

Seasons Of Culture, 2026-30 – Key Headlines

Background

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is committed to partnership working and making useful interventions to sustain the culture, heritage and sport sectors. Activity after 2025 has been co-designed with Local Authorities and other stakeholders to build on the success of the years of culture.

In 2024 the West Yorkshire Combined Authority commissioned Ruth Melville Research and the hub to gather information, insights and learning from stakeholders that have been strategically and directly involved in years of culture activity within the region.

This activity continues to generate valuable insights into successfully supporting place-based cultural activity, which will ultimately inform the development of a manual for hosting large-scale cultural programmes.

However, it has also provided valued suggestions for future activity, and affords a unique opportunity to embed recommendations as we look at next steps.

The CA has considered this insight, along with other evidence, and is currently shaping plans to support place-based cultural activity post-Bradford UK City of Culture 2025, these include:

- Uplift local activity, skills and knowledge – don't displace
- Springboard from a West Yorkshire USP such as being home to the world's first nature reserve, the cradle of sculpture, the world's first film and its rich heritage of industry and innovation.
- Multi-year commitment
- Opportunities to build on sustainable local, regional and national partnerships
- Working at multiple scales (small, medium, large) – rooted in community participation
- Link culture with wider policies: align cultural plans with health, regeneration, and economic development goals such as the Local Growth Plan
- Highlight West Yorkshire as a region with our unique approach to attract visitors and inward investment
- Retain and nurture the capacity, networks and expertise gained during years of culture
- Support long term economic and environmental sustainability of the sectors including accessing green energy provision and benefiting from increased footfall, tourism and profile
- Be investment ready for future opportunities
- Clear planning and delivery phases
- Evolve strong cross-authority collaborations, relationships and opportunities

Seasons of Culture;

- Launch a programme of region-wide themed annual '**Seasons of Culture**' activity, between **2026-2030** (with 2026 a shorter pilot)
- The first proposed themes include '**Green**' (from summer 2026) and '**Sculpture and outdoor Art**' (2027) to dovetail with plans for the next iteration of Yorkshire Sculpture

International. Subsequent themes to be discussed but might relate to legacy and future of screen innovation and region's rich tangible and intangible heritage

- Shifting from 'years' to annual seasons (can be flexible Easter to end of summer school holidays for example), with one theme per year
- Themes broad enough to encompass a wide range of activity, while providing a marketing opportunity
- Some CA investment to draw in other public and private funds such as sponsorship
- Centralised marcoms resource and dedicated platform
- Themes align with 'Visitor Perception' research
- Has flexibility, scalability and can adjust based on resources and capacity
- Opportunity to seek additional investment (e.g. Arms Length Bodies / sponsorship) for example the Heritage Lottery Fund *Nature, Towns and Cities* [Nature Towns and Cities | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)

Seasons of Culture aim to;

- Retain, sustain and evolve capacity, expertise, talent and offer
- Provide certainty, whilst also providing flexibility
- Provide opportunity to adapt/amplify existing work
- Planning in place until 2030 with investment to attract further public and private funding
- Provide an additional opportunity to market coordinated activities to local, national and international audiences in relation to LVEP

Unknowns and Parameters

- Business case will go to CA meeting in October with indicative budget to be distributed through Local Authorities and enable place-based grant giving
- Best way to secure match funding from Arms Length Bodies or other sources (programme level or project level) such as a joint bid by LAs
- How to integrate / overlap with LAs culture grant funding programmes?
- Grant mechanism – large pots, small pots?
- How to ensure broad and diverse (in all senses) programming across the region
- Appropriate resource and governance – WYCA, LA, culture sector
- Do we need a carbon standard for events – training provided (e.g. SAIL, Julie's Bicycle)
- Should we have launch events, or closing events?
- Themes beyond 2027?
- When thinking of 'Green', or 'Sculpture and outdoor Art' themes – how do you think your organisation may respond? I.e. what sort of work does it conjure?

Next Steps

- Strategic Outline Business Case (SOC) is being prepared by the CA
- Working with LA officers to provide local evidence and knowledge to support the management case (operational detail)
- 1st August SOC submitted, for October CA Approval. (Will include development funds for pilot 'Green' season in 2026.)

- July – Oct: Destination Management Organisations to help us map out website requirements and integration with their systems

How can I share my reflections and suggestions?

Attend one of the Seasons of Culture Workshops;

[Session 1: Seasons of Culture – Wednesday 9 July, 11-12](#)

[Session 2: Seasons of Culture – Wednesday 9 July 3-4](#)

[Session 3: Seasons of Culture – Thursday 10 July 11-12](#)

[Session 4: Seasons of Culture – Thursday 10 July 3-4](#)

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