

The Bradford skyline

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has announced that Bradford will follow in Coventry's footsteps to become the UK's next City of Culture.

Bradford is a vibrant city in West Yorkshire with a young population and strong community spirit. The city has rich industrial heritage (it was once the wool capital of the world) and boasts spectacular Victorian architecture – some of which received £2million of National Lottery Funding back in 2018. This investment breathed new life back into the historic buildings and created a thriving, well-connected city centre of shops, offices and apartments.

> An old black and white photograph of a busy town centre with shops, cars and people walking
>
> Bradford's old 'Top of Town' was awarded National Lottery support

We have supported projects large and small in the city, including the history of The Quaid-e Azam league – the first Asian cricket league established in Yorkshire.

And now, the city will have the opportunity to showcase this culture and heritage to the UK and the rest of the world.

> I am looking forward to working with Bradford to make their programme an amazing success and to help share its fascinating heritage on a worldwide stage.

Eilish McGuiness, Chief Executive at The National Lottery Heritage Fund

What is the City of Culture?

UK City of Culture is a programme developed by DCMS, with the title being held by a different city in the UK every four years. It supports cities to set out a vision for culture-led regeneration – showing the important role that culture can play in towns, cities and rural communities. The title brings social and economic benefits such as investment, year-round festivities, and opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Bradford is the fourth city to be awarded the title, after Derry/Londonderry in 2013, Hull in 2017 and Coventry in 2021.

> Colourful lights being projected onto a large historic building in a town square, in front of a large crowd
>
> Made in Hull 2017. Credit: James Mulkeen

All bids were asked to explain how they would use culture to grow and strengthen their local area, as well as how they would use culture to recover from the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Throughout Bradford's bid campaign, they delivered a series of projects which may offer us a glimpse of what's to come, including:

- a new public artwork programme
- launch of 'The Unit', a Channel 4-backed facility for filmmakers
- The Mills Are Alive in Manningham – a large-scale projection show which illuminated the iconic chimney of Lister Mills

Positive impact of our past funding

We invested £3million for Coventry City of Culture, and in response they developed a natural heritage strand to their programme called Green Futures. In 2021, we saw Green Futures adapt in the face of the pandemic with virtual reading groups, digital artist talks and socially distanced walks.

This year, the programme was able to release an exciting schedule of in-person events – including a record-breaking drone show – to continue using culture to encourage Coventrians to take a more active, long-term role in sustainability and connect them to their local natural heritage.

> One person digs a hole with three onlooking people.
>
> Coventrians planting trees.

For Hull 2017, our £3m investment helped to fund a magnificent programme of events throughout the year – from large-scale projections and illumination onto buildings, to a range of artworks and events depicting the heritage of the city's fishing industry.

Following the success of 2017, Hull has been using the momentum to transform its rich maritime heritage and become a world-class visitor destination. The Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City (HYMC) project – which received a £13.6m National Lottery boost – is conserving two historic vessels, transforming the Maritime Museum and developing a visitor orientation centre. The legacy project will tell the story of Hull's rich maritime history and create a sense of place, belonging and identity.

An old ship in a dock with kraken tentacles emerging out of the deck

The historic vessel The Spurn Lightship

Investment in heritage projects across the city of Derry/Londonderry over a number of years helped it to be named as the first UK City of Culture in 2013 and in making that year such a success.

Transformational effects

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “I am delighted that Bradford have been given the prestigious title of City of Culture 2025. I am looking forward to working with Bradford to make their programme an amazing success and to help share its fascinating heritage on a worldwide stage.

“Thanks to National Lottery players, we’ve been able to fund large-scale projects at past City of Culture award holders, Hull and Coventry. We have witnessed first-hand the transformational effects that this title can bring, creating a deeper sense of place, pride and identity. We look forward to the exciting opportunities it will bring to the people of Bradford now and into the future. Congratulations Bradford!”

Our work and the value of heritage

Did you know that heritage isn’t just about castles and buildings? Find out more about what we fund, and the fantastic projects we support, which includes cultures and memories.



Drew Bennellick building birdboxes with the London Wildlife Trust team. Credit: Broni Lloyd-Edwards



ctacle of nature

Hull Maritime Museum under renovation. Credit: Hull City Council's Hull Maritime project



25 years: Derry Girls star takes us on a tour of her home city