

Empty Shop CIC led a programme of community engagement events around the heritage and cultural assets of Church Street and 'Creative Social', a programme of creative industry events for young people, introducing them to career and training opportunities in the sector.

## Middlesbrough Council

### Creative Factory

By putting independent artists and creative thinking at the core of its approach, Creative Factory actively builds the relationship between institutions and creative practitioners, creating a stronger, more resilient cultural sector for Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley.

## Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)

### The Middlesbrough Settlement

MIMA have developed a long-term model of collaboration, working with residents and local organisations in North Ormesby to make creative projects that revisits the Settlement model and updating it, asks 'what might a Settlement for the twenty-first century look like?'

## Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

### The Black Path

The project brings together community historians, artists, environmentalists and local residents to celebrate the historic Black Path in South Teesside, creating a striking and unique artwork along part of its length.

## Reimagining the Steel Gala

Through intensive engagement with the Dormanstown community and Corus Sports & Social Centre, Tees Valley Arts supported partners to re-create the annual Steel Gala which has been held for many years in Redcar.

## Social Life of Steel

In partnership with Tees Valley Arts, this project will enable the public to tell their own story of the social and cultural history of heavy industry in Redcar, collected as a unique archive.

## Stockton Borough Council

### Greater Tees Carnival

Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) shared its professional experience and knowledge of carnival and celebration with communities across the Tees Valley. The project will create a high quality, vibrant community carnival model that is created with and by Tees Valley communities.

## Theatre Hullabaloo

Drawing on Hullabaloo's pioneering child-centred artistic model through a dialogue between artists and children, the company developed two new productions:

- Lullabub: working with new parents and their babies on the theme of lullabies and creating a new play space.
- Spirits of the Sea: an immersive storytelling performance for children aged 7 years and above, that toured community venues across Tees Valley.

## Tees Valley Arts

### Real Tees Valley

Diverse groups of young people from across the Tees Valley worked with professional filmmakers to make a series of over 30 short films about young people's views on place and identity. Over 2,400 people watched films as part of the Visual Stories of Youth Film trail in pop up locations across Tees Valley.

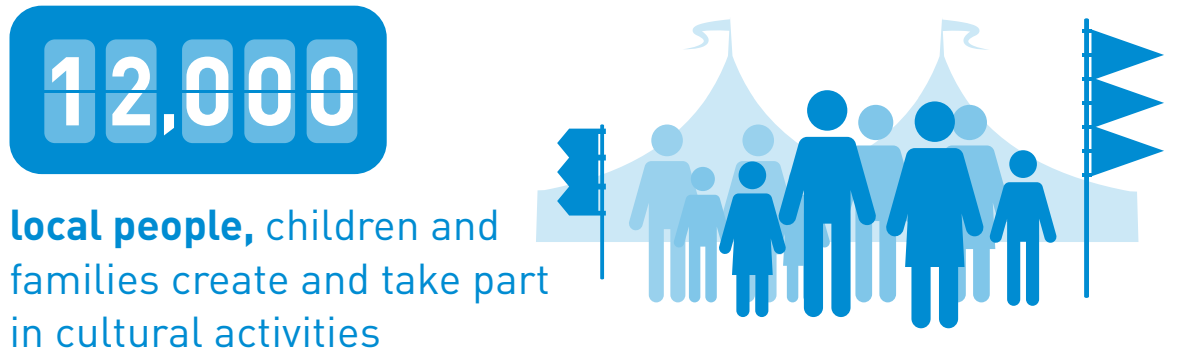
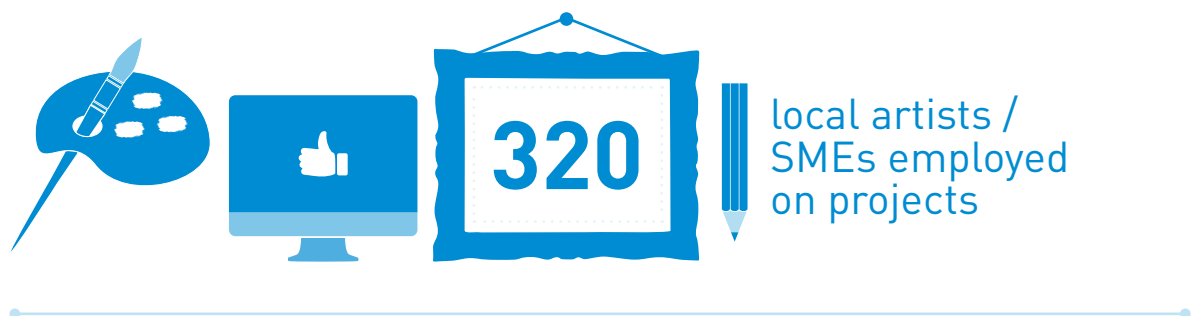
## Tees Valley Museums

This consortium of the five Local Authority museum services have developed three pilot projects, to test new approaches to reaching and engaging visitors:

1. A Playful Welcome: Increasing family engagement.
2. "Museum by Me": Increasing community involvement and interest in local heritage.
3. My Heritage Story: Improving literacy through schools engagement.

# HEADLINE FINDINGS SUMMARY:

**Over a four-year programme (2018 - 2021) Great Place Tees Valley delivered:**



# HEADLINE FINDINGS:

## 1.

The reach and engagement with GPTV has been significant, including amongst diverse population groups and geographies



## 2.

GPTV has led to increased collaborative working across the Tees Valley for practitioners in the cultural, creative and heritage sectors

## 3.

The impact of the programme on children and young people, especially through the Real Tees Valley programme, has been transformational in respect of increased confidence and ambition and a positive sense of place







**4.**  
Participation in the programme supported increased community confidence and sector capacity building

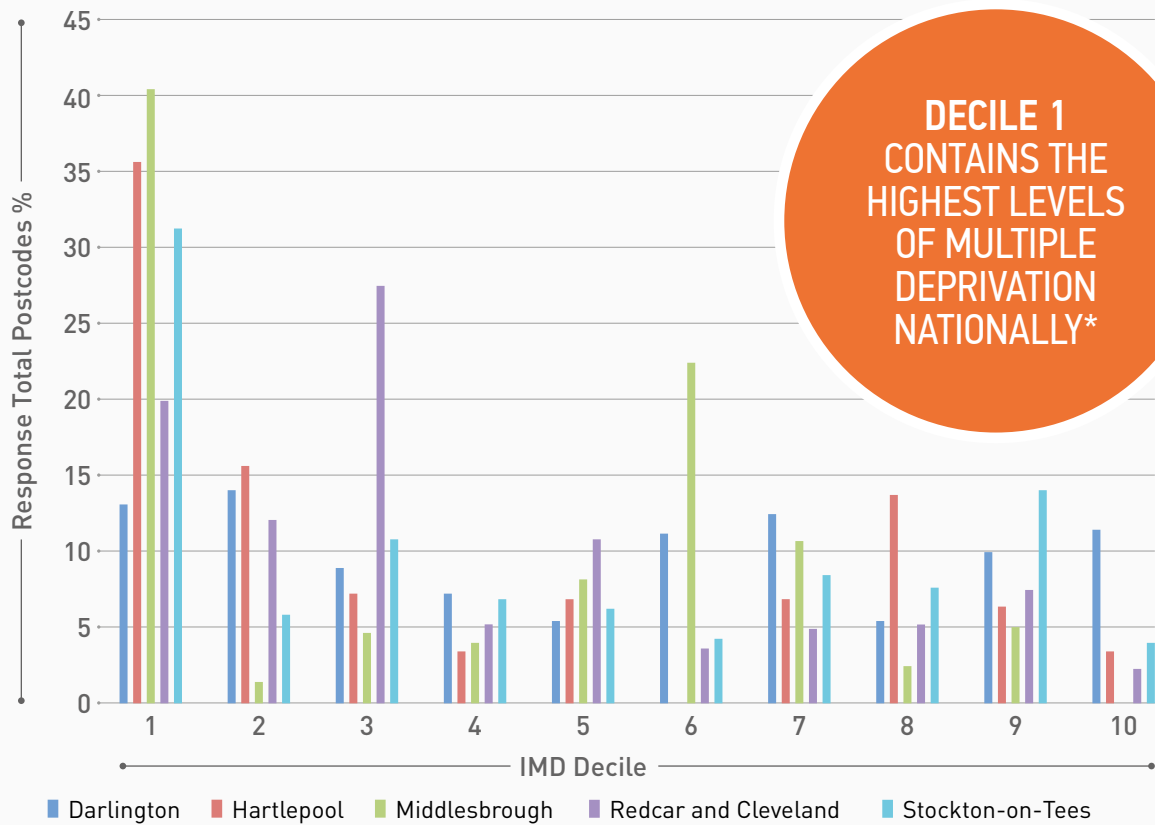
**5.**  
The potential to coalesce the Tees Valley through culture and creativity was realised despite the area's varied geography



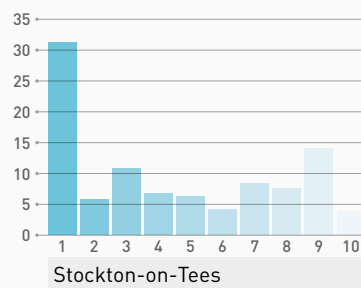
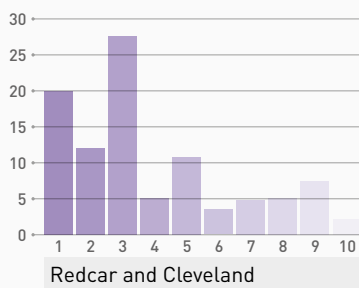
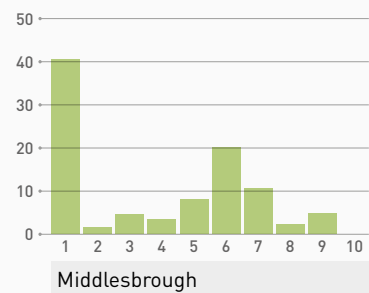
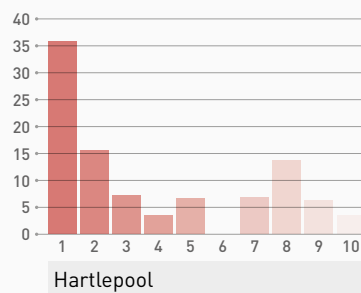
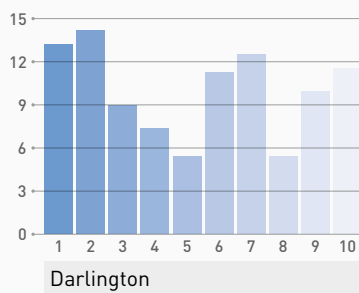
**6.**  
Some communities were harder to engage than others, meaning that initial programme aims had to be modified

# HEADLINE FINDINGS:

## Local Authority Great Place Participation by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile



**DECILE 1  
CONTAINS THE  
HIGHEST LEVELS  
OF MULTIPLE  
DEPRIVATION  
NATIONALLY\***

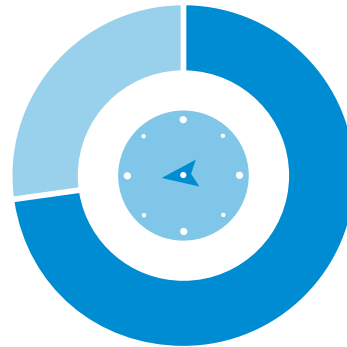
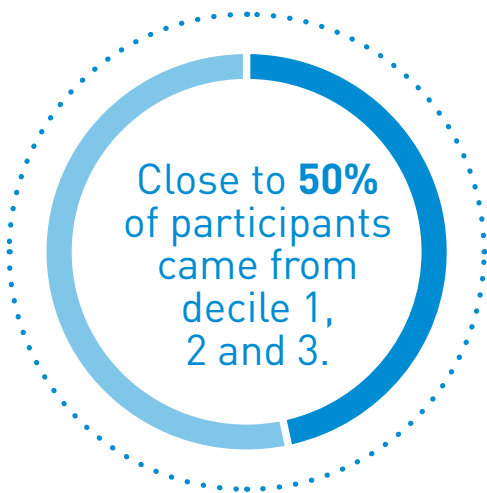


\* "decile 1 contains the highest levels of multiple deprivation nationally" IMD 2019

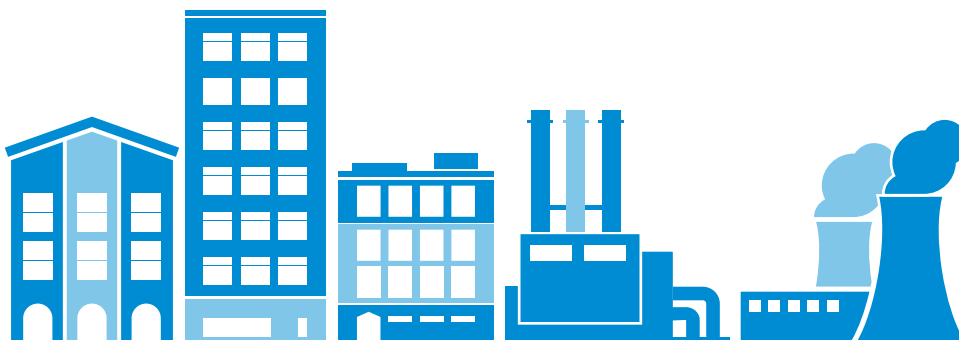


# HEADLINE FINDINGS:

Key outcomes across the IMD decile



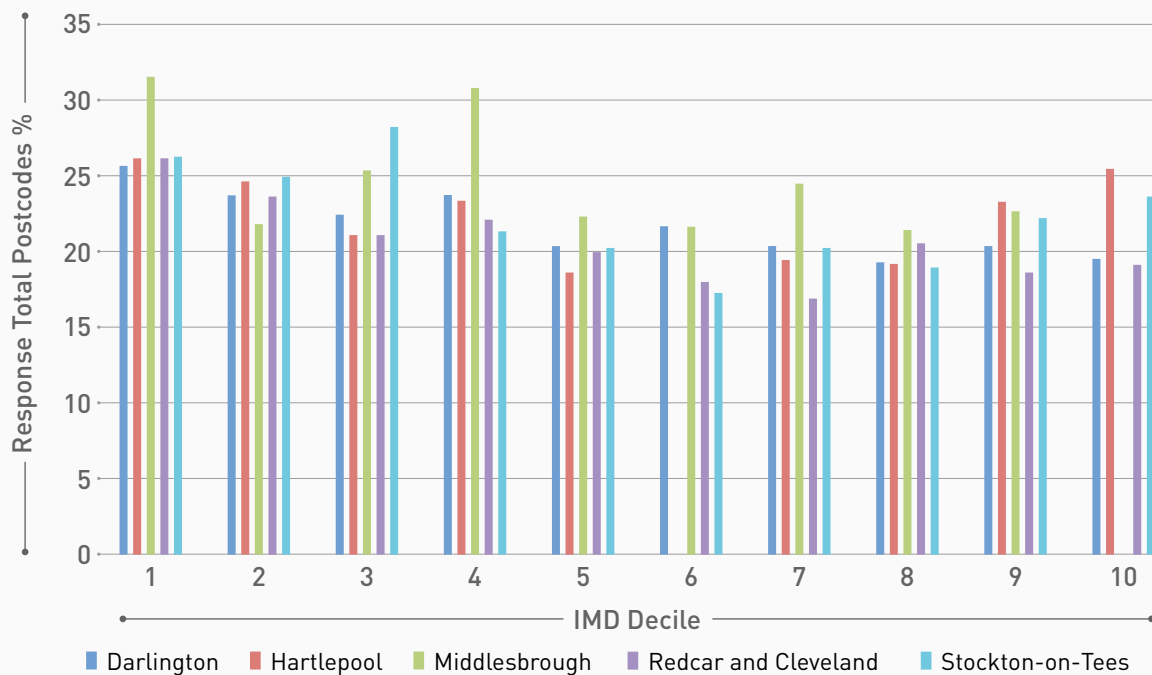
The programme also had reach beyond the Tees Valley with **18%** of participants visiting from outside the area.



**26%** of recorded participants were drawn from areas within decile 1 of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, consisting of some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS:

Participation in the programme amongst young people 5-24 across the IMD decile



### 1. GREAT PLACE TEES VALLEY ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVE TO ENGAGE THE WHOLE OF TEES VALLEY IN THE PROGRAMME'S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE OFFER

**The reach of the programme surpassed national trends of engagement with arts and culture amongst lower socio-economic groups:**

- 26% of recorded participants were drawn from areas within decile 1 of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, consisting of some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country
- Close to 50% of the recorded participants came from decile 1, 2 and 3
- Over two thirds of audiences were from the Tees Valley Combined Authority area, with many of the participants consulted (40%) attending cultural activity and venues in their local area for the first time
- The programme had significant reach beyond the Tees Valley with 18% of participants visiting from outside the area



## 2. GREAT PLACE TEES VALLEY ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVE TO INCREASE PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS

The programme demonstrated a series of successful collaborations and partnerships, including the Greater Tees Carnival (Stockton Borough Council) and Tees Valley Arts, delivering projects that reached across all five boroughs

- Over 70% of project partners reported collaborative working as a key contributor to their success
- Collaboration between cultural organisations and other public sector agencies, charities, health providers and creative businesses increased by on average 12%
- New local cultural partnerships and effective collaborations will be key assets in the future delivery of a regionally responsive skills offer

## 3. THE PROGRAMME ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVE TO INCREASE A POSITIVE SENSE OF PLACE AND BELONGING, ESPECIALLY AMONGST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

22% of all participants in the Great Place programme were children and young people aged 5-22 years

- Significant participation amongst young people within the most deprived Wards of Tees Valley
- The success of the Great Place projects amongst children and young adults was a result of shared programme values on the importance of placing young people at the heart of the creative process
- Projects across the Tees Valley were united by a commitment to co-creating creative content with high levels of participant involvement
- Feedback from young people provided powerful evidence of the programme assisting them to use the creative process to advocate for an optimistic and positive narrative regarding the place where they live
- The 'Real Tees Valley' (Tees Valley Arts) project produced 27 films by young people that were screened across the region, providing a powerful visual counter-narrative for areas too often represented as blighted by dereliction and decline



# HEADLINE FINDINGS:

## 4. PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME SUPPORTED INCREASED COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE AND SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING

**Participants showed a demonstrable willingness to take part in a range of cultural activities, leading to improved skills and confidence**

- The programme offered networking and capacity building for practitioners and early-career creatives in the cultural and heritage sectors
- The programme successfully delivered practitioner training to support leadership of cultural activity with marginalised groups
- The programme supported public dissemination of the work of young artists and students that increased confidence and led to enhanced career opportunities
- Participation in the programme helped local artists to exhibit at larger venues outside of the area

## 5. GREAT PLACE TEES VALLEY HELPED IN COALESCING THE AREA THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND HERITAGE

- Qualitative data demonstrated increased participation and engagement and willingness to travel across the Tees Valley for cultural events and activities
- Participation data was uneven across the region (with over 50% of recorded participants residing in Darlington and Hartlepool)
- Whilst participation data revealed that people from all parts of the Tees Valley engaged in the Programme, reach was not confined to major conurbations
- The potential to coalesce the constituent areas of the Tees Valley around culture and creativity was achieved in spite of the constrained geographies of a number of its major conurbations





## 6. PARTICIPATION OBJECTIVES IN SOME PROJECTS WERE DIFFICULT TO MEET

**Some communities, including re-settled groups and Roma communities, did not engage in spite of targeted participation initiatives**

- It was not possible to establish reasons for lack of engagement which created challenges for evaluation as only the views of those who did engage has been evaluated
- Evaluation mitigated this by ensuring that focus group findings including the views of participants from a diverse range of communities including from varying ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds
- Overall Great Place Tees Valley was highly successful in engaging audiences from areas where uptake of cultural activity has historically been low, although this was not always possible to achieve







## CONCLUSION AND LEGACY CONSIDERATIONS:

The evaluation confirms that a number of significant changes can be seen across the lifetime of Great Place Tees Valley. In particular, the rise of a shared vision and the willingness of Local Authorities to support and develop an infrastructure for culture has noticeably improved during the lifetime of the programme.

**E**qually significant has been the way, through their cultural outputs, including films, local carnivals, art exhibitions and performances, participants in the programme have shown how proud they are to live in the Tees Valley.

This confidence was achieved by placing communities at the heart of the creative process. Therefore the evaluation strongly supports the view that cultural regeneration can only be achieved with residents holding an equitable stake in development. In spite of the gains made through increased engagement and local confidence, further growth and collaboration remains constrained by considerations such as uneven access to the internet (exacerbated during the time of the pandemic), as well as local transport infrastructure. Whilst the evaluation evidenced a willingness to travel across the region for cultural events, the report supports the view that strategic investment in mass transit is a requirement of effective cultural regeneration.

Overall, with the investment provided through the Great Place Programme the Tees Valley's cultural and environmental assets have been harnessed to provide a meaningful and positive impact on people's lives. However, the benefits accrued from increased confidence and a positive sense of place will only be realised if this is sustained through investment in policy, infrastructure and venues, skills and training, especially for the many young people who have an ambition to stay in the region to develop creative careers.

The evaluation of the Great Place Tees Valley programme has been a rich and rewarding exercise. It has drawn on a wide range of research methods to reveal that an unprecedented engagement with culture, a range of settings and communities. The most important finding is that the programme's reach has been exceptional across the Tees Valley in parts of the area where uptake of culture in arts and heritage has traditionally been low. Taken together the projects represent a collective effort to work towards the growth of the region through creativity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Future investment in Tees Valley culture, creative and heritage assets must prioritise engagement of the area's most important asset: its people.
2. Future investment should also focus on providing opportunities for the many young people who have an ambition to stay in the region to develop creative careers.
3. Great Place Tees Valley benefits will only be sustained with further investment in policy, infrastructure and venues, skills and training.

