

Appendix 9

I Love West Leeds Festival Evaluation 2007

Overview

The third "I Love West Leeds" (ILWL) took place 2-22nd July 2007 and involved approx 6000 people and 150 artists and musicians in a two week festival covering 37 events in 5 wards.

The Festival offers local people from West Leeds the opportunity to participate and perform in inspirational arts projects, and for all the people of West Leeds to experience high-quality arts on their doorstep. As a cross art form festival ILWL featured events such as drive-in movies, poetry, outdoor projections, community radio, a festival day in Pudsey Park and a knitted shed!

The festival is intergenerational in nature and the aims to break down barriers to participation by siting projects in unusual locations and making the majority of events free of charges to participants. Projects such as the community radio acts as a networking opportunity for groups and individuals and as a community information dissemination point. They also provide opportunity for discussion, airing local opinions and aspirations and to work with and debate with local councillors, MPs and other key decision-makers in the community.

The Festival is a high profile, high quality arts festival for the area that celebrates the vibrant community and encourages participation. The profile of the festival has risen consistently over the last 3 years. In addition to accessing new and repeat audiences for festival events, the marketing of the festival brand acts as a fantastic PR and Communication tool to the rest of the city about the vibrancy and development of West Leeds.

In 2007 45,000 brochures were printed and delivered door to door through direct mail drop covering LS12,13,28 postcodes. 20,000 Festival Day flyers were distributed through school registers and advertisements were taken out in Pudsey, Bramley and armley free papers. The billboard by Mikes Carpets offered a high profile space to advertise the festival and proved successful in advertising the festival to a wider audience. We gained extensive coverage of festival by YEP and Yorkshire Post (even the motoring section!) and had several live Radio interviews with Radio Leeds along with TV appearances on BBC North, Calendar and GMTV This Morning.

2007 project highlights

The projects all embodied the ethos of the festival in creating and bringing high quality arts events to West Leeds and making them accessible to all. The projects covered different artforms and scales, from small scale intense work creating new audio dramas to the Pudsey Park event involving 40 artists and

an audience of thousands. The quirky nature of the projects made the festival unique without being esoteric.

Participatory projects included a community radio station broadcasting on air and online. Guerrilla knits and the knitted shed involved 250 knitters from age 5 to 96 creating a craft masterpiece that captured the imagination of the city and indeed the press. Fire! – was a project working with 100 young people from 4 primary schools to create a series of 4 giant murals on the front of the old Bramley Fire Station. Picnic at Armley Mills was newly commissioned dance performance using dancers at different stages in their careers.

Experience focused projects included Drive-in movies involving a 3 story inflatable screen, Hop on the Bandwagon - a project taking musicians into unusual places on a council library bus and Casey Orr's - By Water. An exhibition that brought a stunning photographic journey to an unusual location, ensuring that hundreds of visitors got to experience a fantastic large scale outdoor photography exhibition.

Issues and concerns

Commissioning – equity of conditions and contracting standards. For example, alternative programme provision with colleges offered block bookings at start of year regardless of take up. Voluntary Sector offered hourly rate based on attendance. Clearly this inequity puts the sector at a disadvantage and makes the work unsustainable.

Genuine regard for added value and recognition that small sector organizations are often able to engage with groups marginalized by statutory sector and larger organizations. The need to ensure that local organizations continue to provide local services and that where provision has grown from grassroots, it needs to be supported and the value of what it brings outweighs cheapest bids put in by organizations who are able to benefit from economies of scale.

Rolling out of good practice must not overshadow the fact that the best and most effective local provision are those that respond to the specifics of a local need and often deliverable by local on the ground organisations.

Commissioning – timescales and contract lengths. Need at least 3 years and plenty of lead in time as end of contracts approach to either implement an exit strategy or maintain staff with skill and expertise to continue delivery if contract renewed. In the past, year on year renewing of contract has meant that redundancy notices have to be issued to work within Employment Law. Whilst these can be rescinded, it does not make for a good working relationship with employees or make the sector a good employer, leading to loss of personnel with skills and experience and detracts from people with relevant skills and experience entering the sector in the long term. We have just lost one member of staff after 4 years in post, because she was about to be issued with her 3rd redundancy notice in that time.

Full cost recovery. The full cost of running a building, line management needs to be recognized with the understanding that in small organizations this cannot be absorbed in to a big budget or cross subsidized.

Voluntary Sector representation

Where do we fit in to new structure of Local Area Management? Specifically within West we have a cultural sub group – how will this feed ideas into planning etc?

Finance

How will budgets be affected by WNW amalgamation?

Regeneration – it would be really good to understand how the sector can benefit from LEGI and be involved in west and to have our possible contribution recognized.

Partnership working

How do we ensure that the voluntary sector survives when they don't have the same level of resources to commit etc? And how do we ensure that all partners make an effective contribution and the sector are seen as an integral part rather than an add on or meeting targets?