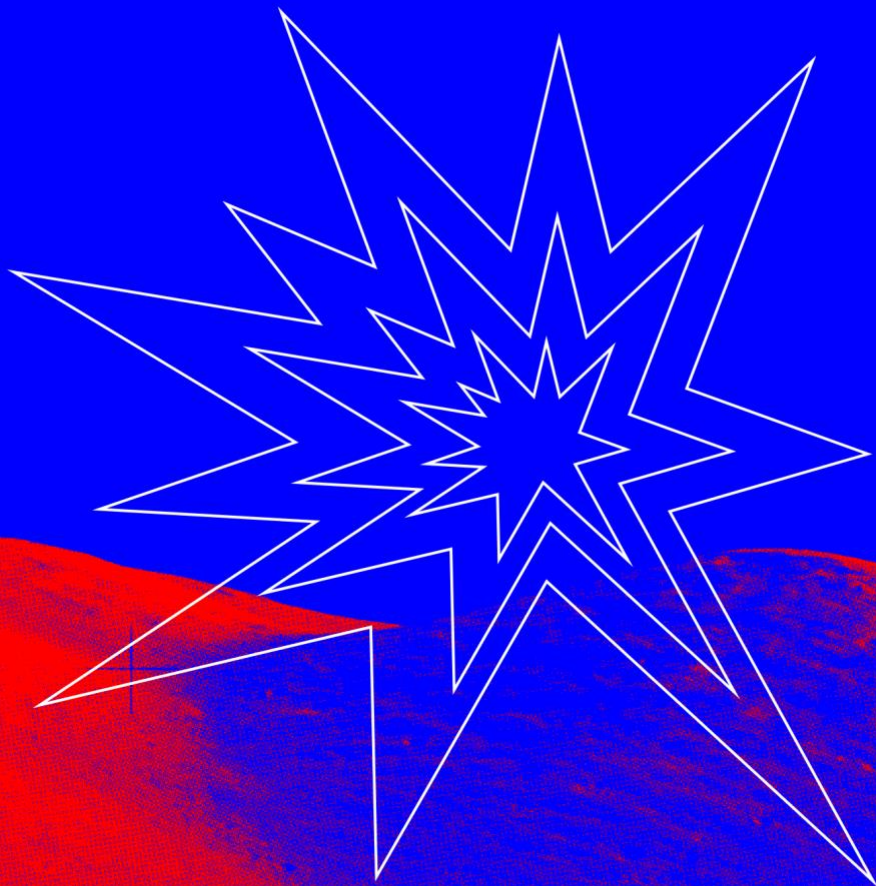
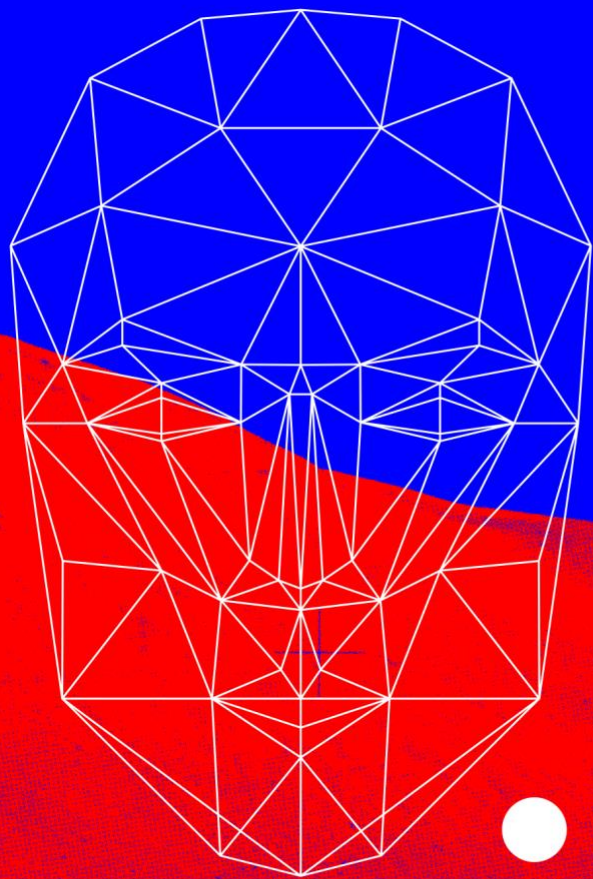




WILDFIRE

THE
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WITHIN

Final Evaluation

November 2024

Counterculture Partnership LLP

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1. Executive Summary

Counterculture Partnership LLP was appointed by Wigan Council in early 2024 to design and deliver an evaluation of “The Fire Within” – Wigan Borough’s manifesto and 5-year plan for culture, launched in 2019. The main aims of the evaluation were to identify and assess the delivery and impact of the strategy to date including the main successes, achievements, challenges, and opportunities encountered by local delivery partners and how these might inform future plans for culture in Wigan. The process entailed a combination of desk-based research and stakeholder consultation, carried out between April and September 2024.

In summary, the evaluation found clear evidence that The Fire Within, with its distinctive vision and strategy for culture in the borough, has helped to:

- 1. Increase investment, ambition, capacity and momentum in Wigan’s cultural sector;**
- 2. Put Wigan’s culture, heritage and creative practitioners ‘on the map’, transforming perceptions of the borough regionally and nationally as a place for culture to thrive;**
- 3. Engage and celebrate Wigan’s creative young people and cultural communities; and**
- 4. Bolster relationships internally and with key partners and investors.**

Analysis of local data found that at least £60m was invested in Wigan’s cultural sector between 2019-24. Of this £24m came from local sources and £36m external. This equates to £1.50 of additional investment leveraged into Wigan for every £1.00 of local funds spent.

Wigan’s Cultural Partnership Steering Group, inaugurated in April 2022, has maintained its commitment to supporting the vision of the manifesto, by connecting ambitions and setting out aspirational aims and objectives for the borough into the future, in the face of unforeseen challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

A refreshed manifesto is due to launch in 2025 which will embed the work to date and take culture and heritage in Wigan to the next level. Consultation with local partners during this evaluation identified potential areas for improvement with regards to branding and design, access and inclusion, awareness-raising and engagement, and infrastructure. These should be taken into consideration, along with the following key opportunities and priorities:

1. Maintaining investment through coordinated fundraising activity;
2. Continued focus on youth voices and cultural opportunities for children & young people;
3. Continuing to invest in talent locally and providing spaces for it to thrive;
4. Consolidating and building on existing collaborations and partnerships; and
5. Deep community consultation to hear clearly what residents want from programmes.

2. Scope and Approach

2.1 Context

The Fire Within was Wigan Borough's manifesto and 5-year plan for culture, from 2019-2024. Full details can be viewed at www.thefirewithin.org.uk, which also explains how and why the Manifesto was developed, as follows:

"The Fire Within Cultural Manifesto emerged from a detailed consultation with cultural sector partners and community groups commissioned by Wigan Council, supported by Arts Council England, and researched by expert consultants Maria Brewster, Debbie Chan and Sue Potts. Their research mapped what cultural activity was already taking place and looked at how improvements could be made to attract large scale funding, develop a network of artists and increase resident participation in the arts, heritage and culture.

Five themes were formulated by artists, cultural organisations and community groups to focus and ignite their collective energy across the five years to develop culture and deliver improvements linked to health and wellbeing, economy and tourism.

Themes for each year included:

- 2019 - Wigan's Future Artists and young people
- 2020 - Digital Wigan
- 2021 - Health and happiness
- 2022 - Every community needs a stage
- 2023 - A new Heritage

Internationally renowned and locally based artists AL and AL then transformed this work into a visually stunning document that has acted as the framework for the borough's creative transformation.

A new Culture, Arts & Heritage Team was formed to work alongside the many existing cultural, arts and community organisations to enable and facilitate delivery of ambitions within the Manifesto. Funding to support the delivery of the new Cultural Manifesto was agreed by senior council leaders and politicians.

To date the work completed is already making a significant contribution to the sector's long-term aims. Programmes of work in Wigan Borough have shown real benefits to residents and communities whilst contributing to a shift in perception, with the borough now recognised for its re-energised cultural offer and creative talent."

The Manifesto takes its inspiration from Wigan's distinctive history, cultural heritage, and contemporary creative practice, setting out what was essentially a theory of change - uniquely expressed as 'Spark', 'Ignite', 'Fuel' and 'Fire' - along with a five-year delivery plan.

The delivery plan was developed in 2019, prior to the arrival of COVID-19. As elsewhere, delivery was significantly impacted by the pandemic, with some activities and objectives no longer capable of being delivered in the manner, to the extent, or within the timeframes originally envisaged. Surrounded by such uncertainty, a more 'agile' approach by partners to delivery was inevitably required. However, our assumption is that the intended outcomes and impacts for Wigan - its artists, cultural organisations, neighbourhoods, visitors and other stakeholder groups – have largely remained the same.

In light of this, our evaluation has focused less on assessing achievement of the specific objectives set out in the original five-year plan and more on assessing the extent to which the Manifesto has helped to deliver positive outcomes and impacts for Wigan, in line with the overarching theory of change behind it. This theory of change and how it has shaped our approach to evaluating the delivery and impact of the Manifesto are set out in the Evaluation Framework, which can be found in Appendix B.

2.2 Objectives

The evaluation set out to address the following main questions:

1. To what extent is there evidence that planned **inputs** (e.g. investment, grant funding, in kind contributions) were secured?
2. To what extent is there evidence that planned **activities and outputs** were delivered?
3. To what extent is there evidence that intended **longer-term outcomes and impacts** have been achieved, in line with the theory of change?
4. To what extent are these outcomes and impacts **attributable** to the strategy, as opposed to other factors in the wider strategic environment?
5. What have been the main **successes and achievements** to date?
6. What have been the main **gaps, weaknesses and challenges** in relation to the delivery of the strategy or its impacts, and what lessons can be learned from this?
7. What **future opportunities** exist to build on the manifesto and how might these be taken forward?

Section 3 of this report sets out our assessment of the main benefits delivered, illustrated through examples of selected successes and achievements.

This is followed at Sections 4 and 5 by consideration of the main lessons learned, in terms of the key gaps, challenges and opportunities identified, which could help inform priorities and plans for culture in Wigan for the next five years and beyond.

2.3 Methodology

The evaluation comprised the following activities, undertaken from March to September 2024:

- **Evaluation Framework:** this stage focused on the development and agreement of an evaluation framework, setting out in detail our understanding of the theory of change behind the strategy (i.e. what activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts it was intended to deliver for Wigan, and what inputs would be required to support this), along with our proposed approach to conducting and structuring the evaluation process. See Appendix B for details.
- **Desk-based review:** this stage focused on the transfer, collation and analysis of all existing available data and literature held by Wigan Council. Through this process, we were able to develop our understanding of what had been delivered, identify key gaps in the data and discuss with the Council and other delivery partners how best to fill these.
- **Sector consultation:** we presented the proposed evaluation framework to Wigan Cultural Partnership in May. It was agreed to hold a series of themed roundtables to obtain further insights from local partners who had been involved in delivering elements of the strategy. Three sessions took place between 4 and 11 July 2024, respectively focusing on (1) Creative Hubs, (2) Children and Young People and (3) Programmes, Partnerships and Commissioning. 11 people participated in those discussions. Following these sessions, data collection forms were sent out to those and other key partners to capture further data relevant to our research. Each form was individually tailored to the theme and organisation in question. 26 were issued (see table below). 14 responses were received.
- **Analysis and reporting:** key findings from our desk-based review and sector consultation were then compiled and analysed, culminating in this report.

<i>Children and Young People</i>	<i>Creative Hubs</i>	<i>Programmes, Partnerships & Commissioning</i>
1. Curious Minds 2. Everyday 3. Wigan & Leigh College 4. Wigan Council Culture Team 5. Wigan Libraries 6. Wigan's Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) 7. Wigan Music Service 8. Wigan Youth Zone 9. WigLe Dance CIC	10. Castlefield Gallery 11. Cross Street Arts 12. Culture Network 13. Leigh Spinners Mill 14. Open Eye Gallery 15. The Fire Within 16. The Old Courts 17. The Snug 18. Wigan Little Theatre	19. Down to Earth 20. Haigh Woodland Park 21. Lancashire Mining Museum 22. Lancashire Wildlife Trust 23. Light Night 24. PRIDE 25. Streets Apart 26. Wigan Libraries

3. Successes and Achievements

3.1 Overview

The Cultural Partnership Steering Group was inaugurated in April 2022, following initial delays linked first to capacity and then to the pandemic. With representation from a range of key stakeholders, it has continued its commitment to supporting the vision of the Manifesto, by connecting ambitions and setting out aspirational aims and objectives for the borough into the future. It is clear that Wigan Council recognises the value that the cultural sector brings to the borough, and its officers will continue to work together across directorates and departments, alongside key partners, to sustain and develop activity. Culture provides a continued opportunity for Wigan Borough to benefit from economic growth, regeneration and development opportunities for health, tourism, economy, jobs and skills.

In summary, there is clear evidence that the Manifesto, with its distinctive shared vision and strategy for culture in the borough, has helped to: increase investment, ambition, capacity and momentum in Wigan's cultural sector; put Wigan's culture, heritage and creative practitioners 'on the map', transforming perceptions of it regionally and nationally as a place for culture to thrive; engaged and celebrated Wigan's artists, young people and creative communities; and bolstered relationships internally and with key partners and investors, such as Arts Council England (ACE), National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Manchester International Festival (MIF). Selected stakeholder quotes and a case study illustrating these outcomes and impacts are presented below.

Putting Wigan's culture, heritage and creative practitioners 'on the map'

"The Fire Within exhibitions put Wigan clearly on the map in the Northwest."

"Exhibiting artists really benefitted from wider audiences seeing their work and it enabled many to develop further in their careers as artists."

"We explored Wigan's unique environments and biodiversity through creativity."

"We showcased unique stories and perspectives from our communities."

"Creative placemaking and regeneration made a strong impression that really shone a spotlight on Wigan."

"I think it was unfortunate that Covid then came, and perhaps undermined efforts a little bit, but it certainly put Wigan on the map in terms of its commitment to culture."

"When we talk about being a Wigan based organisation, it means something now that it didn't mean before."

"We are now able to tell our story in a different way."

Increasing investment, ambition, capacity and momentum in Wigan's cultural sector

"It has brought funding into the borough, and increased awareness and availability of culture for residents."

"The Manifesto document was inspiring - often these documents are quite dry, but I felt it did have the voice of artists behind it. It allowed us to demonstrate our ambition."

"There's a real appetite for culture in Wigan, for sure - we're a creative town."

"TFW brought a real sense of professionalism to Wigan - it really upped the ante."

"The Manifesto has snowballed - it's given us a momentum we've never had."

Engaging and celebrating Wigan's creative young people and cultural communities

"The Manifesto helped develop a bit of a shared language around culture and schools / young people."

"Young people from the borough were represented in a really positive way."

"A more community-led way of working has really worked, getting into the nooks and pockets of Wigan, really hyper local."

"Some older people might say there has always been a scene, but as someone younger coming through. I think I've definitely noticed that it's livelier and busier now...just having more places to go within communities."

Bolstering relationships internally and with key partners and investors

"Artists across the borough made connections and continue to be in contact, collaborating on projects and supporting one another."

"The Manifesto brought the town together, creating new links between groups of artists, bringing a quality cultural offer to our town."

"We developed new partnerships on a local and regional level to enhance the reach and impact of our work."

"The Manifesto enabled partnership working, advocacy and drive to develop new work and collaborate."

"The Manifesto built upon existing cultural activity and opportunities with key partners to add value to new initiatives developing in the Borough."

CASE STUDY: The Fire Within at The Galleries – ‘The Beating Heart of the Manifesto’

A brand new, ground-breaking cultural space, also named The Fire Within, was created at The Galleries to launch the Manifesto in 2019. Opened by Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England (ACE), this initiative took an innovative approach to public space by transforming a partly vacant shopping centre in the heart of Wigan town centre, which was already suffering decline due to the retail downturn, into an inspirational hub for culture. The space exhibited treasures from Wigan’s museum collection, alongside newly commissioned artistic displays by artists from across the Borough, attracting increased footfall and new audiences into the shopping centre.

The space also included a 20-metre ‘Emoji Stage’ for live performances (which included new wave band the LYNCHS, poet Louise Fazackerley, Wigan Youth Orchestra, WN Dance Company, SunCurves, Zach Carpenter, The Surgeiacs and performance artist Anna FC Smith) and housed digital screens with content exploring Wigan Borough’s Cultural Manifesto.

The main use of the performance space was pre-pandemic, between May 2019 and Feb 2020. It was used for various key community events including a Leigh Film Society monthly Saturday family cinema screening, a theatre performance by Wigan & Leigh College, a book launch, Christmas carol concerts, The Music College’s end of year gig, Holocaust Memorial Day, and International Women’s Day. It became a daytime social hub for local young people, particularly college students.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the use of the space. However, Wigan Council’s culture team saw an opportunity to maximise it during lockdown as a venue for digital broadcast, streaming Pride in 2020, the council’s Christmas programme Frost Fest, and wellbeing festival Well Fest. It was also used as a location to shoot a film by WigLe Dance.

The Manifesto launch event on 11 May 2019 showcased talent from across the borough. 400 people attended, with 23,762 visits recorded to The Galleries overall that day - an increase of 2,652 (12.6%) on the same day from the previous year. There were a further 16,781 visitors to The Fire Within in the first 12 months post launch.

For the launch event, six former retail shop units in the Atrium of The Galleries were renewed and curated by artists AL and AL, who are from and live in Wigan Borough, creating launch exhibition *Satellite of Love*. AL and AL worked alongside 25 local artists and the council’s museums and heritage teams, curating four newly commissioned artistic displays as well as the ICONS gallery.

A second exhibition, *Love is A Rebellious Bird*, was launched on 2 November 2019, attracting 12,000 visitors - this complete refresh of the four units explored issues including climate change and equality, with exhibits from 10 artists, predominantly women.

CASE STUDY: The Fire Within at The Galleries (continued)

The launch of Year 2 of the Manifesto took place on 19 September 2020 at the Fire Within exhibition opening of *We Will Always Be Together xx*. Curated by AL and AL, the exhibition opened the rescheduled Digital Wigan programme, exploring the transformation of reality, the computer age, and the transitions our lives pass through each day as we spend as much time online in digital worlds as we do in reality. In the five weeks the show was open, before the second lockdown, it attracted over 3,000 visitors. During the closure period, a film of the exhibition was produced and made available online.

Sparks - the cultural incubator programme at The Fire Within - saw up-and-coming local musicians and bands supported with use of rehearsal space within The Galleries complex, including The Lathums, Lottery Winners, Joe Astley and Stanleys, all of whom went on to achieve success with sold out gigs and major record deals. Wigan Council seeks to continue the ethos of the Sparks programme with projects such as the Open Eye Hub Fellowship and the Doc Fund, offering local creatives access to space, mentoring and resource to develop their practice.

The Fire Within cultural space delivered art and heritage to residents, visitors and shoppers who would not normally be engaged in creative experiences. It delivered a regular programme of creative workshops to further engage new audiences and signposted to other cultural activity available across the borough. It opened six days per week, Monday to Saturday (11am-3pm) in its first year, with events programmed in advance each Saturday and throughout the week.

The project was shortlisted in 2020 for the national MJ Achievement Awards 'Innovation in Property' category.

"I know numerous creative professionals who have travelled across the UK to visit The Fire Within and all are in awe. It is an influential space for young artists and it is an educational space for everyone... an incredible contemporary arts scene accessible to the borough for free!"

"The quality and diversity of The Fire Within exhibitions and events are right up there with what major cities, let alone towns, aspire to. The richness and variety of the displays; the shocks and surprises which they contain; the evocations of past, present and future; and creative connections between the local, national and international."

(Creative practitioners)

"I've never seen anything like this before, especially in Wigan."

"I think The Fire Within makes people proud of our town."

"Really good to see Wigan Council giving people the opportunity to showcase their talents."

(Visitors)

Figure 1: Making music at TFW.

The following sections of the report set out further evidence and analysis of successes and achievements - expressed through case studies, testimonials and, where available, quantifiable outputs, outcomes and impacts. Further details and examples can be found in the tables at Appendix C which draw together data, insights and testimonials provided by local partners.

These have been grouped by the evaluation areas set out in the evaluation framework in Appendix B, although it should be noted that many activities (such as the example given above of The Fire Within at The Galleries) are relevant to more than one theme.

- **Investment** – investing in Wigan’s cultural innovators and artistic community.
- **Children & Young People** – providing exceptional creative & cultural education in Wigan; galvanising and developing Wigan’s young people through culture.
- **Creative Hubs** – developing resourceful and stimulating cultural networks; amplifying Wigan’s cultural scene; developing and supporting Wigan’s artists and cultural talent.
- **Programme, Participation and Commissioning** – celebrating Wigan’s unique heritage and identity; producing World Class cultural events and commissions in Wigan; attracting new artists and cultural talent; engaging and collaborating with local communities.



3.2 Theme: Investment

Investing in Wigan's cultural innovators and artistic community.

Wigan Borough's ambitious five-year Cultural Manifesto - The Fire Within - has provided a catalyst for the long-term transformation of cultural provision across the borough. Historically, there has been a significant underinvestment into Wigan Borough, including a lack of Arts Council England (ACE) funding. A key objective of the Manifesto was to attract more large-scale funding and investment to strengthen and grow the cultural sector and to increase resident and visitor engagement in arts and cultural activity. There is evidence that it has achieved this.

A Culture, Arts & Heritage Team was formed in 2018 to work alongside Wigan's many existing cultural, arts and community organisations. This team was tasked with driving forward the Manifesto, delivering investment in the arts, increasing activity and changing perceptions of Wigan Borough as a cultural destination (tying in closely with the wider Greater Manchester Cultural Strategy). Funding to support the delivery of the Manifesto was agreed by senior council leaders and politicians from April 2019 for five years.

Analysis of data provided by Wigan Council (see summary table below) indicates that at least **£60m was invested in Wigan's cultural sector between 2019-2024**. Of this, £24m was from local sources and £36m external. This equates to **£1.50 of investment leveraged into Wigan for every £1.00 of local funds spent** – a net positive return on investment of 1.5:1.

Furthermore, the economic impact of having a vibrant cultural sector includes the wider benefits of artists' employment, town centre regeneration, and cultural tourism. [Research commissioned by ACE](#) concludes that for every £1 generated by the arts and culture industry, an additional £1.30 is generated in the wider economy. Growth of the sector supports local infrastructure and social mobility for residents, further supporting the economic case for investment.

Financial Year	Local Funds (£ million)	Investment Leveraged (£ million)	Total Investment (£ million)
2019/2020	4.842	1.992	6.834
2020/2021	5.028	1.939	6.967
2021/2022	4.102	1.922	6.024
2022/2023	4.928	29.157	34.085
2023/2024	5.144	1.013	6.157
TOTAL	24.044	36.023	60.067

Some notable successes and achievements, in terms of increasing investment into Wigan's cultural sector and cultural infrastructure, include:

- Wigan was named as one of only seven **ACE 'Priority Places' in the North West** in 2021, with the aim of increasing cultural investment and engagement. Alongside this came the development and delivery of an action plan by ACE, Wigan Council and its cultural partners, in line with ACE's Let's Create strategy, with a vision for the borough linked to the Manifesto aims, and offering support to key organisations. This work is believed to have already had significant impact and expected to result in further sector development.
- The borough now has four **ACE National Portfolio Organisations** (Curious Minds, The Old Courts, Thick Skin Theatre and Get it Loud in Libraries) that are collectively bringing £4.5m funding into Wigan borough from 2023-2026, helping keep talented local people in creative jobs, among other things. The council and its partners will endeavour to grow the number of NPOs further, in future rounds.
- In 2018 the National Lottery Heritage Fund (**NLHF**) awarded Wigan Council £1.3m towards a programme of capital works and activities to deliver the **Revealing Wigan Archives** project. Throughout 2020, despite delays due to the pandemic, work continued on the transformation of Grade II listed Leigh Town Hall, the new home for the archives. Doors opened to the public on 24 June 2021, making the borough's amazing collection of historic archives more accessible than ever.
- January 2023 saw the announcement of £20m support from the government's **Levelling Up** fund for Wigan's bid to establish **Haigh Woodland Park** as an arts, culture and heritage destination of national significance. The masterplan totalling £37.5m will create a new chapter for Haigh Hall, remove the building from the English Heritage at Risk Register and secure its future for generations to come. These funds supplement the Heritage, Nature and People project award from NLHF, totalling over £4m to renovate the Victorian Bothy Cottages and Plantation Gates (currently on the Heritage at Risk Register), creating a spectacular town centre gateway, whilst delivering a new Woodland Activity Hub in the heart of the Plantations. A further £85k has been awarded by ACE towards the 'Amphitheatre for a Tree' project that will see the development of a landscaped garden inspired by Wigan's history.
- **The Freelance Creative Practitioner Fund** was initiated to support local creatives during COVID-19. 57 local freelancers benefited in total across two rounds of funding, with nearly £70k invested in helping them maintain their practice during the pandemic. This programme was established 12 months ahead of the Manchester version and was the second largest investment of its type in Greater Manchester, after Manchester itself.

3.3 Theme: Children & Young People

Providing exceptional creative & cultural education in Wigan.

Galvanising and developing Wigan's young people through culture.

There is evidence that the Manifesto had a positive impact on the creative and cultural lives of many of Wigan's young people. Some notable successes and achievements include:

- £200K was invested in cultural education through Curious Minds and Wigan Council, with 13 projects supported through the **Deal for Communities Investment Fund**. These reached children and young people through innovative cultural education programmes in schools, at various cultural venues and hubs, and outdoors in the borough's green spaces. Various Wigan arts organisations including The Turnpike, Wigan Youth Zone and Wigan STEAM offered young people cultural activities involving dance, digital, theatre, carnival and more.
- Curious Minds was funded to develop a **Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)** for Wigan borough. Following a series of facilitated consensus workshops and planning sessions, and the forming of a steering group, **Wigan & Leigh Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)** was established in 2019 and a local plan put in place to meet ACE's [Cultural Education Challenge](#).
- Young people at risk of social and digital isolation were kept engaged during lockdown, with **1,800 Creative Care Kits distributed** to young people aged 13–20 years, and many cultural activities were moved online and widely publicised.
- In April 2021, 40 young dancers from across Wigan, working with **WigLe Dance CIC** and professionals from Greater Manchester, performed and filmed *We Are Flame* at borough landmarks, directed by Hawk Dance Theatre. The piece enabled young talented people to get out of their homes and showcase their abilities after a year of stay-at-home instructions, lockdowns and other Covid restrictions.

Figure 2: Children dance to live music at The Fire Within.



CASE STUDY: WigLe Produces

WigLe Produces was a compelling 2-year programme of youth-led performance and participatory activity, supported by Wigan Council. It responded to the TFW Manifesto, with the aim of inspiring young people to be physically active and culturally engaged through dance. 24 people were supported into part-time employment through the programme.

"WigLe has helped my confidence so much and I've made so many amazing friends – it's like a family."

"I think it's had a huge impact on young people, like me, across the community in such a positive way."

"WigLe allows children to be creative and have fun in a healthy and social way."

(Young participants)

"I think, for us, it's given us a brilliant way to keep our children active & healthy whilst also connecting with other schools in the borough. It's also a brilliant way to celebrate and involved our children's families and friends, bringing everyone together."

"Wow! That performance was amazing! I can't believe how my little girl has grown in confidence in such a short time. It's so special for us to all be here as a family too, supporting her."

(Teachers and parents)

"We have seen significant impact on the health, emotional, social and educational lives of these children and young people. This has been in the form of increased confidence & social skills as well as the physical and mental health benefits of taking part in dance as a regular part of their improved, more healthy, lifestyles. Also, increased opportunities for young people to explore dance as a professional career prospect, by disrupting pathways into the professional sector for Wigan's young people. We have also worked closely with teachers & schools to add value and a high-quality dance offer for local schools whilst also maintaining close relationships with children's families; bringing the community together at regular events to celebrate the young people of our borough."

(WigLe Dance CIC)

CASE STUDY: Wanderland

Lancashire Wildlife Trust's *Wanderland* project delivered 36 community workshops over 9 green spaces, 24 family-focused events and 20 activities for young people. *Wild Arts* was delivered in partnership with Wigan STEAM, offering workshops to help connect young people with nature, in schools and at pop up locations. Over 4,249 young people (including their families) were engaged. Over 30,000 people visited Pennington Flash to see Luke Jerram's 'Floating Earth'.

"It's great work, raising awareness of environmental issues and connection to nature."

"It's nice to see the kids so engaged in the workshops and my 3-year-old showing interest in drawing."

"I loved seeing the bees and the tiny frogs in the meadow."

(Workshop participants)

"Many parents commented that getting their family out into green spaces was something that they felt inspired to do a lot more of in the future. They acknowledged that bringing art and nature together was an effective way to encourage their children to learn more about the world around them. For some, exploring the spaces around them and learning about the historical, cultural and environmental significance, brought about a sense of connection and pride within their area."

(Lancashire Wildlife Trust)

CASE STUDY: The Chance to See Fund

This fundraising collaboration between Wigan band, The Lathums, and Curious Minds, aims to bring 'joy, hope and positivity' to young people of all backgrounds in Wigan, through creative experiences. Inspired by a lyric from The Lathums' 2021 single, *How Beautiful Life Can Be*, this fund was created in response to the cost-of-living crisis and inspired by the band's own successes having been supported in their music as teenagers and as part of their further education. The fund is currently allowing young Wigan artists to access creative and cultural experiences of all kinds, by removing financial barriers to participation.

"Music makes me feel like I am wanted in life – it is the only thing keeping me sane."

(A young funding recipient)

CASE STUDY: Let's Dance

In 2019, WigLe Dance CIC hosted a borough-wide dance event. Across a week of activity, *Let's Dance* engaged 760 young performers from 40 schools and community groups who performed for over 900 of their friends and family. WigLe worked with 40 artists including professional dancers from Company Chameleon, MA students from Salford University Emergence Dance Company and Boogie Storm dancers, as well as Wigan School Games organisers. Fantastic stakeholder feedback was received for *Let's Dance*. WigLe also managed to generate enough income to run the event again in 2021.

"Thank you for organising such a wonderful event! The pupils loved creating a piece of dance for fun and the love of dance! The organisation was smooth and efficient, yet relaxed and easy going. It definitely created a good atmosphere for pupil confidence and support. We will be back on-board next year."

(St John Fisher High School)

"The Let's Dance Showcase has now become Wigan Borough Dance Festival and is one of the biggest youth dance events in the country - the funding we received allowed us to test the model and develop those relationships with schools."

(WigLe Dance CIC)

Figure 3: A WigLe Dance performance.



3.4 Theme: Creative Hubs

Developing resourceful and stimulating cultural networks.

Amplifying Wigan's cultural scene.

Developing and supporting Wigan's artists and cultural talent.

The Manifesto supported Wigan in offering a vibrant and varied range of creative and cultural hubs for its residents. These were varied and plentiful, from ambitious capital projects like King Street's Heritage Action Zone and The Royal Court Theatre, to pop up spaces supporting the practice of local artists. The borough's hubs provided Wigan's creatives with learning and rehearsing space and performance opportunities, and its communities with places to gather, discover and enjoy culture. For example:

- The new **Wigan Archives at Leigh Town Hall** allows in-person access to both physical and digital records, dating back 800 years. The education room welcomes groups for talks, events and performances. The team appointed new recruits to focus on the volunteer and outreach programmes. The archives have highlighted pioneering men and women who helped shape local communities, providing a new cultural attraction for local residents and visitors from across the region. Window displays have also featured work from local heritage groups and artists on a rolling programme.
- **Castlefield Gallery** provided a pop-up space in the former Marks & Spencer store in Wigan Town Centre as part of The New Art Spaces scheme. This scheme began in 2009 offering multiple properties across Greater Manchester and the North West as testing ground for experimental and large-scale creative project development. Use of the space was available to members of the Castlefield Gallery Associates membership initiative, allowing them to develop their creative practice at a very low cost.
- A key heritage building, **Leigh Spinners Mill**, is one of the finest mill buildings in the country and is Grade II Listed. The Leigh Building Preservation Trust, a registered charity, developed a scheme to acquire and restore the Mill, committing to its long term, sustainable future as a cultural, community and commercial asset to the region.
- Culture features heavily in the **Leigh Strategic Regeneration Framework**, which aims to reinvigorate Leigh Town Centre, with input from cultural partners. The SRF creates a vision for a vibrant and thriving town centre for Leigh with culture at its heart, supporting the arts and creative sector to grow. Over £30 million funding has been secured to deliver these projects.
- In Wigan town centre, Historic England awarded funding to complete a **Heritage Action Zone** in King Street with cultural live/work space and the redevelopment of the Royal Court Theatre. King Street Heritage Action Zone won the **Future Cities Forum 2021 National High Street award** in Dec 2021. Judges referenced the HAZ's work in reusing and reviving historic buildings such as the Royal Court Theatre to transform the town centre, and its links with the Fire Within Cultural Manifesto.

- In January 2022, the Council took on the **Turnpike Gallery**, re-opening the building after two years of closure to the public and safeguarding the only purpose-built gallery in the borough.
- Many artists from the **Cross Street Arts** community made impactful contributions to Manifesto projects. Anna FC Smith's *Water Well* piece featured in The Fire Within's *Satellite of Love* exhibition - she also ran children's workshops and was commissioned to create a pageant vehicle as part of Boxing Day celebrations. Brian Whitmore's *Wild Calligraphy* brought art to Wigan's beauty spots. Brian, Louise Fazackerley and other artists collaborated on *Paper Birds* in which 1,000 origami paper cranes, each with a poem attached, hung from the ceiling to create a murmuration of handmade birds in flight. Various Cross Street artists also worked and exhibited at the former M&S Space converted and utilised by Castlefield Gallery as part of their New Art Spaces initiative (see above).

Figure 4: A performance outside The Turnpike Gallery.



CASE STUDY: The Snug - The Early Doors Club

A council-driven UK Shared Prosperity Fund initiative allowing small venues to showcase the work of grassroots and amateur artists, with 64 music events in 5 venues across 4 towns in Wigan Borough - acoustic nights, full-band performances, school choir and brass band showcases, Q&A sessions and more. From September 2023 – April 2024, 31 events were delivered, providing paid opportunities for 56 artists, and an audience of 2,313. 11 businesses were supported through the post-event incentive scheme across the 4 towns. 42.7% of survey respondents used the scheme, which created an economic boost for surrounding businesses on Fridays from 8PM - 10PM, a time Wigan Council confirmed had experienced a drop in footfall and spend. In a survey conducted by The Snug, 100% of people rated 5/5 when asked "Overall, do you think The Early Doors Club project is a good idea?"; and when asked "How important do you think it is to have projects like The Early Doors Club in your community?" 95.5% rated 5/5, with the rest rating 4/5.

"This project will help us re-launch what we started before COVID with hosting music events – it's really exciting for us and will allow us to raise the profile of the venue."

"This will help keep more people in and around the town centre. It will help our neighbours, as people will spend locally. We already have a good relationship with them but this project will enhance that."

"I want this project to transcend to the next generation so they feel proud of where they are from. We want to provide a safe environment, enjoy some company, enjoy some great music and then go and explore what the area has to offer."

"Although we are a place of worship, we want to open our doors to the community. Putting on a variety of different events connected to this project will also allow us to reach the younger generation. The collaboration with The Snug is really exciting and the expertise they bring will encourage people, even though it is a church, to come in because it's such a lovely space to meet up and enjoy music. The project will only benefit us and the community."

(Partner venues)

"The customers we receive from The Early Doors Club have helped fill a dark spot that we regularly see on Friday nights past 8pm."

"We can always tell when an Early Doors is in town. There is a big influx of people who come in after 8pm - it's always great to see."

'We've definitely noticed more diversity in our audiences - we're getting people from underrepresented groups who wouldn't normally come out to an event that's late at night. They want to come out something a bit earlier. We're getting younger people, and older. We've got an LGBTQIA+ group that meets up at the Snug as well, and they hadn't heard of us before. People set foot in the places that we've created and feel welcome straight away.'

(Nearby businesses)

3.5 Theme: Commissioning, Programme and Participation

Celebrating Wigan's unique heritage and identity.

Producing World Class cultural events and commissions in Wigan.

Attracting new artists and cultural talent.

Engaging and collaborating with local communities.

The five years of the Manifesto offered an exceptional array of rich and varied events, programming and artist commissions in Wigan. Local creators were showcased and celebrated and contributions came from a diverse range of visiting artists. Stakeholder feedback clearly shows that the programme engaged and supported the wellbeing of Wigan's communities, attracting and inspiring audiences from Wigan and beyond.

Creativity could be discovered far and wide across the borough: in exhibition spaces, theatres and libraries, natural green spaces, on the streets and online. Visual arts, photography, film, poetry, music, dance and festivals were all on offer. Festivals were vibrant and varied.

Artists AL and AL programmed a series of flagship exhibitions and commissions at The Fire Within. The Turnpike, Museum of Wigan Life, WigLe Dance, Wigan STEAM, Leigh Film Society, The Old Courts, Open Eye and many other cultural organisations came together to provide an exciting range of activities appealing to a wide range of audiences.

- The programme around the 50th anniversary of the opening of **Wigan Casino**, including an NME commissioned exhibition by photographer Francesco Mellina, attracted an audience of 18,553 across 4 weeks, exploring the impact of this iconic club and its continued legacy.
- The **Museum of Wigan Life's Make Some Noise Exhibition** explored the borough's musical heritage with events and talks, achieving an audience of 11,758.
- **Get it Loud in Libraries** worked nationally with emerging artists, supporting a Thomas Headon gig at Leigh Library and two sell-out gigs in Ashton.
- A stunning commemorative mural for **Pete Shelley**, lead singer of the Buzzcocks, was commissioned for his hometown of Leigh, adjacent to Leigh Civic Square.
- The **Rugby League World Cup Cultural Programme** saw local libraries and the Museum of Wigan Life hosting a series of free rugby-themed events and school visits, including poetry workshops and author talks. The team worked with Julia Lee (the first woman referee in rugby league) on a heritage project celebrating Life with the Lionesses, with an exhibition revealing the untold story of women in rugby league. Wigan Life Centre also hosted Open Eye Hub's photography exhibition, exploring the thrill of rugby league fans, by local photographer Emma Case.
- The Old Courts' **Wigan & Leigh Arts Festival** was a two-week programme of over 60 arts and cultural events and activities involving 30 local, regional and national partners and engaging 6,000 people across the borough.

- 300 young people participated in the two-day **Wigan Dance Festival** led by WigLe Dance.
- **Light Night** brought around 30,000 visitors to see internationally acclaimed artist Luke Jerram's Floating Earth at Pennington Flash, with a further 4,500 visitors attending the light trail at Wigan Pier. It is now a recognised highlight in Wigan's cultural calendar.
- The colourful two-day King Street Summer festival **Streets Apart**, created by a consortium of nine Wigan and Leigh based organisations, attracted 12K visitors.
- **Green Heart** – Wild Calligraphy saw local calligrapher and poet Brian Whitmore commissioned for site specific works across Wigan's green heart, offering positive statements to residents on their daily walks during lockdown.
- Castlefield Gallery, The Turnpike Gallery and Future Everything achieved an audience reach of over 5,000 with their **New Media projects**.
- Mental health awareness programme **Wellfest** was live streamed and achieved an online audience of 15K. Comments from participants included:

"I really enjoyed it – I feel it has improved my wellbeing. Great month to have it in January because of January Blues. Lots of talent and lots of laughter".

"I really enjoyed the event – I enjoyed being part of an audience again and listening to the poetry".

Figure 5: Streets Apart Festival.



CASE STUDY: Light Night

Light Night Wigan is a free outdoor light art festival featuring work from national and international artists. Light Night 2023 was the 3rd addition and marked a step up in scale and ambition, with a move to Grade II listed Mesnes Park and investment from Arts Council England. Light Night Wigan is driven by the Borough's Cultural Manifesto The Fire Within, building on The Deal 2030 and Wigan's vision to be a place where people want to work, live, visit and invest.

"Truly wonderful - the atmosphere in the park, the feeling between artists and the encouragement and support from the event team was incredible. It was truly magical. A very special event for us, we felt proud as punch to be a part of it. Really reminded us of why we do this."

"The festival was a blast, filled with good vibes and beauty! Your working process is human and friendly, really nice."

"It was welcoming, well attended, well run and well inspiring."

"Thanks so much for Wigan Light Night, it was a stunner and I was so thrilled and proud to be a part of it. You made it super-great - with such an amazing team making it happen... A joyous experience, especially wandering around realising how much the people of Wigan were enjoying the festival in their park."

(Artists)

"One of the best events Wigan has ever done. We come every year and we loved the fact it was in the park this year giving many more areas for big items/lightings - it was so much better than previous years, very impressed."

(Audience member)

Figure 6: Luke Jerram's "Floating Earth" at Pennington Flash.



CASE STUDY: Down to Earth

Down to Earth is one of 39 ACE-funded Creative People and Place programmes. Informed by extensive consultation exploring what residents want from creativity where they live, it is delivering three years of community cultural activity in Wigan and Leigh, from 2022 onwards. Focussing on natural and community assets and partners across Wigan and prioritising areas of deprivation, Down to Earth is empowering local people to grow their own sustainable arts and culture offer *"that happens within minutes, rather than hours, of our homes, schools and safe spaces... re- invigorating our post-industrial terrain by cultivating and nurturing world-class arts across the borough"* (see <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/down-to-earth/> and section 8.6 for more).

Figure 7: Down to Earth.



CASE STUDY: Heritage Action Zone – King Street and Streets Apart Cultural Programme

King Street was once the entertainment hub of Wigan - the Streets Apart project celebrated this history, and kick started a cultural revival. Led by a consortium of nine Wigan- and Leigh-based organisations on a mission to bring world-class cultural activity to King Street, this three-year project was supported by £120,000 investment from Historic England. The locally-rooted programme commissioned artists, local creative partners and community groups to co-create unique street art, podcasts, outdoor performance and more, culminating in the Streets Apart Festival in 2023 which transformed King Street for a jam-packed two-days, attracting around 12,000 visitors.

Pioneering outdoor arts organisation Emergency Exit Arts delivered a parade from Mesnes Park to King Street. The parade was part of Hi-Street Fest, a national project celebrating heritage and history, and featured two giant puppets: Farrah the Fox, a 5m-high mechanical puppet on a scooter; and Frankie, designed by 84 local young people and arts organisations. The parade was made up of 250 participants, including local dancers from WigLe Dance, Bom ta Bom percussion band, and young people with decorated scooters, wheelchairs and skateboards. The evening events included a programme curated by artist Darren Pritchard centring on LGBTQIA+, global majority artists and female DJs. Sunday focused on local creatives with a community programme including artist workshops, heritage tours, live music and dance performances. Engaging with 83 local artists in the planning and across the weekend, the festival was a huge success, laying the foundation for other large-scale events across the borough's town centres.

2019 plans by Arts at the Mill CIC (known locally as The Old Courts) to redevelop the Royal Court Theatre took a step forward with £1.27m funding secured from Historic England as part of a wider Heritage Action Zone scheme for King Street. The organisation also received additional funds from Power To Change. The refurbishment of the theatre is seen as one of the key catalysts for the regeneration of the area aiming to make King Street the go-to place for culture and leisure activities.

King Street Heritage Action Zone won the Future Cities Forum 2021 National High Street award in December 2021. Judges referenced the HAZ's work in reusing and reviving historic buildings such as the Royal Court Theatre to transform the town centre, and its links with the Fire Within Cultural Manifesto.

CASE STUDY: The Mine is Yours

The Mine is Yours (TMIY) was a partnership project between the Lancashire Mining Museum (LMM), Wigan Council, Peel L&P and Healthy Arts (HA), receiving just under £70,000 from NLHF and match funding of £20,000 from partners. Its aims were to create a stronger identity for the Lancashire Mining Museum, making it the flagship for mining heritage in Greater Manchester and a vital and vibrant community resource, increasing and diversifying its visitors and volunteers, generating new revenue streams and building a more sustainable future. Project activities included creative workshops, training programmes and resources, mining trails, installation of an audio soundstore and film of the project, and festivals of arts, heritage and mining in which 670 musicians and 460 actors took part with audiences of around 1500.

Audience feedback – festivals and trails:

"Magnificent to see the Miners' banners again! I used to love the gala days on Marsh Playing fields in Leigh when I was growing up."

"Was fantastic to hear the brass band, then the Miners' banners came through the gates - was definitely a sight to see!"

"Had a brilliant day, well done everyone involved for making it all possible."

"Well organised, the timetable programme worked very well. The opening procession with the brass band and mine workers was tear jerking. All the artist/ performers gave 100%. Brilliant day!"

"Really enjoyable mix of tangible mining heritage and natural trails, currently the intangible memories of places is difficult to imagine but through digital maps and illustrated booklets that won't be an issue."

"The walk was very interesting and pleasant (feet apart!) – I've liked discovering all these places I never knew existed even though I live quite near them."

Audience feedback - learning outcomes:

"(The history of the mining industry) has to be saved and kept alive for the future generations of children in particular. My children found it really interesting and I remember my Nanna's stories."

"I attended with young students who have little knowledge of the mining industry. Some thought a 'pick-axe' was something used in 'Minecraft'! Visiting enabled us to discuss and remember an industry from where a lot of our families grew."

"I was awe struck by it all. Although I remember the demise of the mining industry, I think it brought it home how big the impact was to whole communities and that this change has taken place within the space of just 50 years."

"I'm a nurse and part time farm manager. When people moan about our work shifts, I tell them of those kids in shafts 16 inches high for 13 hours a day. Curling up on kitchen floor too tired to eat!!"

Figure 8: Corrie Shelley Band performs at The Mine is Yours.



CASE STUDY: The Home In Your Heart

The Home In Your Heart programme was funded through the Deal for Communities Investment Fund and delivered by Sync Projects in a bid to connect local people with each other, improve confidence and promote social inclusion through arts and culture. Fourteen people previously disengaged from their communities, living with mobility issues or widowed came forward collaborate on work that has gone on to be exhibited at the Museum of Wigan Life – a major milestone for all of those involved.

"I didn't tend to leave my flat or do anything outside of my usual routine - I've had negative experiences with friends in the past but I'm so grateful for this project - it's been a real heart-opener. It's a real community spirit."

(Participating local resident)

Since January 2019, the group worked with acclaimed artist, Mark Storor, travelling the region visiting exhibitions and museums, sometimes for the first time. The collaboration helped to forge connections between residents and provided them with the confidence they needed to share their lived experience. They became subjects of their own expressive photographs and wrote accompanying poems capturing a memory important to each of them. The residents involved in the exhibition have now become 'Culture Champions' and aim to engage even more of their neighbours with new opportunities and apply for funding to help with ongoing projects.

4. Gaps, Challenges and Lessons Learned

4.1 Context

The cultural sector was one of the hardest hit by the arrival of the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Wigan Council and its partners implemented a proactive service recovery action plan. Its priorities focused on supporting cultural organisations, strengthening communities, economic recovery, and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents, including children and young people. The service continued to deliver a rich cultural offer online – residents were consulted on their priorities for culture during the pandemic to inform the programming approach. Culture was also included in the council's corporate recovery priorities, and the focus remains on supporting the cultural sector and residents' wellbeing during the **cost-of-living crisis**.

Cultural Manifesto activity in Year 2 was severely impacted and delayed by the pandemic with venues closed due to lockdowns and all major events postponed until 2021. Partners continued to adapt to the changing circumstances and where possible, continued with activity as planned, in order to meet Year 2 objectives.

The impacts of the pandemic and cost of living are still being felt. The financial struggle is ongoing for many cultural organisations with increasing overheads and decreasing revenue from ticket sales. For cultural organisations to be resilient and grow, a level of subsidy by local authorities will be required to provide stability and a base from which additional funds can be leveraged. This is particularly the case for organisations reliant on ticket income. The decision by Wigan Council to invest in its main anchor organisations through the **Community Recovery Fund** has paid dividends in helping to secure ACE National Portfolio status for local organisations for the first time and returning more than £2.6m of inward investment on the initial £600k investment from the council.

4.2 Local Factors

Accessibility and inclusion

"The Manifesto could have been perhaps a bit more accessible and a bit more inclusive."

"More consultation is needed to make events more accessible and inclusive – provision for people with disabilities, presenting information in different ways to accommodate different access needs, interactive exhibits, more seating, preferably undercover."

"Accessibility is key - it's a big borough, we need go even more hyper local. We have first-hand experience that different communities need bespoke offers – there can't be an assumption that one size fits all."

"Consider a relaxed / sensory event for disabled and neurodivergent audiences."

Manifesto branding and design

"I think the Manifesto brand was both its best and its worst asset at the same time – it could have been more inspirational, especially to young people."

"Having a TFW venue was confusing – if we hash-tagged it on our events around the borough, audiences would show up at the shopping centre."

"The design of the Manifesto document was overworked and not accessible to all audiences."

"The brand didn't get the buy in from the sector. It became something that people were almost trying to push away and work against rather than with."

"The yearly themes have at times been limiting to some organisations. General themes or values for the manifesto would work better to give the sector more flexibility to respond."

"We needed a clear action plan at the beginning, because that was a missing ingredient - joint investment and shared leadership on pieces of work is just critical, and allows the brand to be more easily shared because everyone's got a vested interest in it."

"The brand was really useful in being able to design programmes that were themed around the manifesto but very quickly the brand got assigned to a space in the shopping centre, rather than to a manifesto that everybody should be hopefully buying into and responding to."

Awareness-raising and engagement

"Lack of awareness was an issue. Not everyone in the sector fully understood what [the Manifesto] is and who it is for and how it should be used by them."

"We had strong social media engagement but room for improvement with younger age groups. We recommend more tailored content for Instagram and TikTok for future Light Nights."

"Digital platforms have limited reach for promoting events as not all audiences are digitally connected. Marketing and promoting events is key, and there needs to be more support for this."

"Engaging 16-24-year-olds has been a struggle. While dedicated events have slightly increased participation in this age group, we've not had enough impact."

"Engagement and participation at some events were challenging. The appetite has certainly increased since the inception of TFW but culture is so subjective. Lessons learned would be more/wider consultation to assess needs, wants and appetite in the different areas across the Borough."

"Longer lead-in time should be given to maximise participation and outreach."

"I feel there were gaps in relationships within The Fire Within partnership. I feel these could be stronger moving forwards."

Infrastructure

"There's real lack of exhibition spaces in the town centre."

"Transport is a massive challenge - both artists and audiences face difficulties getting to and from events, which has impacted their decision to return for future events."

5. Future Opportunities and Priorities

A refreshed Manifesto is due to launch in 2025 which will embed the work to date and take culture and heritage in Wigan to the next level. There are already numerous transformational projects in train, with the £37.5m Haigh Hall masterplan leading the way, cementing Wigan Borough as a future regional, and potentially national, cultural destination.

A creative industries asset strategy will identify long-term sector opportunities for growth in the next 10 years and beyond, repurposing significant heritage sites for cultural use. This, alongside the emerging Wigan Borough Visitor Strategy, will further increase the economic value of the sector and its impact.

Consultation with local partners during this evaluation identified the following further opportunities and priorities to be considered for the refreshed Manifesto:

- 1. Maintaining investment through coordinated fundraising activity** - ensuring that organisations, some of which have grown quite quickly from recent investment, can continue to thrive *"instead of everyone rushing to scramble for funding all the time"*. More support and resource needs to be committed to developing more effective, joined up funding bids.
- 2. A continued focus on youth voices and cultural opportunities for children and young people** (e.g. creative education, training, career pathways) - *"We need to hear from new, inspiring young leaders and upskill them for the future."*
- 3. Continuing to invest in talent locally and providing spaces for it to thrive** - addressing the 'glass ceiling' that inhibits the local cultural ecology from growing. For example, the lack of infrastructure (space, transport connectivity); the challenging economic climate; and a lack of sustainability for many organisations. *"We need to be thriving on our own, and this needs to be sector-led, not council-led."*
- 4. Consolidating and building on existing collaborations and partnerships** which the first manifesto set in motion. *"The culture network is really getting going now in Wigan. I notice as a creative practitioner, it's a very supportive network. Obviously, everyone wants to be doing well themselves, but it doesn't feel super competitive."* *"We're slowly getting to know everybody else through the culture network - it's a really important tool that we need to keep developing."*
- 5. Deep community consultation to hear clearly what residents and communities want from programmes**, taking care *"not to try too hard delivering shiny new things when we have great assets right there in plain sight."*

6. Appendix A: Contributors

We would like to extend special thanks to Georgina Roby (Service Manager – Culture and Events, Wigan Council) for her help engaging local partners and providing vital information to support the evaluation process. We would also like to thank representatives of the following organisation who contributed through the roundtables or the provision of further data:

- Cross Street Arts
- Curious Minds
- Down to Earth
- Jess Fernhart
- Light Night
- Lancashire Mining Museum / The Mine is Yours
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust / Wanderland
- Leigh Film Society
- Open Eye Gallery
- The Fire Within hub (at The Galleries)
- The Old Courts
- The Snug / Early Doors Club
- The Turnpike
- Wigan Council
- Wigan Libraries
- Wigan STEAM
- WigLe Dance

7. Appendix B: Evaluation framework

7.1 The Fire Within – Goals and Objectives

'Spark'

Wigan will:

1. Spark and commission homegrown talent.
2. Celebrate our unique heritage and identity.
3. Invest in our cultural innovators and dynamic artistic community.
4. Activate artists to transform our Borough's cultural vitality.
5. Welcome new talent into our inspirational Borough.
6. Collaborate with artists to make great works and stage World Class events.
7. Galvanise our new generation and kindle The Fire Within them.
8. Provide exceptional creative education to stimulate a sustainable cultural economy.
9. Empower people to produce social justice through the culture it makes.
10. Democratise the creative process and act to amplify unheard voices through culture.
11. Inspire The Fire Within us all to burn brightly with pride and belief in our Borough.

'Ignite'

The Fire Within 5-year goals are to:

1. Create culture-led transformation in Wigan. Seek and develop ambitious cultural opportunities for Wigan's creative talent.
2. Stage World Class cultural events and commissions in Wigan.
3. Nurture, nourish and connect Wigan's cultural talent to achieve our aims together.
4. Produce dynamic local and international collaborations with Wigan's cultural organisations.
5. Empower a people-led cultural identity inspired by Wigan's magnificent social heritage.
6. Amplify Wigan's flourishing and distinctive cultural scene.
7. Enable thriving creativity in Wigan through resourceful and stimulating cultural networks.
8. Support artists in Wigan on their journey from the seedlings of early years practise.
9. Invest in professional artists to make innovative, ground breaking work in Wigan.
10. Offer radical research archival access to stimulate and develop extraordinary Wigan stories.
11. Attract creative innovators to Wigan.
12. Provide exceptional cultural education in Wigan for future creatives.
13. Find cultural methods to benefit everyone in Wigan, in solidarity with the entire community.
14. Enhance life experience in Wigan, nourishing love and progress with unity.
15. Stay loyal to Wigan's roots, expanding social cohesion and growth.

'Fuel'

The Fire Within will accomplish the goals of our 5-year plan by:

1. **Securing investment** to stimulate artistic talent, cultural entrepreneurship and people-led cultural activity in unique local places.
2. **Activating dynamic creative hubs** which empower our cultural community to innovate, collaborate, network, connect and mobilise.
3. **Engaging, challenging and galvanising our young people** to take centre stage and show us new ways of seeing the world which create pivotal cultural innovations and experiences.
4. **Commissioning hyperlocal exceptional culture** which is inspired and driven to nourish our people's love of Wigan and their neighbourhoods, causing national interest and significance.
5. Focusing on the local communities, dreams and memories, **creating an arts and cultural programme** that responds to their hopes and wishes **to improve our community life**.

'Fire'

The Fire Within 5-year plan will ensure the culture we create:

1. Represents and involves artists, creative industries, cultural organisations, public sector and voluntary services in decision making.
2. Focuses on the people of Wigan, stimulating stories that have meaning and purpose, fuelling local mythologies which lead to social happiness and health.
3. Unifies everyone to work together and collectively take responsibility for delivering World Class events to the people of Wigan and beyond.
4. Stimulates national and international visitors, activating new partnerships which boost our economy, driving Wigan forwards in the Northern Powerhouse.
5. Enables everyone in Wigan the opportunity to be involved in celebrating our unique local traditions, social histories and magnificent heritage.
6. Will awaken untapped potential in Wigan's young people encouraging the local community to embrace the transformative power of innovation through creativity.

2019: Wigan's Future Artists

1. Establish a Local Cultural Education Partnership, with support from Curious Minds, who are dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people through great art and culture.
2. Spark creative programmes and develop cultural education in schools, colleges, cultural organisations and support a new generation of Wigan artists utilising the Communities Investment Fund.

3. Expand on creative progression routes for our new generation with the inspired team at Wigan School of the Arts, The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts and other cultural organisations.
4. Listen to young people, providing a voice for the new generation within cultural programming, tailoring activity to their needs.
5. Ignite The Fire Within aspiring young artists by creating platforms to showcase new talent.
6. Develop cultural incubator work spaces to attract and retain creative talent in the borough.

2020: Digital Wigan

1. Developing strategic collaborations with regional New Media Arts organisations Abandon Normal Devices, FACT Liverpool and Future Everything to generate co-commissions, touring programmes and festival housing.
2. Commissioning multi-sited digital public art works by Internationally renowned Wigan based artists AL and AL, as a linchpin for a year of digital activity to coincide with their solo exhibition at The Turnpike in Leigh, which explores Machine Intelligence and the future of this new sentient species.
3. Launching the new Heritage Lottery Funded digital archive, with the creation of a public searchroom, heritage exhibition space and expanded specialist storage strongrooms for the archive collections at Leigh Town Hall, providing a network of digital resources for artists and public.
4. Curating digital programmes across the Borough's cultural organisations which celebrate and connect our unique technological heritage to our digital future in Libraries, from WiganSTEAM, Leigh Hackspace, Get It Loud, The Turnpike and The Old Courts.
5. Staging new artistic interventions and approaches for utilising and sharing public space in The Galleries Shopping Centre at the heart of Wigan town centre, now currently vacated as a consequence of the digital online shopping revolution.
6. Exploring the potential of a digital hub, network lounge, multi platform performance and exhibition space for WiganSTEAM.

2021: Health & Happiness

1. Evolve and expand Wellfest, Wigan's health and wellbeing festival, as a showcase for rejuvenation and creativity in our Borough.
2. Collaborate with Public Health and Clinical Commissioners Group activity to focus on cultural activity that explores mental health, encouraging open dialogue and expression, giving voice which creates more understanding and eradicates stigma.

3. Galvanise the 15 Libraries in our towns across the borough, to work closely with our communities, and high- light exciting new scientific research, literature and publications focused on health and happiness.
4. Mobilise and explore Wigan's exceptional green spaces to stage cultural events and community activity. Haigh Hall has the largest area of ancient woodland in Greater Manchester. Wigan's Central Park (now Mesnes Park) was once host to an annual Carnival with 1500 performers and attracted 40,000 visitors.
5. Activate and promote Wigan's exceptional green network of canals through the borough, in partnership with The Canal and River Trust, highlighting the 23 locks of the Wigan Flight Canal Route, which according to World Heritage Expert John Hinchcliffe is 'one of the most impressive ensembles of canal infrastructure in the country'.

2022: Every Community Needs a Stage

1. Supporting the Royal Court Theatre development plan, which will provide a stage for a wide range of cultural events and performances.
2. Developing a first-floor project space at The Turnpike as part of the Leigh Cultural Quarter.
3. Collaborating with the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts at Trencherfield Mill to fulfil their potential in our Borough.
4. Partnering with the Royal Exchange Theatre Development programme to enable the creation of new works made collaboratively in community spaces.
5. Commissioning a socially engaged performance piece that embeds the collective making and sharing of new work in our Borough's communities.
6. Financially and practically supporting hyperlocal festivals, happenings and performances, opening resources and event spaces to collaborate, share and redefine social space.
7. Encouraging everyone to get involved in their communities, social groups and local projects as part of the incredible Wigan LGBTQ+ Pride Festival of equality and diversity.

2023: A New Heritage

1. Systematic and inspired cataloguing of Wigan and Leigh's Heritage, from personal stories to Museum archives, engaging volunteers with organisational support.
2. Continued support for Wigan's local heritage groups and projects.
3. Coordinating and promoting the visibility for the Heritage Open Days in our Borough.
4. Collaborating and commissioning creative residencies which explore heritage sites.
5. Continuing the development, which will being in 2019, of Wigan Pier as a cultural and entertainment centre.

6. Curating exhibitions of local icons and stories and the Heritage Lottery Funded Digital Archives in Leigh Town Hall.
7. Exploring Wigan's historical role in socialism, supporting the annual Diggers festival.
8. Repurpose significant Industrial heritage sites Trencherfield Mill and Spinners Mill for cultural use and locations for artistic production.
9. Exploring the culture of food in Wigan. Heinz in Kitt Green is Europe's largest food factor, Uncle Joe's Mint balls and Edward's Bakery have extraordinary local heritage and culinary success stories.
10. Collaborate with The Canal and River Trust as a co-commissioning partner across the Canal network in Wigan exploring the industrial transformation of the landscape and the technological creation of space and culture.

7.2 Theory of Change

Theory of change is a good practice methodology for planning and evaluating interventions (e.g. policies, strategies, programmes or projects) - particularly those that intend to promote or deliver societal changes. The methodology focuses on identifying the intended change(s) or benefit(s) that need to be delivered, then mapping *backwards* to identify a series of causally linked preconditions that will be required to achieve them, as follows:

- **Impacts** – the overall, ultimate changes or benefits to society that an intervention is seeking to achieve. These may be expressed or supported by a ‘vision’ describing the envisaged situation at a point in future by which the intended changes have taken effect and the intended benefits are realised.
- **Outcomes** – the specific changes or benefits (for individuals, organisations or stakeholder groups), which are required to bring about the desired impacts.
- **Outputs** – the specific deliverables that are required to achieve the intended outcomes, which the project activities are intended to deliver.
- **Activities** – the specific activities that are required to achieve the intended outputs, which the inputs are intended to deliver.
- **Inputs** – the resources required to deliver the proposed activities.



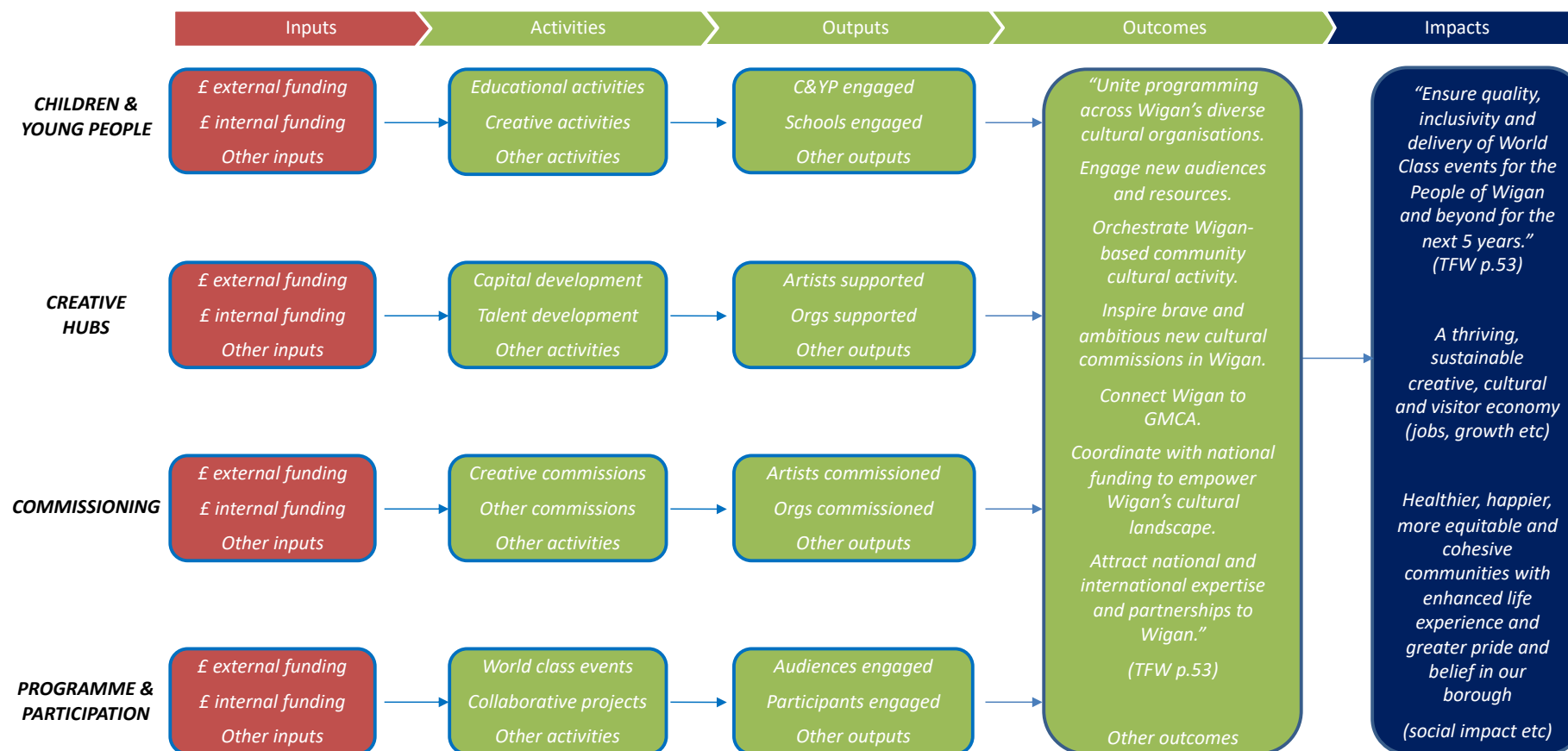
The following factors should also be identified and considered:

- **Enabling Factors** – conditions in the external environment that are expected to support the achievement of intended project benefits.
- **Risks** – conditions in the external environment, which may adversely affect the achievement of intended project benefits.

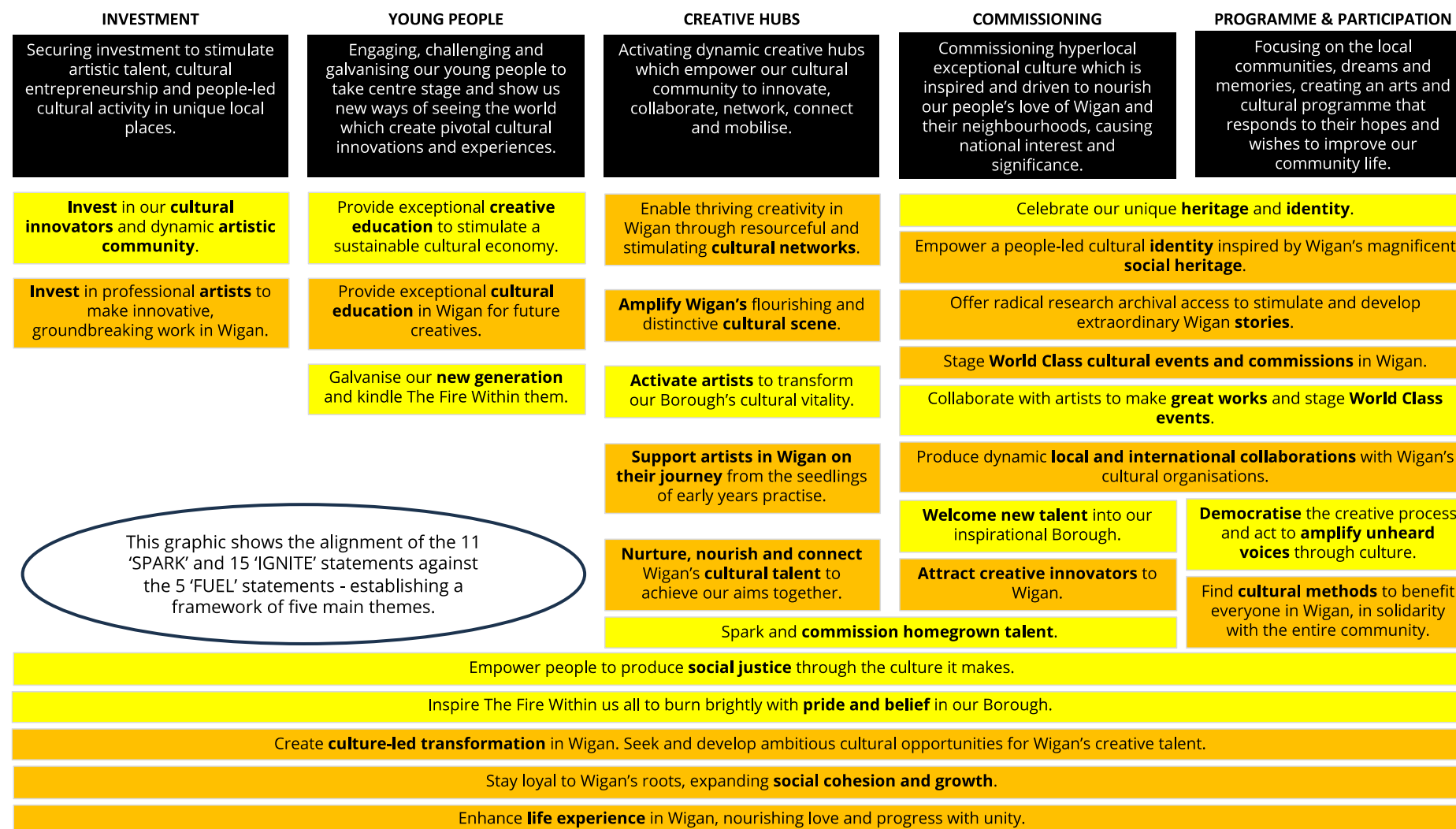
The main purpose of this methodology is to articulate the logic that underpins the intervention: how the proposed inputs and activities and outputs will lead to the intended stakeholder benefits (outcomes and impacts). This can be presented diagrammatically to help indicate this causality and chronology. This diagram is also sometimes referred to as an ‘Outcomes Pathway’ or ‘Logic Model.’

An inferred, high-level logic model for The Fire Within is presented in the diagram overleaf. This is then followed by a series of further graphics illustrating how a thematic evaluation framework was developed from the various goals and objectives set out in the Manifesto, linked to the inferred logic model.

Figure 9: The Fire Within – Inferred Theory of Change.



7.3 Strategic Framework



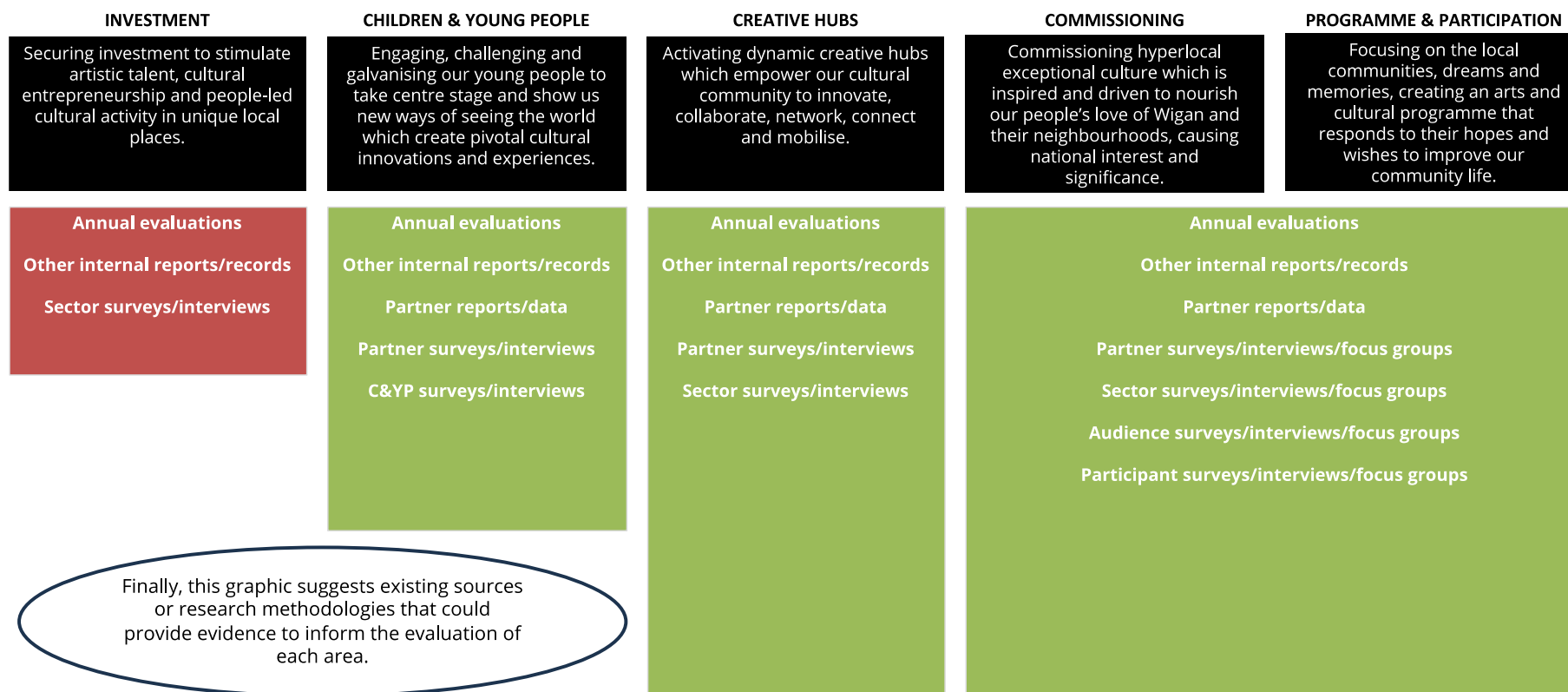
7.4 Evaluation Areas



7.5 Key Performance Indicators



7.6 Evaluation Methods



Sector surveys/data (job/growth). Audience surveys/data (visitor spend/external perceptions). ONS data (enterprise/employment counts, turnover/GVA).

Audience surveys/data (local benefits/perceptions). ONS data (IMDB - health & wellbeing, education & skills, child poverty etc).

8. Appendix C: Supporting Information

8.1 Overview

The following tables contain a summary of information provided by local partners to assist the evaluation (see section 2.3 for methodology and Appendix A for a list of contributors). In some cases; contributions have been reported verbatim. In others they have been summarised (for succinctness, or consistency of presentation). While we have endeavoured to present all information accurately and faithfully, some gaps or errors may have crept in. All content should therefore be considered illustrative rather than definitive.

8.2 Children and Young People

Organisation / Activity	No. of C&YP / schools engaged	Examples of other outputs & outcomes achieved
CIF Cultural Education Projects	50 schools 3,000 C&YP	3 schools supported on their Artsmark journey and Newbridge (gold standard) now aiming for Platinum status. - Arts Award – 90 Discover awards achieved to date with the following in progress: 280 Discover, 60 Explore, 20 Bronze, 8 Silver. 3 individuals trained as Arts Award assessors and 1 planning to do so. - Through the CIF funding, free Arts Award resources were available to all schools and community groups in 2020.

Organisation / Activity	No. of C&YP / schools engaged	Examples of other outputs & outcomes achieved
Wigan and Leigh Archives	78 different school classes 2,646 school children 2,505 engaged in C&YP activities	- One person supported into full time employment. - Four people supported into part time employment. <i>"The session was expertly delivered and very well targeted for our class. The learning was strong and valid. Really enjoyable session!"</i> (Teacher) <i>"Once again, a million thankyou's for the previous two days. I have immensely enjoyed my time at the archive."</i> (Placement student) <i>"[I've had an] excellent insight into the variety of tasks involved in running an archives. I feel well equipped with the skills and experience needed to undertake an Archives & Records Management MA and have enjoyed my time at Wigan & Leigh Archives!"</i> (Long term placement, who has since gone on to qualify as an Archivist and secured a permanent Assistant Archivist position at The National Archives)
Wigan & Leigh College	48 photography students engaged in projects including Wigan Arts Festival, Wigan Casino Anniversary programme and Light Night 6 fashion students worked with artist collective We Are Willow	<i>"Wigan & Leigh College made a strong contribution, providing mentoring and identifying professional development opportunities for students and alumni. They also provided numerous work experience opportunities through live projects and contributing to coursework."</i> (Stakeholder)

Organisation / Activity	No. of C&YP / schools engaged	Examples of other outputs & outcomes achieved
	on football shirt design for the WEUROS	
Light Night Wigan Icons project	6 schools	Media coverage including ITV's Granada Reports. <i>"The project was amazing! Darcie was amazed seeing her artwork in lights... She is so proud of herself... I can't thank you enough for the opportunity of being part of such a fantastic event. The amount of people visiting the park and sharing pictures of the art people have created is brilliant. Thank you again for Darcie's opportunity."</i> (Mum of competition winner)
The Turnpike	6 schools 4,342 C&YP	The Turnpike has continued to work with the Wigan and Leigh LCEP to create cross-sector lasting impact for the benefit of children and young people. As part of the Steering Group, The Turnpike leads on the Youth Voice Task Team, is making successful strides towards developing a Youth Panel for Culture for the Wigan Borough and joining the LCEP National Leadership Programme.
Museum of Wigan Life	161 schools 7,194 C&YP	Delivery of school workshops, Museum Minis.

Organisation / Activity	No. of C&YP / schools engaged	Examples of other outputs & outcomes achieved
Leigh Film Factory	1,550	- Work experience placements for two Year 11 students. - Financial support for young filmmakers, both local and national, via the Doc fund programme – 6 x £1K bursaries with mentoring from Northern Heart Film. 2 people supported into part time employment - Technical Operative and Event Operative.
STAT Zine	10 artist/writer contributors	- Local young person supported to produce a culture zine, by the Council investing in the first 3 issues. - First independent cultural zine in the borough - the relationship has continued and they are still active.
Wigan STEAM – Digital Families, Digital Imagination Club (for 11–16-year-olds)	Family activity – this number includes adults and children -15	Words used to describe the club include “fun” “engaging” “technological” “exciting” “innovative” “interesting” and “nostalgic”. <i>“It was fun, challenging amazing and spectacular and wonderful”.</i> (Young participant) <i>“Very informative - I learned something new.”</i> (Adult participant)
WigLe Produces	6,400	See case study.

8.3 Creative Hubs

Creative Hub	Activities delivered	Artists supported	Organisations supported	Outcomes achieved
Turnpike Gallery	A programme of exhibitions and commissions including a partnership project with Liverpool Biennial, showing a major film installation by Paris-based Algerian artist Mohammed Bourouissa.	123 artists exhibited	864 school participants	- Turnpike became a member of the GMCA Culture Portfolio, ensuring funding for a major two-year project 'The Making of Us'. 1 person supported into full time employment. 4 people supported into part time employment.
Open Eye Gallery / Hub	A series of photography commissions, exhibitions, workshops, community engagement, mentoring and talent development programmes.	15 artists supported	16 organisations support	Forward, Together: Wigan 50th Exhibition: <i>Employment</i> - 8 days freelance curator; 5 days curatorial assistant; 5 days x 2 freelance technicians.
The Old Courts	58 networking sessions. 144 training / advice sessions.	1526 artists supported 665 days of free space to develop work	617 entities supported 54 VSCE organisations supported	19 placements on live projects. 98.5% positive feedback from individuals and organisations.

Creative Hub	Activities delivered	Artists supported	Organisations supported	Outcomes achieved
		• 236 training and advice sessions • 11 artists supported with bids • 1330 artists/ producers supported • 75 networking sessions • 19 live placements		<i>"I've been involved with The Old Courts from the very beginning. As a blind musician they have always supported me."</i> <i>"It was a delight to work with a team who care passionately about their community, and the wider world, using the power of art to create connection, communication and understanding."</i> <i>"...extremely supportive and helpful, warm and friendly. They are a vital resource for Wigan."</i>

8.4 Commissioning, Programme and Participation

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
WEUROS Art & Heritage Programme	• Unique partnership of 10 host city local authorities, including Wigan & Leigh, came together with key	• The FA • Libraries Connected • Sporting Heritage	• 3,438 local participants • 22,949 audience visits	• 20 Wigan & Leigh College students received training from Getty, plus various work experience placements.

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
	partners to develop a nationwide museums and heritage programme, commissioning ambitious arts projects. • A series of 18 summer holiday football-themed heritage activities also took place, many based around Archives: Wigan & Leigh. • 74 sessions were held for participation/ education.	• National Football Museum • The British Library • Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Turnpike Gallery • 170 artists & creatives employed for 402 days • 18 community organisations • 21 schools and Wigan & Leigh College students took part	• 968,489 social media interactions plus over 1.4m PR reach	
National Land Art Competition -Tour of Britain	• Artist Dani Gaines created a series of roadside installations decorating the route of the September race.	• Worked with pupils from St David's Primary School in Aspull and a small number of volunteers	• Featured on the British Cycling website and included in global live TV coverage	• Shortlisted for the 2019 national prize and came runner up in the public vote.

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
Boxing Day Film '42'	Spectacular film created by AL and AL in collaboration with choreographer Amy Burdon of WigLe Dance and artist Anna FC Smith, to celebrate the renowned annual Boxing Day fancy dress party in Wigan.	6 King St DJs 10 WigLe dancers 10 Wigan & Leigh college students	Online audience in excess of 160K people	- Global online coverage. - Strong partnership with GMCA and their streaming programme.
The Walk – Little Amal	A welcome programme for Amal followed by a parade and production at the Edge led by The Old Courts, capturing stories of migration through music and poetry.	- MIF - The Old Courts/Edge - Manchester Street Poem - WigLe / Louise Fazackerly - Youth Brass Band - Wigan Age UK Choir	4,000 audience 40 participants	<i>"To see that her struggle need not define her... gives us (refugees and asylum seekers) all encouragement and hope".</i> <i>"In Leigh there were many platforms on which the far right put out negative things – but this was a situation where communities were actually defending (her) and calling out that behaviour – it encouraged positive connections and discussion in a way we've not seen before."</i> (Manchester Focus Group, including Wigan)

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
Open Eye Gallery – Future High Streets	A national Historic England commission looking at the changing dynamic of the high street from the perspective of local young people.	- Open Eye Gallery - Castlefield Gallery - Wigan & Leigh College - B:YOU	5,000 audience	30 young participants received work experience on a live shoot with a professional photographer.
Open Eye Hub commission (part of the Wigan Arts Festival)	Working with community groups and 8 college students on 2 outdoor photography commissions in Wigan town centre, 1 outdoor exhibition at Haigh Hall and 1 outdoor exhibition at Pennington Flash.	- Open Eye Gallery - Wigan & Leigh College - Friends of Haigh - Men's walking group - Embrace Wigan and Leigh	40 participants 5,000 audience	The work at Haigh was used as a case study in support of a subsequent bid to NLHF.
Happiness – film commission and pop up cinema (part of the Wigan Arts Festival)	Working with Northern Heart Film – who had recently relocated to Wigan – on a new film piece, and set up of a pop-up cinema in the centre of Wigan.	Northern Heart Film	9 participants 350 audience for screenings	This relationship with NHF led to the establishment of the joint Doc bursaries programme – 6 x bursary awards and 3 x honorary awards given.

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
Behind Closed Doors	Local photographer's exhibition exploring the experience NHS workers during Covid, exhibited at Wigan Library.	Petro Bekker - photographer	500 exhibition visitors	Supported the purchase of a mobile indoor exhibition system for use by local community groups.
Light Night	See case study	Various including Wigan Council, TTGOT, Everyday, Wigan and Leigh College, the Wigan Youth Zone, schools and scout groups.	Third edition=19K	- Wigan Council has been invited to join the Light Up The North network. 29 creative practitioners employed. 188 support staff employed security, crew etc). - Over 140 freelance workers employed. £316K direct economic impact from participant, staff and audience spend in local economy.
Blue Plaque Scheme	Permanent memorials highlighting the impact Wigan's heroes and celebrities have made on local heritage and culture: Professor Sir John Charnley – Nov 2024 (to be cited on Wrightington Hospital)	Led by Wigan Council	No exact figure but all plaques were placed in areas with significant footfall	10 plaques delivered <i>"From his humble beginnings born to working-class parents in Milton Street, Leigh he showed us what can be achieved from nothing, Pete clearly is an inspiration and areas like this need to honour its iconic figures, it gives youth in this area something to aspire to".</i>

Event	Overview	Partners	Audience reach	Outcomes
	• Mary Tomlinson – Nov 2024 (to be cited on Wigan Town Hall) • James Caldwell Prestwich – 2023 on Leigh Town Hall • Folly Field – 2023 on Real Crafty Pub upper Dicconson St Wigan • Mary O'Shaughnessey - 2023 in Ashton Library • Kathleen Mary Drew-Baker 2022 – Leigh Central Primary School • Wigan Athletic Football Club 2022 – Queens Hall Wigan • Dr Muriel Haigh – 2020 Mesnes Park Terrace Wigan • Margery Booth – 2020 Queen Hall Wigan • Pete Shelley - 2019 Landside, Leigh.			(Paul Lally founder of the Pete Shelley Memorial Campaign)

8.5 The Fire Within at The Galleries

Events / activities commissioned	Artists engaged	Partnerships	Audiences engaged
Exhibition #1 (May 2019) Satellite of Love • The Fire Within HQ and Emoji Stage • ICONS Gallery • The Immaculate Conception of Isaac Newton • Satellite of Love • From Within Your Shadow we Bare our Hearts • The Godley Frame, This Earth, This Most Excellent Canopy, The air	• 25 local artists	• Leigh Film Society • Wigan & Leigh College	• 16,781 exhibition visitors • 120 participants • 600 event audiences
Exhibition #2 (Nov 2019) Love is a Rebellious Bird • The Fire Within HQ and Emoji Stage • ICONS Gallery • Birth • Rebel • Love • Re-birth	• 9 local artists • 1 visiting artist	• Louise Fazakerley poetry book launch 'The Lolitas and The Uniform Factory' • International Women's Day • Holocaust memorial event	• 12,000 exhibition visitors • 700 event attendance
Exhibition #3 (Sep 2020) We Will Always Be Together xx • The Fire Within HQ and Emoji Stage • ICONS Gallery	• 9 local artists • 1 visiting artist	• Wigan Pride • TMP college • Manchester Camerata (Music Café)	• 6,000 exhibition visitors • 20,000 online audience (Wigan Pride – digital version)

Events / activities commissioned	Artists engaged	Partnerships	Audiences engaged
• Supernatural • Superhero • Super Viral • Super Computer		• More than Words • Council Events team (Frost Fest) • Council Comms Team (Wellfest)	• 15,000 online audience for TMP digital end of year performance • 25,000 online audience (Frost Fest) • 15,000 audience (Well fest) • 90 participants • 300 event attendance • 120 school children / 9 schools

8.6 Down To Earth

Project	Date	Partners	Artists Engaged	Audiences Engaged	Stakeholder feedback
Bunker Cabaret	March 2023	The Hooligan Art Community	6 artists	74	<i>"Very impactful, empowering and relevant."</i>
Mocktails & Dreams	July 2023	Wigan Council (Pennington Flash Launch)	1 artist	3K 260 engaged	<i>"This is my favourite stall of the whole event, can we book this for a party?"</i>
Community Workshops	June – Dec 2023	St. Jude's Social Club / Warm 'N' Cosy dance group	1 artist	35–40 per week	<i>"Excellent feedback, the group have told us that they have been pleasantly surprised with their own abilities throughout the workshops."</i>

Project	Date	Partners	Artists Engaged	Audiences Engaged	Stakeholder feedback
Grain!	Sept 2023	The Hooligan Art Community	5 artists	17	<i>"Interesting - look forward to the fully developed show after all R&D is complete."</i>
The Social	Nov-Dec 2023	Not Too Tame 4 social clubs across the borough	16 artists including Sally Molloy, Northern Soul Dance Champion in 2022	Approx. 1600	<i>"Feedback stated that the show brought people together, was nostalgic, heartfelt, fun, superb, entertaining, immersive, energetic and enjoyable."</i>
Taking Shape	Nov 2023 –	Everyday	6 artists	0	Artists felt the programme was extremely impactful not only on their careers but their overall confidence and ability. All artists would like to continue working with Down to Earth on community projects across Wigan and Leigh.
Flashes Festival of Nature	May 2024	Wigan Council (Pennington Flash Launch)	6 artists	4K 70 engaged	Artists thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would like to work with Down to Earth again. Community felt that the music added to the overall event, and inspired their children to get involved and have fun.

