

# The Cultural Spring

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2021-2022



"It is really good for me to forget about all my problems and go into my own little world and to learn new skills."

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As the effects of the Covid pandemic subsided, a sense of normality began to shape the second year of Phase Three of **The Cultural Spring**.

Over the previous 18 months, restrictions imposed because of the pandemic meant we could not deliver our programmes, workshops and activities in the way we'd done during the previous six years.

Although we adapted to new ways of delivering arts activities in **Sunderland** and **South Tyneside**, it was a relief to start working with artists and our communities face to face.

We appreciate there are people who still prefer to work with us remotely, so our latest workshop programmes were a mix of in-person and online activity. And we continued to produce our successful in-home art activity packs for those unable to leave their homes.



# 2021-2022 Projects

The year 2021-2022 was a particularly busy one for us and we delivered several projects, either working in partnership to commission activity or working independently on our own projects.

These included:

## Welcome Back

Working with **South Tyneside Council**, we commissioned arts company **3D Joe and Max** to create a massive street artwork to help encourage shoppers back into South Shields.

The 'undersea' artwork, at the junction of King Street and Fowler Street in the town centre, was funded by the Government's Welcome Back Fund and incorporated the Tyne Lifeboat and Roman ruins.



Artist **Joe Hill** already had an idea of what the 3D artwork would look like, but he and fellow artist **Gavin Nolan** adapted changes suggested by locals who attended public meetings to discuss the artwork. Painting the artwork on to the street took Joe and Gavin three days and it was still looking great several months later!

Our Phase 3 wards are **Hebburn North**, **Hebburn South** and **Primrose** in **South Tyneside** and **Ryhope**, **Doxford** and **Silksworth** in **Sunderland**.

## Nexus Metro 40

Another project we've worked on also celebrated a notable anniversary.

In partnership with **Nexus**, we produced artwork for three South Tyneside stations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Metro.

We commissioned County Durham artist **Laura Brenchley** to create new pieces of artwork for Bede, Chichester and Hebburn stations. Laura worked with community groups, schools and members of the public to produce tiles which formed a larger collage for each of the three stations.

Groups and schools who worked with Laura included **Hospitality and Hope's Wellbeing Hub**, **Hebburn Sea Cadets**, **Monkton Academy**, **St. Aloysius** and groups from **Bilton Hall Community Trust**.



# The Stephenson Trail – 200-Year Celebrations

For this project, we've been working with **Sunderland City Council** to celebrate the first railway in the world to use only steam and gravity power.

The George Stephenson-engineered Hetton Colliery Railway celebrates its bicentenary later in 2022 and we were commissioned by the council to help mark the date with a spectacular programme of events and activities.

The railway was used to transport coal from Elemore and Hetton pits to the River Wear in Sunderland. The Stephenson Trail traces the route of the railway from Elemore Park and is being celebrated by Sunderland City Council to recognise the importance of the railway.

The trail will be at the heart of this year's 200-year celebrations.

Work on the programme started in February and will continue until November this year.

We have eight strands to our programme: a schools resource pack; a banners and flags project; a musical programme we're working on with **Lake Poets Marty Longstaff**; a photography project, which you can find on our website; a coal mining stories and oral histories project; a trailmarkers project; a community exhibition, and a celebration event.

Funding for the celebration of the Stephenson Trail has come Neighbourhood Funds from Sunderland City Council's East, West and Coalfields areas.



## Empty Shops

For this project, which started in April this year, we appointed a new member of the team.

**Emma Biggins** was given the role of project co-ordinator to find suitable premises in each of Sunderland's five council areas – North, East and West Sunderland, Coalfields and Washington – from where programmes of activity will be delivered starting later this year.

Emma explained: "By placing ourselves physically in communities we can produce workshops, art sessions, talks, exhibitions and other activity in people's neighbourhoods, while the shops or community hubs could also be used as platforms for creatives, arts, culture and heritage organisations and existing groups already based within these communities. It's expected that we'll have each premises for about a month.

"We'll also use the shops to find out what sort of arts activities local neighbourhoods would like to see more of, as well as spreading the word about The Cultural Spring's wider programme. This will also be an opportunity for existing groups to promote themselves and hopefully increase their own members.

"We're confident the takeover idea will work as we successfully delivered a similar project – a pop-up shop in the Bridges – in 2017."

# My Seafront, My Roots

This remarkable project, another collaboration with **South Tyneside Council**, was launched in early 2021 and culminated in an extraordinary collage of sound, music and imagery.

My Seafront, My Roots was led by composer **Tim Burke** and singer **Austin Gunn** and was inspired by letters written by South Tynesiders during the Covid pandemic. It was one of several Cultural Spring non-digital projects aimed at engaging people who did not have access to the internet.

The letters were used by Tim and a songwriting group to create songs or phrases. South Tyneside choirs the **Breathless Singers** and **Custom Voices** recorded some of the purpose-written music as well as snippets of traditional local songs and sea shanties.

A soundscape of familiar South Tyneside sounds was also added – and the resulting audio video experience was available to view at The Word for several weeks.

One of the first people to see the finished artwork was **Jeanne Thompson**, from South Shields. Jeanne was one of the letter writers, and said: "I'm not sure what my expectations were, but I was very moved. It's beautiful and I felt very emotional. I enjoyed being part of the letter writing group and part of my letter is used in a section on the Great North Run. I thought the finished piece was excellent."



The Cultural Spring is part of the **Creative People and Places** programme, initiated and funded by **Arts Council England** through the **National Lottery**. Creative People and Places projects are about more people taking the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in art experiences in the places where they live.

This year marks 10 years of the Creative People and Places programme.

With £108 million investment nationally in the programme since its launch through Arts Council England in 2012, Creative People and Places projects have empowered communities across the country to take the lead in deciding what creative activities they want and need.

The projects have a wide-ranging, positive impact on individuals and communities in parts of the country where involvement in arts and culture is significantly below the national average. There have been over 7.5 million engagements with the programme – 86% of which are from groups with low to medium engagement with arts and culture.

Over the next three years, Arts Council England is investing £38.3 million in Creative People and Places through National Lottery funding, so more communities can choose the creativity and culture on offer in their local area.

The Cultural Spring works in Sunderland and South Tyneside and our core partners are University of Sunderland, The Customs House, Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust, and Sangini, a women's health organisation which operates in both boroughs; The Cultural Spring Charity and Young Asian Voices in Sunderland.

Other highlights from our last year included our regular seasonal programmes and a range of other activity including:

## Your Art Community Commissions

Throughout 2021-2022 we continued to offer to help community groups through our popular and successful **Your Art Community Commissions**.

We were particularly focused on supporting community groups get back up and running in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

As usual, our successful commissions were chosen by a panel of Community Champions, but we also added an extra level of support by appointing a Community Connector to each chosen project.

Over the past few years, we have invested more than £100,000 in dozens of local community groups through Your Art.



## Go and See Visits

Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, we were delighted to restart our Go and See visits.

Our Go and See programme aims to ensure people living in Sunderland and South Tyneside get the chance to experience the best arts and cultural events happening across the North East and beyond.

We work with theatres, galleries, festivals and artists to gain access to special events, back stage tours and discounted tickets for people living in our wards.

Previous Go and See visits have included trips to theatre shows at **Sunderland Empire, The Customs House, The Festival of Thrift, The Northern Children's Book Festival** at MIMA and more.

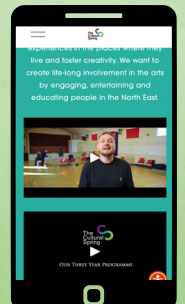
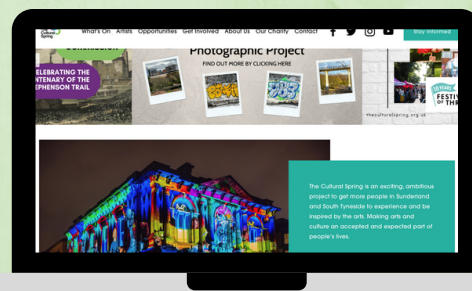
Over the last 12 months we've had very popular and well received Go and Sees to **The Customs House Panto, Red Ellen** at Northern Stage and **Royal Northern Sinfonia** at The Fire Station.

Keep an eye on our website - [www.theculturalspring.org.uk](http://www.theculturalspring.org.uk) for news on our latest Go and See visits.

## Our New Website

Talking of which, we relaunched our website earlier this year. Our new version is easier to use, easier to navigate and very accessible.

We'd welcome any feedback you might have.



# Working With Our Venues:

Another huge benefit of the lifting of Covid restrictions has been that we've been able to work with our brilliant venues once again.

We've been talking to **Ros Taylor**, Community Development Worker at Big Local Central Jarrow, to see what venues think of working with us. Here's what she said:

"Big Local Central Jarrow has held a number of workshops with The Cultural Spring since November 2021. I have also put in two successful Cultural Spring Your Art bids one in 2018 and the other bid in 2019.

Our 2018 request for support was to run a course in Glass Fusion. The application was successful. Big Local contributed the room hire, officer time and refreshments in kind. We also organised a trip to the National Glass Centre for the group who took part in the course. As the glass fusion course was a success the second bid to run a follow-on glass fusion course to develop skills was held in 2019. A celebration of the group's work was also held to show off everyone's work.

We also informed local groups about the Your Art grant such as the Central Detached Youth Group that Big Local commission and Roseway Residential Care home.

In November/December 2021 we worked in Partnership with The Cultural Spring to put on taster sessions in cyanotypes and ceramics. Members of the community had expressed an interest in ceramics so the workshop taster proved to be popular. Due to the success of the workshop tasters a longer course of ceramics and cyanotypes were offered to the community of Central Jarrow plus the wider community earlier this year.

My manager Anne Corrigan and myself, now liaise with Alex Marsden and continue to keep in touch with Emma Scarr who both keep us updated about what is going on with Cultural Spring projects. They listen to our ideas for sessions and find the appropriate tutors. We charge The Cultural Spring a nominal charge for room hire per session and we provide the refreshments. The sessions offered to us by The Cultural Spring are Pay as You Feel, which is ideal, especially in the current financial climate - this takes away one of the barriers that can stop members of the community from taking part in art and cultural activities.

Big Local Central Jarrow has also networked with other groups/organisations to let them know about The Cultural Spring and the artists that could provide an activity. We share information about The Cultural Spring on our Big Local Facebook page. Though not everyone has access to the internet so through Cultural Spring we can help residents book onto courses.

We offer new experiences and activities to residents through our partnership with The Cultural Spring. The tutors who have delivered the sessions have been excellent.

New people have come to our venue to take part in the sessions and find out about Big Local. We have made a link with a person who can offer another activity at our mental health awareness events. Other people on the courses are people that we know through our work in the community but have always wanted to do something creative and not had the opportunity.

It has been a very positive experience working with The Cultural Spring who have been very accommodating. It has been wonderful to see participants in the sessions develop, grow in confidence, develop new skills plus hidden talents and make new friends."

*\* The Big Local Central Jarrow community project is based in the old Mid Tyne Activity Centre building which is part of South Tyneside Council's Jarrow Focus.*



During 2021/22,  
we engaged with  
people from  
every single  
local authority  
ward in  
Sunderland and  
South Tyneside,  
43 wards in  
total.

# New Faces

Over the last year we've warmly welcomed three new brilliant additions to our small, but perfectly formed team.

We've already mentioned **Emma Biggins**, who joined us for our Empty Shops project. Emma is a University of Sunderland graduate and an artist in her own right who has worked with several leading arts organisations in the region.

We were also joined by **Alex Marsden**, who was appointed as our new community engagement co-ordinator last November. Alex joined us from arts development organisation Gem Arts where she was Project Manager. Her role is to further improve our links with our communities, identify new venues and new organisations to partner, as well as helping to deliver workshops and events.

And finally, over the last year we've enjoyed the company and talents of our intern, **Lucy Baker**. Lucy is studying creative media at Sunderland College and her passion for media was sparked when studying GCSE photography at Seaham High School. During her time with us, she has helped us raise our profile in Sunderland and South Tyneside.



We publish a monthly newsletter. If you would like to receive a copy, email us at [info@theculturalspring.org.uk](mailto:info@theculturalspring.org.uk).

You can also keep up to date with what we're doing through our social media channels:

Twitter: [Cultural\\_Spring](https://twitter.com/Cultural_Spring)

Facebook: [facebook.com/culturalspring](https://facebook.com/culturalspring)

Instagram: [@theculturalspring](https://www.instagram.com/theculturalspring)

Or through our website [www.theculturalspring.org.uk](http://www.theculturalspring.org.uk)

