



Young Cumbrians to get help to build creative careers - and stay in the county

#seeittobeitcumbria

Art Gene is pleased to join a new countywide initiative led by Cumbria Arts and Culture Network (CACN) as part of a £175,000 project funded by Arts Council England to help more young Cumbrians build careers in the creative industries.

Working with theatres, museums and arts organisations as well as careers and education providers across the county, Art Gene and CACN will deliver SEE IT TO BE IT over the next three years.

Maddi Nicholson, Art Gene's Director and CACN Board member, warmly welcomed the project: "SEE IT TO BE IT provides an opportunity to showcase and celebrate creative careers, inspiring young people in Cumbria to develop knowledge and experience and to be part of a thriving cultural ecology. It builds on the Catalyst initiative, a project that Art Gene and CACN worked on together and which supported young artists to make new work in Cumbria."

Director of CACN Kate Parry said:

"Even though Cumbria is a wonderfully creative and inspiring place to live for many - our work tells us it is not easy for young creatives to build careers here. Too often, we're finding young people interested in creative careers - whether as museum curators, sound technicians, actors or artists - either leave to work in cities or feel they have to give up their creative ambitions. Yet young people are the future of our county's health and vitality and we need young creatives to live and thrive here. SEE IT TO BE IT is about pulling together to make that realistic and possible.

Mac Benson, a young creative and Project Lead at Queer Cumbria, commented:

"Young people in Cumbria deserve to see that a creative career is not only possible, but valued. This project is important because it will open doors, build connections and confidence for young people to thrive in creative industries, right here at home."

SEE IT TO BE IT will bring together partners from across educational, careers and creative sectors to do three things:

- Ensure creative careers are well represented in school and college careers programmes, so that young Cumbrians grow up understanding the different options open to them and how to access them.
- Bring together the different development opportunities for young creatives already happening across the county, under the SEE IT TO BE IT banner, so that young creatives know where to look for support and development.
- Create more paid opportunities for young creatives in all corners of Cumbria, so that it becomes more possible to develop a career and earn a viable living in the county.

Arts and cultural organisations of all kinds are stepping forward to be part of the new scheme, including theatres and arts centres, dance organisations, museums and inclusive arts organisations. There will be a particular emphasis on supporting young people who face the greatest challenges, for example, as a result of disability or neurodivergence.

Project Partner and Co-Director of The Knotted Project theatre company, Simon McElligott commented:

“The Knotted Project are so proud to be a partner on See It To Be It. Our mission is to transform young people's future through the power of theatre and this new investment will ensure that creative young people can thrive here in Cumbria.”

Brewery Arts in Kendal are also among the many organisations backing the project. CEO/ Artistic Director Miriam Randall added:

“Young people need to have opportunities to discover, explore and shape the arts and creative industries, wherever they live. At Brewery Arts, our mission is to empower the next generation of creatives, so I am delighted we are part of See It To Be It, a vital project that will boost skills, confidence and connections across the county.”

Sarah Glass, Executive Director at the Centre for Leadership Performance, said:

“The Centre for Leadership Performance is committed to developing Cumbria's future leaders, we know how vital it is that young people see creative careers as real, accessible options. See It To Be It inspires ambition, builds confidence, and champions future talent. We're proud to be part of a project that helps make those futures feel possible.”

The project will begin in summer 2025 with the creation of a new See It To Be It website. In the coming months, a range of new opportunities for young people will be launched including

commissions, residencies, placements and early-career jobs across the Cumbrian culture sector.

Annie Brewer, herself a young creative who has worked in Cumbria for two years, is Schools and Families Producer at Lakeland Arts in the South Lakes:

“Just this weekend I was working at a storytelling festival in Bowland Bridge delivering creative activities to young people and families. Most of the parents and children asked me about my job, and all were very surprised that jobs like this exist in Cumbria, that creative opportunities are available. Most of the parents were concerned that the creativity their children are expressing at this age won't be nurtured in Cumbria; that they will be forced into a different career. This project will help highlight Cumbria as a cultural hotspot with opportunities for young creatives to grow.”

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Notes to Editors:

Cumbria Arts and Culture Network is a not for profit company which exists to connect, champion and develop the creative industries in Cumbria. The organisation has been awarded Place Partnerships funding by Arts Council England to deliver See It To Be It. The total project cost is £350,000 and discussions are underway with a range of other funders to complete the package.

Cultural organisations involved in See It To Be It include:

Art Gene, Barrow
Rosehill Theatre, Whitehaven
Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal
Lakes International Comic Art Festival
Prism, Carlisle
Queer Cumbria
The Knotted Project
Soundwave, Whitehaven
The Centre for Leadership Performance, Cockermouth
University of Cumbria
Theatre by the Lake, Keswick
Grizedale Arts

Signal Film & Media, Barrow
Propellor Ensemble
SOMO Creation
Cumbria Museum Consortium
BarrowFull, Barrow
Everyone Here, West Cumbria
Florence Arts Centre, Egremont
Full of Noises, Barrow
Theatre Factory, Barrow
Lake District Music
Highlights Rural Touring
Cumbria Community Foundation
Lakes College West Cumbria
Enterprising Cumbria (and Cumbria Careers Hub)
Cumbria Music Hub
Cumberland Council
Westmorland and Furness Council
Northstar CoDesign
Orchestras Live!