

Imagining the outcomes of London Borough of Culture: What the evidence tells us

Executive summary

MAYOR OF LONDON

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Introduction

In order to win a London Borough of Culture award, the chosen boroughs will have to demonstrate that they will run an inspiring and high quality cultural programme. Boroughs will not only be assessed on how the proposed programme will create 'great art', but also on: how it positions people and place at the heart of the programme; how it can enhance citizens' wellbeing; how it helps to integrate communities; and perhaps most crucially, how local residents will be actively involved in shaping and delivering the programme.

Finally, applications will also be assessed on how well culture is embedded within wider Council plans, meeting the particular socio-economic challenges the borough faces.

During the development of the London Borough of Culture programme, the Mayor and GLA sought examples from far and wide that illustrate the kind of outcomes they would like to see from the award. They set out to answer three broad questions:

- How can boroughs build a cultural legacy?
- How does culture strengthen communities?
- How can culture help places to thrive?

This document summarises the findings of that research process; a more detailed report is available by emailing boroughofculture@london.gov.uk.

The examples cited in the following pages include evidence from relevant studies into the impact of culture on people's lives, and findings from other cultural programmes. The latter are comparable to the London Borough of Culture in that they are focused on a specific year and a specific place. They are celebrations as well as programmes of activities. They also aim to boost growth, both for the cultural sector and the host town or city. Examining the evidence for what these similar programmes have achieved in their host towns and cities, and considering why these outcomes matter, should provide useful insights for boroughs preparing to apply for the award.

Putting the award in context

The London Borough of Culture is modelled on existing City of Culture programmes that take place within the EU and, since 2009, the UK as well. However, it differs in that it places a far bigger emphasis on community. Local people are at the heart of London Borough of Culture: they will play a key role in both shaping and co-producing its cultural programmes. This emphasis on active community participation will maximise the long-term social impact arts, culture and heritage can have on people and places. The scheme will also excite and engage communities by offering cultural experiences of the very highest quality.

London is immensely rich in culture – something that Londoners, as well as visitors, are increasingly coming to appreciate. But access to our city's cultural assets is highly unequal, dependent on borough, and many of London's diverse grassroots cultural activities are under threat.

London's cultural assets – and challenges

London has a huge stock of cultural assets. The cultural sector is as important a part of the capital's global branding as its financial sector.

- 253 of Arts Council England's 831 National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are in London.
- 16 per cent of London's employment is in cultural and creative industries.
- Culture accounts for around 3 per cent of local authority funding in London compared with 2.2 per cent across the rest of England.
- In 2015/16, 59 per cent of Londoners agreed that the arts made a difference to the area where they lived - compared to 45 per cent in 2010/11.

Despite London's rich cultural offer, large-scale inequality in access to culture prevails in London, depending on the borough.

- 91 per cent of London-based NPOs are in London's central zones (1-2).
- Inner London makes up 92 per cent of all theatre attendance.

Increases in land value and UK-wide austerity measures have had a serious impact on the cultural sector.

- In 2014 it was predicted that 30 per cent of artists' studios would be lost within five years.
- Between 2007 and 2015, London lost 35 per cent of its grassroots music venues and 25 per cent of its pubs.

These cultural challenges reflect a wider economic picture that is putting serious pressure on local service providers. In order for London to reap the full benefit of its cultural assets, it is more important than ever to embed arts and culture into local and neighbourhood plans. London Borough of Culture offers a serious opportunity to ask how this type of programme of activities can best respond to the current environment, and ultimately deliver real socio-economic benefits.

Building a cultural legacy

Place-based cultural programmes can bring long-term benefits to the local cultural sector, by **fostering greater collaboration, encouraging creative and professional development, and boosting capacity in the longer term.**

Fostering greater collaboration

Like the major cultural programmes on which it is modelled, London Borough of Culture is designed to be artistically and creatively ambitious, bold and innovative. If local cultural organisations want to rise to the challenge, new partnerships – often reaching outside the cultural sector – will prove vital. Evidence suggests that such partnerships can help organisations to become more embedded in the local community, reach new audiences and unlock new funding sources.

- 2014 Commonwealth Games cultural programme (Glasgow): 17 per cent of event organisers worked with educational bodies, 12 per cent with community and voluntary sector groups, and 12 per cent with sport organisations. The benefits from new partnerships that reached outside the culture sector included:
 - helping cultural organisations become more embedded in the local community;
 - sharing learning across sectors;
 - extending the reach of culture to new audiences, and
 - unlocking new funding sources and research partnerships.¹

Encouraging creative and professional development

‘Once in a generation’ occurrences such as a European Capital of Culture designation or a major sporting event require cultural programmes that go beyond business as usual and seek to raise the bar in terms of artistic ambition, quality and innovation. This makes demands of the cultural practitioners and organisations that deliver them, but it is also a key motivation for taking part.

- 2014 Commonwealth Games cultural programme (Glasgow):

¹ BOP (2015), *Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme Evaluation: Overarching Report*,

- 86 per cent of the organisations involved in delivering the programme reported that the scale and scope of their work had increased.
- 69 per cent took greater artistic risks, with 39 per cent believing that they achieved a higher quality of artistic outcome than usual.
- More than 40 per cent of organisations said that they had benefitted from training and skills development, and that participation in the programme had furthered organisational development.
- Three quarters of the organisers thought that involvement had increased the profile of their work, and 52 per cent felt that it had raised expectations of their future performance.²

Boosting capacity in the longer term

The initial year-long London Borough of Culture programme has the potential to give birth to new events or organisations that continue long afterwards. Boroughs should make every effort to ensure that the impact on the cultural sector's creative and professional development and capacity will last beyond the year of the award.

- European Capital of Culture (various): Examples abound of new cultural events or organisations that grew out of the Year, like the Lille 3000 biennial, Brussels' Zinneke Parade, the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC), and the Manchester International Festival.

²*ibid.*

Strengthening communities

Year-specific and place-based programmes can massively increase the cultural opportunities on offer to local people. However, this on its own won't necessarily lead to stronger, healthier communities. The latest research shows that real progress occurs when local people are involved in shaping and running the cultural activities on offer. The Mayor and GLA want to support boroughs that are brave and ambitious in terms of encouraging local people to participate in culture.

Improving health and enhancing wellbeing

Research shows compelling links between cultural activities and better health outcomes, both mental and physical.

- Music therapy and music making have been shown to benefit people living with dementia, stroke and other neurological conditions.³
- Dance can help reduce loneliness and alleviate depression among people in social care environments.⁴ It also has proven benefits for people with Parkinson's disease.⁵
- Music-based activities can be effective in reducing depression and anxiety,⁶ as well as helping to combat stress-related diseases.⁷

Culture can also boost people's happiness and all-round sense of wellbeing, regardless of age, income or employment status. In recent years, two large-scale, national surveys have shown such correlations:

³Raglio, A., Filippi, S., Bellandi, D., & Stramba-Badiale, M. (2014) 'Global music approach to persons with dementia: evidence and practice'. *Clinical Interventions in Aging*, 9:1669

⁴ Consilium (2013) *What do we know about the role of arts in the delivery of social care?* Skills for Care

⁵ Houston, S. and McGill, A. (2012) 'A mixed-methods study into ballet for people living with Parkinson's'. *Arts & Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*. 5(2): 103–119; BUPA (2011) *op. cit.*; TLCMD (2011) *op. cit.*

⁶ Daykin, N. (2016b) *Music, singing and well-being for adults living with diagnosed conditions*. What Works Centre for Wellbeing; Raglio et al. (2015) *op. cit.*

⁷ Fancourt, D., Ockelford, A. and A. Belai (2013) *The psychoneuroimmunological effects of music: A systematic review and a new model*; Daykin, N. (2016a) *Music, singing and well-being in healthy adults*. What Works Centre for Wellbeing; Daykin, N. (2016c) *Music, singing and wellbeing for adults living with dementia*. What Works Centre for Wellbeing; Daykin, Norma (2016b) *op. cit.*

- The DCMS Taking Part survey⁸ showed that people who have attended arts events or visited a heritage site in the last 12 months are significantly happier than those who have not.
- The Scottish Household Survey 2011 also found that those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60 per cent more likely to report good health compared to those who had not.⁹

Importantly, cultural activities can also help people to feel less lonely – something that particularly affects older people in London. Research has shown that there are a range of mental health and well-being benefits that accrue particularly to older people from engaging in arts and culture, including improved cognitive functioning,¹⁰ the maintenance of curiosity,¹¹ reduced social isolation, and increased confidence, happiness and overall well-being.¹²

For everyone, the activity itself – whether dancing, singing or something else – can be inherently beneficial. For older people in particular, the fact that the activity represents social interaction outside the home can be just as significant. Given the incidence of loneliness and social isolation among this age group (which is more prevalent in London than nationally), developing new interests and activities is particularly important.

‘Climbing the ladder’

Widening access for everyone – not just as audience members and stewards, but as co-creators – is one of London Borough of Culture’s key ambitions. The success of the programme depends on putting culture at the heart of the community, and that can’t happen unless ordinary people get involved. Engaging local people across the spectrum of London Borough of Culture activities will not only help to foster community cohesion but will also offer valuable opportunities for learning and skills development.

- 2012 Cultural Olympiad (London & UK): anecdotal evidence suggested a range of benefits to volunteers, including increased confidence, better team-

⁸ DCMS (2014) *Culture, Sport and Wellbeing: An analysis of the Taking Part Survey*

⁹ Scottish Government (2013) *Healthy Attendance: The Impact of Cultural Engagement and Sports Participation on Health and Satisfaction with life in Scotland 2013*

¹⁰ Singh-Manoux *et al* (2003) ‘Leisure activities and cognitive function in middle age: evidence from the Whitehall II study’. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 57:907-913

¹¹ BOP Consulting (2011) *Assessment of the Social Impact of Volunteering in HLF-funded projects: Year 3*. Final Report for Heritage Lottery Fund

¹² Muora Silva Lima (2007) ‘Ballroom dance as therapy for the elderly in Brazil’. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*. 29(2); Piercy and Cheek (2004) ‘Tending and befriending: the intertwined relationships of quilters’. *Journal of Women and Aging*. 16(1-2); Reynolds (2011) ‘Visual art-making as a resource for living positively with arthritis: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of older women’s accounts’. *Journal of Aging Studies*. 25: 328-337

working skills and even vocational skills, for example through exposure to digital technologies.¹³

One way to visualise the different ways local people can get involved in culture is as a ladder¹⁴. On the bottom rung are the audience members. The next rung up is for workshop participants; higher still, stewards and other volunteers; and finally on the higher rungs, the people making decisions – getting directly involved in the curation and management of cultural activities, and ultimately taking full ownership of the community's cultural assets.

Meaningful community engagement in decision-making and in the delivery of activities is a key area in which the London Borough of Culture programme is seeking to make a difference.

Increasing civic participation

Taking part in culture is a great way for people to meet and talk to others, building new social networks. People who join in cultural activities are also more likely to take part in other areas of civic life – from volunteering to voting.

- 84 per cent of participants in Heritage Lottery Fund projects and 79 per cent of the voluntary organisers of Heritage Open Days agreed with the statement that 'by working together, people in [their] neighbourhood can influence decisions that affect the neighbourhood' (compared to only 42 per cent of the general public).¹⁵

¹³ Garcia, Beatriz (2013) *London 2012 Cultural Olympiad Evaluation*, Final Report.

¹⁴ Arnstein, S. R. (1969) 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

¹⁵ BOP Consulting (2011) *op. cit.*; BOP Consulting (2010) *Heritage Open Days 2010 – Presentation of findings*. Presentation for English Heritage.

Helping places to thrive

Beyond their impact on people and communities, cultural programmes like the London Borough of Culture have been associated with wider economic and regeneration outcomes. In this respect, they can be compared to major festivals and high-profile cultural facilities.

Boroughs will need to plan strategically to ensure the ‘halo effect’ continues beyond the year of activities – but there is encouraging evidence that such programmes can generate sustainable economic benefits. Success depends on four main factors: **improving profile and perceptions, attracting more visitors, increasing investment and leaving a lasting economic legacy.**

Improving profile and perceptions

Programmes similar to London Borough of Culture have a strong track record for generating positive media coverage and challenging negative stereotypes of an area. In turn, this can contribute to making people proud of their neighbourhoods. This creates a virtuous circle. The more people feel part of a local community, the more likely they are to act together to improve the area.

- Lumiere 2015 (Durham): the festival generated over 450 stories across online, press, and broadcast, including 12 national broadcast stories and 8 international broadcast pieces.¹⁶
- Edinburgh Festival: 94 per cent of people surveyed in the Festival’s Impact Study in 2011 reported that, ‘the Festivals are part of what makes Edinburgh special as a city’, while in 2016, 89 per cent of local festival goers reported that the festivals ‘increased their pride in Edinburgh as a city’.¹⁷

Attracting more visits and visitor spending

The ‘big moments’ created as part of the programme will likely attract high numbers of visitors, both from outside London and from other boroughs. Experience shows that cultural visitors spend money in local businesses and help urban spaces feel

¹⁶ Policy Research Group, St Chad’s College, University of Durham (2015) *Evaluation of Lumiere*, for Durham County Council.

¹⁷ BOP Consulting (2011b) *Edinburgh Festivals Impact Study*; BOP Consulting (2016) *Edinburgh Festivals Impact Study*.

safer and more vibrant. The Mayor is keen for winning boroughs to encourage other Londoners to see the city through fresh eyes, just as tourists do.

- European Capital of Culture (various): A 2013 review of evidence from cities that had participated in the programme showed the average increase in overnight stays during the Year was 11 per cent, and smaller cities saw comparatively greater tourism boosts than larger ones.¹⁸

Increasing investment

The 'spotlight' of a year-specific cultural programme creates momentum for change. The regeneration – both physical and reputational – that begins with the programme announcement can catalyse additional investment from other sources, both private and public. Although capital projects will not be a focus of the London Borough of Culture, successful boroughs may also attract funding from other Mayoral schemes like the Good Growth Fund, Environment grants and other capital funds.

- UK City of Culture (Hull): Hull City Council estimates that its investments in public realm improvements and culture and tourism infrastructure in preparation for the Year will amount to more than three times as much as the UK City of Culture programme and marketing budget itself.

Leaving a sustainable economic legacy

When all the above factors work together, the combination can deliver significant short-term economic benefit. But sustaining those gains over the longer term is not a given. Boroughs that want to see a long-term economic legacy from the programme will need to plan ahead.

- European Capitals of Culture (various): A 2013 study found that host cities commonly enjoyed an increase in visitor arrivals during the Year itself, followed by a decline the following year.¹⁹ However, several cities (including Stockholm, Genoa, Linz and Bologna) were able to continue increasing visitor numbers. Researchers found that the successful cities were those that had a longer-term vision, marketing plan and resources for culture.

For further details and additional examples, see the full report by emailing boroughofculture@london.gov.uk.

¹⁸ Garcia & Cox *et al* (2013) *European Capitals of Culture: Success Strategies and Long-Term Effects*, p.134.

¹⁹ Garcia & Cox *et al* (2013) *op. cit.*, p.137.

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