



WVRF 2018 Evaluation and Reflection Report



"Landscapes are living realities in continuous transformation ... a source of creativity and change."

International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes ICOMOS-IFLA 2009

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on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership

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Festival Overview

The Wye Valley River Festival is a biennial festival inspired by the landscape and led by arts professionals collaborating with the people who live and work in the Wye Valley AONB. It is a festival with intentions to inspire and challenge, changing the way we look at ourselves and how we see things, how we relate to our environment, neighbourhoods and to each other. A stimulating and enthralling programme of shows, performances, spectacle installations and public debate that happen in exciting and unusual places - a combination of wonderful events, large and small interventions and sometimes international exchanges, with something new and exciting to move and stimulate us all. The Wye Valley River Festival brings local people, environmentalists and talented artists together in an internationally important landscape, in a creative exploration of what is possible.

"It is a very inspiring and imaginative combination that makes you see the world in a different way."
Sue Parkinson - education co-ordinator WVRF2016

The 2018 Wye Valley River Festival completed the 3 planned festivals set out in the original Business Plan of 2013-2018. The project has realised much of the ambition set out over five years ago.

The Wye Valley River Festival core team have, over those five years, demonstrated creativity and flexibility, applying their skills, knowledge, networks and experience effectively to put the Wye Valley River Festival firmly on the map. Over this period there has been much to celebrate, reflect upon and lessons learnt. Planning, funding and managing a Festival of this scale and ambition requires commitment and focus from all partners. The Festival of 2018 manifested to us that we have developed many important skills and relationships that build success. As we move forward with the Festival and review and embark on a new business plan there is much to learn and to reflect upon to refine and improve the Festival across the board.

The Vision

The Wye Valley River Festival (WVRF) aims to create an arts & environment festival with landscape at its heart. By staging magnificent outdoor arts events that captivate and engage, we will celebrate and interpret the river, the countryside and its communities, using the arts to develop thinking, imagination and understanding, building new audiences and strengthening the vital role that culture will play in the future development and 'place making' of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Our strategy was to create three biennial arts festivals in 2014, 2016 & 2018, and now beyond, that will challenge, inspire, amaze, and engage new audiences, whilst promoting positive change and environmental awareness. The work has not been curated in the traditional way - buying in existing shows - but through developing and devising bespoke work with artists well versed in creative community engagement, consolidating these relationships and energising the wider partnerships, networks and connections. This has been an ambitious and forward thinking approach, with quality, place and engagement as key foci. Together we have discovered that a quality arts and environment programme has brought communities together to be inspired and learn about themselves and the world around them.

"Art is a great and inclusive way to deliver environmental messages" Audience Member

"The festival helped deliver some of the Environment Agency's aims and objectives to promote the River Wye for recreation and raise environmental awareness. The River Wye was the heart and soul of the festival and this was very much reflected in the events that took part.

Lynn Bulbeck - Environment Agency

"What is outstanding about the Festival – the seriousness with which the integrity of the artistic quality is paralleled by the importance given to conveying environmental messages and engaging people with the environment"

Annie Grundy - Articulture WVRF2016

"I think definitely works well. It brings all the community alive as it comes down the River, everyone is so proud and excited to be able to be part of it!"

Rowena Barr – Lydbrook Tump Committee

Previous Wye Valley River Festivals – 2014 & 2016

The business plan developed in 2013 for the Wye Valley River Festival envisaged 3 biennial festivals with growing reach and impact. This has been achieved. Each Festival has focused on a different theme, based on some of the Special Qualities in the AONB Management Plan. In 2014 the theme was 'nature and culture'. 2016 was 'Water' and our relationship to it locally and globally. 'Woods & Trees' was the 2018 theme. Every Festival aims to engage new partners and inspire the community and artists in new ways. This commences with a facilitated & funded the Research and Development (R&D) process, creating a sense of shared ownership among the Festival team, local communities, countryside professionals & the broader arts partners. Below is a brief summary of the first two Festivals with further detail in the Appendices.

The inaugural Wye Valley River Festival was held in May 2014, launching in Hereford on May 3rd and finishing in Chepstow on May 18th. It attracted audiences of nearly 20,000 over 8 main sites with 7 new arts pieces, engaged over 1,500 artists and participants, plus over 150 people attended training or workshop sessions. The 'Overall quality of the event' was rated as Good or Excellent by 98% of respondents to feedback surveys. 65% learned something more about the area because of the event and 99% thought the River Festival was a good idea. The estimate of net contribution to the local/regional economy was £275,000.

The second Wye Valley River Festival journeyed through the AONB from Hereford to Chepstow between 29th April & 15th May 2016. It encompassed 30 events, at 28 venues with 11 new shows created. We exceeded all our targets. Audiences increased to 29,800+ with 2,837 young people involved in workshops, 1,500 artists and participants, 500+ adults actively engaged in creating programme content and 21,600 hours of workshops & training sessions delivered within communities. Independent evaluation confirmed that engagement with the arts when designed to foster public appreciation & understanding of the landscape, has real impact with the audience. Overall the feedback from audience and participants was generally very positive. Of those interviewed, the location, organisation and entertainment of the events was rated between 91% - 93% as 'Excellent or Good' with 100% of schools saying that they benefited greatly from involvement. The 2016 Festival was Highly Commended at the Visit Herefordshire Awards for Excellence in the Best Festivals & Events (Community) category, which was won by the Hereford River Carnival, part of the Wye Valley River Festival. The estimate of net contribution to the local/regional economy was about £500,000.

The first two Festivals proved the value of this innovative and inclusive co-creation model, boosting the enthusiasm to promote inclusion, participation and empowerment through the arts. The inspiration and influence of the Wye Valley River Festival has spread through ArWaith ArDaith 2015; Lakes Alive, Cumbria; Festival of Nature, Bristol; InsideOUT, Dorset and Wayfaring, including Oerol in Terschelling, Holland.

Films created about 2014 and 2016 Wye Valley River Festivals can be viewed through the links below

<https://vimeo.com/108516280>

<https://vimeo.com/170193570>

WVRF2018 Main Achievements

Wye Valley River Festival 2018 brings to a close a series of 3 festivals conceived in 2013. The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership together with our Artistic partners, Desperate Mean and Phillipa Haynes, realised the ambition set out in the original business plan of 2013. The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 attracted **32,500** visits to **30** events at **25** different venues, **2** world premieres were performed on the first day of the Festival: the 'Heart to Hart' Ensemble performance celebrated the unique woodlands of the Wye Valley exploring ash die back, forestry techniques and deer management while creating wonder and charming audiences. Jony Easterby's 'Tree & Wood' was an enthralling night time promenade installation creating a rhapsody of traditional woodland skills set to song, sound and light. Other events included a Woodland Conference; a night time procession and tree projections on Monmouth's Shire Hall facade; a Festival finale day of celebrating art and landscape, culminating in a phenomenal deer-head fire sculpture and pyrotechnic display. Over **150** singers, musicians and amateur actors came together from riverside communities to perform at the events alongside seasoned professionals. Audiences were entertained by local youth theatre and circus groups, choirs and bands and a range of professional and local artists. Over **500** torchbearers from the local communities joined together to celebrate their place, in Monmouth and Llandogo. A highlight was international artist Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon hosted by Cadw at Tintern Abbey during the second week of the Festival. The **Welsh Government Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas**, opened the Museum of the Moon, gaining coverage on **S4C** Welsh TV. The Museum of the Moon was 'picture of the day' in the **The Guardian**, **Daily Telegraph** and **The Times**. Tickets for evening viewings sold out, raising **£11,700**, while Cadw's daytime ticket & retail income also doubled that week. A short film of the installation of 'the Moon' was produced using drone footage which received over **50,000** views on Visit Wales website homepage during the Festival. A brand new Festival website was created and received over **11,000** unique views in the period mid-April to mid-June 2018.

"I would like to congratulate you all on the fantastic River Festival finale 2018; my family and I were genuinely blown away! I have young children and it was so family friendly. The theatre running throughout the day was magnificent and I felt totally immersed in creativity and talent. Whilst walking back to the car there was a joyous bustle of young and old all talking about how special the event had been. I personally feel an increased connection to the landscape and the area around there because of the event. Best wishes, Zoe Proctor "



Festival Structure and team

A great many people dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to making the Wye Valley River Festival such a broad, innovative and enjoyable series of events. For this Festival, as with the previous ones, the core Festival team comprised of the Wye Valley AONB Unit supported by artistic partners, **Desperate Men**, one of the UK's leading outdoor theatre companies, and Phillipa Haynes – Festival Director and Netty Miles – Production Manager. A full delivery team is built up for each event around the artistic, logistical and community requirements of the specific venues and activities. This may include artists and other practitioners; landowners and community participants; production crew including stewards, volunteers & site security; stall holders and food concessions; and of course the audience themselves.

The 2018 Festival had an 18 month lead in, including a Research & Development (R&D) phase where the environmental themes were explored with two gatherings of artists, conservationists & local communities, from which the artistic responses were initiated. These then fed into the main funding bids to Arts Council (England and Wales) and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). The bids were prepared by the core Festival team and submitted by the AONB Unit. Some smaller grants were applied for by individual partners or communities for specific or bespoke activities or 'fringe' events. A range of fundraising and sponsorship sources were also pursued by the Festival team and the overall Festival budget was built up over the development phase – and up to the last minute! Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, led on Festival co-ordination. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Phill maintained overall control of the budget, with regular meetings to refine the budgets as they evolved – for better or worse. Similarly the artistic programme was refined by Sarah, Phill and the Desperate Men, to match the available budget and take advantage of opportunities as they arose. Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer, and Netty led with much of the site planning, licencing and consents. The marketing, led by Ruth Waycott, AONB Information Officer, was much improved over previous Festivals with additional funding from Visit Wales, enabling the contracting of Lucy von Weber to assist with digital marketing. Sharon Seymour, AONB Finance & Admin Officer handled orders and invoices through the AONB Unit's treasurers, Herefordshire Council. The AONB payment systems need refining for the future.

A key attribute of the Festival team was the agility to work with what was often a constantly shifting situation. The core team had to work day and night at times to implement the Festival, which is only possible when everyone is committed. The evolving nature of the Festival programme, especially in the planning stages and run-up to the Festival fortnight, is sometimes difficult to relay to relevant partners who seek clarity and confirmation. Flexible planning and clear communications are critical. Every effort was made to keep local communities and other interested parties up to date, including the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee, as appropriate. Partnerships are key to the co-production and creative success of the Festival. These take time to establish and require compromise and empathy from each partner.

One of the aims of the Festival is to provide opportunities for skills development and certainly it has created great opportunities for learning. The AONB and Festival team, the wider partnership and various local communities have all improved aspects of festival and event management, community engagement and collaborative working at a variety of levels. Participants – and audience – have matured and grown wiser through the success of the 3 Festivals. The collaboration between artists,

environmentalists and local communities has been at times a steep learning curve from each perspective. But over the 3 Festivals support and respect has been built up through the demonstration of dedication, professionalism and delivery. However, there are still lessons to be learned in making sure the structure is robust for taking the Festival into the future.

‘On behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee, the Chair thanked the Wye Valley AONB Manager and his team for organising and facilitating this event and for the hard work that was required in order for the event to take place’. JAC Minutes 8th July 2018

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 is a Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership initiative with funding from the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government Initiative in the Wye Valley AONB, Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Visit Wales, Forestry Commission, Foresters’ Forest Landscape Partnership with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency, Cadw, Ross Town Council and Monmouth Town Council. In-kind support from Cadw, Hereford River Carnival, The Shire Hall, Monmouth, Natural Resources Wales and numerous volunteers & local communities. Sponsorship from County Marquees, Severn Area Rescue Service (SARA), Griffiths Engineering, Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire, Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Hillside Brewery, Green Man at Abbey Mill, the aMazing Hedge Puzzle & Wye Valley Butterfly Zoo, Wild Trail bars. Special thanks to land owners at Symonds Yat Rock, Lydbrook Tump, Shire Hall, Monmouth, Tintern Abbey and Llandogo Riverside who granted access to make these events possible.

Programme and core artistic content



Wye Valley River Festival 2018 took place from the 5th – 20th May 2018. Following a format established and refined since 2014, the Festival spanned two weeks three weekends and flowed from Hereford down river finishing at Tintern Abbey on the 20th May. The ambition of the Festival, as devised in the research and development period and described in the 2018 funding bids, was largely realised in the form of high quality work produced at the Festival and reflected in the feedback received from audiences and participants alike.

★ **Giant Puppets at Hereford River Carnival 5th May 11:00am – 2:00pm**

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 commenced in Hereford with the Festival Trio, led by Tim Hill, accompanying volunteers & AONB team members who took part in the Carnival Parade. The giant woodland beast-head puppets made by **101 Outdoor Art Creation Space** generated lots of interest as they paraded through the town centre and along the river. The Festival volunteers accompanying the puppets meanwhile did a great job distributing the programme brochure amongst the crowds, of approximately 8,000 people, capitalising on a great marketing opportunity for the Festival. The parade took about an hour to complete and some of the route was difficult for the giant puppets to navigate, and in hindsight better reconnaissance or a dry run would have assisted. Overall the team was pleased with the reception in Hereford and the engagement with the audience. The puppets were a draw and created a ripple of excitement with the crowd eager to capture images on mobile phones.

★ **Streets of Monmouth and Chepstow 5th May 11:00am – 2:00pm**

The remaining AONB unit staff accompanied 'Treemendous' walk-about street theatre, informing about 500 people in each town about the main Festival activities happening later that day at Symonds Yat Rock. 'Treemendous' attracted plenty of attention as they strode through town, reinforcing the 'Woods & Trees' theme of the Festival. People lent out of windows and popped out of shops to see what was going on and the consensus of opinion was that this worked well, building excitement and interest in the Festival to come.

★ Symonds Yat Rock – The Magical Woodland and Jony Easterby 5th & 6th May 5-9:30pm

By Kind Permission of the Forestry Commission

The Festival team, Desperate Men, Phillipa Haynes and the ensemble of performers were based at Symonds Yat Rock and delivered the original concept of 'The Town coming to the Woods'. A festival site was created in the woodland with 2 distinct theatrical show areas and further spaces for relaxing in hammocks, picnicking, listening to musicians, forest bathing, poetry and craft workshops and learning about the Wye Valley woodlands from a variety of conservation organisations. The woods came alive with music, words, movement, merriment and creative woodland focused activities, in the dappled summer evening light. The **George Choir** sang on the Saturday and **Berry Hill Brass Band** played on the Sunday. The Woodland Automaton was revealed in its Yurt and two world premieres were performed on the first day of the Festival at Symonds Yat Rock, and repeated on the Sunday:

The '**Heart to Hart**' Ensemble performance celebrated the unique woodlands of the Wye Valley both exploring ash die back, forestry techniques and deer management while creating wonder and charming audiences. The travelling theatrical narrative is now an established concept of the Festival which both reveals and entwines many different strands and elements of the theme together. It has proved to be a hugely popular and effective engagement mechanism, allowing the exploration of complex environment issues within a family-friendly construct. WVRF2018's central show was scripted - after extensive research - in advance of rehearsals, as opposed to being devised with the ensemble which it had been in previous Festivals. The show took two different forms, one for the weekend main events which included more musicians and rehearsed community involvement and one which was adapted and suitable to be done purely by the ensemble as a mummer's play type 'pub show' touring to both small community venues and schools. The show's narrative only changed during the finale. This enabled maximum engagement and performance opportunities within a small budget and short rehearsal period without compromising on the content, production values or narrative.

Jony Easterby's 'Tree & Wood' was an enthralling night time promenade installation creating a rhapsody of traditional woodland skills set to song, sound and light. The show was beautifully conceived and staged for an audience of around 250. It wonderfully sat alongside the themes explored within the Heart to Hart show bringing the evening to an end in a magical reflective glow.

The two days embraced musicians, workshops, fire, creativity and exploration of these magnificent woods for audiences of about 800 on each day.

"The realisation of this year's theme, running through all events, performances and activities has been inspiring and brought the beauty and importance of the Wye Valley's precious natural landscape to the heart of visitors. It has been a pleasure translating such beautiful, lively and heartfelt texts into the Welsh language to welcome Welsh speaking visitors to the Festival. "

Festival translator

"I felt totally immersed in creativity and talent and my children were captivated throughout."

audience member

★ **Marchant Baron poems: The Kymin, Monmouth 5th May – 30th July**

'Trees are my solace. Trees speak to me, they speak to us.' Two of Marchant Baron's Poems were installed at The Kymin, Monmouth. These elegant poetic tributes to trees were appreciated by 6,000 people at the popular National Trust site overlooking Monmouth. An extract from another poem was displayed in the grounds of Tintern Abbey which created a beautiful contemplation that complemented Juke Jerrams' Museum of the Moon.

★ **Arborealists Exhibition: Monmouth Museum 5th May - 30th September**

The Arborealists' are a group of contemporary visual artists from across the United Kingdom who create art inspired by trees. A group of 20 artists visited Lady Park Wood National Nature Reserve on two occasions in April 2016. They met with **Dr George Peterken OBE**, nationally renowned woodland ecologist, and toured the woodland in his company, learning about the significance of this nationally important Woodland Research site. Inspired by this and a further residency the artists created an exhibition and film that displayed in Monmouth Museum, with an exhibition attendance of about 1,050 during the Festival, which carried on throughout the summer after the Festival period.

Outcomes and learning points 5th and 6th of May all locations

- The team was deployed over 5 sites on the 5th May which stretched capacity and energy. For example some ensemble performers and key Festival team members were occupied with logistical challenges that would have been eased with extra drivers and vehicles.
- Our partners Foresters' Forest, Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission devised a range of engaging activities to occupy audiences in between the theatrical shows.
- Engage Youth Circus and the musical entertainment from the George Choir and Berry Hill Band was well received and created local participation in the Festival.
- The location in the woods at Symonds Yat Rock posed issues in terms of access for those with limited mobility. Going forward we need to improve our disability access. We provided a mobility vehicle yet the location and siting of the some of the Festival remained difficult to access.
- The site worked well in the dry, but had it been wetter and the ground conditions worse there would have been problems for everyone.
- Jony Easterby show site was hosted in a restrictive space creating difficulties for the audience to circulate around the stages and get a good view of the work. In future there needs to be more discussion on site before layouts are established.
- The Festival band led by Tim Hill excelled at both Hereford and Symonds Yat creating a unique celebratory sound track to the Festival.
- Heart to Hart was well received by all ages, sharing woodland stories and knowledge in an engaging style.

★ **Lydbrook Tump Fete 7th May**

The Wye Valley River Festival has partnered with the Lydbrook Tump Committee since 2014 and has brought a range of elements of the Festival to complement activities at this village fete. In 2018 the

Heart to Hart show became the centre piece of this engagement, delighting the mainly local audience of about 1,500 at this event. In addition the Festival site at the show was joined by the Re-wild team part of the Foresters' Forest project who brought a range of local rural craft skills to exhibit and run workshops for the audience to take part in. Tump Committee members baked a giant Wye Valley River Festival themed cake to celebrate the day (and for a 'guess the weight' competition).

Outcomes and learning points

- Wye Valley River Festival is embraced by the community of Lydbrook and the Festival elements complement and enhance the Fete activities.
- The local organising committee arrange all of the other elements of logistics, stewarding, site layout, promotion and entertainment.
- We may need to use an amplification system at future events when a site is acoustically challenging.

★ Heart to Hart shows at Fownhope 9th May, Ross-on-Wye 10th May, Chepstow 11th May, Redbrook 15th May

During the first and second week of the Festival the Heart to Hart show toured some of the local pubs and settlements not associated with the main Festival sites. We devised the tour to reach an audience who did not normally engage with the arts and to encourage them to visit the other events that were part of the Festival. We believe we achieved this.

It was a great opportunity for the actors to present to a more intimate audience and tighten the show ready for the next two busy weekends to follow. The actors delivered the show without the Festival band on these occasions, providing their own musical accompaniment, and were able to adapt the show to a more adult audience.

Outcomes and learning points

- The Festival ensemble refined and embellished the show during this tour.
- The word was spread further into more remote locations that the Wye Valley River Festival was taking place.
- We engaged a hard to reach group and engaged them with the arts and environment in Chepstow.
- The promotion of these smaller events could be improved.

★ Woodland Assembly and the Shadow Forest 12th & 13th May, Shire Hall Monmouth 11:00am – 7:00pm

By kind Permission of Shire Hall - Monmouthshire County Council

The 'Trees came to Town' taking over the Shire Hall in Monmouth the Agincourt Square, the Nelson Garden, Monmouth Museum and by the evening the main high street with a Fire & Forest Parade. The day was action packed and included music and performances, exhibitions, talks and workshops, poetry and the evening parade and projections. In the centre of town, in front of the Shire Hall in Agincourt Square, Heart to Heart was performed twice and Festival Trio, there was a tree stump 'soap box' with speakers addressing the crowd on environmental issues. **Dave Young's spectacular Umbrella Tree** enthralled young and old alike and the Woodland Automaton, housed in its Yurt, drew the inquisitive in. The **Monmouth Town Band** played under the Shire Hall arches alongside stalls of woodland conservation organisations.

Inside the Shire Hall the entire space was curated with films, a rolling programme of speakers, woodland décor, workshops to make miniature shadow forests and a full scale Shadow Forest created by **Anita Westmorland** (please see full programme). All the school Automata were also on display. Talks from the expert speakers ranged from tree communication through the mycelium network, to Ash die back and the health benefits of immersion in wood-scapes. Overall about 2,500 people were engaged on Saturday and further 255 viewed the Shadow Forest on Sunday.

The Arborealists premiered their film produced to celebrate the residency and the exhibition at Monmouth Museum was official launched with a talk by Dr George Peterken.

★ **Fire Forest Parade and Nelson Garden Poems 12th May 8:00pm – 10:00pm**

By kind Permission of the Nelson Garden, Monmouth

To build excitement for the Fire Festival Parade people were encouraged to gather in the Nelson Garden towards the bottom of the town where the parade was due to commence. **Roger Drury** a local performed read poems to a crowd that swelled to around 150 and was later joined by the Heart to Hart ensemble who improvised an official opening of the garden by King Sessile, to the delight of the crowd. This was followed by a procession to the Monnow Bridge where a larger crowd assembled for the main fire torch parade with an engagement of about 700 people. The **Articulture** commissioned **Boudicca** chariot led the parade, followed by the giant puppets, the Festival band and ensemble and over 100 fire torch bearers up to the Shire Hall. As darkness fell Agincourt Square was illuminated with woodland scenes and animations projected onto the façade of the Shire Hall. One of the 5 Festival films captures the action of this day and can be viewed on the Festival website.

Outcomes and learning points

- The speakers programme during the day could have been better facilitated and timed.
- Two speakers pulled out last minute.
- The sessions with the speakers in the courtroom were not focused and the speakers were not briefed as well as they could have been.
- Articulture's Boudicca created a great interest and gave a platform for an artist with disability to be seen, particularly at the fore front of evening festivities.
- The evening was difficult to time as it was a bright evening and the projections needed darkness but the road closure had not been arranged to give optimum darkness. Never the less the projections were very effective, beautiful, and well received by the audience.
- Overall the whole day was a great success.

★ **Wye Wild Swim & Walk the Wye, Monmouth 13th May**

The Wild Swim in the River Wye, run by Monmouth School Sports Cub, was initiated as part of the 2014 Festival and has become an annual fixture. In 2018 it was included again in the Festival programme. The social media marketing undertaken by the Festival team was key to securing sufficient entrants for the 2018 event. A film of the event has been produced and is available on the Wye Valley River Festival web site.

The 'Walk the Wye' Pink Walk for cancer, run by Monmouth Rotary Club, fell within the timeframe of the Festival. The event was promoted through AONB listings and social media and we took the opportunity to distribute the Festival programme to all of the 300 entrants in the Walk the Wye challenge.

Outcomes and learning points

- Good to help Wye Swim event and continue the relationship with the Sports Club within the wider Festival programme.
- The marketing as part of the Festival raised the profile of the event and ensured enough entrants for the swim to take place.
- An engaging film that showcases the landscape and swim was produced.

★ **Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon at Tintern Abbey 14th - 20th May 7pm – 10:00pm**

By kind Permission of Cadw

This special collaboration between Cadw and the Wye Valley River Festival brought Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon to Wales for the first time. During the late 1800's pilgrims and tourists travelled by train to see the harvest moon framed in the rose window of Tintern Abbey. The Festival team wanted to re-create the feel of those early journeys to this inspiring location and scheduled monument, and celebrate the natural and built heritage through this mesmerising installation.

The opportunity to host the Museum of the Moon came later in the evolution of the 2018 Festival. We had a funding shortfall and the team decided to use the installation to pilot an ticketed element of the Festival, with the intention of covering costs as much as possible. With Cadw & Luke on board, evening tickets were priced at £3.80 (with concessions available for family groups) and below Cadw's normal day-time entry to the Abbey of £6.80.

The ticket sales were set up with online service Ticket Source and managed by the AONB team. When the Moon was installed, Cadw opened the Abbey as normal during the day-time. In the evening the AONB team ran the site, supported by the Production Manager and a team of Festival stewards and volunteers, alongside a skeleton crew of Cadw staff. Nearly 4,000 people came to see the Museum of the Moon in the evenings. Cadw were very pleased with the event and doubled day-time gate and retail income from the events. Cadw are interested in co-creating more artistic events in the Abbey.

A programme of supporting activity was arranged around the week long residency of the Museum of the Moon which included:

14th May: Festival Press launch and event attended by Lord Daffyd Elis-Thomas AM (Welsh Government Minister for Culture and Tourism), and 100 VIP guests including local resident Kate Humble and Nick Ramsey AM.

15th May: A talk by Tintern Philosophical Circle - 'The Moon what does it Mean?'

16th May: Pilgrimage Walks to the Moon - Four guided walks from 4 separate start points converged on the Museum of the Moon, via a simple 'pilgrims' meal prepared and hosted by the Tintern Village Hall committee, with greetings and symbolic feet washing by the Festival ensemble. Each walker/pilgrim was presented with a carved wooden 'stave' – earlier in the year made by AONB volunteers – a muesli bars donated by a sponsor.

17th May: **Passing the Baton** - a theatrical production about the history of **Lydbrook Band** performed in the grounds of the Abbey

18th May: The Festival Picnic - with choirs, music and the Festival Heart to Hart show

20th May: Moon bathing - meditation and poetry.

Outcomes and learning points

- The Moon VIP Launch was hugely successful but could have been better with clearer arrangements for the format of the evening, roles, responsibilities and volunteer management.
- We should have hired scanners for the ticketing from the beginning.
- Practicing the ticket scanning procedure would have been beneficial i.e. a dry run for front of house and training for steward to run this from the start.
- Volunteer management needs improvement
- The marketing of this installation took off with a momentum of its own and we sold all of the tickets.
- A clear steer on the capacity of the venue should have been sought earlier.
- The community of Tintern were positively engaged with the whole Moon programme of events in either facilitating the events or participating.
- Though there were shortcomings and improvements to be made in logistics these issues did not filter down to the audience who praised the creativity and experience of the events.
- The contracted stewarding team worked well to resolve all issues.
- Walkers are Welcome Groups led the Pilgrimage walks and these events were well received by the participants.
- Cadw compared visitor numbers and income, both ticketed and retail for the same period during the previous 5 years. It was evidenced that the WVRF2018 has increased visitor numbers by 104% and retail income had also increased by 60% producing in effect an increase in total income to the Abbey of 97%. This coupled with the effective way we worked together, has resulted in an agreement to develop this creative partnership in future.

'The Festival gave us the opportunity to present the Moon in a new environment. It was great to be involved in such an inspiring event in such a beautiful location right on our doorstep.' Luke Jerram

★ Llandogo Festival Finale 19th May 1:00- 10:00pm

By Kind Permission of Mr. & Mrs. Barnwell

The Finale of the Festival took place in Llandogo and was an extraordinary afternoon and evening of entertainment, theatre, workshops, walks, spectacle, food, drink, play, creating, dancing, canoe ballet, trapeze swinging, running into a night time lantern parade and fire sculpture, with an overall attendance of 3,000 people. Over 20 different organisations and stalls helped the crowds enjoy the afternoon sunshine (after the Royal Wedding). So many artistic elements worked together to make this part of the Festival a great success. **Folk Dance Remixed** energised the crowds in this perfect rural setting. Local bands and choir performed. Twenty **University of South Wales** drama students created walkabout performance on the 'woods & trees' theme. Articulture brought **Kapow** another interesting new work to the Festival. Martin West from **101** installed 20 fire braziers on the river with the assistance of Volunteers from Severn Area Rescue (SARA). Performances artists the **Water Girls** floated down river on canoes in a musical choreographed dance. A woodland encampment of rural skills workshops was run by the **Re-Wild Project**, lanterns workshops were created by **Art Blast**, **Dash Panache** brought a trapeze rig and ran workshops for the public.

The torch procession started with an exchange of flares from top and bottom of the valley before 500 torch bearers snaked their way through the village back to the riverside site. The ending of the Heart to Hart show was beautifully realised as darkness fell and the King swam across the river illuminated by floating fire braziers, to be re-united with his love as the fire sculpture of the deer shone across the river from the opposite river bank. **Pa-Boom** led by Dave Chadwick created the evening night time fire sculpture and pyrotechnics which wowed audiences.

"I congratulate you all on the fantastic River Festival finale 2018; my family and I were genuinely blown away! I have young children and it was so family friendly, the size was ideal. The theatre running throughout the day was magnificent and was so much more special having it done in staggered chapters. I felt totally immersed in creativity and talent and my children were captivated throughout. The torchlight procession was magical, whether parading or watching it from the site. It was very emotive and it felt like being part of an historical ritual. And finally the theatrical finish of the play followed by the pyrotechnics finale was the most impressive display we have ever seen. Whilst walking back to the car there was a joyous bustle of young and old all talking about how special the event had been. I personally feel an increased connection to the landscape and the area around there because of the event. A huge well done! I can only begin to imagine how much work went into organising it." Audience member

Outcomes and learning points

- The location and community of Llandogo once again embraced the Festival and made it their own

- A popular event creates greater demands on logistics, from parking to signage. We have reflected upon the need to tighten up these elements of the Festival going forward
- Recycling and waste handling needs to be improved in future.
- The stewarding of the torch procession needs to be more robust with such large numbers.
- There are aspects of the Festival that are better served by paid or contracted crew and stewards, rather than relying more on volunteers. This is the case for sites such as Symonds Yat, Tintern Abbey and Llandogo, where key roles include medium to high risks, unsociable hours, independent decision making and authoritative handling of the members of the public. As the Festival grows we need to build a supporting crew to facilitate it and this will need addressing in future plans and budgets.



Outreach & Community Project

The Schools Project April 2018

The education elements are integral to the ethos of the whole Festival. To enable young people to work with high quality art professionals in a class room setting, giving teachers the opportunity to develop new skills or strengthen existing ones is as important as working with young people in other ways. The artists **Rebecca Prior and Faye Jones** have been a part of the core outreach team since 2014. The integrity of the work, its process and outcomes have always been extraordinary. WVRF2016 Flags and Banners adorned all sites again during WVRF2018 and the major project for WVRF2018 was the extraordinary Automaton, which played a central role throughout the Festival.

Every young person who took part in the workshops contributed to the finished piece and all made their own individual automata exhibited during the Monmouth weekend which they then got to take home.

Evaluation was undertaken after each Primary School session:

100% of teachers circled very good and excellent for the following:

- Rating the workshop
- Workshop suitable for the ages
- Creating a positive learning environment
- Clear instructions from the artists
- Engaging, educational and fun

The task was organised with success for all in mind and a genuine sense of creative freedom for all the children. Thank you for a relaxed and wonderful afternoon

The language activities at the beginning were interesting and you had all children engaged throughout the session. Lots of materials for the task.

100% of teachers circled likely and very likely for the following:

- Young people have gained more knowledge about the Wye Valley River Festival and have been encouraged to visit.
- Young people have gained more knowledge about the woodland in the Wye Valley.
- Teachers more likely to visit the Festival as a result of the workshop
- Teachers inspired to run a workshop using similar materials and knowledge without the artists



“My class had a lovely afternoon and really enjoyed the activities you planned. I really liked the clever combination of design, technology and creativity.”

Wyldwood facilitated workshops with 2 additional Primary Schools and 1 care homes on an inter-generational project with the school groups taking part in 12 sessions to produce puppets and artwork exploring the woods & trees of the Wye Valley. During the Festival the ensemble of actors visited the school in Fownhope with Wyldwood to see the work that the children had produces which was exhibited in the school grounds. The Heart to Heart show was then performed to the pupils and parents at a special after-school production to celebrate the success of the project.

Community workshops

These took place on April 4th, 9th & 10th and were jointly facilitated by Dave Young from **Creation 101** and Hereford River Carnival / **Carnival Arts**. These quickly developed a loyal following, attended by families and a number of community leaders and councillors who wanted to engage with the Festival. Attendees were from Hereford, Coleford, Forest of Dean and Monmouth, plus some visitors to the area, as it was held during the Easter holidays. The workshops developed active Festival enthusiasts from across the Wye Valley, networking and creating together. A Facebook group was created to hold the relationships together and channel the energy towards the events of the Festival. This helped in communicating the key facts and timings to the local animators who then shared with their contacts creating a participant base for the Fire torch and lantern parades across the Festival venues. 150 participants took part in these workshops.

Pilgrimage Walks

This concept caught the imagination and channelled the passions of local walking groups who wanted to take part in the activity and facilitate it. Together with the Festival they developed three separate walks of varying lengths, with staggered start times, all converging on the Museum of the Moon on mass. It created a buzz of excitement when the walkers returned and a sense of purpose to their shared journey and experience of enjoying the landscape together. This element provided opportunity for healthy activity and quiet enjoyment of the landscape. The walkers also enjoyed extract from the Heart to Hart show while they ate their supper made by the local community. We felt this was a new addition to the programme and one we would like to build on. Total attendance was 40 walkers, 5 local community organisers and an additional 15 Youth Club walkers making a total of 60.

Hoarwithy Walk

To extend the reach of the Festival in the Wye Valley we created a walk in and around the village of Hoarwithy on theme of ‘woods and trees and river trade’. This proved to be slow to sell. On the day 12 people took part and 4 people made tea making a total of 16 participants in an afternoon walk along the Wye.

Volunteers

A large number of individuals volunteered their time to help make the Festival happen again and many of those are happy to do so again. There are a growing number who would like to volunteer in

a range of capacities for the Festival. However, we need to improve our facilitation of volunteers with a robust volunteer policy and better co-ordination, training and briefing. We will investigate the potential of a 'Friends Group' to support making the Festival happen in the future.

Welsh Language

In 2018 we communicated in Welsh and English as much as possible, and where relevant to funding from Wales rather than England. Please see the marketing section for examples of bilingual promotional material. We asked our translator for his feedback on the Festival:

"The Festival has raised our awareness of the Wye Valley's natural beauty even further and inspired all the team to venture out and explore the area as often as possible. On a professional level, our terminology work has improved our knowledge of the natural world and the species in the Welsh language."

Outcomes and learning points

- The outreach elements remain a fundamental part of the Festival, producing additional artwork & props, building opportunities for engagement and pre-publicity.
- Carefully planned, programmed and promoted activity delivers better engagement and satisfaction levels.
- Working with new groups/communities and networks broadens opportunities and deepens engagement.



WRVF 2018 Marketing

Overview

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 marked a major step up in terms of scale, breadth and quality. Programming included the 'Museum of the Moon' by international artist Luke Jerram, at the iconic Tintern Abbey an all-ticketed event which was a first for the Festival. As a result, marketing activities had to step up too, ensuring that the maximum tickets were sold for this iconic installation at Tintern Abbey, one of Cadw's most famous attractions.

In a world dominated by digital marketing, this year's marketing plan put the emphasis on establishing a new stand-alone website for the River Festival (www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk) and focusing on social media, moving away from previous Festivals' emphasis on traditional press advertising and PR. Overall 62% of respondents to the Festival Evaluation rated the marketing as 'good' or 'excellent'. Personal recommendation or word-of-mouth was the main way people first found out about the Festival and subsequent information sources were flyers/leaflets (33%), Facebook (20%) followed by magazines/newspaper articles (9%).

Establishing a brand



2018 saw the establishment of a strong, visually appealing brand for the Wye Valley River Festival, which was rolled out across all media and activities. We wanted our marketing activity to be part of the creative artistic experience visitors have. We commissioned Wye Valley artist, photographer and sculptor **Gemma Wood** to create a piece of artwork to celebrate the Wye Valley River Festival. We wanted something that reflected the theme for this year's festival – woods & trees – and the idea of a woodcut seemed to fit perfectly. It needed to capture the beauty of the Wye Valley, with its ancient woodlands and fabulous springtime bluebells, and that lime-green, new leaf colour that lasts for just a week or so in early May. Gemma understood exactly what we were looking for and came up with a beautiful design, full of lime-green leaves, glorious garlic and bountiful bluebells. We used Gemma's work in our social media posts, helping to engage audiences with the Festival earlier and in a more meaningful way. We then used the design across all media to ensure brand consistency. This did much to raise awareness of the River Festival and improve its profile.

Festival Brochure

We printed 20,000 copies of an advance brochure / bi-fold A5 flyer, in English and Welsh, which was distributed in early Spring 2018. It promoted the headline attractions of the Museum of the Moon, the Symonds Yat Woodland Gathering, the Monmouth Woodland Assembly and the Festival Finale in Llandogo. Glide Media distributed copies targeting off-territory locations in the BR, GL and HR postcodes in England and the NP and CF postcodes in Wales.



Festival Programme

We produced 10,000 copies of a 34 page A5 Programme in English and Welsh, detailing all the events and artists at the River Festival and targeting distribution primarily within the AONB. Post Festival research found that 38% of visitors heard about the Festival through the Programme.

<https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Programme.pdf>



<https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/4869-River-Festival-Programme-WELSH-WEB-I-res.pdf>

Banners, roadside signs, posters and vehicle decals

We carried the branding across all our activity, including decals for our AONB van. Anyone driving from Chepstow to Hereford would have seen up to 60 branded roadside banners and signs. 14% of respondents to our post Festival survey stated that they heard about the Festival through these signs.



Festival Passport

We produced 500 copies of the Wye Valley River Festival Passport specifically to engage with a family audience and to try and encourage visits to more than one Festival location. We wanted to play with the idea of crossing borders in and out of England and Wales to make the River Festival a more intriguing proposition for visitors from outside the local area. The 'official stamper of River Festival Passports' was **Mr Cherry**, the River Festival Documenter, who appeared and disappeared at locations unexpectedly, stamping passports to put their owners in the running for some splendid prizes, creating much excitement with young family groups. The AONB staff also had a different coloured stamp for when Mr Cherry was not available. The Passport was a helpful tool in tracking how people moved between the Festival locations.



Traditional Advertising

We spent around 10% of the marketing budget on traditional press advertising, targeted at local newspapers within the AONB and catchment (Monnow Voice, Border Life, What's on, Beacon, Voice, Review, Ross Gazette etc). This was to ensure coverage of our local population, particularly those not using social media. Our research found that just over 4% of Festival goers heard about it through press advertising (so self-selecting as our survey was undertaken on-line).

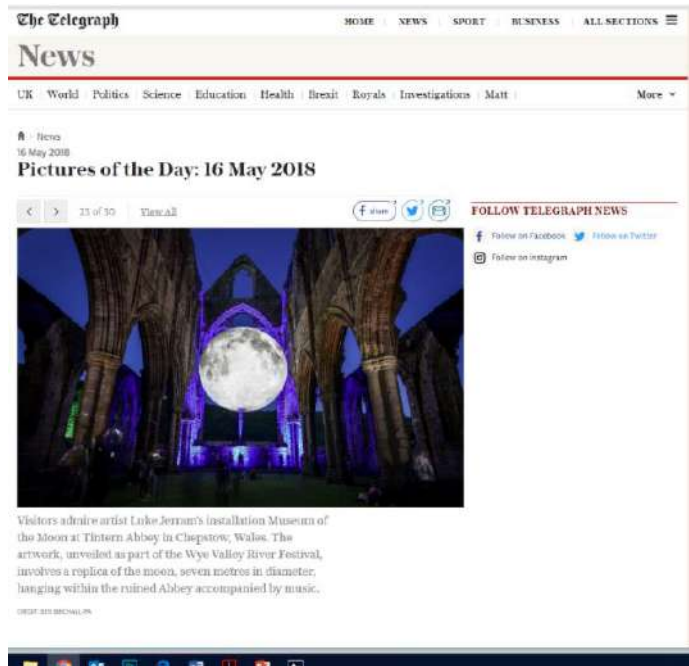


Press Activity

Over 30 press releases were issued. Most pleasing was that Museum of the Moon photographs appeared in The Guardian, the Telegraph and The Times on consecutive days whilst the Moon was at Tintern Abbey.

The Welsh language early evening Programme Heno, on S4C, filmed at the Press Launch, including an interview with the Minister, Dafydd Ellis Thomas and then broadcast live from the Museum of the Moon two days later in a fabulous piece which lasted 6 minutes. This brought in a Welsh speaking audience from much further into West Wales than we anticipated, with visitors coming from as far as Llanelli to see the Moon.

We had widespread coverage of the Festival by press on both sides of the river:



Filming and Photography

We wanted to create a visual legacy which will be of real value long after the Festival has finished. Additional funding from Visit Wales allowed us to commission photography of the Festival to providing quality images for our own use and for partners. It also allowed us to commission drone and video filming. Five films have been produced covering the Museum of the Moon, the Wild Swim in Monmouth, the Monmouth Woodland Assembly, the Festival Finale in Llandogo and a more general film showing the River Wye as a place to explore on foot and on the water in the River Festival area. The first film, showing how the Museum of the Moon was installed at Tintern Abbey film was released to Visit Wales who shared it on their social media channels, helping it to receive over 51,000 views. This helped to increase ticket sales for the Moon and to raise awareness across a much wider audience that the River Festival was happening. View it at:

<https://www.facebook.com/visitwales/videos/10155802314636785/>

Photography can be viewed at: <https://drabbleandco.com/>

Select Client Area & Click on Wye Valley River Festival & Open Gallery

User Name is information@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

Password is RIVERFESTIVAL123 Pin is 2210

Both photography and video content has proved invaluable for our social media activities, especially establishing our new Instagram account. The Museum of the Moon itself attracted national photographers whose work was published in the national press during the Festival period. Here is Ben Birchall's photo which appeared in 'Tuesday's best photos: Guardian, May 15th'.



<https://www.theguardian.com/news/gallery/2018/may/15/gaza-mourners-and-a-nearby-moon-tuesdays-best-photos#img-6>

Guerilla Marketing

Using the additional funding we secured from Visit Wales for marketing we undertook a couple of guerilla marketing activities in the days before the Festival to surprise and attract attention. The first was a sound installation placed inside the historic Monnow Bridge gatehouse to intrigue people as they walked across the bridge and get them asking 'What is this Festival thing all about?' The second was an imaginative duo called 'Tree-mendous' who made appearances along the Wye Valley from Chepstow to Monmouth on the first day of the Festival, generating a huge amount of interest and literally stopping people in their tracks. Tree-mendous worked very effectively for us as they matched our Festival theme brilliantly, attracting attention and allowing us to engage with people and distribute Festival Programmes. Direct feedback from our visitor survey shows 24% of respondents (people who attended events/ bought tickets and replied to our survey request) remember seeing Treemendous. Anecdotal evidence from later events shows people were prompted to attend an event because they saw Treemendous and picked up a Festival Programme. Highly visual and mirroring our theme Tree-mendous were more effective than the static soundscape at Monnow Bridge. They helped our social media activity get off to a flying start, as we began conversations with our on-line audience.

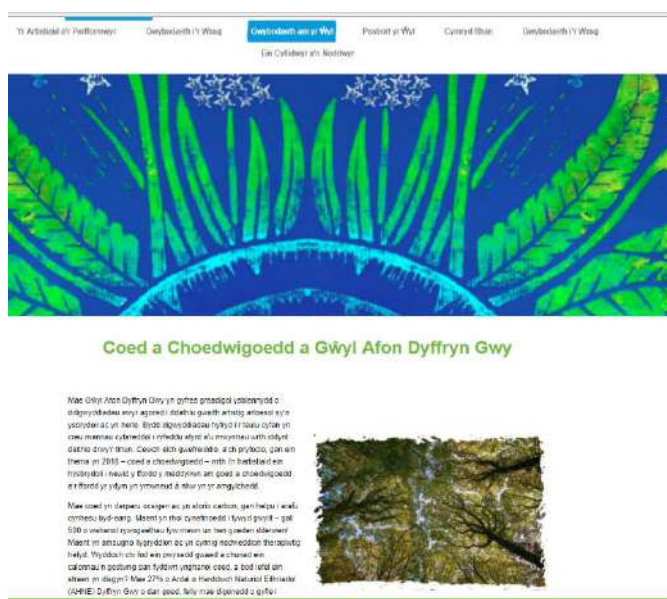
The collage consists of three images. The top image is a screenshot of a Facebook post from the 'Wye Valley River Festival 5 May - 20 May 2018' page. The post, published by 'wyevalleyriverfestival' on May 5, features a colorful abstract graphic and text in Welsh and English: 'Great day! See you tomorrow? Dimnod arbennig! Welwch ni chi fory? Wales Visit Monmouthshire Visit Herefordshire Forestry Commission Dean Forest Wye Valley (Pictures by/Lluniau gan - Emma Drabble, Drabble & Co & Giant puppets: Sarah Sawyer)'. It shows engagement with likes and comments. The middle image is a screenshot of a news article from the 'Monmouthshire Beacon' dated Thursday, 10 May 2018. The headline is ''Tree'mendous launch for Wye Valley River Festival'. The article, by a reporter from Monmouthshire Beacon/Chepstow Beacon, describes the 'in-tree-gue' performance by two young performers from Bristol. The bottom image is a photograph of the 'Tree-mendous' performance, showing two large, stylized tree puppets on a street with people watching.

Website

Top priority for this year's marketing plan was to establish a new bilingual standalone website for the River Festival. This was crucial to engage with a much wider audience than in previous years and to provide a professional platform for ticket sales for the Museum of the Moon.



Our new standalone site www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk went live 6 weeks before the Festival and had 11,000+ visits in the period up to June 2018. Research shows that just under 20% of people heard about the Festival from our website.



Significantly 27% of all web traffic was driven by social media over the Festival period. This figure could be at least twice as high for future events now that the Festival platforms are established as an additional communications medium.

Social Media - Digital Community Engagement

Recognising the rapid changes since the 2014 River Festival, our 2018 marketing activity focused on digital and social media, moving away from previous emphasis on traditional PR and print advertising. Securing marketing funding from Visit Wales enabled us to concentrate on a targeted social media campaign on Facebook, to establish an Instagram account for the River Festival and to consolidate our Twitter platform. We worked to develop a specific social media presence to encourage attendance and ticket sales and to form a digital community within which attendees could interact with organisers and performers. We feel this worked especially well. Our online survey, carried out after the Festival, found that 47% stated that social media was how they heard about this year's Festival and 48% stated that they used the Festival's social media throughout its duration, making this platform the most effective and efficient way to engage with audiences.

Social Network	Acquisition		
	Users	New Users	Sessions
	2,951 % of Total: 26.73% (11,038)	2,802 % of Total: 25.77% (10,875)	3,646 % of Total: 22.38% (16,292)
1. Facebook	2,626 (88.87%)	2,497 (89.11%)	3,211 (88.07%)
2. Twitter	279 (9.44%)	259 (9.24%)	373 (10.23%)
3. Instagram	35 (1.18%)	31 (1.11%)	46 (1.26%)

Facebook



With an existing River Festival Facebook page we extended our audience from 800 to 2,600 during the Festival period. Initial activity prior to the Festival saw the bilingual page used for targeted advertising for individual events as well as the overall Festival programme. We used it to drive awareness and build quality, relevant, interest-based followers to boost the fan base.

Judicious, targeted advertising on Facebook stimulated interest in key target markets, queries and enquiries were fielded from prospective visitors and conversations and feedback took place online each day.

We chose to give Visit Wales our Museum of the Moon installation video to publish first and this proved to be an excellent strategy as it has had over 51,000 views, reaching more than 143,000 people and generating 3000 interactions (comments and shares etc). This shows the value of giving the video first to a national platform (Visit Wales). It has helped with awareness raising of the AONB and Wye Valley River Festival by default. It also drove people back to the website and had an impact

on ticket sales for the Museum of the Moon at Tintern Abbey. You can view it here:

<https://www.facebook.com/visitwales/videos/10155802314636785/>

Judicious, targeted advertising on Facebook stimulated interest in key target markets, queries and enquiries were fielded from prospective visitors and conversations and feedback took place on line each day. We spent £568.16 on Facebook advertising and are very pleased with the impact this had on both ticket sales and a growing number of quality followers.

Post Festival the Wye Valley River Festival Facebook page has sustained its following and continues to be a lively forum for information sharing, proving invaluable for feedback gathering in respect of the events and satisfaction levels of those attending this year.

Twitter

We used the already well-established AONB Twitter account @wybeauty (appreciating that the latter can be a more transient channel and that we would see new followers during the Festival that would then un-follow post events). Activity extended our Twitter following by 150 during the Festival and has now levelled off at 3,540 (just slightly under 5% of total base grown).

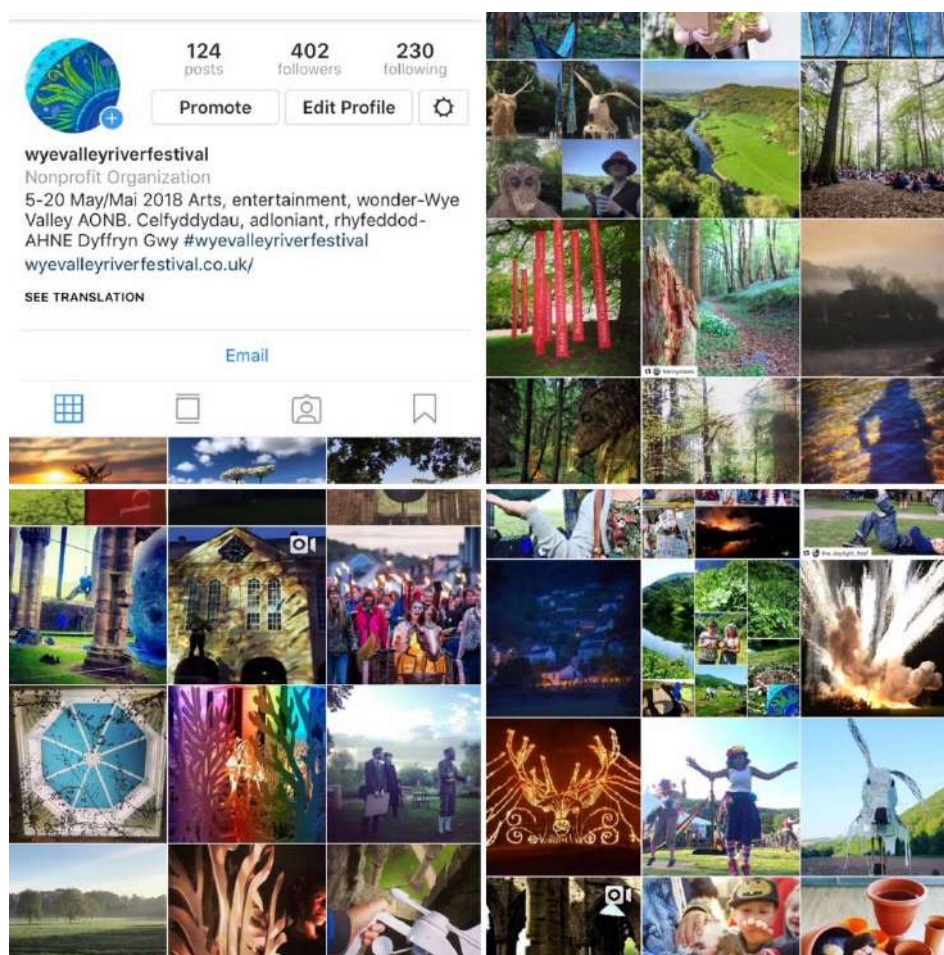
The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter interface. At the top, there are two profile cards. The left one is for 'Wye Valley AONB' (@wybeauty), which has 2,114 following and 3,526 followers. Its bio mentions 'Outstanding tweets by natural beauties!' and lists hashtags #wyevalley, #wyevalleyriverfestival, #deanwey, and #AONB. The right profile card is for 'Visit Wales' (@visitwales), featuring a red dragon logo. Below these, a tweet from 'Mon Countryside' (@MonCou...) is visible, mentioning recruitment for the Lower Wye. The main part of the screenshot displays a grid of tweets from 'Wye Valley AONB' dated 15/05/2018. These tweets include event listings for 'HEDDIW - Dydd Mawr 15 Mai' and 'Arborealists' exhibitions, as well as information about 'The Moon, what does it mean?'. Each tweet is accompanied by a small image showing people at an event. The interface includes standard Twitter navigation tabs like 'Tweets', 'Tweets & replies', 'Media', and 'Likes'.

Instagram

An Instagram gallery was set up and seeded with content, mainly featuring pre Festival preparations, much of which was shared from contributing artists and included reflections on previous River Festivals. We also used content relating directly to the 2018 Festival preparations, as such the development of Gemma Kate Wood's artwork used for branding and Priormade's creation of the automata.

Mid to long term (from Festival start to mid/end of June) we nurtured the new followers, curated content, a lot of it User Generated (from happy visitors and using the hashtag #WyeValleyRiverFestival) as well as imagery and video that originated during the event.

We have grown from 0 to 450 on the gallery that was set up just two weeks prior to Festival and this number continues to grow. The Festival hashtag is used to track content and re-share. 80% of all content is from users rather than originated at source and this has stimulated wider engagement. Our Instagram Audience base in England is growing and it has also engaged artists and performers:



Conclusions

We are delighted with the impact our new Festival branding has had, establishing a strong and pleasing brand in the marketplace. We are also really pleased with the progress we have made in moving to a digital platform with our marketing activity. This has been successful in bringing in audiences from a much wider area, including staying visitors from the rest of the UK and some

overseas visitors. It has also proved effective for selling our ticketed events. You can see a round up of all our social media activity here:

<https://wakelet.com/wake/f55586f7-906e-4865-98bf-9cc67273ba8a>

We end with some of the responses we had to our online survey:

'The actors were great, I still smile when I think of the festival king washing the pilgrims' feet in his marigolds and wielding a washing up brush and then on Saturday he swam the River Wye to be reunited with his love – how fantastic was that.'

'So many magical highlights...Jony Easterby's finale backdrop of new life emerging through butterflies and trees, the giant moon glowing in the ruins of Tintern Abbey, amplifying the heavenly harmonies of the George Choir, the torchlight procession at Llandogo and the jewel box of finale fireworks by the river. All this and more, surrounded by scenery beyond compare!'

'It was a fantastic festival. I love living in the Wye Valley.'

'The Wye Valley is one of the most beautiful places on earth and sitting outside Tintern Abbey in the sunshine or inside it at evening for the Moon festival were glorious experiences that will stay with us forever.'

'I had booked a weekend in the Wye Valley to go canoeing with the family and by chance a couple weeks before came across a facebook advert for museum of the moon, it looked great so booked it up for the Saturday night. It was in fact amazing and a wonderful experience in the abbey as the sun went down. I'd happily come again for the weekend and focus on what the festival has to offer. I lived in the Wye Valley for several years and hadn't been back for a while I'd forgotten how beautiful the place is, a true gem.'

'I see this as a very important event for adults and children alike because it draws attention to the environment in a fun and interesting way. The supports it gets is very impressive. Thank you for keeping it going.'

'It was AMAZING - we moved to the area last year and are so happy there is so much on offer here.'

'Thought the firework display and light sculpture was absolutely amazing!'



Summary of Feedback and Evaluation

Generally the consensus and feedback is that the Festival was a phenomenal success. The evaluation of the Festival was carried out on a number of levels using a variety of methodologies. Key targets were; workshop participants pre-Festival; on site audience, social media users, Festival partners and participants and the core Festival team. Data was also drawn from ticket sales for the Museum of the Moon, via the Ticket Source website.

Pre Festival engagement / workshops

Feedback was obtained from two of the pre-Festival engagement processes; Priormade's automata work with the schools and various 'make and create' workshops for the public. The schools' engagement work is referred to elsewhere in this report. The public workshops established a Facebook Group from which anecdotal feedback was gathered.

On site audience

Formal Feedback questionnaire

The main Festival audience evaluation was contracted to Fuze Research Ltd (see appended report). The methodology consisted of predominantly face to face interviews at specific Festival events using iPads and a questionnaire. There were 27 questions with close correlations to the 2014 & 2016 Audience Feedback forms to enable some comparison of data. A total of 356 responses were obtained. Of these 300 were achieved by the Fuze Research interviewers &/or Festival team on-site. An online version of the survey was promoted via the Festival & AONB Facebook pages, which achieved the additional 56 responses. Some key results and findings are:-

- The age profile of the 2018 Festival responders was similar to the previous 2 Festivals, with the largest age group being 35-64. The highest proportion of 2018 respondents came to the Festival with family (34%), followed by friends (21%) and partner/spouse (16%).
- 58% of respondents come from the 3 counties of Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire & Herefordshire. The next 22% combined came from 'Newport & Cardiff area', 'Bristol & Bath area' and 'Worcestershire'. 15% came from 'elsewhere in England' and 4% from 'elsewhere in Wales' with 1% from 'outside the UK'. Correspondingly 80% were day visitors (with 45% stating they lived in the Wye Valley anyway) and 20% overnight visitors.
- key driver for visiting the Festival was 'to enjoy some outdoor art/performances' (26%), followed by 'to be inspired' (20%); 17% stated 'the arts are important to me' and 12.5% said 'It was recommended to me'

- 55% were first time visitors to the Wye Valley River Festival, however 9% had attended another Festival event this year and 6% had attended two or more. 16% had also attended both the 2014 and 2016 Festivals.
- 46% of respondents stated the Festival was the only reason for visiting the Wye Valley.
- over 45% found out about the Festival by 'word of mouth' and 24% stating they had seen some local advertising. Social media was effective with Instagram accounting for 21% and Facebook 18%.
- 'good or excellent' ratings were given by 92% for 'Welcome and hospitality from staff / volunteers', 75% for 'Been able to connect with the landscape from taking part in today's events' and 62% for the Marketing.
- Overall 'Good' ratings were given for the following:-
 - 98% for the 'overall visitor experience'
 - 92% for the 'Quality of the art work programmed'
 - 70% "Learnt more about the Wye Valley Landscape",
 - 70% "Been inspired to visit the countryside more" and
 - 65% "Learnt more about woods and trees" which was the theme of the Festival,
 This suggests a huge success in achieving a high quality arts & environment festival.
- 92% of visitors were aware of the Wye Valley being an AONB

The open text question "What would you improve for future Wye Valley River Festivals?" provided a range of useful insights including on the need for better accessibility, recycling and detailed programming information.

Informal 'Festival Documenter'

At many Festival events the official Festival Documenter, Mr Cherry (Will Wilding), was out and about engaging with members of the audience, making films, taking photos, and generally documenting all manner of people and trees! Mr Cherry also coordinated the Festival Passport, which encouraged holders to visit further Festival events and get their Passports stamped, thus building up a following. His website <http://www.mywye.weebly.com> contains many insights from audience and participants alike about the Festival and is a valuable the record.

Social media users

Through Visit Wales funding, an on-line bi-lingual questionnaire was promoted to social media contacts for 3 weeks after the Festival, receiving 94 responses. For 71% this was their first Wye Valley River Festival and over 50% attended Museum of the Moon events at Tintern Abbey. 90% travelled in private cars.

- 43% stayed '3-8hours' at Festival events, 22% 'up to 3 hours' and 31% stated 'I live close to the event attended'
- 83% were 'happy' or 'extremely happy' with 'Pre-event information' and 88% similarly with 'Organisation of the event' and
- 75% were 'happy' or 'extremely happy' with the 'Event website' and 65% 'agreed or strongly agreed' that "The Festival social media (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram) was helpful & interesting"
- 69% 'agreed or strongly agreed' that "The Festival theme of trees and woodland helped me appreciate their value to the environment".
- 97% said they would come to a future Wye Valley River Festival.

Festival partners and participants

As in previous years, the Festival artists and participants (including production crew, volunteers, local community organisers and funding partners) were sent a questionnaire after the Festival via Survey Monkey. There were 17 questions and 52 respondents, 55% were professional/paid participants and 45% volunteers. Some of the key findings were as follows:-

- 88% felt their role(s) and responsibilities were clearly defined.
- 44% had not been part of the Research & Development (R&D) phase, but another 44% stated that the evolution of the Festival from R&D to performance had achieved the aims and objectives of the 'Woods & Trees' theme. The remaining 12% 'didn't know'.
- Participants felt the Festival helped develop their or their organisation's skills in the following areas: 70% 'networking / collaboration', 41% 'artistic work', 30% 'environmental understanding &/or appreciation', 30% 'community development' and 28% in 'event management'.
- 82% of participants rated the support of the Festival team as 'good or excellent' both before and during the Festival.
- the Festival was rated 'effective or highly effective' as a platform for the following aspects by participants; 98% for 'outdoor arts' and for 'the Wye Valley as a special place', 78% for 'landscape & environmental issues' and 67% for 'up-skilling of participants / performers'.
- 92% thought 'the Festival as a multi-sited event works well' and 88% that 'the Festival as an environmental and artistic collaboration works well'.
- 86% said they would be interested in being involved in a 2020 Wye Valley River Festival.

There were several open text questions, including "Q9 What was least successful and/or provided the biggest challenges?". Similar to the audience feedback, many of the comments related to logistics and refining the promotion of the detailed programming. There were specific issues relating communications, managing the ticketing at Tintern and the torch procession at Llandogo.

Many organisations, communities and new collaborators were represented. Much of the feedback from partners who have a strong connection with the festival is positive and when critical, constructive. Feedback that was less positive came from collaborators who found the edgy art form challenging or not to their taste. This suggests a need to re-iterate why we chose to use particular art forms and to expose our champions to more of these forms and come to their own judgements. A proportion of respondents were volunteers or participants in choirs who only attended a small element of the festival so may not have had a broad experience of the festival as a whole. Choirs and performers found short comings in their experience regarding timing of performances and desired improved hosting and stage management. Volunteers wanted improved briefing and a better understanding of their role at the festival. The short coming within visitor experience that was most often highlighted was a need to improve disabled access to festival sites. In addition a number of respondents felt we need to do more to communicate regarding the environment, and are not content with the subliminal messages within the art. We will reflect on all of the feedback and seek to find the means to improve these elements. Partners felt the Marketing was much improved in 2018 and that is cause for celebration demonstrating the Festival team's ability to rise this highlighted shortcoming from 2014 and 2016.

Core Festival team

Throughout the Festival development and delivery the core Festival team constantly refine processes and respond as much as possible to feedback. After the Festival the AONB team completed 2 debrief sessions identifying 'What went well' and where we 'Could do better'. This was then reviewed together with the Festival Director, Artistic Directors and Production Manager, incorporating initial returns from the Participants survey. Three areas which require reflection and

clearer management are communication, visitor experience and the environment messages. A key issue, as in previous Festivals, was the demands placed on the core Festival team throughout the Festival which can stretch capacity. Consequently the AONB team felt they were unable at times to properly staff the AONB marquee and represent the AONB to the public. Logistics, including needing more drivers and distributors, remains a challenge for such a complex multi-sited festival.

Economic Value of the Festival

The Fuze audience survey identified a spend per person per day of trip of:

Accommodation:	£20.42
Food and Drink:	£18.22
Travel:	£14.31
Shopping:	£8.05
Entertainment	£3.60
Total:	£64.60

46% of respondents had stated the Festival was the only reason for visiting the Wye Valley. If this spend is applied solely to 46% of the 32,500 attendees this equates to a local spend of £965,700. However only 20% of all visitors were identified as overnight visitors, so the day-visitor spend per person per day (without accommodation) is £44.18. Applying this 80:20 split to day v overnight visitors results in a total audience spend estimate of £721,547.

The total Festival budget expenditure was £208,154. This was predominantly spent in the regional economy (with many of the artists and suppliers coming from the Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire and the Bristol & Cardiff areas). Consequently it can certainly be claimed that the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 generated spend and investment in the region of about £1million.

The Social Media survey identified the following spend

	£1-20	£21-40	£41-60	£61-80	£81-100	£101+	N/A DID NOT SPEND ANY AMOUNT	TOTAL
Food and drink	32.97% 30	20.88% 19	9.89% 9	4.40% 4	0.00% 0	2.20% 2	29.67% 27	91
Transport	58.43% 52	5.62% 5	1.12% 1	2.25% 2	0.00% 0	1.12% 1	31.46% 28	89
Accommodation	1.15% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.30% 2	2.30% 2	94.25% 82	87
Gifts	13.33% 12	8.89% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	77.78% 70	90
General shopping	19.10% 17	8.99% 8	1.12% 1	2.25% 2	0.00% 0	1.12% 1	67.42% 60	89
Leisure activities/attractions	21.35% 19	4.49% 4	2.25% 2	0.00% 0	1.12% 1	0.00% 0	70.79% 63	89

Partners and Funders

The success of Wye Valley River Festival is dependent on a complex raft of partners and organisations on both a local and regional level. WVRF2018 worked with in excess of 40 organisations to achieve its outcomes, all of whom play an important role, with some contributing vital skills and additions to the programme.

Each main event incorporated contributions and collaborations of many partners towards music, performance, circus, dance, singing, making, storytelling and a variety of craft activities and a range of countryside organisations explaining about the natural world, leading walks or activities or interpreting built heritage. The breakdown of financial and in-kind contributions to the Festival is at the end of this section. On the following pages are outlines of the major partnerships and collaborations that made the Festival so special.

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 is a Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership initiative with funding from the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government Initiative in the Wye Valley AONB, Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Visit Wales, Forestry Commission, Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency, Cadw, Ross Town Council and Monmouth Town Council. In-kind support from Cadw, Hereford River Carnival, The Shire Hall, Monmouth, Natural Resources Wales and numerous volunteers & local communities. Sponsorship from County Marquees, Severn Area Rescue Service (SARA), Griffiths Engineering, Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire, Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Hillside Brewery, Green Man at Abbey Mill, the aMazing Hedge Puzzle & Wye Valley Butterfly Zoo, Wild Trail bars. Special thanks to land owners at Symonds Yat Rock, Lydbrook Tump, Shire Hall, Monmouth, Tintern Abbey and Llandogo Riverside who granted access to make these events possible.

The Wye Valley AONB Partnership and Wye Valley River Festival Team are immensely grateful for all the funders, sponsors and supporters who made the Festival such an enjoyable and rewarding event for all those who participated.



Art Blast

Kate Sheppard and Dorota Rapacz provided dynamic workshops for all ages at the main Festival events – making bag lanterns inscribed with the poetry of Alice Oswald, shadow puppet miniatures. Bringing energy creativity and fun to their work Kate and Dorota were a key part of the participatory programme.

“The Festival was spread over different places and gave the opportunity to local people be part of it. It’s perfect. By involving different communities you bound them together in a mutual target of protecting and advertising the natural beauty of the River Wye Valley. The Festival was a great platform for presenting our business locally.”

Articulture Wales

Articulture are an arts based organisation based in Machynlleth. A long term partner within the outdoor arts sector. The Festival provides the opportunity to showcase new talent and to try out work on audiences. In 2018 they commissioned 2 pieces to showcase at the Festival. Firstly the Wheelabouts Boudicca’s performance, which produced mobile street theatre piece built around wheelchairs. Their latest show takes us on the Roman road with Boudicca. Boudicca will be rampaging through Monmouth aboard a stunning Chariot led by a galloping mechanical horse, and led the Fire Forest Parade the culmination of the day’s events in Monmouth. In addition Kapow a lively, energetic and vibrant dance theatre duo performed in Llandogo. They provided a comment on humanity and a comedic gardening show combined. Grow is a playful and touching celebration of the power of nature to rejuvenate, take over spaces and grow through the cracks.

Our partnership with Articulture is important for creating links across Wales for new work and talent to be realised in rural communities where it rarely gets seen.

Brass Bands & Musical Director Tim Hill



Our partnership with Lydbrook Band goes from strength to strength. Brass music is a fundamental component of the Festival, it creates the live sound track that accompanies the performance and processions and weaves its way into people’s memories. In 2018 the 10 piece ‘small band’ joined Tim Hill and Tongues of Fire (our Musical Director) to create the Festival band at the grand finale in Llandogo and accompanied the night time finale show.

Tim Band was at all the major events and parades and a sound track for the Monmouth film was created which gives a flavour of the atmosphere the music created.

The local brass bands which included: Berry Hill, Monmouth and Lydbrook Professional and Lydbrook training band. Robert Morgan our contact had this feedback.

“Many of us in Lydbrook band joined the Festival Street band - we were really out of our comfort zone but the end result was memorable. We were able to take our form of music (Brass Bands) to an audience who would probably not listen to brass bands It's fantastic that the length of the Wye from Hereford to Chepstow to could give the general public such a wide ranging and diverse experience of the Arts It's a mixture of many different art forms and is appreciated by young and old alike - being on the banks of the river makes people aware of how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the UK.”

Cadw

A new partnership with Cadw has developed well during the 2018 Festival. Ffion Reynolds and Pascal Bidois have been supportive and instrumental in the success of the Museum of the Moon at Tintern Abbey. The space at the Abbey was offered to the Festival free of charge to create the installation and allowing a supporting programme of the Festival within the Abbey grounds. The organisation provided funding, staff time, expertise and consents to make the event possible. It was the first time the Festival team attempted a ticketed event and with a supportive partner and flexible planning it proved to be hugely beneficial both financially and professionally for all involved from the artist Luke Jerram, to the Production Manager Netty Miles the rope access company, stewards, volunteers and the local businesses who benefitted from the increased income during the week-long event.

Dash Panash – Youth Circus

This new collaboration with the Festival was a great addition to the activity at the Llandogo Finale. The group were able to show case young people's skills in the main arena at the Festival and in addition brought a flying trapeze rig and conducted workshops for the public. Khan Fox DeVere felt she experienced 'Great communication throughout.'

"I attended the initial R&D days. Our original plans & ideas were taken into account and translated. This is a very supportive festival with excellent ethos towards performance. I feel much more confident in marketing our company since the Festival. The Llandogo event had a great community atmosphere. We had so much positive feedback from the event.

The Festival is incredibly varied with some sites being more popular than others however i feel it is an important aspect that it is multi-sited as this opens the event and message that is being sent to more people over a longer period.

The arts have always been a platform for issues. This model opens the issues up to people that cover a broad spectrum of society.

It would be great to work on other aspects of the Festival as well as the delivery on the day. I am skilled in event and infrastructure planning and the liaising/booking of artists. I would like more of the AONB training concerning the local area. During the R&D for this festival we were instructed regarding woodland management, the charcoal industry and coppicing. I have passed this information to many people since and am much more aware of landscape and issues."

Engage Youth Circus



Art Space Cinderford have partnered the Festival with Engage Youth Circus since 2014. In 2018 the young people's performance was integrated into the telling of the Heart to Hart show at Symonds Yat and Lydbrook. Sally Gibson runs the organisation and felt the Festival had:

"benefited our young performers understanding of participation in professional events. The communication with Desperate Men was clear, a clear spec, but with enough flexibility to allow our young leaders' own creativity to come through. Support from the performers and musicians for our young circus

performers was extremely good. Great to link in with a multi art form, environmentally concerned arts event and to be able to offer this to members of our community, especially young people who will remember the wackiness, the stories and sense of adventure and hopefully propel some of them headlong into the arts. "In the future she would like to see: "More youth involvement. More community involvement (although this is already pretty good) Consideration / consultation with those with disabilities/ disabled performers."

This feedback indicates success in creating opportunity for upskilling and mentoring one of the aims of the Festival.

Lydbrook Tump committee & community

The community of Lydbrook have been hugely supportive of the Festival the following feedback gives an insight into the meaning of the Festival to the local community.

“The support from the AONB was fantastic. It all came together perfectly on the day :) I think from what we saw at Lydbrook, it came across as a very detailed theme of Woods and Trees... visitors seemed fascinated by all the projects that covered this, even to small details of tents being erected using branches! Also following on Facebook, a lot of schools, projects, walks.... all carried on the thread and you really felt there was an enthusiastic buzz up and down the river. As having organised the Lydbrook part of the three Festivals so far, I feel very confident with putting our plans into action with previous contacts and knowing how it all falls into place. The huge enthusiasm with everyone involved with organising the Festival, such a buzz which pushes you to do your best to make it a success. “Participation” - I think because it is our third Festival, everyone seemed to know what works, therefore the theme this time seemed bigger and better than before and visitors/public embraced it! Even at Lydbrook, the stall holders matched their wares to “Woods and Trees” as much as possible, local schools, walking groups, and local nature projects tied all this in so it spread the word naturally. I think the multi-sited event works extremely well for the Festival, it really lets communities up and down the river take part and involve their villages/towns and helps spread the current theme. Local businesses really benefit too as they take part and advertise their wares. Yes the environmental and artistic collaboration work very well together and seamlessly. It involves groups of people of all ages and with the visual effects, brings it all to life and gives a fun element too

Atmosphere was terrific as visitors explored what was on offer, with the different projects highlighting the themes. There was definitely a united euphoric feeling between the organisers as happy, smiling people arrived to enjoy the riverbank, the stalls, the music and what the individual could learn from the various crafts on offer”. Rowena Barr

Ensemble Performers

Flowing through the Festival over the 2 weeks the ensemble became immersed in their Hart to Heart performance, characters, and landscape while communicating messages to the audience about the woodlands of the Wye. It has been an enriching experience for each of them and they all expressed an interest in future collaborations. The strength of the ensemble holding the narrative of the Festival together was once again underlined through this feedback. The script and direction from Richard Headon was praised.

“Collaborating with the desperate men was great. As the longest standing street theatre company it was an honour to be invited to join the ensemble. It has given me more confidence in writing and performing music in street theatre contexts.” The benefits to me included: “Wider network of south west performing contingent. Connecting into land based organisations. Meeting local projects close to my homelands and building stronger bridges to making sustainable work in the area.” Chez

Gareth Clark has been involved from 2014 on this occasion he assisted Richard Headon with the creation of the Heart to Hart show.

“The R&D where Richard and I met some local forestry experts, was very useful in developing the themes of Heart to Hart and in informing the cast of the issues and complexities of modern woodland management.”

“The performances were very well received and this was from us taking a little more time to develop a script and ideas prior to rehearsal. An R&D phase with all of the cast and then a subsequent writing phase really helped set the tone for performance as well as allowing for all of us to add personal touches. This preparation was essential in developing the work and something I will continue to consider. The weather was a huge factor(!) Well organised. I felt the overall programme of events was very well organised. It felt coherent and concise. Activities seemed to fit with each other. From the first performances in Symonds Yat where the gathering became an audience for Heart to Hart and then moved into Tree and Wood. It felt very satisfying. This also was the case at Llandogo where all events were very well managed. There are such clear examples of people following the Festival from Hereford and visiting areas for the first time. This happened in Symonds Yat and Llandogo where people told us they were amazed at these places and they were only down the road. The multi-venue festival seems to add to the local involvement and it was special to be part of the Monmouth procession and the Llandogo fire walk. I think the strength of the Festival is the multi locations. It is brilliant for us as artists to work alongside experts. I think it offers both parties an opportunity to appreciate the benefit of each other’s knowledge and skills. It is the part of the Festival I enjoy the most.”

Environment Agency

Financial support from the Environment Agency has been important to the Festival. Our partnership demonstrates trust in our ability to curate the Festival and communicate messages through the arts to support the navigation and environmental work they do.

Forestry Commission

Symonds Yat was the site of the first weekend of activity and our partners their supported the events with a presence at the events and with logistical assistance in the build-up. The Forestry Commission were another key funding partner in the Festival. Tamsin Sagar gave the following feedback:

“Art is a fantastic method of opening people's eyes/minds to what they may not notice otherwise. It also makes the Festival quite unique. “I feel the Festival has” positively reinforced relationships between the FC and the AONB and has forged new connections too with local artists. It was a useful platform for the Community Rangers and the Active Forests co-ordinator to meet the local community. Personally I massively enjoyed going to all the events, I managed to see lots and I felt it to be very inspiring and satisfying having this on my doorstep. I think that it's essential to include different places along the Wye Valley in order to join these places up and bring the benefit to more communities than if it was just in one place. I thought it made it more interesting and exciting as you could enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of various towns/villages etc in a space of 2 weeks. It's a fabulous way to celebrate the diversity that we have in the area. It is also a great way to get people involved that may not bother to travel to one specific venue but if it's on their doorstep e.g. Lydbrook, Llandogo then they are more likely to get involved and experience the joys! Happy to help in creating the next Festival.”

Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership Project

A key funding partner and supporter of the Festival, Sue Middleton was able to showcase the Foresters' Forest project alongside the Festival as the themes and agenda's married well.

Sue and partners supported the events at Symonds Yat Rock, Lydbrook and the Festival team invited them to Tintern and Llandogo where elements of the project were showcased too. Paul Rutter, from Plantlife was invited as an expert on Veteran trees and he gave the following feedback: *"It was a welcome opportunity to work with the AONB team being adjacent to the Forest of Dean where the Foresters Forest project is actively involved learning more about the ancient trees there. We need more overlap between science, nature and the arts so more people of all ages and backgrounds and interests find it accessible and inspiring"*

Llandogo community

Partners in Llandogo included the Brown family who run the local shop, the local school, playgroup, the village hall committee the memorial green committee and the women's institute and the landowners Clive and Christine Barnwell, Val Welham, and Mr. Lewis the landowner on the opposite side of the river. The strength of support in Llandogo for the Festival is a great testament to the relationships that have been carefully built up over a number of years by the Festival team. Jill Rundle from the Women's Institute felt that the landscape and environment, outdoor arts and the special qualities of the Wye Valley were communicated in a highly effective way.

"It allows local people to participate on home territory and encourages those people to look at what might be happening in adjacent areas It is very inclusive and allows an immense amount of collaboration and networking." Jill would like to offer her services to a steering group in the future.

Monmouth Museum & Arborealist Exhibition

The Museum provided the location for the Arborealist exhibition and organised the funding for the exhibition and showcasing of the film. The Museum staff hosted an opening night of the exhibition which was timed to fit in with the programme in Monmouth. They supported the Festival through promotion particularly through social media.

National Trust

Sara Szwer from the National Trust supported the Festival through hosting the Marchant Barron poems, volunteering at the Museum of the Moon and leading the Pilgrimage walks to the Museum of the Moon. Sara felt:

"It keyed us into an area (pilgrimages) we are interested in but have not had experience with. It brought us closer to members of WVAONB office a real strength was how different types of artists and performers display different aspects of a theme. By getting quality artists and delivering imaginative events, the experience for the visitor/audience is high quality ... exhilarating and varied experience for the visitor."

Nelson Garden

The small community charity provided a venue and support for the activities in Monmouth.

SARA Severn Area Rescue Service

This local charity has supported all 3 Festivals. Once again they provided key river logistics covering a challenging aspect of the river art at the Llandogo Finale. They installed the fire braziers on the river and helped ferry the crew from bank to bank invaluable when delivering challenging spectacle in the landscape.

"We were asked to perform a function on the river more complicated than which we would normally do, so we practiced rarely-used techniques. Watching the gently burning braziers on the river at Llandogo in the peace and quiet before & after the fireworks was a special moment." Richard Newhouse

Shire Hall, Monmouth - Monmouthshire County Council

This important venue at the heart of Monmouth Town was offered to the Festival free of charge alongside the supportive staff. The Building and its exterior was taken over for two days to create a part installation part Festival space for a conference and theatrical works.

"There was a very clear theme about the dichotomies of tree management and engagement of the public with this most precious resource. The subject had clearly been thoroughly researched and was beautifully communicated. Shire Hall is always looking for opportunities to engage differently with the community and this certainly achieved that. This event definitely pushed the boundaries of using every square inch of space and showed us, in some instances, what can be done. The Festival also introduced us to a number of people that will be useful in the future (Arts groups, interpretation company etc.)" Aileen Atkinson, Manager

Sound Works

Roger Drury who runs sound works is a long -time collaborator and his valued constructive criticism points to a need to reflect upon the legacy more and the way that skills and themes could be deeper embedded into the local supporting arts groups and organisations. Roger provided support for the literary elements of the Festival reading poems in the Nelson Garden and assisting William Wilding with the filming.

"It works to tour work in rural communities which have very basic access to the arts but the sense of a common journey be it the Festival or the River is still not so clear or achieved and the issues of what skills are learnt, shared, left behind need to become a basis for reflection and locally owned and developed."

The Woodland Trust and Gwent Wildlife Trust

The Woodland Trust & Gwent Wildlife Trust were supporters of the Festival offering in-kind support time to the Festival at the research and development phase and bringing activities and exhibitions to all of the large events. They provided experts for the tree stump soap box at Monmouth and a great range of activities at the larger events

Tintern Village Hall Committee

The community of Tintern embraced Wye Valley River Festival 2018 with a week of activity centred in their community. The Village Hall Committee were instrumental in facilitating the pilgrimage walks, feeding 40 pilgrims and 15 young people and making the evening memorable evening for all. The Village Fete group supplied food at the picnic evening and the Tintern Festivals Group hosted a

fringe event the Moon Meditation, while the Philosophy group hosted a Moon themed talk. Local people volunteered to steward the event. Gemma Wood a local artists created the image for the Festival in 2018 form a woodcut and took many outstanding images. David Horn, Magnum photographer and local also took many pictures of the event that can be seen on the Tintern Village web site, which did a good job promoting the events. <http://www.tinternvillage.co.uk/page-103/>

University of South Wales: Prifysgol De Cymru Faculty of Creative Industries:

This partnership allows the Festival to enrich the programme with students from the performing arts course making new work together as part of their course assessment. It is a great opportunity for skills development and showcasing young people's work. Hilary Ramsden PhD Senior Lecturer, Drama and Performance, is seeking to deepen this relationship in the future and through the Festival has been able to make contact with a local secondary school Wyedean to build a partnership between students.

Walkers are Welcome

Supported and led the Pilgrimage Walks. Planning and delivering guided walks takes time and commitment three groups were involved. Chepstow, Monmouth and Abergavenny group leaders helped facilitate this project.

William Wilding - AKA Mr Cherry

William took on the persona of Mr. Cherry the Festival documenter once more and created a website of films and images of the Festival <http://www.mywye.co.uk/> He encouraged people to get their opinions on the Wye Valley woodlands documented and the results are moving, insightful and hilarious in equal measure. William also facilitated the stamping of the River Festival Passport which once again encouraged repeat visits to the Festival, and a race to gain the most stamps and win prizes. The passport highlighted the journey through landscape and the crossing of borders and focused on the crossing of borders between England and Wales in a playful way, Williams documenting tend was a feature at all the main events at the Festival.

["Its just great to be involved in something like the RF. Looking towards 2020 I would like to be part of the R&D, PR, marketing and promotion and performing."](#) William is a great advocate for the Festival and obtained the grant from Ross Town Council to facilitate the Ross- on -Wye element of the project.

Festival Income

Arts Council England	£59,000
Sustainable Development Fund	£53,073
Arts Council of Wales	£25,000
Earned income - Ticket Sales Museum of the Moon	£11,831
Visit Wales (marketing)	£11,799
Forestry Commission	£5,000
Forests' Forest Landscape Partnership	£5,000
Environment Agency	£5,000
Cadw	£4,800
Earned income - Food concessions	£2,134
Monmouth Town Council	£2,000
Earned income - Cash ticket sales and t-shirts	£1,350
Monmouthshire & Herefordshire Councils	£1,000
Ross Town Council	£800
Sub total	£196,000
Support in kind AONB staff time	£61,235
Support in kind Woodland Trust - staff time, assets	£20,000
Support in kind Shire Hall Monmouth- Venue hire waiver	£10,000
Support in kind Cadw Staff	£4,000
Support in kind Forestry Commission	£1,000
Support in kind Walkers are Welcome	£200
Sub total	£96,435
Total	£286,022

Conclusions and Recommendations



Wye Valley River Festival is poised to capitalise on its recent success. We have created a recognised brand with a USP of immersive, edgy art that is of the landscape and embraces the people. Audiences have become a little more ‘mature’ in their understanding of the genre; promenade performance blending music, choirs and fire spectacles are part of this mix and have wowed audiences during the Festival. Audiences are now more prepared to take a chance and be surprised at the Festival, based on the body of work that has been produced. Questions from audiences are framed differently now and focused around what we are going to do next and how they can be part of it. The Wye Valley River Festival has created an appetite for ‘challenging art’ where there was none locally. This is a long term impact to be celebrated. The Wye Valley River Festival received the national Bowland Award in July 2018 at the annual AONB ‘Landscapes for Life’ conference. This award, voted on by the Family of AONBs, recognises a best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/eventreport/bowland-award-2018-winnerswye-valley-river-festival/>

As pioneers of working with the arts and the environment and local communities at a landscape scale, we are encouraged that other AONB partnerships have followed our lead. For example, ‘Wayfaring’ is taking place this year across 3 AONBs work with And Now on a series of connected adventures in landscape. And Now worked with us on the 2014 & 2016 WVRF. There is a growing network, level of expertise and appetite for art projects in the protected landscape sector, such as LakesAlive in the Lake District. These new relationships require nurturing and could create opportunities for developing outdoor art in the landscape of other AONBs in the future. Through Wye Valley River Festival our team have developed skills and expertise and we are happy to share with others to create more opportunity.

Wye Valley River Festival has provided the opportunity for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership to communicate with visitors and the community in a completely new way. Through the arts we reached far more people with our key messages about the importance of the special qualities of the AONB and the work it takes to conserve and enhance them. We need to engage people emotionally with landscape, to get them to care, and play their part in conserving and enhancing the landscape for future generations. Through the arts we can replace dry conversations with a new language of intrigue, adventure, discovery and ownership, empowering folk to act positively. This new way of working will be directed and focused keenly, now we clearly see the potential. With the assistance of

our artistic partners we want to continue to develop our brand to reach more people and effect positive change.

We have created a brand in Wye Valley River Festival that locals and visitors alike are attracted to. The opportunities for creativity in England and Wales through the Festival are huge and the ripples going forward are being felt weekly at the AONB Office, with approaches from artists and the community with ideas and projects inspired by the Festival. We plan to commence plans for 2020 soon and if funding allows, host an event in 2019 to keep the Festival alive while riding high.

We have a small budget to investigate plans for 2020 and future festivals. Between now and March 2019 we intend to:

- Investigate different models of governance and management for the Festival
- Investigate a Friends of the Wye Valley River Festival group to build momentum for the next Festival
- Reflect on elements of the Festival that require improvement; such as re-cycling, environmental messaging, the form that the art will take and communication with local communities, eg. choirs, volunteer management, etc.
- Pick the theme for the next Festival early and communicate to all partners



Appendices

Wye Valley River Festival 2014

The inaugural Wye Valley River Festival (WVRF) was held in May 2014, launching in Hereford on May 3rd and finishing in Chepstow on May 18th. The first Festival celebrated nature, culture, landscape and life along the River Wye by presenting high quality and affecting arts events and activities and exploring the contemporary issues facing the river and its communities today. The main artistic programme reflected, enhanced and supported the parallel and integrated community arts and heritage based activities, and a wider community programme of smaller, local new and existing events that came under the WVRF brand. The Festival aimed to develop the capacity of communities, to progress the event in a meaningful way, develop partnerships for the future, test out ideas, concepts and possibilities, and this all succeeded in extraordinary ways. The issues around 'invasive species' drove a central narrative.

The WVRF2014 was a great success, it achieved its goals and many valuable lessons were learnt along the way which were taken into the second Wye Valley River Festival in 2016

WVRF2014 attracted audiences of nearly **20,000** and engaged over **1,500** artists and participants, plus over **150** people attended training or workshop sessions.

With a budget of £125,000 the estimated net contribution to the local economy was at least **£275,000**. The 'Overall quality of the event' was rated as Good or Excellent by 98% of respondents to feedback surveys. 65% learned something more about the area because of the event. 16% were inspired to 'Attend other arts events' and 99% thought the River Festival was a good idea.

'The best interpretive event EVER'

Andrew Nixon – AONB Development Officer (2014)

"I think this Festival will develop within a few years to be a well-known 'destination' Festival that visitors will look forward to, and that will inspire a lot of loyalty in participants and spectators alike".

Jo Henshaw – Hereford River Carnival (2014)

The WVRF2014 evaluation produced invaluable base-line data and recommendations which we took forward into the second phase.

Wye Valley River Festival 2016



The second Wye Valley River Festival again grew out of the collaboration between the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the Artistic Directors, Desperate Men Theatre Company- Jon Beedell and Richard Headon and Festival Director, Phillippa Haynes. The objective of the 2016 Festival was to build upon our solid foundation and to grow at a reasonable and realistic pace. Water and the River as a Global Artery was investigated as the theme that was developed through the Research and Development (R&D) process. This brought together a number of artists with eminent local environmentalists and water specialists to debate issues, exchange watery experiences and explore opportunities. These were then proposed and refined with local community movers and shakers.

95% of the world's water is salt water in the oceans, the remaining 5% fresh water- most of which is locked in ice or deep underground. Life on earth relies on 0.03% of the world's fresh water to survive.

This fact inspired the artistic response from the core team; The Water Ones, the Wye Serai caravans and the magical tea making Samovar were born.

The artistic and environmental programme was extended to include expanded outreach and more installations. We aimed to increase audience engagement to 25,000 and encourage repeat visits throughout the Festival and also to strengthen the Festival identity.



"I am inspired by creating theatre in unusual settings that engages ordinary people in extraordinary ways. I believe at its best, it can connect, inform and inspire"

Richard Headon - Desperate Men

"There is an intimacy with outdoor audiences in sharing a space and time where many things are beyond our control. This is what makes it exciting"

Jon Beedell - Desperate Men

The Festival launched in Hereford on Friday 29th April 2016 and closed on Chepstow on Sunday 15th May. There was activity on all 17 days of the Festival. The Festival was a glorious creative series of

outdoor events embracing innovative artistic work that inspired and challenged, with 23 core artists driving the content.

WVRF2016 encompassed **28** events, at 28 venues on sites from Hereford to Chepstow. We exceeded all our targets: Achieving **29,800+** people attending events. **1,200** school children were involved in our workshop programme.

In addition **1,098** children had Wye Serai school visits with the Ensemble for half a day each. **539** young people worked with artists to create the flags which decorated the Festival sites.

A further **300+** people participated in community training/workshops. **1000** origami birds were made by over **200** local people from a variety of community groups which were used in one of the installations. A whole community, young and old contributed to the other installation. **328** people took part in the walking/story project.

220+ local singers, musicians and performers were involved in the performances

250+ torchbearers were involved in the Llandogo procession with a further **50** volunteer torchbearers involved throughout the Festival.

In all **18** local youth theatre groups, choirs and bands took part in the performances.

20 students from University of South Wales were involved with the project **15** of which went on to produce performances for the Festival as part of their degree assessments.

4 young Festival apprentices, including one Erasmus student from Portugal, were engaged in all aspects of the Festival delivery and arts development and with the 1000 Birds project

9 emerging Welsh artists created **3** new outdoor dance commissions showcased/trailed in Monmouth (and later performed at the National Eisteddfod at Abergavenny).

12 major Welsh landowning organisations participated in Articulture's 'Landowners & Landscape Outdoor Arts' conference, which was the first of its kind and a landmark event.

This all equated to around **21,600** workshop hours delivered pre-Festival, **3,234** hours of workshop engagement in schools. **18,300** hours of engagement in community training/workshops and 728 hours of workshop contact pre walk for the walking/story project.

The overall feedback from audience and participants was very positive. Of those interviewed, the location, organisation and entertainment of the events was rated between **91% - 93%** as excellent or good.

"The fact that extraordinary, high quality arts/performance were taking place in, what are usually, quiet, rural locations is a hugely successful aspect of the River Festival. The events generated a sense of community cohesion - people could not quite believe what was happening on their doorstep!"

Hannah Elton-Wall - Artspace Cinderford

"To strive for artistic quality, alongside an excellent process, that engages the widest possible audience, challenging where appropriate, filling a need where necessary but always looking for the wonderful."

Phillippa Haynes – Festival Director



The diversity of the audience, the quality of the engagement and participation, the opportunity of developing creativity and skills for children and young people all improved, compared to 2014. The range of places and ways in which people were able to engage with the arts activity was strengthened and was reflected in our increased audience numbers. The amount of amazing professional artist involvement in the Festival also grew, which enhanced quality and impact. It was a great success but the capacity of the Festival team was pushed and stretched.

The Festival marketing was better co-ordinated than in 2014. We improved much of the information dissemination, with enhanced digital and printed materials, both in terms of output and quality. But marketing was still perceived as the weakest aspect of the Festival. The complexity of the marketing needs, the diverse and dispersed nature of rural communities and the offer itself are all challenges which we are looking to address for WVRF2018. We also wish to improve our bilingual offer and include better signage for some performances.

The attendance and engagement for WVRF2016 of **29,800+** people would indicate that overall it was a success, outstripping targets. From the audience feedback surveys, **68%** of the respondents came to enjoy outdoor performances first and foremost, with **50%** saying that being entertained in a beautiful environment was a big draw and **44%** said they wanted to support their community.

“It brings all the community alive as it comes down the River, everyone is so proud and excited to be able to be part of it”
Rowena Barr, Lydbrook Tump Committee

“The Llandogo site encapsulated the spirit of the Festival the best” Audience Member

“The events I saw were highly imaginative and eye catching. I felt the artistic work really caught my attention and made me see places that I am familiar with in a totally different light. I loved the fact that the crowds were made up with all sorts of people – young and old. “
Lynn Bulbeck - Environment Agency

“I loved everything about the Festival, it’s amazing, brilliant” Audience member