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**EBBSFLEET
GARDEN CITY**

PROUDLY PRESENT

EBBSFLEET FUSION FESTIVAL

**COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF ARTS, CULTURE,
FOOD AND WELL BEING**



EVALUATION REPORT

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Cohesion Plus

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Ebbsfleet Fusion Festival Evaluation Report

Background

We were delighted to produce the first ever Ebbsfleet Fusion Festival and are grateful to our partners Blueprint Arts and our funders Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC), Kent Equality Cohesion Council, KCC Reconnect and Arts Council England for all their support.

For those who are not familiar (if not then why not?) we produce culturally diverse outdoor community events, with the aim of bringing communities together and promoting community cohesion through the use of arts, public education and sport. We have a long track record of delivering community focused events around Kent.

This is the second community focused festival that we have produced in Ebbsfleet this year. In January 2022 we successfully delivered the Ebbsfleet Magical Winter Garden in Penn Park which saw hundreds of local residents attend. This event gave us the encouragement to raise our ambitions and come back with a larger event with a particular focus not just on arts and culture, but also wellbeing. We feel that we more than achieved our objectives with the Fusion Festival and we look forward to working in partnership with EDC and local community partners as there is a clear appetite for similar events in the future. I feel strongly that festivals like this help generate a sense of community belonging and place, bringing together existing and new communities, creating shared experiences and positive memories.

Gurvinder Sandher MBE – *Cohesion Plus*



Marketing and Community Engagement

There was a comprehensive marketing plan in place for the event with a series of online posts, including paid adverts targeting the local community in Ebbsfleet. This included posting in local neighbourhood groups. In the build-up the promotional videos had over 3,000 views online locally and our post was shared over 60 times.

This was supplemented by articles which appeared in the local press and media, promotional videos which were shared online and via WhatsApp and over 10,000 flyers which were distributed door to door in the Ebbsfleet and Swanscombe areas. There were also banners placed strategically around the Castle Hill development to ensure maximum exposure.

In addition Blueprint Arts led on a series of community workshops working with young people. Despite the challenge of summer holidays and some of the hottest weather recorded in the UK, a group of young people participated in a series of Young Producer workshops in the build-up, contributing ideas which culminated in them producing an element of the festival. This important element not only engaged young people directly but they were also empowered to promote the festival through their friends and family networks with specially produced flyers.

Furthermore we shared information regarding the event with the Ebbsfleet Cultural Exchange, a group consisting of artists, residents and business owners who are invested in shaping activity that takes place in the area.



Post event, Cohesion Plus shared a number of short films across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. In the first week post event, the event films had had over 32,000 views.

The Event

The Ebbsfleet Fusion Festival coincided with the opening of the Platinum Jubilee Park. There is always a concern when producing a community festival for the first time, whether local residents will engage and whether the event has been programmed correctly. The hard work in the build-up did indeed pay off with around 1500 people attending, a figure which was recorded by our security team who were using clickers to count footfall upon entry.



The core theme of the festival was to celebrate the local community and place through arts, culture, food and well-being. The event and the park was officially opened by civic guests Deputy Lieutenant Rosemary Dymond, Mayor of Dartford Cllr Paul Cutler and Leader of Dartford Borough Council Cllr Jeremey Kite.



Highlights from the event included a number culturally diverse roaming and interactive performances such as the Chinese Lions who paraded and performed stunts around the park's jetty area as well as the Kings of Dhol who performed a fusion of North Indian percussion and dance to pop songs. Also performing were the Victory Sisters Trio with their particular blend of 1940's classics. DDFK Brass Band played their signature brass renditions of chart hits as well as Phase 4 Steel Pan Band who brought a slice of the Caribbean to the event. To round out the offering was Spencer Moyo who sang reggae classics befitting of the summer festival atmosphere of the event.

The non-musical entertainment available was just as dynamic with a stilt walker parading and taking selfies with the public and a face painter who decorated adults and children alike. A magician performed to large crowds engaging families with his magic and comedy routine as well as a puppeteer with a special space dog act. Superheroes met with attendees and took pictures with young children and encouraged those walking around to participate in the free workshops available. Also on offer was a pirate workshop which taught swashbuckling antics. There were also participatory workshops such as aerial hoop, yoga and interactive musical storytelling sessions for 0-5 year olds.



The event also hosted local organisations such as Dartford Arts Network, Kent Adult Education, Porchlight, Cement Fields, Playground Project and Salvation Army who engaged with attendees and promoted their services as well as offering free interactive activities. Blueprint Arts showcased their Young Producer programme with dedicated spaces where young people had opportunities to participate in a silent disco, create pieces of visual and also take selfies in a magical fairy garden.



The event ran between 12pm and 6pm and the busiest periods were between 12.45pm to 5pm with the food vendors and performance audiences receiving consistent footfall.

Feedback

On the day, event staff spoke to members of the public to capture feedback. In total 70 face to face evaluations were completed and the feedback was as follows:

72% of respondents said that the quality of the Ebbsfleet Fusion Festival was very good.

92% of respondents said the festival was value for money.

81% said that the whole experience was very good.

17% heard about the festival through social media.

40% heard about the festival through advertisement including leaflets.

33% heard about the festival through word of mouth.

93% of respondents felt that events like the Fusion Festival bring communities together and promote cohesion and understand.

98% of respondents felt that the Fusion Festival enhances the sense of community in the local area.

Comments captured included:

"What a lovely day. We had so much fun bringing the kids out to enjoy the new park and the awesome entertainment. Please do it again!"

"Thank you for putting this all on. With the summer holidays here it's always a challenge keeping the children busy but with this on our doorstep it was happy days."

"Lovely food, great entertainment and activity. Great way to open up this park."

"We had a great day. Our favourite bits were the bhangra dancers, magician and Chinese lions! Amazing to watch."

"We finally get to come to the new park and this is what is waiting for us! We loved every single minute of it and especially the food!"

"This was great and I'm glad that we got to spend the day together experiencing all this cool stuff. We really need more events like this in the area."

"The kids loved it, we loved it, what's not to love!"

"I tried an aerial hoop today for the first time and will definitely be trying it again. Can't believe all this activity was free! Would love for it to come back next year."

"We would definitely come back again if this is a regular thing. It's a wonderful family day out."

"Huge thanks to the organisers, they did a great job."

"I had so much fun, I loved the dancing lions and stilt walker! Everything was so good."

"The event was really well put together and fitting for the size of the area. Cant really complain other than I wish there were more food options."

"Really lovely event, we enjoyed ourselves and made a lot of memories. Would happily come again if it happens next year."

"Can you please have more food options! Other than that loved the samosas and ice cream! Also the entertainment was amazing"

"Would totally come again!"

"More events like these please, we need more activity in Ebbsfleet!"

"We're new to the area so its really heartening to know that events like these are happening on our doorstep and that they are free to attend!"

"The bhangra and Chinese lions performance was excellent, so amazing and I'm so glad that the kids got to see it"

"We need events like these in the area"

"I've paid to take the family to events like this in the past and am chuffed that I could bring them along for free today and the entertainment was amazing. The kids were busy all day and it left me and the wife to sit on the grass to enjoy the scenery. Can't ask for more."



Next Steps

Ebbsfleet is an area and community which hugely benefits from and is receptive to artistic and cultural activity. Given the successes of both the Magical Winter Garden and Ebbsfleet Fusion Festival, we are keen to continue delivering activity in the area, working with local stake holders, artists, organisations and residents. It is our intention to deliver a series of events subject to funding across 2023 and around the development, bringing together new and existing communities.

When delivering events like this for the first time, there are always important lessons to be learnt. Moving forward we will look to have more food and drinks options, minimising waiting and queue times. Given that this was the first time we were delivering the event, we wanted to be conservative with the number of food vendors we invited onsite, especially as we had no solid estimate of the number of people that would attend. Food is a large draw to events like these so we will look to widen the overall offer next year. We also will have look to have an additional face painter as this was something that was mentioned by some parents and something that we also observed. We felt that not having a stage and doing pop up activity worked well and is something we will look to develop next year.

