

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

Date:	Monday 17th November, 2025
Time:	1.30 pm
Venue:	Mandela Room

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure

In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest.

4. Minutes - Place Scrutiny Panel - 27 October 2025 3 - 6

5. Barriers to Regeneration Scrutiny Review - Town Centre Board/Place Leaders Partnership 7 - 18

The Director of Regeneration will be in attendance to provide an overview of the Town Centre Board/Place Leaders Partnership.

Recommendation: that the Panel determines what further information will be required for this scrutiny investigation

6. Barriers to Regeneration - The Role of Culture and the Creative Factory Project 19 - 30

The Head of Culture and the Director of Creative Factory will be in attendance to provide an overview of the role of culture in regeneration.

Recommendation: that the Panel determines what further information will be required for this scrutiny investigation

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

22 December 2025 at 1.30pm

8. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Friday 7 November 2025

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors D Branson (Chair), T Livingstone (Vice-Chair), B Hubbard, A Romaine, D Coupe, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye and T Mohan

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Joanne McNally 01642 728329/Tabitha Frankland 01642 726241, 01642 728329/01642 726241, joanne_mcnally@middlesbrough.gov.uk; tabitha_frankland@middlesbrough.gov.uk

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 27 October 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), D Coupe, J Ewan, D Jackson and T Mohan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Matthew Gibbons and Lee Walker

OFFICERS: J McNally, C Jones and R Horniman

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors B Hubbard, A Romaine and J Kabuye

25/23 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions were made and the Fire Evacuation Procedure explained.

25/24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

25/25 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 29 SEPTEMBER 2025**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 29 September 2025 were submitted a Member requested an amendment to the minutes as follows:

A Member suggested a survey being sent to colleges and the university, to gain feedback to see if people who had come from different places across the country and now studied in Middlesbrough could suggest ways of improving Middlesbrough, from their own life experiences from where they were born. Members agreed to this suggestion.

25/26 **BARRIERS TO REGENERATION SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Director of Regeneration introduced the Representatives from Locus who were in attendance to provide Members with an overview of the initial findings of the latest economic assessment on Middlesbrough. The economic assessment focused on Middlesbrough's current position including emerging trends and how Middlesbrough is responding to those. Members were advised that the presentation they were to receive was on the initial findings of the assessment and a full report would be produced in the future.

Members were advised that an economic assessment on Middlesbrough had previously been carried out in 2017/2018. Findings from that assessment included:

- Shift Middlesbrough's focus away from a 'need-based' retail model toward a 'want-based' experience economy
- Prioritises leisure, culture, events and unique offerings that cannot be replicated online
- Increase use of transport links and improve signage
- Investment in public realm and safety
- Strategies to reduce vacancies through alternative uses

Members heard that since 2018 some of the work that had been carried out included:

- Redevelopment (Centre Square and Gresham)
- Focus on Anti-Social Behaviour
- High Street Heritage Action Zone
- Town Centre Masterplan
- Shift towards increased office space

- Train station redevelopment

The Panel heard that there were 157 less retail units in Middlesbrough compared to 2017. There had been a shift in location of units with less premises in locations such as Linthorpe Road and Borough Rd with a shift towards Railway Station. Office space in 2017 was based around the university but again had shifted to Centre Square and the Railway Station area.

It was advised that 14.6% of Middlesbrough's units were currently vacant compared to 17.85% in 2018. It was highlighted that Middlesbrough was marginally above the UK average of 14% and Middlesbrough was noticeably below the Northeast average of 17%.

In terms of population, it was advised there had been a slight growth of 6% in resident population since 2018 from 140,600 to 148,284. There had been no change in employee numbers however the demographic had shifted to younger people and there had been an increase in the 25–34-year-old demographic. In terms of employment strength had maintained in sectors such as healthcare, education and construction related jobs.

Members were advised that 2024 showed the highest amount of footfall in the town centre in 5 years, if the footfall numbers for 2025 continued it should have a similar footfall to 2024. The majority of visitors to the town centre concentrated on Thursday/Fridays and Saturdays which was consistent with patterns across the country. Visitors tended to be younger in age 18-35 years leading to Middlesbrough outperforming significantly against the Northeast average on younger visitors.

In relation to spending Members were advised that money spent in the town centre was down due to shoppers making online purchases this was a trend across the whole of the UK. Visitors are spending less but they were making more smaller purchases across several businesses such as coffee shops, cinemas and different stores. Spending on eating out and retail was identified as being slightly below regional and national averages however it had not significantly decreased.

It was also reported that the spending power of visitors to the town was lower than average compared to other towns and cities.

In relation to crime and anti-social behaviour Members heard that 11,381 crimes had been reported in 2018 down to 6491 in 2025. Crime had essentially halved since 2018 but remained a significant concern as it was still higher than other comparative areas. Anti-social behaviour was an issue with a 20% difference to near neighbouring towns. The core message was that if people didn't feel safe, they would not visit town centres. A Member stated that one of the problems was the misconception of crime and how could this be addressed. It was suggested that a robust presence or campaign would be the best route to tackle this, with strong communications that crime was dropping.

The Locus representatives summarised the following key points:-

Commercial Change:

Total commercial premises in the town centre had decreased, primarily due to a substantial reduction in retail units. Retail now accounted for a smaller share of total space, reflecting diversification into hospitality, leisure, and office uses.

Vacancy and Performance:

Vacancy rates had fallen to around **14.6%**, slightly below the national town centre average (14%) and outperforming comparable centres in the Northeast (17%).

Demographic and Residential Growth:

Middlesbrough's population had grown from **140,600 (2018)** to **148,285 (2022)**, driven by increased student numbers, infrastructure investment, and inward migration. The population was more diverse, younger, and increasingly skilled, presenting opportunities to broaden the visitor and consumer base.

Transport and Accessibility:

Public transport use had recovered strongly post-pandemic. Rail passenger numbers had risen above 2018 levels, supported by a £35m station redevelopment. Car parking use had declined, indicating a gradual modal shift toward sustainable transport.

Crime and Safety:

Crime and anti-social behaviour had reduced significantly despite staying above national and regional averages, with total recorded crimes down nearly 7% in 2024/25 and ASB incidents halved since 2019. Collaborative policing and place-based initiatives had improved perceptions of safety and confidence.

Spending and Economic Activity:

Transaction volumes were up despite lower average spend per transaction, suggesting broader engagement with a more varied town centre offer. Retail leakage remained high (44%), particularly to Teesside Park, underlining the need for continued place enhancement and loyalty retention.

Initial recommendations from the assessments were: -

- Target the younger age demographic (18-35)
- Additional security presence/further work to reduce ASB
- Business Crime Reduction Partnership
- Continue with framework set out in the Town Masterplan.

The Chair queried whether Locus could provide further comparators for the panel to consider which Locus agreed to provide.

The Chair thanked the representatives from Locus for attending the meeting.

Members had several questions for the Director of Regeneration

- Are we looking at leisure to increase footfall? In response the Director advised that we would see less retail than now but concentrated towards Hillstreet Centre. Cleveland Centre may see education and health.
- A Member questioned if buildings would be turned into homes, it was advised that it would not work. Due to size and structure, the infrastructure around was not conducive and the infrastructure in Middlesbrough does not assist town centre living.
- A Member suggested changing units to student accommodation, it was advised that there was an oversupply of accommodation but low supply of good quality student accommodation.
- What should we do to attract people into Middlesbrough? The Director of Regeneration agreed to bring forward a report on the direction we should be moving in. It was stated that Middlesbrough town centre was a dated 1970s set of builds set up for a function no longer required, the town centre needed to be looked at as a 'centre of a town' and not a town centre and look at what would attract young people as young people would be the conduit to bring older people in (e.g., children's play and leisure)

The Director of Regeneration advised the Panel that a Place Leaders Partnership had been established which included key organisations such as Police, college and university. It was agreed that the Director would attend the next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel to provide an update on the work of the partnership.

The Chair thanked the Director of Regeneration for attending and providing additional information.

AGREED as follows:

1. The information provided was received and noted
2. The presentation would be circulated to Members
3. Locus to provide comparator information
4. The Director of Regeneration to provide an update on the work of the Place Leaders Partnership at the meeting on 17 November 2025

25/27 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided an update on items discussed at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 22 October 2025 which included:

- Scrutiny Chairs Update
- Executive Member Update – Children's Services
- Executive Forward Work Programme
- Forward Plan Actions Update

25/28 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for 17 November 2025 at 1.30pm.

25/29 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None

Middlesbrough's Place Strategy

Future Middlesbrough: A Vision for Young People





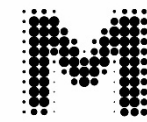
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Can do place

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Middlesbrough**

Context

- Place Leaders Partnership has been formed
- Key stakeholders working together to inform our Place Strategy
 - University and colleges
 - Cleveland Police
 - Arts Organisations
 - NHS
 - Large organisations
- Linking Town Centre Strategy, Investment Prospectus and culture programme.





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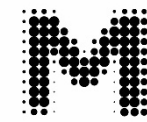
Vision

To be the UK's most creative place for young people to live, learn and realise their future.

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- Providing young people with as many reasons to visit our town as possible
- Providing positive multicultural and sharable experiences
- A bold, future-focused offer built on creativity, innovation and inclusivity
- Anchored in Middlesbrough's digital, engineering and cultural strengths
- Linked to the town's 2030 Bicentenary ambitions and plans.





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Purpose & Ambition

- To Make Middlesbrough a destination of opportunity for young people
- Connect culture, business and community for shared prosperity
- Build experiences that are accessible, affordable and transformative
- Foster pride, belonging and empowerment through opportunity.





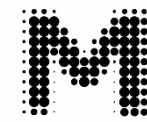
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Pride in Place Principles

- **Stronger Communities** - Build belonging and civic pride
- **Thriving Places** - Create vibrant, safe neighbourhoods with great amenities
- **Empowered People** - Give residents a real voice and ownership of change
- **Middlesbrough focused principles** - Create-in-Place, Civic Co-Creation, Low Cost High Impact, Creative Every Day, Storytelling as Strategy.





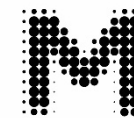
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Why Focus on Young People?

- A vital part of Middlesbrough's bright future, part of their neighbourhoods and as contributors to the local economy
- Young people in Middlesbrough's make up a higher % of the population compared to similar towns
- Currently underrepresented in decisions shaping the town
- Strategy co-designed with and for young people
- Benefits everyone - better opportunities, stronger communities.





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Strategic Narrative

- Attracting young people, with a tailored offer supporting them across all areas
- Invest in housing, education, access to skills and culture experiences
- Build pathways into local employment and entrepreneurship
- Make the town centre a hub for creativity, innovation and collaboration
- Retain local talent and attract new visitors and investors.





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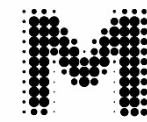
Desired Impact

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Middlesbrough**

- Inspire youth engagement and ambition
- Boost Middlesbrough's reputation and visitor economy
- Strengthen community pride and cohesion
- Retain graduates and attract new business investment
- Animate the town centre and heritage spaces

...and more.



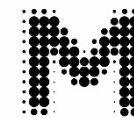


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Key themes & actions





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Promotion & Place Leadership

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- Launch a new place campaigns: strengthening 'Let's Go To Town' & 'Made in Middlesbrough'
- Reimagine events like Orange Pip Market, connecting our culture and events programme with our leisure food and drink businesses
- Amplify stories and events via We Are Middlesbrough as the digital hub
- Recruit ambassadors and influencers to champion Middlesbrough's story.





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Next Steps

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Middlesbrough**

- Finalise and approve strategy
- Identify and confirm game-changing projects
- Investment Prospectus, action and engagement plans
- Begin public consultation and implementation
- Build momentum towards Middlesbrough's 2030 Bicentenary celebration (on-going).





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**Invest in
Middlesbrough**

Thank You

Any Questions?



CREATIVE FACTORY

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Agenda Item 6

Building the Most Creative Town

The Origin

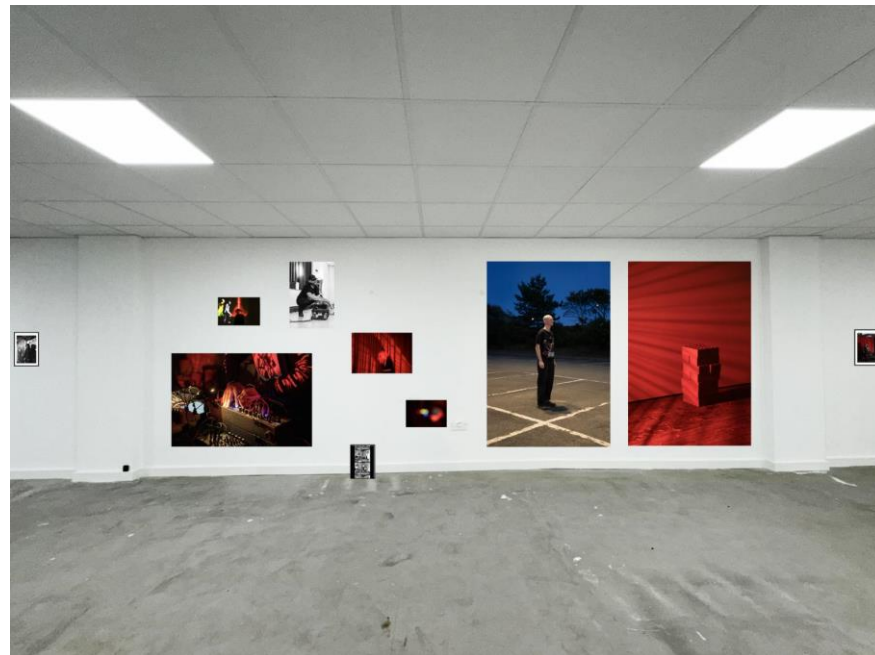
Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership (MCP) was founded in 2018.

Culture Capital Prospectus was written in 2021.

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CFC bid was successful in 2022, with £4.25m investment from ACE/DCMS.

Creative Vision and Masterplan (2023 -33) sets out Middlesbrough's ambition to be the most creative town by developing a sector that is four things: Valuable; Secure; Resourced; and Thriving.

Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership secured £2 million in Levelling Up Funds from Middlesbrough Council in 2024 and establishes Creative Factory.



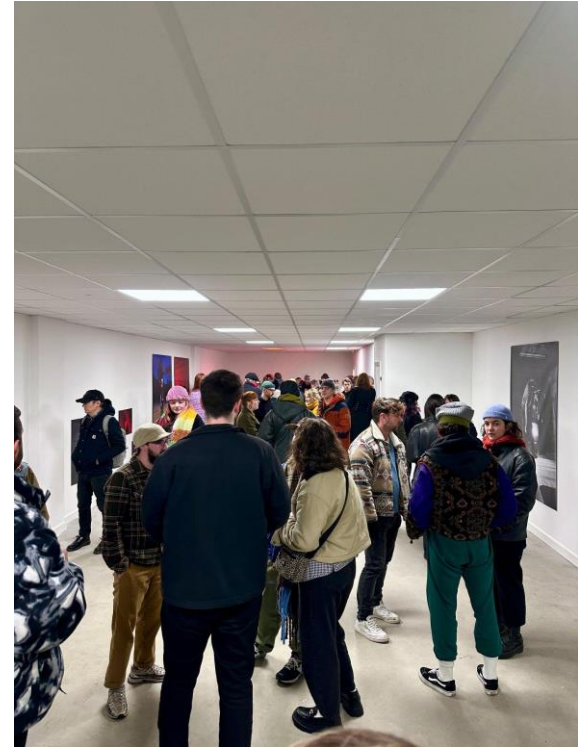
Creative Factory - Mission

Long-term sustainability and investment for the cultural and creative sector.

A Creative Land Trust, anchoring creative economies in Middlesbrough by developing 50,000 sq ft of creative space.

Sufficient surplus to reinvest in the creative sector and sustain long-term operations.

A resilient future for artists and creative businesses in the region by providing affordable, creative spaces, securing investment, and ensuring culture is the beating heart of Middlesbrough.



The Plan

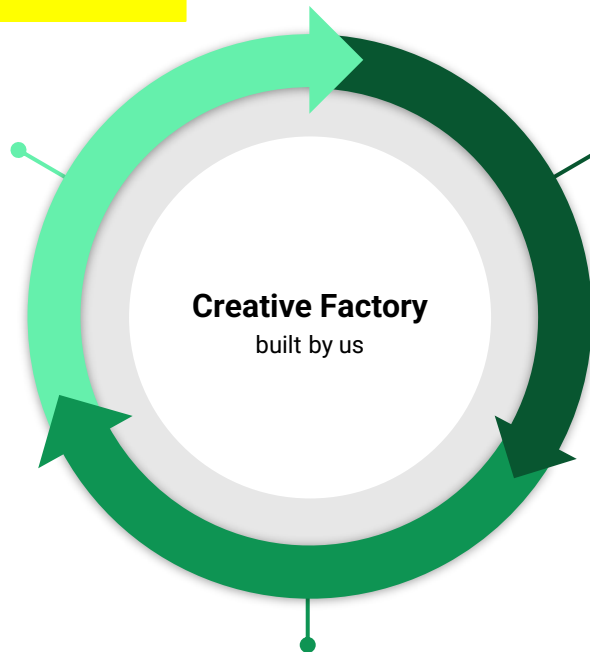
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Creative Place Lab
**Testing Innovation and
Ideas**

Creative Land Trust
**Acquiring, managing and
filling space with creative
businesses**

Creative Factory
built by us

Pro - Creative Ecology
**Scaling up through
investment and business
development support**



The Progress

Project Director - leading on delivery, community engagement, partnership development, governance, acquisitions, capital development and first lettings.

Operational Team - includes Middlesbrough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority members

Community-led governance, wide spread consultation steered by Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership

Property acquisition - 6,300 sq ft secured, mixed portfolio (commercial & residential, AT, auctions and surplus lists)

Shared mission - Embedding culture into Regeneration plans, partnering with TVCA on Place Partnership bid, a member of the Place Leadership Board

Strategic Foundations - Business and financial modelling, best practice, network development

The Spaces

Commercial: 46 Linthorpe

Work space // A Creative Embassy

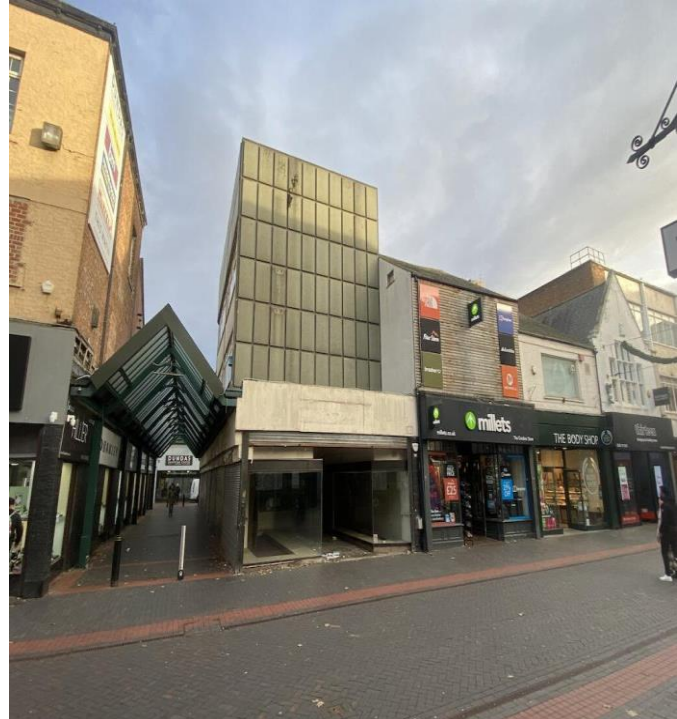
4,100 sq ft // Shell and core fit out

Residential: 91 & 132 Princes Road

Live/work space

2,200 sq ft (combined)

4 x 1 bed apartments (to be ready Jan 2026)



Placemaking Projects

Most Creative Train Station – 9 artist installations and 1 artist residency explored the station's heritage and the experience of commuter's today.

We Shall Be - groundbreaking community-led commissioning programme to transform public spaces around Middlesbrough's historic quarter

Parking Day – transformed a parking space on Albert Road on 19 September into a temporary public area for creativity, music, and conversation.

Forged – Supporting the delivery of a vibrant programme of public art in the Tees Valley, with the aim to tour nationally

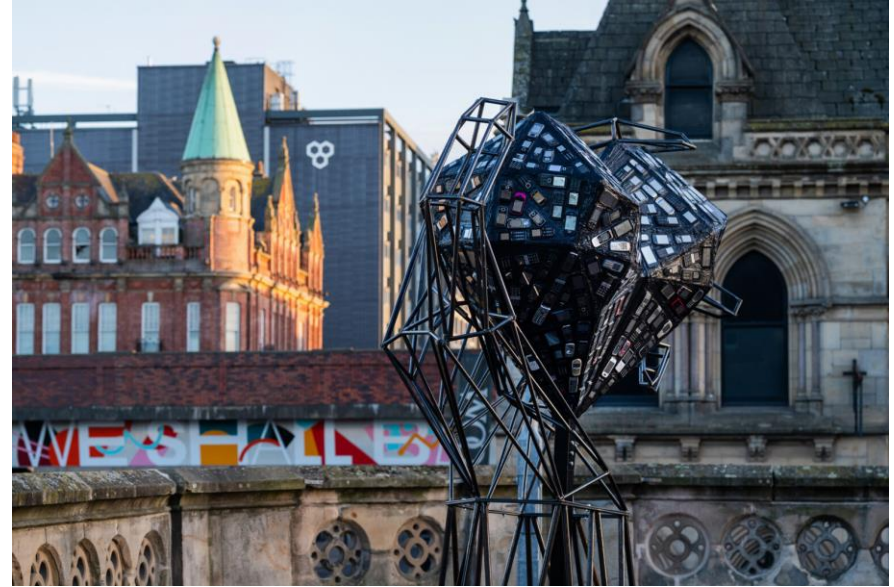


Photo Credit: Rachel Deakin

Next Steps – Creative Factory

Complete legal setup (CLT & Charity)

Proof of Concept

Launch pilot test-trade and live/workspaces

Develop brand and comms strategy

Work with funders/investors to leverage investment/funding

Drive social and cultural impact through co-location, collaboration and storytelling

Measure economic and social impact



Next Steps – Culture Sector

2026

MIMA hosts Turner Prize and New Contemporaries
150th anniversary of Middlesbrough Football Club
10th anniversary of Orange Pip
Launch of Storytelling Festival
Develop a philanthropy programme for culture
EQI for UK City of Culture?

2027

10th anniversary of Middlesbrough Art Week

2028

300th anniversary of the birth of Captain Cook (100 years of Stewart Park)

2030

Boro 200: Celebration of Middlesbrough's Bicentenary
Teesside University's Centenary
Middlesbrough Mela's 40th Anniversary



Outputs/Outcomes

More creative spaces/clusters across the town

More artists, makers and innovators working here

Increase in jobs and investment contributing to economic growth

The town centre feels more welcoming and has a distinctive, experiential offer which increases footfall

Vacant/forgotten spaces are animated

Local graduate talent is retained and outside talent moves in

Public perceptions of Middlesbrough have improved

Levels of ASB in the town centre are reduced

The logo for Creative Factory features the word "CREATIVE" in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed within a thick, black, stylized bracket. Below the bracket, the word "FACTORY" is written in a larger, bold, sans-serif font.

CREATIVE

FACTORY

For More Info

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www.boroculture.co.uk

[Most Creative Town Film - Click Here](#)

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