

SEED SEDGEMOOR CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES
EVALUATION REPORT

MARCH 2026



Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd
Evaluators
The Priory
54 Lyncombe Hill
Bath BA2 4PJ
Somerset

Tel: 01225-446614

Email: ajataja@aol.com

Website: www.AnnabelJacksonAssociates.com

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
Learning	4
Quality	6
INTRODUCTION	9
Seed	9
Creative People and Places.....	9
Key questions.....	10
Evaluation brief.....	10
CONCEPTUALISATION	11
Introduction	11
Explanation of logic models.....	11
Language.....	12
Conceptualisation	12
MODELLING OF THE HIGHBRIDGE HUB.....	14
The hub structure	14
Engaging local champions.....	15
Widening participation	16
Creating a self-sustaining community	17
Connecting with other hubs and feeding back to/into Seed	18
PROJECT CASE STUDY: BLOSSOMING BRIDGWATER	19
Activity	19
Observation from the evaluator	19
Audience feedback	20
PROJECT CASE STUDY: ART ROAD TRIP	29
Activity	29
Reflection.....	30
Participant survey.....	34
PROJECT CASE STUDY: BLUES IN THE PEWS.....	46
Description.....	46
Feedback.....	46
PROJECT CASE STUDY: LONELINESS PROJECT	53
Introduction	53
Preferences.....	53
Places needing art.....	58
Background.....	60
PARTICIPANT PROFILES	62
Highbridge Hub.....	62
Glow Home	74
Highbridge And Edington Front Garden Music Festivals	77
Art Road Trip.....	82
Blossoming Bridgwater	84
RESIDENTS' SURVEY: BRIDGWATER.....	91
Publicity for the survey.....	91
Responses	91
Place	92
Culture	97
Seed and arts engagement	99
Background.....	103
Conclusion	108
OBSERVATION EVALUATION SYSTEM.....	110
Introduction	110
Responses	110
Artistic programme.....	110

Delivery and engagement.....	119
Overall.....	128
Conclusion	131

Copyright © Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd. March 2026.
Not to be reproduced in part or whole without prior permission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEARNING

Seed created an explicit model of community empowerment from the beginning.

MODEL

Seed, organised its work to have a rolling programme of delivery with four stages:

- Plough: research and consultation: researching existing activities in the area; holding public meetings, which Seed called the Creative Accelerator; and building the network.
- Sow: pilot activities and commission locally generated activities: reflecting the choices identified in the first stage
- Grow: recommission further development of activities targeting, joining up, and creating a brand that results in repeat attendance.
- Yield: hubs and activities become more sustainable: being open about the structure; supporting experimentation; talking about the journey; and connecting with other hubs.

The hub “approach will enable us to focus our activity and efforts, provide equity across the different geographic areas and implement learning as we progress.” Seed application

“Seed invests in people and that is what really matters.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

The advantages of this model are that it:

- Allowed Seed to focus attention on one place at a time rather than dissipating effort across its area.

“Once Seed came into Highbridge, they committed and committed hard.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

“We couldn't have set up the group to this standard without Seed. It was written into the contract that artists should be paid and that is music to my ears. The initial cash injection allows you to establish a certain quality, then people grow to expect that and then they will pay for it.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

- Maximised impact and efficiency including supporting experimentation and learning.

“What Seed has been really good at is allowing us to practice without fear of failure. For example, one event happened across two venues and naysayers were convinced that audiences wouldn't move from one audience to the other, but they did, which has removed this as a perceived barrier in future programming.” Modelling exercise

“Highbridge is a much better place because of Seed. CPP has definitely improved the community remarkably. The arts events are at a higher level because people – audience members and organisers – have seen what is possible.” Modelling exercise

“This year’s music festival was far more ambitious and successful than last year, and last year was successful. The music festival has really taken off.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

97% of respondents said the fashion show made them want to see more arts events. Audience survey of Blossoming Bridgwater

- Clearly communicated the limit of time for which towns would be the main focus of Seed’s work, which helped to manage expectations.

“They check in and asks if we need anything. If they could, they would give us money. We understand Seed has to move on to another area, and it is great we still have contact with them. I can’t think of anything else they could have done for us. If you need help, they are there.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

“Seed puts a lot of trust in us. They consult and work with us. They are very responsive. We have meetings and emails to check everything is alright. I don’t think they can do anything more. I can’t fault anything.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

- Built capacity in the community, with an explicit message about Seed’s faith in the abilities of local people.

“One of the things we did in the consultation was introduce people to each other, people would not naturally have met each other, and encouraged them to support and promote each other’s events.” This coming together led to a sharing of skills, ideas and audiences, which gave a stronger and more visible pattern of arts delivery, including spin-off activities.” Modelling analysis

“Seed has a great model. They gave us quite a lot of money to set up and then tapered the level, so we were not dependent on them.” Interview with community participant in Highbridge

We carried out a residents’ survey for Bridgwater, which demonstrated increased awareness and appreciation of the arts. In the baseline survey, 60% said there are more creative/arts activities and events in Bridgwater town centre than a year ago. In the follow up survey, this increased to 73%. In the baseline survey, 70% said that arts and culture are an important way to improve wellbeing, which increased to 92% in the follow up survey.

“It is where I feel most myself as I can get lost in the music. It is my favourite thing to do.” Participant response to Blues in the Pews

Seed will close after this funding round, but it could still serve as a model for other CPPs.

LEARNING IN PROGRESS

The concept of a hub was resilient but needed to flex to match the circumstances and preferences of each local community.

QUALITY

Seed used an observation system to define and measure elements of quality. This collects data on specific indicators of quality as well as asking for overall judgements.

Seed events rated highly on all its elements of quality.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

97% of observers were able to identify multiple ways in which the local community was involved in creating the event. 83% said the event was created in response to an explicit community request. 89% said the choice of venues/location reflected local preference. 78% said the event was delivered in partnership with local groups or individuals.

LOCALISATION

97% of observers identified multiple ways the artistic programme was designed to reflect local interests. 69% said that the project used a venue or site of local significance and 72% said it connected to community members' sense of place.

"The pieces were cohesive, joyful and reflected the identity and aspirations of people of Cheddar very well." Observation system

ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

All observers identified multiple ways the event exhibited artistic aspiration and innovation. 72% had an innovative use of the site or space, and 64% said it included work that challenged the audience. 53% said the event was larger scale than other local offerings. 44% said the event made a creative use of materials or technology.

94% of observers rated the artistic excellence of the work as good or very good.

"The engagement with Seed has really bolstered my identity as an artist. As I work in different artforms and am not known for anyone thing, it is easy to think of myself as a dabbler." Participant interview for Moments of Stillness

"The script and the performance were extremely good, and the innovative approach of the performer triggering aspects of the sound as part of her performance was intriguing and added to the performance hugely by creating a sense of place and the feel of another presence in a one-person show." Observation system

"The artistic programme was pitched just right to attract and appeal to people who don't usually engage with visual arts installations but were curious enough to want to see what

was happening.” Observation system

SUPPORT TO ARTISTS

83% of observers recorded that the event was designed to support the artistic development of artists. 62% said the event helped artists reach new audiences. 50% said that artists supported or mentored each other. 46% said that artists networked with each other in specially organised events.

“I found the whole experience challenging but by pushing my boundaries I have come out of it a better musician. To compose I had to understand the harmonic structure fully. I had to think about the sound effects possible with the piano. I couldn't just approach the music on the surface. I had to go behind the notes. There was a frustration notating it. That I couldn't explain everything I wanted to achieve. I didn't just mean play it slowly, I meant make it linger. After this process, I feel I will approach other compositions differently, I will look behind the notes, have more of an appreciation of what the harmonies mean emotionally, think more about what the composer might have intended.” Interview with artist for Blossoming Bridgwater

““When you are studying Music, you don't know how boxed in you are, how one dimensional your practice is. Blossoming Bridgwater made me feel free. It made me realise how versatile the piano is. I thought fashion and composition and performing were different elements, but combining them felt organic, liberating, more creative, exhilarating.” Interview with artist for Blossoming Bridgwater

ORGANISATION

All observers rated the event as well organised. 97% of the observers said the artists delivered what was expected and publicity was visible. 92% said flows of people were well managed.

ACCESSIBILITY

97% of observers said the event had special access arrangements. All observers rated the accessibility of the event and the location as good or very good.

“The integration of British Sign Language as part of the movement vocabulary of the performance, and as a way of characters repeating dialogue was extremely effective and much more enjoyable than having an interpreter at front of stage.” Observation system

The evaluator made these comments on Blossoming Bridgwater was:

“The show was unusually accessible in its format. This was partly due to the venue. The barriers that performing arts often present for new audiences – walking into a deep, dark, quiet space with a closed door – did not apply. The stained glass windows filtered – and coloured – the light. The church had the benefit of being centrally located in the town, as one audience member commented, bringing life into the streets where activity was most needed. The seats, which were mainly laid length ways rather than width ways, gave an informal format.”

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

All observers identified special measures that had been taken to support environmental sustainability. For example, 94% were in a location that participants could walk to. 34% had an environmental theme.

LEGACY

All observers were aware of a legacy from the event. 63% said that follow up activity was planned. 26% said they were aware of cases where artists are continuing to work together.

VALUE FOR MONEY

All observers rated the event as very good value for money.

INTRODUCTION

SEED

Seed is a consortium of community organisations: Homes in Sedgemoor, Community Council for Somerset, Bridgwater Senior Citizens Forum, Somerset Film, Bridgwater Town Council and Young Somerset.

Seed's mission is:

"To make creative arts, culture and heritage part of everyday life in Sedgemoor by growing new opportunities for its people to participate, create and celebrate."

Seed's vision is:

"By 2030, everyone living or working in Sedgemoor has new and accessible opportunities to engage with, participate in and appreciate creative arts, heritage and culture in all its many forms, and many more people take advantage of those opportunities. The creative culture of the community is exciting and inspiring. It has been nurtured, and there is a sustainable platform for further growth."

Seed's values are to:

- Be sustainable and to promote the sustainable growth of opportunities for people to participate in creative arts, heritage and culture in Sedgemoor.
- Embed a participatory action research methodology in all of our activities in order to empower the people of Sedgemoor to lead our project.
- Achieve the highest possible standards are achieved through our programme in excellent artistic output and participatory processes.
- Recognise and promote the strength that comes from the diversity of the communities we work with.

CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES

Creative People and Places (CPP) is a place-based programme targeted at cold spots, with eligibility defined as being in the bottom 33% of places according to the Active Lives Survey carried out in November 2015 to May 2017.

"Our vision for Creative People and Places is to support the public in shaping local arts and cultural provision and, in so doing, to increase attendance and participation in excellent art and culture. This investment will encourage long-term collaborations between local communities, arts organisations, museums, libraries, amateur groups, the voluntary sector and others. It aims to support new and different approaches to developing cultural programmes that deliver excellent experiences, genuinely engage people in shaping provision and involve a variety of partners." Arts Council England guidance

The aims of the fund are to (I have changed the language and order to make the format consistent):

- Empower communities to take the lead in shaping local cultural provision.
- Support more people from the identified places of least engagement to experience, create and be inspired by arts and culture, and become regularly engaged as audiences or participants.
- Encourage partnerships across the subsidised, amateur, voluntary, and commercial sectors.
- Maximise opportunities for collaborations across arts organisations, museums and libraries where possible.
- Support activity that is excellent in terms of art and culture and the process of engaging communities.
- Support activity that is radically different from what has happened before in the eligible places prior to the Creative People and Places programme.
- Where possible and appropriate, maximise digital opportunities for cultural engagement and empowering the public.
- Learn from past experiences (including learning from the current Creative People and Places programme) and create an environment where the arts and cultural sector can experiment with innovative approaches to engaging communities.
- Learn more about how to establish sustainable arts and cultural opportunities and make this learning freely available across the cultural sector.
- Demonstrate the power of arts and culture to enrich the lives of individuals and make positive changes in communities.

Creative People and Places is an action research programme and, as such, places evaluation at the heart of the work.

KEY QUESTIONS

Creative People and Places has three overarching, national evaluation questions:

- 1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by creativity and culture and what are the most effective ways to achieve this?
- 2. What approaches enable us to deliver on our aspiration for excellence, both in the process of community engagement and the creative and cultural experiences on offer?
- 3. What else are we learning that facilitates better public engagement in creativity and culture?

EVALUATION BRIEF

My brief was to focus on the learning aspects of CPP to help Seed tell its story.

CONCEPTUALISATION INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is composed of four interlinked strands:

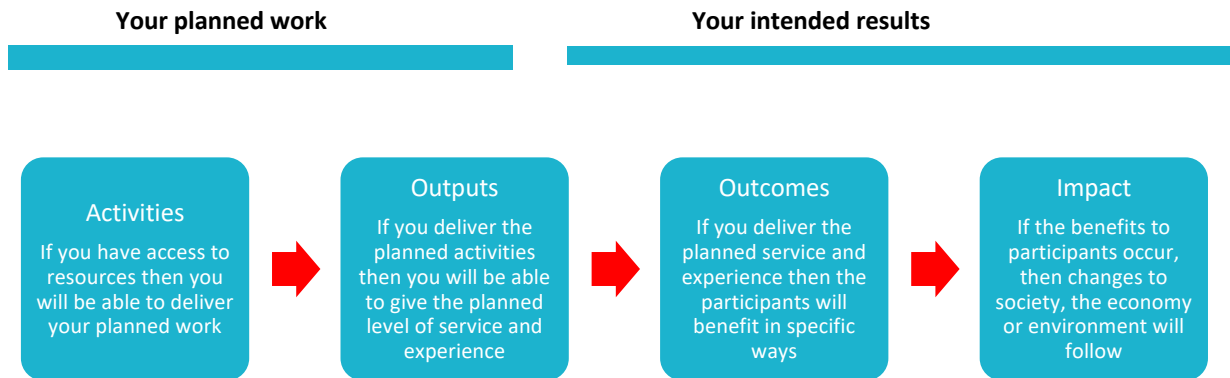
- **Thinking.** Framing, focusing, conceptualising, interpreting, synthesising.
- **People.** Motivating, training, involving, reassuring, listening, informing, influencing
- **Systems.** Planning, gathering data, entering data on a computer, analysing data, disseminating information.
- **Action.** Making recommendations, implementing recommendation.

Evaluative thinking has these benefits:

- **Ensuring a clear direction.** The process of creating a logic model helps to generate a group consensus about the precise intended outcomes.
- **Creating a lean evaluation system.** Being precise about intended outcomes and critical success factors helps evaluation to focus on key questions.
- **Bringing the different elements of the evaluation system together.** Articulating the theory of change helps test the implied connection between actions and expected outcomes, and results in a balanced evaluation system that covers both.
- **Testing the logic behind the programme.** The logic model session helps check that the ideas behind the programme are sound and can identify potential hurdles in its delivery. Clear thinking strengthens not just the evaluation but also the implementation of a programme.
- **Ensuring expectations are realistic.** The logic model shows the chain of logic and therefore graphically and so illustrates the time lag between short terms outcomes, long term outcomes and impact.
- **Customising the evaluation.** The logic model helps ensure that the evaluation captures what is special about the programme.
- **Summarising the project.** The logic model gives a concise description of the programme in a form that shows its rationale.
- **Providing a structure to capture programmatic learning.** Comparing what happens with what was expected or planned leads naturally to questions about programmatic lessons.

EXPLANATION OF LOGIC MODELS

A logic model is a visual depiction of a programme or project. Logic models were originally developed and popularised by The Kellogg Foundation in the United States in 1998. By plotting the different stages in a programme – the actions and assumed consequences (outcomes) - logic models provide a simple but powerful way of interrogating the causality assumed by a programme. Logic models are read from left to right:



LANGUAGE

This is my definition of the terms used in a logic model:

- **Resources** are financial and non-financial inputs for a project.
- **Activities** are the actions taken by the project, the key choices in delivery.
- **Outputs** are measures of effort to show that the project took place, and can be defined from the supply side (number of events), or the demand side (number of participants).
- **Outcomes** are changes in the attitudes, behaviour, skills, knowledge, motivation, feelings, or aspirations of participants; or the culture, structures, systems, or processes of organisations.
- **Impacts** are the direct and indirect effects for society, the economy and the environment.

CONCEPTUALISATION

This is the initial logic model.

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Cultivate and plough: Tasters and go sees, Create the Future pop up event	Number and profile of participants in each element	People who live, work and/or study in Sedgemoor increase their awareness of, appreciation of, interest in, and ability to engage with arts	Participants sustain their interest and engagement in, and support for the arts, and increase their capacity to programme and deliver arts events
Sow: Participatory activities including CLUL	Media coverage		
Tall timbers: Large-scale arts events	Artworks: films, sketchbooks	Local artists develop their skills, track record, profile, and connections	
Green shoots: artist CPD (independent practitioners)			

through to project facilitators) Sowers and growers: Volunteers		SEED members develop the consortium and strengthen its connections, and learn how to reach new audiences e.g. the value of hubs	
<p>ASSUMPTIONS:</p> <p>People are already creative even if they do not or cannot engage in subsidised arts e.g., they might be working on a carnival float.</p> <p>People want more arts activities and will participate.</p> <p>Basing activity locally in hubs will remove major barriers to participation e.g. travelling.</p> <p>Sedgemoor can mean something to the local people (compared to Somerset).</p>			

The logic of Creative People and Places is straightforward. The best route to achieving the objective of engaging and retaining audiences is less obvious, and a rich territory for discussion and debate.

MODELLING OF THE HIGHBRIDGE HUB

THE HUB STRUCTURE

Sedgemoor is unusual in Creative People and Places in having a rural context. Partly because of the wide geographical area, Seed, organised its work to have a rolling programme of delivery with four stages:

- Plough: research and consultation
- Sow: pilot activities and commission locally generated activities
- Grow: recommission further development of activities
- Yield: hubs and activities become more sustainable.

The hub “approach will enable us to focus our activity and efforts, provide equity across the different geographic areas and implement learning as we progress.” Seed application

The modelling sessions took place over Zoom on 5th August 2022 and was attended by Paul Chapman from Highbridge, and Scott, Laura, Phil and Liz from Seed.

I suggested using a structure based more on people than activities and this was consistent with Paul’s request at the beginning that the modelling should use clear language and avoid arts council jargon. I structured the meeting around four stages (which were renamed by the group) together with these questions drawn from CPP and Seed objectives:

- What exactly was done to make the art accessible and targeted on the least engaged?
- What evidence is there that the audience numbers have increased and reached the least engaged groups?
- Was the community effectively engaged in the process of creating the activities and were these authentic to Highbridge?
- How many people overall have been involved in creation?
- What exactly was done to ensure the art was excellent: inspiring and exciting - or what would be your definitions of excellence?
- What evidence is here that the audience perceived the art to be excellent?
- What lessons can we/did we learn?
- What exactly was done to form and increase the capacity of the local group?
- In what ways has the local group increased in capacity?

My modelling is aimed at capturing the practical realities and lessons from Highbridge: the dynamics, the processes and reasons for the processes, the challenges and learning that is useful as a record for Highbridge and to inform and support other hubs. My technique is based on tools in Neuro Linguistic Programming, particularly on David Gordon and Graham Dawes’ Experiential Array, which looks at beliefs (assumptions about what is possible and desirable) as well as behaviours, ways of doing things (strategies) and emotions, and how external factors affect the skill/ability.

ENGAGING LOCAL CHAMPIONS

Engaging local champions had three elements:

- **Researching existing activities in the areas.** Seed talked to local people in the area (e.g., Create You, Bridgwater Library, contacts from previous Somerset Film projects), from which it created a film that was included in its initial bid to CPP. This stage had three elements: 1) Understanding what people wanted. One theme was that Highbridge didn't have a distinct identity and people wanted to be proud of where they live. 2) Understanding peoples' quality criteria. People emphasised the need for activities to be authentic, which they defined as embracing the culture that is already there. Authenticity is a word that often comes up in these contexts and it is important to understand what it signifies to the individual. 3) Understanding place. Research found that Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge were different areas, with Highbridge having lower provision and engagement, and this led Seed to focus on Highbridge.
- **Holding public meetings, which Seed called the Creative Accelerator.** These happened over the Internet because of COVID, which actually seemed to increase reach (compared to a physical meeting) because people were at home during the lockdown. Even those who were working from home could usually find time in their day to engage. Artists who would usually be travelling were at home and often had more contact with their neighbours. Seed used an Ideas Market model, which usually gave time for detailed participation and practical engagement using sticky notes. Seed attempted to produce a similar affect using Zoom break-out rooms, which were successful in allowing precision in probing attendees about what exactly wanted. Many of the themes of earlier research were reinforced in this consultation, including the desire for people in Highbridge to be proud of where they live, as one contributor said: "I want Highbridge to be Instagrammable." One of the lessons from this stage is that consultation is likely to create a scatter of comments, not all of which seem relevant at first. Paul described this as a "horrible porridge of mess". However, this porridge was useful because even if some of the areas were beyond the arts e.g., weaknesses in local bus services, knowing about barriers to attendance helped when Seed was commissioning arts projects. Moreover, as Phil emphasised, the arts provide a set of perspectives, resources and connections that can sometimes catalyse change around problems outside the arts.
- **Building the network.** This was an organic process of connecting with people who attended public meetings and with their networks. A simple practical lesson is that explicitly asking people to tell other people about Seed and the Highbridge CPP project helps widen the network, although many people will make contact without this stimulation. Building the network gives ideas, skills, resources, but also energy. Paul explained that before this, there was a common perception of Highbridge as a "desert". However, when the group (if we can call it a group, as I mention below, it is a dynamic coming together of people) spoke to the kids, they loved living in Highbridge, which gave momentum to the work. A second lesson is that people should be approached because of their passion for the area and their interest in, and ability, to take action. Engaging institutions or their representatives is not necessary to provide validation: the activity

and voice of the community provides this validation (although as mentioned below, in the long-term these links might be needed to support sustainability).

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

There were three elements to this:

- **Targeting** Seed commissioned artists to produce activities in collaboration with the “group” from Highbridge. The need to reach new audiences was explicitly stated in the call-out to artists. Projects were designed to remove financial and non-financial barriers to attendance. It is important to look at events from the audience perspective. Two commissions that looked different on paper appeared overlapping/competing when they were delivered because the differences in philosophy were not evident to audience members.
- **Joining up.** One of the great benefits of the process in Highbridge was that it brought together people who were active in the arts who had never met. Laura commented that: “One of the things we did in the consultation was introduce people to each other, people would not naturally have met each other, and encouraged them to support and promote each other’s events.” This coming together led to a sharing of skills, ideas and audiences, which gave a stronger and more visible pattern of arts delivery, including spin-off activities. For example, the Front Garden Music Festival gave a platform for the relatively large number of local musicians who were attending open mikes, who had not previously come together in an event. Paul observed that: “When you bring people together you widen the creative possibilities. 1+1=4.” The connections and the development of an audience encourage people and venues to initiate their own activities. For example, in Highbridge, after two years of Front Garden Music Festival, one of the venues, a social club, has created its own series of open mike events. Joining up is not a simple or smooth activity: it needs to manage different interests. For example, in Highbridge, some people have used the arts programme as a launching point for starting a business. This might be seen as a positive outcome in terms of local economic development, but can produce tensions if some people feel they are giving to the community and that others are taking out more than they are putting in.
- **Creating a brand that results in repeat attendance.** Local ownership is key from the very beginning of the hub. Paul explained that: “Highbridge now has an artistic community of people who are all joining together. This is one of the successes of Seed, People see local events run by local people and that makes them want to become engaged. It has worked because it is by Highbridge for Highbridge.” The Audience Agency data shows that around 75% of attendees meet the criteria of non-engagers. Paul says that an indicator of success is that events are drawing audiences from Burnham-on-Sea – a reverse of previous perceptions of interest! The lessons from this stage are: 1) it is important to be flexible rather than having preconceptions about what can and cannot be included in CPP activities. Arts Council guidance seems to suggest that work with children is not within the remit of CPP, but experience in Highbridge, as in many other areas, is that working with children is an important and highly successful element of new audience

development, partly because children and young people are so easily reached through schools and other youth activities, and partly because, as Paul explains: “Children consume new experiences far more easily than adults.” They can bring their parents with them, as audience members or participants, in activities parents might not otherwise have considered. 2) As Paul explains, when you are trying to engage with a community that has no experience of participating in the arts, you have to lead them gently. A fundamental measure of excellence is how much people enjoy a piece of work. Other indicators might include whether a work is interesting or thought-provoking, however uncomfortable or provocative work might alienate some audience members. The promoter needs to be prepared by reflecting carefully on how best to contextualise and follow up the programme to facilitate access. There is a concomitant danger that playing it too safe with programming policy can underestimate the audience and inadvertently act as a gatekeeper rather than facilitator.

CREATING A SELF-SUSTAINING COMMUNITY

The elements of this are:

- **Being open about the structure.** So far, the Highbridge hub has resisted the idea of coming together in an organisation. The Highbridge ‘hub’ has an organic structure, that waxes and wanes, and sees the benefit in being able to focus on action. Seed’s image of a hub in the initial Arts Council application was not prescriptive and allowed for different forms, from regular informal get-togethers and debriefs (an action research-based model) to a (part-time) building-based site. There was an assumption that the hub would mutate and develop over time in step with community needs.
- **Supporting experimentation.** Paul notes that: “What Seed has been really good at is allowing us to practice without fear of failure. For example, one event happened across two venues and naysayers were convinced that audiences wouldn’t move from one audience to the other, but they did, which has removed this as a perceived barrier in future programming.”
- **Talking about the journey.** There are three elements to this: 1) Developing the relationship with Seed. The objective is very much that the community takes the lead on hub activity, not least because Seed needs to move its resources to other areas. As Scott explains: “Part of the reason for the name Seed is that we wanted to get stuff started, but not be the provider or runner. There is a naturally stepping back process.” Notwithstanding this, Highbridge has and will benefit from Seed’s role as a facilitator, without this compromising its lead in any way. There was one project, which experienced problems from the beginning, which suggests a lesson of halting project until initial concerns are resolved. 2) Thinking about the long-term. This was more difficult in the case of Highbridge because of its early timing in the programme. Seed naturally didn’t want to dictate or direct future choices. Seed now has different models of hubs and so can give new places an answer to the question about what a hub is that broadens rather than narrows the possibilities. Thinking about the long-term might also involve talking to hubs about whether they will need future funding and where they

could apply. Seed deliberately doesn't tend to apply for town or parish council grants so it is not competing with hubs. However, larger projects might need Arts Council funding, for which hubs might need to bid with Seed. Thinking about the long-term might also involve strengthening links with institutions that were put aside during the early work because of the focus on action. 3) Reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses and the value of the hub. Paul emphasises that: "Highbridge is a much better place because of Seed. CPP has definitely improved the community remarkably. The arts events are at a higher level because people – audience members and organisers – have seen what is possible."

CONNECTING WITH OTHER HUBS AND FEEDING BACK TO/INTO SEED

This stage is at an early stage, but could have three elements:

- **Supporting learning in other hubs.** Community members from Highbridge presented some of their work at a town hall meeting in Axbridge, which helped Seed to explain some of the possibilities. Highbridge community members might be able to offer practical advice to other communities e.g., about setting up a CIC or opening a bank account. This evaluation report is also designed to help other hubs.
- **Working across the area.** Community members from Highbridge have proposed projects in the new hub areas. Some hubs will have a physical base, and Highbridge projects will be offered the possibility of showcasing work there. Creating synergies between hubs is one way to increase impact.
- **Contributing to the overall CPP programme.** Seed had the initial idea that community champions - Sowers and Growers – would come together for a Sedgemoor-wide social networking event for mutual benefit. Highbridge could also be involved in conferences and other review processes in CPP.

PROJECT CASE STUDY: BLOSSOMING BRIDGWATER ACTIVITY

Blossoming Bridgwater had:

- Seven creative workshops: February 8th, February 15th, March 8th, March 15th, March 22nd, March 28th and April 5th with artist Chloe Haywood creating petals that formed a skirt, using materials donated by the Royal Ballet and Opera's Sustainability Department.
- A music commission from pianist Nurry Lee.
- Two shows: 30th and 31st June, showcasing the collections of six local fashion designers, with Blossoming Bridgwater as the finale. Nurry played her music commission, wearing the skirt designed by Chloe Haywood, using pieces made by community participants.

OBSERVATION FROM THE EVALUATOR

The show was unusually accessible in its format. This was partly due to the venue. The barriers that performing arts often present for new audiences – walking into a deep, dark, quiet space with a closed door – did not apply. The stained glass windows filtered – and coloured – the light. The church had the benefit of being centrally located in the town, as one audience member commented, bringing life into the streets where activity was most needed. The seats, which were mainly laid length ways rather than width ways, gave an informal format.

The show itself was episodic, with three fashion shows and the Blossoming Bridgwater finale. While the uneven pace, with gaps between each presentation, could be seen as a weakness, in practice it seemed to create a sociable atmosphere. In intervals, most people were talking to others, whether those they came with or strangers, rather than looking at their phones. This is partly because the workshops created a community of people who attended together.

The compering was clear and informative, with background on the inspiration of the artists. This gave a behind-the-scenes view, which audience members often say they want from events.

Fashion appeals more to female audiences, although there were men in the audience. However, aside from this limitation, the artform was unusually accessible because of its concrete nature (none of the artists' inspirations were entirely conceptual), variety (rather like a sampler or taster format), and sense of excitement.

The presentation was high quality. The clothes were all well cut and mainly wearable. The looks were well presented with an overall vision encompassing hair and make up. The filming ensured the audience had something to look at when the models were further up the runway. The screen was well placed so that the real and filmed images complemented each other rather than overlapping. As would be expected in a church, the acoustics were excellent.

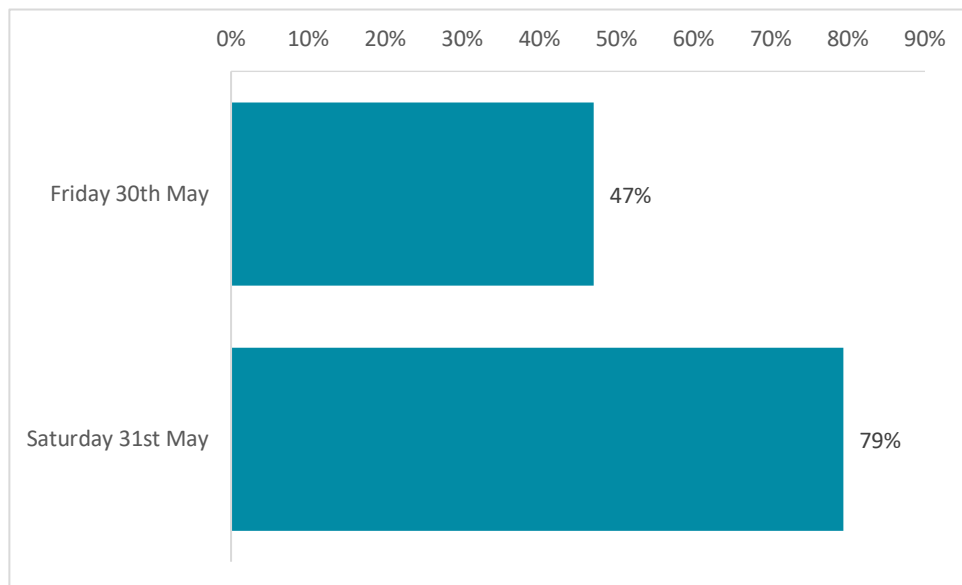
The connection to the community was strong: in the location, in the choice of models, all of whom were local, and in the styling of the clothes.

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

RESPONSES

We have 34 responses, with more from the Saturday.

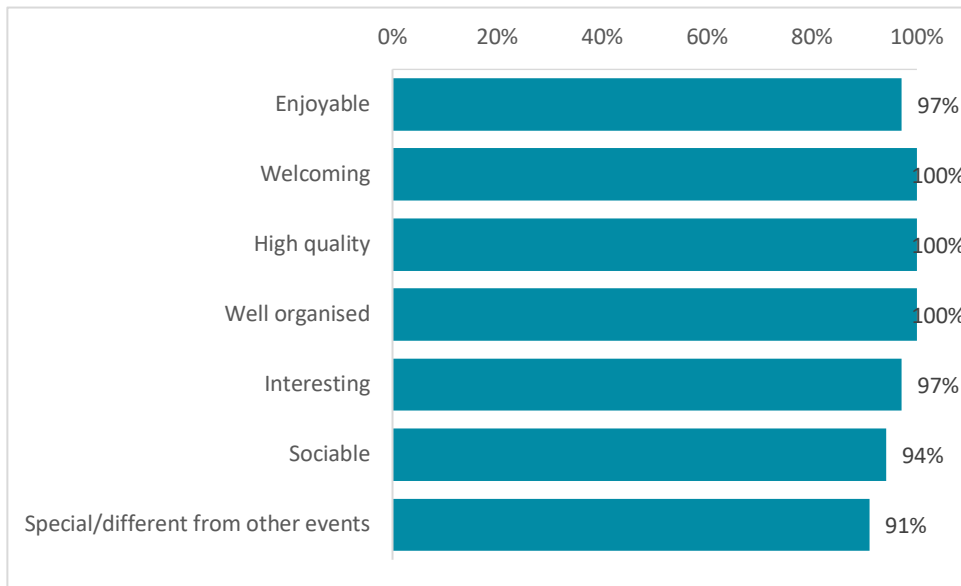
FIGURE 1: WHICH DAY(S) DID YOU ATTEND THE SHOW?



QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

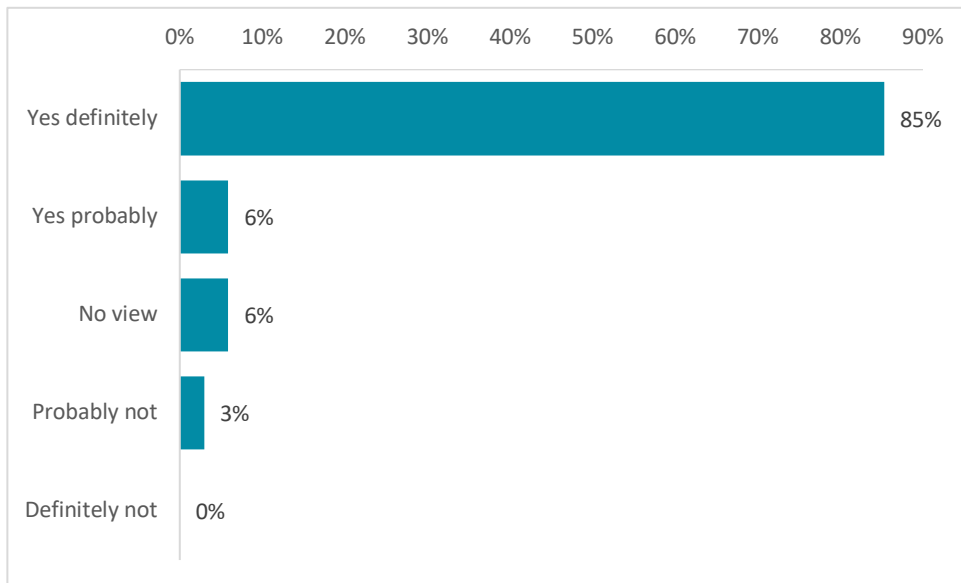
Views of the fashion show were extremely positive. Most views were stated strongly, as “Yes definitely”.

FIGURE 2: PLEASE TELL US YOUR VIEW OF THE FASHION SHOW: WAS IT? (AGGREGATION OF “YES DEFINITELY” AND “YES PROBABLY” RESPONSES)



91% of respondents said St Mary’s Church was a good choice of venue.

FIGURE 3: WAS ST MARY’S CHURCH A GOOD CHOICE OF VENUE?



Respondents said it was a good location because of:

- Character of the building.

“The church was an outstanding backdrop with amazing acoustics and a place I wouldn't normally go into.”

“Atmospheric.”

“Gave the event a sense of drama and space.”

“Beautiful opulent venue gave it an amazing atmosphere.”

“I liked the majestic look of the place, but it still felt cosy.”

- Size.

“Beautiful space with right dimensions.”

“Great space, big, and sounded excellent. Easy access and parking.”

“Lots of space, not claustrophobic. Easy access on and out of seats.”

“Space, accessibility, aesthetic, comfortable, great view wherever you sat, great acoustics.”

“You had lots of space for the audience.”

- Location.

“It was beautiful, central location and easily found.”

“A great setting.”

- Seating.

“The length of the space meant every seat was a good one and the clothes were on show for a long time.”

- Acoustics.

“The inside was fantastic, and the sound and light travelled beautifully.”

- Community feeling.

“It is welcoming.”

“It felt like a real 'special event'.”

- Suitability. Including one negative comment.

“Different venue - interesting having fashion in a church.”

“It really fit in well. It created a nice contrast for certain designers and tied in perfectly with the dress Nurry Lee wore that was designed by Chloe Haywood.”

“Perfect venue for the fashion show!”

“If it would be somewhere else, I don’t think I would attend. The place made a big difference for me.”

“A Church didn’t seem right for a loud and excitable show.”

OVERALL VIEWS

We asked what, if anything was special about the show. Answers had these themes:

- A new experience.

"I've never been to one before."

"Something new in Bridgwater."

"It was nice to have something complete different happening in Bridgwater."

"I've never been to a real fashion show before. It was amazing to have this in Bridgwater. Every element of the experience was fantastic."

"It was like a breeze of fresh air, something unusual."

"Unique never happened in the area before."

"I had never attended a fashion show before. I loved the designs, music and venue."

"So creative, collaborative and unexpected."

"Seeing fashion outside of retail fashion. It was far more expressive and was really interesting to experience."

"It conveyed a lot of interesting messages and emotions. Any the clothing was unlike anything you'd actually wear, so it's quite a special contrast to modern society."

- Professional quality.

"High quality production and event which brought something completely new to the town."

"Thoroughly enjoyed the show. Very professional."

"Extremely professional great to see so many local organisations collaborating."

"Unexpectedly professional."

"High quality event, so impressed and inspired by the designers, the garments and especially the models."

"The production and designers were amazing."

"I felt it was a very professional event in a great location, well organised - great to see community models"

"Amazing venue, so good to see something like this happening in Somerset & the cross section of participants was amazing."

“The quality of designers, the standard of production and the experience as a whole exceeded expectations. Felt like I was at a London show.”

- Community feeling.

“It was affordable and accessible for all communities.”

“It was amazing, I got to watch the setup as well as the shows and it was truly incredible watching a small community of people with similar interests work together to create the show.”

“I had lots of friends there which was really fun.”

“Normally in shows you can’t interact with people but in this one you could.”

“The atmosphere was incredible, the second everyone was in the church together (the crew) it felt like we had all been working together for months if not years.”

“That it happened in Bridgy, that the fashion and the music was such high quality and that the models were from our community. I was amazed when I heard that at the end.”

- High quality of experience.

“There was a bit of waiting between designers, but as I have never been to a fashion show before this could be normal? It didn't affect my enjoyment though.”

“I enjoyed everything.”

“Three was a good 'buzz' - it felt exciting.”

“The combination of event and venue. The backdrop of the church was beautiful.”

“Really enjoyed the venue and the variety of the designers.”

“The energy in the church was amazing. You could feel the bond and relationship between models and designers. Some very emotive work.”

“It was moving and inspirational.”

“I really loved the big screens, very effective.”

“A lovely evening full of heart and local talent. The setting gave it a warm, familiar feeling.”

“The show was amazing, my 8 year old daughter attended with me, and she loved it as well. It felt like a real high fashion show, loved the atmosphere and we found it all very exciting! Would love for it to happen every year or more often. Think Nathan is amazing and loved his collection particularly, gave me chills and was very moving, had tears in my eyes. The whole show was very powerful.”

“I liked Blossoming Bridgwater as it was such a magical part of the show.”

“The piano piece that was composed for Bridgwater.”

We asked respondents if there was anything that they would recommend that Seed should change about future events. No one mentioned any changes, only more: more shows, more designers, more snacks and more publicity.

“I just hope they will put on another Seasons next year!”

“I can't think of anything which would have made that particular event better than it was.”

“More variety like this one.”

“It would be nice to see more designers' collections.”

“Maybe a pre-event dinner offer at the Old Vicarage.”

“I found it difficult to find out about the workshops via Seed, but I found it easier to find out through the Blossoming Bridgwater Instagram page.”

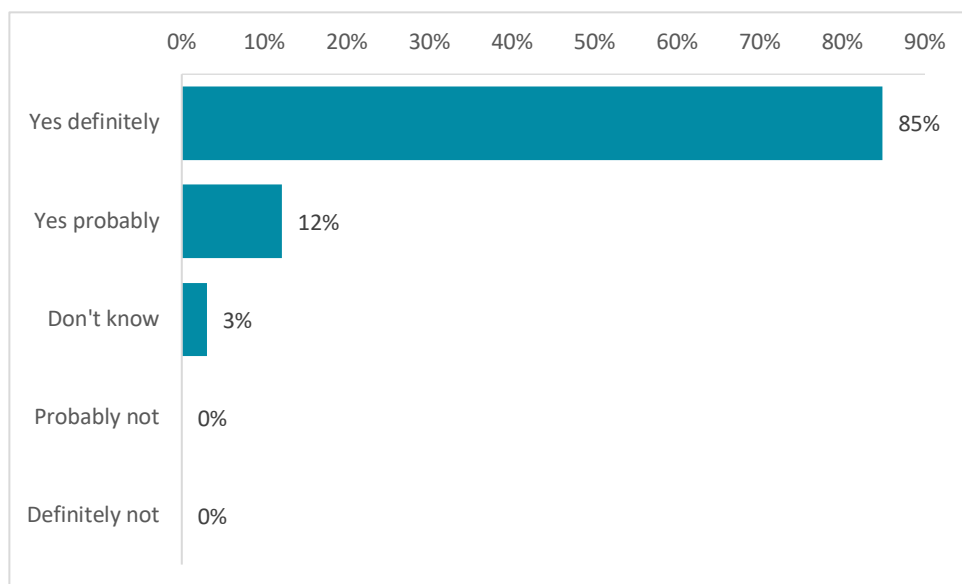
“Nothing it was absolutely incredible.”

“It would be great to see Bridgwater take a few more creative risks in the future. It's not exactly known as a fashion hotspot, but that's all the more reason to shake things up. Maybe try a more unexpected venue or theme next time to bring more energy and buzz. Most of the crowd seemed to be friends or family of the models and designers, so there's definitely room to grow when it comes to reaching a wider audience. Still, it was a sweet night that showed a lot of promise.”

OUTCOMES

97% of respondents said the fashion show made them want to see more arts events.

FIGURE 4: DID THE FASHION SHOW MAKE YOU WANT TO SEE MORE ARTS EVENTS?



"The creative buzz it created really whetted my appetite to see more shows of this epic proportion."

"We need to build on Bridgwater's creative energy."

"Showing what is possible and can be done."

"Would love a bit more culture!! Please do another fashion show."

"It was very interesting, and glamorous. Very entertaining evening. The addition of the pianist was also really special."

"I go to a lot, but I hadn't been to anything like this before. I would definitely consider more events that I would usually not attend based on this experience."

91% of respondents said the show gave them a more positive impression of Bridgwater.

"Good for the town."

"More arts and culture in Bridgwater is definitely a massive plus."

"My impression of Bridgwater was already positive."

"More forward thinking."

"It is great to see a variety of events being held, something for everyone."

"I love seeing some diversity in Somerset!"

"I hadn't previously associated Bridgwater with this kind of cultural experience."

"I haven't been to Bridgwater before."

"Interesting because it showed that the community can come together."

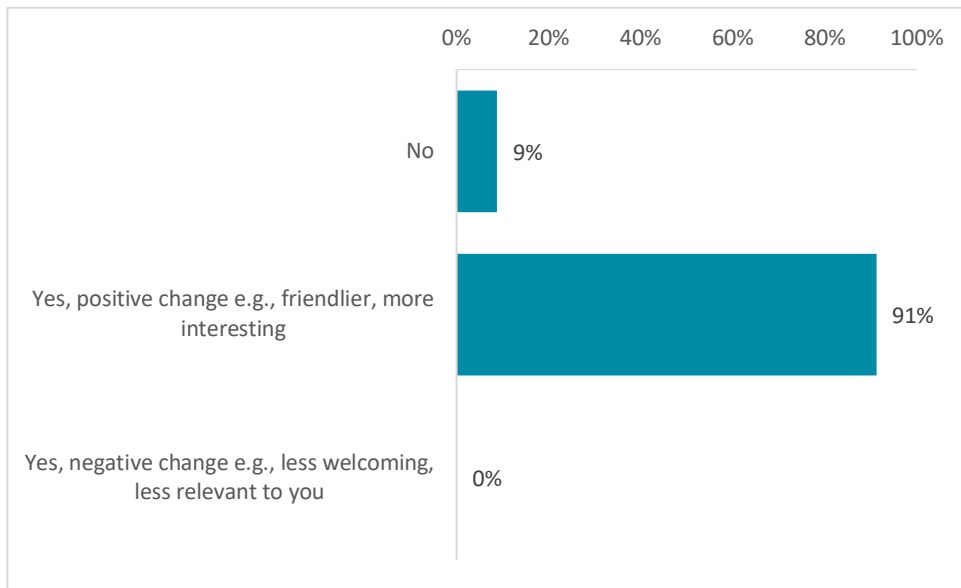
"It put a positive and creative spin on Bridgwater."

"It made the town feel more lively and eventful."

"Seeing more people get involved."

"A few years ago, you could never have imagined this event happening in Bridgwater - or even the idea of fashion designers living and working here."

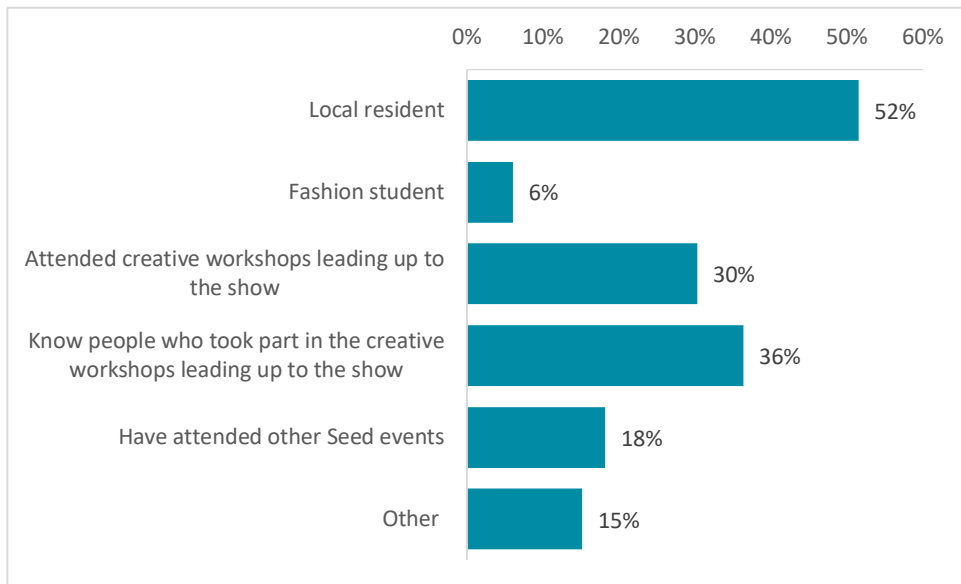
FIGURE 5: DO EVENTS LIKE THIS CHANGE YOUR IMPRESSION OF BRIDGWATER?



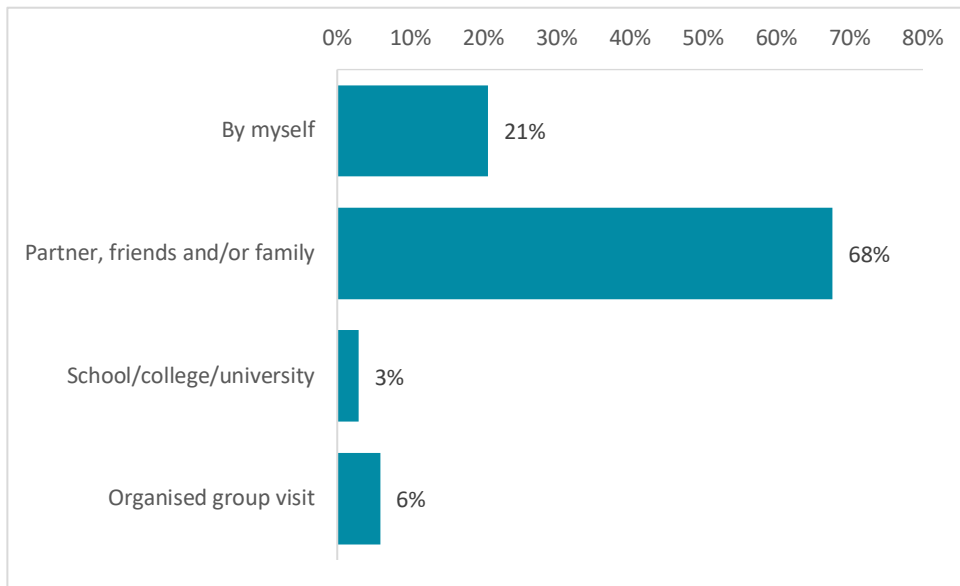
BACKGROUND

30% of respondents attended the creative workshops.

FIGURE 6: WHAT WAS YOUR INTEREST IN THE SHOW? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY



Respondents mainly attended with other people.

FIGURE 7: WHO DID YOU ATTEND THE SHOW WITH?

PROJECT CASE STUDY: ART ROAD TRIP ACTIVITY

Seed programmed the work with a clear structure to develop local familiarity and trust, and encourage repeat visiting, which did happen. During the week, the National Gallery team delivered, each day six hours of drop in workshops in a central point in Bridgwater, Cornhill, and a half hour talk in the pop up shop. At weekends, the team went to two other locations across the area that had high pedestrian traffic.

DATE	LOCATION	LENGTH IN HOURS	PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS	ACTIVITY
26 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Awe and Wonder: exploring landscape using texture and light
26 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, talk	Paintings by Turner
27 th September	St Joseph's school	1 hr 1.5 hr 1 hr	Year 3 class Year 5 class Year 6 class	Workshop exploring colour mixing, painting and print through work of Canaletto.
28 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Creating your own world, family friendly drop in with creative activities like sculpture and installation
28 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, talk	Painting Detectives: how to look at paintings
29 th September	South Esplanade, Burnham on Sea	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Memory Net: creative activities inspired by the sea e.g., making postcards, mindful doodles, with artwork added to a net installation
30 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Creative Reflections: activities inspired by the sea
30 th September	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, talk	The Art of the Seascape
3 rd October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, drop in	New Worlds and New Landscapes: creating landscapes using collage and creative materials
3 rd October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, talk	The paintings of the National Gallery and

				the influence of industry
4 th October	School	1 hr 1 hr 15 mins 1 hr 15 mins	Year 4 Year 5 Year 3	Canaletto Take One Picture session.
5 th October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Patterns in Nature: creative activities around and inspired by creatures
5 th October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, talk	Painting Detectives: how to look at paintings
6 th October	Cheddar Caves and Gorge Carpark	6 hrs	General public, drop in	Reimagining the Gorge: creative activities and walk
7 th October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	.5 hr	General public, drop in	Mindscapes: creative activities to support wellbeing
7 th October	Cornhill, Bridgwater	6 hrs	General public, talk	A mindful look at paintings

REFLECTION

INTRODUCTION

I interviewed Scott O'Hara, Director of Seed, Laura Hylton, Producer and Community Engagement Manager, and Elliott Morgan, Comms and Admin Coordinator.

IDEA AND PLANNING STAGE

Planning the project had six elements:

- Seed pitched the idea of Art Road Trip to the community consortium to see if they were interested and they were.
- Two staff members from the National Gallery came to Sedgemoor. Seed introduced them to the local artists and organised for them to create figures for the Individuality exhibition, so they were already part of programme of activity.
- The National Gallery offered taster workshops online in October 2023 and Seed made full use of these: the core team each attended eight workshops, and they also invited local artists and community members. Seed accounted for 41% of all attendances at the National Gallery's online workshop series.

"In essence our objectives are to empower the community to make artistic decisions, so the process with the online workshops was a strong fit. They also gave us information on the context and content of the National Gallery workshops, so we knew how to engage the local

community. The workshops gave us a crash course in how to relate the paintings to different people.”

- Seed consulted with community members to understand their preferences, which were that they would like to have introductory talks as well as similar workshops in person. They were particularly keen to see the pictures.

“Every single online workshop was fantastic and the whole process was helpful because we knew exactly what the facilitators were like and could see the impact on participants.”

- Seed involved three local artists in delivery at the weekend, two in Cheddar and one in Burnham on Sea.
- Plans evolved in three ways. Seed had wanted the project to include the community co-creating an artistic response to the National Gallery paintings, but applications to Jerwood Arts and the Thistle Trust were unsuccessful, so this element of the project was abandoned. Seed considered taking a group to the Arnolfini, the nearest gallery to Sedgemoor, but when the National Gallery said that reproductions were available, they were eager to have these. And thirdly, Seed considered exhibiting the reproductions in an outdoor structure near the National Gallery vehicle, but the funding for this didn't come through, and meanwhile a pop up shop in Bridgwater became available for longer than initially thought, for a year, so the exhibition was programmed for this space. Morrisons Foundation gave Seed £8k to fit out the shop, which also supported legacy activity.
- Seed chose community locations with the highest footfall in Sedgemoor.

“We were very much guided by wanting to reach as many people as possible. We wanted to make sure it was accessible to people with no familiarity with this kind of artwork.”

The strengths of the planning stage were:

- The budget allowed Seed to be ambitious.

“It felt helpful to know that resourcing wouldn't be a constraining issue at the conceptual stage. We felt confident there were the resources to be quite ambitious, which isn't always the case.”

- The process was collaborative.

“The National Gallery team was pretty flexible. Whatever we proposed, they were always open to discussing.”

- Roles and responsibilities were clear.
- The timing was perfect. Seed had the pop up shop and the Art Road Trip visit happened in the lead up to Somerset Art Week, who publicised the project in their brochure.
- The planning time, which was 18 months, allowed Seed to involve the community fully.
- The consistent pattern in programming, having six hours of drop in workshops and a midday talk, encouraged repeat visits.

The weaknesses of the planning stage were:

- Seed couldn't initially understand what the National Gallery was expecting. The offer was still unclear when the facilitators visited Sedgemoor but became clearer at the online workshops.

“When we met the National Gallery team, we felt very confident we could work with them. But at the end of the visit, we weren't any clearer about what they were looking for. The time frame was clear. The fact they had a very strong and high level commitment was clear. The fact they were definitely planning to bring something to us. What wasn't clear was what that would look like and what they would require from us.”

“We have local artists and venues who offer creative workshops. It was only when we saw the quality and skills of the facilitators in the online workshops that we could understand the possibilities. Art Road Trip was offering us a specific set of expertise and quality of experience.”

- Details of delivery were only firmed up just before delivery.

“We were still negotiating with the facilitators two weeks before delivery, talking about what would and wouldn't work in terms of timing and project plans. And we only realised at the last moment that we were expected to act as first aid officers.”

- The National Gallery sometimes took a long time to respond to queries.

Overall, Seed spent 35 days on the ideas and planning stage, which was the most of any partner so far, and illustrates the effort to embed the visit.

DELIVERY STAGE

The strengths of the delivery stage were:

- Seed decided early on that they were very interested in exploring Keeper of Paintings, especially because they had previous experience with augmented reality. They hosted an exhibition at the Engine Room for two weeks. This involved obtaining feedback on a development version with a mixed group including home school children, youth groups with learning difficulties and other community members. This element of the project continued after the National Gallery vehicle left, giving one element of legacy. Feedback was that the Keeper of Paintings was a fun and imaginative experience, but needed more thought around accessibility e.g., the tablet was heavy, and tiring to hold up to the canvas; users needed the option to change the size of the instruction text, and resize the canvas once created; the app would benefit from a voiced version; and some users would need detailed instructions for each step.
- Seed exceeded their target for attendance. They were hoping for an average of 100 participants a day and achieved 163.
- Seed met their objectives of reaching new audiences. 58% of people who went to Picture Salon had never been to a Seed event. 16% had never previously attended an arts event, which is the highest Seed has ever seen in one of its projects. 4% of responses to the survey were from ethnic minority populations, which is above average for Seed events (the population in Sedgemoor is relatively non diverse – 98% identify as White/White English).

- Seed wanted to engage and inspire participants and 70% of respondents to the survey said the Art Road Trip event they attended definitely did this. Only 15% of attendees left the exhibition not engaged and inspired.
- Seed thought the National Gallery facilitators were excellent.

“The facilitators were very good at the practical workshops, very good at managing large groups of people, very good at managing difficult people, very good at getting people to offer their own thoughts and opinions, very good at making people feeling valued. The talks were very easy to understand.”

The weaknesses of delivery were:

- The marketing and promotional materials arrived too late and were not well conceived.

“We had meetings with the National Gallery marketing team. There was a lot of back and forth and everything seemed to be fine. But the fliers that were delivered didn't reflect the discussion. They didn't relate to the area at all and didn't describe the specific activities that were being delivered. We had asked for 500 copies and received 5,000. Even with more time, we would not have been able to distribute this number because as a rural area we don't have a distribution system of this scale in place. We requested A1 posters to fit the space in the pop up shop and received A3 posters, which were too small for signage boards and far bigger than any local businesses would take.”

- The National Gallery provided a promotional poster for Keeper of Paintings that didn't mention Seed or the Engine Room and referred to the National Gallery vehicle, which had left by the time of the Engine Room installation. Furthermore, Seed was told it couldn't create its own poster using National Gallery assets or alter the one provided.

IMPACT AND LEGACY

The impacts and legacies so far are:

- Art Road Trip increased Seed's interest in the National Gallery collection.

“You take for granted things you are familiar with. But really looking at the paintings and seeing the impact they had on people who were seeing them for the first time was quite magical. These are great cultural assets of human history. They are extremely high quality, by master artists at the peak of their powers. They are historical documents. I am somebody who has spent a lot of time appreciating them and I don't think it is fair to our audience to dismiss the paintings because they are of or by old White men.”

“Art Road Trip is the only visual arts project we have done so far that hasn't been focused on contemporary arts. What we discovered is that while people don't bring it up in consultation, there is an appetite to engage with the more traditional art objects and practices.”

- Seed definitely feels it has a relationship with the National Gallery.

“We definitely feel we could make a call if there was something we wanted to explore with the National Gallery. It does feel as if the Art Road Trip has ended.”

- Seed used its CPP funding to take 25 people to the National Gallery in February 2025 to attend a guided tour from the education department.
- Seed has found places to display the 19 reproduction images provided by the National Gallery. Images will be up until at least April 2026 and Seed created a walking trail for them. Seed contributed £4,000 from its CPP budget for this, and Bridgwater Town Council donated £1,500.
- Having pictures to offer local businesses allowed Seed to start relationships with people it has not worked with before, who have since been willing to display Seed's event flyers and posters.
- One of the participants was a local artist who had not worked with Seed before, so Art Road Trip widened the organisation's pool of talent.
- Art Road Trip contributed to work re-imagining the Cornhill.

"One of the days at Cornhill, two young lads came past on their bikes and a family said they were known troublemakers. A few people told them to get lost. Five minutes later they were sat at the easel drawing and they were there for an hour. What struck me is that maybe they just wanted something to do. A local councillor popped in and I mentioned this incident to them."

- This was the first time Seed had organised a workshop environment outdoors. Previous workshops had been delivered in a venue. Previous workshops had been delivered in a venue. Art Road Trip inspired Seed to suggest workshop activities as part of the community led Front Garden Music Festival.
- Art Road Trip enabled Seed to devise a workshop using Keeper of Paintings, which it can deploy in future projects.
- Seed is committed to ensuring at least two local schools participate in Take One Picture or Articulation in 2025.

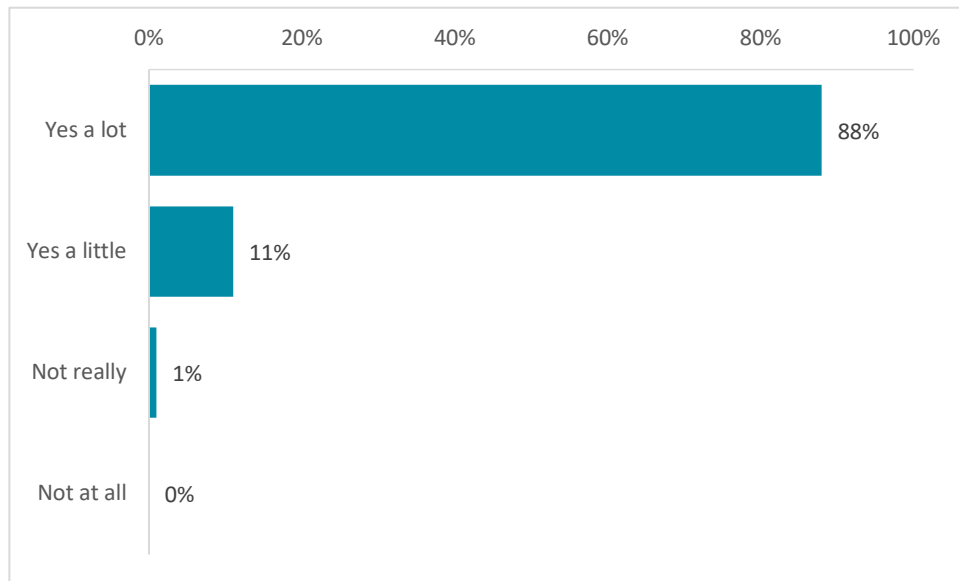
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

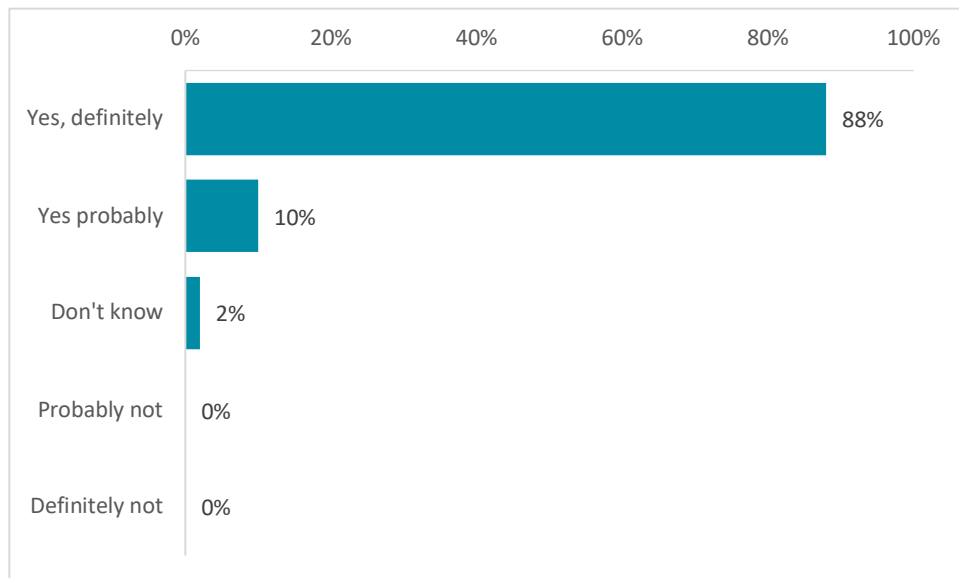
I have 79 responses.

QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

99% of participants said they enjoyed the workshops.

FIGURE 8: DID YOU ENJOY THE WORKSHOP?

98% of participants said the workshop was memorable.

FIGURE 9: WAS THE WORKSHOP MEMORABLE?

Participants were asked what they particularly liked about the activity. Comments had these themes:

- Enjoyment.

“Seeing my son’s creations making with others. Bringing something fun to Bridgwater.”

“Rather delightful. The pleasure of creating and observing the joy of others. Diverse community engaging in moments of creative calm.”

“I spent a lot of time being creative which is what I love to do.”

“The sense of welcoming quiet joy.”

“Seeing my son have fun.”

“Doing new things with my son and him being happy and occupied.”

- Inclusion.

“Interactive and creative.”

“Lots of different activities and opportunities to try new things.”

“The accessibility for both young and older children.”

“Being able to people watch and connect while being creative.”

“That all family members could participate.”

- Variety.

“Many different options, lovely staff, great vibes!”

“Different activities for children to try.”

“Being able to use different things to colour.”

“Lots of different materials available to use.”

- Learning.

“I learned how to paint. I am happy to do this. I was here for 4 hours.”

“Lovely explanation of paintings by Rachel Ruysch by your representative.”

“You are given space to create while also given the opportunity to talk about the gallery and the local area.”

“Freedom to play with colour.”

- The facilitators.

“The lovely people.”

- Sense of community.

“It brought people together in a creative way.”

- Impact on participants.

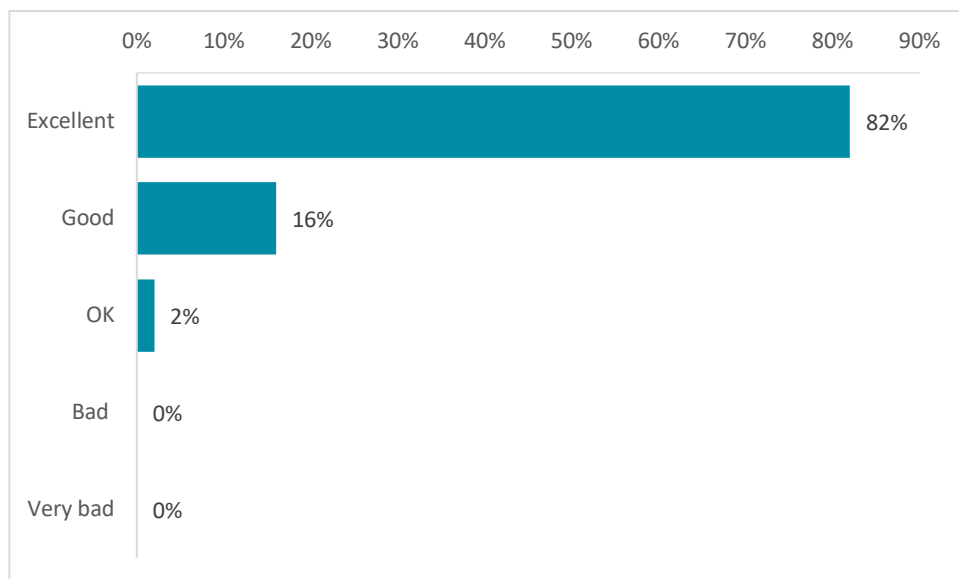
“It helps young people like my son to be more confident of what they’re doing and to express themselves through their art.”

Participants were asked what they thought should be changed about the Art Road Trip activity. Comments were:

- Nothing.
- More advertising.
- More materials.
- A different venue e.g., quieter.
- More seating.
- Longer workshops.
- Regular workshops.
- Background music.
- More information about paintings.

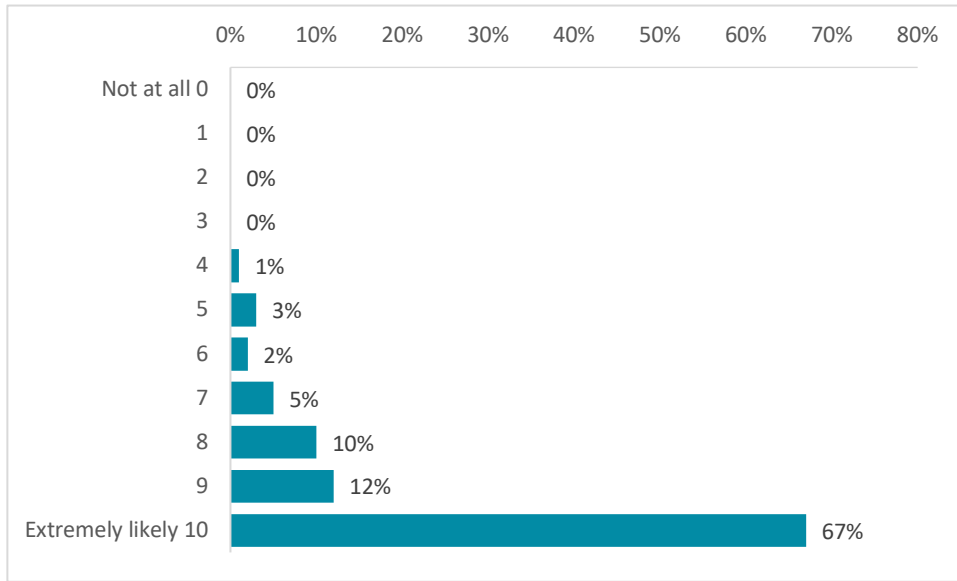
98% of participants rated the quality of the workshops as excellent or good.

FIGURE 10: PARTICIPANTS’ RATING OF THE QUALITY OF THE WORKSHOP



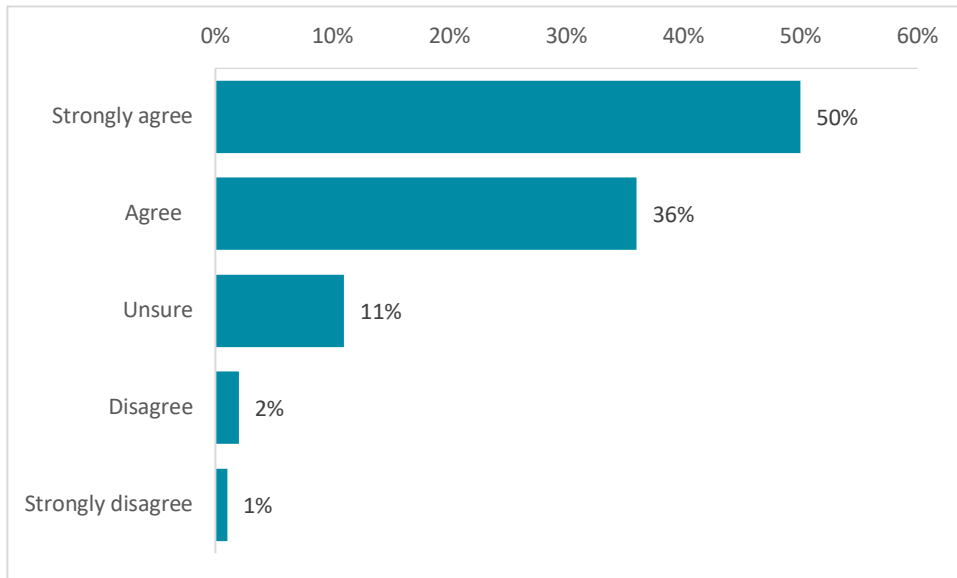
89% of participants said they were very likely to recommend the event to their friends and family – scoring 8-10 on a ten point scale.

FIGURE 11: HOW LIKELY, OUT OF 10, THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD RECOMMEND THE EVENT TO THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

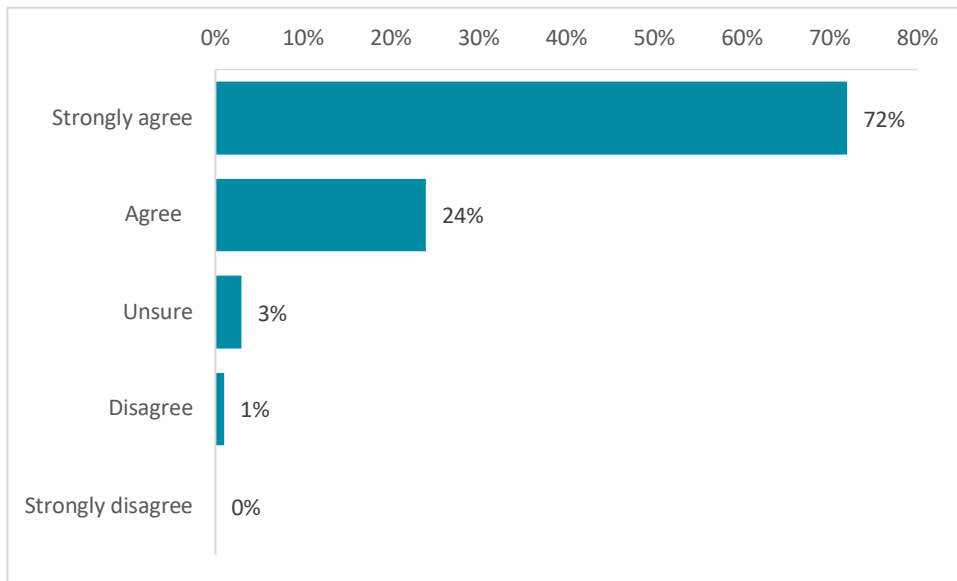


86% of participants said they thought about paintings in a different way after the workshop.

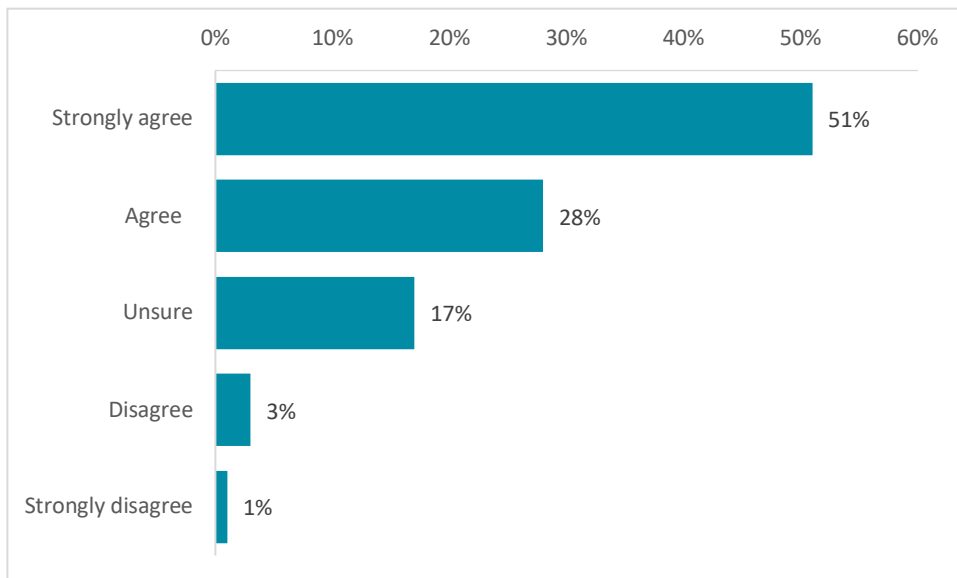
FIGURE 12: I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT PAINTINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY



96% of participants said they have tried something new that was creative.

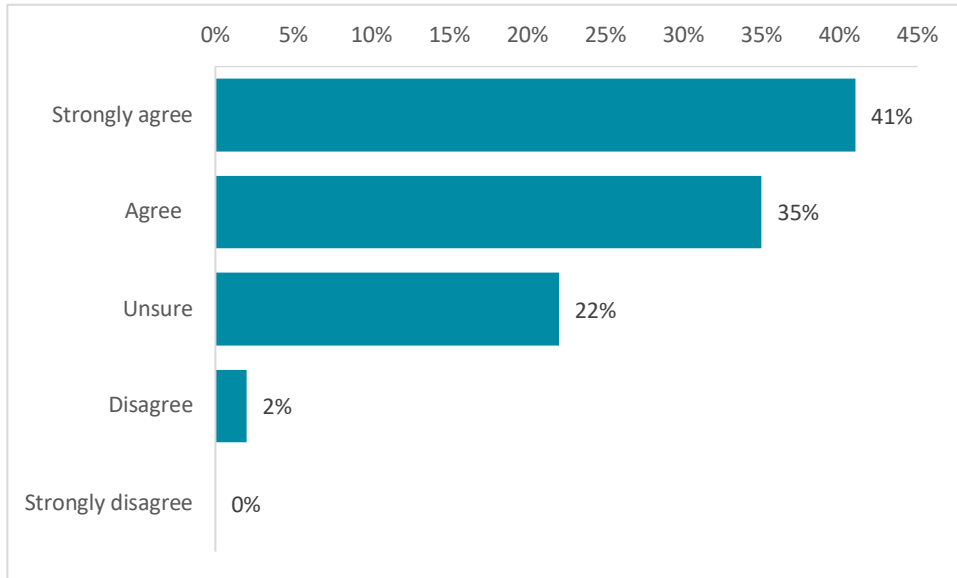
FIGURE 13: I TRIED SOMETHING NEW THAT WAS CREATIVE

79% of participants said Art Road Trip made them feel prouder of their local area.

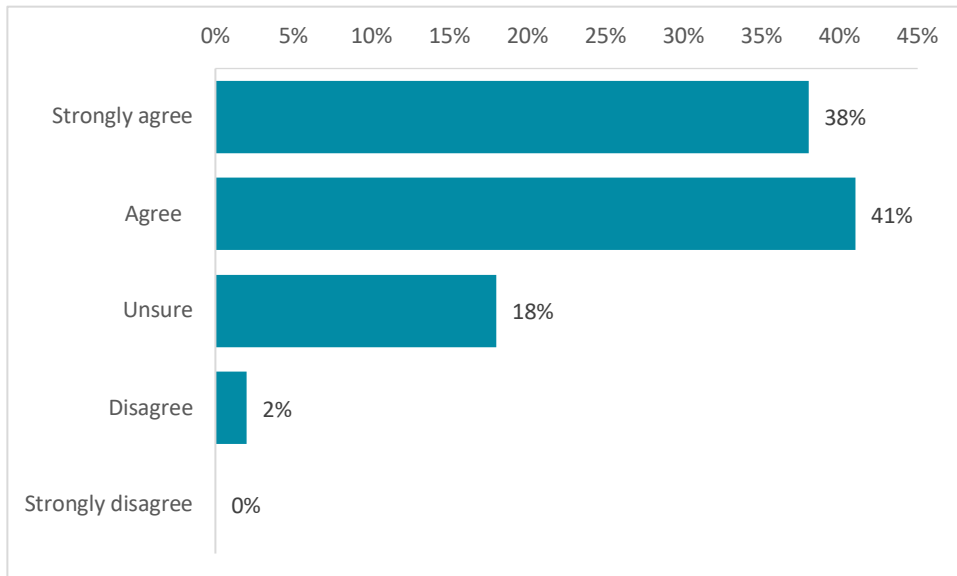
FIGURE 14: BECAUSE OF ART ROAD TRIP I FEEL PROUDER OF MY LOCAL AREA

CONNECTION TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY

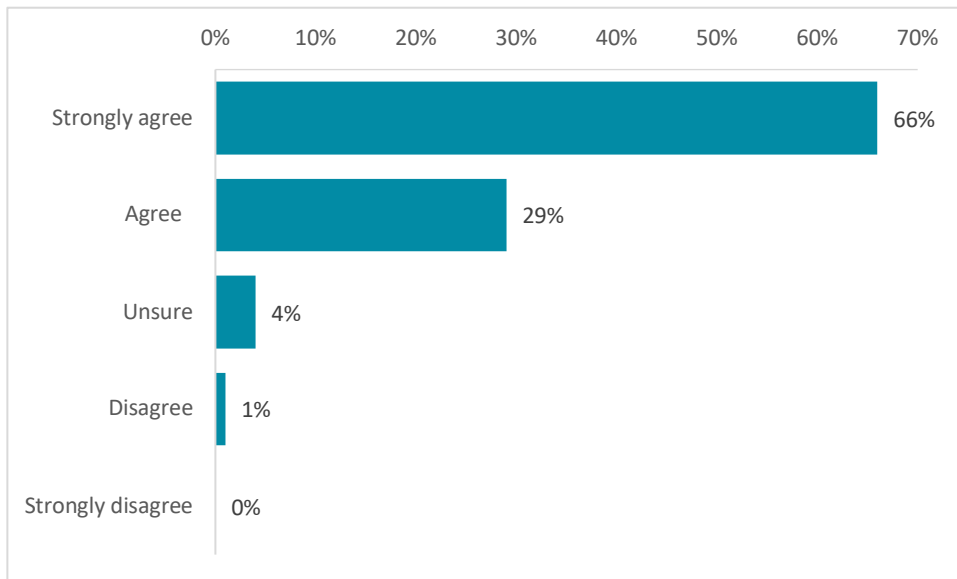
76% of participants said the National Gallery's paintings are relevant to their community.

FIGURE 15: THE NATIONAL GALLERY'S PAINTINGS ARE RELEVANT TO MY COMMUNITY

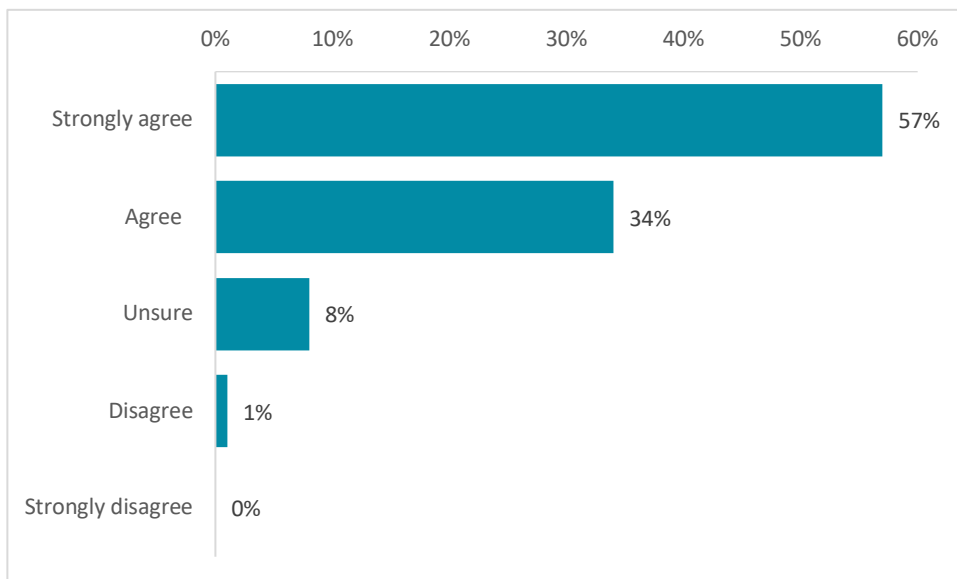
79% of participants said they feel a sense of connection to the National Gallery.

FIGURE 16: I FEEL A SENSE OF CONNECTION TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY

95% of participants said the National Gallery is for everyone in the UK.

FIGURE 17: THE NATIONAL GALLERY IS FOR EVERYONE IN THE UK

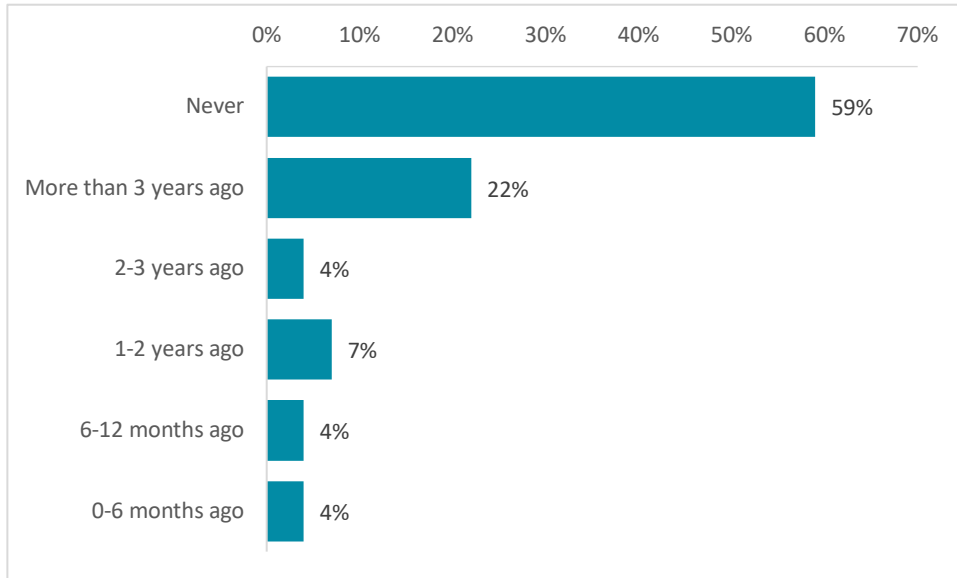
91% of participants said they want to do more things with the National Gallery.

FIGURE 18: I WANT TO DO MORE THINGS WITH THE NATIONAL GALLERY

BACKGROUND

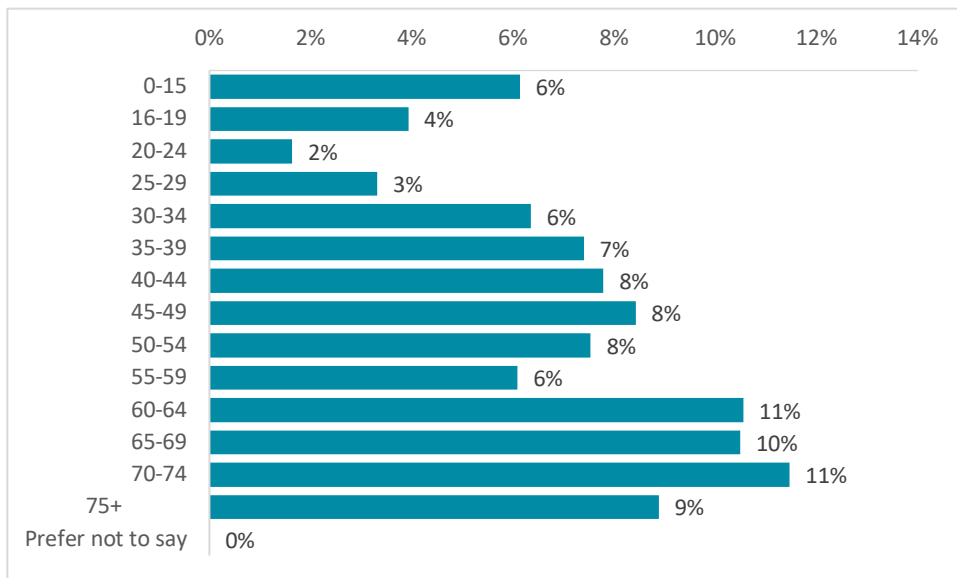
59% of participants have never visited the National Gallery.

FIGURE 19: PARTICIPANTS' VISITS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY

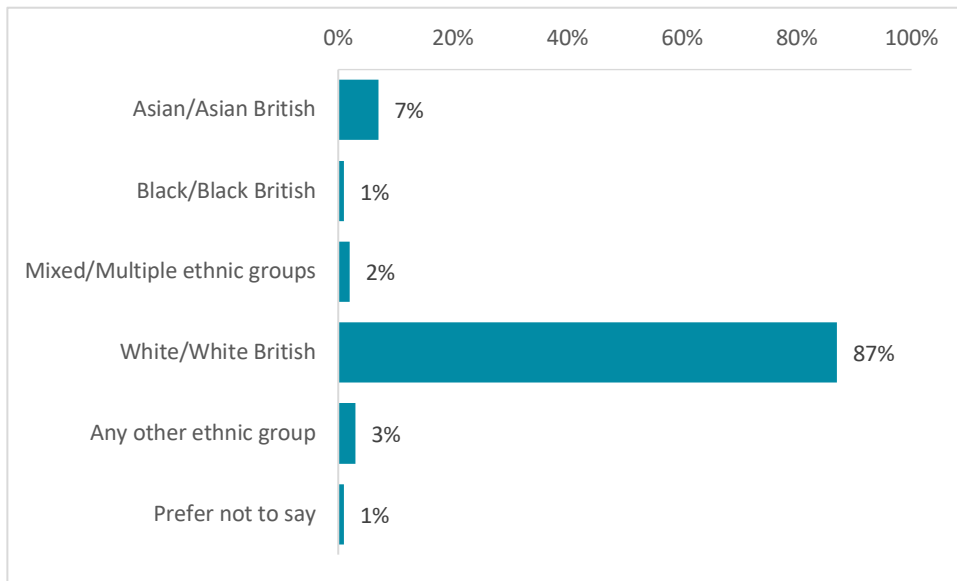


Participants are drawn from different age groups.

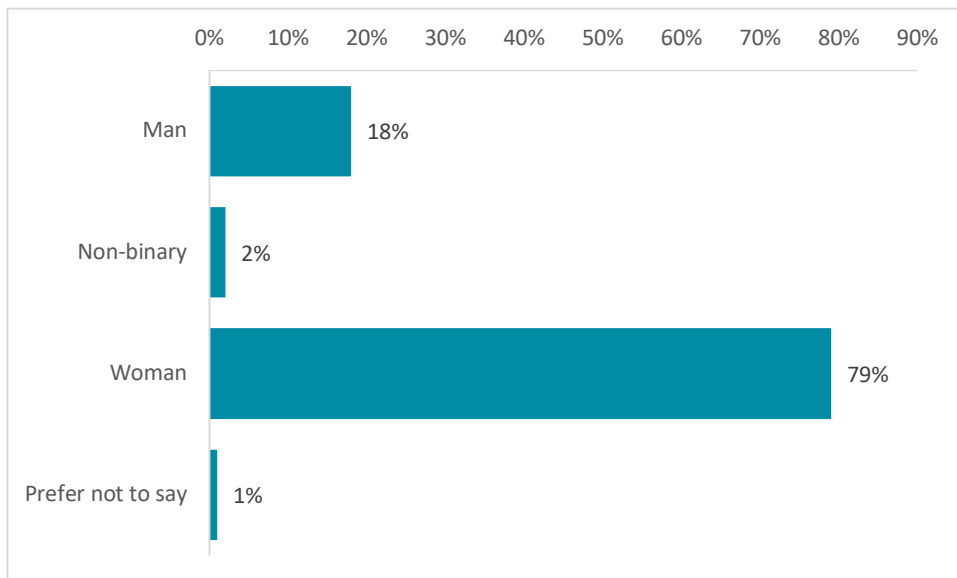
FIGURE 20: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS



13% of participants are Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, Mixed/multiple ethnic groups or another ethnic group.

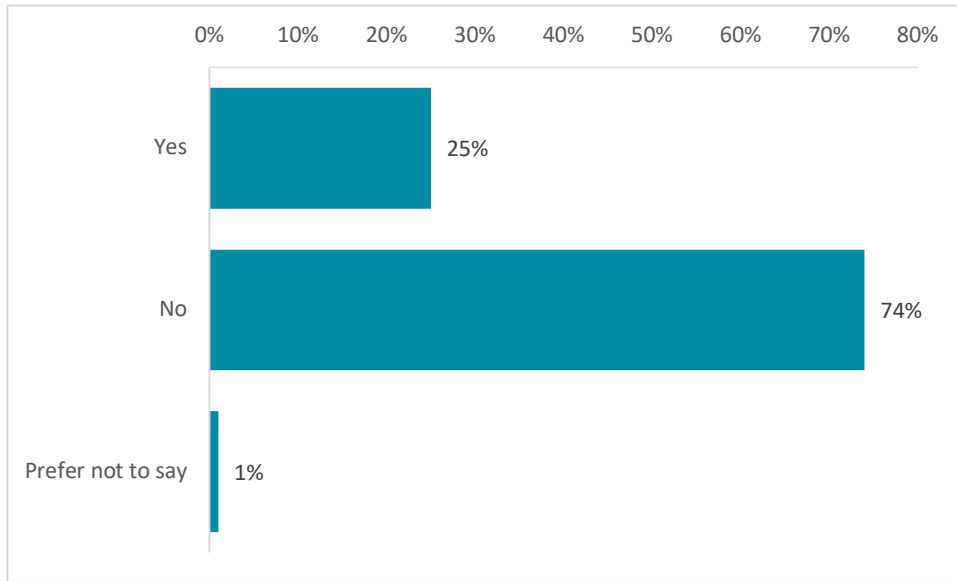
FIGURE 21: ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

79% of participants are female.

FIGURE 22: GENDER IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS

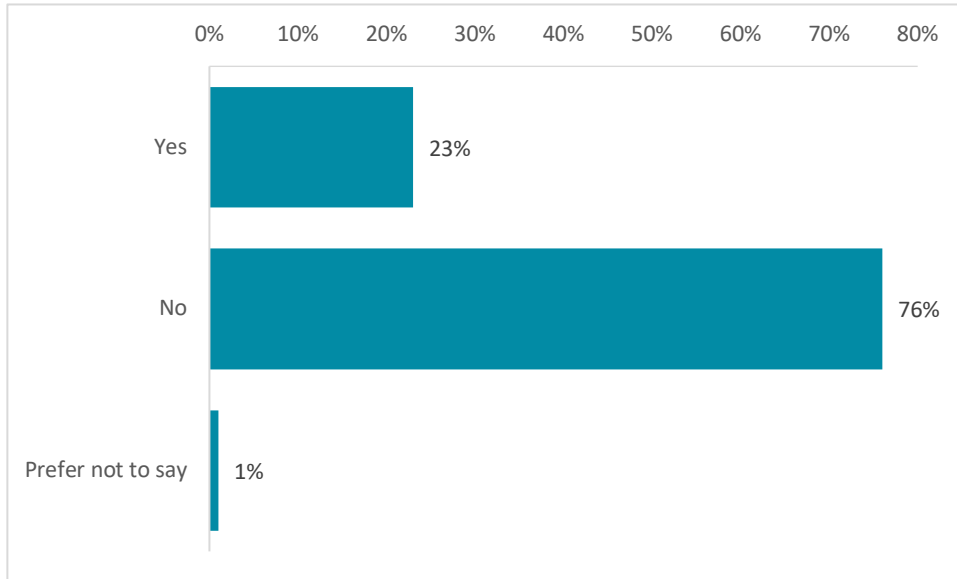
25% of participants identify as deaf or a disabled person or have a long term health condition.

FIGURE 23: DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A D/DEAF AND/OR A DISABLED PERSON OR HAVE A LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION?



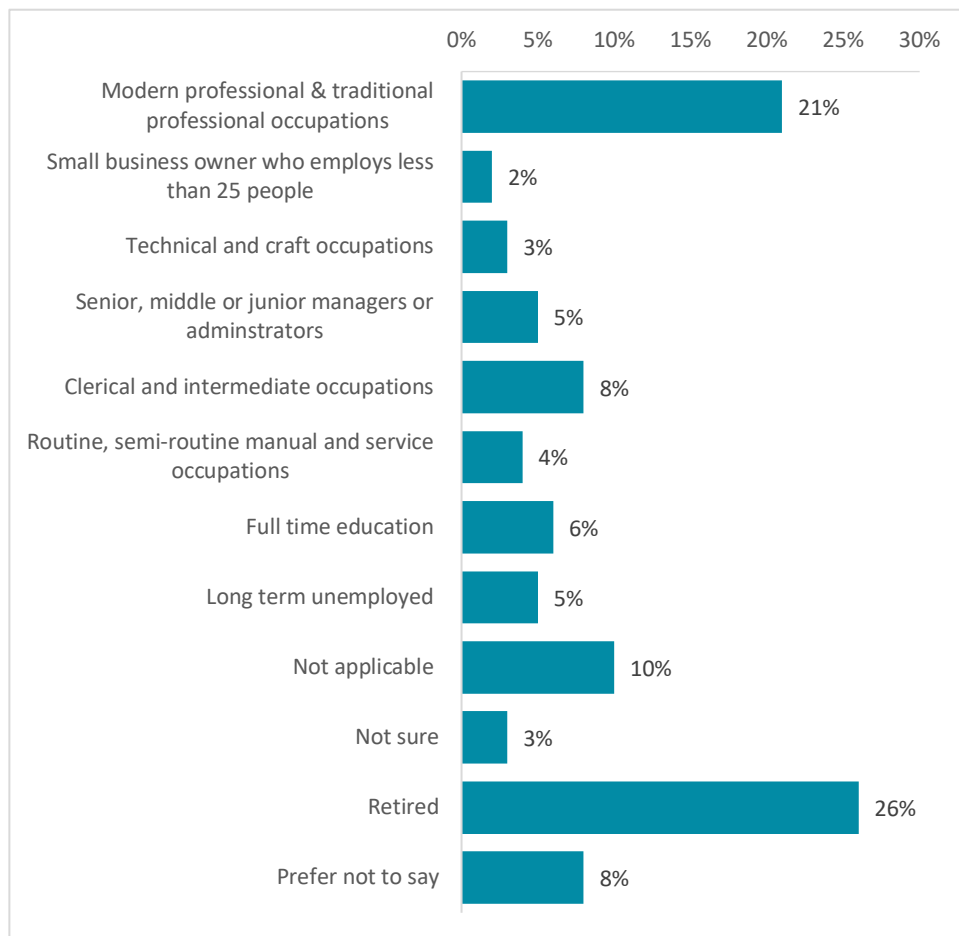
23% of participants identify as neurodivergent.

FIGURE 24: DO YOU IDENTIFY AS NEURODIVERGENT?



The occupation of participants is in part a reflection of the timing of the workshops.

FIGURE 25: OCCUPATION OF PARTICIPANTS



PROJECT CASE STUDY: BLUES IN THE PEWS DESCRIPTION

Blues in the Pews took place at St Johns Church in Highbridge and had two elements: Jam nights and workshops. This is the pattern of attendance.

FIGURE 26: ATTENDANCE 2021-2022

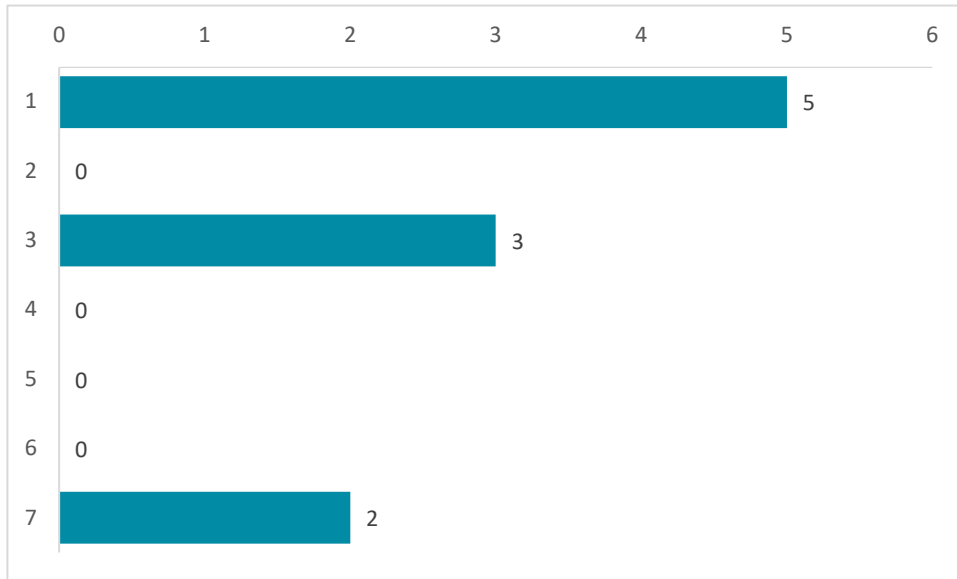
DATE	ESTIMATED AUDIENCE	NO. OF PERFORMER PARTICIPANTS (ESTIMATE)
JAM NIGHTS		
18 Sep 2021	70	10
23rd October	50	8
20 November	45	8
18th December	55	6
22 January 2022	70	11
26 February	65	9
26 March	70	12
23rd April	65	13
21st May	65	15
25 June	70	14
SCHOOL OF BLUES WORKSHOPS 21-22 MAY 2022		
	AUDIENCE	PARTICIPANT
Beginning Blues Guitar	15	15
Blues & Soul Vocals	20	20
Beginning blues Bass	4	4
Beginning blues Keyboards	3	3
Getting into Sound Engineering	9	9
Blues Drums	10	10
Guitar Masterclass - Ruzz Evans - 11 Jun 2022	18	16
Estimated TOTAL different participants - including workshops		70
Estimated TOTAL different participants - Jam Nights only		50

An estimated 50 people took part in Blues in the Pews Jam Nights.

FEEDBACK

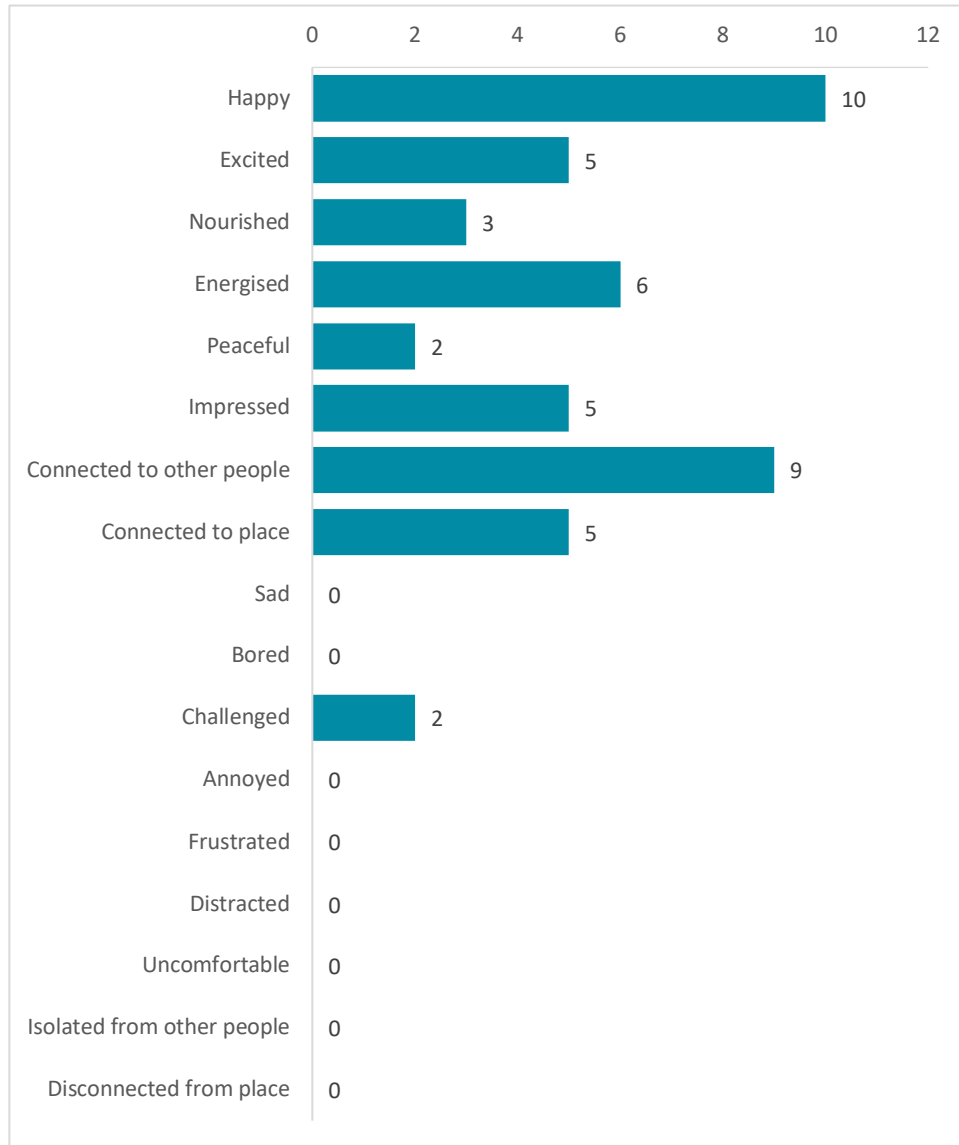
Ten people replied to our feedback survey, a mix of people who have been once and 3+ times.

FIGURE 27: HOW MANY BLUES JAM NIGHT SESSIONS HAVE YOU ATTENDED? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY



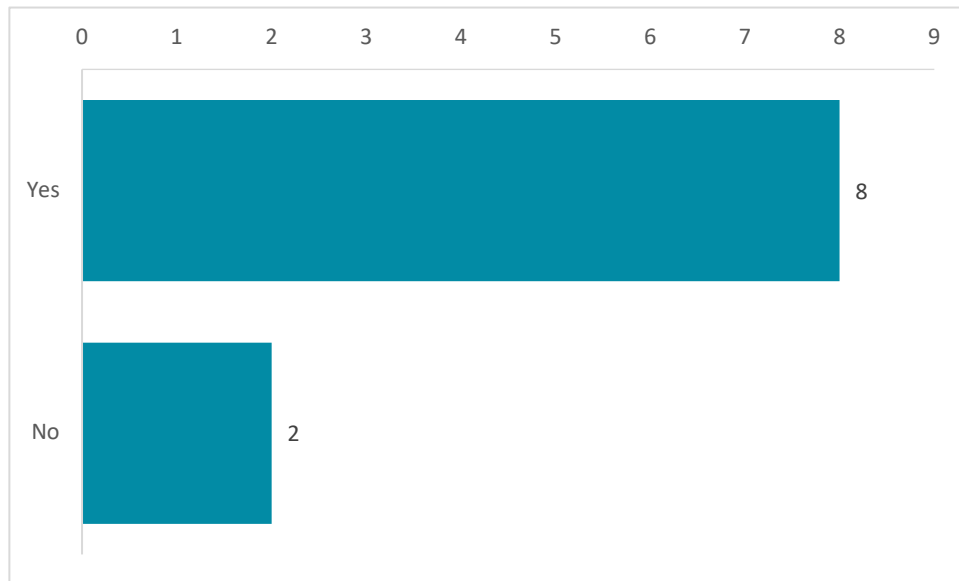
The main feelings from attending Blues Jam nights were being happy and connected to other people.

FIGURE 28: HOW DID YOUR PARTICIPATION IN BLUES JAM NIGHT SESSIONS MAKE YOU FEEL?



Eight of the ten said they had improvised musically in a group before, with one explaining this was at school. One of the two who had not improvised before said: "I thought it would be more scary."

FIGURE 29: HAD YOU EVER IMPROVISED MUSICALLY IN A GROUP BEFORE? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY AND ADD MORE



Participants said that improvising musically is special because of:

- Immersion in the music.

“You don’t think about anything else. Your fears disappear.”

“It is a unique headspace you get into where you are both composing as you play, but also listening and responding to what is around you - in terms of music, energy, audience response and more.”

- Sense of achievement or fulfilment.

“It is where I feel most myself as I can get lost in the music. It is my favourite thing to do. I can create with the tone. Also I can mix genres last time I improvised a 50’s / Elvis blues piece. It was good to see that the audience enjoyed it as I had created it for them as some of them like 50’s music.”

“For me, music is an external extension of the soul...that added to my love for people and humanity just feels magical and fulfilling.”

“Give freedom of expression.”

- Connection to other people.

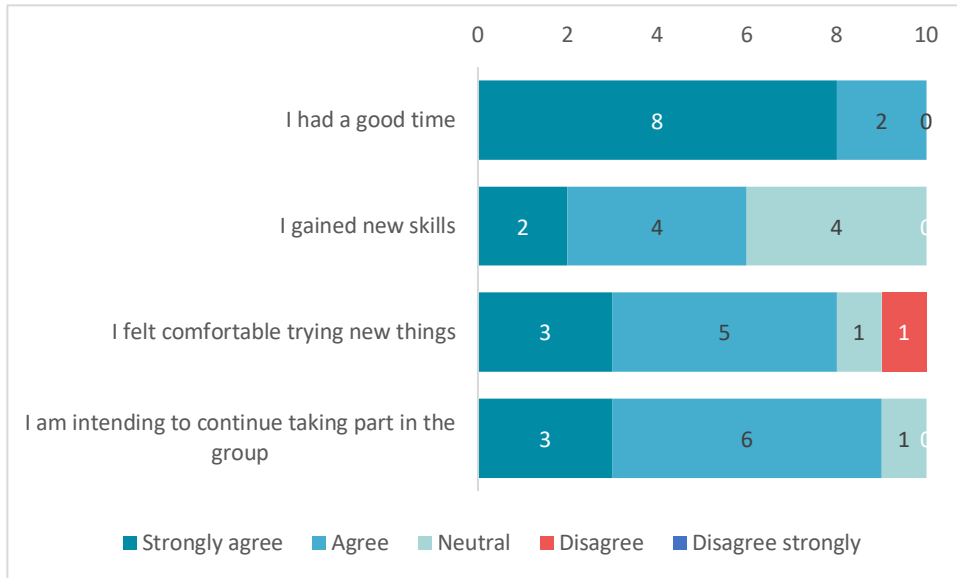
“Learning how to integrate with other musicians.”

“Connection to others. Freedom to create. Face fear of needing to get things right

“It’s a way of making a connection with other minds that you have no other connection to, and that is a unique feeling!”

All respondents said they had a good time. Nine people said they intend to continue with the group: one said the distance is too far to travel regularly. Eight said they felt comfortable trying new things.

FIGURE 30: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR ENGAGEMENT WITH BLUES IN THE PEWS?



“Blues has become a staple part of local calendars and I really hope it long continues.”

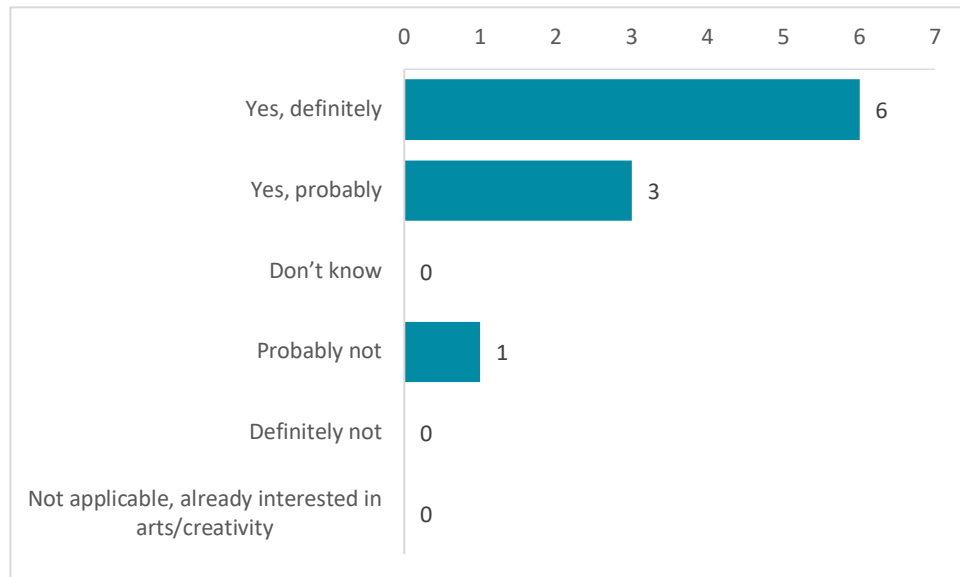
All respondents said they had mentioned Blues Jam nights to other people, which illustrates the way positive arts experiences filter through the community – the social multiplier. The average number of people each person contacted was six.

FIGURE 31: HAVE YOU MENTIONED BLUES JAM NIGHT (SESSIONS OR PERFORMANCES) TO ANYONE ELSE?



Nine of the ten said that Blues Jam nights excited them to take part in other arts events or creative activities.

FIGURE 32: OUR AIM WITH BLUES JAM NIGHT WAS TO EXCITE YOU ABOUT THE ARTS SO THAT YOU WANT TO TAKE PART IN OTHER CREATIVE ACTIVITIES, WHETHER WITH SEED OR ON YOUR OWN. DID WE ACHIEVE THIS?



We asked “What ideas do you have about places near you that need art, local people who need art, or situations than need more art? Art includes drawing, photography, sculpture, craft, theatre, music, musical theatre, opera, dance, film etc.” Responses were mainly building on the success of Blues in the Pews:

- “More music please.”
- “Blues workshops.”
- “A jazz jam would be great too.”
- “Free outdoor musical performances.”
- I think it would be excellent to create more venues and opportunities. I think the fact that the band at Blues in the Pews is so good musically and also very encouraging is a big factor for me. I also like the fact that xx is in charge as I know I am in a safe place where I am not judged. I have been to some art classes as I enjoy writing and drawing but can’t always find a safe place. I would enjoy going out more. The Blues in the Pews is the only place that I have been to in 3 months other than being with my family at home.”
- “There is a big local musician and art fraternity in and around Highbridge/Burnham, I think anything that brings people together on both a regular and special basis is great..the Front Garden stuff is great. Burnham’s Manor Gardens has had a great following for events in the summer over the years, it would be great to see Highbridge Rec get that same following.”
- “Also, regular, non ‘cringy’ stuff for teens/young adults to do would be great, there is nothing locally for this group if people...the bitter disappointment of the YMCA not being

a local young people 'hang out' hub is not what local people imagined when they welcomed it."

- "Need here is a strong word. As an artist, I totally agree that the arts are needed, but Joe Public doesn't always see it like this. Make art visible, part of everyday life. Accessible. Take it out. Embed it in routine. Make it affordable, but valued and appreciated. Start young and make it as important as literacy, Maths, PE. Enable ALL to see themselves as artists, creative."

PROJECT CASE STUDY: LONELINESS PROJECT

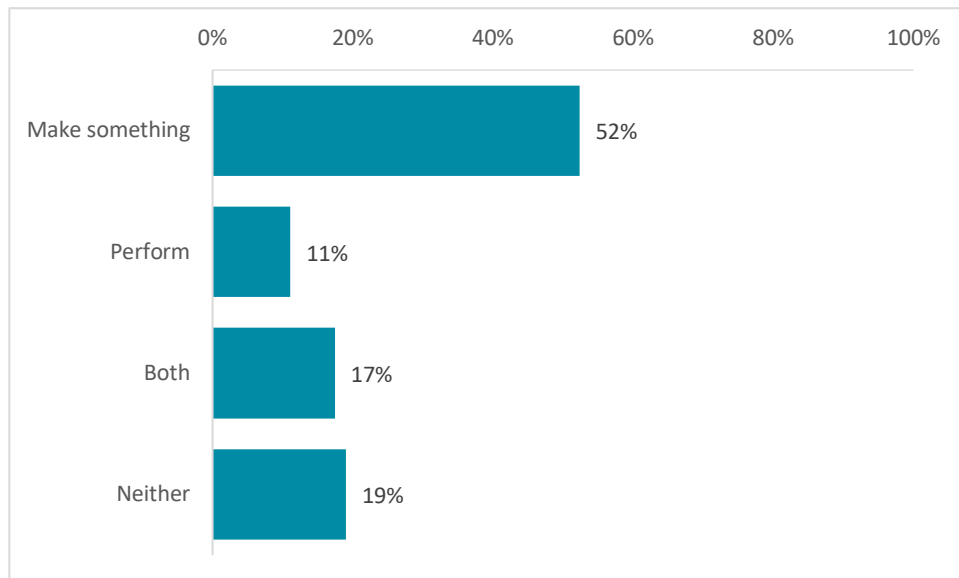
INTRODUCTION

We created a survey to stimulate thought about the range of possibilities. This was designed specifically for SEED with the idea of understanding more about personal preferences in terms of how projects would work, without expecting respondents to already know exactly what types of creative activities they would like. The team publicised the survey link through its partners specially targeting people who are shielding or do not have access to a computer or the Internet. I have 63 responses.

PREFERENCES

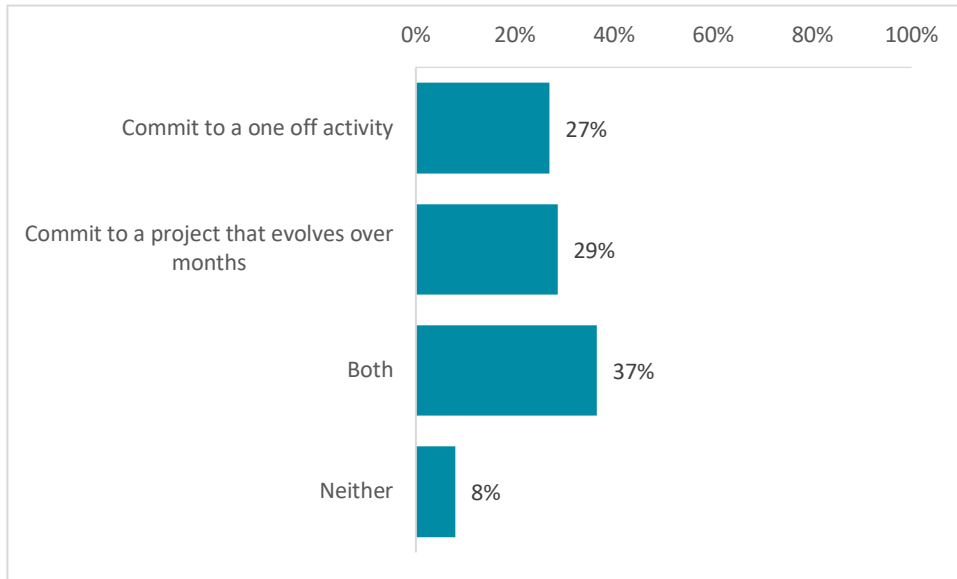
52% of respondents would rather make something.

FIGURE 33: WOULD YOU RATHER MAKE SOMETHING OR PERFORM?



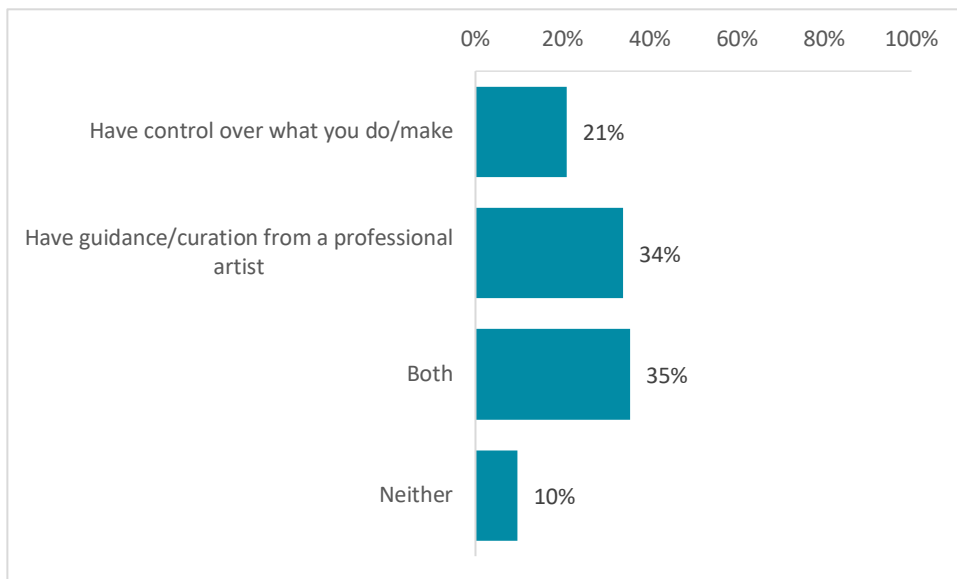
Respondents are fairly evenly balanced between those who would prefer one off and ongoing projects, and 37% would like both.

FIGURE 34: WOULD YOU RATHER COMMIT TO A ONE OFF ACTIVITY OR TO A PROJECT THAT EVOLVES OVER MONTHS?

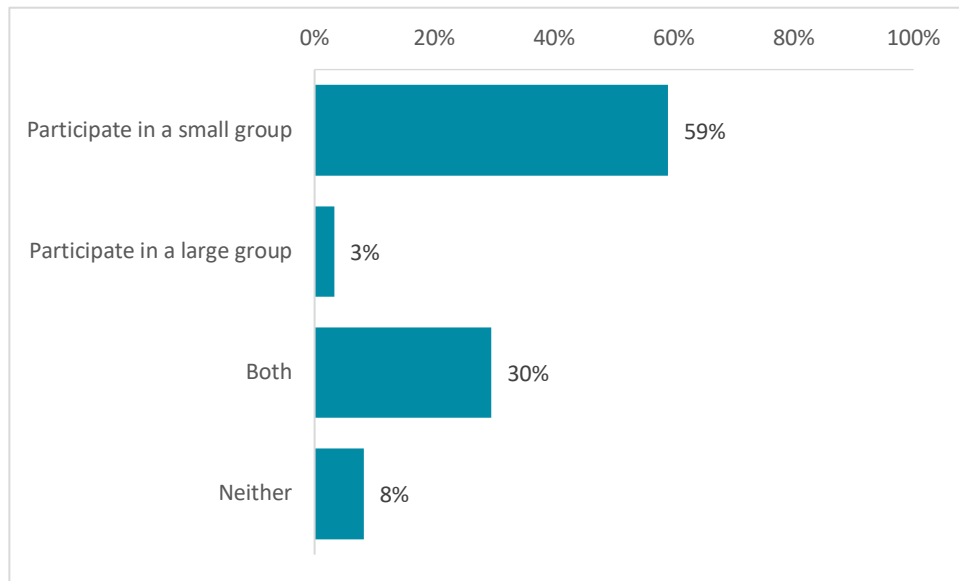


69% of respondents would like guidance/direction from a professional artist.

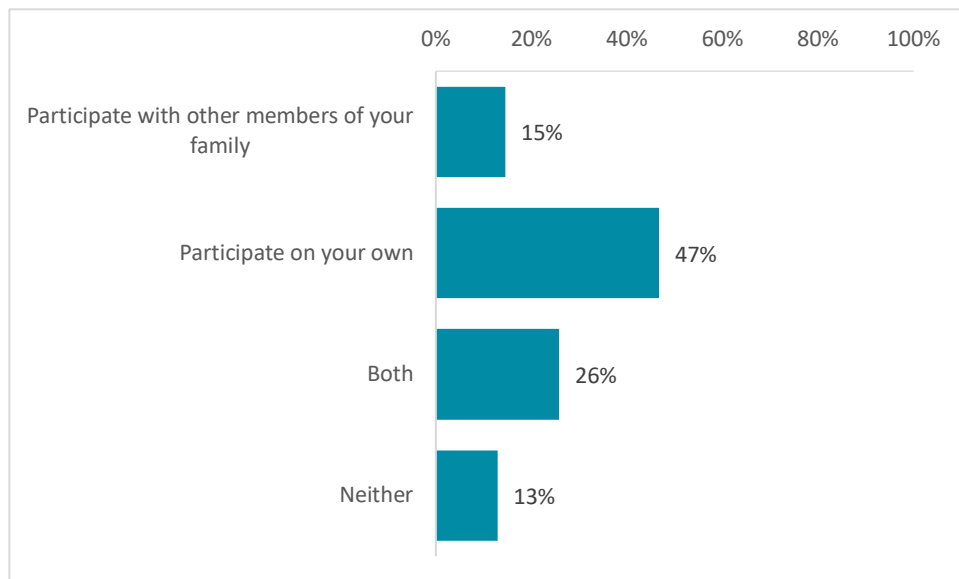
FIGURE 35: WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE CONTROL OVER WHAT YOU DO/MAKE OR HAVE GUIDANCE/DIRECTION FROM A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST?



59% of respondents would prefer to take part in a small group.

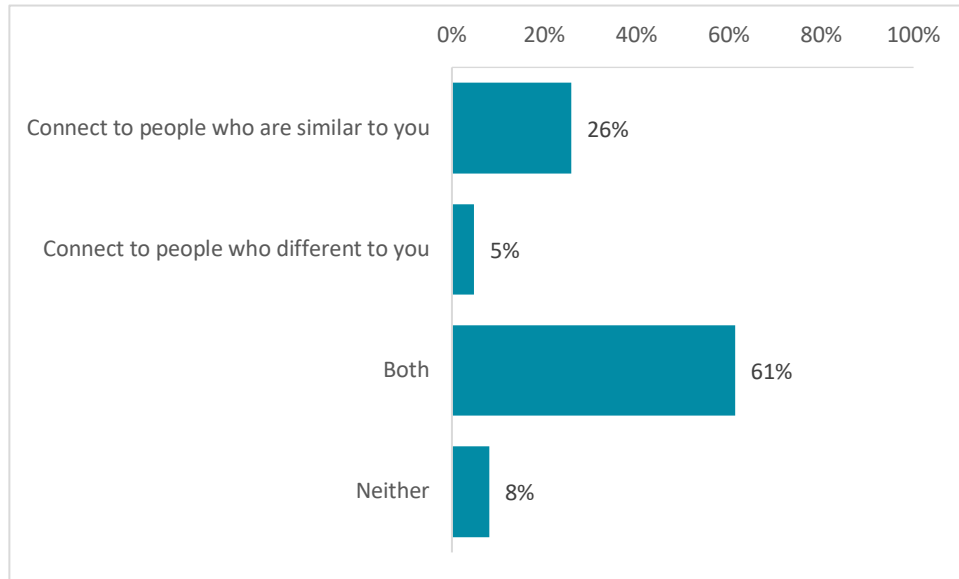
FIGURE 36: WOULD YOU RATHER PARTICIPATE IN A SMALL GROUP OR A LARGE GROUP?

47% of respondents would prefer to participate on their own rather than with other members of their family.

FIGURE 37: WOULD YOU RATHER PARTICIPATE WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY OR ON YOUR OWN?

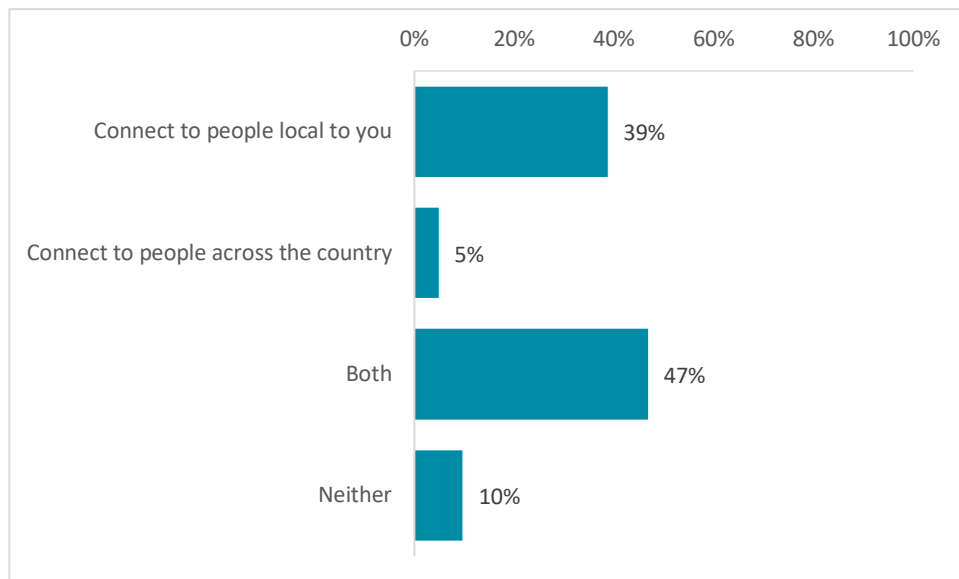
61% of respondents would like to connect to people who are similar and different to them.

FIGURE 38: WOULD YOU RATHER CONNECT TO PEOPLE WHO ARE SIMILAR TO YOU OR DIFFERENT TO YOU?

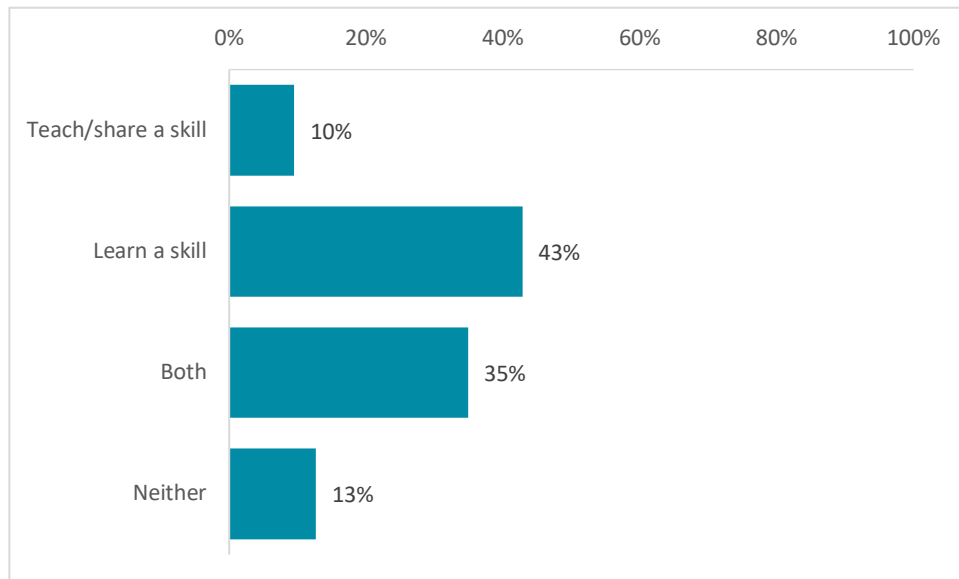


39% of respondents would rather connect to people local to them, although an additional 47% would like to connect to people across the country as well.

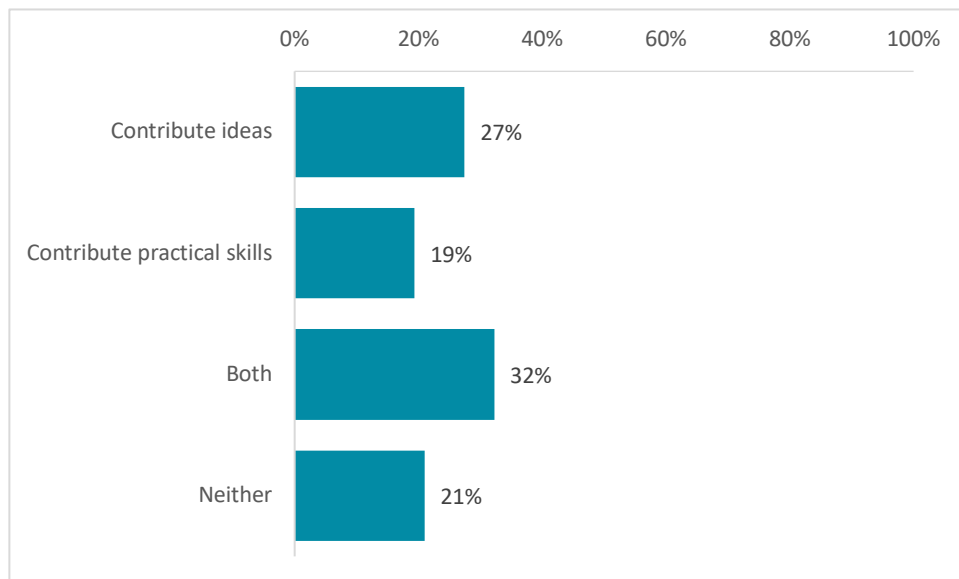
FIGURE 39: WOULD YOU RATHER CONNECT TO PEOPLE LOCAL TO YOU OR ACROSS THE COUNTRY?



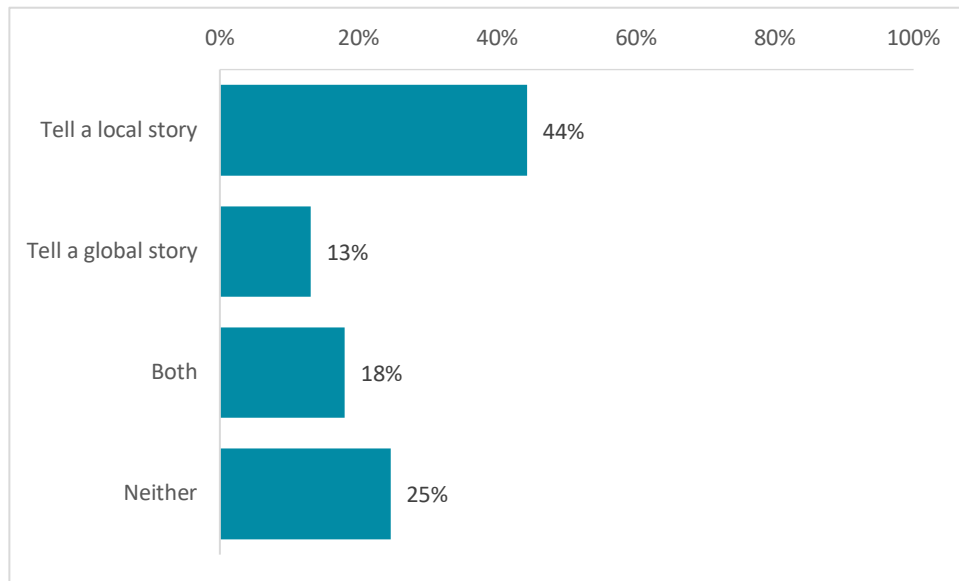
78% of respondents would like to learn a skill, but 45% would also like to share a skill, which reinforces the picture from the previous evaluation of a population with a high base level of existing interest in creativity and skills.

FIGURE 40: WOULD YOU RATHER TEACH/SHARE A SKILL OR LEARN A SKILL?

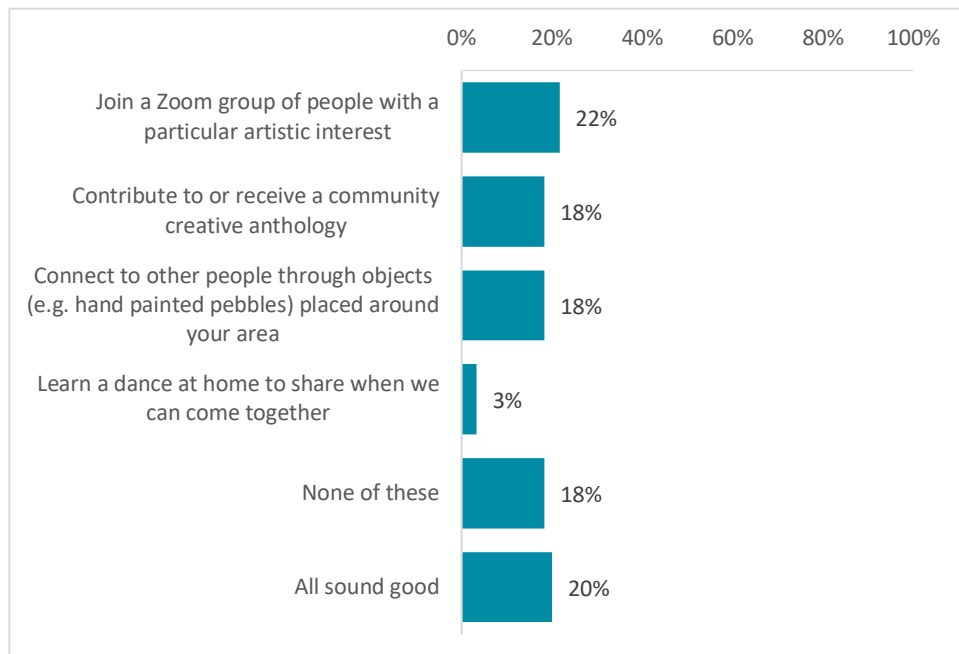
59% of respondents would like to contribute ideas, and 51% would like to contribute practical skills.

FIGURE 41: WOULD YOU RATHER CONTRIBUTE IDEAS OR CONTRIBUTE PRACTICAL SKILLS?

62% of respondents would like to tell a local story.

FIGURE 42: WOULD YOU RATHER TELL A LOCAL STORY OR A GLOBAL STORY?

There is reasonable support for each of the options except the dance.

FIGURE 43: WHICH OUT OF THESE FOUR OPTIONS WOULD YOU PREFER?

PLACES NEEDING ART

We asked respondents: “What ideas do you have about places near you that need art, local people who need art, or situations than need more art? Art includes drawing, photography, sculpture, craft, theatre, music, musical theatre, opera, dance, film etc.” The specific suggestions given were:

- Sea wall and Esplanade in Burnham on Sea, the Apex River Brue coastal walk, the town centre of Highbridge - historical street performers or similar (ie Victorian age), would be

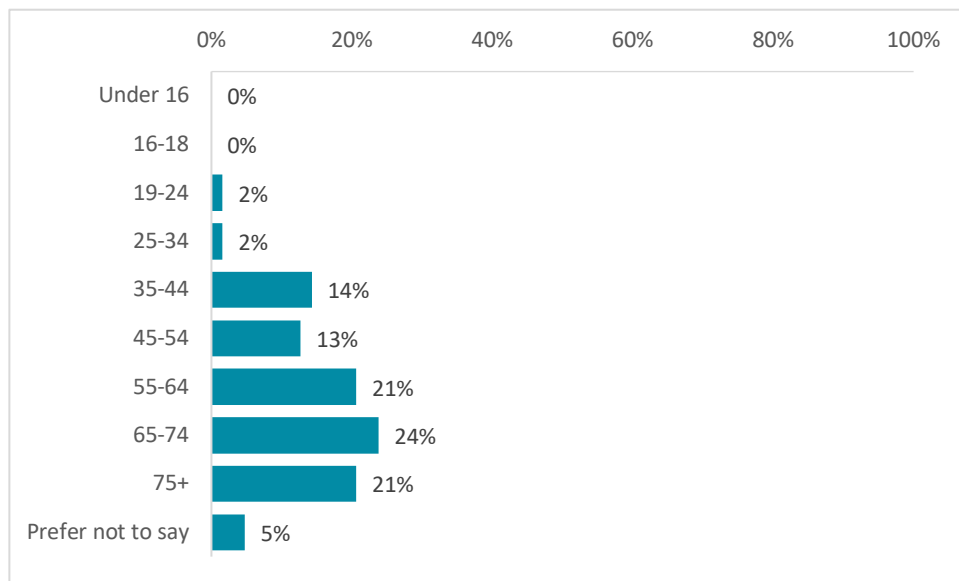
interested in a Bayeux Tapestry type project using recycled plastic for the outdoors, creating a memory of what has happened during the past year, but giant scale, using plants to create an image, static sculptures on benches that can be graffitied and painted over, more music i.e. pianos to use in public places, etc.

- I'd love to see a lot more street art in Bridgwater, like we see in Bristol. Sculpture could be good, too. And small urban landmarks, like the Carrot in Weston.
- Housing estates need brightening up and involve local people. Address equality, access and listen. Adapt create and design art works in response to place. Walk, talk, design, make, perform the piece. Use hybrid model of practice to connect live and digital space. Opportunity to combine multi art forms to respond to challenges of our times.
- In Bridgwater, mural painting in Eastover facing Asda, railway station car park. Idea of creating virtual carnival using projections on local buildings.. illuminations... telling stories on the buses, singing in public places.. lots of ideas!
- Everywhere needs art! Art can affect people in different ways. Rural areas have less going on.. maybe zoom groups could be started in local areas connecting people that don't know each other, then after lockdown meet in person.
- Crochet- happy to show people how do it.
- Walks local environment canal side river side local parks.
- Everywhere needs art, we need freedom of expression and to nurture all tastes and styles to be allowed.
- A Bayeux tapestry type thing about the history of Bridgwater? With sewing, knitting and crochet? The Docks need more art.
- As a creative artist, I am interested in showcase the environment, so people have a better understanding of the impact on the nature world, like using Recycled materials for art, getting groups to take part.
- Everyone needs art in every form. We need theatre desperately here.
- Where people walk and will see it. Near local independent shops that have kept us all going this last year. As a thank you. Avoid the gorge.
- The food festival has applied for funding to support a plan air activity this year - might be worth connecting with them?
- It will be great when venues are open again so people can meet for all the above
- Bridgwater Docks needs either a good art work or sculpture
- Yarn bombing is a great way to brighten up an area and can include many participants.
- Combining writing with drawing/painting centred on the locale.
- I like being part of creating theatre or film projects that involve writing and photography.
- Big colourful events that take over and then disappear.
- Being able to get out with a camera and tell the story of where you are is a really enhancing way of being outside
- Share music, song writing ideas and techniques
- Inspirational examples of the arts are woefully lacking locally as is an appropriate venue.
- Perhaps a cafe with art classes like the Crafty Teacup in Burnham. They do or did all sorts of activities & cook lovely meals for you.

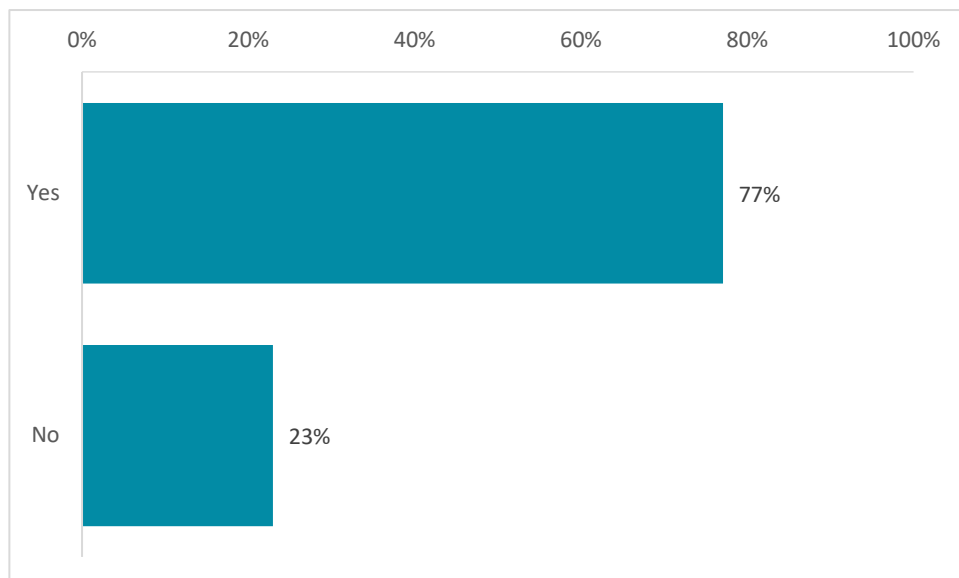
- The Art centre, the college, all the community centres. Funding is the problem.
- Medical facilities. Outdoor spaces.
- Community projects for all ages.
- Everyone can benefit from art - the process of creation is therapeutic.
- It would be lovely to have the high street of Bridgwater filled with artists and makers in the redundant shop windows, giving the spaces life again and having drop in sessions for people to access and be creative.
- it would be great to make a pieces of art which could become part of urban furniture, such as bust stops, town halls etc.
- I feel we need things to be brought together in Cheddar.
- The Christmas lights idea was wonderful. Something like that.
- There are several areas in Highbridge that could be lit up with art work. The awful old wall by the YMCA, the wooden hoardings by Asda abs in bank street car park.
- It would be good to discover what gifts the people in my local community have to share with one another by meeting together. We hope to be able to start a film club this year.
- Highbridge:- buskers and street performers in a market setting to encourage usage and to help remove the feeling of boredom and "going nowhere" that is ingrained in our community. Outdoor cinema. Rock event similar to that in Bridgwater (Burnham on sea used to have one), orchestral/classical music summer evening open air with champagne and strawberries, possibly in Apex or the Highbridge recreation ground. Local parade of arts like a day time carnival feel. A pantomime society that practice and perform on the Highbridge community centre much like other towns and villages have. A music festival similar to places like Sidmouth. Wouldn't it be cool if Highbridge became known as a place where art was free flowing on the streets and had a feeling of we can do anything rather than we are stuck doing nothing!
- As soon as legal, open air music and drama in Blake Gardens.

BACKGROUND

Respondents vary in age.

FIGURE 44: AGE

77% of respondents have access to a computer and the Internet, suggesting that more work might be needed to reach a wider group.

FIGURE 45: DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPUTER AND THE INTERNET?

50% of respondents asked to sign up to SEED's mailing list to hear about other local creative projects and events, and left their email addresses. I have passed on the individual data.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

HIGHBRIDGE HUB

INTRODUCTION

I interviewed seven people who had been involved in the Highbridge Hub as local community members, residents, local businesses and/or artists.

CORRINNE CURTIS

Corrinne is an early career theatre producer. The Highbridge/Burnham area has always been home for her. She went to London to study European Theatre Arts before moving back.

Corrinne had long been aware of the story of the Nornen – a ship that went down in 1897 and is still visible on the Berrow mud flats. She thought it would make a good stage play because it is a positive story: local people rescued every member of the crew - and their dog.

Corrinne thought that involving local people in each stage of the project would break down the barriers that stop them engaging with theatre. The question was how to go about it. Corrinne is an experienced actor and puppeteer, but was new to producing and community engagement.

“I believe passionately that everyone should access professional theatre. In Highbridge, people tend not to go to the theatre because they think it is for posh people. I think people should have high quality theatre on their doorstep. They shouldn't have to travel.”

Corrinne approached Seed and was encouraged to continue with the project. She submitted an outline project application and then a more detailed plan. Getting feedback helped her refine her ideas. The whole approach was refreshing because she felt that she could tailor the project to the area, rather than having to mould it around funders' objectives.

Access has been embedded in the project with: free transport, free food and no ticket price. All activities had a breakout space for those with sensory processing disorders, anxiety or Autism. All venues were step-free. British Sign Language has been integrated into the telling of the story. In the R&D phase, Corrinne worked with two deaf consultants and 11 BSL interpreters.

“British Sign Language is such an evocative, expressive language. It helps convey the story not just for those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, but for the whole audience.”

Corrinne started by delivering two local history talks, a theatre-making workshop and two youth theatre workshops, all of which were very well attended. One theatre making workshop was cancelled because of low bookings, presumably because of the timing during the pandemic. Corrinne was very appreciative of the support from Seed, who agreed that she should cancel the event and direct her time to activities where the community interest was strong. All the way through this process, the project engaged people who wouldn't usually be interested in theatre. Over, 115 local people participated in the R&D phase of the project.

“All the way through, we were asking local people how they want to tell the story.”

The next stage was a two-week rehearsal period at The Princess Theatre and Arts Centre with professional actors and two days of behind-the-scenes workshops with local people. The process explored key characters and story elements, incorporated information and ideas from community participants, considered the role of the community cast, visited the wreck of the Nornen, met the local RNLI team, experimented with different styles of BLS integration, played with possible structures for the show, explored how music could be used alongside ensemble storytelling and created cardboard puppets as props.

FIGURE 46: PHOTO OF THE NORNEN BY BEN COSTIGAN



Participants were enthusiastic about the show, which showed Corrinne that she was on the right track and would have an audience. Involving the community changed the narrative of the play somewhat: participants were particularly interested in the people and the relationships. They also provided practical knowledge. For example, in one of the scenes, an actor was improvising trying to rescue the captain and a participant called out: “That isn’t how you throw a rope!” and then stood up to show the actor how to do it correctly. Another member of the audience showed the actors how to steer a ship. And an ex- sea faring pilot brought

out a map to show the cast how far the rescue team would have had to travel. Audience reaction was particularly effusive for the physical theatre elements so Corrinne moved away from the idea of a written script towards having a more physical devising process. This will also allow community members to join the cast and create their own characters.

Corrinne realised that local people varied widely in their preferred involvement in the show so she has designed the next stage of the community element for maximum flexibility. Local people will be able to be in the community cast, make some objects for the set, or attend build up activities for the show.

Seed’s funding of £4,532 helped Corrinne to obtain Arts Council England Access and Project funding, as well as small amounts from Sedgemoor District Council, Burnham-On Sea and Highbridge Town Council, Princess Theatre and Arts Centre, the BARN Growth Fund, Taunton Brewhouse and two small foundations. The total budget for the R&D stage was £48,693.

The whole project has been a powerful learning experience for Corrinne. She developed her skills in managing a team. She learnt to slow down her practice to collaborate with the deaf team. She learnt how to manage a large project budget.

The project has helped local people appreciate their history. Corrinne worked with Capture Burnham, whose research is presented [here](#). Through the project, Corrinne has been in contact with the sea faring association from the town the board came from (Brevik) and was

told the names of the people who were in the boat. One of the descendants of the survivors from the shipwreck is planning to come to the show.

“I felt that we, as an audience, have been treated with a lot of care and attention to put us at ease, and made to feel very welcome.” Comment from participant

The next stage will develop the production. Corrinne has formed a company and is planning another programme of community engagement, including History and Drama workshops in schools. The plan is to have performances in Marine Cove Gardens in Burnham-On-Sea and an exhibition of photographs documenting the show and the historical research carried out for the project. The Princess Theatre is an important partner in the project and has offered help with ticketing, marketing, training and managing volunteers, and front of house. Corrinne has applied for funding from Arts Council England and National Heritage Lottery Fund. She already has the promise of matching funding from the local councils. The planned performance timing is August 2023.

“The first phase of the project has shown that the production is feasible, is wanted, and will have a legacy beyond the life of the show.”

Corrinne isn't being paid for her role in taking the project to the next stage. She supports herself with two jobs as front of house in a theatre and a support worker in a national charity.

As well as giving advice and support throughout the project, Seed has helped Corrinne by putting her in touch with local organisations and artists, so she now has a network of friends and collaborators, including people who have written letters of support for her funding applications.

Corrinne definitely thinks that Highbridge feels a more creative place because of Seed. Corrinne goes past Create You most days, which gives a visible sign of change.

“Highbridge feels more upbeat and it hasn't been upbeat for a long time. The arts give a spark of life that feels exciting.”

SARAH BERRYMAN

Sarah has always been an artist, although her work opportunities have been limited by her long-term caring responsibilities. As a mature student, she self-funded a degree in Contemporary Art and Professional Studies at Weston Super Mare University, affiliated to Bath Spa University.

Sarah first encountered Seed through Create You, a small independent craft business and shop in Highbridge, where she is a volunteer. Her first impression was that: “it was nice to encounter enthusiastic people who were able to get things done.”

Create You led on the Glowhome project. Sarah had already worked on another community projects that had created a sculpture trail. The idea for the art packs was agreed with Seed and funding was provided. Sarah sourced all the materials and made up the arts packs. At one stage during the Glowhome project, half the space in Create You was taken up by arts packs!

FIGURE 47: GLOWLANTERN FROM SOPHIA CAMPBELL

The success of the Glowhome project led to a second project, Glow Lanterns. Sarah suggested paper lanterns because paper is safer, cheaper and easier to store than glass jars. As well as the paper bags which local people decorated, Create You worked with one of the schools to create some big panels. Create You distributed 500 lanterns and had enough demand for another 200! Burnham joined the project in the middle and wanted half the lanterns, which caused a bit of resentment locally.

As well as a shop selling the work of local artists, Create You runs groups which meet weekly, workshops for children and workshops for adults. Groups tend to have 25-30 participants each week and pay £6-9. Adult workshops vary from one to ten participants with a cost that

depends on the artform and cost of materials. The Seed projects have raised the profile of the shop: the Create You logo was on all publicity. Everyone knows about it, but the engagement is only sustained for activities that are free. For example, Create You ran a whole day of Halloween parties, which reconnected with people who had attended the two projects.

Sarah found the collaboration with Seed really helpful in enabling her to put the learning from her degree into practice. She said she learnt that she is not as organised as she thought! Feedback from Seed helped her clarifying her thinking so she is now more confident in applying for funding.

Sarah feels that Seed has engaged strongly with the local community. The team make an effort to be visible and to talk to people and that makes a real difference. Sarah is aware of one young lady who suffers from agoraphobia and anxiety who attended one of the early workshops and has progressed from barely leaving the house to being able to walk to the shop, as well as producing beautiful artwork for the walls of her home.

Sarah thinks that Highbridge seems more creative since Seed's involvement. Other groups are springing up. People now know that there are creating activities in Highbridge, although there is more to do to get past the level of apathy.

"Seed has withdrawn a bit, but not left us completely, which is reassuring."

NADJA MCDEVITT

Nadja has always been interested in the arts. In her 30s, she sang and played in bands, before pursuing other interests. In her 50s, she got a degree in Photography at UWE. She has had a few exhibitions, and started working in outreach for the Library Service.

Nadja met Seed when she was the Assistant Manager at Bridgewater Library. She was immediately struck by the value to the library of being involved in CPP events or exhibitions. Nadja was featured in Seed's initial video, produced as part of its application to Arts Council England.

FIGURE 48: THE WAY THROUGH BY NADJA MCDEVITT



Nadja was employed as one of the artists for Moments of Stillness. The idea came to her because of her love for walking in nature, when she would take short still videos, with a similar feeling to the one minute of silence used in remembrance. The project seemed particularly pertinent during the early days of the pandemic because walking in nature was one of the few things people were still allowed to do.

The project consisted of a call out for members of the public to send in their one-minute videos of nature walks, which Nadja edited to create a film. Seed employed a musician to create a soundtrack, which helped to bring the images together. The response to the project far exceeded Nadja's expectation. She thought they would get around 50 videos and received 90. The Facebook group formed for the project still exists. Nadja also had an exhibition at the Princess Theatre in Burnham giving her creative response to the Moments of Stillness.

"It was incredible what people came up with for Moments of Stillness. The different views of the place that people had. The things they spotted, even though some didn't move outside their gardens. It was very inspiring to see the variety."

Nadja has found the whole experience of working with Seed to be informative. Through Moments of Stillness, she learnt how to edit films together.

"The engagement with Seed has really bolstered my identity as an artist. As I work in different artforms and am not known for anyone thing, it is easy to think of myself as a dabbler."

Nadja definitely thinks Highbridge feels more creative since Seed started working in the area. There is more activity such as youth theatre and music. There is more work in schools, with more needed. The events and activities have helped to create a stronger sense of community. Bringing people together at events reduces fear and stereotyping. For example, local people might think that antisocial behaviour comes from the homeless people, but bringing everyone together in events has given more positive associations.

“Highbridge is starting to feel like a place where things happen.”

Nadja is the chair of the Seed CIO, which has been a fascinating experience as she wouldn't usually think of herself as enjoying meetings or, indeed, engaging at a senior level. She has used her people skills. She has learnt how to reach people in the community, although she doesn't think anyone has all the answers to this: CPP projects need to use lots of different routes and lots of different media. Each time Seed reaches out further, it learns about new barriers or gaps in engagement. For example, publicising events on Facebook, you reach new people, but then become aware of people who don't use social media. When Seed manages to reach the people in social housing, you start thinking about the residents in new housing, who might not be low income, but tend to be commuters and not connected to the community. One important learning point for Seed has been how to make the transition from one place to another smoothly and gently so that the local people don't feel dropped.

“More than anything, Seed has given me confidence. It has shown I can make things happen.”

Nadja created an organisation, Our Highbridge, to continue the legacy from Seed in organising creative activities and events. They have lots of ideas and what happens will partly be determined by the funding. She has already worked with the Youth Theatre on a project to create a play in three days.

“The arts and creativity can help to bring a community together because art can be something that creates a conversation. Seed has opened a gateway to thinking about creative ways of doing things.”

IAN BODMAN

Ian has run the Coopers Arms pub in Highbridge for 11 years. When he first took over the pub, he tried open mike nights and events with local bands, but they weren't particularly successful in bringing in customers, perhaps because they needed more advertising. The space in the pub doesn't lend itself to large crowds because the layout of the spaces creates bottlenecks.

Ian wouldn't tend to go to galleries, concerts or theatres. However, he is very supportive of the community and helps out wherever he can. For example, he has provided the bar to Burnham-On-Sea's BOSFest music and arts festival at a nominal fee e.g., buying stock up front and only charging what is used, and providing his time for free. He also prides himself on helping his customers to network, including an introduction which led to a local musician performing on one of the smaller stages of Glastonbury. He suffered a bereavement recently and was struck by the importance of music as a way of reflecting on memories and supporting his mental health.

“Music is something we all need.”

In 2021, one of his customers approached Ian and asked if he was interested in hosting a Seed event. He said yes and was introduced to the Seed team to discuss the possibilities. The result was that the garden of the Coopers Arm was used as a venue for Highbridge Front Garden Music Festival in June 2021 and June 2022. Ian wasn't particularly involved in the planning of the event. The programming, licences, insurance and publicity were all supported by Seed. Ian provided chairs and foldable seats taken from indoors and, of course, bar service.

Ian estimates that more than 300 people attended each of the festivals, which exceeded his expectations. The first festival was during COVID, and the pub was only allowed to offer table service, which took a little bit of scheduling on the night.

“The pub was a lot busier than usual the day of the Highbridge Front Garden Music Festival. We are always busy when the sun is out on summer weekends, but it is not often you see every table, every chair and every blade of grass occupied.”

Ian wasn't hosting the Front Garden Music Festival to get anything out of it. However, he thinks it has increased his new customer base by perhaps 5%.

Ian is full of praise for Seed. He feels the events they support are all led by local people, so all authentically Highbridge. One change he would like is further attention given to retaining audiences between the festivals. He has been talking to Highbridge Creative about having some kind of showcase or performance for his Christmas lights. He always has a little celebration on the night the lights are switched on, but he would like to be more ambitious this year. This is a direct spin-off from the Front Garden Music Festival.

“Seed is very hard-working, very keen on doing a good job every time they do something. This depth of preparation is one of the reasons the events are so successful. I would definitely work with them again.”

Ian has seen a change in Highbridge. He believes that the two events have strengthened connections across the community and encouraged pride in the area. People will be more interested in taking part in the arts because they might not otherwise have even thought of music as art. Many people tend not to consider going to the arts because of the cost, which include an overnight stay as well as travel, food and the ticket prices themselves. Seed events create an audience because they are without these financial constraints.

“Seeing events being successful makes local people feel that if they have an idea, like-minded people in the area would help to make it a reality. The arts give a platform to make people believe there is a way to improve Highbridge. It has sowed a seed.”

DAWN CAREY

Dawn Carey is the CEO of a mental health charity in Highbridge, In Charley's Memory, and was Councillor for Highbridge on Burnham-On-Sea and Highbridge Town Council.

Dawn was involved in the art book project. In Charley's Memory (ICM) sees about 50 young people a week and all 50 of the artbooks Seed gave them were given out and used. The young people were not willing to share their artwork online, but Seed was understanding.

The team at ICM used the artbooks as part of the therapeutic process. They have always been a bit unsure how to use creativity because being an art therapist is a specific profession for which they don't have the accreditation. They have always had arts materials, or other materials like Lego, available in shelves outside the therapy rooms. What the artbook project did is give counsellors more confidence to integrate visual art into the sessions.

“The art book project was a massive success. Before the art book project, we weren't actively promoting art. We now talk about it in the initial interview process with clients. Young people often come with quite a fixed idea of what they should be doing in a counselling session. We use art to help them communicate in a different way. The art books are also useful to give young people a visual record of how far they have progressed.”

Following Dawn's engagement in the art book project, Seed's name came up in a Town Council meeting, and she felt comfortable strongly recommending them. Her observation is that councils only really engage with projects if they have a passionate champion and she was happy to play this role for Seed.

Dawn attended a Creative Accelerator meeting and really liked the model. She felt that the small group break-out rooms allowed people to speak who wouldn't have had a voice in a larger meeting. She would like this kind of community consultation to be repeated.

Dawn was aware of the projects Seed was supporting and sometimes wondered if they had taken on too much. While she understands that Seed wanted community members to have ownership, she thinks the team could be more visible.

“I judge excellence in terms of the number of people who engage. Seed has definitely reached out to the people, and the high level of engagement in every project is a testament to them, it shows they are obviously successful.”

Dawn attended the event at the Apex this summer and was impressed by the number of people attending and the level of engagement.

“There were families sitting down without iPads or mobile families, just creating. That was a special moment to observe. I stood back and watched families being families and that was really, really special.”

Through Seed, Dawn has met new groups in the community. Through connecting with Create You, she was introduced to the whole creative community. This has supported her other work, such as interfacing with Burnham Retail Group. Dawn doesn't think Highbridge could have progressed in this way without Seed because it needs a central body to support the large number of small groups.

“You need that one group that will shout from the roof tops and say this is what we are going to do come along and try it.”

Dawn writes poetry and draws, but has always been a little self-conscious about it. Seed has helped her value the arts without imposing a judgement. It has helped pull in people who wouldn't otherwise think of themselves as creative. It has reminded people that art is for any age. They don't need to stop when they leave school.

“I am of an age where I think of art as drawing or painting. But art is so much more. Scraps of paper on a window. Writing down your thoughts in a book. Seed has opened my eyes to what art is and it isn't something that fits in a box. The arts are special because they are open to all.”

PAUL CHAPMAN

Paul Chapman is an engineer on large-scale construction projects such as tunnels. He has always been around bands, especially helping with the stage management and technical roles.

Paul attended one of Seed's Creative Accelerator online community consultations, and realised there was potential to do something arty in Highbridge. When Seed put out a call for expressions of interest, Paul teamed up with Sharon Parkes, a dance practitioner, to create Highbridge Youth Arts, which was the fulfilment of a long-term ambition for both of them. Paul has a family connection to disability and the two were completely committed to creating a group that was accessible and rooted in the community.

Paul administers the CIC for the classes, for which he takes no fee. Sharon used her salary as a bursary to allow her to study for an MA in Dance and Psychotherapy at Goldsmiths, where she is in the second year.

Highbridge Youth Arts has two groups: 5-9 year olds and 10-15 year olds. The younger group started with 30 members, and a waiting list of 10-15, but has settled down to around 12-15 members. The older group started with 20 young people and is now a core group of six to eight people, with an evolving focus on special needs. The smaller number is nearer to Paul's initial expectation. The fall in numbers happened partly because the sessions were moved from Tuesdays to Thursdays to accommodate Sharon's university work, and partly because of increased provision in Highbridge. He is aware of six groups delivering dance classes in Highbridge.

“Highbridge has gone from being a proper desert to saturation level in youth dance.”

The group members embody the success of Highbridge Youth Arts. One 12 year old girl was very shy when she joined. Within a few months, she was taking the lead in the group's pantomime and then directing and creating work. Her confidence has visibly grown. A 19 year old boy, who has Downs Syndrome, is gifted, with an absolute talent for singing and dancing. His speech has improved from being part of the group, and other members have learnt to listen to him, and have picked up some sign language.

“The kids are totally accepting of each other.”

The sessions have a distinctive style. Unlike the private sector teachers, who are more exam-based, Highbridge Youth Arts is deliberately focused on creativity and improvisation. For example, the 2022 Christmas show, *Maybe Tomorrow*, started with a six-page script, from which the young people created the rest of the story.

Seed gave Highbridge Youth Arts £10,000 in the first year and £2,500 in the second. In addition, the group raised £2,500 from the Town Council. Seed also helped Highbridge Youth Arts have an exchange with a Cornish group, *Stacked Wonky*, which has led to an ongoing relationship.

Paul has supported other Seed projects. He wrote a letter of support for Blues in the Pews and managed the two Front Garden Music Festivals. The latter he describes as now “an established point in the Highbridge calendar”. These music events have led to spin-off activity. For example, Highbridge Social Club has introduced a mike night once a week and the musicians are often those from Blues in the Pews.

“For the Front Garden Music Festivals, we got people coming from Burnham, which was unheard of before. A lot of people said it was the best day they had had in Highbridge!”

Although he has connected with Seed on different levels, Paul doesn't totally understand what the organisation does and how it works. The whole issue of being community-led is quite complex because local people vary so widely in how much support they need and want, and also in their commitment to community values. That Seed would move onto other areas after two years was not entirely clear to him from the start.

“Once Seed came into Highbridge, they committed and committed hard.”

Before Seed, Paul had never run a dance class, which he does regularly, and had not run a festival. He now has the knowledge of how to obtain licenses and carry out risk assessment.

Paul definitely thinks that Highbridge is more creative and confident as a community because of Seed.

“There are many more creative things happening in Highbridge and more regularly. Highbridge has always had a sense of community, but it was quite negative. That has changed. Seed has given Highbridge a bit of confidence in itself. There are a bunch of people who have lived here all their lives who now have the confidence and momentum to keep doing things. So, that is a success.”

REV MARTIN LITTLE

Martin joined Highbridge as Vicar of St John the Evangelist Church in Highbridge just after Seed had carried out its initial community consultation. As well as being a minister, Martin has a long experience of playing in bands. When he arrived and started looking after the church, he was immediately struck by its beauty as a venue: larger than other community buildings in Highbridge, with a large stage, good sight lines from across the space and acoustics with just the right amount of reverberation to create a rich sound. The building had already been used for live music at fund-raising events and for Christmas concerts.

Martin heard about Seed from another member of the community who runs a community centre. He met the Seed team soon afterwards and realised their objectives fitted his plans perfectly. Martin thought of calling the event Blues in the Pews partly because of the catchy name and partly because of the accessibility of this musical genre.

“12 bar blues has a standard structure, 3 chords, so almost everyone can do it. We interpret the blues genre generously. We have had a bit of soul, country and rock and roll.”

Seed gave Martin the Community Accelerator document and copies of the consultation report and helped him fill in the application. He had a real sense that Seed wanted him to succeed, rather than placing him in competition with other local projects.

“I am all about breaking down barriers between church and community. Church of England is a living faith and also the national church, so our buildings should be seen as community resources.”

Talking to local people, Martin found a strong interest in live music. He was also given some advice, including the need for a bar for the events. One of the participants, who is a brewer, took on the licence for the sessions, and supplies the beer. The rule is that everyone is welcome, but under 18s need to be accompanied by an adult. The licencing and environmental health officers at the council were supportive of the church’s application and this faith proved to be justified. There has been no underage drinking.

“I was really keen Blues in the Pews would be accessible to all ages. We have to ensure it is safe for young people to come to. It had to be a family-friendly event and we do have some regulars who come as a whole family.”

FIGURE 49: PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY SEED



Martin likes the sense of juxtaposition of having contemporary music in a traditional space, the invitation to revisit assumptions. This is captured in posts on social media which Martin has seen, along the lines of: “You will never guess where I went on Saturday night! I went to church.”

“Blues in the Pews has been way more successful than I expected.”

Blues in the Pews has been designed with inclusion in its heart. Martin and his band provide 20 minutes of rehearsed music. Then Martin invites participants from a sign-up sheet onto the stage to perform with the

support and backing of the resident band. Martin curates the evening to ensure a mix of sounds and abilities. He also supports people who are interested in performing but lack confidence. In practice, this has meant making an effort to include female participants. One participant has developed skills to such a level that they can take the place of the band’s bass player when he is away.

“Music is a spiritual thing, it transcends neurochemistry or materialist explanations. There is a mystery to music that we can't explain away. It makes us feel more alive and more together. It gives us a different relationship with time; music is bound by time but also allows us to step out of time. There is a sense of transcending your limitations as a human being or maybe becoming more human.”

Seed gave Martin “loads of support”. He said he couldn't have asked for more. He didn't have recent experience of applying for a grant and Seed gave advice. The process helped him translate the language of the church into the language of the community. Seed provided funding for advertising and made suggestions about possible artists to deliver workshops. Seed also encouraged Martin to think about the long-term sustainability of the group from the very beginning. Seed's involvement allowed Martin to raise additional funds from the Town Council.

“Seed has a great model. They gave us quite a lot of money to set up and then tapered the level so we were not dependent on them.”

Blues in the Pews is now in its second year. Martin runs ten sessions a year (with a break over the summer). Each session has around 50 attendees with a core group of around 40. Two sessions ago, Martin introduced a £5 charge and this hasn't affected attendance so far. Indeed, some people have said they would be prepared to pay a monthly subscription, so they were supporting the group even if they missed a session. The group still has funding from Seed and matched funding from the Town Council, and will need to reconsider the business model in ten months', when this runs out.

“We couldn't have set up the group to this standard without Seed. It was written into the contract that artists should be paid and that is music to my ears. The initial cash injection allows you to establish a certain quality, then people grow to expect that and then they will pay for it.”

Blues in the Pews hasn't made a huge difference to attendance at the church, it hasn't led to a religious revival. However, Martin believes it has made a huge difference to how the church is viewed. The community seems better connected to, and particularly proud of, the church. This is important because the church was closed during the pandemic lock-downs.

“Blues in the Pews has broken down barriers around the church. It shows that we are human and we love music too. We have always said we love our church and it is precious to us, but we are not precious about it.”

Martin thinks Highbridge is definitely more creative than it was before Seed's support. There have been spinoff projects from Blues in the Pews and Seed's involvement. During a meeting of the Sowers and Growers, Martin met an artist, and this led to two collaborations: a large installation of origami butterflies in the roof space of the church, and a follow up project supported by Somerset Art Works. Further work with the same artist is planned.

“Seed has strengthened the networking between creative and community people in Highbridge. We talk to each other more, are more aware of what other people are doing. The sense of collaboration has been really positive.”

Martin thinks Seed has strengthened the sense of community in Highbridge. However, it is important to remember that Highbridge has always had a strong sense of community. Local

people are proud of the fact that, when the old town hall was knocked down, a new one was built with public subscription. The church is important because people are concerned about seeing their heritage slipping away from them. Martin likes to call the area around the church Highbridge's heritage quarter!

Martin thinks that Seed events have felt authentic. However, he heard some complaints about the flags project because the shop fronts need further investment and the change looked superficial. There is always a suspicion of people coming in from outside, which Seed has managed to navigate skilfully.

"Seed has been in Highbridge for a couple of years and that is very important. There are so many agencies that pounce on Highbridge for six months and then you never see them again. Seed has taken time to build trust, which is important with quite vulnerable communities."

Martin would like to see more challenging art in Highbridge. He thinks people are often put off by the language around the arts. He would like local people to be able to access high quality cultural experiences without having to travel.

"Wouldn't it be nice if Highbridge had something cultural going on every day in the week!"

Martin's dream is for St John's to become a church and arts centre. The church needs a sustainable model. He sees other cities with lots of closed churches, and some are repurposed as arts centres. He would like to see the two uses combined.

"Seed support has given me the confidence to imagine that the church could also be an arts centre, because they believed in us. That is worth as much as the money."

GLOW HOME

INTRODUCTION

SEED organised the distribution of lantern-making kits from six local shops in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge (Create You; Crafty Comforts; Julians; Material Needs; The Toy Cupboard and Whites Farm Shop). Participants photographed or filmed themselves with their lanterns. SEED edited the individual submissions to create an overall film, which was part of the Xmas Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge online light switch on 21st November 2020. Five £20 vouchers were given to participants whose work made it into the online film.

Partners for the project were Sedgemoor and Burnham and Highbridge Town Council and Create You of Highbridge.

FAYE

Faye took part in Glow Home with her four year old daughter Alice. Faye particularly liked Glow Home because her daughter, Alice, enjoyed it and was able to do it on her own. Even though she is only four, she chose the design and cut it out on her own. Alice is able to use scissors safely because the household is already very arty and crafty. For example, they have made chalk boards, paper chains and paper lanterns. Faye values arts and crafts as a way of teaching self-expression, motor skills and responsibility/health and safety.

Alice loved seeing herself in the video. Faye would like her to join a drama group once they open up again.

Glow Home had an added feeling because it was a community thing. Faye mentioned that a care home near her took 15 of the kits. Some of her friends took part. Others said they didn't know about it until it was too late, but Faye doesn't know how they missed it as "it was everywhere." The only weakness in the project is that the packs went very quickly because people wanted them.

"There were a lot of people in the video. It created a conversation with people. Everyone was talking about it and saying how nice it was. I would like to see it every year."

Faye works at Spec Savers. She describes herself as terrible at art at school, although she did study drama. She doesn't attend the arts particularly. She has attended the shows in London, and was planning to take Alice, now she is old enough. They have watched Hamilton together and Alice knows all the words to the King's songs. Faye is quite anxious going to events, not because of anything to do with the arts but because she doesn't like crowds.

Faye said she knew that Seed was behind the project because their name was on the poster. However, she didn't know much about Seed.

KATHY

Kathy took part in Glow Home by giving out materials from her shop. She started with ten kits, which she gave out in a few hours and asked for and received another 20 on the same day, and then she asked for 50 and was given what was left.

She thought the project was an amazing idea because: "It really did bring everyone together." She is very aware that people are struggling. Some of her customers still phone her up for a chat, even though the shop is shut.

The project was particularly needed at the moment because: "People need something normal, that they can enjoy." People were messaging her throughout the project saying how lovely it was.

Kathy is particularly keen on projects that bring children and old people together. "They are good for each other. They both light up."

Kathy also liked the film. She has watched it six times so far and it makes her well up.

Kathy is extremely artistic. She has silver in tap dance. She also has grade five singing from the Royal Board of Music. She used to belong to a performing arts company doing show songs. She only gave up when she had a family. All her family is artistic and many have worked in the arts. Her great great grandfather was on the stage at the Old Vic. Her grandfather was musical and used to sit her down and play different types of music, and say that all music is good. Her son is 11 and plays the trombone and drums and is just about to sit grade two music exams.

Kathy loves the theatre, opera and galleries. "You can't get me out of there. But I don't get a lot of time now."

Kathy is worried about how the pandemic will affect the arts. “It would be criminal for it to all fall away. Artists are all struggling now. I watched the film about Tolkien’s life last night and I was thinking: we cannot lose all these things. They are so important to our health and wellbeing and our history.”

Kathy is hoping that Glow Home will happen again next year, and will be even bigger. She has a WhatsApp group of the retailers in Burnham and would like them to take part too, and for the film to be longer.

Kathy has joined the town team for Burnham, connecting to Seed.

RUTH

Ruth is a local GP who has recently moved back from Botswana to Somerset because her parents live here.

Ruth has two sons, one of whom sung the opening song.

Ruth thought the whole process was good: the clear instructions, the creation of the video, and the sense of occasion, having a count-down to the switch on. They missed the carnival and this felt like a similar project, albeit on a smaller scale. “It made us feel festive when we were not looking forward to Christmas.” Particularly strengths were in bringing families together, including people from different parts of the community and ethnicities; involving the schools; and giving children something to do and a sense of purpose, and legacy of the film online.

“It is lovely the Globe project went online. It is going all over the country and celebrating our local musicians and craft. It gives a connection when the area isn’t particularly multicultural.”

The process was a bit last minute and would have been better placed during half term, when there would have been more time to prepare. The schools couldn’t really get involved as they weren’t organising any singing. Her son’s music teacher asked him to take part.

The family is very artistic, especially musically. Ruth’s sons, who are , 8 and a 12 both play the drums and one sings. They are so committed to their music that during lockdown they created a shed in the garden for the drums and recording equipment. Ruth also sings and sews. Her mum makes tapestries and quilts.

As a GP, Ruth is aware of the importance of hobbies for her patients, and finds that singing really helps her psyche. She hadn’t heard of arts on prescription and said she was only just getting up to speed with how things have changed in the UK since she came back.

The arts are important to Ruth. “We have a village craft event. It is a way of bringing people together. It is so essential. You don’t realise how important it is until you can’t access it.”

Ruth was aware of SEED and her son is joining a group on diversity.

EVALUATOR’S COMMENTS

Five points particularly struck me:

- The value of being connected to an existing event, the light switch on.
- The importance of timing, responding to communities' needs for connection at this moment.
- The benefit of having a particular time for people to look at the film, which gives more connection than putting up an online offering that people look at on their own.
- The high level of arts skills and engagement for an area described as a cold spot, showing what can be captured from having a more inclusive definition of arts engagement.
- The comment about feeling anxious in venues because of crowds. I wondered if this was related to living in a rural area, and whether there were other barriers to arts attendance (psychological as well as physical) in rural areas that have been relatively neglected in the audience engagement literature.

HIGHBRIDGE AND EDINGTON FRONT GARDEN MUSIC FESTIVALS

ROGER

Music has been part of Roger's life since he was a child. Going back to the 1960s, he and a friend wanted to be in a band, to follow in the footsteps of the Shadows, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones. Roger played drums and a friend from school played guitar, and they merged with another band. For a while they played instrumentals because no-one wanted to sing. This didn't draw an audience, so they pulled in two other musicians and started doing local gigs called the Limited Company. After a while they decided that name was too starchy so they changed to the Beat Route. Roger met his wife through the band and last year they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and renewed their vows. The band split up as two members went to university but reformed in the early 1990s and played together for 18 years as Hot Rod. Ten years later, Roger decided that what he most wanted for his 70th birthday was for the band to play together again. This happened and the band raised £1,000 for charity.

"Our whole life has revolved around music."

Roger remembers well the first time he heard about Seed's Front Garden Music Festival, thinking it was a brilliant idea. He has taken part three times now, the last two in his own front garden. As Roger explained: "Everyone is so excited. This is the highlight of our year. We have a few drinks. It is a nice atmosphere. We have got to the age where we don't like doing gigs after 10pm. With Front Garden Music Festival we get all the enjoyment and can be in bed early!" About 30 people attend each year, mainly family and friends. Roger's wife sings in a choir, which will also perform on the day. In addition, last year a friend who is a choreographer devised a routine for the audience to learn for Crocodile Rock. This year the choreography is to Surfing USA. The only disadvantage of the structure is that they don't get to see other acts in the Festival.

Music keeps Roger fit. He practices once a fortnight and drumming is very energetic. He has a smart watch and most days he walks 2-3k steps but on the day of the Music Festival he walks 20-30k.

"Drumming keeps our minds alive. We enjoy it and it is exercise."

Roger attended the first community consultation with Seed and would have attended more. He appreciates that the Festival has continued even though the initial circumstances, social distancing required by COVID, have thankfully ended. He thinks Seed gets a perfect balance between support and empowerment, especially this year. He put forward an artistic programme and Seed approved it. Last year, he forgot to tell Seed about the other elements of the programme, the choir and choreographer, so of course this didn't end up in the marketing. They also forgot to make a poster for the event.

“It is nice to have the backing from Seed. Any more would be too much. We feel free.”

The band is a part of, and a contributor, to the local community. Since 2019, they have raised £10k for charity, with the causes all health related and around issues of which the band and their family have experience. The band members buy their own equipment and are not paid to perform, but this seems reasonable because, as Roger explains: “This is my hobby now and with any hobby I would have to pay a subscription. We perform for charity.”

RUTH

Ruth grew up in a musical family and loves music, although her talents are more around design. She is self-taught in graphic design, in which she has worked as a freelancer.

Before Seed, Ruth said that:

“Highbridge was a town that was really forgotten. It didn't have any free live events. Some pubs had gigs, but if you are not a pub person, or have a family that you don't want to take to a pub, there was nothing. The town is deprived, many families are on universal credit and most of the shops are closed. It is an area of high social need.”

Ruth attended Seed's early community consultations and came up with the idea for Our Highbridge, working with Nadia (see earlier interview). Our Highbridge is now a CIC and Ruth is on the community panel for Seed. Scott helped Our Highbridge by putting in a grassroots music application to Arts Council England, but it was rejected. As Ruth explains: “It is quite a struggle for CICs trying to do things in the community.” Without Seed, Our Highbridge wouldn't have been able to put on any of these music events.

Ruth thinks that Seed has exactly the right balance between support and empowerment.

“They check in and asks if we need anything. If they could, they would give us money. We understand Seed has to move on to another area, and it is great we still have contact with them. I can't think of anything else they could have done for us. If you need help, they are there.”

Ruth is organising the Front Garden Music event and it is quite tiring, but also worthwhile. To see people out and about enjoying themselves and bringing trade to the businesses. In practice, Ruth notes that for people who are not interested in sport, most recreation is arts based, whether it is craft or music.

“These events prove that Highbridge is not just a dead-end town. The arts bring people to spend time together as a community. My children and other people's children, get to live in a better town as a result.”

Since Ruth's first contact with Seed, the personal impact has been huge. Every time she organises an event, she learns something, some new aspect of project management. This year the event was larger and she learnt about how to organise road closures. Through this process, the different community groups came together and decided to apply for local authority permissions for the whole year all at once as a way of saving time and money. All these experiences have built Ruth's confidence. She would like next year's event to be even more ambitious, with more people involved and more locations for events in Highbridge.

JESS

Jess has sung in bands since she was 16. She started a Musical Theatre course at the Tobacco Factory in Bristol and realised this wasn't for her. She won a place at BIMM in Brighton and did a degree in Popular Music, which she loved. However, in 2008, she got pregnant and couldn't afford to live in Brighton, so she came home. The baby was quite poorly and took all of her time. She thought it would be less painful if she didn't think about her music career before so she deleted everything, including recordings, which she now regrets.

One day, she got a call asking if she wanted to play guitar in a girl band, and the women bonded playing Appalachian songs. Jess met Seed and was encouraged to put in an expression of interest for a project called Herstory on the local history of women including the witchcraft trials. This was approved and Jess led on the activity, which included creative writing workshops, an installation at the Axbridge Museum, a small performance, and a historical talk. Jess even delivered the history talk because the historian was ill, and wished she had described this as a discussion or reflection rather than the more formal expectations around a talk! Jess said the process was stressful and terrifying and brilliant. Part the way through she was diagnosed with ADHD.

Jess has just engaged on a new project, which is to run Singing for the Slightly Terrified workshops, especially designed to draw in women as music. With its focus on instruments, music can be rather male dominated. Seed has been very supportive of Jess' ADHD diagnosis, and she feels she can work at her own pace without any pressure.

Overall, Jess said the work with Seed has been life-changing.

"Seed has opened doors for me. I didn't know about the community arts scene. I am not yet ready to write a funding application to Arts Council England. I can't describe how understanding Seed has been. I said I was struggling creating a budget, so Seed wrote a budget for me. The support has been important. With the arts, you are expected to master the creative side, but also do the administration, and lots of us can't do that. Seed understands that a lot happens in your life. This isn't my main job."

Jess still suffers from imposter syndrome but she feels more confident because of what she has achieved.

"Seed invests in people and that is what really matters."

SAM

Sam is on the Parish Council, as a representative of which she sits on the committee for the Edington village hall. After three years she became the Vice Chair with lead responsibility for

organising events. Sam met Seed because they asked if they could hire the village hall and as she say, she quickly learnt that what they do is fantastic.

“This year’s music festival was far more ambitious and successful than last year, and last year was successful. The music festival has really taken off.”

Sam said the village hall works really well with Seed. The committee organised the food and the bar for the music event. Seed organised face painting. Last year around 400 people attended and they expected more this year so Seed hired extra chairs for the event. The publicity each organises is complementary: Seed provide artwork, posters and banners. The village hall advertises and has a team that puts up the posters. Seed gave the village hall a choice of performers and then took care of the contractual relationships and management.

“Seed puts a lot of trust in us. They consult and work with us. They are very responsive. We have meetings and emails to check everything is alright. I don’t think they can do anything more. I can’t fault anything.”

Sam said she is always learning when organising events like this. Especially thinking of ways to get things done without spending money. For example, she created a game of noughts and crosses for the children using spare carpet samples from home.

“I have learnt patience. When you are working with lots of different personalities, you have to learn to manage people. Not allowing the stress to become too much.”

Sam loves music. She was a clarinetist in her teens. She also went to dance classes.

“Music is special because you would be hard pushed to find someone who doesn’t enjoy music. It is also an activity you can enjoy while still talking to your friends, it is about being with people as well as watching or listening to something. If you are watching a play, everyone is paying attention to the stage.”

Sam knows of local people for whom last year’s music event was the first public performance they had attended since COVID. The village hall also feels that the music festival has helped bring back audiences, which are generally at a low level since the pandemic. Private hires are also well below the level that the village saw four years ago.

Sam thinks the music definitely has a positive effect on the community.

“You only need to walk through the green to seeing people connecting. The more we do, the more the community comes and out and is together, the stronger the community.”

JEREMY

Jeremy organises the bar. All the people involved in organising the event for the village hall are volunteers. The music event helps the village hall meet its objective, which is to have an event every two months.

“The secret of this event is it is all about bringing the community. It is amazing how many people we haven’t seen before. The more of these events the better.”

Seed provided a budget for food and drinks so that performers would get a voucher.

“Music is one of these things that crosses a number of people’s interest. If you think in terms of Venn diagrams, and I do, it is in the middle. It attracts all ages, all persuasions, all races. It is the ideal thing. I am not saying there aren’t other things, but it is the most effective feelgood event you could have.”

Jeremy makes a careful judgement of how much food and drink to buy for each event so the village hall does not have waste or stock. At 4pm he was nearly out of stock, which has never happened for an event before. This shows the strength of the community reaction.

JACK

Jack organised and played at an event in his back garden for the 2024 festival, having previously performed and been part of the clash mob. He was particularly keen to return to the original format of the Festival, performances in people’s gardens, because he prefers to perform and experience music up close, in small venues.

“The Front Garden Music Festival is a brilliant idea. I love the intimate feeling and the informality. As a musician, you are not reliant on loads of tech. Small venues are better because of the connection with the audience. And people are there to listen to the music, they are not shouting over it or taking selfies.”

Being a community organiser was not without its challenges. A couple of weeks before the Festival he found out that the pub opposite his house, which had agreed to offer parking and toilets for audience members on the assumption they would buy a drink, had closed. Jack’s wife’s theatre group stepped in to provide tea and cakes, and after speaking to Seed, two portaloos turned up in their drive.

“We didn’t want lots of people traipsing through our house to use the toilet so the support from Seed made all the difference.”

Jack has played the guitar since he was a kid and played occasionally since, while he worked as an architectural designer. He has had more time to perform since he retired a few years ago. If he doesn’t play music for a couple of days, he will notice it in terms of his mood. He loves the way Seed supports grassroots performance because people seem to have retreated to their bedrooms, recording or otherwise working in isolation and he feels it is important for them to come together. He particularly likes the way Seed supported events are relevant to the place, site specific artwork.

Jack also attended Edington Festival, which he enjoyed but thought could have been better thought through. For example, an area was fenced off at the front for the dancing, but the dancers, who were tap dancers, should have been on the stage, which would have positioned the audience closer to the stage. He understood the practical value of having rows of plastic chairs but felt this had more of a concert feeling and preferred a more informal festival layout.

At the Front Garden Music Festival, Jack talked individually to lots of audience members about Seed and suggested they look out for other events. Every event gives a chance to spread the word. Jack could not have organised the event without Seed, he couldn’t have paid the performers, and is geared up to help on other events, whether through performing or providing designs.

ART ROAD TRIP

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER AT THE EXHIBITION

The daughter really enjoyed the exhibition and said it was memorable. She didn't like the quality of the reproductions, that you couldn't see the brushstrokes. She is an artist, with lots of different interests – clock making, 3D puzzles, archery and photography. What she is really interested in is detail. The exhibition made her wonder what makes an artist famous, or if they are not recognised in their lifetime, what makes their work endure?

The mother explained that even though they didn't like the quality of the images, they appreciated the exhibition. She is in a wheelchair and her daughter is on the autism spectrum, so they don't travel. They have been to Tate St Ives, but it was a huge effort and so they combined it with a holiday. They thought it was a great idea to have the exhibition in the shopping centre because people could go past and be drawn in. If there was a gallery in town, they could see art every day instead of having to make a special effort.

The mother home educated her daughter. She emphasised that this was not the same as being home schooled – that she was not following a curriculum but rather ensuring her daughter has wide experiences and developed her abilities in different directions. Now her daughter has started attending college and asked to study art but has instead been put on a Basic Skills course learning Maths and English with no access to the arts studios because the college lacks the money for special needs assistance. Neither the mother nor daughter had heard of Seed but were interested in learning more about it.

MOTHER WITH SMALL CHILDREN

The mother attended a workshop with her two girls, aged 5 and 8. They really enjoyed the workshop. They were impressed with the quality of the resources, the professionalism of the facilitators and the look of the van. Visiting the exhibition and hearing about the attention to detail even in aspects like the frames reinforced the sense of caring. The exercises set by the facilitators were open ended so children could do as much or little as they liked. The children had never sat down at an easel before, so this made them feel special. The mother told all her friends about Art Road Trip and mentioned it where she works, as a sociology teacher at the college.

The mother was particularly impressed that the National Gallery had chosen to come to Bridgwater. There are many creative people in the area. If you asked people their opinion about the National Gallery, she thought that most people wouldn't have an opinion. So, Art Road Trip might be a trigger to start having an opinion. And that could make them feel more comfortable in a gallery.

“We know that the National Gallery could have gone to Taunton. It would have been easier, and they might have got more people attending. Before this, I felt that the National Gallery was for city dwellers, for rich people, not for a dump like Bridgwater. That they came to us makes you feel valued. This is where they are most needed.”

The mother would like to see events like this in the high street every weekend. It brings families into town where they might otherwise avoid it because it doesn't seem safe with all the empty shops and antisocial behaviour.

“The workshop made us feel that we own the high street again.”

If the workshop had a weakness, it was that it wasn't promoted more widely. It felt like “a quirk of luck” that they found out about the workshop. She would have expected primary schools to be interested in the project, but she didn't hear anything through her daughter's primary school.

A CARE WORKER FROM A GROUP FOR ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The care workers enjoyed the workshop because the facilitators were so friendly and nice. She doesn't think she is good at art but liked that they showed how to do things. That makes her job easier if she decides to use some of the materials in the group e.g., painting with tape.

She has always liked paintings but got more out of them by having someone explain what to look for.

She really appreciated the workshop being in Bridgwater. There was no pressure, and her service users had the choice to take part or not. She said “of course” the National Gallery's paintings are relevant to her community.

“There isn't much to do in Bridgwater unless you have money in your pockets. Having these workshops in town makes my job a lot easier.”

A YOUNG ARCHITECT AT THE EXHIBITION

The young person enjoyed the exhibition: she thought it was simple but effective. It was memorable because of the scale of the work. She appreciated learning about the stories behind the works. The painting about Salome made her think about a film she had seen on the same subject. She had never made the connection before, and that made her think about the different interpretations people have inside themselves.

She had visited the National Gallery but a long time ago. She definitely feels a connection to the National Gallery and believes it is for everyone in the UK because “It is Britishness.”

She would recommend the exhibition unconditionally. There is no downside. It is free.

CONCLUSION

Seed's Art Road Trip had these strengths:

- Consideration of legacy from the beginning, allied with detailed planning to make this happen.
- Attendance at the National Gallery's online workshops, which gave insight the style of what was offered.
- Involvement in Keeper of Paintings, the first and, so far, the only lead partner to do so.

- Inclusion of reproduction artwork in exhibitions, and allied to this, a non-patronising attitude to participants, which didn't assume they would be unable to see the relevance of paintings from people or circumstances that were different to them.
- Delivery in a small number of places – chosen for their high footfall – and with a set pattern of drop in workshops and talks, so that participants to develop local familiarity and trust, and encourage repeat visiting, which did happen.
- Attraction of new and more diverse audiences compared to most other Seed events.
- Use of the project as a positive route to build relationships with local businesses and organisations.

The first four points make Seed a particularly strong partner in Art Road Trip. A couple of the other partners complained that local people were disappointed not to see touring artwork in the project, but they didn't manage expectations or design the project to avoid this mismatch.

The main weakness of Art Road Trip for Seed is the lack of information about what the National Gallery will do next.

BLOSSOMING BRIDGWATER

CHLOE

Chloe was the artist who came up with the idea for Blossoming Bridgwater. Her creative practice involves upcycling fabrics. She had been collaborating with the Royal Ballet and Opera, where the process was around mending, for example through making couture patches, patches that were beautiful rather than just practical. She was invited to contribute a piece to an exhibition about reusing textiles at Manchester Art Gallery and decided to make a skirt. This became part of the grieving process for my mother, who had recently died, and had taught her about sewing. Although the exhibition was positive, Chloe felt uncomfortable that the narrative of the artwork was all about her and therefore came up with the idea for a project where the stories came from the community. She also wanted to move beyond showing clothes on manikins and so thought of having an artist – a dancer or musician – displaying the new skirt. This was the proposal she presented to Seed.

“I have delivered lots of creative workshops. I find it inspiring to hear about other people’s stories.”

Chloe was keen for the participants to take hold of the project, so she designed the workshops to give participants choices – about the fabric, the size of offcut, the thread colour and the type of embellishment (embroidery or applique). As the workshops progressed, Chloe was more directive about the colours because she wanted to skirt to have an overall aesthetic.

90% of participants said they hadn't used a needle and thread before, so the workshops had to give participants enough time to develop their skills. The social element was as important as the creative element. Participants talked while they worked, and conversations that were honest and intimate. They also supported and encouraged each other.

Most of the workshops took place in the Seed pop up in Angel Place, downstairs at first and then on the mezzanine. The location was good because it was central, but the space was very cold in winter. However, experiencing the process in different seasons was part of Chloe's intention for Blossoming Bridgwater.

"Blossoming Bridgwater was all about growth. We started in January because I wanted participants to see the way the environment changes your relationship to the process. It was difficult to sew when it is freezing cold. The needle moves differently. Maybe it slows you down. In the summer, your fingers are more slippery."

Seed had suggested showcasing Blossoming Bridgwater at the Front Garden Music Festival, but Chloe didn't like the idea of being on a main stage. She wanted the musician to be nearer the audience, and Seed respected this. When she was invited to submit a collection to the planned fashion show in Bridgwater, she realised the two projects could be combined. Chloe had hoped Seed would project manage the show, but the Council wanted to do it, which she thought meant Blossoming Bridgwater wasn't given the profile it should have been. Overall, Chloe felt promotion of the project could have been stronger. She publicised Blossoming Bridgwater on her Instagram account. Seed gave her a structure for a poster showing where the logos would go, but she expected more help publicising the workshops and shows.

Chloe was very happy with the quality of the show. She appreciated the way the camera work and presentation changed for each designer. She thought Seed's compering hit all the right notes. Some of the clothes were challenging, but that made Nurry's job easier, because there was a sense of calm when she came on. One of the participants fed back that her family were surprised at the innovation of the designers and her daughter told her she now had massive street cred from being involved in such a project!

Chloe thought the venue was perfect. Having a café in the church, knowing that the changing rooms were used as a playroom for children during services, all these elements strengthened the sense of being embedded in the community.

Chloe said the impact of Blossoming Bridgwater on her was greater than she expected because of the strong reaction from the community.

"I set out for this community to tell their story. I didn't imagine how involved they would be. Participants were so invested in their work. Some came for half an hour and stayed four hours. 70% of the words people chose in the workshops were positive. They were posting their work online. When they came to the shows, they were really engaged, rather than spectators. Nurry became a pop star to them and their delight at her wearing their work added another depth of emotion."

Chloe had three offers to take part in shows on sustainable fashion, but Seed couldn't fund these, and the main one, Bath Fashion Festival, was cancelled when a sponsor withdrew. Chloe would like to develop the project but would need more help from Seed on the advertising and administration.

Chloe is based in Cheddar and hadn't been to Bridgwater before. She went to the carnival and felt a strong sense of community, which was confirmed at each stage of the project.

NURRY

Nurry heard about Blossoming Bridgwater because Chloe contacted her manager, who chose her. Her first impression was that the project was fantastic and so different from anything she had done before. So many elements were new to her: composing, combining music with fashion, being inspired by a place she didn't know.

The process was challenging because it required different skill sets. She wasn't sure where to start with the composition. She had to think of a theme, interpret the words and emotions from the workshops musically, and create a structure that moved from bright to darker emotions and ended on a triumphant high.

The composition process made Nurry more conscious of the thinking behind music, and the way notes only communicate part of the intention.

"I found the whole experience challenging but by pushing my boundaries I have come out of it a better musician. To compose I had to understand the harmonic structure fully. I had to think about the sound effects possible with the piano. I couldn't just approach the music on the surface. I had to go behind the notes. There was a frustration notating it. That I couldn't explain everything I wanted to achieve. I didn't just mean play it slowly, I meant make it linger. After this process, I feel I will approach other compositions differently, I will look behind the notes, have more of an appreciation of what the harmonies mean emotionally, think more about what the composer might have intended."

Performing can be quite stressful because she is often playing from memory, concentrating on remembering thousands of notes. Now she might feel more relaxed, more able to trust her instincts rather than seeing herself as purely a conduit for the composer's notation.

Nurry attended two workshops and was surprised by how musical some of the participants were. She attended the first half of each show and loved them. She had never been to a live fashion show and thought the designers were fantastic, bold and unapologetic. She thought the venue was beautiful, with excellent acoustics, as good as a concert hall, not too dry or too damp, able to fill the space with sound.

Nurry had all the support she needed. Chloe organised everything for the workshops. Seed supported and encouraged her.

"Laura was so reliable. A stable backbone for Blossoming Bridgwater. There were a lot of components that were very new for me, and I felt very well supported."

Nurry couldn't think of any way to improve Blossoming Bridgwater. The project had so many components and each seemed well organised. It was an incredible experience for her musically and creatively.

Nurry is now keen to do more composition.

"When you are studying Music, you don't know how boxed in you are, how one dimensional your practice is. Blossoming Bridgwater made me feel free. It made me realise how versatile the piano is. I thought fashion and composition and performing were different elements, but combining them felt organic, liberating, more creative, exhilarating."

Nurry lives in London, but her family lives in Bath and she boarded in Well Cathedral School for seven years before going to the Royal College. She describes herself as a Somerset girl.

KATIE

Katie heard about Blossoming Bridgwater from Instagram. She attended the last workshop, where she made a petal. She kept in touch with the other people from the workshops and attended the fashion show with three other participants.

Katie had been a secondary school Art teacher for seven years and had just left to pursue her artistic career. She has a BA in Fine Art and a PDCE in Art and Design at Secondary level. In September 2025, she will start an online Masters in Creative Practice, endorsed by Plymouth University, Make Happen.

Katie is hoping to collaborate with Chloe and the two wrote a project application to Seed together.

Chloe thought the Blossoming Bridgwater workshop was very well organised. Chloe introduced the project, showed examples of her work, where the petals would go and her process of putting the petals together.

The show was higher quality than Katie had expected. Very professional in terms of the quality of the work, the models, the structure, the lighting, the use of the church. Everything was very sophisticated. She thought the church was the perfect venue because of the character of the building and the way the light bounced off everything.

Even though Katie only attended one workshop, this was on the first day of not having a teaching contract so Blossoming Bridgwater definitely affected her wellbeing. It helped her mood. It gave her the confidence to apply to Seed.

“Blossoming Bridgwater helped me unpack things and get into the right mindset after some stressful experiences at work. It connected me to a community. It created a stepping point for the future. It showed that everyone is supportive and wants what is best, and the world is your oyster.”

One of the strengths of the workshop was that people had their own experience. Some took their artwork away and worked on it at home. Some added embellishments. Katie felt there was no pressure, and people could work in their own way.

The only weakness in the workshops is that the structure could have allowed for people who attended one workshop by having more templates and having a choice of putting beads on the petal at the same time as the lettering.

Katie lives in Taunton and has visited Bridgwater several times in the last couple of years. At first, she wasn't sure what to think, and felt Taunton had anything she wanted. However, in the last couple of years she has seen subtle changes in Bridgwater, and has become more aware of the arts cafes, the independent market, and arts organisations like the Engine Room and Grow Create, so now she thinks Bridgwater has more creative outlets than Taunton.

BELLA

Bella was a Designer Technology teacher, now working as a jeweller. She met Chloe at an event and Chloe asked her to help with the workshops. She attended all the workshops and helped set up, check the equipment and support participants so they were not waiting for Chloe. She felt the collaboration went well because she is rather controlling, as you might expect of a teacher, and Chloe was more relaxed, and happy for the process to evolve, but also extremely well organised.

Bella went to the fashion show on the Friday. She thought the marketing was a bit disjointed, with information on Blossoming Bridgwater being separate. At the door and with the tech guys, she asked where Chloe was, and they didn't seem to know who she was.

“Blossoming Bridgwater was such an amazing project that it deserved a bit more hype than it got.”

The show itself was very positive because it was giving people a chance to see fashion close up, fashion at its rawist.

Bella appreciated the venue because of the sense of it embracing the whole community. One of the workshops was held in the church and she noticed that there was an AA meeting before, and a homeless man who came to sleep on a pew afterwards.

“The church was as gorgeous hub of the community. I didn't hear anyone who didn't want to do to a church.”

Bella thought the workshops were amazing because of the cross section of people who attended, the welcome that was extended to all, and the quality of what was produced.

“Participants were working with the most unbelievable fabrics we wouldn't usually have access to. They wouldn't have usually have access to a concert pianist. Two of the participants cried, they were so inspired by the music, so happy that someone was taking the time and effort to do this for them.”

Bella lives in Dorset and didn't know much about Bridgwater. She had a sense that there are areas of deprivation, but could see that people like Seed are working to make it a place that is loved.

RACHEL

Rachel found out about Blossoming Bridgwater because she follows Chloe on Instagram. Rachel had taken photographs of one of Chloe's previous projects.

Rachel attended two workshops and was very impressed with them: with the quality of the fabric, the support to help people with the sewing, and the diverse group of participants, which in one session included a group of teenage boys.

Rachel thought the shows were incredible because they were so well organised, so professional in terms of the lighting, the music and the staging.

“Chloe’s skirt was a great finale piece. It was just breathtaking. It was an amazing evening’s entertainment. You could have been in Bristol, I was surprised it was in Bridgwater and for £5.”

Rachel thought the venue was amazing. Before she saw it, she had reservations but then felt the shows couldn't have been housed in a better place.

“The church gave the shows more depth and character. The history of the church gave an authentic feeling.”

Rachel thought that the main strengths of Blossoming Bridgwater were Chloe’s vision, meticulous eye for detail, and welcome extended to everyone in the community. She couldn't think of any weaknesses to the project.

Rachel is retired, a semi-professional photographer. Blossoming Bridgwater inspired her to seek out more musical or fashion events, which might be in London.

Before Blossoming Bridgwater, Rachel hadn’t heard of Seed. She lives near Langport.

LYNN

Lynn heard about Blossoming Bridgwater through Facebook. She follows Seed and has attended several other projects.

Lynn was so eager to join the project that she was the first one through the door on the first day and only missed a couple of the workshops. She really enjoyed the workshops. She looks out for anything about ballet on the television, and really felt it was a privilege to work with materials from the Royal Ballet. She became interested in embroidery a couple of years ago and used YouTube videos to learn some techniques. She experiences sewing as so relaxing that she has dedicated a room in her house as a craft studio.

“I embroider for my personal enjoyment and relaxation and gratification. I can’t wait to get my other jobs done so I can get back to my studio.”

Lynn had never been to a fashion show before and didn't know what to expect. She thought some of the fashions were a bit crazy, and not in keeping with the church location, but a lot of fun. She thought the ambiance of the church was stunning. She used to go to the church for bellringing, so she knew the space from above, but saw a different perspective on it.

Lynn felt as if she was treated as one of the team by Chloe and Bella. She was greeted every time she went, and her ideas were listened to. She enjoyed the conversations, which helped her connect to people she might pass in the street but not talk to.

The main strength of Blossoming Bridgwater was Chloe. Lynn looked up her history and was delighted that someone with those skills would come to Bridgwater and be so forthcoming, and welcoming and open.

The only weakness was the lack of heating in the first sessions in the winter.

Lynn moved to Bridgwater seven years ago and has noticed there is more to do in the last couple of years. She said that Seed is good at bringing people together, at running projects that strengthen the community.

CAMILLA

Camilla heard about Blossoming Bridgwater from following Seed on social media. Her daughter is studying Fashion and Business Studies at Bridgwater College, so it seemed great project for them to attend together. Camilla plays flute with a local music group, Eclectic Collective. She studied Classical Music as a student in Poland, before she came to England.

Camilla attended two creative workshops and thought they were very well organised. Everything was well explained so participants understood how their work fitted into the wider project. In a workshop, she chose a music note as her word and when Chloe saw this, she asked about her experience and invited her to perform as part of the show, which she did.

Camilla said the show was much better than she expected because of the quality of the outfits and the way lighting and filming enhanced the experience. She thought the church was a good choice of venue because of the acoustics and the beauty of the building. However, she felt some of the outfits were not suitable for a church. She liked the combination of the fashion show and the Blossoming Bridgwater finale and felt the transition between the two was smooth.

Camilla thinks that Bridgwater needs events like Blossoming Bridgwater. She doesn't have a negative impression of the town, but she knows it has a bad reputation. Seed's projects bring people from outside Bridgwater and help to change the town's reputation. She would like Seed to do more in Bridgwater because they are doing fantastic work.

Camilla would like to take part in, or attend, more fashion shows.

RESIDENTS' SURVEY: BRIDGWATER

PUBLICITY FOR THE SURVEY

The baseline survey was promoted through a dual strategy of online and physical methods. In order to avoid skewing the results with disproportionate representation of arts engagers, Seed did not directly promote the survey via its website, ebulletin or social media channels, or local arts organisation, but non-arts organisation members of the Seed consortium were asked to promote it via their social media accounts, websites and where appropriate in direct emails to subscribers. Physical distribution of the survey was undertaken via a postcard and accompanying poster which was distributed physically to a wide variety of potential collection points around Bridgwater including:

- Community centres (Victoria Park, Sydenham, Westfield- for further distribution by the village agent, The Town Hall warm space, The Hub).
- Shops and businesses in town (for staff notice boards and shop windows), hairdressers, tattoo studios, takeaway food outlets, charity shops, coffee shops and cafes, pubs.
- Churches on community noticeboards
- At the information counters of non-arts organisation consortium members including Bridgwater Town Council and the Library.

Around 150 postcards were hand delivered to letterboxes in two areas chosen as they were far enough away from the other physical distribution points to have potentially not seen a postcard previously:

- The Valetta Place/Chigley Close/Riverside and Northgate Area; and
- The southern ends of Bristol and Bath Roads

Postcards were also handed out to members of the public on the street.

Early feedback made it apparent that members of the public without access to internet would be disadvantaged, so the option to leave a contact telephone number instead of an email was added to the survey and assistance was offered through the Hub and town hall to complete the survey manually. An incentive was offered in the form of a £100 voucher for the supermarket of their choice to be randomly selected from respondents.

The follow up survey unfortunately clashed with other events and surveys, which meant that less publicity was possible.

RESPONSES

The baseline received 230 responses, which is a reasonable set of data. The follow up survey had 52 responses, which is not comparable.

The follow up survey is biased towards long term residents.

FIGURE 50: HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN BRIDGWATER? (BASELINE SURVEY)

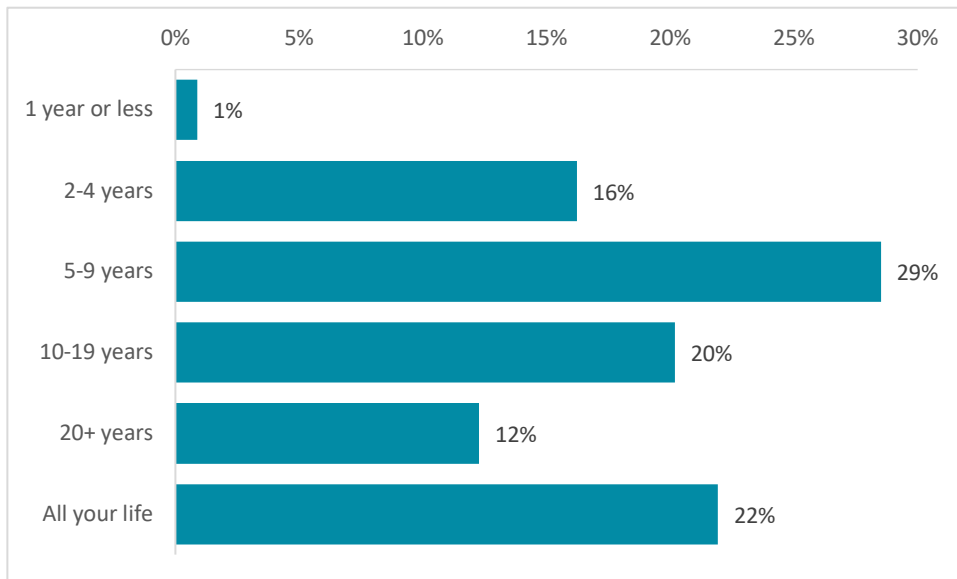
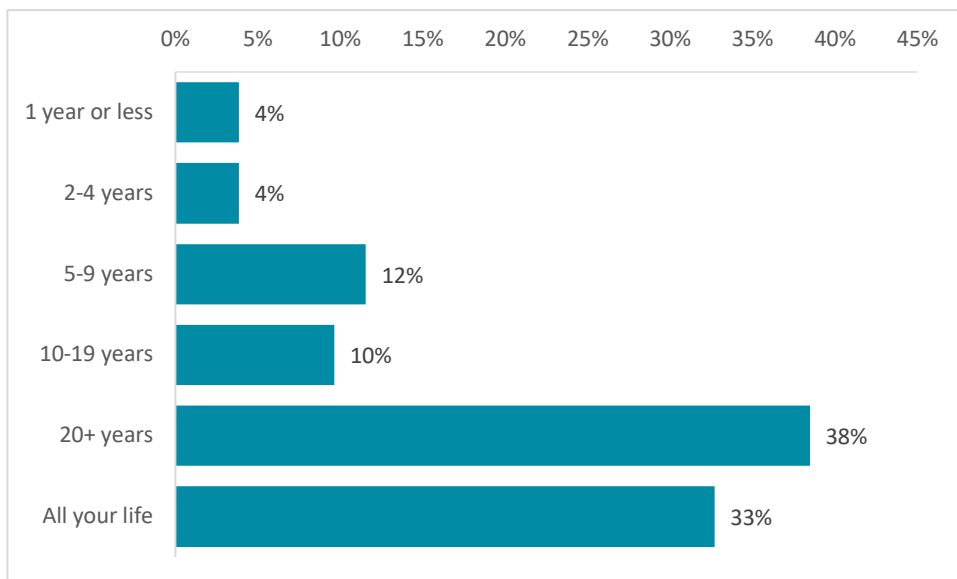


FIGURE 51: HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN BRIDGWATER? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



PLACE

We asked residents to describe Bridgwater in three words. Baseline responses are mainly positive, with the most common words being “beautiful”, “comfortable” and “friendly”. The follow up survey is also positive, with a greater emphasis on the historic nature of the town.

In the baseline survey, 76% said that Bridgwater is a creative place. In the follow up survey, this decreased to 65%, perhaps signalling increased understanding of the barriers to delivering cultural events.

In the baseline survey, 69% said that Bridgwater needs more creative arts activities and events. In the follow up survey, this increased to 81%.

In the baseline and follow up surveys, 67% of respondents said that Bridgwater has a good range of creative arts activities and events.

In the baseline survey, 60% said there are more creative/arts activities and events in Bridgwater town centre than a year ago. In the follow up survey, this increased to 73%.

In the baseline survey, 65% of respondents said they feel proud to live in Bridgwater. In the follow up survey, this fell to 52%.

In the baseline survey, 62% said Bridgwater town centre is welcoming. In the follow up survey, this fell to 15%.

In the baseline survey, 54% said that Bridgwater town centre feels safe. In the follow up survey, this fell to 12%, presumably reflecting specific incidents.

FIGURE 54: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT BRIDGWATER? (BASELINE SURVEY)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
I feel proud to live in Bridgwater	18%	47%	23%	10%	1%
Bridgwater town centre is welcoming	19%	43%	25%	10%	3%
Bridgwater town centre feels safe	19%	35%	28%	15%	3%
Bridgwater is a creative place	25%	51%	17%	6%	2%
Carnival, festivals, arts and culture make Bridgwater a better place to live	33%	43%	19%	3%	1%
There are more creative/arts activities and events in Bridgwater town centre than a year ago	18%	43%	33%	5%	1%
Bridgwater has a good range of creative arts activities and events	22%	45%	25%	7%	1%
Bridgwater needs more creative arts activities and events	21%	48%	25%	7%	0%

“Bridgwater Town centre, especially evenings and night time, feels unsafe to walk alone. I rarely if ever go out.”

“I love how creative Bridgwater is and the effort that’s been put in with the markets etc recently- more please!”

“I’d love to see more for teenagers and young adults that doesn’t cost lots. Summer courses in art, drama, music.”

“I Couldn't be happier to have moved here from Berkshire.”

"I feel that, although Bridgwater is considered to be an un-welcoming and to some degree an anti-social town, it's hard to deny that Bridgwater has a thriving creative art scene and, in some ways, I feel that the grittiness of Bridgwater makes it a unique place to film and photograph in as it's suburban setting give it a very honest feel to it."

"We need to spend tax payers more wisely than the arts centre and the engine room."

FIGURE 55: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT BRIDGWATER? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
I feel proud to live in Bridgwater	12%	40%	33%	15%	0%
Bridgwater town centre is welcoming	2%	13%	27%	44%	13%
Bridgwater town centre feels safe	4%	8%	29%	50%	10%
Bridgwater is a creative place	25%	40%	29%	6%	0%
Carnival, festivals, arts and culture make Bridgwater a better place to live	56%	37%	8%	0%	0%
There are more creative/arts activities and events in Bridgwater town centre than a year ago	33%	40%	25%	2%	0%
Bridgwater has a good range of creative arts activities and events	15%	52%	25%	4%	4%
Bridgwater needs more creative arts activities and events	38%	42%	13%	4%	2%

"I have seen and attended more creative events this year in Bridgwater, which is incredible and they have all been amazing. However, I do not feel they are always readily advertised, so a lot of people miss out on the opportunities."

"Bridgwater has transformed over the past 5 years. It is impossible to imagine a cafe like Slate or events like the angel place popup or seasons happening here when I first arrived in Bridgwater."

"Many art forms are sadly underrepresented."

"There are no creative courses for young people at Bridgwater College, you have to go to Taunton."

"More please."

"My impression is that Bridgy Gallery, Seed, Mingle cafe and Slate have really brought out the town's creative side and made it more exciting to be here. But the antisocial behaviour in the town centre makes it hard to want to be in town."

"There IS a lot to be positive about in Bridgwater."

"Any arts activities should be self funding and not rely on hand outs from normal residents."

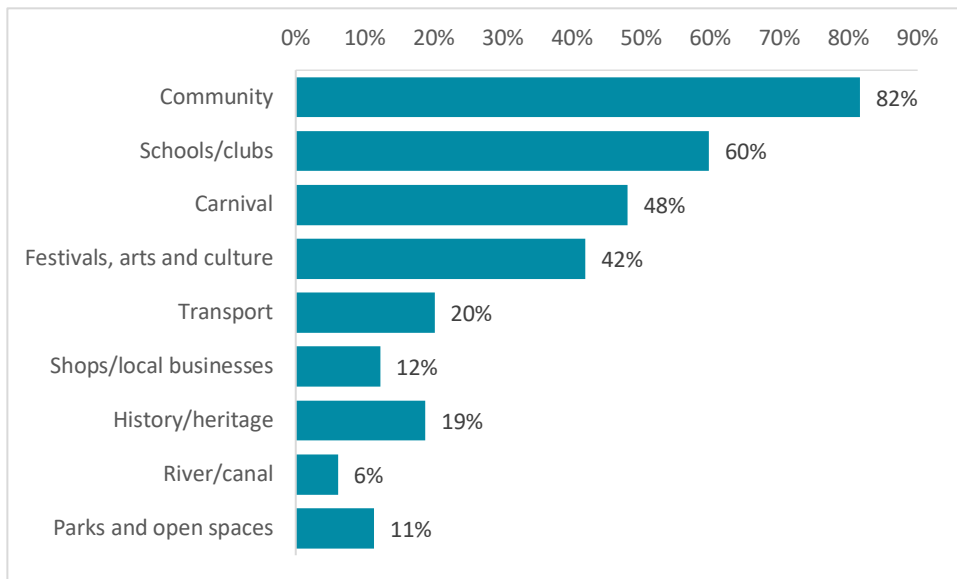
"Events need to Be more diverse and more lgbtqia+ friendly."

“There is still a need for more diverse creative practices, that are inclusive and accessible for all and feel safer for individuals.”

“Antisocial behaviour in the town centre makes residents uncomfortable, and puts off tourists.”

In the baseline survey, the best things about Bridgwater were the community, schools and clubs.

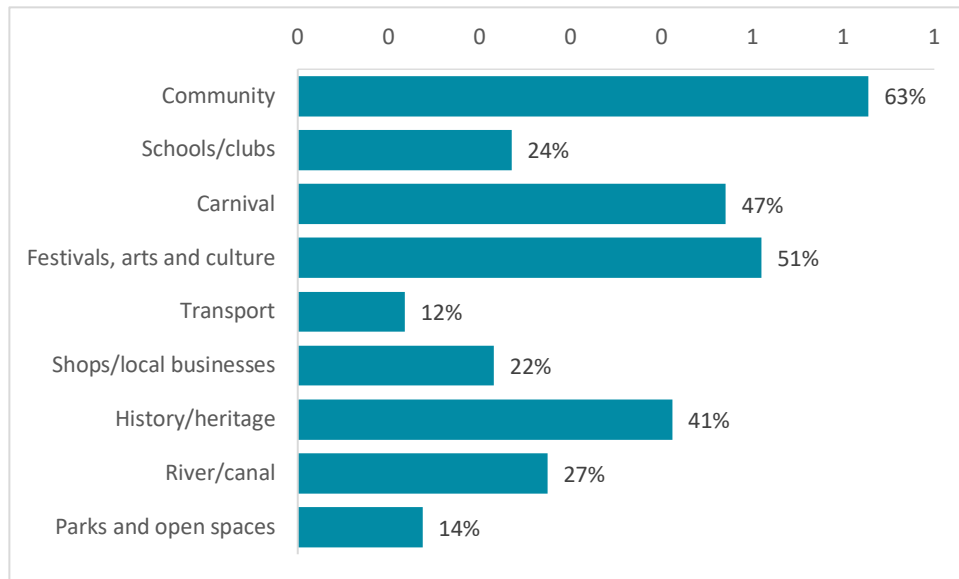
FIGURE 56: WHAT ARE THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BRIDGWATER? PLEASE RANK THESE IN ORDER FROM 1 FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND 9 THE LEAST IMPORTANT TO YOU (AGGREGATION OF 1-3) (BASELINE SURVEY)



“We Need MORE art, community projects and meeting places.”

The rating of carnival stayed fairly constant between the two surveys. Festivals, arts and culture increased from 42% placing them in the top 3 categories to 51%. History/heritage increased strongly, from 19% to 41%, consistent with the infographic above.

FIGURE 57: WHAT ARE THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BRIDGWATER? PLEASE RANK THESE IN ORDER FROM 1 FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND 9 THE LEAST IMPORTANT TO YOU (AGGREGATION OF 1-3) (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



CULTURE

Awareness and attendance are relatively high.

In the baseline survey, the average attendance was 53%, which increased to 55% for the longer list of events in the follow up survey.

In the baseline survey, the average awareness was 87%. It was slightly lower for the follow up survey, 81%.

FIGURE 58: WHAT IS YOUR CONTACT WITH THESE FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN BRIDGWATER? (BASELINE SURVEY)

	Not heard of	Heard of but not attended	Attended once	Attended more than once
Blake Museum	10%	37%	36%	17%
Brick and Tile Museum	13%	41%	34%	12%
Bridgwater Arts Centre	10%	27%	35%	28%
Bridgwater Carnival	5%	31%	29%	35%
Bridgwater Docks Festival	14%	32%	38%	16%
Bridgwater Fair	9%	26%	29%	36%
Bridgwater Food and Drink Festival	15%	28%	36%	20%
Bridgwater Library	10%	26%	30%	34%
Bridgwater Together	23%	35%	32%	11%
Bridgwater Town Hall Theatre	11%	30%	37%	22%
Bridgy Gallery	19%	40%	30%	11%
Cobblestones/Bar27/other live music venue	11%	36%	32%	21%
Front Garden Music Festival	26%	34%	32%	8%
McMillan Theatre	8%	36%	34%	23%

National Trust (Fyne Court/Coleridge Cottage)	14%	28%	34%	25%
Quayside Festival	14%	34%	38%	14%
Somerfest	13%	45%	36%	7%
Somerrock	14%	40%	32%	14%
Seed the Day	23%	40%	29%	8%
The Engine Room/Somerset Film	10%	37%	37%	16%
YMCA	11%	31%	31%	27%

FIGURE 59: WHAT IS YOUR CONTACT WITH THESE FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN BRIDGWATER? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)

	Not heard of	Heard of but not attended	Attended once	Attended more than once
Art Road Trip	58%	10%	15%	17%
Blake Museum	0%	29%	19%	52%
Brick and Tile Museum	4%	46%	15%	35%
Bridgwater Arts Centre	2%	17%	13%	67%
Bridgwater Carnival	0%	6%	8%	87%
Bridgwater Docks Festival/Fallen Moon	2%	33%	25%	40%
Bridgwater Fair	0%	8%	8%	85%
Bridgwater Food and Drink Festival	2%	23%	23%	52%
Bridgwater Library	0%	6%	10%	85%
Bridgwater Together	56%	12%	15%	17%
Bridgwater Town Hall Theatre	10%	24%	18%	49%
Bridgy Gallery	17%	40%	19%	23%
Cobblestones/Bar27/other live music venue	0%	31%	17%	52%
Front Garden Music Festival	25%	39%	20%	16%
Hidden Station	63%	22%	4%	12%
McMillan Theatre	2%	23%	23%	52%
National Trust (Fyne Court/Coleridge Cottage)	26%	28%	8%	38%
Quayside Festival	12%	12%	21%	56%
Somerfest	17%	31%	19%	33%
Somerrock	21%	60%	6%	13%
Seed the Day	12%	52%	19%	17%
Seed Creative Popup	58%	19%	12%	12%
SI-ate concept store	27%	23%	15%	35%
Super Saturday	23%	33%	6%	38%
The Engine Room/Somerset Film	58%	25%	10%	8%
YMCA	10%	25%	13%	52%

Attitudes to the arts are positive in the baseline survey and even more so in the follow up survey.

In the baseline survey, 82% of respondents said they think that everyone is or can be creative, which increased to 87% in the follow up survey.

In the baseline survey, 71% said that arts and culture are one of the main ways of expressing the identity of a place, which increased to 94% in the follow up survey's reworded question that Arts and culture help to make a place distinct and special.

In the baseline survey, 70% said that arts and culture are an important way to improve wellbeing, which increased to 92% in the follow up survey.

In the baseline survey, 72% said they would like to spend more time on creative activities/events, which increased to 87% in the follow up survey.

FIGURE 60: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE? (BASELINE SURVEY)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Everyone is or can be creative	26%	56%	13%	5%	0%
Arts and culture help to make a place distinct and special	30%	41%	27%	2%	0%
Arts and culture are an important way to improve wellbeing	30%	41%	25%	5%	0%
I would like to spend more time on creative activities/events	30%	42%	23%	5%	0%

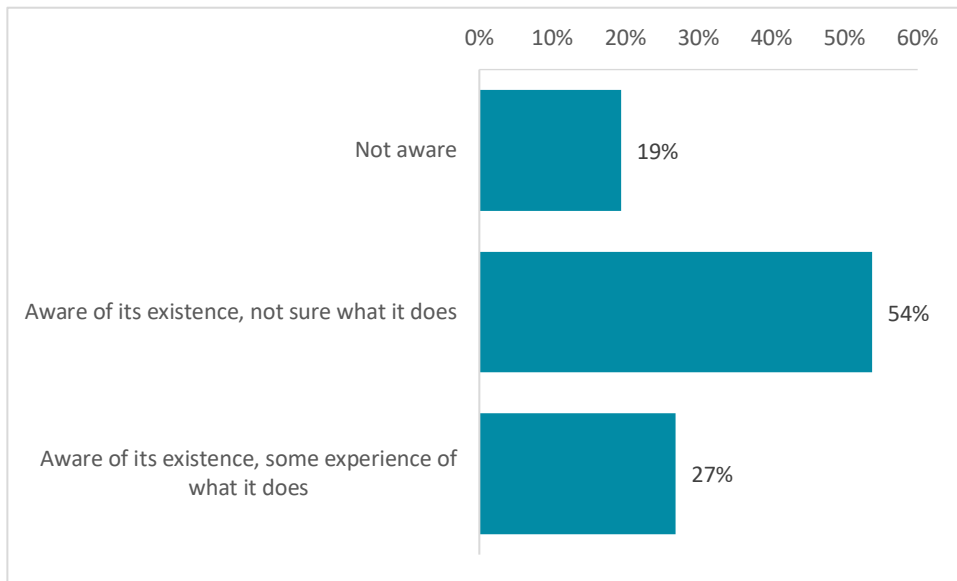
FIGURE 61: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Everyone is or can be creative	52%	35%	8%	4%	2%
Arts and culture are one of the main ways of expressing the identity of a place	56%	38%	4%	2%	0%
Arts and culture are an important way to improve wellbeing	60%	33%	6%	0%	2%
I would like to spend more time on creative activities/events	54%	33%	12%	0%	2%

SEED AND ARTS ENGAGEMENT

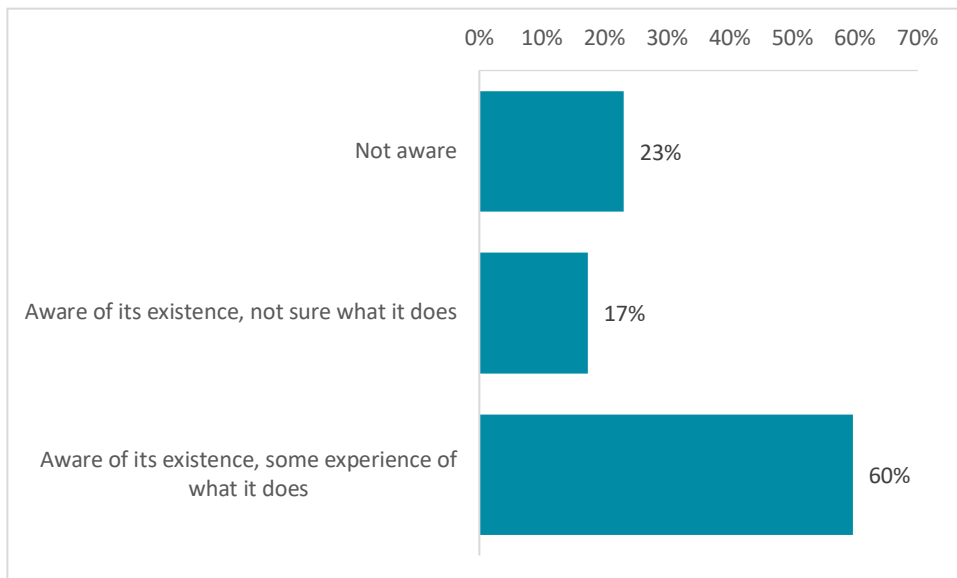
In the baseline survey, only 27% were aware of Seed and aware of what it does, increasing to 60% in the follow up survey. Note that this also suggests that the follow up survey is not biased towards individuals with experience of Seed, since 40% are either unaware of it or not sure what it does.

FIGURE 62: WHAT IS YOUR AWARENESS OF SEED SEDGEMOOR? (BASELINE SURVEY)



“Fantastic organisation really community based with some really unique and creative ideas.”

FIGURE 63: WHAT IS YOUR AWARENESS OF SEED SEDGEMOOR? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



In the baseline survey, the main barriers to attending festivals, arts and culture in Bridgwater were cost and lack of information about what is on. In the follow up survey the cost barrier decreased and the information barrier increased, possibly because respondents are more willing to pay for arts events when they see their value.

Only 14% of baseline respondents and 4% of follow up respondents said they are not interested in festivals, arts or culture. The percentage saying arts events are not welcoming fell from 24% to 6%. The “other” responses in the baseline were feeling of being unsafe in the town centre, access needs, work commitments and weather. The “other” responses in the follow up survey were lack of time, health issues, antisocial behaviour in town and one feeling that arts events are elitist.

FIGURE 64: ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS TO YOU ATTENDING THE FESTIVALS, ARTS OR CULTURE IN BRIDGWATER? PLEASE TICK ANY THAT APPLY (BASELINE SURVEY)

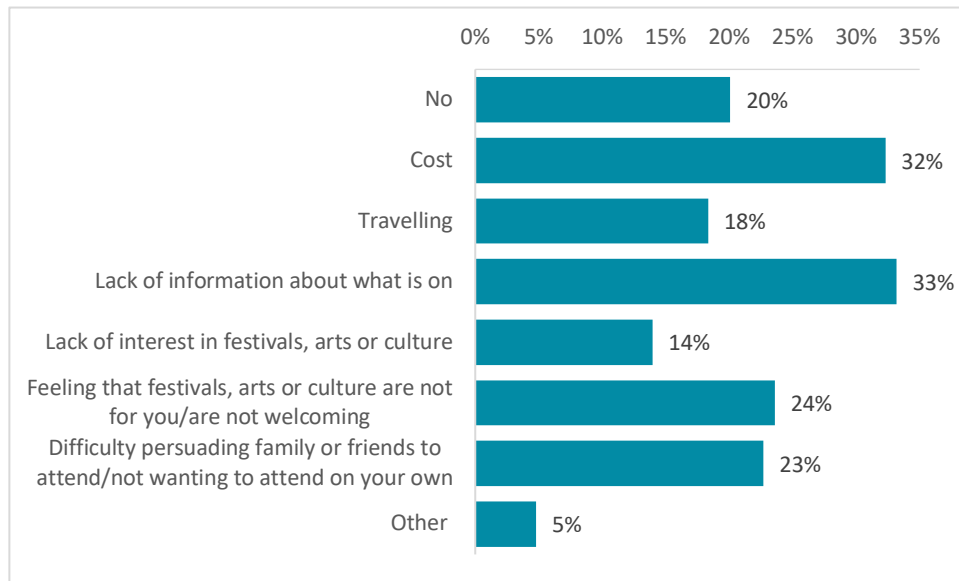
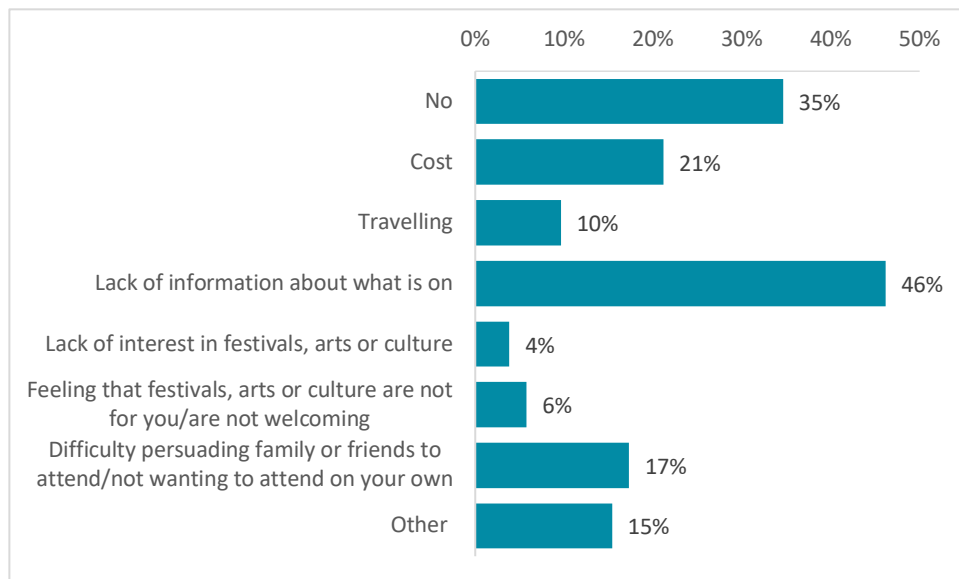


FIGURE 65: ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS TO YOU ATTENDING THE FESTIVALS, ARTS OR CULTURE IN BRIDGWATER? PLEASE TICK ANY THAT APPLY (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



I created our own list of creative/cultural activities designed to be inclusive (non-elitist) and in plain English. In both surveys, only one person said they haven't done any of these in the last 12 months. The percentage of respondents who said they had been to an arts exhibition was 27% in the baseline and 52% in the follow up survey. The percentage who said they had helped to organise an arts event increased from 17% to 23% (a modest increase and again suggesting the follow up was not dominated by Seed contacts). The percentage of respondents who said they had attended a creative class or workshop increased from 16% to 58%.

FIGURE 66: WHICH OF THESE CREATIVE/CULTURAL ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU DONE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? (BASELINE SURVEY)

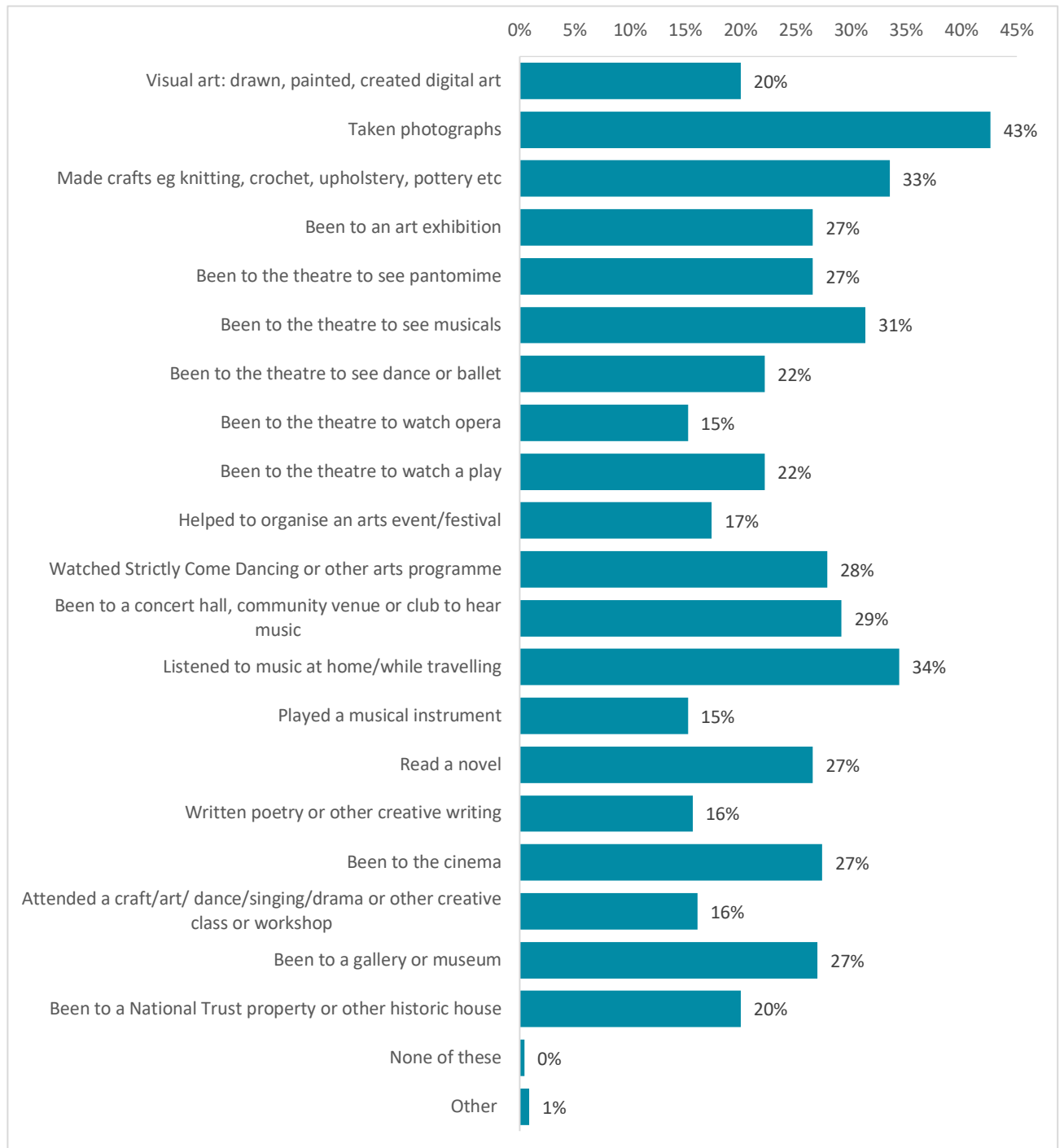
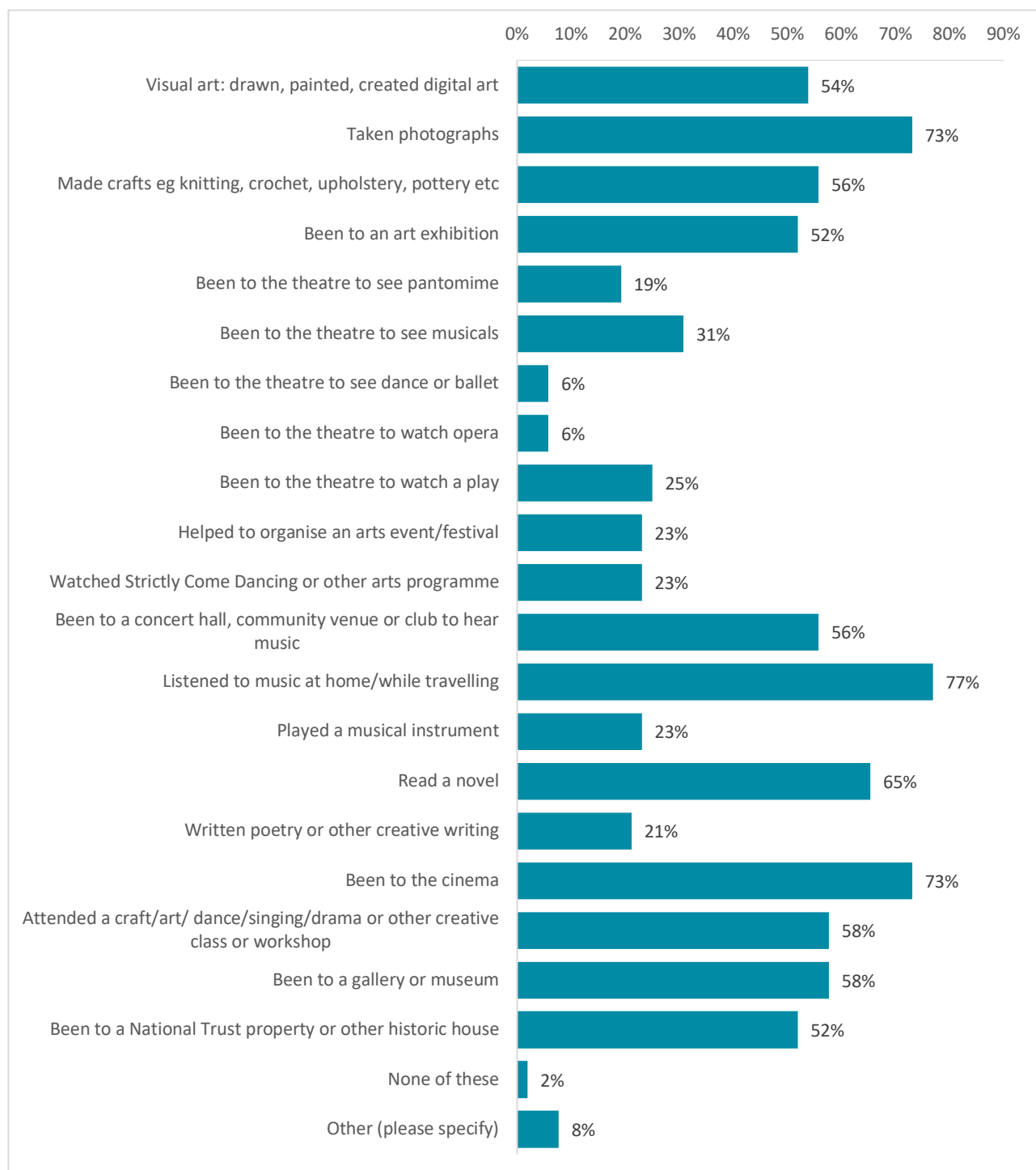


FIGURE 67: WHICH OF THESE CREATIVE/CULTURAL ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU DONE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



BACKGROUND

Baseline responses are relatively well spread across the neighbourhoods. The “other” responses are Bath Road, Cheddar, Wembdon, Taunton Road, Clarks Estate, Wilstock, Spaxton, Burrowbridge, and Kings Down. The three respondents who live outside Bridgwater are assumed to work or study in the area, given that they received one of Seed’s postcards.

FIGURE 68: IN WHICH NEIGHBOURHOOD DO YOU LIVE? (BASELINE SURVEY)

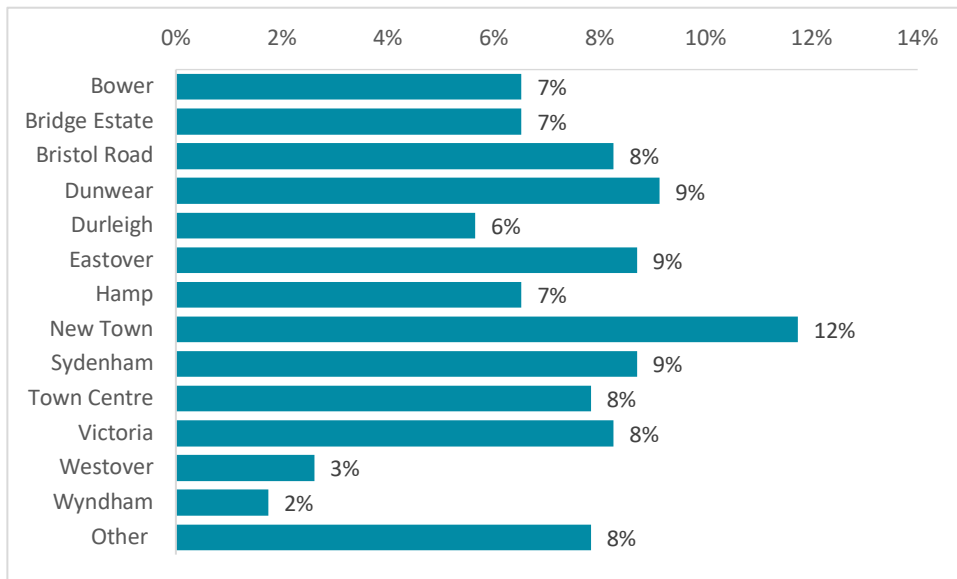
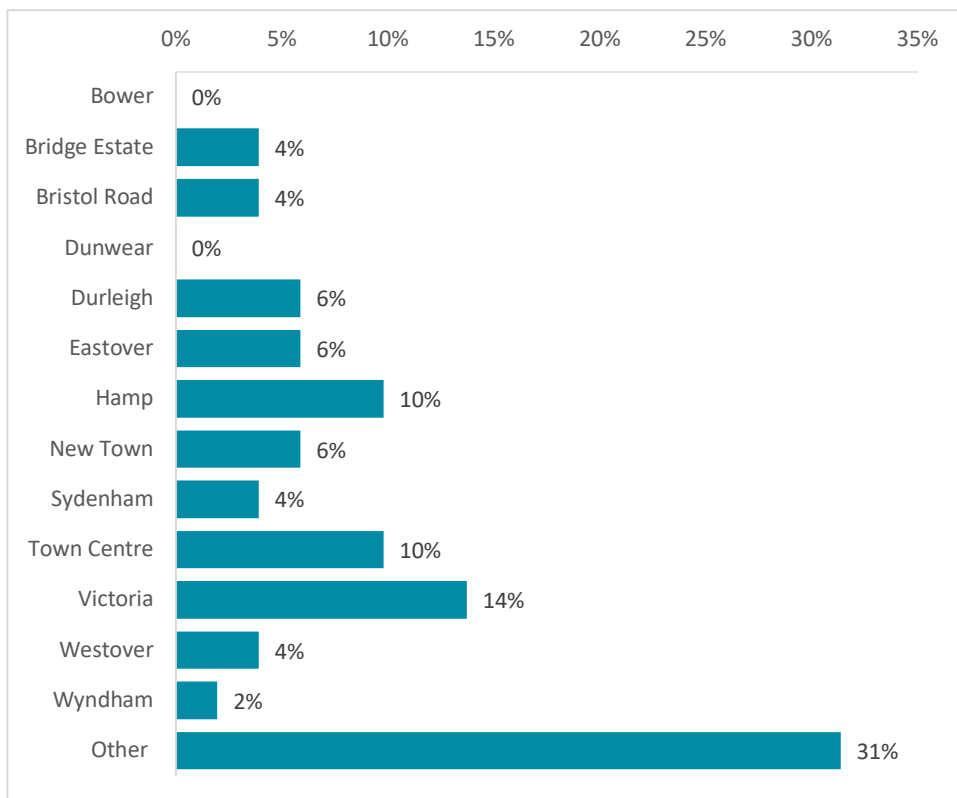
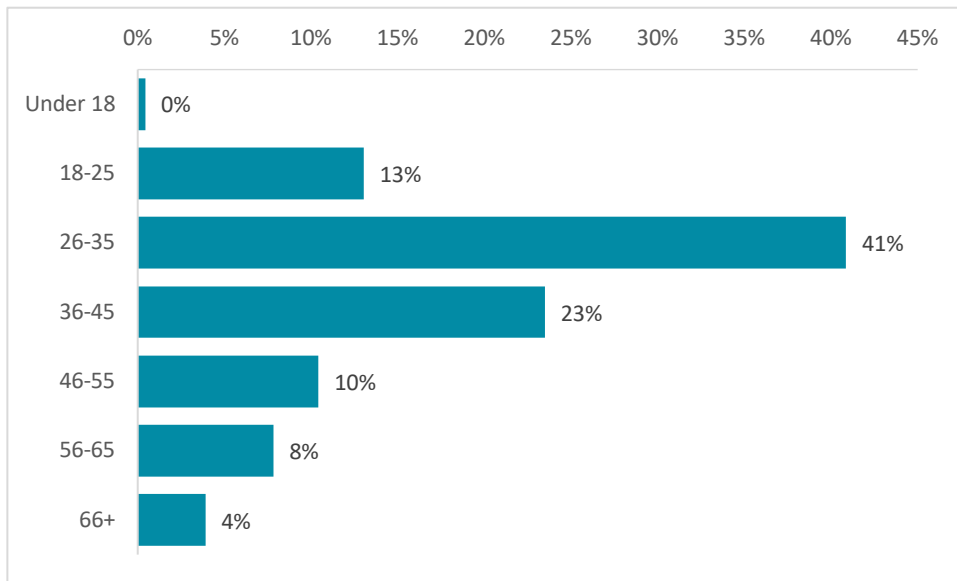
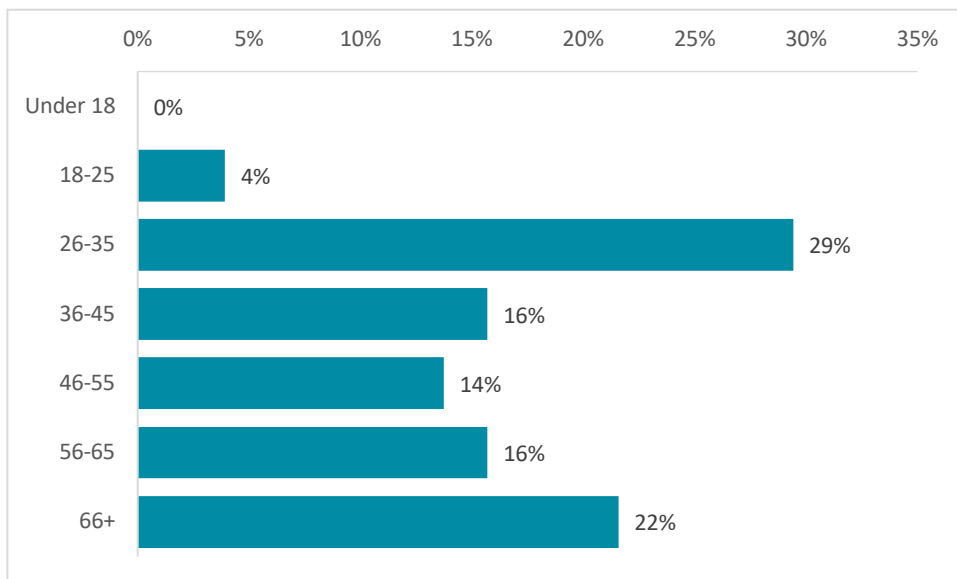


FIGURE 69: IN WHICH NEIGHBOURHOOD DO YOU LIVE? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



The follow up survey respondents came from a wider area. The “other responses were: Quantocks but strong connection to Bridgy, village outside, Taunton Road, Cossington, Wilstock, Chedzoy, Kings down, West Bridgwater, Kings down, Wembdon, Burnham, Woolavington St Johns Street and Puritob.

The follow up survey has an older age group.

FIGURE 70: WHAT IS YOUR AGE? (BASELINE SURVEY)**FIGURE 71: WHAT IS YOUR AGE? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)**

Neither survey is not diverse, which is a reflection of the population in Sedgemoor. The follow up survey is slightly more diverse.

FIGURE 72: WHAT IS YOUR ETHNICITY? (BASELINE SURVEY)

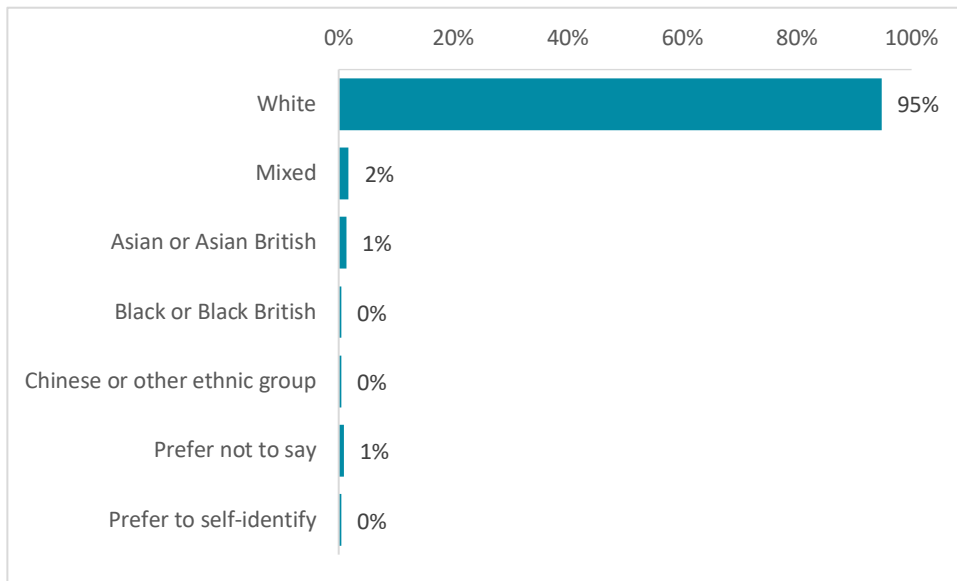
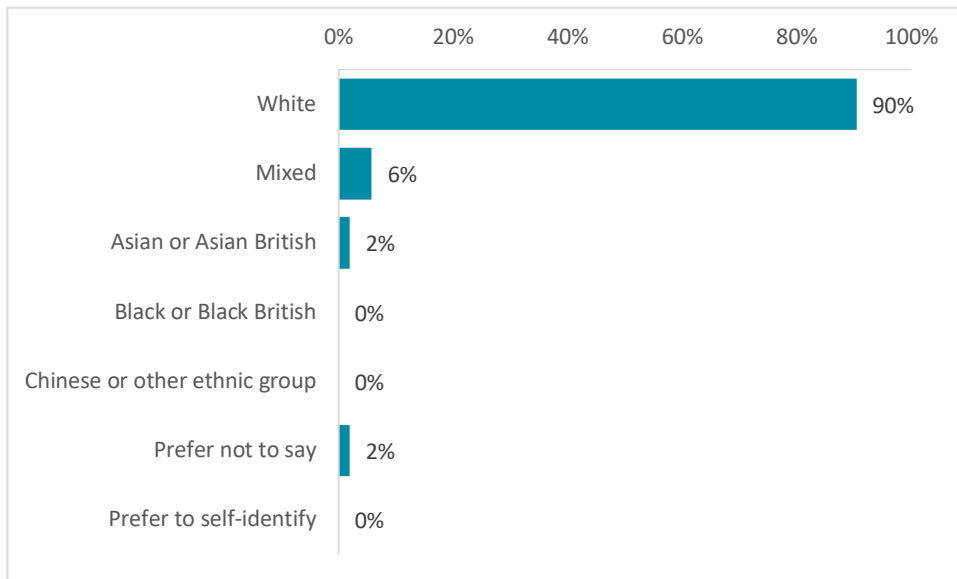
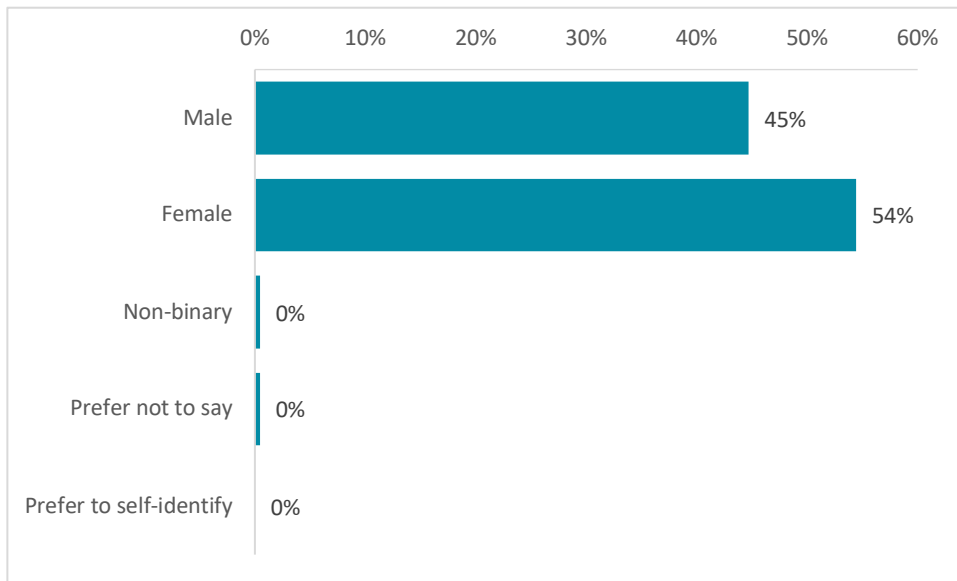
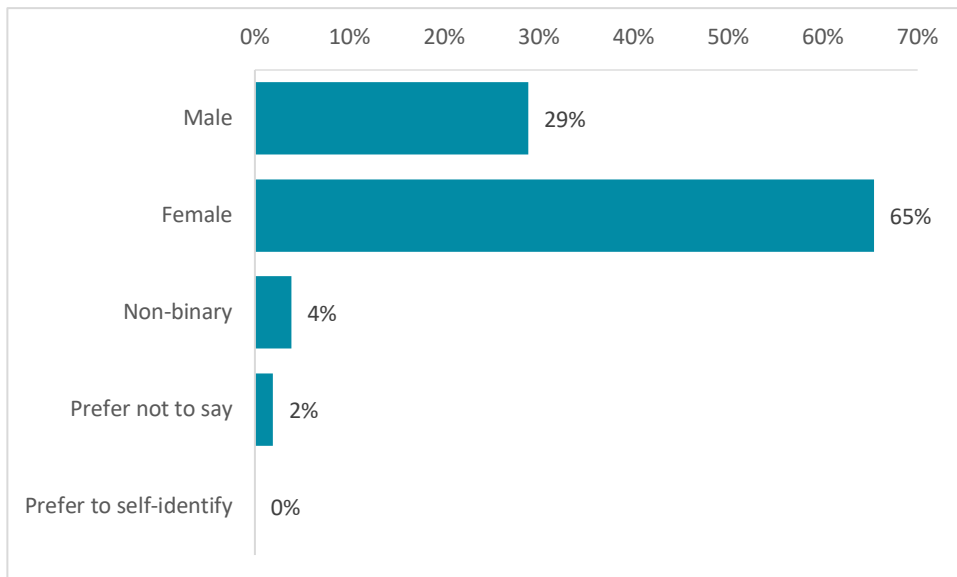


FIGURE 73: WHAT IS YOUR ETHNICITY? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



The gender balance is more even in the baseline survey.

FIGURE 74: ARE YOU: (BASELINE SURVEY)**FIGURE 75: ARE YOU: (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)**

41% of the baseline respondents said they have a disability or long-term health condition, which seems very high and might be COVID-related. This falls to 29% in the follow up survey, despite the older age group.

FIGURE 76: DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY OR LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION? (BASELINE SURVEY)

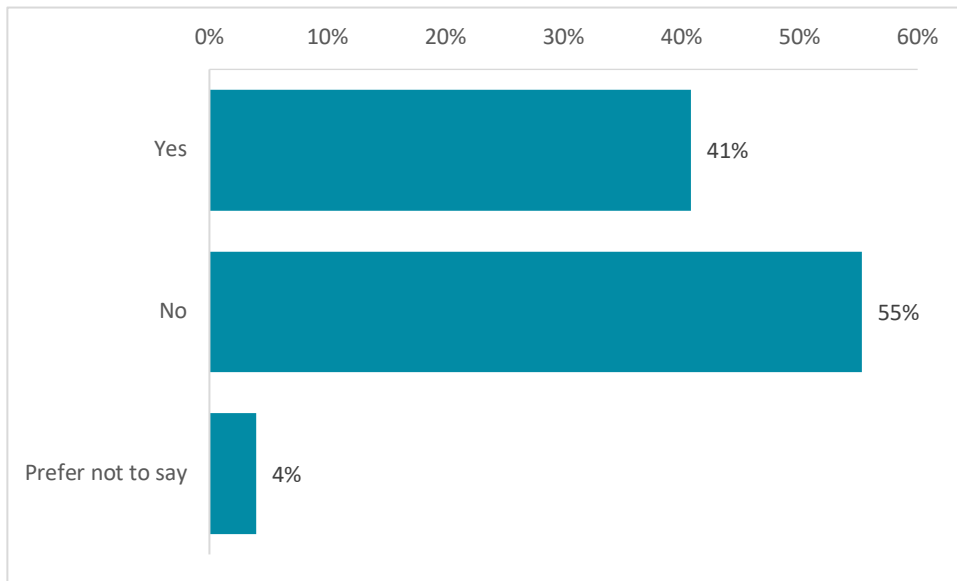
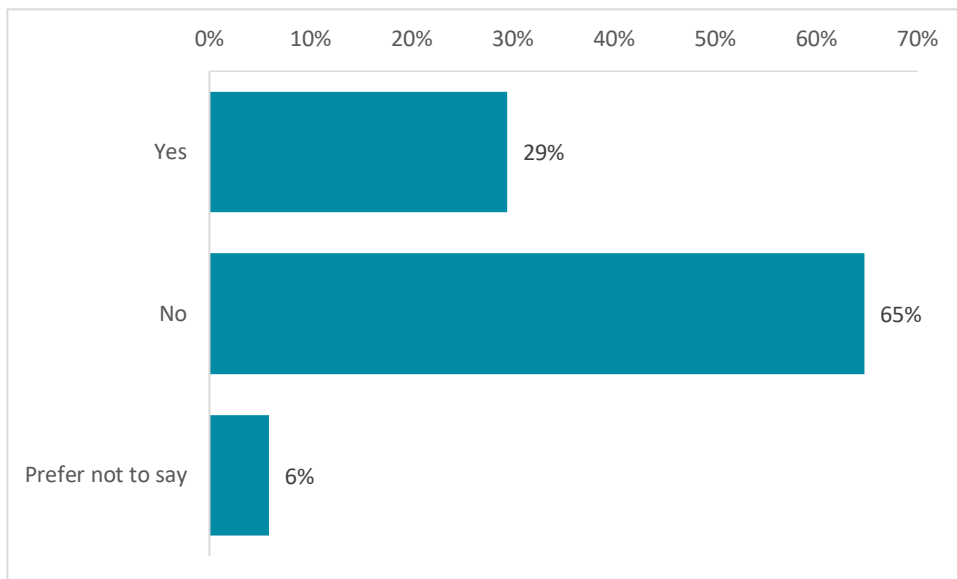


FIGURE 77: DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY OR LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION? (FOLLOW UP SURVEY)



CONCLUSION

The residents' survey is a powerful tool and it is a shame not to have more responses to the follow up. Notwithstanding this, some tentative conclusions are possible:

- Awareness of Seed is higher in the follow up survey, but not so high as to suggest that only people who had worked with Seed had responded.
- Awareness and valuing of the historic nature of Bridgwater is far higher in the follow up survey.

- Attitudes to the arts are more positive in the follow up survey. A higher percentage say that festivals, arts and culture make Bridgwater a better place to live. A slightly higher percentage said that everyone is or can be creative.
- Priority to the arts in Bridgwater is higher in the follow up survey. It doesn't feature in the top three things about Bridgwater in the baseline and comes second in the follow up survey.
- In the baseline survey, the main barriers to attending festivals, arts and culture in Bridgwater were cost and lack of information about what is on. In the follow up survey the cost barrier decreased, and the information barrier increased, possibly because respondents are more willing to pay for arts events when they see their value and possibly because follow up respondents are more middle class.
- In the follow up survey, a higher percentage say that Bridgwater needs more creative arts activities and events, which suggests that Seed has stimulated interest in the arts.
- Belief in the arts' contribution to wellbeing is high in the baseline and near unanimous in the follow up survey.
- There is some evidence of increased engagement in the arts between the two surveys, although the small sample reduces the reliability of this finding.

OBSERVATION EVALUATION SYSTEM INTRODUCTION

Observation forms are useful because they:

- Value and capture the important insights and knowledge of the team and so ensure their voice is heard in the evaluation.
- Acknowledge that quality is actively created, and can be judged in the process, rather than relying on outcome measures, which are not as much under the control of the team.
- Stimulate discussion about why different members of the team have different perceptions of the same event.
- Generate quantitative data around intangibles such as quality and engagement.
- Direct observation to specific questions.
- Use time when team members are already present at a workshop or event.
- Save time because most of the questions are tick box, so quantitative data can be compiled very quickly, and comments can focus on new issues.
- Capture learning at the time, before thoughts are lost.
- Reflect and contribute to an internal discussion about models of quality and so help to create and articulate understanding of the team's way of doing things.
- Fulfil the requirement for peer review from Arts Council England.

The limitations of observation are:

- You cannot see participants' feelings, only their behaviour.
- You cannot see actions that happened before the section that you are observing, although you might already know about it or be able to ask the local team about them.

RESPONSES

We have 36 event forms from four observers between August 2023 and July 2025 for 21 events, across more than 386 hours of engagement. The artforms represented include: fashion, craft (clay), drama, filmmaking (animation), literature (poetry, storytelling), music (live jazz, singing, sound and technology), visual arts (ceramics, sustainable crafts, photograph, sculpture, print making).

ARTISTIC PROGRAMME

97% of observers were able to identify multiple ways in which the local community was involved in creating the event. 83% said the event was created in response to an explicit community request. 89% said the choice of venues/location reflected local preference. 78% said the event was delivered in partnership with local groups or individuals.

"The exhibition included community made elements alongside professional artist elements."

“Community members helped select the artworks for display.”

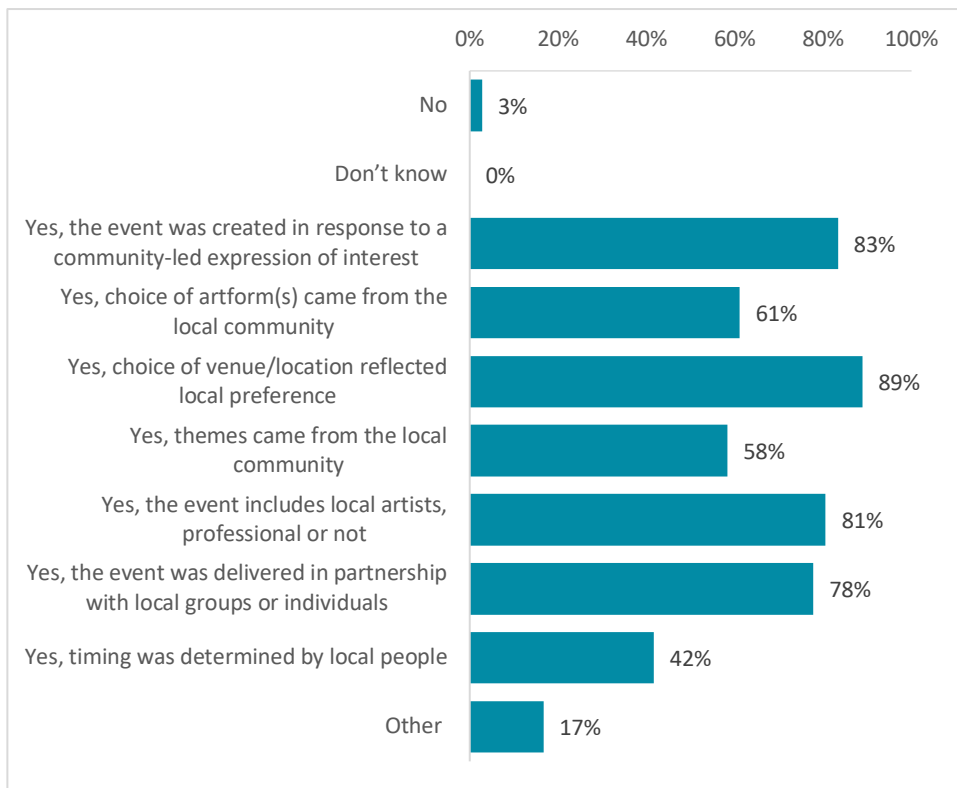
“The event is now entirely organised, delivered and performed by local community members.”

“The script was developed from community stories in a collaborative development project previously commissioned by Seed.”

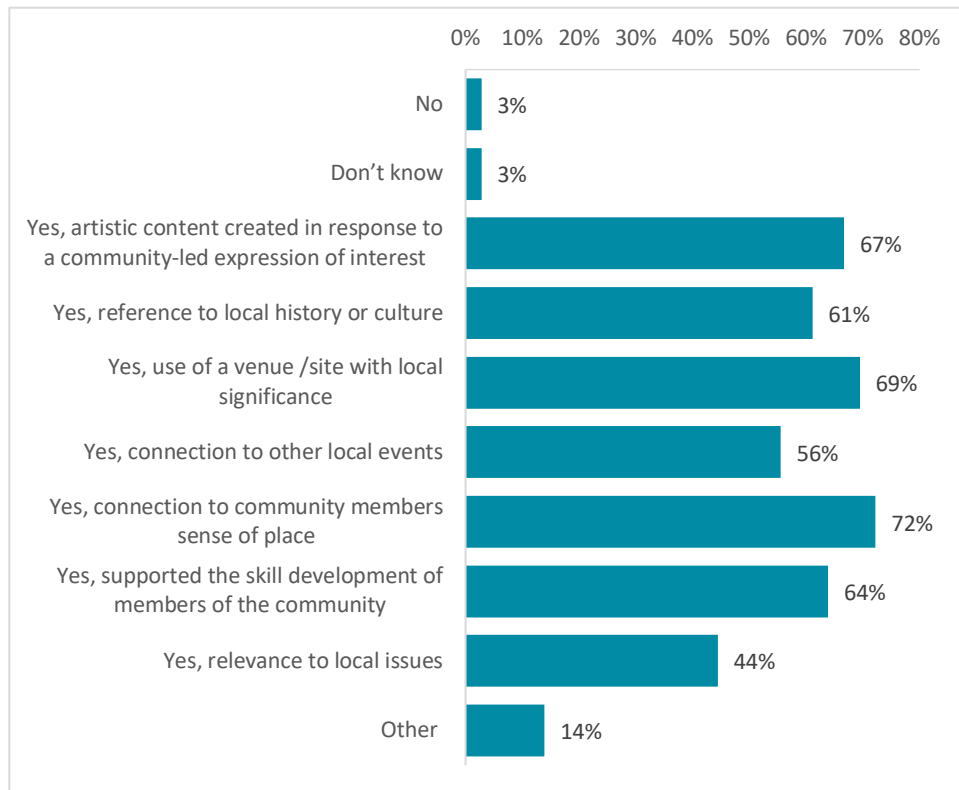
“The images were co-created with local non-artists.”

“The exhibition was of community created work, facilitated by the artist.”

FIGURE 78: WAS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN CREATING THE EVENT? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY



97% of observers identified multiple ways the artistic programme was designed to reflect local interests. 69% said that the project used a venue or site of local significance and 72% said it connected to community members’ sense of place.

FIGURE 79: WAS THE ARTISTIC PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO REFLECT LOCAL INTERESTS?

“The community members created the stories that the artworks depict.”

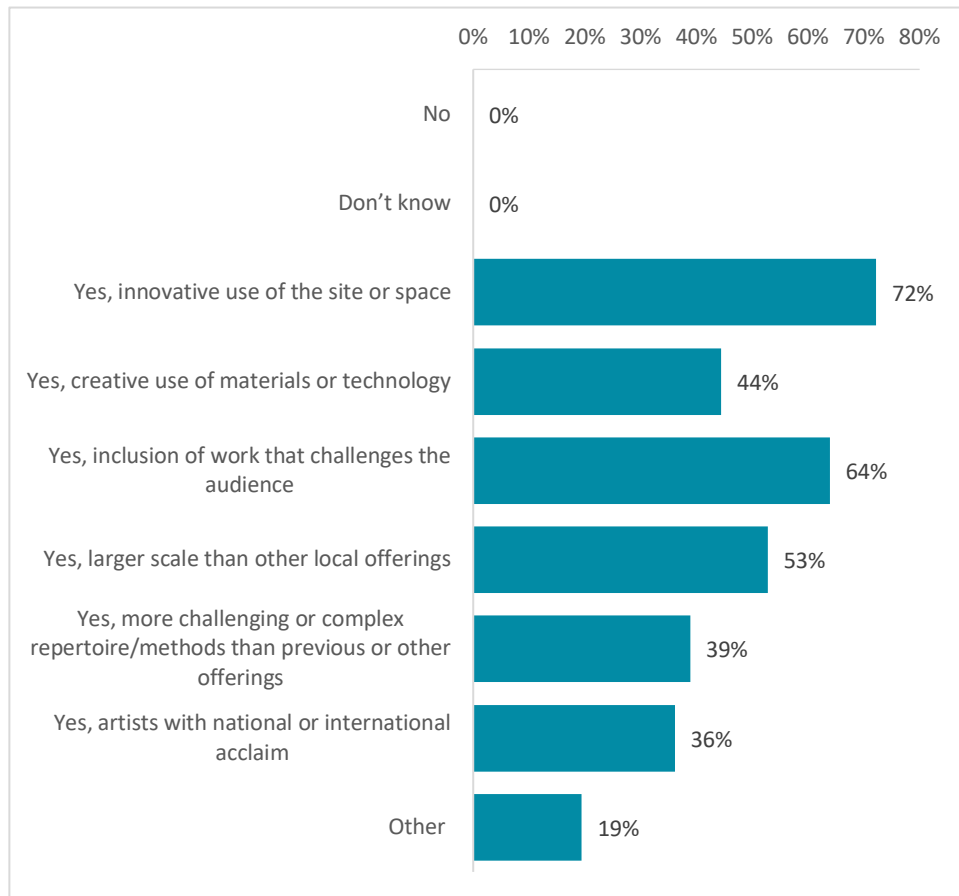
“All pieces in the show were created by local participants.”

“Participants determined the repertoire themselves.”

“The event was opened by a local participant-led music group.”

All observers identified multiple ways the event exhibited artistic aspiration and innovation. 72% had an innovative use of the site or space, and 64% said it included work that challenged the audience.

FIGURE 80: WAS THE ARTISTIC PROGRAMME ARTISTICALLY AMBITIOUS AND/OR INNOVATIVE?



“Closure of a busy road in this town for a music event has only ever been done once before.”

“The integration of BSL throughout the performance was innovative.”

“Augmented reality artworks in the railway station were both ambitious and innovative - particularly as the community proposed the initial idea and were involved in selecting the final proposal from more than 20 received including from National and international artists.”

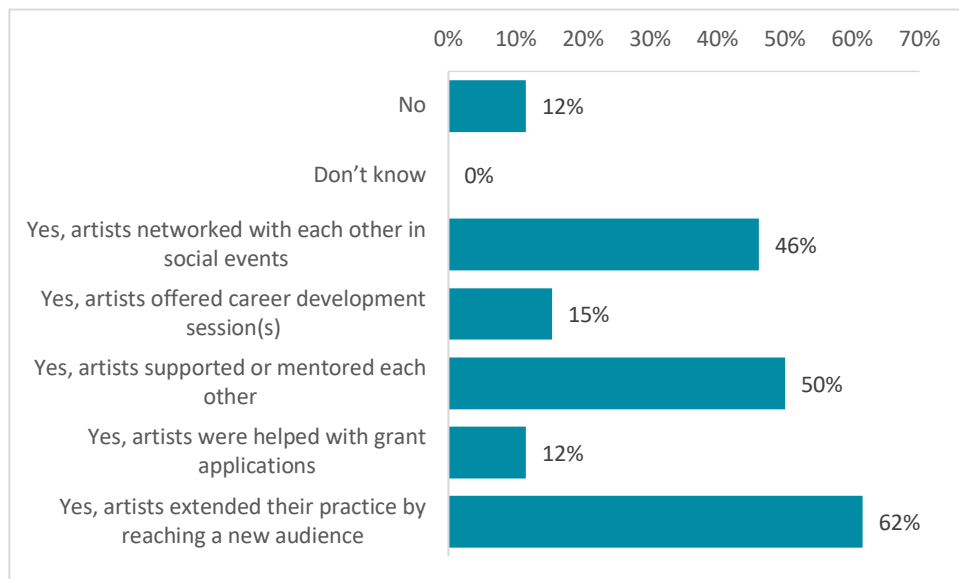
“The installation was inspired by works by Anthony Gormley.”

“The participant was group taking on much more challenging material.”

“The project was a step up in quality and ambition for the participants who had previously been involved in Cheddar projects such as Window Wonderland.”

83% of observers recorded that the event was designed to support the artistic development of artists. This was particularly in terms of reaching new audiences, being mentored or being supported to strengthen their networks with other artists.

FIGURE 81: WAS THE EVENT DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTS?



We asked about the observable audience reaction. Answers had these themes:

- Enjoyment.

“The audience was extremely joyful throughout the performance.”

“People loved this trail and made repeat visits - bringing others to enjoy it.”

- Enthusiasm.

“The audience was extremely positive and supportive, with recognition this was a local amateur group. Even when the rain bucketed down, people remained gathered under the Angel Place forecourt to watch.”

“Very enthusiastic response from the audience - they were literally dancing in the street and keen to join in and have a go on the Brazilian Drums and to sing along.”

- Interest.

“There was a great deal of excitement from experiencing the gorge in a new way. Many people found the work challenged their ideas of what art would be. More than once I heard someone saying 'I don't get it. Why are their pictures of rocks projected onto the rocks' - almost always challenged by someone else in their group who tried to come up with an answer. It was truly remarkable the way people grappled with the idea and looked for a meaning or interpretation that was relevant for them - and indeed that they very much wanted the images to mean something.”

- Length of engagement.

“Audiences engaged very enthusiastically with an unexpectedly high dwell time.”

We asked about the strengths of the artistic programme. Answers tended to reference the high quality of artists throughout, and had these more specific themes:

- Local reference points.

“The script was well paced and incorporated local legends and family stories without disrupting the story arc.”

“High quality images and animations that genuinely embody the stories told by local people and reflect the character of the community of Bridgwater, innovative and engaging AR elements.”

“Highly distinctive artworks, high quality well executed images and understandable/identifiable places and stories that connected with people strongly. The augmented reality elements were easy to engage with and captured people’s attention and imagination.”

“Highly original, engaging and something very 'Somerset' about many of the stories and ideas. Short Vignettes were ideal for a festival setting and held the audience attention for the right amount of time.”

“It was a great coup to have a performer of this quality and profile performing their own work in a school theatre in a Somerset Village. Very few comparable performers would be willing to do so.”

“The project is connected to Mendip Rocks! and festival of Geology.”

- Innovative interpretation of a community location.

“Very effective use of the greengrocers shop’s facilities in the configuration as an art gallery.”

“It was a strange and original response to a unique place that managed to both challenge and resonate with the local residents who came to see it.”

“Clever but simple set and staging design transformed a park into both a ship and a town.”

“The pieces were cohesive, joyful and reflected the identity and aspirations of people of Cheddar very well.”

“The script and the performance were extremely good, and the innovative approach of the performer triggering aspects of the sound as part of her performance was intriguing and added to the performance hugely by creating a sense of place and the feel of another presence in a one-person show.”

- Careful balance of challenge and accessibility.

“The exhibition did a marvellous job of drawing people into the space and challenging what they thought they saw and what it meant.”

“Accessible while challenging to first time engagers and hard to reach non- participants targeted at this event, there was a choice of activities that really worked.”

“Strong mix of familiar repertoire with traditional Brazilian music that was new to the audience.”

“I thought it a truly inspired choice for Bridgwater, yes, stretching the audience who would be very unlikely to otherwise experience music of this nature locally, but rewarding their attention with absolutely top quality musicianship. I think Bridgwater will have gained some new jazz fans that weekend.”

- Bringing professional and community artists together.

“National and international designers with local community models and volunteers.”

“People coming together to play music and sing.”

“The performers were excellent - at times it was difficult to distinguish between professional and community performers, the music was very high quality and integrated into the performance very well.”

“Many of the figures were extremely well made and highly expressive and/or detailed. Yet those pieces contributed by children or adults who had never made anything out of clay before were not out of place in the installations.”

“Community members created something that as a combined piece (a field of work) was significantly greater than each component piece. Many of the individual pieces were of remarkable quality. The piece was very ambitious - to achieve an Antony Gormley style installation.”

“This was a participant led event, designed, shaped and created by the three Seed commissioned groups. The skills shared and continual growth of the groups was an observable strength on the programme. Collaboration, dedication and determination to perform, entertain and support peers.”

- Inclusion.

“Strengths in female led confidence in sound technology, sound design and set-up. Artistic lead as a musician with a technical understanding of sound, Pa set-up. This was a female led workshop focused on females working, supporting and performing in the music/performing creative arts. A strong female facilitator in a safe environment to support women.”

“The integration of British Sign Language as part of the movement vocabulary of the performance, and as a way of characters repeating dialogue was extremely effective and much more enjoyable than having an interpreter at front of stage.”

- Breadth.

“We had a variety of music genres to appeal to variety of tastes, free activities and workshops for adults and children help to keep people outdoors even when the weather isn't perfect.”

“Broad representation of the community in the works.”

“Broad range of material performed.”

“Diverse group of performers.”

“A wide range of genres and styles were offered. The final two acts were very high quality performers in different styles - Slackrr (punk-pop with a highly polished, high energy stage presence) and Redtenbacher's Funkestra ft. Jana Varga having a very high level of musicianship from players with an international reputation.”

- Practicalities.

“Road closure ensured community safety with the opportunity to relax and enjoy the 12 special qualities and its projections.”

We asked about the weaknesses of the artistic programme. Answers had these themes:

- None.
- Technical issues.

“Some of the images lost effectiveness due to lack of contrast.”

“A twilight performance with lighting would have been even more effective.”

“Not everyone had access to a smart phone and so could not appreciate the augmented reality elements.”

“Some technical issues meant exhibit started late.”

“The projections were running late, not enough time to setup etc and rain created some delays.”

- Overall programming.

“The overall impact was reduced by not showing the entire collection of figures as a 'field' as Gormley does, but this decision reflected the community participants desire to be able to view and identify each individual piece.”

“No overall cohesive theme or thread in the performance.”

“Change overs were a little slow and some challenges with communication between facilitators added pressure to the coordination of the event. This however, did not impact the concert and was not reflected in the event. Timing slightly went over which poses a risk to losing your audience.”

- Branding.

"Not enough connection with Seed, we would have liked to be a little more involved in the process and/or could have utilised our skills. Seed would have like to support the event which appeared short staffed!"

"The use of space was good however, in future events like these we would ensure that the activities were next to the Seed set-up table."

- Impact of bad weather.

"The bespoke tent provided a great setting for the event but was not able to cope with the inclement weather."

- Skill of some artists.

"Uneven quality of performances."

"Artists were still practicing their playing skills."

"Varying levels of ability."

"Significant difference in quality between acts."

"Local acts (including participant group) nowhere near as polished as the later acts."

"As might be expected, not all of the individual pieces were of high quality as they were most participants" first experience of making a sculpture out of clay and for many it was their first art making experience since leaving school."

- Lack of innovation.

"No original songs performed."

"Those who have seen previous events with Little Big Horns would not have heard anything new in their set."

- Choice of venue.

"Lack of footfall at venue."

- Lack of diversity.

"The group is overwhelmingly 'stale, male and pale' as one observer put it."

- Need for more.

"We could have had more workshops/ free activities."

“An activity that encouraged people to engage with technology in a fun, accessible and creative way would have been great, and it was a missed opportunity not to have it.”

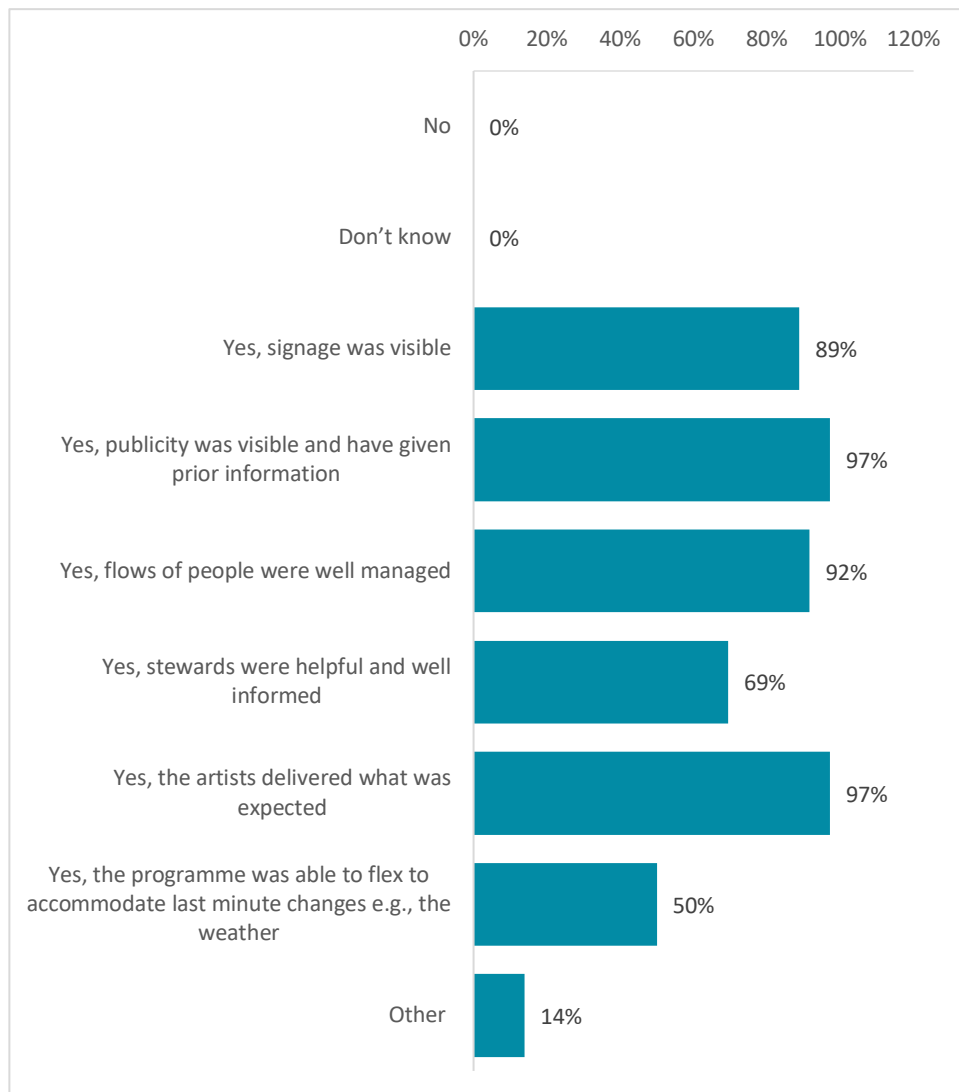
“A more diverse range of performers, collaborating with Somerset Diverse communities and offering a wider range of music/dance for the audience/community.”

“More time was needed, could have been a two day course.”

DELIVERY AND ENGAGEMENT

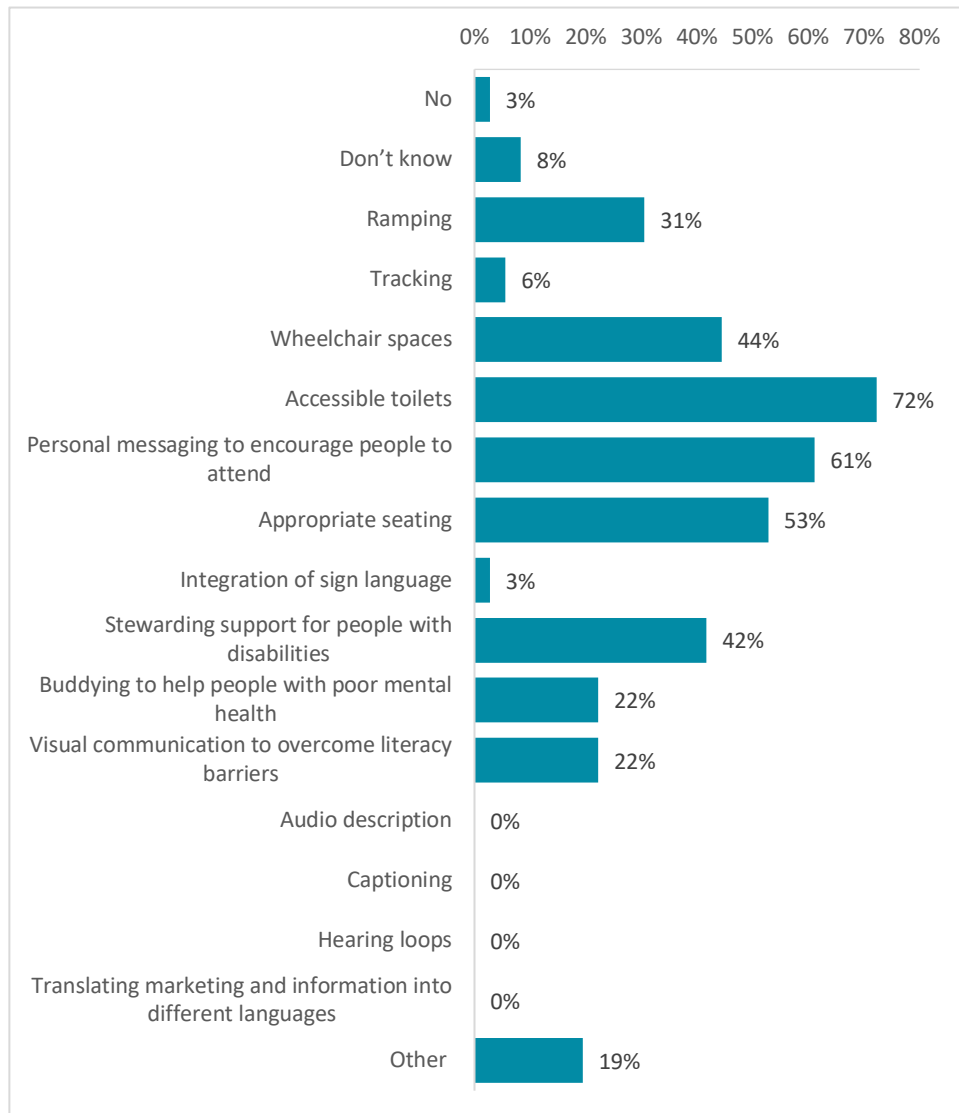
All observers rated the event as well organised. 97% of the observers said the artists delivered what was expected and publicity was visible. 92% said flows of people were well managed.

FIGURE 82: WAS THE EVENT WELL ORGANISED?



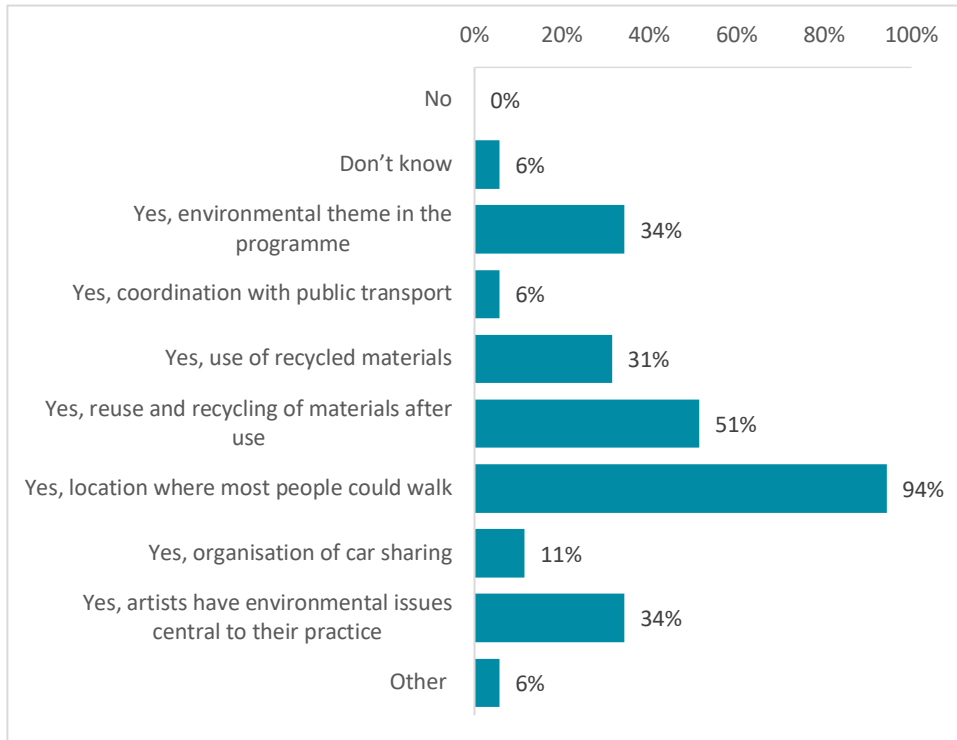
97% of observers said the event had special access arrangements.

FIGURE 83: WERE THERE ANY SPECIAL ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY



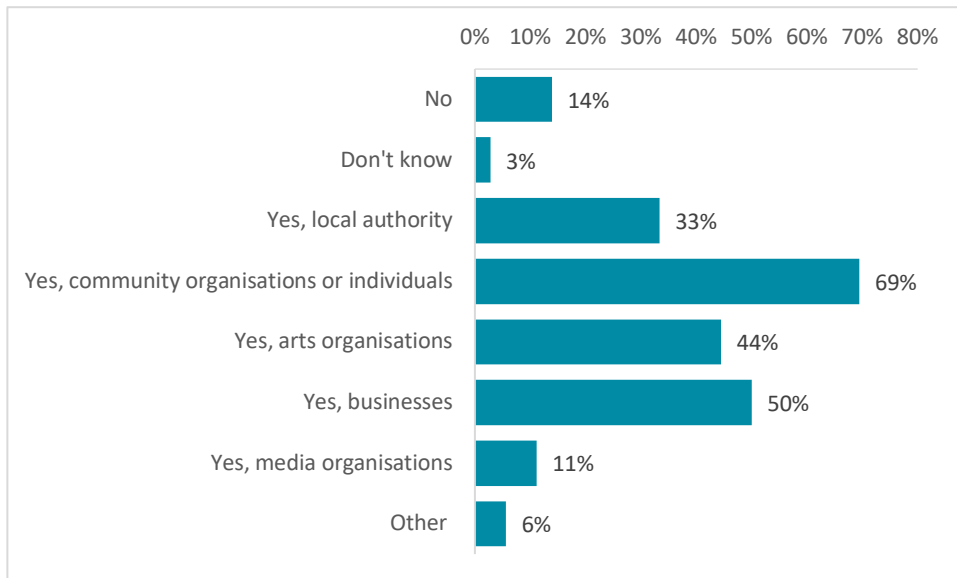
All observers identified special measures that had been taken to support environmental sustainability, especially a location most people could walk to.

FIGURE 84: WERE THERE ANY SPECIAL MEASURES TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY?



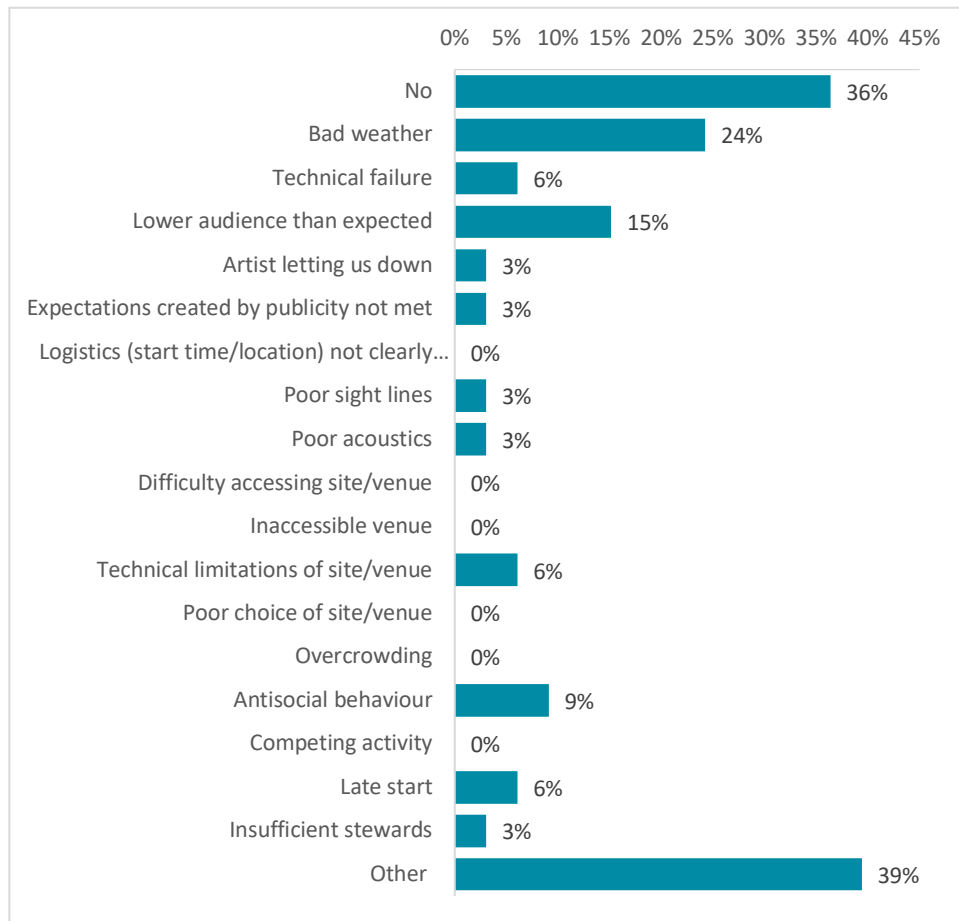
86% of observers identified other stakeholders who helped deliver the event.

FIGURE 85: WERE THERE OTHER STAKEHOLDERS WHO HELPED DELIVER THE EVENT?



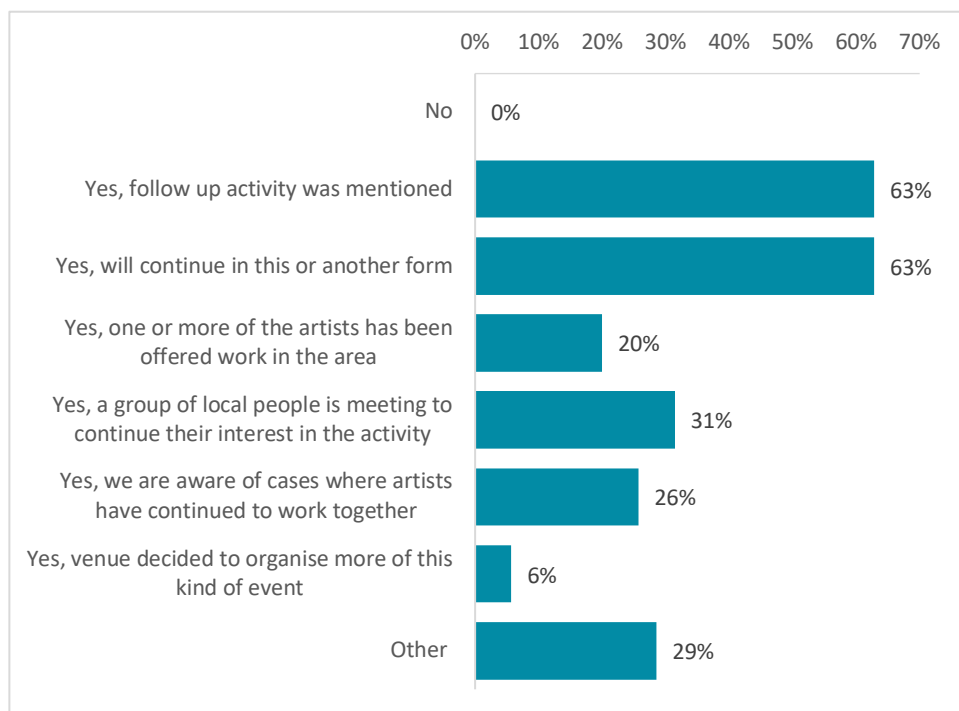
35% of observers identified no challenges with the event. The main challenge was bad weather.

FIGURE 86: WERE THERE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE EVENT?



All observers were aware of a legacy from the event.

FIGURE 87: IS THERE ANY LEGACY FROM THE EVENT?



“We are having discussions to repeat the event next year.”

“The community group is looking to hold their own outdoor music event.”

“Artist will return later in the year with another show.”

“Local groups are asking for more activity of this kind to be held in the gorge.”

“The Community Rail Network has asked to keep part of the exhibition on permanent display in their new community room at the station, and the Station Management has decided to keep the works on the platform on permanent display rather than taking it down as planned on 1 April 2024.”

“The exhibition will last for nine months on site.”

“The group recruited more participants as a result of this performance.”

“I received a testimonial from a mother saying how much her autistic son enjoyed and now has more confidence going to venues alone.”

“This was the fourth public performance by the group, and clearly their best to that point. The group has become more cohesive and musically adept, and despite being a large ensemble of guitars, is now sounding like a 'group'”.

We asked about the strengths of event delivery. Answers had these themes:

- Artistic programme.

“The artistic programme was pitched just right to attract and appeal to people who don't usually engage with visual arts installations but were curious enough to want to see what was happening.”

“Combining the exhibition with free art making workshops was very effective in provoking engagement beyond just looking at the art. It led to questioning, reflecting and responding from the audience. the accompanying film showing the artists process and creating a context was also helpful.”

- Community meaning.

“The vision of the community was achieved - if not exceeded in the delivery of this event.”

“It felt more like an inclusive community event than a typical art exhibition.”

“Deeply rooted in the community, with other community groups assisting with the event. Everything was well planned and well managed.”

- Relaxed atmosphere.

“The location of the work in the Popup Shop avoided the intimidating barrier of the typical art Gallery in the mind of this audience segment, and numbers of attendees were quite high as a result.”

“Friendly, relaxed and open event, with little expectation created, then a dramatic outcome delivered.”

“Strong coordination team and front of house welcoming and inviting.”

“The smaller space was cosy and did create an atmosphere.”

- Problem-solving approach.

“Adapted to poor weather well with change of location at last minute. Effectively delivered and kept to time despite that.”

“Three community groups collaborated to produce a Christmas concert three days prior to Christmas. Each community group are supported by their Seed commissioned facilitator. The planning and attention to detail in the programming is a challenge. Musicians shared, loaned and borrowed equipment to speed up the change-over on stage.”

“Flexible location meant that acts could set up whole another was performing creating a mini 'festival stages' feel and avoiding breaks between acts.”

- Respect for local community.

“Minimal disruption to the town, despite reasonably large gathering in central square/thoroughfare; people in the town centre who did not know the event was on were able to join in.”

- Partnership.

“Excellent partnership working ensured a successful event delivery and enjoyment to that attended.”

“Partnership with DWP and Job Centre brought in 15 other participant organisations quickly and easily. The event attracted many people who would never have attended a typical Seed event.”

“A positive collaboration with the DWP and local charities including the Town Hall.”

- Audience.

“Very good turnout 1000+ audience.”

“Clearly well advertised with local community engaged in the event. Collaboration of event partners appeared to work well, and on the surface a very successful event. Great turnout.”

“Members of the community commented who had never attended a music festival or live music prior to this event! Although we didn't reach our target, we still engaged 500 people on the day.”

“The community support was powerful, a full house with love and applause.”

“It was remarkable to see waves of people attending across an extended period.”

“The event was sold out for most performances.”

“Exhibition has been widely noticed and made a great impact.”

“Many audience members were keen to stay and learn more about the objects after each performance. People not in the tent continued to watch the show from under cover of nearby shopfront awnings.”

- Creation of new possibilities for the community.

“Very smooth and friendly audience experience. It demonstrated that the venue could work as a theatre for the local community.”

“Showing the impact of SEED in the community.”

- Delivery according to plan.

“Very high quality - it achieved the aims of delivering a high quality, locally devised professional theatrical performance to the town in a new setting and reaching people who did not normally go to the theatre.”

“All areas proposed to explore for the day were covered and delivered to a high standard in a safe environment.”

“Exhibition development was excellent and delivered as planned.”

“Well organised, ambitious, high quality programming.”

We asked about the weaknesses of event delivery. Comments had these themes:

- None.
- Reliance on partners.

“Several high profile attendees RSVPed yes but did not show up.”

“National Trust failed to deliver - site manager was unaware of event, and our contact had not shared publicity material at all.”

“Food providers either cancelled at the last minute, were late or did not have the required materials! One act (Brainworks) cancelled after publicity was printed.”

“Without support from the venue, our volunteers and staff have too much to do. Musicians did not get vehicular access to site and had to lug equipment further than should have been necessary.”

- Community clashes.

“Strong personality clashes creating tension between the facilitators. This was not obvious to the audience. However, the tension was visible by the groups.”

“A couple of disagreements in terms of the logistics.”

“Comments from the Mayor on launching the event about keeping the ticket office open did not impress the station operator, our partner on the event!”

- Attendance.

“The venue is difficult to draw people into - many passers by might have been attracted in if it was more obvious what was happening inside.”

“Community engagement and story generation workshops had to be rescheduled due to lack of participants.”

“More publicity would always be good but the Seed team was missing a comms worker in that period so no criticism is intended.”

“Poor marketing! Not enough for people to engage with on the day. The music was not enough.”

“Scale needs to be adjusted to suit audience, relocate to allow people to sit in shade? More food/beverage/child friendly activity offers needed. Headline act needs to be more recognisable to draw casual attenders.”

“Audience engagement was strong at the start, but then once a story object was chosen, became significantly less participatory. It would be good to include more opportunities for participation as the stories develop.”

- Need for more information on the event.

“More signage, explaining what was going on and who was behind it would have been helpful.”

“Venue was slightly away from main high street footfall.”

“Some of those unfamiliar with the location struggled to find the theatre, despite the signage being good, as there were so many possible wrong turns to take.”

- Layout.

“Having the information centre off to the side in a park rather than at a gorge entrance/exit point meant many people did not see any of the information about the event.”

“A better surface than the roadway was required - once the rain began, the surface the performers were standing on became very wet, despite the rain cover provided.”

- Lack of understanding of Seed.

“The local organiser did not credit funder or Seed.”

“Lots of learning about how the organisations can work with Seed for hands on support not just financial support! stop using the word funding, it's a commission!”

- Staffing/capacity.

“More technical crew were needed to ensure everything was working in time for the opening.”

“Lack of capacity to physically keep figures safe from vandalism meant the original vision of including figures along the Gorge walking trail had to be abandoned.”

- Timing.

“Other elements of the Quayside programme did not stick to time, leading to a clash with the group’s performance with the Main Stage.”

“Event slightly overran.”

- Need to plan for bad weather.

“Set was not sufficiently weather-proof.”

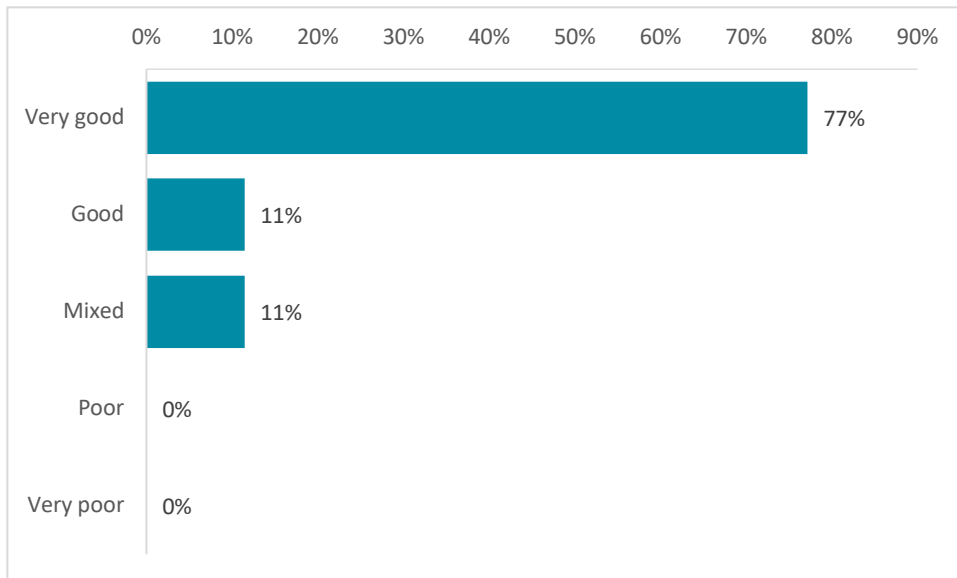
- Illuminate.

“Visitors did not engage with the Illuminate audience survey via tablets. People did not want to complete the survey and so few were collected.”

OVERALL

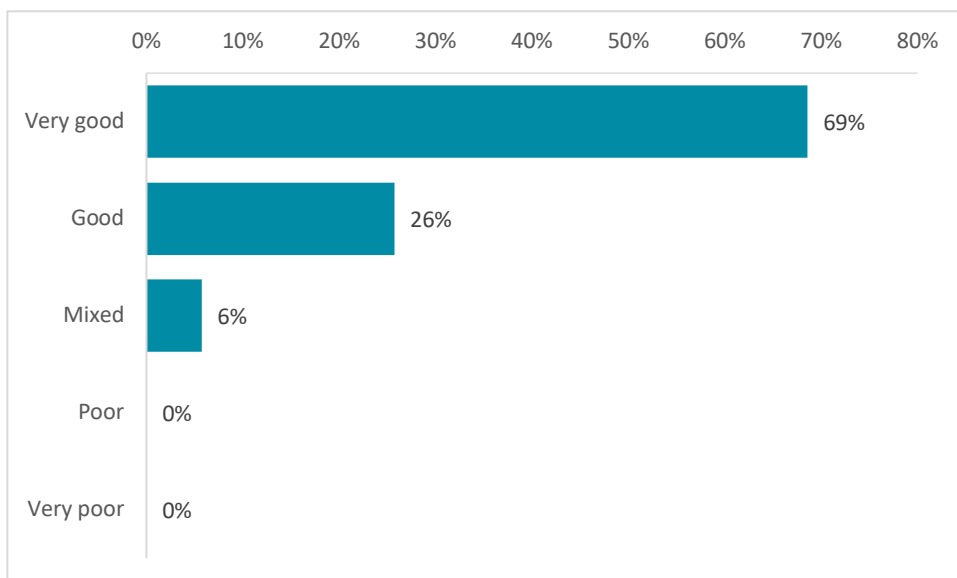
89% of observers rated the location/venue as good or very good.

FIGURE 88: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE SUITABILITY OF THE LOCATION/VENUE?

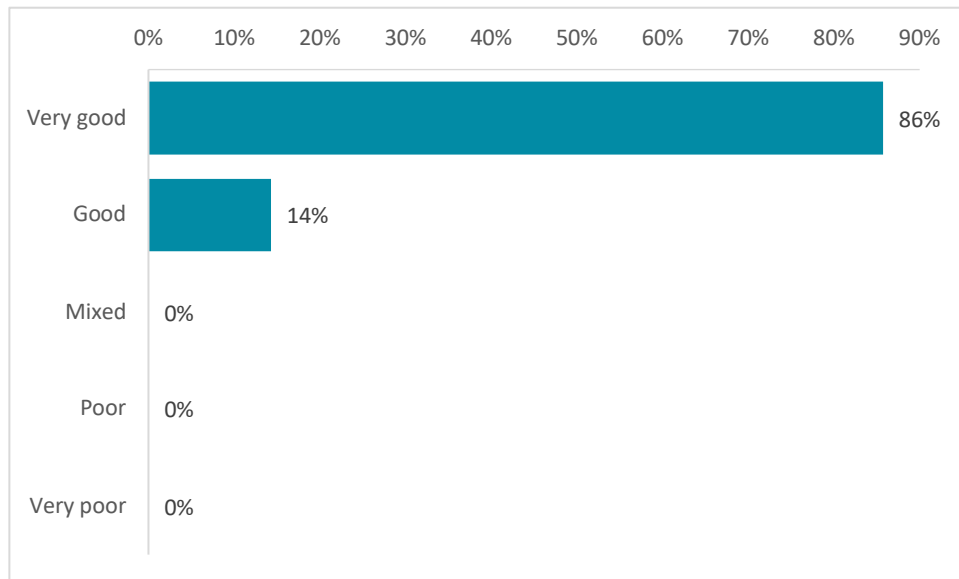


94% of observers rated the artistic excellence of the work as good or very good.

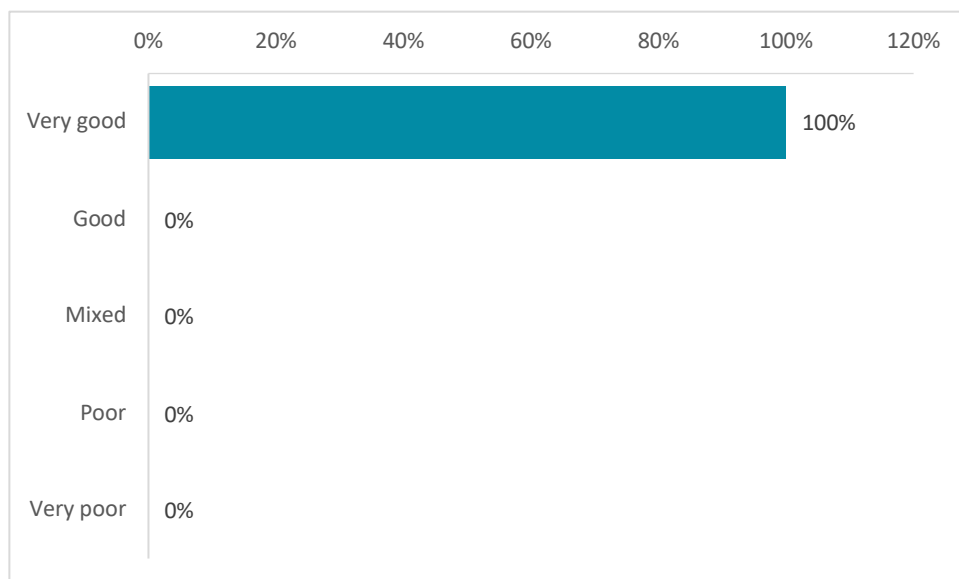
FIGURE 89: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE OF THE WORK?



All observers rated the accessibility of the event and the location as good or very good.

FIGURE 90: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE EVENT AND LOCATION?

All observers rated the event as very good value for money.

FIGURE 91: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE VALUE FOR MONEY?

We asked if there are any lessons for future events. Answers included:

- Staffing/capacity.

"More crew are needed for events like this."

"More staff onsite for technical support! Seed can have a more active role in the project."

- Endorsement of the approach.

"People want more activity in the gorge."

"It was very effective commissioning a community engagement and development stage that created a script that could be used to seek production funding."

"These artists, partners and providers are all excellent to work with."

"People loved the creation and the experience of seeing the figures. More work of this kind is encouraged."

"Street bands definitely work well in this location - there is an appetite for this to be an annual event."

"Explore opportunities for audiences to participate in the development of stories."

"Not to be assume what the audience might like - keep pushing the envelope."

"People from other areas in Sedgemoor would like their own version of the project. Visitors from elsewhere asked if the work might tour there. The depth of engagement with the community in this event was exemplary."

"A great opportunity to connect with the community and deliver some consultation in Bridgwater."

"An overall fantastic event with flows of positive comments and feedback via the audience. The participants have grown in skills and confidence which is a reflection on the outstanding support via their facilitators and continued Seed commission."

- Fine tuning.

"Place information point directly in the audience path, not off to the side."

"A shopfront venue would help to reach this particular cohort - although the venue interior was perfect for this event."

"Places with no passive surveillance cannot be used to display potentially vulnerable artworks."

"Tent/setting needs to be upgraded and weather proof."

"A stage surface is required for this or similar locations."

"Layout design would need to be slightly tweaked. Link activities with stall holders."

"Possibly not having an event so close to Christmas. I think this added to some of the additional pressure between 2 of the facilitators. I would ask the venue to have additional support behind the bar (run by volunteers) to increase the queue time and allow the audience to take their seats quicker."

"More coordination with organisers giving more time for technical issues to be resolved."

"Attendance for a popup relies heavily on footfall."

"Yes, earlier marketing, engage the schools and more local groups. Food vendors pay for a pitch in advance of the event."

"A location more suitable to accommodate a live audience. Food and drink NOT available at the ER cafe was disappointing. An opportunity to engage more of an audience/community if the building was further utilised."

"Without buy in from the National Trust this event would be better elsewhere."

"A full debrief with community and performer stakeholders is required."

"The Arts Quarter has a fairly limited capacity so at least two hours is required to enable everyone to see the work."

"Allow more time for the workshop, possibly a full day or across two-days. Risk of participants not engaging if we made the workshop too long."

- Audience data.

"Better audience number estimation methods would have been helpful, as very different figures have been quoted by different stakeholders."

"People really disliked filling in the ACE Illuminate survey, and made sure to let us know that."

CONCLUSION

THE SYSTEM

The observers give a detailed and balanced picture of the work of Seed, which complements and adds to the modelling and surveying work we have done.

STRENGTHS/ACHIEVEMENT

Seed has facilitated events that:

- Typically arise out of a request from the community.
- Are driven by community leaders and groups.
- Reflect community preferences regarding artform, location, venue and timing.
- Reference local history or culture and/or current issues.
- Connect to other local events.
- Support the skill development of members of the community.
- Make an innovative use of the site or space.
- Have a creative use of materials or technology.
- Are larger scale, more ambitious and/or challenging than other local offerings.

- Have special access arrangements so that the whole community can engage.
- Are designed to support the professional development of the artists.
- Are well organised in terms of signage, publicity and management of flows of people.
- Help communities to see other possibilities in their location, whether using a space as a venue, bringing people or groups together, or seeing their place in a different light.
- Meet a local need and stimulate an appetite for more.

WEAKNESSES/CHALLENGES

Weaknesses/challenges in this approach are that:

- Working with the community means that tensions between individuals and groups, which exist in most, if not all communities, are replicated in some aspects of collaboration; a lack of diversity might also be apparent in the group.
- Community groups might lack the capacity to plan the events in the detail that is needed to deliver a high quality result.
- Presenting professional and community artists together naturally means the skill level varies and the overall programme might lack cohesion.
- Working with partners means that some parts of the programme do not happen when partners are unreliable.
- Choosing venues that are meaningful to the community does not necessarily equate with high footfall or strong attendance.
- There is a delicate balancing act between empowering local communities to take control and supporting them so that they have the technical and other knowledge they need to deliver and draw an audience.
- Communicating the role of Seed takes time, as there are possibilities (for support) and also expectations (for appropriate acknowledgement).
- Developing an open and trusting relationship with audience members, and avoiding stereotyping or pigeonholing them, appears entirely contrary to the highly personal questions in the Illuminate system.