

Cumbria's Cultural Investment Priorities

Advocacy toolkit for people, place and economy

A practical, adaptable resource for strategic conversations



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What this advocacy toolkit is for

A shared, flexible resource to help partners make a consistent case for culture in different conversations.

Purpose	Objectives	What is Included
Make Cumbria's cultural contribution visible and relevant to strategic decision-makers. Provide credible evidence, common messages and practical asks that partners can adapt.	Connect culture to public priorities. Strengthen investment and commissioning conversations. Support organisations, networks, freelancers and micro-businesses.	Core strategic pitch. Audience guidance and policy briefs. Message builder and asks. Investment propositions, evidence guide and FAQs.



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How to use this toolkit

Select and adapt the material. It is not intended to be presented from start to finish every time.

1. START WITH THE AUDIENCE

Identify the decision, portfolio or relationship you want to influence.

2. CHOOSE THE STORY

Use the core pitch, then select the most relevant policy brief.

3. MAKE IT LOCAL

Add your activity, outcomes, evidence and a short human example.

4. MAKE A CLEAN ASK

State the action, resource, partnership or decision required.

Use shared evidence consistently, but adapt the entry point and language to the conversation.



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Tailor the conversation to the audience

Lead with the outcome each audience is responsible for, then show how culture can help deliver it.

Audience	Priorities	How Culture Delivers
Combined Authority	Cross-portfolio delivery, infrastructure and investment pipeline	Recognition, coordination, strategy and commissioning
Councils	Thriving places, communities, assets and access	Partnership, local commissioning and asset planning
Health partners	Prevention, connection, healthy ageing and trusted settings	Commissioning routes and sustainable delivery
Skills & education	Talent, retention, employability and progression	Brokerage, placements, apprenticeships and entry roles
Tourism, business & funders	Year-round value, place appeal, evidence and scalability	Product development, partnership and investment
Cultural organisations	Collective voice, infrastructure, collaboration and reach	Shared propositions, evidence and practical support
Freelancers & micro-businesses	Paid work, visibility, networks, space and progression	Fair commissioning and accessible opportunities



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The case for investing in Cumbrian culture

Cumbria already has the assets, reach and delivery relationships. The opportunity is to make fuller use of them.

Value in its Own Right	Connective Infrastructure	A Partner in Delivering Local Priorities
Creative expression, heritage, imagination, enjoyment and participation matter in their own right.	Culture links communities, visitors, young people, organisations and opportunity across a large and dispersed county.	Cultural organisations already have the people, places and partnerships needed to help deliver priorities around skills, health, communities and the economy.

Economic and social evidence strengthens the case; it does not replace culture's intrinsic public value.



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Culture in Cumbria: The Headline Numbers

Different measures describe complementary dimensions of value and should not be added together.

£153m	Direct sector GVA, 2024	ONS
c.5,250	Jobs supported within the sector.	ONS BRES
c.£113m	External cultural investment attracted since 2022.	NLHF, 360Giving, ACE
£500m+	Annual culture-associated visitor spend.	Genecon/Cumbria Tourism
c.1.05m	Annual engagements reported by 42 surveyed organisations.	Organisation survey
91%	Residents engaging in arts and culture at least annually.	DCMS
£243m	Annual health and wellbeing value from regular participation.	Frontier Economics/DCMS
11,600	Creative jobs across the wider economy.	Genecon modelling



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How cultural investment aligns with CCA priorities

This shows how cultural investment helps deliver the priorities the Combined Authority is already focused on.

Inclusive growth	Jobs, enterprise, supply chains and external investment.
Skills & employment	Creative capability, paid pathways, talent attraction and retention.
Visitor economy	Year-round experiences, longer stays and wider dispersal.
Health & wellbeing	Prevention, social connection and trusted settings.
Thriving places	Town vitality, adaptive reuse, identity and belonging.
Transport & access	Rural reach, participation, employment and evening access.
Environment	Interpretation, stewardship and low-carbon reuse.

Culture is relevant to multiple CCA portfolios, not only a standalone cultural brief.



Community, Inclusion & Rural Access

Access is a cross-cutting condition shaping participation, health, skills, employment and place.

The Evidence	What Works	What to Ask For
48% of surveyed organisations cite transport as a barrier to audience participation. 69% of independent creatives say transport or geography affects work across Cumbria.	Rural touring, mobile provision, community venues and locally selected programming take activity to people.	Plan cultural access alongside transport, work, education and services. Sustain community-based delivery and work with under-served communities.

Belonging, affordability, confidence and communications matter alongside physical access.



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Strong Delivery & Constrained Capacity

Investment in people and organisational capacity helps cultural organisations work together, attract funding and reach more people.

What we're investing in	What it helps us do	Why projects are not enough
Leadership, coordination, producing and administration. Time to plan, employ people and manage partnerships.	Collaboration, fundraising, evaluation, audience development, shared evidence and programme scaling.	Short-term project funding rarely covers the core functions that secure partners, attract investment and sustain countywide impact.

Capacity is delivery infrastructure, not an overhead detached from outcomes.



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Investment Proposition 1: Capacity and Coordination

Build the connective function that enables countywide collaboration and cross-portfolio delivery.

The Opportunity	What Investment Enables	Decision Conversation
Dedicated staff time and resources to bring partners together, develop projects, share evidence and attract investment.	County-wide coordination. Fundraising and joint funding bids and partnership projects Evaluation and advocacy Audience development and scalable delivery	Who will convene? Which functions need dedicated resource? How will the CCA, councils and sector voice connect?

Immediate next step: scope the function, operating model and relationship with existing networks.



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Investment Proposition 2: Paid Creative Pathways

Translate creative interest into sustainable work, enterprise and wider-economy skills.

Early Exposure	Schools, participation and encounters with creative work.
Connecting Young People to Creative Careers	Visible routes, employer links and trusted advice.
Paid Placements	Traineeships, apprenticeships and commissions.
Entry Level Roles	Real jobs, fair pay and structured development.
Sustainable Careers	Progression, enterprise and reasons to stay or return.

Immediate next step: sustain and scale proven brokerage, traineeships, placements and entry-level roles.



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Investment Proposition 3: Place, Health and Visitor Programmes

Use existing cultural assets to deliver outcomes across multiple portfolios.

Healthier Communities	Thriving Places	Higher-Value Visits
Create practical ways for health services to work with cultural organisations on wellbeing, prevention and healthy ageing.	Activate town centres and civic assets through meanwhile use, flexible cultural space and local programming.	Package culture with accommodation, food and destination development to extend stays and seasons.



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Build a Clear Advocacy Message

A simple structure for organisations, networks, freelancers and micro-businesses to adapt.

1. Who we are/What we do	Purpose, place, people and activity.	"We are a rural touring network bringing professional work into community venues."
2. Outcomes we deliver	Name the change, not only the activity.	"We reduce isolation, widen access and sustain community spaces."
3. Evidence & opportunity	Use one or two numbers and a short example.	"Demand is growing, but transport and coordination limit expansion."
4. Our ask	Request a specific action, resource or partnership.	"Partner with us to extend delivery into under-served communities."

Keep the message short enough to say aloud. End with the decision or next step you want.



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A Menu of Practical Asks

Choose one or two asks that match the audience and opportunity.

Recognise	Partner/Commission	Invest/Enable
Reference culture in a strategy. Invite cultural representation into a board or working group. Treat culture as delivery infrastructure.	Commission a programme or feasibility study. Connect culture to health, skills, tourism or place teams. Share data, referrals, venues or communications.	Provide multi-year core or coordination funding. Fund paid work and evaluation. Protect assets, provide affordable space and address access barriers.

A strong ask specifies who should do what, why it matters and what happens next.



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Using the Numbers Responsibility

Use each measure for its intended purpose and avoid creating an unsupported total.

Direct economic measures	GVA and employment within defined industries.	Describe direct sector scale.
Visitor-economy estimates	Spend, jobs and GVA linked to culture-motivated activity.	Explain how the estimate was calculated and avoid overstating certainty.
Wellbeing and social-value estimates	Wellbeing or life-satisfaction values.	Do not present as cash savings or available budget.
Survey evidence	Activity, reach, outcomes and constraints reported by respondents.	State the sample and avoid claiming complete coverage.
Case studies	Specific examples of delivery and impact.	Explain how change happens, not universal impact.

**Do not add direct GVA, visitor modelling and social-value estimates together.
Cite source and year.**



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Common Questions and Clear Responses

Short answers to assumptions that can weaken or distract from the investment case.

“Isn’t culture leisure?”

Culture has intrinsic value and is also productive activity, visitor infrastructure, employment and social infrastructure.

“Why fund core capacity?”

Partnerships, fundraising, evaluation, producing and coordination require people and time.

“Does this only benefit the Lakes?”

The ecology is countywide and culture contributes to skills, health, belonging, towns and rural access.

“Is this only about large organisations?”

Anchors connect to national opportunity; smaller organisations, freelancers and venues provide local reach.

“Why not create new pilots?”

Where demand and impact are demonstrated, sustaining and scaling proven approaches can create more value.





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The Invitation: Act Now and Build the Framework

Combine immediate action with the strategic evidence and governance needed for long-term investment.

Act Now	Build the Framework	First Conversation
Embed culture across portfolios. Invest in capacity. Create paid pathways. Scale proven models. Protect and activate assets.	Countywide Cultural Strategy. Cultural Infrastructure Framework. Shared outcomes and evidence. Governance and accountability.	Agree ownership and sequencing. Select the first proposition to develop. Identify one or two practical early actions.

Recognise • Invest • Connect • Scale • Champion.