

APPENDIX 1

Report from Bath Festivals

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REPORT FROM BATH FESTIVALS TO BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

1 INTRODUCTION

Since Bath Festivals was last reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel, in November 2010, the organisation has risen to the challenge of continuing to grow its national profile and maintaining a vibrant and flourishing artistic programme, despite a significant reduction in its public sector funding. Bath Festivals has also had a complete change in its senior management team since that time, with a new Chief Executive, joined by new appointments to the key posts of Finance Director and Development & Marketing Director.

Bath Festivals:

- **Produces three successful festivals of national significance**, having added the Telegraph Bath Festival of Children's Literature¹ to its portfolio in autumn 2010, joining the long-established Bath International Music Festival and the Independent Bath Literature Festival.
- **Runs an extensive learning & participation programme**, which is far larger than those operated by comparable festival organisations across the UK, and which ensures that the organisation is engaging on a regular basis with people across the outer areas of Bath and in North East Somerset. In 2011/12 44% of the participatory programme took place in schools, libraries & youth centres in North East Somerset, and 11% in areas such as Twerton, Whiteway and Foxhill.
- **Supports other local cultural organisations** by running the Bath Box Office, which sells almost 90,000 tickets per annum for 120 organisations in and around Bath and helps to market their events through the use of social media. It also operates a What's On listings website which publicises the work of all local cultural organisations.

2 BATH FESTIVALS' CONTRIBUTION TO BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL'S OBJECTIVES

Bath Festivals contributes to the priorities of Bath and North East Somerset Council through:

Building a stronger economy: as a leading player within Bath's cultural offer, enhancing its image as a contemporary, vibrant city as well as a world heritage site, and thus attracting visitors to the City including a significant proportion of higher-spending overnight visitors. An economic impact study of

¹ The Children's Literature Festival is not part of the services contracted by B&NES Council from Bath Festivals, but it is an important addition to the overall range of activity undertaken by the organisation.

Bath Festivals in 2009/10 demonstrated that it contributes £3.88million to the local economy, which will have grown since the addition of the Children's Literature Festival to our programme. We have also grown a much stronger range of national media partnerships with The Independent, the Telegraph, Sky Arts and BBC Radio 3, which all secure a significant national profile for Bath.

Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live: Festivals are an important part in making people proud of their area, both through our major high profile events such as Party in the City, involving nearly 2000 local performers and an audience of 18,000 plus, and through our commitment to increasing our engagement in areas outside the city centre.

Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone:

Through its learning & participation programme, Bath Festivals makes a significant impact on the confidence and communication skills of young people, from the exuberant annual performance by hundreds of school children in Bath Abbey as part of the Music Festival, to in-depth, focused work with disengaged young people in youth centres and schools throughout the district.² Bath Festivals also has more than 200 volunteers, many of whom are retired – not only do they provide invaluable support, but they gain much enjoyment and engagement from their involvement.

3 ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

This report summarises the major recent achievements of Bath Festivals, and also sets out the challenges that the organisation faces.

3.1 ARTISTIC PROGRAMME

- The **Bath International Music Festival** has attracted 4 and 5 star reviews in the national press for its adventurous programming which in 2011 and 2012 has included highlights such as the opening concert for 2011 with a lyrical contemporary programme on a Celtic theme, introduced by the Bristol Pipe & Drum band and followed by a ceilidh, to performances in the Roman Baths, to the Bath Abbey concert in the round by the renowned Early Music choir I Fagiolini, to our outgoing Music Director Joanna MacGregor's final production – a modern day rendering of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, designed to make opera accessible to families and young people. The Festival's programming is deliberately broad ranging in order to attract a wide spectrum of audiences – from world famous classical stars such as Sir Willard White, to popular artists such as Billy Bragg and Martha Reeves & the Vandellas.

A particular highlight of the 2012 festival was the moving *Labyrinth of Stories* installation on homelessness in St Michael's Without, produced in partnership with the Genesis Trust. The church was transformed with a labyrinth of candles,

² An external evaluation by the University of Exeter of Bath Festivals creative writing in schools programme, *The Write Team*, provided strong evidence for its beneficial impact on overall engagement in learning, confidence and communication skills, and for its long-term effect on teaching practice.

with listening posts for the public to listen to the life stories of homeless people. Ambient music was created by young people involved in Bath Festivals' youth music programme, and each night students from Bath Spa University performed Gavin Bryars' composition inspired by the song of a homeless man, *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*.

- **Party in the City:** this takes place on the first Friday of the Music Festival, and has been developed by Bath Festivals in order to show off the huge range of musical talent in Bath and the surrounding area. Just under 2000 performers – almost all local – join in, presenting concerts in 30 venues across Bath. In 2012 Party in the City also took place in some venues in Keynsham. Party in the City is also an important way of launching the Festival to local people, reaching an audience of 18,000 plus on the night – admission is free to all venues which are mostly packed out, and the whole evening ends with fireworks and a free party event at the Pavilion.
- **The Independent Bath Literature Festival** has considerably increased its national profile in the past two years under James Runcie's leadership, enhanced by the media partnership gained with the Independent in 2012. It stands out in the increasingly crowded literature festival market, because of its strongly curated approach – it is not just an assembly of writers offered for tour by their publishers. The festival has strong themes each year, encompassing debates, talks, workshops and mass public readings. Highlights range from well-known figures such as Jeremy Paxman, Hisham Matar and Sandi Toksvig, to our first public reading event of the King James Bible in 2011: over 400 volunteers signed up within a few days of putting out the call for readers, joined by well-known writers and actors. This success was built on in 2012, with public readings for the Dickens' Bi-Centenary of *David Copperfield* in Bath, and of *A Tale of Two Cities* in Midsomer Norton.
- **The Telegraph Bath Festival of Children's Literature** is not part of the contracted service from Bath & North East Somerset Council but forms an important new part of Bath Festivals' overall programme. It reached an audience of in 2011, aiming to enthuse children and young people with a love of reading. The programme ranges from best-selling authors such as Jacqueline Wilson, who packed out the Forum, to a series of workshops in schools and children's centres – in order to ensure that we reach children whose families might not bring them to the Festival.

3.2 LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

Bath Festivals has an active learning and participation programme, both through the festivals and year-round.

- The major creative writing in schools programme *The Write Team* completed its first three years of delivery in July 2011. Targeted at under-achieving children, this project has placed writers into schools on a long-term basis and has had a significant impact on communication skills and overall engagement in learning, as well as on teachers' own practice. External evaluation by the University of Exeter demonstrated the benefits of the approach, gathering some moving testimonials from children:

'I have concentrated more in lessons. Also I have started to write outside of schools and it has really widened my imagination. I have really like the Write

Team because I have felt more comfortable about writing generally.'

The Write Team was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for three years. Bath Festival is now working in partnership with Saltford teaching school to offer the Write Team approach as part of professional development programmes for teachers, and with Bath Spa University's teacher training department. We are also working with national partners such as the BookTrust to promote the success of our approach, and to influence teaching policy.

- Bath Festivals started a new youth music programme, *Make Music Happen*, in September 2011, in partnership with music providers in Bath & NE Somerset. It involves creative music making workshops in Radstock, Peasedown St John, Southdown and Keynsham youth centres, and a training programme to develop young music promoters. Most of the young people involved do not engage with formal music provision, and have responded positively to the chance to broaden their musical vocabulary and skills.
- In 2011 and 2012, the schools commission which launches Party in the City at the Music Festival was led by Brazilian percussionist Adriano Adewale. Each year it involved 10 schools, particularly targeting schools in the less well provided for areas of Bath & NE Somerset. Adriano was a dynamic role model for the children, who worked with him to create compelling compositions, on the rights of the child in 2011 and on sport & music for 2012. Both years, 180 children took part in the performance in Bath Abbey, drawing in a full capacity audience of more than 1000 parents and family. Teachers told us afterwards that many of the parents had never previously set foot in the Abbey.
- The Literature Festival learning and participation programme involved over 1000 students in 4 projects, including Aesop's Fables in which the young people created moral messages for adults and used QR code technology to share their writing with our festival audience and the general public.

3.3 BATH BOX OFFICE

Bath Festivals operates Bath Box office without any dedicated subsidy for the ticket sales function, offering it as a service to the local community. Bath Festivals is however grateful for the support from B&NES to produce the What's On website (£10,000 per annum), and for the support towards the software upgrade which is being implemented in Summer 2012.

- In 2011/12 89,175 tickets were sold on behalf of 120 organisations in and around Bath, plus 50 more promoted on our What's On website, receiving 50,521 unique visitors.
- Bath Box Office relocated into the newly refurbished Bath Visitor Centre in February 2012. This greatly enhances the service offered to visitors and the strategic relationship with Bath Tourism Plus. It also integrates the box office team better to Bath Festivals, as it is in the same building as the office base
- Selling tickets and providing front of house service for the Bath Music Plus popular music events has helped to grow ticket commission income significantly

3.4 MANAGEMENT

Bath Festivals has to achieve demanding financial targets in order to secure our future. In order to do this, it is vital to make sure that the management of the organisation is as strong as possible. This has been a major focus of the new management team's work over the past 2 years:

- **Governance:** Bath Festivals has adopted a comprehensive Governance Handbook as a framework for the board, and has adopted new Articles of Association. New board members have been recruited to fill identified skills gaps, including John Cullum, a locally based businessman and previous High Sherriff of Somerset, and Louise Mitchell, Chief Executive of Colston Hall/Bristol Music Development Trust.
- **Fundraising:** the core proposition of Bath Festivals' business plan, adopted in January 2011 and currently being updated, is that the reduction in public sector funding will be compensated for by improved fundraising performance. The demanding fundraising targets have been more than achieved since the arrival of Owen McNeir as Development & Marketing Director in September 2011. However some ground was lost in early 2011 after an unsuccessful appointment to this post in January 2011, which eroded the financial reserves. Bath Festivals was awarded support from Arts Council England's Catalyst scheme in 2012, to build capacity to raise money from private philanthropy.
- **Marketing:** a new marketing strategy is being developed, with the intention that Bath Festivals is presented more clearly as one organisation, rather than a disparate collection of separate brands. The websites will be brought together under one umbrella, and greatly improved over the next 12 months.
- **Staffing:** Bath Festivals staff team is one of its greatest assets. A new Music Festival Artistic Director, Alasdair Nicolson, has been appointed and will present his first Festival in 2013. Alasdair is a renowned composer, and a versatile artist who is also a programmer, conductor and educationalist. A new staff development plan is being adopted, and a review of salary structure is underway.
- **Finance:** Bath Festivals has a highly experienced Finance Director, supported by a Finance officer (both posts are part-time). Financial reporting has been significantly improved, and financial performance is regularly reviewed by the Board's finance group.
A recovery plan has been adopted by the board, to rebuild the reserves over the next three years.

3.5 FUTURE PRIORITIES

Bath Festivals will address three major priorities over the next few years:

- **Broadening engagement:** building on our successful learning and participation programme, we will increase and deepen the festival presence in the less affluent areas of B&NES
- **Raising our national and international profile,** which will bring more visitors to Bath and complement the tourism strategy, building Bath's image as a lively, culturally active city as well as a major world heritage site
- **Achieving financial and organisational stability:** continuing our work to increase our earned and fundraised income, and to build a resilient, well-

managed organisation

Broadening Engagement

We are determined to broaden the range of people engaging with our festivals and to maintain and enhance our already considerable programme of education activity, in the belief that participation in the arts makes a vital contribution to personal growth, and to the wellbeing of individuals and whole communities. There is extensive research to demonstrate that building new audiences for the arts take a very long-term and committed approach, and we know this will take time, and a thoughtful engagement with local communities.

We will focus on areas such as Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Peasedown St John in NE Somerset, and on Whiteway, Foxhill and Twerton in Bath. There is considerable strength to build on in terms of Bath Festivals' work with schools, libraries and youth centres in these areas.

We know that the answer is to work in partnership with others – with local community organisations, with agencies such as Libraries and the Youth Service, and with other arts organisations who share our commitment to working in these areas such as Creativity Works in Radstock and the Bath Film Festival. We recently organised a productive meeting of potential arts partners, including B&NES Arts Development, from which we will develop a shared approach, pooling our expertise and community relationships.

Although Bath Festivals has presented events outside Bath in the past, the current management team intends to take a different approach from now on. Whilst some of our past events have been successful – when there is a welcoming and well set up community venue – we know that there needs to be a long-term approach, focusing on specific community partners who we can work with over several years. We will have to balance our desire to increase this area of our programming with the constraints of our reduced staffing resources and the need for careful financial management, but this is a strongly felt priority and a core part of our long-term vision for the organisation.

A year round programme of youth engagement is also being developed, building on the strengths of the emerging teenage strand in the Children's Literature Festival, the youth music programme, and *The Write Team*.

Bath Festivals also intends to continue the strategic lead it has provided in bringing music education providers together through the *Make Music Happen* project, supporting Bath & NE Somerset's Music Service in creating a Music Hub to secure future investment from Arts Council England.³

³ Music Services nationally are now funded by Arts Council England rather than by the Department for Education, and are required to create Music Hubs that bring together the Music Service with other local music education providers, including relevant arts organisations in their local area such as Bath Festivals.

Profile

Our festivals programmes will mix high profile artists with new commissions and collaborations, creating national and international partnerships to widen our creative inspiration and to share resources. The programming will remain deliberately broad, in order to attract a range of audiences, but will have strong unifying themes of artistic exploration and intellectual challenge, mixed with popular and accessible events and imaginative community participation projects.

We will invest in our marketing and communications operation, securing and growing our national media partnerships, and delivering on our new ambitious marketing strategy.

Finance

Bath Festivals has made a good start in increasing its fundraising performance to meet the reduction in public sector funding, increasing fundraising from £262,000 in 2010/11 to £413,500 forecast for 2012/13 (much of which has already been secured). However it faces significant challenges in achieving financial stability over the next few years, with a reduction in public sector income of £155,000 (26%) between 2010/11 and 2012/13, and a further reduction of £50,000 from Bath & North East Somerset Council already indicated for 2013/14. We also face potential difficulties in terms of a contested VAT liability on the literature festivals box office income. However the impact of that is unlikely to be felt for about two years while HMRC reviews its practice on VAT on ticket sales for cultural events, in the light of a tribunal case brought by the British Film Institute.

The Future

Bath Festivals is determined to meet these challenges, but it will require continued success in fundraising and earned income generation, and tight financial management. Any significant further cuts in core public funding would pose a major challenge to its ability to continue to deliver festivals that achieve the current national and international profile, and to achieve the intended expansion of our community engagement and education programmes.