

Review of Festivals and Events 2021-22

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Context

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, no festivals or events were permitted to take place until June 2021. After this time, events were permitted to go ahead with careful management for social distancing. From 19th July events were permitted to go ahead with no social distancing required. The Festival and Events team have worked with event organisers to ensure that all events which took place after 19 July did so with careful attention to their plans and risk assessments.

Frank Turner concerts

17 – 18 July

Llanthony Secunda Priory

The F and E team worked with the Guildhall programmer and technician on delivering 2 safe socially distanced concerts for 500 people at the priory as part of the Guildhall Presents series. The events were well received by the audience and local residents and several compliments were sent to the team afterwards for delivering a well organised, safe event.

Rooftop

17 – 18 July

Eastgate Carpark

This event, was organised by Gloucester Culture Trust, Strike a Light, The Music Works and Gloucester Guildhall.

It achieved its aim of providing a platform for 18 performances / sets across dance, music, film and circus involving 70 artists. The festival also included paid roles for producers and creatives including university graduates.

892 people attended over the 3 days. 17% of these were new attendees to the event 67% felt that the event made them feel more positive about Gloucester and 72% felt that Rooftop was relevant to them.

The audience consisted of 55% Gloucester, 35% Gloucestershire, 10% further afield.

Kings Jam

22nd August

Gloucester Park

This event moved to Gloucester Park this year due to Kings Square being redeveloped.

The organisers (The Music Works) have requested that the park becomes their new festival location in 2022 because the venue worked so well as a festival site.

The event aimed to increase and diversify audiences, showcase local talent along with National headline acts and to test new income streams by charging for tickets for the first time.

3 national Headliners, 19 local performers and a national dance act formed the programme. 3 local businesses were also brought in to provide catering and the bar.

The event sold 1,142 tickets @£5 and they reached their maximum capacity of 1,313 against a target of 800 tickets. The audience was a diverse demographic of young people, BAME and people with disabilities. It is estimated that 70% came from Gloucester, 6% Gloucestershire and 14% from further afield.

Local communities were engaged in this event with the White City Venture community even painting the ticket office bus.

There were some issues with noise during the event due to a misunderstanding of the license requirements and the sound technicians. This will be rectified in 2022 with the employment of an external noise management company.

Gloucester Goes Retro

29 August

This event took over the City Centre for the day including an extension into the Docks, due to Kings Square being unavailable. It is estimated that around 10,000 people visited the event, although this is an estimate due to no footfall counters in the gate streets. 156 surveys were returned from the public following the event and 92% said they came into the City for the event, the majority were staying for the day. 43% came from Gloucester. Local businesses were also surveyed and 53% saw an increase in footfall, 43% saw an increase in turnover. 58% of businesses said they felt the event had a positive effect on their business. Feedback on the event is to include more music and entertainment and food choices in future.

Gloucester Day

4th September

Working with Gloucester History Festival and the Town Crier Alan Myatt, this event included two parades, street entertainment and stalls. The day was quieter in attendance than previous years, however there were still 1 – 2,000 attendees throughout the day. Discussions are starting to take place about the 2022 event and developing new entertainment and stalls to compliment the parades.

Gloucester History Festival and City Voices

4th - 19th September

The History Festival aimed to offer an innovative, high quality, real life and digital programming combining Blackfriars Talks, Heritage Open Days and Community City Voices. The city voices programme is developing accessible interactive events showcasing the rich diverse heritage in the city.

156 events took place including 39 Blackfriars talks. 35 of these talks were recorded and shared online.

3,094 Tickets were sold with an additional 1500 online talk bookings. Ticket sales were down 30% from 2019. This is above the national trend of festival ticket sales loss which is at 50%.

15,684 people attended the festival over the three weeks and 20 community groups took part in delivering the programme.

Imjin 70

26 September

This event was organised by the Imjin 70 committee including representatives from GCC on the group. The F and E team assisted in delivering the Cathedral service and the Military Parade that followed including a salute outside St Mary De Crypt with HRH The Duke of Gloucester in attendance. The event ran smoothly, was received well by an audience of a few hundred spectators and the Imjin 70 organisers were very happy with the event and the support from F and E officers.

Bright Nights festival

5 Nov – 1 March 22

Bright Nights is a new winter festival of lights for Gloucester. It consists of light installations in a variety of locations across the city over a period of several months. Initiated in winter 2020, owing to the national lockdowns in place last year, the majority of the activity was postponed to Winter 2021-22 instead. The works on display were commissioned from a variety of national and internationally acclaimed artists and developed by a creative production team who worked closely with the city council events team and venues. The creative production team consists of a creative duo of Vashti Waite and Katherine Jewkes.

At the time of writing the first part of Bright Nights has concluded with the second part taking place between 14 - 28 February 2022. Part one was attended by an estimated 17,000 people – this is not including the interaction with Shadowing – these figures will be obtained when the artwork is taken down in January. A successful Arts Council application for means that Part 2 will proceed between Jan – March 2022.

The weekend of 11th - 14th November brought in the largest number of people into the city – with a steady flow of families walking between the installations and staying and spending money in the city centre.

The project was city-wide collaboration between a number of partners and funders including the city council, Gloucester BID, Unlimited, FESTIVAL.ORG, Gloucester Culture Trust, Llanthony Secunda Priory, Strike A Light, Your Next Move, Historic England, Blackfriars Priory, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Visit Gloucester.

Breathing Room

Anna Berry

6 – 14 November, Blackfriars Priory

Working with the Blackfriars team, this art installation was visited by 2,657 people over the 8 days it was open to the public. It was very well received with a large number of people never having been to the venue before. Comments from the public included that although they live on the outskirts of the city they never come in and were pleased to have something to come in for and it was widely remarked on that they were so grateful the event was free.



Lumino

Ulf Pederson

11 – 14 November, Llanthony Priory

Hosted at Llanthony Priory this event attracted a total of 2,526 people over the 4 nights.

The café took £2,124.15 over the weekend. They received £189.60 in donations.

It was their biggest event of the year by far and they were thrilled at how it all went.

They have said they would absolutely love to be involved again should Bright Nights return next year or in future. "It's been brilliant."



Shadowing

Chomko & Rosier

5th November – 5th January 2022

This installation is still in place and ends on 31st December. Three lamp posts in the City centre record and play back peoples shadows. Many families have been seen interacting with this installation and having fun with it. Final interactive figures will be released at the start of January.

Scintillated Birch Forest

Jack Wimperis

July 21 – June 22, Gloucester Guildhall

This artwork was created by local artist Jack Wimperis who was selected for a competition and Sky TV series called LandMark. The sculpture needed to be displayed for 11 months and Jack chose Gloucester as the location for this. The artwork was promoted as part of the Bright Nights festival and attracted a large number of visitors to the Guildhall to see it, particularly over 11 – 14 November as part of the artwork trail.

Lantern Parade and Christmas Lights Switch On

The theme for the lantern parade this year was based around climate change and was called Guardians of Nature (Loving our planet). 6 primary schools worked with 6 local artists to create the lanterns, and the children carried them through the city centre while the Christmas lights switched on above them. Due to Covid concerns the parade did not end up in the Cathedral this year and ended back at Blackfriars Priory.

The audience was larger than previous years and an estimated 10,000 people came out to watch. All the lanterns were taken back to the schools to be put on display or were reused in the Matson Lantern parade.

Globoscope

Collectif Coin

26 – 28 November, Robinswood Hill

This event was presented by Strike a Light in partnership with Bright Nights and supported by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Although one of the three show days had to be cancelled due to high winds, 3,000 people visited the artwork on the hill. This included organised trips of families from Matson, White City and Coney Hill, who brought lanterns they had created with a local artist to the event and were rewarded with a mug of hot chocolate.

The Wildlife trust ran family activities during the event and benefitted from the interaction they had with different audiences from the city. The event was considered to be a great success in terms of increasing numbers of people visiting the Hill and café and the trust are keen to work with the council on events in the future.



Civic Events

Six civic events will have taken place this year, although some had limited numbers due to Covid guidelines at the time. Flag Raising took place on Armed Forces Day although the armed forces event had to be cancelled due to Covid guidance at the time. Gloucester Day, Remembrance Day and the Mayors Christmas party all took place in a similar way to usual years and the Mayors Civic Service is due to take place on 6th March 2022. Imjin 70 was the additional 6th Civic event this year which took place on 26th September.

Conclusion

Considering the ongoing disruption caused by the covid pandemic, the city has continued to enjoy new festivals and events, push boundaries by trialling new festivals, ideas and spaces in line with the ambitions of the Cultural Strategy. The Festival and Events team at the city council have supported numerous events and activities across the year and across multiple sites, delivering activity and providing funding, advice and guidance. Additional funding has been brought into the city and partnership projects have flourished.