

# **Culture Strategy**

## **2026 - 2028**

**Celebrating culture, creativity and  
community in South Ribble**



## **Celebrating culture, creativity and community**

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## **Introduction**

Culture in South Ribble is about people - belonging, connection, pride, and visibility. Creativity already happens here – in community spaces, parks, schools, high streets and through the people who bring energy to their place.

South Ribble has a strong network of communities, events, and activities as well as venues, high streets, parks, and open spaces.

Our opportunity is to connect with what already exists and make it visible.

This strategy focuses on:

- making culture more visible in everyday spaces
- bringing culture to where people live
- ensuring residents feel ownership and pride in their place

Culture is not an optional extra – it is a driver of wellbeing, community activity, and creative engagement.

This strategy brings out common themes, each of which is supported by a programme of activity – combining flagship projects, community participation, seasonal cultural activity, and skills development for local creatives.

## Our vision

South Ribble Borough Council's vision is to be:

**A listening, engaging and responsive council that makes the best use of its resources to enable every person and community to thrive in a vibrant, green, and fair borough.**

This strategy provides a framework to support South Ribble's vision, with an overarching ambition of:

**A borough where every community can shape, share and celebrate culture.**

We want creativity to be seen and felt:

- on high streets
- in parks
- across neighbourhoods
- through the voices and stories of residents

Culture should not be limited to buildings or big programmed venues – it should be visible in daily life.

## What is culture

“Culture means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, religion, and other forms of heritage...Creativity and culture are deeply connected, but different. Creativity is the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art or are imagining of an existing work. Culture is the result of that creative process: we encounter it in the world, in museums and libraries, theatres and galleries, carnivals and concert halls, festivals and digital spaces.” *Arts Council England*

Our research made it clear that culture in South Ribble is about people - belonging, connection, pride, and visibility. Creativity already happens here – in libraries, community spaces, parks, schools, high streets and through the people who bring energy to their place. Our opportunity is to connect with what already exists and make it visible.

**This strategy focuses on:**

- making culture more visible in everyday spaces
- bringing culture to where people live
- ensuring residents feel ownership and pride in their place

Culture is not an optional extra – it is a driver of wellbeing, community activity, and creative engagement.

## **South Ribble's current cultural offer**

We have undertaken primary research to map 136 cultural and heritage assets across South Ribble. This dataset combines information from the following sources:

- Organisations funded by Arts Council England (2014–present)
- South Ribble Borough Council Directory of Activities
- Lancashire Libraries
- Lancashire History Federation members
- Search Engine searches

This research offers a valuable foundation for understanding the borough's cultural and creative ecosystem and identifying key opportunities for growth.

There is a wide variety of cultural participation activity taking place across the South Ribble borough. Whilst there is a small number of dedicated cultural venues, most of the activity takes place in community and public settings, including libraries and churches. Most delivered by third sector organisations, voluntary or small commercial organisations. There is an established calendar of events, which are well supported locally, delivered by a range of organisers including but not limited to the council.

### **Spaces and places**

South Ribble has a high number of community venues offering cultural activities. Rather than plentiful bespoke venues for culture, the activities are taking place in community settings such as churches and church halls, schools, and community centres – and in Housing Associations and residential settings where provision is strong.

Formal cultural venues include:

- Worden Hall (Council)
- British Commercial Vehicle Museum (Charitable Trust),
- Samlesbury Hall (Charitable Trust),
- Penwortham Arts Centre (Town Council)
- South Ribble Museum (Council) which is currently closed.

- There is also a well-established programme of events and activities taking place in public spaces such as parks and town centres.

The borough is well served by parks and other public spaces such as town centres and markets. Many of these have a heritage narrative (Worden Hall and Hurst Grange especially) and already provide much of the space for large-scale events and community gatherings. They also offer scope for extended cultural and active-leisure use. There are plans for makerspaces and a 'community room' in the redeveloped Leyland Market which will create a new opportunity for live performances, exhibitions, and creative activities in the heart of the town, and with strong, relevant programming will support the commercial ambitions of the market.

Libraries are managed by Lancashire County Council where there is scope for increased cultural programming and partnership working - as seen in other parts of the county (such as in Lancaster for example which hosts over 50 live music events each year alone).

### **South Ribble's museum service**

South Ribble Borough Council owns an accredited museum collection, housed at South Ribble Museum and Exhibition Centre which is currently closed and in disrepair.

Evidence gathered for the strategy shows residents and partners value the heritage of the borough, however, this does not need to be limited to a single building. The 2023 – 2033 National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategy aims to address current and future needs of the heritage sector – supporting new ways of ensuring heritage remains accessible, relevant, sustained and valued.

A new model of delivery for South Ribble's heritage offer could involve exhibiting and sharing the museum collection in different ways, without the need to retain the Museum and Exhibition Centre building itself. A refreshed approach might involve taking heritage directly into communities, utilising local events, activities and other assets such as Worden Hall, Leyland Market, Hurst Grange Heritage Centre, Penwortham Arts Centre, libraries whereby businesses, tourism networks and local people can open up conversations about South Ribble heritage, breaking down barriers and preserving history for generations to come.

Alternatively, the council could invest in the building to bring it back into use as a traditional museum, allowing visitors once again and keeping the collection on display in a single location. Both options are to be reviewed.

## **Spotlight - Worden Hall and Park**

Worden Hall and Park are much-loved amenity - enjoyed by the whole of South Ribble and neighbouring boroughs for its lovely features including maze, formal and walled gardens; model railway and of course the Hall. It is host to major festivals and events and there is a strong sense of community ownership.

The Grade II listed Hall has enjoyed £2.8m of investment recently - which has brought a stunning upgrade to public facilities, cafe, meeting rooms, and event spaces. There is a drive to use the event space as the backdrop for residents' lives such as wedding celebrations and other moments. It also offers potential for a regular programme of smaller cultural and community events.

There are two food outlets, including a tapas and wine bar and a café, as well as a cluster of creative workshops and studios. Work is underway to secure a new operator for activity within the walled garden which will provide joint working opportunities and an enhanced visitor offer for the park.

The challenge ahead is to get the right balance between income generation and public access and engagement.

## **Leyland Town Deal**

Leyland has received £25 million in funding from government and along with £9 million from South Ribble Borough Council there is a total of £34 million being invested into the town centre.

Progress is continuing key projects:

- Leyland town centre improvements including a new public square and commercial and residential developments including improvements to Leyland Market
- Northworks - a business hub for skills, events, and workspaces

The two projects within the Town Deal plan both contribute to the cultural ecology. The refurbished Market and public realm provide opportunity for cultural events programming, creative retail, and heritage interpretation. As a business and enterprise centre, Northworks provides more opportunities for creative industries and entrepreneurs to find support for their ventures.

## **Cultural activity**

Key population centres are served with a diversity of activity, and there is an equitable distribution of local 'high points' such as well-established and well-supported festivals and other features. Much of the activity delivery is in the hands of volunteer groups, charities, and 3rd sector agencies, working with the support and encouragement of the council, or in the private sector via small creative businesses.

The council-led events programme is under review. It presents an exciting opportunity to build on internal skills and refresh the offer. The good availability of local groups and organisations means that there is a real potential to co-design and deliver and potential to attract Arts Council England funding in the future. A cultural events programme is proposed in section 8 to further support the existing corporate and community events delivered by the council.

The council also supports community events with grant funding. A new, cultural events grant is being launched in 2026 to support the further provision of these events in the South Ribble.

Other events are delivered by individual groups and organisations, often as small enterprises, including several participative events -such as classes at local ballet, dance, music and drama schools, heritage talks, arts and crafts groups – as well as all the individual but temporary/one-off gigs, concerts and theatre performances which take place.

## **Spotlight - South Ribble LIVE**

A series of local music weekenders is a partnership between the council and The Creative Network. It is a good partnership, with much support from local businesses, bands and audiences. Taking place in Longton, Penwortham and neighbouring Chorley, these three events bring a diverse programme of live music to the towns' high streets, pubs, shops, and public spaces.

Penwortham (May) and Longton (July) attract up to 10,000 across the two weekends with hundreds of artists performing at venues across each town.

The events are well supported, are multi-generational, and foster pride, boost wellbeing, support talent development and support the evening economy.

Looking ahead to the future development and legacy of these events, there is an opportunity to bring other providers into conversation such as Lancashire Music Service and Lancashire Music Association.

### **Digital maturity**

The proportion of the South Ribble population that engaged with the arts in person in the previous 12 months is 92.66%, which is higher than the national average, suggesting a mix of high levels of grassroots community participation, and out-of-borough attendance at regional arts venues which are many and relatively easy to reach.

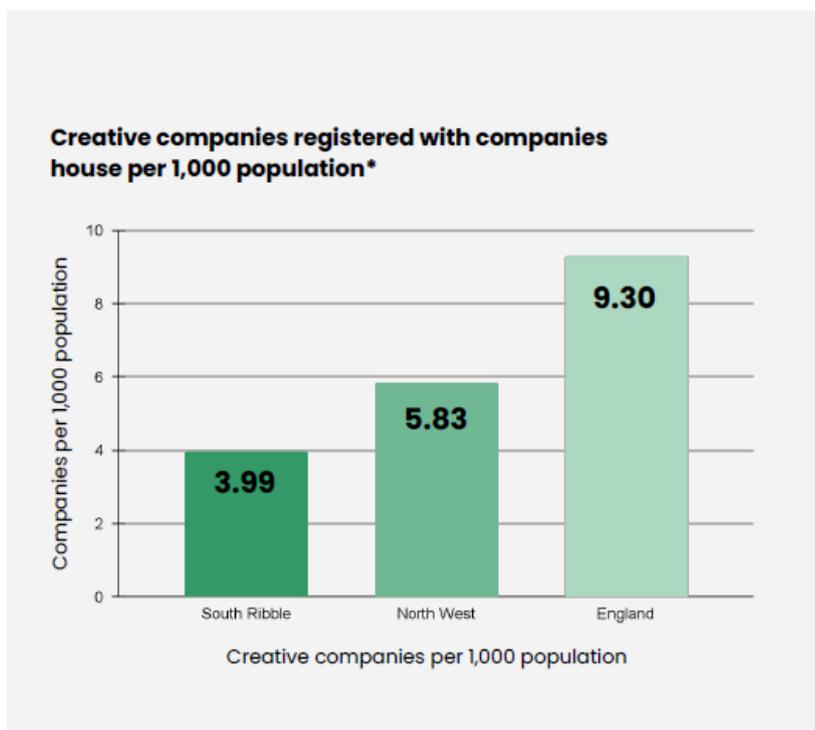
In contrast, the proportion of people that engaged with the arts digitally in the previous 12 months in South Ribble is 37.32%.

Digital maturity is low for both event promoters and venues and needs to be improved to future-proof cultural organisations and activity. There is a real opportunity to boost awareness of what already exists simply by improving digital presence and marketing.

### **Employment and Economic impact**

In South Ribble there are a total of 785 employees in the creative and cultural sectors (1.57% of total employment). This is lower than the proportion of creative and cultural employees in the Northwest (3.14%) and lower than the proportion in England (5.05%).

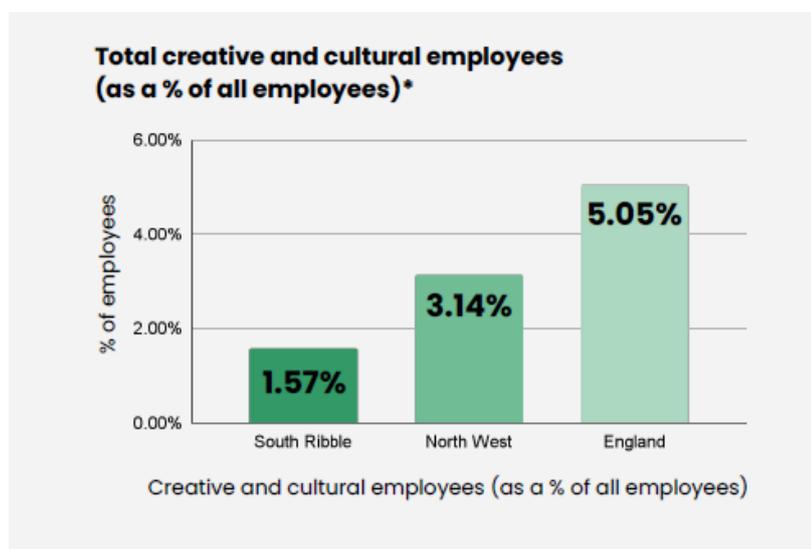
South Ribble has 3.99 registered creative companies per 1,000 population. This is lower than North West (5.83) and lower than England (9.30). Creative companies include all those in the 'Creative Industries' sector according to the Standard Industrial Classifications used in DCMS subsector estimates (SIC07 codes). The following sub sectors have been included: Advertising and marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design and designer fashion; Film, TV, video, radio and photography; IT, software and computer services; Publishing; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts; Arts; Film, TV and Music; Radio; Photography; Crafts; Museums and galleries; Library and archives; Cultural education; Operation of historical sites and similar visitor attractions.



\*Source: Companies House

Of South Ribble's 50,000 employees across all sectors -785 of these are in the creative and cultural sectors (1.57%). This is lower than the proportion of creative and cultural employees in the North West (3.14%) and lower than the proportion in England (5.05%). Additionally, this is lower than the percentage of creative and cultural employment across the whole of the UK economy (7.1%).

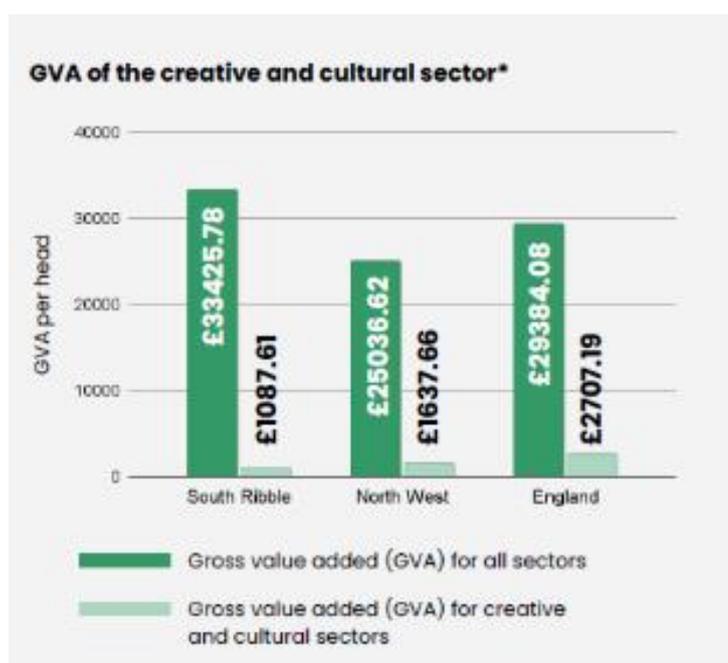
This employment data does not include self-employed or freelancers since a sector breakdown of this data is currently unavailable at local level. National rates of self-employment in the creative and cultural sector (32%) are more than double the rate of self-employment in the wider UK economy (14%).



\*Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

According to the Creative Policy and Evidence Centre, there are 485 people who categorise themselves as working in arts, culture, and heritage occupations, or 0.9% of total employment. This data presents a picture of an under-developed cultural and creative economy.

The total Gross Value Added (GVA) across all sectors in South Ribble is £33,425.78 per head of population. GVA for the creative and cultural sectors in South Ribble is £1,087.61 per head of population. Creative and cultural GVA represents 3.25% of all GVA in South Ribble. This is lower than the percentage of creative and cultural GVA across the whole of the UK economy (6.9%)



\*Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

## **What does this tell us?**

The data shows that South Ribble's creative sector is made up of micro-businesses and sole traders. These organisations often work with small margins and limited capacity, but they are agile, easy to start up and deeply rooted in local communities. Their people-led approach means they can respond quickly to community needs and bring creativity into everyday spaces.

Although financially fragile, they form a vital part of a dynamic cultural ecology and are central to retaining local talent, supporting young and emerging creatives, and strengthening South Ribble's cultural identity. With the right support – such as visibility, space, commissions, and skills development – these micro-enterprises can grow, collaborate, and contribute even more to the borough's cultural life.

## **Participation**

Data tells us about residents in South Ribble are engaged with culture more than the average, but not necessarily by accessing formal cultural / heritage venues in person. This aligns with the findings of a strong participatory arts offer.

It reflects the demographics of South Ribble which show a population which is comfortably off, has higher employment, is healthier, more qualified, happier, and more satisfied with their lives than the regional or national average. Additionally, South Ribble residents are less vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis and experience less deprivation than the regional or national average. These statistics may fluctuate between individual places within the borough but overall provide a strong basis of residents with disposable income to spend on culture and leisure activities. This 'healthy' picture also makes it possible for South Ribble to target and prioritise the pockets of need or vulnerability, using cultural and creative initiatives as part of dealing with wellbeing needs, or poverty impacts.

## **Visitor economy**

The data used in the table below is supplied by Marketing Lancashire, and is generated using the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM), owned and operated by Global Tourism Solutions (UK) Ltd.

The table below shows a modest increase across all indicators for South Ribble. The borough has similar outcomes to many of the other boroughs in Lancashire, but it is one of the very few to see growth against economic impact.

It is recognised that South Ribble has few venues which are ready to attract large numbers of tourists and that the borough is surrounded by popular visitor locations of all kinds including Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool, The Ribble Valley, the Lake District and more.

South Ribble is surrounded by popular visitor locations of all kinds including Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool, The Ribble Valley, the Lake District and more.

The themes and actions outlined in this plan will aim to improve South Ribble's place identity, provide more reasons to visit, promote what is on and increase visitor dwell time and consequent spend.

2023	Output by Area	Visitor Numbers			Economic Impact			Employment FTEs		
		Share	Total	% Change	Share	Total	% Change	Share	Total	% Change
1	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	6%	£3.9m	0.94%	4%	£234.5m	0.58%	4%	£2,333	7.2%
2	Blackpool Council	32%	£21.57m	6.12%	37%	£1,978.8m	-0.16%	41%	£23,419	5.33%
3	Burnley Borough Council	3%	£2.27m	1.09%	3%	£149.5m	2.40%	3%	£1,468	8.04%
4	Chorley Council	5%	£3.12m	0.94%	4%	£207.3m	-0.32%	4%	£2,038	6.11%
5	Fylde Borough Council	5%	£3.19m	3.87%	6%	£345.7m	-3.25%	6%	£3,360	2.54%
6	Hyndburn Borough Council	3%	£1.83m	0.75%	2%	£110.8m	0.35%	2%	£1,067	7.39%
7	Lancaster Borough Council	10%	£6.96m	1.39%	11%	£597m	-2.87%	11%	£6,116	3.71%
8	Borough of Pendle	4%	£2.49m	-0.66%	3%	£154.4m	-8.49%	3%	£1,563	-13.72%
9	Preston City Council	9%	£6.06m	2.21%	7%	£400.4m	1.76%	7%	£3,947	8.07%
10	Ribble Valley Borough Council	6%	£3.83m	0.65%	6%	£305.1m	-2.77%	6%	£3,174	3.18%
11	Rosendale Borough Council	2%	£1.26m	0.04%	1%	£73.4m	-1.79%	1%	£720	3.04%
12	South Ribble Borough Council	5%	£3.03m	0.84%	4%	£202.1m	0.21%	4%	£2,036	7.04%
13	West Lancashire District Council	4%	£2.7m	2.04%	4%	£208.4m	-0.95%	4%	£2,035	6.29%
14	Wyre Borough Council	7%	£4.44m	1.12%	8%	£428.2m	-4.41%	7%	£4,033	3.47%
	<b>LANCASHIRE</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£66.66m</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>£5.40bn</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>£57.311</b>	

## Challenges and opportunities

An extensive programme of stakeholder engagement and research has been undertaken to understand South Ribble cultural offer, and the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. A full list of those consulted is included in Appendix 1. This research identifies the following strengths, weaknesses and opportunities:

### Strengths

- Plentiful and varied offer of participatory activities across the borough
- Worden Hall and Park and the depth and diversity of the offer
- Affluent, happy, and healthy population with high levels of cultural participation
- Strong history, including of international importance and interest e.g. Battle of Bamber Bridge,
- Community-led Programmes: well-established, volunteer-driven programmes rooted in community interest, needs, and support e.g. Leyland Festival,
- Popular existing council run events programme including events such as South Ribble Live run in partnership with the Creative Network
- Engaged communities with strong local pride and willingness to turn out for activities
- Music-based event tradition and availability of experienced volunteers
- Participation in cultural activities is considered an everyday, normal experience which improves lives and wellbeing
- Active town council and parish councils supporting culture
- Active Health team within South Ribble Borough Council delivering quality work and financial sustainability
- Well-loved parks with multiple uses and assets for culturally based activities
- Effective community hubs, already engaged in hyper-local arts and cultural programming with potential for further artist-led projects, and the potential for rolling out good practices across the borough

### Weaknesses

- Very little strategic funding for cultural activity from Arts Council England.
- Perceived lack of regular community and events promoter access to publicly owned spaces
- The local knowledge of 'shared' heritage, culture and events resources is currently patchy and tends to be limited in parts of the borough/community where there is no direct management of a council asset or event.

- No cultural network or support programmes for creative professionals, or for local organisations and groups.
- Much of the borough is characterised by smaller, often rural locations, with smaller communities. This can make programming challenging in terms of quality, quantity, and diversity. As there is a hyper-local tendency, it might be possible to invest in product that ‘tours’ from community to community.
- Demographics disguise several pockets of deprivation and need.
- Little engagement with Lancashire’s strategic development partners e.g. Lancashire County Council, Creative Lancashire, Arts Lancashire.
- Little engagement with regional / national strategic development partners e.g. Museums, Development North, Arts Council England, English Civic Museums Network.
- Poor Visibility: Limited collaborative marketing efforts and low visibility of cultural and creative opportunities.
- Insufficient Data Practices: A lack of shared data collection and evaluation frameworks across the sector.
- Lack of venues / spaces to tell the important local heritage stories, or house local groups and societies.
- No programmes to develop creative practitioners and young talent.
- Lack of quality and depth of programme / offer.
- Lack of depth engagement with Higher and Further Education - albeit there is an opportunity to develop links with strong local institutions.

## **Opportunities**

- Strong existing cultural offer across the borough which can be better promoted to provide a full picture of what is on in South Ribble
- Place-based cultural ambition - Leyland’s emerging Town of Culture ambition provides an opportunity to pilot and test place-based cultural delivery, partnership working and external funding approaches that could be scaled across the borough.
- Potential to develop an education programme to tell the stories of South Ribble’s heritage
- Conservation work at Worden Hall has created opportunities for a range of different uses - community and commercial, with an existing tenant base from which to build.
- British Commercial Vehicle Museum trustees looking to raise aspirations and work in local partnerships to build audiences and other growth opportunities.

- Battle of Bamber Bridge is a distinctive story for South Ribble with significant interest in the US. The 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary should be a programme of significant activity and investment - with potential for funding bids around a legacy
- Leyland Market and public realm redevelopment as a cultural space.
- Work collaboratively with Preston, especially towards 2032 Guild which takes place every 20 years - building a shared approach to community and carnival arts events programming and marketing that might include existing events in our borough.
- Co-commissioning with other Lancashire boroughs and / or cultural organisations.
- Growing population demands cultural placemaking activity - new families need to feel connected to the local area and communities.
- Better collaboration with Lancashire County Council's culture, heritage, and libraries services.
- Work with county-wide development agencies such as Arts Lancashire which has a current focus on developing county-wide leadership skills, sector advocacy and approaches towards wellbeing and programming such as music.
- Lancashire Music Association is looking for partners to build a countywide music development network this could help give some structure and vision to a revitalised events programme.
- Active Health team to include more creative health activity.
- Leyland Town Deal programmes could create more opportunity for cultural and heritage engagement in the town centre, specifically at dedicated spaces in the market.
- A member of the Lancashire Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) which will benefit culture via the visitor economy - working across county.
- Professionalisation of the voluntary sector
- Hyper localism in small places and villages provides a platform for small, touring, community, itinerant activities.
- Linking South Ribble Borough Council's events programme to place stories.
- Social prescribing service understands the importance of arts / culture / heritage activities
- Network of well-used local libraries has more potential to provide cultural and creative engagement in partnership with LCC.
- Expertise and experience in the council's Heritage and Culture team

## Threats

- South Ribble lacks place identity, this is subject to further change under Local Government Reorganisation proposals
- South Ribble Museum and collection remain closed
- Lack of engagement with and awareness of county development agencies e.g. Marketing Lancashire leads to South Ribble being de-prioritised in strategic programmes.
- Lancashire devolution - needing to be prepared
- South Ribble's heritage assets are not as developed as others across the Northwest
- Over prioritisation of tourism and commercialisation of South Ribble Borough Council cultural assets and events programme.

## **Priorities**

The background, stakeholder engagement and current context outlined above present an opportunity to strengthen South Ribble's cultural offer through several priorities:

1. People and participation
2. Place and identity
3. Partnership and investment

Each priority is supported by a programme of activity – combining flagship projects, community participation, seasonal cultural activity, and skills development for local creatives.

### **1. People and participation**

South Ribble's cultural identity begins with its people. Many residents already take part in creativity informally – through making, crafting, storytelling, heritage activities, libraries, community groups, and faith spaces. However, the evidence shows that cultural participation is not consistent across the borough. Some communities experience fewer opportunities, limited visibility of creative activity, or barriers related to confidence, transport, cost, or knowledge of what is available.

This priority focuses on making culture easy to find, easy to access and easy to join in with, particularly for people who feel culture “isn't for them,” or who are less likely to engage in traditional arts spaces. We aim to take creativity into the heart of communities – parks, markets, libraries, high streets, and neighbourhood venues – where people already gather.

We will create low-pressure, welcoming entry points for all ages, with a specific commitment to:

- Residents in priority wards
- Children and young people
- Older adults
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Disabled and neurodivergent residents
- Families experiencing financial hardship

Strengthening participation will build confidence, wellbeing, social connection, and pride in South Ribble – creating a cultural offer that genuinely reflects the people who live here.

Participation will be supported by clear education and engagement pathways, ensuring residents are not only able to take part in cultural activity but can also develop skills, confidence and progression routes. Cultural learning will be embedded across programmes, with a focus on children and young people, underrepresented communities and residents who face barriers to participation.

#### **What does this mean in practice:**

- Creativity activity delivered in community spaces
- Local artists paid to work with residents
- Pop-up creativity and seasonal events
- Removing barriers so people can participate
- Increased promotion of what is on, both activities delivered externally and by the council

#### **Programme ideas**

- Doorstep Culture – free outdoor workshops and performance days. Targeted intergenerational days delivered as part of the events programme – young people and older residents working together on a creative outcome.
- Creative Cafes – monthly low pressure creative meetups in community venues. Sessions themed for groups who face barriers – neurodivergent friendly café, LGBTQ+, young carers session, etc.
- Artist in Residency – co-create something with community groups. Each residency must include activity with at least one underrepresented group.
- Digital platform on which to promote cultural activity.

## **2. Place and Identity**

South Ribbles identity is shaped by its people, its heritage, its green spaces and its distinct towns and villages. Yet many residents told us that their local stories, histories and cultural strengths often feel invisible or under-celebrated. CT Consult identified a clear opportunity to grow a stronger sense of place through culture – making creativity visible in public spaces and connecting people to where they live.

This priority focuses on celebrating local character, shared heritage and contemporary stories through public art, storytelling, heritage interpretation and creative placemaking. Cultural activity in public spaces – including parks, markets, high streets, and community buildings – will strengthen belonging, increase vibrancy, and promote pride.

By amplifying community voices, supporting local artists, and creating visible moments of creativity across the borough, we can build a stronger collective identity rooted in South Ribble's uniqueness. This includes heritage connected to local industries, migration, environment, green spaces, and everyday life.

Place-based approaches will be central to delivery. Leyland, as the borough's largest town, presents a significant opportunity to focus cultural activity, test new approaches and strengthen local identity through a potential Town of Culture bid, while ensuring learning and impact can inform delivery across South Ribble's neighbourhoods.

### **What does this mean in practice:**

- Murals co-created with communities
- Residents involved in concept and design
- Creativity made visible in everyday places

### **Programme Ideas:**

- Behind the Wall – murals in key communities. Residents co-design through workshops with young people / diverse communities.
- Story of Us – oral history / micro exhibits popping up in empty windows. Capture stories from groups whose voices are underrepresented in local history records.
- Heritage Postcards – a creative publication celebrating local identity.

## **3. Partnerships and investment**

South Ribble's creative sector is made up of micro-businesses, freelancers, and sole traders. These individuals and groups are skilled, adaptable, and deeply community-

rooted, but they often face challenges around capacity, visibility, space, funding, and long-term suitability.

This priority focuses on building a stronger cultural eco-system – one where creatives, community organisations, businesses, schools, heritage groups, and the council work together to deliver shared outcomes. Partnership development is critical for attracting external investment, commissioning local talent, and creating a supportive infrastructure for the creative economy.

We will build sector capacity by:

- Providing skills development
- Offering commissions and paid opportunities
- Supporting collaborative working
- Improving access to funding
- Creating digital platforms for visibility
- Developing pathways for younger and emerging creatives
- Exploring infrastructure projects such as a future Creative Hub

This approach strengthens resilience, grows the cultural economy, and increases the borough's ability to secure investment from Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and regional partners. By enabling cultural development is sustainable, ambitious, and aligned with community need.

The strategy will support the development of partnership and funding bids that align with its priorities, including place-based opportunities such as a potential Leyland Town of Culture bid. These initiatives will act as a catalyst for external investment, skills development and longer-term cultural sustainability.

**What does this mean in practice:**

- Collaboration on joint projects
- Developing new funding bids
- Connecting creativity to wellbeing and placemaking
- We will strengthen creative economy by investing in skills, networks, commissioning pathways, and opportunities.

**Programme Ideas:**

- South Ribble Creative Collective – quarterly meet-up for local creatives. Access fund: small bursaries for travel / childcare so freelancers can participate.
- Funding Readiness Workshops – supporting grassroots groups to apply for grants

- Creative Careers Pathway – schools + colleges + local arts organisations

### **Cross-Cutting Commitments:**

Two important commitments apply equally across each priority and area of work:

- Inclusion, representation and accessibility
- Children and Young People

### **Inclusion, representation and accessibility**

South Ribble's cultural programme will be shaped by – and reflect – the diverse voices of its communities:

#### **We will:**

- Work with residents who have been historically underrepresented in cultural activity (LGBTQ+, Disabled people, neurodivergent residents, ethnically diverse communities)
- Prioritise delivery in areas with lowest engagement or lowest cultural provision
- Ensure every programme strand has a clear inclusion objective

No community should feel culture “is not for them.

We will measure success through increased participation from groups who face barriers.

### **Children and Young People**

Every young person should have access to creativity, close to home.

#### **We will:**

- Connect culture with education partners (schools, colleges, SEND schools)
- Ensure young people have decision-making influence (youth advisory group for Behind the Walls)
- Create opportunities for young people to co-design events and artworks

Young people will not just participate – they will influence and lead.

## Action plan

### Priority 1- People and Participation

ACTION	WHEN	RESULT
Implement chosen option for a museum service in South Ribble	2026 - 28	Increased participation and engagement with our museum collection and heritage stories of South Ribble
Pop-up creativity in our assets, libraries, parks, community hubs – look at opportunities at Worden Hall and external spaces such as the British Commercial Vehicle Museum	2026 – 27	More opportunities to take part
Commission local artists to deliver workshops	2026 – 27	Residents involved in creativity
Launch <i>Doorstep Culture</i> (4 annually)	2026 - 28	Increased visibility of culture and higher participation across all wards
Establish regular inclusive <i>Creative Cafes</i> (neurodivergent friendly, LGBTQ+, older adults' monthly sessions)	2026 - 27	Increased participation from underrepresented voices and social connection
Commission local creatives to lead pop-ups and workshops	2026 – 28	Stronger local creative economy and fair paid opportunities
Design and deliver education and engagement programme	2026-28	Clear cultural learning pathways and progression routes
Deliver themed inclusive skills sessions (youth, wellbeing, LGBTQ+, migrant communities)	2026 – 28	Increased local employment for creatives
Share our opportunities and outputs via a marketing campaign to include exhibitions / digital stories	Ongoing	Improved visibility and community pride

Launch pilot Artist in the community <i>Residencies</i> (2/year)	2027 – 28	Co-created work between residents and artists
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### Priority 2 Place and Identity

ACTION	WHEN	RESULT
Submit expression of interest for UK Town of Culture	Before 31 March	Potential to go through to the next round and submit a bid.
Developing youth advisory board for Behind the Wall	2026 - 27	Cultural access increases for groups with barriers
Deliver Behind the Wall mural trail across towns and villages	2026 - 27	Visible celebration of creativity, community pride, placemaking
Embed community engagement in each mural location	2026 - 27	Residents feel ownership and connection to their place
Launch Story of Us	2027-28	Celebrating local identity, culture, and heritage; communities, local artists. Increased visibility and participation across the borough
Create Heritage Postcards literature	2027 - 28	A creative publication celebrating local identity.

### Priority 3 Partnerships and Investment

ACTION	WHEN	RESULT
Launch cultural digital offer – cross promoting cultural activity across the borough	2026 - 27	Clear, accessible cultural information hub for residents and creatives
Develop partnerships across schools / health / business, LCC’s culture and library services , Arts Lancashire, Lancashire Music Association and Marketing Lancashire and creating a cultural network	2026 – 28	More investment into the borough

Secure external funding to grow cultural programme	2027-28	Sustainable cultural activity
Deliver training, funding readiness support, and sector meet – ups	2026 – 28	A more resilient, confident creative workforce
Develop funding partnership bids	2026 – 28	Reduced reliance on council budgets
Review of the council’s events plan and identity opportunities to increase cultural content, embedding cultural strands into existing council events.	2027-28	More cohesive and inclusive events calendar
Identify gaps in council’s events calendar and develop new cultural festival moments – including with neighboring authorities eg Preston towards 2032 Guild.	2027 – 28	Broaden reach, diversity, and vibrancy
Activate Leyland Market with cultural pop-ups, workshops, and performances	2027 – 28	Increased vibrancy, footfall, and community engagement
Co-design activity with the market traders to support economic growth	2027 – 28	Stronger link between commerce and culture

## Activity programme

The programme below supports the above priorities and defines how South Ribble will deliver culture. It sits alongside and complements the council’s corporate events calendar.

### Programme Strand 1 – Doorstep Culture

**Bringing creativity into the everyday places where people already live, meet and spend time.**

Doorstep Culture is about making creativity visible, accessible, and part of daily life in South Ribble. This strand takes cultural activity directly into neighbourhoods, high streets, parks,

markets, and community spaces, responding to the evidence that many residents want creative opportunities close to home and outside traditional venues.

This programme will include pop-up performances, creative workshops, artist-led activities, seasonal events, street-based culture, small; festivals and community celebrations. Activities will be designed to be flexible, low-pressure, and free or low cost, ensuring that everyone – regardless of income, confidence, or background – can take part.

Doorstep Culture will focus particularly on areas with lower cultural engagement, working with communities to shape activity that reflects their identity, interests, and experience. The strand will also provide paid opportunities for local creatives, linking them directly to communities, town centres, and public spaces.

Who benefits: families, older adults, younger residents, low-income households, neurodivergent residents, migrant communities, and those who may not typically engage with the arts venues.

#### **Delivery Steps:**

1. Identify suitable parks/locations across the borough
2. Commission local workshop leads and performers
3. Deliver four seasonal events (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter)

#### **Outputs (per year)**

- 4 events
- 200+ residents engaged

#### **Outcome**

Culture becomes visible where people already are.

### **Programme Strand 2 – Creative Cafes**

#### **Low-pressure creative meetups build confidence and connection.**

##### Delivery Steps

1. Identify 6 community venues (e.g. cafes, community centres, libraries)
2. Commission 6 artists to deliver monthly sessions
3. Pilot inclusive formats:
  - Neurodivergent friendly
  - LGBTQ+ creative café
  - Older resident's creative social

Outputs (per year)

- 12 café sessions
- 360 participants

**Outcome**

Increased participation from residents who face barriers.

**Programme Strand 3 – Artist in Residencies**

**Artists embedded into community spaces.**

**Delivery Steps**

1. Select 2 spaces per year
2. Open call for artist residences
3. Each residency must engage at least one underrepresented group

**Outputs (per year)**

- 2 residences
- 6 workshops/ exhibitions

**Outcome**

Residents co-create with professional artists.

**Programme Strand 4 – Behind the Wall (flagship mural trail)**

**Celebrating identity and sense of place.**

**Delivery Steps**

1. Identify 5 – 7 mural wall sites
2. Recruit 5 mural artists (local & regional)
3. Form a young people’s mural advisory group (managed by Education and Engagement Officer)

**Outputs (per year)**

- 5 murals
- 150+ residents engaged in workshops

**Outcome**

Visible celebration of people and places.

**Programme Strand 5 – Story of Us**

## **Heritage and storytelling led by communities.**

### **Delivery Steps**

1. Work with residents to collect stories
2. Pop-up displays including empty shop windows
3. Digital map of stories and locations

### **Outputs (per year)**

- 3 exhibitions
- 200+ stories collected

### **Outcome**

Heritage becomes community-led and inclusive

## **Programme 6 – Creative Economy and Skills**

### **Supporting the growth and sustainability of South Ribble’s creative workforce.**

This strand develops the borough’s creative economy through skills, training, professional development, commissions, and partnership-building. It helps local creatives become more resilient, connected, and ready for funding or new opportunities.

### **Key elements include:**

- Creative skills workshop
- Funding readiness support
- Creative business development
- Networking meetups
- Commissioning pathways (linking creatives to Parks, markets, libraries etc.)
- Integrating opportunities into the new Culture Web Panels
- Supporting young creatives and emerging talent
- Connecting creatives with Leyland Market programming
- Exploring long-term creative infrastructure, including a future Creative Hub

Who benefits: freelancers, designers, makers, performers, musicians, creative micro-businesses, students, and early career artists.

### **Delivery Steps**

1. Quarterly creative networking sessions
2. Annual Creative South Ribble conference

3. Small bursaries (childcare/ travel) to reduce barriers for freelancers

**Outputs (per year)**

- 2 networking events
- 30 creatives supported
- 5 funded applications assisted

**Outcome**

A stronger, connected cultural sector

**Programme Strand 7 – Education & Engagement (Cross-cutting)**

**Purpose**

To embed cultural learning, skills development and progression pathways across all cultural activities in South Ribble.

**Delivery Steps**

Work with primary and secondary schools, colleges, youth services and adult learning providers to co-design cultural activity

Embed education and engagement outcomes within existing programme strands, including Culture in the Parks, Artists in Libraries and Behind the Walls.

Create progression routes for young people and early-career creatives, including workshops, shadowing opportunities and paid commissions.

Ensure activity is inclusive and accessible, including SEND-informed approaches and support for families facing cost or transport barriers.

**Outputs (per year)**

10+ school, youth or learning linked cultural sessions

2 pilot progression pathways (e.g. young curator, young producer, young artist)

Paid opportunities for early career creatives linked to delivery

**Outcome**

Residents of all ages gain skills, confidence, and clear pathways into cultural participation and creative careers.

## **Funding and delivery**

Much of the cultural sector operates on grant funding, as cultural organisations are rarely financially profitable. However, their true value lies in the societal benefits they deliver, including enhanced health and wellbeing, skills development, and contributions to placemaking and community cohesion.

### **We will:**

- Use existing council venues and assets more effectively (community spaces, public realm)
- Collaborate with delivery partners
- Seek external investment, not rely solely on council budgets

### **Potential sources of funding:**

We will use external funding wherever possible, so the programme does not rely solely on council budgets

- Arts Council England
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Business sponsorship / partnership contributions
- UK Town of Culture

## **Monitoring and measuring success**

### **What will success look like by 2030?**

- Culture is more visible across the boroughs – in parks, community centres, high streets, and schools
- More people feel culture is for them
- Local artists feel supported and connected, not isolated
- Residents see their stories, heritage and identities reflected at them
- South Ribble is recognised as a place where culture grows from the roots up

### **How progress will be tracked**

- Quarterly updates to Portfolio Holder
- Annual dashboard to Members

- To senior leadership through service planning and delivery
- Publicly where appropriate
- KPIs will be developed to monitor participation, inclusion, number of events, funding sourced, geographic spread

A mid strategy review will be completed in 2027 to assess impact, refine programme, and ensure alignment with local needs and the wider economic impact.

## **Appendix**

### **Consultees**

Arts Council England  
Arts Lancashire  
British Commercial Vehicle Museum  
Creative Lancashire  
Freelance artists, historians, and volunteers (several)  
Jacky Moon events  
Lancashire Ancestors Research Centre  
Lancashire County Council  
Lancashire Music Association  
Lancashire Music Service  
Leyland Festival  
Leyland Historical Society  
Leyland Market operations  
Leyland Town Deal  
Leyland Town Team  
Market Ale House  
Northern Potters  
Northwest Heritage Trust  
Preston Black History Group  
Preston City Council  
South Ribble Borough Council officers and councillors  
The Creative Network  
Worden Hall tenants and groups  
Leyland Bonfires  
Lostock Hall Town Team  
Penwortham Arts Centre  
Samlesbury Hall