

Last week saw the formal handover of the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture title from Knowsley to St.Helens. The honour rotates around the six Merseyside boroughs, and is a great opportunity to celebrate the things that make us special.

The handover took place at the spectacular Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot. It's a place to tell stories, and there's power in stories. The stories told about us affect how we're seen and how we see ourselves.

Others are quick enough to put us down, so it's vital we take every opportunity to tell our own stories.

Stories like those about previous generations in St Helens borough, in our towns, districts and villages, who led the industrial revolution through ingenuity and backbreaking work in the coal, glass and chemicals that built the modern world.

Stories of human and sporting endeavour in our community clubs run by hundreds of volunteers who change and improve lives on a daily basis, and sporting success from leading the way in women's football nearly a hundred years ago to conquering the world in sports like rugby, darts, boxing and more today.

Stories of St Helens artists, musicians, comedians, writers and creators who educate, entertain and excite audiences around the world from national TV and number one albums to the Olympic opening ceremony.

Stories of businesses from the small start ups to the multinationals who call St Helens home, and who day in, day out innovate and support growth in our region – including right now many who are at the forefront of the green industrial revolution.

Stories, above all, about never giving up no matter what the world throws at us – standing together through seemingly impossible times, in unity, in hope.

This and much, much more is our story. This is our culture. And it's what we'll be celebrating in 2023.

More information about the celebrations will be revealed in due course. We're looking forward to being the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture and to telling our story, in our way.

Best wishes to all Star readers.

These are tough times for all of us. There is no shame at all in asking for a helping hand, and there are plenty of people and organisations ready to give one. If you need support please reach out. Visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether for all the latest information and advice.