Northern Heartlands – A shortlisted bid for the Great Place Scheme.

Our Geography
- Our area takes in Teesdale, Weardale and the lowland belt of towns and villages that connects them, including Crook, Bishop Auckland and Shildon. We have combined river catchment, landscape character and local authority boundaries to arrive at this broad partnership area.

With £1.65 million, together we can:
- Work creatively to increase local input into policies affecting this area.
- Support people to explore a sense of self through a sense of place.
- Help build community resilience, based on an understanding of the past, present and future of our landscapes.
- Celebrate our differences and diversity through the thing we all have in common – this place.
- Discuss and enhance the role of heritage, culture and the arts in shaping the future of our landscapes and communities.
- Develop the confidence to take more ownership of landscape policy through education and through building skills.

The Northern Heartlands team will:
- Build on the model of working used in the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership scheme, as exemplified by Heart of Teesdale.
- Enable local organisations to work with artists and university researchers to explore the interplay between people, heritage and landscape.
- Catalyse and help coordinate community events, performances and exhibitions in under-used public buildings.
- Organize discussion forums around these issues involving diverse sets of interests so as to impact on policy.

The Two Strands
1. We will work over the whole of the Northern Heartlands area with a Community Initiatives Fund and a rolling debate on the role of local culture in social and economic development.
2. We will also have a special focus on two sets of communities in the area, upland and lowland, both economically marginal and both facing new challenges and new opportunities with Brexit.
- Remote settlements at the head of each dale.
- Villages in the lowland belt with a mining heritage.

Northern Heartlands

Our Themes

We will explore themes such as;

- Farming and the stories of life on the land
- The spirituality, meanings and identities of place
- The birth of the railway age and our undervalued heritage
- The challenges and opportunities of environmental change
- How local does a local have to be, to be a local?
- The role of the outdoors in our physical and mental health
- The digital age/remote working/ new work opportunities

Our Approach

Northern Heartlands staff and artists will explore these themes with local organisations in the focus areas we have identified above, including schools and those in the voluntary sector.

We will also have a Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) run by County Durham Community Foundation (who will match fund it), to which organisations can apply from anywhere in the Northern Heartland's area to fund their own activities on these themes. A wide range of groups will have a chance to benefit from and contribute to the Partnership, as new needs are identified and people see what can be achieved.

We will link all this activity to help create a sense of common purpose. A major artistic production, such as a community opera, involving as many community groups as want to take part, could help build this sense of purpose.

We will work with partners to organise a programme of debates that will bring diverse interests together to explore and promote the role of heritage, art, culture and landscape in the local economy and in local identity.
The scheme will culminate in a major national symposium that will communicate the learning gained to the 'outside' world, just as happened with the Heart of Teesdale's *Artists, Farmers and Philosophers* symposium in 2016.

Our Timescales

12 January 2017	Bid to be submitted
By end of March 2017	Decision made whether grant awarded
By September 2017	Staff in place
To December 2017	Detailed consultation and project development
End March 2020	Funding finishes

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