



TRANSPORTED (BOSTON AND SOUTH HOLLAND)

**CREATIVE  
AND  
PEOPLE  
PLACES**

**NON-ARTS PARTNERSHIPS**



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## CASE STUDY THEME

> Non-arts partnerships

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Transported is a community-focused arts programme for Boston & South Holland which aims to get more people enjoying and participating in arts activities. The programme is designed to increase local engagement in high quality arts experiences and to build the capacity of the voluntary and professional sector through non-arts partnerships collaborations.

Transported is one of 21 Creative People and Places (CPP) programmes funded by Arts Council England. Transported is an arts programme led by artsNK and is supported by Leisure in the Community. The programme is built on innovative non-arts partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors including FreshLinc Limited, Elsoms Seeds Limited, Boston Borough Council, parish councils, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Services, housing associations, civic societies and civic trusts.

Drawing on interviews with the Transported staff team and its partners, this case study explores non-arts partnerships in practice and focuses on the impact and outcomes of the programme. It further examines the approaches that are considered to be good practice and unpicks the building blocks for success and programme sustainability.



Transported: On Your Door Step, Fenside. Photo: Electric Egg

## KEY FINDINGS

- › Transported's non-arts partnerships have enabled it to deliver a diverse mix of arts projects which has drawn in new audiences and reached people that would not normally engage in the arts.
- › Transported's partnership with the private sector has helped to lay the foundations for further collaborations and inspired partnerships with other partners across different sectors.
- › Transported's concept of 'taking art to people' has led to the creation of new arts projects in everyday places where people would not expect to encounter the arts, including live performances in the workplace and in the town square, artwork on the side of lorries, a public art installation at a nature reserve and a photo exhibition on the outside of a community centre.



## INTRODUCTION

Transported: *Boston Heroes*, Boston Borough Council. Photo: Electric Egg

Boston & South Holland is a largely rural area in Lincolnshire, which has a long and illustrious agricultural background. It is renowned for its rural economy of farming, food processing and haulage industries, with Lincolnshire producing 20% of all the food grown in the UK. It has three focal centres Boston, Spalding and Holbeach, which are small traditional market towns that serve the surrounding villages. In recent years, Boston & South Holland has experienced an unprecedented population change following the arrival of high numbers of European migrant workers settling in the region. Boston & South Holland today is characterised by higher than average levels of rural isolation, unemployment and a lack of community cohesion.

Prior to CPP, Boston & South Holland had a “virtually non-existent arts infrastructure”, with only one Arts Council England funded National Portfolio organisation, the South Holland Centre in Spalding, a handful of professional artists, and a couple of artist studios and exhibition spaces of a relatively small scale.

Almost a decade ago, a controversial art project painted Boston in a negative light when it received national publicity. The project highlighted the increasing cultural tensions in the area as a result of the rising number of newly arrived European migrants. It was one of several works commissioned by the Beacon Art Project known as *No Place Like Home*, which was funded by the Arts Council England and several local councils in Lincolnshire. The artist produced a video called ‘*I Hate Boston, Boston Hates Me*,’ which was projected onto a wall at the town’s railway station. It caused widespread anger, distrust and cynicism towards the arts locally and local councils in Lincolnshire have since been reluctant to support arts projects fearing that something negative could happen again.

In short, there was a need to work with a range of different non-arts partners to invest in new infrastructure for the arts, to change the sceptical attitudes towards arts locally, and to address the very low level of engagement with the arts, especially in the rurally isolated communities.

**“The people we consulted talked about problems with transport and rural isolation, so we took the arts to where people were. They said the arts were elitist and had nothing to offer them, so we suggested we could work with them to do art to improve their village green or public spaces, or doing art which was offering very clear health outcomes that gave art a purpose and relevance to them. The perception was that most art wasn’t relevant to those people.”** Transported



## APPROACH TO NON-ARTS PARTNERSHIPS

Non-arts partnerships are a key feature of Transported's approach for the programme. Most importantly, Transported recognised from the beginning that they were not there to try to repair what they considered to be a 'non-existent' arts infrastructure. Transported's aim for CPP was to build a new infrastructure to deliver the arts through, which was not dependent on arts organisations, artists, and art venues, but dependent on the partnerships with the non-arts sector. This meant that Transported collaborated with the private sector, local authorities and community organisations to deliver a new kind of the arts experience which was accessible and relevant to people that do not normally engage with the arts. So far, Transported has worked with around 50 partners, with each project providing an opportunity to establish a new partnership or strengthen an existing partnership further.

**“It was very much a step by step approach. Step one was find to a way to engaging people and letting them have an arts experience. Step two was almost a faith that arts would work its magic and people would want to do more. Step three was that partners would recognise the value of working with us to provide people opportunity to see and do more.”** Transported

Transported works across a number of strands and collaborates with different non-arts partners in a variety of ways:

- › **Arts and Health:** Transported is working with health partners to pilot arts and health projects to contribute to wellbeing.
- › **Public Art:** Transported has worked with a number of different organisations and community groups to commission new public art in multiple locations across Boston & South Holland.
- › **Community Events and Festivals:** Transported brings arts activity to community events and developing festival experiences in Boston Borough & South Holland.
- › **Haulage:** Transported has worked with FreshLinc and Boston Borough Council to commission *Art on Lorries* and *Boston Hero*.
- › **On Your Doorstep & Public Art:** Transported is working with community groups to use the arts to improve public spaces.
- › **Open Book:** Transported is working with libraries to bring the arts to the centre of rural communities in Boston Borough & South Holland.
- › **Taster:** Transported is providing opportunities to try new arts activities in Boston Borough & South Holland as the first step to creating sustainable new independent groups.
- › **Transported Live:** Transported is working with local businesses to create new arts experiences for the workplace and to bring live performances to Boston Borough & South Holland

Transported's general approach to CPP is to increase community engagement with the arts by taking art to people where they come together. For example, Transported has worked in partnership with local businesses including Elsoms Seeds and FreshLinc to create new and innovative arts experiences for the workplace. Transported has also organised a number of spontaneous live performances in Boston town square such as *Fen Boy* theatre show, which later toured across Boston & South Holland to reach wider audiences that would not normally have access to art experiences. Furthermore, Transported has worked with community groups for *On Your Doorstep*, which was a photo exhibition project of the Fenside community. Fenside was identified by Transported as an area with particular low levels of engagement in the arts, so Transported commissioned a photographer to work with community centre volunteers and residents of the Fenside Estate to create portraits of the community, which were later installed on the outside walls of Fenside Community Centre.

**“Initially, Transported focused on increasing demand with a high number of exciting and varied events. In the next phase work was more focused, with businesses, libraries and others on more in-depth participation. Lately it is more strongly addressing the supply, working increasingly with the local arts infrastructure potentially creating an online directory and trade fair.”** Transported's interim evaluation, June 2015

## OUTCOMES

According to Transported's interim evaluation, projects have successfully drawn in new audiences as 70% had not had arts experiences in the last 12 months and 47% had not been to a museum or gallery in the last 12 months. Transported projects have demonstrated a number of social outcomes including changing people's attitudes towards arts, making the art something that everyone can access, and making arts more relevant to everyday life.

**“At FreshLinc supervisors reported an increase in pride and skills in drivers. At Elsoms the chairman described that ‘people came away feeling uplifted’ after a six week residency in the canteen, staff brought their families in to see the final show. One worker was so moved he was ‘nearly brought to tears’. At Fenside the photography project breathed life back into the community centre at a time when its existence was under threat. The community continued to communicate through their own Facebook page and asked for a new photography club too.”** Transported's evaluation blog

For the public sector, feedback from Boston Borough Council highlighted that working with Transported has helped them to create a sense of civic pride and improve the cultural offer of Boston for both locals and visitors. As a result of Transported's successful collaboration with FreshLinc on the *Art on Lorries* project, Boston Borough Council found confidence and inspiration to work with Transported to create *Boston Hero*, a project which celebrates community-nominated unsung heroes in artwork installed on the side of Boston Borough Council's fleet of bin lorries, that has brought inspirational artwork to every doorstep in Boston.

**“After the launch everyone across the borough will have an opportunity to see the artworks when the bin lorries come down their streets. One especially gratifying aspect of this project has been public recognition of council staff and volunteers from the community who all make the extra effort to improve things for people who live here.”** Boston Borough Council

Part of Transported's motivation to work with the private sector was the premise that businesses would be willing to make a financial or in-kind contribution to the arts, which would allow Transported to deliver more arts projects and activities. So far, Transported has secured small financial contributions from its private sector partners. Going forward, Transported expect to receive reasonably significant contributions to programme from its private sector partners. Overall, Transported has helped businesses to raise their profile and feel good about giving something back to the community, but also found that its activities contributed to the wellbeing of its employees.

**“The private sector started to see how our projects have contributed to the team spirit and worker wellbeing.”** Transported



Transported: Elsom's Creates, Elsom's Seeds. Photo: Gary Naylor Photography

## WHAT WORKED WELL?

- **Partnerships at all levels** – The non-arts partnerships established with the private, public and voluntary sectors has enabled Transported to deliver an arts programme which was effective in terms of reaching out to new audiences who do not normally engage with the arts. The success of the partnerships has laid the foundations for future partnerships and inspired further collaborations.

**“The fact that the programme has been successful at reaching their target audience is directly as a consequence of working with non-arts partnerships.”** Transported

- **Leveraging the private sector** – Gaining buy-in from the private sector partners has been crucial to the success of Transported, as it enabled Transported to demonstrate what could be achieved when working with non-arts partners and using non-traditional settings, such as in the workplace or artwork on the side of lorries.

**Our partners are wide-ranging, but the way that businesses have embraced the value of arts in the workplace has been one of the project’s biggest achievements so far. It has raised people’s aspirations and appreciation of the place that they live.”** Transported

- **Capacity building and knowledge sharing** – Transported has organised meetings to bring together project steering groups to learn more about what Transported is doing across the programme as a whole. One of the aims of these meetings is to work towards joint grant applications in the future. Transported also encourages its steering group members and project partners to go to each of the project openings to network and share their experiences.

**“There are plenty of opportunities for cross fertilisation across different groups. CPP has given all three sectors an opportunity to do something different.”** Transported



Transported: *Art on Lorries*, FreshLinc. Photo: Electric Egg



## LESSONS LEARNT

- › **It takes time to build confidence in the arts** – An initial barrier that Transported faced was that it found that non-arts partners were reticent and lacking in confidence to support arts projects. It has taken a lot of time and effort for Transported to get projects up and running and secure buy-in from non-arts partners because of the initial reticence that existed amongst the non-arts partners. However, this hard work has paid off as momentum of the programme has picked up and non-arts partners have gained confidence and an appetite to collaborate with Transported on future arts projects.

**“Lots of local authorities were fearful that if we started things off, the responsibility to finish them off would sit with them.”** Transported

- › **Engaging ethnically diverse audiences** – Transported acknowledged that its projects and activities were failing to effectively engage with the migrant communities of Boston & South Holland. As the migrant communities were one of its key target audiences, Transported has explored ways it can actively reach and engage more diverse audiences, such as translating their publicity into other European languages and recruiting event team assistants from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Transported organised for a local Polish choir, *Cantus Polonicum* to perform inside and outside the *Miracoco Luminarium*, an inflatable sculpture at the Transported launch. Transported’s Management Group also includes a representative who was a founder member of *Bigos-Artists of Polish Origin*.

**“The challenge going forward is to convert their passive engagement with the arts into an active engagement. We still have work to do to get Eastern Europeans actively involved in the programme.”** Transported

- › **Gaining support for community arts** – Initially there was a degree of animosity from some artists and arts organisations that opposed Transported’s mission and the CPP agenda. Some people resented Transported getting significant amounts of investment to support community arts rather than “arts for arts sake”. Transported has overcome this issue by not being afraid to collaborate with non-arts partners and find other artists and arts organisations to work with that were willing to support Transported to achieve its goals.

**“Artists and arts organisations which were in the area assumed they were going to get the funding and the support for carrying on doing what they were doing, rather than responding to the CPP agenda. Transported’s programme is not just to increase arts activity; it’s to increase arts activity which specifically engages in the first instance those that are least engaged. That’s a very specific set of challenges and if artists aren’t interested in those challenges then that’s fine if they can carry on doing their own thing.”** Transported

## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

Transported's approach towards achieving excellence is about having open conversations about artistic excellence with its non-arts partners to discuss what excellence looks like. Transported encourages all of its partners to attend project openings to enable them to put their own individual perceptions of quality into the wider context of what Transported is doing with all its partners. Transported's commissioning process ensures that artists are questioned about 'what artistic excellence is' and how the artist intends to reflect this in their projects.

**"We would argue that all of our commissions are examples of excellent art. As right from the beginning the individual projects are set into a context of what excellence looks like. We work with our partners to reach a consensus, so while each partner may have a different view about what they might like, they can agree on what is the most excellent available in the context of their commissioning process."** Transported

## SUSTAINABILITY

Transported's main priority to secure sustainability for the programme is to ensure that their steering groups and non-arts partners are empowered to do more in the future and that they will ultimately be responsible for carrying things on. Each partnership has been designed to establish a long-term relationship in which projects can evolve and become part of the legacy of the programme. Going forward, Transported will play more of an artistic advisory role rather than a delivery role. Another important way in which Transported is sustaining the value of CPP is to inspire its strategic partners - local authorities, businesses and other service providers - that arts can make a positive contribution to life in the area and play a part in delivering their own outcomes.

Transported will also try to ensure that partners recognise that it is a shared responsibility and that partners are inspired to make their contribution in the future and to access strategic funds to make that happen rather than depending on Arts Council England funding. Transported recognises that robust evaluation and good data collection are crucially important for the programme to demonstrate its value and to secure future funding.

**"This is an action research project and we need to know what has worked and start to have opportunities to explore why things work and then be able to demonstrate the value of what it is that we are doing, so that we can persuade people in the future to give us more money."** Transported



## RSPB FRAMPTON MARSH

Transported worked in collaboration with RSPB to commission cammdesign to create *Reflector*, an apt piece of public art installed at RSPB's Frampton Marsh wetland reserve, which features sketches of birds by the local community. The project was accompanied by *Flock, Plumage and Feathers*, a series of other community projects by artist Julie Willoughby that featured sketching, knitting and willow sculpture. The projects have helped to 'raise the profile' of Frampton Marsh through the publicity which the public art installation created. It also helped RSPB to attract new visitors to the reserve.

For RSPB working with Transported has helped them to build the capacity and appetite to deliver similar initiatives in the future. In particular it has given RSPB the confidence and expertise to develop their arts offer further, something which they would have not been able to achieve without the support of Transported. As a result of the success of the arts projects at Frampton Marsh, RSPB recognise that there is potential scope to develop art projects at other RSPB nature reserves across the UK.

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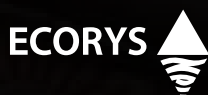
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