More Than Moments:

The Impact of Culture in Hull and East Yorkshire

Executive Summary

March 2026

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Commissioned by

HEY CREATIVE
Advancing our cultural landscape

Report created by

KADA

In 2025, HEY Creative commissioned research to establish a robust, region-wide evidence base for the economic and social impact of culture across Hull and East Yorkshire (HEY).

This work responded to an identified gap of fragmented and inconsistent data, creating a barrier to strong advocacy for our sector and our place.

At a time of devolution, increased cross-sector working and a challenging funding landscape, a coherent evidence base is essential to support advocacy, investment and long-term planning.

HEY Creative is proud to deliver this report and campaign for culture for Hull & East Yorkshire – for the first time, demonstrating clearly the considerable value that culture generates for our economy, our place and our communities.

Headline Findings

The evidence demonstrates that culture is a significant economic and social asset in HEY:

£101.2 million
annual economic contribution (GVA)

Over 2,100 jobs
and
365 cultural businesses

25:1 social return on investment

£1.14 billion
annual social value

Culture's economic impact is comparable to major industrial sectors, while its social value (driven largely by wellbeing benefits) far exceeds its direct financial footprint.

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What This Means for HEY

Culture in HEY is not a peripheral sector. It is core regional infrastructure, contributing significantly to:

- Economic growth and productivity
- Health and wellbeing outcomes
- Skills development and workforce resilience
- Pride of place and social cohesion

The scale of both economic and social return positions culture as a high-value investment area for public, private and cross-sector partners.

For **businesses**, culture drives economic development, workforce wellbeing and place competitiveness. For **local authorities** and **funders**, culture delivers measurable economic and social returns. And for **residents**, it makes our region a vibrant and connected place to live.

Key Strengths

HEY's cultural sector demonstrates a number of clear strengths:

- **Strong economic performance and growth** **GVA** has increased by approximately 37% over the last decade
- **Sector resilience** **Business numbers** have recovered post-pandemic, with steady long-term growth
- **High levels of volunteering and community engagement** Nearly 13,000 volunteers, contributing both economic and wellbeing value
- **Strong heritage engagement** 66% of residents visit heritage sites, matching national levels

The sector is embedded, valued and delivering impact across communities.

Key Challenges

Despite these strengths, the report identifies structural challenges that constrain growth:

- **Underinvestment relative to national benchmarks** Arts Council England investment is ~25% lower per head than average
- **Slower sector growth** Employment and growth lag behind national sector trends
- **Concentration of activity** Workforce and enterprises clustered in a limited number of sub-sectors
- **Participation gap** Cultural engagement is below national average (88.4% vs 91%)
- **Inequality of access** Barriers linked to deprivation, rurality, disability and transport

While the sector is strong, it is not yet reaching its full potential.

Strategic Implications

The findings point to several critical priorities for the region:

1. **Sustain and grow investment**

Address real-terms funding reductions and regional disparities

2. **Strengthen cross-sector integration**

Maximise culture's role in health, education, business and place development

3. **Expand participation and access**

Target underrepresented groups and remove structural barriers

4. **Support sector growth and diversification**

Enable innovation across a broader range of sub-sectors

5. **Leverage culture as a driver of inclusive growth**

Align cultural investment with economic and social priorities

What Happens Next

This report provides a foundational evidence base for action, openly available for all to use, so we can work together to support and strengthen the cultural sector in Hull and East Yorkshire.

With strategic alignment and investment, culture can continue to play a central role in shaping a healthier, more inclusive and economically resilient region.

Everyone has a role to play. Later in 2026, HEY Creative will publish an action plan setting out our own contribution and how we will work with partners to deliver this change.

How you can take action now:

- **Champion culture:** Join our campaign and use our resources to support arts, culture and heritage across Hull & East Yorkshire.
- **Advocate for its value:** Be vocal - share the impact of culture with local leaders, businesses and your community.
- **Show your commitment:** Sign the Hull & East Yorkshire Creative Charter, and play your part in supporting the sector.

Sign the Charter

Together, we can ensure culture continues to power our economy, strengthen our communities and shape the future.

Thank you for championing culture in Hull & East Yorkshire.