

# STOKE-ON-TRENT

UK CITY OF CULTURE 2021

Together We Make the City

Summary October 2017



STOKE-  
ON-  
TRENT-FOR  
CITY-  
OF-  
CULTURE-  
2021



STOKE-ON-TRENT  
CANDIDATE CITY



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

Stoke-on-Trent has been shortlisted to be UK City of Culture in 2021. Since the announcement we have been working hard to make our bid yet more compelling: building our cultural programme, developing new partnerships, strengthening our relationships with leading artists and cultural figures, building our budget, refining our vision and laying the foundations for a transformational impact on local communities. This is a summary of our full and final bid.

## Why Stoke-on-Trent?

# We are Stoke-on-Trent

A city of craft, a city of graft  
and a city of innovation.  
A city of collective endeavour.

A place for doing and making in new ways, where people make art from dirt and send it across the globe.

Stoke-on-Trent embodies the industrious, innovative spirit of the United Kingdom of the past 250 years. In 2021 we will celebrate our historic place as the craft capital of the UK and the World Capital of Ceramics. In creatively reviving this legacy, we will engage and inspire people from the city, the country and the world.

Stoke-on-Trent is at a crossroads – one of the fastest growing economies in the UK and record business growth but outdated perceptions are holding us back. UKCoC will demolish those perceptions, taking the city back to its place on the national and world stage.

2021 sees completion of major private developments and our £52m capital programme, transforming the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, the city centre and key heritage assets across our six towns, ready to showcase the new Stoke-on-Trent.

Bidding for UKCoC has galvanised our creative sector, generating momentum and energy to secure delivery, all our Cultural Forum partners are committed to realising a shared vision for the city.

The people of Stoke-on-Trent are overwhelmingly behind the bid – 79% supported our bid.

2021 is a year of anniversaries. Stoke Repertory Theatre will celebrate 100 years, the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery 40, Staffordshire University 50 and Trentham Gardens 25. 2021 is also the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Wedgwood, son of Josiah and inventor of what we now know as photography.

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## What Will Happen?

Our Vision for 2021 is

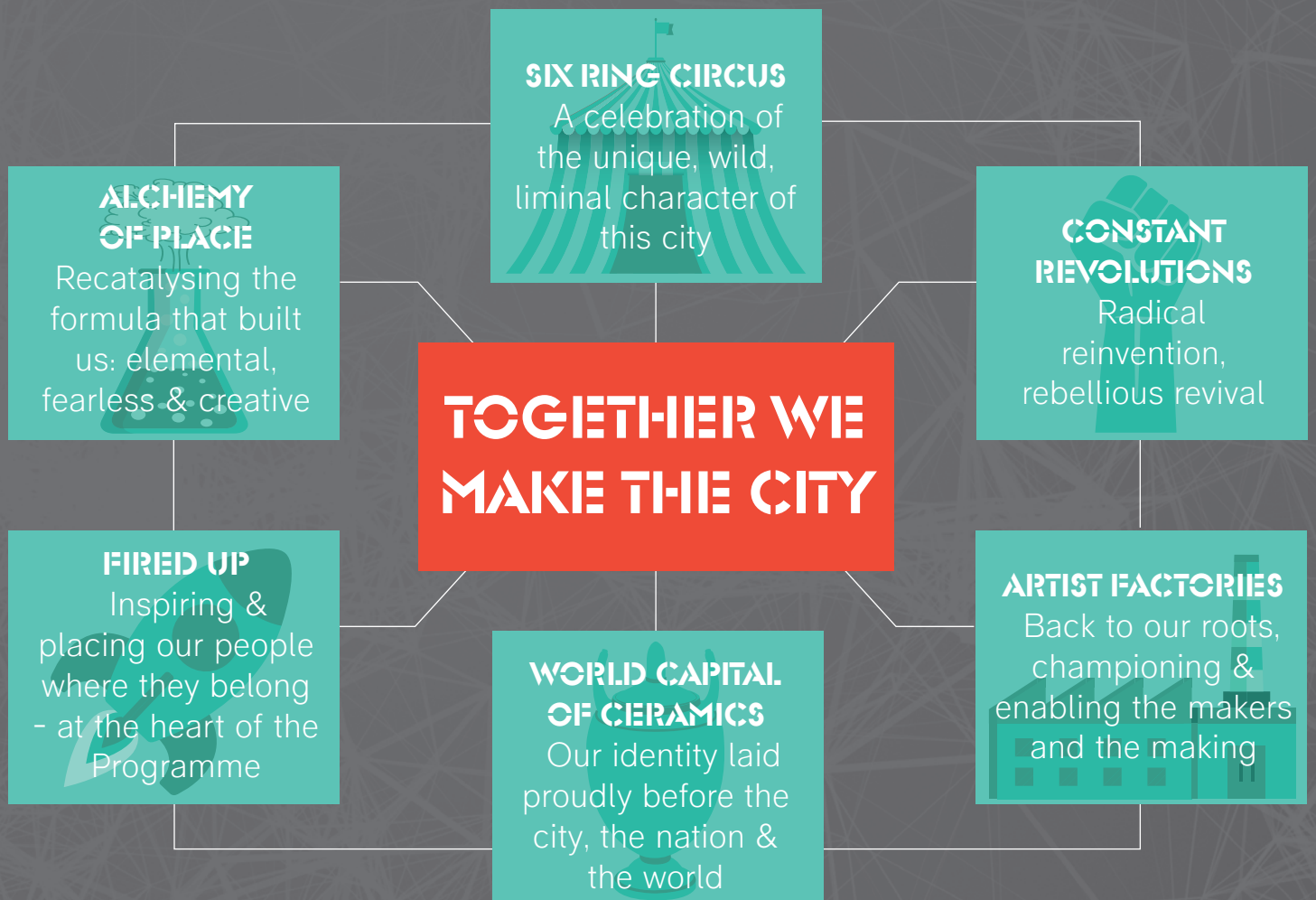
# TOGETHER WE MAKE THE CITY

Making is what we do. Together is how we do it – collaborating, innovating and creating with common purpose.

UK City of Culture is our opportunity to share our way of doing things: bringing artists, makers, audiences and cultural organisations together from across the UK and beyond to the city, to make, and make things happen, the 'Stoke Way'. Our bid is rooted in the character of the city: creative, skilled, practical, innovative, ambitious, and rough-edged. We know how to deliver.

We have reworked our themes to better showcase our unique fusion of six towns in one city. Like our towns, our themes are connected. They are unique yet intertwined. Like a gyroscope, our themes spin out from our vision, capturing and generating the energy of people and of place.





Our Programme is ambitious, ground-breaking, diverse and deliverable. Our cultural organisations will work with national and international artists, building on our existing strengths to impact across the city and the UK. Here are just a few examples of the highlights of our programme:

**The Artist Factories** – Art and artists take over the remarkable workspaces that define Stoke-on-Trent, delivering large scale works of art impossible to miss – ensuring the city is bursting with art and makers for the whole year.

**Who Threw That?** – A global blockbuster ceramics exhibition, drawing on the best of national & international collections and linking them with the city's contemporary artisan producers

**The British Ceramics Prize** – A new national award for ceramics curated by the British Ceramics Biennial to join the Turner Prize, Booker Prize & RIBA Stirling Prize as one of the nation's key accolades.

**Revolutionary Theatre** – Brilliant new productions created by major national and international theatres – part of the 360 Network. Toured to take the city's 2021 programme to the nation and the world.

**Circospectacular** – An international festival of circus on a spectacular scale, building on Circus250, celebrating the area's own Philip Astley ('the father of modern circus'), generating an annual festival/marketplace for international circus arts as its legacy.

**Cast of Thousands** – We recreate the population of SOT on a smaller scale. A clay army for the 21st Century mobilised to go out into the world. Digital components embedded in key figures will enable the creators to track their figures as they travel.

**Youthtopia** – Children and young people dream big in a major programming strand involving: dance, digital, live orchestral music, circus skills, spoken word and visual projections. They'll be running the show, taking over the programming, marketing and management, the lot.

**The Water Between Us** – The greatest long-distance waterborne celebration of culture ever seen in the UK. Celebrating Stoke-on-Trent's role in building the nation's canal network. Outdoor arts will light up the waterways of the UK.

**The Art of Made** – Our digital programme will deliver year-round labs and festivals celebrating and exploring making in the 21st century and will become an annual international event.

## Where will it happen?

Activity will take place across the city and its six towns, embedding the programme in our whole community. We will use our fabulous theatres, museums and venues but will also place art in the unexpected and unusual places created by our remarkable heritage. Our programme will tour the country, bringing Stoke-on-Trent's city of culture to the nation.

## Who will be involved?

Stoke-on-Trent City Council and its partners will establish SOT2021 Ltd, a charitable company, to develop and manage the year, its build up and legacy.

Whilst SOT2021 Ltd will lead the programme, it will work with cultural organisations and the Cultural Forum to ensure that the city's artistic community are fully involved in, and benefit from, the year as the nation's cultural capital.

Our community advisory network (SOTCAN) will both develop and advise on programming. Our UKCoC will be a genuine 'people's programme'.

Culture Makers, our volunteer programme will involve thousands of local people in supporting and enhancing the year

Whilst grounded in this remarkable city, our UKCoC will have a national and international reach. Partnerships are already in place with major national cultural institutions across the whole of the UK and conversations are ongoing with national and international cultural figures.

## How will we know it has worked?

Our two Universities, Keele & Staffordshire, have already established a Cultural Observatory to monitor and evaluate the progress we are making in: the economy, health & wellbeing, education, participation, community engagement, skills and tourism.

The bid sets out where we envisage a permanent legacy for UKCoC in our city in terms of cultural content, capacity and knowledge, community engagement and capital projects. The partners in the bid are fully committed to delivering this legacy

## What happens next

The bids have been submitted and the judges are visiting. In early December the Stoke-on-Trent UKCoC team will present our vision and programme and we expect a decision later that month.

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