

ADEPT President's Awards 2024

Entry form

Main contact name steph davies

Email steph.davies@halton.gov.uk

Award category Shaping Places for People

Project Title Reconnecting Runcorn

Local authority entrant Halton Borough Council

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

Reconnecting Runcorn, a regeneration programme using culture to drive economic activity, skills devt, career opps, attract visitors, inward investment

Please note we need at least one supporting image per award submission. Upload your image/s below.





Video - please paste links to any video evidence here. (Leave blank if not relevant.)

https://youtu.be/Hkgv_f9QYzQ

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

In the 1960s Runcorn was designated as a New Town, with new road networks and shopping centres built to serve incoming residents from Liverpool. Subsequently, the 'Old Town' of Runcorn faced a legacy of underinvestment. Reconnecting Runcorn is an amazing and timely programme to address local physical, environmental and economic needs and aspirations.

The IMD 2019 indicates that Halton is 39th most deprived borough nationally (from 317 boroughs); the ward is in the top 10% most deprived.

Reconnecting Runcorn focuses on bringing the connectivity from the past throughout the town to meet current needs, using culture to create an economically viable town and raise the aspirations of residents.

Cultural activity runs throughout the project from the Brindley Theatre enhancement, a new temple hall and peace garden for the Buddhist Temple and a creative and digital hub – a base for local creative groups to support residents, in particular young people.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

Aspects of the programme are already in full delivery, e.g. Hazlehurst Studios; this hub for creative practitioners has expanded into a visible and accessible centre on the high street for creative and digital organisations and learning.

Since officially opening in June 2023, almost 70 workshops/events have been held. These have included a range of artforms - photography, sketching, sewing, printing, painting, jewellery, pottery, paper crafts. This model is being replicated in other Reconnecting Runcorn projects, including the Power in Partnership project, Youthy.com, a base for young people; and a Creative and Digital skills hub where local creative organisations, Mako Create and A Place for Us will operate.

The programme centres around raising aspirations, developing skills, inspiring creative industry careers, welcoming visitors and investors and underpinning civic pride.

We think this must be the only regeneration programme which includes canal boat adventures and a new Buddhist hall and Peace Garden/Chedi!

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

The Reconnecting Runcorn programme, although led by Halton BC, is being delivered by a range of partners, including the local NHS Trust, Riverside College, Halton Housing, Runcorn Locks Restoration Society, Hazlehurst Creative Studios, Wat Phra Singh Buddhist Temple, Power in Partnership (youth support organisation), Mako Create (digital skills CIC) and A Place for Us (local performing arts organisation).

Partners are actively invested in the programme and helping to drive it forward; many are also providing match funding.

A number of Halton BC departments are collaborating to deliver a high quality community-led programme; these include Regeneration, Highways, Programmes Office and Environment.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

A Runcorn Town Deal Board was established to act as an advisory/reporting body for the Reconnecting Runcorn programme; it is very representative, made up of voluntary sector organisations, private sector partners, local councillors and MPs, local businesses, health and education sector reps - all committed to delivering a unique and vibrant suite of projects that connect the 'old town' physically and thematically.

Young peoples' voices are prominent through our youth sector partner, Power in Partnership.

An annual 'Runcorn Day' gives an opportunity for local residents to immerse themselves in ongoing plans and feed in suggestions for future delivery. Activities include a tour of the area, site visits, panel discussions and a marketplace of all projects.

A revamped Reconnecting Runcorn website acts as a portal for current information on projects, plans and events. A social media and press campaign, led by a specialist agency, adds a unique approach to showcasing the area.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The Reconnecting Runcorn programme was awarded £23.6m through the Towns Fund, which is part of the UK Government's Levelling up agenda. The Town Deal is an agreement between Government, Halton Borough Council and the Town Deal Board to deliver a vision and strategy for the 'old town' by March 2026.

The programme also benefits from match funding via partners, £200k so far, including the NHS, Halton Housing and Wat Phra Singh Buddhist Temple. Sources of match funding so far include National Lottery, Landfill Tax Funding and private donations.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies (£114k) are being aligned with Towns Fund where appropriate to deliver additional activity and added value to this programme, for example a business support programme and public realm improvements to Church Street in the centre of the Old Town.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

Building on our strong local economy and strategic location, we will reconnect the Old Town to Runcorn and the wider region, so that it becomes an attractive and vibrant place to work, to live in, and to visit. Through our Town Investment Plan our aim is for the Old Town to be:

- An attractive area for businesses to locate, providing a stronger local economy with a wider variety of job opportunities in the heart of the community that are more accessible to local people.
- An attractive place for people to live, where its population enjoys better health and services are more accessible to the community.
- An attractive place for people to visit, with new and improved visitor destinations maximising the potential of its heritage, waterways, and culture.

Building on the existing Old Town Strategy, our strategy for delivering that vision is focused on:

- Continuing to reconfigure existing infrastructure to make space for new jobs and homes.
- Making targeted investments in new local infrastructure to reconnect the Old Town to the surrounding areas and create a more appealing environment.
- Supporting the growth of our leisure, culture and heritage offer, with targeted enhancements of existing assets.
- Developing more accessible and integrated services so that all residents have access to the best quality education, health and care when they need it.
- We are already doing a great deal to address these problems and fuel the development of the town. For example, we took decisive action to demolish the 'Trumpet Loop' of the A557 to facilitate redevelopment of the area around the railway station and improve links into the heart of the town.
- With investment from the Towns Fund we can do even more and move even faster to deliver the vision. In line with the strategic approach outline above, and in consultation with the local community and businesses, we have developed seven investment propositions to government:
 - Runcorn Station Quarter through which we will develop an existing opportunity site and create a new enterprise hub with flexible office space.
 - Creative and Digital Skills Centre, which will turn a group of vacant shops into a new home for the growing creative and digital sector.
 - Brindley Theatre Enhancement, which will enhance a key local asset by improving the theatre's offer and the surrounding space.
 - Unlock Runcorn, which is the first phase in recreating the canal link between the Bridgewater Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal.
 - Town Centre New Homes, with the construction of 140 new homes, most of which will be on the high street.
 - High Street Connectivity, a package of interventions that will re-purpose and improve existing infrastructure and make the town more legible and connected.
 - Health and Education Hub, a new facility that will provide residents with access to integrated services, including health, education and job seeking advice.

