

LEFTCOAST

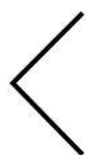
REAL ESTATES

YEAR 2

An independent evaluation based on findings by UCLAN and Ruth Melville Associates



Produced by:



LEFTCOAST



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Section 1 – Background and introduction

This is the Evaluation Report for year 2 of the National Community Lottery-Funded (NCLF) Real Estates programme, delivered by LeftCoast, Blackpool. It presents findings from the qualitative aspects of the evaluation, provided by the Psychosocial Research Unit (PRU), University of Central Lancashire and independent evaluators MB Associates, who work in parallel with PRU as evaluators of the Arts Council England funded, Creative People and Places Programme.

LeftCoast was established in 2013, as part of the UK Creative People and Places Programme. The organisation has a successful track record of programming art, culture and creative activity for communities across Blackpool and Wyre. LeftCoast has always had a commitment to providing high quality arts experiences to all communities in the region, but in recent years has become increasingly committed to place-based and neighbourhood working and to programmes of work capable of achieving demonstrable social outcomes. The three-year NCLF funded Real Estates programme runs alongside the CPP programme.

LeftCoast has been undertaking area-based and co-commissioned projects since 2012-13 and has substantial experience of collaborating with partner organisations and communities. What is distinctive about the Real Estates project, in comparison to its previous work, is that despite the means of change being through art-based activities and interventions, the emphasis, for the first time, is on clearly defined social change objectives. The Real Estates programme plans to activate processes which, by the end of the third year, will support people in the communities of Flakefleet (in Fleetwood), Mereside and Hawes Side (in Blackpool) to feel less isolated, to have a more positive outlook and to communicate a sense of pride in, and connection to, their local areas.

The intention is also that the programme will deliver on three main outcomes as follows:

Outcome 1: Estate residents will feel less isolated

Outcome 2: People have more positive outlooks, feeling pride in, and connected to, their locality

Outcome 3: People having increased self-confidence to request or make the changes they want to see happen on their estate

Real Estates aims to decrease social isolation and increase personal and community agency through the development of collaborative arts-based activities in three residential areas of Blackpool and Fleetwood. LeftCoast has partnered with two housing associations which each work in different areas of Blackpool and Wyre, Blackpool Coasting Housing (BCH) and Regenda. The partners have a shared objective, which is to carry out a transformational three-year programme with a view to generating outcomes which are sustainable in the long-term.

Revisiting year 1

The placement of artists – as residents in Hawes Side (Blackpool) and Flakefleet (Fleetwood) was intended to offer two artists the opportunity to gain a first-hand experience of life as tenants of the local housing associations, as well as to become members of the community.

With this approach, LeftCoast was seeking to test whether artists, chosen and placed by the partnership team, could become embedded in the community, rather than being seen as visiting collaborators, and whether this approach could positively affect the ambitious objectives of the NCLF programme.

In the first year the appointed artists (Ocean Farini and Natalie Lee) realised an ambitious and varied programme of activities with a strong focus on social engagement, inquiry and facilitating and nurturing community involvement. This work successfully unearthed a series of important local issues. The artists each demonstrated a capacity to critically reflect on important social problems and to develop relationships with local people. The Artists each worked to open up spaces which could foster a sense of potential that things could be different. LeftCoast helped sensitise the artists to local political dynamics, histories and cultures and supported them to foster relationships. The importance of continuity and long-term process was recognised and Ocean was commissioned to work as an associate artist in year 2, the intention being that she would make eight return visits to Flakefleet in order to further develop the Front Door project. Currently, this is on hold until we can safely exit the restrictions of the pandemic.

In year 1 the projects aimed to build resourcefulness, resilience and the social capital that comes with experience of connection and involvement in self-determining activity. The Housing Associations that match-fund this programme (including the gifting of the houses) each reported that LeftCoast had demonstrated an infectious 'can do' attitude as well as a clear capacity to think about and work with difficulties as they arose.

We reflected in the year 1 report that honing the combined skill set and relationships between the resident-artists and wider community programmes would be especially important in supporting people to take their first tentative steps in local action.

Introduction to the year 2 report

In 2020 three artists completed residencies. Mark Borthwick completed a six month residency in Hawes Side from February to August 2020. Sarah Harris is completing a six month residency in Hawes Side from September 2020 – March 2021. Gillian Wood is completing a twelve month residency in Flakefleet from February 2020 – February 2021.

No specific public-facing activity has been undertaken in Mereside in year 2 of the programme because LeftCoast judged that given the pandemic restrictions it would be difficult to commission or deliver any activity that could add something distinctive to the conversations which were already underway between partners in 2020. LeftCoast has kept in touch with partners and Laura Jamieson has reported that conversations have continued between partners about the need for a community space. This aspect of the work has not been a focus for the evaluation team in year 2 and is not addressed in detail in the report.

Section 2 - Brief area-based case studies

2.1 Flakefleet

Area and context

Flakefleet is a small area close to the centre of Fleetwood. Prominently visible along one side of the area is Lofthouse of Fleetwood Ltd. the town's single largest employer (280 employees), and manufacturers of Fisherman's Friend lozenges.

Fleetwood expanded greatly in the first half of the 20th century with the growth of the fishing industry, and passenger ferries to the Isle of Man, to become a deep-sea fishing port. Respondents from the housing association, Regenda, sustained many of the residents of Flakefleet had worked in the fishing industry. The decline of the industry began in the 1960s, though fish processing is still a major economic activity locally. It was reported to the research team that very few people in Flakefleet now work either in the fishing industry or for Lofthouse. ICI, another former major employer in the area, closed its local factory in 1999 and unemployment adversely affects health and life expectancy in the town.

A significant proportion of the housing stock in Flakefleet is social housing which is managed by Regenda. Regenda has its own social programme which includes a regeneration and employment officer and links to programmes such as Active Lancashire which seek to support population health and wellbeing.

Much of Regenda's own work (monitored via its own KPI's) relates to helping people access training and employment. A GP-led local initiative, Healthier Fleetwood, has run since the summer of 2016 and there has already been some success in improving physical and mental health using a social prescribing model.

Revisiting year 1

The first year of this residency produced a programme of work which successfully developed and addressed the three programme outcomes. The work identified a range of important social and structural issues contributing to loneliness and has initiated programmes with several local partners to address these, providing a platform for future work. The lack of a large indoor space for community activity in Flakefleet, as well as the need for outdoor spaces that might allow people to congregate, were highlighted to Regenda. At the end of year 1 there was common agreement within the partnership about the appointment of Gillian Wood as the new artist because her skill, practice and local knowledge were felt to be assets to the programme and objectives.

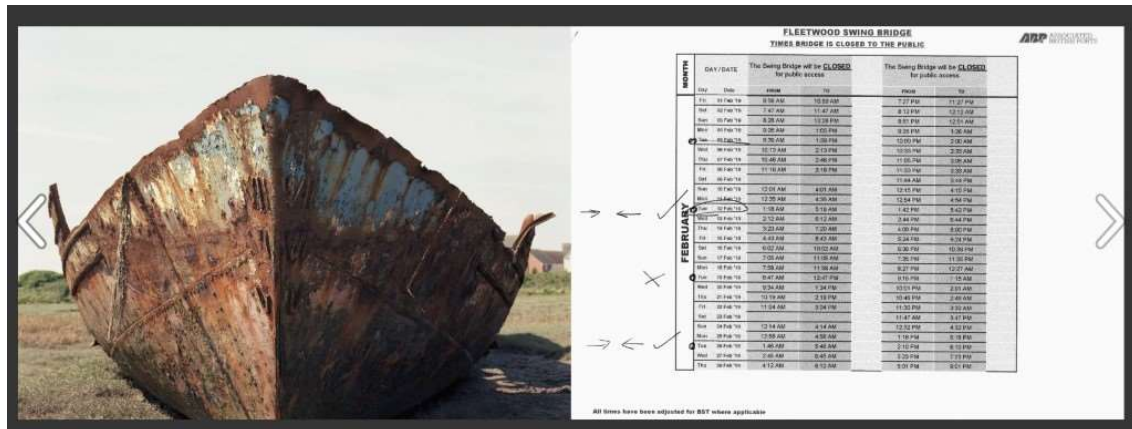
In year 1 Ocean Farini experimented with a weekly workshop which explored young people's interest in fashion and street wear and together the group developed a new fashion label (Front Door) which was launched at a celebratory event in September 2019. It was planned that Ocean's residency would be extended by three months up to December 2019 and that she would work as an Associate Artist for another 12 months, in order to extend some of the Front Door work developed in the first year maximising sustainability and legacy. In the end, largely due to COVID-19 this has not proved to be possible. However, the Front Door participants did receive a copy of the Front Door book which told the story of the project and

also included an essay by Guardian columnist Lynsey Hanley. The book is also on sale via Big Cartel.

Image 1 – The Front Door book



Image 2 – Images from the Our Big Green book



Ocean also produced a book about the project Our Big Green (see image 2 above) which celebrated the spoken word and photography of this resident group and also encouraged people to send a letter to those who hold power over the space to campaign for better facilities that would enable locals to use it more. At the beginning of Year 2, images from this book were hung in Affinity Shopping Centre which allowed residents to discover this new green space during the pandemic. During July – Sept, 240,000 people visited the shopping centre, estimating that 25% of people would have seen the images in the shopping centre, that's an audience of 60,000. We have had calls for requests for the Our Big Green off the back of people seeing this exhibition.

Year 2 Gillian Wood - artist and approach

Gillian Wood is an artist who comes from Fleetwood but has worked all over Europe as a costume textile artist for film and TV over more than 15 years. With over 10 years experience as a supervising textile artist for film, TV, Theatre and Opera, Gillian founded Hausfrau UK in 2018. Hausfrau is a studio for costume ageing and textile art based in the north of England, supplying the film industry with beautifully broken down and aged costumes. Being from the area Gillian knew about Fleetwood and how it was quite different to Blackpool. She described to the evaluators how the population is more stable and people tend stay in Fleetwood for longer. She has found the area to be friendly in a similar way to Ocean Farini.

Engagement

Gillian kept a tally of contacts and time spent with residents through which she was able to document that she had spent from 3–7 hours per week with residents, had spoken to between 7 and 64 people on a weekly basis. Overall, she has engaged more than 384 individual people (270 in Scrub Hub of which 21 were volunteers and 37 in gardening) at the point of reporting in the 10th month of the residency and many more have been aware of work such as the Scrub Hub through Facebook and other social media. The fact that these figures are so high in a year when we have experienced a global pandemic is impressive and reflects Gillian's commitment and ingenuity. Additionally, it highlights that the residency model, by its embedded nature, can continue to operate at neighbourhood level through extremely challenging times whilst other provision struggles to be flexible enough to respond.

Strands of work and activities

Gillian made a lot of connections through local organisations including Regenda, the Fire Station, Flakefleet School, Fleetwood Folk Club, Fleetwood Market, Fleetwood Museum, Fleetwood Cricket Club, Cardinal Allen secondary school, Affinity shopping centre, the Community Hospital Trust and Wyre Council. She used initial contacts and conversations to try things out and see what might develop from them. Some of the different artistic strategies used included: a short-term project with young people using the Princes Trust at the Fire Station, attending multiagency meetings, running a creative class for primary school children, seagull knitting and natural wool dyeing, making Halloween pumpkins and SOS van craft boxes, developing an exhibition with local people as well as working on her own garden and initiating conversations with neighbours.

In this short case study we present brief overviews on three specific strands of work, **The Scrub Hub, a planting project and Inside Out.**

Scrub Hub

Early in the pandemic Gillian set up the 'Scrub Hub,' seeking to recruit volunteers who were able to sew to help her make scrubs for medical professionals working during the COVID-19 pandemic. She set up a Go Fund Me page to raise money and her partner Martin also ran a backyard half-marathon to raise money for materials. Gillian said: "I have a lot of friends in the costume industry and I saw some of them in Leeds and Manchester doing this, so I decided

to start one here". She also had a personal connection to the issue as her sister-in-law is a nurse.

Image 3 – A Tweet from a nurse conveying thanks for the scrubs



Gillian reflected on the Scrub Hub in terms of the experience of doing something locally and being part of something that felt useful in the moment. A lot of the people who joined in the sewing told her that they didn't want it to end, they were proud of their work and many told her that they have taken photos of it and shared these with friends and family, as well as on social media. The project had made her consider the number of people who are stuck behind closed doors with skills they are currently unable to put to use and she thought about this in terms of the 'invisible skills' or 'buried skills' which exist in communities. She also considered this in terms of the history of the Flakefleet area, how

historically it's been defined by the skills of industrial labour and production and how since the advent of long-term structural unemployment there were many skills sitting unused locally. She says that :

The town is not wealthy and it tends to lack something playful and creative and the permission to act in this way. It's a hard working place and working town.

With more than 200 people expressing an interest in taking part, the high level of interest was slightly overwhelming. LeftCoast commissioned Tina Dempsey to support the project and this element of the work is written up under the micro-commissions section of this evaluation report. Gillian made a small film about the scrub hub in which a number of those who took part talked about who they were, elements of their lives, and why they had wanted to take part. The evaluation team did interviews with two people who took part in the project and these pen portraits – written up below - reflect the ways in which people had valued the opportunity the project provided to contribute in a practical way to a need which emerged in the pandemic.

Image 4 – Scrub patterns laid out



Pen Portrait - Sue McCabe

Sue has been sewing since she was 9 years old and worked for many years in a sewing factory after leaving school. She was a single mum to three children and says “sewing was always

something to fall back on and to see us through financially". For many years Sue did contract sewing making curtains and other things for businesses such as pubs. Six years ago she got cancer and had to give up her contract work. She describes how being ill led her into a deep depression. Many of her friends were still working and over the time she was ill Sue lost touch with many of them, losing her sense of self-worth and social confidence.

I just sat here and thought I have worked so hard and done all I can do for my kids and it's my time and I'm ill and I can't enjoy it. I used to sit here crying, especially in lock down, cause I couldn't even go out.

Sue saw a post about the Scrub Hub on Facebook and felt a strong urge to do something to give back to the NHS, saying *"I needed to do something proactive for the NHS staff after all the care they have given me"*. She says *"I can't give thousands of pounds, but I can give what I can do"*. Sue took 15 rolls of cloth over the period the Scrub Hub was operating, making 6-8 scrub sets at a time. Being used to piece work, she found she was able to produce the work quickly to a good quality.

After making scrubs for the Scrub Hub, Sue used the off-cuts to make face masks. She recognised that many people who needed masks to do day-to-day things like going into shops might not have the money to pay for them. She made more than 800 face masks. She started by distributing the ones she made through the local garage, in return for a donation to Trinity Hospice which provides end of life care. Later she made many more masks distributing them through Street Life a local organisation supporting homeless people. However, as well as getting the feeling of making a positive practical contribution to the pandemic, Sue found that doing a craft she had done since childhood allowed her to become lost in the activity because it was second nature to her. She found that the sensations and sounds of sewing helped break the cycle of thinking about her illness and that it also evoked happy memories of her children in younger days. She says *"I got these flashbacks of making things for one of the girls and it pushed me to want to do more."*

Since the scrub hub Sue has been taking on a number of small new projects. She has started to design dog coats which she plans to make and sell on Facebook. Taking part in a community project also gave her things to talk to friends about and improved her sense of self-worth and connection.

The sewing gave me a new lease of life. It got me thinking, I am still here, I am still working, I can still go out, and I can still see people. Being involved in something and doing something gives you something to talk to people about. It gave me the sense of, I can do this still, I can get on with life a bit. It gave me a bit of an outlook again. What I have is terminal. It can't be fixed. I've come to terms with that, but I don't want it to rule my life. Sewing gave me a purpose again.

Pen Portrait - Liz Girwan

Liz worked in Highways for 35 years and was a Highway Engineer for Highways England for 20 years. She retired from that role in 2017 and set up her own dog walking business. She says *"anyone who has a dog is never lonely, because everyone talks to you when you are with a dog"*. She did dog walking full time for two and a half years and spent lots of

time driving around the Blackpool and Fylde area. She sold the business shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Since this time, she has been working part time as a Lollipop lady.

Liz noticed Facebook posts about the Scrub Hub and decided she wanted to get involved. Sue says :

I do a bit of sewing and crafting, but they didn't need sewers, they needed drivers. I am used to driving from being a dog walker and I was at a loose end. One of the existing drivers had to return to work, so I took it on, and I really enjoyed it. I felt like I needed to do something if I could. I was playing a little role, but a worthwhile role. I needed to be out doing something and I used to look forward to it and it gave me an opportunity to chat to people on the doorsteps throughout the day.

Liz felt that this role has given her a sense of satisfaction and after finishing with the Scrub Hub she has been looking for another volunteering opportunity, saying...

I don't want to feel that I am coming to the end of my life. I want to feel that I am making a contribution to society, to give something, in particular to people who need it.

Inside Out

This idea grew out of Scrub Hub and Gillian used it to encourage people with no formal arts training who had discovered art through lockdown to develop their skills and contribute to an exhibition. The invitation read: Have you developed a creative skill, revisited a skill you fell out of love with or just didn't have time for anymore? We want to hear from you about your work for a new exhibition celebrating creativity discovered during lockdown.

Gillian recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown has been a testing time for many people who had to manage multiple issues around health, family, friends, household budgets and food, giving people lots of new worries. However, many people found creative ways to cope with the uncertainty by planting, making, baking, cooking, taking photographs, knitting and sewing.

When Gillian talked to people about this wave of creativity happening across the town many people didn't tend to think of these activities in terms of culture, tending to see that as something that only happens in the museums and galleries in large cities. She wanted to do a project which could shine a light on the wealth of creativity happening on the doorsteps of Fleetwood. She said :

We want to celebrate the rich skills of Fleetwood. Whether people have crocheted a blanket, grown a pumpkin, painted a picture or baked amazing cakes. The work doesn't need to be about lockdown, we want to show en masse what a productive and joyful town Fleetwood is. People don't have to be an expert sewer or a master baker, we are interested in all levels of creation.

Over time, LeftCoast has developed a relationship with the Affinity shopping centre which has gifted two, unused shop spaces to local organisations working with

communities. LeftCoast negotiated the use of one of these spaces to support this work. The idea was that it provides a visible presence for the project in the shopping mall, generating attention and interest in the work. Gillian intends to use the space to bring people together for creative activities and there is a lot of enthusiasm for this amongst people who are taking part. At present this isn't possible due to the continuing lockdown.

Image 5 – Inside Out workshop space at Affinity shopping centre



In 2021, Gillian and LeftCoast also plan to use space within the former community hospital building which is now the Community Hospital Trust. This building is being redeveloped as a community hub. The local foodbank is already located in the building and Regenda also plans to move its offices to the building.

The intention is to use the site to host a public exhibition later in 2021, showcasing paintings, sketches, sculptures, textiles and other products and artefacts created by local residents throughout the project, offering a public display of local creativity. In the meantime, an Inside Out Facebook group has been created and Gillian has used this to provide updates about the work as well as posting videos of creative activities. Kelly Garrick from Fleetwood Trust has commented on the value of the work led by Gillian in year 2 of the programme, suggesting Gillian and LeftCoast had been the "glue" bringing things together in a really difficult time, especially those who don't have access to the internet. In relation to the idea of an exhibition Kelly said

They were trying to create an exhibition in celebrating the successes of people finding the artistic skills that they've had joy in lockdown and having a way to be able to display this as well, they were looking for a place to create an exhibition' and that became the hospital building. So all these people during lockdown found they've got skills they didn't know they had. It's really that sense of pride of achievement and that sense of community together...and wouldn't it be wonderful for them to display what they'd done and have a meaning for it and a reason behind it as well. LeftCoast came to us and said could they use the hospital as an exhibition , well we nearly fell over ourselves, we were that excited about it, because it links in every single thing that we're trying to do, so it's about mindfulness and positive attitude and really celebrating successes with people and creating hope for the future, and that's what we're trying to create.'

Kelly hopes the collaboration with LeftCoast will continue. She wants to carry on bringing the community together, to help tackle isolation, help maintain mental health and create hope for the future:

It excites the whole Trust about what we could do working together in partnership. It just blows our minds!

Greenfields

Early in the project Gillian and her partner worked on the garden in the Regenda property they were living in, growing plants that they could distribute to local people. As she walked around the area Gillian would record where she went, any names, what people said, what she did, what she thought about and any ideas it gave her. She had noticed that front gardens are a popular place to meet and get to know the neighbours and wanted to do something generous which fostered a sense of conviviality. In March they collected trees from a local grower and planted them around the Greenfields area, asking some residents what tree they would like. Most chose a fruit tree. Talking about planting proved a good way to get to know people and she started to notice the number of people in their 50s and 60s who had health issues which made gardening difficult.

As conversations developed Gillian began to explore the possibility of making and installing some raised beds for older residents with mobility issues who wanted to do some gardening. Planting trees had proved to be a useful way of chatting to residents and Gillian used it as a way to make a bigger connection. She also grew things to deliver to residents who were stuck behind closed doors in lockdown. Gillian spent a lot of time liaising with Regenda and local residents about the plans and at the end of November the raised beds were completed. In her log Gillian noted

Went to visit Maureen and Christine at Greenfields to tell them that we are coming tomorrow to make the raised beds. I'm very excited about it that everything will come together because all the deliveries are happening on Saturday and it all has to work out ... it's madness. I'm going to be up until midnight sorting all this out, but I have to do this. It has to work. ... Maureen was so excited about the raised beds. I don't really think they could believe that they were getting them because they did look really good when they were constructed, very solid, very new and very professionally done if I may say so! It was a very rewarding experience. I was so happy to see them happy after months and months of

negotiating with Regenda. Finally something was happening. Maureen said she is already planning with her son he will come down and help her as to what she wants to grow. I think it's a good idea to concentrate on this area at Greenfields because then it becomes a sort of showpiece for Regenda so that they can see what is achievable and how it affects people. I can see that but Regenda don't see that yet ...I am looking forward to seeing this taking shape next year after all the really hard ground-work and frustrations about nothing ever getting done this year. I will make sure things are in place and that it is continuous and sustainable.

As is intimated in the above quotes there is a feeling that Regenda could have been more helpful with the raised beds and that there is still a way to go in terms of them seeing the value in the work generally, as well as becoming active partner. Gillian has also been liaising with Regenda and local residents about ways to improve the green spaces, about lines of communication and about taking action to build vegetable beds, plant hedges and flowers. They have also explored the possibility of developing a green community space in collaboration with Wyre Council.

Pen Portrait - Maureen Gillian

Maureen has lived in Greenfields for 12 years having relocated to the area from another part of Fleetwood. She said that in the main she had good relationships with her neighbours, but mentioned a series of tensions in the area between some older residents and people with substance misuse issues. She says in the main people “*look out for each other*” and she gave the example of providing ongoing care for her neighbour who is elderly.

She described how the relationship with the work began because Gillian had been in the neighbourhood and had introduced herself and had said “*I’m coming to look at the gardens and to see if I can help you*”. Gillian had begun by planting trees in some of the common land and Maureen had told her “*the kids will take them out and break them*”, but Gillian hadn’t been deterred by this. Maureen described Gillian as follows:

She is bubbly, she has a real great personality and she cares about people. She follows through on the things she says she will do. She explains things well and she is good at getting people involved. She has really put a lot into it, been reliable, listened to our ideas.

Maureen thought Regenda were “*alright really*”, although she suggested that “*they don’t do enough and hadn’t done much to help people in lockdown*”. She feels overall that Regenda “*could be more proactive*” and that there is a lot more that can be done to help the community work more collaboratively with each other and with Regenda.

Summary outcomes of the residency

Installing an artist in residence has:

- Mobilised local people to make a valuable volunteer contribution to the NHS during lockdown
- Countered isolation and increased connectivity through a craft based project
- Enabled people to recover craft skills they were not using and to develop new ones
- Engaged locals, and developed new communication channels at a time of lockdown

- Demonstrated to the Housing Association that better use could be made of outdoor public space
- Installed gardening infrastructure and adapted it for people with mobility problems
- Grown plants for local people, introducing sharing for community benefit.
- Provided a number of creative leisure and learning opportunities at a very challenging time.

2.2 Hawes Side

Area and context

Up to the 1970s Hawes Side was well known regionally as the home of the famous Blackpool Tomato, which was grown commercially in hothouses that covered much of the area. Producing these was the main source of income for many families in the area. In year 1 the work of the programme focused on Loftus Avenue, Powell Avenue and Quayle Avenue, with the resident artist's house situated in a former warden's dwelling in a sheltered housing area a short walk away. The house is quite cut off from the main estate.

The housing stock in Hawes Side is managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) and LeftCoast did not have an established history of working in this area prior to the project beginning. The programme team discovered in the first year that Hawes Side doesn't appear to have a strong place-based identity and there are fewer community assets in comparison to some other neighbourhoods in the region, including Mereside and Flakefleet.

Revisiting year 1

The first year showed that there were some challenges in building relationships across Hawes Side due to relatively low levels of social interaction between households and little experience and confidence in using public space and engaging in cultural activities. The resident artist's feelings of isolation in phase 1 offered a means of understanding and identifying with the experiences of some, especially older, residents. The experience of *living as* a resident has revealed some of the practical difficulties permanent residents encounter in communicating with the housing association about issues including repairs and maintenance.

The artist appointed for year two was Mark Borthwick. He was chosen because he has a very strong background in socially engaged practice and his practice is based on storytelling, the northern voice, foodbanks and re-purposing land. Mark left part way through the year and Sarah Harris was appointed in September 2020 and will work until March 2021.

Year 2 Mark Borthwick - artist and approach

Mark was artist in residence on Hawes Side, Blackpool from February 2020 to August 2020. Mark was appointed in part due to his skills as a storyteller. In an interview in 2020 Tina Redford noted how in the interview Mark had "*changed the mood in the room*", demonstrating his skills at engaging people and bringing ideas to life through words. The

LeftCoast team felt that, given the difficulties in generating broad engagement within the project in year 1, Mark's skill set might prove to be a really valuable asset for the project. Not long after Mark moved into Hawes Side, the first national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic began. This proved to be a really challenging time to be undertaking a residency in an area where many of the tenants were over 60 and hence shielding. This meant that Mark was unable to use his intended form of engagement of live storytelling in public settings. Nonetheless, he sought out alternative ways to engage with local people and to understand the issues of isolation faced by people in the area.

Mark's experience of the residency was a difficult one and eventually he chose to leave part way through the year. He felt isolated in Hawes Side and this was worsened considerably by the COVID-19 pandemic. He was very open to discussions with the evaluation team and some of the things he mentioned in these discussions included

I didn't expect it to be this hard to engage. We started at the start of lockdown and I hadn't made any relationships. It has been very frustrating and I had to change my plans dramatically.

For an artist whose chosen form is live storytelling, the lack of obvious ways to generate a live audience clearly made for a difficult situation.

Engagement

Mark kept a tally of contacts and time spent with residents through which he was able to document that on a weekly basis he had spent from 2–10 hours per week with residents and had spoken to many people on weekly basis. Overall, he has engaged more than 100 individual people in his 6-month residency, many on multiple occasions. The fact that these figures are high in a year when we have experienced a global pandemic is impressive and reflects his commitment and ingenuity.

Overall, 235 people were engaged in Hawes Side year 2 between April and December 2020.

Strands of work and activities

Mark did make a number of contacts through taking walks around the area, through spending time in his van which was parked on the street and which was often in need of maintenance. He used these times to strike up conversations with people who were passing and through this he learned quite a lot about the preoccupations of people in the area. However, in the context of the 2020 lockdown he found it difficult to foster more longstanding connections, as well as a sense of personal connection. One especially difficult thing for Mark was the sense that he had to change his artistic plans and proposals so completely in response to the pandemic.

Image 6 – Mark outside the community centre talking to a resident



Storyline

Mark's original plan was to use storytelling as a key facet of this work in Hawes Side. In response to the fact that many of his neighbours were shielding and didn't have access to new technologies, Mark developed an analogue way of sharing stories with them. He set up a telephone line which they could ring and hear a different story every day. Some of the stories were provoked by conversations with local people. People who rang the story line were also invited to leave a story or a thought to share with their neighbours. This second facet of the project was intended to provide a way for people who were isolated to hear their neighbour's voices. Mark also delivered some online story telling sessions to groups of local people who expressed an interest and these also encouraged conversation between people shielding who potentially had very little human interaction over lock down. However, technical issues meant that Mark was unable to know whether people were actually engaging with the storyline and he found this understandably frustrating.

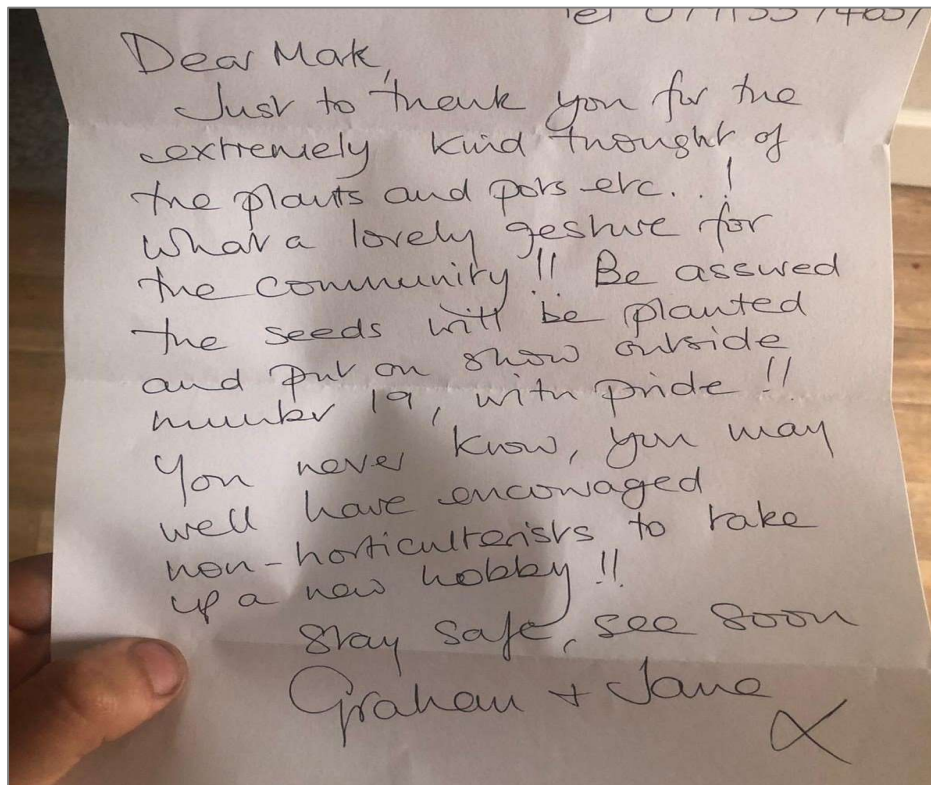
Image 7 – Flier for Hawes Side Story Line

<h1 style="font-family: cursive;">Hawes Side</h1>	<p>HI EVERYONE! I'M MARK, I LIVE ON BOSTONWAY, AND I'M A STORYTELLER!</p>
<p>TAKE A STORY! LEAVE A STORY!</p> <p>STORY LINE</p> <p>DIFFERENT EVERY DAY</p>	<p>BEING A STORYTELLER IS HARD AT THE MINUTE: HOW CAN I TELL STORIES, AND LISTEN TO STORIES, WITHOUT SPREADING GERMS?</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em;">532989</h1> <p>ALWAYS OPEN - FREE TO CALL</p>	<p>SO I SET UP THIS STORYLINE, AT 532989. IT'S FREE, YOU CAN CALL ANYTIME, AND THERE'LL BE SOMETHING NEW EVERY DAY.</p>
	<p>I REALLY WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORIES, JOKES, HISTORY, WHATEVER IS ON YOUR MIND. SO PLEASE CALL AND LEAVE A MESSAGE!</p>
	<p>LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING TO KNOW YOU, MARK B</p>
	<p>< LEFTCOAST Mark Borthwick Traditional Storyteller</p>

Hawes Side Garden Project

Another response Mark made as a result of his conversations with neighbours was to put together planting packs for the residents of Boston Way. These were intended to offer people another creative activity to do whilst in lockdown. The plants were all herbs and he told the story of each plant, also providing trowels, pots and compost for those who had no gardening experience. One of the aims of the project was that at the end of lock down the plants that have been brought on in houses would be planted into a communal planting area.

Image 8 – seed packets, flier and feedback letter from the garden project



Summary outcomes of the residency (6 months)

Installing an artist in residence has:

- Countered isolation and increased connectivity through gardening and creative online activities
- Demonstrated to BCH that better use could be made of outdoor public space
- Secured financial support from BCH for local gardening activities
- Developed a storyline as a means of sharing local stories in lockdown
- Grown plants and distributed trees to local people, introducing sharing for community benefit.

Year 2 Sarah Harris - artist and approach

Sarah Harris has been working for LeftCoast for several years in the role of Creative Community Activist and had already done a series of projects in Hawes Side since Real Estates began. In her previous role she had sought to make community connections with residents, and to experiment with different activities, finding out what residents want to do and then organising events and activities, encouraging people to get involved.

She became resident artist in September 2020 shortly after Mark Borthwick left, undertaking a 6-month residency. She has continued to use a relational approach to her work, seeking to develop connections with local people and to open up opportunities to explore forms of creativity and expression in their own lives.

Engagement

Sarah has kept a weekly tally of contacts in her journal, normally engaging between 6-20 residents in the course of the week from under 16s up to those in their 80s. There was a core group of older residents who she had multiple contacts with her over the residency and who became central to the work in Boston Way.

Overall, 235 people were engaged in Hawes Side year 2 between April and December 2020. This is a considerable number given the limitations imposed by Tier 3 in October and the second lockdown in November 2020.

Strands of work and activities

Sarah already had detailed knowledge about the area and already knew some local people. She has a sense of social confidence and inquisitiveness which is quite infectious. Sarah has been working through ideas with the Boston Way residents to explore what it is they want and need and how an artist can add value to the experience of living in Boston Way. Given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic Sarah has focussed her work on her neighbours on Boston Way, whilst developing possible digital concepts for engagement with the other streets. A key engagement tool has been a weekly digital art club that she has set up. Hence much of the case study focusses on this, although two other strands of work – the community allotment and augmented reality – urban jungle – are also written up as examples of Sarah's work which address broader local groups.-

A focus on Boston Way

Early in the residency Sarah was able to make links and join an existing meeting of a group of women who call themselves The Boston Birds. She described how she “*felt at ease straight away*”. Sarah noted that many people in the group experienced loneliness and found meaning in making things and doing crafts.

Sarah spoke to this group as well as other residents about her ideas about the area and the proposal for doing Lockdown Letters, dog bag dispensers, relocating the dog poo bin and replacing it with a library and murals, and doing an event for Halloween. A few weeks later the notes from Sarah’s practice diary emphasised how being part of the Boston Birds WhatsApp group had given her a way of understanding their everyday lives and concerns and the ways in which they use the platform as a way to maintain a sense of companionship and to provide small acts of care and concern to each other.

Being part of the Bostonway Birds has opened a crack into their lives. The WhatsApp messages begin at 5am, repeating the same mantra: Good morning and welcome to a brand new day, I managed to sleep until 4:30, hope you slept better. Make the most of your day, wash your hands and stay safe. The goodnight messages come in 6:30pm.

Sarah also emailed Councillor Critchley early in the residency. She found her to be supportive and she had a detailed knowledge of the area and was keen to do a joint project. She also made contact with BCH early on and mentioned this to the residents that she was working with in order that she could raise issues of concern to them

Told Karl & Annetta, I was meeting with BCH - these are the issues: Cut branches off - slippery for elderly, Recycling, Decking

In early discussions with BCH Sarah found them to be ‘by the book’ and felt that it might prove to be difficult to get things done with them and she might need to just get on and do things herself. However, in a meeting with Paul Dillon early in the residency he encouraged her to ‘go for it’ which altered her view of this relationship. Sarah spent a lot of time knocking on doors and having conversations with people. She also began collecting ghost stories from local women. But she noted

It’s very hard to have a conversation with people who are hard of hearing during this pandemic. They keep walking up close to me, with me backing away, like a Lancashire Tango.

Nonetheless, Sarah managed to develop a clear sense of local relationships and local issues and concerns. She felt capturing a sense of the different characters, views and lives in the area was important, because all too often residents in areas like Boston way tend to get seen in terms of an ‘overriding label’ based on the ‘type of housing they reside in’. This helped her rework her original sense of the area as somewhere that ‘people got put’ recognising that ‘people choose to live here’ and value many things about the area.

In response to consultation about activities with the residents, Sarah focussed on making ‘art packs’. Some of the group had never used a glue or a staple gun. Later in the residency she has also worked with another artist (Claire Griffith) around making a zine type colouring book

which could capture elements of the life of the area, including portraits of local people and stories about the area. Local stories were also gathered for an event at Halloween at which lanterns were displayed and ghost stories recorded by four residents were shared. Sarah also distributed hot pots. When the group were making lanterns, one group member told Sarah that she couldn't finish hers because she didn't have any scissors and didn't get her money until next week. Sarah recorded in her notes a realisation that some people's budgets don't extend to craft activities whilst she helped the resident finish her lantern.

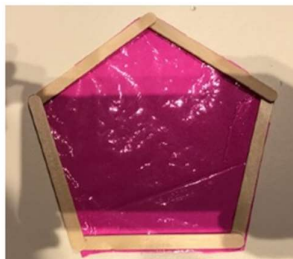
Sarah also made 40 wicker stars and left them by the library over a weekend and all were taken. One resident said she was posting some to Germany as Christmas presents and another said he had taken three and put pictures of his grandchildren in the centre.

Image 8 – Bostonway Art Club Lanterns

Bostonway Art Club: Lanterns



Step 1:
Lay 5 sticks over the template, then glue together using the glue gun, with a dab of glue at each end. Make 12 of these pentagon shapes



Step 2:
Use the template to cut out 12 shapes from the cellophane and stick to one side of the sticks, using PVA or superglue. Leave one shape partially glued, to access the lights.



Step 3:
Glue 6 shapes together. Start with one shape as the base and glue a shape to it one at a time. Keep in mind, that to fit the shapes together, the pieces should be at an outwards angle. Then do it with the other 6 shapes

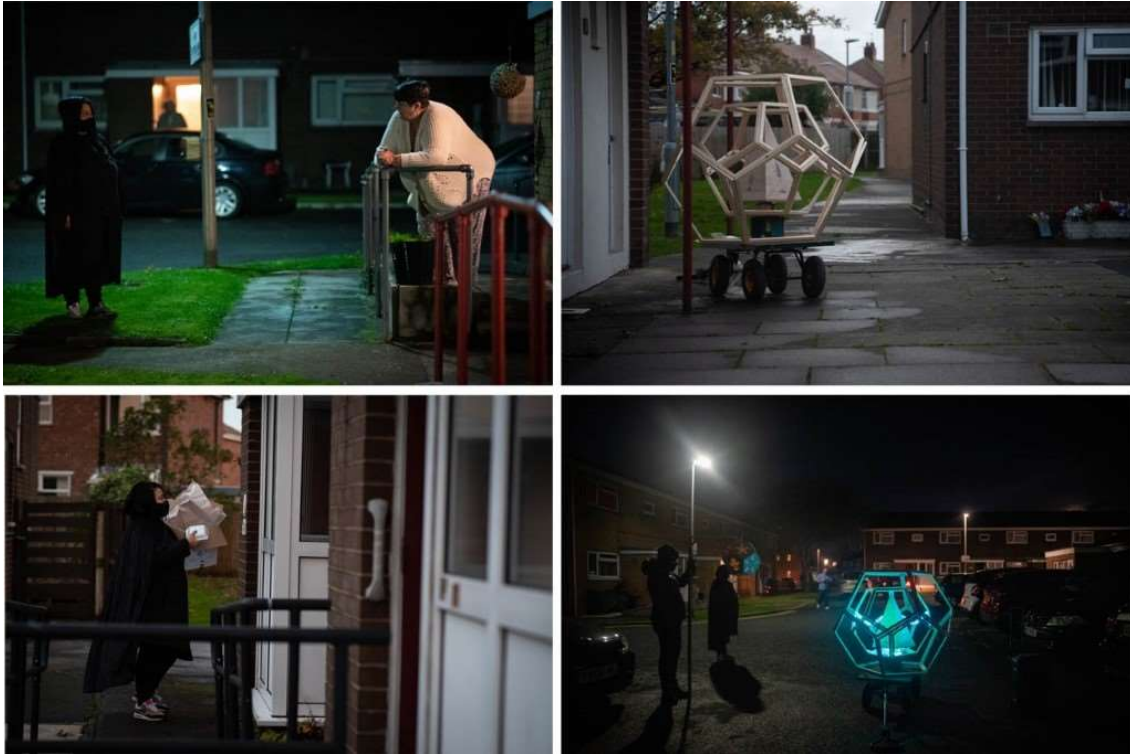


Step 4:
Glue the two shapes together. Put in your lights and switch on! Use the string to hang the lantern up. For a more diffused light effect, cover the tissue paper in PVA and lay over the cellophane.

After the Halloween event, Sarah set up a craft group inviting all local residents to take part, exploring ways in which she could usefully use her own skills and practices to support the group. However, Sarah has found it hard to move the group into considering doing more ambitious projects, saying

They know what they like, and they're sticking with that. For some it's confidence... [maybe]. It's going to be a difficult task to raise their ambitions around this art group. Really, actually, they like the connections, the chat, the company. The midweek making they do off their own backs is another thing to share and start a conversation.

Image 10 – Halloween event on Boston Way



By December Sarah noted that she was ‘starting to feel like a warden’. A lot of people were inviting her into their homes, at a time when some of them had only left their houses a handful of times in the previous 9 months and when many don’t even see their own family. She noted in her diary

They let me in, not because they like me, or they want the company. I’m providing a service. Pam once listed off group types that she wasn’t able to see, “but you can come in whenever you like”. She’d highlighted me as having an official role in the community.

During the final weeks of the residency, Sarah has interviewed seven members of the group and has co-created painted portraits. The group has been really excited about this work which seeks to represent the routines, repetitions and humorous exchanges of daily life for older women in the area, who get by and find ways to take care of each other, including in lockdown. The work will be displayed in the windows of the community centre.

Pen Portrait - Carol

Carol has lived in Boston Way for 8 years after locating from another Council property. She moved because she could no longer manage the stairs in the old property. She describes Boston Way as a “lovely area” and “everyone is friendly”. She likes the fact that it is a cul de sac, saying “we don’t get bothered”. Carol is heavily involved in local community activities including the Knit and Natter group, the craft group, and aromatherapy group and usually also attends the bingo. Since the pandemic began Carol has been in a WhatsApp group with

residents she usually socialises with and she says it's offered a way to stay in touch with people who have had to isolate.

Carol was quite critical of some of the earlier resident artists, but said that Sarah's approach had made a huge difference. When asked to explain how and why she said:

She knocked on the door and introduced herself. She asked if there was anything she could do and offered to set up a WhatsApp group of residents. She had us telling stories and got us making stuff. This stuff was good, but she also made it a bigger thing by organising a Halloween event with ghost stories. And she kept in contact everyday and took an interest in us all.

Carol explained that she and other residents were really keen that the next resident artist had a similar approach to Sarah. For Carol this was about Sarah's approach, her warm personality and the fact that she conveyed an interest in them as people and their wider lives and concerns and was prepared to join in groups and activities that were already happening.

Common Land

Sarah has explored turning the communal garden into a community allotment, transforming a currently unused and derelict space into a shared project. Several community members have contributed to shifting several tons of material and people reported that they enjoyed the opportunity to get involved and get their 'hands dirty'. Sarah has held some outdoor workshops planting seeds and painting bird boxes.

Community members have also designed a mural which Sarah plans to paint in the space. Sarah has also spoke to BCH about putting a gate into the space which links the space to the community garden, but this may need to be taken up by the next resident artist. She has also spoken to Blackpool Organics, which has beehives on the Booths building in town, about the possibility of doing something similar locally, in order to allow the space to be used to develop a local product and a micro-business.

Augmented Reality - Urban Jungle

This is a facet of Sarah's practice which she has been developing both in her own artistic practice and in relation to the residency. She describes how in lockdown she was quite bored and started speaking to BCH about using AR as a way to engage local people in conversations about place and place-making. Around Powell Avenue she has used it to engage young people, designing murals which also relate to AR environments. The murals act as a trigger to launch an AR in the same space. Sarah is using the idea of urban jungles to open up ways of thinking about how spaces might be redesigned. AR seems to be a tool which has potential to facilitate public conversation in lockdown.

Summary outcomes of the residency

Installing an artist in residence has:

- Developed a much more detailed knowledge of the assets, interests, lives and concerns of local people

- Mobilised local people to take part in creative activities in lockdown and developed forms of interest and creative activities that may be sustained by residents after the residency
- Encouraged new modes of reflection and communication in lockdown (e.g. developed WhatsApp group to foster care and communication with and between local people who experience isolation; and developed Lock Down letters which encouraged people to write to themselves or others and explored use of augmented reality as an engagement tool and creative practice)
- Countered isolation and increased connectivity through an online craft based project which provided creative leisure and learning opportunities at a very challenging time.
- Distributed resources allowing people to take part in and practice craft based activities, recognising and countering financial issues which might otherwise exclude them
- Enabled people to develop new skills
- Engaged local people and developed new communication channels at a time of lockdown
- Developed a community event, sharing food, self-made lanterns and local stories

Section 3 - Micro Commissions

Introduction

Alongside the main residencies, several micro projects have been commissioned to support the overall objectives of the programme, they consider the local context and experience of COVID-19, as well as supporting the work of the main residency artists. As the emphasis of this project is on social outcomes rather than art processes, these are presented briefly.

3.1 Henry Iddon – Lockdown Portraits

Henry Iddon was commissioned in March 2020 to document lockdown across Blackpool and Wyre. As a press photographer he had the permission to travel further from his house in a way that the rest of the nation did not. The commission offered an opportunity to capture visually the impact of the lockdown in the local area. LeftCoast felt that much of the pandemic narrative was emerging from big conurbations and cities, overlooking the smaller unseen communities. They also felt that the situation was changing so quickly, people forgot what they went through yesterday, last week or last month, recording it visually would help people to accurately recall this time.

Image 11 – Henry Iddon portrait of dog walkers in lockdown



3.2 Daniel Astbury – Brief Encounters

Daniel Astbury is a graphic designer and artist originally from Blackpool and now based in Myanmar. He was commissioned in March 2020 to co-creating a series of posters with local people around topics of interest to them through what LeftCoast described as a ‘democratizing the design process’. He wanted to work to open up the creative process based on a personal experience with each collaborator. As Daniel said,

It was important to me to hear from the people on the front line. I wanted to listen to what they had to say and promote their message to others. But how to get hold of them? As I pondered this... the doorbell went and I opened the front door to an NHS nurse dressed in full PPE.

During the weeks of lockdown Daniel was living in a family home where his mother and grandparents live and due to illness multiple key workers visited the house. His mother is recovering from cancer and has other health complications which require daily visits from nurses and other NHS workers, and his grandfather has carers visiting four times a day.

Over the weeks the conversations with the teams of carers and NHS nurses was incredibly insightful. Three of the carers who visited our family home during lockdown signed up to co create some designs to express their thoughts in the time of lockdown.

Amongst those he worked with was young carer Dom. Dom was planning to go into the army at 16 but suffered an injury. His sister advised him to train to be a carer instead, so he ended up on the front line of caring during Covid-19. He says he “loves his job, wouldn’t change it for anything.” The other thing he loves are his Air Force Ones. Daniel and Dom created a poster riffing off the recruitment poster for the army which makes it look cool. They wanted to make a poster which was personal to Dom but also like a Nike advert or recruitment poster for being a Carer.

Image 12– Daniel Astbury poster of Air Force One trainers repurposed around care



3.3 Sarah Harris – LeftCoast debates

Sarah wanted to make a response to the COVID-19 pandemic which allowed the possibility of sustaining a conversation with local people within conditions of lockdown. She developed LeftCoast Debates as a way of offering a response to issues and concerns she was hearing about in conversations with local people as well as those emerging online and in social media. The programme started on 8 April 2020 and ran for seven weeks. Each week delivered a different provocation which encouraged people to respond over Twitter. The topic each week was inspired by the responses from the previous week. It was intended to offer people an opportunity to voice issues, anxieties and concerns and to connect with an online community.

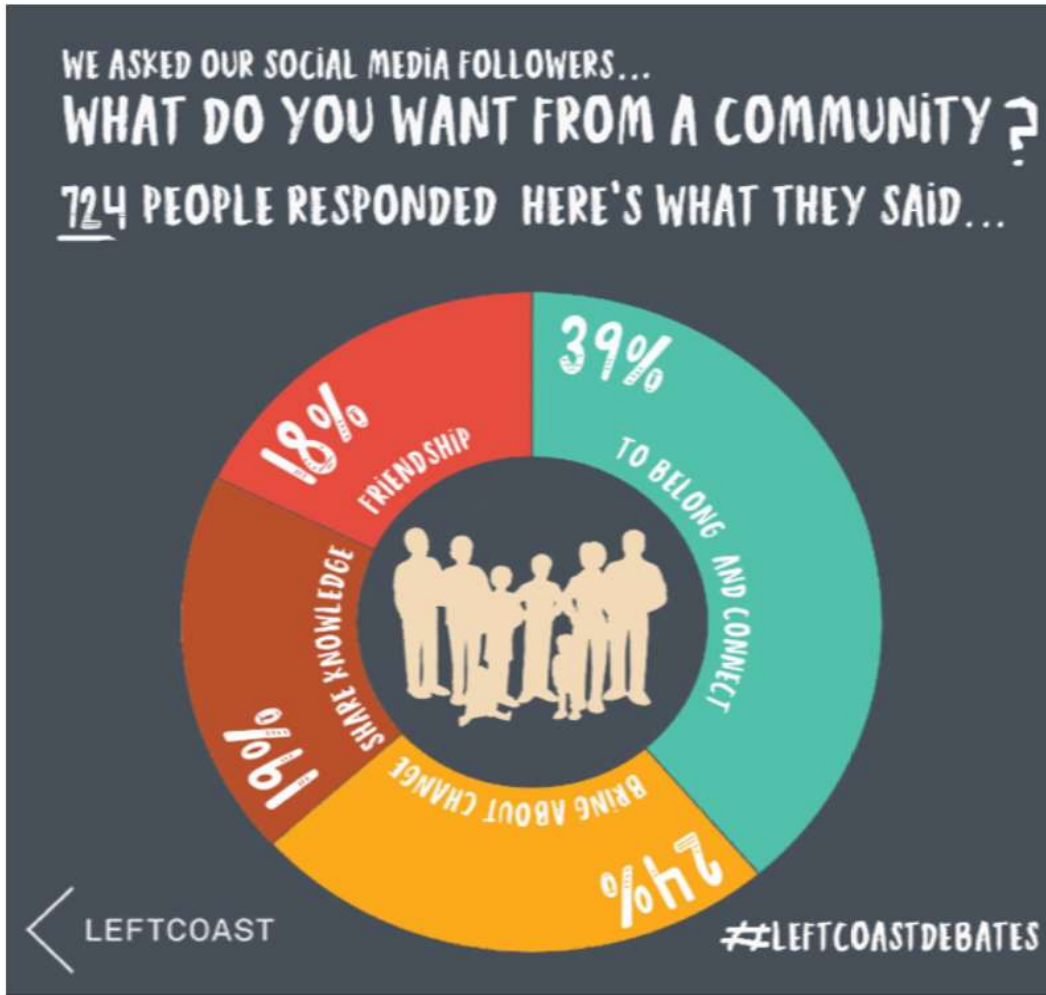
The project successfully engaged with local people online, addressing issues and concerns which were preoccupying local people at the time.

- How we will change our ways, reevaluate our values systems and calculate worth?
- How will coronavirus change the world?
- Resources to inspire you to take action during COVID-19.

- We ask how a sense of belonging has enriched your life?
- Tell us about the communities that you're a part of.
- How do we feel about the fact that many of our essential workers are among the poorest people in the UK?
- Tell us about the small, radical acts you have introduced to your life over lockdown.

The conversation was sustained via Twitter.

Image 13 – Screen shot of Twitter feed on #leftcoastdebates



3.4 Sarah Harris – Postbox Lockdown Letters

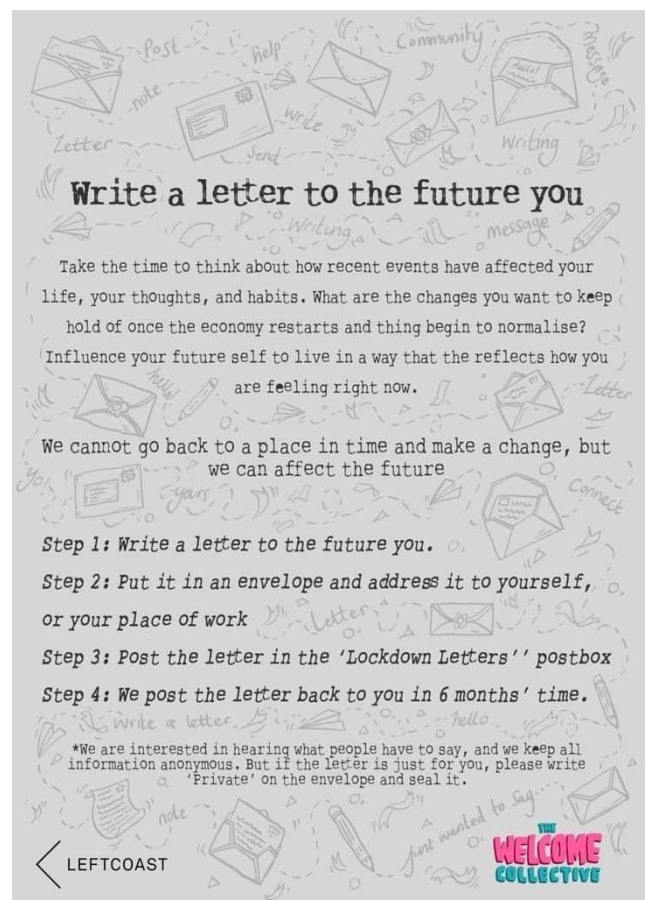
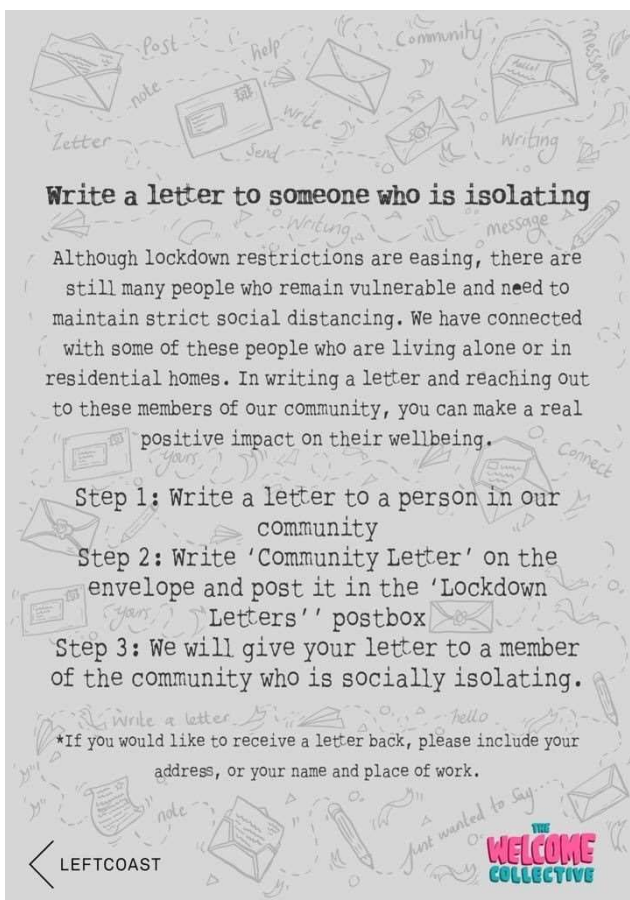
This project was delivered to support the work in Hawes Side. Sarah wanted to use the project to make connections with and between local people. Sarah thought that sending a letter could be seen as a way of putting something positive out into the world, that may have a positive effect on someone else. In writing a letter someone always has to imagine an audience for their ideas and considering how this might affect them. This involves a capacity for empathic

exchange. Some people chose to write a letter to their future selves which and they were encouraged to 'reenvisage' their 'future in a playful way. Sarah said
I want to create moments of magic and transcendence, of joined realities and perceptions that can enhance people's experiences of their local communal areas. Ones that open up possibilities for development of spaces and bonding within communities

A handmade postbox was installed in a communal area on two estates and accompanied by a set of instructions/rules. People could deposit 3 things in the postbox:

1. A letter to their future selves
2. A letter to someone who is still shielding
3. Something that you wish to share

Image 14 – Instructions for the letter project



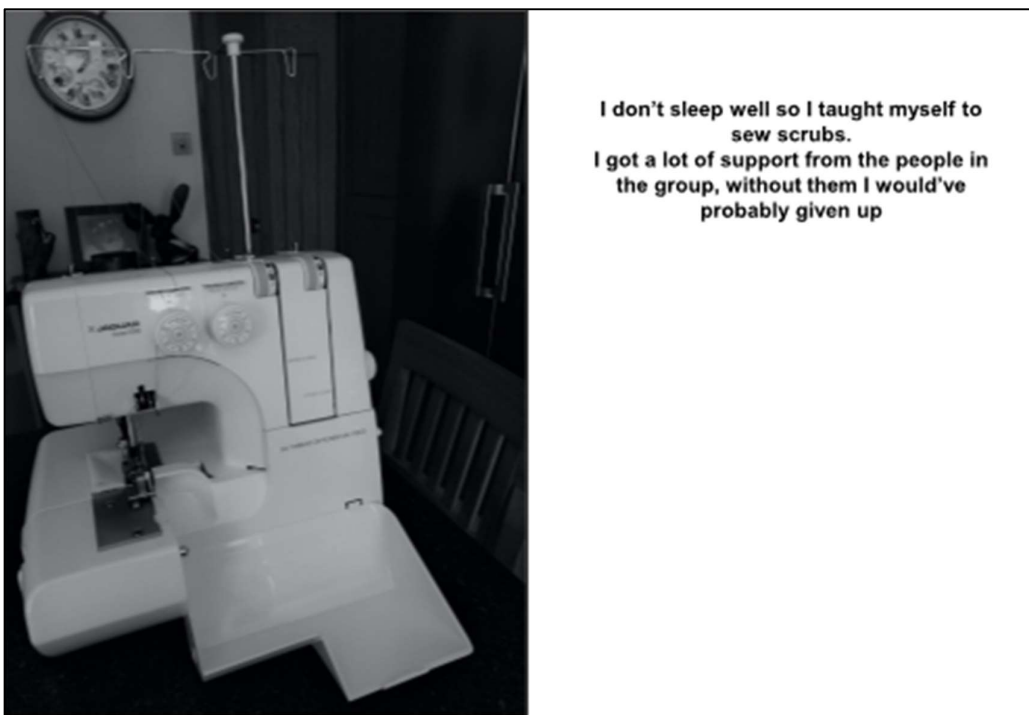
In this respect the post box was an important physical object, because it signalled the idea that existing communal areas in the estate could be reimagined and repurposed, relocating the dog poo bin and replacing it with a post box which encouraged communication between residents. Sarah also thought that the project imagined a creative provocation which was low risk and which encouraged new modes of communication at a time when many people felt more isolated than usual

3.4 Tina Dempsey - Scrub Hub Book

Early in the development of Gillian's Scrub Hub project going live more than 200 people had expressed an interest in taking part. LeftCoast realised that Gillian would benefit from some practical support with communications in the project and Helen Clay (LeftCoast's Communications Manager) offered the opportunity to provide an additional way of documenting the project. Helen said that "Gillian's project fulfilled a need to feel useful", both for her and for the others who took part. She recognised immediately that they could not work with 200 people and managed to identify sewers who could manage more capacity. However, neither Helen nor Gillian wanted to dampen people's enthusiasm for the project and wanted to give them an opportunity to keep in touch with it as it developed. As Helen said "You don't often get communities so clearly expressing that desire to help".

Gillian set up a FaceBook page which storied the project as it developed, showing pictures of the Scrubs, some of the people who received them, documenting the work of different people. Helen noted that although not all of the sewers were from Flakefleet, the project demonstrated that good things could be initiated and developed in the area and in that respect it could be a source of local pride. Alongside Gillian LeftCoast also commissioned artist Tina Dempsey to work with those involved in all aspects of the scrub hub from sewers to medical front line workers. Tina wanted to create a work that would share some of the stories, ideas and wisdom from those involved across the spectrum and who will probably never meet in person. Her book Handle with Care was created in a limited edition to share between this group of people.

Image 15 – image from Handle with Care – Tina Dempsey



Section 4 - Discussion - assessing year 2 in relation to the NCLF programme outcomes

Outcome 1: Estate residents will feel less isolated

This is an important programme objective and despite the context of COVID-19 some important learning has emerged in the last 12 months. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this a uniquely challenging year for the programme. The explicit objectives are focussed on initiating social change and for most of the last 12 months it has been incredibly difficult to develop activities which seek to bring people together physically for reasons of public health.

Fortunately, the three resident artists have each found their own ways to respond to the pandemic context and all have managed to initiate and sustain some contacts with local people. Given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic the efforts that artists have gone to in order to initiate and sustain relationships with local people should be commended.

Table 1 – LeftCoast engagement data for years 1 and 2

	Year 1 - 2019-2020	Year 2 - 2020-2021
Number of people receiving and/or delivering a community-led welcome Hawes Side & Flakefleet	642	1200
<i>LeftCoast Debates</i> programme – a series of online community conversations held in the first lockdown in 2020	NA	4,076
Digital Audience - reach	Not counted	49,148
Number of people participating in new social networks or activities	191	1367
Number of people gaining new knowledge and skills to affect changes in their lives	91	301
Volunteers drawn from estates	14	55
Volunteer hours drawn from estate	Not counted	779 hours

As the evaluators, UCLAN have been able to document the ways in which those who have taken part in and contributed to activities organised by the resident artists have felt more connected to society, happier within themselves and some have also felt able to initiate things for themselves. For example, the case study of Sue McCabe who took part in the Scrub Hub demonstrates the ways in which someone with serious and enduring health issues was able to use the experience of taking part in a project aimed at making scrubs for NHS workers in order to reevaluate her outlook on her situation, to discover a “*new lease of life*”, and to find a renewed sense of purpose in her life. This example demonstrates how involvement in a cultural project can give people a positive sense of contributing to an important public intervention and in this case also to the pandemic.

For many older people, some with health issues, this contribution allowed them to rediscover a sense of civic contribution which some felt had been lost or significantly depleted through illness or retirement. Stephen Frosh (2001) poses the following question about the ways in which we relate to the communities in which we live:

How does one imagine oneself in connection with a community, a culture or a nation... What is it that allows one to feel part of a social order, able to take up ‘citizenship’, neither excluded nor excluding oneself?... To be a citizen, one not only needs to formally belong somewhere; one has to feel that this belonging is real

Many examples from this NCLF-funded programme demonstrate this idea made by Frosh (ibid) that citizenship is both imagined and real. Taking part in a cultural programme can give people a renewed sense of themselves, can help them to reassess their own situations and can foster a sense of connection and contribution to their local community, as well as wider society.

1.1 Identify community views about the main social and structural mechanisms which result in feelings of isolation and the groups most and least affected by this.

All resident artists working across the first two years of the programme have been able to successfully identify community views about important social and structural issues. These issues have been wide ranging and have included: limited access to local green spaces, poor maintenance of local green spaces, limited career opportunities for local young people, that residential areas such as Flakefleet and Hawes Side and being targeted by high interest loan companies, issues of exclusion experienced by residents due to age and/or ill health and/or lack of community assets, socially irresponsible behaviour amongst residents or visitors to areas (e.g. dog faeces), food poverty, difficulty moving around the estate for people with physical health issues due to issues of urban planning and design, and issues in relationships between residents and BCH/Regenda.

The resident artist model has proved to be especially valuable and adept in tapping into local people’s issues and concerns. David Silverman (2007) makes the case that ‘understanding mundane life extends beyond listening carefully to how people speak to one another’, suggesting that ‘It also requires observation [and description] of fine detail’. The best practices developed in this programme to date have been able to develop forms of working and propositions which become intelligible through shared cultural resources and reference points. It is important that artists are supported by LeftCoast to handle uncertainty

and ambiguity in order to stay close to local people and work with them on their concerns and ideas.

1.2 Identify examples of strategies, initiatives, artistic proposals, networks or events which have led to reduced feelings of isolation.

The main strategies used by artists have been:

- The delivery of things to people's homes which allow them to grow plants or do creative activities whilst in lockdown (e.g. gardening packs and arts packs),
- Initiating socially distanced conversations and using these to understand and explore ways of addressing issues of community concern and interest (e.g. map making, storyline, Gill planters project)
- Using social media (e.g. Whatsapp, Zoom) in order to facilitate and sustain conversations with local people, to deliver creative workshops and to generate conversations between local people.
- Generating social interventions which respond to wider social situations and or identified needs (e.g. Scrub Hub, Greenfields) and seeking the support of local partners to install new community resources (e.g. raised beds).

Learning

The initiative and proposals which have proved most successful across the first two years in reducing feelings of isolation have been diverse, but all have had common characteristics.

Artist as resident - the most successful strategies and initiatives have all begun with a sense of the artist as a resident who takes an interest in the lives and everyday concerns of other residents in the area and their stories about the estate and its history and day to day life. In Sarah Harris's recent field log she noted "*I am starting to feel like a warden*". The artist as warden is something which may be worthy of further exploration in year 3. This is not to equate the role of resident artist to that of warden, though a good enough warden must have an eye to relationships as well as practicalities and take care of a complex living situation. Arguably, both the good warden and the good artist-in-resident use their nuanced understanding of the estate or housing complex to grasp what engages and motivates the people who live there to invest in the place where they live and develop propositions for action and change

Empathy - such an approach is predicated on a sensitivity and openness to local people's experience and feelings about what is happening in the area. This involves staying close to the residents as the work unfolds, which is incredibly demanding, not least because it involves inserting oneself in the issues, histories and activities which divide communities as well as those that bring them together.

Providing support and care - all resident artists have reported certain difficulties in maintaining this approach and the demands on LeftCoast to provide consistent care, support and forms of connection for artists working in this role should not be understated. LeftCoast is experienced at supporting commissioned artists, but this programme seems to place a high level of demands on artists due to the need to initiate and develop complex negotiations with

communities that form the basis for artistic interventions. When artists leave and others arrive, there is a clear need for high levels of support with materials, feedback, discussion, as well as brokering or mediating relationships with partners. It is psychologically, emotionally, and practically containing work, which helps to reduce the difficulty and anxiety of working in challenging contexts that often demand capacities and abilities not conventionally thought of as part of the artist's skill set.

Mediating trust – this conveys the ways in which the resident artist role involves skills such as emotional intelligence, empathy, active listening, not taking sides and providing careful feedback to different partners, as well as thinking and acting strategically and having difficult conversations.

Taking risks – many of the resident artists have experienced both the need but also the difficulties of taking risks. LeftCoast is developing a model of working that will enable artists working as residents within communities to get people to try new things, and potentially open up new opportunities for future working, but thus far many people have preferred to stay close to their own experience and interests and to take part in projects initiated, led and held by the resident artists. Nonetheless, the sense of making a small contribution to a shared project has been a highly valued facet of the programme and there are many examples of the ways in which this can positively affect people's a sense of personal agency and community connection.

Asking questions – Rancière amongst others has described how the value of artistic practices lies in its potential to intervene in and question existing ways of seeing and apprehending the world. In the best examples in Real Estates to date, we see that things that have previously been unacknowledged (e.g. debt, lack of green space, designed in atomisation leading to loneliness) are given space to emerge, be explored and brought into recognition by different partners. In a project with clear and identifiable outcomes, the value of the symbolic space opened up by cultural involvement should not be underestimated, not least because this is often the sort of space in which people who feel quite marginalised and silenced often take the first tentative steps towards forms of critical and imaginative engagement focused toward the idea of a transforming local relations and the living environment.

Making links and connections – it is clear that the programme objectives will not be delivered through the spontaneous and isolated success of individual projects, but from a capacity of different partners to think together about the issues and ideas which are emerging and how these might be acted upon strategically. This makes it imperative that as one artist leaves and another arrives that LeftCoast helps them to pass the baton in order that learning and connections can be carried forward. However, it also makes it imperative in year 3 of the programme that conversations with BCH and Regenda move on to considering how the accumulated learning from the programme can be acted upon by partners at the end of year 3 and if possible that an action plan be drawn up before the funded BCH project ends

1.3 Identify action strategies to extend positive effects and individual examples of success

The case studies in this report document the many ways in which resident artists have been able to initiate valuable steps in supporting residents to communicate their experiences and

needs, to raise concerns as part of public discussions, and to create platforms for residents to request changes and take action. It is difficult to provide a pithy summary of these issues because many are complex and nuanced. However, issues related to the design of the area and relationships with BCH and Regenda clearly have the capacity to make a positive contribution to reducing feelings of isolation in the future.

In year 1 we reported the following:

The work in all areas has unearthed feelings amongst residents that they are misrepresented as housing association tenants (as well as in mainstream media and public discourse). There is a sense that they are seen as the problem, with professionally designed solutions focussed on changing the behaviour of tenants, rather than addressing the social and structural context in which such problems emerge. Regenda and BCH have been open to such criticisms and have valued the involvement of resident-artists and LeftCoast as trusted intermediaries. They both report that LeftCoast continues to demonstrate an infectious 'can do' attitude as well as a clear capacity to think about and work with difficulties as they arise.

Senior figures in BCH and Regenda were receptive to these messages and continue to value the work being done within the programme as well as the intelligence, understandings and ideas emerging. The strengthening and extending of existing interpersonal relationships provide a basis for a growth and development community agency and local sense of self-confidence.

Inevitably this work will take time, but it has the potential to generate ripple effects across the networks of partners, which could help to generate new forms of social and cultural infrastructure in Flakefleet and Hawes Side. However, delivering on these strategic possibilities will rely on LeftCoast, BCH and Regenda considering the strategic implications of what emerges from the programme and deciding together how to act upon these. We argue that in year 3 and the longer term the programme should consider the following questions:

Year 3 of the programme:

1. How does LeftCoast maintain points of contact with the community as resident artists leave and others arrive?
2. How are the relationships, understandings and energies around individual projects sustained?
3. How are artists supported to maintain a focus on risk and exploration in the final year of the programme?
- 4.

Longer term considerations:

1. Is it feasible for LeftCoast, BCH and Regenda to provide an ongoing point of contact with the community after Year 3?
2. How might this be resourced?
3. Would an ongoing resident role (as artist, or warden even) be valuable and financially defensible?

Outcome 2: People have more positive outlooks, feeling pride in, and connected to, their locality

One of the issues the evaluators have discussed with the programme team during the latter part of year 2 is the unintentional implication of deficit implied in the formulation of this outcome.

Going forward we would suggest that Outcome 2 be reworded to: *People have opportunities to identify feelings of pride in, and connection to their locality, as well as to instigate and contribute to positive change processes.* Revising the wording of Outcome 2 might help to reflect important learning from year 2 of the programme which indicates the ways in which some residents *already* feel pride and connection to their locality; although many indicate that they lack spaces and forums in which to express these views. For example, some residents in the Boston Way area of Hawes Side have expressed to Sarah Harris that the immediate area around the artists house is friendly and supportive and for some the nicest place they have ever lived.

2.1 Identify and describe examples of people getting involved in specific activities which evidence pride and connection to the area and which exhibit new feelings of connection to others within the area

The work in Flakefleet and Hawes Side in year 2 has established meaningful, deep and ongoing inter-personal relationships (offline) with 50 local people mainly from two different age groups: young adults and middle-aged to older adults who have collaborated and participated directly in activities facilitated and led by the three resident artists.

In year 1 the programme of work benefitted from existing social settings and networks (pubs, food banks, churches, a local primary school, a community centre), something which has been much harder to draw on for much of year 2, although Gillian did collaborate with the YMCA on a project early in 2020. Nonetheless, the different projects developed in year 2 have provided people with opportunities to communicate things they like about the areas in which they live as well as things they'd like to see changed. Hence the programme continues to exemplify a commitment to generating the physical and psychological conditions in which new ideas and relationships can be developed, fostered and sustained.

Good examples include:

Scrub Hub – which gave people an opportunity to make a practical contribution to the pandemic gave a sense of an important and practical local contribution which was a source of pride. This was supported by Tina Dempsey's work which garnered some very positive community feedback.

Greenfields – gave people with physical impairments an opportunity to take part in gardening, which was also used as a way to explore issues related to local space.

Lock down letters – which used the idea of writing a letter as well as a new post box to reimagine an existing communal area in the estate to encourage new forms and modes of communication between residents.

Each of the above projects engages the subjects related to civic life and citizenship, some through civic space, civic development and planning, and others through social connection and social contribution. The project inevitably throws up questions about the systems and infrastructures which support and inhibit social and cultural life in communities and how these are best developed and supported. We will need to sustain our focus on these issues in year 3.

2.2 Identify and describe examples of people making better use/new uses of community assets (examples) and with what results (e.g. in terms of involvement in community, care of place, local identity and belonging)

The most successful artistic proposals in the first two years have given people opportunity and permission to do everyday creative things like going for a walk, joining a community Zoom meeting, Zoom art group or creative activity (e.g. Inside Exhibition), taking part in gardening or growing (either at home or in shared green spaces), meeting other residents (in a green space or online at the shop in the Affinity centre), having fun, taking part in training, sewing, providing support to each other and having a laugh. Access to these normal everyday experiences provides a vital sense of connection and attachment to a values way of life which has been unsettled in negative ways in the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, the most successful artistic proposals have sought to explicitly engage with and respond to the local context, working with existing cultural practices, exploring them, showing them in a different light or setting, stimulating surprise, and subsequently reformulating them to provide the basis for new and original artistic and/or civic proposals.

2.3 Which artistic proposals and activities have stimulated a locality-based cultural imagination?

One of the issues the evaluation team has discussed in year 2 is the different relationship between thinking and doing in these forms of artistic practice. Tim Ingold (2014) suggests

Ideas [like people] have lives. They don't just pop up, ready-formed, from nowhere. An idea is like a place you visit. You may arrive there along one or several paths, and linger for a while before moving on, perhaps to circle and return sometime later. Each time you revisit the idea it is a little different, enriched by the memories and experience of your previous stay.

Our view is that those artists who have found it easiest to formulate a liveable creative practice whilst living as a resident are those who tend to turn *doing into thinking*, as opposed to those who tend to turn *thinking into doing*.

Resident-based artistic practice develops a depth of knowledge of an area informed by an aesthetic and social sensibility. It is this that nourishes a capacity to take creative risks through artistic processes and proposals which foster personal and social connections, which commit to engaging with the everyday lives of the areas, as well as proposing new ones. In this way *doing* unfurls active relationships to the people and place, and *thinking* involves the development of shared modes of reflecting on the meaning people attach to these activities and what these convey about the preoccupations, priorities and politics of the community.

Outcome 3: People having increased self-confidence to request or make the changes they want to see happen on their estate

This is the most ambitious intended outcome of this project and clearly the most difficult to achieve, especially in the context of COVID-19. This is because many people have lost employment, income, as well as day to day connections with other people. It is also clear that the enforced period of isolation and the widespread feelings of a loss of control have led many to reach out to other people in their communities and to seek out opportunities to make a positive contribution.

All resident artists have held conversations with local residents and all have sought to use these to generate forums and spaces for people to do things together. Where it hasn't been possible for people to leave their own homes, artists have had conversations in people's gardens, on the phone, by WhatsApp, Zoom and/or have delivered gardening packs and creative resources to people's homes allowing them to take part in creative activities in their own homes. This emphasis on generosity, conviviality and opening and maintaining lines of communication has been important in giving people a sense of care and concern. However, delivering sustainable change will require systemic thinking and partnership action as we outline below.

3.1 Has engagement with the programme stimulated any new community-initiated actions, initiatives or activities? (Number - captured by LC above- description, area, who led by, number of people involved)

Gillian successfully garnered the support of Regenda for the raised beds and crowd funding for the Scrub Hub and Mark successfully negotiated with BCH to secure funding for his sheltered housing project and secured 100 trees from the Woodland Trust. Sarah has managed to generate support from BCH and local residents for the idea of a community allotment and some developments have taken place.

As we report in 1.2 above, thus far many people have preferred to stay close to their own experience and interests and to take part in projects initiated, led and held by the resident artists. Nonetheless, the sense of making a small contribution to a shared project has been a highly valued facet of the programme and there are many examples of the ways in which this can positively affect people's sense of personal agency and community connection.

One important example in year 2 has been in Hawes Side where a number of local people have had conversations with Sarah Harris about the appointment of the next artist due to start in April 2021. The older residents in Boston Way have been especially keen to influence and even be involved in the recruitment of the next resident artist.

This demonstrates the ways in which the availability of a resident artist over the last 2 years, has been seen and understood as a community resource which is valued by local people. Local people who have taken part in projects and accompanying conversations have recognised the outcomes they have delivered in the form of changes to the physical infrastructure and/or forums which people can contribute to. There have also been examples which have

demonstrated that levels of trust are very low amongst some people and artists need to be aware of this and to act on promises or commitments in a timely and consistent manner. Nonetheless, the experience of the first two years suggests the presence of green shoots of community agency which can be nurtured.

3.2 Do people who use and contribute to these networks report an enhanced sense of agency and aspiration?

A series of conversations have taken place between resident artists and people in different roles within BCH and Regenda, from Housing Officer in which the aspirations and desires of residents have been aired and explored and specific requests for resources made. All artists have communicated a level of frustration in the slow pace at which things happen, for example the speed at which resource requests are considered by the two organisations. This is important because at the end of the programme one important mode for facilitating and achieving change in these three areas will involve tenants' own agency in working more directly and collaboratively with the housing associations on issues of community concern.

Thus far the programme has unearthed important concerns about how some residents feel about how their local areas are managed by the housing associations and about the possibilities and practicalities of communicating with them to request and/or make changes locally. The artist-residents' experiences have shown that tenants feel they are not always spoken to in a respectful way and sometimes have to wait long times before receiving a response to a service request.

Implicit in achieving Programme Outcome 3 is the assumption that residents' requests for changes to their estates will be respectfully received and considered by the housing associations; and that there will be a mechanism through which decisions are communicated. For this reason, there is an important need for LeftCoast to have regular dialogue with BCH and Regenda in year 3 in which the strategic implications of what happens at the end of the programme are addressed and an action plan developed. This is because the partnership *with* the housing associations, will only produce sustainable change if it also influences their working practices at strategic and delivery levels. Having a publicly communicated action plan (and possibly also communication plan) at the end of year 3 will help. In addition, there needs to be a plan to carry forward learning from the programme in the future.

3.3 Which projects in which areas seem to have generated an increased sense of social or cultural capital and why?

Social capital tends to be seen in terms of the networks of relationships among people who live a particular area which support a shared sense of identity, values, trust, reciprocity as well as the tangible and intangible resources that support human contact and relationships. Cultural capital tends to be defined in terms of the social assets an individual or group can draw on and which provide systems of exchange, communication and power to act in pursuit of singular or shared goals. Many residents have been able to communicate their views and experiences about issues of importance to them and several simple but significant discussions have taken place about issues such as green space, acts of care, social isolation and opportunities for people of different ages.

As the programme moves into its third year it's important that the emphasis on strengthening and extending of interpersonal relationships and modes of communication between residents and from residents to BCH and Regenda is sustained and developed. There is currently limited evidence that residents in Flakefleet and Hawes Side are acting collectively to request changes independently of the programme and in many cases it's not clear that they feel confident to do so. However, the strength of the relationship and bonds between residents and artists offers a sense of what can be achieved in this regard and a stronger involvement of BCH and Regenda in conversations with the community in year 3 may help to activate community-led change and to explore the activation of new forms of community infrastructure.

Also, previous programmes of activity run by LeftCoast (since 2016) and the actions of community-led groups in Mereside, demonstrate that LeftCoast can successfully initiate programme which contribute to increased levels of self-confidence which are sufficient to take on project of greater scale and ambition, such as the development of a community launderette, which although stalled by the pandemic is intended to be delivered before the end of year three, future lockdowns permitting.

Section 5 - Conclusions

Year 1 of Real Estates unearthed a series of impediments to active citizenship in the sense of an absence of social and civic spaces where people can meet, socialise and discuss and argue about community activity. A number of the programmes of work developed in that year either relied on community spaces (e.g. a room in a pub) or sought to bring unused spaces into more active use.

Year 2 has demonstrated that many such problems have an intractable feel to residents and instituting change processes takes time, commitment, creativity, partnership and systemic thinking and acting. LeftCoast is experimenting with a new model of work and such experiments inevitably involve challenges. In year 2 COVID-19 has significantly added to these challenges, not least because the isolation experienced at different times by the resident artists in year 1 was worsened by the pandemic. However, somewhat counter-intuitively COVID-19 has also broken down some barriers and provoked some people into wanting to take social action in world in crisis and projects such as Scrub Hub have unearthed 'hidden skills' in communities and brought them into use.

An important ongoing consideration is that resident-based working is highly demanding and requires a high level of support from host organisations. The support roles provided by Laura Jamieson (Creative Engagement Manager) and Tina Redford (Artistic Director) and are, in our view, vital because they seek to reduce anxiety in the artists, allowing them to take risks, and providing practical support and local knowledge.

It has become clear in year 2 that scarcity of community resources, organisations, social spaces and networks is a huge challenge in Flakefleet and Hawes Side. However, the resident artists have fostered better relationships between local people, provided opportunities for dissent, provided people with the autonomy to make small changes in their situations and daily lives. As we have observed previously, this concern with responding to the local context

is in no way about LeftCoast conceiving its own role in simplistic terms as making things better. LeftCoast is committed to supporting artists to take on projects as shared concerns with local people and partners, paying attention to the ideas and feelings of local people, the work of partner organisations (including the Council, BCH and Regenda), and the wider work of the LeftCoast. One way of explaining the potential of these practices is that they open up opportunities for people to make expressions of shared public affect which provide a window onto 'structures of feeling' in the areas (Williams, 1977). These are valuable because they provide insight into how people feel about things in ways which may not previously been clearly expressed, but which nevertheless indicate what they take pleasure in, or are receptive to, or hostile to, and how ideas about community agency and change can be transmitted.

In year 1 participation figures were modest and the fact that these have been improved in year 2 in the context of the pandemic is impressive and reflects the commitment of the artists and the programme.

Regenda and BCH have each communicated a continued commitment to the work, as well as conveying a belief in the value of the ideas, knowledges and connections emerging. It will be interesting to see in year 3 whether the partnership can think and act strategically in order to ensure that the project delivers legacy that can be sustained.

LeftCoast have previously considered commissioning a social value analysis in order to supplement the qualitative research. It may be worth revisiting this in year 3 and considering this sort of data might be helpful for Housing Associations to show the value generated for residents in working in this way and possibly also to justify ongoing investment in this work, or ideas emerging from it.

Both independent Evaluation teams at UCLAN and MB Associates have seen Real Estates present itself as a distinctive approach to community development practice in the first two years, with some bright lightbulb moments and meaningful outputs for communities and partners alike. The evaluation reports for year 3 will also evolve and mature alongside projects with further reports gathering and expressing more community voice and creating more case studies demonstrating the impact of this work. Ultimately, Real Estates iterates that the creative act/the art is the universal tool for *unlocking greater communication* between people participating on LeftCoast's community projects, which in turn makes us all feel heard, more confident and less alone.

Section 6 - Ruth Melville Associates

Evaluation Headlines from LeftCoast's Annual Evaluation (November 2019 – November 2020)

- Even before COVID-19, Blackpool and Wyre faced a number of underlying demographic, health and economic challenges.
- The arrival of COVID-19 in the Spring 2020 presented a major challenge to LeftCoast in four broad areas – delivery, projects, partners and the evaluation.
- LeftCoast's structure and clarity of working arrangements meant that they were able to adapt and refocus relatively easily – the Programme continued to successfully deliver and indeed explored new opportunities.

LeftCoast continues to attract new participants for the arts from a broad section of the local population. They are doing this in different ways and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The available evidence shows that: Across LeftCoast's participants, 63% lived in areas which are among the poorest 20% in the country.¹ This rises to 89% for the Artist in Residence work.

- **The Programme is reaching into the poorest areas** in Blackpool and Fleetwood, among the most deprived towns in England.
- **During lockdown, LeftCoast are increasing that reach** into those more deprived areas which are often excluded from digital offer.
- **Participants continue to enjoy their experiences** and are inspired to do more.

The fundamental approach of the organisation is to use quality, socially engaged arts to show how this can deliver on the aims of partners, particularly in terms of social change.

We find that:

- **LeftCoast continues to build on strong partnerships with the local non-arts sectors** – particularly in health and housing – reflecting six years of excellent and committed work.
- **Partners continue to have faith in LeftCoast and the arts as a force for positive change.** The Programme's flexible response to lockdown reinforced this belief.
- **Specific work in Fleetwood has supported and strengthened the role of the arts** within partnerships for change, and strengthened the partnerships themselves.

¹ We use postcodes to calculate levels of deprivation mapping postcodes against the English Indices of deprivation 2019 (IMD). The IMD provides a measure of a broad concept of deprivation, made up of several dimensions, including income, employment, education and health deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime.

LeftCoast has made a real difference to local communities through the use of arts as a catalyst for the development of a sense of confidence and self-worth, developing or rediscovering skills, and increasing social connections.

We find that:

- **Participants' sense of worth increased through being involved in LeftCoast's projects**, and this was magnified further during lockdown when they felt they were helping the community.
- **Learning new skills, or revaluing existing skills, positively contributed to people's sense of themselves** and how they could both be creative and useful.
- **Projects increased connections and a sense of being connected** both for local residents and for artists.
- **A sense of connection was particularly important during lockdown** because of people's isolation from one another, but this had been an issue on the Estates prior to lockdown.
- **The Programme's work increased a sense of place**, and connection to place, among local residents linked to their agency to make a difference locally.

The LeftCoast model

This has been evolving over the seven years of programming and partnership building to date.

The approach relies on LeftCoast's skills and experience, and on the core principles by which they work:

- Genuine care and working alongside: They explicitly and politically position themselves to work alongside – **with, not for** people – and this brings a sense of "travelling together".
- Commitment to high quality socially engaged work, a standard which they challenge both themselves and their collaborators to meet.
- Taking risks and trying new things: politically and locally resonant work can feel risky at times, but it pays off. It attracts and enthuses participants, develops new partnerships, challenges assumptions and leads to longer term changes and deeper engagement with local residents.
- Blackpool and Fleetwood to its core: LeftCoast's work echoes Blackpool itself – the spectacle and 'glitz' alongside the real life of residents.

This shift brings real opportunities to multiply impact and value arising from the work. Partners continue, and replicate, the work started by LeftCoast. So the impact is felt not just by those who directly come into contact with LeftCoast or one of their residencies or commissions, but also by people who live and work with any partners or artists who use this approach.

For example, local housing association partner Regenda who co-fund one of the artist residencies has calculated the social value of some of the residency's work. This is agreed as a limited application, we were not able to factor in a lot of the full social value generated by the project and we are looking to extend this approach for the current residency. However, the overall figure of nearly £90,000 of social value² created was both impressive, and validating for the non-arts partners involved.

This is potentially a far more sustainable approach and offers the possibility of mainstreaming, and thus multiplying, impact.

The LeftCoast Team

As a result of the team's size and closeness they were able to adapt very fast to the lockdown reality and it was notable how much peer support was available to the core team. This is partly a result of the role designation, which isn't rigid but at the same time does have clear 'spheres of leadership', between for example the Director and the Programme Manager or between Director and Creative Engagement Manager. Decisions are discussed and shared from a very early point, ideas passed around and refined, rather than sitting in one area of the team alone. However, there is a clear sense of responsibility for certain areas and although naturally things do fall between the gaps, there is a warm and no blame culture within the team which means it is soon picked up.

This closeness and care – which extends within the team as well as without – is strongly fostered by the leadership of the Director.

There can be limitations to this sort of model as it is reliant on personal style, close contact and informal interactions. LeftCoast need to consider how to embed good practice that arises from instinct and intimacy with those coming into their orbit who might have different styles and where informal communication approaches are not possible.

The LeftCoast Partnerships

The previous Phase 2 evaluation found that the partnership work developed over the six years of LeftCoast was one of the strongest outcomes in terms of potential for long term impact. The new approaches developed were already beginning to show impact in a place where serious socio-economic and image challenges, as well as a weak and fragmented sector, had been further devastated by austerity and major cuts to services.

This was built on the history of trust and ownership of the process between LeftCoast and the local authorities and other partners. Despite Phase 3 beginning with yet another challenge to partnership – with the impacts of COVID-19 on timescales, priorities and finances – the trust developed has meant that LeftCoast has been able to flex their

² Total of £89,490.42 using a Social Return on Investment model called the HACT toolkit (<https://www.hact.org.uk/value-calculator>) data from events and specific clubs/activities on the Flakefleet Residency – 2019-2020. Calculations courtesy of Marcos Glaister, Regenda Homes.

approach with the trust and commitment of the various partners, calling on them as appropriate.

The approach taken by LeftCoast is to show the value of socially-engaged arts, in addressing partners' aims and outcomes. Delivering on community cohesion and resident agency when working with a social landlord; or community wellbeing when working with health initiatives; modelling or sharing approaches which extend audience reach and engagement when working with the local arts sector or using creative thinking to bring out the commercial potential of arts projects or their ability to change perceptions of place.

This approach is about an adaptation of communication and language, rather than a difference of activity – high quality socially engaged arts does deliver all these outcomes, it is just that it takes a particular communication style to help partners see how this work contributes what they need. LeftCoast's continuing success in keeping and enhancing existing partnerships and in developing new ones is evidence of the success of this.

The hoped for impact of this is the embedding of these approaches and ways of thinking into the mainstream practice of partners – multiplying the value of what LeftCoast alone can do. This is still a work in progress and will be tracked over the course of Phase 3.

Social landlords and the local authorities in both Blackpool and Wyre recognise the value LeftCoast can bring in changing perceptions of place, and building cohesion within neighbourhoods. The core of this partnership is through the REAL ESTATES programme co-funded by Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH – the social housing provider for Blackpool) and Regenda (the social housing provider for Wyre) along with significant investment from the National Community Lottery Fund's 'Reaching Communities' programme.

REAL ESTATES

Partners valued LeftCoast's ability to continue to deliver during lockdown, at a time when they needed to redirect nearly all effort to simply keeping people's lives going. The flexibility of the response – particularly the adaptation to work which helped give a sense of purpose during the pandemic, for example the Scrub Hub, or simply kept communities talking among themselves, for example the Halloween event and the letterboxes, or the story telling, were seen as fulfilling needs others hadn't time to fill during the crisis.

The initial outcomes of the partnership are clear: the funding itself, the work of the residencies, and the learning that arises. It is still too early to conclude on the longer term impacts, but it is clear there is still further work to do in ensuring the aim of multiplying the value of the work. As outlined in the LeftCoast model above, the full value of the work will lie not in the actions and outcomes of the residencies, but in the learning that emerges about how best to achieve pride and local connection, reduction in social isolation and enhanced agency in communities which are often left behind by services. Further work is needed in looking at how to continue the work (or more particularly the learning and opportunities arising from it) beyond the residency itself.

The Artists in Residence experience

Both artists found the pressures of trying to develop new social connections at a time of lockdown and social distancing hard and stressful, requiring a very creative approach, as Mark put it:

I learnt a lot about how to engage with people with an array of difficulties in a guerilla style.

Mark Borthwick, artist survey response

Both continued to make work, with Gillian developing the Scrub Hub as well as working with a sheltered housing area on green space and linking into a number of other making initiatives around in Fleetwood at the time. Mark had more challenges in linking to existing initiatives as the Hawes Side area is particularly divided and lacking in community networks, particularly in the immediate area of the house which is in an area of supported accommodation and faces many physical barriers to community. Noting the lack of internet access faced by many of his (mainly elderly) neighbours, he developed the Storyline dial in storytelling and story-gathering work. He began also to map some of the physical barriers and challenges to community through a series of maps.

In this way, despite (and to some degree because of) huge challenges caused by lockdown and knock on effects in terms of contact with LeftCoast staff and with other local artists, both artists achieved one of the key aims of the REAL ESTATE funding, and the point of the residencies which is to explore, investigate, and make visible to others the lived reality of people in these estates. This experience of isolation wasn't unique to Mark and Gill, and their position as artists in residence meant that they weren't insulated from it.

Although leading to interesting work and a lot of learning, in the end Mark didn't feel able to continue with the residency after the first six months, feeling that LeftCoast were not able to support him as he needed. There was a series of miscommunications which went alongside the challenges of lockdown, and these shouldn't be underplayed or written off as simply related to lockdown. This experience has affected the views of Mark on working with commissioners in this way

Working with Leftcoast has made me reconsider my model as an artist. I think it's unlikely I'd take up another residency like this. In a residency, you are at the mercy of the commissioning org for your housing, income, and work. If the org is poorly organized, this can lead to a tremendously stressful situation.

Mark Borthwick, artist survey response

LeftCoast has done a lot of reflection and asked input from both evaluators and used the learning to initially commission a short term residency from a LeftCoast member of staff who knew the area and the work – and the implications of the role fully, rather than embarking on recruiting another artist before there had been time to fully rethink what is needed to support artists in this way.

It is also worth noting that Gillian has not felt anything of this sort, and in fact felt very supported.

I am listened to when I talk about what I experience as a socially engaged artist, advised and supported constantly with my ideas. What is most important to me, is a feeling of safety and support, that I can express myself knowing I am supported in an intelligent and calm way, and that together we can always find interesting ways forward, share our knowledge, be curious and research, and as a team hopefully bring positive change.

My ideas have been discussed at all times with Leftcoast and they have always helped to form and improve things. They are great at helping to hammer down details and thoughts that are unclear by contributing artistic knowledge and helping me to reflect on my own thought process. Also they have been very supportive in suggesting places to look for inspiration as a socially engaged artist, broadening the pool of knowledge. Importantly, their support gives me added confidence to work with my practice in the community.

Gillian Wood, artist survey response

Some of this will relate to her having a different style of working – her approach is to try out ideas by doing and making, rather than thinking them through fully first. While neither style is intrinsically better than the other, it is notable that a 'do first' approach can be much more reassuring for funders or partners looking for activity to happen. This has been interesting learning for LeftCoast and will likewise affect the way they recruit and manage residency commissions in year 3 of REAL ESTATES.

LeftCoast has made a real difference to local communities through the use of arts as a catalyst for the development of a sense of confidence and self-worth, developing or rediscovering skills, and increasing social connections.

Artists are valued as a conduit for connection and thus valued. Small events enabled the community to come together and interact. The Doorstep Halloween project saw lots of people come out and connect, reducing feelings of isolation.

Conversation flowed freely, between residents, Sarah, Claire and I [artists and evaluator]; what would be a one to one conversation quickly involved others. "we'll have to start a petition for you to stay, Sarah!" Carol [local resident] shouted in her direction.

Doorstep Halloween observation

Participants comments also show that LeftCoast was helping generate a sense of connection that was lacking pre-COVID 19 as well.

It's just nice to have something different. The kids don't come around here. They don't come knocking on the doors. It's great to be outside, together.

Hawes Side resident, Doorstep Halloween observation

Though only one example, this effect is reported as typical of the Artist in Residence work in that it prompts further connections for example prompted by the conversations during the Doorstep Halloween event, one resident took a broom from his house and

began sweeping his neighbours' access ramp. Another man emerged from his house with a Dr Seuss Cat-in-the-Hat inspired hat on, which said 'goblin', much to everyone's delight. Another resident appeared clutching her dog, both wearing purple fluffy coats.

Artists also felt that connection was valuable for them, and highlighted the shared experience of lockdown:

Being able to talk to and connect with some really special people in a time when connection was very difficult.

... it was also a poignant realisation of how isolation feels, and has given me a greater empathy with residents who exist in isolation in the everyday.

Artist in Residence, Survey response

Through working with LeftCoast, artists felt a stronger sense of community, and of being valued by the community:

Community is something very important to me, and a sense of place. It is extremely fulfilling as an artist to be able to contribute and give back to society. LeftCoast have given me the opportunity to realise this and I feel a sense of being valued within the community.

Artist survey

Connection to Place

Generally, people living on the estates where LeftCoast's work is focused feel a sense of pride in place and connection to their locality. Before Covid-19, they reported being generally satisfied with their locality and having a good sense of belonging (both scored an average of 3.4 out of a maximum of 5)³.

When asked, participants in LeftCoast activities were positive about their local areas and said:

- There were people they could call on for help or to socialise with, although they didn't have much contact day to day with neighbours.
- They valued the sense of community, variety of amenities in the area and that it was peaceful.
- There was still a sense of more work to be done however. One participant in a LeftCoast project said 'a new found respect and appreciation for the area'⁴ would be the thing that most improved it.

³ A 'Happy-O-Meter' door to door survey carried out by LeftCoast which covered questions around people's feelings around isolation and 'sense of belonging' to the local area, and gained 121 responses. In these questions, 0 meant 'not at all' e.g. 'not at all' satisfied with the locality and 5 meant 'completely'.

⁴ Happy-O-Meter survey respondent.

- Others said they would welcome more activities similar to the ones they had engaged in, with one adding 'have more funded activities and groups, as certain areas of Blackpool are overlooked just because they are not considered the worst⁵.'

LeftCoast projects have highlighted both people's pride in their area and a positive sense of place. In conversations sparked by Doorstep Halloween, participants discussed between themselves having lived on the Estate for a long time, and were keen to compare notes. The residents showed a depth of knowledge about Blackpool over the past few decades. Some knew about the town even if they didn't identify as being from there, though they may have lived there for a while.

Projects also introduced people to new areas in their locality as this comment from a Fleetwood resident demonstrates:

I've been blown away by this little area during lockdown. We didn't know it existed till we took our daily walks and it has certainly helped our 'mental health'. It's a wonderful resource for Fleetwood residents.

Comment about Our Big Green, LeftCoast project.⁶

Previous work of LeftCoast is beginning to show dividends in a pride in place leading to agency, for example the Mereside 'Mafia' community group, set up through LeftCoast's Phase 1 work, remain a strong voice for local people. During lockdown, Mereside Mafia was one of the leads in 'Corona Kindness community hubs', supported by Blackpool Coastal Housing. Maggie Cornall, Director of Operations at Blackpool Coastal Housing, says Mereside Mafia 'has really taken ownership of the estate and the community'.

This report utilises excerpts of two separate evaluation reports to meet the criteria of the NLCF report.

These documents can be found in full, in the supporting documents folder that has been up loaded to drop box.

⁵ Happy-O-Meter survey respondent.

⁶ See <https://leftcoast.org.uk/our-big-green/> for details of this project carried out by Artist in Residence Ocean Farini, which highlighted a forgotten and unloved large green area near the Flakefleet estate

Section 7 - Year Two Data

Number of people receiving and/or delivering a community-led welcome in Hawes Side & Flakefleet. Due to Covid Welcome activities were severely restricted however SOS bus enabled a flurry of distanced engagement in Oct/Dec	1,200 Participants
However we moved on line with some of our community conversations and ran a LeftCoast Debates programme that had an audience of :	4,076 Audience
Number of people participating in new social networks or activities Participation Scrub Hub = 270 Gardening project = 37 Hawes Side stories =231 Green fields and Flakefleet up to June = 48 July – Sept FF figures = 171 Sept figures HS = 41 FF Oct – Dec = 165 HS Oct – Dec = 194 Get Dancing submissions - 28 Inside out FB live workshop views - 182	1367 participants
Because we moved our activities online we got a wider Digital Audience: (The difficulty with these stats is knowing the demographic, although targeted and promoted at a local audience, digital means that this audience can be from anywhere and the reports don't give us a very localised demographic, other than North west, of which 95% of participants were) Views of get dancing on line - 46000 Views of inside out FB - 3148	49,148 reach
Number of people gaining new knowledge and skills to affect changes in their lives There are actively 60 people that Gill is communicating with in Flakefleet around the gardening development and the Inside out exhibition, learning new skills and developing projects for their community. 6 people actively attending the Art Zoom Group in Hawes Side each week 41 volunteers learnt new skills/under went training this year 12 community volunteers supported developing the community garden in Hawes Side 182 people have viewed online workshops on facebook.	301
Volunteers drawn from the estates ITV – 10 volunteers worked with artist on ITV ident for 2.5 days SOS – 10 volunteers trained. Scrub hub – 31 actively engaged and supported training collectively. Hawes Side community garden - 4	55
Volunteer hours in total (Minimum wage £8.21 x779 = £6,395 volunteer time)	779 volunteer hours

Project Targets

	Target	Year 1	Year 2	Total to date
Number of people receiving and/or delivering a community-led welcome H&F	492	642	1177	1819
Number of people participating in new social networks or activities (H,F&M).	410	191	1367	1558

Number of people reporting they feel less isolated.	228			
Number of people with improved community mindedness, e.g. volunteering.	316	14	55	69
Number of people using existing or new community-based assets, e.g. green space, launderette	1920	95	342	437
People are confident to raise their funds and programme their events.	24		33	33
Numbers of people accessing LC activities and reporting an increase quality of life and build confidence.	300			
Numbers of people gaining new knowledge and skills to affect changes in their lives.	300	91	301	392
Number of people reporting increased self-confidence accessing partners/partner services: housing associations/children's centres/parks & recreation, Council	200	45	12	57

Targets we are struggling to record at the moment are:

- 1) **Numbers referencing that they are feeling less isolated.** Covid has made that a really difficult question to ask this year as everyone has become isolated due to the restrictions.
- 2) **Volunteers/community mindedness** – All of our large scale community engagement projects have been stopped this year, and this is where we would ordinarily utilise volunteers. We have a duty of care to volunteers and therefore have only encouraged volunteering where it is outside and in low numbers, or can be done at home. This has understandably had a knock on effect on our targets here. However if you look at the hours in which the volunteers have given to the projects it's almost 780 hours. So they have dedicated considerable time to supporting community work.
- 3) **Number of people using community assets**, again Covid has limited what we can encourage people to participate in, and all the participatory events in community assets have been cancelled this year so our numbers are considerably lower than we'd expect them to be at this point in the project. However as detailed in the report, new online community assets have been created during lockdown, some by Real Estates, or by partners, that residents have actively engaged in and the outside space and gardens have been assets that have been utilised and developed.
- 4) **Number of people accessing LC activities, reporting and increase in quality of life and confidence.** The nature of Covid has meant that our evaluators have not been able to sit in and observe any sessions, we have also not been able to get detailed

participant evaluations back, we've sent them out but completion rates have been really poor. You'll see there are cases studies that have been undertaken via phone interviews that would suggest that participation has a very positive effect on participants. However we're struggling to gain large scale feedback which would enable us to see if we are hitting our objective more broadly or not.

Section 8 - Finance

Request for extension, clarification on figures.

In year one we requested a carry forward of £10,420 of BIG funding, this was matched by carry forward from other partners therefore the total was £20849. (This is referenced in the second tab of the year one BIG financial report)

In our year 2 report, we are looking to carry forward £25,209 (total) this year of which only £5,822 is BIG funding.

Due to Covid restrictions, this year the larger scale engagement programme activities have had to stop. This is where a lot of our match would have been used. We have had a small amount of staff savings due to the Community Activist going on secondment to become and Artists in residence and this is where most of our BIG underspend is from. The Real Estates Artists in residence have continued, we adapted the Welcome programme to a digital programme and the SOS bus engagement and the evaluation of artists in residents has continued.

Our proposal is to carry forward, £32,770 of the underspend from year 1 & 2, so that we can extend the programme delivery till March 2022 as detailed in the email request of the 26th January. We have confirmation of further match – in kind use of the Hawes Side house for a further three months - that will be required to enable this, as well as confirmation from our partner funders to extend till this time.

Detail of proposed spend during 2022 is in the BIG financial report tab 3. We are not requesting any further money from BLF just utilising what is already approved, over a slightly longer period.

Section 9 - Next Steps – Year 3

Informed by year 2 reflection we are proposing the following for our final year of delivery of Real Estates.

Flakefleet

We have spoken to Gillian Wood about remaining in the residency to the end of December 2021. This will provide a consistency to that residency, a enable her to realise some of her ideas, which have been restricted and or postponed due to the pandemic restrictions. We're really pleased that she has agreed to this and she has already started the year with energy and enthusiasm - creating a community newsletter to help her keep in touch with everyone, despite lockdown 3.

Hawes Side

The same offer was given to Sarah Harris as Gillian, but Sarah decided she wanted to be closer to home. So will complete her current residency to the end of March and then hand over to someone new. Directly informed by the reflections within this report we have advertised a new brief considering the idea of a warden – or Concierge is how we've currently termed it. (Brief included in drop box)

We will appoint in March and get this person in post asap to run to March 2022, subject to approval of NLCF delivery extension. BCH have agreed the extension to the use of the house.

Mereside

This conversation has progressed, all be it slowly, with partners over the last year and we believe that there will be movement on delivery of a pop up community space in Mereside, once restrictions are eased, of which we will be a partner within that conversation and we hope will enable us to trial the community laundrette idea that still seems to be a community need.

Get Dancing

Get dancing has been developing online and since December we've had over 100 contributions to developing a new social dance for Blackpool. This programme will be delivered, within our Real Estate communities in Blackpool over the summer utilising out door space to ensure people are safe and able to participate. This will culminate in a showcase event in October, we're just not sure what that will look like yet, within the ever changing circumstances we're working within.

Spareparts Fleetwood

Although it looks as though the festival of transport will not be able to take part again this year we have confirmed with our partners that a durational (three day) installation will take place. This is an installation that will happen outside for a prolonged period, which will enable us to facilitate social distancing we will support the community engagement element of this installation, including with our Real estates community in Flakefleet.

Recruitment of Community Activist post.

Sarah Harris has communicated that she would like to step down from her Community Activist role, (which she is currently on secondment from). Therefore we have advertised a 1 year post to fill this vacancy. (JD in drop box.) We have managed to cover this role with freelancers and the team during our quieter winter period, but as we come into summer and have a large programme to delivery this role will be key in supporting delivery of all the above, including providing regular on the ground support for the Artists in Residence.

Once in post this role will provide us with more capacity within the team to address the relationship development between residents and their housing providers as well as help with sign posting to other community assets, we believe both these areas will enable us to create a positive legacy for the project, on top of all the newly developed assets.

Despite the challenging year, we are really proud of what we have achieved and are looking forward to building on what we've learnt to take this project through to its conclusion.

Feb 2021.