Executive Summary

* 1. Introduction
		1. Background to ‘Back to Ours’

‘Back to Ours’ is a festival of touring performances that visited community venues across the city during school half terms in February, May and November 2017 and February 2018.

The vision for ‘Back to Ours’ was to reduce barriers for disengaged local people to access arts and culture events.

In order to achieve this, the project set out to create a series of temporary performance venues within existing community facilities, transforming spaces that disengaged audiences are already familiar with and feel safe in.

The spaces were turned into venues that could cater for an inspiring night out at the theatre to see a comedian, watch an incredible musician or see some world-class dance.

‘Back to Ours’ was a Hull 2017 production with a Core Project Team (CPT) made up of five key individuals, all of which were Hull 2017 staff.

* + 1. The ‘Back to Ours’ Venues

Eight venues across the city became designated performance spaces for the ‘Back to Ours’ festivals. These venues were primarily chosen because they were recognisable within communities in the North, East and West of the city and had the space required to receive productions on the scale of what was in mind for the artistic programme.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NORTH | Kingswood Academy |
| Winifred Holtby Academy |
| North Point Shopping Centre |
| EAST | Freedom Centre |
| Archbishop Sentamu Academy |
| WEST | Sirius Academy West |
| Hymers College |
| William Gemmel Club |

* + 1. Artists and Performances

A total of 32artists and artistic companies were commissioned to perform at ‘Back to Ours’, totalling 109 performances across the four festivals. For a full list of the acts programmed for the festivals, see Section 1.2.2 of the ‘Back to Ours’ Evaluation Report.

* + 1. Aims, Objectives and Purpose

The ‘Back to Ours’ Evaluation Report provides objective analysis and evaluation of how the project delivered against its own vision, aims and objectives (see Figure 1); and the extent to which ‘Back to Ours’ contributed to Hull 2017’s overarching strategic aims and objectives (see Figure 2)[[1]](#footnote-1).

The insights from this Report will be used to inform project planning and delivery within Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Ltd. and improve and enhance any community arts and culture projects the organisation may undertake in future.

In addition, there are plans to share key findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations with other cultural organisations (both locally and nationally), so they can benefit from knowledge transfer.

 Figure 1: Project-specific Aims and Objectives

Figure 2: Hull 2017 Overarching Aims and Objectives



* + 1. Methodology

The evaluation included primary data collection with a range of project stakeholders and the ‘Back to Ours’ audience at different points within the project lifecycle. This enabled expectations and intentions for ‘Back to Ours’ to be measured, as well as the outputs and outcomes of the project. Mixed methods were used, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Research and Consultation on ‘Back to Ours’

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Respondent Group | Research Methodology | Sample Size |
| Core Project Team (CPT) | Pre-event online surveyPost-event online surveyPost-festival 1 depth interviewPost-festival 3 depth interview | **4** **5****3****5** |
| Artists | Post-event depth interview | **6** |
| Peer Assessors | Pre-event online surveyPost-event online survey | **9****8** |
| Audiences | Post-event survey (online/F2F/ CATI[[2]](#footnote-2))Focus groups‘Chat with Nan’ groupsUsherette tray token countsEmoji paddlesVox pops | **735****3****123****4,887****1,271****27** |
| Delivery Partners | Post-event online surveyPost-festival 3 depth interview | **3****2** |
| Venue Partners | Pre-event online surveyPost-event online surveyPost-festival 1 depth interviewPost-festival 3 depth interview | **6****7****8****8** |
| Media  | Media Coverage Analysis[[3]](#footnote-3) |  |

The evaluation focuses on both process and outcomes, measuring impact, capturing learning, and building understanding of what worked well and where improvements can be made.

* 1. Key Findings

Sections 1.2.1. to 1.2.17. highlight key findings from the ‘Back to Ours’ Evaluation Report. At the end of each section the Project Aims and Objectives (Figure 1) and Hull 2017 Aims and Objectives (Figure 2), to which these findings contribute are highlighted.

* + 1. Contribution to the Overall Hull 2017 Programme
* 109 separate performances including one new commission
* 32 artists and artistic companies
* Four festivals totaling 22 days of activity
* Eight temporary performance spaces in community buildings

Artists were commissioned to perform existing touring productions at the festivals, although one piece was new work written for ‘Back to Ours’ – Yvette by Urielle Klein-Mekongo. The programme covered a diverse range of art forms including film, circus, comedy, theatre, dance and music.

***Project Aim 1***

***Hull 2017 Aim 1***

* + 1. The Artistic Programme
* The artistic programme was developed through initial consultation with the local community and finalised by the CPT in collaboration with Venue Partners and programme consultants.
* The collaborative approach received positive feedback from Venue Partners, who welcomed the opportunity to have an input on the events that would be coming to their venues.
* The aim of the artistic programme was to provide a broad range of entertainment that would be appealing to all ages, whilst also pushing boundaries and challenging interpretations of art.
* Audience members responded well to the programme and Venue Partners praised the variety and quality of the acts, which exceeded what they would have been able to fund if they had booked them independently.

*“I thought it was amazing, I wasn’t really expecting that. I thought the puppetry was incredible. Like how they made all the little gestures, it was all just with their hands.” (Audience member on Meet Fred)*

*“The venue has seen acts we could never afford to invest in. It has been a huge positive for us.” (Venue Partner)*

***Project Aim 1***

***Hull 2017 Aim 1***

* + 1. Quality and the Creative Case for Diversity
* Of the CPT members who gave equal ops data, there were:
* Five females and one male
* Age groups from 20-44
* Residents from Hull and the East Riding.
* There was recognition that ethnic diversity and disability were under-represented in both the CPT and amongst commissioned artists.
* Peer assessors generally felt that diversity was achieved to some level across the project, with the programming and community engagement strategies implemented by the CPT.
* ‘Back to Ours’ was high quality, with ACE Quality Metrics[[4]](#footnote-4) scoring a minimum of 5.5 out of 10, with the most frequent score being 8 out of 10.
* Concept: it was an interesting idea, Local Impact: it’s important that it’s happening here (in Hull’s community venues) and Rigour: it is well thought through and put together were the highest scoring Quality Metrics on average across the CPT, Peer Assessors and audiences (scoring 8.9 or above).
* Peer Assessors felt the weakest Quality Metric was Distinctiveness: it is different from things I’ve experienced before, due to their own personal or professional experience of attending similar events.

***Project Aim 1***

***Hull 2017 Aim 1***

* + 1. Audience Engagement
* 12,466 tickets sold across four festivals.
* Total estimated audience numbers across the four festivals was 9,536.
* An average of 57.1% capacity was filled across festivals. This varied hugely across shows however, with some Picture House screenings achieving as little as 6% capacity and live music acts Black Grape and Pigeon Detectives reaching 100% and 98%.
* Some audience members expressed disappointment that some performances had low audience numbers and felt that this had a negative effect on their experience.
* 29% of audience members had been to more than one ‘Back to Ours’ festival.
* On average, 1 in 4 audience members attended two or more performances in the same festival.
* High levels of audience satisfaction with 94.8% saying they would be interested or very interested in attending something similar in the future.
* 82% were very likely to recommend ‘Back to Ours’ and 14.8% likely.
* Predominantly female audience with an average of 74% compared to 24.7% males.
* Successfully attracted a family audience with average group size of 3.6, made up of 2.6 adults and 1 child under the age of 16. The most frequent group size was 4.
* 91% of audience members came from a HU postcode and 61% were in the Kingston Upon Hull local authority.
* Although they didn’t represent a large percentage of total audiences, there was a higher density of audience members from the areas local to venues in the North, East and West of the city.
* Only 2.2% of audience members hadn’t attended any arts and culture events in the last year, which suggests they are engaged.
* Hull’s UK City of Culture status was a key motivation for attending ‘Back to Ours’, with 27.1% selecting this as their main reason to visit.
* 26% of audience members selected ‘something to do with the kids’ as one of their main reasons for attending.
* 1 in 5 audience members selected ‘a specific interest in the artists / actors involved’ as a main reason for attending ‘Back to Ours’ (20.5%), with many of these mentioning the live music acts, for example Badly Drawn Boy or Black Grape

*“I wanted to come and experience something new with my family.” (Chat with Gran: Audience member)*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Festival** | **Total capacity** | **Seats sold** | **Capacity filled %** | **Value of sales** | **Average ticket cost** |
| Festival 1 | 4,866 | 2,711 | 55.7% | £8,930 | £3.45 |
| Festival 2 | 5,880 | 2,934 | 49.9% | £10,765 | £3.84 |
| Festival 3 | 5,061 | 2,316 | 45.8% | £8,487 | £3.29 |
| Festival 4 | 6,010 | 4,505 | 75.0% | £20,590 | £3.75 |
| **Total** | **21,817** | **12,466** | **57.1%** | **£48,772** | **£3.58** |

***Project Aim 2***

***Hull 2017 Aim 2***

* + 1. Marketing
* The Hull 2017 website and word of mouth from friends / family or colleagues were the principal ways of communicating with audiences about ‘Back to Ours’, most closely followed by Hull 2017 social media.
* 38.4% of audiences found out about ‘Back to Ours’ through the Hull 2017 website
* Advertising and printed promotional materials generated much greater awareness for ‘Back to Ours’ than for Hull 2017 events – with 20.1% for ‘Back to Ours’, compared with 13.1% for Hull 2017 events overall.
* Particularly significant with ‘Back to Ours’ was the influence of word of mouth recommendation, in person – 30.9% for ‘Back to Ours’ and 14.5% for Hull 2017 events overall
* Partners generally agreed that the marketing materials for ‘Back to Ours’ were visually effective and appealing across a wide range of ages and art forms.
* Venue Partners expressed an initial lack of confidence in the marketing activity, stating that printed materials - including guides and banners, were sent out too late.
* Venue and Delivery Partners and the CPT felt that the marketing of ‘Back to Ours’ improved throughout the year as the team reacted to learnings and feedback.

*“We’ve learnt from that and with each one it’s got better and better.” (Venue Partner)*

*“We've tried completely different methods across every festival to use last year as a real test bed for what did work what didn't.” (CPT member)*

* + 1. The ‘Back to Ours’ Venues
* Eight locations were designated performance spaces for ‘Back to Ours’.
* Geographical barriers to attending the arts were reduced, with some audience members reporting that they lived in walking distance to the venue.
* Audience members reported feeling more comfortable and less intimidated in ‘Back to Ours’ venues as they were less formal than traditional performance venues.
* 26.4% of audiences thought that the venue facilities were better than city centre venues.
* 79.6% thought that the ‘Back to Ours’ venues were better than city centre venues in terms of affordability.
* 45.8% felt that the atmosphere at ‘Back to Ours’ venues was better than city centre venues.
* 73.6% thought that the parking was better at ‘Back to Ours’ venues compared to city centre venues.
* Audience members welcomed the opportunity to explore buildings in their neighbourhoods.
* Venue Partners felt that their facilities had a more positive image within the community as a result of taking part in ‘Back to Ours’.
* Using community venues helped to generate a sense of inclusion, with audience members reporting feeling valued due to events taking place in their own neighbourhoods.

*“I think people feel valued more, because I think there's not a lot going on here. I think, if they can see these events going on, they'll think that someone's looking after them. I think people around here, don't feel like they're remembered; I think they feel they're forgotten.” (Focus Group Respondent: Audience Member)*

***Project Aim 3***

***Hull 2017 Aim 3***

* + 1. Bringing People Together
* 66.4% of audience members ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement ‘Back to Ours made me feel more connected to the local community here’.
* 69% of audience members ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement ‘Back to Ours made me feel more connected with Hull and its people’.
* 92.8% agreed that ‘Back to Ours gave everyone the chance to share and celebrate together’
* 63.6% agreed that ‘Back to Ours’ gave them the opportunity to interact with people they wouldn’t normally have interacted with.
* ‘Back to Ours’ generated a sense of pride in the community which appeared to be bolstered by Hull’s City of Culture status and the events of the wider artistic programme.
* Audience focus group respondents also reflected on how the project encouraged them to be more involved in their local community.

*“I think it helps bring all the community together. And it gets everyone together and smiling and seeing positive things.”*

*“It made me think about becoming more involved in other events at the venues that I went to.”*

*“It makes you feel proud of where you’ve come from.”*

*(Audience Members)*

***Hull 2017 Aim 7***

* + 1. Risk-taking

The project was successful in raising aspirations to try something new. Audience members felt that the low ticket prices encouraged them to experience a new art form or event, because it didn’t cost them much so it wasn’t seen as a big risk.

*“The fact that the tickets were really cheap, so you think, I'll take a risk on something, because I don't feel like I've spent 40-50 quid on something I haven't enjoyed.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

***Project Aim 2***

***Hull 2017 Aim 2***

* + 1. Emotional Response
* 98% agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Back to Ours’ was an enjoyable experience.
* In the Emoji Paddle[[5]](#footnote-5) research, positive emotions were reflected more commonly than negative emotions, supporting feedback that ‘Back to Ours’ was an enjoyable event.
* The most common emotions across all shows were ‘Happy’ (36.7%) and ‘Love’ (30.4%).
* Audience research suggests that those who selected negative emotions were reflecting on the themes and content of the performance, rather than a negative experience

*“I remember it made me cry. And I came away and I thought, who thought dancing could bring you to tears? It was so powerful. And the way their bodies told the story.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

***Hull 2017 Aim 7***

* + 1. Production Management
* All parties praised the efficiency and smooth delivery of the festivals. In particular, the production schedule received positive feedback and was considered to be very efficient given the complex nature of the project.
* Artists were confident in the ability of the production team and spoke positively about the support offered by Delivery Partner HPSS.
* Artist liaison was another strength during the live delivery of the festival, with performers feeling ‘well looked after’ and supported throughout.
* Venue Partners also felt that the CPT had the technical and logistics under control, which helped them to feel more at ease during the live delivery of the shows.
* The CPT reviewed and adapted the delivery plan after each festival, which lead to improved project management over time.

*“When we arrived all of the tech equipment that we'd requested was there, and ready to use, and was in perfectly working order. We actually found it a very pleasurable experience.” (Artist)*

*“I think it’s honed itself over the year, I think they’ve got better as the year’s gone on.” (Venue Partner)*

***Hull 2017 Aim 3***

***Project Aim 3***

* + 1. Project Management and Partnerships
* Project management for Back to Ours was widely considered to be successful, with the Hull 2017 team scoring highly on frequency of meetings, explanation of roles and responsibilities and communication overall.
* The CPT felt that communication was one of the main challenges of the project and acknowledged that this was an area for improvement going forward.
* Strong relationships were built with Venue Partners, who reported feeling part of the team through having a high level of involvement in planning and decision-making.
* Venue leads also developed relationships with other venues across the city as a result of working on ‘Back to Ours’.
* Positive relationships were also built with the CPT and Delivery Partners, which ensured the efficient delivery of the festivals.
* Being involved in ‘Back to Ours’ gave artists the opportunity to work with new individuals and organisation whilst developing strong relationships with the CPT and front of house staff.
* All Delivery Partners, Venue Partners and Artists consulted were keen to work on ‘Back to Ours’ or a project with a similar concept moving forwards.

*“Absolutely a privilege and a pleasure to work with that team of people, to be very honest with you.” (Artist)*

*“I know it's not your job to be part of the team, but you become part of the team. You feel part of the team.” (Venue Partner)*

***Hull 2017 Aim 9***

***Project Aim 3***

* + 1. Media Coverage
* ‘Back to Ours’ received a total media coverage of 312 pieces across print, online and broadcast with a total readership of over 354 million and an estimated AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent) of more than £472,000.
* The www.hull2017.co.uk website received more than 1,709 click-throughs from online editorial and coverage about ‘Back to Ours’ has been shared over 21,000 times on social media, mostly Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

***Hull 2017 Aim 4***

* + 1. Economic Impact
* ‘Back to Ours’ wasn’t a project designed with economic impact in mind and was more focused on engaging local people who were non-engagers of arts and culture. As such, ticket prices were subsidised to help remove any financial barriers, and events were very much directed towards Hull residents rather than visitors.
* 79% of audience members from outside Hull were in Hull ‘mainly’ to attend ‘Back to Ours’.
* Of the respondents who were visitors to Hull, 87.6% were in Hull just for the day and 12.4% were staying overnight when they attended ‘Back to Ours’. 29.7% of overnight visitors stayed in a hotel.
* Visitors were less happy with the city centre signposting and public transport for ‘Back to Ours’ compared to Hull 2017 overall. This may be due to the ‘Back to Ours’ venues being located in neighbourhoods outside of the city centre, which may have made this more difficult for non-Hull residents to get to.
* Visitors were more likely to be satisfied with the value of money for ‘Back to Ours’ than Hull 2017 events overall – potentially due to the low ticket prices (97.1% compared to 91.9% for Hull 2017 overall).
* As an initial estimate, the audience of 9,536 people across all festivals had an estimated total spend of £91,105.

***Hull 2017 Aims 4 and 5***

* + 1. Capacity Building for CPT, Artists and Partners
* For Venue Partners, Delivery Partners, Artists and the CPT, Hull’s status as UK City of Culture was a key motivation for being involved in ‘Back to Ours’.
* Other key motivations for Venue Partners specifically included:
* The opportunity to gain exposure and raise the profile of their venue;
* A chance to be involved in the year’s celebrations; and
* To develop opportunities for local people to access the arts.
* All but one Venue Partner reported learning new skills and developing existing ones as a result of taking part in ‘Back to Ours’, including making relevant contacts in the industry to help them continue using their venue as a performance space.
* Venue Partners also indicated that the project enabled them to learn more about the capabilities of their venue, which increased their confidence in hosting events independently from ‘Back to Ours’
* For Delivery Partners, ‘Back to Ours’ provided the opportunity to work in new environments, which boosted confidence and increased the ability to work creatively and flexibly.
* Members of the CPT felt that the scale of ‘Back to Ours’ and their level of involvement and responsibility within the project was much greater than anything they’d worked on before.
* Artists reported a raised professional profile and the opportunity to reach diverse new audiences with their work. They also built a greater understanding of Hull and its communities.

*“The events allowed our staff to be exposed to differing audience types and gain confidence dealing with people in a controlled and non threatening environment.” (Delivery Partner)*

*“For me personally, it’s kind of one of the biggest thing I have ever done and the fact that it all went well and it all went smoothly, was the biggest achievements I have ever done.”*

*(CPT members)*

* 1. Key Learnings

There are several key learnings that have been highlighted by the Evaluation Report for ‘Back to Ours’:

* + Venues within neighbourhoods in the North, West and East of Hull were chosen to target communities that typically have low engagement with the arts, to help remove geographical barriers.

*“It’s nice to have it where you’re not having to travel too far from where you live isn’t it.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

* + Audience members feel valued and included in the Hull UK City of Culture celebrations through events coming to their local area rather than the city centre.

*“[Back to Ours] Made me feel more part of community as well.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

* + Hosting events in non-traditional performance spaces within familiar community buildings is a highly accessible approach to engaging audiences with arts and culture.
	+ Low ticket prices help to reduce risk when accessing events and enables people to try something new.

*“I went to see that Yvette, which is obviously quite hard-headed. I wouldn't have risked paying 18 quid a ticket, to go see that at Truck, but for five pound a ticket, I'll go and give it a whirl.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

* + Hull 2017 Volunteers are invaluable to engaging audiences, increasing audiences’ understanding, and raising awareness.
	+ Creative ticketing strategies rather than relying on solely online sales are key to increase attendance in local audiences.

*“We need to make sure we don’t put all the tickets online because they will just go to whoever, they won’t necessarily go to people living in the areas that we’re wanting, we want people who are living around the venues to go and walk up.” (CPT member)*

* + A strong, flexible CPT and technical and logistics Delivery Partners are key to ensure smooth delivery of productions in non-traditional performance spaces.
	+ Reaching specific audience groups, for example over 55’s and males requires a strategic approach to marketing and communications activity.
	+ Creating a festival programme within a programme needs clear messaging and an overarching marketing and communications strategy, if it is to successfully carve out its own brand and identity.
	+ Managing expectations is a key factor of planning and developing a project – in particularly the audience and Venue Partner expectations.
	+ Projects within a wider artistic programme could fall victim to ‘noise’ from other large scale and high profile events.

*“Now you’re saying about Back to Ours, there was that much on last year, I can’t remember what I’ve seen.” (Audience Focus Group Respondent)*

* + The success of longer-term projects is ensured by constant review of process and adapting to meet the needs of the audience.
	1. Recommendations

The experience of ‘Back to Ours’ highlights several recommendations linked to the delivery of UK City of Culture and strategic touring projects, whether in communities within Hull or elsewhere.

* + 1. Non-Traditional Performance Venues
* The project has demonstrated clear benefits to hosting arts and culture events in community venues and this should be developed moving forward.
* Consider expanding into currently under-represented areas, for example the North Hull Estates.
* Explore the possibility of using outdoor areas at existing ‘Back to Ours’ venues to respond to the clear audience appetite for outdoor events, for example school playing fields or the Freedom Centre’s outdoor stage.
	+ 1. Artistic Programme Development
* Continue to push boundaries with programming whilst maintaining a family friendly and mainstream appeal. Programming popular live music act next to other art forms can give added credibility to alternative work and encourage people to try something new
* Arts Council England advocate that diversity and equality enrich the arts for artists, audiences, and society. Future projects must consider how to increase the diversity and equality of CPTs and commissioned artists, which in turn may impact on diversity of the audience.
	+ 1. Audience Development and Engagement
* Work with community leaders and gatekeepers to increase representation of more deprived Hull residents and ethnic minorities in audience numbers.
* Keep ticket prices low to encourage risk taking and continue to attract family groups.
* Revisit ticketing strategy to ensure local audiences have access to tickets, with further provision to purchase in person at more sites within the community and over a longer period of time.
* Work with school venues to create awareness and appetite in students, using engaging tactics such as taster performances or publicity stunts.
	+ 1. Marketing and Communications
* Where possible, build in longer lead times for programme announcements and marketing materials to allow awareness to build. This will help to encourage audience planning and enable enough time to save for tickets.
* Explore the viability of developing relationships with cafes, pubs, and restaurants close to venues to raise awareness and increase visibility locally.
* Empower partners to play a more active role in the marketing of events in their own venues to better capitalise on their existing local network and reach.
* Continue to identify and foster relationships with key regional and national media contacts alongside smaller local publications likely to have readership in the target audience.
	+ 1. Project and Production Management
* Maintain high quality production of performances to provide portfolio of evidence for ‘Back to Ours’ as a credible and reputable festival to be involved in. Build on the positive reputation of ‘Back to Ours’ to attract new acts and creative partners.
* Continue to consult with communities, Venue Partners, Delivery Partners and Peer Assessors to ensure the project adapts and evolves according to feedback.
* Ensure a programme of the scale and ambition of ‘Back to Ours’ is properly staffed to ensure the vision of the CPT, artists and Partners can be realised to the desired quality.
1. Aim 6 and Objectives 2 and 20 of the overarching strategic aims were not applicable to this project, so have not been included. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Computer Aided Telephone Interview [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cornershop (one of Hull 2017’s PR agencies) utilised TrendKite to undertake an analysis of media coverage for each Look Up artwork. TrendKite is an on-demand earned media analytics platform that uses semantic, big data analysis. Features include breaking news alerts and automated, interactive reports. The platform uses proprietary quality and impact scoring algorithms to provide sophisticated metrics that include share of voice analysis; SEO and keyword analysis; website traffic and social media engagement metrics. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Quality Metrics are a set of statements that aim to help understanding about what people value about the work. There are nine metrics tested by the project delivery team, peer assessors and public – Concept, Presentation, Distinctiveness, Challenge, Captivation, Enthusiasm, Local impact, Relevance and Rigour. A further three are just asked of the project delivery team and peer assessors: Originality, Risk, and Excellence. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Immediately after performances, audience members were invited to share their emotional response using handheld ‘paddles’ with a variety of emoji faces on them, which represented the following emotions: Love; Confused; Happy; Sad; Angry; Scared; Bored and Amused. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)