



The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the North West

Arts Council England is the lead agency for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad in the North West.

Over 1.7 million people have already taken part in the Cultural Olympiad in the North West since it launched during the 2008 Open Weekend. The North West's contribution over three years has already included 1,340 public events, 940 workshops involving 15,000 participants, 268 new commissions, 545 partnerships and 2,800 artists.

London 2012's [launch event last week](#) announced some of our programme for the [London 2012 Festival](#) which will take place from 21 June–9 September 2012. There is much more to come and further announcements will be made throughout the next few months about how the North West will contribute to the London 2012 Festival and the UK Cultural Olympiad

The London 2012 Festival is the finale of the Cultural Olympiad. It will shine an international spotlight on artists from all over the world as well as from the North West. [Anthony McCall's *Column*](#), which is the North West's [Artists taking the lead](#) commission, will be welcoming in the Festival and the Olympic Year. *Column* is a vertical, spinning column of cloud rising into the sky from the surface of Wirral Waters. Several kilometres tall, it will be visible across the North West and beyond. Watch a short interview with the artist [here](#).

The Cultural Olympiad programme for London 2012 is founded on the values of internationalism, inspiring young people and leaving a legacy for our arts and culture sector.

National projects already underway in the North West as part of the Cultural Olympiad include [Unlimited](#). [Laurence Clark](#) has just won an Unlimited commission for *Demotivational Speaker*, a show which will question what it means to be

inspirational. The show can be seen next summer at the Edinburgh Fringe, [DaDaFest](#) in Liverpool and the Bloomsbury Theatre London.

The North West's four year programme for the Cultural Olympiad centres on **digital innovation, excellence in outdoor arts and culture and sport participation.**

Inspired by 2012 to send the statement of 'WE PLAY' around the North West and the UK, the programme is designed to elaborate on the way we think, to stimulate new experience and to provide opportunities for everyone to be a great 'player' through creative, physical, social and intellectual activity.

The programme reflects a North West output like never before and sets a standard for collaboration and the development of cultural activities.

Its series of annual programmes, collaborative projects and new commissions seek to leave a legacy of partnerships across different sectors, of a new cultural infrastructure in the North West and of artworks and events which have a life beyond 2012.

[Abandon Normal Devices](#), [Lakes Alive](#) and [Blaze](#) are its three main projects, principally funded by Legacy Trust UK and Arts Council England. These three annual programmes have been gathering momentum and public interest over the last three years, ensuring that in the Olympic Year, our North West programme is outstanding.

Abandon Normal Devices is an annual festival of new cinema, digital culture and art at the frontier of new thought and research practice. It provokes reaction, creation and experimentation between and across different disciplines and geographical locations. Its programme in 2012 will see one of its life science projects, Pigs Bladder Football, by artist John O Shea, growing a football out of living cells and will feature the UK premier of Andrew Kotting's film *Swanown*.

Blaze is a youth-led culture and sports programme involving young people from across Lancashire in creating new work which makes links between culture and sport. In 2012 Blaze will be part of a new regional partnership with Brighter Sounds

to present Blaze Festival North West, the North West's first youth inspired and produced festival of culture, sport, music and art.

Lakes Alive is a festival of outdoor performance and street arts across Cumbria. It has already grown into a programme of national and international reputation and reach, establishing the North West as a centre of excellence in street arts. The North West is proud that Lakes Alive has been commissioned by the London 2012 Festival to produce a new large-scale show by the French street arts company *Les Commandos Percu* for the first night of its opening weekend.

WE PLAY is the North West's emblem of collective identity and the **WE PLAY Challenge** is the North West's campaign for the Cultural Olympiad. It will actively encourage people to get involved in the Legacy Trust funded projects and it will include official Cultural Olympiad events. Launching in March 2012 and running through until September, the WE PLAY Challenge equates taking part in the Cultural Olympiad programme of events to a multi sports event contest, such as a triathlon or decathlon. North West residents can sign up to the challenge, take part in the events, record their activity and discuss their London 2012 experiences with other members of the WE PLAY Challenge. They will also get the chance to take part in the making of an artwork which will be unveiled in Preston during the closing weekend of the Paralympic Games.

Over 30 cultural projects in the North West have gained official Olympic recognition as part of the London 2012 Inspire programme. Encompassing geographical and social diversity, these events for the Cultural Olympiad form a coherent body of work, curated around the 'WE PLAY' statement and the North West's programme themes of digital innovation, outdoor arts and culture and sport participation.

In addition, the North West programme has led on the development of new creative collaborations between regional and international artists and has formed international co-productions and commissioning partnerships for these projects. Our programme has formed collaborations with the Cultural Olympiad in the North East, the South West, Northern Ireland and Scotland and co-commissioning relationships with the Pre Games Training Camps programme in the North West and the London 2012 Look programme for Old Trafford and Greater Manchester.

One example is [The Moment When...](#), a first time collaboration between Cheshire Dance and Walk the Plank, and a commissioning partnership between Arts Council England and Local Authorities in Cheshire and Warrington to deliver a series of three spectacular performance and participation events in iconic and historical locations involving regional and national artists and Upswing. The first event on 29th May at Chester Race Course will welcome the arrival of the Olympic Torch into the North West as well as launch the Big Dance programme in the region.

With the final chapter of London 2012 fast approaching, we would also like to announce that the North West is developing a WE PLAY Expo at [Preston Guild 2012](#), the North West's Closing Event for the Cultural Olympiad. Hosted by Preston Guild 2012, a unique festival that takes place every 20 years, this once-in-a-lifetime 2012 celebration invites everyone in the North West to come to Preston and connect for the closing weekend of the Paralympic Games.

Debbi Lander, North West Creative Programmer for London 2012 said: 'Inspired by 2012 to send the statement of 'WE PLAY' around the region and the UK, our North West programme illuminates the powerful and unique way in which art and culture can elaborate on the way we think, can generate new experience and provide opportunities for everyone to be a player through creative, physical, social and intellectual activity. It reflects a North West output like never before and sets a benchmark for collaboration and the development of cultural activities. The legacy of our participation in the Cultural Olympiad will last well beyond 2012.'

Sarah Maxfield, North West Regional Director of Arts Council England said:

'The North West has an exhilarating programme of astonishing events on offer throughout 2012. The Olympic year will provide the springboard for some very special once in a life time opportunities for people living in, and visiting the region - and much of it free.

'Art in the outdoors features very strongly with Lakes Alive international street arts in Cumbria, dance and spectacle in unusual places in Cheshire through *The Moment When...* and the Artists taking the lead project, *Column*, by artist Anthony McCall, on the Mersey Waterfront.

'Young people are at the forefront of designing and delivering their own art in the Blaze programme in Lancashire and there is a cutting edge digital offer with Abandon Normal Devices.

'In addition, there will be a whole host of cultural activities linked to visiting athletes from around the world and further opportunities for everyone to celebrate the games locally as the Torch makes its way through the region. 2012 will truly have something for everyone.'

Ends.

Notes to editors

The Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Cultural Olympiad

The Olympic and Paralympic Games is the largest sporting event on earth but our games are about more than sport. They also stage arts and cultural activities through the Cultural Olympiad. This four year programme spans all forms of culture and is designed to give everyone in the UK a chance to be part of London 2012.

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements and is a series of programmes and events in every region and nation of the UK. The Cultural Olympiad started in 2008 and finishes on the closing weekend of the Paralympic Games on 9 September 2012.

The London 2012 Festival is the finale of the Cultural Olympiad. Since the Cultural Olympiad started in 2008, over 16 million people all over the UK have participated in or attended performances as part of Cultural Olympiad programmes inspired by London 2012 and funded by its principal funders and sponsors. Over 169,000 people have attended more than 8,300 workshops as part of the Cultural Olympiad programmes.

Principal Funders of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival are Arts Council England, Legacy Trust UK and the National Lottery through the Olympic

Lottery Distributor. BP and BT are Premier Partners of the Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival.

www.london2012.com

Artists taking the lead

Artists taking the lead is the UK Arts Councils' flagship project for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

Twelve extraordinary public art commissions are being created across the country, one in each nation and region of the UK, to help celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The winning commissions were selected by independent panels of artists and producers, and are funded by Arts Council England in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland and the Arts Council of Wales.

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-plan-2011-15/our-priorities-2011-15/2012/artists-taking-lead/>

Unlimited

Unlimited is a project at the heart of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad that celebrates disability, arts, culture and sport on an unprecedented scale. Unlimited is being delivered by Arts Council England, London 2012, the UK Arts Councils and the British Council.

We are commissioning work that encourages disabled and Deaf artists to push beyond their personal best by creating work which opens doors, changes minds, and inspires new collaborations.

There have been three rounds of commissions: over £400,000 has already been awarded to [10 commissions](#) in the first round, more than £820,000 to [13 commissions](#) in the second round and £700,000 to [12 commissions](#) in the third and final round.

To date, work has been performed on a variety of national and international stages and has received critical acclaim.

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-plan-2011-15/our-priorities-2011-15/2012/unlimited/>

Legacy Trust

Legacy Trust UK is an independent charity whose mission is to support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and which will leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the UK.

Legacy Trust UK is funded by a £40 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund (£29 million), Department for Culture Media and Sport (£6 million) and Arts Council England (£5 million), and is a Principal Funder of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival.

WE PLAY

WE PLAY is the North West's unique contribution to the build up and legacy of London 2012 and is primarily funded by Legacy Trust UK (www.legacytrustuk.org), an independent charity whose mission is to support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and which leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the United Kingdom. The Trust is a Principal Funder of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival.

WE PLAY is conceived and led by the North West Creative Programmer for London 2012 as part of the North West's programme for the Cultural Olympiad. It is a four year programme delivered through new regional partnerships.

The North West Steering Group for the 2012 Games is the group responsible for helping the North West to maximise the legacy benefits from the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The North West Legacy Framework for the 2012 Games '[Be Inspired](#)' was published in May 2007 and updated in the publication '[Everyone's 2012](#)' published in July 2009. www.nwbeinspired.com

Abandon Normal Devices

Abandon Normal Devices is a festival of new cinema, digital culture and art, designed to inspire ideas and spark debate around the concept of normality in relation to our bodies and the way we live today. The festival takes place in autumn each year, alternating between Liverpool and Manchester plus an extended programme across the region. It is one of the three Annual Legacy Programmes commissioned by the Legacy Trust UK for WE PLAY, the Northwest cultural legacy programme for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Abandon Normal Devices is driven by a unique partnership between FACT (Liverpool), Cornerhouse (Manchester) and folly (Lancaster). For more information visit www.andfestival.org.uk

Blaze

Blaze is an ambitious youth-led programme taking place across Lancashire, from the Fylde coast to the Pennines. In the lead up to 2012 young people are realising their creative aspirations, producing a dynamic programme of new work each summer, making connections between sport and arts, that excite and engage residents and visitors to Lancashire and Blackpool. It is one of the three Annual Legacy Programmes commissioned by the Legacy Trust UK for WE PLAY, the Northwest cultural legacy programme for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Blaze is partnership project led by Lancashire County Council with Blackpool Council and Creative Lancashire. Find out more on www.blazeonline.org.uk

Lakes Alive

Lakes Alive is a programme of world-class street arts events and festivals bringing the towns, villages and spectacular landscapes of Cumbria alive. Featuring the best international artists, the programme animates public spaces in Cumbria across spring and summer each year, culminating with Mintfest, its flagship street-arts festival. It is one of the three Annual Legacy Programmes commissioned by the Legacy Trust UK for WE PLAY, the Northwest cultural legacy programme for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The Lakes Alive programme is created and directed by Kendal Arts International with Manchester International Arts. Visit www.lakesalive.org to find out more.

Key Dates and Information

Programme Announcements

The North West will make regional Cultural Olympiad Programme Announcements in January 2012, March 2012 and May 2012 (dates to be confirmed).

- **January 2012** – launch of the official public website for London 2012 in the North West and online edition of the North West in 2012 Events Calendar
- **March 2012** – launch of the programme for the Cultural Olympiad in the North West activating the WE PLAY Challenge and Events Programme
- **18 May 2012** – launch of the Games Time Edition of the North West in 2012 Events Calendar

Official Website for London 2012 in the North West

In January 2012, the North West will launch its official public website for London 2012 in the North West. This website will archive and replace the existing regional site - www.nwbeinspired.com - and will drive traffic to and from www.london2012.com. This central resource for 2012 news and events across all areas of London 2012 in the North West will include the Cultural Olympiad

Official Events Calendar for London 2012 in the North West

An online Events Calendar will be hosted on the North West site and it will list all official London 2012 activity taking place in the North West in 2012, including Cultural Olympiad events.

North West Be Inspired Briefing Pack

This document provides general information on London 2012 in the North West across all areas and sectors. It is updated regularly and it can be downloaded from www.nwbeinspired.com

Cultural Olympiad in the North West contacts

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