



Counter Culture

Collaborative Innovation Project for
Cheltenham Economic Recovery

“ Culture holds up a mirror to our tired streets, squares, buildings and civic spaces and asks us to look again at what makes them special. It gives people the opportunity to connect their individual stories with collective narratives, helping to make their place feel like home. Culture provides people with ways to explore, celebrate and create shared experiences. It brings depth and meaning to people’s experience of a place, highlighting the extraordinary in the ordinary.”

- *People, culture, place, The role of culture in placemaking, Local Government Association*



Counter Culture facilitates the innovative partnership of local businesses, communities, cultural producers and digital innovators on a project to repurpose empty retail units across Cheltenham.



Why Counter Culture?

- Maximises Cheltenham's USP as a leader in cultural and digital innovation.
- Provides a creative tool for Covid-19 economic recovery and high street regeneration.
- Facilitates deeper business partnerships and community links.
- Strong alignment with Cheltenham Borough Council's *Place Vision*, Cheltenham Borough Council's *Recovery Strategy*, Cheltenham Culture Board's *Cultural Strategy* and the GFirst LEP's *Industrial Strategy*.
- Opportunity to place youth engagement and the retention of local talent at the centre of the project.

How will Counter Culture work?

- Creatively repurpose empty retail units.
- Produce varied and engaging pop-up cultural activities, accessible to everyone.
- Create new reasons to visit the town centre.
- Increase the profile and sustainability of cultural producers, community groups and local businesses.

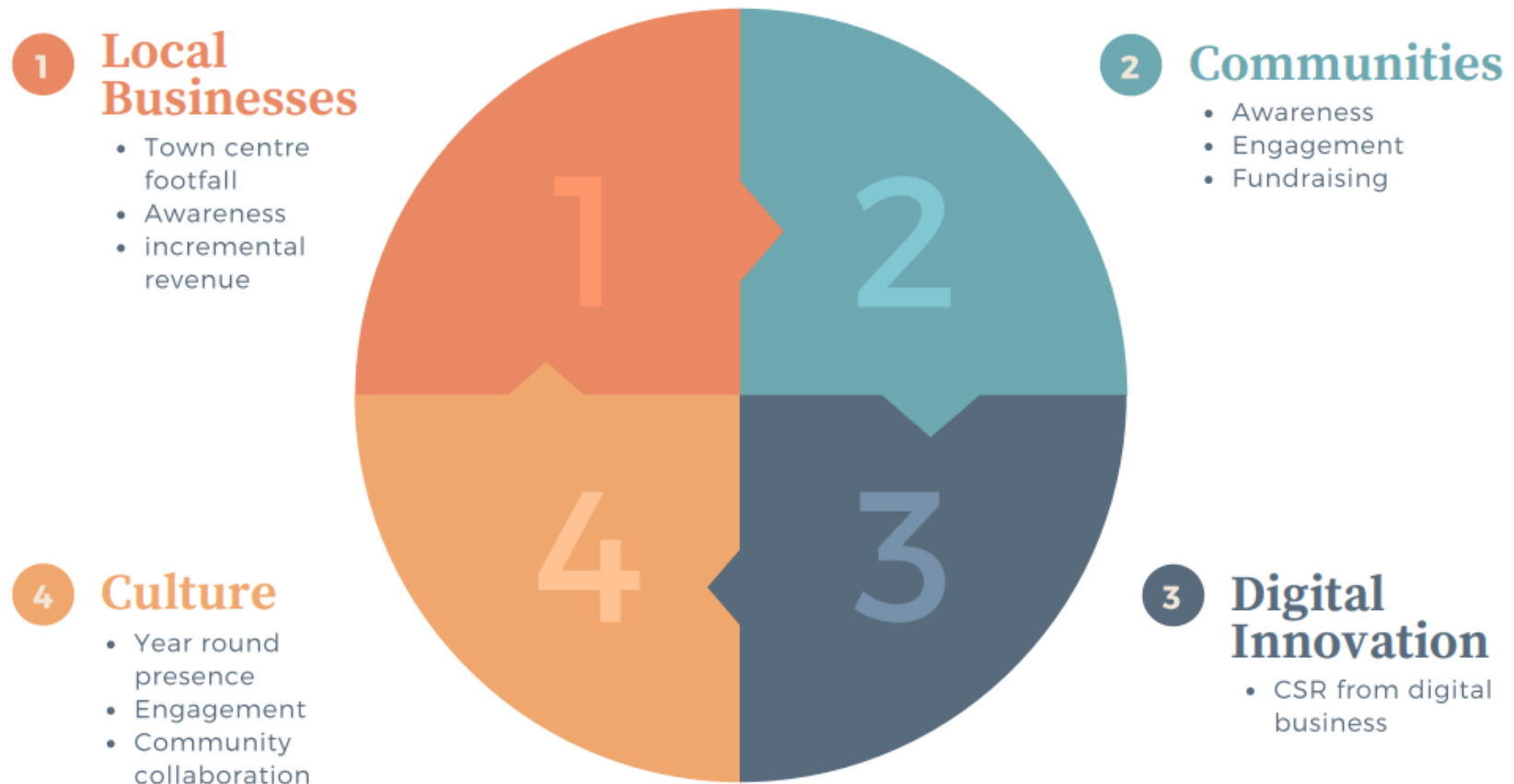




Strategic Aims:

1. Reinvigorate the town centre
2. Repurpose empty shop units
3. Support local businesses
4. Promote the climate change agenda
5. Drive community engagement and local charity awareness
6. Develop a platform where tech companies can work with
7. Promote cultural organisations
8. Provide a PR and marketing point of difference for Cheltenham
9. Create a Counter Culture fund to ensure future sustainability of the project

The Four Quarters of Counter Culture



The four quarters of Counter Culture are underpinned by diversity, accessibility and sustainability.

Project Pilot and Partnership Example



1 Cultural Provider

e.g. Cheltenham Paint Festival is secured as a cultural curator and facilitates public stencil making workshops in the selected shop unit.

2 Community Link

e.g. The Paint Festival work with a specific community group such as Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees. Themes for workshops could be crafted from refugee stories.

3 Digital Innovation

e.g. The partnership is extended to include a digital focused company who curate a virtual stencil gallery showcasing the project. This could include digital screens across Cheltenham which exhibit the artwork.

4 Local Businesses

e.g. Local business such as a printers or framing shop sell Cheltenham stencils as merchandise.

Next Steps

1. Assess all relevant barriers to access, including review extent of flexibilities around business rates and exemptions, insurances, health and safety to fully understand financial set up cost.
2. Presentation of Counter Culture proposal to Cheltenham Economic Recovery Taskforce and Culture Board.
3. Lobbying to Government and the National High Street Task Force by Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force on COVID-19 relaxations that could be extended beyond the 100% relief for retailing, providing greater flexibility to the Counter Culture proposal.
4. Investigation into empty shop unit availability (ongoing), with aim to identify potential units by November 2020.
5. Identify partner(s) who will act as curator.
6. Discussion with CBC, GFirst LEP and the BID about investment into the project. Review wider funding opportunities, e.g through National High Street Task Force.
7. Establish Counter Culture crowdfunding.
8. Secure investment and key partners.
9. Secure remaining partners.
10. Launch