



Morley Literature Festival 2010 Evaluation Report

Date: 1 November 2010

Executive Summary

This report critically evaluates the fifth Morley Literature Festival (MLF), taking account of opinions and feedback from the Festival Director, members of the public through verbal and email comments, the Festival Committee, and the South East Leeds Area Management Team. It also sets out a series of recommendations to improve the festival organisation and audience experience in future years, for consideration by the MLF Festival Committee.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to evaluate the 2010 Morley Literature Festival and provide a series of recommendations for the future organisation of this event.

2.0 Background

2.1 In September 2006 the inaugural Morley Literature Festival took place and following its success Area Committee agreed that the festival should become an annual event.

2.2 An evaluation report of the first festival recommended that a locally based organising committee be established and that a freelance Festival Director be appointed to develop the programme and deliver the 2007 Literature Festival. Since then the festival has run successfully on an annual basis on these terms.

2.3 Alongside MLF runs a smaller separate organisation Friends of Morley Literature Festival, set up after the 2007 festival, to support the festival aims and objectives. The Friends have their own committee and accounts.

2.4 In January 2010 a new festival director, Jenny Harris, was appointed, to take the festival forward in its anniversary year. The festival was developed with the recommendations from the 2009 evaluation plan in mind.

3.0 The Fifth Festival Structure

3.1 Jenny Harris was contracted as Festival Director in January 2010. The Festival Committee met monthly up to the festival, alternating executive and full meetings.

3.2 The Festival Committee Executive Committee currently comprises Cllr Bob Gettings - Chair, Cllr Shirley Varley - Vice Chair, Lesley Gettings - Secretary, Janet Harrison - Treasurer and Jenny Harris - Director. The Festival Committee meetings included executive members plus invited representatives from Area Management Team,

Morley Town Council, Friends of Morley Literature Festival, the Library Service and Find Your Talent.

- 3.3 A clear work programme was followed by the director, with line management from the Chair of the Committee.
- 3.4 All members of the management committee are committed to the festival and worked extremely hard to ensure its success. The relationship between the committee and the separate organisation Friends of Morley Literature Festival needs to be examined to ensure the aims and functions of both organisations are distinct. The committee would benefit from the addition of representatives from the arts and business sector who could contribute additional skills and experience to the festival's future development.

Recommendations for the MLF Committee

- I. Seek to recruit arts and marketing representatives to the Committee
- II. Explore options for evening meetings to facilitate wider membership of committee
- III. Re-examine the relationship between the Committee and the Friends of MLF
- IV. Set dates for future meetings and ensure that paperwork is distributed in a timely fashion to the relevant committee members

4.0 The Festival Programme

- 4.1 The content of the festival was curated by the Festival Director and took place over seven days from 9-17 October. The events programme comprised 20 public events (of which 3 were free entry), 2 Family Fun mornings at Morley Library, and 2 workshops, as well as 11 school events and 2 outreach events.
- 4.2 The festival secured Gervase Phinn as patron and he opened the festival with a sell-out and well-received Literary Lunch at Village Hotel.
- 4.3 The quality of the programme was particularly high this year – we were able to attract authors of the calibre of Will Self, Barbara Taylor Bradford and Iain Banks which gave the festival a very creditable status within the press and on the wider festival/arts circuit.
- 4.4 The events exceeded audience targets in most cases, with audiences travelling from Wakefield, Ossett and all parts of Leeds to attend (see appendix 1 for detailed audience figures). Only the event with Barbara Taylor Bradford significantly underperformed, although by moving her talk to the Banquet Hall it was still a high quality evening.
- 4.5 New venues used included local businesses Bertie's Diner and Bee's Knees café, as well as St Mary's Church and Morley RFC Clubhouse.
- 4.6 It was a challenge to attract three traditional 'headline' events for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights of the festival. The bigger name artists weren't touring as they have been in previous years. However, this did not ultimately affect the success or impact of the festival - the fact that the biggest attended event (Will Self) took place on a Tuesday night suggests that the festival should worry less about days of the week in future iterations.

- 4.7 After the success of last year's community event in Gildersome, three similar events were organised in Gildersome, Drighlington and Churwell. All three were excellent and attracted good audiences. The three events were organised and promoted by individual committee members and this format worked well.
- 4.8 An online book group was launched in partnership with Leeds culture blog The Culture Vulture. This enabled the festival to develop an online presence and audience and proved very popular with readers. There is potential to develop this as a quarterly project to maintain year-round interest in the festival, and promote Morley to a wider Leeds audience, at virtually no cost.
- 4.9 The festival developed new links with local publishers and writing organisations, including Cadaverine and Route, which resulted in successful events and reciprocal marketing.
- 4.10 While the festival successfully produced an outstanding quality programme this year, it should look to develop its own projects in future years as well as bringing in authors on tour. This will give the festival a real depth and root it in its location of Morley.
- 4.11 The Festival has been approached by the Fine Art Department at Leeds Metropolitan University with a view to creating a creative relationship for 2011 and beyond. The University held a photography exhibition at Morley Library as part of this year's festival and we will explore possibilities for a joint project for the 2011 festival.

Recommendations

- I. Continue the development of a high quality programme
- II. Include new patron in programme planning
- III. Secure funding for a new commission based on Morley / writer in residence for 2011
- IV. Explore development of events outside festival dates
- V. Develop workshop programme, including children's events
- VI. Continue to hold the lunch at the Village Hotel.
- VII. Book the Town Hall dates early to ensure exclusive use of the venue during the festival week
- VIII. Continue with community events
- IX. Continue to work with local businesses as venue spaces
- X. Explore new link with Leeds Metropolitan University

5.0 Finances, Fundraising and Sponsorship

- 5.1 The financial foundation for this year's festival was secured by the Outer Area Committee with an allocation of £10,000. Other cash funding was secured from Morley Town Council, Land Securities, Find Your Talent, the Friends of Morley Literature Festival and Sport Relief.
- 5.2 Support in kind was given by the *Morley Observer*, Morley Library in allowing free use of the Baker Room and staff supporting events and selling tickets, the Bees Knees, Berties Diner and Cucina for hosting events and the White Rose Shopping Centre in displaying banners and advertising the festival on their websites, electronic screens and magic mirrors. The relationship with the White Rose

so a priority will be to find a new source of funding for the schools programme in 2011.

Discussions are planned on the development of the festival's relationship with Land Securities and the White Rose Shopping Centre in 2011 and beyond.

Recommendations

- I. Apply for Arts Council and Arts@Leeds funding
- II. Explore funding opportunities for schools and outreach programme.
- III. Further develop relationship with the White Rose Shopping Centre
- IV. Further explore sponsorship opportunities with local businesses

6.0 Marketing and Publicity

- 6.1 A new, more contemporary but family friendly brand identity was developed for the festival and rolled out throughout online and offline print and marketing materials. A professional designer was employed and a new format pocket-sized brochure produced which proved popular with audiences.
- 6.2 8000 festival brochures were produced and distributed via direct mail and by hand to libraries, schools, arts venues and businesses in Morley, Leeds, and the Wakefield area. An additional 10,000 fliers were produced and most distributed via Audiences Yorkshire's leaflet racks throughout West Yorkshire. Morley schools received and distributed fliers via book bags. 200 full colour posters were printed.
- 6.3 The website was redesigned and content developed. Crucially online booking was offered for the first time via the Leeds Grand Theatre and proved very popular with younger audiences. Approximately 28% of total bookings for the 2010 festival were made online. A new online mailing list has been created and e-fliers were designed and sent out to promote the festival using the MailChimp service. The brochure was available as a pdf download on the site. The facebook page was developed and bulletins sent out regularly.
- 6.4 The press strategy focused on regional and local press this year, with articles appearing in the Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post, as well as plenty of coverage in the Morley Observer, and their Batley/Dewsbury partners. Barbara Taylor Bradford mentioned the festival on BBC Radio 2 and her publisher ran two full page national ads in the Sunday Mail and Telegraph. Coverage was also good online – with local blogs including the Guardian giving a focus to the programme. However, press remains quite a specialist task and the festival should give consideration to employing a freelance pr expert on a small contract to help with this in future years.
- 6.4 The festival was very successful in generating interest and audiences via Twitter.
- 6.5 Four banners advertised the festival in Morley, but otherwise it was a challenge to create a presence, with most shops unable or unwilling to display posters and brochures. The Town would benefit enormously from the facility to display festival flags or lamppost banners, which would create a festival feel and be of benefit not just to MLF, but other events during the year.

- 6.6 Reciprocal marketing was developed with Leeds International Film Festival, Opera North and City Varieties marketing to their own mailing lists and online channels. Leeds Light Night would be a good marketing opportunity for the festival next year but would need funding if it were to be in the form of an event within the Light Night programme.

Recommendations

- I. Make further improvements to the website for 2011
- II. Continue to use professional designer with experience of working with copy.
- III. Explore the budgetary options for additional help with marketing and PR
- IV. Discuss the potential for improved Town Centre marketing with Morley Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce
- V. Explore possibility of Light Night event

7.0 Book Fair and Book Swap

- 7.1 The Book Swap and market event on Saturday 9 October was run by Morley Chamber of Commerce and supported by MLF.

The craft fair held by coincidence in the Town Hall on the same day contributed to the overall success of the event.

The event sits rather uncomfortably within the Festival programme currently as it does not fall within the festival dates and is not organised by the festival. The event definitely has potential, but better links need to be developed with the Chamber of Trade to ensure its future success.

Recommendations

- I. Explore options for continuing with/developing the Book Fair with Morley Town Council and Chamber of Trade.

8.0 Schools, Family and Young Peoples' Events

- 8.1 Find Your Talent (FYT) once again supported the schools and outreach programme. Whilst the incoming government's announcement of the cancellation of the project meant that some of the ideas developed for the 2010 festival (such as the use of an empty shop unit in Morley Town Centre) were not able to be realised due to time constraints, the FYT team managed to secure the full funding allocation for the festival from the Treasury.
- 8.2 Find Your Talent ran a literature development programme for authors and teachers in Morley during 2010 and MLF was able to use the contacts and models from this programme to strengthen the festival's schools programme. An inset session run by MLF, FYT and Libraries was offered to all the Morley Family of Schools and attracted 13 representatives. The inset was held at Morley Library and enabled us to present directly to teachers the festival offer to schools. Following the session, 10 schools took up the offer of a free author day in their school. Each author was paired with a specific representative from the school to plan and deliver school work and share outcomes with school colleagues. This meant the school sessions were much more meaningful and linked to the school's own curriculum.

- 8.3 It was virtually impossible for the festival director to attend more than a couple of schools events this year, because of concurrent events within the main festival. It would be worth having an extra freelancer to support this work and provision will be made for this in funding applications for 2011.
- 8.4 Find Your Talent also encouraged the festival to work with the Youth Service this year and as a result a professional graphic artist was recruited to work with Drighlington Youth Group over two sessions. However, this was not particularly successful – there were behavioural problems with too many children attending and the youth workers struggling to maintain control. Additionally the artist did not have the right kind of skills for working with this kind of group.
- 8.5 We were unable to secure a big name children’s author for the Town Hall this year, partly because the Town Hall had other bookings in during the week of the festival. However, Morley Family of Schools have secured some funding from the Stephen Lawrence Foundation for an author event during the next six months and have asked the Festival to organise this.
- 8.6 The festival benefits enormously from the support and assistance of the children’s development librarians at Leeds Libraries, Debbie Moody and Lorraine Lee, who suggested and advised on childrens’ authors and supported events.
- 8.7 The two family fun mornings at Leeds Libraries were well attended and will be worth building on for 2011.

Recommendations for the MLF Committee

- I. Recruit more assistance with the schools’ programme in 2011.
- II. Continue to build on the links created within the Morley schools.
- III. Secure funding from new source for 2011 and beyond.
- IV. Organise Stephen Lawrence Foundation event for Morley Family of Schools

9.0 Front of House and Stewarding

- 9.1 The stewarding at this year’s festival was organised in partnership with the Friends. Roles were clearly defined for all stewards this year and the standard of stewarding was excellent, but generally the number of volunteer stewards is low and must be increased for 2011.
- 9.2 More consideration needs to be given to the Front of House at Morley Town Hall. Signage could have been better for events in the banqueting rooms and more stewards employed to welcome audiences (rather than the porters).
- 9.3 It is noted that some stewards feel uncomfortable handling cash sales on the door and that it would be good practice to allocate committee members to this role from next year.
- 9.4 A licensed wine bar was provided for two town hall events which proved very popular, and tea and coffee refreshments laid on at all Library events. Feedback from audience members suggests that the provision of refreshments for all events would be welcome.

- 9.5 Bookselling for this year's festival was provided by Blackwells of Leeds. They provided an excellent service and are interested in a future relationship with the festival.

Recommendations for the MLF Committee

- I. Advertise for and recruit more volunteer stewards
- II. Explore the potential for a pop up bar provided by external supplier
- III. Continue to use Blackwells in future festivals.

10.0 Friends of Morley Literature Festival

- 10.1 Once again the Friends of the festival were a great resource in terms of sourcing stewards, running events and donating cash towards events.
- 10.2 The Friends have agreed to take on the development and running of the Festival's writing competition from 2011
- 10.3 Despite considerable effort this year in advertising at events, they have not managed to recruit a significant number of new members and the core team of active volunteers remains very small.
- 10.4 It is not clear what the Friends remit and function is and how it is distinct in its offer from the main MLF committee. Whether it needs to operate as a separate organisation, or whether its current functions could exist as a subcommittee of the main MLF committee should be explored.

Recommendations

- I. Members of the committee should meet with the Friends to discuss ways forward.

11.0 Ticketing

- 11.1 The Box Office function for the festival was managed this year by The Grand Theatre, which also enabled MLF to offer online sales for the first time. Just under 28% of total ticket sales were made online this year, which shows the added value this service has brought to customers.
- Morley Library offered ticket sales for the first time and proved very popular with the local public. Ticket sales were offered again through the Morley Observer but proved less popular, perhaps because their opening times are sporadic. Althams sold tickets for the main events.
- 11.2 Ticket sales patterns show that online ticketing was popular with events aimed at younger people (e.g. Robin Ince) but local ticket agents Morley Library and Althams also sold plenty of tickets.
- 11.3 Weekly ticket updates meant that the Committee were able to keep a better eye on individual events this year and respond as appropriate – this was particularly pertinent with the Barbara Taylor Bradford event which was moved to a new part of the Town Hall in response to slower than expected ticket sales.

Recommendations

- I. Continue to use the Grand Theatre Box Office and online in 2011.
- II. Discontinue selling through the Morley Observer
- III. Improve accountability with Morley Library through dedicated cash till button

12.0 Short Story Competition

- 12.1 After last year's debacle over the Short Story Competition, when the results were not announced well into March 2010, the decision was made to postpone the competition and relaunch it for 2011 with a timetable that coincides with the Festival dates.
- 12.2 The Friends of MLF have taken on the organising and promoting of the competition and it was launched at this year's Festival.

Recommendations

- I. Involve patron Gervase Phinn in the judging of the competition.

16.0 Mayor of Morley

- 16.1 Due to the nature of this year's programme it was felt that receptions would not be appropriate. However, we were very grateful to the Mayor and Mayoress of Morley for their support of this year's festival, both in attending several events and loaning the use of the Mayor's parlour for the headline artists.

Recommendations

- I. Seek the continued support of the mayor for 2011.

17.0 Conclusions

- 17.1 The 2010 Morley Literature Festival was a success with the programme of events well attended, well organised and receiving positive feedback from the general public.
- 17.2 The festival director has developed contacts and relationships which put the festival in good stead for 2011.

Appendix 1: Total Ticket Sales

Ticket Sales

Event	Venue	Actual (Paid)
Some Girls Mothers	Morley Library	30
Jack Sheffield	Churwell Community Hall	50
Dulcie Lewis	Gildersome Conservative Club	70
Dulcie Lewis	Drighlington Primary	50
Will Self	Morley Town Hall	315
Robin Ince	Bertie's Diner	61
Morley Folk Club	TownHouse	52
Blake Morrison	Morley Town Hall	24
Iain M Banks	Morley Town Hall	163
Barbara Taylor Bradford	Morley Town Hall	114
Tea with Helen Castor	Morley Town Hall	61
In League with Literature	Morley RFC Club House	52
Rachel Hewitt	Morley Town Hall	149
Joe Maiden	St Mary's	69
Anthony Clavane	Morley Town Hall	24
John Shuttleworth	Morley Town Hall	293
Total Tickets Sold		1577