



IMAGINE WIRRAL – EVALUATION REPORT



Report developed by the Culture and
Visitor Economy Team, in partnership with
the Wirral Intelligence Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Imagine Wirral 2018 was an unprecedented year of culture, creativity and ideas for the borough. The ambitious 2018 programme included major events and collaborations, which placed Wirral on an international stage like never before, increasing visitor numbers and participation in transformative experiences. This evaluation report provides an insight into the main findings for major events featured as part of the Imagine Wirral programme.

THE CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wirral is a borough of contrasts. Rural areas and urban and industrialised areas sit side by side in a compact peninsula of 60 square miles and 24 miles of coastline.• The most recent population figure for Wirral is 322,796, making it one of the largest metropolitan boroughs in England.• Demographically, Wirral differs slightly to England, as it has a lower proportion of younger adults and a higher proportion of older people. In addition, life expectancy varies by around 10 years between wards in the east and west of Wirral, reflecting the large inequalities which characterise the borough.• Contrasting with the affluence to be found in parts of Wirral, parts of Birkenhead and Wallasey are amongst the most deprived in England.• Cultural investment in Wirral has historically been very low.• Research from the Active Lives Survey conducted by Sport England in partnership with Arts Council England, stated that in the 12 months prior to May 2017, 32.78% of residents in Wirral spent time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or craft (local authority average= 35.16%), indicating how engagement in arts and culture in Wirral was lower than average. <p>The Imagine Wirral programme provided an opportunity to bring cultural activity to the borough and build participation through targeted engagement.</p>
ACTIVITY	<p>Imagine Wirral 2018 was a landmark year for celebrating art, culture and heritage in Wirral and marked the first year that a creative programme of events had been developed for the borough, by the Council in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The programme consisted of major events such as the Three Festivals: Tall Ships Regatta, New Brighton Revisited, Lost Castles, Giant Spectacular and River of Light, as well as an array of community events that were supported by Imagine Wirral and delivered across the year, providing residents and visitors with a variety of local and large-scale arts, culture and heritage events.</p>
DESIRED OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase visitor numbers to Wirral through the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme• Generate additional economic impact for Wirral over the course of the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme• Secure external funding totalling £200,000 over the course of the Programme• Improve both residents' and visitors' perceptions of Wirral• Increase participation in arts and cultural events• Improve the wellbeing of those participating and engaging in the Imagine Wirral Programme• Build partnerships through the collaborative delivery of some Imagine Wirral events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an online social media presence for Imagine Wirral, attracting 500 followers on Twitter by the end of 2018
FINDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 250,000 visitors attracted to Wirral to experience the array of amazing events across the year. • Over £5m was generated for the local economy as a result of the Imagine Wirral programme. • Over £200k of external funding secured through grant and commercial opportunities. • Secured the largest ever Arts Council England bid achieved by the Council (£77k). • Over 85% of people who engaged with the programme rated their experience at events as either 'good' or 'very good' • Local schools were engaged with and over 700 schoolchildren participated in the programme. • Hundreds of volunteers supported the delivery of the events. • Brought the largest ever one-day event to Wirral in the form of the Giant Spectacular event which attracted over 80,000 visitors to New Brighton. • Social media presence greatly increased with over 1,000 new Twitter followers secured in the first 6 months. • National/global media reach achieved - Wirral's Lost Castle was featured in The Times and on BBC One's The One Show, and further afield, New Brighton Revisited attracted media coverage from the likes of Vogue Italia, while the Giant Spectacular in New Brighton made international news, including NBC News in America.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further social impact research and analysis to be conducted or commissioned next year to complement the Imagine Wirral postcards and to capture health and wellbeing benefits and local case studies. • Survey templates to be developed for local businesses and circulated a fortnight after the event to capture their impact. (recommendation has been actioned) • Engagement with organisers of local/community cultural events to be held at the beginning of the year around evaluation and template to be developed and circulated to ensure this data is captured. (recommendation has been actioned) • Sponsorship and commercial opportunities to be identified at an earlier date for events as part of the 2019 programme and a brochure to be developed (recommendation has been actioned) • Analyse when other events are happening in the city region to see if these have any correlation with visitor numbers to events. • Future programmes should include at least one momentous event a year that will act as a particular draw to visitors and complement the rest of the cultural programme. • Analysis to be conducted to assess why spend on hotel accommodation increased for River of Light, to identify if any additional provisions could be exploited, or provided for future events. • Consider developing visitor itineraries to complement future events and to entice visitors to stay in Wirral for longer.



INTRODUCTION

2018 was a ground-breaking year for art and culture in Wirral and marked the first year that a creative programme of cultural events had been developed under the 'Imagine Wirral' brand (www.imaginewirral.com). A new Culture and Visitor Economy Team was established at the beginning of the year to drive forward the programme. The new team formed part of the Economic and Housing Growth Directorate; a reflection of the Council's ambition to bring arts and culture to the forefront of regeneration and growth plans.

THE LAUNCH OF 'IMAGINE WIRRAL'

The Imagine Wirral Programme was launched on 15th February 2018 at Birkenhead Town Hall. The event was attended by over 100 stakeholders, including creative organisations and people, local businesses, Liverpool City Region partners and external funders.

The launch signified a new era for arts and cultural activity in Wirral under the banner of 'Imagine Wirral'. The logo was designed by a local creative and was the emblem for the Imagine Wirral brand, which highlighted Wirral's ambitions to explore the art of the possible, to stimulate and bring to reality people's creative ideas and to improve perceptions of Wirral as a fantastic cultural destination.

DELIVERY OF THE IMAGINE WIRRAL PROGRAMME

The Imagine Wirral Programme was a combination of major events and collaborations across the year, as well as a celebration of community arts and cultural events. The programme was delivered by Wirral Council's Culture and Visitor Economy team, in partnership with teams across the Council, Wirral Partnership, as well as with local creatives and major arts organisations. The Culture and Visitor Economy team had three distinct roles in delivering the Imagine Wirral programme of events:

1. TO DIRECTLY DELIVER MAJOR EVENTS (MAIN FOCUS OF THE REPORT)

The Culture and Visitor Economy team worked with a range of stakeholders and partners across the Imagine Wirral year to directly deliver major events. Building on previous partnership working the Tall Ships Regatta, Giant Spectacular and River of Light were all delivered in collaboration with Culture Liverpool and the Lost Castles project; the first Liverpool City Region collaborative project, was delivered in partnership with all six of the city region boroughs: Wirral, Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton and Halton.

2. TO FACILITATE AND SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF MAJOR EVENTS

The Culture and Visitor Economy team also played an integral role in facilitating and supporting major events that featured as part of the Imagine Wirral programme. These included the New Brighton Revisited photography exhibition which was delivered in partnership with Northern



Narratives and the events that took place to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War which were led by the Wilfred Owen Commemorations team and supported by the Council.

3. TO SUPPORT LOCAL TALENT AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

A key aspect of the Imagine Wirral programme was to shine a light on local talent and community events. Through the Imagine Wirral website and social media channels, such as Twitter, the team provided marketing and promotional support to an array of community-organised and partner-led events including 'The Secret Gardens of Oxton', 'International Guitar Festival', 'Wirral Open Studio Tour', 'Wirral Festival of Firsts', 'Heritage Open Days', 'Wirral Earth Festival', 'Egremont Festival', 'Wirral Arts Festival' 'Leverhulme Grand Prix', 'Love New Brighton Parade', 'Be in Birkenhead Festival' and 'One Wirral 2018'.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Imagine Wirral programme was a real flagship opportunity to demonstrate how art, culture and heritage could be integral to delivering outcomes identified as part of the Wirral Plan 2020 pledge ambitions. Over the course of 2018 the Imagine Wirral Programme contributed towards the delivery of the Culture and Visitor Economy strategies, as well as a number of the ambitions set out in Wirral's Growth Plan. Outcomes aligned to these strategies' priorities have been attached as appendix 1 in the 'graphs, tables and case studies' report and demonstrate the interdependencies between culture, the visitor economy and the associated benefits for local growth ambitions. Above and beyond the strategies that are directly aligned to the Imagine Wirral programme, it is important to recognise that the programme generated an array of positive outcomes for the priorities identified in the Wirral Plan's 'People' and 'Environment' themes. Summaries of the outcomes achieved against these themes have been outlined in appendix 2.

IMAGINE WIRRAL PROGRAMME LOGIC MODEL

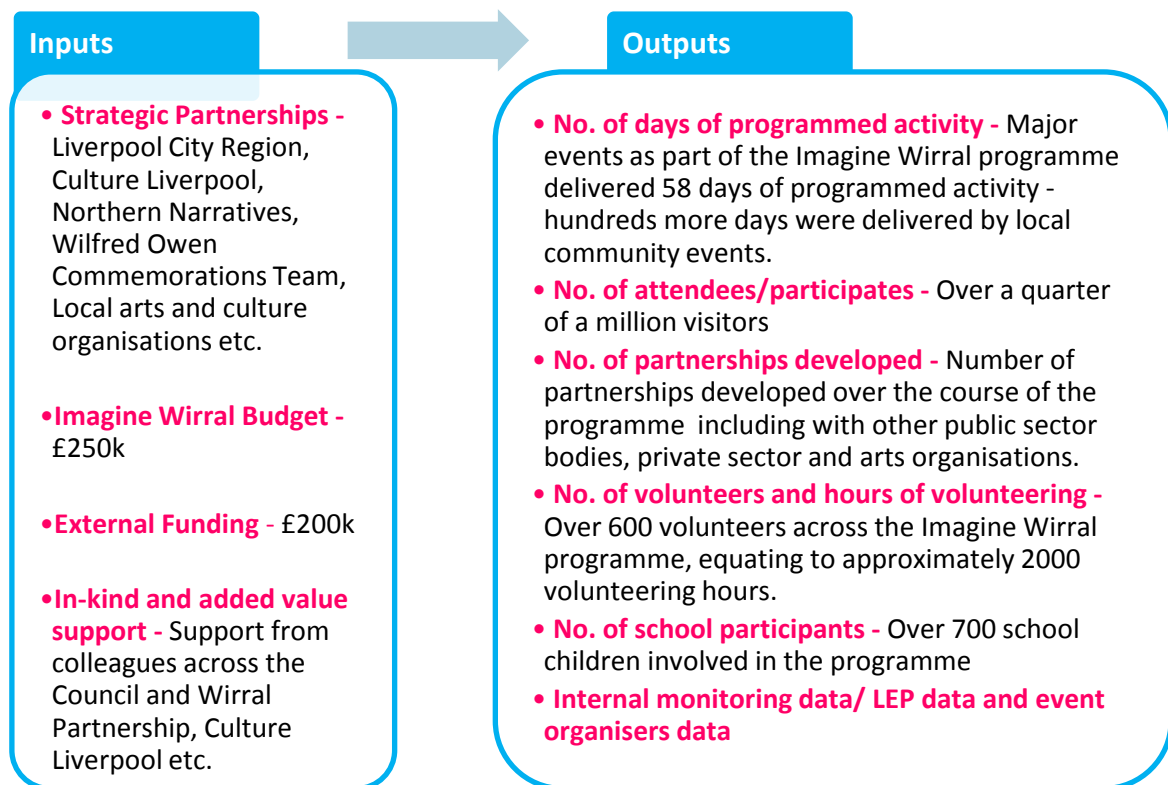
The Summary Logic Model attached as appendix 3 in the 'graphs, tables and case studies' report provides an overview of the key themes and desired outcomes that were measured through the Imagine Wirral Programme. These desired outcomes are reflective of the wider strategic ambitions of the Council and partners as set out in the Wirral 2020 Plan and can be categorised into the following sub-headings:

SUB-HEADING	DESIRED OUTCOMES
VISITORS	Increase visitor numbers to Wirral through the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme
ECONOMIC IMPACT	Generate additional economic impact for Wirral over the course of the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme Secure external funding totalling £200,000 over the course of the Programme



PLACEMAKING	Improve both residents' and visitors' perceptions of Wirral
CULTURE, SOCIETY AND WELLBEING	Increase participation in arts and cultural events Improve the wellbeing of those participating and engaging in the Imagine Wirral Programme
PARTNERSHIPS	Build partnerships through the collaborative delivery of some Imagine Wirral events
MEDIA PRESENCE	Develop an online social media presence for Imagine Wirral, attracting 500 followers on twitter by the end of 2018

The logic model includes a series of inputs outlining the resources that were required to deliver the Imagine Wirral programme and outputs that have been achieved as a product of these inputs:



IMAGINE WIRRAL PROGRAMME BUDGET ANALYSIS

The total budget for the 2018 Imagine Wirral Programme at the outset of the year was £250k. This budget was fundamental in enabling the Culture and Visitor Economy team to obtain match-funding for events from external funders such as Arts Council England. This resulted in the Council successfully securing the largest ever external grant from Arts Council England of £77k for the Three Festivals: Tall Ships Regatta event in May 2018. Funding secured from external bodies was crucial in



maximising the variety and quality of the creative programme and in bringing larger scale events to the borough.

Commercial income was also generated through food and drink concessions available at a number of Imagine Wirral events and through charging local businesses to feature their logos on Imagine Wirral banners displayed on New Brighton promenade. It is important to recognise that the 2018 Imagine Wirral programme was an opportunity to test the local authority's commercial approach and was a crucial year in enabling the Council to start building a strong track record that provided businesses and potential sponsors with confidence in the 'Imagine Wirral' brand; associating it with the ability to deliver outstanding moments and events across the borough.

The programme also benefitted from an array of in-kind contributions. For example Culture Liverpool provided in-kind support with regards to the development of the creative content for the Tall Ships Regatta, Giant Spectacular and River of Light. Contributions were also obtained from local businesses for hospitality events. These contributions included free samples such as miniature Wirral Gins.

METHODOLOGY

COMMISSIONED RESEARCH – NORTH WEST RESEARCH AND STRATEGY

Evaluation for major events within the Imagine Wirral programme, including Tall Ships, Giant Spectacular and River of Light was commissioned to North West Research and Strategy (part of the Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership). NWRS have the expertise required to evaluate events of this nature and scale, and had previously been commissioned to conduct River of Light and Community Firework surveys in 2017, as well as the Mersey River Festival in 2017. The commission included fieldwork and the production of a research report which analysed the following objectives aligned to the Imagine Wirral logic model. Sample evaluation questions have been outlined below:

To identify and quantify the visitor element of major events

- Which of the following best describes the people you are with on this trip?
- What type(s) of accommodation are you staying in?

To develop a detailed profile of the audiences, including spend to measure economic impact

- How important was the event in your decision to visit Wirral?
- Approximately how much do you think you have/will be spending during this trip?

To obtain perceptions of the event and of Wirral as a place

- How would you rate your satisfaction of the event?
- Has this event changed your perceptions of Wirral?

To explore the legacies and impacts of events to indicate future demand

- Would you attend/ participate in similar cultural events in Wirral in the future?
- How likely are you to visit Wirral again in the future?



The research was undertaken by IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme) trained fieldwork staff via face-to-face interviews with visitors during the event. Face-to-face interviewing is one of the most widely used methods of conducting primary research and allows for more in-depth data collection and comprehensive understanding by enabling the interviewer to probe for more detailed, or expanded responses.

To ensure information gathered was managed and governed effectively NWRS used Snap Survey market research software for top line results and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for depth analysis. Snap Survey software delivers innovative design, distribution and reporting tools to ensure the insight required is achieved. Research agencies use SPSS to analyse survey data and mine text data so that they can get the most out of their research projects.

Through reviewing CCTV coverage of these events and measuring the number of visitors within a metre-squared (at different event locations to ensure the calculation incorporated highly dense visitor areas and lower dense areas), the Culture and Visitor Economy Team calculated the estimated total number of visitors for each of the major events. This figure was provided to North West Research and Strategy to feature within the report findings and to enable them to assess overall economic impact of events.

IMAGINE WIRRAL POSTCARDS

The evaluation reports produced by NWRS predominately collated quantitative data, providing statistical analysis of major events. Imagine Wirral postcards were created to complement this data set and to capture qualitative feedback. The postcards asked questions such as 'Could you please describe how participating in this event made you feel? What was your favourite part of the event? And why?' The postcards enabled the events to be seen more holistically and captured attendees' perceptions of the event in emotive language, which referenced how attendees felt, providing 'the human factor' to the evaluation process.

OTHER MAJOR EVENT EVALUATIONS

An alternative approach to capturing data was conducted for New Brighton Revisited photography exhibition due to this event being led by Northern Narratives, in partnership with the Council. Northern Narratives captured their data thorough commissioning MA students from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) to conduct and collate primary research consisting mainly of audience questionnaires, but also from observations and general conversations with visitors to the exhibition. The students assembled their research findings and conducted further analysis outlined within their research report. The report encompassed findings that aligned with the majority of the Imagine Wirral logic model desired outcomes, but differed with regards to the types of questions asked to attendees and didn't incorporate questions to capture the estimated economic impact of the event.



EVALUATION FINDINGS

Findings captured for each of the major events featured as part of the Imagine Wirral programme have been analysed below. The findings have been sub-sectioned into headings that correspond with the logic model themes and desired outcomes. All graphs, tables and case studies referred to within the report are available in the 'graphs, tables and case studies' report which accompanies this evaluation.

VISITORS

Desired outcome: Increase visitor numbers to Wirral through the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme



VISITOR NUMBERS

Wirral's tourism data highlights that the peninsula currently attracts over 8.8 million day and short break visitors each year. The Imagine Wirral programme enhanced Wirral's tourism offer, bringing an additional 250,000 residents and visitors to the borough to attend major events as part of the 2018 programme.

A breakdown of audience numbers for major events is outlined in table 1.

Tall Ships Regatta - The Tall Ships Regatta event attracted nearly 100,000 visitors to the New Brighton waterfront to enjoy the three days of creative programming and activities to celebrate the fleet of international Tall Ships. The figure demonstrated an increase of 146% since the Mersey River Festival in 2017, which attracted approximately 40,000 visitors to Wirral. The vast majority of visitors attended on the Bank Holiday Monday for the Parade of Sail and Song, which saw the magnificent Tall Ships leave the River Mersey to begin the first leg of their race to the port of Dublin. Graph 1 demonstrates a steady incline of visitor numbers from day one, which could be attributable to 'word-of-mouth', greater social media presence and more people becoming aware of the event over the course of the weekend.

New Brighton Revisited - A total of 8,091 visitors attended the New Brighton Revisited exhibition. Graph 2 demonstrates how the number of visitors peaked over the opening weekend. As expected weekends were the exhibition's busiest time, due to this being the optimum time for people to utilise their 'free time'. Following week 2 visitor numbers plateaued at slightly fewer than 1,000



visitors a week. Visitor numbers for the exhibition exceeded expectations for a similar photography exhibition of this nature. This could be attributable the Liverpool Biennial being opened during the same weekend as New Brighton Revisited, enabling visitors to the Biennial to also seize the opportunity to come to Wirral to visit the exhibition whilst in the Liverpool City Region.

Lost Castles - Over 8,000 visitors participated in the Lost Castles workshops, or attended the weekend of events. Graph 3 provides an overview of visitor numbers over the Lost Castles weekend. It is important to recognise that in addition to the numbers in graph 3 approximately 100 people participated in the Lost Castles workshops the week prior to the event, 250 people participated in the Lost Castles build day on Thursday 9th August and 220 people participated in the demolition.

Giant Spectacular - The Imagine Wirral programme also brought the largest ever one-day event to Wirral, which attracted an estimated 80,000 visitors to New Brighton.

River of Light - The final event of the 2018 Imagine Wirral programme attracted 53,536 visitors to the New Brighton waterfront. This figure was similar to visitor numbers recorded for River of Light in 2017; demonstrating that the event continues to bring in crowds of 50,000 plus a year.

It is important to note that the total number of visitors attracted to Wirral through the Imagine Wirral programme will have been greater than 250,000, as the number of visitors who attended local/community events promoted through Imagine Wirral platforms have not been recorded within this evaluation.

VISITOR PROFILE

Table 2 provides an overview of the profiles of visitors attending Imagine Wirral events.

Tall Ships Regatta - Attracted the most visitors from across the city region and elsewhere in the North West and UK (46% of attendees). This may have been attributable to both the nature of the event attracting Tall Ships fanatics to Wirral specifically to see the ships on the River Mersey and could also be due to the event being held in the summer and in the seaside resort of New Brighton, which meant that visitors could combine the event with additional seaside activities in New Brighton e.g. 'going to the beach'.

Giant Spectacular - A large proportion of attendees were Wirral residents, with the remaining visitors travelling an average drive time of 20 minutes to the event; originating from elsewhere in the city region, or came from neighbouring Cheshire.

New Brighton Revisited - Had the greatest attraction for international visitors, which as aforementioned may be attributable to the event opening on the same weekend as the Liverpool Biennial. The Liverpool Biennial features a number of commissions from international artists, hence why this event may have attracted greater numbers of visitors from outside of the UK.

Lost Castles and River of Light - More localised events, with the vast majority of attendees being Wirral residents, or from the Liverpool City Region. This may be due to Lost Castles being more



of a community-based event hosted in partnership with the city region and River of Light being an annual event which conflicts with other local areas bonfire night celebrations.

VISITOR INFLUENCES AND MOVITATORS

Table 3 provides an insight into visitor influences and motivators for each of the Imagine Wirral events. Feedback collated from visitors on the day of the events highlighted that over 70% of visitors came to Wirral specifically to attend the event in question, demonstrating the importance of the Imagine Wirral programme in bringing additional visitors to the borough to experience and participate in cultural events. This was particularly the case for the Giant Spectacular event, whereby 98% of visitors came to Wirral to attend the event. Visitors may have been more influenced to attend this event due to it being the first time the Giants had been part-hosted in Wirral and due to the event marking the end of the Giants trilogy to Liverpool. This signifies the importance of ensuring that unique, one-off events feature as part of future cultural programmes, as evidence demonstrates that these types of events act as a greater draw to visitors who want to be part of history and something extra special.

VISITOR SATISFACTION

Table 4 provides an overview of visitor satisfaction levels for each of the Imagine Wirral events. Feedback collated from visitors on the day of the events highlighted high levels of satisfaction for all Imagine Wirral events with over 80% rating their overall enjoyment of events highly, with the Giant Spectacular event scoring a record 100% satisfaction level. Visitor satisfaction levels may have also been higher for events such as the Giant Spectacular and the River of Light as these events were shorter in duration and incorporated big outstanding moments e.g. the Giant route and the firework display; whereas the creative content for other Imagine Wirral events was more sporadic and across a number of days.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Desired outcome: Generate additional economic impact for Wirral over the course of the Imagine Wirral 2018 Programme and secure external funding totalling £200,000 over the course of the Programme

VISITOR EXPENDITURE

The Visitor Economy in Wirral has enjoyed sustained growth in recent years and is currently worth over £426 million annually; an increase of over 36% since 2012. The Wirral Plan for 2020 and the Wirral Visitor Economy Strategy seeks to drive the borough's visitor economy to £450 million by 2020.

The Imagine Wirral programme has contributed towards this ambition by generating an additional £5m for the local economy as a direct result of the Imagine Wirral programme, resulting in a return on investment for the Council of £25 for every £1 invested. The economic impact was deduced



by calculating what spend would have occurred over and above what would have happened anyway if the events had not taken place (the additionality). Based on this rationale graph 4 provides a breakdown of economic impact for each Imagine Wirral event.

Tall Ships Regatta - Generated an economic impact of £1.7m over the course of the late May Bank Holiday weekend. On average Wirral residents spent approximately £17.92 per person at the event, day visitors spent £23.89 per person and staying visitors spent £50.04 per person.

Giant Spectacular – Generated the greatest economic impact of £2.3m over the course of just one day. This was attributable to a higher level of visitor spending, when compared to other events and was due to attendees planning their visit as part of longer day itineraries as they followed the Giant on his route along the New Brighton promenade and at alternative times throughout the day to correspond with the Giant route schedule. On average Wirral residents spent approximately £18.22 per person at the event, day visitors spent £26.35 per person and staying visitors spent £90.19 per person.

River of Light – Generated an economic impact of £1.03m over the course of the evening. This figure was up 34% on last year (£770k). This was predominately due to the rise in figures relating to staying visitors. The overall accommodation spend had increased effecting the total impact (e.g. spending £90 in 2018 compared to £70 in 2017). On average Wirral residents spent approximately £15.95 per person at the event, day visitors spent £9.12 per person and staying visitors spent a staggering £355 per person on accommodation, travel, food and drink, as well as on other activities during their stay in Wirral.

A breakdown of mean spend per person, dependent on the type of visitor (resident, day visitor or staying visitor) for these three Imagine Wirral events have been outlined in graphs 5, 6 and 7.

IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

Throughout the Imagine Wirral programme engagement was undertaken with local businesses prior, during and post events, enabling them to plan and maximise on event opportunities and the associated increased footfall to the area.

Case study 1 provides an overview of the impact of the Giant Spectacular event on the Floral Pavilion. The Floral Pavilion was a key stakeholder in the Imagine Wirral programme and hosted three Imagine Wirral hospitality events: Tall Ships Regatta, Giant Spectacular and River of Light. These hospitality events provided an opportunity to showcase the Floral Pavilion as a suitable and ideal venue for business conferences and events to VIPs attending the event (including local businesses, Liverpool City Region partners etc.). For all of these events the Floral Pavilion also generated income through providing an additional offer for the public and visitors, through for example selling tickets for ‘afternoon tea’ to correspond with the event timetables.

Further engagement with local businesses in New Brighton following the Giant Spectacular event revealed that on average businesses rated the Giant Spectacular event ‘9 out of 10’, with 1 being



poor and 10 being excellent. Local businesses also noted the following positive impacts on their business as a result of the event:

‘Increased footfall and staff morale was also high and encouraging’

‘Increased footfall, income generation and new regular customers after the event’

‘Income was up on concessionary items by 57% compared to the same equivalent day last year.’

Hospitality events also provided a perfect opportunity for local businesses to not only network and develop new contacts, but to also showcase Wirral’s local suppliers and products. For example, Wirral Gin and Peerless Brewery beer were served and promoted during events to VIPs and local business ‘ACE Audio Visual’ provided technical expertise at events.

Procurement exercises conducted when commissioning food and drink offers to complement events also ensured that tenders would have to demonstrate how they were sourcing from the locality first, ensuring local businesses and the local economy benefitted from Imagine Wirral events foremost, before opportunities were offered to businesses outside of the borough.

PLACEMAKING

Desired outcome: Improve both residents’ and visitors’ perceptions of Wirral



PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE

A number of large-scale Imagine Wirral events, such as the Tall Ships Regatta, New Brighton Revisited, Giant Spectacular and the River of Light were hosted in key locations such as Birkenhead and Wallasey. These areas historically have poor reputations and higher levels of deprivation, including some of the most deprived areas in the UK and were therefore focal areas for the cultural programme. Within these areas, on average over 50% of people stated that they felt better about Wirral as a place and where they lived as a result of attending and engaging in the event. The remaining 50% stated that they felt the same about Wirral as a place (no-one stated that they felt any worse about Wirral as a place as a result of the events).



In addition, through bringing arts and culture to these areas the programme contributed towards the Council's growth ambitions for the borough; transforming and enhancing the visitor and cultural offer in these locations. For example the Animated Square festival optimised the use of Wirral's fantastic public and historic spaces (Hamilton Square) and showcased Birkenhead Town Hall in a new light, demonstrating the potential of the place and bringing additional footfall to the area beyond the usual 9am-5pm; ensuring the area was a brighter, safer place where residents and visitors enjoyed spending time.

Many residents highlighted the pride they felt in the area. Two examples of resident feedback from the Tall Ships Regatta event are provided below:

'Participating in this event made me feel happy and proud that my roots are here in New Brighton and Birkenhead. My favourite part was the Animated Square because it was beautiful and was very interesting.'

'Very excited and proud of New Brighton! It is wonderful after the decline of this iconic resort to see it coming back to life. It's great to see the clean sandy, the historic fort and lighthouse being the backdrop to a festival of fun events.'

During the Lost Castles event over 80% of visitors and participants stated that they felt more positive about Wirral as a place. This may have been attributable to this event being more of a participatory experience for the local community, enabling local residents and visitors to come together to build and demolish the huge cardboard castle structure in Ashton Park. Many residents who participated in this event highlighted how they had met their neighbours for the first time and had made new friendships, contributing to their improved perceptions of place.

Graph 8 highlights how the vast majority of visitors across all Imagine Wirral events stated that they would return to Wirral following the event, demonstrating the positive impression that visitors had of Wirral as a place during events. This is particularly beneficial in relation to bringing visitors back to Wirral in the future to experience cultural events as part of the 2019 Borough of Culture programme

CULTURE, SOCIETY AND WELLBEING

Desired outcomes: Increase participation in arts and cultural events and improve the wellbeing of those participating and engaging in the Imagine Wirral Programme



INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND IMPROVING WELLBEING

Opportunities to participate - The Imagine Wirral programme has been centred on the philosophy that every Wirral resident has the right to participate in arts and culture, regardless of their age, ability or socio-economic background. Extensive engagement work was undertaken with Wirral's creative communities to secure support for delivery of the events programme and maximise their involvement. This ranged from providing opportunities for organisations and individuals to perform at events, to opening up a design competition for the Imagine Wirral logo and facilitating workshops with local forums to inform the content of exhibitions. The Imagine Wirral programme was also used as a platform to promote the work and projects of local artists and creatives. Organisations were given the opportunity to use the Imagine Wirral branding to show their involvement in the extended programme. Case study 2 demonstrates how participation was made possible for the Lost Castles project.

Attendees of events also engaged with the programme over social media: Imagine Wirral Twitter page and Wirral Council Facebook page. There was a sense of wide support for the programme and there were many examples of positive reviews both from residents and from visitors from further afield. Case study 3 demonstrates how a local resident felt after participating in the Tall Ships Regatta event.

Children and young people - Children and young people were a key focus of the Imagine Wirral Programme. Local school children and youth groups were encouraged to participate and engage in the creative programme throughout the year. Prior to the Tall Ships Regatta, local school children were engaged in a 'Message in a Bottle' workshop, where they learnt about plastic pollution in a thriving, fun and exciting environment. Case study 4 also highlights how local schools and youth organisations maximised opportunities that were created to enable their young people to engage in the Giant Spectacular event.

Children and young people were also included in the Imagine Wirral programme as performers at events, from choirs through to dance troupes, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their talents. It is worth noting that children and young people also made up many of the visitors to the year's events, with engagement activities designed to engage them on the day. For example, many young children enjoyed creative activities such as building their own fish and jellyfish on a stick at the Tall Ships event, as well as partaking in circus skills workshops. Many children were also involved in both the workshops and build elements of the Lost Castles event.

Some young people also volunteered as part of Imagine Wirral events. Wirral Metropolitan College circulated volunteering opportunities to their students and a group of students volunteered for the Giant Spectacular event, providing them with an opportunity to build their confidence and communication skills.

Older residents - Over a third of residents stated that they would have stayed at home if Imagine Wirral events, such as the Tall Ships Regatta, or Giant Spectacular weren't on. This demonstrates the importance of the programme in encouraging social interaction outside of the home. This is particularly important for Wirral's ageing society. For example over a third of respondents



(43%) who attended the Tall Ships Regatta were aged 55 years or above, with the highest concentration being those aged 65 years or above, some of whom attended on their own. This indicates how the programme contributed towards tackling loneliness and social isolation, by bringing people out of their homes and into the community, improving health and wellbeing, sense of place and having a beneficial impact on social cohesion.

Accessibility - Thorough consideration was given to equality and diversity and ensuring accessibility for everybody prior to all Imagine Wirral events. For the Tall Ships Regatta event, Blue Badge parking was provided and there was a free shuttle bus to the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton. The site was fully accessible for Animated Square and on street car parking was also available. The same applied for Lost Castles; additionally for this project, workshops were made fully accessible for those with reduced mobility. There was Blue Badge parking again in place for the both the Giant Spectacular and the River of Light events

Special provisions were also organised wherever possible. A separate picnic space was organised at the Giant Spectacular event which enabled two visually-impaired children to be escorted and interact with the Giant when he was at rest. This provided exclusive access that would not otherwise have been possible and enabled the children to explore the sheer size of the Giant through touch and enjoy the event as much as sighted visitors. Case study 5 focuses on how families and young people with autism were also able to access and enjoy the River of Light event.

Imagine Wirral volunteers - Over the course of the Imagine Wirral Programme there were over 600 volunteers (majority from the Lost Castles event) who gave their time to participate and support the delivery of events. Volunteers provided a friendly meet and greet to visitors, filled out Imagine Wirral feedback postcards with attendees and completed a range of other tasks, such as giving directions to visitors and even providing tannoy announcements of the event's creative schedule.

Feedback from volunteers was incredibly positive, with comments demonstrating how volunteers had not only gained great satisfaction from their experience of being an Imagine Wirral volunteer, but had also made new connections and friendships, as well as developed their skills and confidence. Case study 6 provides an overview some of the positive comments that were received from volunteers who were involved in the delivery of the Tall Ships Regatta event. The Imagine Wirral volunteers became an extension of the Culture and Visitor Economy team and often stated '*how they felt like a member of the team*'. This was reflected in the findings from Imagine Wirral volunteer surveys, whereby volunteers gave their volunteering experience the highest possible rating for both the Tall Ships Regatta and Lost Castles.

PARTNERSHIPS

Desired outcome: Build partnerships through the collaborative delivery of some Imagine Wirral events

The Imagine Wirral programme was paramount in developing existing partnerships and forging new relationships and collaborations.





Tall Ships Regatta, River of Light and Giant Spectacular - Building on the success of partnership working in previous years, Imagine Wirral continued to maximise on bringing waterfront events to the River Mersey in collaboration with Culture Liverpool. Drawing on Culture Liverpool's expertise of bringing world-class events to Liverpool and their legacy of being the European Capital of Culture in 2008, the Imagine Wirral programme benefitted from in-kind support from Culture Liverpool in relation to the development of the creative content for the Tall Ships Regatta and the River of Light. The partnership also encompassed bringing the final part of Liverpool's Giants trilogy to the New Brighton waterfront; an unmissable event of major scale that generated a significant economic return for the local economy and attracted international attention, including a feature on NBC News in America.

Lost Castles - The Imagine Wirral programme also featured the first-ever Liverpool City Region collaborative cultural project, Lost Castles. The project was a huge success and was rewarded by winning the 'Community Event of the Year' award at the 2018 Echo Awards. The project also marked a new era for working in partnership on city-region wide cultural events, which will be hosted annually and will be a particular highlight of future cultural programmes.

New Brighton Revisited - New partnerships were also forged with arts organisations such as Northern Narratives, an arts initiative offering opportunities to experience and enter the world of photography, and Open Eye Gallery, an independent, not-for-profit contemporary photography gallery. Northern Narratives, in partnership with Open Eye Gallery led on the delivery of the New Brighton Revisited exhibition with funding from Arts Council England and in-kind support provided by Imagine Wirral in the form of providing the venue for the exhibition (New Brighton Sailing School). The success of the exhibition and partnership developed will act as legacy for Wirral's Borough of Culture year, with collaborative projects planned with Open Eye Gallery, which will continue to socially engage the local community in photography.

Liverpool City Region - Partnerships were further developed through joint working at the Liverpool City Region Cultural Partnership and the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture sub-group. These groups bring together each of the local authorities, major arts organisations, local universities and media, as well as other public service leads to drive forward the Liverpool City Region Culture and Creativity Strategy.



Wirral Cultural Partnership – The partnership continued to drive forward the delivery of Wirral's Culture Strategy and was fundamental in providing feedback, which helped to shape the Imagine Wirral programme.

Wirral Partnership - The partnership was fundamental in providing support for the Imagine Wirral programme. Key partnerships during events included working collaboratively with Merseyside Police to ensure adequate event safety procedures and security were in place for all events as part of the programme, and working in partnership with Wirral Met College to provide opportunities for local young people and students to participate in the programme. The Imagine Wirral team also worked closely with Wirral Chamber of Commerce to ensure local businesses were engaged in the programme of events and invited to hospitality events.

Local Businesses - The team worked particularly closely with local businesses such as Cammell Laird, Biffa and Veolia. Cammell Laird inputted into the development of the incredible Animated Square projection show, which showcased the history of the shipbuilding yard, alongside the wider story of Wirral's unique history and Biffa was also a key partner throughout the programme, ensuring that the local environment was clean and safe for visitors during the event, improving residents' and visitors' impressions of Wirral as a place. Case Study 7 provides an overview of the partnership developed with Veolia for the Tall Ships Regatta event.

External Funders - The Imagine Wirral programme would not have been possible without the support of external funders such as Arts Council England. The Imagine Wirral programme successfully secured the largest ever Arts Council England bid achieved by the Council (£77k), which was used to maximise on the scale and quality of the creative content for the Tall Ships Regatta event. Arts Council England also supported the Lost Castles project, the Giant Spectacular and New Brighton Revisited. This funding was pivotal in ensuring Imagine Wirral 2018 was a memorable and transformative year.



LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the successful delivery of the 2018 Imagine Wirral programme there have been several points of learning which will need to be taken into consideration for Wirral's 2019 Borough of Culture year. The table below highlights the key lessons learnt and the associated recommendations:

LESSON LEARNT	RECOMMENDATIONS
The LEP evaluation provides visitor insight and analyses economic impact, but does not capture social impact, or impact on local businesses.	Further social impact research and analyse to be conducted or commissioned next year to complement the Imagine Wirral postcards and to capture health and wellbeing benefits and local case studies. Survey templates to also be developed for local businesses and circulated a fortnight after the event to capture their impact. (Recommendation actioned - template has been developed for Borough of Culture)
The impact of the Imagine Wirral programme on local community events has not been recorded within this evaluation as a process was not developed to capture this data.	Engagement with organisers of local/community cultural events to be held at the beginning of the year around evaluation and template to be developed and circulated to ensure this data is captured. (Recommendation actioned – engaged with local organisers)
More marketing 'lead in time' required for attracting sponsorship/commercial income	Sponsorship and commercial opportunities to be identified at an earlier date for events as part of the 2019 programme and a brochure to be developed, presented and circulated to potential sponsors for Borough of Culture at the beginning of the year to provide necessary lead in time. (Recommendation actioned – sponsorship brochure developed and event hosted for local businesses)
Visitor numbers tended to be impacted by other events in the local area or city region	Analyse when other events are happening in the city region to see if these have any correlation with visitor numbers to events.
Visitor satisfaction levels were much higher for events that were of significant scale and of a one-off nature.	Future programmes should include at least one momentous event a year that will act as a particular draw to visitors and complement the rest of the cultural programme.
The River of Light event resulted in a significant economic impact compared to the previous year due to an increase in staying visitor spend	Analysis to be conducted to assess why spend on hotel accommodation increased for River of Light, to identify if any additional provisions could be exploited, or provided for future events.



Visitor expenditure on food and drink was the highest area of spend (apart from travel and accommodation for staying visitors) and was particularly high for Tall Ships due to the scale of the food and drink provision and potentially due to the commission of the continental market.	Scale of food and drink offer to be considered for each event and extra provision to be provided if required.
Visitor expenditure on other attractions was low for the majority of events	To maximise on this spend in the future visitor itinerary options could be developed for events that cover the whole day, or span a number of days enabling visitors to make the most of their time in Wirral by combining their visit with other attractions e.g. Wirral Museums

EVALUATION CONCLUSION

Imagine Wirral 2018 was a huge success, attracting substantial footfall to the borough, showcasing Wirral on a regional, national and international platform like never before, generating a staggering economic impact for the borough and providing a real flagship opportunity to demonstrate how arts, culture and heritage could be integral to delivering the outcomes identified as part of the Wirral Plan pledge ambitions.

Special moments over the course of this year have included the Tall Ships festivities, New Brighton Revisited photography exhibition, the Lost Castles project which saw incredible historic structures built across the city region from cardboard boxes, the Giant Spectacular – the largest one day event ever brought to Wirral – and the third River of Light celebrations.

Imagine Wirral 2018 delivered above and beyond our ambitions and aspirations for the year and is now the name behind delivering world-class cultural events to the residents of Wirral and beyond. In 2019, the borough is building on the success of its 2018 programme with another extraordinary line-up of events and creative projects as it becomes Borough of Culture for Liverpool City Region, awarded by the Combined Authority.



