How to Avoid an Identity Crisis – *Hullness* revisited

11:30am: 1@ theDock

Chair: **David Atkinson** (University of Hull)

Panellists:

**Dr Jo Byrne:** Research Manager, Culture, Place and Policy Institute (CPPI), University of Hull

**Anthony Yates:** VISITOR ECONOMY MANAGER VISIT HULL AND YORKSHIRE

**Lottie Gross**: Editor of Love Exploring

**Emma Elizabeth Davidson** (Journalist and Writer)

**Julie Corbett** (Hullness Volunter and Hull 2017 Volunteer)

***The theme:*** Between 2009 and 2012 a community-focused research project and exhibition explored the nature of Hull’s distinctive identity or, in the project’s terms, the city’s *Hullness* and sense of place. This session revisits this earlier attempt to capture Hull’s ‘spirit of place’ and explores how understandings of *Hullness* have shifted and developed as a result of Hull 2017.



The 2009-2012 project asked schoolchildren, residents associations, students, artists and community groups what *Hullness* meant to them. Was it something physical - embedded in the streets, buildings and districts of Hull? Was it about people, community, or a local spirit and attitude to life? The exhibition that resulted sought to explore the various ways of thinking about *Hullness*, and we will revisit this 2012 versions of *Hullness* and its lukewarm reception from some parts of the media.

The idea of *Hullness* subsequently found its way into the Hull City Bid and the City of Culture competition judges spoke of how its clear articulation of *Hullness* was central to Hull’s success. In turn, the spirit of Hull has been a core element of the 2017 programme. As 2018 draws near, Hull’s perception by broader publics beyond the city has shifted and celebrating the city’s identity is now fashionable. But how did this change develop, and has *Hullness* changed for those who live in the city?

In this session we revisit the idea of *Hullness* to explore how far, and in what ways, 2017 has changed how local people think about their city. We consider potential futures for a sense of place, and articulate how distinctive identities might be celebrated and sustained amid a wider, globalising world. We draw on voices from within and beyond the city to explore what *Hullness* was, what it is, and what it might be in possible futures where a sense of place and place-identity are increasingly valued and celebrated in a globalising world.

**Suggested Questions to follow up explanation on Hullness**

The narrative of Hull changed almost immediately after the announcement of UK City of Culture, and no doubt pride of Hull already existed. Do you think winning the title gave people permission to speak far more positively about the city?

**Lottie,** when you were working for Rough Guides, you fought for Hull to be one of the top destinations to visit in 2017. What did you see in Hull that got you to the conclusion that Hull had become a genuine visitor destination? Also, what were the unexpected outcomes of this announcement (mention traffic to the Rough Guides site)

**Anthony,** could you tell us a little about visitor numbers to Hull after the announcement of UK City of Culture, that you’ve been able to capture to date.

**Emma**, as a culture journalist who grew up in Hull and has since spent years away from the city. How has your perception of Hull changed?

**Lottie**, as a travel journalist you must see places changing, reinventing themselves or enhancing their offer to tourists. Have you seen any examples of places that have lost their identities, and what places have you seen recently who are genuinely trying to change perceptions both internally and externally?

**Julie**, as someone who was initially involved with the Hullness project and have since been a volunteer for Hull 2017 what has that particular journey been like for you?