

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund - Great Place Scheme Nations

### Final Programme Evaluation Report

*“this project has helped to show that connecting people to their place has both health and economic benefits. It can help to increase and sustain pride in an area and make it a better place to live. Recognising the importance of everyone's heritage is a powerful way to engage previously disengaged communities.”*

*Great Place Scheme Nations, Project Manager*

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## Executive Summary

### Overview

Between December 2017 and March 2018, The Fund awarded through Great Place Scheme Nations (GPS Nations), grants ranging between £150,000 to £500,000 to 18 places in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Four projects in Northern Ireland, nine in Scotland and five in Wales. The projects were set to last up to three years. The Scheme was also being delivered in England, where it was co-funded by Arts Council England. The aim of the Great Place Scheme was to enable heritage and cultural organisations to make a step-change in how they work together, and with organisations in other sectors, in order for heritage to contribute more to meeting local social and economic objectives. The ambition of the programme was to support places to:

- Inspire a vision of how heritage and culture can change their place.
- Connect heritage and culture with new partners to help change places for the better.

- Incorporate a vision for heritage and culture into ambitions for their place.
- Build and share learning.

Activities delivered by projects were to fit into the following broad categories:

- Talking to people.
- Exploring new ideas.
- Creating tools to realise step-change.
- Building capacity.

The aim of the GPS Nations evaluation is to assess to what extent the activity undertaken in the programme led to the desired outcomes, and how this occurred. Within this overarching aim the evaluation:

- reviews the approach to delivery of the GPS Nations projects and identifies its strengths and weaknesses.
- identifies lessons learned and best practice for both national and local stakeholders in making change locally.
- provides illustrative examples and case studies demonstrating the range of heritage activity and the

role of this activity in achieving change in places across devolved nations.

This report draws on data collected from projects at the beginning of the programme in 2019, at a mid-point in early 2020, prior to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and up to September 2021. Some of the projects were not completed at time of writing, so certain data was not yet available. In addition, a series of learning events were held in 2019 and 2021 which provided insights for this report.

### Key findings

GPS Nations projects had a broad remit to consider all aspects of place and explore how, through partnership and new ways of working, heritage could be repositioned strategically and with communities to make places better to live, work and visit. The Covid-19 pandemic aside, projects were able to make a step change for their places, laying the foundations for ongoing social and economic outcomes and impacts in areas relevant to their place. The key findings are:

- The concept of ‘place’, has played out in different ways for GPS Nations projects - which range from bringing an existing geographic community together around its heritage to places where heritage has been identified as a driver or offering potential to describe a discrete ‘place’ - usually more oriented towards developing stronger visitor destinations or in order to build a community in relation to a designation (Biosphere, UNESCO Global Geo Park or National Park), which has not necessarily resonated with its resident communities.
- Developing cross-sector partnerships are crucial for place-shaping work, bringing the right skills and relationships together and for embedding an approach to heritage strategically. Places have learned the skills and competencies required for successful cross-sector partnership working and addressed some of its challenges.
- Heritage has proved an effective mechanism for cross-sector working, reaching different parts of

communities and bringing about positive social outcomes.

- GPS Nations projects have taken communities on a journey from consultation and engagement to ownership of their local heritage. Legacy plans focus on a greater level of community empowerment, supported by local organisations or partnerships.
- New approaches to and models for engaging and involving communities have been developed, used and tested.
- Projects have demonstrated how a shift in the 'ownership' of heritage - tangible and intangible, is the most effective route for engaging a wide range of communities. A shift from heritage for the visitor to sharing 'my' heritage for the benefit of our community.
- The resilience of projects, and their partner organisations, was proven through their response and adaptations to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Adaptations as a result of the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic provided additional learning for projects

about who they can reach and how they can engage communities, particularly using digital tools.

- There is a mixed picture as to how far heritage is now reflected in local plans and strategies, however, in most places the foundations are laid - for some the route was embedded in their structure and plans, others have found keeping heritage on the agenda more challenging.
- Local authorities are key players for making the change explored by the GPS Nations projects sustainable - either through ongoing investment, facilitation or support and/or through embedding the new ways of working within strategy and policy i.e. user-centred practice and cross-sector working.
- Achieving inclusive growth and tackling poverty were beyond the immediate scope of the GPS Nations projects, however through their process of exploration they have demonstrated the potential for heritage to be integrated to help deliver such strategies i.e. in terms of improving well-being and employability for individuals.

- Economic impact was not achieved by most GPS Nations Projects due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, however through work focused on place branding and partnership the foundations are laid.
- The majority of projects have planned legacies, which encompass a range of approaches - newly developed cultural or heritage strategies, a wide range of partnerships are being supported ongoing, business plans and funding applications are in process and new models of working are being rolled out for use in new projects.

### Summary of recommendations

The recommendations stem from the findings of the evaluation and are designed to suggest how the National Lottery Heritage Fund might approach supporting and funding projects which are focused on or include ambitions to realise impacts for places, their communities and place-shaping.

#### Recommendation 1: realistic strategic ambition

Projects, programmes or activities which have a place focus should provide a clear definition of their place, be specific about the communities which will benefit, articulate strategic positioning and be realistic in terms of scale and scope of ambition.

#### Recommendation 2: monitoring and evaluation

Measuring impact should involve setting baselines; identifying and integrating measures for outcomes which have meaning specific to a place, alongside those used by national studies useful for benchmarking; and longer-term tracking. Process evaluation should also be embedded to support continuous learning and development of models or new ways of working.

#### Recommendation 3: inclusive growth and tackling poverty

Where inclusive growth and tackling poverty are desired outcomes, heritage projects should be designed accordingly and are more likely to have impact when they have a singular focus for a particular demographic or community and on particular areas such as skills development.

Alternatively, such projects could be delivered as a component part of a larger scale place-based strategic initiative designed to have significant impact.

#### **Recommendation 4; ‘modular’ investment**

An approach is suggested to frame the different ‘investment’, funding or support, modules which deliver the outcomes and impacts relevant to a place - focused on desired outcomes and impacts which make a step change for that place. Projects may therefore need to demonstrate the value of engaging communities with heritage through activity, increasing understanding or through building relationships; others may need to strengthen the capacity of the heritage sector; formation or formulation of a strategic cross-sector partnership may be required in other situations; or some places may be ready for a longer term, at scale, strategic programme. Essentially breaking down the component parts of the GPS Nations projects and supporting places to focus on specific areas.

#### **Recommendation 5: assess strengths and weaknesses**

Identifying through consultation and then articulating strengths and weaknesses in relation to place-shaping will enable places to identify where ‘investment’ is required. It would also inform the kinds of support, training or resources which could be provided.

#### **Recommendation 6: innovation process models**

Support projects to achieve change for their place through use of process models or methods such as ‘design thinking’ or ‘agile working’ to give them confidence and provide structure.

#### **Recommendation 7: knowledge exchange**

Facilitate sharing of knowledge and practice across place-focused projects.

#### **Recommendation 8: shared examples**

Support comparison and sharing of outcomes and impacts through examples or case studies of practice and impact - e.g. in relation to ‘co-creation’ and ‘empowerment’.



### Recommendation 9: digital training

As projects integrate digital engagement, digital archives and archiving and content across their projects, support skills development in this area, including how to measure impact through this work.

### Looking ahead for GPS Nations projects

Having devised new approaches to engaging communities with heritage, it is important that local authorities or other strategic agencies are encouraged and inspired to use, adopt or develop the new ways of working which have been successfully tested through GPS Nations projects.

The projects were able to assess a wide range of positive outcomes as a result of their projects, it is important that places which have experienced the investment which comes with a project such as GPS Nations are able to track their impacts over the longer term.

It is assumed, in response to current agendas, that future such strategic place-based initiatives would require a greater focus on or more rigorous appraisal of:

- Equality, inclusivity, diversity.

- Environmental sustainability of activities, particularly regarding the visitor economy.
- Hybrid delivery models for organisations and initiatives - digital and in-person.
- The value of delivering heritage remotely for local, domestic and international/global audiences.
- Evaluation models and approaches to integrate appropriately assessment of culture and heritage capital.

# 1 Introduction

Between December 2017 and March 2018, The National Lottery Heritage Fund (The Fund) awarded through Great Place Scheme Nations (GPS Nations) grants ranging between £150,000 to £500,000 to 18 places in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; four projects in Northern Ireland, nine in Scotland and five in Wales. The projects were set to last up to three years, however as they spanned the period affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority were extended. The scheme also ran in England, where it was co-funded by Arts Council England. The aim of GPS Nations was to enable heritage and cultural organisations to make a step-change in how they work in partnership, and with organisations in other sectors, in order for heritage to contribute more to meeting local social and economic objectives.

*‘The aim of the Great Place Scheme is to put heritage at the heart of the local vision for places across [NI, Scotland, Wales], making a step change in the contribution of heritage in those areas, and embedding it in the places’ plans for the future. We will fund a portfolio of projects that vary in scale, covering urban and rural communities*

*and the full breadth of heritage. This includes nature, the built environment, museums, libraries and archives, designed landscapes, culture and traditions, industrial maritime and transport heritage’.*

*GPS Nations, Guidance for Applicants*

The scheme was designed following the principles of networked heritage, aiming for outcomes which:

- Strengthen the connections between heritage, civic and community organisations, and the private sector.
- Involve people.
- In time lead to the social and economic benefits that heritage can achieve, including tackling poverty and inequality, improved resilience for local organisations, and inclusive growth in the local economy, amongst others.

The programme also aimed to share learning, for the benefit of other places in the Nations.

Activities delivered by projects were to fit into the following broad categories:

- Talking to people.

- Exploring new ideas.
- Creating tools to realise step-change.
- Building capacity.

### 1.1 Programme evaluation overview

The programme evaluation of GPS Nations, delivered by The Audience Agency, assesses to what extent the activity undertaken in the programme led to the desired outcomes, and how this occurred. The evaluation:

- reviews the approach to delivery of the GPS Nations projects and identifies its strengths and weaknesses.
- identifies lessons learned and best practice for both national and local stakeholders in making change locally.
- provides illustrative examples and case studies demonstrating the range of heritage activity and the role of this activity in achieving change in places across devolved nations.

The report also raises questions for The Fund in its future approach to place-based funding and support.

The programme evaluation additionally assessed the impacts of the extended periods of lock-down and restrictions on projects' delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data used in this programme level evaluation included responses to a series of three surveys delivered in 2019, 2020 and 2021 completed by project leads and managers, plus an additional survey to document the response to the Covid-19 pandemic delivered in 2021. The responses to these surveys were complemented by feedback from members of project steering groups, partners and project participants and audiences. The Audience Agency also facilitated a series of learning events - one in person in 2019 and a further six remotely in the first half of 2021, from which evaluative insight was drawn. Project reports on progress against approved purposes supplied to The Fund have also been referred to, along with a limited number of project evaluation reports.

It was the projects' responsibility to undertake their own evaluation and make a more detailed analysis of outcomes and impacts and information on legacy plans.

Finally, it should be noted that not all projects were completed at time of collating information for this report (September 2021), therefore some projects are less represented in the reporting while they draw their own conclusions and complete their evaluation. It was also not possible to include representative data collected from participants and audiences at a programme level (as few projects had brought together their data at time of data collation). However, this data is expected to be included in the individual project evaluations.

## 1.2 This report

To give context to the findings, this report begins with an overview of projects' delivery and activities. It incorporates the projects response to and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main sections respond to the programme evaluation outcomes framework which has been used across GPS for all the Nations, as devised by BOP Consulting for the GPS England projects (and revised slightly for the GPS Nations projects). Within this section particular questions and outcomes for the projects are highlighted.

The final sections draw conclusions and provide commentary and recommendations.

This report is accompanied by Appendices with supporting information on GPS Nations projects activity and outcomes. Individual GPS Nations project evaluation reports should be referred to for further detail.

Quotes from those delivering GPS Nations projects gathered through the evaluation are credited to the name of the project.

## 2 Timescales, budgets and activity

### 2.1 Project timescales

Some projects had requested extensions prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, for the following reasons beyond the three years stipulated at the outset.

- The length of time required to establish partnerships and/or governance which was widely considered to have taken much longer than expected. Projects perceived this to have a knock-on effect and therefore limiting the time for delivery.
- Developing links with the community which was assessed to take longer than had been planned, particularly where new relationships needed to be built.
- Slow, or issues with, recruitment of Project Managers or a change of Project Managers causing a late start and/or hiatus mid-project.

All projects (except one) were granted extensions of differing lengths as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the point of the Covid-19 pandemic causing

lockdowns from March 2020, some projects had only just started their delivery phase and it was these projects which were most severely affected.

Projects appreciated The Fund's flexibility in relation to the project delivery and timescales, which in the case of this being a pilot scheme was essential.

*“The Great Place Scheme is a fantastic initiative - please repeat it again. It allows efficient / effective community led delivery on a small landscape scale. I appreciate it was a pilot, however the lead in time from scheme launch to application was very challenging - it felt rushed in order to develop meaningful partnerships. In reality many of our initial plans were refined as they were rushed at planning stage. I felt NLHF recognised this and were flexible to change”.*

*Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

### 2.2 Funding and budgeting

While projects would say that more funding would have been useful, the evaluator assesses that there is little suggestion that additional funding for projects would have been effective or made a material difference to fulfilling their

approved purposes. The only challenge was where projects had requested extensions prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, where there was no additional money in the budget to extend salaries i.e. for Project Managers. Where projects stated that they were only just beginning in terms of the change that they wanted to make at the end of their delivery period - this does demonstrate that the GPS Nations investment had achieved the ambition of being a catalyst and laying the foundations for change. Projects also appear to have been able to deliver within the same budget more or less despite delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, although further investigation of additional resource needed may be required to corroborate this.

Additional funding has also been leveraged by a number of projects to support project delivery - both from National Lottery Heritage Fund and elsewhere. From a legacy perspective, further funding is also being sought to support ongoing work, or funding used from within local budgets - using the impacts of the GPS Nations work to make the case.

However, there is a sage piece of advice from one project:

*“Peidio bod yn rhy uchelgeisiol gyda beth sy'n bosib ei gyflawni o fewn y gyllideb / Not to be overly ambitious with what can be achieved within budget”*

*Llechi Adfywio trwy Dreftadaeth yn nyffrynnoedd Llechi Cymru*

### 2.3 Activity overview

Projects' delivery fell into two broad phases - firstly establishing or convening the partnership and agreeing its governance and vision, along with employing Project Managers; and secondly the delivery of activity. The approved purposes for each of the projects describe a range of activity which are included in the Appendices.

The delivery also divides into pre- and post-pandemic phases. While social distancing measures were loosened from June 2021 (although in different ways and at different speeds in each of the Nations), many projects did not plan face to face activity of any scale until the Autumn of 2021. Therefore, for many projects a considerable proportion of their delivery was almost entirely remote, digital or socially distanced.

The types of activity delivered included:

- Production of a place ‘story book’ used to engage stakeholders, residents and visitors with local heritage. These involved a heritage audit, gathering of local heritage stories or some guidance on how and where to engage with heritage. Some were accompanied by a toolkit, training and ‘brand’ development, as well as public facing Apps. Used by projects such as Barry Making Waves, Badenoch Heritage and Dunfermline.
- Writing of Cultural or Heritage Strategies to inform the work of projects such as for Inverclyde or as its legacy such as for Conway taking in Colwyn Bay or the full focus for the project such as for the Outer Hebrides.
- Developing or supporting networks of heritage organisations with learning exchange, training, funding, capacity building and/or to deliver an activity collaboratively e.g. Paisley and Renfrewshire establishing a network of around 80 organisations in the county; North Belfast Heritage Cluster, led by Belfast Charitable Society, worked with 14 different organisations which own or are responsible for a heritage building or site.
- Commissioning creative activity, such as Barry Making Waves which used a framework approach for creatives and artists to apply to join in order to bid for commissions in association with the GPS Nations project. All artists who joined the framework were commissioned by the GPS Nations project to deliver heritage related creative artworks - including animations and plays.
- Heritage training and skills development opportunities, particularly around traditional skills e.g. Coalisland and East Tyrone and Imagine Colwyn Bay - Conway's Business Team are administering and supporting the Creative and Digital Bursary Fund which has been developed through the GPS Nations project.
- Community engagement activity targeted at specific locations or geographic communities, young people, marginalised groups or schools. These covered participative activities such as archaeological digs,

archiving, making/craft/photography, walks and talks and opportunities to contribute to creative interpretation of heritage through filmmaking, plays and writing.

- Festivals and events e.g. Seaside Revival: Bangor-by-the-Sea; a Heritage festival planned in Dunfermline; a North Belfast Festival - three days of events to celebrate the work of the project; and in Glasgow a canal festival was curated.
- Heritage trails and walking tours were produced by a number of projects including Dunfermline, Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections and Cuilcagh to Cleenish, mostly using digital tools to deliver them.
- Archives were produced by many projects referencing both tangible and intangible heritage, much of which was digital from 2020 onwards.

## 3 Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic

### 3.1 Overview of impacts

An specific survey was sent to project leads in 2021 to understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the scale and scope of which are summarised here.

When the first lockdown was announced in each Nation, projects were at a range of different stages of development or delivery. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic were therefore specific to each project. Although, it should be noted that changes to projects' timescale, format or activity are not all attributable to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic - some had changed their focus in response to identified needs, regardless of the pandemic.

The main impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on projects are summarised as follows.

- Activity was paused and once re-started needed to be re-scoped or took longer to deliver therefore extending the overall length of most projects.
- Resource and capacity was adjusted to pivot to new formats of delivery - digital or socially distanced



(although there was little additional budget applied to make these changes).

- Community engagement and activity converted from in-person to digital.
- Exclusion of some target communities as a result of the need to convert to digital engagement and activity.

### 3.2 Covid impacts

On average just over half, 55%, of project activity was still to be delivered from January 2020 onwards, ranging from 20% to 80% across projects<sup>1</sup>. This activity represented on average half, 51%, of the total GPS Nations projects grant budget, ranging from 20% to 80% across the projects. However, there is no pattern between the amount of activity to be delivered beyond January 2020 and the budget remaining, i.e. in one case it was over half of the activity to be delivered, but using less than half of the budget, elsewhere the proportions of activity to be delivered and budget remaining were similar.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Project Manager Covid-19 pandemic response survey 2021

Delivery took longer to achieve during the pandemic, even if with the same target group with the same outcomes to be achieved. On average projects were extended by 10 months, ranging from an additional 4 months to 20 months. The average total length (from the point of permission to start from The National Lottery Heritage Fund) of projects was 40 months or 3 years and 4 months, ranging from 2 years to 3 years 11 months in length.

*Table 1: For those activities that have changed or will change format, what kind of changes have been or will be made? (Select all that apply)*

Types of changes to projects due to the pandemic	All Nations
In-person to digital	100%
Reduced capacity	92%
Different target beneficiaries	23%
Different focus	46%
Different venue or location	46%
Other (please give details)	15%
Total respondents	13

Source: Project Manager Covid-19 pandemic response survey 2021 (Base 13)

The most significant change was the move from in-person to digital or distanced activity, as a result of the ban on large gatherings and need for social distancing - whether meetings, training, events or other activity.

*“We have tried to be more creative when trying to use digital or other non 'in-person' forms of engagement which has meant that some activities have evolved entirely whilst still trying to maintain the same audience and the same focus and the same set of community outcomes.”*

*Ein Cymdogaeth Werin - Preseli Heartlands Communities*

Reduced capacity was due to illness, but also staff changes caused by people leaving the projects.

The adjustments required to planned activities delivered from January 2020 to the end of the projects varied. Activity had its format changed, was delayed, was not delivered at all or whether it could be delivered was uncertain. Some projects had to change 90% of the delivery format, while others delivered 80% of their project in the same format and timescale as planned (further findings in the Appendices).

The changes precipitated as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, were often difficult to manage, with one project expressing their disappointment and feeling isolated in the first instance as it was not possible to develop partnerships in the same way.

*“...sense of disappointment and...struggling to let go of some of the plans that were in place and do what felt like a compromise, really, in terms of, not doing the face-to-face work”*

*Falkirk*

There were wholesale changes to project activity format, e.g. the Seaside Revival Festival converting to a purely digital event. However, the amount of activity which just did not take place at all is very small.

Inevitably, some ideas could not be implemented because of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

*“All stops were pulled out but some of them simply could not be implemented due to Covid restrictions which have lasted 18 months - effectively 50% of the project period”*

*Badenoch Heritage*

### 3.3 Activity converted to digital or socially distanced

Here are a range of activities which were delivered digitally or of necessity had to be developed and delivered socially distanced.

It should be noted that although the Covid-19 pandemic did cause a major conversion to digital delivery, some projects had already integrated into their approved purposes a range of online activity - such as websites or trails accessible digitally.

- Meetings, workshops, consultations, working groups converted to delivery online.
- The Dock Office in Barry - the Calendar building - with a clock tower which forms part of the skyline was closed to the public. So, an animator was commissioned to create short films working with schools to show people inside and explore its heritage.
- Place in the Biosphere produced six films and a VR experience looking at place names, physical landscape and ancient monuments to share back discoveries about local heritage to small rural communities.
- Dunfermline converted engagement with heritage activity to a downloadable walking tour suited to Covid restrictions - 'Down the Street'.
- Seaside Revival: Bangor-by-the-Sea converted to the 'vintage stay at home festival' - with lots of short how-to videos, walking trails/a treasure hunt (with QR codes) and online competitions.
- A weaving project in Dunfermline was led by an artist who converted in-person workshops to digital using engaging videos and Instagram posts. Materials were provided to make small woven pictures which were designed to join together to make a larger picture. There is still an ambition to have a final physical exhibition in the museum and gallery in Dunfermline to show off the full landscape picture.
- Distribution of digital content e.g. in Paisley and Renfrewshire online resources and content was made available through URLs or YouTube for partners, council and community groups. The project was also able to provide content to care homes which had

smart televisions installed, so they could engage with live workshops or downloaded content.

- Social media-based sharing and archiving - Preseli Heartlands had been doing community mapping to lead to an exhibition - so it was converted to Facebook - where old and contemporary photographs, videos memories of life, of living in the region were contributed - a community grew to over 800 members with over 2000 images shared under different themes plus lots of interaction. Using Facebook facilitated wider engagement with both English and Welsh speakers, using Facebook's translate function.

*“I think it was fantastic as well because we had lots of Welsh language shared on it and a lot of...our special Pembrokeshire language ... But even English people on the group were still able to access the content because obviously Facebook has got the translate function on posts.”*

*Ein Cymdogaeth Werin - Preseli Heartlands Communities*

Projects focused on the quality of experience or interaction and ensured that artists or facilitators were presenting or

facilitating in an engaging way and were happy to use the digital tools. Where they wanted content to be distributed more widely production and content standards were applied for example, so that it was not just a recorded zoom workshop.

The surprise came from an ability to diversify and increase engagement using digital tools. For a young people's group in Gwynedd it was easier to fit in zoom calls around school, rather than in person sessions, where previously online interaction would not have been considered for young people. However, there were challenges of keeping the energy going through weekly zoom sessions, compared to in-person interactions. Likewise, it was easier to engage more dispersed communities online and get them working together - attracting higher than expected attendances. The Seaside Revival Festival in Bangor attracted a larger audience than usual from outside Bangor online which they aim to build on going forward.

Not all response to Covid was digital of course, and much of it involved a hybrid approach.

- Preseli Heartlands converted food workshops ‘taste your heritage’ into online facilitated cooking sessions, with food packs delivered in advance so participants could cook together.
- Dunfermline engaged people with their weaving project by posting out information which was more successful than leaving leaflets in places.
- Barry Making Waves made arts and crafts packs and hand delivered them, and they could be requested on Twitter or Instagram.
- Elsewhere, walking tours that people can do on their own were developed from a pre-Covid-19 pandemic storytelling day.
- The Place in the Biosphere blew up photographs to create an exhibition using local shop windows.
- Seaside Revival installed street murals in Bangor.

## 4 Process/Strategy Outcomes

### 4.1 Summary

#### 4.1.1 Partnership development

In terms of partnership development, GPS Nations projects have been unique catalysts in bringing together partners from across sectors to achieve objectives in new ways.

- The process of partnership development has been successful, although not without its challenges - particularly around the time it takes to form the partnerships and set up the project governance.
- While a shared vision was embedded across projects, it still required constant reinforcing and it was vital to embed the language of place.
- Strong leadership was required to ensure that new ways of working were explored, and to build trust and confidence in these approaches.
- While local authorities led or were involved in many projects, it was clear that operating outside or removed from local government was beneficial in some cases. However, in terms of embedding back

into strategy and policy, the involvement of local authorities is vital.

- Cross-sector partnerships were essential for bringing the appropriate range of skills and competencies together, as well as to ensure a holistic approach to realising project ambitions.
- Engaging non-cultural sector businesses, however, requires ongoing investment.
- Projects have been successful in demonstrating why cross-sector working is effective strategically, with concrete examples of what it has led to.
- Ongoing partnerships or collaborations are a key part of the legacy of most projects.
- The concept of ‘place’, has played out in different ways for GPS Nations projects - which range from bringing an existing geographic community together around its heritage to places where heritage has been identified as a driver or offering potential to describe a discrete ‘place’ - usually more oriented towards developing stronger visitor destinations or in order to build a community in relation to a designation

(Biosphere, UNESCO Global Geo Park or National Park), which has not necessarily resonated with its resident communities.

#### 4.1.2 Community engagement and ownership

Through engagement and consultation, there is an increased sense of ownership of local heritage more generally by communities. GPS Nations projects have paved the way to empowerment through building experience, confidence and skills within and across communities, while in some cases also setting up the structures through which communities can enact their empowerment and help make decisions. In achieving this visible activity has been vital, so that projects do not appear ‘strategy heavy’.

The key factors for effective project working with communities are:

- Leadership by projects and within communities.
- Facilitation and problem solving.
- Pragmatism, responsiveness, flexibility.
- Offering meaningful opportunities.

- Recognising the limitations of time/attention/energy in communities.
- Developing structures for decision-making and influencing by communities and helping them to understand these.

Overall, the projects have explored how and to what extent communities can, and want to be, involved. Given the parameters of time and budget for this project, pragmatism has meant a focus on those who wanted or were ready to be involved. In taking this more people-centred and responsive approach, projects have demonstrated to others what can be achieved. It is however clear that ongoing support, facilitation and skills development is vital to maintain what the GPS Nations projects have started in collaboration with communities.

#### 4.1.3 Strategic context and development

GPS Nations projects have also effectively influenced local strategy or policy - either through a place at the table within local infrastructure or by delivering new strategies. The projects have demonstrated how engagement with heritage can be effective in addressing a range of local challenges or

issues. Increasingly, and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, culture is being integrated within wider local strategy and policy, particularly as a part of the rebuild and recovery post-pandemic.

As a catalyst for exploring how to achieve wider social and economic outcomes for places and communities, other than increasing engagement with heritage, starting with heritage, whether tangible or intangible, has been effective in this place-based work. Principally, projects have demonstrated what's possible, and what is not, by working in a more collaborative, open and flexible way.

## 4.2 Place Context

GPS Nations projects were located in a variety of types of places. Some projects focused on a town or part of a city, where people live, work and visit, which had one particular or collection of heritage assets and/or which could be described in relation to a specific feature i.e. a river, canal, valley or island. These types of places have clarity in terms of what the communities involved identified with. However, some projects covered a collection of communities or heritage assets over a more dispersed, often rural, area.

Others may be better described as a visitor destination or part of another entity with its own distinction, such as a UNESCO Global Geopark, a Biosphere or part of a National Park. These descriptions of the places are not necessarily mutually exclusive but suggest that the idea of ‘place’ in the context of GPS Nations is fairly broad in its definition and that the characteristic that gives a place cohesion may be driven by other factors than the specifics of what a particular community identifies with. In this way GPS Nations projects range from bringing an existing geographic community together around its heritage to places where heritage has been identified as a driver or offering potential to describe a discrete ‘place’ - usually more oriented towards developing stronger visitor destinations or in order to build a community in relation to a designation, which has not necessarily resonated with its resident communities.

The GPS Nations projects were also taking place alongside a wide range of other place-based strategic activity and significant major projects. At the interim reporting stage, 11 projects were working in the context of major regeneration projects which had been started within the last five years,

eight alongside major infrastructure or transport projects and three places had sustainable communities’ initiatives. Since the projects had begun, a further six projects indicated new major regeneration projects, three were in a place bidding in the first round for a UK City of Culture 2025 and two had major infrastructure or transport projects plus either a sustainable communities or place programmes. The majority of these latter were supporting the GPS Nations project.

Northern Ireland had the least number of strategic initiatives taking place alongside the GPS Nations projects, relative to Wales (which had a similar number of projects to Northern Ireland).

The extent to which Project Managers said these local major projects supported their projects fell to an average of four out of 10 at the final survey stage, from six out of 10 at the interim reporting stage, the latter with particular reference to the major regeneration projects.

Seven project areas have benefited from The Fund’s programmes or projects in the last five years. Although this funding is to some extent considered distinct from the GPS



Nations project funding. The Project Managers' average score has stayed at four out of ten across the surveys for the extent to which these other projects funded by The Fund are supporting the GPS Nations project.

There are some further bids to The Fund which are related to the work of the GPS Nations projects, such as Scotland's Place in the Biosphere's partner projects in Galloway Glens and for the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership 'Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire'; and in the Cuilcagh to Cleenish project, Northern Ireland, funding for complementary work funded to develop Arney Battlefield Trail, including volunteer training and a guided walk programme.

It is clear that most projects were taking place in areas where there is increasingly significant infrastructural or economic development and some GPS Nations projects have joined with others to support change, whether transport, capital heritage projects or by participating in ongoing infrastructural partnerships. However, the data indicates

that some of this work slowed down, which may be due to the impacts of the pandemic.

### 4.3 Cross Portfolio, Cross Sector Partnership and Working is Significantly Improved and Extended

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Partners feel 'bought-in' to partnership processes and ways of working.
- A shared agenda and vision are developed and realised among relevant stakeholders.
- New partnerships have developed between project partners, cultural organisations and other sectors.
- Culture becomes more relevant to the core concerns of stakeholders from outside the cultural sector.

#### 4.3.1 Partners Feel 'Bought-In' to Partnership Processes and Ways of Working

Over 60% of steering group members felt highly<sup>2</sup> involved with the way their GPS Nations project made decisions.

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<sup>2</sup> Rated 8 or more out of 10 at an interim point 2020.

However, it is clear that developing effective working processes and building engagement takes considerable time and effort by both the project and its partners.

Projects universally reported, at the interim stage, that establishing the partnership and its governance had been the most challenging aspect of the project, prior to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. Projects had felt ‘strategy heavy’, so maintaining engagement was challenging as was managing expectations for the project.

Developing the partnerships had involved navigating complex sets of relationships, dealing with historical differences and a need to support people to work together effectively.

*“Communicate your brief as clearly as possible at all times: leading by example to encourage unity of purpose to all stakeholders and partners, avoiding old rivalries and being prepared to push for structural changes in organisational roles if this will help facilitate effective project management.”*

*Badenoch Heritage*

Once under way, projects have had to work on breaking down silos and overcoming barriers presented, for instance by some local authority processes, such as procurement.

*“Flexibility is valuable if funders will agree. Sometimes when you're working with project partners for the first time, new and exciting ideas can appear from nowhere when you sit down to start the detailed planning, in particular when people start to feel more comfortable working together and maybe more willing to move out of their comfort zone.”*

*Coalisland and East Tyrone*

#### **4.3.2 A Shared Agenda and Vision are Developed and Realised Among Relevant Stakeholders**

A shared vision was increasingly strengthened as projects progressed, with Project Managers giving an average score of nine at the final survey point for ‘the project shares a vision’. Three quarters of steering group members also indicated a high level of agreement that their GPS Nations project shares a vision.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rated 8 or more out of 10 at an interim point 2020.

The main challenge expressed in creating a vision at the outset of the projects, was the workload required to engage both partners and communities with it. This was hampered by other factors, indicated by around a half of projects, including a lack of evidence for culture/heritage impact, a lack of track record in delivery of such projects and a lack of cultural/heritage infrastructure. Projects also felt they had skills gaps, which hindered the formation of a shared vision, around relationship and partnership management. This resulted in a need to learn which partners would be right to support the project.

*“Be flexible. Sometimes you just waste time trying to work with a certain organisation who are not engaging - change direction and find new partners. Keep to the spirit of the project, not to the detailed wording.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

Projects learned that it was important to deliver activity that engaged communities as soon as it was possible, to make the project visible. This also reinforced the collective vision across the partnership and helped mobilise community involvement.

#### 4.3.3 New Partnerships Developed Between Project Partners, Cultural Organisations and those Outside the Sector

Projects had a wide range of strategic and delivery partners, including a local authority and/or a cultural organisation. Significantly, other strategic partners came from local services - for volunteering, business support, youth or education and other agencies such as a waterways authority, National Park or a local nature partnership. At the interim survey point, partners included a higher proportion of volunteer services, the education sector or services and clinical commissioning groups. By later in 2021 at the final survey point, no clinical commissioning groups or youth services were involved as strategic partners, and the number of education services had reduced. However, the number of social and community care strategic partners had increased. This shift could be attributed to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. There were relatively fewer cultural organisations as strategic partners for the Northern Ireland projects.

The funded delivery partners are predominantly the local authority, cultural organisations and local enterprise agencies. A range of community organisations and clinical commissioning groups, which had been funded partners at the interim survey point, were no longer funded by the GPS Nations projects by the final survey.

There is relative confidence that there are strong and valuable partnerships in project areas between cultural or heritage organisations and those who are working in other sectors (scored at an average of six out of 10 by Project Managers at the interim point and up to seven at the final survey point).

New partnerships have also been created, which has steadily increased over the course of the GPS Nations projects' lifetime.

**Table 2: Have any of the following types of new partnerships been created between organisations in the cultural sector and other non-cultural sector organisations?**

Types of new partnership	All Nations
Formal partnership	3
Joint programming	7
Joint application for funding	8
New network	8
Informal information sharing	15
No new partnerships will be created	0
Other	1
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>15</b>

*Source: final project manager surveys all Nations 2021 (Base 15)*

Partnerships were developed with education, tourism, regeneration sectors and planning, and to a lesser extent young people, health and social care services (others quoted include town and regional councils, Business Improvement District, Waterways Authority and animal conservation). There were particularly increased numbers of partnerships with the health and education sectors at the final survey stage. In Scotland, where there were nine projects, there is

a greater focus on partnerships with the tourism and planning sectors. Three of these new partnerships, so far, have made a joint application for funding.

Over 60% of steering group members indicated at the interim point in 2020, that there are strong and valuable partnerships between cultural organisations and those who work in other sectors such as health, education, social care and youth services.

At the first Learning Event, it was widely acknowledged that GPS Nations projects were bringing together a range of partners and stakeholders in an unprecedented way. These cross-sector partnerships were effective in building relationships with communities on behalf of projects.

Partnerships with cultural organisations were particularly effective, as they brought skills such as event management and community engagement. Cultural organisations were considered more used to working within the local infrastructure and with local government and their creative approaches increased reach.

*“...partnership was local authority, National Park and others led by a community charity – so the cultural partner brought new perspectives. Span Arts, who were the creative arts partner, enabled us to reach out and do things in a visionary and creative way that I don't think we would have been able to without their involvement.”*

*Ein Cymdogaeth Werin - Preseli Heartlands Communities*

*“partnership with Memo Arts Centre developed areas that would not have been possible from within the local authority – they have developed a volunteer bank which the project has drawn on – it was effective as the partner took ownership.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

The Project Managers are clear that these new partnerships were a result of the GPS Nations project bringing sectors together, with the scoring of the project's contribution to these coming together increasing from an average of seven out of 10 to eight out of 10 by final survey stage.

The partners involved with the governance or delivery of projects consider developing partnerships as a priority in terms of their participation in GPS Nations.<sup>4</sup>

The projects identified what they considered led to successful partnership working.

- Identifying joint benefits - with smaller and larger organisations working together to shared goals which bring added value or result in ‘bigger’ things and focus on legacy.
- Sharing organisational values with a flexible approach and complementary working practices characterised by critical friendship and trust.
- A clarity of roles and responsibilities, with partners taking ownership of different activities.
- Complimentary skillsets, expertise and knowledge with ‘*key individuals who are able to facilitate discussion and spearhead initiatives*’ (Project Manager).

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<sup>4</sup> Of the 14 project partners who completed the survey 12 quoted developing new partnerships as a priority the interim stage 2020.

#### 4.3.4 Culture Becomes More Relevant to the Core Concerns of Stakeholders from Outside the Cultural Sector

As projects progressed, the generation of a shared language has developed across partners from outside the cultural sector. One project quoted that ‘*sense of place*’ has become a well-used phrase, and is understood. For other projects engaging with different perspectives was vital for progress.

*“Understanding each other’s limitations and opportunities; breaking down pre-conceived barriers held by others about government departments.”*

*North Belfast Old to New*

It was also cited that positioning the project outside usual stakeholders or traditionally dominant organisations was effective, particularly important at community level where perceptions of the local authority were not considered beneficial to engagement with the project.

Projects also found that a focus on heritage is naturally inclusive, as it has a relevance which resonates with communities and as a result a wider range of organisations and agencies are coming to recognise its value (subject of much discussion at the first Learning Event).

Through a focus on heritage, GPS Nations projects have also enhanced understanding and engagement for other place-based initiatives or designations, such as Place in the Biosphere in Scotland.

*“We’ve got the word “biosphere” in our title, and nobody knows what biosphere means, or what the designation meant. The biosphere organisation has grown, but still it's really only this project that has made it real for communities where they can actually see that something happened by being in the biosphere and by using that as a way of looking at your environment. It's had an enormous impact for the new biosphere organisation that's just set up.”*

*Place in the Biosphere*

#### 4.4 Culture is Embedded in Wider Local Plans and Strategies

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Culture is included in local authority / LEP/A / Combined Authority plans for Economic Development, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health, Care Commissioning, Children and Young People etc.
- Cross portfolio joint commissioning is increased.

##### 4.4.1 Culture is included in local authority / LEP/A / Combined Authority plans for Economic Development, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health, Care Commissioning, Children and Young People etc.

Projects are engaging with policymakers in two broad ways. Either the project is positioned strategically so that the route to policymakers is embedded within the structure and governance of the project. Or the project is aiming to influence policy by demonstrating its impacts to policymakers and strategic leaders.

Project partners indicated, at an interim point in 2020, that the arts, heritage and creative industries were most likely to be positioned in the mix of wider local economic and social agendas, with a few indicating they were at the heart and others that they featured only occasionally or partially.

Prior to the pandemic, workload and capacity were consistently quoted as challenges for some projects to achieve impacts at policy level. Despite generating a flow of information, strategic decision making appeared to remain a slow process. Added to which competing agendas and an ongoing challenging funding environment mitigated against culture achieving a significant place at the policy table. While some felt there was a clear route to influence at policy level, investment in this area could still be challenging.

*“In our case, I think that advocating for culture and heritage within regeneration was pushing an open door to some extent and what was needed was a firmer structure to make that happen and integrate decision making about art and heritage within departments that manage major projects. It sometimes felt that the huge*

*ambition of the GPS was not matched with tools for delivery, the tail trying to wag the dog but without enough influence to do so. Perhaps at the application stage more detail is needed about delivery structures, decision making processes etc. Also, perhaps it would be beneficial to allow applications from local authorities who are about to embark on a major infrastructure or regeneration project, so that the cultural and heritage funding has a specific role in that scheme.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

However, compared to the outset of the project, the integration of culture in local policy and strategy is growing, particularly within Covid-19 pandemic recovery and re-building strategies (as a result of the devastating effect of the pandemic on the sector and recognition of its pivotal position in local economies).

For instance, in Scotland the National Partnership for Culture (NPC), made up of experts from across Scotland’s culture sector, will advise on challenges facing the culture sector and build on the recommendations recently set out to



the First Minister by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery<sup>5</sup>.

And Conway's new cultural strategy says, '*Culture can drive sustainable economic growth and help bring communities closer together. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are facing key challenges that culture can help to overcome.*'<sup>6</sup>

Further examples from across the Nations as to how projects are able to influence wider local plans and strategies are included in the case studies and Appendices.

#### 4.4.2 Joint commissioning

Joint Commissioning is a strategic approach to planning and delivering services in a holistic, joined-up way. It is defined as two (or more) partners working together to design a way of delivering services (i.e. to the public) that delivers on the strategic aims of both/all partners. Both/all partners contribute resources, and the project will be of sufficient

scale/value to require a contract (reference to Joint Commissioning from BOP Consulting description for the purposes of the Project Manager Surveys for GPS Nations).

Six projects indicated that cultural organisations were involved in joint commissioning in their area. The extent to which this was happening scored a six out of 10 at baseline and final survey point peaking at seven at interim point, indicating that there is some activity, but it is not increasing.

Examples include in Dunfermline work with the local Cultural Trust working at a local and national level, in Colwyn Bay there is a partnership with M-SParc to deliver the Creative Industry Hub and Sculpture Trail development with the Bay of Colwyn Town Council, and in Coalisland and East Tyrone, building on the GPS Nations, members of the original steering group are planning to create a new heritage, art, drama, music and crafts programme. It is, however, unclear at the final reporting stage the progress of such projects.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/national-partnership-for-culture/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://conwyculture.com/content/files/Creu-Conwy-%E2%80%93-Cultural-Strategy-for-Conwy-County-Borough-2021-2026\\_2021-12-14-120251\\_fbys.pdf](https://conwyculture.com/content/files/Creu-Conwy-%E2%80%93-Cultural-Strategy-for-Conwy-County-Borough-2021-2026_2021-12-14-120251_fbys.pdf)

## 4.5 Culture Becomes a Wider Civic Responsibility Across Sectors

The indicators for this outcome in the short to medium term are the following:

- Local sponsorship and business giving are increased (in-kind and cash).
- New kinds of partnership with culture at the centre are sustainable and attract investment.

Projects are working with local networks, associations and organisations to engage local businesses - including Business Improvement Districts and Town Centre fora, or they have co-opted different businesses on to their project steering groups. Challenges to engaging local businesses are time and capacity, necessitating the need to define the purpose of engagement and identify shared objectives.

*“Making them see the benefit of heritage and culture to their business. Sharing similar language.”*

*Paisley and Renfrewshire, Developing a Cultural Destination*

The refrain is, as ever, to be purposeful in engaging others and use time as effectively as possible.

*“Their time is also precious, and the messages need to be clear and easily understood. You need to show progress and action and show that the engagement is not just a 'talking shop'.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

Many local businesses in the GPS Nations locations are small with higher staff turnover and different hours and therefore communications can be difficult, and they do not always have capacity to get actively involved. Also, where there is a lack of existing business networks it can be difficult to engage a larger number of businesses. There is no evidence of significant cash investment by businesses, and it is assumed that through improving relationships over time further support may be generated. The Covid-19 pandemic slowed down these possibilities at time of reporting.

However, projects had been successful in involving local non-cultural businesses, whether in practical ways through creating window displays or more strategically. The Barry Making Waves ‘Barry Place Board’ which includes local business and non-public sector stakeholders, is a strategic initiative which gave presentations to the ‘Shop Local’ group

and continued to engage with them through the Town Council.

Seaside Revival worked on initiatives to involve local businesses in the project supported by one of the partners who is the chair of the local chamber of commerce.

The Slate Valleys project held Business Breakfasts, online lectures, and promoted through Gwynedd Council's Business Network newsletter, social media, Papurau Bro and Gwynedd News.

Dunfermline and Colwyn Bay worked through groups and individuals dedicated to the towns - in Dunfermline the Town's Economic Advisor and in Colwyn Bay through the Creative Colwyn Network which is developing a cross sector Town Team to act as a creative alliance to support culture strategy delivery through local arts projects e.g. large scale portrait photographs in prom shelters and sculpture installations.

Place in the Biosphere has generated an active engagement programme with businesses and local communities using the "Sense of Place" toolkit.

As a result of the Coalisland and East Tyrone project, several of the steering group and other local businesses and stakeholders are developing a new partnership project building on the GPS Nations programme.

However, it is reported that the Covid-19 pandemic prevented activities which would have involved local businesses, while businesses themselves were facing new challenges.

#### 4.6 Communities Have Greater Input and Influence in Decision-Making in the Cultural Sector

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Communities feel validated & listened to.
- New ideas generated by communities are tested and implemented.

The following are addressed under section 5.8.

- Assets of Community Value are listed.
- Community Right to Bid/Buy applications are made.

Investment in understanding communities has been vital. Engaging with not just one but often a range of communities locally has been a learning curve for projects.

As the first BOP Consulting report for Great Place Scheme England outlines, the stages of consultation, engagement and empowerment are relevant to this programme. The consultation started when writing the bid and continues throughout. Engagement has taken many forms indicated in the activities overview. Empowerment requires building understanding within communities of what's possible and how it can be achieved for which the work of the projects has to a greater or less extent paved the way. In the meantime, projects have been effective in giving communities ownership of the development and delivery of activities.

Local communities were involved in developing the bid through community representation on steering or working groups and through consultation meetings, including three Charettes (in Scotland). In delivery mode this has widened to include online consultation, community panels, a youth panel, a community survey, a co-commissioning group,

volunteering and ambassadors, participatory budgeting, creative workshops and a range of outreach work. As projects progressed there has been an increase in community representation in governance, on steering or working groups and increasing amounts of volunteering. The mode within which this engagement operates varies between continuous involvement of a group where the project can iterate and be responsive i.e. through Working Groups, or a more task-based approach using community workshops to co-design elements of delivery.

At the time of the baseline Project Managers' survey the extent to which new ideas had been created as a result of community engagement was at five out of 10 rising to eight out of 10 at the final survey point. The extent to which ideas had been implemented increased over time, as might be expected, from four out of 10 at the baseline survey to seven out of 10 at the final survey point.

For many places involving communities in programme development and design represented a new way of working.

*“This is a bottom-up community development approach, transparent, inclusive and community owned.”*

*Coalisland and East Tyrone*

However, as with partnership development, engaging with communities requires time generally and particularly to seek out those who are willing to be active or activists.

*“It takes longer to talk to the right people on the ground and takes time to find the right people that really make things happen.”*

*Dunfermline Lighting up the Auld Grey Toun*

*“Working with Canal Co-op has meant direct involvement with locally based organisations who have a grassroots presence and awareness of local views.”*

*Reawakening Glasgow’s Canal*

Building trust is crucial to the success of the projects. Good practice involved working within communities to actively engage them, ensuring consultation was fun, using the right language, focusing on what was important to the community and investing in local people first. The projects’ clear message was to offer communities ‘something active’, and not strategy, in order to engage with them productively.

The most important outcome is that communities can see that, ‘it is possible to have their ideas developed and have impact on delivery’, as experienced in Dunfermline. For this project they sought out the ‘community activists’ and invested in engaging them from the outset. Other projects experienced positive engagement as a result of their approach.

*“We have seen a rise in people engaging with their local heritage. In particular the Preston Tower project is beginning to gain more traction and the local community are engaged with the restoration aspects of the project as well as the potential to become more involved in managing the site.”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

Projects have also been working with communities which do not see heritage as a priority, which presents its own distinct challenges.

*“The North Glasgow Community can be hard to reach especially if they see that there are other priorities over heritage such as foodbanks, housing, health,*

*unemployment and crime. However, we have reached a number of communities through engagement.”*

*Reawakening Glasgow’s Canal*

*“The project is at an early stage. New ideas have been created through a process of listening to local community members and stakeholders, which has led to new sharing of knowledge about local cultural heritage and the development of new opportunities, content and ideas for delivery of the approved PR”*

*Badenoch Heritage*

Bangor’s Seaside Revival had a tried and tested model of taking on board suggestions for the event from local groups. And Barry Making Waves demonstrated a significant level of co-production.

*“The Youth Cabinet suggested a digital film project about Barry FC which we will take forward. Theatre practitioners are currently researching and engaging with the community to collect stories in order to create a short play. Community Garden Gibby Greenfingers asked for their storage container to be painted and we commissioned an artist to work with them to create a*

*mural. A local artist who proactively organises annual events suggested we organise kite making workshops leading up to the kite festival and we did this. A local dance company proposed a project which we have taken forward.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

In Colwyn Bay, by giving local heritage groups something to do, rather than simply opening a discussion, they have been more engaged. This involved delivering new heritage interpretation, with the support of a consultant who encouraged residents to consider different perspectives to be more representative of society.

However, a certain amount of pragmatism is also recommended.

*“Meet as many people and groups as you can in the first few months, and then gradually you will learn which individuals and groups are actually willing/able to work with you....The time will fly, so run with those projects where you have partners who are as committed as you. Don't worry too much about the bigger picture, as long as each piece of the project is*

*good and well managed, it will all come together in the end. But don't worry if one element doesn't work out, treat it as a pilot, and learn as much from something that didn't work, as from the things that did work.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

Projects are also tackling the practicalities of involving communities - including transport and language. Inevitably, some project report that they were not able to deliver their projects in collaboration with Communities as much as they would have liked. Colwyn Bay, for instance, indicated that capacity and time mitigated against a fully co-produced with its communities programme.

#### **4.7 People Have a Greater Sense of Collective Efficacy**

The indicators for this outcome in the short to medium term are the following:

- More people feel that by working together, they can bring about change in their local neighbourhood.
- Appoint community representatives to Strategic Delivery Boards.

As the assessment of delivery outcomes, in section 6, demonstrates there is a strong sense that collective effort had an impact. GPS Nations projects demonstrated the enablers and some of the inhibitors, to bringing community-led ideas to fruition.

It is considered that effective leadership at a project level is vital to be appropriately supportive, responsive and flexible in working with communities.

*“As a result [of community engagement] we have adapted the project to better meet the needs of groups and enable ownership of the project.”*

*Dunfermline Lighting up the Auld Grey Toun*

*“It [new ideas from the community] enabled the scope of the project to be extended and develop into other areas that were not part of the original vision...Community consultation events identified the priorities for the project to get involved in, the delivery of these priorities was then facilitated by project officers working with the community to bring in additional expert facilitation when required.”*

*Badenoch Heritage*

*“The local community led the design and delivery of the entire project - we were only the facilitators”*

*Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

Reawakening Glasgow’s Canal had another approach to passing over ownership of the project, whereby, ‘Community groups were encouraged to submit applications for different elements of the project, such as stalled spaces and the community ideas (heritage) fund.’

However, there are challenges to collective efficacy, as even if a community can identify a need and a solution or has a creative idea, the operating environment may present barriers to realising their ambitions. To achieve this level of community empowerment requires support and facilitation.

*“The big question that’s asked all the time is, why can’t that happen? Local people are saying, well, we’ve got the idea, we’ve got the energy, we’ve got the gatekeeping capacities. We can open that door and this door, and why can’t that happen?”*

*And then on the other side of the partnership is the policy end of things, the delivery end of things, and they’re saying, well, you can’t do that because we’re*

*going to have problems with archaeology or with environmental organisations or with whatever. And it’s a constant battle all the time between those who really want to drive it and see the benefit and can see the outcome, and those who have to wrestle with the delivery, bureaucracy, timescales, funding, all of those things. It’s always fun, I have to say, because somewhere in the middle of all that, we do find a way through!”*

*Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

GPS Nations, have nevertheless managed to get people around the table, have been learning the importance of what language to use and how to judge the best way to work for the benefit of the community and its ambitions.

To be effective, as the Paisley and Renfrewshire project observed, local authorities have to understand how to offer meaningful opportunities to communities and allow them to lead. It is perceived that this is a process of change that is fundamental to achieving collective efficacy within communities.



*“Take ideas to the community, and help them to build it, because then it's a meaningful partnership. If we're going to try and get them formalised into working groups and let them learn all this language, then we also have to be ready to give them meaningful opportunities or leading on programming, which is a process.”*

*Paisley and Renfrewshire, Developing a Cultural Destination*

*“How far you can get with communities depends - In some places I'd just be trying to rein them in and trying to steer them, whereas others have needed quite a lot of help and assistance.”*

*Place in the Biosphere*

For Preseli Heartlands it was effective to convene a wider, community-led partnership along with other agencies, to consider the future, emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus was on visitors, in the expectation of greater domestic holiday traffic, and considered issues of environmental sustainability related to increased numbers. This structure was empowering as it connected organisations together and through these connections gave a greater level of control to local businesses and organisations to shape

their own responses. Ultimately, this may result in economic growth as the group aims to continue to work together.

However, a few of the projects point out that there is a limit as to how much you can ask of local community organisations. The Badenoch Heritage project suggested that there cannot be over reliance on some organisations or individuals - so a holistic approach needs to be considered.

*“As we know, community individuals, and the shapes of organisations, they can come and go... They have strong times and weak times and they have lead individuals. Some of us talked about two key people, and you really panic about whether they're going to leave or not.”*

*Badenoch Heritage*

Many were small communities or organisations which were supported over the three years of the project, which led to a certain amount of exhaustion. Projects have therefore considered finding ways of providing ongoing support, rather than talking more purposefully about what is next after GPS Nations.

#### 4.8 Cultural Assets are Owned, Managed and Run by the Community - Short to Medium Term

The indicator for this outcome in the short to medium term is the following:

- Cultural sites and /or facilities come under community ownership via Asset Transfer.

Six projects were involved in discussions about assets of community value at the interim stage (two in each Nation), however none were reported at the final reporting point.

Two projects indicated that they were involved in transferring buildings into community ownership, another referenced a community share scheme at the interim stage.

Projects were aware of some initiatives:

*“The members of the North Belfast Heritage Cluster own all their assets which are of great community value. Discussions on the future of these assets and how to maximise their regeneration potential is a constant theme.”*

*North Belfast Old to New*

Other examples are in the Slate Valleys, where discussions were taking place in the Nantlle Valley and in Deiniolen about community assets; The local Town Hall in Prestonpans has also recently been leased to the Battlefield Trust - a heritage group which is active in the area.

There were three expressions of interest from community groups for Right to Bid/Buy applications through the local authority with all three indicated as successful purchases (two in Scotland and one in Wales) at the interim point. However, this dropped to one expression of interest and successful bid in Scotland by the final survey point.

## 5 Delivery

### 5.1 Summary

- Heritage engagement was increased amongst target audiences and communities by using new approaches to engaging communities. These were community led and based on a deeper understanding of the target communities.
  - The focus was on enhancing the quality of experience of engaging with heritage and facilitating communities to get involved and make their own decisions.
  - Working with local organisations from across sectors was crucial for reaching different communities and delivering a range of quality activities and events.
  - Projects focused on discovering the heritage stories within communities (intangible heritage), rather than only seeking to engage communities with existing tangible heritage.
  - Networking and partnership were at the heart of the projects and a key part of the foundation for project legacies.
- The way projects had been set up, with a partnership basis and in collaboration with communities, gave them the resilience which was vital for them to be able to continue to achieve objectives during the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Some projects focused on developing a local ‘story book’ which supported their place branding and helped develop their visitor offer.
  - Projects were able to deliver outcomes which are the foundations for achieving inclusive growth, particularly in relation to pride in place, belonging and increased well-being. They also benefited individuals through training and skills development
  - Local organisations benefitted from a range of capacity building opportunities.

## 5.2 Delivery, Activities and Engagement

### 5.2.1 Events, Activities, Sites and Facilities are Enhanced

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Heritage is in better condition.
- Events and activities are higher quality / more innovative.
- Events and activities have greater reach, specifically underserved/marginalised/disadvantaged communities.

The GPS Nations projects were facilitators, so it was essential to partner with communities and others to bring together the right skills and expertise. Community engagement was also designed to involve and reach into different communities in a way which gave them ownership and delivered a quality of experience. The strategic process described in the previous section of this report was therefore vital to realise the GPS Nations ambitions.

For instance, projects had delivery partners from the arts, creative industries or heritage sectors, and worked with a range of other public services and sectors which had existing experience of community engagement - either of volunteering, engaging the least engaged, youth panels, community consultation, co-curation or co-production; education programmes; and activities focused on health and well-being outcomes.

*Table 3: Thinking about your delivery programme, how are you ensuring delivery of high-quality events, engagement and other activities?*

Ways of delivering high quality events and engagement	All Nations
Partnering with established heritage or cultural organisations	14
Training local people	9
Supporting new organisations to develop	9
Bringing external expertise to the area	9
Hired a creative programmer	3
Other	1
Total respondents	15

*Source: final project manager surveys all Nations 2021 (Base 15)*

To maintain quality, projects combined using existing expertise in the area and from elsewhere, supported by training and development for local people and community organisations.

**Table: What activities are you undertaking to enhance heritage, both the physical infrastructure and the interpretation?**

Activities to enhance heritage	All Nations
Events	13
Training and skills development	11
Enhanced interpretation	10
Signage/wayfinding	7
Trails	10
Physical infrastructure development	7
Other	5
Total respondents	14

*Source: final Project Manager survey 2021(Base 14)*

Communities were engaged in enhancing the interpretation of their heritage through capturing oral histories, memories and photography; communities helped develop trails and walking tours; and reminders of heritage were placed in the public realm such as banners and signposting.

However, what was more important was how activities were delivered. Projects explored the relationship between what you deliver, where, how and with/for whom, in order to increase reach. Alongside straight forward targeted marketing techniques, projects focused on the location of activity, partnering with organisations or schools in key places for instance. This was the key area of innovation for the projects.

Projects primarily focused on enhancing the experience of heritage, rather than improving its physical condition (this capital investment is addressed through project legacies). There is a slightly greater focus on digital tools for enhancing heritage, e.g. websites and online content, as would be expected in response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Assessment as to whether these approaches achieved ‘greater’ reach and higher quality will have to be considered relatively by each project. Clear baselines and local contextual data would be required to understand whether these projects were more successful at engaging certain parts of the community in activity - compared to other

heritage projects or other kinds of activity with similar social ambitions. This assessment is therefore beyond the scope of this report.

**Table 4: How are you ensuring that events/activity reach new or larger audiences?**

Approaches for reaching new or larger audiences?	All Nations
Delivering with new partners	11
Developing content relevant to a wide audience	10
Community engagement activity	13
Set-up/expand/improve websites	12
Targeted marketing activity using relevant media	10
Co-production or curation with communities	11
Working with schools	10
Delivering in places of low engagement	7
Outreach to communities	9
New marketing techniques	4
Other	0
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>15</b>

*Source: final project manager surveys all Nations 2021 (Base 15)*

## 5.2.2 More People, and a Wider Range of People Engage with Culture and Heritage

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Culture and heritage events and activities are recognised as such and are more relevant to target people.
- Events and activities increase knowledge of local heritage.
- People have enjoyable experiences.
- Participation from target communities and groups, specifically underserved / marginalised / disadvantaged audiences is increased.

The projects were successful, within the scope of their ambition and the limitations which the Covid-19 pandemic imposed, in engaging a range of people from their communities. Individual project evaluations provide more information on who and how many engaged. It is, however, clear that projects were able to engage people with heritage for the first time, including those they assessed might not normally engage with culture in this way.

In making this assessment, it is useful to consider what data and insights were used. Overall, projects had reasonable knowledge of their local population from experience or secondary data, but few quote robust baseline insights or data used to select who they worked with.

Most projects had identified their target groups in fairly broad terms, in the context of the make-up of the local population profile. Some had more specific priorities, such as communities in a specified geographic area, people with low engagement with heritage or culture, young people and people who are new to heritage or culture. Other target groups quoted as a priority included children and families and those experiencing deprivation in more than one dimension or on lower incomes. Specific demographic targets are also quoted including BAME communities, LGBT+, older people, carers or young parents, people with disabilities or life limiting health problems, asylum seekers and refugees, rural or isolated communities<sup>7</sup>.

As projects progressed knowledge of local population and their needs increased. Knowledge of local visitors or tourists was more limited. At the interim point, a few quoted the need to generate more ‘hard data’ and insights related specifically to their projects.

One project indicated that it had been supported through work with an academic institution in developing a digital platform.

*“Renfrewshire Council has developed The Centre for Culture, Sport and Events, with the University of the West of Scotland...The Centre has been set up to conduct research, development, consultancy and knowledge exchange around key themes, including place-focused cultural regeneration. We contracted a PhD student, through the centre, to consult on developing our brief for the creation of our Great Place Scheme digital platform.”*

*Paisley and Renfrewshire, Developing a Cultural Destination*

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<sup>7</sup> Source: Baseline Project Manager survey all Nations 2019

Five projects commissioned as part of their projects, research into local issues, population, visitors or cultural or heritage audiences to inform the project or provide baselines. Overall, ten had research partners (for research and evaluation purposes), including five who had partnered with local HE or FE partners on research and evaluation<sup>8</sup>.

*“A lot of studies / consultations have taken place locally as part of the Baylife regeneration programme so research has been fairly light touch...An element of the Culture Strategy involved research to ensure that it was linked to local strengths / needs”*

*Dychmygu Bae Colwyn / Imagine Colwyn Bay*

However, knowledge and understanding of communities was built mostly through conversations and the process of engagement.

*“Trust and relationships were developed and therefore this allowed for open conversation and understanding.”*

*Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

*“The Place Board are a good representative group and we have had many discussions about lack of provision and what Barry needs.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

*“Mapping exercises, needs analysis, interviews, and engagement through creative opportunities have helped to build an understanding of the local population. The development of networks and in particular a cross sector town team brings knowledge and perspectives from the 3rd sector, community, public and private sector together which gives a more rounded understanding”*

*Dychmygu Bae Colwyn / Imagine Colwyn Bay*

Seaside Revival got to know more about one community in a residential estate - cut off from the town centre by a dual carriage way who tended to just use their local shopping centre and not come to the town centre - through working in partnership with community organisations, tapping into their relationships with and knowledge of local groups, such as sewing and knitting groups.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: final Project Manager surveys all Nations 2021



Over time, assumptions about particular types of people were also challenged. For instance, in Falkirk, daytime in person events, ‘Then and Now’ sessions on various different local heritage topics, converted to online later in the day events and the age range shifted to include a higher proportion of younger people. This disproved their assumption that younger people were harder to engage.

Inevitably, one project reported, a greater understanding of community need built up in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, although projects recognise that many of the challenges existed prior to 2020. It also has to be remembered that it was a profoundly difficult time for many and that even with the opportunities identified by the projects, there were people in communities who were closed off and could not be reached in person or digitally.

Others’ used research to understand needs going forward.

*“The GPS delivered a COVID impact report which investigated how community organisations were recovering from the pandemic. This report was*

*combined with original baseline data collected by the evaluation consultant, to create an overview of the strengths and skills gaps of the community-led heritage sector.”*

*Paisley and Renfrewshire Developing a Cultural Destination*

### 5.2.3 Numbers of Audiences, Participants and Volunteers across the Projects

Final numbers for engagement will be available once all projects have completed after March 2022. Engagement numbers at the interim stage are included in the Appendices. Projects were, however, asked whether and how their original audience estimates had changed. 80% of projects revised their figures for engagement up or down which across the projects, at the outset, had been on average 1,700 engagements (ranging from 63 to 80,000). On average across the projects 50% of engagement was digital (although the range is from 1% of those engaged to 100%).<sup>9</sup>

Data provided in October 2021, across 14 projects gives a total of 178,950 digital engagements - ranging from 60 to

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Project Manager Covid-19 pandemic response survey 2021

15,000 across projects, from over 500 digital events and activities.

Digital engagement included viewing or engaging with content and attending interactive sessions - including livestream views, video views, page views, subscribers, membership of a Facebook group, Facebook live views, website visitors, social media reach of an event or video and event attenders/workshop participants or subscribers on zoom.

**Table 5: digital events and audiences across projects**

Type of activity	No. digital events	Estimated no. people engaged
Public facing online exhibition or performance	399	178,950
Professional development event (e.g. artist development workshops or training)	75	885
Community consultation event or planning meeting	38	466

*Source: Project Manager Covid-19 pandemic response survey 2021*

#### 5.2.4 Social: Stronger, More Connected, and Happier Communities

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Local pride is increased.
- People feel a greater sense of belonging to place.
- People feel their community has been brought together.
- More intergenerational connections are made & understanding increases.
- Young people's aspirations are raised.
- Underserved / marginalised / disadvantaged communities' aspirations are raised.
- Participants' general health and/or mental health improve.

Data collected from participants and audiences, at an interim stage, strongly indicated that the projects were able to increase pride in place and that participants increasingly felt that the GPS Nations projects made their place special. To a lesser extent participants felt they had a lot in common with people in their area and that they belonged to their

area. Projects also brought people together who might not usually mix, particularly inter-generationally.

Data from participants and audience, at the interim stage, is included in the Appendices, with further data on social outcomes included in individual project evaluations (full data from across the projects was not available at time of collating data for this report).

#### 5.2.5 Holding and sharing heritage

The most successful way of widening engagement with heritage involved changing the approach from an invitation to engage with existing heritage, to an invitation to communities to share the stories of their own heritage. This effectively differentiates between those who are existing engagers with heritage, and others in the community who are the 'holders' of heritage. The former is likely to be museums savvy and more likely to come forward to be involved in a heritage project. The latter may be living and working in an area but do not perceive their own histories or stories as heritage. Care was therefore taken by projects to create the appropriate environment for sharing

heritage stories, within communities rather than formal settings.

The Preseli Heartlands project brought farmers and their communities together to talk about heritage. The draw was, *“a little community exhibition where people brought their artefacts items memorabilia photographs and bits and pieces and it was in a little remote village hall and micro hub”*. Likewise in East Lothian fishermen were invited to share their stories which demonstrated their pride in where they come from.

For some projects, this raises questions about different kinds of heritage - tangible and intangible, whose heritage it is and how it is accessed. People who engage with heritage in a more formal way, through museums or at established heritage sites, may not have access to the intangible heritage related to contemporary communities. While the heritage stories held by those communities is not given a wider context and is inaccessible to others.

*“But there is also a heritage underneath the surface from very proud, particularly industrial areas, where there's a huge tradition and pride in the background of*

*families who've worked in really tough industries, whether that's salt-making or mining or fishing. And often, other people are actually excluded from that history. How do you cross these boundaries?”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

### 5.2.6 Making heritage personal

Projects observed that where they had no ties into a community, it was harder to engage those communities with heritage. It was therefore important to work through existing structures or with existing groups to explore stories or connections to heritage.

The East Lothian project partnered with the Seaton Archaeological Society which in turn engaged with the community, which proved effective for reaching younger people and those less engaged with heritage.

This project also partnered with Preston Grange Museum, to support a photography project with a group of excluded young females who went on to create an amazing body of work which culminated with an exhibition with which their families became involved. At the exhibition many families

were delighted by the level of engagement of their children. Along the way, *“this small project went from being just a photography workshop to being something that these girls became incredibly proud of”*. Participants went on to do more photography workshops and one took it up at college, when very little else had engaged their interest previously. The legacy of the project is set to be embedded within a programme which links excluded young people with work or courses, for which they can get funding. Young people will be offered opportunities to work in heritage related areas and be mentored by those working in the sector.

By talking about the personal connections to the life of Preston Tower, which related to families with grandparents living nearby, the project also went some way to having wider social benefits, such as contributing to reducing anti-social behaviour associated with the site.

*“[the] idea that heritage cuts across classes... if you start talking about their grandparents or names that they recognise or people that they know, there's less*

*tendency then for anti-social behaviour ...So, actually, if you have an outdoor exhibition for example of people's parents or private photos taken on a site that include the families of some of the youngsters that are maybe involved in some of the antisocial behaviour, there's less tendency because there is a link there with the families. It won't stop everything but it actually links them to the place and the people of the place.”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

This approach aligns with that developed through the work of Nina Simon, who wrote, ‘The Art of Relevance,’<sup>10</sup> which was referenced by Dunfermline project. Here the project lead introduced senior people and decision-makers associated with the project to this book and continually brought the focus of the project back to her approach. This ensured the project was led by its communities, rather than a focus on pre-conceived outputs.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.artofrelevance.org/>

## 5.3 Cultural Sector Connectivity and Resilience

### 5.3.1 Stronger, Better Networked Cultural Sector

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Local networks between culture, heritage and creative industries are better developed.
- Cultural practitioners/and others enhance their skills and knowledge.

The previous section on process and strategy outlines the importance of partnerships within and across sectors for GPS Nations projects. Challenges were recognised in creating strong local networks within the cultural and creative industries sector, with almost universal agreement that ‘workload’ is the greatest challenge to building relationships, followed by a ‘competitive funding environment’ and a few quoting a ‘lack of shared vision’. Projects indicated that networks need a clear purpose so that participating organisations can articulate clear benefit and are willing to spend time on them.

There are also more logistical challenges, particularly for more rural projects.

*“geography - partners distant from each other and with different local priorities”*

*LleCHI Adfywio trwy dreftadaeth yn Nyffrynnoedd Enwebiad Safle Treftadaeth y Byd Llechi Cymru/Llechl Heritage regeneration in the Welsh Slate Valleys - World Heritage Site nomination*

There were a number of training and skills development opportunities delivered which benefitted heritage and wider cultural organisations. Likewise, heritage networks were strengthened through strategic work, as outlined in the legacy plans.

Colwyn Bay reported, ‘unintentional capacity building’ as their commissioned creatives for the project started working in partnership with organisations they were introduced to through the project.

### 5.3.2 Cultural and Creative Sector has Greater Capacity and is More Resilient

The indicators for this outcome in the short and medium term are the following:

- Cultural, heritage & creative businesses grow in number and size.
- Cultural, heritage & creative businesses employment is increased.
- Cultural, heritage and creative organisations have a more diverse mix of revenues.

Within the lifetime of these projects, it is unlikely that growth in the cultural and creative sector would have occurred in terms of number of organisations, size, employment levels or sustained diversified revenues. This is for longer term assessment, although such outcomes will be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic recovery.

However, overall capacity building and increased resilience, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, is clearly demonstrated by both the projects and delivery organisations.

Resilience can be considered in two ways. The ability to *‘weather the storm’* or *‘to learn from experience and adapt*

*to change and challenges’*. This latter being the bounce forward response<sup>11</sup>, *‘having the tools, the resources and the skills and being prepared for a range of possible future circumstances’*, and *‘finding new ways of working’*.

Given that GPS Nations required projects to work at a strategic level developing partnerships and piloting new ways of engaging communities with heritage, they were building their ability to be resilient prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The projects were therefore able to be more resilient in overcoming the impacts of the pandemic and keep focused on achieving their ambitions in new ways.

For instance, working with and learning from communities was already embedded across the projects, which proved particularly useful in maintaining continued engagement through the pandemic and exploring the possibilities with communities for digital and distanced delivery. While some projects did feel slightly paralysed or risk averse in response to the pandemic initially, others were quicker to respond and re-scope. The resilience of the projects was perceived

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/resources/case-in-point-what-is-resilience-anyway>

to have filtered through to the partner and delivery organisations involved - as skills were passed on, experience shared and/or support provided.

Projects had the confidence to continue, whether, as they indicated, supported by a robust financial contingency, with the support of a cohort of volunteers which enabled things to continue, or through adjusting use of budget and resources. It was summed up by one project: *‘I love the saying around having faith in your wings rather than the branch that you perched on’.*

*“Resilience is a little bit about not disappearing but feeling a sense of momentum in one way or another, and then choosing your moments to do something. – there’s a confidence in holding back a bit...”*

*Project Manager survey 2021*

Confidence was also sustained as The Fund allowed this responsiveness and flexibility.

*“that encouragement to know that if you do something different, it's not going to be a massive problem, it's actually an opportunity”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

*“...Adaptability, coming up with new activities. You put them to the Heritage Fund, and he says yeah, try it, go for it. So we took a big leap sideways and dumped a whole lot of our work into digital work. That seemed to work very well. When you're in the middle of a programme, I suppose it's changing course mid-flight. Not everybody is comfortable with that. A lot of people are nervous about doing that. But if you can do it, and get away with it, then it's a risk well worth taking.”*

*Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

### 5.3.3 Resilience from Partnership

For Reawakening Glasgow’s Canal, it was the formation of the ‘Canal Cooperative’ which was particularly effective and gave it the resilience it needed. This cross-sector partnership brought a combination of skills and capacities, related to arts, nature, fishing and Scottish Canals.

*“By far the most important relationship during this project has been that with the newly formed Glasgow Canal Co-operative, which was set up as a co-op of organisations around the canal which works to improve collaboration, utilise local skills and assets, connect*



*with new audiences and develop new experiences for visitors. Co-op members include local housing associations, cultural and arts organisations, social enterprises and the canal authority (Scottish Canals)."*

*Reawakening Glasgow's Canal*

The operational approach for the Cooperative was developed using a Test Unit Summer School<sup>12</sup> which explored how to form and run the organisation at prototype stage involving twelve organisations based in the area. Different members of the Co-operative were given ownership through funding for activities they led on.

*"Direct engagement with local organisations has included funding bids made by groups for some of the different project work items e.g. stalled spaces, heritage (community ideas) fund, volunteer and training funding."*

*Reawakening Glasgow's Canal*

This is particularly demonstrated in relation to the development of events, which were considered a pivotal success for the project.

*"Cultural partners are drawn on as they have links into the community and are expert in organising events, but they then e.g. need to be working with the Scottish Canals because they own the land around the canals for events to be held on – without these two partners the local authority would not be able to deliver"*

*Reawakening Glasgow's Canal*

## 5.4 Visitor Economy and Economic Benefits

### 5.4.1 Economic: Great Places become Destinations of Choice

The indicators for this outcome in the immediate term are the following:

- Cultural tourism at GP sites/events is increased.
- Tourists' perceptions of sites/events improve.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://agile-city.com/test-unit/units/2018-co-op-protocol/>

- Places generate more positive external press & media coverage.

Knowledge of tourists and visitors is rated below knowledge of local population with the majority of projects rating it between five and seven out of 10. Five projects indicate that tourists are a priority audience. One project - Badenoch Heritage, commissioned further insight into visitors and tourism in the area.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that adjustments to the visitor offer could not be fully tested in most cases - although some places did benefit from increased staycations and are looking to strengthen their visitor offer further to appeal to this market. Individual project evaluations will provide more insight into perceptions of visitors.

*“Nifer ymwelwyr wedi cynyddu i'r ardal oherwydd Covid-19 a cynnydd mewn 'gwyliau gartref' / Visitors to the area have increased due to Covid-19 and increased 'home holidays’”*

*Llechi Adfywio trwy Dreftadaeth yn nyffrynnoedd Llechi Cymru*

*“When things began to open up - this area became incredibly busy with people wanting to come out of the city and have access to the coast - walks and beaches. It has made it clearer that this is a unique selling point for our area and one which could be made use of in the coming years. The opportunity to increase the tourist economy, even in areas which would not hitherto have been regarded as tourist destinations is most definitely something which will be more closely examined in the coming years.”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

#### 5.4.2 Economic: Culture has Wider Economic Benefit: inclusive growth

The indicators for this outcome in the short and medium term are the following:

- Communities, including underserved / marginalised / disadvantaged communities, are more productive.
- Inward investment is increased.
- Cultural and heritage tourism is increased.
- Tourists' perceptions of local area improve.

- External press & media recognise culture as part of the core narrative of GP places.

Wider economic benefits can only be assessed over the longer term, particularly given the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is, however, useful to consider inclusive growth more holistically in relation to the GPS Nations projects.

The OECD defines inclusive growth<sup>13</sup> as follows,

*“Economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all”*

And the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>14</sup> defines it as:

*“Growth that benefits everyone across the city region, bringing clear economic, fiscal and social benefits”*

In Scotland there is an explicit focus on inclusive growth as a cross-policy agenda. This is concerned with employment,

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/inclusive-growth-west-midlands-agenda-new-mayor>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.inclusivegrowth.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/414813\\_SCT1119483414-001\\_Inclusive-Growth-Outcomes-Framework\\_P3.pdf](https://www.inclusivegrowth.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/414813_SCT1119483414-001_Inclusive-Growth-Outcomes-Framework_P3.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf>

jobs and workforce<sup>15</sup>. In Wales, the Economic Action Plan for Wales (2017)<sup>16</sup> references ‘growth with a purpose - inclusive growth’. Here there is a greater emphasis on well-being, as well as achieving environmental ambitions,

*“Growing our economy inclusively, spreading opportunity and promoting well-being are at the heart of this Plan, underpinning its contribution toward delivery of our National Strategy: Prosperity for All.”*

Northern Ireland is at a more investigative stage with a report which explores a range of approaches to inclusive growth<sup>17</sup>, and further recommendations for action within its ‘Reset for Growth’ report<sup>18</sup> by Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission. The latter heavily influenced by recovery from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic focuses on international reputation, climate change, housing and investing in business hubs, innovation and talent

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/inclusive-growth-in-northern-ireland.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/news/2021/june/working-in-partnership-to-deliver-forward-looking,-pragmatic-proposals-for-growth-and-prosperity-in-ni-and-belfast>

development. However, it also emphasises the need to improve the living and social environment in Belfast.

A recent report by the British Council and RSA explores heritage for inclusive growth<sup>19</sup>, and explores where and how heritage can be instrumental in achieving both economic and social outcomes.

*“Concepts of inclusive growth challenge the conventional economic wisdom that all growth is good growth,...Inclusive growth recognises that our wider well-being and economic security is not only a function of our income or employment status but also perceptions of our ability to shape our lives, our interactions with others and also our sense of place and belonging.”*

In this context, GPS Nations projects have integrated component parts of inclusive growth within their projects, laying the foundations for approaches to inclusive growth at a strategic level in their places through their ‘pilot project’

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/reports/2020/the-rsa-heritage-for-inclusive-growth.pdf>

approach. The relevant aspects of GPS Nations projects, as outlined in other sections of this report, which align with the principles of inclusive growth include the following:

- Involvement of a diversity of participants, including those who are marginalised or socially or economically disadvantaged, with opportunities to meet new people from across a community and/or make inter-generational connections.
- Improving community well-being through increasing pride in place and belonging.
- Skills development through volunteering or training.
- Community development through representation on steering groups, boards and working groups.
- Strengthening cross-sector working and partnership.
- Providing opportunities for local ownership and for communities to take the lead on delivering local activity.

- Increasing recognition of the social and economic impacts of culture and heritage at policy and strategy, including impacts on the visitor economy.

Given the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not possible to assess wider economic impact, however the projects' impacts for local businesses signifies the potential impacts. Open House's Seaside Revival has proved the connection between culture, events and regeneration for local businesses in Bangor - where *'animating our seafront'* brought economic benefit. This has been enhanced through the role of Wayne Hemingway, a consultant for Open House, who is also involved in the waterfront development plan where he advocates for an infrastructure which further supports animation of the place through festivals and events.

In Dunfermline there was a focus on a particular street that is rich in Medieval heritage, but which was run down. A walking tour was recorded during the pandemic, and attracted attention to the street, which led to additional money for art installations and the street is now reviving with empty shops being rented.

### 5.4.3 Telling your story

The Barry 'Story Book' is a particular example of how place branding has been approached in a holistic way. It has helped shape the activities of the GPS Nations project and has also been instrumental in increasing a sense of place for Barry. It is the story of Barry along with a design toolkit, completed fairly early on in the project and widely disseminated for use.

The Barry Story Book is a pivotal element of the project.

*"We will be developing and publishing a Barry Story Book to use as a catalyst for change, inward investment and to influence policy makers...This group will want to see evidence of impact, therefore the engagement process with them needs to be phased. First phase to present the Story Book but further engagement to present outcomes and evaluation data from the project at interim and final stages. We will also need to move from saying 'this is a good thing to do' to getting them to understand how to do it."*

*Barry Making Waves*

*“The Barry Storybook has been really useful for me in commissioning artists and thinking about themes and stories and subject matter that are relevant to Barry. And then the toolkit, that's been really taken on board by Barry Town Council...We've started using it in the public realm. We had some regeneration money last financial year for some town centre improvements. In Barry, because we had the toolkit, we had a colour palette, we had themes that we could actually use with a purpose, rather than just randomly, quickly doing something because timescales are really short. So we've got new bike stands and planters, banners, and so on... Planning Department are aware of it, using it and sharing it with developers. So, for instance...we have this old Roman site in Barry that's not that well-known. And it had these interpretation panels there since the '90s. They were really faded and old and people were complaining about them. We're redoing them now, and the designers have used the toolkit colours and graphic logos and everything, so it looks right up to date now...every time there's some work to be done, some signage or some public realm work, if we're like, “right,*

*what can we use from the toolkit?” then everything will start to work together.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

## 6 Legacy

The following gives a summary of the legacy plans across the projects as far as they were known in mid-2021. However, this sentiment sums up the feeling of many of the projects, which is testament to their potential for legacy.

*“And hopefully we will get some more funding to keep it going because we think we just feel like we've just started and then it's just, you know, we're talking about wrapping it up and we've really just started to scratch the surface”*

*Seaside Revival: Bangor-by-the-Sea*

### 6.1 Embedding new models of working

Models used or developed to deliver GPS Nations projects are being developed and refined.

The Cuilcagh to Cleenish project which was delivered by a partnership including Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, the Cleenish Community Association and others, delivered through the resources of the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark, is taking its developed partnership model and approach to

co-creation and community development to inform the development of the Arney Battlefield Trail and Nixon Hall Trail. The GPS Project's achievement has been in roles and responsibilities and overcoming challenges, including land ownership permission and other factors such as topography, providing a blueprint for further activity.

*“We're going to bring someone in as a consultant who will look at our model, and work with the Geopark on a cross-border basis around the mountain, Colca Mountain, to see if we can roll with this model that we have,... Again, to look for funding for possibly up to five years in the future.”*

*From Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

Starting with local heritage has clearly unlocked engagement with the Biosphere in Scotland more generally and has again provided an approach which can be developed.

*“They have managed to get funding for five years, quite a large amount of funding, to take on 12 staff. I think PLACE in the Biosphere was the only project that was being run that showed how communities could be involved in the heritage and was relevant to the whole*

*biosphere concept of people and place...and they will be using PLACE in the Biosphere as a lead as to how they approach working with communities in the biosphere for the future.”*

*Place in the Biosphere*

## 6.2 Strengthened partnerships and networks

In the Preseli Heartlands those involved in the steering group for the GPS Nations projects, have developed stronger ties, which will possibly lead to future partnership opportunities, for instance between the local authority, National Park Authority and arts and community organisations.

For the Badenoch Heritage project, a legacy body, has been set up to maintain and promote the assets set up during the GPS Nations project - such as the website, its promotion infrastructure, ambassadors and the digital archives. This is led by a board made up of communities and key partners such as the local authority and the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Likewise, a ‘town team’, has emerged in Colwyn Bay which is cross-sectoral.

*“Partnerships have evolved – in response to need which has been catalysed by Covid - getting involved in sort of cross-sector groups...We have brought together a kind of town team, which I think will be the ongoing legacy rather than the sort of steering group partnership. I think it will be that town team that hopefully takes things forward.”*

*Dychmygu Bae Colwyn / Imagine Colwyn Bay*

In North Belfast, there are strategic funding applications being put in place, conceived as both a collective proposal, and one for each of the individual heritage organisations in the cluster.

*“We’re building a business case for each of the organisations, the idea being that we collectively can bring this package, all in it’s around £20 million, of an investment opportunity to whoever, to the council, or... somebody...But each organisation within that has their own outlined business case that they can then take to other funders and other opportunities.”*

*North Belfast Old to New*



In addition, the project is positioned in relation to infrastructure projects.

*“We’re getting really brought in now to different strategic partnerships. One of the initial projects that we had was within an arts and network package of projects around urban design and the rebuilding of streets in this area, and particularly junctions. Now because of the work that we’ve been involved in that, we’re part of a project that meets every three weeks... with the Department of Infrastructure, Department of Communities, Belfast City Council, Belfast Rapid Transport... We’re in those meetings now, and the clusters know us, so we’ve been able to really get round the table and these working groups”*

*North Belfast Old and New*

### 6.3 Community engagement

The key legacies from the community engagement activity of the projects, are new relationships within communities as well as increased trust with the agencies and organisations which have been involved in the projects, including cultural

and heritage organisations and local authorities. As has been set out in this report, projects have catalysed local agencies and authorities to consider working in different ways with communities. Effectively, communities have been facilitated to suggest ideas and identify what is important to them. In many cases this has involved hearing from communities whose stories are seldom told, often from a lived experience rather than historical perspective. This has led to an increased knowledge and understanding of communities, along with increased ownership by communities of their local heritage and their relationships to it.

### 6.4 Assets

As the activity descriptions indicate (see Appendices), a range of tangible assets have been left behind by the projects - from archives, websites, Apps, story books, interpretation panels, walking tours, artistic installations and other creative outputs.

*“...then there's our digital legacy. Longer-term, the geopark will take all of the work we've done on recordings and films and so on and so forth and bring*

*that into their website on their cultural side of activities, in the longer term.”*

*From Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

*“Barry website has got a lot of content now and I've put out to tender somebody to host and maintain the website for another couple of years, so that that's a bit of a legacy.”*

*Barry Making Waves T*

There are, however, issues of copyright and anonymity which need to be considered when an archive is created or if stories or testimony are to be published. Some projects have found ways around this by developing verbatim scripts for performances from testimony. The North Belfast project has responded by developing a policy and procedure document for all Cluster members relating to archival practice - essentially a practical guide to developing and sustaining an archive.

## **6.5 Continuing activity**

Projects' legacies are being supported in a range of ways, with further funding applications to continue the work, public consultations and/or continuation of the work through

existing partner organisations or those employed to deliver the GPS Nations projects.

*“We will be holding a charette towards the end of the project to research local issues and how to capitalise on the culture and heritage - both for local people and also for visitors.”*

*Preston Seton Gosford Heritage Connections East Lothian*

*“We're not going to get everything done within the time period that we have. Once we cease activities in June [2021], which is only two months away, the Council and the Geopark will take whatever work we have done on other trails and complete them. Now, that's a big ask, and it means that officers who've been on our committee will take it upon themselves to deliver that. So one of the ones that is a 27-mile-long cross-border canoe trail. That's a big piece of work. We've got all our permissions with everything ready to go, but we're not going to get to application procurement and development phase by the time we finish, so we're handing that over.”*

*From Cuilcagh to Cleenish*

*“We’re putting the one-year application in. The idea would be that that would buy us time, as I say, to tidy up some of the loose ends, but also to do a bit of visioning as to where we would like to see a similar, maybe three to five-year project going beyond that, because some of the work we’ve done does need that sort of length of time.”*

*North Belfast Old to New*

*“Although the project finishes this summer, the council have extended my contract [Place Manager role] until September ‘22 because they want me to carry on with some regeneration work in Barry and possibly elsewhere in the Vale. That means I can continue to work with the Barry Place Board and still meet with them, probably quarterly then. So that’s going to continue. And I can just continue to keep an eye on the website and be maybe the first point of call for if people have got queries or want to know how to use it.*

*So, yeah, I think I feel quite positive. There’s so much potential regeneration happening in Barry over the next five to ten years, with a massive master plan for the waterfront, possibly a marina. There’s so much work going to happen, and I think they really needed that storybook and toolkit to inform the work, otherwise it could have been something that was not properly relevant to Barry.”*

*Barry Making Waves*

## **6.6 Legacy Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic**

On average half of projects’ activity had changed from the original plan over the course of the project lifetime, and the majority of those changes were in response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Added to which, over half felt that the pandemic had weakened their potential legacy.<sup>20</sup> Half felt there was no effect as a result of the pandemic on their networks, partnership working and the value of culture and heritage, others that there was some weakening or strengthening.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Covid-19 pandemic response survey delivered 2021 to project leads, base 14.

Overall, there is a general sense that the sector has been badly impacted in terms of income and audiences, but there is some hope in relation to culture being integrated into recovery in some places.

However, a few projects identified that the pandemic did have some positive impacts for their legacies around the following areas.

- More people value their place now, and value the work that goes in to improving it.
- New projects are in development and funding applications being prepared which build on the success of the GPS Nations delivered during the pandemic.
- More lasting legacy outputs have been achieved due to a change in approach influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The positive outcomes for legacy are reflected in this report in terms of the resilience of the projects and their learning in the face of the pandemic, and some projects felt that, *‘Attitudes of policymakers around the value of culture and heritage’* were strengthened; and 11 out of 14 projects said

that communities were perceived to have been strengthened as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a stronger ‘sense of community’.

*“Communities have come together as a result of the pandemic, with a shared sense of purpose”*

*Project Manager survey 2021*

Local businesses were more challenging to maintain relationships with, as many were just navigating their own survival, although others took up a community role which drew on arts and culture to engage the community.

This mixed picture indicates that the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on legacy appear to depend on the nature of the project and the local infrastructure or environment they were working in (it is also important to say that some of the places where projects took place were severely affected by the pandemic, such as Inverclyde, where cases were very high). Nevertheless, projects also recognised that there would be some longer term negative economic impacts which would continue to be challenging in terms of legacy.

## 7 Conclusions and commentary

### 7.1 Contextualising place-based initiatives

It is useful to put the evaluation of GPS Nations into a wider context of place-based initiatives. One such is Big Local<sup>21</sup>, funded by the National Lottery Communities Fund through the Local Trust. While it is a different model focused on smaller geographic areas and with funding of £1 million or more, the findings to date share parallels with the outcomes of the GPS Nations projects.

While the length of time Big Local projects are expected to run has been extended to 10-15 years, it is important to consider what can be achieved in particular timescales, and how. The Big Local timescales acknowledge how long it takes a community to learn, the need to accommodate changes in direction and recognises that the volunteers and community members who run the projects will change and most importantly the time it takes to achieve the ambition of the projects. The inquiry into positive and lasting change

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<sup>21</sup> <https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/>

in the Big Local programme<sup>22</sup>, indicates that the greatest successes to date (2019 saw the half-way point) are in bringing the community together through activities and events which increase pride in an area, a sense of belonging and/or an ability to rely on neighbours. The study for Big Local also challenges whether such projects can have the wider economic impacts. This brings some context to how far GPS Nations could go in setting out their ambitions and the relative importance of different kinds of outcome.

*“As demonstrated by Kubisch et al. (2010), the extent to which Big Local areas will be able to impact employment rates in their community could be beyond the abilities of a hyperlocal programme;”*

Similar challenges and outcomes were cited in the New Deal for Communities findings.

*“the biggest improvements were for indicators of people’s feeling about their neighbourhoods...residents recognise change brought about by the NDC Programme*

<sup>22</sup> Power in our hands: An inquiry into positive and lasting change in the Big Local programme <https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PIOHPositiveLastingChange.pdf>

*and are more satisfied with their neighbourhoods as places to live”<sup>23</sup>*

The need to balance community engagement and strategy is also highlighted in relation to the Big Local projects.

*“Partnership members have also expressed a tension between feeling they need to put in place some quick wins, to make residents feel as if they are doing things (and doing them well), and planning for more strategic projects that are going to create lasting changes to softer outcomes (McCabe et al., 2017).”<sup>24</sup>*

While these are only two amongst many examples of place-based initiatives which could be used as comparators, they help calibrate the successes and challenges of the GPS Nations projects and act as a backdrop to the conclusions of the evaluation. The body of knowledge and understanding of place-based initiatives is growing and it is important that those funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund both draw on and contribute to the ongoing dialogue around place-shaping and culture and heritage’s role in this.

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<sup>23</sup> Batty et al., 2010: 6

## 7.2 Overall ambition

It is useful to consider the breadth of the ambition for GPS Nations projects in the context of these other place-based initiatives. The ambition of GPS Nations projects was set to have impacts for places in the following areas.

- Re-position heritage as a force for change, making areas/communities better places to live, work and visit.
- Make social change, build social capital and improve wellbeing.
- Bring economic impacts - working towards inclusive growth and tackling poverty including growing the visitor economy.
- Build relationships across-sectors.
- Find new ways of working to achieve outcomes.
- Enable local people, communities, organisations to lead the way - including involving those who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

GPS projects were challenged to consider all aspects of place-shaping, as coined in 2007, by Sir Michael Lyons as, *‘the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens’*.<sup>25</sup> The place-making agenda is also continually evolving, as is reflected in the GPS Nations ambition. The focus currently is on giving power to communities, with local government as enabler, benefitting disadvantaged places (now characterised through the ‘levelling up’ agenda), and on improving places to live, work and visit.

This appears to be a tall order for a three-year project, however, the GPS Nations offered an opportunity to explore and trial, to be catalysts and lay the foundations, and in this respect most projects indicate success; and this despite the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 7.3 Project outcomes

The most successful outcome area across the projects was the building of, ‘sustainable partnerships with other sectors,

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<sup>25</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/229035/9780119898552.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229035/9780119898552.pdf)

agencies and organisations in the local area’.<sup>26</sup> There are many examples from projects which demonstrate how these cross-sector partnerships benefitted the projects in terms of delivery - particularly in relation to bringing together different skills and areas of expertise, legacy and potential impact. For instance, the expertise of arts organisations in events, creative interpretation and community engagement was particularly valued. Places have learned the skills and competencies required for successful cross-sector partnership working and addressed some of its challenges.

Projects have discovered that heritage is an effective catalyst for cross-sector working, as well as for community involvement resulting in wider social outcomes - whether of pride in place, generating social capital or changing perceptions of heritage and its role in and relationship with the community.

Models of community engagement and co-creation have been used and developed which have given places confidence to

<sup>26</sup> Great Place Scheme Nations Guidance for Applicants

change the way they approach involving communities, resulting in greater ownership and agency - such as drawing on Nina Simon's 'The Art of Relevance', the model of community involvement developed by Cuilcagh to Cleenish and the Test Unit Summer school used to develop the Glasgow Canal Coop. This focus on process as well as outputs has been important for the success of projects.

While the Covid-19 pandemic affected how project activities were delivered, and therefore who and how many people they could engage, projects were able to reach new audiences for heritage through existing or re-imagined plans.

The resilience of projects, and through a ripple effect, that of the organisations which made up the partnerships, was demonstrated chiefly through their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the process of creating a vision, initiating cross-sector partnerships and engaging communities, the facets of resilience were built in. This capability was then vital to be able to continue projects and achieve objectives during the pandemic.

While there is more work to be done in most places to see heritage 'fully reflected in local plans and strategies', some

projects' produced or informed a local cultural or heritage strategy, and others have increased representation of heritage at a strategic decision-making level. However, there is a mixed picture, as while many projects had an open door, others found it more challenging to keep heritage on the agenda and get all the right people around a table. Projects indicated it was important to understand who has the levers to make things happen or make change - whether local landowners, the local authority or other stakeholders. This in a context of needing to manage multiple and competing perspectives and priorities - and now not least that of recovery and rebuild in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ability of GPS Nations projects to have significant impacts for inclusive growth or tackling poverty in their places goes beyond what is possible within three years, the budget and their scale. To have such impacts at a significant level requires focused strategic investment over the longer term. GPS Nations projects have, however, demonstrated the potential of heritage to be effective as part of inclusive growth strategies e.g. on the one hand to



improve well-being, and on the other to enhance individual's skills and employability.

While some projects involved local businesses as partners, it was not possible to assess the economic impact for them, likewise impact for the visitor economy during the lifetime of projects was limited (although there were signs that the staycation market was growing) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the foundations for potential economic impacts have been laid through, for instance, strengthened place branding and partnership working.

#### 7.4 Community involvement, engagement and impacts

The Great Place Scheme Community Empowerment Process Model (as presented by BOP Consulting for the GPS England programme evaluation) outlines a process which moves through consultation to engagement and on to empowerment. However, this complete journey was not possible within the lifetimes of most of the projects. To attract initial engagement the projects curated events and activities - some of which integrated elements of consultation. They then involved communities in a range of ways from participation, to helping shape or co-create a

range of activity or outputs. Different approaches were used in combination to maintain levels of engagement alongside giving communities ownership - project leads taking the role of facilitators and enablers. Empowerment is evident in legacy plans where local partnerships of organisations were developed or strengthened and given agency within the local infrastructure e.g. the Colwyn Bay town team or the legacy group in Badenoch. Such partnerships are particularly important to balance the tensions between benefits for community involvement and ownership and growing the visitor economy. However, it is clear that ongoing support, funding and skills development is necessary to empower organisations or communities further.

'Ownership' of heritage was a key theme to emerge through the GPS Nations projects. This represented a shift from heritage for the visitor to showing and sharing 'my heritage' as a resident of this place, or in other words, from heritage that feels remote from the lives of contemporary communities to heritage which tells the stories of those who continue to live and work in a place. In light of this, projects were considering where the value in their activities

lay - in the act of sharing stories or in collecting and presenting them for a wider public. This again requires reconciling the tensions of a dual focus between community and visitor economy benefits. Projects therefore felt that they would need to consider how to present the heritage stories told by residents and communities authentically and appropriately (this was solved in Barry through the development of a play representing the stories).

### 7.5 Role of the Local Authority

There are clear advantages of delivering strategic projects from within a local authority, and in fact to make sustainable change their involvement and leadership is essential. Local authorities offer a range of expertise and can unlock opportunities from within, whether funding or strategic leverage. However, on the other hand, local authority procurement, high level data protection procedures, bureaucracy and ‘ways of doing things’ can be challenging for delivery of projects like GPS Nations. Perceptions by communities of local authorities can also put people off from engaging with projects which appear to be led by a local authority.

This has meant that in some cases the Council’s brand has been put to the side in order to position the GP Nations projects within the communities with which they are working, rather than as a council initiative.

As projects move into legacy, the challenge is to embed the new ways of working developed through the GPS Nations projects within councils, particularly in relation to how communities are involved, rather than reverting back to a service delivery mode. It is, however, invariably the responsibility of the local authority to take up the baton of GPS Nations projects to implement their legacy or ensure they have sustained impacts (either directly or as part of an ongoing partnership). At a strategic level this therefore means

- Integration of GPS Nations learnings, particularly in relation to community involvement, into policy and strategy.
- Commitments for ongoing support or funding.
- Support for fora/partnerships/boards, including representation from the community, which have a remit to shape or steer ongoing activity.

- Continuing community representation, consultation and/or involvement at a strategic level.
- Commitment to continued cross-sector working to develop holistic solutions to benefit communities whether involving transport/road infrastructure, bids for major designations, initiatives such as Biosphere or UNESCO Geopark or re-development of a key heritage asset or other regeneration initiatives.

## 7.6 Digital learning

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, projects had to discover what was possible without face-to-face contact. The conversion to digital delivery accelerated projects' approach to experimentation as they had to try new approaches and see if they worked, and then adjust in relatively short timescales. It also demonstrated how resilient the projects were in the face of adversity.

While for some it took a bit of time to work out what might work, most were surprised by the results, and that they were still able to achieve their project objectives to a greater or less extent.

Projects produced a wide range of digital assets (some planned and some as a result of conversion to digital in the face of the pandemic). While in the short to medium term there are plans to care for or maintain these assets, it is clear that ongoing investment and expertise is required in most cases for archiving, storage and access. There are also issues of intellectual property and copyright - necessitating putting agreements in place for archiving and use.

Unfortunately, there were some planned activities which were just not possible remotely, such as workshops on traditional building skills or selecting physical archive material.

## 7.7 Differences by Nation

Given the range of projects in each Nation, and that there were more in Scotland than in Wales or Northern Ireland, there is no specific evidence which suggests differences in outcomes or impacts of the projects attributable to the context of the different Nations.

Projects also found it challenging to make time to understand how national agendas and priorities applied locally, so it is not possible to provide insight in this area.

There are a couple of observations of note. For Wales use of the Welsh language was significant for some projects, being able to deliver in Welsh and English through workshops or Facebook or at events. No Northern Irish projects were led by local authorities, but there is no 'control' to say how or if this made a difference in impacts in Northern Ireland.

### 7.8 Rural and urban differences

Rurally based places included From Culcaigh to Cleenish, Coalisland and East Tyrone, Place in the Biosphere, Badenoch Heritage, Preston/Seton/Gosford, Outer Hebrides and Preseli Heartlands and Slate Valleys.

Town/City based projects included North Belfast, Greenock, Paisley, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Glasgow, Bangor, Barry, Llanelli and Colwyn Bay.

Each had a mixture of coastal and inland locations.

The majority of the rural projects were working with dispersed rural communities, involving working with either a

range of different small communities or developing the heritage opportunity across a wider geographic area with local partners. While the town or city-based projects were effectively focused on a more defined geographic area and the communities that lived in and around it with a stronger focus on the role of local businesses.

There was a stronger community development aspect to the rural projects in terms of mobilising communities to be aware of and take ownership of local heritage. While the town/city projects were to some extent more about developing the heritage infrastructure, capacity and capability through partnership or strategy. However, projects included both these aspects to some degree.

### 7.9 Measuring impact

Projects expressed challenges in being able to gather robust data to make the social and economic case for heritage and culture, and this is perhaps something to review further once all project evaluations have been completed. While some projects did engage independent evaluators, others also expressed challenges in terms of resource, time and skills for evaluation.

*“including heritage and culture, and prioritising these as part of a wider project, takes extra resources - time and funding - it is difficult to prove the economic benefit, easier to show how projects can make a place 'look and feel' better, but they often require harder facts.”*

*Project Manager survey 2021*

Taking into account these challenges, feedback from GPS Nations projects and the learning from other projects such as Big Local, it is clear that there are challenges for projects in relation to delivering different types of evaluation.

Three levels of evaluation are suggested here, in order to be able to truly assess the impact of the GPS Nations projects over the longer term.

The primary focus of projects was on the ‘immediate outcomes’ in the evaluation framework. These measure changes as a result of delivering or engaging with the project. However, measures for pride, belonging or well-being, for example, provided for use through the programme

evaluation, and those which can be drawn from the ONS Community Life survey<sup>27</sup> for instance, can feel too generic, and not reflective of outcomes specific to places or felt by participating communities. Some projects therefore felt that these measures were not appropriate for them. While using standard measures which can be benchmarked against national datasets is useful, it is also meaningful to invest in understanding what these measures mean for individuals and communities - bringing them to life - which is invariably discovered through more qualitative research or participant observation.

Evaluations may additionally focus on measuring the short-to-medium term outcomes, which requires casting forward to what will come next as a result of a project activity. To make an objective assessment it involves exploring logical connections, e.g. meeting new people increases an individual’s confidence to work in collaboration and to meet other new people, thereby increasing social capital within a community. Social capital being an ingredient of

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-201920>

communities being effective at coming together to make change. Alternatively, it might involve assessing the likelihood of sustained investment, growth or opportunity, as a result of project activity, beyond the project's life. In either case, it is making a set of informed assumptions of what the immediate outcomes may lead to, either by asking stakeholders or referring to the literature to outline the potential. Whether these outcomes actually happen invariably should be assessed beyond the lifetime of a project.

The final level of measurement is therefore important - to be able to track change over time for places and their communities. This requires ongoing investment in monitoring, ideally against baseline data collected prior to the project. Such tracking is required to assess the ultimate impact of the projects. The insight generated would also help identify where project activity, such as GPS Nations, was most effective and where future activity should be targeted, particularly in the context of fulfilling such strategies as inclusive growth or tackling poverty. At this

level it is also important to consider attribution, particularly where there is investment in a number of initiatives.

Measuring overall impact, usually involves assessing a number of measures or metrics. However, where projects are trying to influence different stakeholders, or make the case in differing strategic contexts, it may be necessary to frame the impacts in different terms or language - which presents further evaluation challenges recognised by projects. For instance, for communities understanding which outcomes are important to them related to developing 'a better place to live' is essential - and this may be specific to different places so there is no one size fits all; in tourism terms the economic impact of visitors attracted to an area i.e. the additional spend is a usual measure (which was not possible to assess as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic for GPS Nations) but can feel limited as it does not take a holistic approach to increased prosperity; and for local authorities such areas as increased social integration or social cohesion are important but need to be tracked over the long term. Further evaluation challenges are also presenting themselves, as while these impacts are both

social and economic, increasingly there is a move towards assigning an economic value to social impacts which is the subject of the DCMS valuing culture and heritage capital project.<sup>28</sup> However, as pointed out by projects this requires specialist expertise and resource.

It will be useful to assess the project evaluations against these different areas and consider where there are gaps or inconsistencies, with a view to developing support on how such projects are able to and should be evaluating.

### 7.10 Looking ahead for GPS Nations projects

Having devised new approaches to engaging communities with heritage, it is important that local authorities or other strategic agencies are encouraged and inspired to use, adopt or develop the new ways of working which have been successfully tested through GPS Nations projects.

The projects were able to assess a wide range of positive outcomes as a result of their projects, it is important that places which have experienced the investment which comes

with a project such as GPS Nations are able to track their impacts over the longer term.

It is assumed, in response to current agendas, that future such strategic place-based initiatives would require a greater focus on or more rigorous appraisal of:

- Equality, inclusivity, diversity.
- Environmental sustainability of activities, particularly regarding the visitor economy.
- Hybrid delivery models for organisations and initiatives - digital and in-person.
- The value of delivering heritage remotely for local, domestic and international/global audiences.
- Evaluation models and approaches to integrate appropriately assessment of culture and heritage capital.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-culture-and-heritage-capital-a-framework-towards-decision-making>

## 8 Recommendations

The following outlines recommendations which emerged from the findings of the evaluation which are designed to suggest how the National Lottery Heritage Fund might approach supporting and funding projects which are focused on or include ambitions to realise impacts for places, their communities and place-shaping.

### 8.1 Recommendation 1: realistic strategic ambition

To ensure that 'place' does not become a catch all for a wide range of projects, there are four areas which should be clear and aligned for projects or programmes to be considered impactful in terms of place-shaping:

- Firstly, a clear definition (and rationale for this definition) of the place i.e. what characteristics or who defines it as a cohesive 'place' which the work of a project, programme or activity aims to benefit.
- The communities which make up that place should also be defined, or the parts of that community which the project, programme or activity is designed to benefit.

- A description of how the project, programme or activity is positioned strategically within the infrastructure of its 'place' in order for its outcomes to be suitably supported and have sustained impact (with stated support and endorsement by the strategic leaders).
- The scale or scope of ambition should be realistic in the context of the above, the budget and the timescale and resources available and in line with the current context or situation of the 'place' - i.e. how does the project, programme or activity contribute to ongoing place-shaping or facilitate a step-change?

While these areas were expressed at the outset by projects all or in part, the evaluation indicates that if one of these areas is not clearly defined and supported, projects can encounter challenges to their impact, while those which were aligned were set for a more impactful legacy.



## 8.2 Recommendation 2: monitoring and evaluation

Measuring impact, as set out in the conclusions, where projects, programmes or activities have an ambition for significant impact, purposeful monitoring and evaluation is essential. Where impact is expected to be over the medium or longer term, establishing baselines and a programme of ongoing tracking research should be invested in. Identifying measures which have meaning specific to a place should be integrated, alongside those used by national studies useful for benchmarking.

As well as approved purposes, which represent outputs or deliverables, projects should also set out their learning goals and integrate reflection on their process. This enables the documentation of ‘models’ of working and the potential for replicability. Embedding a continuous learning cycle enables behaviour change, following the double loop learning cycle coined by Argyris and Schon.

## 8.3 Recommendation 3: inclusive growth or tackling poverty

If heritage projects are tasked to achieve inclusive growth or tackle poverty (or other specific social or economic impacts) recommendations one and two are particularly important - as it is likely that such work would need to be long-term and at scale to achieve impact. However, it is also recommended that projects have a singular focus e.g. on the needs of a particular community or demographic or on a particular area of activity, such as skills development. Otherwise, funding guidance should invite projects, programmes or activity to be proportionate about how the change they can make is framed - in the instance of the GPS Nations projects they have laid foundations, been a catalyst and explored what’s possible, with significant impact still to come.

## 8.4 Recommendation 4: ‘modular’ investment

As recommendations one to three indicate, the distance to be travelled for a place, as a result of a project, programme or activity, may be different for different places - essentially start and end points may differ. This suggests some tailoring

of different kinds of support, funding or other interventions to enable the relevant step-change.

One of the Scottish GPS Nations projects articulated a range of different starting points, and a more modular approach may also offer a solution to the projects' request for a development phase before delivery of their GPS Nations project. However, instead of a development and delivery phase, it may be more useful to think from the perspective of the outcomes and impacts which would move a place's story to the next stage. Essentially breaking down the component parts of the GPS Nations projects. This approach invites places to consider what type of 'investment' they need and to articulate the strategic purpose and the outcomes they want to achieve, in line with the National Lottery Heritage Fund's outcomes<sup>29</sup>. One place may need investment in multiple areas, whereas another place may need to just focus in one or two areas to make change. This is not to argue against the holistic approach of GPS Nations, but to enable recognition of the elements of place-shaping.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes>

These 'investment' modules may be in relation to the following:

- A need to demonstrate the value of heritage and heritage engagement to help make the case for and define the need for strategic work (possibly in places with little existing infrastructure or partnerships focused on heritage). Some GPS Nations projects started here identifying assets or developing a 'story book'. Others started by inviting communities to share their heritage stories. Such work benefits from creative facilitation and may be designed to strengthen relationships across communities or between community organisations or to increase understanding of, or build relationships with unknown, marginalised or diverse communities. Larger scale or longer-term projects may also explore how to engage and work with communities in more people-centred ways.
- Strengthening the capacity of the heritage sector to increase the impacts of its work. This might involve

supporting heritage or cross-sector networking, training or other kinds of support for smaller scale collaborative projects which support collective capacity building.

- Formation or formulation of a strategic cross-sector partnership to steer or inform local heritage strategy or policy. While such a partnership may need to cut its teeth through activity, its purpose would be to attract investment and funding, and define how heritage can support a place to realise its strategic social and economic goals.
- Delivery of longer term, at scale, strategic programmes with singular purpose - for places which can articulate a clear strategic direction, outcomes and impacts in which heritage can play a vital role in achieving.

*Thanks to Paisley and Renfrewshire project which inspired this recommendation.*

## 8.5 Recommendation 5: assess strengths and weaknesses

Projects should be able to articulate where their strengths and weaknesses lie in relation to place-shaping - whether heritage infrastructure, community ownership, digital engagement, equality, diversity and inclusion, or cross-sector partnership working. Identifying strengths and weaknesses should be developed through consultation with relevant stakeholders and communities. Understanding this will help identify which type of ‘investment’ is required and the kinds of expertise a project may be looking for from partners.

*“The themes of Funding, Communications, Sustainability and Accessibility are identified as core issues that hinder the growth and capacity of organisations in Renfrewshire. Addressing these weaknesses are necessary to the future of the heritage sector.”*

*Paisley and Renfrewshire, Developing a Cultural Destination*

This assessment could also inform a purposeful programme of support, training, case study or resources to support

project delivery by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Project leadership can then take advantage of the latest thinking and studies relevant to place-based work and outcomes and impacts assessment.

### **8.6 Recommendation 6: innovation process models**

Where projects are focused on delivering change, project leads and facilitators can benefit from a programme of support. They may also benefit from knowledge exchange on use of models, such as the Design Council's innovation process model, using the principles of design thinking<sup>30</sup> or agile working<sup>31</sup> methods which would give projects more confidence in their process and provide a structure or framework for delivery. While a process was implicit in some projects, making it explicit at the beginning may support achievement of objectives. Exchanging examples of effective models would also be beneficial.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond>

### **8.7 Recommendation 7: knowledge exchange**

Likewise, where projects are aiming for significant change, knowledge exchange between different kinds of place projects and opportunities for collective reflective learning enable projects to adopt or define new ways of working. While GPS Nations integrated some learning events, there was more appetite for formal and informal opportunities for exchange.

### **8.8 Recommendation 8: shared examples**

Encourage sharing of examples of approaches and models for engaging and involving communities in projects to enable comparison of approaches between projects and identification of transferable approaches. As some of the terms, for instance 'co-creation', 'ownership' and 'empowerment' are used in different ways. This would enable more effective assessment of outcomes and impacts across projects.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.agile.org.uk/what-is-agile-working/>

## 8.9 Recommendation 9: digital training

Further training or support in evaluation of digital engagement and using digital analytics is now essential. A set of useful metrics which can be compared across projects should be suggested, which not only describe the quantity of engagement, but indicate level and depth of digital engagement with content or information. Likewise, sharing of approaches to digital content creation and digital archives and archiving would be beneficial, so that appropriate expertise can inform how such content or archives may be delivered, maintained, sustained and made accessible.

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