

Reimagining Regional Policy Through Creative Engagement: New North East Exhibition Opens March 2026

Policy meets participatory art this spring as Teesside University and the Darlington Economic Campus unveil a new co-created exhibition exploring how creative engagement can reshape regional policymaking.

Titled *Reimagining Regional Policy through Creative Engagement* the exhibition is led by the Institute for Collective Place Leadership at Teesside University, and co-organised with the Darlington Economic Campus in collaboration with Creative Darlington. The exhibition is funded by UKRI Impact Accelerator Account and Creative Darlington.

Opening from 2–8 March 2026 at the Friends Community Hub in Darlington, the exhibition showcases creative outputs from a year-long programme of participatory workshops (December 2024–December 2025) involving policymakers, civil servants, local authorities and regional stakeholders across the North East.

Using participatory art methods including storytelling, creative cartography, aesthetic prompts, and collective drawing—participants examined how place and identity shape public decision-making. The exhibition opens up these co-creative policy conversations, foregrounding local insight and forward-looking perspectives on place-responsive growth.

Positioned at the intersection of culture and governance, the exhibition underscores the importance of arts and humanities in expanding how regional policy is discussed, shaped and communicated. Designed for policymakers, researchers, cultural organisations, students and the public, it invites audiences into new ways of engaging with regional identity, inclusive governance and creative public dialogue.

Themes include:

- North East identity and civic pride
- Inclusive regional policymaking
- Co-creation between government, university and community partners
- Reimagined futures for place-based growth

A private view launch event and additional associated events including a screening at The Forum in Darlington will be confirmed in early 2026.

Azadeh Fatehrad, Co- Director of the Institute for Collective Place Leadership, said: *“Creative engagement is not an enhancement to policy- it is a way of thinking with people, with place, and with identity. This exhibition shows what becomes possible when institutions and communities design futures through shared creative processes.”*

Beth Russell, Second Permanent Secretary to HM Treasury at The Darlington Economic Campus, said: *“The Darlington Economic Campus is proud to support this collaboration with Teesside University, which demonstrates how creative approaches to engagement can inform inclusive regional policymaking. By bringing together policymakers, academics and local partners, it strengthens our understanding of place-based growth and the value of cross-sector collaboration in shaping sustainable regional development”.*

Publicity timeline:

- Teaser campaign: December 2025
- Full media outreach: January–February 2026
- Exhibition opening week: 2–8 March 2026

Media and interview requests:

Azadeh Fatehrad A.Fatehrad@tees.ac.uk

Sara Gracey Sara.Gracey@hmtreasury.gov.uk



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