

# A Great and Curious Future

## Warrington's vision for Cultural Growth 2020-2025



Photo courtesy of Ioan Said



# A proud heritage, an ambitious cultural future

*"A Great and Curious Future* is inspired by Warrington's quiet pride and dogged determination. Our people are dynamic: we inspire, cultivate, experiment and produce. We want to advocate for a culture, arts and heritage scene worthy of its people.

"In order for us to move forward with our cultural vision, we need to explore and remember our past. What started as a humble, determined industrial town famed for our wire manufacturing is now a celebrated economic powerhouse. Our history and heritage has shaped the Warrington of today and we have a compelling story that needs telling far-and-wide.

"Our uniqueness is illustrated through our stories, revealing a dynamic and very distinctive town which is diverse in its heritage and culture.

This is reflected in our:

- **Stories** – The Invisible Girl, Alice in Wonderland, Old Billy the Barge Horse
- **People** - Ossie Clarke, Pete Postlethwaite, Anna Laetitia Barbould
- **Places** – Warrington Museum & Art Gallery, Pyramid, Parr Hall, Walton Hall & Gardens

- **Events** – Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival, Warrington Music Festival, Get Creative
- **Traditions** - Warrington Walking Day, Lymm Heritage Day, Bawming of the Thorn.

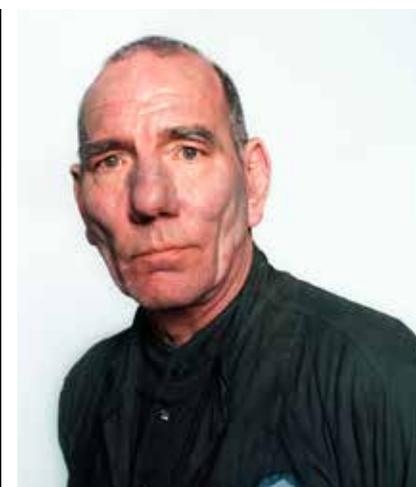
“We recognise the powerful contribution engagement in arts, culture, heritage and sport can make to everyone’s health and wellbeing. By coming together, sharing cultural experiences, feeling pride in our local area and celebrating the heritage of their town, our residents will reap the social benefits of living in Warrington and be an integral part of an amazing cultural scene across the borough.

“From wireworks, Walking Day and producing acting greats like Pete Postlethwaite, Warrington has a compelling combination of a proud industrial heritage and thriving cultural offering.

“The goals within this framework and the aspirations embedded within them represent all those with a cultural stake in our town and are fully supported by the council.”



Cllr Maureen McLaughlin,  
Chair of Warrington's  
Culture Board



# A Warrington for everyone

Everyone has the right to high quality cultural activities, regardless of their background, knowledge, skills, needs or experience. We know that arts and culture can make a huge difference to people's health and wellbeing, so we will be building on a strong track record of using culture as a positive intervention to address some of the issues we face.

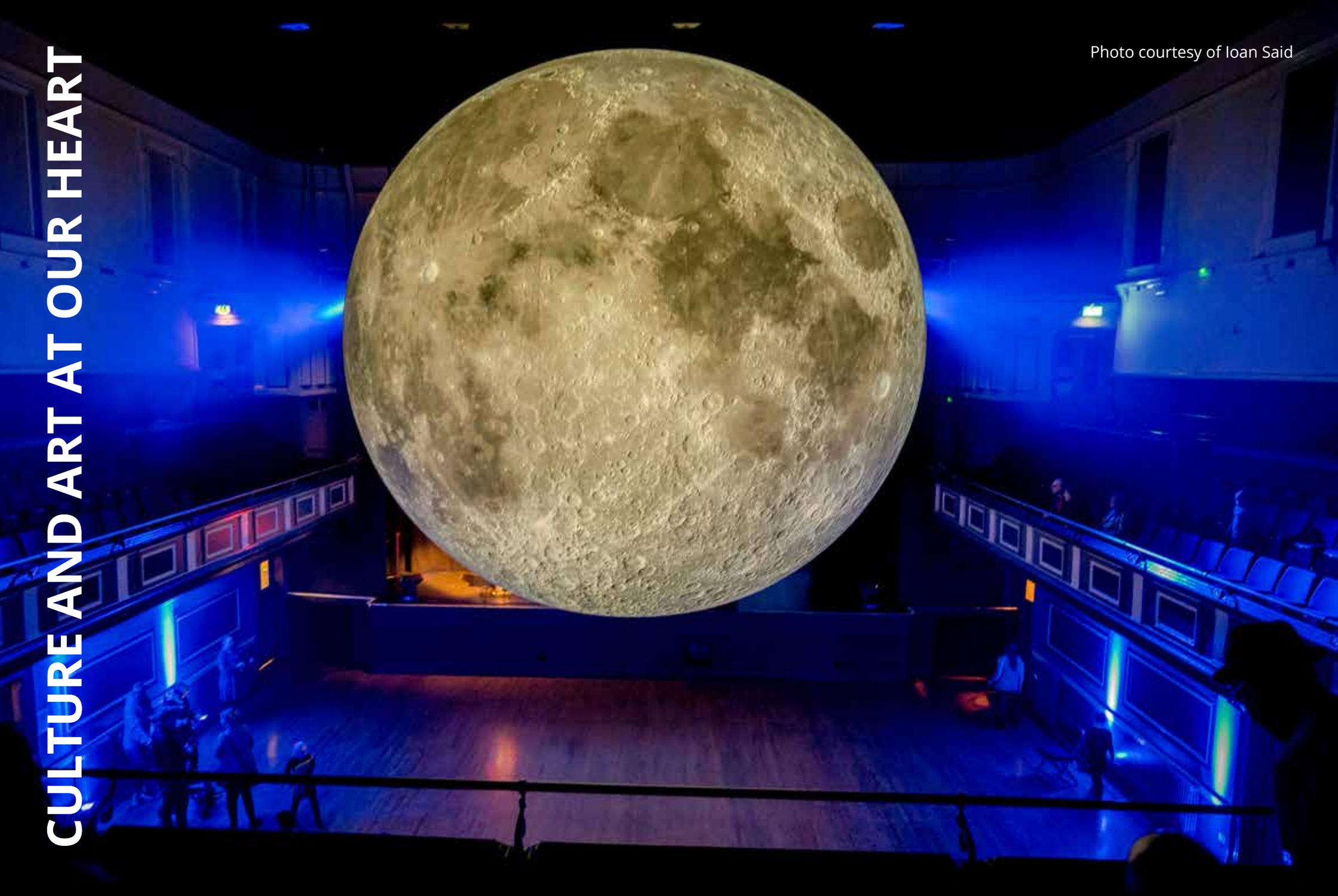
Inclusivity is a priority, and a cultural programme which places the emphasis on diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our plans. We aim to develop a cultural offer which is representative of Warrington's diverse population and that is accessible to everyone. We realise that only by doing this will we release the full potential of Warrington's creative and cultural talent.

Partnership working is one of our strengths and we have an established track record in working across all sectors: public, private, voluntary, faith and community. It's essential we develop this further, to work with partners in a co-operative approach to address both real and perceived barriers to participation in culture. To realise the potential of local people we need to invest in and support social action, developing wide reaching, inclusive and quality volunteering opportunities. This will help to increase engagement across the borough that will be valued at all levels.

## Not Too Tame Theatre Company: CASE STUDY

Not Too Tame are Warrington's first resident producing theatre company, with an established reputation for creating work that celebrates regional identity, champions community spirit and combines a high quality theatre experience with a 'great night out'. This pioneering theatre company, which is also an Associate Company of Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot, will present a menu of high-quality, home grown theatre productions and events, before touring them around the UK with their Access All Areas (AAA) network. The company will also create opportunities, access and learning for those with an interest in a career in the arts - particularly those from low income backgrounds.





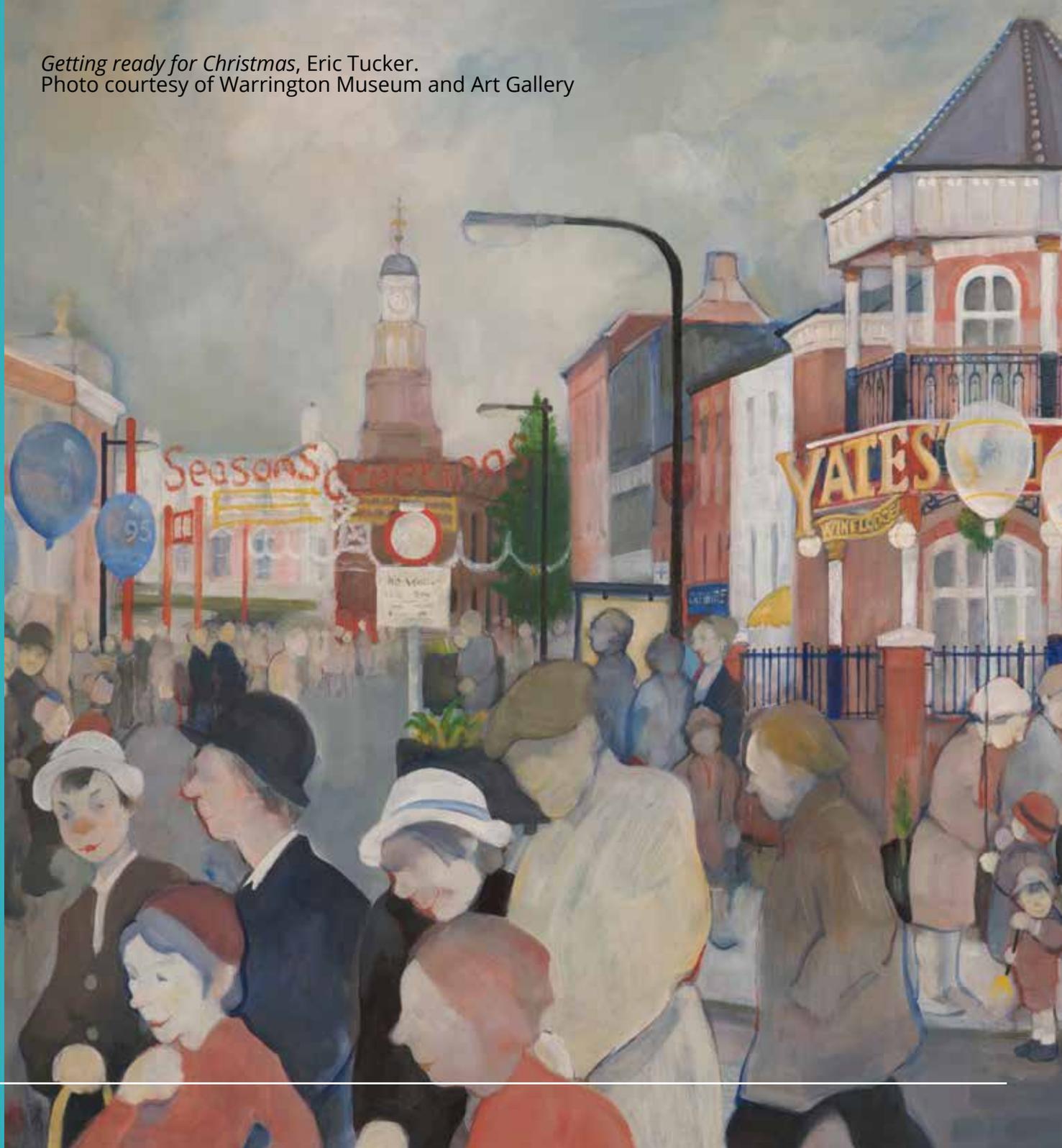
# Culture and art at our heart

As one of the country's most economically successful towns, Warrington's cultural future looks equally bright. Both **Warrington Means Business** and the new **Town Centre Masterplan** have a significant focus on cultural development, recognising the importance of culture in economic growth and the place-making agenda.

Our ambition to animate the town centre with art, culture and colour is reflected in the growth of our events programming in recent years, with a renewed focus on 'scaling up' our ambition and impact. The **Central 6 Neighbourhood Masterplan** also supports this agenda, with plans to ensure access to arts and cultural opportunities for all. We recognise that engaging our communities will be key in developing a sense of identity, pride and ownership across the whole borough.

Through a commitment to positioning arts and culture at the heart of the town's future plans, communities will celebrate our shared history whilst retaining pride in their own, distinct cultural heritage. We want to reflect the stories of our people in such a way that not only illuminates Warrington's culturally significant past, but lights the road to a creative and successful future.

*Getting ready for Christmas, Eric Tucker.*  
Photo courtesy of Warrington Museum and Art Gallery



# Eric Tucker, The 'Unseen Artist': CASE STUDY

The talent of 'unseen artist' Eric Tucker remained undiscovered until his death in July 2019, aged 86. Tucker's work, which depicts the pubs and streets of north-west England, attracted comparisons with LS Lowry and was hailed as an important discovery for British art after it was found by his family. The Tucker family first exhibited Eric's work in his home in Padgate after his death, expecting only neighbours to come.

The news travelled and more than 2,000 people queued in the street over two days to see his work. His dream of having a gallery exhibition in his home town was finally fulfilled, as Warrington Museum & Art Gallery staged a retrospective called *Eric Tucker: The Unseen Artist* which featured 70 of his paintings and a recreation of the parlour he used as an art studio in the home he shared with his mother.

Eric showed a commitment and passion to bringing colour and art to Warrington in a way that we are ambitious to replicate through our cultural framework.



# Our 2020-2025 objectives

## We'll be celebrating by singing our own song

A place-making strategy which creates a cultural brand for Warrington will highlight the centrality of arts and culture to the borough as a whole, to individual communities within it and to the town centre.

Our people will be proud of their cultural scene which inspires curiosity, creativity, inclusion, ambition, learning, innovation, wellbeing, talent development and economic growth.

Art forms that are currently under-produced or unrepresented in Warrington will have a greater presence, including theatre, literature, dance, creative technology and multi-art form experiences.

To make this happen we will:

- Communicate the pride in our town, its history and heritage, by presenting Warrington's stories in creative, contemporary and captivating ways.
- Build on existing arts and cultural events, attracting more diverse audiences and developing an understanding of shared history and emerging cultures across Warrington.
- Make a positive case for the inclusion of arts and culture in every aspect of life in Warrington, including schools, parks, community hubs, leisure centres and workplaces.
- Develop Warrington's reputation as an incubator for talent development in the creative sectors, and a place that both exports and imports creativity.
- Work with communities and creative practitioners to embed creative programmes into Warrington's future development and regeneration plans which reflect (and encourage) the diversity of the region.
- Identify and celebrate Warrington's alumni who have gone on to achieve success in the creative and cultural sectors.



Photo courtesy of Ioan Said

# We'll be celebrating by singing our own song: CASE STUDIES

**Culture Warrington**, a charitable trust formed in 2012, manages three key cultural venues in the town: **Parr Hall**, **Pyramid Arts Centre** and **Warrington Museum & Art Gallery**. The organisation also delivers the **Warrington Arts Festival**.

**Parr Hall**, a beautiful grade II listed concert hall, is a Warrington institution which brings a huge range of big-name, high-quality performances to the town centre. It has been a long-standing feature of the Warrington cultural scene from its opening in 1985.

**Pyramid Arts Centre** was opened in November 2002 by Warrington Borough Council, with a focus on smaller performances and community events. In addition to the array of professional performances on offer in the Studio Theatre, Exhibition Hall, Postlethwaite and McCarthy Rooms, Pyramid is also a venue for a variety of classes and workshops across the whole range of arts.

**Warrington Museum & Art Gallery** is one of the oldest museums in the country. Opened in 1848, much of the quintessential character of the building has been preserved and its original glass cabinets are crammed with treasures from all around the world.

The gallery showcases the work of nationally and internationally renowned artists like Grayson Perry, Polly Morgan, Swoon, Elbow-Toe and Adam Neate, and local artists such as Eric Tucker and Marie Jones.

Warrington Museum & Art Gallery caters for younger audiences through formal and informal learning including a diverse schools curriculum programme with themes including Ancient Egyptians, local history and Museum take-over days for the whole school!

The town's archives and local studies are also based here making it an important focal point for our heritage.



Photo courtesy of Ioan Said



From the Ride Your Pony exhibition at Warrington Museum and Art Gallery

Photo by Jules Lister

# We'll have a cultural programme bursting at the seams

**Warrington will be a welcoming place for cultural practitioners to experiment, create, collaborate, champion and lead our cultural growth.**

Children and young people will feel that arts and culture is an important part of their lives, whether at school or in the wider community.

Warrington Arts Festival will have grown in reputation for quality, inclusion and creativity locally, regionally and nationally. The contemporary live music scene will continue to thrive, and emerging performers will be nurtured and given platforms to showcase their talent.

To make this happen we will:

- Ensure that everyone has access to a diverse range of meaningful, high-quality cultural experiences.
- Enable networks, collaborations and development projects for creative professionals.
- Introduce new, and improve existing spaces for performance, exhibition and creativity.
- Make theatre accessible to all and reflective of Warrington's diverse communities
- Continue to develop Warrington Arts Festival as an unmissable annual event which gives people the opportunity to experience local, national and international talent.
- Promote community involvement in the development of accessible, fully inclusive cultural programmes.



# We'll have a cultural programme bursting at the seams: CASE STUDIES

**Disability Awareness Day (DAD)** is one of Warrington's longest established events. Established in 1992, it is the world's largest not-for-profit, voluntary-led pan-disability celebration, held annually in a huge tented village over seven days within the grounds of Walton Hall Gardens in Warrington. DAD includes dance, drama and live music from across the globe, attracting some of the UK's leading disability entertainers. Since its launch DAD has raised in excess of £1 million for other charities and has helped inspire similar events in India, Cameroon, Uganda, Thailand, Sweden, Gibraltar and Denmark.

**Warrington MELA** is an annual festival organised by Warrington Ethnic Communities Association (WECA) dedicated to fostering, sharing and appreciating local and ethnic talents. Usually held in Palmyra Square, the Warrington MELA is the town's largest international festival, showcasing cultural diversity and helping to 'break down barriers' through music, dance and food.

Established in 2011, **Warrington Arts Fest** - formerly known as Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival - is a month-long festival hosted each autumn by Culture Warrington. The festival presents both national and international art installations and performances whilst showcasing local talent and offering a springboard for emerging artists to help further their careers.

Warrington Arts Fest attracts audiences throughout the North West with its diverse programme of exhibitions, large-scale installations, performances and the hugely successful Light Night. Warrington Arts Fest prides itself on creating high-quality, accessible arts events and opportunities for the Warrington community to engage with whilst also having fun!



Photo courtesy of Ioan Said

# We'll continue to cultivate cultural growth

**Warrington will be an incubator for talent and cultural entrepreneurship, providing opportunities for professional support, development pathways and a range of learning platforms.**

Cultural education will continue to be a significant part of Warrington's offer to young people and this will be celebrated through a growing number of opportunities to take part in cultural opportunities within a thriving town centre. Warrington's independent arts sector, including amateur dramatic theatre companies, dance schools and drama tuition, will continue to thrive and become an increasingly important part of cultural showcasing events.

There will be access to high-quality arts and cultural experiences for all children and young people in Warrington as audience, participants and creative producers.

To make this happen we will:

- Ensure that children and young people have equal access to high quality creative experiences, providing opportunities to develop creativity, explore emotions and enhance their mental health and wellbeing.
- Support Warrington's Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP), allowing educators and youth leaders to share ideas and resources to improve the provision of cultural education and other opportunities for young people.
- Encourage local culture providers to develop opportunities for learning, upskilling, networking and mentoring for up and coming creative talent amongst both young people and adults to increase opportunities for progression towards careers in the creative industries.
- Improve channels of communication about Warrington's culture and arts, leading to the increased engagement and wider participation of children and young people in cultural activities.
- Use digital technologies and platforms to engage younger audiences and provide alternative space for creative arts experimentation and practice.
- Improve how we capture the thoughts and opinions of young people, and support them to take the lead in shaping the development of Warrington's cultural scene in a meaningful way.



# We'll continue to cultivate cultural growth: CASE STUDIES

**Accent Music Education Hub**, funded by Arts Council England, is responsible for ensuring that children and young people across Warrington and Halton have access to high quality Music Education. This is realised through a programme of Whole Class Tuition, Continuation Lessons, Musical Ensemble Activity, Concerts and Events, Bespoke work, and collaborative projects with Partner Organisations. Working locally, nationally and internationally, and through additional grants and funding, Accent has developed a strong cross-arts focus, with Accent Arts as a branch of the main hub. Organising collaborative work, training and networking across the region, Accent provides a wide-reaching support network for Music Educators and young musicians.

**The Warrington Music Festival** is a town centre event which provides high-quality performance opportunities to new and emerging musical talent from Warrington and across the North West. Established in 2007, and held on the first Bank Holiday in May each year, the event has become a key date in the town's cultural calendar and, as well as providing a springboard to many future careers has seen headline performances from established artists such as Happy Mondays, Cast, The Lightning Seeds and Reverend and the Makers.

**Warrington Primary Arts Network (PAN)** has been supporting Warrington schools with their arts provision for over 20 years. It is led by Headteachers with a passion for the arts and also an understanding of the impact that creative experiences have on children's academic achievement and overall wellbeing. Five lead schools organise annual art exhibitions and performance nights at The Parr Hall which celebrate the creativity of children in Warrington. The events, which are open to all primary schools, are linked to an overarching theme.



# We'll promote wellbeing through arts and culture

**Dance like nobody is watching! In Warrington, we will promote recognition of the connections between creative and cultural activity and improved social, health and wellbeing outcomes.**

All of Warrington's communities will have the opportunity to access high-quality arts and culture – either as producers, participants or audiences. Supporting wellbeing will be at the heart of this offer.



Photo courtesy of Ioan Said

To make this happen we will:

- Recognise that arts and culture should be key in our approach to delivering Warrington's health and wellbeing strategies, supporting leads in areas such as health and social care, young people's services and homelessness to include arts and culture in their strategies for tackling some of the borough's most pressing issues, including social prescribing.
- Collaborate with further and higher education providers to identify opportunities and potential funding to support arts, culture and wellbeing programmes.
- Stimulate intergenerational activity to encourage our growing population of older people, including people with dementia, to engage in Arts activities.
- Ensure arts programmes engage with wider audiences, including the most deprived communities, care homes, community centres and libraries through high-quality outreach activities.
- Embed a cultural growth programme into strategic development and regeneration plans, such as the Central6 Neighbourhood Renewal Programme.
- Create a range of volunteering opportunities to support the town's cultural activities whilst addressing wider concerns such as loneliness and isolation.



# We'll promote wellbeing through arts and culture: CASE STUDIES

**Creative Remedies** is a programme of arts activities which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Warrington residents. The community arts scheme has been set up to offer an alternative treatment for people having or recovering from mild to moderate mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. A range of activities are on offer including music, performing arts, visual arts, media and digital photography, which aim to engage anyone who feels they could benefit, in particular people who are socially isolated within the community. The groups have helped people to make friends, gain confidence and learn new skills, in a relaxed and friendly environment.

**Blooming Art** prides itself on working extremely hard to bring free and affordable art to our Warrington community, working with many service providers who direct their clients for classes

Trained tutors deliver accredited courses in visual art, crafts, photography & well-being, reaching people through the medium of art. In addition to after school art classes and a children's Saturday class, Blooming Art delivers some of the Creative Remedies programme and delivers art therapy to children with complex needs.



# We'll keep growing our creative tech and digital industries

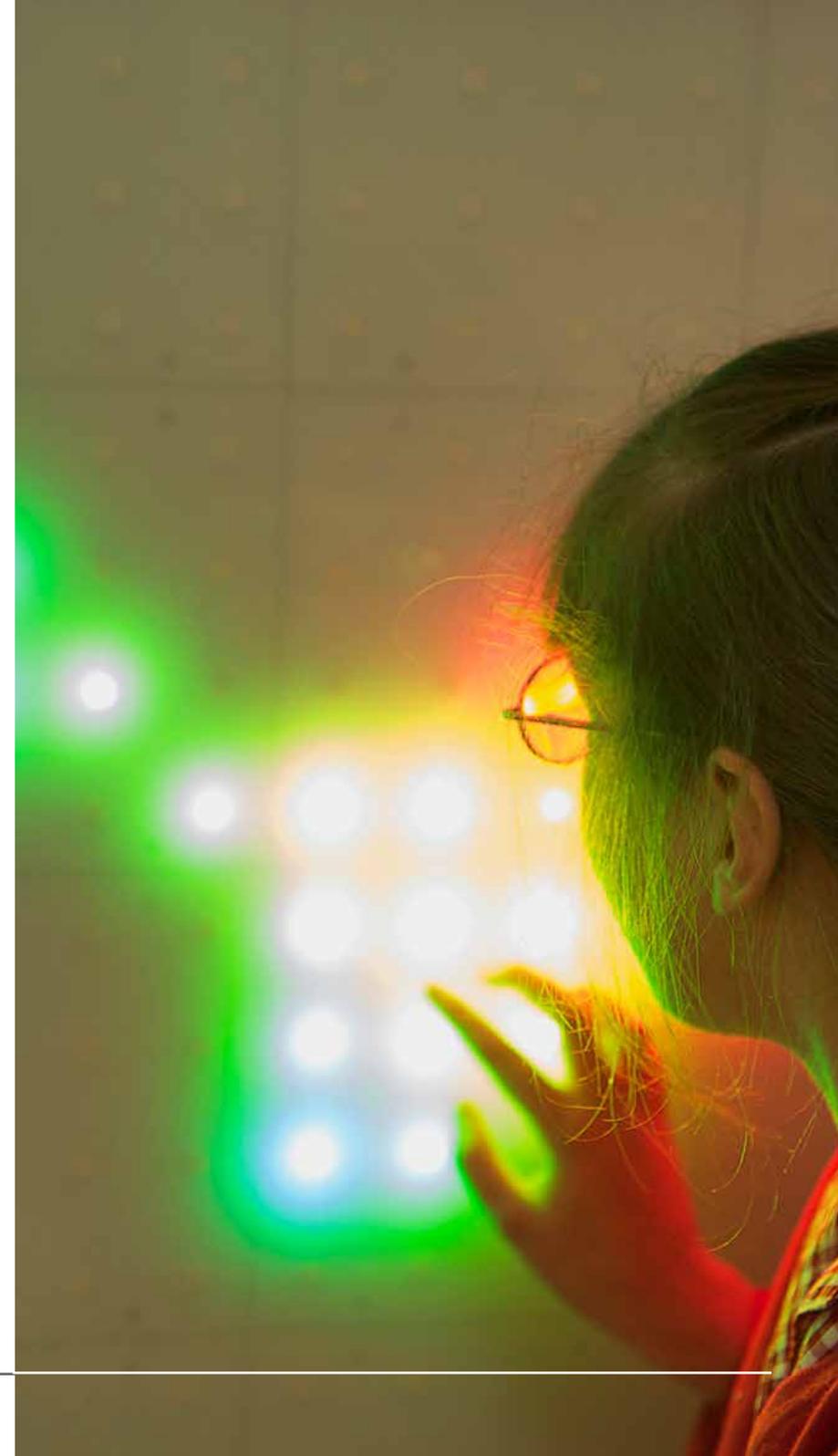
## In Warrington, we will use digital to engage our multiple, diverse audiences

Creative Technology and digital platforms will be an essential part of Warrington's buoyant economy and will help shape the arts and cultural scene to be more accessible, dynamic and diverse.



To make this happen we will:

- Embrace new technologies across all aspects of our creative organisations and programmes including: data collection and audience development; increased accessibility through digital platforms; enhanced visitor experience through digital experimentation; the digitisation of Warrington's collections.
- Develop Warrington's educational programmes and outreach activities for young people and adults, aimed at providing Industry 4.0 skills and creative enrichment which will contribute to increased pathways into future careers within the digital and creative tech industries.
- Ensure everyone has access to digital programmes, irrespective of age, gender, physical ability, ethnicity, health conditions, or socio-economic status, to ensure everyone has access to the digital skills they need to fully participate in society.
- Upskill staff across the borough's cultural organisations and libraries to enable the development of creative digital skills across Warrington.
- Engage with Warrington's schools, colleges and neighbouring universities to promote career progression and development in the digital and creative tech fields, strengthening connections between business and education networks.
- Encourage the development of new local talent through accelerator programmes aimed at developing digital entrepreneurs and showcase the best of Warrington's digital talent and entrepreneurship through a variety of platforms, including networking events, conferences and festivals.



# We'll keep growing our creative tech and digital industries: CASE STUDY

Ludovico is a creative company in the centre of Warrington, on a mission to discover and collaborate with local actors, writers and directors via our freelance media projects, short film opportunities and theatre productions.

Founded by local actor and producer Darren Jeffries, Ludovico also provides professional learning courses from Pyramid Arts Centre, providing creatives of any age or background with the tools and knowledge necessary to begin working in their chosen industry.

Ludovico projects have included 'Maid of Stars', their short film officially selected by London's In Short Film Festival and Manchester's International Kino Film Festival amongst others. 'This Warrington', a media project employing actors and writers across Warrington to promote art & culture throughout our town. Collaborating with Warrington Wolves on their video campaign 'Memories Are Made Here', directing local actors for immersive performances during Warrington Arts Festival, and providing creative for Wired Young Carers in their collaboration with Tate Liverpool.



# Building beautiful - We'll commit to asset growth and improvements

**There will be a commitment to developing our existing assets into attractive, thriving venues in which a varied cultural programme exists that makes a valuable and recognisable contribution to Warrington's place shaping agenda.**

Warrington's culture and distinctiveness will form an integral part of all Town Centre development plans, enhancing the vibrancy of the town centre and providing a more engaging experience for both residents and visitors throughout the day, all year round.

Arts, culture and heritage will be embedded in place-making and tourism strategies, and their contribution to a thriving economy will be recognised. Warrington's unique heritage, including buildings, places and the stories of our past, will be interpreted, presented and celebrated.



Photo from the 'Let's Get Stuck in Traffic' exhibition at Warrington Museum and Art Gallery by local artist Marie Jones, photo by Jules Lister

To make this happen we will:

- Embed arts, culture and heritage into the strategic development of the town centre and beyond, building on a shared understanding of the importance of this agenda within re-generation programmes.
- Ensure effective community engagement when developing existing and new assets into thriving, well-attended cultural destinations.
- Ensure that Warrington's cultural and heritage assets are fully accessible and inclusive through strategic planning with partners such as Warrington Disability Partnership.
- Improve marketing strategies across all of Warrington's assets, by ensuring collaborative support between all local organisations.
- Develop customer relationships across all venues and events, building Warrington's reputation as a first class provider of cultural experiences.
- Create opportunities and spaces for local creative talent to showcase their work.

# Building beautiful - We'll commit to asset growth and improvements: CASE STUDIES

**Walton Hall and Gardens**, the former home and gardens of Lord and Lady Daresbury is set within acres of parkland and is one of Warrington's premier visitor destinations. Walton Hall itself has been lovingly restored and refurbished, boasting unique antique furniture, Victorian paintings, an oak panelled hall, grand staircase and high gilded ceilings.

In October 2019, the conservatory, glasshouses and shippon were officially re-opened following a National Heritage Lottery Fund funded £2 million restoration. Partnerships with Myerscough College and Walton Lea Partnership will provide innovative teaching and training for young adults and people with disabilities, resulting in a range of pathways to increased wellbeing, work readiness, entrepreneurship and employment. This collaboration will also lead to the development of other areas of the Walton Hall Estate, such as the historic formal gardens, conservatory planting and Zoo, all of which will further increase public participation and learning. Walton hall now hosts a wide range of cultural activities, including outdoor theatre, music concerts, cinema nights, food festivals and artisan markets. Walton Hall is also home to a Cycle Museum, located in the Old Laundry Rooms which is situated close to the main hall.

**Warrington's libraries** are increasingly becoming spaces of cultural and creative enrichment. They are well-placed to increase participation in cultural activities because of their use by all social groups and their central role within our communities.

The developing arts and culture offering within our libraries aims to engage with people of all ages, from local dementia groups to children and their families, through collaboration with a range of partners to deliver a holistic, vibrant, creative programme of events. Our libraries are inclusive and support our wider ambitions of the town's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

