1. Arts & Culture
   1. Introduction

Arts & Culture is one of the key themes of Hull 2017, made up of three aims and the accompanying objectives that are relevant to this project:

* **Aim 1: High quality programme of arts, culture and heritage**
  + **Objective 1:** 365 day programme that is ‘of the city’ yet outward looking and includes 60 commissions.
* **Aim 2: Develop audiences**
  + **Objective 3:** Increase total audiences for Hull’s arts, cultural and heritage offer.
  + **Objective 4:** Increase engagement and participation amongst Hull’s residents.
  + **Objective 5:** Increase diversity of audience for Hull’s arts and heritage offer.
* **Aim 3: Develop the cultural sector**
  + **Objective 6:** Develop the city’s cultural infrastructure through capacity building and collaborative work undertaken by/with Hull 2017 and its partners.

‘Back to Ours’ will be evaluated in reference to these aims and objectives, as well as identifying additional outcome areas not covered in the above, but linked to the aims and objectives specific to the project (see Chapter 1).

* 1. Contribution to Overall Hull 2017 Programme

The first ‘Back to Ours’ festival consisted of 24 shows and events (although one was cancelled by the artist) running from 22-25 February across eight venues in the North, East and West of the city.

In total, there were seven different shows that were repeated through a strategic touring network across the venues.

* 1. Ticket Analysis for ‘Back to Ours’ BOX OFFICE REPORT
  2. Demographics of Audiences

As the audience survey sample was small and therefore not statistically representative, this demographic data should be used only as an indication of audience characteristics:

* 30% of survey respondents were male and 70% were female.
* 87% were aged 35 or over.
* 99% were White British and 1% was from another White background.
* 9% had a disability that limits their everyday activity.
  1. Group Composition

Within the post-event audience surveys, audiences were asked about their group size and the ages of people within their group.

Average group size was three and the most common group size was two, with 38% of respondents attending ‘Back to Ours’ as a pair.

54% of respondents attended a show in a group of three or more, and 34% of groups had a child under the age of 16 with them.

All but two of the groups with children in (26 out of 28, or 93%) were made up of three or more people, indicating that ‘Back to Ours’ reached a family audience.

* 1. Locality

Given that one of the main aims of ‘Back to Ours’ was to give people the chance to experience an arts and culture event in their neighbourhood, the post-event audience survey asked respondents whether they considered themselves to be local to the venue they visited. Results show that 58% believed themselves to be local, although this was not quantified by distance from the venue or travel time.

Perceptions of locality differed from person to person and this was demonstrated in the anecdotal feedback from the ‘Chat with Nan’ research. For example, one person felt that they were local to the venue even though they had travelled from Driffield, which is roughly a 40-minute drive away from Hull.

Many of the ‘Chat with Nan’ respondents said that they had travelled to the ‘Back to Ours’ venue specifically to see the show. This willingness to travel gives an indication that this audience was engaged with the arts to a certain extent, as geographical location didn’t appear to be a significant barrier.

Of those survey respondents who didn’t consider themselves local, 59% came from elsewhere in Hull and 41% travelled from outside of Hull. Postcode data taken from the post-event audience survey indicated that 70% lived in Hull, 29% in the East Riding and 1% were from outside of the UK.

Feedback from Venue Partners suggested an overall perception that the majority of audience members weren’t local. This however wasn’t based on official postcode data, but was more of a general feeling got from observing and interacting with audience members at the events, compared to their usual client/customer base.

*“They weren’t your typical locals, but without seeing their postcodes, I’m not sure a lot of them live locally if anybody did at all.” (Venue Partner)*

*“The people that I saw coming to the events were not what I would describe as local community.” (Venue Partner)*

The CCT agreed that although they hadn’t yet seen a postcode breakdown, it was probable that the first festival hadn’t quite achieved an entirely local audience. The team acknowledged that word of mouth recommendations would help to increase uptake in local areas, and which would help to build a local audience for future festivals.

*“I think there’s still an underlying bit of work to engage the communities that it’s actually landing in.” (CCT Member)*

This was also supported by audience feedback, whereby one respondent said that if they recommended ‘Back to Ours’ to their family who live nearby, they would be more likely to attend. Another audience member said that they had already experienced the effect of word of mouth recommendations within their own family circle, which has led them to try new things.

*“In our family, it’s having a roll on effect. Because my daughter, she’s been to a couple of things now, one with her friends and her youngsters, because of what we‘ve told her to go and see. And today we’ve been out seeing something else as a family of six and tonight we’re here as a family of four. So it is rolling already.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

*“I was to go tell my family who live nearby, they’d be more inclined to come here than travel into town to see something. And generally they don’t go to the theatre, so they’d be more inclined to come here.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

* 1. Engagement

In order to identify engagement, survey respondents were asked whether they had attended or taken part in a range of arts, cultural and heritage events and activities in the previous 12 months. 8 of the 77 survey respondents (10%) had participated in or attended 3 or less arts and cultural events in the past 12 months, which is classed as a low level of engagement.

When looking at the locality of these lowest engaged audience members, survey data shows that 6 out of 8 were local to the venue, which is equal to 75% compared to the 58% in the overall sample. Although this is a very small sample size and should not be considered representative, this gives an indication that the project has attracted some of the lower engaged residents that are local to the ‘Back to Ours’ venues.

Although any differences in responses can’t be classed as ‘significant’ due to the small sample size, it is worth pointing out that the low engagers were more likely to agree with the statement ‘Back to Ours showed me that there is more to Hull than expected’ with 75% compared to 56% overall. This hints that there could be a possible shift in attitude towards accessing the arts within the city.

In the post-event survey, audience members were asked for up to three main reasons for attending ‘Back to Ours’. The most popular response with 71% was ‘Because it’s part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017’ which indicates that the city’s status was a big draw. This is supported by the ‘Chat with Nan’ research, where many respondents said that they were trying to get to as many Hull 2017 events as they can.

Although this suggests that many of the audience were engaged, therefore not necessarily the target audience for this project, there were indications that prior to 2017, these groups were not as open to taking part in arts and cultural events:

*“We very rarely go to any of this sort of stuff, it’s because of the City of Culture that we’re out and about seeing this sort of thing.” (Chat with Nan: Audience Member)*

The next most popular reasons for attending ‘Back to Ours’ were all related to trying something new, or getting involved with something different or unique, which does suggest that the project has enabled risk taking to a certain extent (see figure 14 overleaf).

Figure 14: Top 4 reasons for attending

Taking this research into account, it is clear that there is more work to do in attracting a disengaged local audience to ‘Back to Ours’, given that this is one of the primary aims of the project.

* 1. Mapping of Audiences – To include with Box Office data
  2. Cultural Sector Development

‘Back to Ours’ was reported to have positively impacted on the professional development of both the CCT and Venue Partners, with both parties learning new skills, developing existing skills further and building new partnerships both locally and across the city.

* + 1. Skills Development

For the CCT in particular, ‘Back to Ours’ provided the opportunity to work on a large scale project in a more integral role. 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.

*“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.” (CCT Member)*

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

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.

The CCT were also 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. Indeed, Venue Partners reported that they felt that they had learnt something new or developed skills as a result of taking part in the first festival, including;

* A greater insight into how touring productions work;
* A better awareness of the arts and the different types of entertainment available;
* The opportunity to network with other venues across the city and in the local area; and
* Making relevant contacts in the industry to help continue using venues as a performance space.
  + 1. Legacy for venues

The research indicated that there was a positive shift in perceptions of the ‘Back to Ours’ venues. All Venue Partners reported that the project had helped to raise the profile of their space and develop a greater awareness of the capabilities of the venue. For some venues, this has already led to greater membership figures and increased bookings for their facilities.

*“That kind of lifts our profile everywhere, you see, so that’s really good for us.” (Venue Partner)*

*“So I’ve had bookings for private parties in the function room where the event was.” (Venue Partner)*

This change in perception was reflected in the audience feedback. Many expressed surprise at how good the facilities were – particularly in the newer schools Sirius Academy West and Archbishop Sentamu Academy.

*“This is the first I’ve been to Archbishop Sentamu and it is fantastic.” (Chat with Nan: Audience member)*

*“I’ve only ever been here by day before and it’s totally transformed it.”(Chat with Nan: Audience member)*

The CCT felt that one of the main successes of ‘Back to Ours’ so far was the removal of the perceived barriers to putting on shows in community venues. Indeed, some Venue Partners stated that they were already looking into offering alternative entertainment after the project is finished and one venue has already hosted a performance as a direct result of the success of ‘Back to Ours’. This evidence suggests that ‘Back to Ours’ has the potential to develop and contribute to the cultural offering in Hull beyond the lifespan of the project.

*“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.” (CCT Member)*

*“We’ve just had a show on the back of Back to Ours.” (Venue Partner)*

*“I’ve already started to kind of look at different kind of events myself now, that can attract different people.” (Venue Partner)*

*“I can try different events now. That’s what I was hoping to get out of it.” (Venue Partner)*

* 1. Key Learnings: Arts & Culture
* Group size and composition suggest that ‘Back to Ours’ was successful in attracting a family audience.
* The feeling amongst Venue Partners was that the audience for ‘Back to Ours’ wasn’t entirely local and the CCT agreed that there was more work to be done to attract the target audience. Word of mouth was recognised as a key tool to engage with this audience.
* There was little evidence to suggest that the audience was disengaged with the arts, however one of the main reasons for attending ‘Back to Ours’ was to experience something unique or different, which indicates that the project has enabled risk-taking to some extent.
* One of the key successes for Venue Partners specifically is the change in perception towards their spaces. All venues received positive feedback from audiences and some have already benefited from increased membership and facilities bookings as a result of taking part.
* There is already evidence to suggest that Venue Partners are making steps towards offering arts and culture events after the ‘Back to Ours’ project has finished.