



Northern Heartlands

PLACE LAB CREATIVE PRODUCER: Durham Dales and Shildon

Fixed Term Freelance Contract (September 2024 - March 2025)

As Creative Producer with Northern Heartlands, you will play a vital role in overseeing the development of Place Labs with communities in the small towns and villages of Weardale and in Shildon, County Durham.

The Place Lab project is part of *Into the Light*, County Durham's Place Partnership Programme funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) through Durham County Council. <https://www.visitcountydurham.org/into-the-light/>

Weardale and Shildon are just two of six Place Labs which are being developed across the county in this period, with a view to additional Place Labs being developed from April 2025 onwards.

In the short term, we are looking for a freelance Creative Producer to make things happen with communities in the two locations above.

You will be a strategic thinker with experience and drive for developing creativity and innovation alongside those who live and work in the deeply rural area of Weardale and the small post-industrial railway town of Shildon.

This post is currently funded until the end of March 2025.

Context

Northern Heartlands is a charity and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation based in County Durham, bringing the creativity of artists together with individuals, community groups, schools and partner organisations. Together, we create activities and events that can change how people feel about themselves, the places where they live, and what happens there.

We work with people living in the deeply rural areas of Teesdale and Weardale, and with the post-industrial towns and villages of the former Durham coalfield.

Northern Heartlands is working with [No More Nowt](#) as 'Home Producer' for Place Lab 2024-25. Each organisation will work with communities and artists within a specific location to explore, test and enable activity that supports creative agency to flourish. Overall project lead for the Place Lab project is the local authority, Durham County Council. Place Lab is one of just eight projects which make up County Durham's ambitious Arts Council-funded Place Partnership programme, 'Into the Light'.

Into the Light is a transformative programme that will drive long-lasting growth in County Durham through creative collaboration. Over the next three years, it will cultivate talent, widen access to creative education, enhance skills, and break down barriers in the creative industries.

Place Lab is one of eight projects within the Into The Light Programme. We are working in partnership with No More Nowt who are developing Place Labs in Peterlee and Stanley and with Durham County Council, lead for the Place Lab Project who are developing a virtual Place Lab and digital hub for the project.

The mission of Place Lab is to use the power of culture and creativity to catalyse change at a local level. Working in towns across County Durham each Place Lab will foster a community-centred approach to culture and regeneration. Hyper-local, place-based activities will boost cultural participation and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and connectivity within and between our communities. Through collaboration with cultural and creative partners, communities will be empowered to actively engage in decisions shaping the future of their places.

Two pilot Place Lab projects took place in the Durham Dales and in Peterlee; the Dales Pilot report will be available for the successful applicant to help shape their work.

Key Responsibilities of the Place Lab Creative Producer role:

- Work alongside communities to co create and develop opportunities that support the shaping of the places where people live, and what happens in those places
- Programme a series of creative conversations/interventions that explore approaches to developing creativity, building on the interests and engagement within Northern Heartlands' Place Lab areas (Shildon and Weardale, Co Durham in the first instance). In Weardale, activity will start in September with (pre-programmed) events taking place at two agricultural shows in St John's Chapel and Stanhope
- Collaborate with stakeholders to understand project requirements, objectives, outputs and timelines
- Develop project plans, including budget and timelines
- Commission and contract creative practitioners to deliver and co-create activity with community participants (fees for practitioners and any materials from a separate budget managed by Northern Heartlands)
- Support networking and professional development opportunities for creative practitioners and foster relationships between creative practitioners and local residents
- Coordinate and actively engage in action learning opportunities between project leads and commissioner
- Monitor and evaluate the Place Lab process/activity with the support of Northern Heartlands' staff
- Disseminate learning through written reports, presentations and events
- Work alongside the Place Lab team (Durham Co Council, Northern Heartlands and No More Nowt) to inform learning and the future direction of Place Lab
- Report on outputs for UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Arts Council England
- Ensure effective marketing and communications of Place Lab activity including following Place Partnership Guidelines and Place lab communications guidelines

Key Competencies

- A self-motivator, and able to work as part of a team
- A strong and positive communicator including very good listening and negotiating skills
- Good project management skills
- Passionate about breaking down barriers to the enjoyment of, and participation in, culture and the arts
- A dynamic and creative thinker and problem-solver
- Ability to work flexibly, innovatively and creatively with communities and the arts and cultural sector
- An understanding of the role of creativity in place-based approaches and socially engaged arts practice
- Given the timescale of delivery, knowledge of County Durham is desirable

Fee (Freelance)

A fee of £14,490 (ex VAT) is available for this role calculated as:

6 days/month x 7 months @ £320/day plus £150/month expenses (travel/subsistence)

(a total of 42 days over the time period)

Northern Heartlands has an office space in the market town of Barnard Castle, County Durham. This post can involve working from home but will include travel, meetings and activity in person in Weardale and Shildon.

How to apply

Application Deadline: **9:00 am Tuesday 27 August 2024**

Please send the following:

- A letter of application (no more than 2 sides of A4) outlining why you are suitable for the post and including an indication of how you would approach the work
- A current CV (no more than 2 pages of A4) with the names and contact details of two referees

Please send the above as two attachments to info@northernheartlands.org and include in the subject line PLACE LAB CREATIVE PRODUCER

Interviews will take place in Barnard Castle on **Thursday 5th September**

*Please note that No More Nowt are currently recruiting for a similar role to lead Place Labs in Peterlee and Stanley. We would consider the same Producer for both roles (all 4 locations) but you would need to make a clear case for how you would manage the significant geographic spread of locations and the time limitations.

You will need to apply to each organisation separately indicating that you are applying for both roles and stating:

- whether you wish to deliver both
- whether you would be willing to accept just one of the roles

Creative Producer – Person Specification

Essential	Desirable
Qualifications and Experience	
Previous experience as a Creative Producer or similar role, with a track record of successful projects.	Experience of using different approaches and methodologies that support the development of creative capacity
Significant experience of working alongside communities, understanding needs, opportunities and challenges	
Ability to establish strong and effective working relationships with people in different contexts	
Organisational skills that help keep a project on track and keep sight of key overall aims	
Experience of programming and contracting artists including producing artist briefs and contracts	
Experience of managing budgets and delivering a quality programme within budget.	
Knowledge and Skills	
Understanding of rural communities	Understanding and knowledge of County Durham
Flexibility to respond to needs of the community and explore different approaches to engagement	Ability to think conceptually
Strong problem solving skills	Ability to make connections, support and signpost
Excellent communication skills	
An understanding of the processes and principles of community co-creation	
Ability to be tactful, diplomatic and understanding in encouraging partners to consider new perspectives	



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