# FloodEvaluation

# Appendix 1: CPT Consultation

To effectively and successfully deliver Flood, a Core Project Team was established. This consisted of Hull2017 staff members and representatives of the commissioned production team, Slung Low. The Core Project Team (from heron in CPT) were responsible for delivering Flood at all levels, including developing the narrative, commissioning and supporting the artists, and overseeing production.

In order to gain feedback from members of the CPT, consultation was undertaken both during and after delivery of Flood. The data collection methodology employed was online surveys, supplemented by in-depth telephone interviews. The templates for the surveys and discussion guides are provided in Appendices 2 – 5.

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

* **Process Evaluation**: motivations, creative development, and project and production management.
* **Outcomes Evaluation**: artistic quality of the project; the extent to which diversity was explored and / or represented; audience reaction and feedback; skills and knowledge development among stakeholders; collaboration and partnership development among stakeholders; and perception changes towards Hull among stakeholders.

The following report provides an analysis of the feedback from this consultation with the Core Project Team (CPT) for Flood.

## Conceptual Development

Hull2017’s main motivations for the project had been to commission something which was ambitious in both scale and duration, with high production values yet a strong connection to the community.

“Far too often, community engagement work is accompanied by crap production values. It's all very worthy, but it's a bit shit, right? And, we were determined to give productions, either with communities or by communities, the same kind of level of production that we would give to a media-planned show. That sends out a very, very clear message of respect, I have learned, and also of people relaxing in, and being open to receiving the discussion that you're trying to have.”

Slung Low, a Leeds-based theatre company, were approached to scope out the project initially. Members of the team at Hull2017 had been impressed with the quality of their previous work, and they ticked a lot of boxes in terms of Hull2017’s wider commissioning objectives for the artistic programme.

“The thing that I love about Alan's work [Slung Low’s Artistic Director], is that he directs really poetic, meaningful things as if they're Hollywood action movies, and he does it beautifully.”

“That's what we said we would do, commission a lot of northern art. We also said that we were interested in who's next, not necessarily who's now, so they fit along that. So, everything fitted the bill to say, let's find a project to work with them on."

CPT members from Slung Low said that they had been approached by the Hull2017 team initially, but their decision to accept was ‘completely’ influenced by Hull’s status as UK City of Culture (they both scored this 10 out of 10). The ambition and scale of the project were also seen as key factors, along with the level of funding, the opportunity to be a theatre company in residence, and the opportunity to work with individuals in the Hull2017 team.

As mentioned above, Slung Low were challenged to create something longitudinal and multi-platform. On the whole, the brief was quite open, so the creative concept for the commission was left in their hands.

“The provocation from Hull 2017 was to create an ambitious project that would span the whole year of the festival - 365 days.”

Following a green-light from Hull 2017, Slung Low enlisted the services of a playwright who had worked with them on a number of previous projects. Based on their previous work, there was an expectation that it would also contain strong political themes.

“It's a company that we know that do political work, right? So, we were going to be unsurprised if something edgy and political came back, because that's why we commissioned them.”

Slung Low reportedly invested significantly in research and development at the start of the process, and the survey data shows that the concept was inspired by Hull - the city and / or its people. The team came up with the idea for Flood and proposed it to the Hull2017 team, who offered their full support, despite some initial reservations about how local residents might react.

“Literally, one day, we walked into the room to say, "I think we've got it. It's called 'Flood.' It's about what happens if the world is flooded, and how you survive that. But I think it's also about migration, immigration." And we went, "Great." And it's called "Flood," and I partially mocked him on the thought and idea of doing a show called "Flood" in a city that is the second most likely city to be flooded. It was provocative.”

The main way in which Hull2017 influenced the conceptual development of *Flood* was to push the team to be more and more ambitious with their plans.

“Their initial provocation had a big impact on the project, they kept saying, be more ambitious, which was interesting because a lot of the time when we pitch a show they go that’s great, but we need you to think a little bit smaller because of the budget or whatever, whereas Hull kept saying no, think bigger, think longer, think 365 days, and it was through those conversations that we brought in those additional partners and that was exciting”

With the support of Hull2017 staff, the team agreed on Victoria Dock as the location of the live performances, which started to inform the type of show they could deliver.

The significant conceptual changes in the development of Flood occurred when the major funding partners came on board. The Space provided resource to develop and expand Flood, Part One: From the Sea, and supported a new digital strand of work and the introduction of a Digital Producer to the creative team. Whilst the opportunity to have some of their work broadcast on the BBC was too good to miss. It should be noted that Hull2017 identified the opportunity to work with the BBC and were the driving force behind this partnership.

“The BBC project came up, where they suddenly said, we're going to commission 30 companies to do half an hour, and I said, we've got to bring that into this because it's just perfect.”

The community engagement work delivered by Slung Low also had a significant impact on the conceptual development of Flood. Audio and video recordings of members of the public discussing themes from the project were gathered and featured in the live performances and the digital strand of work, whilst the community cast (recruited from the Hull2017 volunteering cohort) supported the team to develop and perform the plays.

The concept was constantly evolving throughout 2017 as Slung Low learnt more about the city. Touring Part One around Hull was seen as a great introduction to the city and gave them a better understanding of what might capture the public’s interests. Part Two also influenced the latter episodes because it allowed them to really understand the space they were working in.

The table below demonstrates that all parties influenced changes in the concept for Flood.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q: Which of the following have influenced the changes in concept?** | **n=2** |
| Input from the Slung Low team | 100% |
| Input from the team at Hull 2017 | 100% |
| Input from the team at the BBC | 100% |
| Input from the team at The Space | 100% |
| Input from the Writer | 100% |

These changes were seen as positive by one respondent, and both positive and negative by the other. They explained that some partners had been disruptive by challenging the team’s approach to the project.

“That need to explain is good… but we also have partners who don't understand what it is we do and why, and don't understand why they've hired us specifically to do a job. The partners who have seen our work previously tend to be more supportive and less disruptive.”

### Victoria Dock

Victoria Dock was chosen as the location of the project by Slung Low, who had enlisted the support of a local producer with knowledge of Hull to identify potential sites. At this point the team had agreed on the subject matter, so their highest priority was finding somewhere with water. Many of the sites were too industrial or had little footfall.

The Slung Low team admitted to feeling hesitant about choosing a relatively affluent area like Victoria Dock when their previous work had been delivered in more deprived communities, but ultimately respondents agreed that it provided arguably the only suitable space in the city. Some argued it was actually quite diverse in terms of its socio-economic makeup.

“I think that there is more diversity actually than people do realize, because there are some lower-class sort of lower income people who are living there.”

Locating on Victoria Dock also appeared to run counter to Hull2017’s vision of bringing programmes to the more culturally disengaged areas of Hull, but it was pointed out that there were no plans to deliver programmes within this community at the time.

All the CPT members agreed that Victoria Dock was absolutely the right location for the project; not only did it contain a large body of water which was unaffected by the tide and accessible from each side, it was also located in the heart of a housing estate close to Hull city centre.

“I'll never have a site as flexible and as brilliant as that, but also kind of from a social, cultural point of view, it was unbelievable.”

“Being able to get all the way around, the fact that it was already fenced off to the public, which is incredibly useful, but it was at the heart of a community so that the way we worked would have to change.”

It was also a flexible site in terms of having the space and resources the production team required in order to deliver the project. Gaining the support from local suppliers was also crucial.

“It was an incredibly flexible space, which we were given complete run of. It had really good power. That was just unbelievable... the electrical company just ran more power than the dock needed. We were able to pull that off and that was really useful.”

The team faced a number of challenges at Victoria Dock. There was a lack of storage options and limited space, for example, and it felt particularly cramped during Part Three when the TV production team arrived. The Slung Low team also invested heavily in training to ensure safety on set, and they ensured all team members had a detailed understanding of the design of the set and its associated risks.

“We trained in a number of things about rescuing people and stuff, but and the entire company is first aid trained to a much higher standard than you would expect.”

“At no point would someone turn around and go, "Can you just fix the thingie?" That doesn't ... we're the people who came up with idea, who designed how it would look, who designed how it would work, who would work out how it would get there safely. That's rare, I think.”

## Expectations & Outcomes

CPT members were asked to rate the production against the ACE Quality Metrics, during and after the event. There had been high aspirations for the production, most of which the team felt had been achieved. The only metric which changed by more than 1 mark was distinctiveness, because Flood was seen as a continuation of some of the previous work that Slung Low had delivered.

Table 2

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | In-delivery (n=2) | Post-delivery (n=2) | Change |
| **Distinctiveness:** It will be / was different from things I’ve experienced before | 10 | 7 | -3 |
| **Challenge:** It will be / was thought-provoking | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Captivation**: It will be / was absorbing and will hold my attention | 10 | 9 | -1 |
| **Enthusiasm**: I will come to something like this again | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| **Local impact**: It is important that it's happening / it happened here (in Hull) | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Concept:** It is / was an interesting idea / programme | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Relevance:** It will have / had something to say about the world in which we live | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Risk**: The artists are really challenging / challenged themselves with this work | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Excellence**: It will be / was one of the best examples of its type | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Rigour**: It will be / was well thought through and put together | 10 | 9.5 | -0.5 |
| **Presentation**: It will be / was well produced and presented | 9.5 | 9.5 | 0 |
| **Originality**: It is / was ground-breaking | 9.5 | 10 | 0.5 |

The CPT reported, anecdotally, that the production had been strong in a number of ways: the multi-platform format was innovative and ambitious; the production values were high, and; the live performances were simultaneously spectacular and thought-provoking.

“I think the endeavour to do a political piece of discourse out of the spectacular was I think the thing that was the real strength… There are plenty of interesting political plays about the state of the nation and immigration and: who's nation is it? There's plenty of great spectacle, but I think combining the two was the things I was really excited about.”

“It was also a very bold and visionary piece of work, and then, beautifully executed as well. Really, once, it did not break down, it wasn't clumsy, it was beautifully, beautifully executed.”

“What was really one of the many ground-breaking things about the thing was that, it's the first project I've ever seen that was on television, live, and online.”

The team had intended to create four episodes which could be enjoyed as a series or as standalone productions; an idea reportedly pushed by the project’s commissioners: the BBC, The Space and Hull2017. There was a feeling that this had been achieved fairly successfully, although it was recognised that the storyline in Part Three had been difficult to pick up without a recap (which was used as a device in Part Four). Overall the team agreed that the whole was far greater than the sum of its parts, but in general audiences were able to get something from each individual episode.

“I think we always knew that each piece was going to tie into the next one. It would be like just me and you sitting down now and watching an episode of the series five of the Sopranos and not watching any of the others.”

“I thought people who came to see part two really enjoyed part two as standalone. I don't think they felt like they missed anything. At the end, when we did part four, we had the recap.”

Indeed, Part Three was generally considered to be the weakest episode, largely because it was difficult for audiences with no experience of the previous episodes, and no connection to Hull, to engage with the narrative.

“I was worried about the part of the country completely divorced from the work and city, what they would take from it. I don't think it's perfect.”

A number of respondents commented that the omnibus performance was perhaps the most well-executed element of the production because the team had learnt from the previous parts.

“I think the strength actually was the omnibus. I think I'm really got to doing the physical build with the three in the middle. It made it feel like much more like it was an event. There was a food offered. It wasn't the sort of people who were going to commit that, but actually I think the experience was really rewarding. It was harder because it didn't sell as well as the single bills, so it was never going into it, and it was a lovely evening.”

In contrast, some felt that the pacing of Parts Two and Four was a slight weakness of the production. The timing of the live performances, either side of the summer, also meant that audience members were forced to endure the cold, although in some ways this added to the immersiveness of the experience.

“It was hard work, at times, watching that show, you know, it went at their pace, not yours. It had a very, very key aesthetic, a very certain way of speaking, and some people can't get on like that.”

“I think the time of year, I wouldn't have necessarily have done it in such a cold… but that was also about scheduling, and run down through the year, things like that. We wanted it to be dark, but we didn't want the audience hanging around until ten o'clock. Actually, the cold kind of worked, as well.”

CPT members who completed the survey felt that Flood had been successful in making audiences look at Hull’s public spaces in a different way, challenging their interpretation of art, and presenting ambitions and aspirations of the city now and in the future.

Table 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q: Which of the following objectives do you feel Flood might contribute to / which objectives do you feel Flood met?** | **In-delivery n=2** | **Post-delivery**  **n=2** |
| Make people look at Hull's public spaces in a different way | 100% | 100% |
| Challenge people's interpretation of art (theatrical performance) | 100% | 100% |
| Present the ambitions and aspirations of the City now and in the future | 100% | 100% |
| Mark or explore a moment in time for Hull | 50% | 100% |
| Encourage people to discover a different experience of the city | 50% | 50% |

Indeed, there was a sense that Flood had been well-received by audiences, although they recognised that some had found it difficult to engage with a ‘heavy-going’ script. They felt that audiences had been impressed by the technical delivery of the production, even if they weren’t always engaged by the dialogue.

“I think everybody who went, appreciated the endeavour, appreciated the spectacle of it. I think some people are going to find that quite heavy-going script, and ideas, heavy-going.”

“Even audiences who had seen our previous work before commented on the technical complexity of the show.”

One of the production’s major achievements was that it had engaged audiences with the political nature of the narrative, which had been particularly evident on social media after Part Three. The team received some criticism for the political viewpoint it appeared to be representing, but this was defended by the Slung Low team.

“I think there was definitely a kind of strand of people who thought that the play was far too left wing, and simplistic, and there was also a strand of people who thought the play was far too right wing and simplistic. I think that's because they thought the character saying things was what the play was saying.”

“Politically it asks question of the city and its residents in a way that lots of the city's theatre doesn't.”

As mentioned above, CPT members felt the production had successfully challenged the audience’s understanding of theatre, particularly with the live performances, which were held outside and on water. It was mentioned by several members of the team that most audience members had never seen anything like it before, and to produce a show like this in Hull was important for the city.

“With the live shows, both the audiences of the show, but also when we were talking to primary school students…we talked much less about the themes and more about our roles and our jobs and how our theatre company works, and so their understanding of, oh so this doesn’t have to be inside, it doesn’t have to be in a traditional place, it can be outdoors, it can involve people you know, it can have boats, it can be on water and have an explosion.”

“One day, [a peer reviewer] said, ‘Maybe I was wrong. I came aware that it's not as good as their usual work, but what I completely forgot is, this work isn't staged in cities like Hull, and it's an amazing thing. And it is a quality show. And I was marking it down, because I had seen something like it before. But I spoke to audiences coming out, and they had never seen anything like it before’.”

It was also mentioned that the production had been successful in reaching non-theatre goers. Parts One and Three, broadcast online and on TV, were most effective in this respect, whist the mobile screening of Part One around the city was also effective in reaching people in Hull who might be otherwise disengaged with the arts.

There was some discussion about why Part Four didn’t sell as well as Part Two. Some speculated that audiences were experiencing cultural exhaustion towards the end of the year, whilst others suggested that there should have been more investment in developing new audiences rather than relying on those who had attended Part Two.

“Looking at sales, the majority of people who came to part four, had seen part two. Actually, it was about new audiences, and maybe we were exhausted too…when we announced part two, that was one of the first projects that was announced at the beginning of the year. Oh my God. Everybody had the energy and enthusiasm, I've got to get to this. It was a large-scale and outdoor event.”

Equally, audience retention was considered a major success because it demonstrated that audiences were invested in the narrative. A number of CPT members said they could tell, even anecdotally, that audiences who attended Part Four had also attended Part Two.

“Definitely when we performed Part Four in the autumn before we did the full omnibus, those were audiences who had mostly seen the show before, and you could tell because when we did the thing with the headphone system, when the lady was giving them out, they’d know whether to give them the full system or a bit of an abridged one. So it seemed like audiences did follow and join us which was nice.”

### Measures of Success

CPT members identified a number of metrics by which they felt Flood should be measured. Audience figures were considered perhaps the least important, although it was mentioned that reach (ticket sales, viewing figures etc) would prove beneficial to Slung Low in their funding applications.

Instead, most respondents felt the production should be judged on the impact it had on audiences, residents and Slung Low themselves.

They also felt it was important to know whether the production had provoked thought and debate amongst audiences, and to what extent it demonstrated a clear connection with the city. All of which they felt had been achieved.

Hull2017 were delighted with the production because they felt it had achieved their ambition of delivering innovative, provocative art inspired by the fabric of the city.

“For me, absolutely everything about what UK City of Culture is about, and the kind of work that should be commissioned, drawn from the fabric of the city, really tries to up the game, tries new things, but does it in an invitational to audiences who are coming to that kind of thing for the first time. It hit everything on the button.”

## Collaboration & Partnerships

All the CPT members who completed the survey said the project had enabled them to establish or further develop relationships with other individuals or organisations. The impacts of these collaborations are explored below.

### CPT

On the whole there was a feeling, amongst all CPT members, that the partnership between Hull2017 and Slung Low had been an effective one, which had improved throughout the year as they learned about each other’s methods of working.

There appears to have been some friction between some members of the team in the early stages of the project. This resulted in a change of Producer, which in turn caused some confusion around roles and responsibilities for communication on the project. Indeed, some members of the Hull2017 team said they’d also found it challenging to manage all the separate relationships within the CPT and the wider creative team.

“That was difficult because the flow of information wasn’t clear, but once all of that had happened and we changed over, then roles became a bit clearer.”

Members of the Slung Low team felt that one of the project’s major challenges had been the timescales, caused by what they called an *“unsatisfactory initial commissioning development period”*, which delayed the development of Parts Three and Four.

“We ended up getting commissioned I think six months, seven months before. Certainly less than the time we needed, which meant that when we got, when we went to rehearsals and designed for part two, we didn't have part three or four.”

CPT members were invited to rate Hull2017’s support in a number of areas. Only one person completed this question, but the feedback suggests they were most useful in providing technical and operations, and marketing support. The lack of communication around roles and responsibilities was again highlighted as a problem area, as was monitoring and evaluation.

Table 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q: Please rate the following aspects of Hull 2017's involvement in Flood on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 is 'Not good at all' and 5 is 'Excellent'.** | **Rating out of 5 (n=1)** |
| Technical & Operations support, to advise on event management and technical delivery | 4 |
| Marketing support, to drive audiences to the live events | 4 |
| Creative Development meetings, including frequency and quality of opportunities to meet (e.g. for script approval and development of digital elements) | 3 |
| Production support, to secure a production base and performance sites | 3 |
| Digital support, to support the delivery of online elements | 3 |
| Community Engagement support, to assist in the recruitment of the community cast | 3 |
| Communications between Hull 2017 and yourself | 3 |
| Contracting, including the explanation of roles and responsibilities | 2 |
| Monitoring and Evaluation support, to document the project, measure outputs and outcomes, and identify key learnings | 1 |

From Hull2017’s perspective, they had initially found it challenging to work with Slung Low because of their different way of working, but they recognised the importance of allowing them the freedom to deliver the production in their own way.

“It is a challenge to work with that company. I don't agree with everything they do….I don't, as an executive producer, and the commissioner, want to walk onsite and see the director moving the set around, when he should be focusing on, "Can the show be better?" But, you choose to work with artists like Alan. You take it on, because you know what they're like.”

Despite the initial tensions mentioned above, the team at Hull2017 felt they had managed the relationship well, by giving them the create freedom and flexibility they required, whilst also providing support and extra resource when it was required on a practical level.

“It's just about going on that journey and knowing that relationships change, and they take a lot of nurturing. We did nurture that relationship a lot. We put a lot of energy into supporting them so they could deliver that work, rather than trying to do it for them.”

“I think inevitably at the beginning, there's always that tension of, ‘we don't need you, we can do it all ourselves.’ I think in that week they realized they couldn't do it all themselves. There were just holes. The holes, you're not going to find until you start doing it. Then that's why we're there to try to fill those holes.”

Slung Low’s independence and proactiveness during the project was largely seen as a positive trait, although they occasionally overstepped the mark.

“I don't think that he asked for that much. They required help and assistance but there weren't like lots of demands, they were very much proactive about what they needed to do and they got on with it. In one way they did that, and in another way, we needed to bring them back a little bit. Go, wait a minute before you do that, let's talk about it because it will have an impact over here.”

There was widespread admiration for the dedication and involvement of Slung Low’s Artistic Director in all facets of the production, but there was also a feeling that this also prevented him from having a greater influence on creative outputs. There was a danger that this might, ultimately, prevent the organisation from growing.

“At what point do you stop and do the creative bit? It's tough to see the times, unless he just works so, so quickly, it's unbelievable. It's just tough to see those times happening. At the same, you can't really criticize him, he pulled off as a beast. It's like, I couldn't have done any better. There's no way I could've done any better. I am in awe of what he achieved.”

Slung Low were appreciative of Hull2017’s support on the project – both financially and creatively. They felt their association with the Hull2017 ‘brand’ had been a major factor in successfully securing funding for the additional elements project.

“That's amazing to work with people like that, but the second ... they gave us belief, but the second thing they definitely gave us is money, 'cause without it, it's all well and good having lots of ambition, but you just run out of it in the end.”

“I’m sure, but I don’t know, that having both Slung Low and Hull2017, big names together on our applications to The Space and Performance Live, strengthened the application and I’m sure that the demonstration that Hull was putting in so much money to support the live shows for Flood, demonstrated their level of confidence in what we were going to produce.”

They were also helpful in brokering partnerships with a number of local organisations who were critical to the successful delivery of Flood, such as Hull City Council and ESAG.

“[Hull2017] were able to help broker some partnerships within the city and bringing on board the council and introducing us to the ESAG group… their support through that process, indeed throughout the whole year, was very smooth and very easy, and them securing the site for us, I think they were very well placed to do all that for us and that felt very smooth, that was great.”

“They told us to make something no one had ever made before. They then gave us enough money to make it. They then connected us to the people who could help.”

Both parties felt that the possibility of working together again in the future was small, although this was not an indictment of the project.

“I think our job is to turn up, do the thing no one imagined was possible, and then leave.”

“I think they've got everything they want or need, in terms as a company and an organization, they want to do it their way, and they're good at doing it. I don't think professionally I would enjoy it that much, I don't think I'd get that much out of it. They do what they want to do. They're not going to be moved on that, I don't think anyway.”

### Community Engagement

Members of the Slung Low team talked about the importance of developing a positive relationship with the Victoria Dock community, which underpinned the successful delivery of the project. To achieve this, they ensured that residents were provided with as much information possible; the team were open to conversations with residents on-site, delivered workshops, and gave out free tickets.

“We decided we would be much more proactive about talking to people. The returns were huge.”

“It was a relentless campaign of information. We went to ... we put letters through the doors. We went to every community meeting we could do…there was an ad campaign which was amazing, and we promised them all they would get free tickets to the show, which was great 'cause it sold out in less than 24 hours.”

It was reported that Victoria Dock residents had initially been concerned about the impact that Slung Low might have on the local area, driven in part by their experience of the In With A Bang event, which caused significant disruption and damage. However, there was still a substantial level of support, and many were keen to be involved in the project.

“Where there was aggression it was passive aggression. It was people complaining about the smell of diesel or whatever it was, and all sorts of middle class...the rest of the time we were constantly surrounded by people who just kind of wanted to get involved a bit.”

The team also worked closely with the local residents association, and delivered workshops at the primary school and Victoria House, a residential home for adults with disabilities.

Slung Low’s resource-intensive approach to community engagement had been questioned by some members of the Hull2017 team at the start of the process. On reflection the CPT agreed that it had been the right approach to take, both morally and for the project as a whole, and the level of community engagement they achieved was one of its major success stories.

“There were times when people were saying, "You've got to stop wasting ... you've just got to stop spending so much resource on this." I disagree with that because it's really easy for two reasons. It's a bad thing to do…but secondly, it's just a really bad tactic because all of those people as individuals are more than capable of stopping this project, and the community knew that.”

“I think their resident engagement, which I was very, very passionate about, they did beautifully.”

“The engagement and the outreach is a huge part of its success. It was never intended to be a five-day show that engaged just an audience. It was about…having a long-term relationship with a community, and I think that it absolutely achieved that.”

The project was also considered to have had a positive impact on the local community. Some members of the CPT said they’d seen residents take more pride in their local area.

“I think there was a real sense of pride around the BBC thing, the idea that Victoria Dock was going to be on the BBC was good.”

They also felt that the project had given local residents the opportunity to learn more about this art form, the chance to welcome new visitors to the area, and a sense of enjoyment.

### Community Cast

Slung Low were unhappy about not having responsibility for recruiting the community cast at first because they would normally audition in a certain way, but they felt the recruitment process had been well managed by the Hull2017 team.

“We like to control the recruitment process. We didn't here, and it was fine, because the people who did the recruitment process were really good.”

Feedback from Hull2017 suggests that Slung Low had managed the volunteers well, which was in part down to their previous experience of managing community casts.

“They're well drilled with what a community cast does, they just built into their production schedule.”

The community cast were predominantly older, White and female – a reflection of the demography of the Hull2017 volunteering cohort from whom the cast were recruited. However, this lack of diversity was not considered an issue for the production, particularly as there was a high representation of BME actors within the professional cast.

The Slung Low team were appreciative of the attitude and commitment of the community cast, whilst there was also praise for the Hull2017 volunteers who worked as wayfinders and on front-of-house during the live performances.

“They were great ambassadors for the city – knowledgeable, enthusiastic, hard-working, a great bunch.”

It was incredibly important to Slung Low that the community cast thoroughly enjoyed the experience and got something out of it, which they felt had been achieved.

“It's not enough for them to sort of found it okay, actually because of what we do is at such a scale, and it's deemed to be ... people feel like it's such a risk, and we need them to be triumphant...why would you bother going through all the effort we went through if people had an alright experience. Just so many more other ways of making people moderately satisfied.”

They also felt that the project had given them an opportunity to tell their story of the city, to test themselves, to feel prouder and to develop new friendships.

### Funding Partners

Slung Low said they’d forged valuable new relationships with a number of other organisations, such as Hull2017, The Space and the BBC.

The Arts Council were considered their most valuable partner for Slung Low, despite the fact that they didn’t fund them directly. They did, however, provide moral support and increase the company’s grant during 2017; it was suggested that Flood had been a factor in their decision to award them this uplift.

“The Arts Council is the most important funder to us generally and the reason we are able to exist in the way that we do, so that has always has been and continues to be our most important relationship, so the fact that during Flood we were awarded the uplift and so many of the Arts Council came and supported and appreciated Flood, that was brilliant.”

Slung Low’s partnership with KCOM broke down after the two parties failed to agree a price for wi-fi during the omnibus performance, although they continued to support them with captioning. It was suggested that the transfer of the relationship from Hull2017 to Slung Low had been a contributing factor.

They felt they would be unlikely to work with the BBC again due to the internal politics of working for the organisation. There was a feeling that they were restrictive in terms of how they wanted commissioned organisations to operate, which stifled their creativity. A number of important, creative decisions – like using a BBC personality to introduce Part Three - were also taken out of their hands.

“The BBC said, we’ve brought you altogether – this was us and the other Performance Live partners, commissioned companies – because TV is boring and what we’re making is not very interesting and we want to bring in people who are doing exciting work to challenge us and do new things and bring different things to the stage, and in the next breath went, so what you’ll need to do is to have this person, you’ll need to employ these people, you’ll need to produce this, you’ll need to do it in this way…in some ways it changed how we were working in positive ways and in other ways it changed the end product in negative way”

Slung Low were more positive about The Space, with whom they had a previous working relationship. One of the ways in which they influenced the project was by pushing Slung Low to be more ambitious and, specifically, to employ a Digital Producer to manage a supplementary digital platform (and who also ended up contributing content to the live performances). It was mentioned that The Space were interested in working with Slung Low, who were also open to collaborate in future.

“Certainly it would be interesting to work with The Space and build that digital stream within our work, definitely”.

## Impacts & Outcomes

### Slung Low

Flood had a significant impact on Slung Low. Some members of the team felt it had fundamentally changed their ambitions as a theatre company and given them confidence in what they can deliver.

“It would be really hard to go back to what we were doing after Flood. The sense of scale, the sense of ambition is huge. We've learnt so much production wise.”

“They're all very clever people with important jobs and they all said absolutely it wouldn't work, and it did… holding onto that confidence will be really key to it so that when we're working on ... when we're talking on partners just as powerful and as challenging as a BBC in the future, we can remember that confidence that it gave us.”

Members of the Hull2017 team felt the project had taken Slung Low out of their comfort zone and introduced their work to a much wider, more critical audience. It was mentioned, for example, that more people had watched Part Three than all of their work in the last ten years. One respondent mentioned that this level of exposure would be incredibly useful for the company’s future funding applications.

“I think the performance live was a really, really brilliant thing to do… I think with Slung Low, more people saw that then have seen their work than in the last 10 years.”

“I think it took them out of a chamber of criticism as well…they might always get the theatre person coming along and telling them that is excellent and that is great, that's what we wanted to see, this and that, but, Twitter is Twitter.”

Despite the success of the project, Slung Low said they hadn’t seen the anticipated benefit of increased work opportunities due to a lack of recognition in the national press and within the arts sector. They also felt the project had altered perceptions of what the company were willing to deliver.

“I think the other reason why we don't have any work is that people go, "Oh, I was going to ask you to do this, and then I realized you'd only be interested if it would last 12 months, be on national television…”

### Skills & Knowledge

As a result of working on Flood, both CPT survey respondents said they’d developed or gained expertise in creative / artistic skills, audience development and production skills.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **New skills learnt or developed** | **n=2** |
| Creative / Artistic Skills (e.g. art forms, artistic techniques) | 100% |
| Audience Development | 100% |
| Production and / or Technical skills | 100% |
| Project Development | 50% |
| Project Management | 50% |
| Health and Safety | 50 % |
| Museums, Libraries and Archive Skills (e.g. researching archives, cataloguing, conservation, interpretation) | 0% |
| Marketing and / or Social Media | 0% |

Respondents from Slung Low said they’d learnt a huge amount from delivering a project of this scale, which was a new experience for them as a company.

“We were responsible for the actual, physical production much more, because there was no partner. Normally there would be a partner like production team. We had to practically learn how to drive telehandlers, how to drive boats, how to sail, you do a whole range of things, all of which can be umbrella'd as practical production skills.”

“The budget was way more than we’re used to working with so we had to think in new ways about how to use such a big budget to make something appropriate to the story and to showcase Hull.”

*“When we did the omnibus in October, we had to take care of business. Again, we've done it, but we've never done it on our own and so we had to learn how to do that. That was really exciting as well*.”

Individual members of the team gave several examples of how the project had challenged them logistically, physically and emotionally.

“We were putting loads of people, a lot of who were old and had mobility issues in boats, and asking them to stage a sea battle. That was challenging.”

“It was physically, immensely the hardest thing I've ever done. It was an unbelievable amount of work…and I haven't had to smile through so much bullshit in all my life.”

“I have a huge phobia of water. I'm incredibly terrified of putting my head under the water and actually had to spend most days on this job diving to the bottom of the canal.”

Part Three provided a particularly steep learning curve for Slung Low, who had never produced a television show before. Specifically, it showed them how difficult it was to manage a concept when there were far more people involved.

“We never worked in tele...we didn't know how to make a piece of television, what we learned was how to collaborate with television people, which was an unbelievably sharp learning curve.”

“A week before it was filmed, there were people literally shouting at me, "We want to be able to deliver what you're being contracted to deliver. This will be the end of you if you don't agree with what I just asked you to agree to," and me standing in the room often on my own going, "Okay. I'm not going to agree to what you want me to agree to. Then, this will be the end of me. Okay. "What's extraordinary is I thought, "Wow, this is really massive. This could be the end." Obviously we then war gamed and prepped for that, and then when it worked, those people just ran to me and went, "Do you know what, mate? You were right. I was wrong. Never mind. Okay, see you." I was like, "What?" I thought there would be a point when I get crowned king of everything. Actually these people are used to just working at that level of drama and bullshit.”

Members of Hull2017 team said the project had taught them a lot about Slung Low’s *‘unusual’* way of working.

“To see them literally every single night, and every member of that creative team involved in all aspects of running that and being on-site at all times, it's just a really different way of working for more people. It was nice to see.”

Some members of the CPT also said they’d learnt how to work outdoors. Others said they’d learnt about ensuring performances were accessible.

“I've never worked outdoors before… We had to take into consideration things like transport and parking and how actual audiences would walk to the event, and leave the event. It was much more event management than anything I've done previously. I think that was a learning thing for me.”

“We did a lot access permission. I think that was a learning thing for all of us… providing captions for the audio described performances and for that specific show.”

Some suggested that Slung Low should try and work with other creatives in order to expand their creative practice.

“I think putting themselves in the concepts where they are working with a really different writer, or even challenging the boundaries of working with a really traditional writer but on the site or working with visual artists or something to really break that practice, would really be exciting.”

It was mentioned that there had been a lack of clarity about who was reporting to the various funding and delivery partners at the start of the project. Therefore one of the key learnings from the development process was to ensure clear lines of communication from the outset. This had an impact on how the CPT later approached funding applications as a consortium.

“With The Space there was a back and forth, was the money going to Hull, then us, or directly to us, and therefore who would be reporting to whom, and whose responsibility were certain things, by the time we had got to the BBC and we’d already dealt with those issues, we set out much more clearly, this is coming to us, this is your responsibility, this is your contact…”

Although Slung Low and Hull2017 would be unlikely to work together again, Slung Low said they’d forged important relationships with a number of individuals who they would be willing to work with in the future, such as the Digital Producer, Brett Chapman, and the Hull2017 Chief Executive, Martin Green.

### Perceptions of Hull

Of the CPT members who completed the survey, one currently lives in Hull and the other had no connections to the city except for producing a show there in the past. As a result of their experience working on Flood, both said they would speak more positively about the city.

“Seeing such ambitious work take place in Hull changes the way I feel about the city.”

However, a number of CPT members said they were frustrated by the lack of national recognition that Flood received. This was attributed to a range of factors such as:

* A reluctance to visit Hull amongst industry professionals;
* Cuts to journalists’ travel budgets;
* A lack of famous people in the show;
* The artistic quality of the production, which didn’t stand out against other outdoor theatre shows.

“The people who talk and write and speak about our culture, that class are more comfortable going to New York than they are Hull.”

“There is still an issue with national, with reviewers who are London-based, coming out of London, because they have taken away their travel budgets, because the papers have no money anymore. So, they're not allowed to, they don't get the money to travel overnight.”

“We have to be honest here. If any reviewer, and nationals did come up, had come to see the show, and gone away, and gone, "Five stars, this is the most amazing thing I have ever seen in my life," others would have come. And, ultimately…no one ever did do that. Right? This was a good show, it was a great endeavour, it was really great but it wasn't earth-shatteringly perfect, in that way.”

Although responsibility for press and marketing lay with the Hull2017 team, some CPT members felt the project had demonstrated that the level of industry recognition is almost impossible to manage or predict.

“If we were going to do this show ourselves in the future, we would not put in that same resource… in the past, other shows may not have got similar attention, and we thought, one day, when we’ve got all the money to put behind it, maybe that will change things, and you kind of see that some things are just the way that they are, and it’s going to get the level of attention it’s going to get.”

One CPT member also made the point that the production had never aimed to gain this level of recognition.

“This show wasn't about getting national reviews, it was about building relationships and community, putting on work for our audience, absolutely”.

However, it was pointed out that the impact of this lack of acknowledgement was that creatives would be deterred from working in Hull in the future.

“Someone like James now knows that he can write the play of his career and no one will pay any attention, which means he won't want to come back to Hull again.”

# Summary

The CPT felt the production was strong in a number of ways: the multi-platform format was innovative and ambitious, the production values were high, and the live performances were simultaneously spectacular and thought-provoking. There was a sense that audiences had been hooked by the spectacle of the live performances and were generally engaged in the political nature of the narrative, although some had been put off by a ‘heavy-going’ script.

In terms of the creative process, Slung Low and the writer, James Phillips, were given the freedom to develop the concept for *Flood*, which was continually evolving well into 2017. Hull2017’s main input in the process, aside from the financial support they offered, was to challenge them to be as ambitious as possible in terms of the scale and duration of the project.

Hull 2017 were delighted with the production because they felt it had achieved their ambition of delivering innovative, provocative art inspired by the fabric of the city. There was disappointment that the production had not received recognition in the national press and within the arts sector, although artistic quality, impact on audiences, and community connection were considered to be more important measures of success.

Part Three appears to have been the most challenging for the CPT and particularly Slung Low. Not only was it a new medium for them as an organisation, they also found it difficult working with the BBC, whose creative vision for the project was not always in line with their own. However, there appears to be a clear opportunity for Slung Low and The Space to collaborate on future projects.

According to the CPT, Victoria Dock was the perfect location for the live performances given the technical requirements of the production. Despite some initial reservations about the resources being invested in community engagement, Slung Low were able to foster good relations with local residents, which laid the foundations for the project’s success. Furthermore, CPT members reported a noticeable increase in residents’ pride in their local area.

On the whole there was a feeling that the partnership between Hull2017 and Slung Low had been an effective one, which had improved throughout the year as they learned about each other’s methods of working. Aside from the significant financial investment, Hull2017 also introduced the team to local organisations who became important delivery partners on the project.

*Flood* has made a significant impact on Slung Low as an organisation; not only has it raised their national profile, it has also made them more ambitious and expanded their professional network. There is also a strong suspicion that the project has helped them receive extra funding from the Arts Council. Many of the individual CPT members have also developed and gained new skills and knowledge around the production of outdoor theatre.