

Culture Consortium Meeting Notes

29th November 2024

Studio 2 Site Gallery

Attending: Annabel Grundy (Sheffield DocFest and Co-Chair), Olivier Tsemo (SADACCA and Co-Chair), Roger Bateman (Sheffield Hallam University), Sonia Gayle (African Heritage Culture Forum), Salli Greaves (Showroom Cinema), Kirstie Hamilton (Sheffield Museums), Judith Harry (Site Gallery), Sarah Sharp, Jo Wingate, (SCC), Lesley Webster (University of Sheffield).

Apologies: Katy Ashton (SCC), Tom Bird (Sheffield Theatres), Diana Buckley (SCC), Amy Cooper (Sheffield Children Youth and Family Consortium), Hilary Coulson (SCC), Mojisola Elufowoju (Utopia Theatre), Dave Hembrough (SCYFC, Sheffield Hallam), Robin Hughes (Joined Up Heritage), Neil Jones (SCC), Georgina Kettlewell (Yorkshire Artspace), Claudia Lastra (Arts Catalyst), Katie Matthews (Gut Level), Jennifer Morton (Joined Up Heritage), Jo Towler (Music in the Round), Wendy Ulyett (SCC), Rose Wilcox (The Leadmill).

Sarah Christie (Rotherham Children's Capital of Culture) had been due to present but was unable to attend the meeting.

1. EDI update

SG noted positive reception of the appointment of new SHU Chancellor, Uriah Rennie.

Group discussion about whether organisations are delivering on, and communicating effectively about, equality. This was in the light of the Race Equality Commission recommendation to publish more detailed information about the makeup and status of cultural organisations teams (using Bristol Watershed as an example of best practice).

Discussion points included:

- Reporting is often required by funders but doesn't always represent the full picture – e.g. project and fixed term workers.
- Growing insecurity of funding makes it hard to promote and retain talent.
- The (necessary) conversation around class representation is growing and in funder requirements.
- Public reporting can be painful – organisations need to be careful and consistent in communicating 'bad news stories'.
 - Counterpoint that this discomfort can be a great motivator to change.
 - Support from peers or funders in best practice would be very helpful.

The conversation needs to continue, in context of feedback from the cultural strategy representation.

The group acknowledged that these topics can be really sensitive, and that having safe shared space to talk about them is important – for example, Sheffield Climate Group being able to share challenges and concerns constructively.

Action - invite Fatima Khan-Shah (Race Equality Partnership Sheffield) to a future meeting.

Action – members to share best practice or examples of reporting within the group.

2. Climate

JH gave an update on Low Carbon Climate Community and Culture Grants.

– Issues with the process were raised: length of time and flexibility of the grants not being very fit for purpose for cultural or heritage buildings.

Future iterations of the scheme will be more flexible.

2b. South Yorkshire Innovation Programme

RB shared information about launch of the new SY Innovation Programme.

This £3m fund administered by SHU alongside the University of Sheffield and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, backed by SYMCA, is intended to support organisations to innovate and grow. Funding covers academic consultancy, innovation audits, research innovation services – e.g. consultancy, knowledge, research projects, over direct grants.

Action - RB to broker introduction for a speaker at a future session.

Action – group to consider potential partnership projects.

Action – SS to share more information about the project to wider networks.

It was noted that the Sheffield Innovation spine didn't factor in community EDI, and that it would be good to see commitment to this in this project.

Action - SS to check about provision for this with Business Sheffield.

2c. Other projects

AG asked if there was an update on SYMCA's transport initiative, a potential card/offer for culture for young people linked to tram and bus travel.

SS – it's in progress, and has been approved, but is at an early stage - practicalities need to be worked out. The intention is for an app – which creates a platform for other offers in the city, including culture.

SGr mentioned Showroom looking at similar offer with Northern Rail.

SS is attending a half-day at SYMCA focused on culture in the first week of December and can ask for more detail to report back.

Action – SS to report back on travel pass plans at a future meeting.

2d. Culture Strategy Launch event

Reminder of the half day event, 10am – 1pm, networking, presentations and a panel including consortium and collective reps.

Andy Gates is also due to speak at the event.

The event is sold out with a capacity of 100 people.

3. Finance

Sheffield Showcase accounts are still being reconciled.

The Consortium has c.£9,000 free funds in the account – suggestion to use some of this for an external facilitator.

3b. Co-chair role

In light of plans to carry on with the review of consortium structure and purpose, AG proposed continuing as Co-Chair until the end March '25, to provide continuity, noting co-chair model and group structure may change after this – e.g. elected members, chair etc.

The group agreed with this proposal.

4. Consortium review: External Facilitator brief

The group reviewed the draft brief for an external facilitator to help with conversations on structure and purpose.

Discussion about practicalities

- Potential to look at a longer piece of research and restructure, and applying to the SY Innovation Programme to extend the work
 - SS asked whether it's all in-kind support.
 - RB to check.
- The need for transparency and making sure the callout is public
 - Timing needs to allow for open recruitment
 - All to help sharing the brief with wider groups
 - Brief to be shared at Culture Strategy launch event
- The timeline to appoint in time for January is too tight to agree brief and advertise.
- SG added that once we've looked at what is needed, can agree where the SY Innovation fund comes in.

- Need to meet with Culture Collective and align with, rather than compete with similar work they are doing.
 - Counterpoint: do we need to follow CC, recognition of circular conversations and not having our own clear brief.

Discussion about content

- KH - the brief needs to help us look at what we do best, including working together – e.g. we've not been a forum to programme together for many years, but did lever money in the past. If we aren't going to do that anymore, what is the group doing that adds to the city.
- SG - after the process of the culture strategy, what are expectations from wider community. Consider the tension between what 'we' want and what Sheffield needs.
- SS – sharing the brief publicly will show commitment to an open and more inclusive process.
- SS - SCC 'Hub and Spoke' will affect this – though it is still being developed.
- AG – if the group is to be a 'spoke' then it needs to know who is representing and why. E.g. if there's an open forum and a hub, is the CC best placed as a representative body, or something else?
- KH – noted the opportunity to work together, there is no other forum in the city at present. We need to make sure new structure is helpful – need for clear purpose, priorities (including what we do not do).
- RB – asked about the history of what was done for the city by the consortium.
- KH – we need to recognise that the funding landscape has changed. We're not in the same place; we need to decide how to strengthen what's happening in the city in light of this.
- OT -mentioned the previous facilitation undertaken as a group in early 2022 which is useful context – OT to share.
- JH – the last facilitation stalled as we then started working on the new strategy, but that work gave the context that the Consortium agenda used to focus on action, e.g. 'what are the opportunities', 'what's on the horizon'.
 - City wide initiatives were the focus of the group.
 - There were two visitor economy bids.
 - Covid then happened and the funding landscape changed. Over Covid the consortium pushed for and negotiated community funds, delivered in an open way.
 - Also Making Ways - artists could apply for money in a transparent way.
- AG - Good to note what the consortium has done in the past and how it has made a difference.

Action - AG to share draft brief as google doc for further comment.

Action – OT to share 2022 notes from prior facilitated exercise with group.

5. Culture Collective

The next Culture Collective meeting is after Christmas.

Pre-Christmas, sub-group conversations are happening with Tom Agar. AG, OT and JT are taking part in these.

6. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes were approved and matters arising covered in the agenda items.

7. AOB

- AG - Children's Capital of Culture launches next week at Arc cinema.
- SS in communication with South Yorkshire LA officers – lobbying Mayor to get funding for Sheffield to extend cultural trainee programme.
- SS trying to get a speaker from CCoC for the event on December 11th.
- SG raised the need for a city-wide cultural calendar in light of challenges in June, a number of events and festivals, and venue clashes. E.g. 22nd June, national Windrush Day, but Town Hall n/a. The city needs to take cultural dates like this seriously. A small civic space is needed for celebrations.
 - AG noted that different cultural events have different clash considerations – e.g. DocFest focus on what's happening with international festival dates, more than local clashes.
 - JW felt there needs to be a specific person responsible.

Action: SS and JW look at bookings systems and cultural calendar dates.

Future guests to attend Consortium meetings include Fatima Khan-Shah (REPS), SY Innovation Programme rep., Karen Harrison (Creative Health Sheffield).

Action	Who	Deadline/timeframe
Check re. SY Innovation Programme - in-kind offer or grant.	RB	January meeting
Share the draft Facilitator brief as a Google Doc.	AG	Mid December
Look at Cultural Calendar and bookings within SCC.	SS and JW	January meeting
Invite Fatima Khan-Shah (REPS) to a future meeting.	Co-Chairs	TBC

Members to share best practice or examples of reporting within the group.	All	January meeting
RB to broker introduction for a speaker at a future session.	RB	TBC
Group to consider potential partnership projects that could pitch to SY innovation fund.	All	Ongoing
Share more information about the SY innovation fund to wider networks.	SS	January meeting
Check about provision for community and EDI within the SY innovation fund with Business Sheffield.	SS	January meeting
Report back if there is progress on SYMCA transport initiative.	SS	January meeting
Share 2022 notes from prior facilitated exercise with group.	OT	January meeting
Invite Karen Harrison (Creative Health) to a future meeting.	TBC	TBC