

FREEDOM FESTIVAL
ARTS TRUST

2023

IMPACT REPORT



FREEDOM festival

"LONG LIVE FREEDOM FESTIVAL!" - 2023 AUDIENCE MEMBER



ABOUT US

Freedom Festival Arts Trust is one of the pioneer organisations in Hull’s cultural revolution.

Producers of Freedom Festival, the Trust is anchored in the city of Hull and influential in the global arts sector.

Freedom Festival began in 2007 as part of the bicentennial commemorations of the first anti-slavery act in Parliament in 1807 and as a way of celebrating one of the city’s most important politicians and his work within the abolitionist movement, William Wilberforce.

In 2013 we were incorporated as a charitable trust and since then, have undergone a significant transformation to better present, in public space, extraordinary artistic programmes rooted in the thematic

exploration of democracy, freedom and human rights.

Outside of our festival programmes, we are committed to talent development and innovative participatory projects with a focus on work that raises awareness of relevant social issues in our local communities, particularly in children and young people.

Freedom Festival Arts Trust is an Arts Council NPO (National Portfolio Organisation), a member of the European Arts network In Situ, and one of the 12 partners in the national arts network Global Streets. These partnerships have put our festivals on the international stage, allowing us to commission world class projects for the people of Hull and beyond to enjoy.

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festival

DIRECTOR MESSAGE

The aim of this report is to allow you a better insight into what we do as an arts organisation, one that works all year round from our base in Hull to support talent development, by creating multiple entry points for hundreds of local people of all ages to engage with the creative projects we commission from the UK and abroad.

Also, how we proudly represent the city of Hull nationally, and internationally, as a thought leader in the development of arts festivals, art in public space and most importantly how to work with creative projects to highlight issues of social justice and to give voice to often unheard communities and minorities.

2023 has been a real example of the evolution of our work. We continued to develop our regional partnerships to prepare the ground for the

second iteration of The Awakening in March, and the first 'Freedom on Tour' programme which took place this year in Bridlington as part of our 5-day Freedom Festival.

Freedom on Tour is an initiative we're working hard to develop and build on over the next few years to reach new audiences and communities and to bring the joys, and social impact of Freedom Festival, to the wider Humber region.

The work we do is designed to be free to access to reach as many people as possible. We believe passionately that world class cultural events and engagement should be free for all to enjoy, and to sustain this work we rely on multiple funding partnerships with organisations such as Arts Council England, Hull City Council, University of Hull

and Creative Europe, as well as generous sponsorship and investment from the private sector, trusts and foundations, and individual donors. This model is difficult to sustain in the current economic climate and I cannot stress enough how important it is for us now to diversify income streams and continue to seek additional partnerships and build new relationships.

I truly hope you will be able to join us on this important journey to continue to impact so many people's lives, to bring joy to the streets, and to keep our great city on the international cultural map. Investment in the creative industries is so important to our regions success and continued economic development.

I look forward to meeting you and to welcoming you to our work.

Mikey Martins

CEO and Artistic Director of Freedom Festival Arts Trust



Photography by Tony Armit

HOW WE WORK

Our festivals are rooted in Hull and themes close to the heart of the city echo through everything we do.

We work with cultural organisations in the UK and beyond to curate and commission projects which can be linked back to Hull's identity, that carry themes which can be integrated into our communities through participatory work, and can engage, delight, and inspire an audience.

We believe the arts should be accessible. Everyone should be able to experience world-class art and take part in memorable cultural experiences. We work with our core funding partners, corporate, and creative partners, to ensure we can offer predominantly free festivals and projects for all to attend.



Photography by Tom Arran

CREATIVE PARTNERS

Freedom Festival Arts Trust is a respected and integral member of an international network of festivals as well a national consortium of cultural organisations. We are globally connected and outward looking, with a commitment to learning from our partners and sharing our working practice.

We develop, curate, and commission artists to produce high-quality work for our festivals giving our audiences access to performances, installations and exhibitions that have the power to be life changing.

We have the privilege to be able to work with, and receive funding from, the following creative organisations:



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THE AWAKENING

The Awakening is Freedom Festival Arts Trust's Winter festival, and draws on themes of Hull's maritime identity, folklore, and mythology.

This festival purposefully takes place in March, as close to the spring equinox as possible, to create a tradition for the city's communities moving from Winter to Spring. The festival welcomes people to the city centre to experience a magical blend of ancient traditions, brought to life by atmospheric light installations, sculptures, live music, site specific content and theatrical street performances.

Photography by Tom Arran

Circa

80,000

people visited the city across
The Awakening weekend

13 companies presented 39 events

3,617
community participants
directly involved

88 volunteers completed
440 volunteering hours

Economic impact of circa

£2m to the city



275k social media reach

29k social media engagement

47k social media followers

total engagement rate 11% (industry standard 2%)

OOH reach 11m

Photography by Tom Arran

festival

One of the highlights in Hull's cultural calendar, Freedom Festival has been delighting audiences since 2007.

Freedom Festival now draws circa **92,000** people to the city centre each year to experience street performances, theatre, installations, musical performances, exhibitions, and large-scale spectacles curated and commissioned from the UK and through our international network.

circa

92,000

audience came to see

270 artists from **36** companies present

136 events

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

71% of our audience would highly recommend the experience to a friend

90% of our audience had a good or very good experience across the festival weekend

84% of people planned their trip into the area particularly to attend Freedom Festival.

£32.16 average spend per head in the city centre (excluding tickets.)

4% of respondents had never experienced an outdoor arts event before.

We attracted around 3,000 new audience members to the festival.

“This is an excellent festival, which is a major asset for Hull, the surrounding region, and the UK more widely. It enables people to encounter and engage with forms of art and performance that would not otherwise be possible. I hope that this festival continues to be supported by the funding bodies and continues to thrive.”

“All the acts were children friendly, and was a very good way for kids to see different acts and types of art.”

We had

741 community participants

86 volunteers completed **886** volunteering hours

We estimate Freedom Festival had an economic impact of

£2m to the city of Hull



Photography by Tom Arran



Photography by Tom Arran



210k social media reach

61k social media engagement

48k social media followers

total engagement rate **29%** (industry standard 2%)

OOH reach **11.5m**



Photography by Tom Arran

Freedom Online:

3,141 visits **2,364** unique visits

Website

33,000 visitors **185k** page views

COMMISSIONS

We commission new and innovative work from the UK and through our wider global networks for our festivals.

We support the growth of creative ideas and are committed to art innovation in a public space. We encourage and support artists to experiment with new approaches, practices and tools, with a focus on environmental sustainability, innovation, diversity and social relevance and reform. In 2023 we presented 3 new commissions with more in development stage

TOMORROW EXHIBITION FREEDOM WOMEN COLLECTIVE

An IWM 14-18 NOW Legacy Fund commission

In this commission, the artists weave stories from Ethiopia, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Sudan using visual and textile art, sculpture, performance, poetry and photography, and provides space and opportunity to reflect on our tomorrows, how we faced them, how we dealt with them and why tomorrow is precious.

These pieces continue our ongoing support of artists who explore their experiences of displacement, giving space to represent themselves to shine light on misrepresentation of refugee's lives and experiences



Photography by Tom Arran



Photography by Tom Arran

CREATIVE PARTICIPATION

We develop and commission programmes that embed local people in internationally significant work.

We aim to encourage and engage predominantly children and young people from hard-to-reach communities in the arts through participatory projects.

These provide memorable experiences and a chance to be a part of something extraordinary. The aim is to help foster individual wellbeing, build confidence and to create stronger, more cohesive communities.

THE AWAKENING: FREEDOM FOX

THE PROJECT:

A creative participatory response to Dan Acher's *Borealis* – translating to Fire Foxes in Finnish

THE AIM:

To engage children across Hull and East Riding in the creation of fox masks, playing on the themes of nature and the spring equinox

THE OUTCOME:

35,000 fox masks were created and distributed to Hull primary school pupils, as well as libraries and children's centres in Hull and the East Riding.

4 workshop sessions leading up to The Awakening at **4 HCAL venues** engaging **247 participants**.

1,682 total workshop participants before and during The Awakening.



Photography by Tom Arran

FREEDOM FESTIVAL

4 participatory programmes

483 programme participants

3,200 hours of rehearsal and performance time

85% of all participants felt more confident, more likely to get involved in further projects in the city and felt a greater sense of community.

BEAUTIFUL BONES BY SURGE (UK)

THE PROJECT: A large-scale street performance reframing the rituals of life and death with participants including musicians from Hull Music Service and pupils from Longhill Primary School.

THE AIM: To engage members of the local community, particularly young people, in an internationally renowned project culminating in a public musical street performance.

THE OUTCOME:

6 months of project engagement

49 performers for the local community

PARTICIPATION FEEDBACK:

“Thank you for everything you did for my children that attended the Freedom Festival. It was fantastic to see them flourish throughout the 4 days and to see them interacting with people that they didn't know and following what they needed to be doing was just amazing. They will have learnt so many skills over the weekend that they didn't realise they were learning.”

– Jaime Pearce, headteacher, Longhill Primary School

“ (Beautiful Bones was) a unique, amazing experience all in all. Very well ran and went above and beyond for artists. I gained a whole new aspect in my djing, as in mixing new, different sorts of music and to a bigger crowd with different ages! Definitely a confidence booster too, walking about with a smile on my face thinking about it!”

– Aiden, DJ.



ACCESSIBILITY

We work with multiple organisations to ensure on-site and online provisions are made so our shows are easily accessible for all.

14 BSL interpreted performances

12 audio described performances and exhibitions

99% of venue and performance spaces wheelchair accessible

EVERY PERFORMANCE, INSTALLATION, AND EXHIBITION ACCESSIBLE TO BLIND AUDIENCES THROUGH AUDIO DESCRIPTION AND TOUCH TOURS

RevoLOOtion

mobile accessible toilet and changing facility on site throughout whole festival weekend

“Thank you for providing such an inclusive environment. Given permission to move around if needed felt incredible and I felt understood.”

“Thank you so much for considering autistic people and trying to make it more accessible for us. It really does fill me with hope when organisations think about how we can access events.”



Photography by Tom Arran

VOLUNTEERING & INTERNSHIPS

Our Festivals would not be the success they are without our volunteers. Our volunteer programme has engaged over **900 people since 2013**, and we welcome both new and existing volunteers each year to be a part of our team, ensuring our audiences have the best experience possible. We work with local organisations like VHEY to recruit, as well as welcoming volunteers from our academic and corporate partners.

The Awakening:

88 volunteers completed **440** volunteering hours

Freedom Festival:

86 volunteers completed **886** volunteering hours

Each year we work with interns as part of Freedom Festival, offering valuable hands-on experience of a large-scale outdoor festival. In 2023 we hosted 3 interns from the University of Hull and Grimsby Creates and 1 international intern. They worked in marketing, artist liaison, photography and event management.

“My internship at Freedom Festival helped me to realise my potential and passion for working in live events. Since completing my internship in September 2021, I have worked on landmark events such as the Platinum Jubilee and now coordinate production activity across the Leeds 2023: Year of Culture programme. I will always be grateful for the knowledge and experience gifted to me by the team at Freedom Festival.”

Cerys Burke – 2021 Intern



Photography by Tom Arran

FREEDOM festival *on tour*

For the first time, we took Freedom Festival to the East Riding, bringing two of our festival shows to Bridlington beach for the day.

It has always been our plan to expand the reach of our festival and introduce new audiences to the power of performance, and this was the perfect opportunity to do so.

Over 2,000 people came to watch these performances throughout the day and we are looking forward to bringing our 'On Tour' programme back in 2024.



Photography by Tom Arran

FUTURE PLANS

We want Freedom festival to become one of the most **innovative, biggest and most creatively renowned outdoor arts festivals in the world.**

We want to continue to bring **world class and cutting-edge performances, installations and exhibitions** to the city for all to enjoy free of charge, allowing every individual to experience something **profound, spectacular and life changing.**

Over the next few years, we plan to grow the Freedom Festival beyond Hull, allowing audiences from areas outside the city to be a part of what we do.

We want to increase our participatory work, by involving more people in thought-provoking and **inspiring projects with the aim to have a positive impact** on those who take part and the communities they live in.

We will continue to champion art in a public space and push creative boundaries. We will stay true to our roots, and continue to tackle **socially relevant topics of freedom, social justice, diversity, democracy and social reform** through the projects we curate and commission.

Freedom Festival Arts Trust would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support in 2023.

CORE FUNDING PARTNERS



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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Hull
City Council



UNIVERSITY OF HULL

MAJOR PARTNERS



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WITH THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS FOR SUPPORTING THE AWAKENING



Historic England



ACCESS SUPPORT

Vehicles for Change
Vicci Ackroyd
Julie Fletcher
Rose Priestley
Charlotte Anderson

Stage Text
Minds Eye Description
Gig Buddies
Nice Twice Club
Disability in the Arts

Network
Mencap
Sight Support

WITH THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS FOR SUPPORTING FREEDOM FESTIVAL

CORPORATE SPONSORS



TRUSTS, FOUNDATIONS AND CREATIVE PARTNERS



FREEDOM ON TOUR



TRUSTEES

K A A Okra
S Friend
N Porteus
K Denby (Chair)
M Relph
S A Christopher

P M Dalby
D J Keel
G Taylor
R Pritchard
L Alford