

**PROTECT.**  
**RESTORE.**  
**HEAL.**  
**GROW.**

# INTRODUCTION

As the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine continues apace, it's looking likely that the cultural sector in Greater Manchester will be able to open and operate physically in some way, gradually, from Summer 2021. By Autumn, 2021 we expect most of the sector, from theatres and music venues, to festivals, museums and galleries, to open in some way, albeit with a reduced or blended programme. This cultural recovery plan is drafted with that in mind, supporting organisations, businesses and individual artists, freelancers and creatives until we can start to operate in a more recognisable, if forever changed, way.

The cultural and creative sector has a huge role to play in the recovery our economy, high streets and town centres, consumer confidence and national and international reputation and, equally importantly, in Greater Manchester's collective healing; from commemorating, marking and trying to make sense of the events of the past year, to supporting our residents' physical and mental health, providing educational opportunities for our young people and bringing people together, as a community again.

There is still a need for a bespoke package of support for individual artists and freelancers, many of whom have been excluded from government support to date. The potential loss of talent is significant and will have an impact on our economy and international reputation for generations to come.

Without action to support the organisations, businesses, collectives, freelancers and creatives through Q1 and part of Q2, they will be unable to undertake the necessary actions required in Q3 and Q4, where our continued investment and support for the sector throughout the pandemic will begin to bear visible fruit, as the cultural sector in GM recovers faster and in a more equitable way than other areas where support has not been so forthcoming. This recovery builds on the GM Culture Recovery Plan 2020/2021 and complements the GM Night Time Economy COVID-19 Recovery Blueprint, developed and delivered by the GM Night Time Economy office and GM Night Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord.

Activities outlined in this culture recovery plan will be delivered within already committed budget, as part of our two-year settlement agreed by GMCA in February, 2020, though some partnership funding will be sought to increase reach and maximise impact of some strands of strategic activity.

This plan will be delivered by and with the 35 organisations in the GM Culture Portfolio, by each of the 10 local authorities that make up Greater Manchester, with strategic partners including Marketing Manchester, GM Health and Social Care Partnership, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England and a whole host of cultural organisations and individuals from across the city region.

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# GM CULTURE PORTFOLIO

The majority of GMCA cultural investment goes to the GM Culture Portfolio (84%, Portfolio, 13% Strategic funding, 3% programme management). The portfolio comprises 35 organisations, based in every district of GM. In February 2020 GMCA agreed to fund these organisations for two years, from April 2020 to March 2022.

Art with Heart	HOME	Oldham Coliseum
Arts for Recovery in the Community	Manchester Camerata	People's History Museum
Brighter Sound	Manchester Histories	Quays Culture
Cartwheel Arts	Manchester International Festival	Royal Exchange Theatre
Centre for Chinese Contemporary Arts	Manchester Jazz Festival	Sheba Arts
Comma Press	Manchester Jewish Museum	The Halle
Company Chameleon Dance Theatre	Manchester Literature Festival	The Met
Contact	Manchester Pride	The Turnpike
English Folk Expo	MancSpirit	Walk the Plank
Gaydio	Music Action International	Wigan STEAM CIC
Global Grooves	Octagon Theatre	Z-Arts
GM Arts	Old Courts	

Despite many being unable to open their doors through most of 2020, these organisations delivered phenomenal activity, in the most difficult circumstances. They entertained residents online and continued established creative projects and provided educational activities for our young people through lockdown. They sewed and manufactured PPE, delivered food parcels and rang and visited our most vulnerable residents to reduce social isolation. These organisations also supported their staff and the wider creative community, providing paid work for artists and freelancers unable to access government support and hosting weekly drop-in sessions to support the careers and mental health of our brilliant artists, musicians, curators and technicians. An overview of the activity delivered by the Portfolio throughout 2020 is available in Our Year In Culture, 2020/2021.

While restrictions remain in place, we will ask these organisations to continue delivering this vital work, as well as supporting them to unlock and provide physical creative opportunities for our residents as restrictions ease. These organisations will be vital Greater Manchester's collective recovery. This will include supporting residents' physical and mental health, helping them make sense of the global, national, local and personal impacts of Covid-19. When permitted, these organisations will also help with the recovery of our places and have a vital role to play in increasing resident confidence to return to our high streets and town and city centres and in bringing life and vibrancy to our public spaces, especially places that have seen retail closures and significant reduction in occupancy of commercial space. While we gradually unlock, and, again, when it is safe to do so, these organisations will be key in attracting local, national, and international visitors to our city region, maintaining our global reputation as a centre of creative excellence, and encouraging use of our brilliant hospitality businesses, from hotels and restaurants to bars and cafes.

Organisations will be asked to focus delivery in 2021/22 in the following areas; providing paid employment for artists and freelancers; providing activity for GM residents, especially in relation to mental health, education, physical health and reducing inequality; and working with and in our high streets, town and city centres. The GM Culture Portfolio will continue to deliver themes referenced throughout this paper, helping our places and residents to heal; marking and making sense of the events of the past year.

# GM GREAT PLACE PROJECT

In 2017 GM was one of 16 places awarded funding by Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, to 'pilot new approaches to local investment in arts and culture'. 2021/22 will be the last year of Great Place funding, so it is vital that we use this time to secure the legacy of Great Place and embed the learning and new partnerships and approaches developed throughout the project.

Since the start of Covid-19, Great Place has delivered a significant amount of activity. This has included Old Frame New Picture; a photography competition and billboard campaign to challenge narratives around ageing. Using supermarket billboards, this managed to reach an audience of 84,000 with 1.6 million impressions, even during lockdown. Creative Care Packs was developed in response to the pandemic and brought together 50+ cultural organisations, all ten local authorities and their community response hubs, the voluntary sector and more than 300 volunteers to develop and deliver more than 50,000 packs of creative activities, ideas and materials to digitally excluded residents in GM, including school children, young adults and older residents.

There is also a significant amount of activity that was unable to be delivered in its planned format, due to restrictions in place across the city region and before September 2021, we will deliver this activity in a Covid safe manner. This includes This Place of Mine; a partnership with FutureEverything and young people in Beswick, Stalybridge, Oldham, Leigh and Rochdale to co-imagine the future of our high streets and town centres through digital art, culture and creativity; Back in the Closet; exploring homophobia in older person's residential schemes in partnership with housing associations and LGBT Foundation and Escape Room; an immersive theatre experience co-created with and for autistic young people in partnership with Libraries GM. While these projects are delivered and evaluated, the main focus of Great Place activity to September 2021 and beyond, will be to continue to develop and secure strategic partnerships and activity to support and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents through creative engagement.

In March 2020 we published 'A Social Glue'; a report commissioned by GMCA and delivered by Manchester Metropolitan University exploring Greater Manchester as international leaders in culture, health and wellbeing practice and then setting out recommendations on how to build on this for both the benefit of the cultural sector and the residents of Greater Manchester under the banner of GM: Creative Health City Region. A Social Glue suggests that cultural resources may offer a key to nurturing hyper-local solutions to city-region issues and critically, that through co-design, people can identify the issues *and* be the means of change. It makes clear, that *now is the time* to capitalise on growing international awareness around the potency of culture to influence mental and physical health and the factors that underpin wellbeing. This research and associated delivery plan, strategic partnerships with GMHSCP and a strategy for Creative Ageing in GM which includes investment in CADA; England's Creative Ageing Development Agency based at the UoM, will be a key legacy of the Greater Manchester Great Place Programme.

# DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

Throughout 2020, while we were unable to meet or create or be entertained physically, many cultural organisations developed enterprising digital solutions. While digital should never completely replace live entertainment or face-to-face interaction, and we must continue to reach out to connect to digitally excluded audiences, artists and residents, digital developments necessitated by COVID-19 have opened-up new ways of working, new local, national and global audiences and partnerships, and will provide new solutions to long-standing problems. GMCA will prioritise digital development and delivery in the first six months of 2021, before moving to a hybrid model, when reduced restrictions allow, through two trailblazing digital projects, United We Stream / Stream GM and GM Creative Connections.

Instigated by the GM Mayor and GM Night Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord, United We Stream produced and streamed quality artistic content, raising more than £600,00 for people impacted by COVID-19. In nine months, UWS produced and broadcast 48 shows, had more than 20m views and provided a platform for more than 400 artists and creative organisations to entertain and excite and reach new global audiences. As joint leaders (with Berlin) in the United We Stream global network, the largest clubbing and creative brand in the world, we will develop the legacy of United We Stream, transitioning into StreamGM, an ethical live-streaming platform, platforming and promoting the very best talent in Greater Manchester, while developing a best-practice framework for live streaming that focusses on fair payment and rights contracts for creatives and shares learning and experience with organisations across the country. In April 2020 we will launch StreamGM at the Digital Cities Festival and will produce at least four digital showcases a year.

Throughout 2020 the GMCA culture team took part in hundreds of conversations around how we might best support individual artists and creative freelancers through the pandemic and beyond. While we were able to provide some financial support to individuals, through the Creative Commissions project, it became increasingly clear that our limited time and resources could be better used strategically supporting individuals to find paid opportunity, connecting them with commissioners, producers and casting directors looking for talent. In collaboration with the sector, and with considerable consultation with freelancers, we developed the Creative Connections concept, a website that allows designers, actors and creative practitioners and musicians and sound techs based in GM to upload a profile that lists their experience, qualifications, availability, the type of work they want to do and how far within GM they would be willing to travel for work. Theatres, festivals, museums, galleries, schools and local authorities would then sign up to search for 'creatives' to hire. To use the service, employers would have to sign up to some best-practice employment terms, linked to the Good Employment Charter. The site will also list spaces and services available for hire across the city region.

Creative Connections will 'open up' the employment pool at a critical time, so organisations don't just hire people they've already worked with, helping to improve diversity of opportunity. Research and feasibility was undertaken in early 2021. A tender brief for development of the website will be issued in April 2021, with a soft-launch for the site planned in Summer 2021.

# COMING TOGETHER

Throughout 2020, the priority for national and local government, public services and all our residents, was dealing with the immediate impact of the pandemic, whether that was the implementation of measures designed to reduce the spread of Covid-19 or dealing with the personal impact of the Pandemic; be that personal loss, illness or poor mental health or trying to manage competing priorities of working from home while caring for or educating loved ones.

As we start to emerge from this immediate crisis management, we are able to start to think about what we lost while we were living through lockdown; one of the key areas being the enjoyment of enjoyable collective experiences. This desire for collective experiences, combined with the decline of the traditional high street and the need to attract people back to our town and city centres provides us with an exciting opportunity, from Summer 2020 onwards, to use culture to bring vibrancy back to our places and bring people together in joyous shared experiences. We will focus our activity in this area in two key ways; delivery of the inaugural Town of Culture in Bury and planning for the second iteration of the event and through our Creative Improvement District framework.

In December 2019, we announced that Bury would be the first GM Town Of Culture, with activity planned for the summer of 2020. When the first UK lockdown was announced in March 2020, it quickly became clear that activities would not be deliverable as planned and, while some activities were put online, the majority were subject to repeated postponement throughout the year, before the decision was made by GMCA in Autumn, 2020, to postpone celebrations to 2021. In April 2021 we will announce the full physical programme for Bury's Town of Culture celebrations, keeping the festival's original title and theme, Happy. Throughout the year, as lockdown eases, we will work with Bury Council to deliver their Town of Culture Programme, with a series of high-profile, joyous events that celebrate and promote talent in the borough and attract visitors, from GM and beyond to the town. In Autumn, 2021, we will invite applications to be GM's Town of Culture 2022, with the intention of announcing the winner in Winter, 2021.

While we are celebrating and promoting Bury's excellent programme, we recognise the need to work with and in other GM districts to support their cultural ambitions. In 2019 the GM Culture and Night Time Economy team commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies to develop a framework that would inform our work with districts in this area. As Levelling Up, Towns Funds, Heritage High Streets and many more government programmes recognise the importance of culture and creative businesses in revitalising the high street, we will use the Creative Improvement Districts framework to shape our conversations and work with districts, using the distinctive assets and resources in districts to co-develop programmes that respond to and support local plans. There is also significant opportunity to harness the potential of much-loved heritage assets in our towns, city centres and high streets, working with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and Arts Council England through schemes like Heritage Action Zones and Historic High Streets. We tested our approach in the final round of ERDF which resulted in significant investment in Islington Mill. The Creative Improvement Districts report states that;

*The high streets of the UK's towns are experiencing a period of turbulent change. The twin forces of internet shopping and out of town retail mean that the halcyon days of high streets populated by national brands are long gone and unlikely to return. In response, many local authorities are now developing plans for a future for their high streets that incorporates a mixture of uses and are looking beyond the economic value once produced by big name*

*retailers and towards a future in culture, food and beverage, night time economies and services uses.*

*The pandemic has exacerbated some of the issues that were present pre-crisis. The so called 'death of the high street' - a pre-pandemic trend towards lower occupancy rates of retail and leisure spaces evident in many towns and cities across the country - has intensified as a result of the government-mandated closure of these businesses and the resulting increase in reliance on internet shopping. Local authorities are hence ever more receptive to ideas which have the ability to maintain and increase growth and employment whilst breathing life into neglected looking high streets.*

*The cultural and night time economies play a central role in developing distinctive and valuable place brands that, in turn, sell places to multiple stakeholder audiences: residents, tourists, investors and government funders.*

*Through our Creative Improvement District framework, we will work with places to establish incentives, from business and comms support and use of space to support in securing event licences and grants, depending on the levers available at local authority level, that will support and attract musicians, music venues, festivals and pop-up events, increasing the vibrancy of our town and city centres and high streets, providing spaces to create and show the significant talent we have in Greater Manchester.*

We will work with colleagues in the GM Ageing Hub, PSR and GMHSCP to explore new models for place-based working, including the role of the cultural sector in neighbourhood service delivery. Post Covid, and with the potential reluctance of the population to travel great distances, new delivery models will be essential for the sustainability of the cultural sector.

# HEALING

As we emerge from the immediate impacts of the pandemic, throughout 2021, we will need to find ways to make sense of the unprecedented events of 2020 and start to heal, individually and collectively, from what has been a terrible year. We will develop and deliver schemes and programmes that support the physical and mental health of our residents and that start the healing process, that will last for many years to come.

As previously mentioned, supporting the physical and mental health of our residents, through research, strategic partnerships and co-developed and delivered activity, will be a key legacy of Greater Manchester's Great Place project. We will deliver the recommendations in 'A Social Glue' and work with cultural organisations in GM, with GMHSCP and leading practitioners and academics, to provide opportunities for our residents, including social prescribing and other creative health opportunities across the life course and across both the health and care sectors. We will build on our work with GM i-THRIVE to develop a creative mental health offer for children and young people which can be delivered in partnership with the cultural sector and we will deliver the first ever social prescribing pilot in four GM sixth form colleges in partnership with Street Games, Curious Minds and the Association of Colleges.

Through investment in CADA, the National Creative Development Agency, based at the University of Manchester, we will continue our partnership with the GM Ageing Hub, leading and delivering internationally significant research and lines of enquiry that support our residents to age well, by staying creative in older age.

As well as direct impact on the physical and mental health of our residents, COVID-19 has instigated important conversations around equality and human rights. Prior to the Pandemic, the Robert Kennedy Foundation had planned to host its inaugural Ripples Of Hope Festival in Greater Manchester and had been co-developing an internationally-significant programme with GM residents and working with young people in schools across the city region to explore what human rights means in GM. The Festival, which was postponed in 2020, provides a timely opportunity to pick up those conversations across GM. We will invest in the Festival, curated by Jude Kelly and with confirmed speakers including Marcus Rashford, to maximise impact across GM with a focus on the following themes; Dignity and Justice, Culture, Participation, Equality and Environment.

# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

As we deliver the activity outlined above we will also undertake research and strategic activity to plan our support for culture in Greater Manchester from 2022 onwards.

## **GREATER MANCHESTER MUSIC REVIEW**

In 2019, UK Music and GMCA published the Greater Manchester Music Review which included 10 recommendations on how the city region could support and develop music in Greater Manchester. Where recommendations don't feature in our broader plans (eg GM Culture Portfolio, Creative Improvement Districts, StreamGM) we will develop activity that supports their delivery.

Greater Manchester's musical strength comes from its diversity, from our bands and orchestras to our DJs, MCs and solo singer-songwriters, from our grass-roots venues, to our arenas and music festivals. In recognition of this diversity, and to ensure that that all artists, genres, record labels and venues have opportunity to be heard and influence policy. One of our first actions will be to establish the GM Music Commission. The commission will meet three times a year to discuss how we can build on the legacy of Greater Manchester's musical history and ensure that talent can flourish in the future.

In-between meetings, the commission will support the sector with advice and advocacy, representing our great city region in local, national and international discussions, ensuring that our artists, bands, venues, orchestras, festivals, teachers, studios and labels have a voice. A call-out for members of the commission will take place in Summer 2021 and the first meeting will take place in Autumn 2021, before a regular cycle of meetings, in January, May and October, begins.

One of the first tasks of the Commission will be to explore how to best support talent in Greater Manchester, bringing together partners, funders, schools and colleges and businesses to establish clear career routes for talented individuals, artists, promoters, practitioners and technical staff. GMCA, Arts Council England, PRS, Princes Trust and DFE, through Music Education Hubs, already make significant investment in talent in our city region. Rather than duplicating any existing funds, we will explore how to maximise the impact of this investment and these opportunities in Greater Manchester, making career pathways clear.

To demonstrate our commitment to talent in Greater Manchester, once a year, the team behind United We Stream will put on a showcase of the very best emerging talent in the city region. The Greater Manchester Music Showcase will feature talent from all ten districts, either on stage or behind the scenes, providing paid opportunities for artists in Greater Manchester who get to showcase their talent on a global stage.

## **CHAT MOSS**

Chat Moss is a large area of agricultural land, nature reserves and wetlandsthat makes up part of the City of Salford, Metropolitan Borough of Wigan, Warrington and Trafford MBC in Greater Manchester and Cheshire. The area is surrounded by significant heritage assets and visitor attractions from RHS Bridgewater to Lancashire Mining Museum and the GM Wetlands. The area is under disparate ownership but has significant potential as a significant attraction adding value to the assets it sits at the heart of. Many partners, from Peel Holdings, to the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, local authorities and GMCA and the Walking and Cycling Commission are committed to working together to increase the profile, use and accessibility of the area. We will invest in and support this partnership, recognising its potential to be a significant attraction for residents and visitors, with a view to securing external funding to support its development.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

As we emerge from the Pandemic, we need to properly recognise the significance of cultural volunteering in Greater Manchester. Many of our volunteer-led amateur and heritage organisations have been unable to access government funding and many of our volunteers are reluctant to return to volunteering roles, even when vaccinated. We will work with the VCSE sector, cultural organisations and existing volunteer networks to investigate the best way to support sustainable volunteering, recognising the importance of volunteering to physical and mental health, skills development and intergenerational skills exchange, talent pathways and the sustainability of many cultural and heritage organisations across our city region.

## **COLLECTIVE ACTION**

Another priority during this period will be making the most of shared experience, resource and networks, especially in relation to marketing and audience development and formal and informal education. We will work with cultural organisations across the conurbation to share audience intelligence and insight and develop shared, thematic 'seasons' of activity, communicating clearly with our residents about activities on offer across Greater Manchester. We will also work with these organisations, Arts Council England, Curious Minds and Local Education Partnerships to support our young people in any attempts to increase wellbeing support and/or catch-up with education missed as a result of the pandemic, supporting national programmes expected to take place throughout the summer holidays.

## **FUTURE CULTURAL INVESTMENT IN GM**

GMCA's funding package for the cultural sector was agreed between April 2020 and March 2022. GMCA's Culture Strategy runs until March 2024. Throughout 2021, we will work with key stakeholders in all 10 districts and investment partners, including Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, to establish the best way to support the sector and empower our residents to enjoy our world-class cultural offer, cognisant of increasing pressures to local authority funding. By late Summer, 2021, we will have developed a range of proposals for future GMCA culture funding for March 2023 onwards, recognising that if there are to be changes to the portfolio, we will need to let organisations know if they need to apply by Autumn 2021.