

Project Aim:

The 'Weardale Wonders' PLACE Lab project aims to highlight and showcase the valuable cultural infrastructure that exists across Weardale, County Durham.

The project aims to work with and alongside partners to help add value to the amazing work taking place by helping to raise the profile of Weardale's unique cultural infrastructure and offer. As part of the project, we hope this will support:

- Collective aspiration to help galvanise efforts.
- Awareness raising of the existing infrastructure within and beyond the community to support capacity for growth.
- A shared collective ambition about what might be possible and exploration of next steps.

The artist/creative team will work with partners/venues across Weardale to develop and deliver an effective unifying campaign using art/artwork as the vehicle.

The artist/creative team will create and deliver a collective series of 'artworks' (this could be for example – a series of unique but unified banners/flags temporarily displayed across Weardale, art work using lighting in some way to highlight or showcase the creative community infrastructure in the area, pop up sound work across Weardale that showcases the unique people/place that is Weardale, images, designs, marker points, temporary 'plaques'...) across community spaces.

About PLACE Lab:

PLACE Lab is a county-wide initiative that explores a way of working to maximise the power of culture and creativity to catalyse civic change at a local level. There are 6 PLACE Lab initiatives across County Durham. PLACE Lab Weardale is managed and led by Northern Heartlands.

About Into the Light:

PLACE Lab is one of eight projects within the Into the Light Durham Place Partnership Programme (2023-2027). Into the Light aims to drive long lasting growth in County Durham's cultural sector, through a transformative programme of creative collaborations.

It cultivates talent, widens access to creative education, enhances the skills of the cultural workforce, and breaks down barriers to working in the creative industries.

The three-year programme will support over 100 creative commissions, create nationally significant performances and theatre-making in the heart of our communities, inspire children and young people, invite visitors to explore our unique mix of culture, science, and heritage, and deepen our understanding of our place in the world.

Into the Light is delivered by Durham County Council in partnership with Beamish Museum, The Bowes Museum, Durham University, Ensemble '84, The Forge, No More Nowt, Northern Heartlands, and TIN Arts. Culture Durham is a key stakeholder, representing the broader cultural sector.

Into the Light is funded by Durham County Council, the National Lottery through Arts Council England, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Durham University. To find out more, visit:

<https://www.intothelightdurham.co.uk/>

What we are looking for:

A creative or creative team to respond to the brief in, but not limited to, the following art forms:

- Photography - Visual art - Graphic Design - Sound - Lighting

The creative/creative team will support several community organisations and community venues - to showcase Weardale's rich community infrastructure, creativity and ingenuity.

We are looking for the creative/creative team to:

- Create unifying, high-quality artwork/series of artworks which increases connection between and visibility of cultural partners/venues in Weardale
- Produce this work through artwork/a format that can be tangibly shared and displayed/experienced at/outside of community venues in Weardale.
- Work with partners and use previous project material/input to inform this work and make sure it is relevant and meaningful in terms of this place and these people (including the use of the established Weardale Together 'Map')
- Work with Northern Heartlands to identify and display work across 5 villages in Weardale from Wolsingham to St John's Chapel
- Develop unifying artwork that helps galvanise partners to recognise and celebrate their connectivity and explore ways to take next steps. Partners have ambition to raise awareness, increase support/capacity and to act as a beacon for opportunities/further resource.
- Explore opportunities to bring community partners together at a creative event/celebration. This could be as part of a wider celebration event/existing event.

Context:

There are many amazing partners across Weardale that support community and civic change through their work. These include (but are not limited to): Weardale Together, Music at the Heart of Teesdale, (who run a youth music group in Weardale called Wear'd Aliens) The Weardale Museum, Drama in The Dale, North Pens Writers and North Pens Playwrights, Wordfest, and agricultural shows including Weardale Show and Stanhope Show. PLACE Lab Weardale has been working with these partners to explore collaborative opportunities to support civic change through cultural activity.

There are many other partners and community organisations in Weardale that play a role in the cultural infrastructure and are potential partners for this work, including (but not limited to): Wolsingham Agricultural Show, Stanhope Silver Band, Weardale Choir, schools in Weardale and Killhope Lead Mining Museum.

Weardale partners share an ambition to increase the connection between and visibility of their organisations, community spaces and cultural work happening across Weardale. Groups, community venues and events play a vital role as part of the community infrastructure of this place and can perhaps sometimes go 'under the radar'.

Timeline for Delivery:

- Artist or creative team appointed: Mid/end Dec '25
- Research, planning and development phase: Jan – April '26
- Production, Install, completion and celebration event: May – June '26

Fees & Materials Budget:

The total creative fee is **£12,000** inc. VAT (if applicable)

Fees are all inclusive, including: all staff & freelancer costs, administration & budget management, and the design, creation and installation of all artwork.

Application process:

We will be holding a 'Find Out More' information session online, for anyone who may be interested in this opportunity, on Wed 26th November at 14.00. Please use the below link to join us there:

[PLACE Lab Weardale Find out More Session](#)

To apply for this opportunity, please submit a short expression of interest detailing why you are interested and your proposed approach (no more than 2 sides of A4), together with your CV and 2 examples of previous work or commissions.

Please submit by email to info@northernheartlands.org by **12:00 noon on Friday 5th December 2025**.

Please state '**PLACE Lab Weardale Proposal**' in the subject title.

Following this, we'll contact all shortlisted applicants on the afternoon of **Friday 12th December 2025**.

All shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview and discussion and to meet with the team at Northern Heartlands on **Thursday 18th December 2025**. **Interviews will take place online.**

For any questions about this process, please contact info@northernheartlands.org

