



MarketPlace Evaluation Report 2024 Ph3Yr2

This report is an externally produced evaluation by We Are Frilly (WAF).

This report is structured to reflect a narrative of MarketPlace crafted from the experience of people in these places



Director's note:

This report is a celebration of an extraordinary year for MarketPlace, the second of our third phase of work in Fenland and West Suffolk. For almost ten years now we have been meeting with our communities, testing new ways of being creative together and developing increasingly ambitious and high quality cultural projects.

I started as Programme Director in January 2024 and through supporting the creation of this interim report, learning about the impact of the past year and setting our ambitions for the next 12 months I am energised about the huge potential in our programme.

What follows on these pages is a compelling story of how we continue to diversify our work, encourage new ways of working and strive for a distinctive and impactful offer to all of our communities across the seven market towns. I am proud of the MarketPlace team, who have collected more responses, gathered more data and been out and about listening to more people than ever. All of this work means that we can confidently push even further into the final year of this phase of work.

Of course there are also still challenges, not least the pressures on families, on finances, on accessing activity locally but also in advocating for our role here. We continue to develop such strong relationships but know that there are many more people we can reach. I personally have enjoyed being out and about, meeting town councils, local residents, our cultural partners old and new to simply offer to be useful in whatever direction that takes us. As we look ahead, this offer will continue. Please enjoy getting to know our work over the past 12 months and I hope you might be able to experience our work in person in the near future.

Rob Drummer
Programme Director



About this report:

MarketPlace is one of 38 Creative People and Places (CPP) programmes funded by the Arts Council England (ACE).

The MarketPlace Phase Three project runs from April 2022 to March 2025. This report captures figures and feedback from activity delivered throughout Year 2 of MarketPlace Phase 3.

This report reflects upon MarketPlace's journey over the past year as a new strategic direction for the programme is implemented.

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MarketPlace Ph3 Yr2 Highlights: A year of connection, consistency and triple the activity!

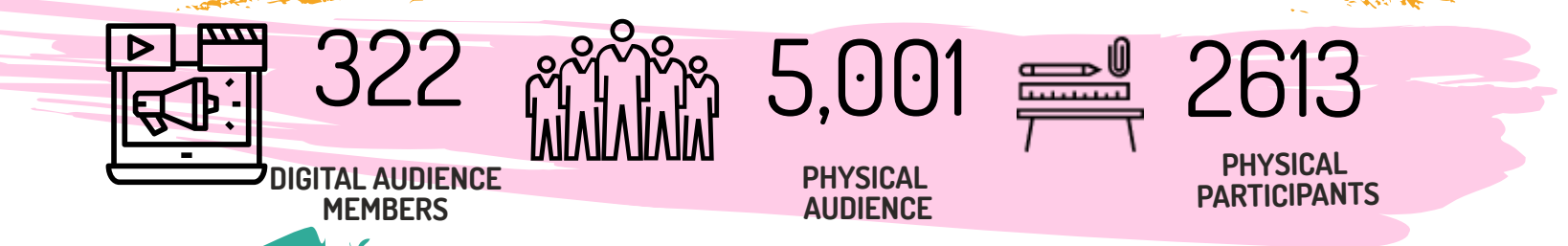
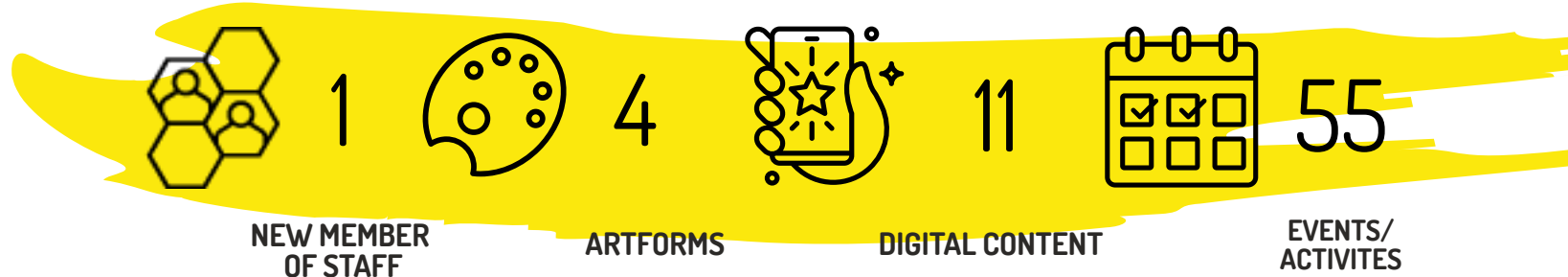


IN NUMBERS

MarketPlace works with community members and creatives across Fenland and West Suffolk to co-create highly visible, high-quality creative offers around the area's unique environment, heritage and future. The activity is designed to surprise, challenge, connect, and amplify local people, artists, and producers, to build engagement habits and leverage influence to increase community-led creativity. It engages and inspires new audiences: individuals and groups not currently involved in the arts, giving them a voice and access to locally relevant arts and culture. This is undertaken through community producers who actively engage within communities and create new communities of interest. This enables the co-creation of programmed activity that responds to local needs and challenges perceptions of art and culture.

MarketPlace is committed to developing all aspects of the programme by, with, and for local audiences, sharing decision-making, and supporting local community members to be inspired and ambitious in co-producing and creating work through attending cultural events nationally. This year, the team tripled their activity level to re-engage existing communities and reach new audiences.

ACROSS 16 PROJECTS



The digital audience figure for Ph3 Yr2 included all social media followers, this figure represents viewers and engagers of digital outputs and activity to more accurately represent active digital audiences. Social media followers and newsletter subscribers will be tracked separately to monitor progress and growth in digital connectivity targets.

Wisbech Rose Fair



MarketPlace provided collaborative public art making at the return of the community led Rose Fair in celebration of it's 60th Anniversary.

St.George's Festival and workshops



A prominent community led event, MarketPlace brought dragons across the town, with dragon making workshops and on the day arts activities.

Spinney Play Day



The annual Play Day at the Spinney see the team continue to undertake deep work with a targeted community in Wisbech, providing creative tasters to audiences who wouldn't ordinarily engage in activity.

Wisbech Stories



A five week art programme for young people from aged 9 onwards to explore the Wisbech Museum collection and learn skills in clay and crochet.

Rivers of Light



Rivers of Light returned for a second year of community lantern making and a parade along the chalk stream in Newmarket.

Escape from Fort Lagoon



A site specific immersive theatre show 'Escape from Fort Lagoon' came to Mildenhall, with a game of cat and mouse along the banks of the River Lark where audience members are active players in a dystopian future with environmental themes.

Newmarket in Colour



Co-created activity with young people at Teen Chill to develop public art skills and create murals for Newmarket in Colour, a creative initiative set up by Discover Newmarket.

Brandon Performance Space Opening



A collaboration between Brandon Creative Forum, Brandon Country Park and MarketPlace to create and curate a public performance space within the country park.

Other activities include:

- Chatteris Craft and Chat
- Art and Stones workshops
- Chatteris Midsummer Festival
- Wisbech Christmas Fair
- Chatteris Quilters
- Voices of Forest and Fen
- Chalk Stream Rocks
- Chalk Stream Walk
- Delicates

Go-see visits to:

- Mutiny in Colour exhibition,
- Festival of Thrift,
- Greenwich & Docklands International Festival,
- Out There Festival,
- Millfield Carnival,
- Green Festival,
- TheatreRoyal
- Bury St Edmunds,
- Museum of Cambridge

Key Findings

MEETING AMBITIONS

These key findings reflect upon the activity and learning across the last year that sees the team continue to work towards their new objectives.

MarketPlace Objective 1:

To increase levels of habitual engagement and participation in culture and creative activity

Achieving the objective:

- MarketPlace delivered and supported the delivery of 16 projects to an audience of 7936. Ten of the projects were in partnership with community partners; six were delivered as part of community-organised activity.
- The team has been developing new partnerships and community groups to create sustainable opportunities. This has included new partnerships with Discover Newmarket and Mildenhall Museum.
- Rivers of Light has been delivered for a second year, exploring the heritage of the chalk stream with residents and building lanterns with groups. Providing a consistent event for communities to connect to and engage with is critical in increasing habits of engagement and participation.

MarketPlace Objective 2:

To create accessible, high-quality projects and activity that build an appetite for creative activity, increase confidence and well-being, and encourage more active citizens

Achieving the objective:

- Escape from Fort Lagoon, an immersive, site specific theatre production was delivered in Mildenhall. This was the largest co-programmed event MarketPlace have delivered to date with an external theatre and production company.
- Building local confidence in and appetite for culture through the delivery of activity at high engagement community events and hyper-local, small enough to fail, conversation starter activities has seen the team target specific communities of interest. 'Delicates' brought together local parents to explore their identity and create a body of work for exhibition. This has seen them continue to pursue other creative opportunities to meet and express themselves creatively.
- The team have been working with the National Gallery to bring activity to Mildenhall, where engagement is challenging, but responsive to bigger scale experiences.

MarketPlace Objective 3:

To co-create and promote highly visible and accessible projects and creative offers that build in work led by local people who might otherwise be less likely to engage and encourage a sense of pride in places and communities

Achieving the objective:

- Rivers of Light second event attracted an audience of 501 residents and 180 participants.
- Escape from Fort Lagoon, their first paid-for cultural experience saw an audience of 98
- Returning to the Spinney for their Annual Play Day and creating opportunities with Wisbech Museum is building creative opportunities for children and young people on the Spinney Estate to increase their cultural appetite and confidence. This sees an annual audience of 565 and 111 young people engage in Wisbech Stories project with the museum..
- MarketPlace continues to collaborate with and support Brandon Creative Forum. This year, the completion of the performance space in Brandon Country Park resulted in a curated opening of live performances and participatory activity.
- As a named delivery partner of St George's Festival, the event has an estimated attendance of 3,000 people, and 312 directly engaged in participatory activity with MarketPlace.
- The team has been providing strategic support through fundraising to create a Whittlesey festival.

Key Findings

MarketPlace Objective 4:

To develop diverse community networks of volunteers, professional creatives, and creative activists, encouraging new start-up/growth activity

Achieving the objective:

- The team actively promotes and engages creative advocates to become part of their community advisory panel and creative producers.
- Partnership work has developed in Wisbech through the Wisbech Museum and connections have been made in Whittlesey, an under-engaged town.
- 69% of their target of volunteers by 2025 has already been achieved.

MarketPlace Objective 5:

To work with strategic partners to influence policy and practice across the area and to leverage new funds for community creativity

Achieving the objective:

- Re-establishing existing networks and relationships with new faces makes this ambition a priority over the next year. This ambition will be influenced by investment in training and go-sees for the team and community members to ensure that the community voice drives the practice.
- MarketPlace has been active within the Fenland Cultural Partnership, exploring a Place Partnership application to Arts Council England
- The team have been engaging Anglia Ruskin University to engage a younger, harder-to-reach audience to develop into culturally active parts of the local creative ecology.

MEETING AMBITIONS



Key Findings

Question 1

Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?

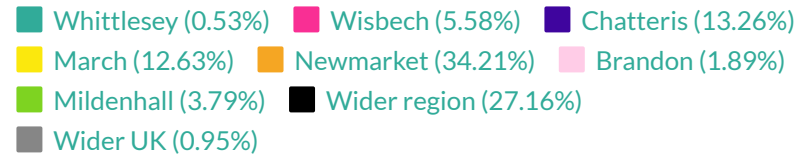
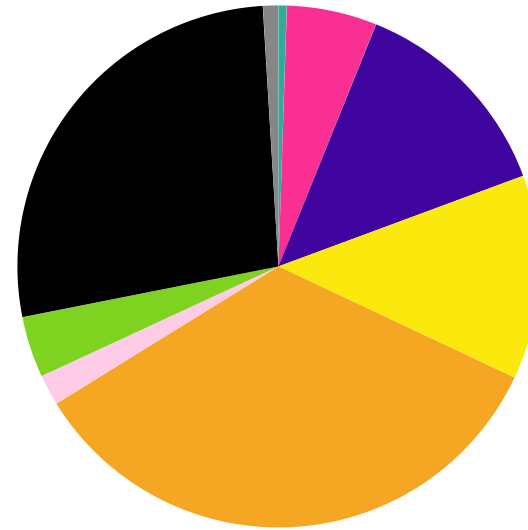
Achieving the objective:

- Targeted activity for communities of interest was undertaken with local partners to reach those who are not usually engaged with culture and are often at risk of feeling excluded by society.

Working in this way enabled the team to reach the following:

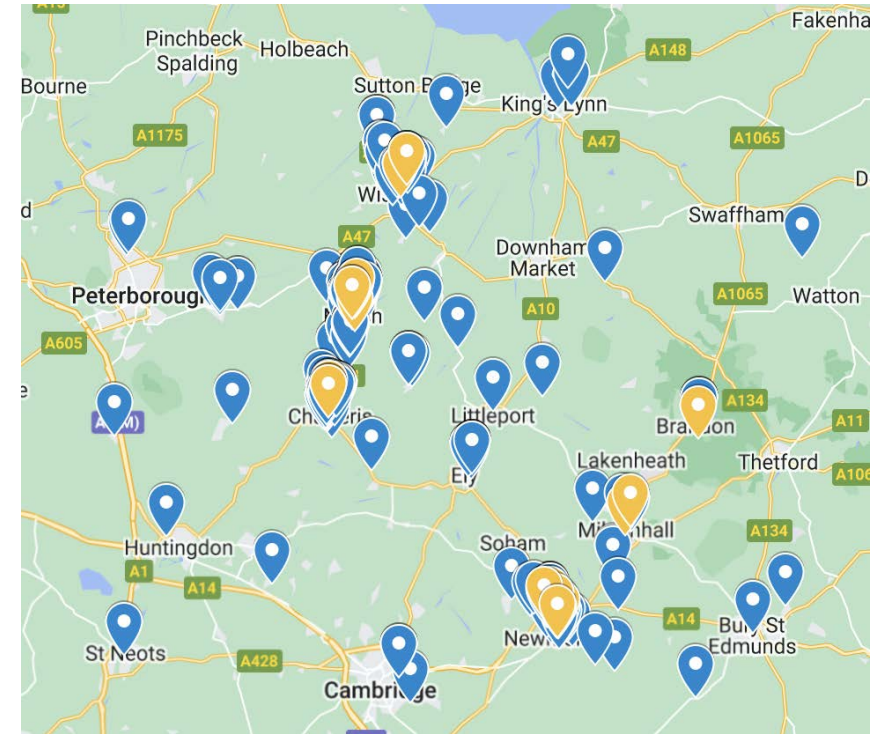
- residents in Brandon at the new Performance Space in Brandon Country Park
- develop relationships with young people in Newmarket to create murals across the town
- re-engage and meet new audiences along Icknield Way in Newmarket, targeting residents and local groups from an area of deprivation for Rivers of Light
- continue to engage families in a deprived area of Wisbech through annual activity and additional opportunities to increase habitual creative engagement
- Geographically based activity continued to be delivered alongside the targeted activity to support locally-led events in March, Chatteris and Wisbech. This sees the team engage with communities from outlying villages that lack cultural access on their doorsteps and those least likely to engage in culture but will attend community activity.

For the evaluation, we explore three research questions:



The large percentage of postcodes collected from Newmarket activity shows MarketPlace's impact when it delivers its events. MarketPlace can more effectively collect data when it is the lead organiser, and it reinforces an appetite for outdoor community-contributed activities such as Rivers of Light.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Orange map location markers represent activity locations amongst the blue audience members. This shows the spread of audiences engaging in local, annual community-led activities due to a lack of cultural opportunities on their doorstep.

71%

of audiences are from priority towns

27%

of audiences are from the wider region

20%

hadn't attended an arts or culture event before

49%

were new to MarketPlace

X3

MarketPlace has engaged 3 times as many global majority

Key Findings

Question 2

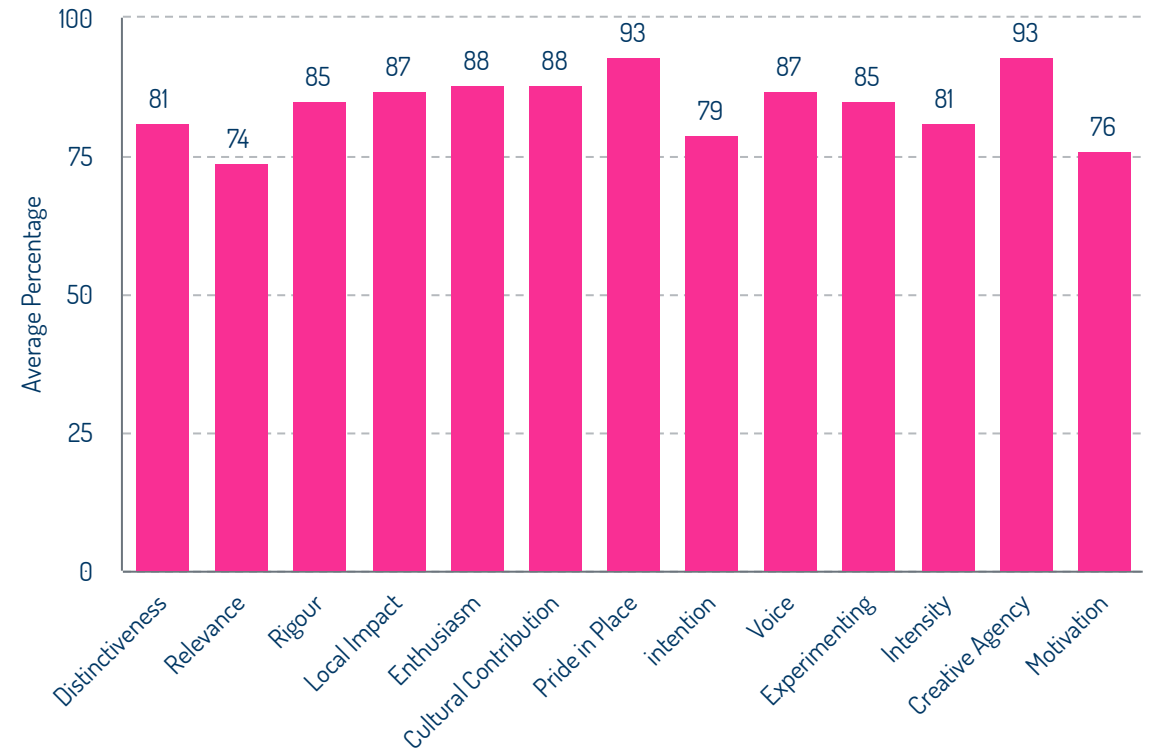
To what extent was the aspiration for the excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?

Achieving the objective:

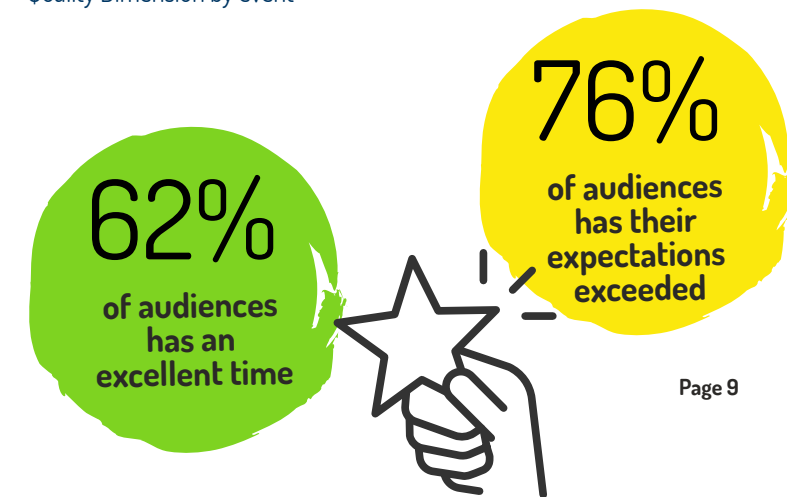
- The 'Small enough to fail but big enough to learn' activity for communities of interest continues with local partners to reach those not usually engaged with culture and often at risk of feeling excluded by society. Working in this way enabled the team to engage communities in co-creating art works to form part of broader community-led activity and to connect with local organisations for sustainability.
- Geographical activity continued to be delivered alongside the targeted activity to reach new audiences on their doorstep and activate play days, supporting locally led activity. This team did this by rolling out a taster activity connected to chalk stream heritage to test the further rollout and appetite for Rivers of Light beyond Newmarket.
- MarketPlace continues to support Brandon Creative Forum. The Forum is developing an outdoor performing arts space for the town, and the team is guiding this endeavour.
- The team has encouraged and supported creative practitioners to build upon their work with MarketPlace to inform funding applications, creating evidence of good practice and excellence.
- Attendees universally identified Rivers of Light as a quality experience across all of the ACE quality dimensions, exceeding the team's expectations for the event.
- Escape from Fort Lagoon provided an immersive theatre experience for residents that was site-specific, creating surprise and bringing something new for residents to experience.
- MarketPlace continues to push and challenge the community partners of St. George's Festival to increase the creative offer.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

AVERAGE QUALITY RATING ACROSS 8 PROJECTS



Quality Dimension by event



Key Findings

Question 3

Which approaches were successful, and what lessons were learned?

Achieving the objective:

- The team are building upon their digital output and engagement approaches to bridge the geographical distance of engagement and raise visibility. This continues to be an iterative development process but sees unique content shared that connects audiences to in-person activity.
- Delivering a combination of discreet and targeted work alongside publicly visible community-rooted experiences is building trust and an appetite for activity.
- Heritage and environmental themes continue to drive more strategic partnerships and opportunities to scale up activity.
- Ensuring activity is locally relevant and accessible and increasing the quality of artistic production is a priority for the team as they seek to maximise funding with NPO partners, influencing programming potential at a cultural strategy level.
- Community-led events, whilst remaining important to MarketPlace, can impact the capacity to deliver exciting and inspiring new experiences for communities. MarketPlace is exploring how this balance can be achieved to increase the skills and confidence of community organisers through go-see experiences.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS





Lessons learned from Yr 2 Phase 3

- After a year of getting to know their communities, a new team is rescoping its vision and ambitions for the Phase so that it can deliver larger-scale activity in Year 3.
- Establishing new community engagement pathways has seen the team deliver craft and chats to fact-find and identify needs and interests. A new group for MarketPlace co-creators is being established to programme a third year of scalable activity. Taster activities and drop-in activities at community-led events continue to enable the team to take risks, try new things with communities and test co-created ideas through a small enough to fail and big enough to learn philosophy. This is the latest team to build authentic and confident relationships with community members and partners. This has seen the team add a live Dungeon and Dragons role-play gaming tent to St. George's Festival, expanding the scope of culture and finding new hooks to engage different age groups into creative habits.
- Youth engagement has been a focus, with the continued delivery of activity across Newmarket through the public art project Newmarket in Colour and continued taster activities to inform the second Rivers of Light parade. MarketPlace is working strategically with partners such as TwentyTwenty Productions to identify more legacy activities for young people.
- Increasing digital content and social media has become a priority element of activity; building an audience with an appetite for digital engagement and embedding digital content within existing in-person projects and activity is more sustainable for the team's capacity.
- The hyper-local approach to co-creation and identifying new community champions to upskill, shape decision making and attend go-sees has seen MarketPlace invite project partners, community members and project participants to attend six go-sees to shape and inform what they are delivering and what MarketPlace could be programming.
- The team identify and create new annual and scalable activities that can leave a legacy for MarketPlace and build community capacity to deliver activity. The team is developing project packages that can be rolled out to similar communities of interest and environmental and heritage commonalities between geographical locations.



1 Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?

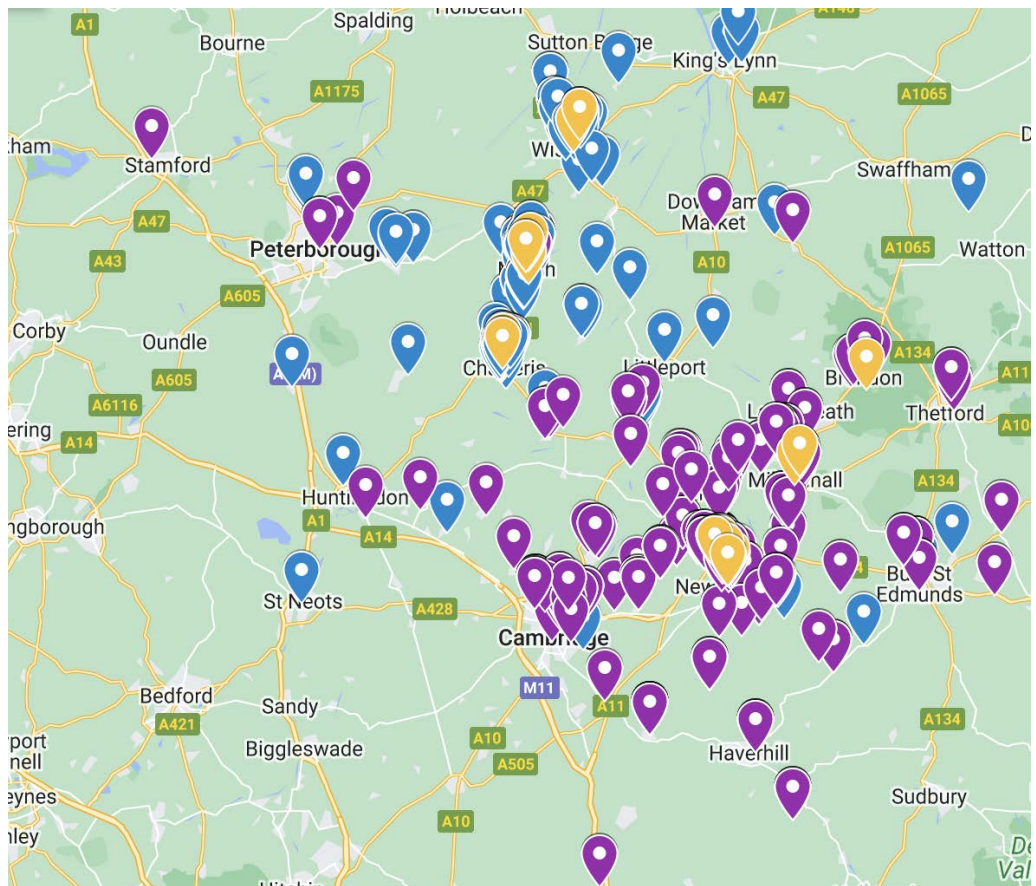
Where did our audiences, and participants come from?

For the MarketPlace activity, there were 2613 participants, a 75% increase compared on last year's figures and an audience total of 7936 an increase of 69%. A total of 969 postcodes were collected from across the programme of events and activities, a 600% increase on previous data collection levels.

The challenges still faced in collecting participant data remained high due to most activities occurring within community-organised events and targeted activities for children and young people.

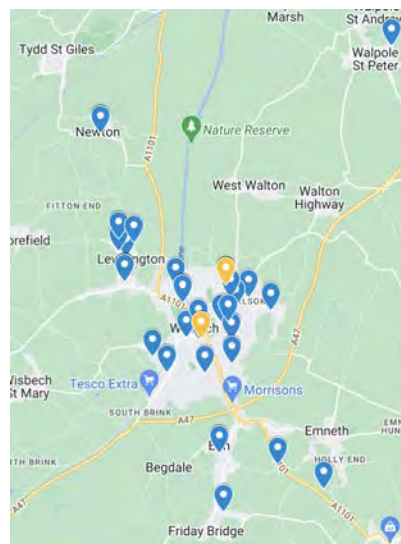
MarketPlace-led activity within hyper-local targeted communities and community-led events shows that most attendees were near the venue postcode. The circumference of the area where most of MarketPlace's audience travels is 333km, with a catchment of approximately 70km from the core delivery area and an average driving distance of 25-40km that people are willing to travel for events. Levels of tourism to the area do see attendees from across the country.

The map to the left shows the distribution of attendees from across the UK reflecting the levels of tourism into the area..



Orange map location markers represent activity locations amongst the blue and purple audience members.

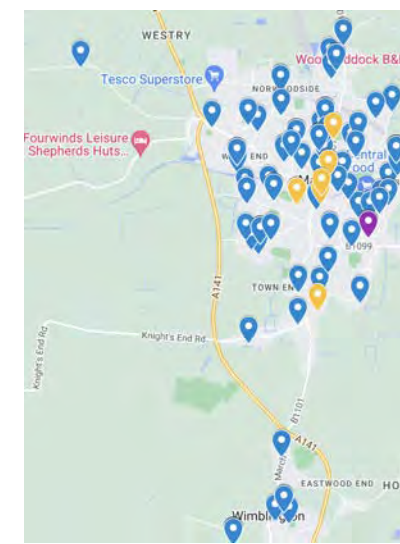
The activity took place in Mildenhall, March, Brandon, Wisbech, Chatteris and Newmarket. The biggest engagement and attendance outside of St George's Festival (approximately 3,000) was for Rivers of Light, with over 600 attendees. This shows an appetite for multi-generational outdoor cultural Activity and presents an opportunity for community-led events to become exhibition sites for work from deeper MarketPlace engagement.



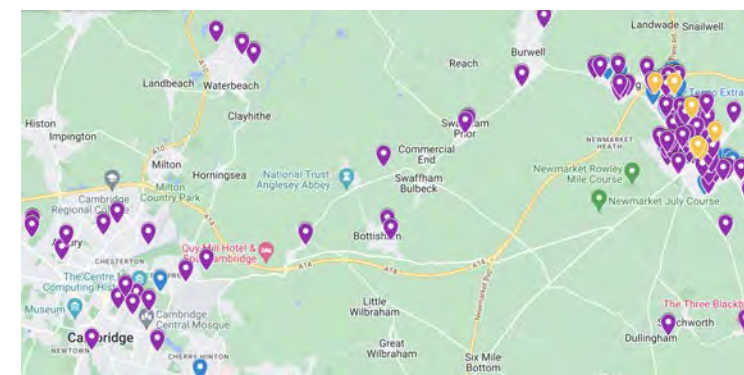
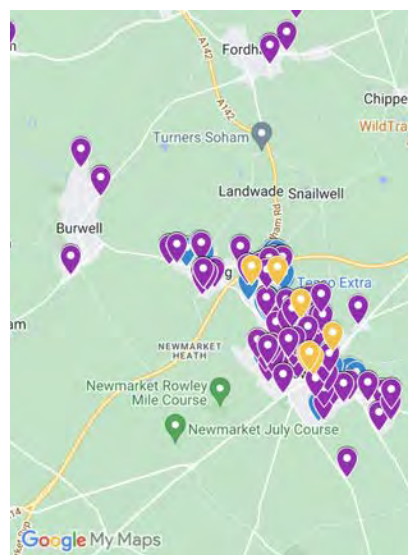
Escape from Fort Lagoon activity in Mildenhall drew in cultural engagers from across the area.



Activity in Chatteris engages audiences from across the town ensuring accessible and inclusive experiences are being offered.



The map top right shows activity in March engages the whole town and outlying villages that lack everyday cultural opportunities.



The map above and to the left shows the dispersal of attendees across Newmarket and Cambridge.

Who were they?

Delivery has seen a focus on young people and families across this year through activity such as Wisbech Stories, Spinney Play Day and community led activity.

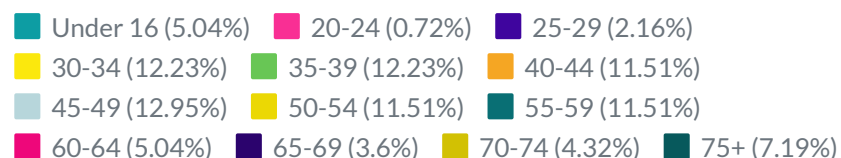
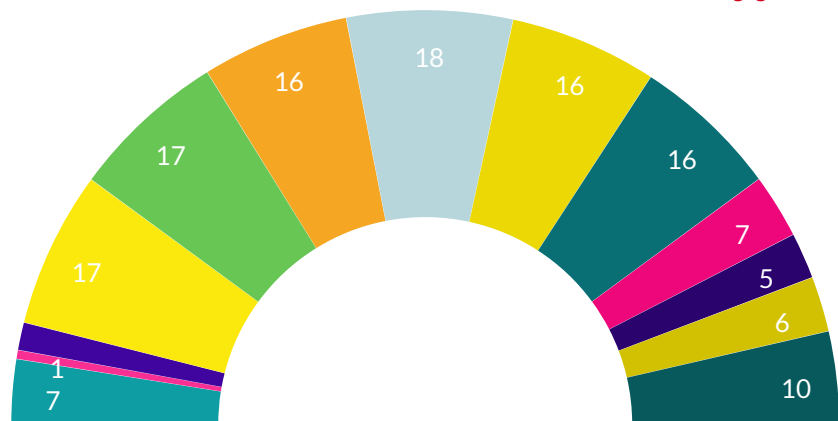
Most activities have taken place as part of other community-led events; this means that data collection is challenging as MarketPlace is not the lead organiser. Demographics were consistently collected, with a total sample size of 149. Actual numbers for each age group are shown directly on the charts.

The targeted activity of marginalised groups and those least likely to engage ensures that MarketPlace remains inclusive and representative in their programming. However, it makes data collection more challenging when they are vulnerable and marginalised communities. Smaller scale projects and tasters have seen a focus on children and young people where data beyond age is rarely collected.

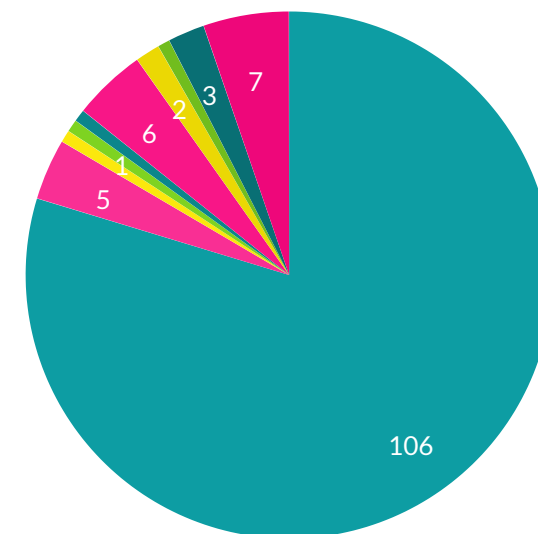
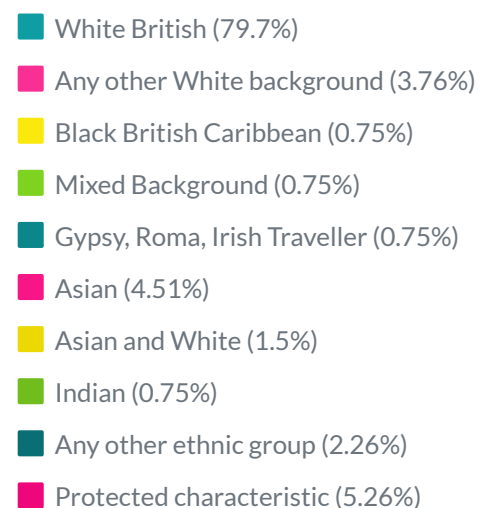
The high numbers of under 16s are due to targeted engagement in Wisbech on the Spinney Estate, where engaging whole families enables the team to embed within the community and through their partnership work with Wisbech Museum and projects in Newmarket such as Rivers of Light project that had workshops leading up to the main parade with local scout and girl guide groups and Newmarket in Colour with local young people.

Demographic data: Age

Data from I&I and does not include all CYP that will be counted from in person engagement.



Ethnicity



Please note: The numbers of protected characteristics represent under 16 years old respondents who completed Impact and Insight Surveys. An additional known 117 children and young people actively participated in activity this year.

Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?

Data sources are a combination of 22 respondents from the Impact and Insight survey and 83 directly collected from workshops groups. Please note: The numbers of protected characteristics represent under 16 respondents.

Disability

6.1-8.4% of population across Fenland and West Suffolk is disabled where life is limited a lot and 10-11.2% where life is limited a little. The census does not distinguish between neurodiverse and physical D/Deaf disabilities. These figures show that MP are engaging fairly representatively of the area but it presents MP with an opportunity to directly engage this community, especially where work has predominantly been delivered in outdoor and large public events that may not feel inclusive or accessible to all.

6%

identified as D/Disabled

9%

identified as Neurodivergent

Ethnicity

80%

White British

11%

Global Majority

80% of those who engaged in activity were from a White British background. This shows that MarketPlace are actively engaging with more diverse communities than is representative across the area. MarketPlace is under engaging with the LGBTQIA+ community by half however 1.5% stated unknown to their sexuality and 5% preferred not to say which could suggest they are reaching less confident and potentially new members in the community.

Identity

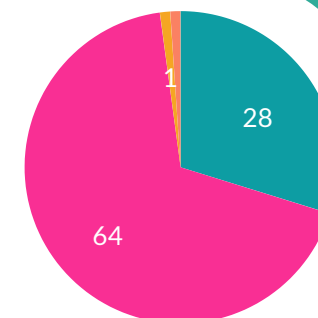
Sexuality

5%

are part of the LGBTQIA+ community

Gender

- Male (29.79%)
- Female (68.09%)
- Non Binary (1.06%)
- Protected Characteristic (1.06%)



Females are more likely to complete a survey on behalf of the whole family, so the high percentage of female respondents is unsurprising.

ALL AGES

The breadth of ages combined with the average attendee group size of 5 shows that MarketPlace provides an intergenerational family experience that enables more isolated older community members to engage in activity on their doorstep. There is a gap between 16-20-year-olds who engage and provide activity feedback. This is unsurprising as this is a key age for higher education, travel and least likely to be engaging in family activity. More experience-based, thrill-seeking opportunities would appeal to this demographic and target activity through colleges and Anglia Ruskin University. MarketPlace has involved a representative sample to provide feedback on their activity.

Friends and Family

5%

was the average group size of those attending.

5%

Attended the events/activity by themselves

The largest group sizes were 26 and 25. These represented scout groups attending Rivers of Light. Targeting attendance to activity through existing groups ensures events are well attended.

New to culture and MarketPlace

20%

hadn't attended an arts or culture event before

49%

were new to MarketPlace

Nearly half of MarketPlace's audience is new to them, and 20% haven't engaged in a cultural event before. 21% attend a cultural event less than once a year. MarketPlace is successfully reaching the communities least likely to engage in culture and those that only engage in free hyper-local, annual activity.

How culturally engaged are they?

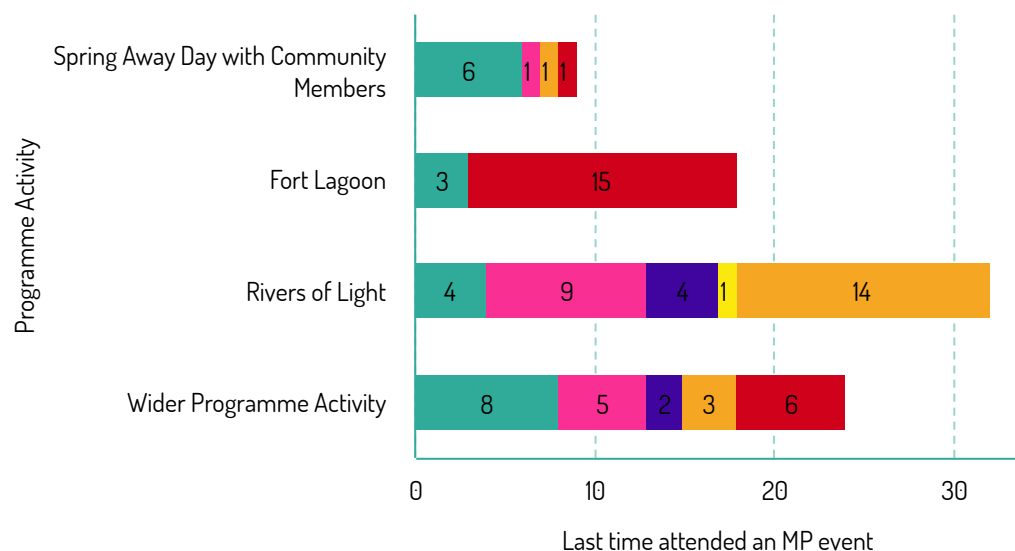
The charts below capture the data from the Spring Away Day with active community members, Escape from Fort Lagoon, a paid-for activity in Mildenhall Rivers of Light – the second annual parade for this event in Newmarket and wider programme activity where MarketPlace pops up at community-led events. The data shows that the community advisors have an appetite for cultural and creative activity as regular MarketPlace event attendees, and the majority participate/attend more than six times a year. Ambassadors for creative activity are essential to maintain engagement and make decisions to shape activity locally. Cultural engages are more likely to take those next steps into volunteering for that level of decision-making.

Escape from Fort Lagoon as a paid-for activity was attended by culturally active residents; however, the majority were new to MarketPlace, which reflects how previous activity has always been targeted at low engagement. Sustainable cultural organisations require a mix of culturally enthusiastic and new audiences. The distinct opportunity to be part of an immersive, site-specific theatre production reflects the uniqueness of this type of activity locally, and an appetite for new outdoor art experiences that are often accessible for first-time engages when at a free to a low price point.

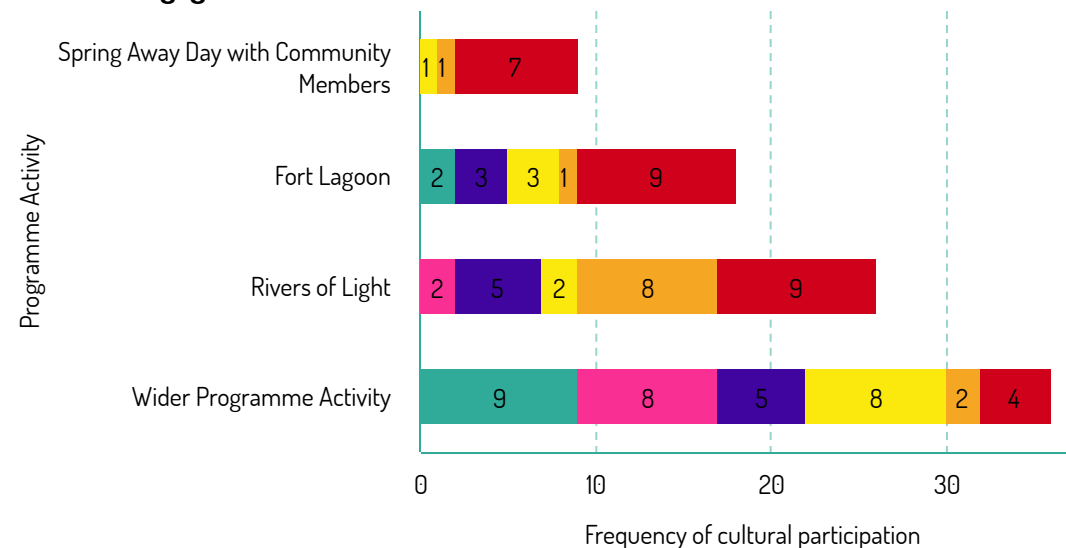
Rivers of Light's return shows that MarketPlace has been able to re-engage previous low-engaging attendees and that a third of the audience is least likely to engage in culture. MarketPlace's support of activity as part of community-led events continues to reach the most first-time engages of cultural activity and the most new to MarketPlace after Escape from Fort Lagoon audiences.

MarketPlace's presence at such events is crucial for supporting the elevation of the creative menu and e-activity. Still, it needs to work smarter for MarketPlace as a feeder event for more ambitious plans. It further reinforces that outdoor and large-scale events bring audiences across the spectrum, and MarketPlace needs to balance deeper engagement projects and larger-scale events.

Last MarketPlace event they attended



Frequency of cultural engagement



0-6 mnths 6-12 mnths Last 1-2 years 2-3 yrs ago More than 3 years ago I have never attended before

This is my first time Less than once a year Once a year 2-3 times a year 4-5 times a year 6+ a year

ACE Research Question:

2 To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

This year, MarketPlace needed to reconnect with communities after a delivery hiatus and maintain existing relationships for future activity. This meant that the focus was on the following:

- contact and visibility through community-organised events
- hyper-local delivery with targeted audiences
- identifying a new community pathway to shape engagement.

Undertaking this process has highlighted a need to deliver excellent experiences that are accessible, small enough to fail whilst being big enough to learn. Using creative engagement processes, the team have been focussed on identifying what is important to communities, using it as a conversation starter to shape future programming and partner development. These conversation starters fall into the contact and connect stages of MarketPlace's new community engagement pathway.

To accompany the pathway, the team have established a series of quality principles for their work to align with ACE measures of quality to evidence the difference they are making with their communities.

Engaging communities at events where they feel confident and comfortable to attend, such as the National Play Day event at the Spinney in Wisbech, Chatteris Midsummer Festival and March Christmas Wish, ensures that MarketPlace is embedded in the local interests of the towns to reach communities who are not typically cultural engagers more effectively.

Across two projects this year, the previous team and new team delivered community galvanising events through lantern parade activity, one with Brandon Creative Arts Forum as part of the Jubilee celebrations and one in partnership with Newmarket Community Arts connected to the heritage of the chalk stream that runs through the town. The team recognises that these events are staples of community arts activity. However, they act as an accessible foundation to build ambition and a programme of outdoor arts opportunities.

Rivers of Light is the first event the new team delivered. It demonstrates how they will continue to have an engaging process for communities to participate in cultural experiences.

'The children were warmly welcomed and encouraged. The staff/volunteers were very patient and friendly explaining the activities in a calm and clear way.' - Chatteris Midsummer Festival

How are we enabling them to experience arts and culture? Community Engagement Path

MarketPlace has been testing its community engagement path to reach more people from the places of least engagement and show the process of how it works. The increase in activity this year has enabled the team to establish new advisory groups, enabling them to discover more community champions and activate residents wanting to engage more with culture. Examples of the path in action are from this year's activity.

Phase 3 yr 3

The growth of advisory groups and creative producers, alongside cultural knowledge development through go-sees, will create more activity for residents. MarketPlace will support communities in becoming more culturally confident and working with partners to deliver more ambitious, large-scale programmes to meet their communities' needs.

Phase 3 yr 2 - We are Here!

This year, the team delivered triple the activities and invited communities to attend Go-Sees to shape the co-creation of a larger activity for year 3. Programming has continued with local partners to build appetite and consistency. They continue to contact and connect with new audiences and communities of interest.

Phase 3 yr 1

Last year, the team maintained connections with existing communities and made new contacts.

Contact

- Networking
- Visibility
- Engagement
- Communications

Example: Influencing cultural strategy sees the team connect with diverse partners

Connection

- Community forums
- Workshops
- Groups
- Events

Example: Presence at community led events in Wisbech, Chatteris and March continue to maintain visibility and engage new audiences

Co-create

- Projects with skilled creatives and community forums
- R&D projects
- Activity design

Example: Co-created public art for Newmarket in Colour activity with Young People

Opportunity to repeat and develop

- Project teams built from long-term relationships
- Group activity
- Invitations to next projects

Example: Participants from Year 1 Rivers of Light activity returned for Year 2 with additional taster activity delivered in new locations to test appetite for roll out.

Habits form

- Signposting
- Information
- Annual events
- Growing in scale
- Brokerage
- Start-ups
- Volunteering

Example: Consistency of Spinney Play Day and building new opportunities with Wisbech Museum is increasing the cultural confidence and creative habits of young engagers.

Active Confidence and Aspiration

Spaces for people to lead through:

- project roles
- group involvement
- start-ups
- Independent fundraising
- scaling up

Example: Brandon Creative Forum are a collaborator and the launch of a new fundraised performance space celebrated local creatives and artists.

Understanding our engagement model and how we're inspiring communities to engage further

MarketPlace continues to engage people in activity from areas of historically low engagement and socially deprived areas in activity they find accessible. MarketPlace values the quality of the process to ensure comfortable and inclusive experiences for their communities before presenting work and ideas that can surprise and challenge them.

People discover MarketPlace by attending other events

This remains consistent. However, it limits the potential of what the team can deliver. Revising how MarketPlace supports such community-led festival events requires the team to identify outcomes for their wider audience engagement and artistic ambitions.

Challenging partners with new ideas

The hiatus and reduction in delivery have impacted the visibility and capability of the team to deliver a more challenging and diverse range of activities. Quick wins to raise the profile and visibility of MarketPlace within the timescales have been identified by the consortium and MarketPlace team; exploring the programming and development of more outdoor arts experiences that can complement locally relevant small-scale, risk-taking projects would enable MarketPlace to achieve scale and depth of engagement.

Small Enough to Fail, Big Enough to Learn

Allowing for more risk taking, testing of ideas and learning from anything that doesn't work while allowing for communities to co-create alongside the MarketPlace team. This philosophy is forming part of the testing practice of MarketPlace so that activity can grow at a sustainable and scaleable rate, increasing the potential for sustainability and legacy.

Building new annual activity

With a new Programme Director, the chance for larger-scale activity that builds on past success but doesn't become repetitive is being tested. The team is looking at what was successful previously and what is happening nationally in the cultural sector.

Building consistent engagement offers

Workshops, hands-on creative and participatory activity building to more public outcomes that are more ambitious. Building creative habits means ensuring enough creative opportunities exist, and MarketPlace recognises a skills gap locally to ensure there are enough creative pathways for people to travel from audience to participant and volunteer to work in the sector. This is one focus of work for the next year and beyond. In the short term, it ensures more regular engagement opportunities beyond annual events so that creative habits are then more likely to continue at home. One such example is the Spinney Estate, where after three annual play days of creative activity, the young people have an appetite for more and engaged in a longer-term weekly project, Wisbech Stories, with MarketPlace and Wisbech Museum, a cultural venue the participants hadn't previously visited.

Testing a model of active consultation, co-creation, and visible community presentation

Testing this model through long-standing community-led events provides a test bed for what MarketPlace wants to achieve for the new annual activity that creates an environment for creative challenge and innovation.

New and Inspiring experiences

A focus on storytelling, performance and narrative-based community programmes to avoid duplication locally with existing craft-based activities

**'It was really fun and great to have something creative to do with my son at the weekend as generally there is nothing to do in March other than the library and the park.'
- St.George's Festival Attendee**

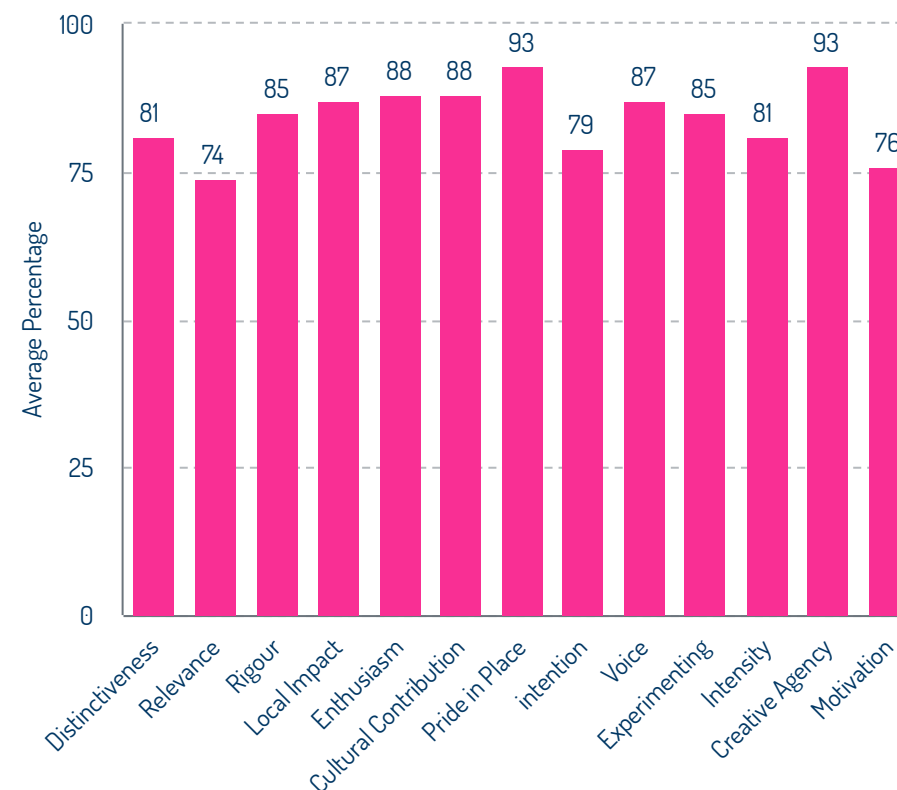
To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

What three words?



Attendees were asked, 'What three words would they use to describe the event?' The top four words used to describe the experience were 'fun', 'enjoyable', 'community', and 'friendly'. All adjectives were positive and represented a mix of active participation and their response to what they were seeing and experiencing in terms of performance and atmosphere. Still, most importantly, they were centred upon a sense of connection with others and having fun together.

Quality of experience



Quality Dimension by event

The average level of agreement with the quality dimensions statements shows that attendees rated the project highly across all dimensions and exceeded staff perceptions of how the event would be perceived. MarketPlace scored the event approximately 10% lower than the public, showing that the team is pitching the themes and artistic content of experiences at the right level for new audiences to feel confident and comfortable accessing culture. The lower rating by the team reflects their depth of knowledge and understanding of culture and their ambitions for what they would like to achieve in the future with the event.

ACE Research Question:

3 Which approaches were successful and what lessons were learned?

Overall successes and knowledge gained

- 1 Targeted work with priority communities such as young people enabled highly visible public works to be created. Delivering deeper engagement work increase cultural confidence and skills whilst creating an impact on the sense of belonging and pride in a place. Newmarket in Colour enabled young people to co-create work that represented both the heritage of the area through the lens of their perspective.
- 2 The targeted audience activity remains successful and enables people who wouldn't normally engage to participate in new creative activities. This will remain an element of future programming but as part of a contribution to a longer programme of engagement to more effectively evidence impact.
- 3 Rivers of Light maintained engagement levels of the first year. Building upon the scale and exceeding expectations of activity will enable the event to grow further. This year the scale and complexity of the lanterns built saw an elevation in practice.
- 4 Data collection levels have improved across project activity with data collection across projects, with a total of 126 quality responses and 870 postcodes collected. This is the most data gathered by Market Place in a single year.
- 5 Investing in Go-sees as part of community and team development has seen the expansion of their ambitions and this will continue as a way to shape programming that elevates their practice within the authentic themes of the MarketPlace area.





Overall challenges

1

Consistently supporting community led events is challenging on capacity. The team recognise they will need to limit their contributions and alternate support in order to achieve bigger scale, MarketPlace co-created activity. Activity at community led events will be seen as a way to consult, share ideas, promote and engage audiences towards larger scale and longer programmed activity they won't want to miss.

2

As a large geographical rural area across the activity, this year has been less visible and discrete, limiting how aware MarketPlace communities are and tasters in more significant events where the MarketPlace brand can be lost. They recognise the importance of this deeper engagement. They will continue with more visible sharing of the work by creating exhibitions and disseminating outputs in public spaces across the towns, such as libraries. Expanding their outdoor arts programme and taking over of found spaces will enable them to reach more people and create opportunities to showcase this more profound engagement work.

3

Fort Lagoon brought a new experience to MarketPlace, as an inherited project from the previous team this presented logistical challenges that the team successfully overcome and highlighted processes and sign off procedures to be implemented for future commissions.

4

Co-creating with people can result in work that challenges different perspectives. This can require the team to manage expectations of participants and support them to compromise on final creative outputs to meet the needs of the funders and minimise any negative responses. Embedding this in risk assessments of activity with funders in advance can help the team navigate those conversations in the future as more public realm work is created.

5

MarketPlace has a new Programme Director, this is a success as the team are revitalised by new energy, skills and experience but also a challenge as the team reset to new leadership and ways of working whilst delivering, and the new Director hits the ground running in their role.

3 Case Studies

MarketPlace's activity this year has led to three case studies:

1Community Led Events - This reflects the support and elevation MarketPlace adds to community led events by bringing creative interventions and co-created elements. This case study includes a spotlight on St. George's Day Festival, Wisbech Rose Fair and Chatteris Midsummer Festival.

Rivers of Light - In it's second year this evolving and growing grass roots developed parade sees Newmarket groups create large scale lanterns, discover the heritage of the chalk stream and undertake an evening lantern parade accompanied by performers.

Escape from Fort Lagoon - A co-commissioned and co-created immersive theatre production that explored environmental issues with wild swimming as audiences engaged in a cat and mouse game across the town of Mildenhall.





- Sustainability
- Elevation
- Reach new audiences
- Co-creation

Why attend existing community led events?

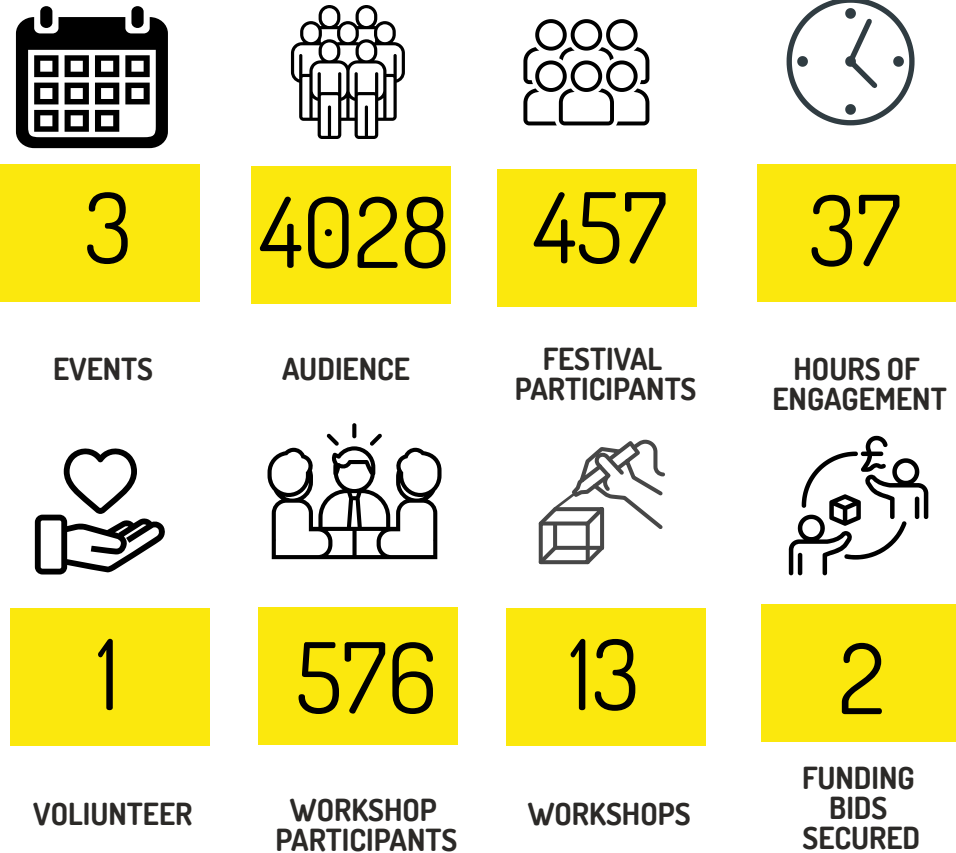
Supporting community-led events enables MarketPlace to reach new audiences and raise local event organisers' ambition in what they can achieve with creative and cultural elements.

The aim of this event was to:

- build relationships with local partners and groups
- provide consistency of cultural opportunity to encourage audience movement along the engagement path
- reach target audiences for MarketPlace
- raise creative aspirations for such events
- increase the value of arts and culture in people's lives

Case Study: Community Led Events

MarketPlace has historically supported community events to deliver creative activities and elevate the experience with cultural additions from performances and collaborative makes. This Case Study primarily focuses on St.George's Festival; however, it includes additional data from Wisbech's Rose Fair and Chatteris Midsummer Festival. This is to reflect on the impact supporting and participating in community-led events has on the reaching new audiences and cultural contributions.



What happened?

MarketPlace is a partner within St. George's Festival which meant the team delivered an event in 2023 by consultation workshops with residents in March in December 2023 for the 2024 festival. In 2023 MarketPlace partnered with Fenland District Council, 20Twenty Productions, March Library and Cambridgeshire Skills to organise the event.

In the lead up to the festival the team worked with artist Ricki Outis to visit 9 local groups in March and Chatteris to run screenprinting workshops to create scales to decorate the parade dragon. These included a mixture of known and new groups such as Scouts, Cubs and Beavers, Hereward Community Rail Partnership, Macmillan Fundraising Committee, the Recovery Café and Edgy Women. Local people led on the project development from concept and planning through to delivery including artistic elements such as screenprinting workshops, chalk drawing, storytelling, poetry and photography.

Artist Cary Outis drew a dragon in chalk on the windows of local shops as a teaser. On the day, festival visitors drew their own dragons on the pavements while watching Cary draw a large dragon onto the window of March library. Other MarketPlace activities on day for families included storytelling with The Yarnsmith of Norwich, tote bag colouring, and a colouring competition.

At Wisbech's Rose Fair attendee engaged with a large scale collaborative make, stitching through fencing and other materials, as well as learning to crochet.

At Chatteris Midsummer Festival MarketPlace were invited by the town could to deliver activities responding to the theme 'Roaring Twenties'. MarketPlace co-created a photo booth experience with photography group F-stop Camera Club where people could dress up in contemporary costume and have their photo taken against a Jazz Age inspired backdrop. Print-outs were provided for people to take home or be sent via email. People joined a taster on how to knit and crochet, and saw how to quilt a hexagonal brooch. Artist Karen Forman ran a family activity creating Flapper headbands and Art Deco suncatchers.


'The people were fantastic the activities engaging'
- Rose Fair Attendee

'Liked it on Sunday where you could have a go at Knitting, Crochet. It was good to see children having a go at something they wouldn't learn at home or school'

- Chatteris Midsummer Festival



'Engaging and stimulating for children great affordable activities for all the family great day out in walking distance'
- St.George's Festival Attendee



**'The children were able to make something and it was really well thought out and accessible for all ages '
- Chatteris Midsummer Festival**

**'Events at the field were varied to suit various needs of our group. This event was far better than those I've previously visited, lots to see and do to keep us interested and want to stay later '
- Chatteris Midsummer Festival**

**'There were events at the fair that were family orientated and it didn't all cost the world. I don't like commercial fairs this on the other hand had local people sharing interesting ideas, talents and opportunities. It was spot on.'
- Chatteris Midsummer Festival**



'The event was a phenomenal success. It felt like the whole community was involved and was in awe of what they had created as a collective group. The workshops had brought the groups together and made them want to come along to the main event to see their work being paraded for all to see. I think a lot of the community were surprised and blown away at the success of the event and how the art and spoken word had been so powerful in making people come together. We need to think about how we go forward for the next event and how this works for the community and how they want to proceed.'

-Team Reflection

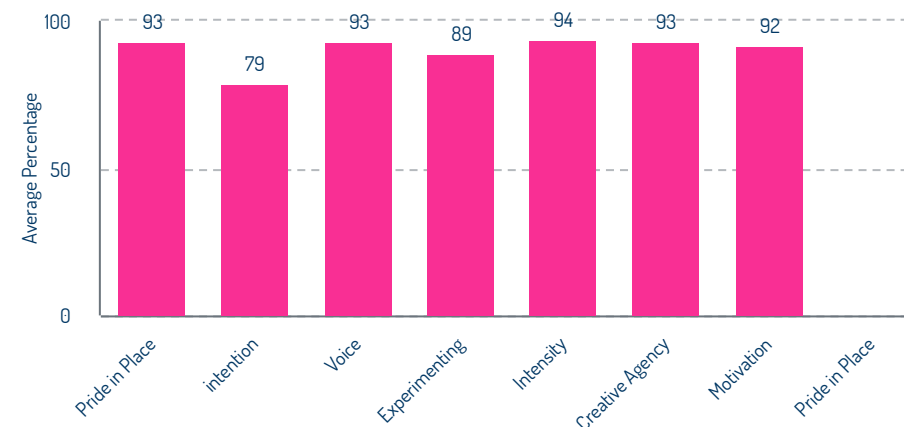
To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

What three words?

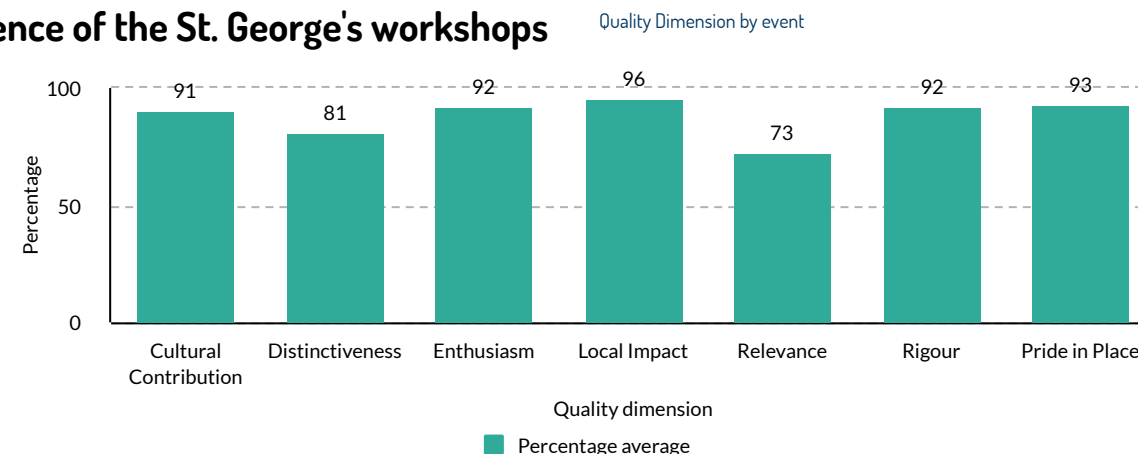
Quality of experience of the Festivals



Attendees were asked 'What three words would they use to describe the event?' The top four words used to describe the experience were 'fun', 'friendly', 'rewarding' and 'inspiring'. All adjectives were positive, represented, and reflected a mix of active participation, feeling motivated by what they were experiencing with activity holding their attention, being connected to family, neighbours and friends, but mostly importantly, escapism by experiencing something fun and enjoyable.



Quality of experience of the St. George's workshops



The average level of agreement with the quality dimensions statements shows that attendees rated the project highly across all dimensions, with the lowest scoring measure being the intention of the events at 79. It reflects how important these events are to the local community and the difference that MarketPlace makes by participating and supporting. The co-creation elements of the collaborative big dragon make resulted in high levels of quality perception, most notably 'local impact' and 'pride in place' giving participants a sense of belonging and active contribution to their communities. Being able to capture their feedback post seeing event attendees response to their work would add an additional depth to the impact this makes on those that participated.

Action Learning

Wisbech's Rose Fair and Chatteris' Midsummer Festival require the team to pop up with a creative activity. The planning can remain time-intensive, but attendees and participants highly value their contributions. The team recognised that they needed to use these opportunities to contribute to larger-scale MarketPlace events to have more significant impacts and greater ambition in what they deliver.

St. George's Festival sees the team continually add additional and new elements. In 2023, the collaboration with local businesses to draw on their windows was a simple intervention, but it has built positive relationships with MarketPlace. They are now ambassadors and potential marketing team members in a position to share opportunities by word of mouth, which is integral to how MarketPlace's communities find out what's going on.

The multi-layered engagement approach to St. George's with consultation, pre-event large-scale collaborative making, and on-the-day activities sees people engage in all three instances and tell more people about the event, fostering a sense of pride. This model for working with communities should be tested on more MarketPlace-led events and the R&D approach at Escape from Fort Lagoon.

Across all three events, attendees value the ability to 'have a go' at something, learn a skill, take something away, and connect with friends, families, and neighbours. This should be a consistent element of any larger-scale MarketPlace-led activity next year.

What next?

The team is re-assessing how they support community-led events and is currently reflecting on the success of their three levels of engagement approach from the 2024 St George's Festival. This has seen new additional elements added to challenge audiences and increase the level of interest and activity of multi-generational attendees with a target of more young people actively and autonomously participating.

The impact of reaching new audiences through these events makes them a great asset to MarketPlace, which is why they return annually to support them.



Rooted in place

Impactful for participants

Interactivity and interpretative

Magic

Why Rivers of Light Lantern Parade?

Building on the previous collaboration with the Newmarket Community Nature Reserve and Newmarket Arts, the Rivers of Light Lantern Parade intends to be a sustainable legacy event that MarketPlace can grow and scale up.

The aim of this event was to:

- build relationships with local partners and groups
- provide consistency of cultural opportunity to encourage audience movement along the engagement path
- reach target audiences for MarketPlace
- continue to build awareness of the heritage of the chalk stream and environmental issues/action
- local people develop skills and a sense of pride
- annually raise the scale and production values of the event so that they are sustainable and achievable by the community



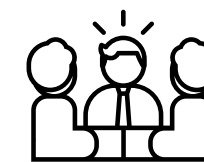
10

WORKSHOPS



600

AUDIENCE



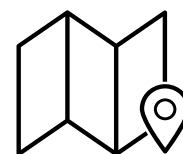
180

PARTICIPANTS



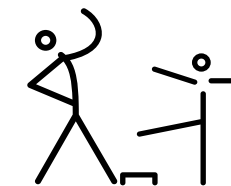
2

ARTISTS



4

MILES WALKED



3

PERFORMANCE GROUPS

Case Study: Rivers of Light

The Rivers of Light Lantern Parade in Newmarket, West Suffolk, was a co-delivered event in partnership with Newmarket Community Arts, Newmarket Community Nature Reserve and Newmarket Town Council.

Residents walked the chalk stream route carrying their handmade lanterns before experiencing a finale of local musicians, choirs, and dance performances. This was the second Rivers of Light Parade.

What happened?

Artwork for the parade was co-created by artist Penny Sobr with the Brownies, Guides, Scouts and the general public across a series of lantern-making workshops.

Inspired by ancient light festivals and Newmarket's history, the event invited local people to follow the town's 'Yellow Brick Road' chalk stream on Saturday, 18 February, helping raise awareness about the area's ecology and the need to protect it.

Families and residents along the route were the target demographic as the parade route runs through areas of least engagement.

The event brought together and showcased different creative community groups, musicians and artists, including the Newmarket Samba Band, Newmarket School of Dance, Newmarket Community Choir and the Slack Magirdle Morris Dancers provided entertainment along the route, including a performance of a song written primarily for the event - Let The Rivers Flow.



'I work in the arts so a lot of what was in the parade I have seen but the overall feeling from the parade and the people taking part is that it is very important to them and their area, which I loved.' - Peer Reviewer

'Clear pride in the lanterns created. Loved the lighting of the trees. Liked the notes on the chalk stream as you went along. More could have been made of these.' - Peer Review

'Raising awareness of Newmarkets chalk stream has brought the community together for a common environmental cause. It was accessible and was essentially an event by the community for the community, giving people a sense of pride in their town.' - MarketPlace Team Member

Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?

Data sources are a from 44 respondents from the Impact and Insight survey, twice as many as last year. Only 16-29 years olds aren't represented in the opinions and responses.

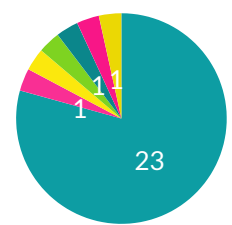
6%
identified as D/Disabled

6%
identified as Neurodivers

This is an above-average demographic for the area. Promoting the accessibility of the route and the short and long experience, alongside targeted workshops, could see this figure increase in future years,

Ethnicity

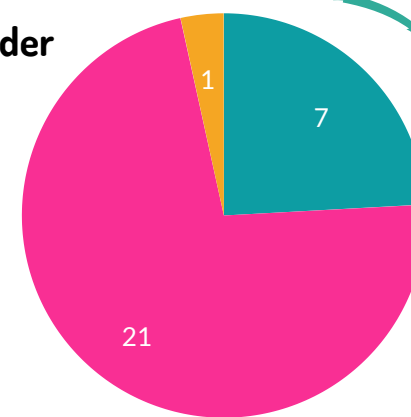
- White British (79.31%)
- White Irish (3.45%)
- White other (3.45%)
- Black/Black British Caribbean (3.45%)
- Mixed Asian and White (3.45%)
- Prefer not to say (3.45%)
- Unknown (3.45%)



This event continues to reach a diverse and representative audience for MarketPlace, elevating the scale of ambition and quality will only see it reach more community members consistently, as we don't have the same level of Asian representation in the sample this year.

Gender

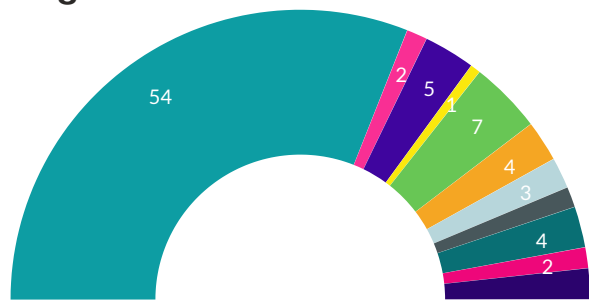
- Male (24.14%)
- Female (72.41%)
- Prefer not to say (3.45%)



Females are more likely to complete a survey on behalf of the whole family, so the high percentage of female respondents is unsurprising.

Age

- Under 16 (62.07%)
- 30-34 (2.3%)
- 35-39 (5.75%)
- 40-44 (1.15%)
- 45-49 (8.05%)
- 50-54 (4.6%)
- 55-59 (3.45%)
- 65-69 (2.3%)
- 60-64 (4.6%)
- 70-74 (2.3%)
- 75+ (3.45%)



The breadth of ages combined with the average attendee group size of 5 continues to show that this event is a family experience that enables more isolated older community members to engage in the activity on their doorstep.

68%
attended with friends or family

21% attended with an organised group, 32% had under 16s with them and 29% had over 16s in their group reflecting how this is becoming a valued family and group event.

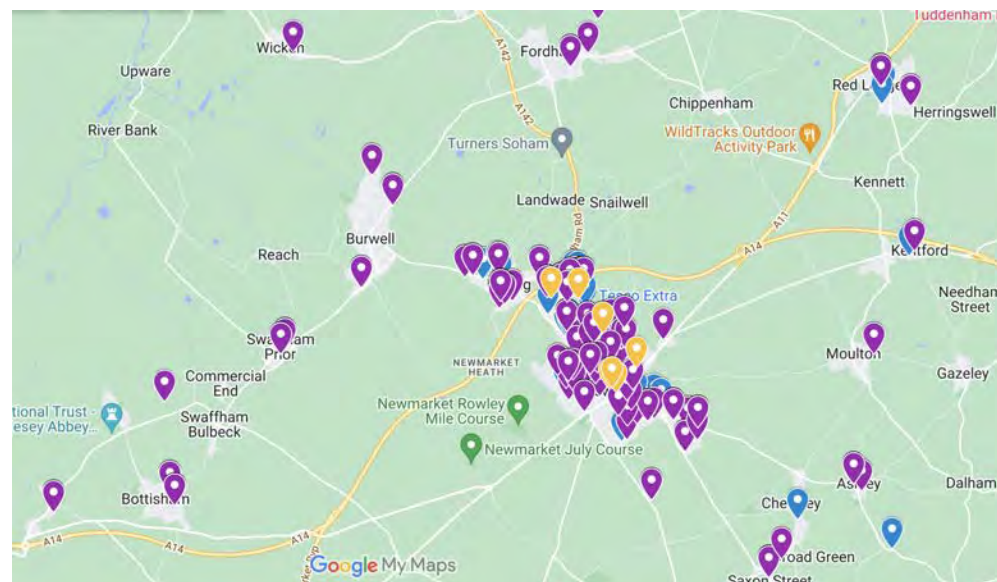
32%
were new to MarketPlace

16% attend cultural events once a year or less, but despite this being the second year of this event the fact that 32% were new to MarketPlace shows that the appetite for the event is growing and remains accessible to own audiences



Where did attendees and participants come from?

The map below shows the event draw attendance from across Newmarket and the outlying villages, with nearly half from the priority CB8 postcode that follows the chalk stream route. This shows that there is a demand for this to be rolled out to two further locations across Newmarket, which would mean the larger lantern assets could be re-used further.. This data suggest this could become a city wide experience across a whole week, tying into national initiatives such as Window Wanderland to further increase the participation and scale of the event.



46%
of attendees were from the CB8 postcode along the chalk stream route

'Clear pride in the lanterns created. Loved the lighting of the trees. Liked the notes on the chalk stream as you went along.'

- Audience Feedback

To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

What three words?



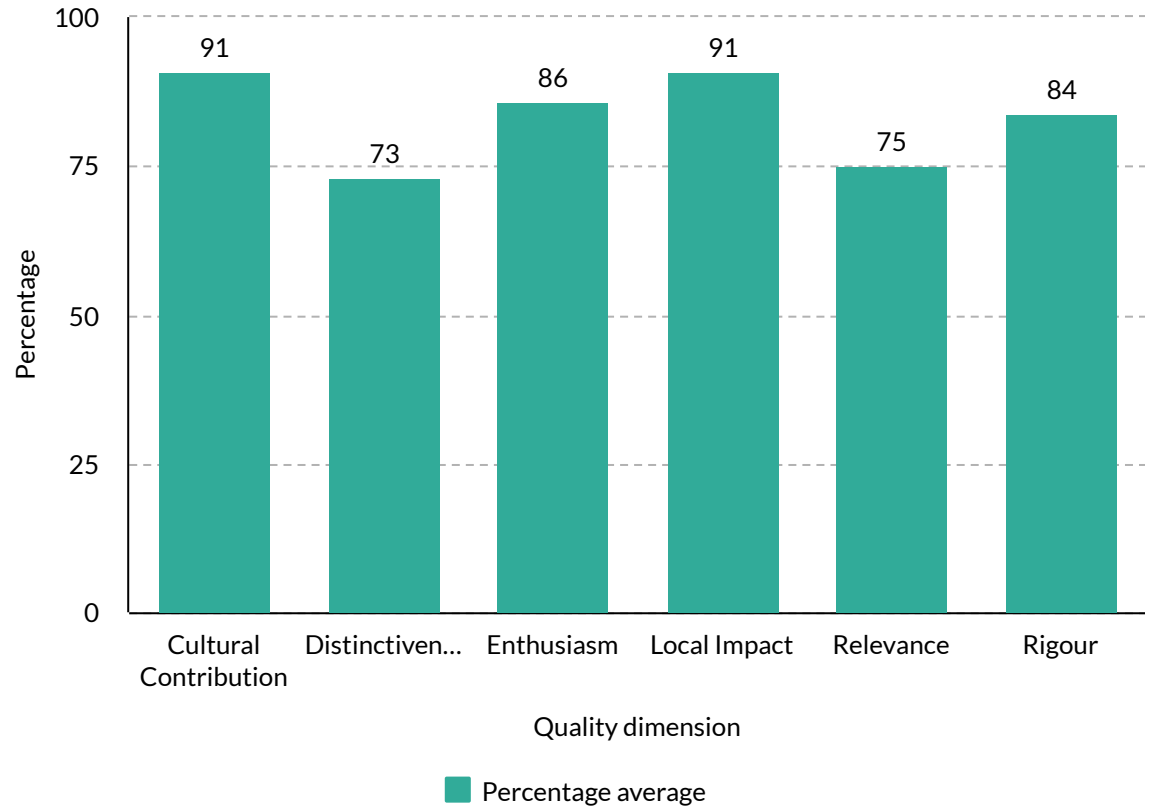
46%
used community as one of their what 3 words

31%
used fun as one of their what 3 words

49%
rated the experience as excellent and 46% good

73%
had their expectations met or exceeded

Quality of experience



Attendees were asked 'What three words would they use to describe the event?' Last year the top three words used to describe the experience were 'fun', 'community' and 'different'. This year, 'community' is the top word, followed by 'fun', 'enjoyable', 'colourful', and 'beautiful'. The event's local relevance and targeted audience make it something special that attendees want to come back for. Expanding on magic of the experience with site-specific and large scale lanterns could increase the engagement and visibility of the event further as you provide attendees with Tik Tok and Instagrammable moments.

The average level of agreement with the quality dimensions statements shows that attendees rated the project highly across all dimensions, with increases of between plus 2-7 in more than half of the measures. As an event becomes an annual fixture, it's important to remember what can be done differently each year to maintain the quality levels, especially distinctiveness.

Action Learning

Building on last year, the team delivered workshops to repeat and new groups from last year, engaging 11-16-year-olds for the first time in building large-scale lanterns. These lanterns and the noise from the samba band continue to draw residents out into their front gardens to marvel at the spectacle. The potential and scope for this is being extended to include costume and dance workshops to expand the offer and scale up.

Responding to recommendations from last year to increase the range of professional and local artists to engage at the start and end of the event saw the performance element increase. However, suitable infrastructure wasn't in place to effectively light activity and make it visible amongst the crowd, and the end location was a bit small for the number of people. Considerations of staging, portable sound systems, and how lanterns can light performers need to be explored, as well as managing the number of attendees should the event grow further next year. These logistical challenges have all been built in as actions for next year.

Notes were written along the stream to increase the chalk stream knowledge and information shared during the workshops with the event attendees. This was a recommendation that the team trialled this year as part of the event.

As per last year, the route had a shorter and longer option. This remains unclear to attendees, especially those joining part-way. Signposting to volunteers and stewards with physical maps and QR codes to digital map routes should be embedded with signposted exit points from the route.



What next?

Marketing messaging before and during the event continues to be an element for improvement. The team could explore heritage zine-making workshops with older community members to create zine libraries across the region and hand them out to attendees, which can be both an invite and an information and feedback collection device. Identifying ways to serve multiple purposes in one activity eases capacity. Investment in the documentation of the event is a priority for the team as the scale grows.

Ambition continues to grow, with peer reviewers highlighting the trial elements of chalk stream notes as something that could be extended further. Elevating the experience without requiring live performers throughout the route could include soundscapes and audio guides. This option could work for an accessible version to engage residents who are neurodiverse or have learning and mental health support needs that might make the event overwhelming due to the number of people. It would engage a greater range of artists and community creatives to participate and submit work for the inclusion of a soundscape or audio guide of poetry and creative writing. Additional ambitions see more embedded performers engaging audiences along the route, as well as dance and costume workshops.

Recognising the interest of the residents who live along the river could create an interesting point of engagement for at-home activities that invite them to turn their homes into part of the spectacle along the route. This could be extended further to those unable to attend the workshops to make their lanterns at home and make them, along with online tutorials and kits to pick up at their local libraries.

The health and well-being associated with the level of walking, especially at night, could see greater partnership work with health initiatives at the local authority and community providers or local walking and running groups.

Combining active participation, event invite, and surprise spectacle enable the team to engage the community on different levels in a single event. The ripple effect and goodwill that will see people talk about their experiences with others can only serve to see the event grow annually.

Taster activity in other Newmarket locations was undertaken to begin sharing knowledge of the chalk stream and testing the appetite for a River of Light evening. This may see the event roll out to two further locations in Newmarket and Mildenhall.

Rooted in place

Impactful for participants

Community Co-creation

Production and Process Values

Interactivity and Interpretive

Magic

Why Escape from Fort Lagoon?

Environmental issues and themes are a national hot topic and extremely relevant to the farming and agriculture communities in the MarketPlace area. Working with national production and threat professionals was a new elevation for MarketPlace to co-create site-specific work.

The aim of this event was to:

- diversify the cultural opportunities and programming of MarketPlace and the local areas
- respond to locally relevant environmental themes
- deliver a site-specific productoin
- co-create and commission with the local community through the Creative Collective



98

AUDIENCE



36

VOLUNTEERS



126

PARTICIPANTS



13

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



2

ARTISTS



2

PERFORMANCE DAYS

Watch here



Case Study: Escape from Fort Lagoon

Escape from Fort Lagoon is a new and immersive theatre production in which participants are encouraged to take to the water and get involved. It takes the form of an escape room-style game that uses app technology to plunge participants into a cat-and-mouse adventure in which they encounter memorable characters and cryptic challenges. It is set against a backdrop of a future where water is controlled and restricted to an elite minority and highlights how water is increasingly a precious commodity.

What happened?

Immersive theatre meets escape, and Mildenhall was transformed into a luxury resort of the future with the world premier' of 'Escape From Fort Lagoon'. Audiences participated in teams to follow clues and solve puzzles throughout the town to escape the resort, where all is not as it seems. Having evaded capture, participants ended the experience in the sanctuary of the River Lark, where all participants took up the option to swim to solve the final clue.

Mildenhall drama group, The Bunbury Players, took on some acting roles. Brandon's 'Happy to Sing Choir' performed a choral piece composed mainly for the show. Members of the library's craft group used their skills to make items for an accompanying Water Museum that any passers-by could engage with

"Escape from Fort Lagoon' was created by Wake the Beast (Adam McGuigan) and Submersion Productions (Jude Jagger). MarketPlace has been an active partner in their Research and development work since 2019. Community members from the Creative Collective participated in the research, presenting ideas and concepts based on local heritage and undertaking site visits to identify potential locations for the site-specific experience.

Although light-hearted in tone, Escape from Fort Lagoon also makes a serious point about the quality of our waters, facing challenges such as plastic pollution and sewage discharge. Creators 'We the Beast' teamed up with Surfers Against Sewage, a charity campaigning for cleaner seas and rivers. 50% of bookings and all ticket sales will go to Surfers Against Sewage.

What in particular exceeded your expectations?

'The joy on the day, everyone pulling together to make it work, the audiences reactions though mainly!' - Peer Reviewer

'This felt like something that would not have happened here otherwise. It attracted attention. Next steps are important.' - Peer Reviewer



Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?

Data sources are a from 44 respondents from the Impact and Insight survey, twice as many as last year. Only 16-29 years olds aren't represented in the opinions and responses.

5%

identified as D/Disabled

The production has an optional swimming element, this did not preclude anyone from attending the event. The managed experience of staggered start times for teams of audience members to engage in activity across the town, meant that this was more accessible than a traditional theatre performance can be for neurodiverse attendees.

11%

identified as Neurodivers

Ethnicity

	White British (...)	18
	Mixed (10%)	2

4% of the Mildenhall population has a mixed background; this shows that MarketPlace successfully reached mixed audiences, but it lacked engagement with wider Asian and other ethnic groups.

Gender

	Male (33.33%)	6
	Female (61.11%)	11
	Prefer not to say (5.56%)	1

Survey respondents reflect a mix of participants engaging with the experience, making this a show that had universal appeal.

Age

	Under 16 (76.06%)	54
	40-44 (7.04%)	5
	45-49 (4.23%)	3
	30-34 (2.82%)	2
	50-54 (2.82%)	2
	70-74 (2.82%)	2
	65-69 (1.41%)	1
	55-59 (2.82%)	2

The survey respondent shows a limited range of ages and reflects an audience of an older age group who are more likely to engage in wild swimming. This could have benefited from targeting gym members, and youth groups to test this type of production with broader ages. Scouts attended as a free experience and aren't captured in this feedback. Children and young people were active participants in the free activities that weren't captured in evaluation activity.

72%

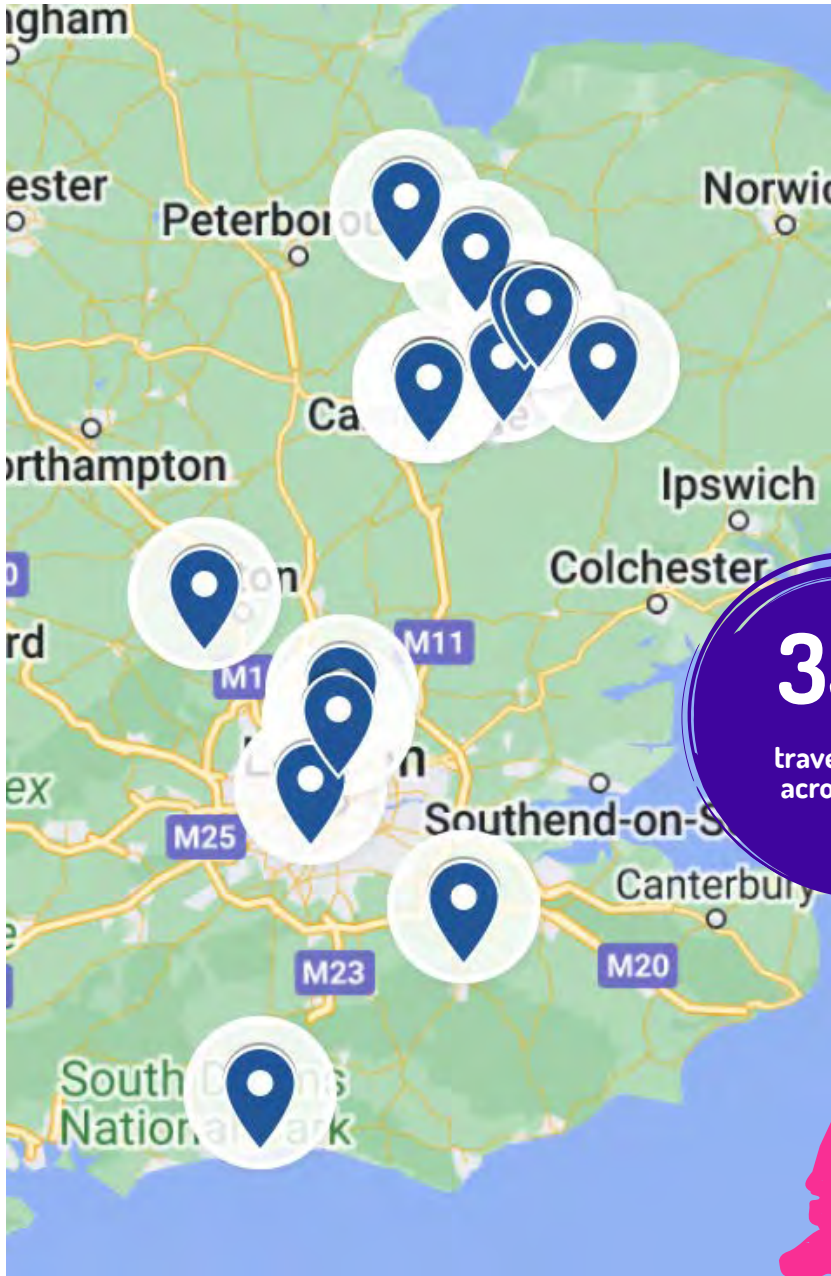
attended with friends or family

The opportunity to engage and participate in events with friends and family is a common theme and this event was appropriate with teams of people engaging in the experience together.

83%

were new to MarketPlace

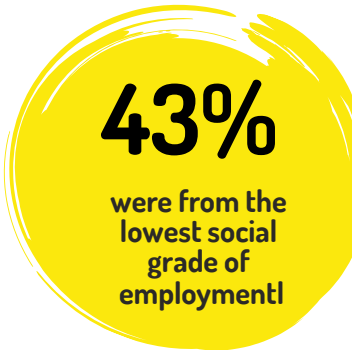
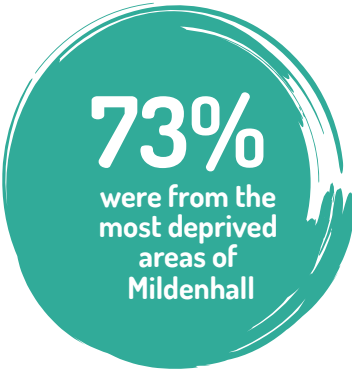
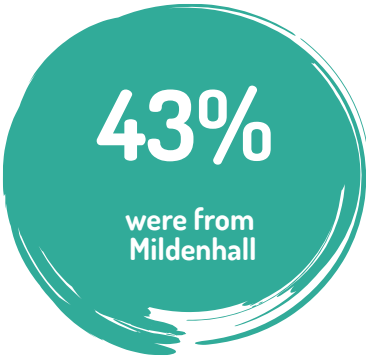
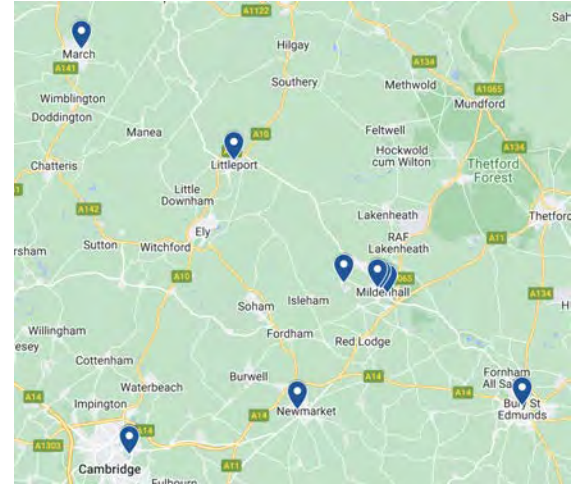
50% attend cultural events more than 6 times a year and this is unsurprising given the paid for nature of the event. Their lack of engagement with MarketPlace before this event shows that MP's work previously has been reaching non cultural engagers



Where did attendees and participants come from?

The unique nature of the production and the networks of the production team meant that this event saw attendance from across the UK. However, nearly half were from within Mildenhall and 23% from the wider region, showing that 66% saw something in this experience for people like them.

The fee-paying element of the experience wasn't a barrier for attendees, with 43% coming from the lowest social employment grade. This shows that something different can entice people to take advantage of opportunities when they are on their doorstep.



"Everything was amazing!! Alan was hilarious and the two ladies that came with us were wonderful. Loved the experience! So immerse, fun and just the right amount of scary!"
- Audience Feedback

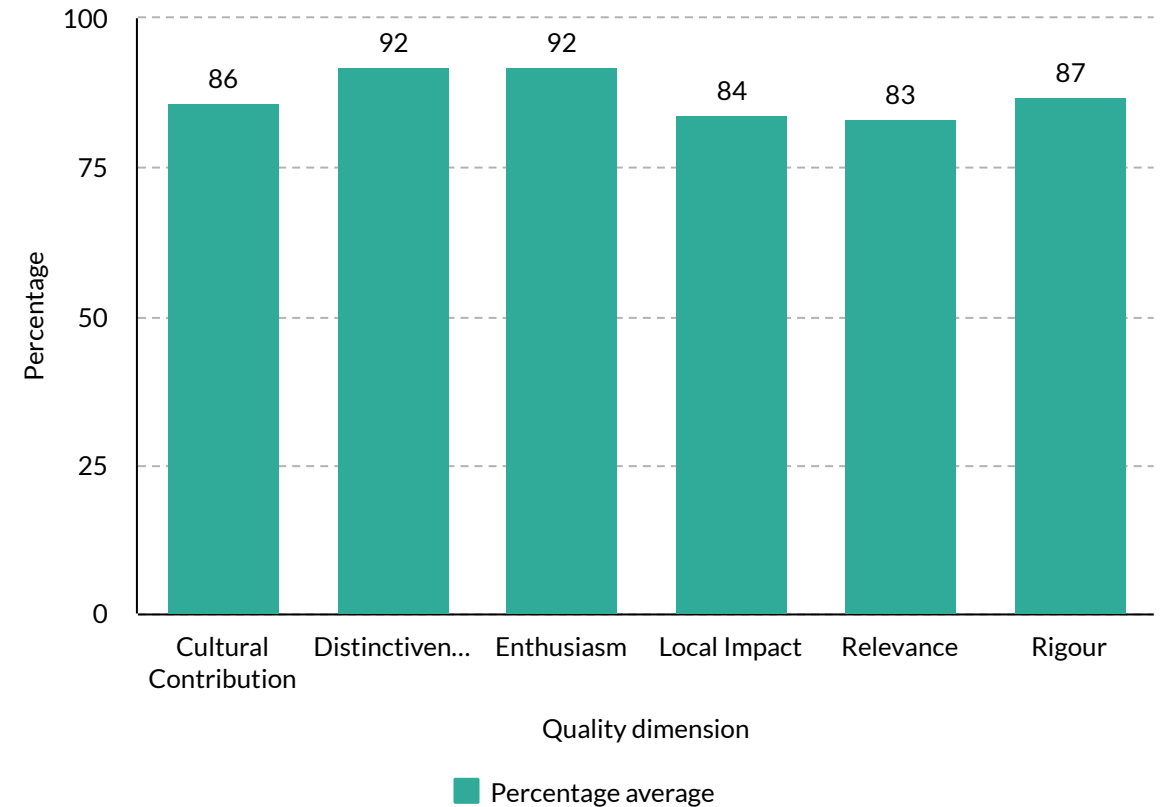
To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

What three words?



Attendees were asked 'What three words would they use to describe the event?' The top three words used to describe the experience were 'fun', 'unique' and 'exciting'. Adjectives such as 'scary', 'challenging' and 'rewarding' alluded to the sinister undercurrent of the story and the active puzzle challenges as part of the experience. Many of the adjectives used describe the immersive nature of the experience and the team's ability to transform a familiar area into something different. This is important in an area with limited venues and cultural facilities and helps audiences feel inspired and worthy of something they would otherwise have to travel for.

Quality of experience



The average level of agreement with the quality dimensions statements shows that attendees rated the project highly across all dimensions. 'Distinctiveness' and 'Enthusiasm' received the highest ratings and reinforced how much the unique opportunity to explore their town in a different way was valued by audience members. 'Relevance' was the lowest at 83% agreement rating, which is still a high ranking as to the themes explored within the wraparound experience of a spa visit gone awry. The production achieves 6 of the seven quality principles MarketPlace has identified as a measure of success for their work.

5 stars

only one audience member gave 4 stars, everyone else gave it the full 5

100%

would do something like this again

96%

felt it was different to anything they'd experienced before

50%

swim weekly,
33% swim monthly,
17% within the last year

Today's event made me think about....

'Water and rivers, and how important they are to us, and also about using theatre in a different way to engage with people'
- Audience member

'A sobering theme told in a light hearted manner. An excellent way to provoke thought without being depressing'- Audience member

Action Learning

As a handover project from the previous team, the logistics were unclear and presented challenges. This has given the team experience working with external partners and identifying procedures and steps to put in place to ensure the smooth running of such events.

86% of the audience were fee-paying, with the remaining 14% were complimentary tickets to venue partners such as the scouts. The event was at a nearly sold-out capacity of 98%, showing that paid-for events and opportunities to engage in new experiences have potential in the area. Future activities must always be balanced with accessibility to ensure that fee-paying isn't a barrier to participation. 10% of respondents highlighted the importance of free access to resources. This event has free elements from a mini water museum, duck installation, and fountain watercolour experience that passersby actively engage in.

80% of attendees discovered the event through word of mouth, highlighting how critical local networks and community partners are in the activity's success. Only 9% found it through traditional print and email marketing methods, and 10% through Facebook. This is why the MarketPlace team invest so much time in building relationships, as the disparate nature of their delivery area makes marketing a challenge.

The event intended to present water conservation issues fun and engagingly; 27% highlighted this in their feedback, and 14% noted their appreciation for their local natural water source. This shows that the team can continue to address regional issues in communities by engaging in cultural activity when the messaging is part of the clear intention of the activity. Ensure that the unique elements of any projects are captured as part of the evaluation and evidence gathering. The exceptional evaluation methods provided to support data gathering enabled rich responses to be collected.

The exploration of habitual swimming shows that there is an additional health and well-being element that MarketPlace could explore as part of its programming and as a means to secure additional funding that is sports—and health and well-being-focused.

This production shows the value of using the unique environment and found spaces to bring culture to communities in new and unusual ways. This has led the team to explore opportunities to deliver outdoor arts across the priority towns.

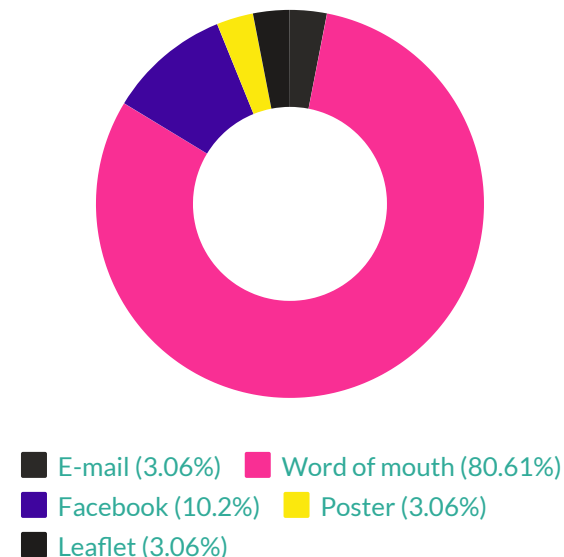
What next?

Investing in co-developing productions with national theatre and production companies can be costly which limits who you can engage with the experience. However, the action research process with local residents to identify a suitable site, share heritage and connect with bringing something new and distinct to the areas elevates the ambition and the knowledge of how cultural experiences can be delivered and developed.

This production employed local talent and gave audiences a unique and thought-provoking experience in a way that bought in touring productions may not have realised. The quality of the experience is evident and shows the value in bringing artists into the region to work and create further opportunities for local talent, as one local resident employed went on to further employment with the team as a freelancer.

This experience has shown the team have the skills to deliver site-specific outdoor work that has both depth and spectacle. Exploring the development of more work of this nature would ensure greater ambitions across the programme.

Success of marketing methods to reach audiences





'We have just managed to escape from Fort Lagoon. At times we had to run down the street. It was so exciting and such fun. It's an amazing premise, because it could be our terrifying future without water, but it is light-hearted. At the end we got to have a glorious swim surrounded by the most beautiful music.' - Audience member

4

Final thoughts

MarketPlace has spent the year engaging targeted communities and raising their visibility at community events. Tripling their activity levels from the previous year has enabled the team to gain confidence, build their networks and identify local needs for year three activity.

Working within their comfort zones to deliver at volume means the team are ready to elevate and scale up their activity, having successfully delivered with national partners on new immersive theatre productions.

Reflections

1

A new Director with new ambition – A new leader's energy can transform how a team engages with communities. The new programme director wants to tell stories on a scale with and for communities. They are diversifying existing projects and bringing new experiences to the area with more artists and art forms.

2

Small enough to fail and big enough to learn – This new philosophy is rooted in the testing of pilot activity for rollout and scaling up. This year has seen lots of small enough to fail activity as relationships were rebuilt and new strategic partnerships made. This next year, the team will apply that learning as it delivers bigger and longer programme activity.

3

Expanding community decision-making by going small needs to expand to more strategic levels – This year has seen community decision-making happen at a co-creation and hyper-local level; maintaining this agency remains important and should continue to be nurtured alongside more strategic programming co-creation.

4

Hot Topics – The national and local environmental priorities see funding and opportunity for MarketPlace to present the region's unique qualities to a wider audience, raising pride, ambition and further investment in these towns. Environmental themes often produce more craft-based and natural material activities over digital strides. Through these mechanisms, the team has successfully delivered and engaged communities about environmental themes. These programmes have often been aligned with health and wellbeing outcomes. Exploring these outcomes further with an additional consideration to engaging men in activity would increase MarketPlace's demographic reach and a community least likely to engage in culture. Outdoor arts, public realm sculpture, and visual arts with disruptive technologies would enable the team to work ambitiously with multi-access points of engagement.

5

Scalability – MarketPlace is already on target to achieve fundraising, volunteering, and audience targets. They also actively collected more data across projects. Continuing at the current growth of activity sees the team strive towards success. Next year, there is a need to elevate artistic quality across all programme areas and diversify the artistic pool to represent different voices and skill sets to raise local ambitions for what is achievable. As the programme increases its presence and impact, evidencing outcomes will be an evaluation priority for next year.

I want to help everyone be bolder, weirder, and think more deeply!
– Rob Drummer, Programme Director

Recommendations Yr2



1

Increase the challenge and creativity through the building of activity - Taster activity is currently happening at drop-in community events and hyper-local targeted groups. Still, it has been seen as repeating creative activities rather than providing something new. While this ensures it is relevant to the interests of groups and accessibility, it isn't challenging their creative potential. The team should consider how smaller pockets of activity across the region can contribute towards a more extensive scale event so that communities will feel a sense of belonging and be more willing to travel across the region to a tend. This would increase the sense of pride to expand from a town level and focus on a region-wide sense of what is special and unique about the area. This would scale up the model of Rivers of Light to a thematically programmed year of activity that engages the whole region, enabling the team to raise the quality of work and invest in ambitious artistic programming.

2

Digital and distance engagement - Digital reach remains essential for those unable to attend activities or participate in workshops. Going live during events and sharing in hyper-local social groups will increase awareness of MarketPlace. Continue to build in digital engagement opportunities with existing project work, for example, tutorials for at-home lantern making and kit drops for people to make at home to bring to the event. The team should always ask: What is the digital access point for the project? What is the at-home version of this activity? How can we increase the footprint of the activity to include pre-event engagement and something to see and discover along the venue travel route? These questions would enable the team to develop additional programming with targeted groups and self-directed residents through hyperlocal and email/online marketing.

3

Legacy and sustainability - The team is aware of the challenges across the funding landscape and the changes to cultural opportunities that occurred when MarketPlace was established. The engagement pathway offers a model for progression with new audiences and existing active community groups, but this needs to align with ambition. The team intends to examine how the appetite for outdoor arts can be elevated to a more professional level, growing local skills, capacity, and opportunities for young people to remain locally. This would give the area additional cultural activity that could be an asset, in the long term, to tourism in the area. Building the volunteer pool and local skills through shadowing and training days associated with project activity and art forms will make this sustainable. Increasing the cultural infrastructure of the area is achievable through MarketPlace's desire to build skills and invest in local people.

4

Consolidate learning into a town strategy of engagement - The level of programming across the towns this year and active local and strategic networking see the team developing an engagement strategy that would support the engagement pathway. This will enable them to effectively programme their capacity and activity across the year against the geographical areas. Mapping the partners and venues against audience development targets will be a priority for the next year of activity to align with bespoke evaluation plans to capture learning.

Recommendations form Yr 1 achieved

1

Map the roles and tasks against the business plan – The team have created a tracker to clarify roles, responsibilities and targets. MarketPlace and We Are Frilly created tool kit evaluation options to capture appropriate evidence for ACE data collection.

2

Share the stories and wins – MarketPlace has been increasing its social media content with the stories and wins. They are investing in storytellers B&G Partners to deep dive at a local level and capture stories to engage more local audiences in the work of MarketPlace.

3

Build on the work to date in digital delivery and innovations for distanced engagement – The team is testing unique digital content to engage distance audiences in the themes and activities of in-person events. This involves sharing guides and facts on social platforms. More opportunities have been identified from rolling project work to expand this further.

4

Continue to develop rolling initiatives of local voice to co-create with communities, upskill, raise ambition and nurture leadership potential – Maintaining support for existing Brandon Creative Forum and Creative Collective community voice mechanisms whilst formalising new opportunities and pathways for young people and young mothers will create a consistent sounding board for programming that brings together different perspectives. The strategic partnership the team has already undertaken in Newmarket and with 20Twenty Productions will develop scalable models for community decision-making in other towns. The team are developing a relationship with Anglia Ruskin University to target students and graduates in creative pathways.

5

Challenge expectations and perceptions of culture to develop work that will raise the ambition for quality cultural experiences for the communities of Fenland and West Suffolk – This year, the team and community members attended six diverse go-see opportunities to broaden the team's skills and knowledge. This will be a continued investment at a team and advisor level to ensure a legacy of cultural skills that can be maintained regionally.



5

Evaluation actions

We want to capture the evolving infrastructure and cultural ecosystem that MarketPlace is weaving. This will help us understand and share the model of practice. These actions are a mix of evaluation activities, reflective practice, and practical programme objectives and challenges we will face together to capture the impact and learning from programme delivery.

Dos

- 1 Revisit story of change and business plan with new Programme Director
- 2 Re-establish the peer review process with the consortium for MarketPlace events and their active participation in evaluation and reflection.
- 3 Identify appropriate reflection mechanism for learning of the team and the new community advisory panel.
- 4 Create a meaningful artist demographic and reflection process as part of their contracting for project delivery.
- 5 Develop programme specific story of change frameworks so that activity states intention of programming and how they want people to feel after experiencing a MarketPlace event

Challenges

- 1 The focus on developing youth led engagement strands impacts the level of data that can be collected.
- 2 The level of illuminate data remain challenging to collect alongside qualitative learning and impact data. Longer engagement projects will enable a better balance of data collection.
- 3 The focus on developing youth led engagement strands impacts the level of data that can be collected due to protected characteristics. Working with targeted and vulnerable groups makes data collection a barrier in consistent engagement.



Appendix

1. Evaluation methodology – inc. table of data
2. Story of Change
3. Programme Quality Principles



1. Evaluation methodology – inc. table of data

The evaluation approach was co-developed with Mark Robinson, We Are Frilly and MarketPlace. It focuses on three research f which were developed for the Arts Council England Creative People and Places (CPP) programme:

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts? (CPP)

2. To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved? (CPP)

3. What approaches were successful, and what lessons were learned? (CPP)

Additional evaluation questions have been identified for longer term monitoring and evidence collection (as identified in the Story of Change). The Story of Change will be reviewed with under the direction of the new Programme Director.

Information source	Collected from	No. of responses
Event monitoring data	MarketPlace events by the MarketPlace team	55 events
Audience demographics	Monitoring at MarketPlace events	149
Postcode analysis	Valid Postcodes from MarketPlace events	969
The Audience Agency	Valid Postcode from MarketPlace events	541
ACE quarterly reports	Quarterly reporting	4
Impact & Insight surveys	Rivers of Light	37 online 24 paper
	Escape from Fort Lagoon	18
	St. George's Day Festival	37
	Chatteris Midsummer Festival	13
	Wisbech Rose Fair	2
	Spring Away Day	11
	Delicates	7

2. Story of Change

MarketPlace will work with community members and creatives across Fenland and Forest Heath areas to co-create highly visible creative offers themed around the area's unique environmental heritage and future that surprise, challenge, connect and amplify local people, artists and producers, building habits of engagement and leveraging influence to support community-lead creativity

INPUTS

- Funding
- Staff resources
- Consortium expertise
- Partnerships and partner activity

ACTIVITIES

- Build community voice and decision-making methods
- Creative brokerage and commissioning locally-relevant events and festivals
- Develop emerging local producers/businesses
- Creating and sustaining and releasing networks
- Strategic marketing to raise visibility
- Advocacy to influence local decisions /policy
- Evaluate, monitor and use data to inform plans
- Fundraising, brokerage and leverage

OUTPUTS

- Community workshops and projects connect to 3 major commissions/events p.a
- Exciting high quality relevant projects that surprise, challenge, connect and change perceptions by building in co-creation
- 3 festivals p.a
- 3 networks: Creative
- Collective, ones in Fenland, Forest Heath
- Connecting groups across rural landscape/locations
- 4 community groups supported to commission new work

OUTCOMES

- Increased levels of habitual engagement and participation
- Cohort of community members with experience of co-creation
- More pop-up, start-up and community creative and heritage groups and events improve infrastructure across area
- Increased and diversified quality professional and community creative programming
- More cross over between heritage and arts activity
- Local authorities buy in to value of culture and creativity
- More volunteering opportunities
- Independent groups attract ££
- Less reliance on local authorities
- Better use of existing resources

IMPACT

More active citizens, fuelled by increased appetite, cultural engagement, confidence, and well-being

A sense of pride in places and rural communities, which also increasingly connect to others, overcoming obstacles of transport to travel and get involved across the area.

Cultural ecology is more representative of diversity of our local communities

Assumptions: MP and others can respond to Cost of Living crisis and it does not fatally damage creative and community sectors - Staffing capacity put in place and maintained consistently - Community demand can be built in challenging context - Creatives respond to themes of environment and sustainability.

Key evaluation questions: 1. Are more people engaging in arts and creativity? (Who, where, what with!) 2. To what extent is the ambition for excellence of art and of process of engaging communities being achieved? (Who, where, what happened as a result in terms of activity and confidence?) 3. Which approaches were successful and what were the lesson learned? 4. How has MarketPlace contributed to the sense of pride in places and communities? 5. What signs are there of more active citizens as a result of MP's work? 6. What evidence is there that the cultural ecology is more diverse as a result of MarketPlace's work?

3. How will we know the work provides a quality experience for our communities?

These principles and measures of quality in the difference they hope to make will act as a review checklist whilst developing activity with communities. Where projects meet these principles confidently they can be found in the banners on the top of the first case study pages.

Principle	How?	What difference will it make?
Community co-creation	People are empowered to shape the work, with influence or control of resources, decisions and presentation, and appropriately visible and credited	Intention – I felt able to shape the intention of the project Voice – my ideas were taken seriously Intensity – I felt deeply involved in the process
Rooted in place	The work has something meaningful and relevant to say about or emerging from a particular place, geography, or community	Relevance – it had something to say about the world in which we live Cultural contribution – it provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area Local impact – it's important it's happening here
Impactful for participants	The work has a positive impact on the people taking part or attending, adding to their lives in creative ways, and developing habits of engagement	Motivated – I feel motivated to do more creative things in the future Enthusiasm – I would come to something like this again Distinctiveness – it was different from things I've experienced before
Representation and Inclusion	The work or project involves and reflects a diverse range of people and perspectives at all levels: from producers to audiences. Barriers to engagement have been addressed in the design of the project in ways that boost access	The work makes everyone involved feel part of the story or experience, inspiring new emotions and thoughts about their lives and situations, and is shared by audiences reflective of local communities
Interactivity and Interpretative	The work reflects and builds in an active role for many people, rather than a passive 'broadcaster: receiver' relationship. The work is designed to bring people into it, with appropriate interpretation or introduction, seeking to involve people regardless of their prior experiences	People feel represented, the work is accessible and inclusive. Culture is programmed in a culturally democratic way. People feel that culture is for them.
Production and process values	The work is well produced and presented to a high standard, regardless of any perceived hierarchies of activities, with suitably high standards of process. The work showcases skilled makers, artists, producers and facilitators, allowing for appreciation of highly accomplished creative practice	Rigour – it was well thought through and put together
Magic	People experience something out of the norm, a heightened sense of something which gives them a sense of wonder and of wondering	Distinctiveness – it was different from things I've experienced before

MarketPlace is part of Creative People and Places programme developed by Arts Council England with support from National Lottery funds.

MarketPlace Consortium Partners



MarketPlace is also supported by



www.cppmarketplace.co.uk



Photography credits to:
MarketPlace and commissioned artists



We Are Frilly is founded on the principles of process-driven participatory practices that extend from co-designing on a project level, strategic planning and cultural accountability through creative evaluation.

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