

## £3.5million funding grant awarded to Creative Community projects

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The University of Birmingham has been awarded more than £1,200,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for a creative urban economy project as part of a larger £3.5m investment in three national projects set to support communities and their creative economy.

In the largest investment yet into the Connected Communities Programme, the AHRC have chosen to support three new projects that aim to transform the way that our communities interact with the cultural and creative economies of the UK.

Every day millions of people in the UK do something creative, from painting to studying their family history to singing in choirs or producing photographs or artwork. These creative individuals, and the community activities that develop around them, play a crucial role in sustaining the vibrancy of the UK creative economy as well as enhancing quality of life. These three new projects look to research these intangible cultural assets, the importance of different forms of connectivity within and between creative communities and their role in local economies, community cohesion and broader well-being.

The three AHRC-funded projects, which involve a wide range of creative, cultural and community partner organisations and researchers from a wide range of arts and humanities and other disciplines based at fourteen universities across England, Scotland and Wales are:

- University of Birmingham – connecting communities in the creative urban economy
- University of Manchester – understanding everyday participation and its role in creating social and cultural value
- Cardiff University – understanding the value of the creative citizen

Professor Mark Llewellyn, AHRC Director of Research explains:

*“The Birmingham project indicates the innovative ways in which research teams are engaging with the Connected Communities programme and the opportunities it offers for enhanced collaboration between research organisations, creative businesses, cultural sectors, local communities and networks.*

*“This award will play an important part in enabling arts and humanities researchers to enrich the contexts of their work and the contributions it can make to an understanding of creativity in our everyday lives.”*

The University of Birmingham’s is leading a £1.2m Connecting Communities project in collaboration with the University of Salford, Birmingham City University, Liverpool John Moores University, Cardiff University and City University London. Project lead, Dr Phil Jones from the University of Birmingham’s School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences explains:

*“A whole range of different organisations and individuals work to bridge the gap between the creative impulses of a community and the wider creative economy. This project is a fantastically exciting opportunity to look at how these bridging processes operate and the ways in which they can be improved for the benefit of communities as well as UK competitiveness.”*

The projects will involve active participation by local community groups and, will help to shape, generate and engage with community initiatives so as to offer potential benefits in the future to policy-makers and cultural and creative businesses.

Connected Communities is a cross-Council Programme led by the AHRC in partnership with four other Councils – the EPSRC, the ESRC, the MRC and the NERC that aims to mobilise the potential for increasingly inter-connected, culturally diverse, communities to enhance participation, prosperity, sustainability, health & well-being by better connecting researchers, non-academic organisations and communities.

In addition to traditional academic outputs such as conferences, books and journal papers, the three research projects - which will last from two to five years in duration - will support a wide range of public events, exhibitions, creative media products as well as a series of artistic outputs.

As well as funding from the AHRC, the individual projects also involve co-funding from a range of organisations including the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Creative Scotland.

### Notes to Editors

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At the core of the Programme is research to understand the changing nature of communities and community values, in their historical and cultural contexts, and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life. This enhanced understanding will also inform the development of more effective ways to support and catalyse community cultures and behaviours that contribute towards flourishing communities and addressing key economic and societal challenges. Engagement with communities at all stages of the research is a key feature. The programme seeks to connect research expertise, knowledge, understanding and approaches relevant to communities from across the research base to develop a more holistic understanding of community life.

The Programme has three cross-Cutting themes:

- Understanding changing community cultures and histories and patterns of connectivity within and between communities.
- Connecting research on communities
- Connecting research with communities and relevant organisations, stimulating research partnerships & enhanced harvesting of research for the benefit of communities

For more information, please visit the **Connected Communities site (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/connectedcommunities.aspx>)**.

**Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC):** Each year the AHRC provides approximately £100 million from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, from languages and law, archaeology and English literature to design and creative and performing arts. In any one year, the AHRC makes approximately 700 research awards and around 1,100 postgraduate awards. Awards are made after a rigorous peer review process, to ensure that only applications of the highest quality are funded. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk) (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk>)

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