Appendix 1: Core Project Team Consultation

* 1. Introduction

The Core Project Team (from heron in CPT) were responsible for delivering the ‘Back to Ours’ project at all levels, including developing the concept, commissioning and supporting the artists and managing production.

* + 1. The Core Project Team

In order to gain feedback from members of the CPT, consultation was undertaken throughout the planning and delivery of the ‘Back to Ours’ festivals.

Feedback was gathered via online surveys and followed up with in depth face-to-face interviews. The templates for the survey and discussion guide are provided in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

* **CPT Pre-Festival 1 Survey:** carried out as an online survey (2 respondents)
* **CPT Post Festival 1 Depth Interview:** carried out face-to-face (3 respondents)
* **CPT Post Festival 3 Survey:** carried out as an online survey (5 respondents)
* **CPT Post Festival 3 Depth Interview:** carried out face-to-face (5 respondents)

The focus of this research was to undertake two types of evaluation:

* **Process Evaluation:** motivations; creative development; artist commissions; venue locations and project and production management.
* **Outcomes Evaluation:** artistic quality of the event; audience profile, reaction and feedback; skills and knowledge development among stakeholders; collaboration and partnership development among stakeholders.

* 1. CPT Demographic Profile

As a key funder of Hull 2017, Arts Council England (ACE) are not only interested in the demographic profile of the audiences for ‘Back to Ours’. They also wish to know the demographic profile of the project team involved in delivering the event, to inform the Creative Case for Diversity.

As such, all members of the CPT were asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Six members of the CPT gave their details.

The five members of the CPT who gave their postcode data were Hull residents, with the final member being in the East Riding.

The group ranged in age from 20-44 and five members were female and one was male.

Diversity was lacking in terms of ethnicity; all respondents identified themselves as ‘White: Welsh / English / Scottish / Northern Irish / British’.

No one self-identified as disabled (as per the definition provided by the Equal Opportunities Act 2010), however one respondent disclosed that they had a learning disability.

Figure X: Age of Creative Core Team

Figure X: Gender of Creative Core Team

* 1. Process Evaluation

In order to inform the planning, development and delivery of future projects and festivals, a series of questions were asked linked to the process of the ‘Back to Ours’ events. These concentrated primarily on:

* **Creative Development:** How was the concept of the project conceived and to what extent did partners get on board with this?
* **Artistic Programme:** How were relationships with artists managed? What was the level of input from Venue Partners?
* **Venue Partners:** How were relationships with Venue Partners managed? What were the challenges and successes of working with these venues?
* **Project and Production Management:** What were the strengths and weaknesses in relation to the project and production management of ‘Back to Ours’, and what would be done differently as a result?
  + 1. The Concept

The primary purpose of the ‘Back to Ours’ project was to create opportunities for local and potentially disengaged audiences to experience the arts within their own neighbourhood. The aim was to transform community venues that disengaged audiences are already familiar with and feel safe in, into an inspiring performance space.

The CPT felt that the concept of the festival was unique and brought something different to the arts and cultural offer in Hull.

*“I think it's quite a unique project in itself. I think the idea of having urban touring is really unique, in the way that we're using schools, and so many of the schools, is unique to Hull.”*

Feedback from the CPT suggests that most artists and venues easily got on board with the concept of ‘Back to Ours’.

*“I think the best thing about their attitude was that they completely and totally understood what we were trying to do.”*

At the start of the project, the team were asked how they approached the subject matter for ‘Back to Ours’. The two members of the CPT that responded to the question said:

* To explore Hull’ contribution to the world 1/2
* To celebrate Hull’s sons and daughters 2/2
* To showcase Hull’s community buildings and public spaces 2/2
* To encourage people to discover a different experience of the city 2/2
* To challenge people’s interpretation of art 2/2
  + 1. Artistic Quality

Arts Council England (ACE) has developed a number of metrics to measure the artistic quality of an event, which in line with ACE guidance, were asked of the CPT pre-festival 1 and post-festival 3.

* Pre-festival 1 , the average score for metrics ranged from 5.5 out of 10 to 9.5 out of 10.
* Post-festival 3, the average score for metrics ranged from 7.5 out of 10 to 9.3 out of 10.

Pre-festival 1, the five top scoring metrics in descending order were:

* **Local impact:**It is / is important that it's happening here (in Hull)
* **Presentation:**It will be / is well produced and presented
* **Rigour:** It will be / is well thought through and put together
* **Challenge:**It will be / is thought-provoking
* **Distinctiveness:**It will be / is different from things I’ve experienced before

**Risk:**The artists are really challenging/challenged themselves with this work and **Relevance:**It will have/has something to say about the world in which we live were the lowest scoring metrics pre-festival 1.

Post-festival 3, the five top scoring metrics in descending order were:

* **Excellence:**It will be / is one of the best examples of its type
* **Enthusiasm:**I will / would come to something like this again
* **Local impact:**It is / is important that it's happening here (in Hull)
* **Captivation:**It will be / is absorbing and will hold my attention
* **Distinctiveness:**It will be / is different from things I’ve experienced before

**Risk:**The artists are really challenging/challenged themselves with this work and **Presentation:**It will be / is well produced and presented were the lowest scoring metrics post-festival 3.

Eight of the twelve metrics received a greater average score from the CPT post-festival 3:

* **Excellence:**It will be / is one of the best examples of its type
* **Enthusiasm:**I will / would come to something like this again
* **Captivation:**It will be / is absorbing and will hold my attention
* **Distinctiveness:**It will be / is different from things I’ve experienced before
* **Risk:**The artists are really challenging/challenged themselves with this work
* **Concept:** It will be / is an interesting idea
* **Relevance:**It will have/has something to say about the world in which we live
* **Originality:**It will be / is ground-breaking

Four of the twelve metrics received a lower average score from peer assessors after attending the event:

* **Presentation:**It will be / is well produced and presented
* **Challenge:**It will be / is thought-provoking
* **Local impact:**It is / is important that it's happening here (in Hull)
* **Rigour:** It will be / is well thought through and put together

Overall, the average rating across all twelve Quality Metrics increased from 8.2 to 8.4. A full breakdown of the scores for each quality metric is shown in Table X below.

Rationale was provided by members of the CPT in relation to the answers given. These included:

**Presentation**

The team felt that the festival had a high production value and that this improved with each festival as the team became more experienced. One member felt as though there should have been more branding in each venue to help create a better image of the site as a ‘Back to Ours’ host.

*“More branding to reawaken each venue and transform it each festival into a Back To Ours host could have been better explored.”*

**Distinctiveness**

The use of new, non-traditional venues lead the CPT to give ‘Back to Ours’ a high score on distinctiveness. One member felt that the performances themselves weren’t distinctive, but their new context within the venues was.

*“The acts aren't different, but the combination of venues, acts and timescale is new. The acts are newly presented in this situation.”*

**Challenge**

It was generally felt that the festival programme was a mixture of deliberately thought-provoking pieces and those that were more accessible or light touch, to appeal to an audience who may not have engaged with the arts before.

*“Some of the programme was deliberately thought provoking, but some of it was very accessible - hopefully provoking people to become more aware of other elements of the festival and to consider these or to become aware of City of Culture.”*

**Captivation**

The CPT felt that the project was captivating to work on and that audiences appeared to be interested in finding out the content of the programme at each festival.

*“It had all my attention, I think the audience were interested in finding out the programme each time.”*

**Enthusiasm**

As with captivation, this was considered from both audience and CPT viewpoints. The team members felt as though both audiences and themselves were enthusiastic about the project and found it enjoyable to be a part of.

*“I am thoroughly enthused by the intentions and spirit of the festival.”*

**Local Impact**

Given that the concept of ‘Back to Ours’ was to create opportunities for disengaged local people to experience the arts in their own neighbourhoods, the project scored highly on local impact.

The team felt the project was successful in focusing the cultural provision on local communities rather than the city centre, helping them to feel involved in Hull’s City of Culture year.

*“Back To Ours worked most successfully in counter-acting the neglected, angry, distanced and pessimistic voices of Hull at a time the local people could have most felt like they were being ignored”*

**Concept**

The CPT scored the concept of ‘Back to Ours’ highly, describing it as ‘something a bit different’. One member said that they had never seen a festival like it in the UK.

*“I have never seen a festival like Back To Ours, in its commitment and sincere intentions, any where in the UK.”*

**Relevance**

It was felt that the project helped to challenge what is widely recognised as an appreciation of the arts, whilst bringing together communities across Hull.

*“The festival is bringing together mixed communities from across Hull and some of the pieces were created to speak to specific communities (e.g. Skin & LGBT community).”*

**Originality**

Similar to the concept metric, it was felt that ‘Back to Ours’ was ground-breaking in its originality and hasn’t been seen elsewhere in the UK. One CPT member felt that although the acts themselves weren’t original, the setting and accessibility of the work was.

*“Not the work, but where the work was and our audiences having access to it was.”*

**Risk**

It was felt that artists generally took a risk in taking their work into a non-traditional performance venue, but this varied according to their experience in working in community venues and the extent to which their piece had to be tailored to fit the space.

*“Although some artists had worked in unconventional venues before, very few felt as challenged as in Back To Ours due to additional demands to work independently from venue staff and in cooperation with festival staff (who are also external to the venue).”*

**Excellence**

The CPT rated the project highly on excellence and one of the only projects of its type, as it was considered to be unique in its concept and level of community involvement and engagement.

*“I think very few community arts projects take as much guidance and lead from the community people as Back To Ours does in its programming and engagement.”*

**Rigour**

It was felt that the project was well thought through and put together, particularly in terms of the planning that went into the festival programme. One team member said that all aspects of the project were under constant review throughout, to ensure the festival reacted to feedback.

*“A lot of consideration went in to the process and this was constantly interrogated and revisited throughout.”*

Table X: Arts Council England Quality Metrics

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ACE Quality Metrics | CPT  Pre-Festival 1 (n=2) | CPT  Post-Festival 3 (n=5) | Change in score from Pre to Post |
| **Presentation:**It will be / is well produced and presented | **9.0** | **7.8** | **-1.2** |
| **Distinctiveness:**It will be / is different from things I’ve experienced before | **8.5** | **8.6** | **+0.1** |
| **Challenge:**It will be / is thought-provoking | **8.5** | **8.0** | **-0.5** |
| **Captivation:**It will be / is absorbing and will hold my attention | **8.0** | **8.8** | **+0.8** |
| **Enthusiasm:**I will / would come to something like this again | **8.0** | **9.0** | **+1** |
| **Local impact:**It is / is important that it's happening here (in Hull) | **9.5** | **8.8** | **-0.7** |
| **Concept:** It will be / is an interesting idea | **8.0** | **8.5** | **+0.5** |
| **Relevance:**It will have/has something to say about the world in which we live | **7.5** | **8.0** | **+0.5** |
| **Rigour:** It will be / is well thought through and put together | **9.0** | **8.5** | **-0.5** |
| **Originality:**It will be / is ground-breaking | **8.0** | **8.3** | **+0.3** |
| **Risk:**The artists are really challenging/challenged themselves with this work | **5.5** | **7.5** | **+2** |
| **Excellence:**It will be / is one of the best examples of its type | **8.5** | **9.3** | **+0.8** |
| **TOTAL AVERAGE** | **8.2** | **8.4** | **+0.2** |

* + 1. Venue Locations

The CPT cast a wide net to find suitable venues within the community to ensure that the project was accessible in the North, East and West of the city. The team first approached schools because they had the size required to receive productions on the scale of what was in mind for the artistic programme.

According to the CPT, not every school was in a position to become a partner for various reasons, such as lack of theatre space or lack of staff support. After the school venues were on board, the team then approached other spaces, including pubs, community centres and North Point Shopping Centre.

The team found it difficult to find community venues like pubs with a large enough performance area, but eventually had a definitive list of eight venues that were to become partners throughout ‘Back to Ours’.

*“Pubs in communities like Bransholme were difficult as none of them had a focal point for a performance. We looked at lots of social clubs but some struggled with committing space alongside existing activities.”*

The CPT acknowledged that there was a lack of venue representation in the North Hull Estates – in particular the Orchard Park area and this is something that the team wish to develop going forward.

*“I think the main issue is that we didn’t have anything in Orchard Park or East Hull, when we talk about North for ‘Back to Ours’, it’s Bransholme, and I want to get it into North Hull and Orchard Park.”*

Table X: The ‘Back to Ours’ venues:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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. Artistic Programme

When putting together the artistic programme for ‘Back to Ours’, the CPT wanted to provide a diverse range of high quality entertainment that would be appealing to the local community, whilst also broadening their experience of arts and cultural events.

*“Some of the shows have been absolutely phenomenal.”*

The team recognised that traditionally ‘safe’ options in entertainment wasn’t necessarily the right direction to take the programme in and that pushing boundaries and encouraging risk-taking was a priority.

*“I think sometimes it's easy to play it to safe and to programme safe stuff, but actually when you talk to people, that's not necessarily what people want.”*

*“Widening the community’s experience of arts and culture and for me, that’s the thing we take most pride in.”*

The team involved the Venue Partners in the development of the programme, asking for feedback around what they thought would work in their spaces. The CPT also encouraged some of the Venue Partners to attend Edinburgh Fringe Festival prior to the third ‘Back to Ours’ festival, to experience the types of shows available.

*“A couple of venue partners went to Edinburgh Fringe to have a look at shows there and experience how a big festival like that feels, how they market and how the venues are dressed.”*

Initially, the CPT needed to build a level of trust in order for the Venue Partners to feel comfortable in letting the team make artistic decisions on the programme. It was suggested the Venue Partners were sometimes nervous about being involved in the final decisions about programming, as it was a responsibility that might reflect badly on them if the shows weren’t well received.

*“But we had to build up that trust with them, so we spent a lot of time looking at clips because we didn’t have time for everybody to go and see some of the work because it was touring and it wasn’t do-able.”*

*“I noticed with the venue managers they were quite frightened of that responsibility, because they were being introduced into the arts for the first time…Quite a few of them have said is if it gets negative press, they don’t want that to come back on their venue.”*

Feedback suggests that the Venue Partners generally agreed on the programme suggestions put forward, however there was a discussion around the suitability of Mark Thomas’s ‘The Red Shed’ in Festival 1. Some Venue Partners were slightly worried about the show having too much of a political focus, although the CPT tried to reassure them that it was a piece of theatre that would resonate with a local audience.

The CPT also recognised that they needed to manage the expectations of the Venue Partners when it came to programming in the beginning of the project, as some made suggestions that were unreasonable when it came to cost and budget.

*“Little Shop of Horrors – insanely expensive to put on, but kind of without that understanding that actually if you do put something like that on, you take a much bigger financial risk.”*

*“Around the table when we were programming that (music) people were like well we want famous people, so it was just kind of managing that.”*

When asked to rate the festival programmes on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’, the CPT scored festivals one and two equally, with an average score of 3.6. Festivals three and four showed improved scores, with 4.2 and 4.

Table X: Average programme rating Festivals 1 - 4

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Festival | Average programme rating (0-5 where 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’) |
| Festival 1 – February 2017 | 3.6 |
| Festival 2 – May 2017 | 3.6 |
| Festival 3 – October 2017 | 4.2 |
| Festival 4 – February 2018 | 4 |

* + 1. Ticketing

The CPT felt it was important to make the tickets accessible to residents in the ‘Back to Ours’ neighbourhoods, rather than solely an online audience. The team knew that Internet access may be low in these areas, or that people preferred to pay for items in cash rather than using a credit or debit card. As such, the festival offered different ways to purchase tickets, including online, face-to-face within the neighbourhoods themselves, or using a self-service ticket machine.

*“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.”*

Although ticket sales in the community were seen as successful, it was acknowledged within the team however that the way tickets are sold needed to be revisited, as they still hadn’t found the best solution.

*“I think it’s been really successful for us to not do 100% sales online and do at least half of them in the areas and going to areas where we know our communities are around and flock to or walk past or there’s a lot of footfall.”*

*“The things that need work on is how we ticket, and how we give people access to tickets, we’ve tried lots of different things but there’s not one solution to that so we need to keep trying.”*

Diverse shows were more difficult to sell; however the team felt that ticket sales had improved greatly throughout the year, although these were hard to predict and didn’t appear to have a pattern to help them plan ahead.

*“We’ve only had a couple which have been tricky to sell, and they’ve been the more diverse shows.”*

*“So, already in those three festivals, we've come a huge distance in terms of being able to put something out there, and people book for it instantly.”*

*“What’s been surprising is, I thought there would be a pattern [to ticket sales] and it’d be fairly easy to work out.”*

One of the weaknesses of the ticketing strategy according to the CPT was that the ticket machines that were placed in the venues rarely worked and were underused.

*“They are really expensive machines, and for most of their life in those venues, they've not sold a ticket, or they've not worked.”*

*“I don't think the ticket machines have been as used or as utilized as we would've maybe envisaged it or hoped a year ago.”*

* + 1. Marketing

The CPT felt that the marketing for ‘Back to Ours’ was challenging, as it was vital that they communicated with neighbourhoods in Hull that were considered ‘hard to reach’. In order to do this, a range of creative offline techniques and traditional print advertising were used alongside digital marketing, due to the lack of Internet access across the target audience. Different tactics were tested across each festival to find the best balance.

*“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.”*

*“I think it's in the same way that we're taking a chance on the programme, we have to take a chance on the marketing a little bit and just have a go at trying something different and being a bit more creative.”*

Part of the marketing strategy involved community engagement and stunts within each of the ‘Back to Ours’ neighbourhoods. It was generally agreed that this tactic was very successful and that the marketing would benefit from further creative community engagement going forwards.The team also believed that this is something that they could have done more of and at an earlier point in the festival calendar.

*“The next step is to be more imaginative with the marketing, and not to just go down the route of just having a brochure.”*

*“It needs to be something a bit more eye-catching and attention grabbing, almost a bit more disruptive.”*

*“We could have done more there to get the community on board with it.”*

*“I think there’s more we could have done in terms of making more noise in communities as well, so putting on street theatre, that kind of stuff.”*

The CPT also believed that the Venue Partners could have had more of an involvement in the marketing and used their own networks to spread the message about ‘Back to Ours’ within the local communities.

*“Things like sharing our key messages and using their social media posts and distributing print to their audience for us. It feels like there's a bit of a wall still there. Sometimes, I think that's because they think, well 2017, so it's our job so we should just do it rather than them taking ownership of it a bit more.”*

* + 1. Relationships with Venue Partners

The CPT generally felt that although it took some time to build up a level of trust, the team developed strong relationships with Venue Partners and this was one of the major successes of the project.

*“I think it's been successful in terms of engaging venues, and getting their buy-in, and also establishing trust with them.”*

*“I guess through the project, we've built up really strong relationships, I would say, with particular partner venues. We've learnt a lot through working with those venues.”*

Although relationships were described as positive overall, performance of the Venue leads as project partners differed. When asked to rate each venue on their level of performance as project partner on scale of 0-5, where 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’, Kingswood Academy received the lowest average score with 2, and Freedom Centre and Archbishop Sentamu Academy received the highest average score of 4.8.

Table X: Venue Partner performance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Venue Partner | Performance average score (0-5 where, 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’) |
| Sirius Academy West | 4.6 |
| Hymers College | 3.4 |
| William Gemmell Club | 2.8 |
| Kingswood Academy | 2 |
| North Point Shopping Centre | 4.6 |
| Winifred Holtby Academy | 3.6 |
| Freedom Centre | 4.8 |
| Archbishop Sentamu Academy | 4.8 |

It was suggested that there were a couple of ‘challenging personalities’ within the Venue Partners, which could easily change the dynamic of a group meeting. The team felt that sometimes it was a case of finding the right person within a venue to communicate with and that once that person gets involved, the whole process becomes much easier. Overall however, relationships with Venue Partners were positive and constructive.

*“The person that has taken over from them [within the venue] has said, I’m really interested in this, you can still be involved but I want to be a bit more hands-on with it. They’ve been fantastic; they really get it, so if you get the right person in the venue, and in two other venues we just haven’t got the right person but it might just take a bit of time.”*

The team acknowledged that in the initial stages of the festival, the main challenge when working with the Venue Partners was to manage their expectations around various aspects of ‘Back to Ours’, for example ticket sales and the programming of the festival.

Venue Partners expressed their concerns around the lack of tickets sales pre-festival, despite the reassurances of the CPT. One member of the CPT said that they understood the concerns, as it was a new project and the Venue Partners clearly wanted it to succeed.

*“I didn’t want them to be worried but it was nice at the same time that they were just so passionate about it.”*

*“It was good that they were all so passionate about it but on the other hand it made them worry as well. As you do when you’re involved in a project you want it to work.”*

*“One venue was really worried about the press picking up on ticket sales.”*

There was also a certain level of conflict between the CPT and Venue Partners when it came to the marketing of the first festival. One Venue Partner had a background in marketing and had their own suggestions on how things should be done.

*“There’s one person who’s got a marketing background so very vocal on how this has been marketed and felt at certain points that things should have been done differently.”*

A learning that that CPT took from this was to give Venue Partners more of a role in the marketing of the festival, to help them feel more involved and in control. Indeed, the CPT endeavoured to give Venue Partners a high level of involvement throughout planning stages, giving them the opportunity to offer feedback and make changes where possible.

*“I think there’s much more that we could have done to try to push them to give their own marketing support and to retweet things and be much more active on social media.”*

*“I think the venues are involved in every single stage that we do, from the very beginning where we sit down and talk about which shows we’re considering, we will 100% take their opinion on board.”*

*“A lot of the constructive criticism they've fed back has been really useful for us to be able to shape the project, and to respond to that.”*

Although the CPT felt that communication with the Venue Partners was good, they agreed it was challenging to keep everyone in the loop – partly due to the number of people involved. This was particularly true for the academies whose facilities were run by an external organisation and the technical staff at venues, as they were not present at the regular update meetings and this lack of involvement meant they were generally less enthusiastic than the Venue Leads.

*“There were so many people involved in it and managing the communication between all those people was probably the hardest part of it.”*

*“The only issue we’ve had with the venues is where schools where they’re academies and someone else runs the facilities side of the school, so you’re dealing with two different people, it just makes it harder in terms of communication.”*

The CPT recognised the importance of regular updates – particularly when members of group were feeling worried or nervous about the project. One of the learnings taken from this was to increase the level of communication with Venue Partners, to help put them at ease during the run up to the live delivery of the next festivals.

*“I think if we’d kind of given them much more of an update on things like that, they’d have something to hang their expectations around.”*

It was also suggested by one member of the CPT that it would be beneficial to conduct more site visits to the venues during the planning stage, to ensure that details aren’t missed.

*“I think it would be more beneficial for me to get out of the office and look around the venue in more detail.”*

* + 1. Working with Artists

The CPT were keen to build positive relationships with the artists to help develop a good reputation for the ‘Back to Ours’ project further afield.

In the initial contact with artists, the CPT explained the background of ‘Back to Ours’. The team found that most artists were open to the concept of the festival and took it as an opportunity to reach new audiences with their work. It was acknowledged however, that it would take time to build a level of trust in the festival, as it was a new and unique concept.

*“The artists that we worked with absolutely bought into it.”*

*“I think that's just a work in progress for them to trust that ‘Back to Ours’ is a feasible, quality festival to be part of.***”**

In terms of the contracting of the artists, the team felt that everything went smoothly, although in some cases took longer than expected.

During the planning of the festival, the CPT recognised that the artists had to make certain compromises due to the limitations of the venues that don’t usually act as performance spaces. This wasn’t seen as a negative by the artists however, and didn’t detract from the quality of the shows. The team felt that the concept of ‘Back to Ours’ meant that artists seemed to be more patient than they would otherwise be.

*“I think they all made some sort of compromise.”*

*“There’s been one incidence where the lights weren’t quite right in one of the venues, and they didn’t complain, but they were being more patient than what they would be if it was at another venue, they understood.”*

The team felt that the artists responded well to the venues and were impressed with the spaces. A member of the CPT said that one of the artists felt that Winifred Holtby was easier to work in than any theatre they had been to before.

*“They were really surprised at how great some of the venues were. There was one company that said Winifred Holtby it was easier to get in and get out for them from that theatre space than any theatre they’d worked in before.”*

The CPT was really pleased with artist’s reactions having performed at the festival. Some artists had been really vocal about their support for the festival and one in particular said that they would love to come back and perform in Hull again.

*“Some artists have been really vocal about their support for it.”*

*“It had a massive impact on them, they loved how warming the audience were to them.”*

*“I’ve not yet met an artist who hasn’t been completely made up with audience responses… They’re just amazed by Hull’s enthusiasm."*

When it came to the set up of the shows, the CPT felt that the artists were confident in the production team’s ability.

*“The artists seemed really comfortable and confident that we had a good handle on the technical specifications for their shows.”*

Although the CPT felt that positive relationships were developed with artists overall, there was a general lack of support in the marketing of the festival - particularly on social media and artist’s websites.

*“We've had massive difficulty in the past of getting anyone to even put it on their website. You know, they're a touring show and that, and we're not even listed as a date on their website, as one stop on the tour. So I think that's been quite difficult.”*

* + 1. Other Partners

Aside from the Venue Leads and the ‘Back to Ours’ artists, the CPT also developed relationships with a number of other partners throughout the planning and delivery of the project.

* When asked whether ‘Back to Ours’ enabled the CPT to collaborate with other individuals and / or organisations, 5 out of 5 said yes.
* When asked whether working on ‘Back to Ours’ enabled the CPT to build new relationships with other individuals and / or organisations they had not previously worked with, 5 out of 5 said yes.
* When asked whether working on ‘Back to Ours’ enabled the CPT to develop existing relationships with other organisations (i.e. a deepening of those partnerships that pre-dated the project), 4 out of 5 said yes.

A key project partner was HPSS, who provided stage, sound and lighting support. The CPT felt that the relationship they built with the company was very supportive and key to the smooth delivery of the festivals.

*“They've been quite supportive of the project, beyond just providing staff and technical equipment for us.”*

The CPT also developed relationships with cafes local to the venues, to help sell tickets and spread the word about the project. Local bus companies also got involved in the project, by helping to advertise ‘Back to Ours’ on bus stops and on the buses themselves.

The Hull City Council events team were also seen as a key partner by the CPT and was described as a ‘safe pair of hands’ to work with.

*“They've been really supportive, and really a safe pair of hands to work on those events, but also really constructive. It's been really good knowing that we've got the relationship with them.”*

* + 1. Planning and Organisation

The team felt that one of the main strengths of the planning and organisation of the ‘Back to Ours’ festivals was that the process was constantly under review and adapted as the project progressed. Feedback from many different avenues influenced planning, including that of Venue Partners, the CPT, audience members, volunteers and front of house staff. Indeed, when asked whether the approach to ‘Back to Ours’ changed in response to learnings from each edition of the festival, all members of the CPT said yes.

The CPT felt that the planning process of the first ‘Back to Ours’ festival went smoothly, considering the complexity of the project.

*“Whilst we were spending time building up the programme and how the festival would be delivered there was a lot of time spent on the production side of it and technically how would it work and how would we make these shows go up and be as professional and as good a quality as what they should be.”*

It was agreed that the many of the challenges encountered in the planning and organisation of the first festival were ironed out as the year progressed.

*“It feels like the project has been on a journey, since I started.”*

The team felt that one of the main successes of the planning and organisation of ‘Back to Ours’ was the production schedule. It was recognised that having an accurate schedule was vital to the success of the project, due to the touring nature of the festival. When planning this, the team made sure to build in extra time as a contingency in case anything came up that would affect the rest of the schedule.

*“If something kind of disastrously went wrong in one area it would have a knock on effect in a different area, so it was really important to have that tight.”*

*“In a lot of cases it did work like clockwork in terms of one thing to the next.”*

One member of the team felt it was challenging to keep to budget during the planning stage of the first festival, particularly when they were scoping out what equipment each venue had. The CPT were pleased however with how the Venue Partners worked together to share resources, which helped to keep costs down.

*“The venue managers are really helpful, because we could use their resources and because we’ve made this little community of these from across the city.”*

*“That was definitely a huge success how they worked together so they were lending each other chairs and things like that.”*

**Challenges**

There were several unexpected challenges during live delivery of the festivals – although it was accepted by the CPT that these challenges were unavoidable to a certain extent. One of these challenges was the cancellation of a Pigeon Detectives performance in the first festival, however the team continued to set up the stage as if the band were to arrive to test that the schedule worked correctly. A member of the CPT praised the way that the communications were handled around this and felt that the wider team supported them extremely well.

*“Everybody came together to sort that out so I felt really comfortable with that.”*

Another example of a challenge faced by the CPT was the late set up of The Red Shed at Archbishop Sentamu in Festival 1. This was influenced by several factors, including an inaccurate plan from an external source, and the time consuming construction of a scaffolding tower, which was used to set up the lighting for the performance. Although these factors caused a delay in the schedule, the CPT felt that the complications were dealt with in the best way possible.

*“I think it was Archbishop Sentamu venue when we had the Red Shed arrive the schedule was knocked back significantly because there were complications with the design.”*

Logistically, the team agreed that travelling from one venue to another was a challenge during the live delivery of the festivals. Due to the locations of the venues across the city, the team felt that a lot of time was wasted in transit between venues.

*“Geographically, the venues are quite challenging to work with.”*

*“Getting from one venue to another was really difficult.”*

Another unanticipated challenge during the live delivery of the first festival was that the radios that were used to communicate between the different venues, did not work. The team overcame this problem in future festivals by communicating using their mobile phones and Whatsapp.

*“Things like the radios we didn’t know they were going to go wrong on the first day.”*

The team learnt throughout the delivery of the festivals that different venues had different capabilities in terms of the space available and what facilities they can provide. For example it was quickly realised that North Point Shopping Centre was too cold to host evening shows in the winter, unless they were held in an empty shop unit that could be heated up. A solution to this was to ensure that the team is always kept up to date with the venue’s capabilities and any limitations, so that they are fully prepared for anything they may need to provide.

*"Different venues have different capabilities, and availability in terms of their space."*

*“I think difficulties mainly there is that misunderstanding about what the venues can provide.”*

When the CPT were asked to rate the facilities at each venue on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’, Hymers College received the lowest rating with an average score of 2.6 and Freedom Centre received the highest rating with an average score of 4.2.

Table 5: Venue facilities score

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Venue | Facilities average score (0-5 where, 0 is ‘Not good at all’ and 5 is ‘Excellent’) |
| Sirius Academy West | 3.4 |
| Hymers College | 2.6 |
| William Gemmell Club | 2.8 |
| Kingswood Academy | 2.8 |
| North Point Shopping Centre | 3.6 |
| Winifred Holtby Academy | 3.2 |
| Freedom Centre | 4.2 |
| Archbishop Sentamu Academy | 3.8 |

**Learnings**

The team acknowledged that they expected the first festival in the ‘Back to Ours’ project to be a big learning curve, and listed several adaptations that they chose to implement in the planning and delivery of future festivals.

*“There’s a huge amount of learning in terms of what works, what maybe works less well or doesn’t work and we could only have really have known some that from actually delivering the festival.”*

One suggested change was to have the support of extra team members during the live delivery of the festival. The team spent a lot of time travelling around the city to different venues and felt that their time would have been better used elsewhere. As such, the team ensured that there were more staff members on hand to act as ‘runners’ between venues if needed.

The team also felt that the use of iPads would help with the smooth delivery of the festival, as they could be used to communicate with each other, access digital documents and box office reports and support with all elements of admin.

After the break down of the radios at the first festival, the CPT agreed that Whatsapp was an excellent alternative, and continued to use this throughout the remainder of the project.

It was also suggested that at certain performances, there were too many volunteers present for the size of the audience and venue. The team felt that after experiencing the first festival, they were in a better position to tailor the volunteer request for each show

*“I felt we had too many volunteers. It felt a little bit overwhelming, because the roles were front of house. So there were a lot of blue jackets when you arrived.”*

*“I think the experience we’ve had with volunteers this time round will maybe inform that training better when it comes to the second festival.”*

Overall, the CPT believed that the delivery of the festivals was easier due to the initial groundwork that was been put in place for the first festival.

*“For this first one yeah we’ve spent a lot longer in terms of planning it we won’t need to spend as much time on the other ones because we’ve got things in place now.”*

* 1. Outcomes

In order to record the impact of ‘Back to Ours’, a series of questions were asked around the outcomes of project.

Questions were based around the following topics:

* **Skills and knowledge:** How has the project impacted on professional development of the CPT?
* **Audience profile:** Did the project engage with the intended audience? How did the audience react to the performances and venues?
* **Venue Partner Legacy:** What will be the legacy of ‘Back to Ours’ for the Venue Partners?
* **Measures of success:** What do the CPT consider to be the main measures of success for the ‘Back to Ours’ project? What are the hopes and expectations for future delivery of the project?
  + 1. Skills and Knowledge

The research looked at the personal and professional impact of ‘Back to Ours’ on the CPT.

All members of the CPT agreed that they had increased existing skills and knowledge through working on ‘Back to Ours’ and 4 out of 5 said they had gained new skills or knowledge.

When asked what skills or knowledge they had gained or increased as a result of working on ‘Back to Ours’:

* 3 out of 5 said project development
* 4 out of 5 said creative / artistic skills
* 3 out of 5 said project management
* 4 out of 5 said audience development
* 2 out of 5 said marketing and/or social media
* 3 out of 5 said production and / or technical skills
* 3 out of 5 said health and safety
* 3 out of 5 said monitoring and evaluation

The team generally agreed that the scale of the project and the level of their involvement was much larger than anything they’d worked on in the past. One member of the team said that although they had worked on bigger projects in the past, it wasn’t in such an integral role.

*“I’ve worked on bigger projects but not at such a key level I think.”*

*“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.”*

Another member of the team said that ‘Back to Ours’ gave them the opportunity to be involved in a large project from start to finish, experiencing a variety of different roles.

One team member was pleased that they were able to be involved at a more fundamental level than they have in the past, which allowed them to develop existing skills. Although they felt it was a big step to take, they indicated that they had plenty of support from more senior members of the Hull 2017 team, without them being partonising or taking away any of the responsibilities.

*“They didn’t patronise me in any way, they didn’t come and try and step on my toes.”*

All team members stated that they’d done something new as a result of working on ‘Back to Ours’, from contracting artists to developing a production schedule. One team member said that the project had given them the opportunity to develop skills that they didn’t know they had.

*“It was the most amount of people I’ve ever worked with on one project before.”*

*“Some things I haven’t done before at all, and I’ve just learned how to do it.”*

*“[the project has] brought out a lot of skills that I probably didn't know that I had.”*

One member of the team described an increase in resilience to criticism through working on ‘Back to Ours’ after receiving negative feedback on social media around the festival programme. It was generally understood that this was the nature of their work and this got easier to deal with as the project developed.

*“It used to be harder, but I’m much more used to it now, people commenting on your programme, and getting negative feedback on your programme, that’s quite hard to deal with at first.”*

Although the team acknowledged that ‘Back to Ours’ was a demanding project to work on in terms of commitment and hours spent, everyone gave positive feedback about the experience so far.

*“I’ve had a great experience from it and I’m quite excited about the next one.”*

*“It's been great personally to feel a part of what we've achieved with this so far.”*

**Personal Learnings**

When they were asked whether they had learnt anything new about Hull and its communities as a result of working on ‘Back to Ours’, one member of the CPT felt that they had realised that there is a real appetite for arts and culture events outside of the city centre.

Another member of the team who wasn’t originally from the city, learnt more about the infrastructure of Hull and its neighbourhoods as a result of driving in between each venue, which in turn helped them to understand more about the barriers that the communities face.

All members of the CPT said they would speak more positively about Hull to someone else as a result of their experience working on ‘Back to Ours’.

**Venue Partner Skills Development**

The CPT were keen to develop skills in the Venue Partners so that they could continue to offer arts and cultural events in their spaces following the ‘Back to Ours’ project.

The CPT feel that one of the main successes in this regard, is that the perceived barriers to putting on shows at community venues have been broken down, and that the managers of these spaces have been surprised at what they can do.

*“That’s been a huge success because we there were a lot of barriers there to get into schools and using the spaces, and that’s been knocked down, that barrier, definitely.”*

*“I think a lot of the venues have been surprised by what their own spaces can do.”*

The CPT suggested that one Venue Partner showed an interest in programming alternative arts and cultural shows as a result of the success of the first ‘Back to Ours’ festival, and that the team was able to support them in this. Similarly, other Venue Partners have spoken to the CPT to ask for advice on licencing, contracting and the ‘behind the scenes’ processes, so that they could put on performances independently in the future.

*“[The Venue Partner] was just saying, oh it would be really great to find out more about what we do behind the scenes. How we do the contracting, how we kind of produce the festival.”*

“*They were really keen to find out how they can do it more independently, which is fantastic.”*

**Audience**

All members of the CPT agreed that ‘Back to Ours’ helped to encourage people to discover a new experience of the city and 4 out of 5 said that the project challenged people’s interpretation of art and culture.

Being on site at the events meant that the CPT received anecdotal feedback from audience members. One team member was pleased with the reactions of audience members to the venues themselves and felt that visitors were impressed with the spaces. Indeed, all members of the CPT felt that ‘Back to Ours’ was successful in contributing to an overarching objective to showcase Hull’s community buildings and public spaces.

*“For the first show that went up in West it was the story of Mr B in Sirius, and I was there speaking to families as they came and they were just so impressed with the space because some people have not been in these new schools.”*

Based their observations and interactions with the audience at the first festival, the CPT had the general impression that the audiences weren’t necessarily from the area local to the venue. The team acknowledged that there was work to do in terms of attracting this audience and it was mentioned that the Venue Partners could help by using their own influence within the community to support this engagement.

*“I think there’s still an underlying bit of work to engage the communities that it’s actually landing in. And I think some of that needs to be negotiated through the partner venues we’re working with because they’ve got that relationship already.”*

When the CPT were asked whether ‘Back to Ours’ had been successful in reaching a local audience and or audiences that were considered hard to reach, their responses indicated that the project became more successful as the year progressed.

Table X: Success in reaching local / hard to reach audiences

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Festival | Success in reaching local audience (average score 0-5 where 0 is ‘Not at all’ and 5 is ‘Completely’) | Success in reaching hard to reach audience (average score 0-5 where 0 is ‘Not at all’ and 5 is ‘Completely’) |
| Festival 1 – February 2017 | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| Festival 2 – May 2017 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Festival 3 – October 2017 | 3.8 | 3.2 |

The CPT generally agreed that a local audience was achieved at the performance at William Gemmel club and that this was one of the main successes of the festival overall. The team felt that the William Gemmel performance achieved a diverse audience, which was described as a real ‘valuable experience’.

*“Having that kind of mish-mash of people from all different backgrounds. I think there’s something really valuable about that experience.”*

*“By the end of it they were all having a conversation about it, it didn’t matter who they were or where they came from. It sounds really cliché but that’s exactly what we really wanted to do.”*

Word of mouth was seen as a key tool for raising awareness in the hard to reach local communities and the CPT felt that this was something that would occur naturally after the first festival had taken place.

*“Hopefully it will gain momentum and more people will hear about it and it will kind of spread to those people that we wouldn’t necessarily be able to directly contact through social media marketing or any of that.”*

* + 1. Measures of Success

When asked what they felt were the key measures of success for ‘Back to Ours’, the CPT referred to one of the primary aims of the festival – to engage new local audiences with arts and cultural events in spaces that they feel comfortable.

“*One of the measures of success is how we engage people who have never been to a City of Culture event, they’ve never been to Truck, they don’t go to things, they don’t go to the city centre. It’s trying to get those people to come along. And trying to get those people to come and along and also enjoy their experience and feel really welcome and to feel comfortable with it.”*

*“I don’t believe that BTO is the kind of show where you can measure success on how many people are sat in the audience, it’s more about who specifically is sat in the audience and why they’ve come.”*

The team was asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the ‘Back to Ours’ achieved some of the key aims of the project by scoring them on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is ‘strongly disagree’ and 10 is ‘strongly agree’.

Overall it was agreed that ‘Back to Ours’ increased pride in the local area, helped to break down barriers to getting involved in the arts and created opportunities for disengaged local people to get involved with the arts. The team recognised however that the project is a long-term process and that these results would take time to be established in the local community. A break down of the responses to these statements is shown in table X below.

*“This is the first year and although there has been a fantastic response from new audiences I think there is still a way to go and it is a journey that will take 2 + years.”*

Table X: CPT Value Statements

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Back to Ours… | Average agreement with statement (0-10 where 0 is ‘Strongly disagree’ and 10 is ‘Strongly agree’) |
| … created opportunities for disengaged local people to get involved with the arts | 7.4 |
| …helped to break down barriers in getting involved in the arts | 7.8 |
| …helped to increase pride in the local area | 6.8 |

The team felt that another measure of success was the ability to take artistic risks to push people’s expectations with the festival programme. The CPT were keen to encourage people to try something new through ‘Back to Ours’ and experience something out of their comfort zones.

*“Another measure of success is taking those artistic risks.”*

*“It’s how we develop things in ‘Back to Ours’ that isn’t already happening in the city, so that it is owned by the community more”.*