

Vice-Chancellor and Warden

SC/DB

19 July 2021

Mr John Hewitt  
Chief Executive  
Durham County Council  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UQ

Dear John,

On behalf of Durham University, I should like to express our firm support for County Durham's bid to become the UK City of Culture 2025. Gaining City of Culture status would be a gamechanger for a region poised for renewal.

The University takes great pride in working closely with Durham County Council and other partners within the county; we are committed to being a principal partner in City of Culture 2025.

As a principal partner, the University will:

- offer expertise in education and research across Arts and Humanities, Business, Science and Social Sciences
- enable access to our world-class collections, museums, libraries, and cultural specialists
- make available high specification technological facilities
- provide a gateway to the world for the people of our county, through our incredible global network of cultural and educational institutions, drawing upon existing collaborations such as that of our Zurbaran Centre for Spanish and Latin American Art with the Prado, Madrid, and of our Oriental Museum with the Palace Museum, Beijing and the National Museum of Japanese History.

We are one of the world's top universities. We are a globally outstanding centre of teaching and research excellence, a collegiate community of exceptional and committed people, in a unique and historic setting, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our expertise and strengths in areas such as Creativity, Culture & Heritage, Digital & Data Science, Health and Sustainability will complement and enrich the contribution of DCC and other partners in the City of Culture initiative. Our innovative research can drive, inform, support and evaluate Durham City of Culture, and, crucially, it can assist in ensuring the global impact of this regional initiative.

At the same time, City of Culture status would be an outstanding vehicle to broaden, strengthen and energise the connections our University has to organisations, charities and grassroots communities across the county; it would allow us to do even more to share our knowledge and talent for the benefit of the whole County.

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Our academic staff conduct boundary-breaking research which improves lives not just in the North East but across the world. We are particularly proud of our research activities that contribute to delivering the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As an example, our research is being used to transform abandoned coal mines into multi-million pound renewable energy systems, via our Durham Energy Institute. We would intend to use the City of Culture to disseminate such future-forging research as a springboard to inspire community innovation on climate change in every town and village across the region.

Our academics in Creative Fuse NE are ideally positioned to support and inform the creative, digital and tech sectors in their engagement with the City of Culture, as well as our new 'Digitale' initiative which has a developed network and platform for open source innovation in digital placemaking.

The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education, our collaboration with Arts Council England, is a vital resource for connecting with and empowering children and young people. Our Widening Participation, Outreach and Museum's Schools Learning teams, can make a significant contribution to the initiative, raising the aspirations of young people and illuminating pathways to achievement.

Durham presents the case for a County of Culture, not just a City of Culture. This emphasises the wealth of the area – from inspiring landscapes and rich and diverse heritage to our optimism, innovation and economic ambition. We boast one of the top Business Schools in Europe, with economic regeneration expertise that could be deployed as part of City of Culture legacy planning, building on existing collaborations with the local science park 'NET Park', through our recently opened enterprise zone 'Orbit'.

Our student community will be a powerful engine for the City of Culture. Durham University students have several hundred sport, theatre, music and art societies, and an extensive, passionate, and well-organised student volunteer programme (over 50,000 recorded volunteer hours per year).

Our participation will extend to our global alumni network, which includes many well-known and influential public figures across the BBC, Sky, Netflix, Aardman, MOMA, the Lincoln Centre, and Sony to name a few. We will work with partners to create meaningful opportunities to harness their experience and input.

City of Culture status in 2025 would support the county in taking the passion for positive change in the region to the next level and bring long-term benefits to the North East as a whole.

I trust that this letter of support expresses the strength of our support and enthusiasm for City of Culture 2025 to be in Durham County, and our commitment to full engagement in this exciting initiative.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Stuart Corbridge**  
**Vice-Chancellor and Warden**