

Review of Festivals and Events 2022-23

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1. Context

The Festivals and Events Team have had a busy year organising and delivering 18 events, overseeing permissions for 46 external events, 9 filming and 6 civic events.

2. Bright Nights 2022

Following on from the report for cabinet in 2021, we were successful in our Arts Council application to fund part two of the Bright Nights Festival which took place in February and March 2022. £39,043 was awarded. The total budget was £128,893.

The events that took place were:

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Windows through time

Bright Nights partnered with the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) in Westgate Street and commissioned local artist Jack Wimperis to create a series of Windows that were hung along the overhead wires. Each window represented a different era and were colour coordinated with the real windows on buildings highlighted in the same colour along the street. The event was initially postponed due to severe storms that hit the county and the display eventually went up from 1st – 16th March. It is difficult to estimate how many people came to see the display throughout this time period, but we do know that 1,500 visited the street between 4th – 6th March. So, 10,000 is a reasonable estimate for the period.



Luma

Luma, presented by Air Giants, is a giant inflatable interactive articulated and illuminated creature, who came to Gloucester for two nights on 5th – 6th March. She visited the Cathedral grounds and 1,500 people came to see her over the two nights. Gloucester Cathedral were delighted to host such an interactive art installation in their grounds, and they stated afterwards that this had opened their eyes to what could be done in the future using the Cathedral site.



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Illuminated Swim

This artwork, created by Tine Bech, initially was presented as part of the Olympics cultural programme in 2012. GL1 Leisure Centre swimming pool was transformed into light and smoke picture, that visitors could swim through while listening to a musical soundtrack that was commissioned for the piece and presented by the Music Works. The event took place all day every day from 2nd – 5th March and was visited by 1,424 paying customers. GL1 staff and CEO were delighted with the event and stated that the event brought many new swimmers to the venue. The event was very photogenic and images were used in 2 National Papers over the weekend.



Snow Globes trail

10 Giant Snow Globes were positioned across the city in a trail from 17th February – 7th March. Gloucester Schools were invited to submit artwork, models and poetry from the pupils, describing the most interesting parts of Gloucester history that they had learned about. Artist Maya Wolf then used this work as inspiration to create 10 artworks, one for each globe, which told the stories of people, places and events from Gloucester. The globes displayed a QR code, which when activated by a mobile phone made it ‘snow’ over the artwork. These received 3,242 interactions over the time period and were found in retail, leisure and cultural locations around the city.

Full marketing evaluation report for Bright Nights can be accessed [here](#).

3. Kings Square Launch Event – 30th April

The official re-opening of Kings Square took place on Saturday April 30th. The event took place in two parts. The daytime programme consisted of have-a-go circus skills delivered by Circomedia staff. The Music Works were commissioned to create a piece of music with lyrics which was choreographed with the new fountains, a dance performance from the nationally renowned Avant Garde Dance company walkabout professional entertainers and Gloucester Swing Dance and a DJ.

The evening programme included a community participation dance routine, programmed by Strike a Lights and Avant Garde, walk about entertainers/comperes and the grand finale was a tightrope walk across the Square created by Cirque Bijou and aerial artist Chris Bullzini. The walk was created to tell the story of the Severn Bore and the interaction between the waves (the Fountains and a dancer) and the Moon (Chris Bullzini).

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There are currently no footfall counters in Kings Square or walk but an estimated 4000 attended throughout the day

The event was deemed to be a great success with all Kings Square partners delighted with the great turnout and performances. The launch date was almost exactly 50 years to the day that the square was last officially opened in 1972.

Kings Square marketing evaluation report can be accessed [here](#).



4. Queens Platinum Jubilee – 30th May – 5th June

Lamprey Pie

The Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in the City started on 30th May with the traditional presentation of a Lamprey Pie. The pie was baked by The Farmers Boy chef (The Longhope pub is famous for its pies). In previous years Lampreys have been flown in from Canada, as they are now an endangered species in the UK). However, with an increasing awareness of the environmental impact of flights, and the fact that the pie has previously not been eaten – it was decided this year to create a pie from a local recipe and the Lampreys were represented in pastry form around the outside of the pie. It was presented to the Lord Lieutenant at Llanthony Priory by the Mayor and was then donated to Feed The Hungry charity who distributed it. HRH Queen Elizabeth sent a letter of thanks for the Mayor and was delighted that the pie was more sustainable this year and was enjoyed by people who really benefitted from it.

Beacon Lighting – 2nd June

The beacon lighting took place on the top of Robinswood Hill as part of an international moment of beacon lighting across the Commonwealth. A new beacon post was installed this year with help from local Councillors and the Robinswood Hill Rangers. The ceremony included a bagpipe performance of a new piece of music written for the Jubilee nationally and was attended by an estimated 1,000 people. The largest number to attend such a jubilee beacon lighting event to date.

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5. Tall Ships Festival - 3rd – 5th June

The Gloucester Tall Ships Festival was organised this year for the first time by an external company, Richmond Events Management (REM). The festival ran for 3 days and the Sea Shanty Festival, organized by Gloucester BID ran alongside this in local pubs and venues.

REM decided not to charge an entry fee for the festival but sold tickets for access to the ships and the National Waterways Museum. The festival attracted 109,000 visitors to the area over the weekend. This was an increase of 34% on footfall in the Docks/Quays the weekend before and an increase of 28% from the same weekend the previous year.

REM were initially contracted for one year with an option to extend the contract for an additional 3 events if successful. Negotiations are still ongoing with regards to a continuation with them. The next festival will be taking place in May 2024.



6. Womens Tour of Britain Race – 8th June

This national event – for the Gloucestershire stage was It was organised by Sweet Spot, that national event organisers in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council as the lead local authority for the County stage, which went through many districts with the Stage Finish being in Gloucester. Gloucester City Council supported the event with funding by and staff resources of the Festivals and Events Team who were involved in the planning and delivery on the day. The race started in Tewkesbury and ended in Southgate Street, Gloucester. Entertainment was organized to take place in The Docks before and after the race final. Around 3,000 spectators watched the race finish. It was the first time the county had hosted this relatively new event, but it has a high profile nationally and internationally within this growing sports community.

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7. Queens Baton Relay – 5th July

The Festival and Events team worked in partnership with the Queen's Baton Relay organisers and the Canal and River Trust. The relay began in Gloucester with the baton being carried into the City on a boat and ended in Kings Square, having travelled through the City Centre with 8 baton bearers being selected from the community. In total the event attracted around 1,500 spectators. The finale in Kings Square included have-a-go activities and promotions provided by GL1 Leisure Centre and was attended by the Mayor.



8. Guildhall Presents - Seasick Steve – 24th July

The Festival and Events Team worked with the Guildhall programmer to deliver this live concert in Llanthony Priory with internationally acclaimed Blues artist Seasick Steve. The event sold out with a 1,200 capacity audience. This represented a great collaboration between council teams, working with external partners and is a coup for Gloucester to attract acts of this quality and renown and testament to the skills and contacts of the programming team. The event ran smoothly although the bar providers (external contractors) did not have enough capacity on site resulting in long queues for drinks, which will be addressed in future events.

9. Luminarium - 12th – 21st August

The Luminarium, a giant inflatable walk-in artwork presented by Architects of Air, was originally planned to be in Kings Square for Easter. However, building delays led to the artwork being presented in August instead. Luminariums are large inflatable structures that visitors can walk through, that are mazes of colour created by natural daylight and coloured material. Tickets were charged for at £5 per adults and £4 for children.

Unfortunately, the Luminarium was delayed from opening due to an unprecedented heat wave on 12th – 14th August, as the inside of the structure was too hot for visitors. However, the team were able to open in the early evenings over the weekend, and ticket holders were able to use their tickets later in the week. Using the Visit Gloucester website to administer advance sale tickets and walk-up

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tickets were available on site. Over the 10 days the artwork attracted 5,509 visitors and took £25,521 in ticket sales. The full marketing evaluation report can be accessed [here](#).



10. Gloucester Goes Retro – 27th August

Gloucester Goes Retro (www.glocestergoesretro.com) was another great success in 2022 with over 35,000 visitors identified in the City Centre and many more in Kings Square and Gloucester Docks. Over 350 classic and vintage vehicles came along to provide the backdrop to the event. A live music stage with swing dancing and fabulous costumes added atmosphere to the Docks where, new for 2023, we had stalls and catering supplied by Channel Events. The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum had a successful event which saw their military village attract a lot of attention and it is likely that we will get additional military content for 2023.

New for this year was the 1970s/80s/90s area in Kings Square. A family focussed area featuring DJs, face painting, a bar, ice cream and street entertainers. 14 'high end' vehicles also featured with mixed reviews from the owners about the location. A great start for Kings Square and an area identified for further development in 2023. We also had street entertainers in the City Streets, everything from dodgy car salesman to over-enthusiastic girl guides, adding to the fun of Gloucester's feel-good festival.

Another new venture was 'Retro on the Water' which saw boat trips and vintage vessels on North Quay for visitors to enjoy. This was a successful volunteer-led activity which will be taken on by the Canal and River Trust in 2023, another partnership adding value to the event.

As a mark of respect to Cllr Colin Organ, we instigated the Colin Organ Photo Competition which attracted hundreds of entries. The family of Cllr Organ chose the winning image (from a shortlist of 6) which will feature as one of main marketing images for the 2023 event.

The event was equally funded by Gloucester City Council and Gloucester Business Improvement District with additional sponsorship from BigDug and delivered within budget.

The Gloucester Goes Retro marketing evaluation report can be accessed [here](#).

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11. Gloucester Day - 2nd September

The Gloucester Day event this year, organised by the town crier Alan Myatt was supported by the Festivals and Events team. HRH The Duke of Gloucester attended the Gloucester Day Parade, and during his time in Gloucester he visited the Museum of Gloucester and was shown around Greyfriars and the new development there was discussed. The 2 parades attracted an audience estimated at 2,000 over the day.

12. Tour of Britain – 9th September

The Tour of Britain's (men's) race was anticipated to attract 8,000 – 10,000 spectators. The Festivals and Events team worked with Gloucestershire County Council, Docks Management company and Gloucester Quays to programme a wide range of activities and music, not only in The Docks where the official fan village was based – but also across the City Centre to create a vibrant atmosphere for visitors to the city.

Unfortunately, the announcement of the death of HRH Her Majesty the Queen meant the event had to be cancelled hours before it was due to take place.

13. Remembrance Sunday - 13th November

This annual civic event incorporated the following elements:

- Morning memorial service at Gloucester Cemeteries and Crematorium
- Service at the Park War memorial including the 2-minute silence at 11am
- Military Parade through the City gate streets
- Memorial service for Hussars on Cathedral Green
- Afternoon Cathedral service

All events ran smoothly and around 1,000 people attended the War memorial service.

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14. Christmas Lights Switch on – Sat 19th November

The theme for this year's Christmas Lights Switch on was Alice in Wonderland, which was selected by artists to link into the Gloucester Primary Schools literature festival which took place the week before the switch on.

6 schools took part, working in October and November with local artists to create the lanterns.

The event took place for the first time on a Saturday and attracted 8,000 – 10,000 spectators. At the time of writing feedback from local businesses via the BID is being collated.

The Tree of Light switch-on took place shortly after the parade in Kings Square and received a much larger audience than in previous years. The new tree position, quality of tree and improved lighting scheme have been warmly welcomed by the Rotary Club, who organize this event in order to raise funds for local Gloucester charities.

Visitors were also able to visit the Quays Christmas market after the event, which stayed open until 6pm.

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15. New Projects and Commissions Fund

- a. This fund of £30,000 is designed to endorse projects and enable applicants to leverage in income from other sources. Grants awarded are conditional on the project securing its expected income from other sources. The aim is to encourage new ambitious work to be created in Gloucester and develop capacity and skills in event production. The criteria include bringing national and international artists to the city, supporting local artists and producers, employment and engagement with local communities and businesses and training opportunities for young people.
- b. Two rounds for applications for this fund were scheduled for 2022. 6 applications were received and 4 were granted funding. A panel of employees from GCC and GCT made the decisions. The 4 successful applicants were:

March – Round One

i. Strike A Light - 75 Years Our Stories

Grant awarded £10,000 (30 % of total project budget)

This ongoing project aims to share stories from the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Gloucester communities from the last 75 years since Partition.

44 workshops and activities have taken place to date and month-long dual language, multi-artform interactive exhibition will take place in February 2023 including a one-day festival. Strike A Light have been working with The Hindu Association, Indian

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Christian Community and the Elder female Asian Muslim association. The producer is Halima Malek.

ii. GASP – Soozy Roberts & Hannah Thomson

Gloucester Arts Week and platform (Arts Exhibitions and workshops)
Grant awarded £10,000 (8 % of total project budget)

This ongoing ambitious community arts development project has been hampered by so far, unsuccessful funding bids to the Arts Council. The project initially aimed to run 2 years of art exhibitions and workshops including an arts pagoda in Kings Square and multiple workshops and exhibitions, working with Matson, Westgate, Podsmead and Tredworth wards in the city.

The GASP artists are resubmitting a smaller arts council application and have scaled back their project accordingly. They are now planning on running a visual arts week and community arts development programme with weekly youth arts workshops taking place in February 2023. They then intend on running an arts week in 2024 across the city, including Podsmead and Westgate and closing in Kings Square with an arts market and arts car boot market.

They are supported by Strike A Light, GL4, Gloucester City Homes, Create Gloucestershire and Thirty Percy and have secured additional funding from Gloucester City Homes and Create Gloucestershire.

September – Round 2

i. Strike A Light – Little Big Dance & Alleyne Dance

Grant Awarded £5,000 (20 % of total budget)

Little Big Dance

We are awaiting for further information before finalising the grant payments, but this event is aimed at 0 – 5 year olds and is part of a national commissioning programme.

ii. Alleyne Dance

This event is Strike a Light working in partnership with British Transport Police and the Community Rail Partnership. The dance group specialises in African, Kathak, Hip Hop and contemporary dance forms. Working with young dancers in the city the event will showcase a public performance at Gloucester train station and on a moving train.

iii. GL4 – Burnt out in Biscuit Land

Grant awarded £5,000 (25% of total budget)

Working in association with critically acclaimed artist Tourette's Hero and a local disabled artists to develop and perform a new show in Matson. Work on the show starts in Autumn 22 and will finish with the performance in Spring 2023.

Funding has been secured from the Collaborative Touring Network.

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16. The Festival and Events team have also supported, either with time, in kind or advice and support to the following and more:

- Pride in Gloucestershire
- Gloucester Rotary Club
- Gloucester Cathedral
- Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum
- Canal and River Trust
- Gloucester Quays
- Folk of Gloucester
- Kings Walk Shopping Centre
- The Music Works
- Strike a Light