How to Avoid an Identity Crisis – *Hullness* revisited

**An invitation** to discuss *Hullness* as part of the***Substance Future Forum****,* and ***Substance Festival***

Hull Minster & Humber Street district, Hull, 7th December 0930-1900 ([www.hull2017.co.uk/whatson/events/substance/](http://www.hull2017.co.uk/whatson/events/substance/))

***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.