WHAT IS UK CITY OF CULTURE?

UK City of Culture is a competition run by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport every four years. Previous winners were Derry/Londonderry in 2013 and Hull are celebrating their year right now.

We have now submitted our initial bid and expect that four shortlisted cities will be taken forward to a final round in Autumn 2017, with the winner announced at the end of the year.

The winning city will then spend the following three years preparing to host one of the largest events in the UK calendar as the world watches. As to what you can expect in 2021, that’s where you come in...

WHY COVENTRY?

BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT

- We would be the first truly diverse UK City of Culture
- Our population is 7 years younger than the rest of the UK
- We have the largest potential catchment of any bidding city in the competition’s history. With 40 million people living within two hours of the city, all roads lead to Coventry
- We are one of the most welcoming cities in the UK offering sanctuary to the most refugees and migrants in England

BECAUSE WE ARE READY FOR CHANGE

- The city is behind it – the City Council, two universities, cultural sector, wider region, philanthropists and the business community
- We will produce a visionary programme rooted in the city
- Cities of Culture have been a huge success for Hull, Liverpool and Glasgow. The time is right for the West Midlands and we will show what Coventry can do

COVENTRY

Loud and rough, scuffed, and visual, close to the sheer breadth of its contradictions, occasionally, because what so often has mattered, is about what Coventry is prepared to imagine.

Written by Chris O’Connell
Theatre Absolute

WHAT IS UK CITY OF CULTURE
OUR VISION

COVENTRY 2021 WILL REIMAGINE THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN A DIVERSE, MODERN BRITAIN

Our bid is based on many hours of exploring what is distinctive about Coventry.

The programme will include festivals, public art, events, new film commissions and spectacle. We will work with local, national and international artists, alongside every school to stage events in every community across the city. You will find it in theatres, fields, streets, rivers, parks, shops and stadia with an estimated 1000 events over 12 months in 2021 and a build-up programme from 2018.

BECAUSE WE NEED IT

- Coventry needs to change its reputation – it is undervalued, underrated and misunderstood
- There are major inequalities in the city including health, childhood obesity, educational qualifications and access to culture
- The city needs regeneration – new hotels, retail and physical improvements
- The cultures of diverse communities in the UK go unheard – we can change that
- Despite two award-winning universities we are losing graduates
- It will have a transformational impact on the city

WHAT WILL IT DO FOR COVENTRY?

- Deliver over £80 million in economic benefit and additional tourism
- Create arts and culture in your streets and communities
- Showcase our city on a national and international stage
- Tackle inequalities through culture
- Kick-start regeneration
- Enable us to celebrate our fantastic city and all we have achieved

WHAT WILL IT DO FOR COVENTRY?
OUR THEMES

BEING HUMAN

COVENTRY HAS PLAYED A UNIQUE ROLE AS A CITY OF SANCTUARY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, WITH A HISTORY OF WELCOMING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD.

In a post-Brexit Britain that has divided cities and nations, we will reinforce the power of culture to cross boundaries, create understanding, nurture respect and embrace humanity. We will welcome more deaf and disabled artists to our city and provide a national focus for their work.

REINVENTION

COVENTRY IS A CITY OF INVENTION AND REINVENTION.

The city that gave birth to electronic music, town-twinning and community schools is imagining a new future where the arts, science, and engineering are valued in equal measure. A place where people, artists and communities can reinvent themselves in a digitally connected, international meeting place.

UNDERGROUND

A CITY BUILT ON A HIDDEN RIVER HAS BEEN THE BIRTHPLACE OF NEW MOVEMENTS, MYTHS AND LEGENDS.

From Lady Godiva’s silent journey of revolution to the creation of 2-Tone, Shop Front Theatre and the Green Party, Coventry has found space for subcultures, peaceful protest and new ways of experiencing the arts. We will surface the undercurrent of youth culture and optimism to drive our future ambitions.

MOVING

A CITY THAT HAS BEEN MOVING THE WORLD BY CYCLE, CAR AND JET ENGINE IS NOW MOVING PEOPLE THROUGH CULTURE.

We laid the foundations for the Arts Council, gifted the world Theatre in Education and will move people’s lives, emotions and attitudes through our 2021 programme.
OUR PROGRAMME

Our programme is still developing and this is a competition. This means we can only reveal the final programme when we win. We’ve had over 200 programme ideas with more coming in every day. Here are just a few of the ones we are continuing to work on.

COVENTRY STREETS OF CULTURES

As UK City of Culture we will run the first Streets of Cultures competition, celebrating 21 Coventry neighbourhoods.

Producers will support and empower local communities to curate festivals and commissions that showcase their culture: a street band, a public art commission, a storytelling festival, poetry in the pavements, Cov Dine with Me, artist designed gardens… individual streets will be reinvented as new cultural spaces to be shared with the city.

ASHA’S INSTAGRAM

In 1958, Gordon Cullen created a mural to capture the spirit in which the reconstruction of the city was undertaken. Thousands of painted tiles depict the modernist architecture of the city, which some say is bleak, grey and ugly. Asha uses her Instagram account to capture the beauty she sees in the brutalism.

In 2021, we will ask people to take out their phones and capture the spirit of the city once more. The angles, the concrete pillars, the scribbles in the subways, the people in the background. These photos will become our new tiles and will be stitched together to form a huge digital mural of our modern city.

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Our neighbours will join us for a year-long programme of events and education work that will leave a lasting impact on our city. The potential projects include:

- Father Forgive is a new modern mystery play for Coventry, working with theatremakers from across Coventry and the West Midlands, the multi-faith, multi-identity, multi-generational story will look firmly forward to the future, asking compelling questions about how to live in a diverse and often unequal world.

- An annual Shakespeare film festival, screening the whole canon of Shakespeare’s 37 plays in a wide range of spaces and venues in Coventry - each one being chosen, hosted and interpreted in a way which introduces a new audience to Shakespeare and indeed to live theatre e.g. A Midsummer Night’s Dream in the Forest of Arden, Romeo and Juliet in London Road Cemetery.

THE GATHERING OF GIANTS

Imagineer Productions

A series of giant structures will be grown in communities and come alive in a journey to the city centre. From the team that journeyed Lady Godiva from Coventry to London, we will see a festival of arts and engineering that builds on the city’s historic giants and its contemporary skills in design and engineering.
Mortal Coil
Combining dance, disabled aerial artists and spectacular digital mapping interaction, Mortal Coil will turn the sky into a womb over Coventry, from which many different lives will be born and played out over time. A beautiful aerial celebration of humanity in all its manifestations.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE
In a year of celebration, we will pause to curate a festival of silence that creates moments of silent beauty, contemplation and reflection. Moments of Silence will feature silent installations, films and dance, written word pieces and mass-participation mindfulness events.

New literary works will tell previously silenced stories and we will work with deaf artists to create performances that turn silence into an ability.

Ring Road Poem
Coventry will use the brutalist architecture of its iconic ring road to create Britain’s first two-mile-long poem. The poem will be etched into concrete, projected onto pillars and recorded into film and sound installations. The poem can only be experienced in its entirety by travelling the two-mile loop. The poem will then be translated digitally into multiple languages and a film.

Shop Front Festival
A festival inspired by the UK’s first dedicated Shop Front Theatre, Shop Front Festival will transform the experiences and perceptions of residents, visitors and shoppers in celebration of the UK’s first pedestrianised shopping centre. A pilot in 2018 will build to a major international festival in 2021. Think galleries, sound installations, pop up cinemas and curious window displays.

Tale of Two Cities, Tale of Two Streets
Based in two of the most diverse wards of Coventry, this project will focus on the residents and shop owners of two streets: Foleshill Road and Far Gosford Street. Photo Archive Miners will interrogate the streets’ history and contemporary diversity through archived film and photography drawn from their multi-cultural Asian, Afro Caribbean and Eastern European communities. The project will produce a publication for the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, and a touring exhibition that will visit community venues and international festivals.

We would also like to thank all members of the 2021 Club
We weren’t sent to Coventry, we chose to come, and now is the time to give back to your city and back the bid.

Sign up to our newsletter at www.coventry2021.co.uk
follow @Coventry2021 on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, and better still, get all of your friends to do the same.

Download our backing the bid poster www.coventry2021.co.uk

Send a programme idea or story to programme@coventry2021.co.uk

Send us an idea for your Street of Culture to info@coventry2021.co.uk