



MarketPlace Evaluation Report 2023

This report is an externally produced evaluation by We Are Frilly (WAF). It outlines the evaluation approach for MarketPlace Phase 3 and documents the progress and delivery of activity during a transition year of support and development.

Evidence was collected for limited delivery in line with Impact and Insight reporting requirements. This report is structured to reflect a narrative of MarketPlace crafted from people's experiences in these places.



Director's note:

The first year of Phase 3 has been a challenging time for MarketPlace. At the start of the phase, the team were working to rebuild trust, momentum and visibility following the mandated pause in delivery and the pivot to digital during Covid. The departure of two team members and the Chief Executive of our lead organisation in the second quarter of the year left the team and the project hugely depleted. In the second half of the year, we were focused on recruiting a new team, developing the business plan, rebuilding key partner and stakeholder relationships, and beginning small amounts of delivery. The death of our remaining original team member and much-loved colleague, Colin Stevens, in January 2023 was a significant blow. We continue to be inspired by his legacy.

Despite these challenges, much has been achieved in the year. We now have an entire team in place, bringing a wide range of experience across the cultural sector and a real passion for co-creation and community empowerment. We're ably supported by a highly experienced new Chief Executive at Babylon Arts and a very positive Consortium board and have a clear business plan approved by Arts Council England. Relationships with stakeholders and partners have been renewed, particularly in March, Wisbech, Mildenhall, Newmarket and Brandon. Community groups in Forest Heath and Fenland actively seek to work with us, and our presence at partner events is paying off with greater visibility. Kids' Business in March and Rivers of Light in Newmarket were highlight events, with Rivers of Light set to become an annual event co-created with the local community.

With the new team and the business plan in place, we can now look forward to renewed activity. In our second year, we will translate new and strengthened on-the-ground relationships into deeper engagement of our target audiences and a greater presence in key neighbourhoods, co-creating cultural activities with our communities. In Fenland, we've observed the importance of the local festivals to identity, so we'll be working with local groups to co-create and commission content for the key annual events, including the St George's Festival (now shifting from a one-day commercial fair to a month-long arts festival) and Wisbech Rose Fair. We will also work in partnership with Wisbech and Fenland Museum to engage our priority communities from the Waterlees Estate in a creative project inspired by local heritage. In Forest Heath, we've supported the Brandon Creative Forum to create the Brandon Country Park outdoor performance space, which will become a focal point for the co-creation of a programme for all ages. We're piloting a creative project with and for mothers in Newmarket and working with young people at Newmarket Teen Chill to create a mural in the town centre inspired by the major contemporary art exhibition Mutiny in Colour.

After a challenging year, the team is energised by the ideas and enthusiasm emerging from our rekindled relationship with people across the area. We also take great encouragement from the positive response from partners and communities to our work over the past year, which point towards us delivering a more significant impact in the year ahead.

Susie Batchelor
Programme Director

Foreword: New people, same place

What is the MarketPlace offer?

MarketPlace is about culture, community and creative conversation in Fenland and the Forest Heath area of West Suffolk. MarketPlace operates across these two districts working with communities in and around the seven market towns of Wisbech, March, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Brandon, Whittlesey and Chatteris.

The journey so far...

Phase 1 was delivered with large-scale activity, piloting town creative forums and developing the creative agent role to connect with communities. The purpose of Phase 1 was to create awareness, establish community-led mechanisms of developing culture and embed MarketPlace within the cultural ecology of the area.

Phase 2 was a period of building trust within local relationships so that they felt confident to invite and see MarketPlace as an active partner within the fabric of local communities. It was a time when MarketPlace had changing staff members and the need for pivoting programmes.

Phase 3 Year 1

MarketPlace was recommissioned for Phase 3 delivery. However, the business plan required review and activity was paused. This saw Arts Council England invest in additional support and development for the consortium and programming team to re-visit their business plan.

This process resulted in a refocus and scaling down of activity whilst resources were deployed to recruit and develop a new programming team.

New direction, ambitions and purpose

The change in leadership and development of a new business plan has identified a new strategic direction for MarketPlace.

Purpose

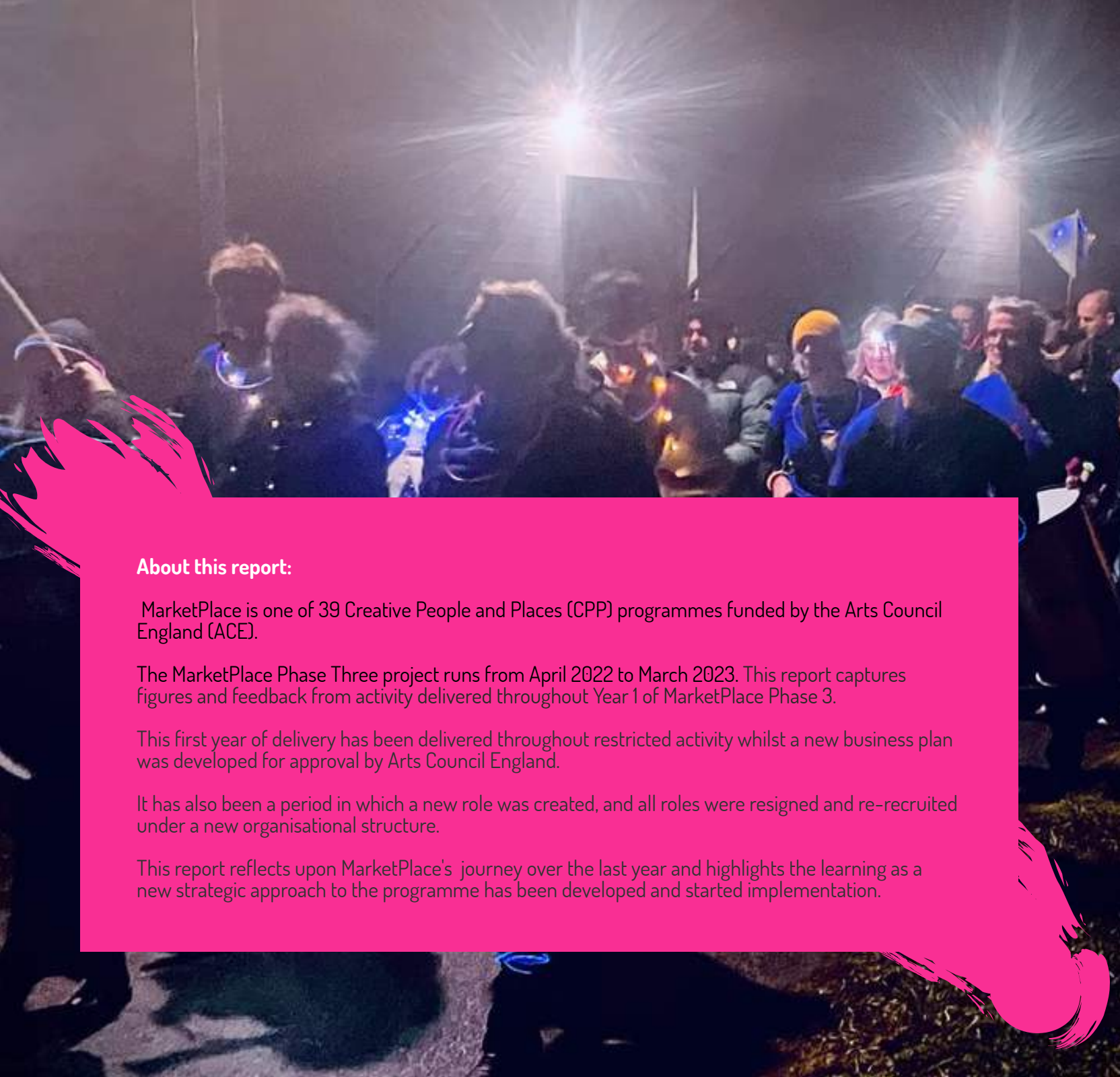
MarketPlace works with community members and creatives across Fenland and Forest Heath to co-create highly visible high-quality creative offers themed around the area's unique environment, heritage and future that surprise, challenge, connect and amplify local people, artists and producers, building habits of engagement and leveraging influence to increase community-led creativity.

Ambitions for long-term impact

- More active citizens, fuelled by an increased appetite for creativity and cultural engagement, confidence, and well-being
- A sense of pride in places and rural communities, which increasingly connect to others, overcoming obstacles to engage across the area
- Cultural ecology is stronger, more representative of the diversity of our local communities, and accessible to all.

Ambitions for 2022-2025

- To increase levels of habitual engagement and participation in culture and creative activity
- To create accessible, high-quality projects and activity that build an appetite for creative activity, increase confidence and well-being, and encourage more active citizens
- To co-create and promote highly visible and accessible projects and creative offers that build in work led by local people who might otherwise be less likely to engage and encourage a sense of pride in places and communities
- To develop diverse community networks of volunteers and professional creatives, and creative activists, encouraging new start-up/growth activity
- To work with strategic partners to influence policy and practice across the area and to leverage new funds for community creativity



About this report:

MarketPlace is one of 39 Creative People and Places (CPP) programmes funded by the Arts Council England (ACE).

The MarketPlace Phase Three project runs from April 2022 to March 2023. This report captures figures and feedback from activity delivered throughout Year 1 of MarketPlace Phase 3.

This first year of delivery has been delivered throughout restricted activity whilst a new business plan was developed for approval by Arts Council England.

It has also been a period in which a new role was created, and all roles were resigned and re-recruited under a new organisational structure.

This report reflects upon MarketPlace's journey over the last year and highlights the learning as a new strategic approach to the programme has been developed and started implementation.

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MarketPlace a year of new beginnings

IN NUMBERS

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

MarketPlace is committed to developing all aspects of the programme by, with and for local audiences, sharing decision making and supporting local community members to be inspired and ambitious in co-producing and creating work through attending cultural events nationally.

ACROSS 8 PROJECTS



5

NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF



4

ARTFORMS



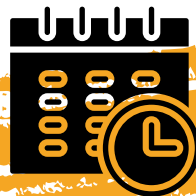
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DIGITAL CONTENT



38

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES



198

HOURS OF ACTIVITY DURATION



19

VOLUNTEERS



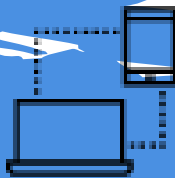
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VOLUNTEER HOURS



£11,890.72

VOLUNTEER VALUE £



8,843

DIGITAL AUDIENCE MEMBERS



4,706

PHYSICAL AUDIENCE



1,349

PHYSICAL PARTICIPANTS

PROJECTS

Chatteris Midsummer Festival



MarketPlace provided mask-making and flower crown-making activities as part of the Chatteris Midsummer Festival to stay connected to communities and find out what they want.

Brandon Jubilee Lantern Avenue



Brandon Creative Forum co-created a Platinum Jubilee Lantern Experience with over 22 local community groups and societies, designing and making 40 illuminated lanterns.

Cambridgeshire Skills Urban Festival



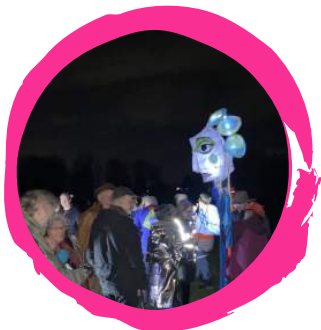
Working with local artist Marian Savill to provide collage workshops as a creative career conversation starter and skills development experience for young people.

Christmas Tree Wishes



Attending the March Christmas Fair to consult with the local community about their hopes and wishes for the following year.

Rivers of Light



Newmarket's community lantern parade, 'Rivers of Light,' brought 600 residents together to celebrate the origins of Newmarket's heritage. Residents paraded along The Yellow Brick Road with handmade lanterns from artist-led workshops.

Voices From the Land



The Fenscapers creative writing group, formed during lockdowns, performed their work at Ely Arts Festival. It was their first time performing their work across a 45-minute set of local environmentally-themed work.

Kids Business Escape Sheds



The Kids Business project enabled a group of young people in March to grow ideas, cultivate skills and create a new business, conjured up through their imagination.

National Play Day at The Spinney Wisbech



Supporting National Play Day, MarketPlace provided large-scale collective makes for families to decorate and build a Dragon's head.

Key Findings

MEETING AMBITIONS

MarketPlace has a new business plan, these key findings reflect upon the activity and learning across the last year that sees the team work towards a new set of ambitions.

MarketPlace Ambition 1:

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

Achieving the objective:

- MarketPlace delivered and supported the delivery of 7 projects to an audience of 4,706. Three of the projects were in partnership with community partners; five were delivered as part of community-organised activity.
- The team has been developing new partnerships and community groups to create sustainable opportunities. This has included new partnerships with Wisbech Museum, Newmarket Community Nature Reserve and forming a new mothers group in Newmarket.
- Rivers of Light project, exploring the heritage of the chalk river with residents and building lanterns with scout and guide groups, will become an annual event within the Newmarket calendar..

MarketPlace Ambition 2:

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

Achieving the objective:

- Escape from Fort Lagoon, a co-commissioned outdoor immersive theatre production, secured additional project funding. This is due to take place in Year 2 of Phase 3. The team have been supporting the production of this site-specific performance experience with local partners in Mildenhall. This is the first investment in a community-consulted nationally touring theatre production for MarketPlace.
- Maintaining key community relationships across the year has identified an approach to building local confidence in and appetite for culture through the delivery of activity at high engagement community events and hyper-local, small enough to fail, conversation starter activities.

MarketPlace Ambition 3:

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

Achieving the objective:

- Marketing and promotion are a priority for the team to rebuild trust and awareness of MarketPlace; this has been undertaken through being present at high-footfall community events.
- Rivers of Light is the first event led by the new team, which attracted an audience of 596 residents and 494 participants.
- Escape from Fort Lagoon has been promoted through new channels for MarketPlace and it is their first paid-for cultural experience.
- The National Play Day event at the Spinney in Wisbech continues a legacy of hyper-local and accessible activity within a housing estate of families that don't engage with wider Wisbech creative activity.
- The Brandon Jubilee Lantern Parade was co-created with the Brandon Creative Forum, the footfall and visibility of the exhibition reached an estimated audience 3500 in-person and 7000 digitally..

MarketPlace Ambition 4:

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

Achieving the objective:

- The new team has begun establishing new networks based on communities of interest, including a new mothers group in Newmarket inspired to establish regular activity.
- Partnership working with Newmarket Community Arts has diversified its pool of creatives and extended its environmental networks with the Newmarket Community Nature Reserve.
- Working with Kids Business Escape Sheds sees a diversification of programmes to inspire new creative professionals.

MarketPlace Ambition 5:

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

Achieving the objective:

- Re-establishing existing networks and relationships with new faces makes this ambition a priority over the next year. This ambition will be influenced by investment in training and go-sees for the team and community members to ensure community voice drives the practice.
- To leverage funding, the team has been identifying how funding can be applied for and secured by community partners to compliment sector partner funding ambitions.

Key Findings

Question 1

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

Achieving the objective:

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

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

- residents in Brandon
- develop relationships with new mothers in Newmarket
- new engagers along Icknield Way in Newmarket, targeting residents from an area of deprivation
- continue to engage families in a deprived area of Wisbech
- Geographical activity continued to be delivered alongside the targeted activity to support locally-led events in March and Chatteris.

For the evaluation, we explore three research questions:

Question 2

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

Achieving the objective:

- 'Small enough to fail but big enough to learn' activity for communities of interest was undertaken with local partners to reach those not usually engaged with culture and often at risk from feeling excluded by society. Working in this way enabled the team to reach the following:
 - new mothers
 - young people.
- Geographical activity continued to be delivered alongside the targeted activity to reach new audiences on their doorstep and activate play days, supporting locally-led activity.
- MarketPlace continues to support Brandon Creative Forum. The Forum is currently developing an outdoor performing arts space for the town, and the team is providing guidance in this endeavour.
- The team has encouraged and supported creative practitioners to build upon their work with MarketPlace to inform funding applications, building evidence of good practice and excellence.
- Rivers of Light was universally identified as a quality experience by attendees across all of the ACE quality dimensions, exceeding the team's expectations for the event.
- A community engagement pathway and a series of quality principles have been established to ensure programming is of a consistent standard of excellence.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question 3

Which approaches were successful, and what lessons were learned?

Achieving the objective:

- A limited amount of digital activity and in-person engagement has highlighted that they are two separate audiences. This has identified a need for unique digital content to be created from in-person delivery alongside digital participation opportunities to maintain engagement with that audience.
- Communities are ready for in-person networking and connections; this impacts the team's capacity due to the vast geographical area the Creative Producers cover within their part-time roles. Delivering activity at community led events enables the team to reach larger audiences easily, re-introducing MarketPlace to communities.
- Heritage and environmental-themed activities enable the team to develop new partnerships and create models of engagement that can be rolled out to other areas. This ensures that the activity is locally relevant and accessible.
- The team has recognised they can't deliver everywhere all at once. One voice does not represent all voices, so creating a model of community decision-making is happening on a hyper-local project-by-project basis.
- Scaleability and visibility are important ingredients for how the team can deliver successfully without burnout or burden on capacity. Outdoor culture on the residents' doorsteps has proven an accessible way to engage those least likely to participate in cultural events and activities.

Building on the from the lessons of Phase 2 with a new team and new direction

- Increased investment and re-scoping of the role of the Consortium through investment partner support by Arts Council England.
- A new business plan that focuses on community engagement pathways to ensure community decision-making is embedded throughout the activity.
- An increased audience development focuses on young people with sector partners to build creative confidence from a younger age, building more active citizens and aspirational creatives.
- It is identifying MarketPlace's digital audience as a new MarketPlace audience and one that needs to continue to be nurtured through digitally unique and distant content for participation.
- Building upon the success of previous delivery models of taster and small projects that enable the team to take risks, try new things with communities and test co-created ideas through a small enough to fail and big enough to learn' philosophy. This enables the latest team to build authentic and confident relationships with community members and partners.
- Post-pandemic, the importance of face-to-face relationship building and networking sees a team needs to be present in the towns to identify needs, interests and barriers for future programming and co-creation of activity.
- Recognising the limitations of demographics, geography and logistics of the current Creative Collective model of community voice and programming, the team are undertaking a hyper-local approach to co-creation and identifying new community champions to upskill, shape decision making and attend go-sees.
- It identifies and creates new annual and scalable activities that can leave a legacy for MarketPlace and build community capacity to deliver activity. The team are developing project packages that can roll out to similar communities of interest and environmental and heritage commonalities between geographical locations.

2

Arts Council England research questions

- 1 Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
- 2 To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?
- 3 Which approaches were successful and what lessons were learned?

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

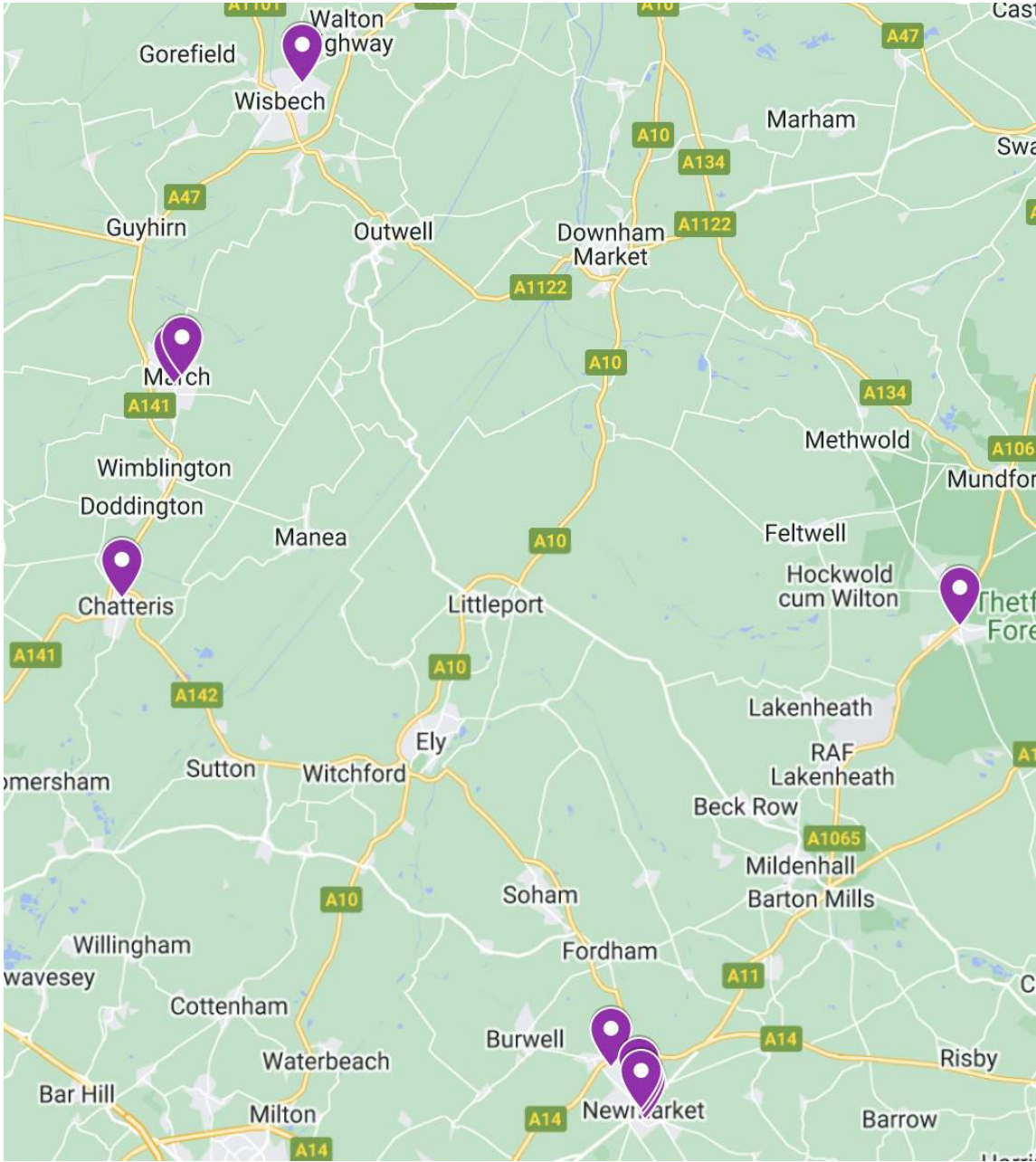
Where did our audiences, and participants come from?

There were 1439 participants and an audience of 4706 for MarketPlace activity. Sixteen postcodes were collected from across the programme of events and activities; insufficient postcode data meant no audience or socio-economic profiling was undertaken.

This year the challenges in collecting participant data remained high due to the majority of activity occurring within community-organised events. All postcodes were collected from the first activity led by the new team and with the evaluator in the area.

Despite the lack of postcode data, the hyper-local nature of the activity ensures attendance by communities within the immediate vicinity of the venue postcode. Postcodes collected represent a maximum catchment area of approximately 15 miles. This reflects the distance rurally based and culturally engaged attendees are willing to be travel.

Activity took place in March, Brandon, Wisbech, Chatteris and Newmarket. The biggest engagement and attendance came from the Brandon Jubilee Lantern Avenue and The River of Light; these two events top and tailed a year of reduced activity, with the Brandon activity delivered by the previous MarketPlace team and Rivers of Light delivered by the new delivery team.



The breadth of MarketPlace activity covers approximately 70 square kilometres.

The first map represents the venue where activity has taken place across the last year. All venues are located within the most deprived areas of each town or centrally located to ensure accessibility of the activity.

The second map shows a distribution of attendee postcodes from Rivers of Light project and host venues for activity.

Rural activity historically reflects a 15-mile driving distance for more culturally confident attendees, as seen in Rivers of Light project with attendees from Cambridge and Fordham. This is a reflection on the range of opportunities available for rural residents.

Who were they?

The team continues to cultivate relationships directly with groups from marginalised and diverse backgrounds at a hyper-local level. With limited delivery across the year, maintaining and rebuilding confidence with communities was a priority. With limited capacity due to recruitment, the team prioritised participation and engagement.

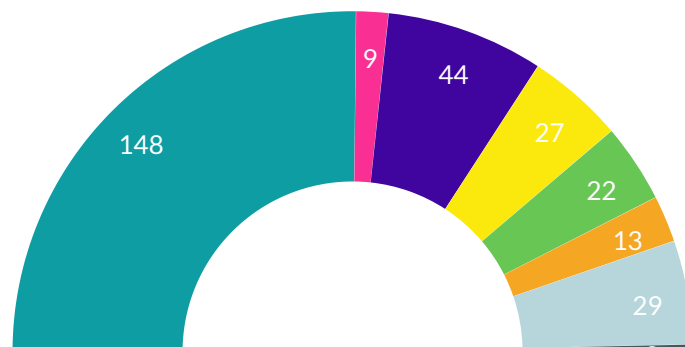
The majority of activity has taken place as part of other community-led events; this means that data collection is challenging as MarketPlace is not the lead organiser. Age demographics are the only consistently collected data, with a total sample size of 294. Actual numbers for each age group are shown directly on the charts. Additional demographic data was collected at the Rivers of Light and can be found in that case study.

The targeted activity of marginalised groups and those least likely to engage ensures that MarketPlace remains inclusive and representative in their programming. However, it makes data collection more challenging when they are vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The high numbers of under 16s are due to targeted engagement on the Spinney Estate, where engaging whole families enables the team to embed within the community, and the Rivers of Light project that had workshops leading up to the main parade with local scout and girl guide groups.

Demographic data: Age

- Under 16 (50.34%)
- 16-24 (3.06%)
- 25-34 (14.97%)
- 35-44 (9.18%)
- 45-54 (7.48%)
- 55-64 (4.42%)
- 65-74 (9.86%)
- 75+ (0.68%)



Images from The National Play Day event at The Spinney, Wisbech

MarketPlace Phase 3 Year 1 Timeline

Lead in to the year!
Jan-Mar 2022

The start of the phase
April - June 2022

The Summer
July-September 2022

Autumn into Winter
Oct-Dec 2022

New Beginnings
Jan - Mar 2023

Internal organisation activity

Provisional confirmation of Phase 3 funding, MarketPlace are required to rescope the business plan and recruit ACE funding support roles of:

- Programm Director
- Investment support

Admin and marketing support staff are made redundant

June:

- ACE investment support begins
- New Programme Director starts role
- Workshops to develop new business plans begin.

July

- Chief Exec of host organisation Babylon Arts, MarketPlace Creative Manager and Creative Agent resign from the post leaving at the end of Aug/Sept.
- Recruitment for all roles begins

Nov:

- New Programme Manager starts
- Babylon Arts, Host organisation, didn't secure NPO funding from ACE

January:

- The New Chief Executive of Babylon Arts starts in the post
- The team suffered the loss of Creative Agent Colin Stevens

Feb:

- New ACE relationship manager assigned
- The two new Creative Producers start their role

External delivery with communities

Completion of extensions activities, including:

- Walking Companion app
- Rainbows in Isolation
- Escape from Fort Lagoon R&D
- Tiny Dances
- Young Carers Art and Voice

June:

- The team deliver crown and mask-making conversation starter activity at Chatteris Midsummer Festival
- Brandon Jubilee Lantern Avenue project delivered with Brandon Creative Forum
- Support The Fenscapers to perform at Ely Arts Festival

August:

- The team deliver National Play Day creative activity at the Spinney Estate in Wisbech
- Work with artist Marian Savill to share collage skills to inspire young people into creative careers

October:

- Kids Business Escape Sheds is delivered with recruitment from 20Twenty Productions

Dec:

- Christmas Tree Wishes event at March Christmas Fair

Jan/Feb

- Attended go-sees at Medway Lights Festival Norwich Science Festival

Feb

- Delivered the first Rivers of Light lantern parade and lantern-making workshops, which will be an annual event for Newmarket.

March

- Support promotion and planning for Escape from Fort Lagoon and St. George's Day Festival

This timeline reflects the challenges MarketPlace has faced as a team, mapped against the level of public-facing activity achieved.

The range of activity delivered in the extension phase, with an entire team, compared to the pausing period of activity to secure the total commitment of phase 3 funding with the loss and recruitment of posts, shows the impact on the capacity to engage communities in new opportunities.

Chatteris Midsummer Festival



National Play Day at the Spinney



Kids Business Escape Sheds



Rivers of Light



Brandon Jubilee Lantern Avenue



Voices from the Land



Cambridgeshire Skills Urban Festival



March Fair Christmas Tree



ACE Research Question:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'This year has been about articulation. It's been about getting ready to perform. The rest of year 2 is going to really prove whether that was just talking or whether that's enabled them to really put things in place that will allow them to do that'

– Mark Robinson, Investment Principle Support

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

MarketPlace has established a new community engagement path for reaching more people from the places of least engagement to show the process of how they work. Articulating this commitment to the operation of engaging will help the team identify how their programming is supporting communities to travel along this pathway.

Phase 3 yr 3

Through go-sees and growth of repeated activity, MarketPlace will be supporting communities to be more culturally confident and working with partners to deliver more ambitious programmes to meet the appetites of their communities.

Phase 3 yr 2

Next year the team can build more opportunities for co-creation and repeat and grow core programming activity alongside supporting groups to self-sustain activity. They will continue to contact and connect with new audiences and communities of interest.

Phase 3 yr 1

This year has seen the team maintain connections with existing communities and make new contacts.

Contact

- Networking
- Visibility
- Engagement
- Communications

Connection

- Community forums
- Workshops
- Groups
- Events

Co-create

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

Opportunity to repeat and develop

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

Habits form

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

Active Confidence and Aspiration

Spaces for people to lead through:

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

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

These principles and measures of quality in the difference they hope to make will act as a review checklist whilst developing activity with communities.

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

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

MarketPlace continues to engage people in activity from areas of historically low engagement and socially deprived areas in activity they find accessible. MarketPlace values quality of the process to ensure comfortable and inclusive experiences for their communities.

However, the concern from ACE in providing a re-scoping period of the business plan has provided concerns over quality and ensuring the new team delivers something different to previous teams. The tension between community led activity and quality of the art can be challenging, especially in rural areas that sees creative talent leave for larger cities. The concerns of the consortium for MarketPlace long term echo this challenge.

"{My fear is} that the desire for projects to be initiated by members of the community will hold back MarketPlace from engaging great artists to co-create with our community.

{I hope that they} seek out the very best co-creating artists from across the UK and bring them to our region to make art with our communities.' - Consortium member

People discover MarketPlace through attending other events

The team are already actively investing in development and go-see opportunities to expand their knowledge and experience of outdoor arts in particularly as a vehicle for successfully engaging communities and the visibility of the work. The success of the two lantern parades highlight an interest and level of inclusion for their communities to access outdoor work, which is particularly relevant in areas that lack cultural venues. Bringing this knowledge and experience to their own projects, with a taster at the community led events they support will make a big impact across the area.

'5000 people came to the St. George's event in March. So, yes, it's someone else's event. And yes, it's been very commercial in the past and it will continue to have a commercial element. But that's what gets the public to turn up. It would be absolutely mad not to be part of those, especially where we're going to be able to influence the balance of the event because of the support and work we at MarketPlace has consistently delivered there It's an opportunity to raise awareness and start a conversation with people and hook them in to our sort of sphere of influence and then try to do something and then say to them, what else could we do? That will be different for next year's festival?'

- Susie Batchelor, Programme Director

Reminding everyone of who MarketPlace is

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

In-person vs. Digital connectivity

Digital and distance engagement enables the team to deliver greater activity and reach wider communities of interest. However, the need for the new Creative Producers to increase their face-to-face visibility within communities limits their capacity to continue to build and contribute digital content.

Resource and budget within each project activity must be assigned to digital outputs and content creation of a consistently high standard. Rivers of Light bought new audiences outside into their communities for a new experience. However, the short lead time prevented the event from being appropriately resourced and digital outputs to be considered.

The Walking Companion app for Brandon Country Park could be a growing experience of routes that complement the team programme's new projects and outdoor arts experiences, enabling audiences to engage with projects after one event.

Finding ways to bring and nurture audiences for the artistic outputs from the smaller scale but deeper engagement projects the team are developing is a way to broaden the reach and identify new audiences for the rollout of activity.

Small Enough to Fail, Big Enough to Learn

This is the new philosophy of MarketPlace, and it allows for risk-taking, challenge and for communities to influence and co-create with artists.

ACE Research Question:

3

Which approaches were successful and what lessons were learned?

Overall successes

1

The completion and sign-off of a new business plan by ACE that focusses on broadening community decision-making and raising the ambition of delivery.

2

The reshaping of the Consortium so that it works for its members whilst providing the support and level of challenge MarketPlace needs to be successful in achieving its business plan objectives.

3

The successful recruitment of all roles by the end of the first year, bringing together diverse skill sets of the cultural and heritage sector alongside locally-driven arts activity. The new team members are diversifying the range and scope of the work MarketPlace hopes to deliver.

4

Being part of a multi-partner project to deliver the first annual Rivers of Light Lantern Parade event and completing the year with an event audience of approx. 600 residents and 494 people participated in the parade, as well as making lanterns is a testament to the skills of a new team to deliver such an event on a short delivery timescale.

5

The development of new strategic relationships with:

- Wisbech Museum
- Cambridge Arts Network
- Newmarket Community Nature Reserve

6

The development and investment in existing and new community relationships across Newmarket and Brandon. This support results in the creation of recent regular community group activity and the development of a new performance space in Brandon.





Overall challenges

1

The reduced visibility and delivery of activity by MarketPlace during this re-scoping phase has impacted partner confidence and community awareness of opportunities. MarketPlace Phase 3 is operating as a new CPP.

2

Team capacity has been a challenge with the level of recruitment for roles throughout the year. This has further been compounded by a return to face-to-face networking and the need to maintain a presence with community organisers while re-scoping the business plan. The full compliment of the new team was only in place in the final quarter of this delivery year.

3

The re-scoping process negatively impacted the previous team's morale for the first half of the year. The pressure of this process upon the new team resulted in burnout of the new leadership at a crucial time in delivery and informing the new delivery team in how they will work together. A lack of CPP induction and learning resources in conjunction with a gap in line management at a leadership level made this process more challenging.

4

The tragic death of a team member before they could provide transition support from the old team to all of the new team members has been burdensome for effective community engagement and the handover of digital resources.

5

As a new team, they are still in the forming stage of understanding how they best work together to achieve the objectives of the new business plan through an action-learning approach.

6

Willingness to attend in-person activity remains a challenge for MarketPlace communities. The combination of the cost of living crisis on top of the pandemic to enable rural communities to travel to attend free and paid-for events is impacting participation and volunteering levels. Community partners are still facing challenges of isolation, making consistency of contact a challenge for the team.



Rooted in place
Impactful for participants
Interactivity and interpretative
Magic

Why Rivers of Light Lantern Parade?

MarketPlace already has a positive relationship with three of the partners, and this was an opportunity to work with a new partner, Newmarket Community Nature Reserve. Their newly recruited local Creative Producer led the delivery of this project with a short lead time.

It was an opportunity for the Producer to represent MarketPlace, develop relationships with local partners, and work directly with new MarketPlace community groups. Connecting environmental themes with local heritage through a creative experience was an accessible introduction for a targeted area of Newmarket to meet and connect with MarketPlace.

The aim of this event was to:

- develop new relationships with local partners and groups for new members of the team
- pilot a new annual event to grow and develop the town
- reach target audiences for MarketPlace
- build awareness of the heritage of the chalk stream and environmental issues/action

Case Study: Rivers of Light

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

Residents walked the route of the chalk stream carrying their handmade lanterns before experiencing a finale of local musicians, choirs and dance performances.



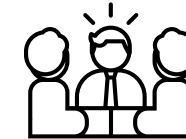
4

WORKSHOPS



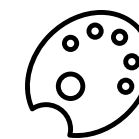
596

AUDIENCE



494

PARTICIPANTS



2

ARTISTS



489

DIGITAL AUDIENCE



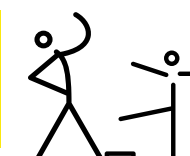
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VOLUNTEERS



4

MILES WALKED



3

COMMUNITY GROUPS

What happened?

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

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

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

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

'The workshops running up to the parade were fantastic. The atmosphere was wonderful on the evening of the event' - Audience feedback

'It was fun, the girls had fun making the lanterns and enjoyed the parade' - Audience feedback

'Absolutely brilliant event from start to finish. The parade led by the samba band was awesome, the lanterns and crowd were brilliant, and so was Covertina. Newmarket choir were spot on with a great rendition of the Rivers of Light song' - Audience feedback

Watch here





'It was a community coming together'

'It made one feel good to be involved with a community event'

'It was joyful, bringing light into the winter months. It was nice to see so many people coming together both in preparation and participation.'

- Audience Feedback

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

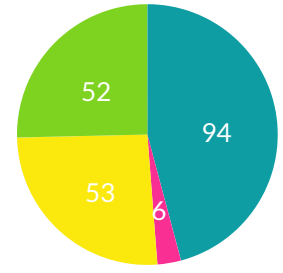
Data sources are a combination of 22 respondents from the Impact and Insight survey and 83 directly collected from workshops groups.

6%
identified as D/Disabled

One attendee completed the walk in a wheelchair alongside the river bank showing it was an accessible experience. This is an above-average demographic for the area. Promoting the accessibility of the route and the short and long experience, alongside targeted workshops, could see this figure increase in future years,

Ethnicity

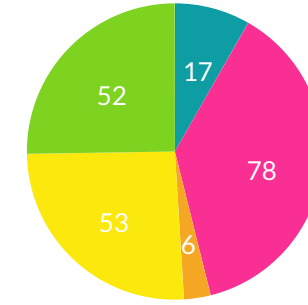
- White British (45.85%)
- Asian (2.93%)
- Unknown (25.85%)
- Protected characteristic (25.37%)



5% of the population of Newmarket is Asian; by removing the unknown and protected characteristics from this sample, the percentage of Asian attendees from our selection would represent 6% of the audience. This shows that MarketPlace is reaching the representation of Newmarket in their targeted activity.

Gender

- Male (8.25%)
- Female (37.86%)
- Prefer not to say (2.91%)
- Unknown (25.73%)
- Protected Characteristic (25.24%)

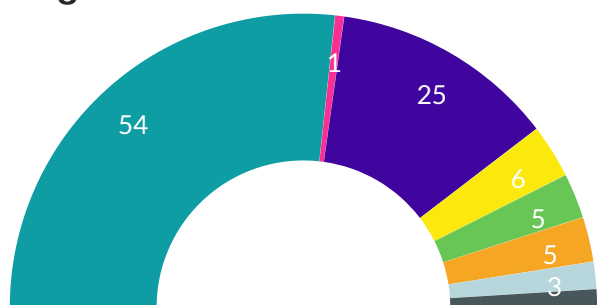


Females are more likely to complete a survey on behalf of the whole family, so the high percentage of female respondents is unsurprising.

Please note: The numbers of protected characteristics represent under 16 respondents.

Age

- Under 16 (53.47%)
- 16-24 (0.99%)
- 25-34 (24.75%)
- 35-44 (5.94%)
- 45-54 (4.95%)
- 55-64 (4.95%)
- 65-74 (2.97%)
- 75+ (1.98%)



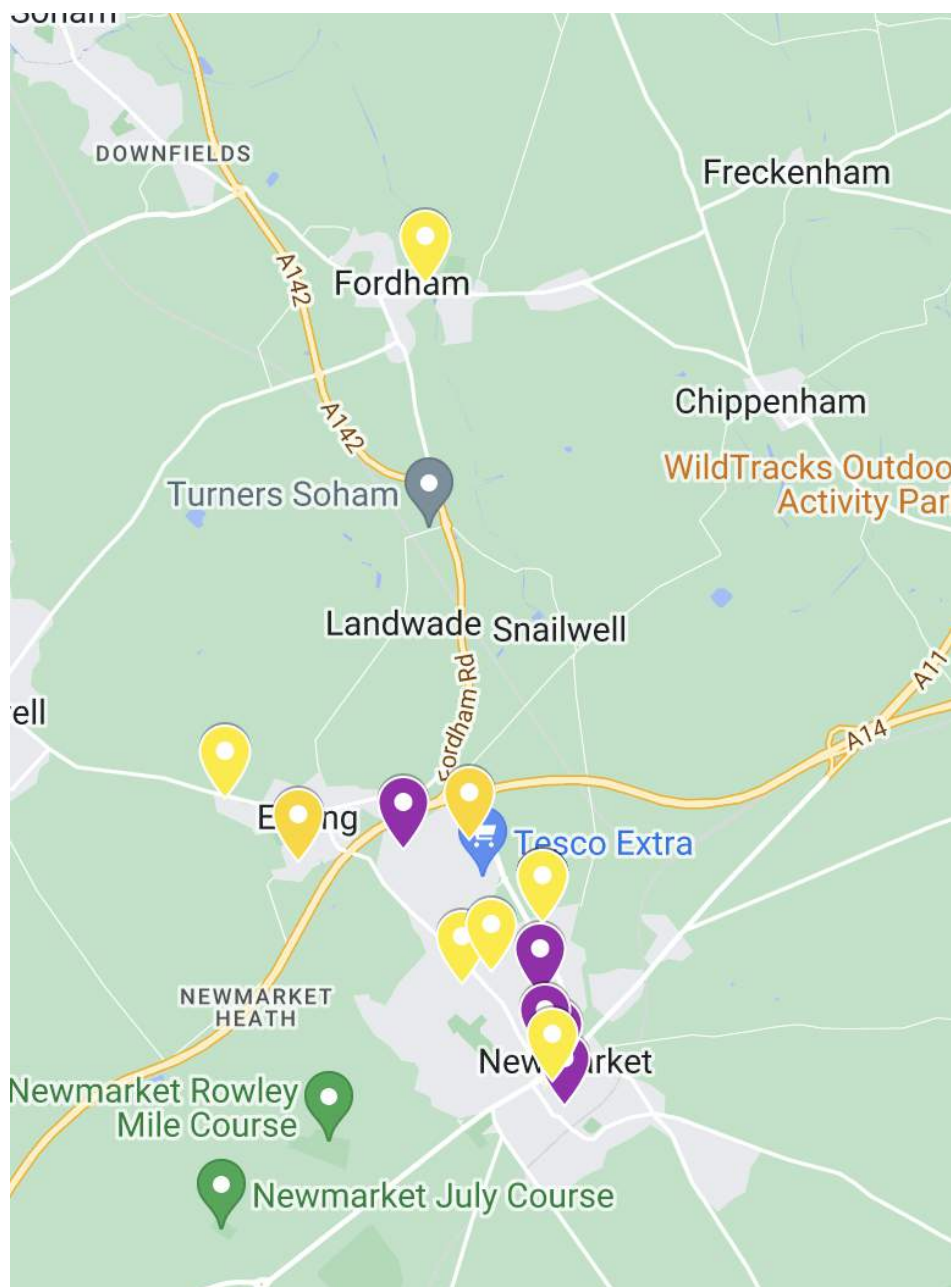
The breadth of ages combined with the average attendee group size of 5 shows that this event is a family experience that enables more isolated older community members to engage in the activity on their doorstep. Many young families were in attendance and didn't have time to fill out surveys, with some participating in only part of the experience due to small children being unable to complete the whole route, highlighting a gap in the data captured.

5
was the average group size of those attending,

The largest group sizes were 30 and 15. The collective and public experience meant that people felt comfortable and confident attending independently.

17%
hadn't attended an arts or culture event in the last 12 months

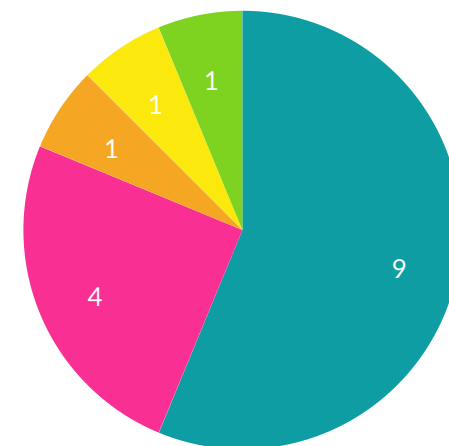
This statistic is skewed by the number of parade attendees participating in the previous lantern-making workshops. The 17% is representative of the residents who attended by discovering the event on their doorstep.



Where did attendees and participants come from?

Location

- Woodditton (56.25%)
- Soham (25%)
- Fulbourn (6.25%)
- Downham (6.25%)
- Trowbridge (6.25%)



The range of locations of Woodditton, Soham and Fulbourn rather than Newmarket represents people travelling to attend from outlier villages due to limited opportunities to engage. This shows that online social media marketing and including local amateurs and professionals to perform as part of the experience meant we engaged their popular local followers.

'It was a bright spark in a cultural desert here in West Suffolk especially Newmarket!

Made me feel enthused hopeful and positive for the survival of our chalk stream' - Audience Feedback

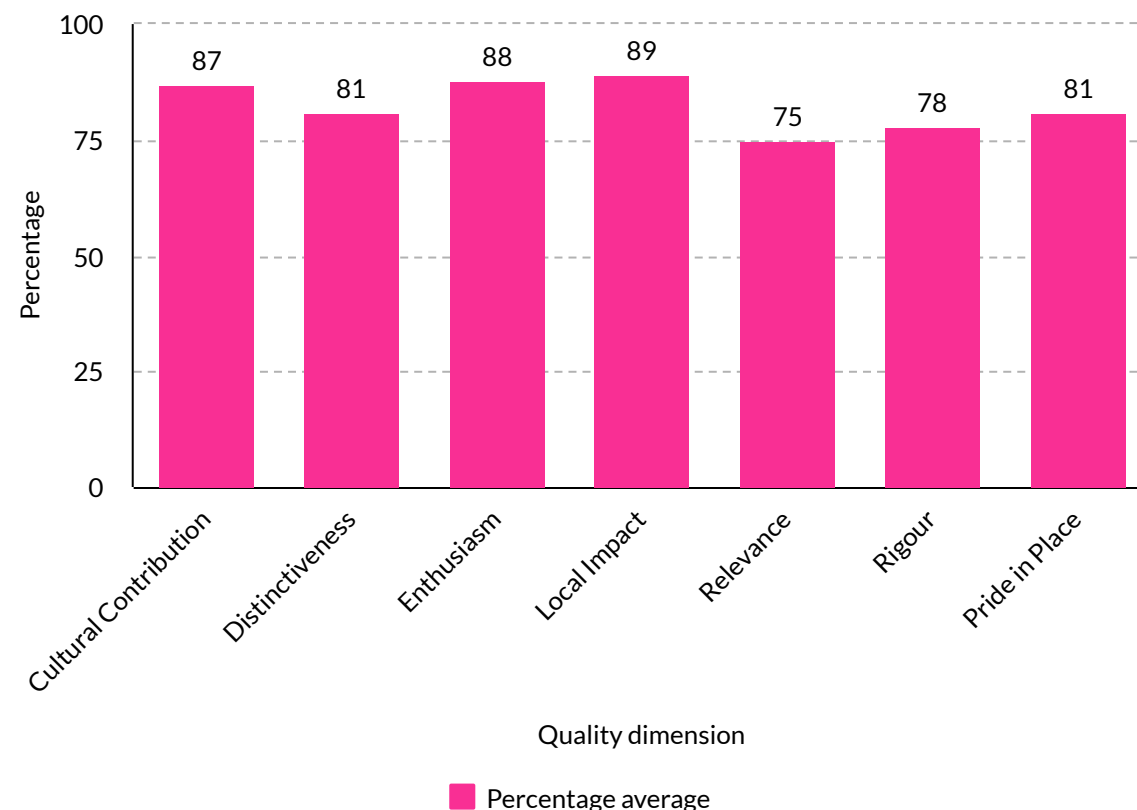
To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of process of engaging communities achieved?

What three words?



Attendees were asked 'What three words would they use to describe the event?' The top three words used to describe the experience were 'fun', 'community' and 'different'. This shows that the event was a new experience for attendees and rooted in the community. All adjectives were positive and reflected an opportunity for people to feel connected to their family, neighbours and the wider community. Attendees were also asked how they would describe the event to other people; the word 'Together' was used by 57% of respondents, showing that attendees valued an experience in which they felt a part of something.

Quality of experience



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

Action Learning

The success of this project lies in its organic growth from a conversation between two community groups, Newmarket Community Arts and Newmarket Community Nature Reserve. From a litter pick with residents, a chat about the issues created this opportunity. Contacting and connecting with groups and people as a starting point ensures ownership over activity.

This experience highlighted challenges in communication and marketing. As the first time using Eventbrite to gauge attendance, the advanced bookings were low compared to the large numbers that attended on the day. Working with children and young people before the event across a series of weeks guaranteed attendance and word of mouth to ensure an audience.

'We went to a lot of scouts, involving younger people, but that infiltrates into the parents and the scout leaders who were just great. They said we'd love to be on board. We'd love to be engaged with all this. We've never heard of Marketplace and all that sort of thing, and I just felt that word of mouth is visible to me. It's not necessarily about putting a brand name on something. It's also about talking about it going to speak to people finding out what they want.' – Peggy, Creative Producer.

There were two parts to the route with musical entertainment at the midpoint. The team conveyed that attendees could complete the whole route, or join/leave at the midpoint. However, this wasn't universally accessible knowledge to those joining in as the parade travelled along the route and for some attendees. The event would have benefited from more volunteers and stewards to support communications as the event went on.

Finding the right artist to co-design and make with children and young people was a part of the success. I created a framework for different ages and abilities to engage and contribute authentically to the lanterns for the parade. Pre-made structures were provided for decoration and full builds for those with more time, interest and ability to make lanterns. Providing different access points for positive participation fosters pride and confidence in participants.

"Collaborating with Penny, the artist, brought the best out of people in those workshops. She gave participants freedom to decorate and make the lanterns, but she was also guiding them with "what if you did that" or "have you tried this?" so that the lanterns were of a similar aesthetic quality. It was all participants own work, but she was just there to make little adjustments and share skills' – Louise, Creative Producer.

'It was lovely but a very long, slow walk without a way to get back to the start after it finished. I was also a bit sad that the fact we'd be following a River Goddess wasn't made clear until quite late on in the publicity' – Audience Feedback.

"Bring a scooter or a bike for little ones; it's a LONG route' – Audience Feedback

Managing pace with en route entertainment was challenging, and the event could grow to include temporary light installations along the river to increase points of interest and create self-directed walks beyond the parade evening.' Feedback has highlighted a need to deepen the relationship with the environmental project partners and develop more outcomes for environmental awareness alongside heritage learning and experiences to deepen engagement.

I'd have been interested to learn more about the route/chalk stream as part of the event. But maybe I missed that bit!' – Audience Feedback.

For those that didn't attend the lantern-making workshops, there was a lack of information and knowledge sharing of the chalk stream. Embedding ways to disseminate this creatively, could be connected to the potential for installations along the route to accompany the lanterns. A leaflet with images of the different elements on lanterns with their significance could be a trail activity for attendees as part of the experience.

Participation through stealth and conversation galvanised community participation in the project. Inviting different community creatives from the local choir, dance school, musicians, and Morris dancers provided different community and generational engagement points into the event.

The event enabled the team to connect and talk through more work with key partners that participated and attended, building new connections. This has highlighted opportunities for staged and cross-marketing events with crucial community opportunities, e.g. the anniversary of Studland Park architecture. So could generate additional investment from sports, health and wellbeing funders.

What next?

The team is already actioning their learning on both the routes and the marketing messaging about the experience for different audiences. It has highlighted the value of investing in letter box drops along residential streets for advanced invitations for residents to attend,

They are looking to increase the range of professional artists and performers for way key stopping points and create the opportunity to collect feedback; the success of the partnership working across the Rivers of Light project has diversified the scope and scale of the project to become an annual event. The heritage and environmental themes and learning that can take place through a creative lens make this a scaleable project as the communities' ambition grows.

'We've got a whole team of people who are like scientists and chemists, university people who were looking at the river and stuff like that, which we're hoping can bring more people in to do something else next time' - Lousie, Creative Producer.

The chalk stream heritage at the project's core means it can expand to two other sites within Newmarket to reach more audiences and extend the event. This river route was chosen as it follows postcode targeting of MarketPlace priority audiences.

It also can potentially roll out to other towns with chalk streams, such as Mildenhall. Investing in ideas the team can transfer and grow is evidence of considered risk and the new philosophy of MarketPlace in how they deliver work.

The growth of creative groups and potential in Newmarket creates the circumstance to ensure legacy from activity that MarketPlace can support and initiate. Targeting youth engagement in Newmarket will ensure that the legacy can continue. The partnerships are exploring the potential for a youth arts council; testing out this model and using Rivers of Light as a project they can actively support, and influence, could create a vehicle for Arts Award delivery and youth project bursaries and become a key part of creative careers pathways in Newmarket.

Fun is important for a new event experience in a hard-to-engage community. The words that audiences choose to describe the event included 'Energising' and 'Exercise', reflecting that the event supports health and well-being outcomes for the community. 'Different', 'Creative' and 'Community' shows that this is a distinctive art form for this community to experience and creates a sense of togetherness.

This highlights an area for evaluation and exploration in the second year of delivering this event. The health and well-being outcomes identified by participants emphasise an opportunity for diverse potential funders and target groups to participation.

Understanding that attendees would have learned a limited amount from experience this year, MarketPlace aims to embed more locally relevant heritage.



3

Final thoughts

The pace of delivery and activity for a new team responding to strategic change in an organisation means that it has been a year of articulation and new visions for what MarketPlace can achieve.

This section collates the headline points of learning identified from the evaluation.

This year has continued to highlight a need for pre-pandemic and pandemic engagement models as the cost of living crisis impacts the communities that MarketPlace seeks to connect with. Creative conversations at community-led events leads to small, scaleable projects, the foundations of which enable roll out across different communities to create active, confident and aspirational participants.

Reflections

- 1 **A new team and a fresh start** - The learning from the last two phases aren't lost; the new business plan builds on the knowledge and recommendations of the two previous delivery teams. With a new team, there are new perspectives, lived experiences and skill sets to shape a new programme for local communities. With all roles filled, the team is in a position to build from there.
- 2 **Small enough to fail and big enough to learn** - This new philosophy is rooted in the testing of pilot activity for rollout and scaling up. Identifying and developing partnerships for testing ideas beyond MarketPlace increases the team's capacity and successful activity's sustainability and future potential.
- 3 **Expanding community decision-making by going small** - The geographic scale of the area and the lack of cross-town movement by residents least likely to engage in culture means that community decision-making needs to happen on a hyper-local level, project by project basis. This approach will enable the team to expand how they co-create, co-programme and share new cultural experiences with their communities.
- 4 **Consortium support** - Honest and open conversations across the Consortium have increased the understanding of their support role and level of challenge to the MarketPlace. Ensuring Consortium members know the minimum requirement of their role and the expectations of their participation is crucial to ensuring a helpful relationship between the host organisation, delivery organisation and the Consortium advisory.
- 5 **A lot to do in little time** - The process of re-scoping the business plan and recruiting a completely new team across the year sets a big ask to deliver three years of work in just two. By setting targets, the team has a framework to focus their community conversations and provide an ambitious programme of work.

'I think we're still very much on a journey. We need to be ambitious ourselves, and we need to expand our horizons a bit. It's how you find that balance between community decision-making and pushing quality. One answer is very much about production values. If you're working with communities to produce work, then regardless of the sort of aesthetic quality or the kind of performance quality of their outputs, you put them within a framework of careful presentation to achieve high standards' - Susie Batchelor, Programme Director

Recommendations

1

Map the roles and tasks against the business plan – The upheaval of the re-scoping process, a newly forming team and delivery commitments from the start have created little space for reflection and mapping. Giving yourself time to map the networks you make, how it fits into the ambitions of the business plan and how you can be more thoughtful about what and how you deliver work is crucial with the delivery timescales left.

2

Share the stories and wins – Every project has a highlight, share and spotlight those insights into people, places and positive outcomes. Placing the communities at the heart of the stories you share shows new audiences that they are the decision-makers and co-creators of what you are doing. Inviting community members attending go-sees to write blog posts about the experience is another way of generating content without placing additional capacity on the team. Developing a person-centred marketing strategy will change what content you share and how you disseminate it. Invest in high-quality documentation of projects to ensure post-event content matches the quality of delivery in support of the stories you want to tell.

3

Build on the work to date in digital delivery and innovations for distanced engagement – Digital platforms require continuous learning, review and investment. The team previous team's digital legacies align with the current programming and delivery. Enabling cross-fertilisation of concepts whilst investing in the basics of social platform engagement strategies can increase the trust in and awareness of MarketPlace with new and existing communities. It can also maintain engagement between annual event activities. There is an opportunity to improve how embedded digital aspects are in the programme. Finding ways to reach a digital audience further with a physical event could aid online visibility and improve marketing reach.

4

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

5

Challenge expectations and perceptions of culture to develop work that will raise the ambition for quality cultural experiences for the communities of Fenland and West Suffolk – Always questioning the team's biases and experiences and those of communities will enable the continued quality of programming and innovation of ideas.

4

Evaluation actions

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

Dos

- 1 Co-create a new evaluation framework based on the revised Story of Change to address the objectives in the new business plan.
- 2 Review evaluation processes and data collection methods to create a new toolkit owned by the team to provide appropriate evidence to ACE.
- 3 Re-establish the peer review process with the consortium for MarketPlace events
- 4 Undertake quarterly reflection sessions as a team to capture and evidence learning.
- 4 Create a meaningful artist reflection process as part of their contracting for project delivery.

Challenges

- 1 The speed in which activity progresses and embedding evaluation within all activity remains a challenge with small micro-commissions and the depth of illuminate data to collect.
- 2 Supporting local artists to reflect critically on their work and develop their embedded practices needs to be considered for small taster activity at the commissioning stage and as commissioned activity is supported through different tiers.
- 3 Capacity of the team to collect data alongside delivery.
- 3 The focus on developing youth led engagement strands impacting the level of data that can be collected.



Cambridgeshire Urban Skills Event with delivery by Marian Savill

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

MarketPlace Consortium Partners



MarketPlace is also supported by



www.cppmarketplace.co.uk



Photography credits to:
MarketPlace and commissioned artists



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

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