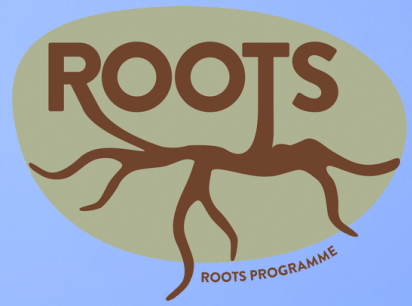
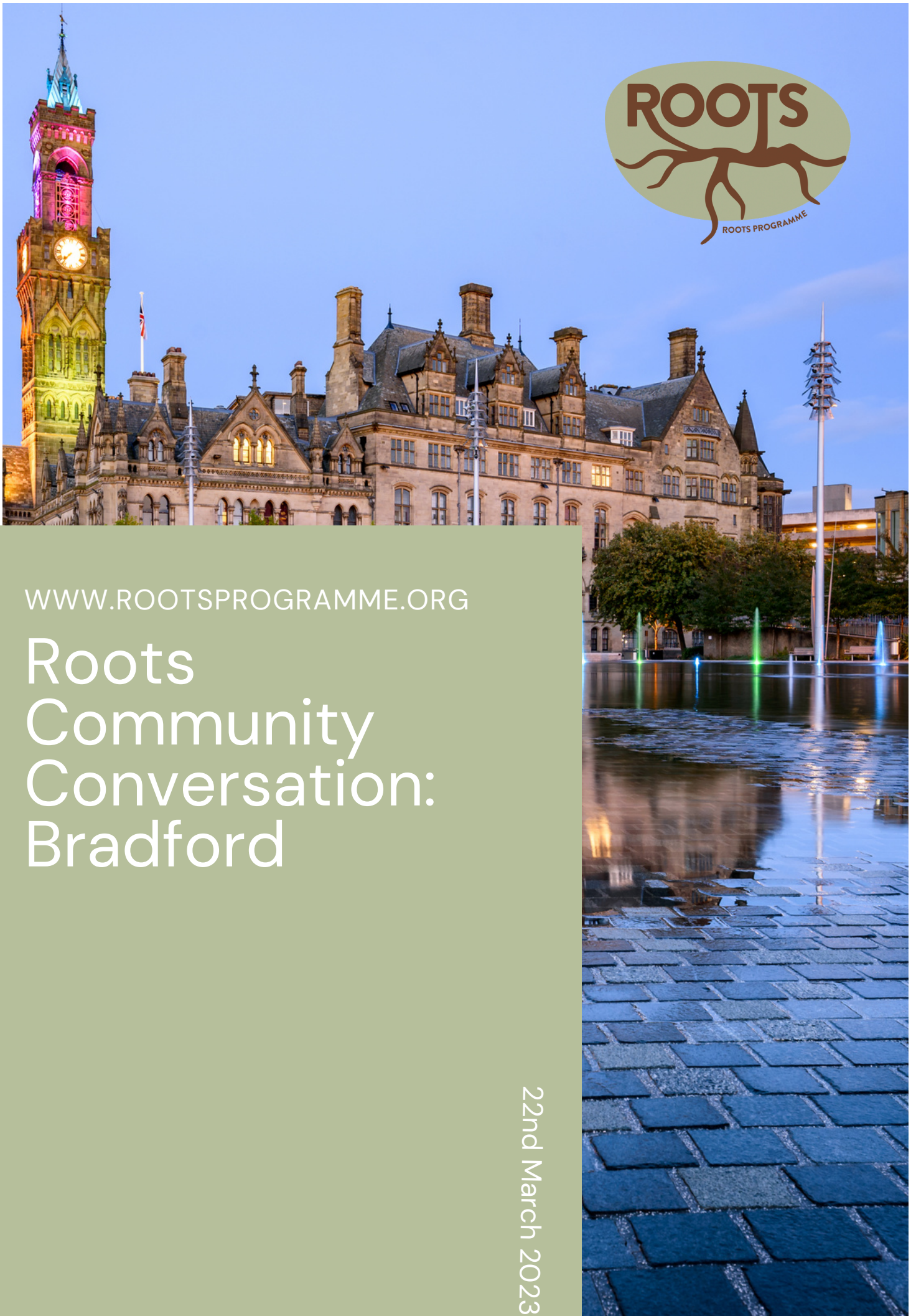




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# Roots Community Conversation: Bradford

22nd March 2023



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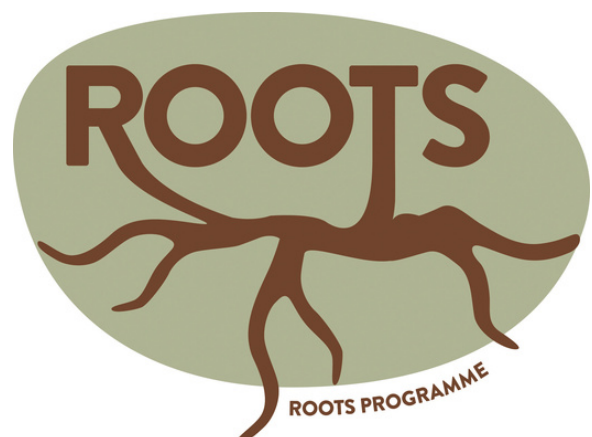
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# 01 Introduction

**The Roots Programme CIC is a small but mighty, grassroots organisation dedicated to bringing people together across our differences, in dialogue rather than debate, to connect with others who have a different experience to us living here in the UK.**



Founded by Ruth Ibegbuna, Roots run several projects and it is through our Roots Community Conversations, we hope to engage the voices of residents in towns and cities around the UK to think about the place they live and consider what they may want it's future to look like – especially those who do not usually participate formally in local affairs.

Roots recognise that communities have capacities, knowledge and resources to make a real life difference where they live. We seek to create a space for listening, speaking, inclusion, respect for each other, agreement or disagreement, but more importantly, provide community members with informal opportunities to discuss ideas for action.

These Conversations are for residents to feed back to elected representatives about the things they care about on their own terms, rather than on set questions asked by the local council. You might not like getting involved in local politics, or even have the time, and this is another way of participating, comfortably.

Participants talk about concerns and challenges from multiple points of view and identify areas of common ground, providing a broader perspective. They can add their own recommendations for action that will benefit the community.

**We are facing a cost of living crisis that doesn't affect us all proportionately, we saw the differing effects of Covid 19 across the country and we are still experiencing the polarising effects of the Brexit campaign. This is a time to come together, hear more from a broader section of the community and find new ways of doing things that will benefit the whole community and make our lives better.**

Community members are the experts on the areas in which they live and instead of shouting at each other on Facebook, feeling we have no right to contribute because we don't have time to commit to volunteering or joining a formal community group, we still have valuable ideas that need to be surfaced and discussed calmly and compassionately.

Roots don't believe that engaging with locals when those with power need support on a development is enough. Roots believe that individual local voices should be heard regularly, through informal grassroots forums and listened to as trusted advisors by those we elect.

***Roots can advise on regular, ongoing local conversations, managed by residents and for residents, with the simple structure and guidelines. We encourage local authorities to embrace and value ongoing dialogue with the community.***

Contact [clare@rootsprogramme.org](mailto:clare@rootsprogramme.org)

# 02 Overview

## The main take-aways

- Bradford is a very warm and welcoming place.
- Bradford is a major 'food destination'.
- Bradford must not overlook the negative comments to be able to reach its full potential.
- Bradford's brilliant grassroots organisations need to find more ways to connect.
- Bradford's young people are dynamic and active in improving Bradford already.
- The 'Green Ribbon' initiative could be brought back and become an ongoing initiative to bring people together.
- Bradford people are proud of their parks, historic buildings and culture of friendliness and acceptance.
- We need to change the culture of littering.
- How can we improve first impressions when you enter the city?
- The council listen, but how can we be sure we are 'heard'?





# 03 The Conversation

## Bradford chats

### Why Bradford for this Community Conversation?

The Bradford Community Conversation is the first of the series of conversation to be held across the UK, whereby the different local communities within the area come together to discuss and deliberate curiously, compassionately and respectfully on matters pertaining to their community, the unique challenges they face and how these issues can be dealt with and overcome.

Roots has a unique connection to Bradford, because Ruth Ibeguna- the founder and CEO grew up in Heaton, Bradford and retains strong links there.

Bradford has some areas with the worst levels of social deprivation in the UK, with widespread pockets of exclusion, and rates of unemployment in some wards exceeding 25%, though other areas of Bradford are among the least deprived in the UK. This creates a paradox to ponder on, of what the true and real representation of Bradford is in comparison to what is being projected by the media.

Against some strong competition, Bradford is to be the UK's 'City of Culture' for 2025 and the programme is expected to generate 15.5 million visitors, a visitor spend of £136.9 million, and could deliver up to £389 million of growth for the city. Things are changing.



In 2021/22, 27% of respondents either definitely or tended to agree that they personally can influence decisions affecting their local area. This is similar to 2020/21. This figure has not varied much over the last 8 years since data collection began.

# 27%

# 04 The Conversation

## We asked, Bradford answered...

### **How does the Bradford experience compare with the Bradford portrayed in the media?**

The true nature of Bradford is displayed and experienced in its beautiful landscape, buildings, the architectural history, culture, food, legacy, the warm, kind-welcoming hospitality and friendly atmosphere created by the people, form the foundation of Bradfords heritage as opposed to the negative press generated and projected.

However the cleanliness of the city, litter management, general hygiene, driving and road usage habits are not up to the required standards, so it's a big deterrent for visitors and outsiders which probably informs the bad press and negative publicity.

It is also believed that all the above mentioned issues are not peculiar to Bradford, but are issues that are faced in any big city, which can be addressed. Overall Bradford is a beautiful city to live in, which is evident in the number of people moving to Bradford from other parts of the country or other countries and happily making it their home for life.

It's the people who make up the community. "Be the change you want to see", is an excellent motto for any community and the change lived would eventually become evident in the community lived in.

Bradford is one of the most unassuming places in the world with people who have great potential, which need to be uncovered for it to be evident. The more people move in, the more potential they bring and inevitably the more changes would be evident. The people make a place and for changes to be made in a community, the change starts with the people first not the leaders. Once the changes are decided and implemented at grassroots level, overall implementation of those changes can be demanded of the leaders.

Though the overall experiences of people living in Bradford may be beautiful, lovely and great, it's still not a true representation of the experiences of the general population. It is therefore important to acknowledge the existence of those negative experiences and not to overlook them in spite of how minute they may be and look at addressing them, though it may only be affecting a minute percentage of the Bradford population and not the entire community.

There are so many great initiatives going on in Bradford but there are no links and collaborations between the different grassroots groups. It is essential to have more of these types of forums for communication, coordination, collaboration and leverages, which would foster integration, accountability and ultimately productivity.

# 05 The Conversation

## We asked, Bradford answered...

### What gives you the greatest hope for the future of Bradford?

Bradford has enormous potential which is evident in the 'Bradford City of Culture' win. When the opportunity is provided with the right support then the potential is huge. The young people whose great contribution was evident in the bid, bring broad diversity to the mix which is really important. Diversity brings a broad level of creativity which can only result in huge potential across the board. The young people and diverse population bring a huge potential to the community.

'Bradford City of Culture' over the 5 years would establish a great legacy for the future generations to come.

More connectivity is evident between areas across Bradford, greater inclusiveness and diversity.

One of the positive things about Bradford is its young population which is an excellent plus. They come up with various initiatives to express themselves and mirror their view within the community, which will shape the future image of Bradford rather than the negative press.

People are encouraged to share their own positive experiences about Bradford, through some platforms which are aimed at promoting community achievements around the world. They are encouraged to share their experiences and stories through these in-house blogs and platforms, so the people can control the narrative as well ensuring more positive experiences are shared as opposed to the negative ones being circulated by the press and media.



# 06 The Conversation

## We asked, Bradford answered...

### Talking points

#### *I live in a city that is open to change*

A great amount of changes are happening in Bradford whether people are open to them or not they're going ahead anyway. More voices are echoing the changes as well now, as opposed to previously when the community was too modest to acknowledge the great initiatives happening.

#### *Westminster politics feels important and relevant here*

The people in the community need to bring about the changes that are required within their community and not wait indefinitely for Westminster to initiate or implement any changes. The national support expected to come, may just never come and this is universally true across the country and not just peculiar to Bradford alone.

#### *Bradford is too often weighed down by past events/perceptions*

Bradford tends to learn the lessons from their mistakes and apply the lessons learnt into the future. For example 'the green ribbon initiative' by 'Bradford women for peace' symbolises an unpleasant event which Bradford learnt from and a positive reminder was inferred from it and implemented to influence future actions about it.

#### *Bradford residents are listened to and appropriate actions are taken*

People feel listened to but they don't feel heard, as there are no follow up actions or evident outcomes. This is because of systemic breakdowns, lack of meaningful consultations hence no accountability or positive outcomes. There are institutional mechanism structures that are not functioning effectively, which either need to be dismantled or remodelled for them to function more effectively. This would ensure that a clear pathway of transparency, accountability and responsibility is implemented to foster efficiency and overall effectiveness.





# 07 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

**In our conversation, participants were asked to think about Bradford and what they would KEEP, SCRAP & REIMAGINE**

It's important to note that this 'playful' activity was the best received by the group. The conversation was respectful, calm and conversational throughout but this particular style of activity created a flurry of ideas and responses from all attendees.

## KEEP

The beautiful buildings and landscape, green spaces, parks and the heritage. Also to keep the buildings low level as well, not too many high buildings.

Keep the culture of openness, friendliness, openness to change, diversity and inclusiveness. These are some of the unique characteristics of Bradford which bind people together, though it may be sometimes difficult to do practically, but worth it.

Bradford has a good community with a lot of wonderful things happening, a lot of voluntary groups action and better for Bradford.

Rebellious DIY culture

# 08 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

## SCRAP

The interchange station

The comment section of the Telegraph & Argus

Racism

Abandoned cars, buildings (possibly making them into more beautiful spaces like public gardens).

# 09 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

## REIMAGINE

Reimagine the awful shop fronts on the low levels of the buildings in the city center, they disfigure the beautiful buildings. To remodel the shops in front of the buildings and make them instagramable, this would attract more tourism into the city and inevitably bring more business to the shops and the city overall.

Reimagine the front page of the T&A by replacing the depressing stories with more inspiring and cheerful ones. To see the T&A as an asset that can be used as a positive powerful tool of communication rather than seeing just its flaws.

Change the national negative perception of Bradford by rebranding its national identity, this can be by controlling the narrative of putting out more positive things that remodel and redefine the image of Bradford to the rest of the nation.

Reimagine the green spaces and spaces for recreation ie Bradford City Football Club, new stadium for Bradford balls, cricket facilities, these are not only places for recreation and wealth but also places with economic potential too.

Reimagine the health and overall wellbeing of Bradford, by reducing inequality and other areas of imbalance wherever they exist.

To leverage on influencers that have their roots or links to Bradford can help redefine and shape its image nationally, especially those in the print media. For example the Lead Culture writer of the Guardian – Lanre grew up in Bradford and would be happy to write-up a great piece on Bradford if approached.

To reimagine Bradford in the light of positive images and projections that can be made to the wider community, taking advantage of arts and cultural festivals coming up, propel Bradford to be appropriately positioned in the 21st century.

# 10 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

## REIMAGINE – CONTINUED

Encouraging tidiness, a better hygiene culture of having cleaner streets. This would also contribute to the overall beauty and ambience of Bradford, an organisation called "Don't mess with Bradford".

Reimagining the entrances into Bradford by having the artist beautify them with arts, as Bradford has so many talented artists.

Reimagine the support for the people struggling with alcohol and drug abuse.

Ways of grassroot groups being linked and remaining connected, may be by mutually holding community conversations more regularly; to foster communication and collaboration within the community.

Less suspicion about community conversations especially at the Council level, so reimagining where some of the control lies in terms of community power, in encouraging more informal community conversations.

Linking schools network initiative can be extended to adults as well.



# 11 The illustrated minutes



We use visual minuting – or graphic recording – to record meetings in words and pictures. They combine a mixture of pictures, graphics and text, which we feel are often more easily absorbed and understood than words alone.

It was produced post-event and is intended to be used to communicate with a wider audience to challenge, inspire and motivate change.

These visual minutes present a good overview of the tone, themes and activities across the Conversation.

# 12 We thank you for your support of our programme

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

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