

Q&As: Blaggrave's New Strategy – Leading with Hope

What is the focus of the new strategy?

Our *Leading with Hope* strategy marks an exciting evolution in our approach – from national and Southeast regional grant-making to deeply rooted, place-based investment in three communities: Portsmouth, London, and Birmingham.

In each place, we are listening deeply to young people, communities and local partners to resource welcoming physical spaces – community-led hubs for young changemakers. We'll also invest in the local organisations and networks surrounding them, strengthening the wider ecosystem so youth-led change can truly thrive.

Over time, we will support communities and young people to play a leading role in how our assets are used and governed, building approaches rooted in community stewardship and democratic governance. This is about enabling young people, in place and alongside their wider communities, to shape decisions, grow their agency, and create lasting change.

As this work unfolds, we'll share what we learn so this approach can help inspire others to consider aligned approaches.

How did Blaggrave choose its three focus areas?

In early 2025 we commissioned research to help us guide the decision of where to focus our efforts. This research, conducted by Clearview, identified a longlist of local authority areas that would provide fertile ground for our intentions of community wealth building, an approach that creates a resilient and inclusive economy for the benefit of the local area, ensuring that economic value is held and reinvested locally, with young people at the centre. The longlist identified cities with a high density of young people, high levels of poverty and deep-rooted inequality, and where the youth sector needed support, but also held enough infrastructure for us to be able to work alongside active partners.

From the longlist, we consulted widely with colleagues across the funding sector to place our work within national context. We also looked closely at opportunity, need and existing relationships. This included where we already have

partnerships, long-standing connections, and a practical ability to support work on the ground.

How is this strategy youth led?

The strategy is rooted in years of listening to young people, not a single consultation exercise. Our approach has been shaped through long-term trusting relationships with young people and those who support them.

What you see in the new strategy reflects the solutions, priorities and insights young people have consistently shared with us over time. Their input has shaped not just this document, but our wider culture and way of working.

What do you mean by ‘physical spaces for young people’ or ‘youth hubs’?

In our three focus areas, we will support buildings where young people and their wider communities can come together – spaces that can act as a hub for young changemakers. These will be shaped by local young people and communities, so the activities that happen there will reflect what is needed and wanted in each place. This could include space for social enterprise, creative activity, advice and guidance, and much more.

We see these spaces not just as buildings, but as part of a wider approach to building strong local infrastructure around young people. Over time, we want them to become financially resilient, locally accountable, and rooted in community stewardship, so they continue to support young people into the future.

This work is inspired by the principles of community wealth building – practical ways to ensure that assets, skills, employment and investment create lasting benefit in the places they are intended to serve. Through this approach, we aim to strengthen local youth leadership, capacity and opportunity for young people and their communities to drive positive change in their communities for generations to come.

How is this strategy changing the way Blaggrave uses its resources?

This strategy builds on how our thinking and approach have evolved over time.

Over the past few years, we’ve explored how our assets can better support our mission – including developing ethical investment approaches, co-founding the ESG Olympics, and more recently the Endowments Investment Challenge.

Through this work, we’ve learned that there are more ways to further our charitable aims when we focus less on maximising financial return alone, and more on how our resources can actively create impact.

As a result, we are aligning all our assets more closely with our purpose. Over the next decade, we will focus on supporting young people and their wider

communities in Birmingham, London and Portsmouth, using most of our assets in ways that directly advance our charitable mission. In practice, this means resourcing community spaces – including buildings that can act as hubs for young changemakers and their wider communities – alongside the wider local infrastructure around them, and supporting young people and communities to help shape how these resources are used over time. We want these to become rooted in community stewardship, so they continue to benefit young people well into the future.

At its heart, this is about making sure everything we have is working towards our mission – creating lasting benefit for young people and contributing to a fairer and more hopeful future.

Will Blagrave still be around in the long term?

Possibly – but we haven't made a final decision.

Our focus right now is on the next ten years, where we plan to use the substantial majority of our assets to support young people and their wider communities, in line with our charitable purposes.

We expect this to be our final strategy as a charitable funder. What comes after that is still open. Our trustees will decide whether Blagrave has a useful ongoing role – for example through supporting learning, partnerships or the wider ecosystem – based on what young people and their communities need at that point.

Any future decision about Blagrave's role or structure will be made carefully, transparently, and with appropriate advice.

How will funding decisions be made under the new strategy?

Our current model is that, wherever possible, funding decisions are shaped by the communities and young people who stand to benefit, with final decisions made by Blagrave trustees (or delegated to staff for smaller grants).

Over the course of the strategy, we will build on this approach by increasing the role of young people and communities in shaping decisions in each place, with young people at the centre. This will include developing approaches to decision-making that are rooted in local context, community stewardship and appropriate governance.

We don't expect this to happen all at once, and the pace will depend on what is right for each place. Throughout, our trustees will continue to hold responsibility for ensuring decisions are made in line with our charitable purposes, and we will be transparent about how decision-making evolves over time.

How do you work with other funders?

Our strategy was developed with the support of a wide variety of other funders and community leaders. We have worked hard to ensure that our plans complement rather than duplicate existing work.

Will Blagrave still provide grants?

Yes, but grants will increasingly align with our new strategy – supporting youth-led initiatives, organisations supporting young people and youth hubs in our three focus areas. Our approach will be co-created with local partners and young people. We don't currently have any grant programmes open to application. Eventually, we anticipate that our traditional grant-making strategy may transition entirely as resources shift into permanent local property and community investments in Portsmouth, London and Birmingham. This is a gradual, long-term goal over the next 10-years. Any evolution of our funding model will be carefully managed by our trustees to protect our charitable aims and support partner readiness.

What does this mean for existing grant programmes?

Our Regional Programme investing in youth organisations in the Southeast of England is now closed to new applications, although we continue to support current partners for the duration of our grant agreement. We're working closely with partners to provide clear timelines, support adaptation, and help identify alternative funding sources. There is no change for our existing Challenge and Change or Pathways Fund, and in time these programmes will transition to focus on our three chosen areas. Our climate justice programme, Roots & Routes, will remain a national initiative supported by a wider pool of funders for at least the coming three years.

Why is Blagrave making this change now, when the charity sector is struggling more than ever before?

Young people are facing unprecedented challenges – economic inequality, housing insecurity, mental health crises, and shrinking opportunities. Under our previous strategy, even within our regional programme's defined four counties, our impact was spread too thin to create the long-term change we know is needed. We want our impact to be deeper, more tangible, and focused on long-lasting change. By listening deeply to young people and their communities, and gaining a greater understanding of local ecosystems, our support can be as nuanced and relevant as communities need it to be.

Where did Blagrave's wealth come from in the first place?

In 2025 we began to explore the origins of the Blagrave wealth that led to the founding of our trust in 1981. Like many historic funds in England, the original accumulation of these resources involved historical injustices, including links to colonial trade and the exploitation of land and people. We believe in being

transparent about our past so we can act with integrity today. We are investigating this further and will share a detailed update later in 2026.

What opportunities exist for organisations outside Portsmouth, London, and Birmingham?

While our direct investment focuses on these three areas, we will continue to share learning nationally, influence funders, and amplify youth voices. Organisations beyond these areas may benefit from convening, networking, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Some of our commitments to national programmes alongside other funders, including our climate justice fund Roots & Routes, will remain for the coming 3 years.

How can current partners stay involved?

We are developing an initiative this year to keep all our current and past partners engaged with us and with each other. We'll share details in due course.

Where can I find more information?

Visit www.blagravetrust.org for updates, resources, and detailed information about the strategy and its implementation, and to sign up to our newsletter.