**Bath Children’s Festival (30 Sept - 9 Oct 2016)**

**Main points from an initial chat on the phone with Judith Robinson, Project Manager**

* Judith is a full time employee and works on 2 festivals a year (of which BCF is one) and she manages two other part-time staff. She also works with the two artistic directors (John & Gill McLay), a marketing team and a sponsorship team.
* The Bath Children’s Festival consists of between 130 and 150 events/sessions – for every age group between 3 and a 10 years old (plus a handful of events for over 10’s up to teenagers/young adults).
* Elements include masterclasses, workshops, storytelling, activities, author talks and some ‘Bath picks’ – an intro into the brightest stars in children’s books. Activities take place in about 11 indoor venues across the city of Bath.
* They also run education and outreach activity throughout the year to increase children’s engagement with literature. During the festival this activity happens in schools during the week.
* Location of the festival and links with community is key – local writers, schools, etc.
* Look at local venues and their suitability for different age groups – for example small rooms for small children, and informal spaces as they tend to move about a lot (so rows of chairs less suitable). Also the type of event/audience will determine the space to be used to an extent.
* Judith said that her experience was that a tented village approach was expensive and absorbs time that may be better spent on coordinating the actual programme. Tents would need to be equipped to a relatively high standard, there may be noise issues (with thinner walls than in a building) and overnight security to consider. However she did see the appeal for a part of the festival to be in a temporary structure and this could be for families to gather between festival events.
* Children’s literature events/sessions take longer to set-up than more ‘adult focused’ activities. They can be more messy, may require things like costumes, films and can be more technically demanding.
* Programming done in conjunction with publishers and timing is key, especially to avoid clashes with other festivals and therefore the availability (or otherwise) of authors, etc. British Council lists many Literature Festivals – as does Love Reading website.
* Definitely think through the payment of authors and impact on the budget as this tends to be missed by organisers. Some local writers/authors may attend free but children’s authors tend to get asked a lot. There are recommended/guidelines for fees at Society of Authors website. There is an ongoing debate about this issue in The Bookseller.
* The logistics of having author’s books available for sale can be daunting. Smaller authors may bring their own but others, especially bigger names, won’t. The alternative to having a dedicated person organising this aspect of the festival is to come to an arrangement with a bookseller such as Waterstones (that’s who Bath work with).
* Bath are “very reliant on ticket income” – and their brochure says that 40% of their income is from ticket sales but they do two other festivals too, so it’s not clear if that applies to all 3 festivals.
* Bath not prepared to share details of their budget (although some financial info may be available as they are a charity – but unlikely this is very useful)
* Funding is competitive but Arts Council keen on new audiences and reaching out to them, etc.
* Recommends keeping year one relatively small and manageable and to manage the financial risks – something like 50 events/sessions in Year One seemed about right to her.
* Judith is happy to help with other questions and would welcome Hull Children’s Literature Festival people to go visit their event later this year to see how they do things. Their event is close (geographically and date wise) to Cheltenham Festival (early October) so this could be worth seeing whilst in the area.