

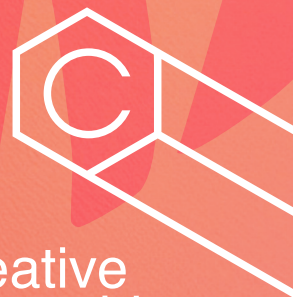
Cultural Capital Exchange Symposium 2025

Friday
31 October 2025
9am–6pm

University of Lancashire
Burnley Campus



Victoria Mill University of Lancashire
Burnley Campus



Creative
Lancashire

This one-day symposium examines the case for culture as the catalyst for social and economic regeneration that contribute to the transformation of places to be more attractive places to live, work, visit, and invest.

Also exploring how Year of Culture could drive growth, foster innovation, create a lasting legacy and benefits including promoting social cohesion, civic pride and environmental sustainability.

The day will include contributions from creative practitioners, cultural leaders, programme directors, politicians and key decision makers and sector organisations that combine to bring creative the vision to life.

Agenda

09:00	Registration (Lower Social Space)
09:45	Welcome & Introduction (Auditorium)
10:10	Culture in the Making Part 1: From the Moor – Aitor Throup (Conversation)
10.40	Culture in the Making Part 2: A City of Culture – Shanaz Gulzar (Conversation)
11:10	Q&A Panel (Auditorium)
11:25	Break
11:40	Morning — Breakout Sessions Culture in Context (VM112) Culture: What Is It Good For? (Auditorium) Culture Clash (VM114) British Textile Biennial Exhibition: From the Moor (BTB Meeting Point – Lower Social Space)
12:40	Lunch (Lower Social Space)
13:40	Guest Speaker (Auditorium)
14:05	Afternoon— Breakout Sessions Culture in Context (VM112) Culture: What Is It Good For? (Auditorium) Culture Clash (VM114) British Textile Biennial Exhibition: From the Moor (BTB Meeting Point – Lower Social Space)
15:05	Break
15:20	Expert Responders (Auditorium)
15:45	Culture in Place— Panel (Auditorium)
16:35	Closing Remarks (Auditorium)
16:45	Performance— R&D Arts (Auditorium) Networking

Biographies

Nihal Arthanayake (Event Host) Broadcaster & Presenter

Nihal is an acclaimed broadcaster and TV presenter. Starting his career over twenty years ago on radio and becoming one of the best-known voices on the BBC network. He previously co-hosted Asian Beats with Bobby Friction, which won a Sony Radio Award, and is now a frequent presenter on Radio 4 Front Row. Nihal is the author of an award-winning book “Let’s Talk: How to have better conversations”, and has also made documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and the World Service, and DJ’d globally. A former trustee of the Southbank Centre and British Council, Nihal is now a trustee of HOME in Manchester and an ambassador for the British Asian Trust.



Aitor Throup Artist, Designer, Creative Director

Aitor Throup is an Argentinian-British multi-disciplinary artist, designer and creative director. His globally acclaimed work has challenged the conventions and limits of fashion by integrating themes of anatomy and philosophy into highly technical garments with rich, layered narratives. Throup’s innovative and cerebral output strives for deep meaning and timeless beauty by merging clothing design, engineering, drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, cinematography, CGI, graphic design and music into an ever-expanding, immersive world of fantastical characters and product innovations rich in symbolism.



Alice Carter

Producer, Walk the Plank

As a Producer with Salford's Walk the Plank, Alice helps deliver bold, collaborative outdoor arts and cultural events that celebrate people and places, producing festivals, parades, large-scale civic events and major UK and European cultural programmes. Dedicated to inclusive creative practice to reach wide ranging audiences, Alice previously worked with LEEDS 2023, producing projects that showcased local artists and history and community collaboration



Andrew Erskine

Senior Associate

Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy

Andrew Erskine specializes in innovation, culture and the creative economy. His work spans creative clusters, higher education, and cultural strategy, exploring creativity's transformative power across sectors. He has led global projects in Europe and the Middle East and speaks internationally on culture, regeneration, and sustainability.



Caroline Kennedy

Festival Director - Blaze Arts

Caroline was Participation Director at M6 Theatre Company for over 12 years, creating inclusive, original theatre and films with children and young people across Rochdale. She has also facilitated for the National Theatre of Scotland, Cumbernauld Theatre, and lectured at LIPA on the Applied Theatre/Community Drama course. Happy Place is a dynamic two-week festival celebrating youth, arts, and activism through creativity and optimism, hosted in Burnley in July 2025.



David Allen

Artistic Director & CEO
Burnley Youth Theatre

David was previously CEO of Skylight Circus Arts in Rochdale, where he helped grow the organisation through a three-year Artistic Development Plan and a full brand relaunch. An award-winning Marketing Executive and Brand Strategist, he has led international campaigns for SEGA and Abbey Road Studios. With extensive experience in marketing and business development, David brings a valuable perspective to Burnley Youth Theatre.



Gavin Parry

Photographer & Professional Coach

Gavin Parry's photographic practice engages with ideas around documentary, portraiture and representation. He has 30 years experience in working in Art Schools and in the HE sector. A committed believer in the transformative power of creative practice/s to support positive change. He makes work and develops projects that are collaborative, relational, and explorative. He is currently Creative Director of Creative Spaces Burnley.



Georgina Roby

Lancashire County Council
Cultural Service

Georgina Roby is a strategic senior manager, with over 25 years of experience, spanning the public, private and charitable sectors. Georgina joined Lancashire County Council in June 2025 as Head of Cultural Services. In her previous role at Wigan Council, she led on the development and delivery of an ambitious cultural sector strategy 'The Fire Within', securing £36M in external funding within 5 years.



Hussnain Hanif

Artist / Broadcaster / Music Consultant

Hussnain Hanif is an award-winning Nasheed artist, broadcaster, and music consultant celebrated for his soulful modern expression of this Sufi devotional tradition. A familiar voice on BBC platforms, he founded the world's first Nasheed Choir and leads The Nasheed Choir in Bradford. Through collaborations with Music for the Many, he's brought inclusive music education to over 80 UK schools, championing music's power to unite, heal, and inspire.



Helen Pheby PHD

Head of Culture, Heritage and Sport
West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined
Authority

Helen was Associate Director, Programme, at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) from 2001–24 and gained her PhD from the University of Liverpool in 2003, focusing on equity of access to culture and social inclusion. At WYCA, she works in partnership to deliver the West Yorkshire Plan and Mayor Brabin's pledges, helping to create a happy, thriving region.



Justine Themen

Freelance Director and Change Leader,
formerly RSC/ Coventry 2021

Justine Themen is a Theatre Director, Cultural Leader and Facilitator known for championing equity, co-creation and sustainability in the arts. She recently directed a bouffon-inspired King Lear for the Royal Shakespeare Company, touring UK schools and communities. Her leadership includes transformation work with the RSC and Belgrade Theatre, working on the bid for Coventry 2021 and directing their City of Culture opening large-scale, multi-platform event, Coventry Moves.



Karen Green

Director, Creative Spaces Burnley

Karen Green is a Director at Creative Spaces Burnley (CSB). With over 25 years experience working in museums and galleries, Karen has worked with major art institutions and local, national and international artists on high profile exhibitions and events. Karen brings this experience to Burnley, leading on CSB's programme and operations, overseeing two art spaces in the town centre. CSB's vision is to enrich the cultural offer in Burnley.



Leanne Buchan

Head of Creative Programming & Engagement, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Leanne's role focuses on strategic planning and collaboration to ensure the success of Children's Capital of Culture. She engages with businesses, funders, local and global partners, and works across Rotherham Council teams, always seeking new opportunities to benefit Rotherham's children and young people. She will be accompanied by young people from the programme.



Louise Yates

CEO & Artistic Director, Back to Ours

Back to Ours was founded by Lou Yates to bring arts and cultural experiences back to local communities. Lou's vision coupled with her distinct invitation and ingredients have sparked a real connection with residents in Hull. Louise has developed an arts organisation that puts people at the heart of it. Having developed a strong brand with a voice that's warm and welcoming it continues to engage and excite new and existing audiences.



Olivia O’Connell

Crowdfund Lancashire, Lancashire
County Council

Olivia is the Community Funding Manager within Cultural Services at Lancashire County Council. She administers the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund via Crowdfund Lancashire. Since its inception, Crowdfund Lancashire has raised over £3m for community projects. Previous to working at LCC, Olivia worked on the cultural programme at Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.



Pete Massey

Director
Northern Economy & Partnerships and
Yorkshire & the Humber

Pete Massey is part of Arts Council England’s North area management team and leads a local team of 20 specialist staff and has responsibility for strategic partnership working. He has led on two UK Cities of Culture for ACE & has oversight of place development work in the North.



Rebecca Ball

Area Director North, Arts Council England

Before joining Arts Council England, Rebecca was Chief Executive and Creative Director of Sunderland Culture. She also led Sunderland’s 2017 bid for UK City of Culture and, prior to this, was Director of The Cultural Spring, Sunderland and South Tyneside’s Creative People and Places programme.



Shanaz Gulzar

Creative Director: Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture

Shanaz Gulzar is an acclaimed artist, producer and presenter from Keighley, Bradford, whose career spans from film and visual arts to public art, theatre and media. She is responsible for creating the programme that will showcase the unique heritage and character of Bradford District. In her capacity as Creative Director at Bradford 2025, UK City of Culture, Shanaz is co-leading a transformative cultural renaissance, with initiatives that celebrate diversity, artistic innovation, and community engagement.



Simon Cronshaw

Co-Founder – Remix Festival

Simon Cronshaw is a Cultural Entrepreneur and Co-founder of REMIX Summits. Since 2012, he has hosted sell-out summits in cities including London, New York, Sydney, Perth, Dubai and Istanbul. REMIX Summits bring together change-makers from different industries to explore the big ideas shaping the future of the creative and cultural industries.



Sue Robinson

Co-director & Owner, Culturapedia

Sue leads an independent company and Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation in Lancashire, developing partnerships to embed cultural experiences in local communities. An innovative cultural leader with regional, national, and international experience, she connects artists, communities, and audiences with limited access to regular engagement. Current projects include Burnley Words Festival, Mechanics Presents, and Spot On Lancashire.



Waqar Ahmed

Creative Director – Respect & Dignity Arts

Waqar Ahmed is a visionary Creative Producer and Senior Leader in Cultural Education, known for creating platforms that give young people and communities access to high-quality, transformative arts experiences. His work has earned recognition regionally, nationally, and internationally. He also founded the award-winning Beyond Labels project at The Hollins School, supported by Super Slow Way, which recently won the Outstanding Arts in a Secondary School Award at the Educate Awards.



Zara Saghir

Artist and Producer

Zara is a socially engaged artist and producer for The British Textile Biennial and Super Slow Way, working with communities across East Lancashire. She focuses on building impactful collaborations between artists, communities, and artwork. Through her practice, she explores taboo issues within British South Asian culture, using personal experience to amplify overlooked voices and promote social change.



Shanna Lennon

Engagement Manager, North,
Heritage Fund

Shanna has worked as an Engagement Manager in The National Lottery Heritage Fund's North Team for five years. Her role is to develop relationships, identify opportunities and support organisations interested in delivering projects which align with the Heritage Fund's vision to connect people and communities with heritage through their grant funding.





Programme

Panel: Culture in the Making Part 1: From the Moor – Aitor Throup

Time: 10:10 – 10:40

Duration: 30 mins

Location: Main Auditorium (VM136)

For BTB25, multi-disciplinary artist and fashion designer Aitor Throup presents 'FROM THE MOOR' – a retrospective exhibition showcasing Throup's groundbreaking designs, sculptures and drawings from the past 20 years. In this extended conversation we explore why Burnley is so important to Aitor, and the motivation behind why he is now an integral part of the movement for change to transform perceptions of the town while helping to 'bring cultural status' Lancashire more widely. In association with British Textile Biennial

Key Contributors:

Aitor Throup with Nihal Arthanayake

Panel: Culture in the Making: Part 2 – A City of Culture – Shanaz Gulzar

Time: 10:40 – 11:10

Duration: 30 mins

Location: Main Auditorium (VM136)

Overview: Leeds Year of Culture 2023 and Bradford City of Culture 2025 embody a strategic and sustained culture-led approach to drive social and economic change at scale. Hear how both initiatives form part of the mayor's place-based plan and long-term strategy for the region.

Key Contributors:

Shanaz Gulzar with Nihal Arthanayake

Panel: Culture in Place

Time: 15:45 – 16:35

Duration: 50 mins

Location: Main Auditorium (VM136)

How do you create something of national reach and bring local citizens along for the journey – with a focus on ideas or initiatives that will involve more people from the local community in planning and shaping the programme.

Key Contributors:

Lou Yates (Back To Ours), Rebecca Ball (Arts Council England), Georgina Roby (LCC Cultural Services), Justine Themen (Freelance Theatre Director), hosted by Nihal Arthanayake

Breakout Session: Culture in Context

Time: 11:40 & 14:05

Duration: 60 mins

Location: Breakout Space A (VM112)

What are the successful culture led approaches in Burnley and similar places that can inspire or be scaled up to deliver step-change and impact (e.g. the partnerships, cultural initiatives, events, and projects that breathe new life into our venues, streets, parks, and public spaces).

Key Contributors:

Sue Robinson (Culturapedia), Zara Saghir Artist and BTB), Karen Green (Creative Spaces Burnley) & Gavin Parry (Photographer), Olivia O'Connell (Crowdfund Lancashire), Shanna Lennon (National Lottery Heritage Fund), hosted by Andrew Erskine (Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy)

Breakout Session: Culture – What is it good for?

Time: 11:40 & 14:05

Duration: 60 mins

Location: Main Auditorium (VM136)

Exploring the legacy and learnings from the experiences of previous Year of Culture and UK City of Culture programmes and ways to maximise the long-term impact. Key Contributors include local government public sector bodies, anchor institutions & cultural programme leaders.

Key Contributors:

Alice Carter (Walk The Plank), Helen Pheby (West Yorkshire Combined Authority), Pete Massey (Arts Council), Lou Yates (Back to Ours), hosted by Simon Cronshaw (Remix Festival).

Breakout Session: Culture Clash

Time: 11:40 & 14:05

Duration: 60 mins

Location: (VM114)

Youth-led strand to generate the ideas and ways to work in a close and embedded way with schools and youth organisations to create more opportunities for young people. Unlocking the ideas and initiative aimed at empowering young people to shape Burnley's future, while celebrating the town's culture, identity, and distinctive heritage.

Key Contributors:

David Allen (Burnley Youth Theatre), Caroline Kennedy (BLAZE In Focus Festival), Waqar Ahmed (Respect & Dignity Arts), Leanne Buchan (the world's first Children's Capital of Culture, Rotherham), plus programme participants and young producers representing the respective organisations.

Exhibits & Performance

Conversations with a Camera (Studio)

A workshop led by Gavin Parry. Every photographic encounter contains the potential to create unexpected moments and a space that might allow some narratives and insights to develop. This is an invitation to be a sitter and consider how and if that's possible

Exhibition of Hope (Atrium)

During October, the University of Lancashire is delighted to be hosting The Exhibition of Hope at Victoria Mill. This exhibition features the work of several prisons with the participants producing work (paintings, drawings, makings, or written) that represent what hope means to them. The exhibition has been organised through colleagues in the university and Novus.

From the Moor (Empire Theatre)

For BTB25, multi-disciplinary artist and fashion designer Aitor Throup presents '*From The Moor*' – a retrospective exhibition showcasing Throup's groundbreaking designs, sculptures and drawings from the past 20 years. Pre-registration required as spaces are limited.

No Need to Whisper (Lower Social Space)

Originally co-commissioned by Lancashire County Council & Breaking Barriers (Rochdale) – and conceived by Culturapedia and artist Parvez Qadir. The installation comprises a set of 15 'silent disco' headphones that play soundscape with spoken narratives on repeat – recorded and presented in libraries across the county.

R&D Arts (Main Auditorium)

Respect & Dignity Arts is the flagship creative writing, spoken word and performance group, delivered in partnership with Young Identity, working across East Lancashire and beyond; linking young people to creative practitioners in order to nurture their craft, build confidence and create empowering content. They have produced three anthologies and also undertaken a national tour, including performing in Manchester, Burnley, Preston, Cambridge and London South Bank Centre.

Cinema

Men In Burnley

A compelling portrait of life in a Northern town, '*Men in Burnley*' captures the resilience, identity and changing realities of men in Burnley, Lancashire. Through interviews, immersive observations and the rhythms of everyday living, the film shines a light on work, community, culture and the subtle pressures facing modern masculinity in a post-industrial setting.

Fairytales From The Edge

A bold exploration of the boundaries between myth and modern life, '*Fairytales from the Edge*' invites viewers to journey into places where fairy-tale logic meets raw reality. Through richly woven stories, the film unpacks the hopes, hazards and unexpected beauty that emerge when the familiar stories of our lives are seen from an unsettled, almost peripheral perspective.

My Burnley

A portrait of life in Burnley, '*My Burnley*' captures the town through the eyes of its residents — their memories, ambitions, and everyday experiences. Set against changing social and economic landscapes, the film explores identity, community and the ties that bind people to place.

Unity Project

Films shown in the Main Auditorium during lunch and breaks.

What is the Year of Culture?

Culture shapes who we are as individuals and how we define our place in the world – our sense of belonging to a place or group of people. It is a powerful tool that can unite, inspire, educate, and transform lives.

Burnley 2027 will be a redefining moment for the borough, scheduled to tie in with the end of major regeneration schemes. It will bring together new activity as well as pre-existing annual or bi-annual programmes such as Beat the Street, Burnley Words Festival, British Textile Biennial and National Festival of Making's blue-ribbon Art in Manufacturing commissioning programme.

It will be a festival of pride, strength and resilience that will strive to deliver significant placemaking, artistic and creative commissioning projects to reimagine the town's cultural heritage. The collective ambition for 2027 is to create projects that involve, engage and inspire local people, creating new public art, theatre, film, music, literature, digital and more. It will be the start of a new chapter for Burnley, creating a legacy of projects to take it into an exciting future.

To help shape this vision, on 31 October 2025 we are hosting a symposium to help articulate the vision and gain learnings from the approaches, individuals and organisations that have delivered similar initiatives in other places (e.g. Leeds 2023, UK Cities of Culture, Boroughs of Culture), as well as other mega-cultural events that have facilitated similar step change in places via a culture-led approach.

The Cultural Capital Exchange - Burnley 2027 Year of Culture Symposium will be hosted and co-developed with broadcaster Nihal Arthanayake who will unlock the creative inspiration from the region and beyond to tell the story of who makes culture and how they do it. The event will take place at University of Lancashire (formerly UCLan), Victoria Mill, Burnley Campus.

Getting to the Venue

By Car

From the M65 Leave the motorway at Junction 10, and follow signs for Burnley A671. At the roundabout take the Town Centre exit and then turn right at the traffic lights onto Trafalgar Street. University of Lancashire Victoria Mill is on the left. Parking at the University is restricted to staff and students, however there are town centre pay and display car parks a short distance away.

By Public Transport

Train

Victoria Mill is a 5-minute walk from Manchester Road Station and Princess Way is a 2-minute walk from Burnley Central Station.

From Burnley Manchester Road Railway Station to Victoria Mill

Turn left out of the station and head down Manchester Road. Turn left at the roundabout onto Trafalgar Street and cross the road. Continue on Trafalgar Street and you'll find UCLan Victoria Mill 500 yards on the left.

From Burnley Central Railway Station to UCLan Princess Way

Turn right out of the Station onto Railway Street, at the end of the street turn right onto Canning Street and onto Princess Way. Cross the road, using the crossing to UCLan Burnley Princess Way.

Bus

The Burnley Campus is situated on major bus routes and buses to Preston, Blackburn and Manchester run regularly.