

THE UK CITIES OF PROJECT:

TOWARDS A
RESEARCH-INFORMED
APPROACH

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

UKRI
Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

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Credit: FiveSix Photography | Coventry 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This AHRC-commissioned review, led by the University of Warwick, presents the case for a research-informed UK City of Culture programme. This is the first release from the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project* and will be followed by a series of events and publications later in the year.

As the UK City of Culture programme matures, it is important to establish a foundation of evidence-led learning to guide future iterations and secure continuity of learning and investment.

A key driver for the UK City of Culture programme is to invest in places that have a clear ambition and evidenced plan for culture-led city transformation. This requires a research-led

approach to how culture might lead to impacts that address the specific needs of a place and its diverse communities.

The focus of the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project* series is on the distinctive role that arts and humanities researchers, in collaboration with other disciplines, can play in place shaping and in the success of the UK City of Culture programme.

UK Cities of Culture are invaluable sites of cultural inquiry: research and evaluation provide evidence of ‘what works’, from different perspectives, as well as capturing unintended outcomes and learning from less successful aspects of the delivery plan.

From accounts of lived experiences and hyperlocal cultural impacts, to large scale social and economic benefits and increased civic pride, research and evaluation can enhance the understanding of the conditions for success and sustainability of the UK City of Culture programme.

This review includes an analysis of findings and learnings from the extensive monitoring and evaluation of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, and the experience of establishing a research-intensive, multi-disciplinary programme in collaboration with local partners, spanning planning,

delivery and legacy of the City of Culture year.

With support from its local university and the AHRC, Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 can plan ahead for a comprehensive place-led research programme.

Connecting this programme with the Department of Culture Media and Sport’s wide ranging Areas of Research Interest will highlight national cultural evidence priorities that DCMS, Lottery Funders and other government departments will require in the coming years to help develop and deliver policies.

The review includes a series of interim proposals to drive a more strongly research-informed approach to the UK City of Culture programme.

The Appendices to the review give an overview of geo-demographic and other data for four rounds of shortlisted and title cities and places.



SECTION

THE UK CITY
OF CULTURE
PROGRAMME AND
THE SCALE OF
OPPORTUNITY FOR
ARTS & HUMANITIES
LED RESEARCH





Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin | Coventry 2021

ABOUT THE WARWICK UK CITIES OF CULTURE PROJECT

The AHRC has previously supported independent research around UK City of Culture through the [AHRC Cities of Culture Network \(2018-2022\)](#) and a portfolio of [UK City of Culture funded projects](#). Building on this work, AHRC has commissioned the University of Warwick to explore the value of longer term planning and engagement, in order to maximise the research potential for shortlisted and title cities, and support a more sustained programme of arts, humanities and social science research into the outcomes, impacts and transferable learning of the UK City of Culture programme.

The Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project highlights the importance of universities and research at different stages of the bidding process for UK City of Culture,

through to delivery, evaluation, and legacy of the programme. The project has a particular focus on increasing the depth and breadth of arts and humanities research to match the scale of opportunity afforded by successful and shortlisted places.

Crucially, it focuses attention on understanding and celebrating the distinctive role that arts and humanities researchers, often working collaboratively with other disciplines, play in place shaping and in the success of the UK City of Culture programme.

For the first time, this review provides an overview of [UK City of Culture Programme](#) data from its inception in 2009 to the fourth-round award of the prestigious title for UK City of Culture 2025 to Bradford.

In this context, the review draws on over 30 interviews with cities, universities, and cultural organisations; data available from the DCMS published assessments and Office of National Statistics; geo-demographic data from shortlisted cities across the UK; and broader research and analysis of the four rounds of bidding.

As the UK City of Culture programme matures it is important to establish a foundation of evidence-led learning to guide future iterations and secure continuity of learning. This foundation will also provide funders with the confidence and evidence to invest in and evaluate outcomes and impacts.

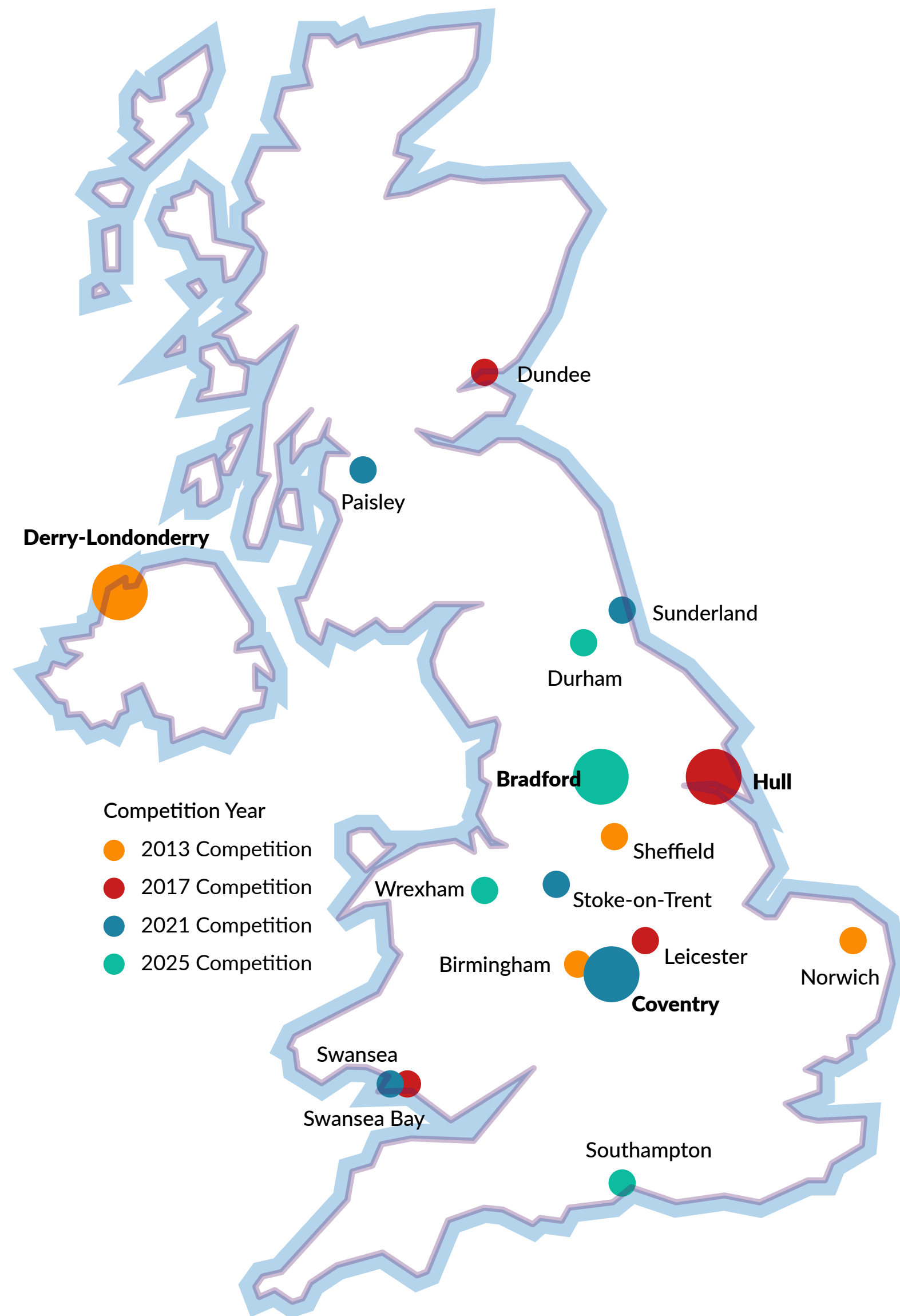
The review includes analysis of findings and learnings from the extensive monitoring and evaluation of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, and the experience of establishing a research-intensive, multidisciplinary programme in

collaboration with local partners, spanning planning, delivery and legacy of the City of Culture year. This demonstrates the central role that universities can and should play.

UK City of Culture acts as a catalyst for new models of enquiry and creative methods of research, working with regional partners as well as local, often seldom heard, communities. From accounts of lived experiences and hyperlocal cultural impacts, to large scale social and economic benefits and increased civic pride, research and evaluation adds value to the transformative impact of the UK City of Culture programme.

The review makes a series of interim proposals to drive a more strongly research-informed approach to the City of Culture programme. These proposals are intended to maximise the opportunities and impacts of independent research and learning going forward.





They also identify areas requiring further research and evaluation to sustain and enhance value creation, impact, and knowledge transfer from the UK City of Culture programme to localities across the UK.

The Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project includes three distinctive and connected outputs. In addition to this initial overview document, the project will produce an edited *Warwick UK Cities of Culture: Future Trends* series of seven short reports, focusing on key impacts of the UK City of Culture programme and the role of research and evaluation in evidencing these. These will be published later in 2022 and include, from an arts and humanities and social science perspective, future trends in the measurement of economic and social value; developing ‘co-creation’ processes with communities to enhance value creation and opportunities for local cultural production and distribution;

the role of tangible and intangible heritage in place shaping; and the measurement of wellbeing in cultural interventions. The project will also include a set of bid and legacy case studies drawn from all four nations of the UK.

Finally, there will be a series of roundtable public discussions in the late Autumn to develop research underpinned conversations and networks around the social, economic, and cultural impacts of the UK City of Culture programme. These will examine the role that the AHRC can play in capturing and improving the quality and depth of evidence for the full range of outcomes associated with the scale of programming and impact of UK Cities of Culture.



AN OUTLINE OF THE UK CITY OF CULTURE PROGRAMME

The UK City of Culture programme is a flagship DCMS project that provides a large-scale, culture-led investment in place shaping. Since its inception in 2009...

71 Expressions of interest in the competition from across the UK

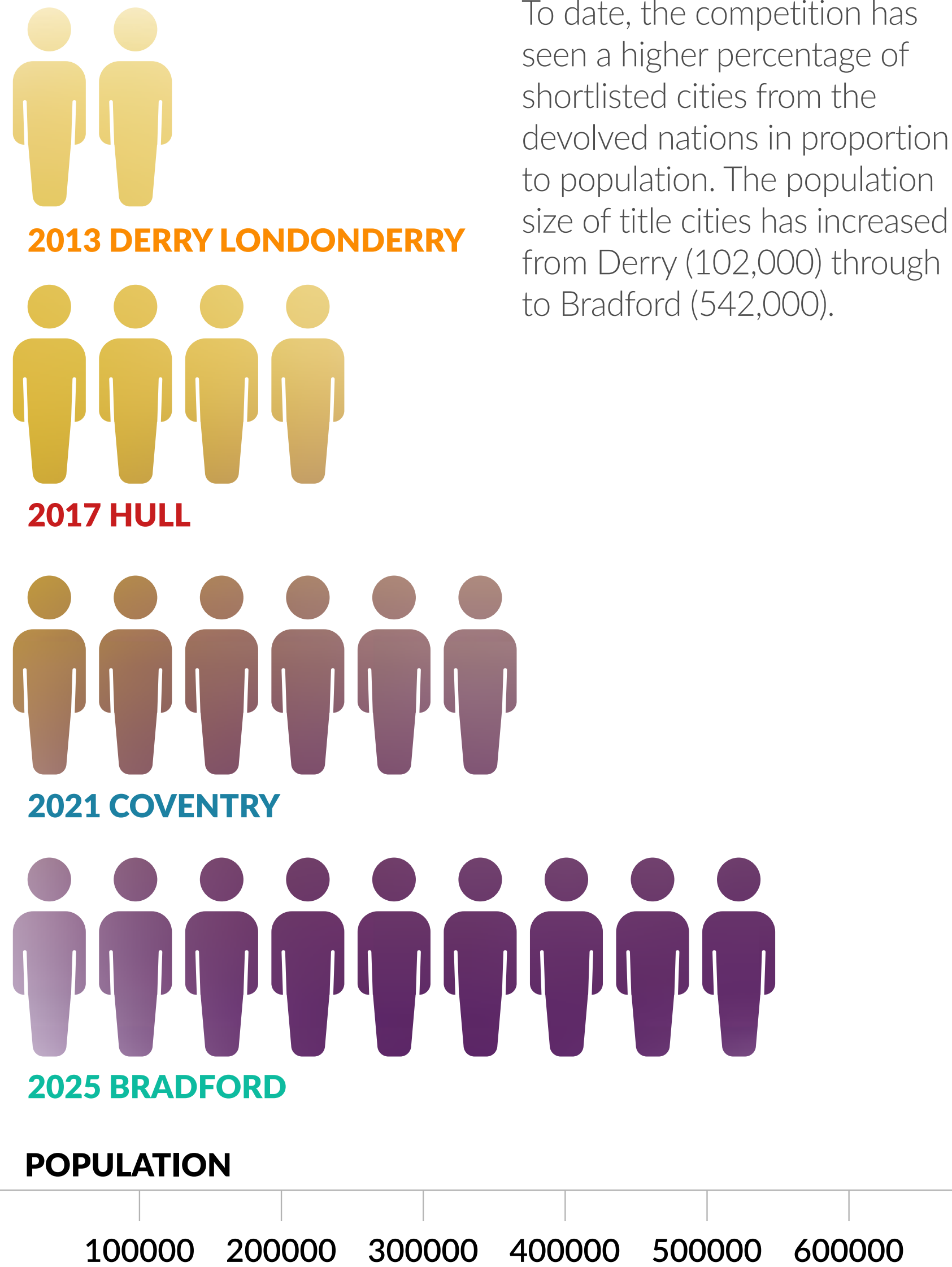
44 Places have submitted full bids

17 Have been shortlisted (representing 9% of the UK population)

04 Have been awarded titles

Every city in the UK could be given an opportunity to bring out the creative skills, talent and enthusiasm of its people – to showcase itself on the national stage.

Andy Burnham – Secretary of State
8th January 2009 introducing the UK City of Culture Programme



To date, the competition has seen a higher percentage of shortlisted cities from the devolved nations in proportion to population. The population size of title cities has increased from Derry (102,000) through to Bradford (542,000).

Shortlisted places are geographically focused in the Midlands and the North of England. The only shortlisted place in the South of the country is Southampton, two shortlisted places are in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland and two in Wales (the Swansea area has been shortlisted twice). Winning cities are geographically dispersed with one in Northern Ireland, one in the Midlands and two in the North of England.

Shortlisted places have generally higher levels of deprivation and lower disposable incomes than the UK average. The combined average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score is 29.69 (UK average 21.67 in 2019). The estimated combined average household income for shortlisted places is £23k per annum after housing costs, compared to a UK average of £24.9k after housing costs.¹

Cities and regions reaching the shortlist stage to date have tended to be more ethnically

diverse than the general UK population. Derry, Hull, Sunderland and Dundee are notable exceptions. The not white British identities average across shortlisted places is 17.8%, almost double that of the level identified in the 2011 Census (UK average 9.8%).

There can be no regeneration without culture.

Councillor Susan Hinchliffe – Leader Bradford Council UK City of Culture 2025

Direct investment into UK City of Culture programming has increased over time, from £23m in Derry 2013, £33m in Hull 2017, to £35m in Coventry 2021. The balance of funding raised from local sources, particularly local authorities, is 40%-50% of the total, with

an additional 50%-60% from national sources, including Lottery Funding and from Government departments.

A key driver for the programme is to invest in cities that have a clear ambition and plan for culture-led city transformation. This requires research into what makes a place and its people distinctive and how culture might lead to a ‘step-change’ that addresses the specific needs of a place. A research-informed approach to developing a narrative of place, people and their needs will strengthen an evidence-led bidding process and deepen understanding of what makes a place and its culture different and special.

¹ See Appendix Three for detail on UK City of Culture data

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE UK CITY OF CULTURE PROGRAMME?

Andy Burnham, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced the UK City of Culture competition in 2009. The origins of the competition were in the transformative effects of the UK's first EU Capital of Culture titles: firstly, Glasgow in 1990 and then the success of Liverpool in 2008.²

Glasgow and Liverpool demonstrated the idea that culture-led regeneration could produce 'once in a generation' opportunities for places facing a broad range of challenges, to fast-track their social, economic, cultural and civic ambitions for change; to re-imagine and re-energise through the lens of arts and culture.

Prior to the UK's departure from the European Union, the opportunity for UK cities to bid for the EU Capital of Culture title came around every eighteen years. Burnham proposed a new quadrennial UK competition to allow more cities to enjoy the benefits of a City of Culture title, drawing on the evidence from Glasgow and Liverpool.

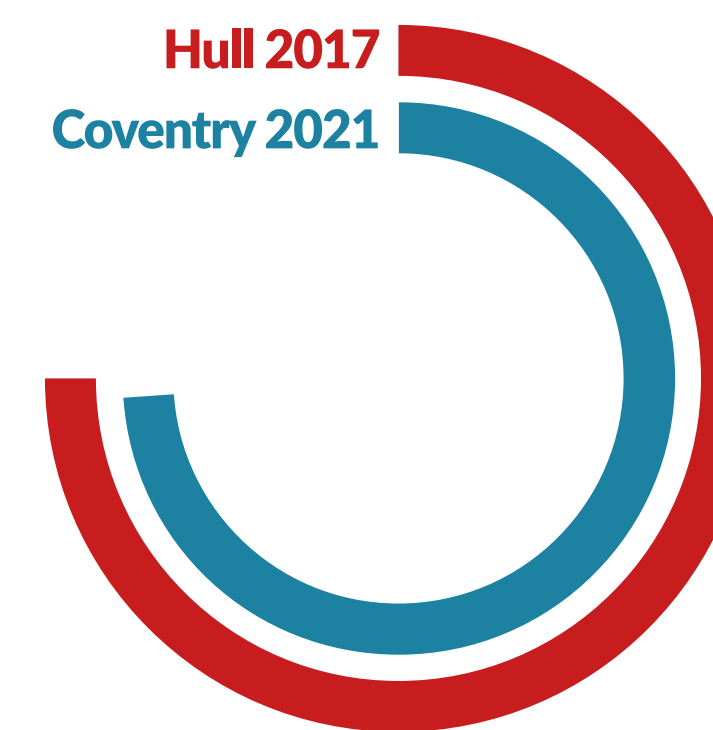
Previous UK City of Culture title holders have benefitted from increased inward economic investment related to the title and additional investments in urban regeneration during their title period. Hull UK City of Culture 2017 reported £89m related to the title and an

additional £672m invested in the local economy.³ The baseline economic impact for Coventry UK City of Culture identified an additional £172.6m investment related to the title between the award in 2017 and January 2021 prior to the commencement of the programme, with an additional £500m in urban regeneration investments during this period.⁴

Other significant reported benefits to UK City of Culture title holders include increases in visitors to the place; local employment into the cultural and hospitality sectors; increased levels of civic engagement; wellbeing and cultural participation; economic stability and growth of the local cultural sector and infrastructure - and, in Hull's case, literally putting their city on the national weather map.

Culture can act as a catalyst for community engagement, civic cohesion and a driver for economic and social change as previously seen not just in Derry-Londonderry (2013), Hull (2017) and Coventry (2021), but all those other places who went on a journey to develop their own cultural strategy. Simply taking part has proved a catalyst in itself.

Sir Phil Redmond – Chair of the City of Culture Expert Advisory Panel



75% of visitors stated that **Hull UK City of Culture 2017** had positively changed their perception of the city.⁵

In **Coventry UK City of Culture 2021**, as of 25th May 2022, **74%** of event attendees stated that UK City of Culture had increased their pride in Coventry as an area.⁶

² Glasgow City Council (1991) Glasgow 1990 Garcia, | B. Melville, R. Cox, T. (2010) Impacts 08

³ Culture, Place and Policy Institute, University of Hull (2018) Cultural Transformations

⁴ Coventry City of Culture Trust (2021) Economic Impact Assessment: Baseline Report – Amion Consulting (2021)

⁵ Culture, Place and Policy Institute, University of Hull (2018) Cultural Transformations

⁶ Data provided by Coventry City of Culture Trust and is correct as of 25th May 2022.

For us the bidding process has unlocked a scale of ambition, vision and financial commitment that is unprecedented, with 150 businesses, cultural and community organisations and 11 neighbouring local authorities committed to transforming the city and wider region through culture.

Cllr. Satvir Kaur – Leader Southampton City Council 2025 (shortlisted city)

In this Review, we acknowledge the benefits for places that are shortlisted, but do not win the title. An important theme is the extent to which the civic partnerships, leadership and planned ambitions for culture-led growth, which are established during the bidding process, lead to additional and sustained benefits for shortlisted cities - including the award of UNESCO Creative Cities titles to Norwich, Dundee and Perth.

Stoke, Dundee and Sunderland are examples of shortlisted cities which have increased investment in arts and culture through additional place shaping funding streams, including Creative People and Places, and other place and people focused Arts Council England and Creative Scotland schemes.



THE SCALE OF OPPORTUNITY & RESPONSIBILITY AFFORDED BY THE UK CITY OF CULTURE PROGRAMME



Credit: FiveSix Photography | Coventry 2021

There is an increasing interest in what can be learnt and developed at regional and UK levels of cultural planning and investment from the levels of experimentation and cultural place shaping afforded to UK Cities of Culture.

The scale of opportunity afforded by the UK City of Culture title allows for an intensity of cultural programming, R&D and other cultural development activity to take place, that leads to measurable, tangible and sustained benefits at scale. The winning city becomes a live test bed for a wide range of cultural interventions designed to address the challenges and ambitions for culture-led transformation.

Many of the shortlisted cities have developed longer term cultural strategies and civic partnerships to inform the bidding process and identify key outcomes and impacts to guide the delivery and legacy of a UK City of Culture programme if successful. The delivery of the title year includes extensive build-up and legacy phases.

The scale of the potential benefits of the UK City of Culture title has increased competitiveness between aspiring places. The costs of the bidding process for the sample of shortlisted cities considered in this Review ranged from £50k - £1m.

These costs include: audience development work; baseline research; community engagement; marketing and strengthening the resilience of the local cultural sector. For the 2025 round, DCMS supported shortlisted cities with £40k grants to develop their bids. The grants were provided as a flexible source of funding to be deployed in a place-specific way, for places to demonstrably strengthen their full application and help to develop a scalable plan on, for example: research and development, including feasibility considerations; consultation; human resources; data gathering; and commercial expertise for capital plans.

One of the things we found when we were bidding for UK City of Culture status was that some of our communities felt that they had lost a sense of connection and pride with Perth and the wider area. That's what we want to reignite.

Fiona Robertson – Perth & Kinross Council UK City of Culture 2017 shortlist

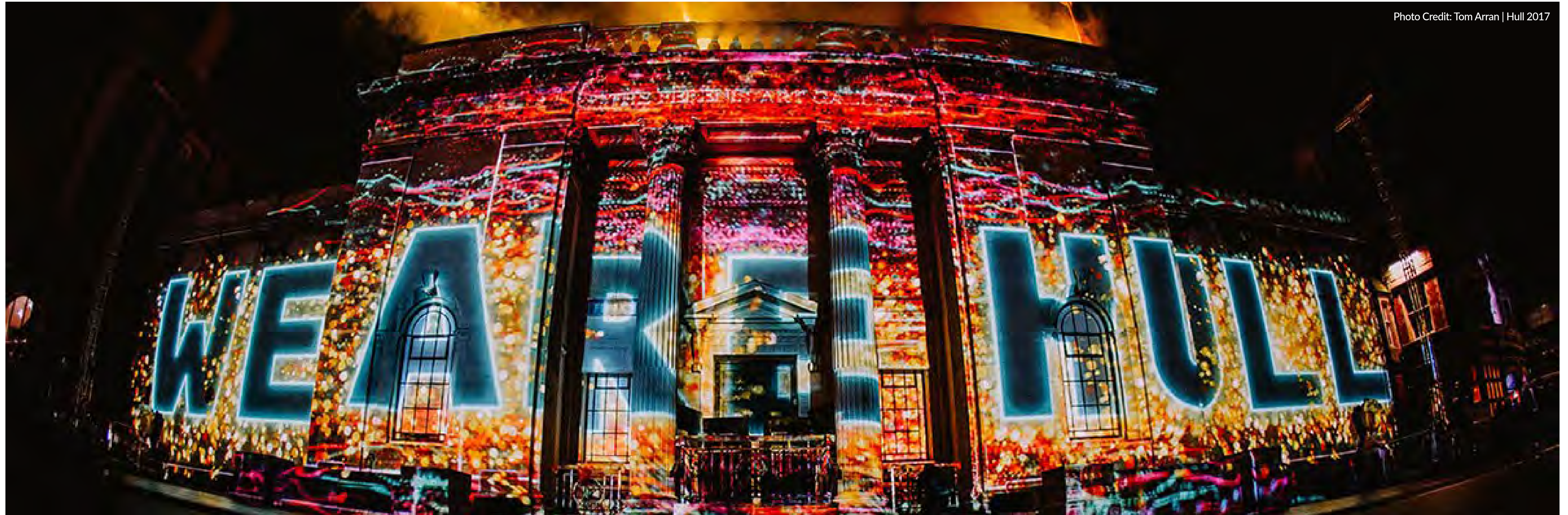


Photo Credit: Tom Arran | Hull 2017

The DCMS criteria for the bidding process have evolved over the life of the programme in response to the intense competition for the award and changes in national cultural priorities and accountability, from 4 broad criteria in 2009,

to 10 detailed criteria for the 2025 round. However, the description of an achievable and sustainable step-change is a consistent thread. This increasingly requires research to develop baselines for economic, social and cultural change.

The criteria for the 2025 round required bidding places to: 'demonstrate a clear evidence-based and robust approach to maximising the legacy and evaluating the impacts of the City of Culture, including through increased and improved data generation and capture'.⁷

The scale of opportunity is now matched with a scale of responsibility to be publicly accountable for the progress made towards intended impacts and outcomes; through evaluation strategies that also provide learning insights

of strategic and developmental value for other places and cultural interventions.

⁷ GDCMS (2021) City of Culture 2025: Expression of interest guidance for bidders

SECTION 2

UK CITIES OF CULTURE AS SITES FOR RESEARCH & LEARNING



UK CITIES OF CULTURE AS SITES FOR RESEARCH & LEARNING

As the criteria for UK Cities of Culture become more detailed and require evidence-led proposals and accurate baselining, evaluation has become more sophisticated and focused on providing baselines, needs analysis and measurable forecasts of expected outcomes and impacts. The 2021 and 2025 rounds have seen universities leading on this work in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders, providing a broad range of expertise from urban geography and data science to health, arts and social science research.

The City of Culture journey provides a lot of learning points for any university on how to really engage with communities and the diversity of a city – As a scientist it has opened my eyes to what culture has to offer our civic status.

Marcus Rattray – Professor of Pharmacology, University of Bradford, UK City of Culture 2025

In total, 50 universities have contributed to full bids and have played an increasingly important role in the bidding, delivery and evaluation of UK Cities of Culture.

Whilst most bidding places have a university relationship, the emphasis has tended to be on the value of universities as anchor institutions with long term interests in local and regional growth.

Universities, like Warwick, Coventry, Hull and others located in shortlisted cities, are often major local employers and their students make up a significant proportion of the local population and, in turn, they can benefit from and contribute to the cultural, social and economic prosperity and vitality stemming from being shortlisted or awarded.

University of Hull, Coventry University, and the University of Warwick have used the UK City of Culture opportunity to increase public engagement



Photo Credit: Karol Wyszynski | Bradford 2025

and impact through investment in programmes of research and UK City of Culture focused PhD programmes, as well as providing civic leadership. They have also received

support from ACE, from the AHRC Cities of Culture Network, AHRC Early Career Fellowships and other AHRC and UKRI programmes.



Credit: HKD Media | Coventry 2021

MIND THE GAP: THE VALUE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Respondents to interviews reflected on how the considerable demands of meeting the evaluation requirements from DCMS and other funders have tended to overshadow consideration of planning and delivering a wider set of research outputs based on the social value, stories, experiences and local impacts of the UK City of Culture programme. In Coventry, the City of Culture Trust invested in studies led by the universities' researchers focusing on a more detailed inquiry into the impact of the programme on communities

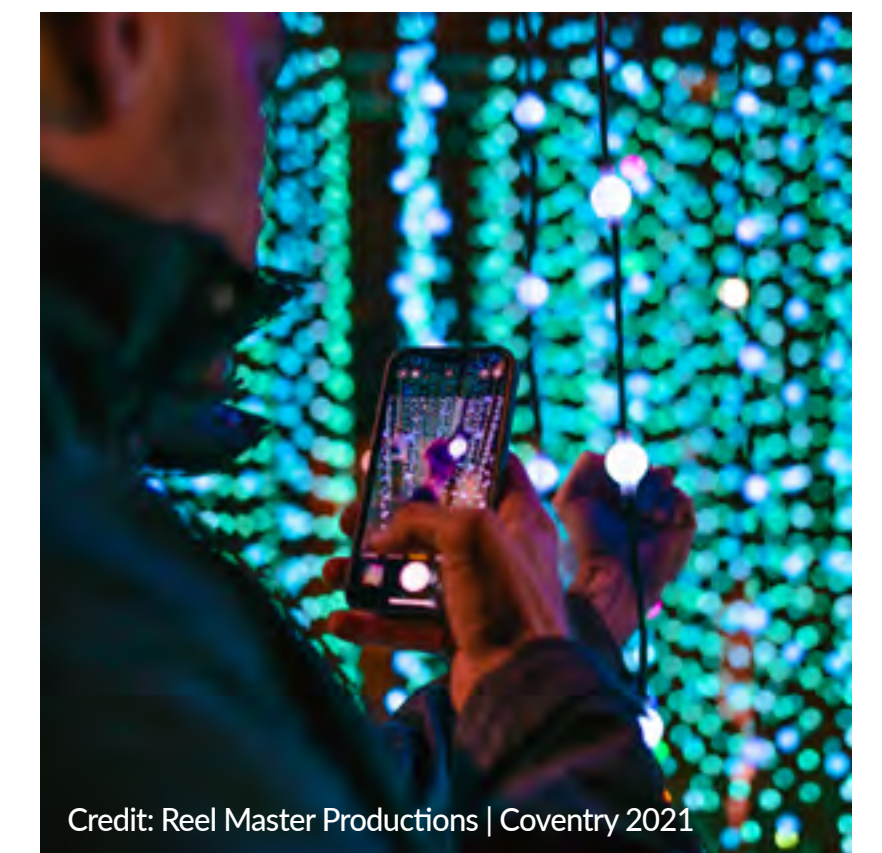
and aspects that would not have had the coverage in the main evaluation programme.

A common theme in the ambitions of shortlisted places is to give life and expression to what makes a place and its people distinctive; to increase civic pride through inclusive access to cultural production and engagement. Essentially, many of our respondents stress the value of UK City of Culture not just in economic terms, but also the difference that culture can make to the subjective quality and prosperity of lives and places.

This calls for approaches that engage and reflect lived experiences and with this the development of evaluation and reporting methodologies informed by the arts and humanities and social sciences.

Because of their scale, UK Cities of Culture are unique sites for research, innovation and learning to inform national cultural investment and place shaping

strategies. Research and evaluation are providing evidence of 'what works', as well as acting as a way of capturing unintended outcomes and learning from less successful aspects of the delivery plan. UK Cities of Culture are invaluable sites of cultural inquiry and research spanning disciplines and fostering innovative collaborative research with the local cultural and heritage sectors, communities, beneficiaries, and stakeholders, including public sector, private and commercial interests.



Credit: Reel Master Productions | Coventry 2021

Interviewees from shortlisted cities and title cities and places, note an increasing emphasis in the bidding process in improving data generation and capture, to provide the evidence of measurable outcomes and impacts that tends towards the primacy of quantifiable hard metrics to measure both social and economic returns on investment.

This evidence is required to assess the economic and social returns on the scale of investment for key stakeholders, including DCMS, Lottery Funders and the Treasury. However, it may not fully capture the 'experience' of being a UK City of Culture from different local perspectives.

This emphasis, in addition to the need for timely and concise reporting to multiple stakeholders and funders, can lead to under-reporting of qualitative and less tangible social and cultural outcomes.

The lived experiences, the memories, small scale cultural legacies and uplifts in individual and social confidence are important elements of the UK City of Culture journey. They also feed into the outcomes that provide hyperlocal individual and social impacts and legacies from being UK City of Culture.

Art and culture should be accessible to everyone and this prestigious title will help Bradford deliver unforgettable events for communities on their doorstep.

Nadine Dorries – Secretary of State for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport.⁸

The AHRC historically and currently supports researchers and programmes that are engaging with these methodological challenges. Through its direct involvement in the UK City of Culture programme, the AHRC and its community can provide guidance and connections whilst investing in the opportunity to 'test' and learn at scale from UK Cities of Culture.

Comprehensive and inclusive evaluations of UK City of Culture should include arts and humanities and social science research into the differentiated effects of the cultural programme, as it is experienced by target populations and neighbourhoods within the UK City of Culture.

Beyond the headline numbers, there is a need to understand better which cultural activities and outputs are more successful in engaging with and generating social value for different populations and their localities.

Evaluation of progress towards these goals needs to go beyond reporting improved metrics from a baseline and needs to include deeper analysis of how these improvements have been made through the scale of cultural programming and activity, and what continuing obstacles there may be. Measuring social value and understanding what works from a subjective beneficiary perspective requires sustained innovative qualitative research as well as quantitative data capture.

Being almost a pilgrim on a journey in your own city where the ultimate privilege is arriving in a place where the people and the city are transformed.

Aideen McGinley – Exec Director Derry/Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013



Photo Credit: Matthew Andrews | Durham S/listed 2025

⁸ The Guardian

LEARNING FROM COVENTRY: THE POTENTIAL OF A RESEARCH-LED APPROACH

Research-led Evaluation:

Coventry is relatively young. The median age of residents is 32 years old, the UK's median is 40 years.⁹ Coventry is home to a diverse population, with 33.4% of residents classified as non-white British compared to 20.2% in England.¹⁰ There are over 120 languages spoken in Coventry, with over 50 first languages spoken in Coventry schools by more than 50 children.¹¹

14% of Coventry neighbourhoods are among the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England.¹² Historically, these neighbourhoods have the lowest rates of cultural participation and life expectancy.

The average IMD score for Coventry is 24.9, but there are significant differences between areas with the least deprived neighbourhood (MSOA¹³) at 5.95 and the most deprived at 56.79. Based on the 2018 Household Survey measures, there are stark inequalities in cultural access between areas of the city from as high as 86% to as low as 11%.¹⁴

Coventry was the first UK City of Culture to be anchored in a ten-year cultural strategy and a Story of Change designed to align the scale of investment, activity and outputs with fifteen outcomes and four impacts publicly agreed through consultation.

Led by the University of Warwick and Coventry University, Coventry City of Culture Trust published its outcomes-based performance measurement and evaluation strategy in 2019 prior to the commencement of the programme, including a detailed baseline with output and outcome indicators. This was essential as all investment and programming decisions were aligned with the publicly agreed outcomes and impacts.

The University of Warwick, in partnership with Coventry City Council and the Coventry City of Culture Trust, produced the Coventry Cultural Place Profiler to guide targeted investment and programming in those communities and populations that historically had benefited least from public investment in culture, leading to engagement, activity and participation in all of the 42 neighbourhoods (MSOAs) in the city.

43% of tickets issued to citizens of Coventry for UK City of



Culture 2021 events in the first six months of the programme went to residents who are financially stretched or facing urban adversity.¹⁵ This significant percentage from economic groups, who were also often from majority minority ethnic identities, was achieved through hyperlocal cultural 'co-creation' projects based on the creativity and stories of different areas of the city, their heritages and community assets.

⁹ Coventry City Council Headline Statistics February 2022

¹⁰ ONS Census Date 2011

¹¹ Coventry City Council: Facts about Coventry

¹² Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

¹³ Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOA) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. This allows for data to be presented in more granular detail. An MSA generally represents between 5000-7000 residents

¹⁴ What the data tells us about Coventry

¹⁵ The postcodes of tickets issued to bookers with a Coventry postcode which was complete and valid were segmented using the ACORN segmentation model.

Coventry City of Culture Trust (2021) Performance, Measurement and Evaluation Interim Report

A TALE OF TWO WARDS: 2018/19 DATA ¹⁶	FOLESHILL	EARLSDON
IMD (City average 24.9)	41.6	10.1
Gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy (City average males 15.4, females 18.9)	21.4 yrs. Males 28.3 yrs. Females	12.1 yrs. Males 15.1 yrs. Females
Ethnic identities (City average 66% white British)	Majority minority ethnic	Majority white British
Income (City average £24,764)	£16,933	£32,000
Participation in publicly funded culture (City average 51%)	43% (as low as 11% in one MSOA)	49% (as high as 69% in one MSOA)

The Coventry City of Culture Trust invested in workshops and partnerships with faith and community groups in Foleshill to develop an extensive cultural programme of over 25 events, the majority of which were 'co-created' with residents and based in their rich cultures, stories, and heritages.¹⁷ The programme included a mass 'Festival of Lights' street procession and a street performance of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Faith written by a local playwright. Local community ambassadors and community centre leaders were supported to develop their cultural production skills to stage local events featuring residents, professional artists and amateur groups.

THE RATE OF PARTICIPATION IN PUBLICLY FUNDED CULTURE IN THE UPPER FOLESHILL MSOA ROSE FROM 11% IN 2018 TO 53% IN 2021. ¹⁸

The extensive use of data capture and generation allows for targeted cultural investment and evaluation of the outcomes and impacts at neighbourhood level (MSOA). Geo-spatial coding of quantitative and qualitative data from ticketing, surveys and other sources of sentiment data, provide a granular understanding of how Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 has impacted on target populations and neighbourhoods in terms of participation, sentiment and cultural preferences.

¹⁶ Coventry City of Culture Trust (2021) Performance, Measurement and Evaluation Interim Report

- Data also available to view in the Coventry Cultural Place Profiler.

¹⁷ Co-creation refers to the engagement and participation by residents in the design and delivery of a project or event.

¹⁸ Coventry City Council (2021) Household Survey



Credit: Hollis Photography | Coventry 2021

Deeper and wider research led by the Universities

In the years leading up to Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, the University of Warwick and Coventry University developed and funded a collaborative programme of research projects, with senior academic research leads and allocated professional services support. This has produced a strong body of research, impact and engagement and created a lasting legacy.²⁰

Each university funded several rounds of projects that engaged directly with Coventry communities, involving researchers from a range of disciplines, and in the case of Coventry University, included high levels of student participation.

Both universities are developing a regional cultural knowledge exchange programme supported by the AHRC Place Programme.²¹

The University of Warwick developed a new set of

collaborations between researchers and artists through funded projects, the flagship Coventry Creates commissions, in partnership with Coventry University and university investment in the Coventry Biennial. These employed innovative methodologies in research and engagement, and co-created projects with researchers, artists and local communities that are continuing beyond the Coventry UK City of Culture year.

Through its thematic programme of research before and during the Coventry UK City of Culture year, University of Warwick collaborations, with a diverse range of organisations and communities have created new relationships, knowledge, and public engagement opportunities. More than 1700 local people have been actively involved: participating in, learning about, and contributing to university research projects that seek to give voice to

the seldom heard, connect communities, tell Coventry stories, improve health, well-being, and diet, and transform the urban and natural landscape. The intensity of these research programmes has gone some way towards capturing the local experiences and impacts of the programme on local residents, the cultural sector, community groups and key organisations serving the city.

To give a sense of the scale and intensity of the research effort, more than 110 projects have been delivered by University of Warwick researchers, including more than 30 SMEs, 135 artists, over 30 university departments and centres, nearly 50 third sector organisations, over 20 schools and 11 public sector organisations. Researchers have co-created projects with police, health workers, voluntary organisations and arts practitioners in the city-region, developing lasting partnerships and demonstrating the benefits of arts & humanities and social science research.²²

²⁰ Through the Resonate Festival, the University of Warwick also invested in a 12-month programme of public engagement, with 186 events bringing research from all disciplines into Coventry communities and engaging nearly 15,000 people

²¹ City Change Through Culture: Securing the Place Legacy of Coventry City of Culture 2021

²² This work has received more than 30,000 views through the Warwick website in the last 10 months alone

As part of its investment in Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry University created Coventry Digital as a project steeped in the past, present and legacy of 2021. Designed as a community partnership, people across the city are building a repository from the many archives about Coventry, giving themselves the resource to tell their city stories. Previously unknown community archives were added giving a deeper, richer experience of a city with a diverse heritage. In doing so, new stories emerge, challenging dominant narratives of people and place, bringing people together as they re-imagine their city. There have been 318,000 searches in its first year of operation.

The collaborative research programme grew organically through the partnership between the Universities of Warwick and Coventry, and was adaptive to the realities of the impact of Covid on the local cultural sector in particular

– most notably with the rapid launch of the first Coventry Creates commissions in spring 2020.

Working digitally through Coventry Creates (2020 and 2021) 61 researchers worked with 67 local artists who were funded to explore and digitally represent the interface between academic research and the artistic process. The evaluation identifies the changes in artistic and research practice resulting from the programme and its response to the pandemic, and has also produced a toolkit to support future artist-researcher collaborations based on insights from the Coventry Creates Evaluation.

More broadly, Coventry UK City of Culture has been a springboard for research creativity, giving value and meaning to the stories and other forms of artistic expression that are generated by participation and engagement in UK City of Culture programmes.

As part of its City of Culture legacy, University of Warwick has invested in the development of research anchored in regional partnerships, placing arts and culture at the centre of new projects addressing priorities across the city-region.

With support from its local university and the AHRC, Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 can plan ahead for a comprehensive place-led research programme. Connecting this programme with the DCMS's wide spanning Areas of Research Interest will highlight national cultural evidence priorities that DCMS, Lottery Funders and other government departments will require in the coming years to help develop and deliver policies.



INTERIM PROPOSALS



INTERIM PROPOSALS

Based on responses to interviews with representatives from shortlisted cities undertaken for the purpose of this *Review* and supported by the Coventry experience of establishing an intensive research programme for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, the Review makes these initial proposals, to strengthen the research value and dimension of the programme.

1

An AHRC-funded UK Cities of Culture Data Observatory building on the extensive open-source data warehouse created for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, can ensure that data and methodological innovations continue to be collated, investigated, and shared as a resource for researchers and other stakeholders. This will support aspiring places by providing a cumulative repository of UK City of Culture findings, insights and learning for research and evaluation.

2

Early engagement of AHRC with Bradford UK City of Culture 2025 will provide the lead time to identify potential funding opportunities for academic research plans; tailored to the local context with the potential to contribute to UK-wide cultural policy, knowledge creation and exchange.

3

DCMS and AHRC are to consider areas of mutual research interest, to support research planning for UK City of Culture 2025 and subsequent rounds, enabling UK Cities of Culture to make informed choices in connecting their own research priorities with the national, as well as local interest.

4

Stronger interconnections and partnerships between relevant AHRC Place, Health and Wellbeing & Communities programmes, to add value and to support and benefit UK City of Culture specific research programmes.

5

A longer term AHRC-funded UK Cities of Culture Research Network engaging with shortlisted cities and hosted by the current title holder, would provide advice to cities or places that do not have access to a local University; focused research expertise and the opportunity for longitudinal studies of the UK City of Culture programme.

6

A common and stable evaluation framework and baseline methodology for UK Cities of Culture, developed by DCMS. This would build on the detail and breadth of the Coventry UK City of Culture Monitoring and Evaluation strategy, recognising the distinctiveness of place and the identified ambitions of title holders, while also supporting comparative and longitudinal analysis of the programme.

APPENDIX 1 THE QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL BIDS



APPENDIX 1: QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL BIDS

The following analysis is drawn from:

- 30+ interviews alongside thematic analysis of winning bids in Derry, Hull, Coventry and Bradford.
- It is also informed by interrogation of published DCMS assessments and research access to over 20 bids that have either reached shortlists or been unsuccessful.
- Research into population sizes, deprivation indices and demographics of shortlisted cities.

To reach the longlist or shortlist, successful bids must score highly against all the DCMS criteria. However, research commissioned by the University of Warwick has explored the common qualities, or characteristics, of shortlisted and winning places.²³ Places that start early, often 2 or 3 years before the DCMS announcement of the winner of the competition, have tended to be stronger and to position culture in broader economic and social place shaping. These places include Hull, Sunderland, Dundee, Paisley, Stoke, Swansea, Coventry, Bradford, and Southampton. Successful bids require a lead-in period for fundraising, partnership development and establishing research programme to underpin the bid.

Interviewees have cited the timeframe of their bid as being critical to commissioning primary research, such as annual visitor profiles or creative industries data.



Photo Credit: David Allan | Sunderland S/listed 2021

²³ Informed by published DCMS feedback on shortlisted bids, interviews with case study cities and restricted access to 20 DCMS and Regeneris assessments

The successful qualities, or characteristics, identified here suggest that a compelling vision, real need for change, a strong narrative and active engagement of the population are as important as a credible and realistic budget. Derry (2013) and Hull (2017) proposed smaller budgets than other short-listed places.²⁴

An urban focus and coherent and manageable geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities or groups of towns from 100,000 to 600,000 • Urban focus with defined public space or vision to create it • Places with a clear rationale for engaging adjacent local authorities • Bids that design engagement across outlying communities
A distinctive story and vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places that identify a new creative narrative • A vision that will engage people and lead to transformational change • Places that leverage their heritage assets in a contemporary programme • Programming themes that are distinctive to that place
Places that have captured pride and engaged the whole population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places that use the bid to address image or perception problems • Bids that genuinely reach out across communities • Bid with a strong media and social media profile with the press on board as a partner.
A clear narrative of need based on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective baseline data as a basis for step changes • A theory of change with a clear link through themes to programme • Plans for research and evaluation against targets
Clear and achievable step changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic change matched to evidence of social and economic need • Places with focus - not trying to solve everything • Programming that specifically addresses the need – e.g., tourism growth, health • Analysis of why UK city of culture is the right vehicle to deliver transformational change
Cities that can demonstrate why culture is the tool for regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places that have a commitment to culture already with opportunity to grow capacity • Places that embrace culture across all service and planning areas
Strong cultural, civic and business leadership that transcends hierarchy or politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross party-political commitment • Senior support across public and private sector • Cultural and community voices being heard at the top table

²⁴ Derry a smaller bid than others on shortlist, Hull bid with smaller budget than Dundee or Leicester

Independent governance and artistic decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear plans for governance, usually an independent trust • Staffing plans with experienced artistic and producing capacity • Clarity on local authority and delivery agency roles
Honesty about capacity to deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the producing, marketing and organisational capacity of the city • Openness about gaps and weaknesses • Awareness of gaps in cultural expertise and plans to address that • Clear plans to develop cultural infrastructure
Planning for legacy from day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More recent bids that transition from bid to delivery to legacy • A legacy that strengthens existing cultural sector • Legacy in capacity, skills, engagement, civic pride
A wide range of partnerships in place including with higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of partners – not just the usual suspects – e.g., canals trust, refugee agencies, wildlife trusts • Involvement of at least 1 University as a core partner • Local regional and national cultural partners • Evidence of private sector support • Health and voluntary sector partners
Places that position UK City of Culture in a longer journey or strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural strategy in place or commissioned during bid • Evidence of links to regional strategies • Places that start their bid 2 or 3 years ahead of decision with a good plan B
Cities that provide benefits or learning for other parts of the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural partners in other parts of UK • Programme that reaches audiences across the UK either through touring, broadcast or digital engagement • A concept or focus that is replicable • Research that can be disseminated to inform cultural practise in other cities
Places with ambitious cultural programme plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities that innovate with their cultural programme • Programmes with national and international partners • Large scale – wow factor programme ideas • Programmes with evidence of being co-created with communities

APPENDIX

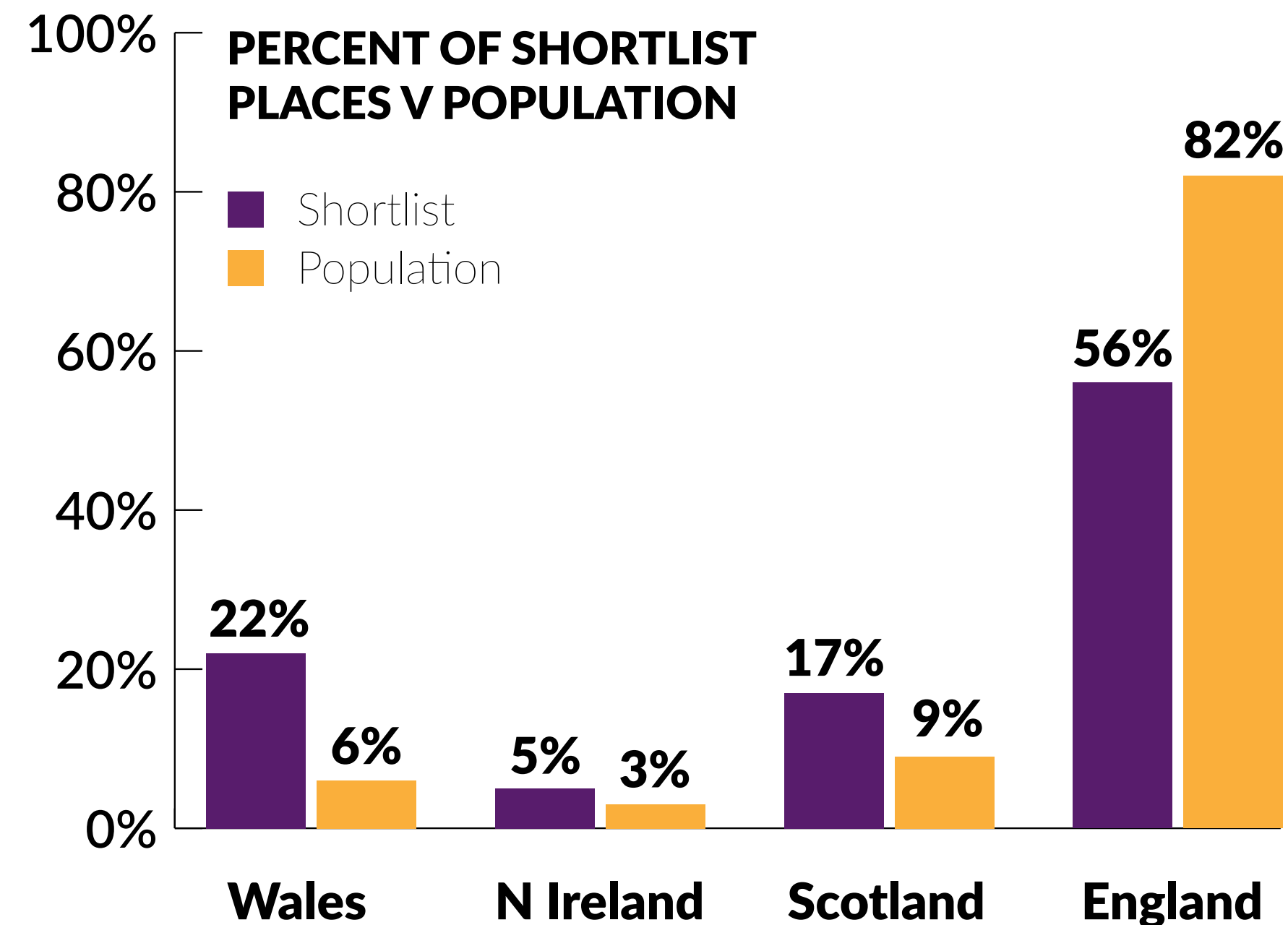


GEO- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF SHORTLISTED CITIES AND TITLE HOLDERS



APPENDIX 2: GEO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF SHORTLISTED CITIES AND TITLE HOLDERS

To date the competition has seen a higher percentage of shortlisted cities from the devolved nations in proportion to population.



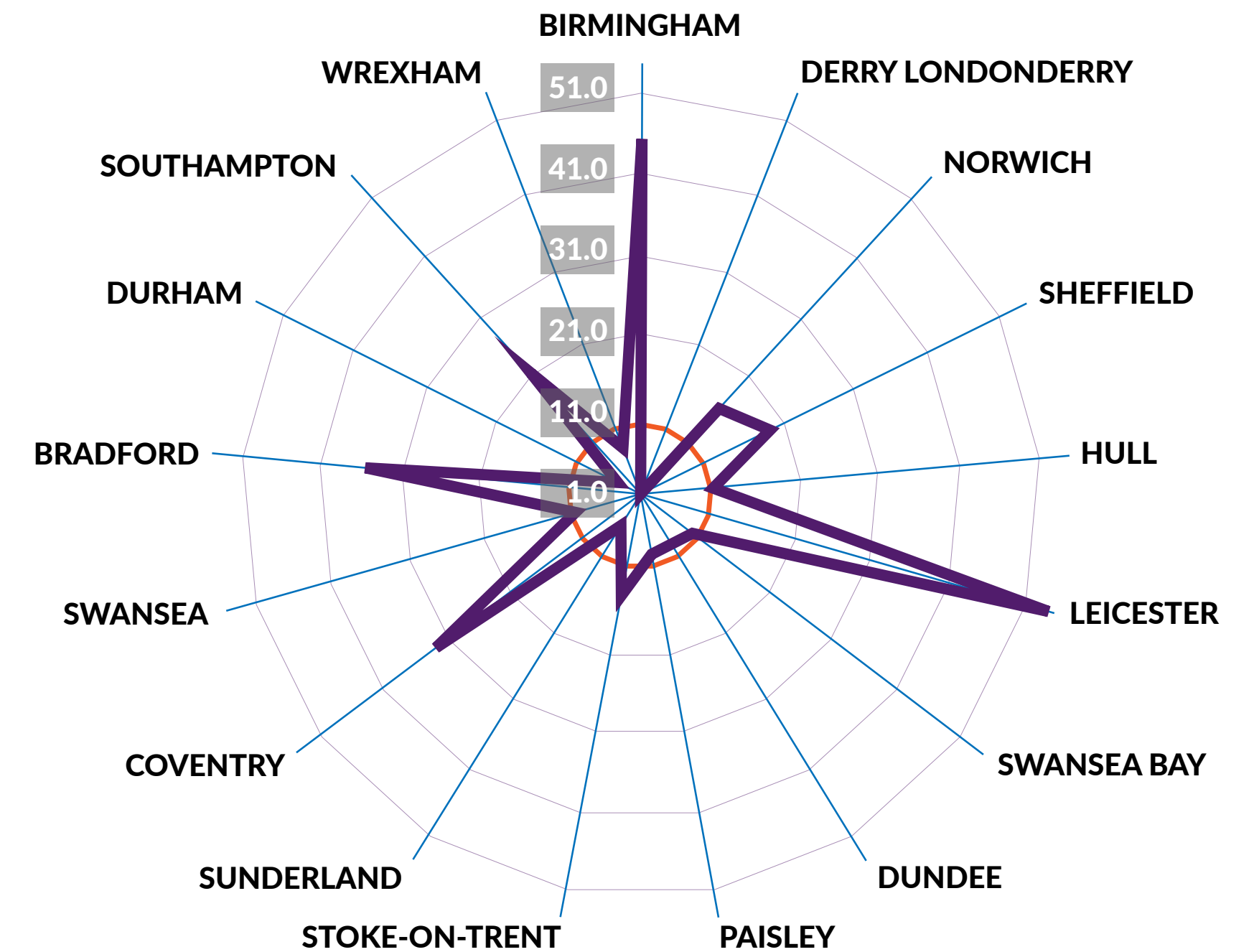
Shortlisted places are geographically focused in the Midlands and the North of England. The only shortlisted place in the south of the country is Southampton, two shortlisted places are in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland and two in Wales (the Swansea area has been shortlisted twice). Winning cities are geographically dispersed with one in Northern Ireland, one in the Midlands and two in the North of England.

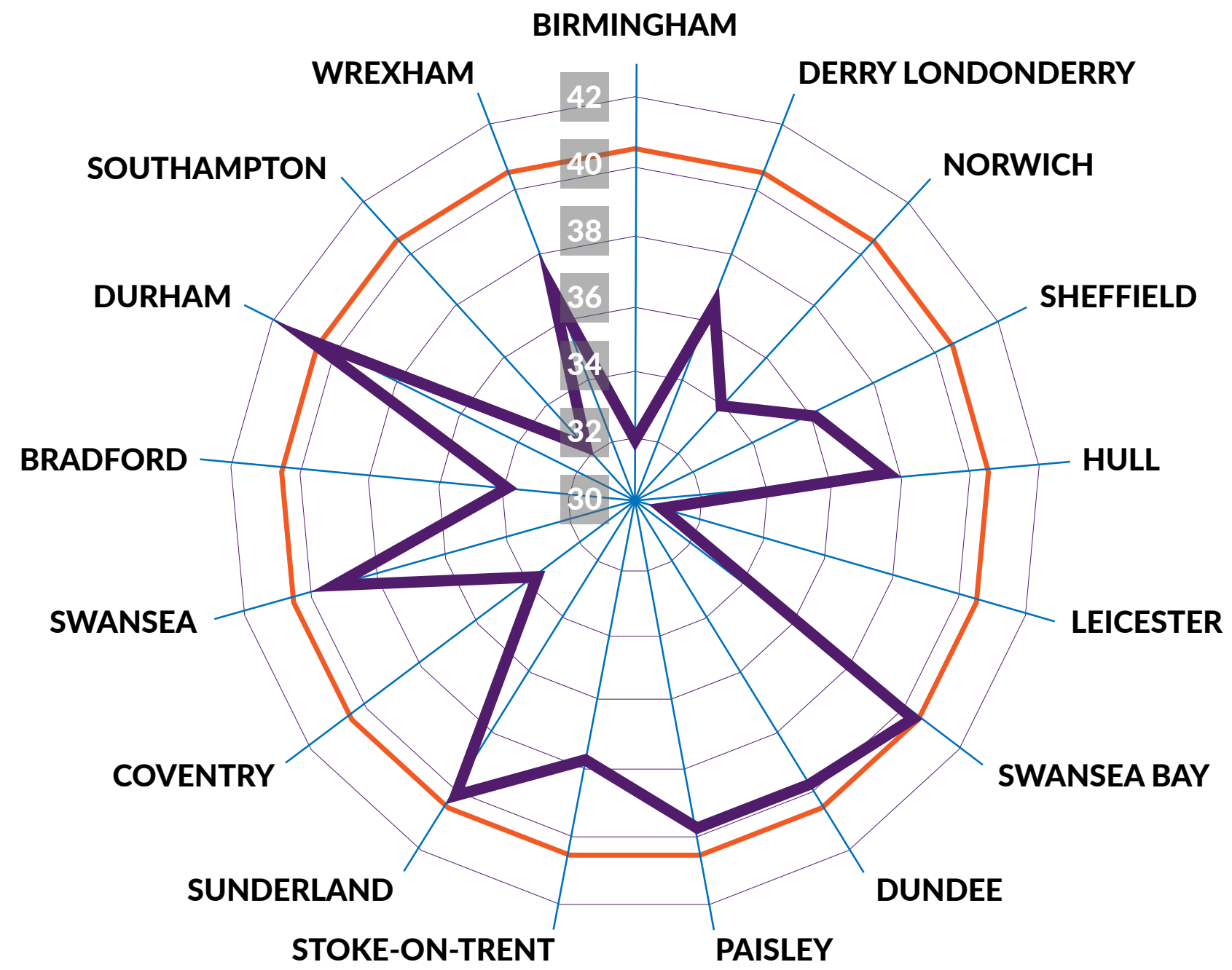
17 places have been shortlisted across the four rounds of the competition to date, this equates to 9% of the United Kingdom population.

Cities and regions reaching the shortlist stage tend to be more ethnically diverse than the general UK population. Derry, Hull, Sunderland, and Dundee are notable exceptions. The other than white British identities average across shortlisted places is 17.8%, almost double that of the level identified in the 2011 Census

(UK average 9.8%). The areas with the greatest populations identifying as other than white British are Birmingham, Leicester, Coventry, and Bradford (the latter two were the highest proportion in their respective competition rounds and went on to hold the title).

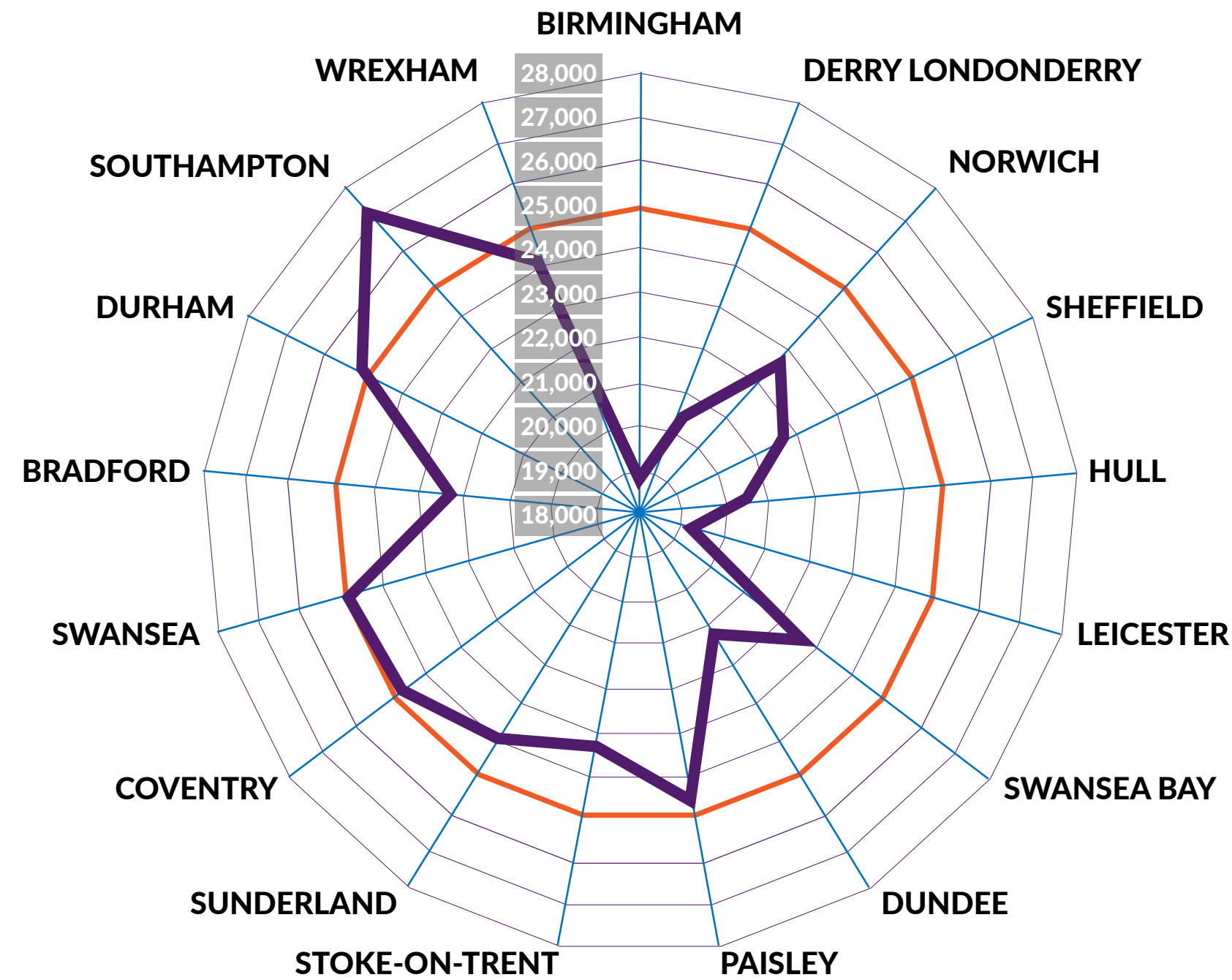
17 PLACES HAVE BEEN SHORTLISTED ACROSS THE FOUR ROUNDS OF THE COMPETITION TO DATE, THIS EQUATES TO 9% OF THE UK POPULATION.





In line with general population trends, due to a younger population, the average household income after housing costs for 83% shortlisted cities is below the average UK household income after housing costs.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR 83% OF SHORTLISTED CITIES IS BELOW THE AVERAGE UK HOUSEHOLD INCOME.



82% of shortlisted places had a median age lower than the UK median age identified through the 2011 Census.

WINNING CITIES ARE GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED WITH ONE IN NORTHERN IRELAND, ONE IN THE MIDLANDS AND TWO IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND.



Photo Credit: Jamie Gray | Coventry



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin | Coventry 2021

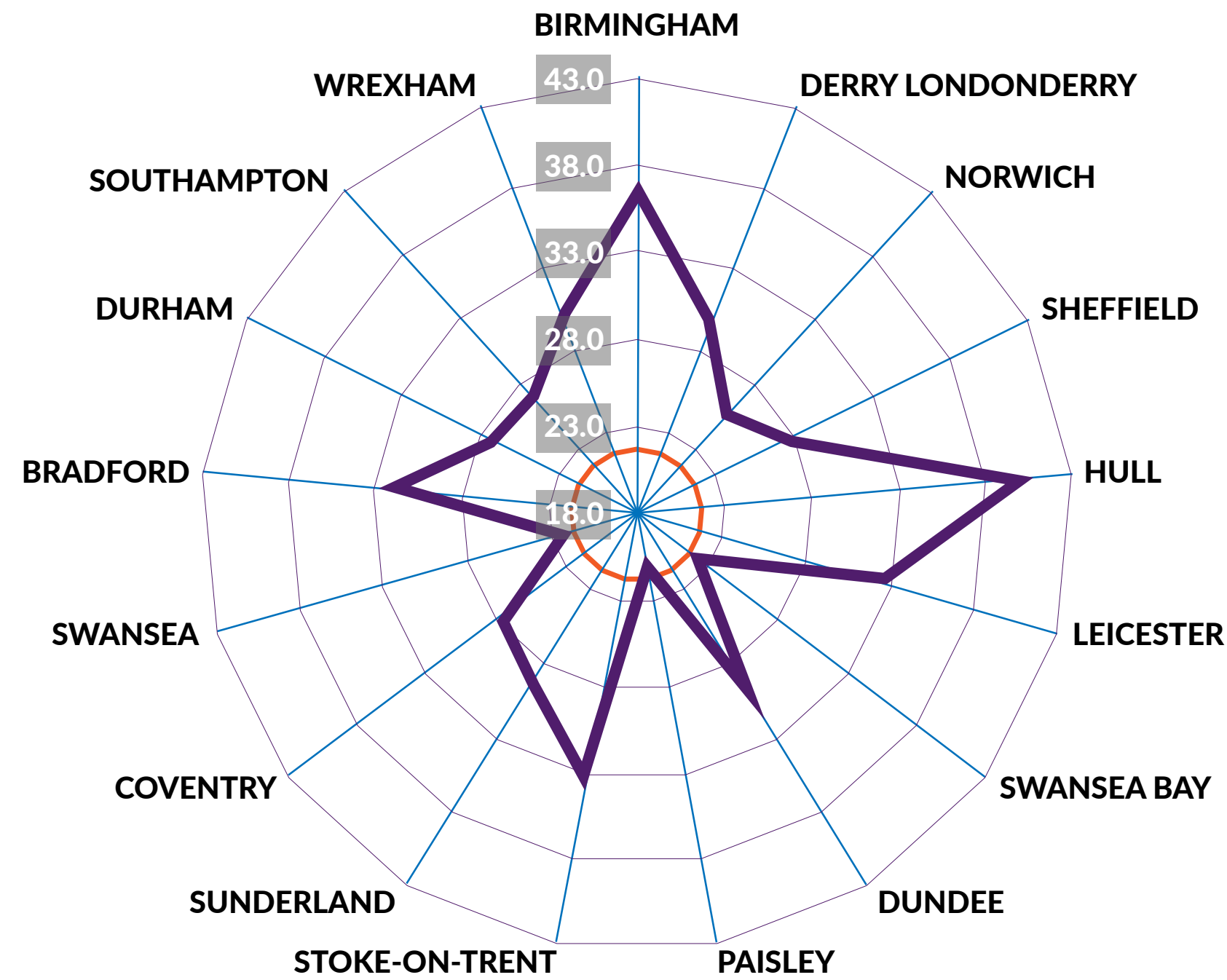
Further to this, all but one of the shortlisted cities have a higher IMD score than the UK average. This is in part due to the lower annual income and younger population.

ALL BUT ONE OF THE SHORTLISTED CITIES HAVE A HIGHER IMD SCORE THAN THE UK AVERAGE.

Generally, shortlisted cities and cities which go on to win the UK City of Culture title are younger, more diverse, and more deprived than the general UK population.

Shortlisted cities, with Birmingham, Sheffield, and Bradford as notable exceptions, do tend to have a weaker cultural infrastructure than comparable places. It is difficult to undertake a direct comparison due to the variance in arts funding across the devolved nations.

IN GENERAL, SHORTLISTED CITIES AND CITIES WHICH GO ON TO WIN THE UK CITY OF CULTURE TITLE ARE YOUNGER, MORE DIVERSE, AND MORE DEPRIVED THAN THE GENERAL UK POPULATION.



APPENDIX
**THE UK
CITIES
OF CULTURE
PROJECT
DATA SET**

3

APPENDIX 3: 2013 BIDDING & SHORTLISTED CITIES

CITY	COUNTRY	FINAL COMPETITION STAGE	UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME AFTER HOUSING COSTS (£) ²⁵	BID PERIOD POPULATION ²⁶	BID PERIOD AVERAGE IMD SCORE ²⁷	% POPULATION NOT WHITE BRITISH ²⁸
Barnsley	England	Initial Bid		21736.00	235,757	28.76	3.9
Birmingham	England	Shortlist	University of Birmingham	18845.84	1,092,330	37.32	46.9
Carlisle	England	Initial Bid	Cumbria College of Art	20800.00	107,949	23.00	5.0
Chichester	England	Initial Bid		28525.64	115,301	13.53	7.0
Cornwall	England	Initial Bid	Plymouth University	21868.08	541,319	22.58	4.3
Derry Londonderry	Northern Ireland	Winner UK City of Culture 2013	Queens Belfast	20341.90	108,610	30.16	1.7
Durham	England	Initial Bid	Durham University	21170.24	515,957	27.04	3.4
Norwich	England	Shortlist	University of East Anglia	23028.20	135,900	25.96	15.3
Sheffield	England	Shortlist		21832.20	560,085	27.68	19.2
Hull & East Yorkshire	England	Initial Bid	University of Hull	21902.40	593,596	25.12	7.1
Ipswich and Haven Gateway	England	Initial Bid	University of Suffolk	22717.24	134,701	24.39	17.1
Portsmouth & Southampton	England	Initial Bid	University of Southampton	23816.00	563,215	25.05	14.6
Southend	England	Initial Bid		23430.16	175,798	22.97	13.0
Swansea Bay	Wales	Initial Bid		20262.84	240,332	22.00	8.5

²⁵ Office for National Statistics 2011/12 Annual Income After Housing Costs estimates.

²⁶ Office of National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2013. The population for Hull and East Yorkshire for the average for Hull and East Yorkshire and Portsmouth and Southampton is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton.

²⁷ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, for Derry Londonderry the figure is derived from the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 for Swansea Bay the figure is derived from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011. The scores for Hull and East Yorkshire for the average for Hull and East Yorkshire and Portsmouth and Southampton is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton.

²⁸ 2011 Census, for Hull and East Yorkshire the figure is the average for Hull and East Yorkshire, for Portsmouth and Southampton the figure is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton.

2017 BIDDING & SHORTLISTED CITIES

CITY	COUNTRY	FINAL COMPETITION STAGE	UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME AFTER HOUSING COSTS (£) ²⁹	BID PERIOD POPULATION ³⁰	BID PERIOD AVERAGE IMD SCORE ³¹	% POPULATION NOT WHITE BRITISH ³²
Chester	England	Initial Bid	University of Chester	27649.00	335,724	18.09	5.3
East Kent	England	Initial Bid		26379.00	111,024	21.59	10.9
Hastings and Bexhill-on-Sea	England	Initial Bid		23536.00	92,903	33.11	10.7
Hull	England	Winner UK City of Culture 2017	University of Hull	20584.00	260,035	41.24	10.3
Leicester	England	Shortlist	De Montfort University	19314.00	349,513	33.07	54.9
Plymouth	England	Initial Bid	Plymouth University	24284.00	262,355	26.64	7.1
Portsmouth and Southampton	England	Initial Bid	University of Portsmouth University of Southampton	24026.00	579,530	26.96	14.6
Southend-on-Sea	England	Initial Bid	University of Essex	29747.00	196,735	24.52	13.0
Swansea Bay	Wales	Shortlist	Swansea University	23219.00	244,462	22.37	8.5
Aberdeen	Scotland	Initial Bid	University Aberdeen	22165.00	229,848	34.23	10.0
Dundee	Scotland	Shortlist	University of Dundee, Abertay University	21321.00	148,270	32.35	8.1

²⁹ Office for National Statistics 2015/16 Annual Income After Housing Costs estimates, figures for Scotland are from the 2015 Local Level Income Estimates Scotland.

³⁰ Office of National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2016. The population for Portsmouth and Southampton is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton.

³¹ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, the score for Portsmouth and Southampton is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton. Swansea Bay is from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 and Aberdeen/Dundee are from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016.

³² 2011 Census, for Portsmouth and Southampton the figure is the average for Portsmouth, Fareham and Southampton.

2021 BIDDING & SHORTLISTED CITIES

CITY	COUNTRY	FINAL COMPETITION STAGE	UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME AFTER HOUSING COSTS (£) ³³	BID PERIOD POPULATION ³⁴	BID PERIOD AVERAGE IMD SCORE ³⁵	% POPULATION NOT WHITE BRITISH ³⁶
Perth	Scotland	Initial Bid	University of Highlands and Islands	22314.00	151,950	26.45	9.3
Warrington	England	Initial Bid		28268.00	210,014	19.31	7.1
Paisley	Scotland	Shortlist	University of West Scotland	24762.00	179,100	21.35	8.7
Stoke-on-Trent	England	Shortlist	University of Staffordshire & Keele University	23550.00	256,375	34.36	13.6
Sunderland	England	Shortlist	University of Sunderland	24250.00	277,705	29.73	5.2
Coventry	England	Winner UK City of Culture 2021	University of Warwick, Coventry University	24764.00	371,521	28.11	33.4
Hereford	England	Initial Bid	Hereford University	27048.00	192,801	19.74	6.3
Portsmouth	England	Initial Bid	Portsmouth University	29028.00	214,095	27.05	16.0
Wells	England	Initial Bid		29867.00	193,282	16.64	4.2
Swansea	Wales	Shortlist	Swansea University	25210.00	246,993	22.37	8.5
St David's	Wales	Initial Bid		25463.00	125,818	21.37	7.2

³³ Office for National Statistics 2015/16 Annual Income After Housing Costs estimates, figures for Scotland are from the 2015 Local Level Income Estimates Scotland.

³⁴ Office of National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2019.

³⁵ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016.

³⁶ 2011 Census.

2025 BIDDING & SHORTLISTED CITIES

CITY	COUNTRY	FINAL COMPETITION STAGE	UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME AFTER HOUSING COSTS (£) ³⁷	BID PERIOD POPULATION ³⁸	BID PERIOD AVERAGE IMD SCORE ³⁹	% POPULATION NOT WHITE BRITISH ⁴⁰
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Northern Ireland	Full Bid after EOI	Armagh College	21379.00	217,232	20.78	1.4
Bradford	England	Winner UK City of Culture 2025	University of Bradford	22374.00	542,148	33.74	36.1
Cornwall	England	Full Bid after EOI	Falmouth University	25474.00	573,299	23.32	4.3
Derby	England	Full Bid after EOI	University of Derby	27148.00	256,814	25.27	24.7
County Durham	England	Shortlist	University of Durham	25238.00	533,149	27.44	3.4
Southampton	England	Shortlist	University of Southampton, Southampton Solent University	27566.00	252,872	27.26	22.3
Stirling	Scotland	Full Bid after EOI	University of Stirling	24522.00	94,080	23.43	5.1
Wrexham County Borough	Wales	Shortlist	Wrexham Glyndwr	24406.00	136,055	30.30	6.9

³⁷ Office for National Statistics 2017/18 Annual Income After Housing Costs estimates, figures for Scotland are from the 2015 Local Level Income Estimates Scotland, figures for Northern Ireland are from the Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2012.

³⁸ Office of National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020.

³⁹ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020, Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017.

⁴⁰ 2011 Census.

APPENDIX 4 CONTRIBUTORS



APPENDIX 4: CONTRIBUTORS

Data from the following contributors has informed this *Review* and the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project* titles to be published in Autumn 2022.

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CAROL BELL OBE Programme Director, Great Exhibition of the North	City	MIKE BROWN Derby City Council	City
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APPENDIX 5

AHRC UK CITY OF CULTURE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO



APPENDIX 5: AHRC UK CITY OF CULTURE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Cities of Culture Research Network:

Turning Evaluation into Policy

City Change Through Culture:

Securing the Place Legacy of Coventry City of Culture 2021

Connecting Communities via Culture-led Regeneration...

Exploring Incentive and Momentum with UK City of Culture 2013 Shortlisted Candidates

From Dark Tourism to Phoenix Tourism:

The Ethics of Cultural Translation in Urban Festivals

Uncovering the Social Processes of Impact Measurement:

Insights from the Evaluation of United Kingdom's Coventry City of Culture 2021

Finding Middlemarch in Coventry, 2021

Creative Peninsula

Documentary Film, Public History and Education in Northern Ireland

Sensing the City:

An Embodied Documentation and Mapping of the Changing Uses and Tempers of Urban Place
(A Practice-based Case-study of Coventry)