

CONCERTA



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National Rural
Touring Forum

Contributing to Community Enhancement through Rural Touring Arts (CONCERTA)

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The CONCERTA Project

In 2016, Arts Council England (ACE) launched the second round of calls for proposals to the Research Grants Programme. The call sought proposals aimed at collaborative research work to develop the evidence base around the impact of arts and culture. The role of the Research Grants Programme is to generate evidence:

- to better understand the impact of arts and culture;
- to make the best case for arts and culture in the context of reduced public spending; and
- to promote greater collaboration and co-operation between the arts and cultural sector and research partners.

CONCERTA has been a national study of the benefits, for local community development, of a relatively under researched form of creative activity: rural touring arts.

Devised by the **National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF)** (Lead Applicant), in collaboration with the **Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) at Coventry University** (Research Partner), the **CONCERTA** project (Contributing to Community Enhancement through Rural Touring Arts) was provided with funding of circa £150,000 by ACE under the terms of the Research Grants Programme for the period from December 2016 until March 2019. NRTF was the Lead Partner and accountable body, with oversight provided by a Steering Group, chaired by NRTF and including ACE and the NRTF Board.

CONCERTA has been based on a mixed methods research design, combining the development of a national, geo-referenced data-driven evidence base of professional rural touring activity with the production of a series of more qualitative case studies of the impact of touring rural arts.

The choice of case studies included a return to some of those areas studied by Matarasso (2004) *Only Connect* in consideration of the potential of the cumulative impact of rural touring through time.

The project was designed to support NRTF and its Scheme members in their professional activities.

The project encompassed five methodological strands:

- *Rural Touring Schemes organisational characteristics, activities and impacts*: An on-line questionnaire was sent to all 24 English Rural Touring Schemes funded in 2016.
- *Mapping the patterns and characteristics of English rural touring arts activity*: a comprehensive, geo-referenced evidence base of five years of English Rural Touring Scheme activity, for all 24 English Rural Touring Schemes funded in 2016. This comprises over 700 digital maps.

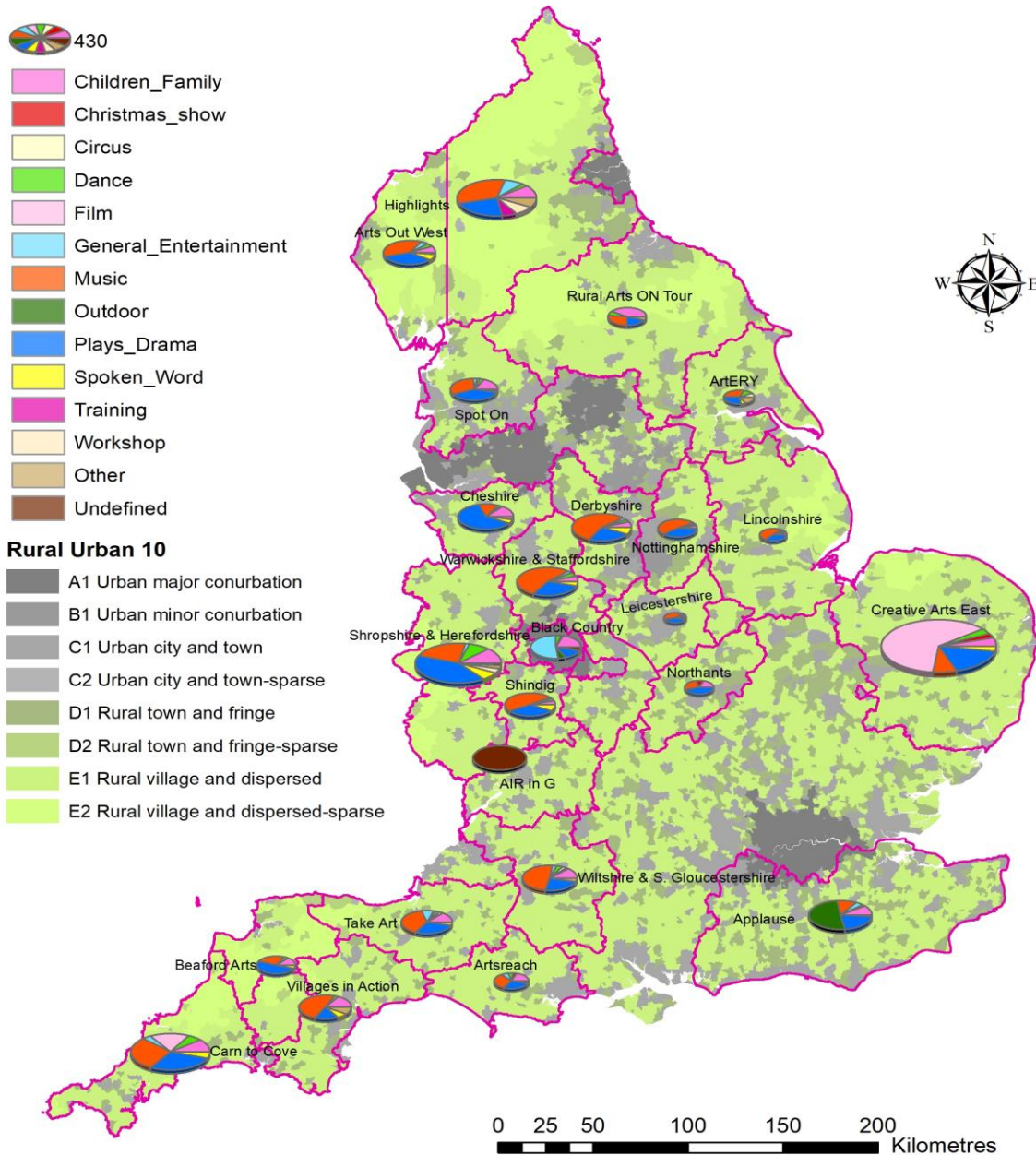
Activity data collected through the scheme survey has been combined geographically (using ESRI ArcGIS) with socioeconomic data from sources such as Census (census.edina.ac.uk), Neighbourhood statistics (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk) and Employment (www.nomisweb.co.uk).

- *Case Studies of the impacts of rural touring activities*:
 - Five Core Cases were selected reflecting levels of 'rurality' in Rural Touring Schemes;
 - Two 'Cumulative' Cases and an interview with François Matarasso - representing a return to local rural touring areas previously studied by Matarasso (2004); and
 - Two 'Non-Scheme' Rural (touring) Arts Investigations to investigate the possible benefits and impacts of other, often amateur, arts-based activities, rather than professional Touring Schemes. In the spirit of co-design and partnership, these cases were undertaken by NRTF with oversight by Coventry University.
- *Supporting professional touring development and wider dissemination*: a range of knowledge transfer and technical expertise activities to support NRTF, their membership Schemes and broader understanding of the characteristics and benefits of professional rural touring.

Rural Touring Schemes: Delivering arts and culture to rural communities

Below is an example of one of the national maps produced from Scheme data, representing number of different art-form types by location in 2012-2017, by Scheme, mapped against national Rural Urban Classification 10.

National Rural Touring Forum Summary - RU 10: Artform Type



This map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right [2013], and Office for National Statistics (2017): 2011 Census aggregate data UK Data Service (Edition: February 2017). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5257/census/aggregate-2011-2>, and Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census: Digitised Boundary Data (England and Wales). UK Data Service Census Support. Downloaded from: <https://borders.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>. This information is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence [<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3>].

In summary, the Rural Touring Schemes represent a set of small, relatively stable, long-established organisations. Overall, annual turnovers are low, and very low in some instances, and this is reflected in employment structures. These range from between one and ten employees, often supported by a freelancer or several. The Schemes exhibit substantial variety in terms of company structure. Some are private companies, some are effectively franchises or projects run by other companies, and some are community interest companies. Many of the more established companies are charities.

Between them the Schemes deliver annually between 2,000 to 2,500 events, incorporating a wide portfolio of art-form performances and a small number of more interactive activities (including workshops, training, etc.). These are distributed across between 800 to 1,000 venues although there is some evidence that venue numbers may be dropping. Over the last five years, the Schemes have jointly delivered 9,500 events to audiences numbering just over 700,000. Annual average audiences per event sit at a highly consistent 70 to 80 person annual average.

ACE funding is core to the sector, with 21 of the 24 Schemes attaining National Portfolio Organisation status, and seven in which ACE funding accounts for over fifty percent of funding. Ticket sales represent around a third of Scheme incomes, with notable variation across Schemes. Local Authorities remain the other main funder, although at an increasingly low scale.

Change dynamics are evident across the sector but one relationship is clear: simply put, the greater the turnover, the more staff are employed, the more freelancers used and the more events are programmed.

The impacts of rural touring

Table ES1 (overleaf) summarises the range of impacts of rural touring identified by the research. Bringing arts activity - quality, diverse, and challenging arts activity - to a substantial range of accessible and remote rural areas, rural touring has been shown to be integral to catalysing and supporting community life in English rural areas, especially as other village 'anchors' have diminished.

The act of bringing touring arts to rural areas (engagement and participation) generates a range of individual and community benefits, including personal development and well-being, community assets and capacity and, ultimately, stronger rural communities.

Table ES1: The Impacts of Rural Touring Arts

<p>Promotes participation in the arts and creative activity</p>	<p>Engagement Participation Inspiration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides and catalyses high-quality, accessible, affordable, arts activity in people’s own local rural communities • Encourages engagement with the arts and creative activity, including a broader appreciation of the arts and its diversity • Inspires audiences to attend other, and a wider variety of, arts and culture events • Inspires people to take up a personal interest in the arts and creative activity – and raises the aspirations of those who already participate • Potential individual health and well-being outcomes given generation of emotion, thought, challenge, captivation, empowerment, etc. through engagement and participation
<p>Builds art and community assets</p>	<p>Activities Buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops new programmes and strands of village activity, including the identification, rethinking and re-using of existing assets • Provides an income stream for local activities, facilities and employment • Supports the provision of new community centres and facilities, including their development as arts venues • Acts as a ‘magnet’ to other arts activities to encourage the development of cultural hubs, venues and events • Contribute to, and potentially form, ‘community anchors’ – and their capacity to deliver broader services, and social, economic and rural development
<p>Generates individual and community capacity</p>	<p>Volunteering Skills Networks Activism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings local people together to plan and support activity in arts and culture – volunteering • Develops individual confidence and skills • Generates volunteering, interest groups and social networks • Generates voluntary activity and self-organisation beyond the arts – community activism
<p>Builds stronger senses of community</p>	<p>Inclusion Identity Cohesion Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings people together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces social isolation and builds (new) social relationships - Provides non-threatening environments (e.g. for challenging experiences/ people with protected characteristics) - Promotes diversity and challenges stereotypes - Develops community cohesion • Develops a sense of pride in, and belonging to, community • Reduces fear and contributes to community safety

Issues, challenges and good practice

In providing an updated national overview of the organisational characteristics, activities, and impacts of the ACE-funded English Rural Touring Schemes, a number of issues were raised by interviewees (Table ES2). These centred around aspects such as: funding and sustaining the rural touring arts model; strategy and rationale (and achievement of them); and, operational effectiveness.

TableES2: Issues for Rural Touring Arts

Issues	Description
Funding Quality Performances	<p>The reducing subsidy model reaching a point where it is becoming unviable to programme</p> <p>Financial models and pressures leading to lack of risk and ‘safe programming’ – can communities be rewarded for riskier programming?</p> <p>What is quality anyway?</p>
Limits of the model	<p>Touring model focusses companies on touring performances only - missed opportunities for innovative workshops/ community arts/ targeted commissions etc.</p> <p>Contradictions of promoting high-quality professional events through unpaid volunteers – and the growing challenges of ‘professionalisation’</p> <p>Skills concentrated in the hands of a small number of people</p> <p>Spread too thinly?</p>
Diversity	<p>Achieving cultural diversity throughout the rural touring model</p> <p>Lack of work around protected characteristics</p>
Succession	<p>Narrow and shrinking group of ageing promoters – and volunteers</p> <p>Limited work to develop skill and succession in communities</p>
Who benefits and who comes to events?	<p>Are touring shows catering for an audience who would access the arts anyway?</p> <p>Could the spending have more impact if it was better targeted?</p> <p>What do we know about the local people who do not attend?</p>

The research was able also to point to examples of responses to such challenges across the Schemes. Table ES3 overleaf provides some examples of Good Practice identified during the research programme.

Table ES3: Good Practice Examples in Rural Touring Arts¹

Organisation	Description
NRTF	Programmes to promote quality and innovation at a local level e.g. Rural Touring Dance Initiative (in partnership with The Place, Take Art and China Plate)
Schemes	<p>Targeted development schemes for promoters (Young Promoters Scheme Black Country Touring and Creative Arts East)</p> <p>Collaboration and joint projects between schemes for strategic outcomes (Shropshire and Black Country “My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding”)</p> <p>Using programming to challenge racism and promote diversity (Spot on Lancashire, “The Chef Show”)</p> <p>Targeted support for Promoters (Village Ventures/ Live and Local - patch based link workers)</p> <p>Tailored support schemes for artists (Developing Artists For Rural Touring (DART) Scheme, Live and Local)</p> <p>Transparent, tiered risk-based subsidy rating for different performances (Spot on Lancashire)</p> <p>Pitching Meetings bringing local promoters together before each season to consider the whole menu of shows as a group, talk through what would work for them and organise dates together (Carn to Cove)</p>
Venues	<p>Volunteer support and training (Wem Town Hall)</p> <p>Community capacity building (Borwick and Priest Hutton)</p> <p>Driving wider programming through the use of rural touring programme to test out/pilot approaches/art-form/ artists (Bulkington Community and Conference Centre)</p>

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Given learning from this research, further enhance the NRTF Annual Survey instrument. Consider how this supports regular sector level development of impact reporting.

Recommendation 2: NRTF to consider further the role of Rural Touring Schemes within current policy horizons over and above engagement and participation in the arts, such as in ‘supporting anchors of local community/rural development’, ‘contribution to civil society capacity’, ‘enhancing social cohesion’ and, ‘delivery of health and well-being’.

Recommendation 3: Continued recognition and development of NRTF sector support to Schemes – communication and feedback; training, dissemination of reports, guides and resource packs (‘help fuel’); and, strategic programmes to promote excellence and innovation at a local level.

Recommendation 4: For the sector and its stakeholders to consider strategic responses to key challenges raised by this Report: Succession and Sustainability; Sustainability: funding and finance; and Diversity and Cohesion.

Recommendation 5: To consider research on Rural Touring Arts and Health and Well-Being as a substantial emerging research priority.

¹ These examples are drawn solely from the Report Case Studies. Good practice examples exist across the Rural Touring Schemes

1 Introduction

1.1 CONCERTA and the ACE Research Grants Programme

In 2016, Arts Council England (ACE) launched the second round of calls for proposals to the Research Grants Programme. The call sought proposals aimed at collaborative research work to develop the evidence base around the impact of arts and culture. Specifically, the role of the Research Grants Programme is to generate evidence to:

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NRTF was the Lead Partner and accountable body for the project.

The National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF)

The **National Rural Touring Forum** is a member led organisation that works strategically with partners to develop work and deliver high-quality art experiences that strengthen rural and other communities (see <http://www.ruraltouring.org/>). NRTF is the leading voice for the rural touring sector across the UK.

NRTF objectives are to:

- provide the rural touring network with training, information and networking services;
- deliver and enable innovative work, international partnerships and commissions; and
- promote better understanding of the value of rural and community touring through research and advocacy.

NRTF membership reflects the range of touring schemes that exist, from independent not for profit companies through to individuals and organisations with an interest in promoting professional arts with rural communities, including performers, promoters, small venues, festivals and producers. Across the UK there are currently around thirty member schemes and 1,650 promoting groups.

NRTF is supported in its work by Arts Council England and is a National Portfolio Organisation.

The Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University is an interdisciplinary research centre of around thirty full time researchers. Its mission is to deliver effective solutions to policy makers, businesses and industries that reflect responsible practice. Through understanding the impact of organisations' activities, behaviours and policies, the Centre's research seeks to promote responsibility and to change behaviours so as to achieve better outcomes for

economies and societies (see <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/business-in-society/our-research/>). CBiS acted as Research Partner for the project.

Oversight and advice was provided by a Steering Group, chaired by the Director of NRTF and included representatives from ACE and the NRTF Board.

1.2 Recognising the Socio-economic Impacts of the Arts – in Rural Areas²

Even since before 1946, with the formation of the Arts Council (then the Arts Council of Great Britain), there has been a tacit, and increasingly explicit, belief by successive governments and governmental institutions that the arts has a positive role to play in promoting civil society and positive social change. In the 1990s this was epitomised through creation of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), discussion of the role that the arts could play in economic and social regeneration (Landry et al., 1993) and the influential report by François Matarasso (1997) *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. Nevertheless, over the decades political faith in, and discussion of, the evidence for arts as a social and economic panacea has waxed and waned (see for example: Reeves, 2002; Florida, 2005; Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Bop Consulting, 2012; Mowlah et al., 2014; Blackburn et al., 2014; DCMS, 2016).

Notwithstanding the emphasis on the value of arts and culture in stimulating social and economic regeneration and place-based development, there has been a recognition of the relative neglect of rural areas in terms of debate, policy and spending (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Harvey et al., 2012; ACE, 2015). A body of evidence has slowly built detailing that the nature of the arts economy and arts practice in rural areas is distinctly different from that in urban areas – with some even suggesting a ‘rural aesthetic’ - and that the arts sector has an important and distinctive role to play in the social and cultural fabric of rural areas (Matarasso, 2005; Bell and Jayne, 2010; Robinson, 2010).

Touring arts is one such example of rural provision with, for example, Matarasso’s (2004) defining study graphically identifying some of the key issues confronting a touring arts approach to arts provision, including drawing important distinctions between the challenges faced by relatively ‘isolated’ and ‘accessible’ rural communities and the range of venues and variety of activities associated with this activity. His aim was to investigate the role that touring arts and theatre can have in enabling rural communities to access diverse high-quality arts programmes which - through developing an infrastructure of promoters, venues and activities – arguably can lead to continuing and sustainable social, economic and cultural impacts in rural areas (Matarasso, 2004).

More recently, the Arts Council’s own *Rural Evidence And Data Review* (2015) has suggested that arts spending in the rural context has greater impact pound for pound than spending in urban areas, including citing analysis of arts participation and audience data from the Arts Council *Taking Part* survey; this has shown that people living in rural areas across all socio-demographic groups are more likely to be engaged with the arts than their urban counterparts.

Thus, in the ACE (2013) *10 year Strategic Framework*, geography and place are noted to matter significantly to the experience, reach and impact of arts and culture: “we must take account of the differing needs of different places...[and]...of the respective needs of rural and urban communities so that people are not disadvantaged by where they live” (p. 29). Similarly, touring art formed an important part of Goal 2 of the ACE (2013) Strategic Framework, which promised to “...increase the reach of art and culture through funding the touring of work” (p.47). Most recently, a ‘rural evidence review and position statement’ is being developed as part of the consultation process for the ACE Strategy 2020 – 30.

² A short contextual literature review was provided in Bos et al. (2018) *Contributing to Community Enhancement through Rural Touring Arts: An Interim Report to NRTF*, Centre for Business in Society, November.

1.3 Researching the Impacts of Rural Touring Arts

1.3.1 CONCERTA

CONCERTA has been a national study of the benefits, for local community development, of a relatively under researched form of creative community activity: rural touring art. Co-designed by the NRTF and Coventry University, CONCERTA has examined the contribution of rural touring arts to the development of different kinds of rural communities in England.

The project was designed to assess a range of socio-economic outcomes that may be generated for individuals and local communities from rural touring activity. The main focus was on 'soft outcomes' – ranging from individual participation, skills, confidence and sense of wellbeing through to potentially enhanced community assets, activities and sense of place. It sought, also, to build from Matarasso's (2004, 2005) foundational studies, including if and how touring arts impacts are sustained through time.

CONCERTA has combined researchers from Coventry University with the largest and longest established network of rural arts companies in England (NRTF), to provide a national insight on the rural and social geography of arts participation and impact, acknowledging the diversity of countryside areas and (sub)populations (including those with protected characteristics)³. CONCERTA has sought to answer the following research question:

“What are the individual and community benefits of professional rural touring arts?”

CONCERTA's investigation was framed by four conceptual dimensions, or hypotheses:

- 'Rurality': the potential need not only to take account of and understand the different needs of rural (versus urban) communities but, also, to reflect the diversity of rural communities themselves (rural differentiation), including possibly the notion of 'a rural aesthetic';
- 'Quality': ACE has a key expectation of quality of arts and arts experience achieved by its funding. In 2018, following a pilot in 2015/2016, it was announced that the quality matrix tool, "Impact and Insight Toolkit", would be rolled out for use by all NPOs⁴. Given most Rural Touring Schemes are NPOs this framework and the toolkit can be expected to define strongly approaches to quality and excellence. The framework has not signalled a change in the way ACE view the importance of professionalism, and most particularly the important message that quality work has a direct link with the engagement of professional artists - bringing professional artists and arts companies into rural settings is the core mission for Rural Touring Schemes;
- 'Time': examining the cumulative impact of rural touring activities through time, involving direct comparison with Matarasso (2004) and trend information on rural touring activity; and,
- 'Impact': the range of individual and community socio-economic outcomes and impacts that may be generated by rural touring activity, such as participation, health and well-being, economic and community development.

³ Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

⁴ All regularly funded organisations will have their work assessed by this new methodology, around the following themes: Concept: it was an interesting idea; Presentation: it was well produced and presented; Distinctiveness: it was different from things I've experienced before; Challenge: it was thought-provoking; Captivation: it was absorbing and held my attention; Enthusiasm: I would come to something like this again; Local impact: it is important that it's happening here; Relevance: it has something to say about the world in which we live; Rigour: it was well thought through and put together; Originality: it was ground-breaking; Risk: the artists/curators really challenged themselves; and, Excellence: it is one of the best examples of its type that I have seen.

1.3.2 Research design and methodology

CONCERTA has been based on a mixed methods research design, combining the development of a national, geo-referenced data-driven evidence base of professional rural touring activity with the production of a series of more qualitative case studies of the impact of touring rural arts and culture.

The choice of case studies included returning to some of those areas included in Matarasso (2004) in consideration of the potential of the cumulative impact of rural touring through time.

The project was designed also to support NRTF and its members in their professional activities as arts organisations.

The project encompassed five methodological strands:

- **Rural Touring Schemes organisational characteristics, activities and impacts:** An on-line questionnaire was sent to all 24 Rural Touring Schemes funded in 2016 (see Annex 2 for a List of the Schemes and Annex 3 for the Questionnaire Survey). A 100% response rate was achieved.

This survey established the nature and key characteristics of English Rural Touring Schemes and sought their views on the socio-economic impacts generated by their programmed activities. It also sought information on which performances and activities were believed to be the most and least successful in producing particular impacts.

- **Mapping the patterns and characteristics of English rural touring arts activity:** a comprehensive, geo-referenced evidence base of five years of English Rural Touring Scheme activity, for all 24 English Rural Touring Schemes funded in 2016. Touring Schemes submitted data on all events and performances by art-form type, delivery model, venue and audience numbers. A 100% response rate was achieved.

Activity data collected through the scheme survey has been combined geographically (using ESRI ArcGIS) with social and economic census attributes from sources such as Census data (census.edina.ac.uk). This mapping included contextual variables such as age, income and ethnicity and against level of rurality (determined with reference to the national 2011 Rural Urban Classification).

This GIS analysis and mapping has provided insight into the geographical development and characteristics of professional rural touring⁵.

- **Case Studies of the impacts of rural touring activities:** In total, seven case studies were undertaken:

- **Five Core Cases** were selected to reflect 'rurality' – operationalised based on rural differentiation by official government definitions of rurality⁶. There were two 'accessible rural' Schemes (Nottinghamshire and Lancashire) and two 'remote rural' Schemes (Shropshire/Herefordshire and Cornwall). In addition, there is an interesting 'historical anomaly' – Black Country – which is funded under the Rural Touring Scheme but would be classified as 'urban'. In reality, this organisation works across urban and rural communities (and boundaries), including at national level, and was chosen given the potential for further learning.

The methodology applied to these cases was centred around the rural touring process including focus on an individual performance taking place during the period of the research.

⁵ See Annex 5 for full details of rurality classification methodology.

⁶ See Annex 5 for full details of rurality classification methodology.

- *Pre-performance* interviews and, if possible and appropriate, focus groups took place with the relevant organisational stakeholders such as the Touring Scheme, the Promoters, the venue, and volunteers supporting the performance to take place;
 - Researchers attended the *Performance*, at the end of which an audience survey was undertaken (see Annex 4), reflective field notes made and, if possible, interviews with the performer/s undertaken shortly after the event; and
 - *Post-performance*: entailed a further follow-up survey of audience members – on-line and telephone - to ascertain the potential continuation of event impacts.
- **Two ‘Cumulative’ Cases** (one accessible rural: Warwickshire; one remote rural, Cornwall) represented a return to local areas previously studied by Matarasso (2004). In these instances, interviews and focus groups took place with the Touring Scheme managers and individuals involved closely in the Scheme at local level.

The 24 Touring Schemes, their rural classification in the study and the case study sites where local events funded by the Touring Schemes were researched, including promoters, venues and audiences (where applicable), are mapped in Figure 1.1 below.

- **Two ‘Non-Scheme’ Rural (touring) Arts Investigations:** the aim was to investigate the possible benefits and impacts of other, often amateur, arts-based activities, rather than professional Touring Schemes, with their greater focus on quality as determined by ACE funding. One accessible rural case, Berkshire, and one remote rural case, Devon, were selected. In reality, finding such case study locations proved problematic – principally due to the extent and reach of Touring Schemes and which have built a substantial history of activity and geographical reach across England’s rural areas. It was almost impossible to find venues in rural settings that had not been touched by the Rural Touring Scheme at some relatively recent point in time.

In the spirit of co-design and partnership, these cases were undertaken by NRTF with oversight and direction by Coventry University. This did provide some challenges for the realities of working ‘at a distance institutionally and physically’ such as, for example, navigating through research ethics and data sharing protocols and rural areas with infrastructure constraints and sparse communities and timetabled activities.

Figure 1.1 English Rural Touring Schemes, 2016, by rurality and case study sites

National Rural Touring Schemes 2016 and Case Study Sites



The definition of rurality is adapted from OS data © Crown copyright and database right [2011], and National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right [2011]. Licensed under the Open Government Licence 3.0 (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>).

- **Supporting professional touring development and wider dissemination:** The final part of the methodology entailed a range of knowledge transfer and technical expertise activities to support NRTF, its membership Schemes and broader understanding of the characteristics and benefits of professional rural touring at national and local level. These activities have included:
 - **Each Touring Scheme has been provided with its individual set of Activity Maps.** These were distributed as a pack to each Scheme, including a narrative and a linked on-line response instrument to allow Schemes to provide a commentary and interpretive feedback. This material supported a Workshop at the NRTF Conference 2019: Hi-Vis: Value, Impact and Success of Rural Touring in July;
 - **NRTF Dissemination:** Materials to support a variety of dissemination activities by NRTF, including blogs, newsletter items and resources;
 - **NRTF Annual Conference 2019:** A keynote presentation and Q&A on the research findings and implications, The Impact of Rural Touring, and a Lessons and Challenges Workshop, and general attendance of the research team to support dissemination;
 - **Annual Survey Instrument:** The research has included a set of successful national data surveys and requests of the Touring Schemes generating a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative dataset, including over time. The learning from this activity has been utilised to generate an Annual Survey instrument for NRTF;
 - **GIS Training:** Given the geo-referenced evidence base and impact maps generated by the research project, NRTF is keen to consider the future sustainability of this information stream. Coventry University has provided initial training in GIS to support the capability of NRTF to take this strategic objective forward; and
 - **University Outputs:** Conference and seminar presentations, Newsletter items and, in time, academic journal outputs⁷.

All data collection activities have complied with Coventry University's ethics code and policy, particularly in relation to the negotiation and recording of informed consent, and allied assurances of confidentiality and data management and security.

1.4 This Final Report

The remainder of this Final Report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the characteristics and activities of English Rural Touring Schemes, 2012-2017, including the creation of a geo-referenced data set for the purposes of mapping, and Scheme views on their socio-economic impacts;
- Section 3 provides a range of in-depth Case Study investigations of rural touring arts. These are led by five Core Case Studies of rural localities which have undertaken funded Rural Touring Scheme activity. A process of synthesis is followed, looking across the Case Studies to draw findings on key aspects of the rural touring scheme business and delivery model. A further two Cumulative Case Studies are then presented, involving a return to localities previously researched for their rural touring arts, and an interview with the original researcher, the acclaimed François Matarasso;

⁷ For example, see Challis, S., Dunham, P. and Webster, M. (2018) The Impact of Rural Touring Arts in Rural Communities - an ACE partnership research project. Presented at the New Perspectives in Participatory Arts Conference, 22 – 23 May, University of East Anglia.

- In contrast, Section 4 provides an investigation of two examples of rural based arts activity in English areas which do not have Rural Touring Schemes; and
- Section 5 draws together the findings on the activities and impacts of Rural Touring Schemes to provide a set of Conclusions, Good Practice and Learning, and Recommendations.

Annexes provide a range of supporting material, including a Bibliography, List of English Rural Touring Schemes in 2016 and research instruments.

1.5 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due especially to the team at NRTF including Holly Lombardo, Stephie Jessop, Jess Huffman and Sally Anne Tye. Also the NRTF Board of Directors and Steering Group members John Laidlaw and Elizabeth Freestone and Joe Shaw of Arts Council England.

Immense thanks are due to the Schemes and their staff, the Promoters, Venues and Volunteers who made us so welcome and gave up their time to grapple with spreadsheets, transcripts and postcards amongst other things. And, finally, of course, the audiences.

We would like also to thank the following: Dr Michelle Newman of Coventry University and postgraduate students at Coventry University who supported the research, especially the GIS mapping process: Huma Asif, Claire Burwell, Matthew Grange, Curtis Hall, Heather Philip, and Nathaniel Revell. Thanks also to John Callen and Satinder Birdi who provided project and finance support.

The maps contain Office for National Statistics (2017): 2011 Census aggregate data. UK Data Service (Edition: February 2017), DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5257/census/aggregate-2011-2>, and Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census: Digitised Boundary Data (England and Wales) [computer file]. UK Data Service Census Support, downloaded from: <https://borders.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>.

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2 The Characteristics and Activities of English Rural Touring Schemes, 2012–2017

“It’s about putting artist in front of audiences and audiences in front of artist. Everything else is fundamentally about getting that moment working properly and our job is to make sure that that marriage is right and the right communities, the right shows, the right artists end up in the right place at the right time and that’s very important to us.”

(Executive Director, English Rural Touring Scheme)

2.1 The Rural Touring Schemes

Rural Touring Schemes are funded across the UK. Touring schemes can vary substantially ranging from independent, not for profit companies that employ people, to a range of individuals and organisations with an interest in promoting professional arts with rural communities and which can include performers, companies, promoters, small venues, festivals and producers.

This study covered the 24 ACE-funded Rural Touring Schemes in 2016 affiliated to the National Rural Touring Forum. These each covered a designated geographical area, roughly coterminous with County boundaries but in many cases straddling more than one county or intersecting county borders. All had been funded by Arts Council England to support rural touring arts in the geographical area for which they have responsibility (Figure 1.1 above).

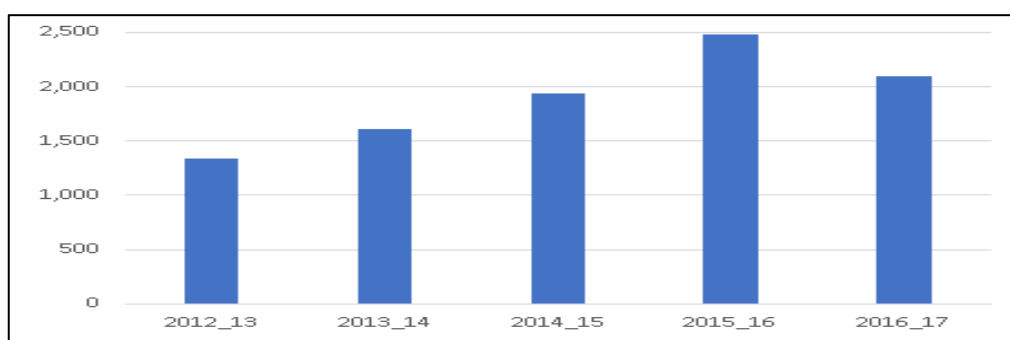
2.2 National Scale and Scope of Rural Touring Scheme Delivery

All of the 24 established English Rural Touring Schemes affiliated to the National Rural Touring Forum in 2016 completed an Activity Data Survey.

This activity generated comprehensive benchmark data concerning the activities of each scheme in the previous five years. Data collected concerned the details of every performance conducted by each Touring Scheme over the previous financial years, broken down by venue (postcode), art-form type and audience numbers. A 100% response rate was received from the Schemes – although not all data requested was provided in full.

Based upon the returns from the Schemes⁸, between 2012 and 2017, almost 9,500 performances were undertaken across England (Figure 2.1 below). In the main, performance numbers have been growing steadily to 2000 – 2,500 per year.

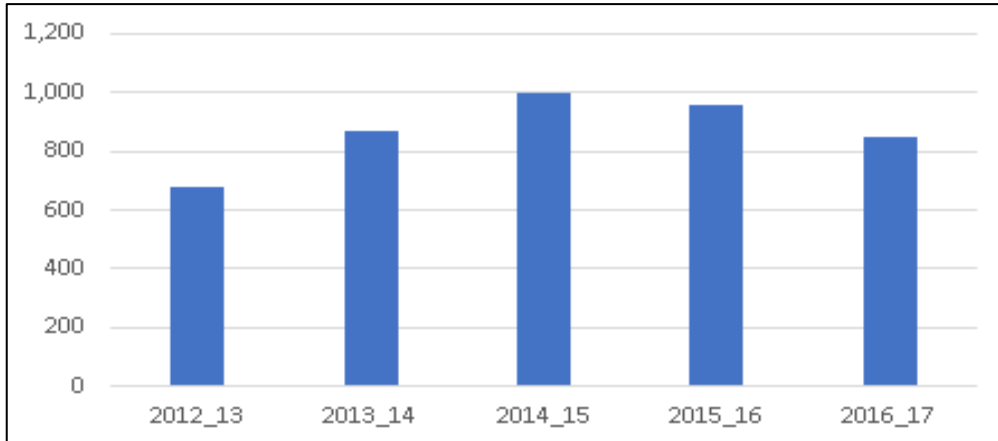
Figure 2.1 English Rural Touring Schemes Performances, by year, 2012-2017



⁸ Whilst returns were received from all schemes, some data was missing. Our best guess is that this represents an under-reporting of small proportions, probably around 5 per cent.

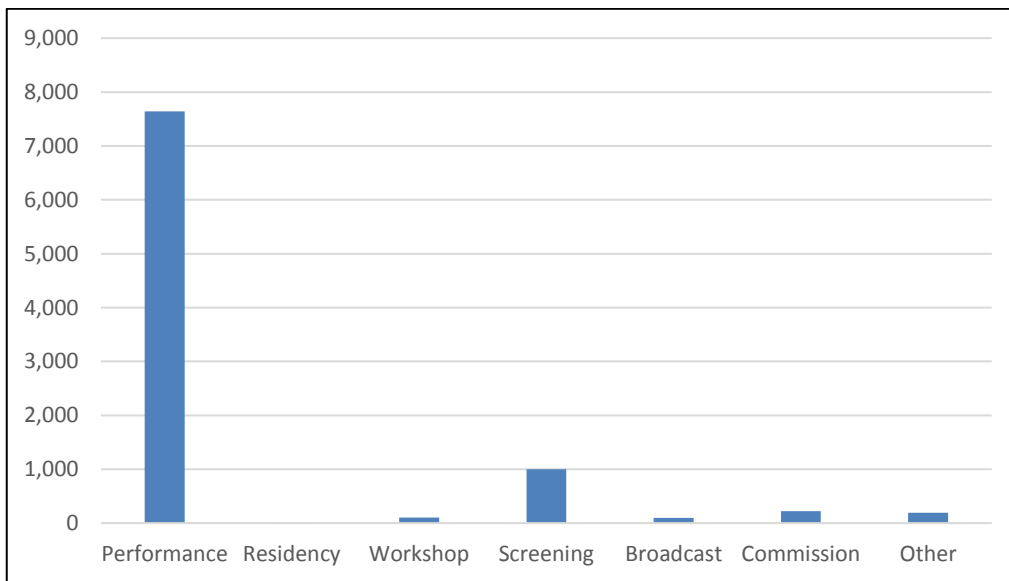
These performances took place across an average of 800 to 1,000 venues per annum (Figure 2.2 below), although venues used per year is exhibiting a slight downward trend.

Figure 2.2 English Rural Touring Schemes Venues used, by year, 2012-2017



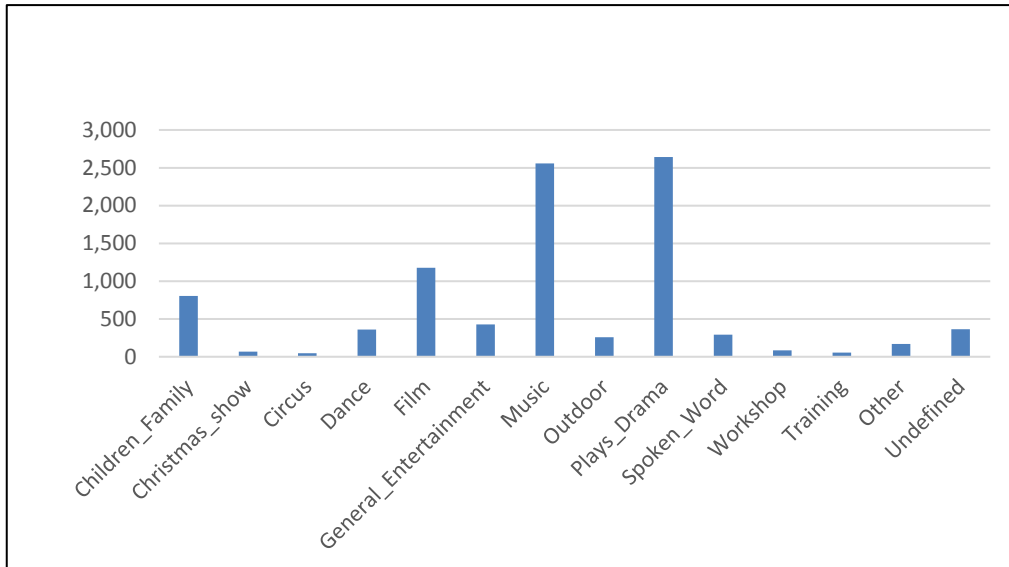
The vast majority of events staged by Touring Schemes are performances 'to' an audience (Figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3 English Rural Touring Schemes Performance Type, period 2012-2017



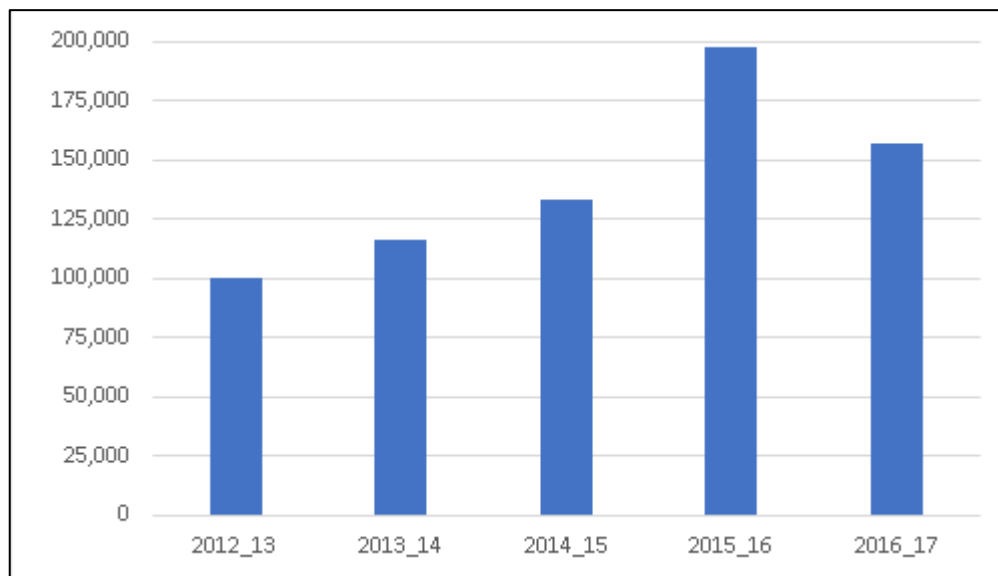
There was a diversity of art-form types undertaken over the five-year period. Drama and Music dominated, followed by Film and Family. Other activities included Spoken Word, Dance, Outdoor and seasonal Christmas Shows (Figure 2.4 below).

Figure 2.4 English Rural Touring Schemes Art-form type, period 2012-2017



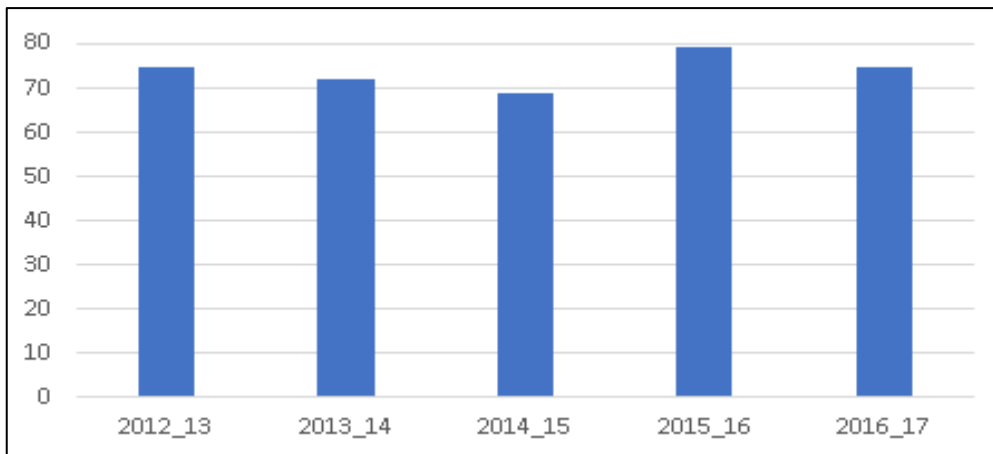
The Schemes reported a total audience of just over 703,000 for the period 2012 – 2017. This had grown over the period, although not consistently (Figure 2.5 below).

Figure 2.5 English Rural Touring Schemes Audience Numbers, by year, period 2012-2017



When audience is matched against the number of performances per year, a consistent average number of attendees per event can be seen – an average of 74 attendees per event for the five-year period (Figure 2.6 below).

Figure 2.6 English Rural Touring Schemes Average Event Audience, by year, period 2012-2017



2.3 Organisational Characteristics of the Rural Touring Schemes

The 24 Rural Touring Schemes completed an on-line survey (see Annex 3) giving organisational details of the nature of their Touring Scheme (for example, geographical area and time of operation; size of operation in terms of employment, turnover and number of companies programmed) and typical models of delivery. The survey established the nature and key organisational characteristics of individual English Rural Touring Schemes.

A 100% response rate was received from the Schemes – although not all data requested was provided in full.

2.3.1 Organisational and artistic performance characteristics

In total, 23 schemes out of 24 have been in operation for ten or more years, with just one established for less than five years.

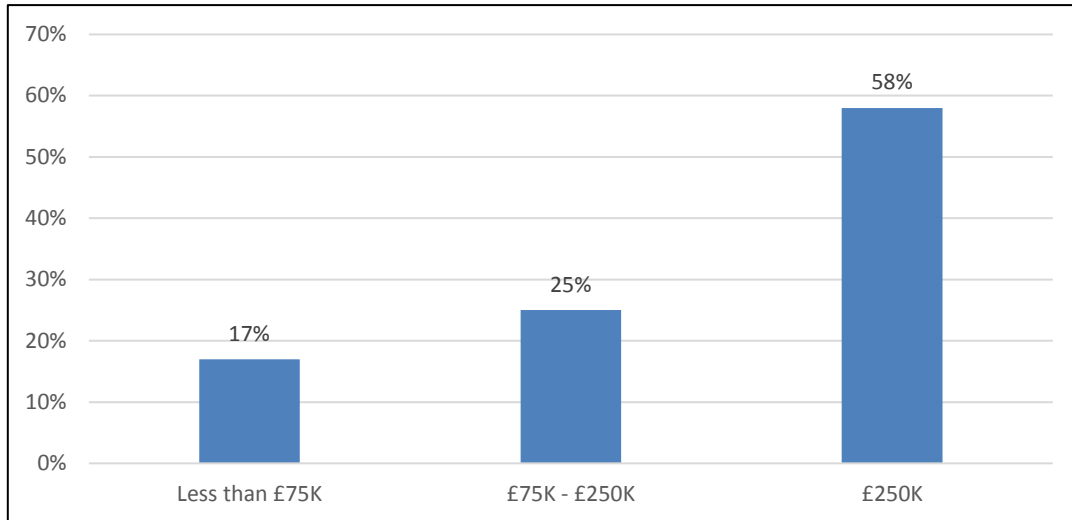
Twenty-one of the Schemes (88%) are ACE National Portfolio Organisations.

All the Schemes remain 'micro-businesses'. A third of Schemes employ between one and two employees with the largest number (42%) employing between six and ten people. The remainder (25%) employ between three and five people.

Three-quarters of the Schemes rely regularly on between one and four freelance staff.

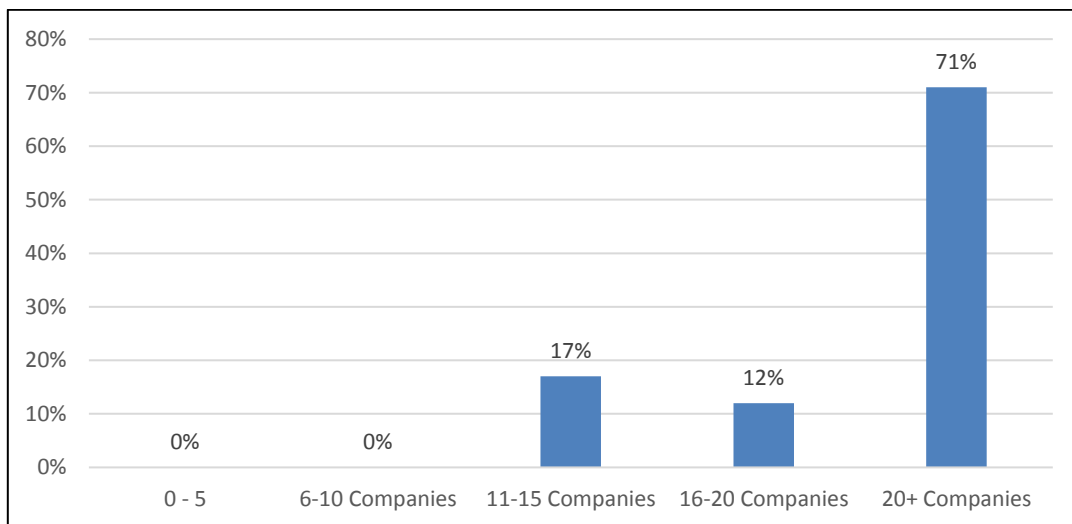
Almost 60% of Schemes have a turnover exceeding £250K per annum (Figure 2.7 below). A handful (17%) account for a turnover of less than £75K with the remaining 25% experiencing a turnover of between £75K and £250K.

Figure 2.7 English Rural Touring Schemes, Annual Turnover



All the Schemes programme at least eleven – fifteen companies per year (Figure 2.8). Most (71%) usually programme over twenty companies per year.

Figure 2.8 English Rural Touring Schemes, Companies Programmed Regularly per Annum

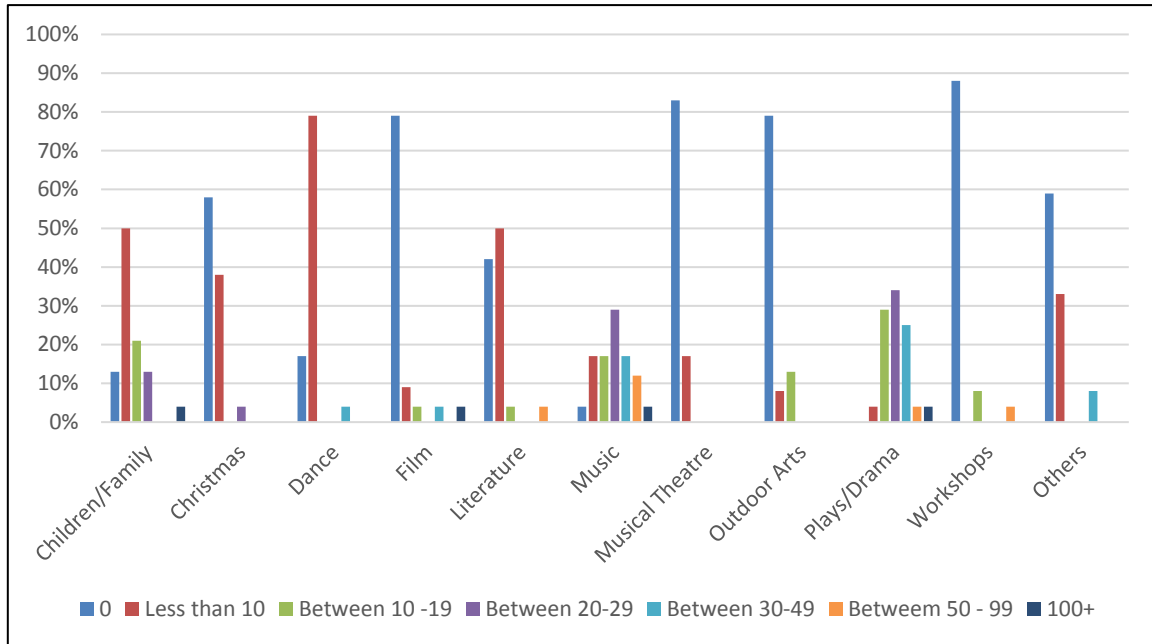


The vast majority (89%) of events staged by Schemes are performances to an audience.

There is a substantial performance portfolio evident across the Schemes (Figure 2.9 below). In terms of types of performance, Music and Dance represent the most common events usually delivered. In total, 45% of Schemes deliver between 20 and 49 music events in a year and 80% of Schemes deliver at least 9 dance events. Film, Musical Theatre and Outdoor Arts are least likely events; in contrast, 87% of Schemes organise between 10 and 49 Plays/Drama events per year.

Over the previous five years, Plays/Drama and Music performance was cited as activities experiencing the most decline in the portfolio, compared to a notable increase in Dance.

Figure 2.9 English Rural Touring Schemes, Recent Performance Portfolio

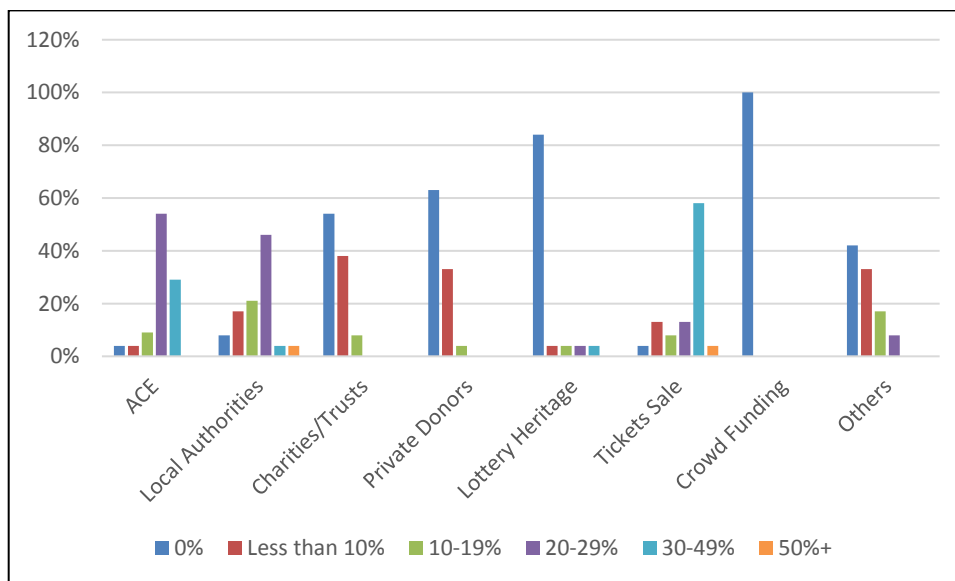


There is a direct, but not exactly linear, relationship between turnover size, employment and programming activity. Simply put, the greater the turnover, the more staff are employed, the more freelancers used, and the more events are programmed.

2.3.2 Funding and income

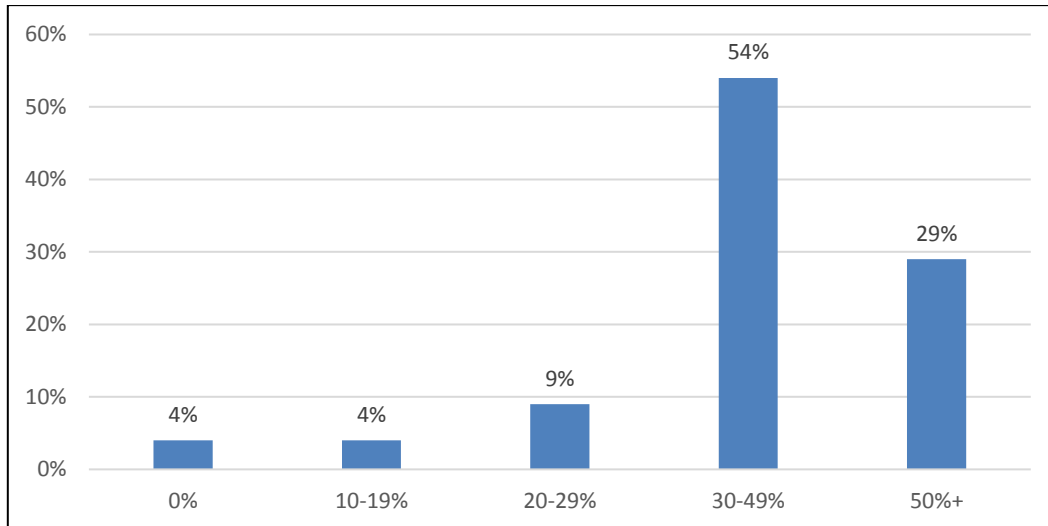
Income profiles are led by ACE (Figure 2.10 below). Overall, ACE represents nearly 40% of income, although it is notable that ticket sales comprise around a third of further income. The only other significant funder across the sector as a whole is Local Authorities who have dropped to around a fifth of the income profile. All the other income sources account for around 5% or less of income streams, although it can be seen that at individual Scheme level these funder types still have a part to play in supporting activity.

Figure 2.10 English Rural Touring Schemes, Sources of Income



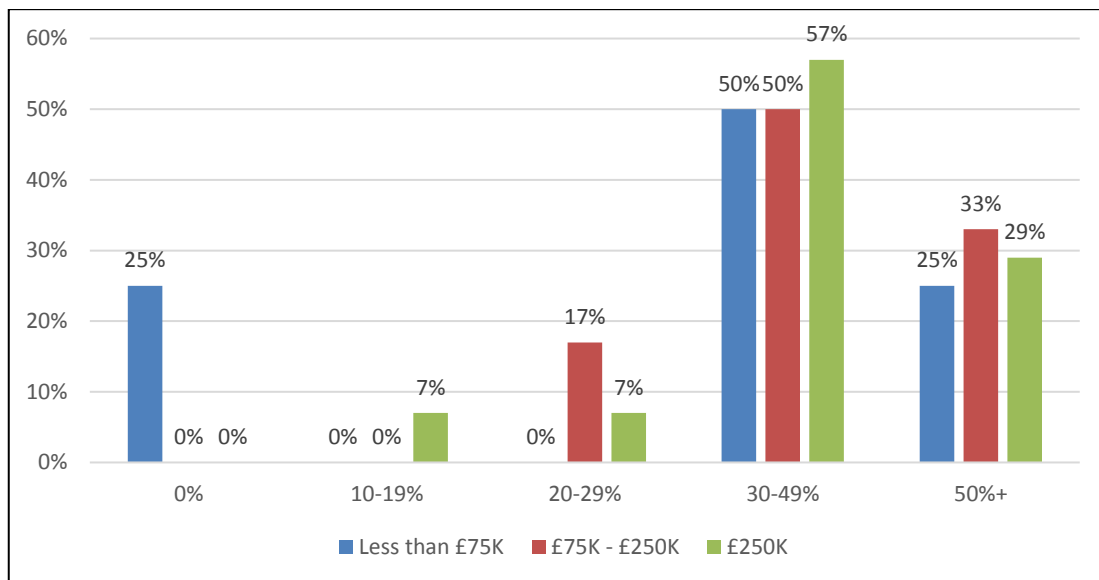
Given NPO status for the substantial majority of Schemes, dominance of financial profiles by ACE is not unexpected (Figure 2.11 below). Half of Schemes receive at least 30% of their funding from ACE, and for 29% it is the main funder.

Figure 2.11 English Rural Touring Schemes, ACE as a Share of Income



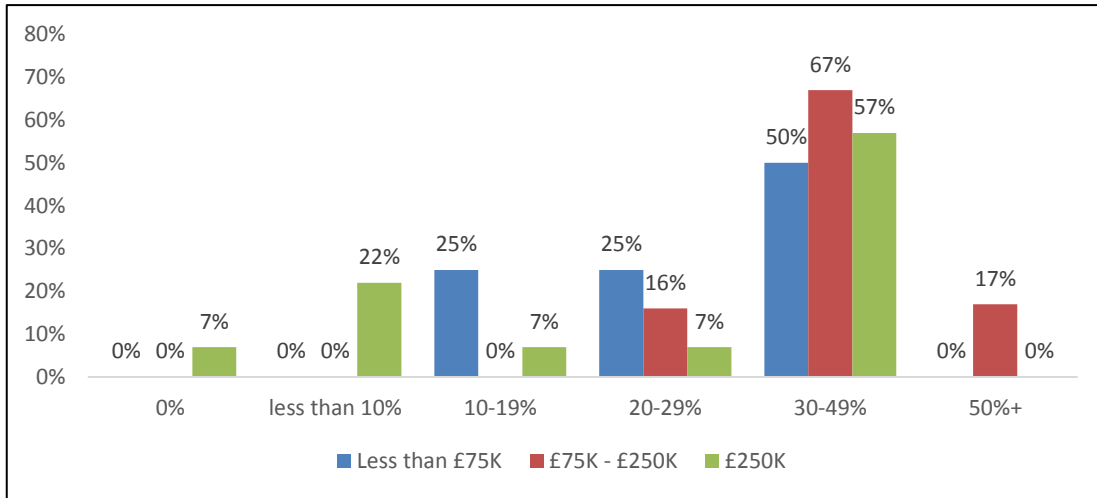
The importance of ACE funding in determining Scheme scale is evident also (Figure 2.12 below). The majority (86%) of the largest Schemes (over £250K turnover) receive at least 30% of their funding from ACE; as do 83% of the £75k - £250k turnover Schemes.

Figure 2.12 English Rural Touring Schemes, ACE Funding Proportion by Turnover



Concerning ticket sales and turnover (Figure 2.13 below), close to two thirds of all Schemes raise between 30 and 49% of their income through ticket sales. For four Schemes (17%, all with turnover between £75K – £250K), ticket sales represented over half of income. Overall, there is variation in how ticket sales contribute to income across the Schemes.

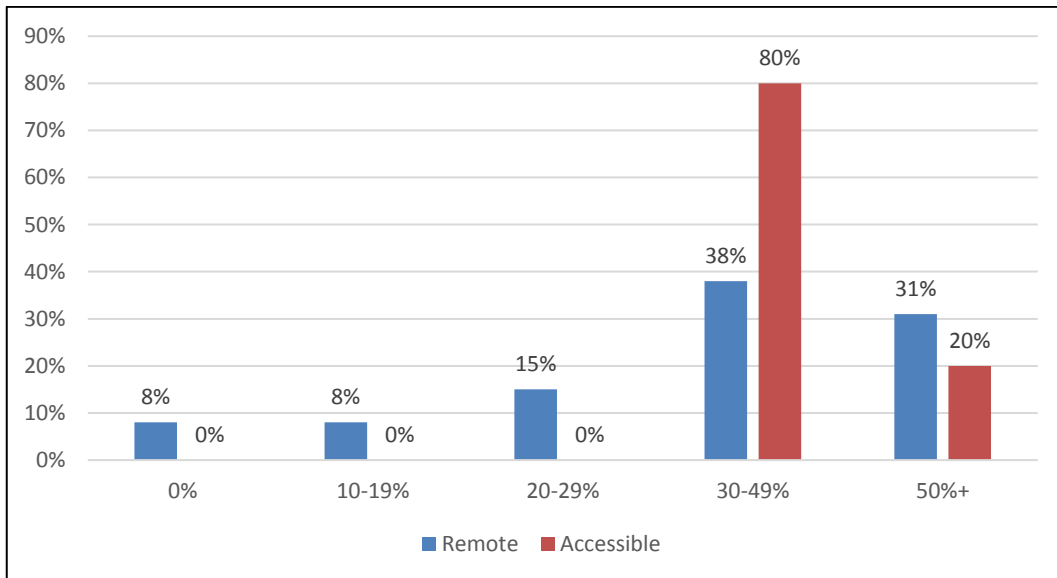
Figure 2.13 English Rural Touring Schemes, Ticket Sales as Percentage of Income, by Turnover



When run against the ‘accessible rural’ versus ‘remote rural’ classification used in the study, ACE’s particular importance in funding of accessible Schemes is clear (Figure 2.14 overleaf).

When the same analysis is carried out for Heritage Lottery funding, whilst this comprises only a small component of Scheme income as a whole, it was found that no accessible rural Schemes received any funding from Heritage Lottery Fund.

Figure 2.14 English Rural Touring Schemes, ACE Share of Income by Remote Rural/Accessible Rural



2.4 Scheme Organisations: A Summary

In summary, the Rural Touring Schemes represent a set of small, relatively stable, long-established organisations. Overall, annual turnovers are low, and very low in some instances, and this is reflected in employment structures. These range from between one and ten employees, often supported by a freelancer or several. The Schemes exhibit substantial variety in terms of company structure. Some are private companies, some are effectively

franchises or projects run by other companies, and some are community interest companies. Many of the more established companies are charities with boards of trustees.

Between them the Schemes deliver annually between 2,000 to 2,500 events, incorporating a wide portfolio of art-form performances and a small number of more interactive activities (including workshops, training, etc.). These are distributed across between 800 to 1,000 venues although there is some evidence that venue numbers may be dropping. Over the last five years, the Schemes have jointly delivered 9,500 events to audiences numbering just over 700,000. Annual average audiences per event sit at a highly consistent 70 to 80-person annual average.

ACE funding is core to the sector, with 21 of the 24 Schemes attaining National Portfolio Organisation status, and seven in which ACE funding accounts for over fifty percent of funding. Ticket sales represent around a third of Scheme outcomes, with notable variation across Schemes. Local Authorities remain the other main funder, although at increasingly low scale.

Change dynamics are evident across the sector but one relationship is clear: simply put, the greater the turnover, the more staff are employed, the more freelancers used and the more events are programmed.

2.5 The Activity Data and GIS (Geographical Information System) Mapping

Through mapping the Activity Data Survey by postcode, a geo-referenced intelligence base concerning the patterns and characteristics of English rural arts activity has been established.

This information has been combined geographically (spatial correlation) with social, economic and geographical attributes of the areas in which the activity has occurred. Economic, population, ethnicity and other factors have been mapped in detail across rural areas, distinguishing degrees of isolation and rurality, key characteristics of rural populations and matching them to rural touring activity over the past five years. The preferred technology for the GIS analysis has been ESRI ArcGIS.

Emphasis has been placed on mapping comparisons of two types of data: **Activity Variables** and **Contextual Variables**.

Activity Variables represent the information supplied by the Rural Touring Schemes concerning their operations over the past five years.

Contextual Variables are obtained from census and other government sources and represent the geographical and socio-economic information that the activity data have been mapped against (Table 2.1 overleaf)⁹.

⁹ Restructuring of government data provision in 2017 means that the social and economic data required for the contextual variables are now available from three principal sources:

- 2011 Census data from the InFuse section of the UK Data Service <http://infuse2011.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>
- Boundary data on census geography from the Census Boundary data section of the UK Data Service <https://census.ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/boundary-data>
- Postcode polygon data from Digimap <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/> .

Other sources of information consulted include the Local Statistics Data Portal (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/help/localstatistics>) and the labour market statistics website (<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>). Data from these sites may be at a coarser resolution than LSOA, so some interpretation has been necessary.

Table 2.1 Variables used in the GIS Mapping Activity

Activity Variables	Contextual Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of performances by year and venue (postcode) • Performance type by year and venue (postcode) • Audience numbers for each performance by year and venue (postcode) • Change in above over time (last 5 financial years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of multiple deprivation • Urban / rural classification - 2011 Rural Urban Classification (<i>Lower Super Output Area and 'constructed' Rural Touring Scheme area</i>) • Population density • Age • Income proxy • Profession / employment measure • Ethnicity

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) or 'neighbourhood' data, typically relating to minimum populations of 1,000 people, has formed the principal geographical basis for the initial research. Patterns of professional rural touring have been ascribed to particular Census Output Areas (OAs) in the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies. This classifies Output Areas into 10 categories of location, based on population size, predominant settlement form (town/fringe, village, hamlet and isolated dwellings) and settlement context (sparse or non-sparse) (Table 2.2 overleaf).

Table 2.2 The 2011 Rural Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies

Categories of Location at Neighbourhood Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban: Major Conurbation (A1) • Urban: Minor Conurbation (B1) • Urban: City and Town (C1) • Urban: City and Town in a Sparse Setting (C2) • Rural: Town and Fringe (D1) • Rural: Town and Fringe in a Sparse Setting (D2) • Rural: Village (E1) • Rural: Village in a Sparse Setting (E2) • Rural: Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings (F1) • Rural: Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings in a Sparse Setting (F2).

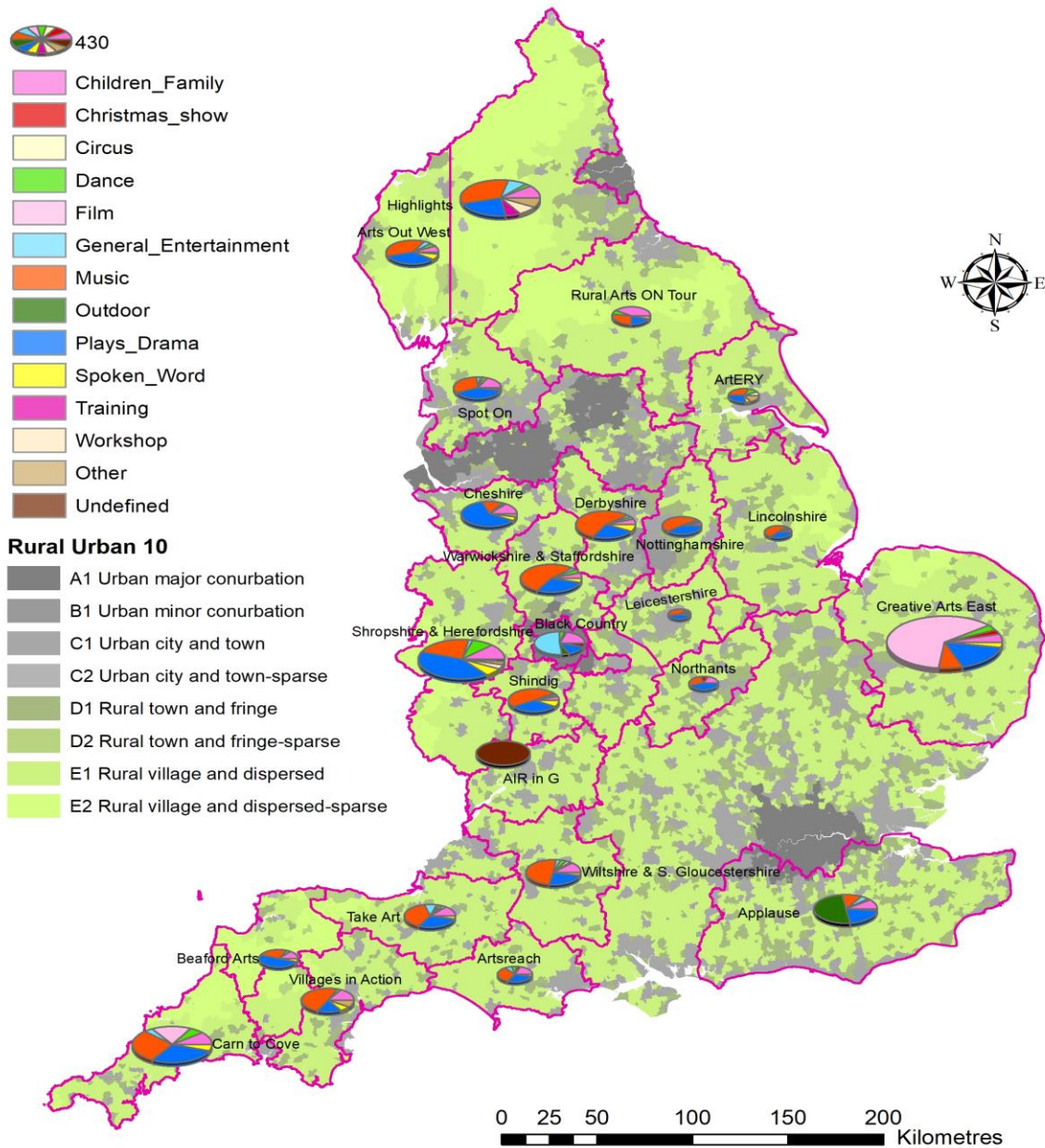
Each Scheme was presented with its own portfolio of maps for consideration, reference and future use.

2.6 Mapping Activities: The National Scale

Figure 2.15 depicts **variety of art form types at a venue** from 2012-2017 against Rural Urban Classification 10.

Figure 2.15 Number of different art-form types by location, 2012-2017, against Rural Urban Classification 10

National Rural Touring Forum Summary - RU 10: Artform Type



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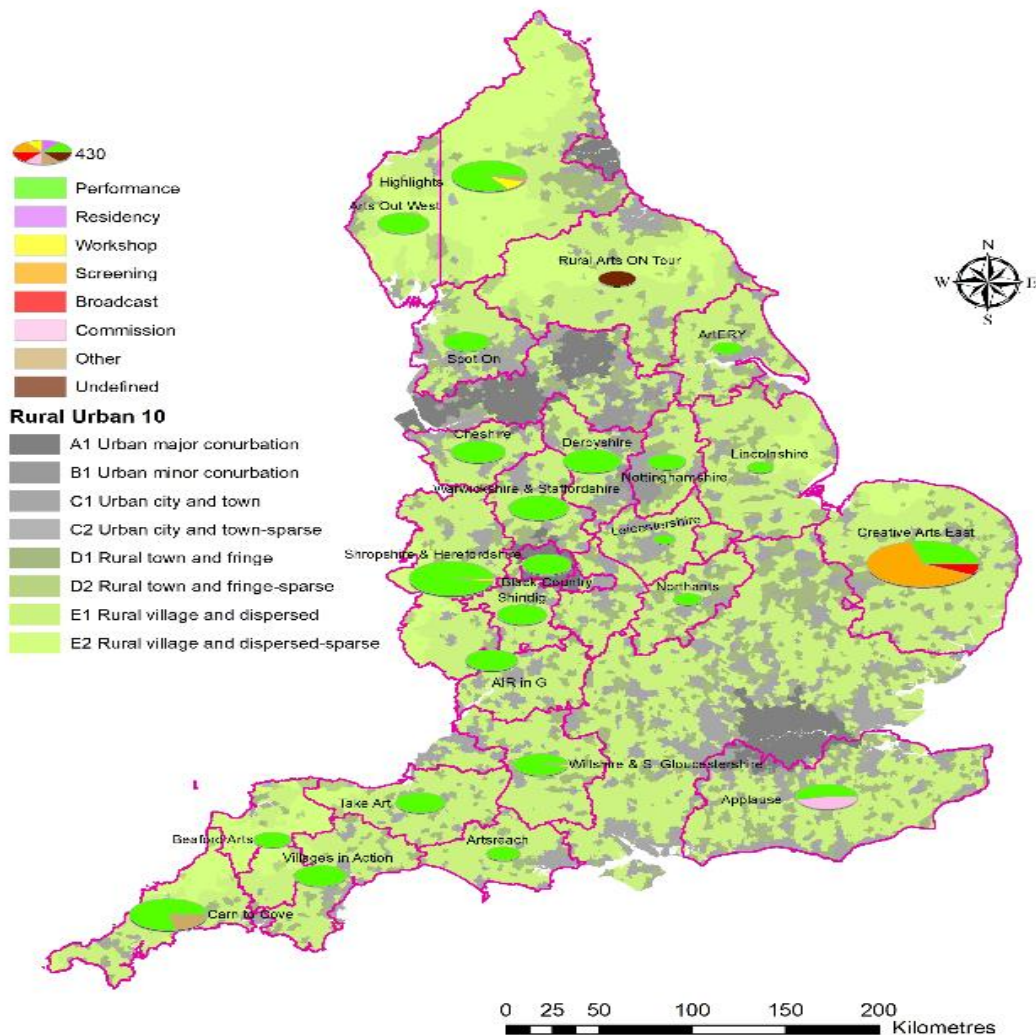
Overall, Plays and Drama (blue) and Music (orange) emerged as the most common art forms performed by English Rural Touring Schemes. More remote schemes tended to display a more diverse portfolio of art form types (e.g. Highlights Rural Touring in the North East, Arts Alive and Carn to Cove) compared with their more accessible counterparts (typified by Warwickshire and Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire). One exception to this is Kent (Applause Rural Touring) which programmed a significant number of outdoor events.

Reflecting the Online Scheme Questionnaire findings, some relatively remote schemes were more likely to programme film performances (e.g. Carn to Cove and Creative Arts East). Many art form types (such as workshops, training programmes and spoken word events) were programmed by only a small minority of schemes.

Figure 2.16 depicts **performance type** and **variety of performances at a venue** from 2012-2017 mapped against Rural Urban Classification 10.

Figure 2.16 Number of different performance types by location, 2012-2017, against Rural Urban Classification 10

National Rural Touring Forum Summary - RU 10: PerformanceType



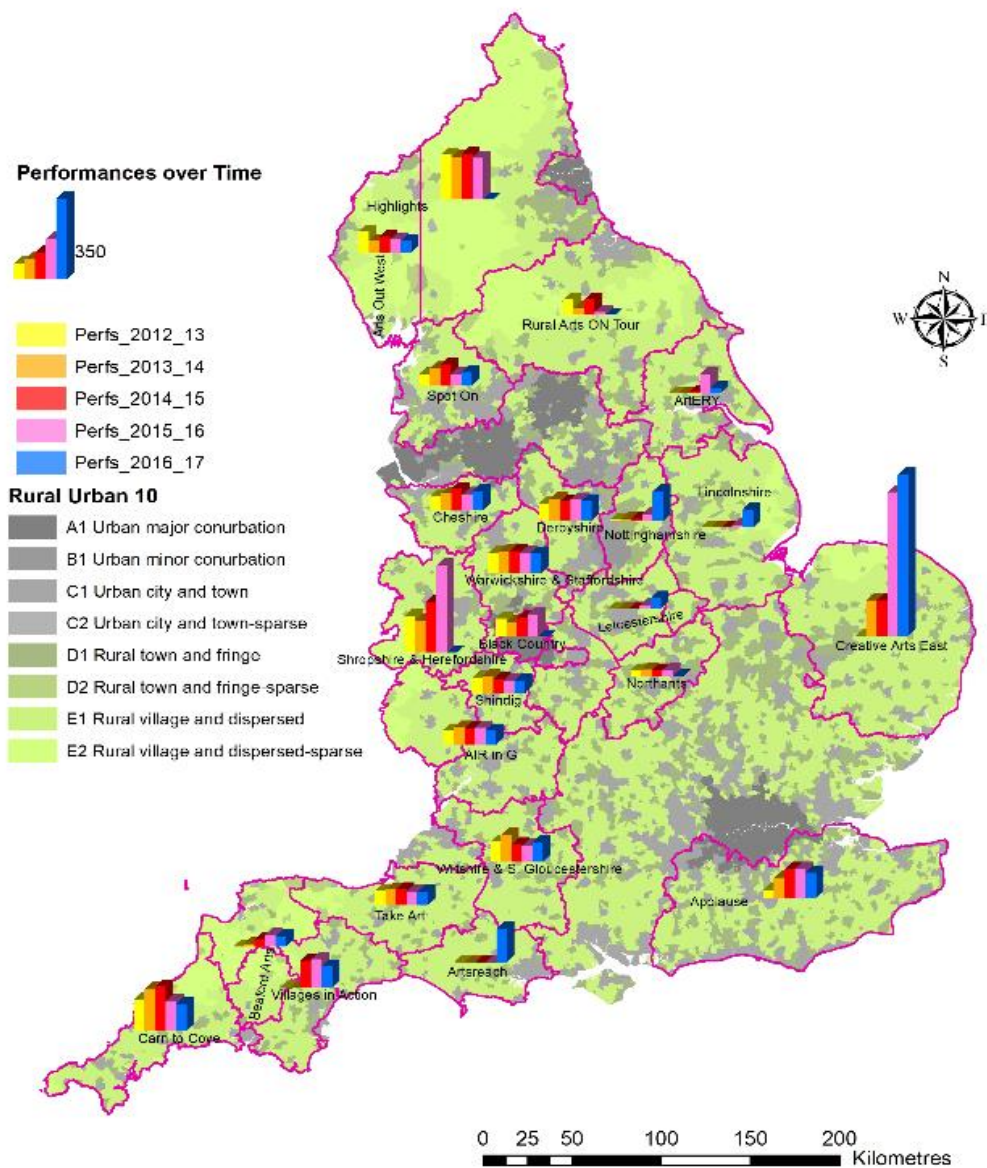
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The striking observation here is the dominance of performances that were delivered ‘to an audience’ across practically all Touring Schemes. Creative Arts East (Norfolk) reported a very significant number of ‘screening’ events which represent another variant of the ‘performance to an audience’ format. Carn to Cove (Cornwall) reported a sizeable number of ‘other’ forms of performance. Applause Rural Touring reported a significant proportion of ‘commissions’ although these might still reflect a dominance of ‘performance’ models of delivery.

Figure 2.17 illustrates the patterns of **performance numbers through time** between 2012 and 2017 for each Touring Scheme mapped against Rural Urban Classification 10.

Figure 2.17 Number of Performances 2012-17 by Scheme against Rural Urban Classification 10

National Rural Touring Forum Summary - RU 10: Performances over Time



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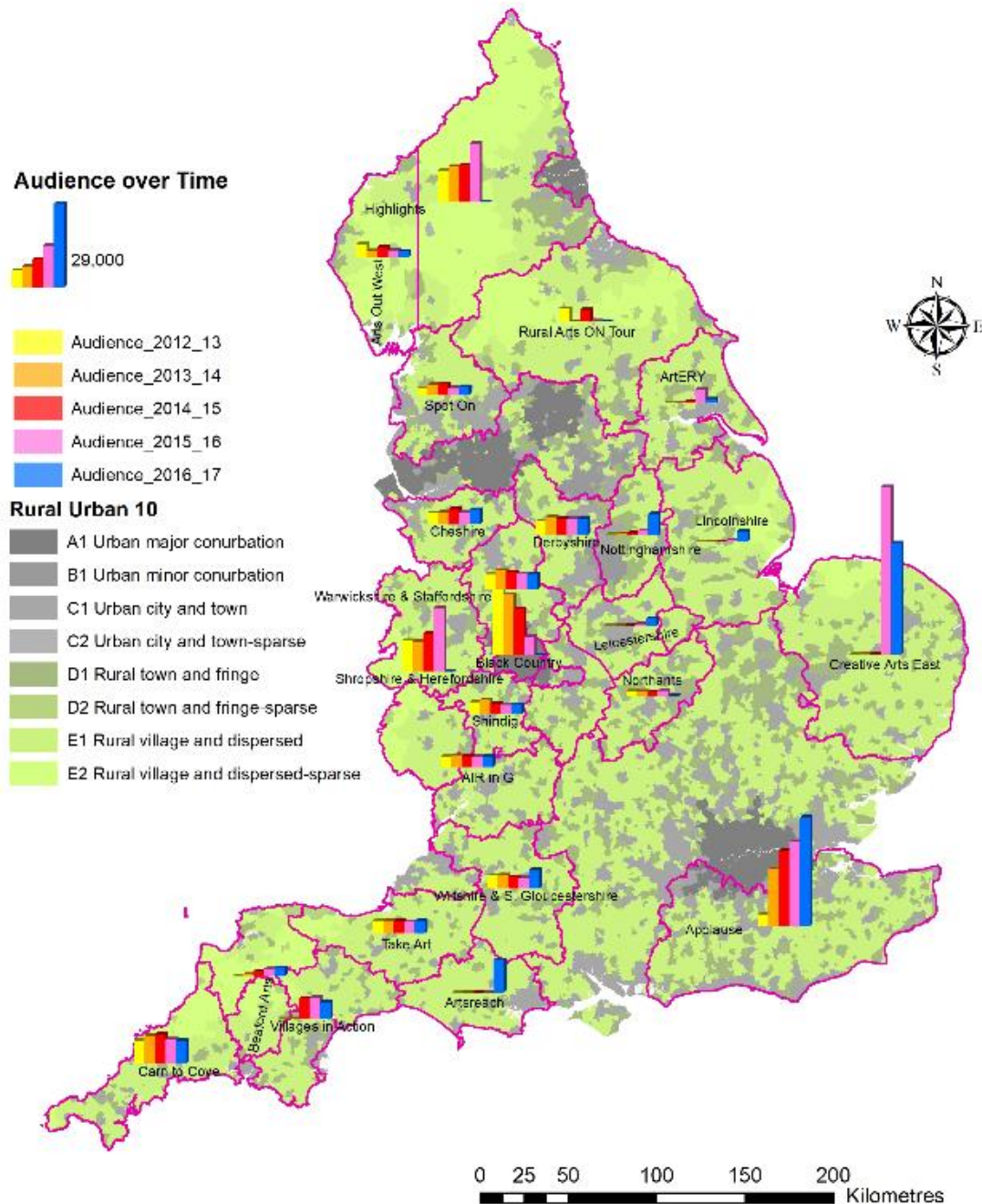
The data is distorted somewhat by the very notable increase in performances reported by Creative Arts East. Other schemes which reported relatively high numbers of performances include Highlights Rural Touring (North East), Arts Alive (Shropshire) and Carn to Cove (Cornwall). Indeed, a number of relatively 'remote' schemes appear to have programmed more performances than their 'accessible' counterparts. Some schemes (including Arts Alive and Highlights Rural Touring) reported a significant fall in performances numbers during 2016-17, although this may be a reflection of the timing of programmed activities set against the timing of data collection. Some schemes (e.g. Northamptonshire Rural Touring and Live & Local Leicestershire) appeared to programme relatively small numbers of performances, although this observation is perhaps somewhat exaggerated by the very high number of performances recorded by Creative Arts East. Some schemes (e.g. Arts Reach in Dorset) reported significant increases in the last financial year. Most schemes reported broadly consistent numbers of performances across the study period

Reported patterns of **audience numbers through time** between 2012 and 2017 broadly mirrored the number of performances programmed by each Touring Scheme over the period (Figure 2.18 overleaf).

Schemes such as Arts Alive (Shrops), Carn to Cove (Cornwall) and Highlights Rural Touring (North East) reported relatively high levels of audience numbers across a similarly sizeable number of performances. This is especially true for Creative Arts East (Norfolk). However, other schemes do not appear to mirror this trend. Applause Rural Touring (Kent), for instance, recorded very high audience numbers against a relatively modest number of performances. This might reflect its relatively 'accessible' status. This was also exemplified by the most urban scheme – Black Country Touring – which not surprisingly recorded relatively high audience numbers. That said, it is not simply the case that relatively accessible schemes tended to record high audience numbers. Some 'accessible' schemes such as Northamptonshire Rural Touring and Spot On Lancashire, for example, did not do so and this represented another question to consider in the subsequent research phases. As already noted, a number of 'remote' schemes, notably Creative Arts East (Norfolk) Carn to Cove (Cornwall) and Arts Alive (Shropshire), tended to record relatively high levels of audience numbers which made them potentially interesting schemes with which to conduct more detailed analysis.

Figure 2.18 Audience Numbers 2012-17 against Rural Urban Classification 10

National Rural Touring Forum Summary - RU 10: Audience over Time



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2.7 Mapping Activities: Regional Reflections

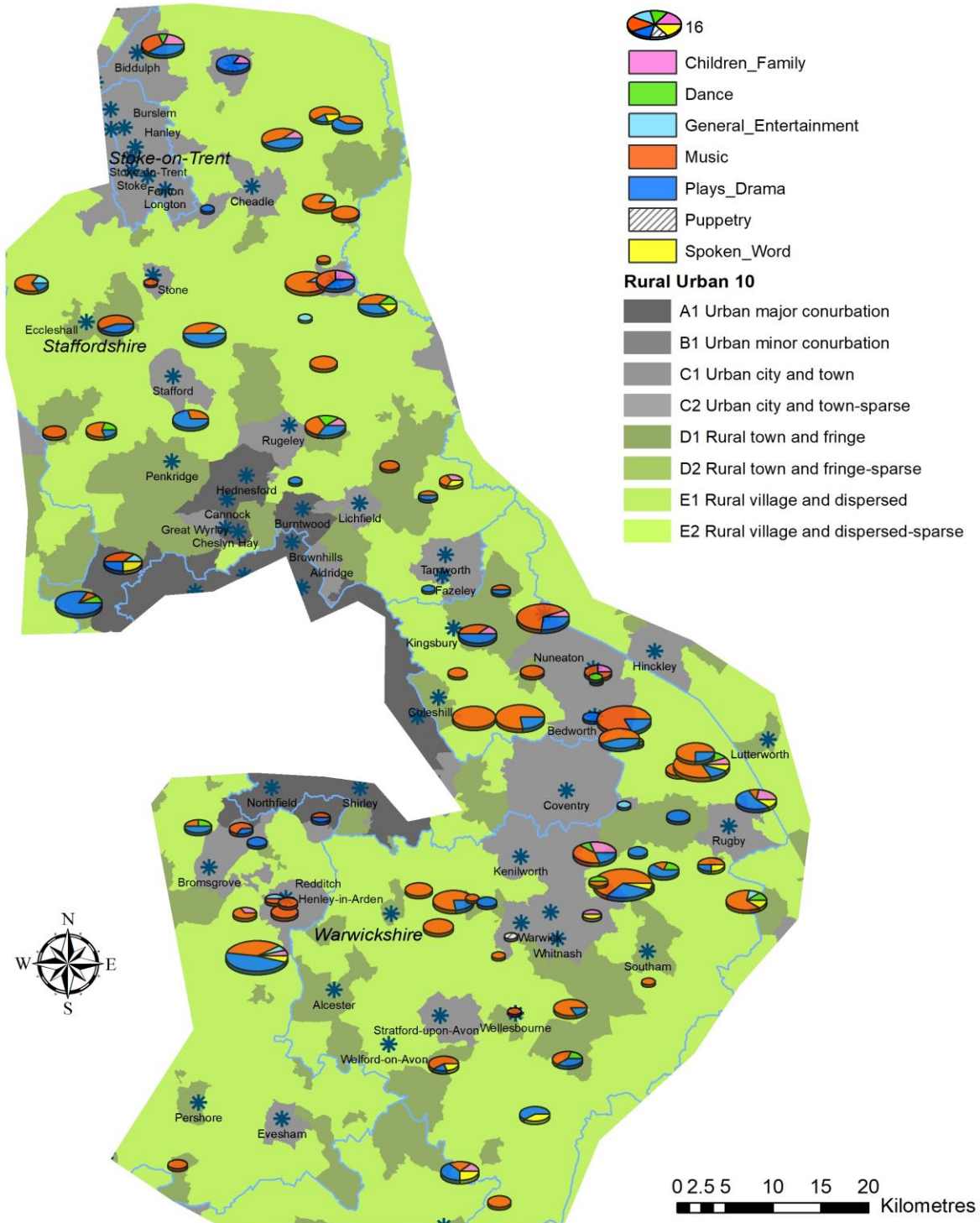
The GIS analysis supported the mapping of Touring Scheme activity against a number of socio-economic variables apart from degrees of rurality. These variables are more meaningfully depicted at smaller spatial scales and so the following Figures map activity data against a range of contextual variables for a brief selection of 'accessible' and 'remote' Rural Touring Schemes.

Figures 2.19 and 2.20 (both overleaf) map **art-form type (2012-17) against the small area geographies (RU10) variant of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification**. They cover, respectively, the activities of Live & Local Warwickshire and Staffordshire (an 'accessible' scheme area) and those of Carn to Cove (a more 'remote' scheme area).

In Warwickshire and Staffordshire (Live & Local) (Figure 2.19 overleaf), most performances were delivered outside of built up urban areas, although there was some evidence of delivery in towns. Plays and drama appeared to be slightly more popular in towns although this was certainly not well pronounced. Very little diversity existed in terms of art form type, with limited reference to children/family performances representing the only noticeable departure from plays/drama and music. Live & Local recorded a broadly even distribution of performances across their area of operation, with few apparent locations of particular concentration.

Figure 2.19 Art-Form Type 2012-2017 against Rural Urban Classification 10 for Live & Local (Warwickshire and Staffordshire) – ‘accessible’ scheme area

Warwickshire & Staffordshire - RU 10: Artform type

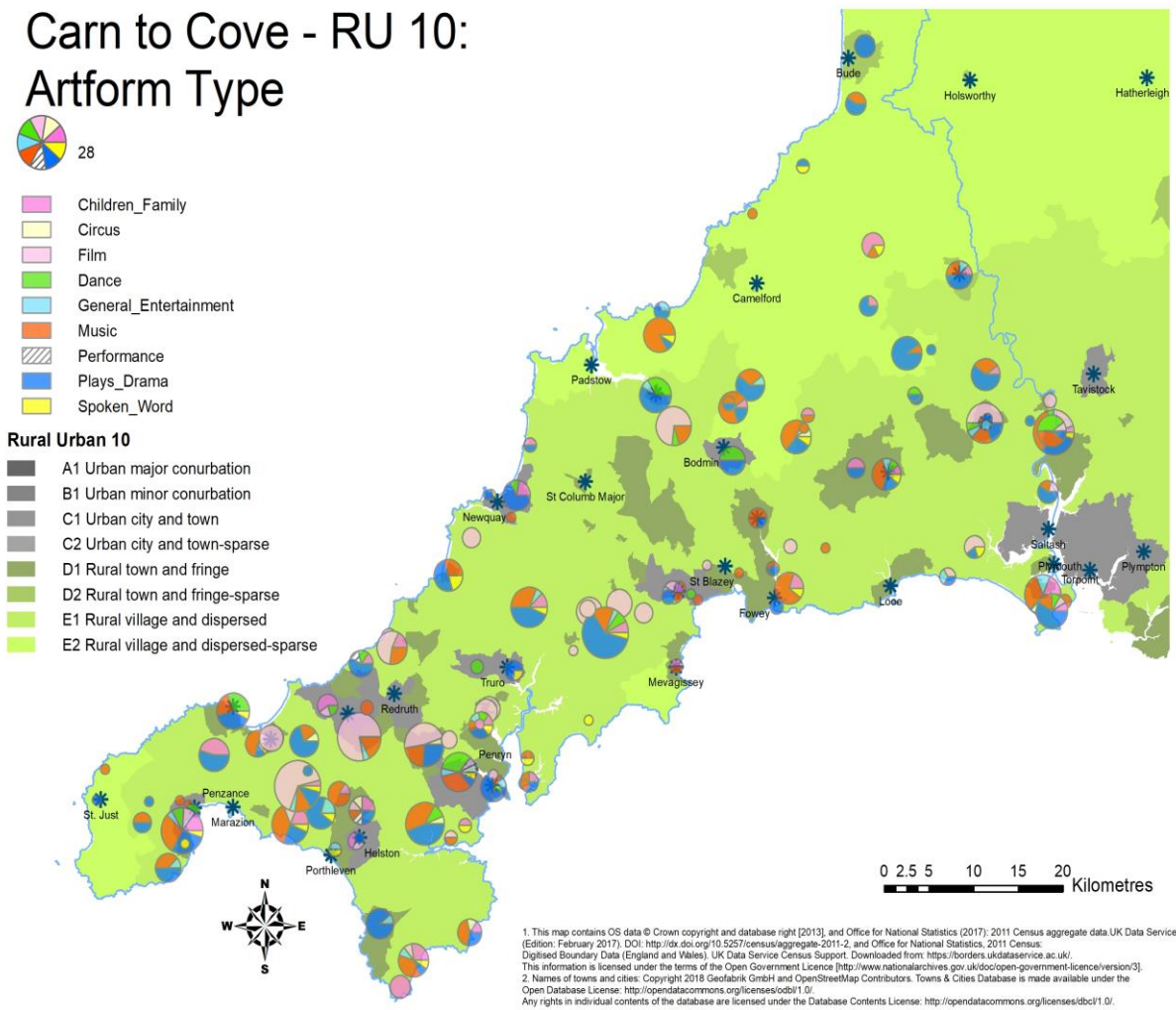


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Figure 2.20 (below) maps **art form type against Rural-Urban Classification (RU 10)** for a relatively 'remote' Touring Scheme: Carn to Cove (Cornwall). Reflecting the national picture, a greater diversity of art form types was evidenced in this more remote location. Carn to Cove displayed a significant number of 'film' performances (shaded pink) and 'dance' performances (green) although plays/drama and music were also popular. There was a spread of performances across the county, but there were particular concentrations in some towns and built up areas, especially to the south west of the county. Film performances were slightly more concentrated in towns than in more rural areas, again especially in the south west.

Figure 2.20 Art-Form Type 2012-2017 against Rural Urban Classification 10 for Carn to Cove – 'remote' scheme area



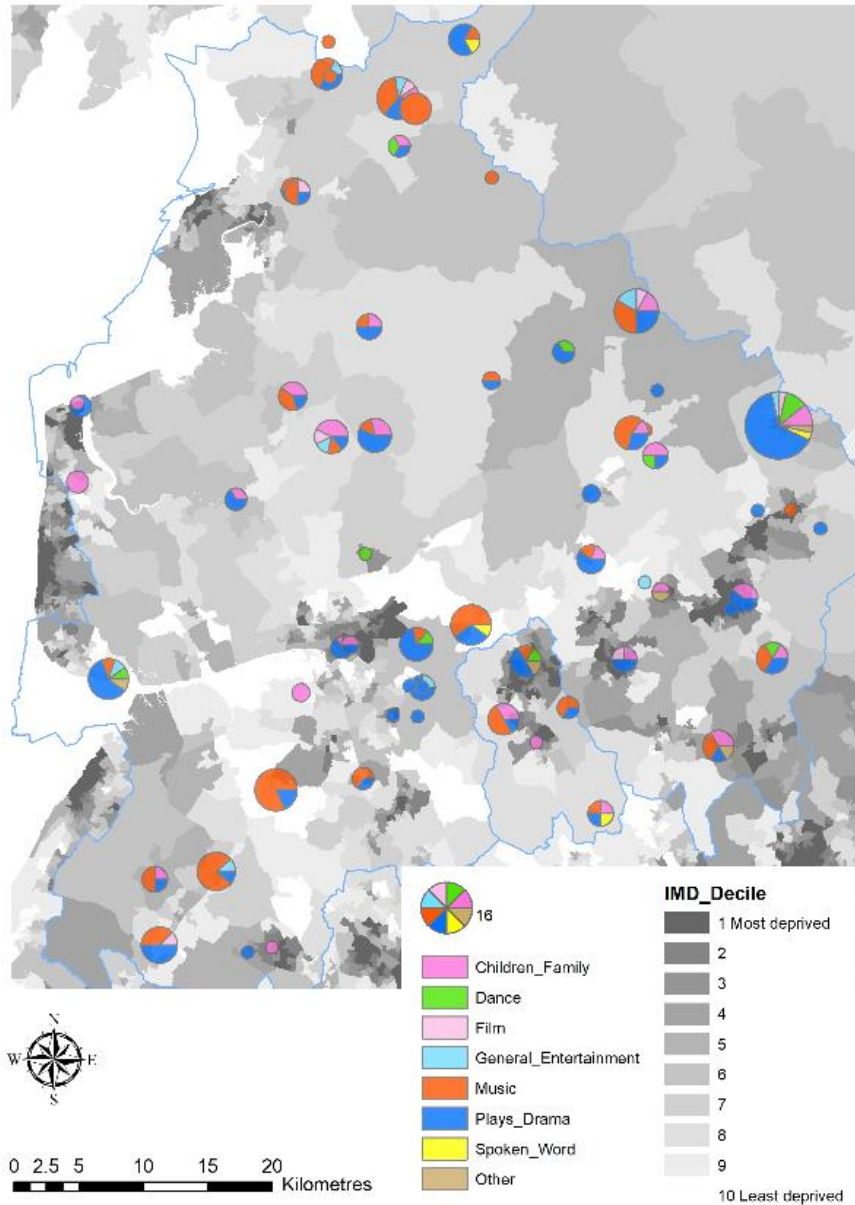
Figures 2.21 and 2.22 (both overleaf) map **art form type against Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) at the neighbourhood level** for an 'accessible' scheme area: Spot On Lancashire (Figure 2.21) and a relatively 'remote' area: Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire (Figure 2.22).

Spot On Lancashire displayed a significant diversity of art form types, relatively unusual for an accessible scheme. It also tended to programme performances in some of the most deprived areas within its area of operation. This was a relatively unusual trait among touring schemes nationally. Plays/Drama and Family-themed entertainments tended to feature most

prominently in the portfolios delivered in more deprived areas, with activities such as music tending to be more common in more affluent districts.

Figure 2.21 Art Form Type against Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2012-2017 for Spot On Lancashire – ‘accessible’ scheme area

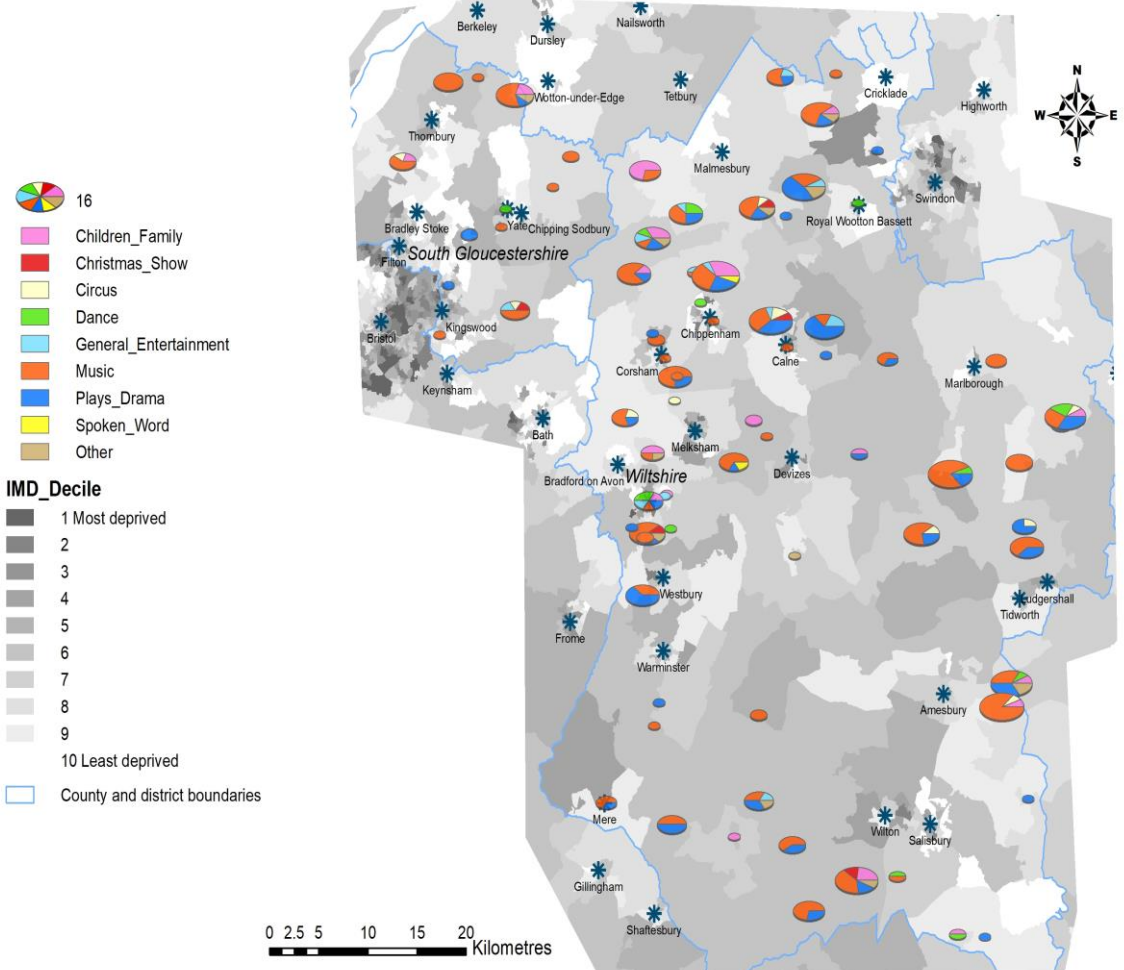
Spot On Lancashire - IMD: Artform Type



The area of operation of Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire featured a generally more affluent population (Fig. 2.22 overleaf). The scheme programmed a variety of art form types, with Plays/Drama and especially Music events being especially well represented in its portfolio. A cluster of venues north of Chippenham featured a wide variety of art form types including Dance and Children/Family themed performances. Some performances were delivered by Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire in places characterised by relative deprivation, but, in common with many schemes nationwide, the scheme tended to programme its activities in areas of comparative affluence.

Figure 2.22 Art-Form Type against Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2012-2017 for Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire – ‘remote’ scheme area

Wiltshire & South Gloucestershire - IMD: Artform type



1. This map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right [2013], and Office for National Statistics (2017). 2011 Census aggregate data UK Data Service (Edition: February 2017). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5257/census/aggregate-2011-2>, and Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census: Digitised Boundary Data (England and Wales). UK Data Service Census Support. Downloaded from <https://borders.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>. This information is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3>).

2. Names of towns and cities: Copyright 2018 Geofabrik GmbH and OpenStreetMap Contributors. Towns & Cities Database is made available under the Open Database License: <http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1.0/>. Any rights in individual contents of the database are licensed under the Database Contents License: <http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/dbcl/1.0/>.

Figures 2.23 and 2.24 (below and overleaf) map **audience numbers through time against the ethnicity mix** of the local population at the neighbourhood level. The featured Touring Schemes are **Village Ventures (Nottinghamshire)** – ‘accessible’ – and **Creative Arts East (Norfolk)** – ‘remote’.

As is the case in many parts of rural England, ethnic minority populations are significantly underrepresented in both of these Touring Scheme areas. This implies that the vast proportion of audiences for Rural Touring activities are British White in terms of ethnicity. There is evidence to suggest that Village Ventures attempted to stage performances in or close to those parts of their area of operation which feature the highest proportions of BME residents. This does not mean of course that such individuals were attending these performances. Creative Arts East map (Figure 2.24) shows limited activity in areas of greatest ethnic diversity.

Figure 2.23 Audience numbers through time (2012-17) against Ethnicity for Village Ventures (Nottinghamshire) – ‘accessible’ scheme area

Nottinghamshire - Ethnicity: Audience over Time

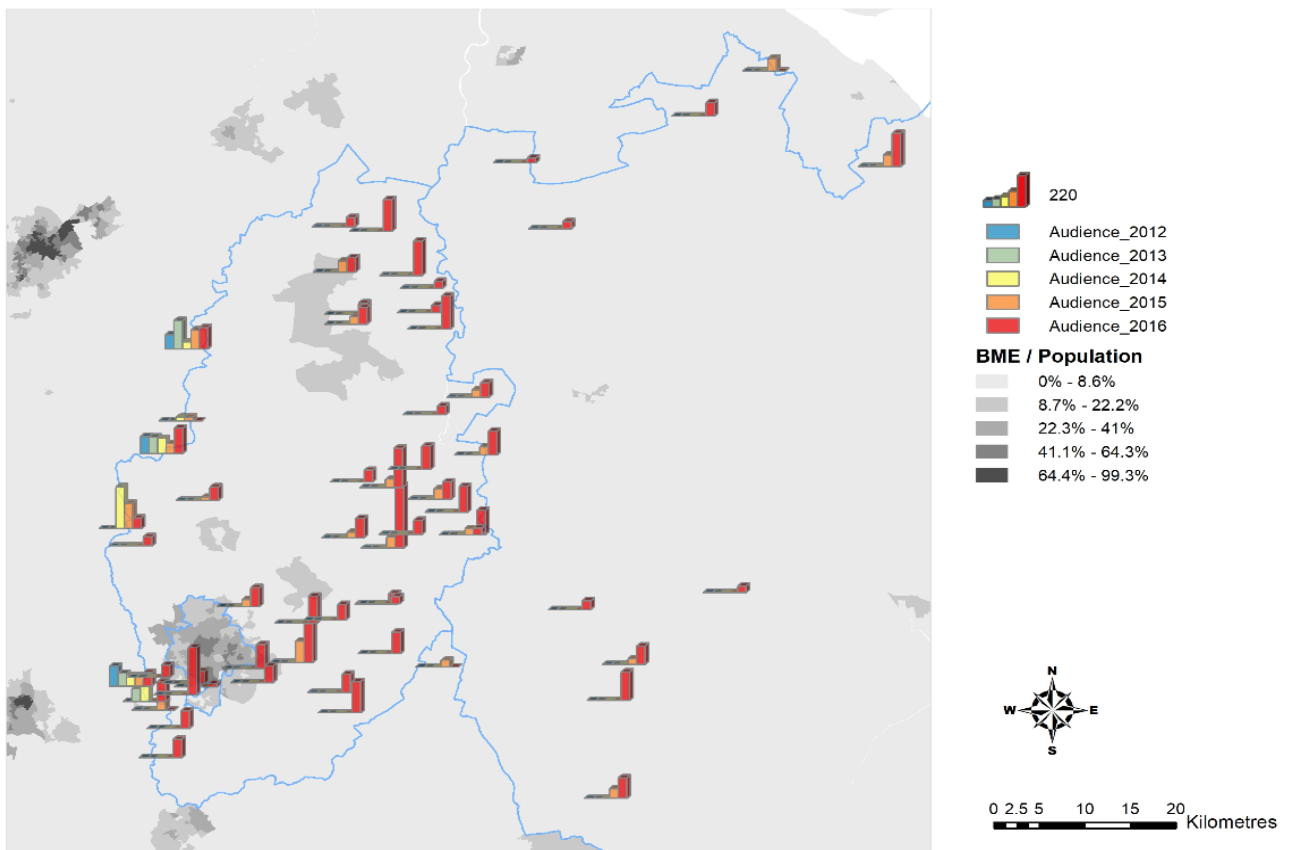
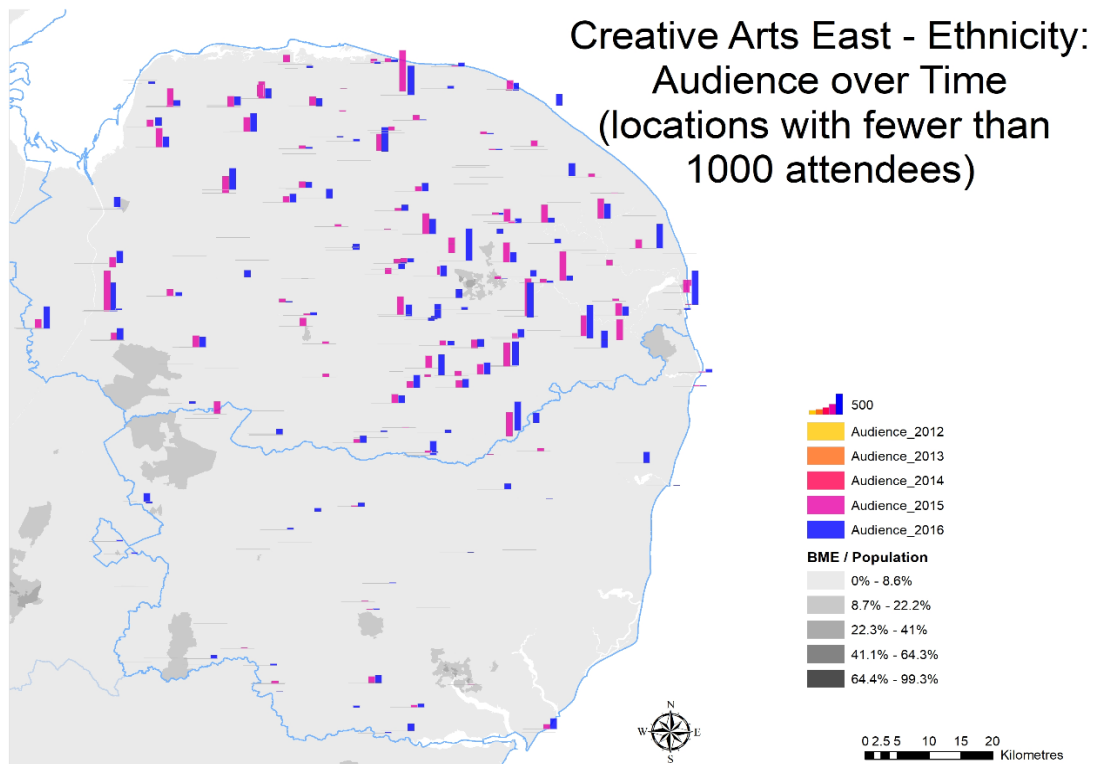


Figure 2.24 Audience numbers through time (2012-17) against Ethnicity for Creative Arts East – ‘remote’ scheme area



The final maps (Figures 2.25 and 2.26 – both overleaf) depict trends in **audience levels over the past five years against the age profile of the local population at the neighbourhood level**. The schemes highlighted are **Spot On Lancashire** (‘accessible’) and **Carn to Cove** (‘remote’). The darker the shading in each map, the higher is the median age of the local population.

In this instance, there were common patterns evident across both ‘remote’ and ‘accessible’ schemes. In general, most of the activities of Rural Touring Schemes took place in areas that featured a disproportionate concentration of older residents, which reflected the broadly older demographic of many parts of rural England. However, this did not necessarily imply that older individuals disproportionately attended these activities. More detailed intensive investigation of audiences in particular communities was required to confirm this. However, in both scheme areas there were notable isolated exceptions to this trend in which performances were being delivered in areas with a comparatively youthful population.

Figure 2.25 Audience numbers through time (2012-17) against Age for Spot On Lancashire – ‘accessible’ scheme area

Spot On Lancashire - Age: Audience over Time

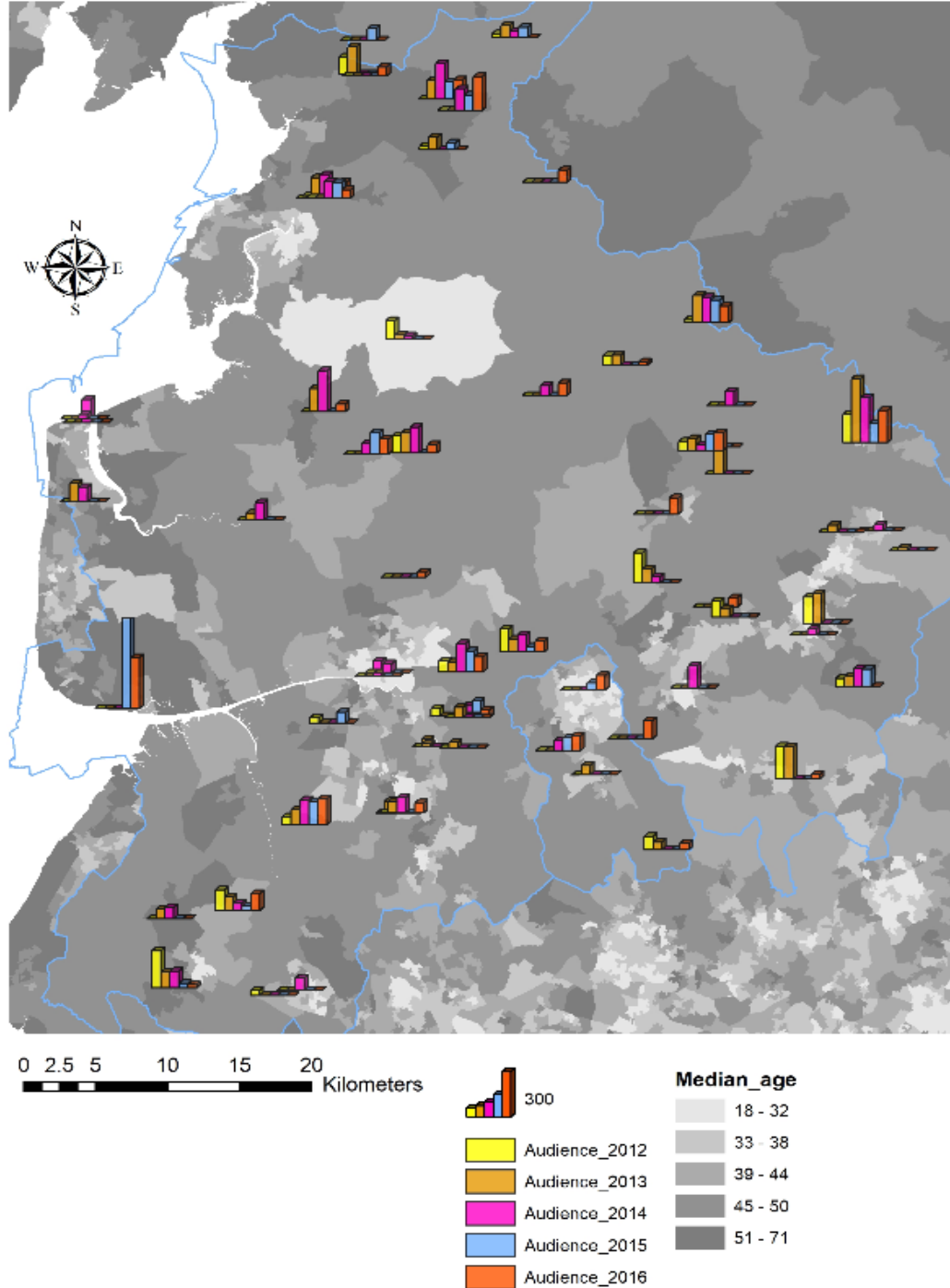
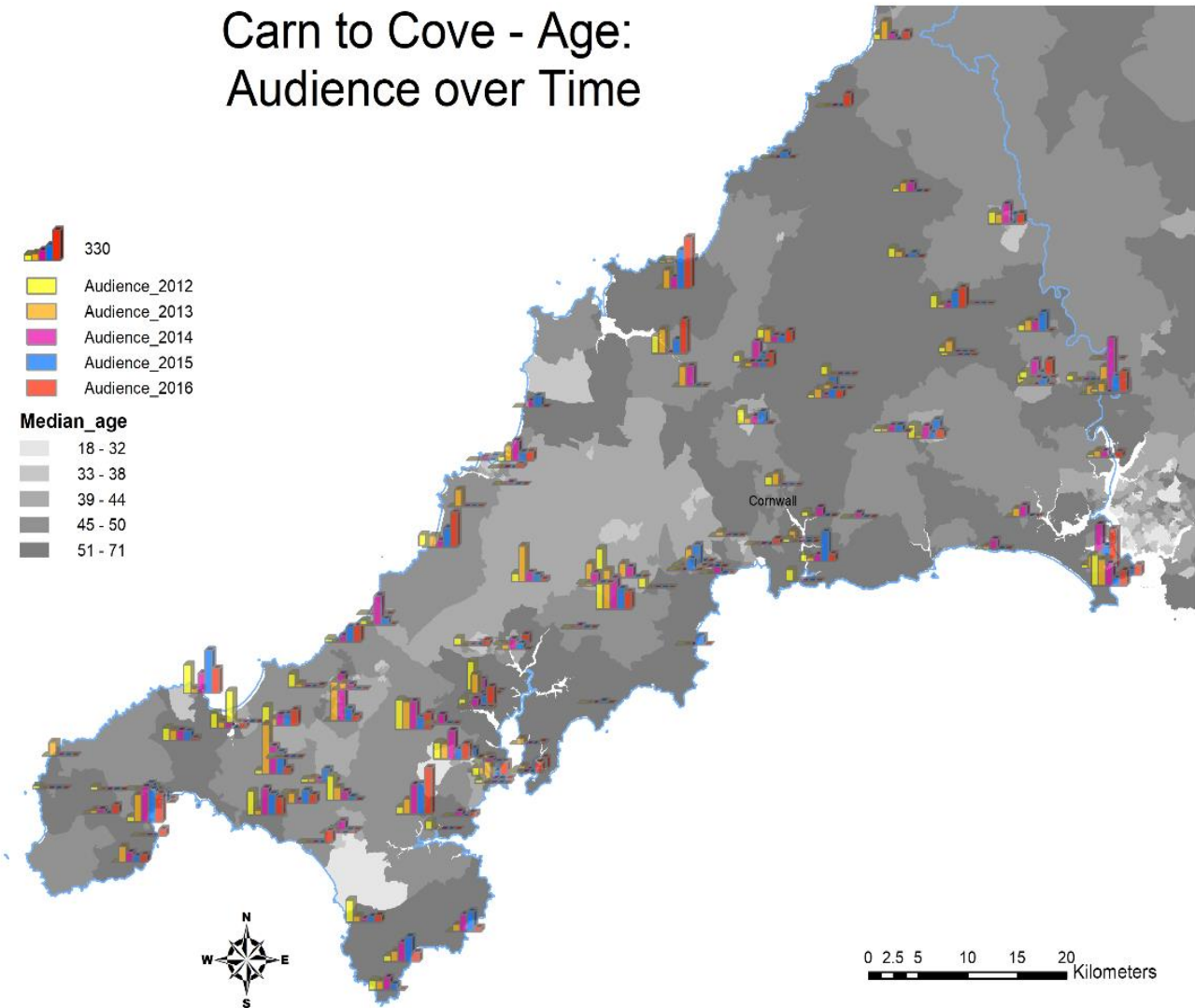
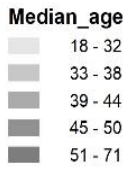
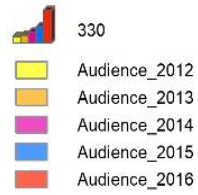


Figure 2.26 Audience numbers through time (2012-17) against Age for Carn to Cove (Cornwall) – ‘remote’ scheme area

Carn to Cove - Age: Audience over Time



2.8 The Socio-economic Impacts of Rural Touring: a View from the Schemes

The On-line Questionnaire Survey sought the views of Schemes on the socio-economic impacts generated by their programmed activities. It also sought information on which performances and activities were believed to be the most and least successful in producing particular impacts, including examples.

2.8.1 Building community engagement

For 38% of the Schemes, out of the range of potential interaction modes (Performance only; Participatory; Interactive; Residences; Workshops; Training; Other), they marked Performance as the 'best' route to achieving community engagement. A further 25% of Schemes declined to answer this question. Workshops were ranked as 'best' by 13% of Schemes with the other modes all gaining only one or two 'best' rankings.

Considering the 'least' effective for building community engagement, 25% of Schemes did not answer and 42% suggested Training. All the other modes received only one or two 'least' rankings.

2.8.2 Building individual skills

In total, 29% of Schemes did not answer this question and a further 25% listed 'Other'. 'Other' was described each time as becoming part of the organising group and/or volunteer promoting. Thereafter, 17% ranked Workshops as 'best' at building individual skills, with the other modes all gaining only one or two 'best' rankings.

Alongside no answer as the highest response (33%), 'least' effective modes for building individual skills were noted as Residences (30%) and Performance Only (17%).

2.8.3 Building self-esteem and confidence

Alongside no answer as the highest response (33%), a further 25% listed 'Other'. Similar to 2.8.2, 'Other' was described as being part of the organising group. Participatory mode was ranked by 13% of Schemes as the 'best' for delivering self-esteem and confidence. For 'least' effective modes, after 25% no responses, Residences were identified by 38% of Schemes followed by Participatory noted by 13% of Schemes.

2.8.4 Reducing loneliness, social exclusion and isolation

In total, 30% of Schemes did not answer this question. Thereafter, 50% of Schemes saw Performance as the 'best' mode for reducing loneliness, social exclusion and isolation. All the other modes received only one or two 'best' rankings. For 'least' effective modes, after 29% no responses, Workshops were identified by 33% of Schemes as 'least' effective for reducing loneliness, social exclusion and isolation. Interactive mode was seen as 'least' effective by 13% of Schemes.

2.8.5 Supports and encourages the development of new social networks, projects or groups

In total, 29% of Schemes did not answer this question. Thereafter, 29% of Schemes saw Participatory as the 'best' mode for encouraging networks, projects and groups followed by 21% of Schemes identifying Residences and 13% Performance. For 'least' effective modes, after 29% no responses, Training and Interactive were each ranked 'least' effective by 21% of Schemes, followed by Participatory noted by 13% of Schemes.

2.8.6 Positive impact is intensified/maximised when it is repeated more than once in the same community

All but one Scheme answered, with 75% of respondent Schemes 'Strongly Agreeing' with the statement that positive impact is intensified/maximised when it is repeated more than once in

the same community. In contrast, 4% 'Somewhat Disagree' and 8% 'Neither Agree or Disagree'.

2.8.7 Positive impact is intensified when the work is tailored to the particular heritage, culture and character of the place

In comparison to results for impacts through repetition, 33% of Schemes 'Somewhat Disagree' with intensified impact when the work is tailored to the particular heritage, culture and character of the places where it is delivered and a further 17% of Schemes 'Neither Agree or Disagree'. In a highly split set of answers, 25% of Schemes did 'Strongly Agree' and a further 21% 'Somewhat Agree'.

2.8.8 High-quality maximises positive impact regardless of where it is developed and delivered

Two-thirds of Schemes (67%) 'Strongly Agree' with this statement and a further 25% 'Somewhat Agree'.

2.8.9 Professional quality is the most important factor in determining positive impact

Just over half of Schemes (55%) 'Strongly Agree' with this statement and further 29% 'Somewhat Agree'. 'Neither Agree nor Disagree' was answered by 13% of Schemes.

2.9 Thinking About What Works

Schemes were asked to briefly detail up to three touring arts activities which they considered to be especially successful in creating benefits for the rural community.

Activities described by respondents were primarily 'performing arts' activities (for example, theatre, musical theatre or dance performances) which commonly had an additional element involving audience engagement or audience participation and interaction.

The key benefits outlined by respondents commonly involved extending the 'reach', accessibility and exposure of arts and culture to 'new' rural audiences that were perceived to rarely attend or engage. Examples included school children (and parents), young people, families, and people from disadvantaged communities. Another benefit frequently stated was that of exposing audiences to different cultures (from BAME backgrounds or by mixing old and young generations) through performing arts and other activities, to enable rural communities to learn about other cultures and to engender social cohesion.

Similarly, Schemes were asked to briefly detail up to three touring arts activities which they considered to be *less* successful in creating benefits for the rural community. There was far less reporting against this question.

Of those that did, less mainstream theatrical and some dance-based performance types were referred to. However, 'type' of performance was often a secondary factor underpinning lack of success. A common factor was that of low attendance, which made such activities unpopular with promoters. Some respondents reported poor success due to a lack of promoter 'ownership' of the programme, performance or activities. Some respondents expressed concern that, in some cases, inappropriate programming is being pushed to local promoters – driven by financial pressures or other factors:

“Promoters know their audiences. Even if a show costs nothing to programme in, it is soul destroying to have no audience turn out. We have to trust promoters and if they aren't interested, we shouldn't force their arm – even to do a favour for a mate or because something [is] cheap”

Additional factors behind 'unsuccessful' activities included: poor quality performances; activities inappropriate to the attending audience or village venues; poor or inadequate promotional and marketing material; inappropriate facilities for the performance, and/or; a lack of resources to support promotion.

2.9.1 Evaluation evidence

Schemes were asked to give any details of evaluation materials they might hold as part of evidence of impact.

Most Schemes reported their use of audience questionnaire surveys to gauge audiences' reactions to performances and to assess their impact on communities, with the intention of informing future programming of the Schemes. Evidence for impact was reported, for example, as positive feedback from audiences, sales (large audiences or sold out performances), and the high-quality of the performances and/or audience engagement/interaction activities. More tangible or intangible legacies of events such as inspiring children and young people to engage in arts and culture, performances having a longer-term impact on audiences, and new professional partnerships between promoters and artists were mentioned also.

Some Schemes also reported that they survey promoters in order to understand whether and how performances have had an impact on communities.

A few Schemes reported having undertaken or been part of more substantive evaluations on impact though these were infrequent and increasingly dated.

2.10 Scheme Views and Impact: A Summary

The 'benefits and impacts questions' sat within the On-line Questionnaire Survey that was answered by all the Schemes. Non-responses to these particular questions were the highest for the survey as a whole, running at about 25% non-response.

Those responses received were strongly consistent. Community engagement impacts were strongly associated with Performance delivery modes by Schemes, reflected through, for example, community awareness raising through prior event marketing activity, the scale of numbers attending such events and their group dynamics ('coming together') at Performances. Development of networks, projects and groups reflected modes based on greater participation: Participatory and Residences.

Concerning individual benefits, being part of organising groups and/or volunteers was identified as a key route to individual skills development. Workshops was noted next. Concerning individual self-esteem and confidence, Participatory event modes were noted after organising/volunteering.

All Schemes were strong in their belief that repeated exposure to arts activity intensified and maximised impact, as did quality in provision. There was no agreement as to possibly enhanced impacts where provision and/or notions of quality were reflected in locally tailored events.

Schemes were substantially driven by various forms of audience response in determining successful impact (numbers, characteristics, willingness to pay, interaction and reaction). More broadly, numerous examples and avenues of impact into local communities could be illustrated. More formal, systematised evidence of intervention logics and impact was limited.

3 The English Rural Touring Schemes: Case Studies

3.1 The Case Studies

The Case Study sites where local events funded by the Touring Schemes were researched are mapped in Figure 3.1 (overleaf). Core Case Studies were selected based on: an equal sample of 'accessible rural' and 'remote rural' Schemes, plus an 'Urban' example, and then the application of an equivalent 'remote – rural' dichotomy at the local level (using Rural Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies)¹⁰.

This sampling framework was set against those localities that existed within Scheme programmes (given the above process), had events taking place within fieldwork periods, and in discussion with Schemes to facilitate accessibility. Cumulative Case Studies returned to Matarasso (2004) sites.

¹⁰ See Section 1.3 Research Design and Annex 5 for full description of case study rationale and selection

Figure 3.1 English Rural Touring Schemes, 2016, by rurality and case study sites

National Rural Touring Schemes 2016 and Case Study Sites

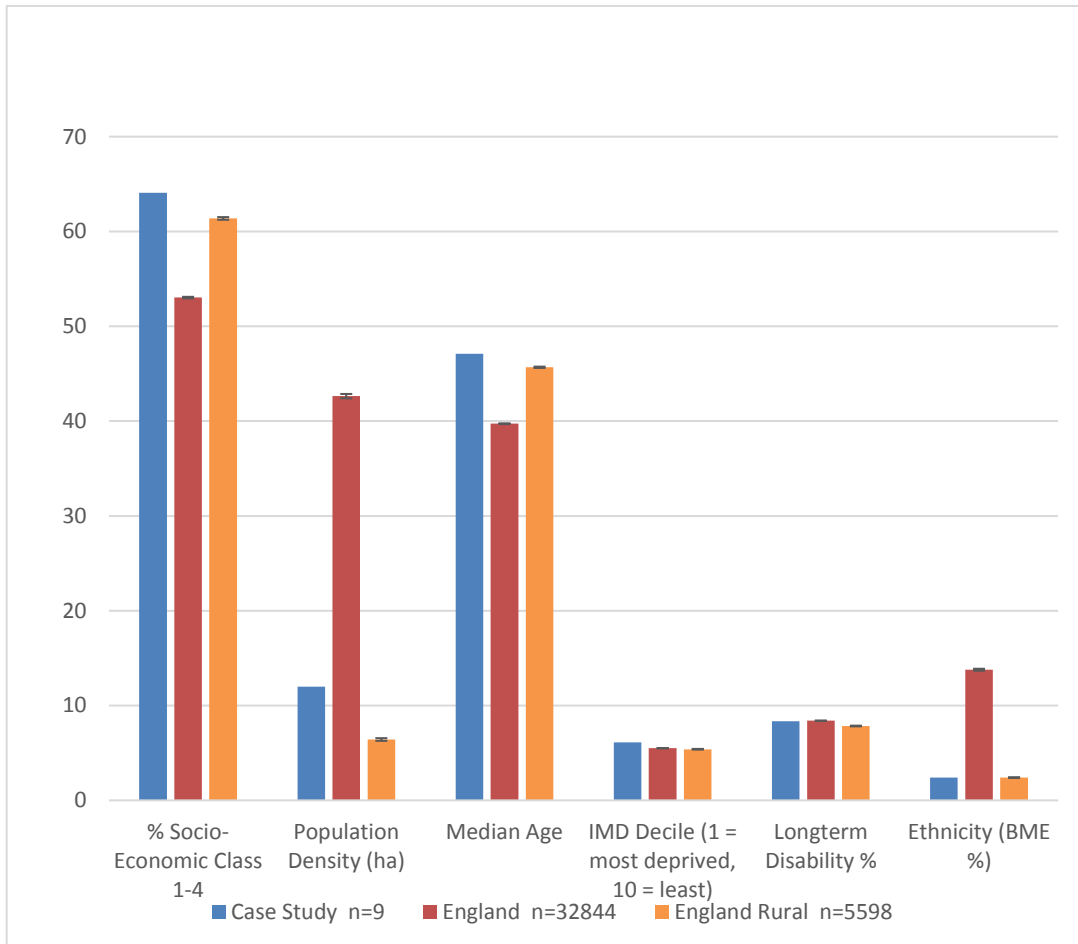


The definition of rurality is adapted from OS data © Crown copyright and database right [2011], and National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right [2011]. Licensed under the Open Government Licence 3.0 (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>).

3.1.2 Socio-economic characteristics of the chosen Case Studies

Figure 3.2 sets out the socio-economic characteristics of the chosen Core Case Study sites against the average for ‘England Rural’¹¹ and England as a whole (urban and rural).

Figure 3.2 Case Study Sites Socio-Economic Characteristics



Overall, Figure 3.2 illustrates the following:

- **% Socio-Economic Class 1-4:** Higher than the average at 64% compared to England as a whole (53%), and to English rural areas (62%);
- **Population Density (ha):** At 12, population density close to double that of English rural areas (6), but well below that of urban areas (43);
- **Median Age:** At 47 years, slightly higher than that of English rural areas (46), and well above that of urban areas (40);
- **IMD Decile (1 = most deprived, 10 = least):** At 6.1, less deprived than both England (5.5) as a whole and English rural areas (5.4);
- **Long term Disability %:** At 8.4%, above the average long term disability for English rural areas (7.8%), but the same for England as a whole; and
- **Ethnicity (BME %):** At 2%, statistically the same as English rural areas, and well below that of England as a whole (14%).

¹¹ England Rural: Lower Super Output Areas using RU10 classification, D1, D2, E1, E2. See Annex 5.

3.2 The Rural Touring Model

The Schemes and Case Studies covered by this report give a broadly national coverage of rural England and each operates a rural touring model which attracts Arts Council England funding and which aims to bring high-quality, professional arts to people living in rural areas.

Schemes action events, sometimes directly, but mostly through working with **Promoters**. They do so by offering a menu of potential performances from a designated list at a subsidised rate. Subsidy rate reflects a mix of artistic and commercial risk, strategic intent and the availability of other 'wrap around' support, such as marketing. Promoters may be professional and/or volunteer.

In turn, Promoters will have relationships with **Venues**. Almost without fail, Venues will be supported by **Volunteers** to ensure **Artists** can perform and events take place. Venues and Volunteers will be sited in, and related to, their local rural **Communities**, and potential **Audiences**.

NRTF acts a national organisation and sectoral body supporting the rural touring system to take place, develop and flourish.

3.3 Core Case Study: Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall, Lancashire

3.3.1 Context and community

Lancashire falls into the category of largely rural with hub towns and was selected as one of the accessible case study areas. Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall is based in Lancashire and falls under the remit of Spot On Lancashire. Spot On work with promoters across Lancashire and while they focus in the rural areas they have several important venues within the Lancashire towns and areas around the towns.

Borwick and Priest Hutton is made up of two hamlets of 180 households in total. It is on no bus routes but within easy range of main line stations in Carnforth and within reach of Morecambe and Lancaster for residents with cars. Local infrastructure is an issue with water and drainage historically being a problem. Until recently its broadband speeds were also some of the slowest in the region. Traditionally a rural farming community it is now changing into a community of in-coming professionals and retirees. The impression of relative affluence is confirmed by the statistics, with 75% of residents in the highest socio-economic classes 1-4, against an England rural average of 62% and England of 53%. A relatively ageing community, with a median age of 51 (England rural average is 46), it is 99% White British in ethnic origin.

Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall was selected as they were a long-standing venue with an active promoter, participating in the coming season programme and had a show within our research fieldwork timeframe. Scheme staff thought it represented an excellent example of a venue that had developed over time and had worked effectively through many challenges and changes to develop a venue with a strong profile and a dedicated audience.

3.3.2 The Rural Touring Scheme

Spot On Lancashire is run as a project by a private company limited by share, called Culturapedia. As a company, Culturapedia deliver a range of projects but focus on assisting communities to take curatorial control over the work they deliver, whether in their rural touring work or in work with local authorities and libraries. Spot On Lancashire predates Culturapedia who took over the project fourteen years ago. They enjoy NPO status for their work through their partnerships with Chester Council, Lancashire Council and Cheshire Council but are wholly responsible for delivering the work with Spot On. Culturapedia see the Spot On work as part of their portfolio that they deliver and it runs alongside work they do to promote performances in Lancashire libraries and other types of venue not normally associated with rural touring arts. The model is essentially the same across all their work:

“It’s rural themed but the focus is community performances and we work with communities or venues, wherever they are. So, if they happen to be in a built-up area, we are not saying, ‘We’re not working with you because you’re not surrounded by sheep’ (Scheme Joint Manager)

Their approach focusses on trying to nurture venues and promoters over time from simply taking shows that they know work in their venues to more risky programming and a variety of shows and art forms. Their touring manager explains:

“...it’s an interesting challenge, balancing what the Arts Council want to see in our menus and what our village halls would feel that was a kind of easy sell.” (Scheme Joint Manager)

As a result, they have evolved a transparent tiered subsidy model for promoters and each show is given a starred rating based on the challenge it represents. Therefore, a theatre show featuring new writing would attract a significantly higher subsidy than a mainstream musical performance. They also set a minimum ticket price of £8.00 and do not allow their promoters to operate concessions. One new innovation has been the introduction of digital ticketing which has been rolled out over all their venues and which they manage on behalf of the promoters.

So far, the results are positive and apart from increasing attendances and ticket sales it also appears to be broadening the geographical spread of audiences.

3.3.3 The Promoters and Venue

Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall have been working with Spot On since 1995 and since then the local community has managed to fundraise for and build a new hall with excellent community and art facilities. The hall was built in 1989 and cost £160,000, £80,000 of which was gained through local fundraising and the rest through grants from the County Council and Sport England.

The venue is seen as very strong member of the Rural Touring Scheme and Culturapedia are very keen to support them as they transition from one promotions' lead person to another. They manage to take two Spot On shows a year and though the venue has attempted a range of art forms – their default is music which is a particular interest of the promoting team. However, they are prepared to take a risk and try a range of music and usually manage to sell out the 100-seater venue. In the early days when Spot On promoters could keep the profits from shows the Memorial Hall was able to finance major improvements to its installations and were able to purchase lighting and a PA as a result.

The person who currently takes the lead on promoting arts events is the former chair of the Memorial Hall Committee and long-time resident in the area who has been involved in promoting for over fifteen years. He is very clear about his motives for being involved:

“I want to see the village being a vibrant place and I want to try and encourage the community aspect of it, and I want people to feel as though they're living in a place that's alive, you know? So, they are the motivations for me. It's quite selfish from that point of view. So, don't think it's all altruism, it's not. We just want to live somewhere where there are things going on” (Promoter, Borwick and Priest Hutton)

The promoter feels that they have had a good deal from Spot On Lancashire but notes that the subsidy is reducing to the extent that the level of risk now means they have reduced their annual promotions through Spot On from three to two. It is important to the promoter that he brings cultural experiences outside of people's normal reference points to the village and of the highest quality, and this is something he believes would not be possible without the support of Spot On. The current promoter is planning to step back from promoting in the coming year and is working with a new volunteer who plans to step into the role.

3.3.4 Volunteers

One of the reasons for the energy and vibrancy associated with touring events is the success the promoter and the Committee have had in recruiting and retaining a team of core volunteers and a network of willing helpers:

“...it's people who like working together and we've been very lucky in these two villages in that that we've got a lot of willing helpers to do that, but they don't necessarily, all of them, want to organise things but they're quite happy to muck in.” (Promoter)

Interviews with volunteers revealed that this was not a group of people with lots of time on their hands but a group of busy people many of whom work full time and who were involved in lots of other community activity. One of the most striking features of this community case study is the success the promoter has had in getting the volunteers involved in other projects as a result of their association with the touring events.

One example, inspired by some of the music seen at events, has led a group of the volunteers to form a Ceilidh band which regularly performs at community events. Another project that grew out of the group of volunteers and which has transformed the viability of the village was the community broadband project which saw volunteers physically digging trenches to install

hyper-fast broadband at a fraction of the cost it would have been if they had hired a private company.

3.3.5 Visited event



The show was a performance by Quebec based folk trio Bon Debarass. The promoter is passionate about the importance of putting on high-quality events outside of the audience comfort zone and believed that the performance by Bon Debarass illustrated perfectly why it works. He believes the trick has been to take the audience with him over a period of time so they trust in the quality of what they are going to see and so they are prepared to take a risk on the unfamiliar:

“Imagine if I was trying to describe the event in advance to someone who did not trust in the quality of what we were doing.... ‘Okay. Now, what you’re in for is an evening of folk music from Quebec which will be mostly in a foreign language. It’s a three-piece band, all with a bit of clog dancing in the middle. So, what are your feelings about this?’ I mean, I can imagine the answer.... but do you know, by ten o’clock, did you notice that 94% of the people were on their feet, dancing and clapping?” (Promoter)

Our audience survey results tend to consolidate many of the comments made during interviews: that the audience for Spot On events in the Memorial Hall tends to reflect the general local population; that the great majority of them are not people who travel to see arts elsewhere; and that in the main they are highly appreciative of the shows they do get to see through the Scheme.

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	28.0	68.0	4.0	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	33.5	62.5	4.0	0.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	20.0	45.0	30.0	0.0
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	29.0	67.0	4.0	0.0
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	13.0	55.0	27.0	5.0
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	39.0	59.0	5.0	0.0
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	32.0	51.0	17.0	0.0
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	32.0	64.0	4.0	0.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	46.0	54.0	0.0	0.0

Note: answers are in percentage values adjusted for the number of missing replies.

Of the 71 surveys returned, 66% of them were from retired people and 80% of them were from people over the age of 45. In total, 82% had not travelled more than 25 miles in the past year to see an arts event and 79% had come to the show with family, friends or neighbours. Interestingly only 65% of respondents had attended events at the venue before but 90% were inspired to attend future events as a result of attending this show. Of those attending, 70% said that affordability was a key issue and while 55% had expected something new or unfamiliar, 65% expected it to be of high-quality. Comments on the survey forms collected after the event were overwhelmingly positive or very positive about the event. All of the audience reported that they were absorbed by the performance and virtually all had their imagination caught, would want to talk about the event and got what it was about. Thus, even though this was a new art form for the vast majority, virtually all suggested they would wish to see more in the future.

Written comments included: “Lovely evening. Group involved the audience. Felt totally part of the experience.”; “Fab to see a community come together for art...” and “Great quality musicians. An opportunity to experience a musical tradition not familiar to me on my doorstep - what could be better!”

3.3.6 Impacts and learning

Reflecting on the Case Study, a range of impacts are evident.

Benefits and Impacts

Evidence collected through the case study interviews, focus group and the audience survey indicate that Rural Touring Arts activity in Borwick and Priest Hutton has:

- Helped drive improvements in local facilities
- Supported the development of strong local networks
- Promoted and continues to support local volunteering
- Promoted community cohesion through events and other spin off activity
- Contributed to local skills development
- Led to the development of other arts and cultural activities
- Contributed to community development through fostering other activities and partnerships
- A driver for promoting a year-round calendar of community events and activities
- Made strong contribution to the economic infrastructure through, for example, the community broadband project

Good Practice

- The Scheme: Innovative digital ticketing; Innovative use of subsidy and tiered arrangement of guarantee against loss; Broadening range of venues beyond the classic village hall model
- The Venue: Strong sustainable volunteering model; volunteering impacting on broader community capacity; programming outside comfort zone while maintaining high audiences

3.4 Core Case Study: Caunton Dean Hole Community Centre, Nottinghamshire

3.4.1 Context and community

Caunton Dean Hole, Nottinghamshire, is typical of an accessible village in a rural setting. With an Urban Rural rating of R50, indicating at least 50 percent but less than 80 percent of the population in rural settlement, the locality has proximity to motorway networks and major roads, along with public transport links. It has accessibility but its immediate geographical position provides independence from major regional urban areas such as Derby and Nottingham. It has been an NRTF client for seventeen years with a long experience of promoting.

Caunton Dean Hole's population is relatively static and has remained so over many years with a significant number of families staying for generations. The many privately-owned houses in the direct vicinity of the venue suggest minimal numbers of social or 'affordable' housing. Conversations with audience members indicated an ageing profile but with a number of young families. Little recent or past migration either from Europe or beyond was noted. Reflecting this, the community has a median age of 49, higher than the England rural average of 46, with 68% of residents classified by government statistics in the highest socio-economic classes 1-4 and only 1.3% of the population from a different ethnic background other than White British. There are two pubs within walking distance, a shop, local post office and a primary school. There are good transport links via a regular bus service.

3.4.2 The Rural Touring Scheme

'Live & Local's not the cake, it's not even the icing on the cake but it's definitely the twinkly bits that you sprinkle across the top' (Scheme Director)

The Rural Touring Scheme in Nottinghamshire is Live & Local; Nottinghamshire is one of seven county-wide schemes that Live & Local now run. Live & Local have only been heading up the scheme for two years but they retain the former local scheme's branding "Village Ventures" for their work in Nottinghamshire. Reduced funding made the original scheme unviable and the involvement of Live & Local meant it was possible to take advantage of their economies of scale. Feedback from venues indicated that the transition from Village Ventures had been smooth. Live & Local employ field workers to ensure that in each of their core areas they have a tailored service that meets the needs of local promoters.

The Scheme Director explained:

"I think fundamentally the core model has not changed, the core model is about facilitating other people to choose and promote professional arts within their community." (Scheme Director)

The model they generally use is that Live & Local offer a list of potential performances and then discuss with each of their promoters the performance they would like. They emphasise that they are keen to promote innovative and diverse performances that reflect the policy of Arts Council England (the funder) but recognise that in many communities this is an uphill task as promoters generally find it hard to attract audiences to more challenging art forms such as dance or performances with more contemporary or cutting edge issues. In this regards, Live & Local believe it is their role both to support and challenge promoters.

Live & Local view Caunton Dean Hole as a reliable, long-running scheme which knows what they are doing, and they know their community and audience well. Their shows either break even (with the subsidy provided by Live & Local) or make a small profit. The local promoters tend to veer away from anything too experimental, tending to book music acts but have taken story tellers, musical variety, and some drama performance. The promoters' preference is for music which they say is an easier prospect in terms of attracting audience. The stalwart member of the promoting team has been involved for over seventeen years and used to share

the responsibility with her husband before his death. She now works with one other core volunteer and a small team of helpers. At one point they were promoting six shows a year but over recent years this has reduced to two and there is a question mark over how much longer the main volunteer will carry on, or what will happen when she steps down.

3.4.3 The Promoters and Venue

The village community centre is in fact a shared-use village primary school. Performances take place in the school hall which, due to its size and layout, does restrict the scale and variety of show that can be delivered. The core promoters have been programming the hall for over seventeen years and are proud of their legacy and contribution to village life. They estimate that roughly 50% of the audience come from the local village and believe that touring events are a focus for people to come together who would not otherwise see each other:

“It’s good for the community and gets people together that you sometimes don’t see from one event to another.” (Volunteer)

A key element of their formula is a buffet supper provided free after every performance which encourages audience members to stay and socialise. The promoters believe that it is the informality of events that contributes to their success but are concerned that audiences are getting more difficult to attract.

The same two people who are responsible for the touring events are also the mainstay on the community centre committee, a fact which has ensured that over time touring shows have linked to the activities of other village groups. One example is a recent show about Amy Johnson which was linked to the Local History Society and the booking of a show with a World War One theme in the 2018 season links into a series of events the church is planning for Remembrance Day.

The promoter considered that artistic quality was important but as a balance between affordability, attendance and income as, for her, quality should be defined as something that people want to see but that is highly professional. It may be something that is “different” (i.e. outside of people’s normal experience) but innovation is something handled carefully to manage audience numbers. She believed that most of the audience were local and would not otherwise attend arts events unless it was promoted locally.

Interestingly, although Caunton Dean Hole’s programme is considered mainstream by Live & Local, when asked what show had had the most impact locally, the four members of the promoting team we interviewed were all in agreement that it was a Japanese drumming troupe, the Taiko Drummers, that had created the biggest impact, with one of the volunteers commenting, “I mean the power of it, the drums, it was amazing wasn’t it?”. Interestingly, this booking came about as a result of seeing the drummers opening a sports event on TV.

3.4.4 Volunteers

The same volunteers have been involved in promoting for a very long time and few other people are involved. The four core volunteers that were interviewed were all over retirement age and the other helpers they talked about were also above retirement age. As one of the volunteers explained, “No one wants to take it on. Nobody younger wants to come and help”.

People active within the arts promotions are also active in other activities that go on in the village and are the same people who promote or volunteer at art events, run the community centre and promote other activities. Skills and confidence gained from putting on arts events over many years has given volunteers the confidence and skills to put on events in general. They know what goes into planning and promoting and they have the mechanisms for publicity such as the parish magazine, word of mouth networks, and so on. This means all the village events benefit from this skill and legacy, and for a village of 500 people there is seemingly a lot going on. This would indicate that the village fetes, MacMillan coffee mornings, bring-and-buy sales, Christmas events etc. all reflect the fact that there is an embedded knowledge of

promoting successful events and illustrate the extent to which the arts programme contributes to a broader capacity of 'village life'.

When asked about their motives for volunteering, interviewees talked about the sense of satisfaction they get from volunteering and putting on events:

"We get a buzz out of it and people enjoy themselves obviously... and when people come up at the end of the show and say that was a blooming good show. Best yet or whatever." (Volunteer)

The biggest issue for the scheme and the venue is what happens when the current team step down. "We will do one more year and then we will see..." as one volunteer said.

3.4.5 Visited event



The performance at which we undertook our survey was a concert by Kit Holmes and Al Greenwood, a mainstream jazz and blues influenced pop duo with a strong pedigree. They were on a tour which had taken in a range of rural locations mainly covered by rural touring schemes and it was clear they were both familiar with the types of venue they would be playing and the type of audience. The audience numbered just over 30 and this represented very nearly a full house, which illustrates the limits of the venue. Of the 32 people attending, three were under the age of 45 and three aged over 75. The median age was 49, with an equal male/female split, no registered disabled and under 5% ethnic minority. Just under two thirds were retired.

The band brought their own lights and PA but it was apparent that it was a difficult venue in which to create an atmosphere reminiscent of the club gigs to which the format and repertoire were suited. Nevertheless, audience feedback for the event was hugely positive – over 98%

of the audience reported they were absorbed by the performance and 88% reported it changed their mood for the better. The art form was not new to the majority.

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	22.7	70.5	6.8	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	40.9	56.8	2.3	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	30.0	65.0	5.0	0.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	22.6	38.7	29.0	9.7
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	27.0	64.9	5.4	2.7
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	42.9	45.2	7.1	4.8
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	28.9	55.3	13.2	2.6
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	40.0	47.5	10.0	2.5
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	2.6	41.0	41.0	15.4
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	30.2	67.4	2.3	0.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	52.4	45.2	2.4	0.0

Note: answers are in percentage values adjusted for the number of missing replies.

Written comments included: “Excellent quality as always”; “Very enjoyable. Very pleased I came”; “As usual it was very good and enjoyable - important for live events such as this to be staged.”

Familiarity and proximity were of great importance to the audience with 75% of respondents having been to previous events at the hall, and 78% saying that one of the reasons for attending was the performance’s close proximity to their home. 87% also reported that affordability was another key reason for attending. The fact that nearly 98% of those attending stated this to be a quality event and the same number reported that they would like to see more shows of this kind appears to indicate that the promoters had built a strong reputation for the quality of their events and knew the tastes of their audience well.

3.4.6 Impacts and learning

Reflecting on the Case Study, a range of impacts are evident.

Benefits and Impact

Evidence collected through the case study interviews, focus group and the audience survey indicate that Rural Touring Arts activity in Caunton Dean Hole has:

- Developed an audience for arts and cultural events who would not otherwise access the arts
- Supported community cohesion by providing opportunities to socialise with people outside of their immediate social networks
- Supported the development of strong local networks
- Had a perceivable impact on people's sense of wellbeing
- Had a positive impact on how people feel about their community
- Been supported by, and linked to, other community activity

Good Practice

- The Scheme: Link worker scheme providing direct support to promoters; balanced approach to innovation, allowing venues and communities to play to their strengths
- The Venue: Creating social events around the events i.e. buffet suppers; marketing through local networks; linking touring programme events to other local cultural events and societies

3.5 Core Case Study: Devoran Village Hall, Cornwall

3.5.1 Context and community

Cornwall is in the category of 'remote rural' for the purposes of our study. With a heritage of tin mining, farming and fishing, the most important industry is now tourism. Carn to Cove, the Cornish Rural Touring Scheme, was established to support rural touring across the whole of Cornwall. Although they have venues in tourist destinations, as a charity Carn to Cove's overall commitment is to rural communities, many of whom live in small settlements and isolated communities throughout the peninsula.

Devoran is a village of 600 people on the edge of the Restronguet Creek at the confluence with the Carnon River. Its small port was linked to local tin mines via a now-disused railway, and though the mining industry has long since died out, along with links to the sea, it still forms an important part of the local heritage. In the past forty years, the most significant industry has grown to be tourism which appears to drive most of the work opportunities in the village. There is a small indigenous population who have lived in the area for generations; 'incomers' form an increasingly important part of the local community. The median age is 50, ten years above the national average and five years higher than the average for rural England in general. It also appears to be relatively affluent with nearly 71% of the population in socio-economic classes 1-4, putting it 10% higher than the average for rural England in general. At 1.7%, BME is slightly lower than the national average for rural areas in general, which is 2.4%. Devoran has a pub and a school but apart from the onsite shop in the local caravan park there is nowhere to buy groceries or fresh food and no post office. The village has good transport links by bus to Truro and Falmouth and a bus service to the local train station, set a mile outside of the village.

3.5.2 The Rural Touring Scheme

Carn to Cove is a charity which employs two members of staff. It works with 85 venues and programmes in about 65 of these venues every year. This has grown from working with promoters in eight venues in 2006, the year in which the current Scheme Director was appointed. Their main aim and role is a resource supporting local promoters and communities, and they try to steer away from venues catering to tourism. They work with a range of venues including sports halls, chapels, barns and even outdoor stages, but their mainstay are village halls, of which Devoran is a good example.

Carn to Cove only have funding to operate subsidies on one show a season per venue, but this does not seem to deter their promoters who usually take at least two shows a year and sometimes up to six. They operate a profit split which gives the promoters the incentive to fill their shows, but the Scheme Director does not think attracting audiences is a necessarily huge issue in most of the venues:

"You can stick fifteen posters around a village and everybody in the village knows about the event, or has talked about it in the post office or wherever, in the pub."
(Scheme Director)

Neither is there any evidence that challenging programming necessarily deters promoters:

"It doesn't have to be safe and it doesn't have to be boring and it doesn't have to be very middle-of-the-road. It can be something that's quite out there and we don't underestimate our audiences, they are up for it. They'll go with it." (Promoter)

The Scheme runs what it calls "pitching events" linked to every season, where promoters are invited to an evening where the shows that will be part of the coming season are "pitched" to them. At these events, they have a chance to ask questions and make a pitch for the shows they want in their venue. The Scheme think this is a very good way of building a relationship

of trust with the venues and certainly enables them to get to know the individuals involved and perhaps to get them to consider shows they would not otherwise think are suitable.

The Scheme also has a strong sense of the importance of both their role in sustaining Cornish culture and in developing a new rural culture or rural aesthetic:

“Through new technologies, village communities and rural communities can talk to each other directly now, not through the prism of an urban aesthetic. I think for example, there are very strong rural aesthetics of course because folk music ultimately, folk culture, which actually still permeates a lot of content and stories obviously come out of... that’s why many companies want to develop their stories inside a community.” (Scheme Director)

The Scheme Director also has a clear view that rural touring has a very important role to play in community cohesion. It is also important to understand the economic impact:

“...not just in terms of the creative economy, but also for the local economies of villages, such as local pubs incorporating pre-event meals and after show drinks etc., it’s a win-win model.” (Scheme Director)

Social impacts are seen as more difficult to quantify, although Audiences Agency research in Cornwall did show how important rural touring events are in building community cohesion and challenging isolation. It’s about:

“a sense of laughter and enjoyment ... there is something about the village hall, it’s not the church, ... it’s something which is non-denominational, it’s quite neutral, it’s not always dominated by alcohol either, which is obviously the pub environment. There are things which are very core to village life which we provide a major shot in the arm for.” (Scheme Director)

3.5.3 The Promoters and Venue

Devoran Village Hall was originally built in the 1920s as a military drill hall. It received funding in 2015 for refurbishment which at the time of writing is nearly complete. It has a very active committee and is well used by local clubs and for events which include Tia Chi, keep fit, acoustic music sessions, a folk club, a gardening club, ‘a Capella’ women’s choir and a monthly local produce market. Unusually for a village hall, the promotions are led by a promoting group rather than an individual. A local parent with a background in drama and community arts was approached by Carn to Cove in 2015 because they wanted a local promoter who was interested in promoting children’s shows. She approached other women she knew through being involved in other community groups in the village and they decided to form a production company to promote children’s shows in the village hall.

She described the very positive experience of attending the first “pitching” event which resulted in them booking their first show, a puppet theatre which was such a success that they have now built their programme up to four shows a year. She explains:

“We have one subsidised show from Carn to Cove every six months – that is really too far apart – we need them more frequently to have more impact. We now do four shows a year including adult and children’s shows using money we’ve got, money in the kitty, from refreshments and stuff...” (Promoter)

She explains that the rural touring shows are part of a whole programme at the hall run by clubs and societies, and that it is part of the regular round of events which bring the community together and that people will come to shows whether or not they are fans of the art form or comfortable with the subject matter. But the fact that it is of high-quality is fundamental to its success:

“With adult rural touring shows people are prepared to give it a go and come along, you don’t always expect it to be brilliant. With the adult shows there is definitely a social element, it’s comfortable to see your neighbours and friends – it’s still a good

evening whatever, people have tea before or drinks after, there are things to do. But with the children's shows, especially younger children, it really matters if the show is not good quality." (Promoter)

One volunteer commented on the importance of local culture in the choice of shows:

"People here like to support local arts companies, local shows that they know are made by Cornish companies, they always want to support local stuff and they are not so interested in supporting outside stuff – it's small scale, small venues, small companies – and things people wouldn't see otherwise, without rural touring." (Volunteer)

3.5.4 Volunteers

The volunteers involved in supporting the touring events are generally the same people involved in the promoting team, with a few other people who help out from time to time. As a relatively new group they still feel they are finding their feet somewhat in terms of building the profile of rural touring events. The four volunteers interviewed all felt it was both worthwhile and rewarding and that volunteering had helped them feel more part of village life. As one of the volunteers commented:

"Certainly, I have enjoyed getting to know people in the village that I wouldn't normally have met - that has been hugely important to me...I feel much more part of the community than I otherwise would have done." (Volunteer)

"Feedback has been so positive, but the work is immense. People absolutely love the shows and they are waiting for the next performance – it makes people feel good about living in Devoran." (Volunteer)

The group regularly meet to make decisions about their programme and to allocate jobs for the coming shows but there have clearly been challenges. "Sometimes it's hard to get decisions made and you have to deal with different personalities". Nevertheless, having a team to promote and support events means that tasks and responsibilities can be shared and there are a greater number of skills to call on. When the group formed in 2015 it was clear they were able to pool skills from their work and professional lives; one of the volunteers had a background in drama and community arts, another was a practicing artist, while another had worked in tourism and public relations.

The whole promoting group which involves about eight people with a few other helpers, are all women. One of the volunteers thinks that this is to do with the fact they started off only promoting children's shows, even though most of the group are not parents of young children.

3.5.5 Visited event

The show we visited, including undertaking an audience survey, was an afternoon event billed as a family show and was part of the Rural Touring Dance Initiative. "Chalk Circle" is an original devised piece performed by a Scottish Company called Curious Seed and designed for audiences aged eight and upwards. It dealt with a range of issues related to identity and growing up and involved what one volunteer promoter referred to as "edgy" themes such as sex and sexuality.

On the day, there were just over thirty people in the audience, half of whom were children or young people. The relatively low attendance was explained by one of the promoting team as related to the show having to be programmed during the bank holiday weekend. Given that it was a long show (over 90 minutes) in an art form many of the audience had not experienced before and which dealt with some difficult themes, the audience response was extremely positive as recorded both in conversation with the research team and in survey responses.

One audience member interviewed commented:

“I think there was definitely engagement and there were moments of intensity where I think you could tell that ‘je ne sais quoi’ in the room when you know that a connection has been made.” (Audience Member)

The results before the show relating to the audience expectations indicate uncertainty about the performance. Of those attending, 69% expected that the performance would be unusual or something new for them and only 39% expected it to be of high-quality. Only 31% thought the venue was family friendly – this last point was itself a very interesting issue for the organisers, who focus on promoting family and children’s shows. These pre-show results contrast with findings after the show, when 87% said they were absorbed by the performance, 79% strongly agreed that it lifted their mood for the better, 73% said the performance was emotionally moving, and 79% said they would want to talk about it to others. The post-show responses were generally very positive, with agreement about the challenging nature of the material (85%), and agreement that it was both high-quality (100%) and that they would like to see more of this kind of event (100%).

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	20.0	67.0	13.0	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	87.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	71.0	29.0	0.0	0.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	54.0	31.0	15.0	0.0
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	64.0	22.0	15.0	0.0
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	79.0	21.0	0.0	0.0
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	73.0	27.0	0.0	0.0
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	79.0	14.0	7.0	0.0
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	7.0	50.0	36.0	7.0
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	67.0	33.0	0.0	0.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	73.0	27.0	0.0	0.0

Note: answers are in percentage values adjusted for the number of missing replies.

Free comments made on survey forms confirm people’s positive experiences – the following being typical: “Creative, fun and engaging a great journey in the story”; “Thought provoking and powerful, I really enjoyed it!” and; “Exciting, fun, imaginative, beautiful”.

3.5.6 Impacts and Learning

Reflecting on the Case Study, a range of impacts are evident.

Benefits and Impacts

Evidence collected through the case study interviews, focus group and the audience survey indicate that Rural Touring Arts activity in Devoran has:

- Helped drive improvements in local facilities
- Promoted and continues to support local volunteering
- Channelled a range of transferable skills
- Promoted community cohesion
- Contributed to local skills development
- Raised money to fund other unsubsidised professional touring events
- Supported local arts organisations
- Contributed to community development through fostering other activities and partnerships

Good Practice

- The Scheme: “Pitching” events to support local promoters; profit share model on subsidised events
- The Venue: Sustainable promoters group spreading tasks and responsibility; programming outside comfort zone while maintaining audiences

3.6 Core Case Study: Pens Meadow School, Black Country

3.6.1 Context and community

The Black Country is not a rural area under any classification. Indeed, overall, it is a densely populated area (urban with major conurbation) and the Scheme is based in West Bromwich and works across the four Black Country Boroughs of Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley.

Pens Meadow is a special school which offers places to over a hundred children between the ages of three and nineteen. The venue is in Kings Winsford, above national average for affluence, and a low 4% BME ethnicity given its West Midlands conurbation setting. The students, however, are drawn from across the Dudley area which has pockets of extreme deprivation and relatively high levels of ethnic diversity comparable with the rest of the Black Country.

3.6.2 The Rural Touring Scheme

Black Country Touring (BCT) receive Arts Council funding under the Rural Touring Scheme programme. They deliver touring arts work across the four Black Country boroughs. They are funded under the same conditions as all the rural schemes and their inclusion relates to the demise of another Black Country project, the Darlaston based “Theatre Foundry”, who had been funded to deliver “community theatre” and Theatre in Education (through Gazebo TIE) to the whole of the Black Country. Its inclusion in the programme, according to the Scheme Director, is a result of the area sharing some of the features of a rural area. That is, with no immediate centre or reference point and no obvious venues to support the whole of the area.

Black Country Touring was founded in 1999. Instead of founding a new company to deliver touring theatre it was decided to adopt the rural touring model which was then just taking off and Black Country Touring was born. They are based in a building in West Bromwich in Sandwell Borough. As with the other Schemes, they work with promoters based in venues to promote shows through charging a fixed fee for each show and encouraging venues to make a profit which they are allowed to keep ploughing back in to more arts work.

The big difference to other Schemes is in the variety of venues and types of communities they work with. Most of their venues don't necessarily have a tight geographical remit and they tend to work in a more targeted way with communities and interest groups. BCT also undertake a wide-ranging programme of special commissions and projects which directly support and interact with their wider touring work. Their Director explains that their method of commissioning is built into the needs of the communities they work with and aims to tailor work which is relevant and accessible. They also regularly partner with other schemes and one of their recent collaborations, “My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding” (2014-16), also features as part of the Shropshire-based Scheme (Wem Case Study).

The focus of this Case Study is the Black Country Young Promoters project which has been running for nearly twenty years and aims to introduce young people to the realities of arts event promotion. The Young Promoters scheme runs across several venues and communities – this Case Study focuses on their work with one venue, Pens Meadow Special School (Dudley) which works with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Inclusion as an ‘extra’ Case Study, then, relates to BCT's existence not only as an interesting anomaly but as a long-standing scheme which has pioneered ground-breaking work, and which regularly works across the country.

3.6.3 The Promoters and Venue

The Young Promoters scheme combines targeted development work with a venue and a group of young people around the promotion of a show which will have a standard promoters'

agreement attached to it. So, like other venues, the group of young people have to choose the show, promote and host it and raise enough money from ticket sales to pay the fee. Since 2016, the Young Promoters scheme has run as a festival across four venues and four shows.

The groups in each venue are involved in every aspect of the production from designing the logos to organising refreshments. Each group meets and collaborates with other venues at key points to organise aspects of the festival. In 2018, 150 young people took part – groups, from Sandwell and Dudley Colleges, Queen Victoria Primary School and Pens Meadow Post 16 in Dudley, George Salter Academy in West Bromwich and Penn Hall School in Wolverhampton.

Most of the “young promoters” have no previous experience of visiting performing arts venues and, in many cases, of seeing live professional work. BCT have a member of staff dedicated to the scheme who explained its impact:

“The Young Promoters project grew out of wish to make performance arts more available to young people – especially teenagers – who are a very difficult audience...They have no preconceptions of what the work is or looks like and therefore the project – which goes on over the course of a year leading to a festival and has a huge impact on them as a result of the learning curve they go through – as they have to deliver every aspect of the project.”

Pens Meadow is a special school which offers places to over a hundred children between the ages of three and nineteen. The young people from the school who participated in the Young Promoters scheme, which form the focus for the Case Study, were all over 18 and were students at the Pensnett site where the school offers their 16-19 provision.

Students attending the school receive one-to-one support and many have very complex needs. The 16-19 provision at the school aims to focus on life skills and to provide students with the opportunity to participate in real world contexts and situations.

3.6.4 Visited event

This was the first year that the school had participated in the Young Promoters scheme and the school were very keen to enable students to participate on the same level as other young people; they dedicated a whole morning per week throughout the whole school year to their students’ participation.

The model is hugely effective in skilling-up a group of young people in making all the decisions a promoter makes in putting on a show. Although supported substantially, the students were still exposed to the same financial risk as other promoters. In this case, the performance at Pens Meadow had a funding target of £300 to break even. The young people were given the task of developing a business plan, including targeted ticket sales and fundraising from other income such as running a café.

The participants in the project were a class group of ten students, aged 18 and 19. From September 2017 until the performance in June 2018 this group met together with a teacher to work through a “tool kit “pack provided by BCT. Two members of staff from Black Country Touring came to run sessions every second or third week on Wednesday morning and other professionals were brought in at different stages to help the group develop their own young promoters’ package. The whole process was supported by one-to-one classroom assistants and the class teacher.

Based around a weekly session of participatory planning, the class teacher who led the project explains the impact on the group:

“This is a group of young people who have had the power to decide many things in their life taken off them as a result of their learning difficulties. In this case, they were given complete (if guided) control and they would have to work through the consequence of their decisions.” (Teacher)

The teacher went on to explain how the nine-month long programme directly impacted on the young people's skills and aptitude and linked directly to the curriculum:

"They have been using their literacy and numeracy skills for researching on the internet, writing notes, with support.... things like working for the box office guys, it's all been about money, so they've been using their numeracy skills to do that. They designed marketing materials and came up with flyers and leaflets." (Teacher)

Apart from having to function in the real world, with real world consequences attached to their decisions, the class teacher thinks that the most important aspect of the project has been the team work:

"They have had to communicate with one another and let each other know what they're doing in order that it all runs smoothly, and they've really developed their skills in doing that and independent thinking and being creative with the things that they need to think about, and if there's problems, problem solving, well this did, this might not work or this didn't work, could we do something different." (Teacher)

The final production selected and supported by the young people at Pens Meadow was "Da Silva's Marionette Circus" by Noisy Oyster Puppet Theatre, which performed at the school on June 12, 2018. As a puppet theatre, they perform nationally and internationally and specialise in small scale venues and often work in schools.

Their director and key puppeteer explained the special excitement about being chosen to perform at Pen's Meadow:

"Obviously, the fact that they have chosen you from a list generates an excitement and a willingness to make it a good event, but also the fact that they are having to organise things that they would never have thought of, selling the tickets, doing the promotion, and all the things that go in to putting on an event, they have to think about and do themselves. So, it's a fantastic project for learning and to open your eyes as to what is required for doing something like that. Of course, for special needs, it's hugely empowering as well." (Director, Arts Organisation)

Although the performance was advertised and any member of the general public could buy tickets, the audience was largely made up of family and friends and members of school staff and their families. The hall was full and there were many children in attendance for what was essentially a children's show. The audience were largely responsive and got excited at places in the performance. The young people who were part of the promoters' group were 'transfixed and focussed' throughout the performance, something their teacher suggested was very, very unusual, and the show was staged and performed as professionally as any other show in the rural touring circuit.

Survey reports were at first surprising. As no arts events open to the public had ever happened at the venue before it was not surprising that no one in the audience had ever been there before; however, it also revealed that expectations were relatively low (including compared with other venues in the research), with only 29% of the audience expecting the performance to be of high-quality. It also revealed that 23 of the 28 respondents lived in Dudley and that 56% of the people were there because they knew someone involved with the production, all which would suggest that many of those attending were family and friends of the organising group or involved in the school. Having seen the show, 80% of the audience were inspired to invite friends or family to future similar events and 64% were inspired to attend themselves.

Free comments on the survey post cards seemed to confirm both that they enjoyed the show and they appreciated the efforts of the organising group, the following comments being quite typical: "Excellent show, great opportunity for young students"; "Excellent show very well promoted", and "The young promoters were brilliant, they made the show very special".

Conversation with audience members before and after the show tended to confirm results suggested by the survey that most of the people who came to the event were not there primarily because it was an arts event but were there to support the promoters. However, having experienced the show they were pleasantly surprised by the quality of the event itself and the quality of the performance.

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	28.0	68.0	4.0	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	33.5	62.5	4.0	0.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	20.0	45.0	30.0	0.0
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	29.0	67.0	4.0	0.0
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	13.0	55.0	27.0	5.0
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	39.0	59.0	5.0	0.0
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	32.0	51.0	17.0	0.0
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	32.0	64.0	4.0	0.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	46.0	54.0	0.0	0.0

Note: answers are in percentage values adjusted for the number of missing replies.

3.6.5 Impacts and learning

Reflecting on the Pens Meadow Case Study, a range of impacts are evident.

Benefits and Impacts

Evidence collected through the case study interviews, focus group and the audience survey indicate that Rural Touring Arts activity in Pens Meadow School has:

- Contribution to the social and emotional development of the group
- Contribution to key skill development of individuals
- Raising the profile of young people in touring work
- Accessing young audiences and family audiences otherwise excluded
- Empowerment of young people through participatory planning and decision making
- Social inclusion and integration of the group into wider community
- Built more arts into the Curriculum of the school
- Integrated into the culture and the life of the school
- Staff training in arts development

Good Practice

- The Scheme: Inclusion of young people in arts touring promotion; Innovative work around disability
- The Venue: Social inclusion of a group in wider community; development of cross curriculum projects; use of real world projects with real world consequences

3.7 Core Case Study: Wem Town Hall, Shropshire

3.7.1 Context and community

Shropshire is categorised as rural remote with a scattering of hub towns. Many of the smaller hub towns such as Wem partly relate themselves through their ease of communication to Shrewsbury or Telford. Wem's nearest large neighbour is Shrewsbury, to which there is a linking bus service and railway connection, and an irregular train service linking Shrewsbury to Birmingham.

Wem is a small market town with 2,626 households and 6,100 residents according to the recent Census. It has been growing since the 1981 census from 3,887 residents and is projected to continue to do so. The median age is lower than for England rural (46) at 43, although local knowledge points to many people retiring to WEM, predominantly from the South East where property prices are higher. This was backed-up by comments and observations that there are new houses on the outskirts of the village largely sold to "incomers". In terms of ethnic breakdown, at 2.1 % this reflects rural England, although this has been growing, with roughly 70% of new of people from overseas between 2011 and 2016 being of Polish origin. WEM is less affluent than England and rural England, 48% in socio economic classes of 1-4, but with lower levels of deprivation.

Wem Town hall was chosen as a venue because they have a particularly active manager and staff with a substantial interest in the arts and a very active volunteer base. In addition, because of its draw to the communities surrounding it, Wem Town Hall is one of the largest venues in the study and illustrates the issues of programming a relatively large venue in a small community.

3.7.2 The Rural Touring Scheme

Arts Alive in Shropshire and Herefordshire was established as a Charitable Trust in 1999 and covers the whole of Shropshire and a significant part of Herefordshire. It was formed from a merger between two distinct touring schemes covering the two counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire. The merger was seen as an opportunity to develop a stronger organisation with a more cost-effective administration base. As an organisation, its focus was traditionally on live arts events but its remit has grown to include "Flicks in the Sticks", the biggest rural cinema network in the UK. Arts Alive tours around 130 performances a year to over 70 venues while Flicks in the Sticks manages 500 screenings a year in village and community venues. It is an NPO organisation enjoying regular sustained funding from ACE. However, there has been a complete collapse of its funding from the two counties which at its height reached £27,000 but has now been reduced to £2,000 from one of the two counties and nothing from the other. As the Scheme Director points out this has had a substantial impact on some of the venues given the reduction in event subsidy now available; nevertheless the Director is adamant that the scheme is of fundamental value to the communities in which it is able to operate:

"It's really important that venues don't see this simply as a means simply of raising money. I am usually on the phone saying this is not a fund raiser this is a social capital raiser. I say, if you want to raise money have a jumble sale. If you want to bring something to your community which brings them together and stimulates them have an Arts Alive event!" (Scheme Director)

A very important element of the Scheme is argued to be its role in bringing a window on the world to rural communities. Strong focus is put on children's shows and giving as many opportunities to teenagers as possible. The Director explains:

"I just want to show these kids... who are growing up on farms, who have never been to London, who have never been abroad... and there's a lot of kids like that in Shropshire - I want them to know that they could be artists. They could be writers.

They could be performers. They can go to the theatre, they can think differently to the way they're being brought up." (Scheme Director)

The Director believes also that rural touring has an important role in promoting a diverse programme to challenge some of the issues that arise in communities with very low ethnic diversity. This was one of the reasons she was so keen to support the Rural Touring Dance Initiative which, in the case of Shropshire, was bringing a London-based black dance company, Just Us, to rural venues including Wem. The Director points out this would not happen without Arts Alive or without the Arts Council. Another recent commissioned project, "My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding", was a partnership with Black Country Touring as a ground-breaking production, which has been demonstrated to have had a major impact on shifting attitudes. The project partnered an isolated rural community with a Bangladeshi community in the Black Country to create a piece of theatre that toured to rural and urban audiences across the West Midlands.

3.7.3 The Promoters and Venue

Wem Town Hall, previously home of the town council but now an arts and cultural venue, was destroyed by fire in 1995 and the present hall reopened following renovation in 2000. It closed again in 2005 as a result of funding problems – reopening after a consortium involving the local school took it over. In 2013, ownership passed over to a Trust who own it entirely. Run by a staff of three part-time workers supported by 51 volunteers it is funded through various means including income from events, largely with an arts and community focus. It hosts a wide range of activities from exhibitions to slimmer's world, U3A (University of the Third Age) and a regular bric-a-brac market, etc. as well as offering a job club and a drop-in benefit advice service. There is a coffee shop run by volunteers as well as educational rooms and bookable space. It runs a variety of cultural events including cinema, performance events especially music, children's shows etc. and it promotes three or four Arts Alive events a year.

The Scheme Director believes one of the most important features of Wem Town Hall is the small part-time team of paid workers on site. The Scheme Director thinks that this has been important in developing the depth and variety of programme. This also meant that they were able to weather the transition from one Town Hall manager to another without it endangering the programme.

The Town Hall team think that one of the important aspects of the venue is that they do a whole range of things in the same space and this results in a much more diverse audience for their shows.

"One thing is that you have people coming here to see a film anyway and then they pick up a brochure and start to peruse what we do. And I'm glad to say a lot of our customers take that risk of coming to see something different. And that, in turn, means they come and see more." (Town Hall Staff Member)

The fact that they have non-arts activities such as the job club and the bric-a-brac market in the centre really helps to encourage people to try the arts events as it reduces suspicion that the arts is somehow special or exclusive. It also promotes accessibility for those attending other activities. One member of staff tells the story of one person who was coming to get advice and mentoring around work opportunities and realised what else was on there and started bringing her children.

As a venue with professional staff, they offer a whole programme of family friendly events and the Arts Alive aspects of the programme tend to focus on the kinds of more difficult to programme events that other promoters in smaller venues shy away from, such as dance and theatre. The manager talked about a one man show about dementia they had programmed which they were able to take a risk on, which had a profound effect on those coming to it and caused people to talk about it for weeks afterwards.

3.7.4 Volunteers



A key aspect for understanding the success of Wem as a venue is the role volunteers have in supporting the venue. There are 51 in total and they help out in every aspect of the programme from running the box office and the cafe to ushering people to their seats. As a venue, they invest a lot of energy in supporting their volunteers and this investment is returned both in the amount of commitment volunteers feel for the venue and also the level of responsibility they are prepared to take on.

One of the most important aspects of volunteering is the effect it has on the volunteers individually and on the relationships they build:

“We do volunteer events throughout the course of the year, where we just put on a social. We try and make it so that they sit together. But it’s amazing how quickly they do all become friends... We have a lot of people that relocate here, and they come in. It’s a way of making friends that have that impact”. (Volunteer)

One volunteer explained how important it had been in her life in terms of meeting people and breaking her sense of isolation:

“... and so I came here because I returned back to Wem after a bereavement and really was looking for an out to get to know people. So, that, yeah, and have met lovely, lovely people.” (Volunteer)

She explained how it had helped integrate her back into community life:

“Volunteering at the Town Hall is really a very significant part of my life and a big reason for actually not moving back to Kent, where I come from”. (Volunteer)

Another volunteer commented how volunteering had helped her have the confidence to get involved in the University of the Third Age and then to integrate the arts into the group:

“I mean it coincided with me coming to volunteer that they came (the U3A). I mean I’ve been a volunteer here for a long time and then I’m in the U3A and then I just said, ‘We could have a film’, because sometimes if you see a film you’d really like to discuss it afterwards”. (Volunteer)

All the volunteers talked about how volunteering had changed their view about many art forms and for many how it had opened the possibilities of other types of art form or performance. The venue manager gave the example of one man who worked as an usher but was not very interested in the arts, he helped out because his wife did. He ended up seeing a live stream of a performance of *The Berliner* and it changed his whole perception about classical music.

“He had never been into classical music, got no interest in it, didn’t understand it. He comes to every single one now. And he’s started to branch out into opera. He comes out, and he goes, I’d no idea what was going on, but it was beautiful...” (Venue Manager)

3.7.5 Visited event

The event for which we undertook the audience survey was a performance by “Just Us”, a Black-led contemporary dance company. It was very much outside of the normal ambit of events in the Town Hall programme and experimental for the venue. Pre-event, the staff were unsure whether it would sell well. The event was supported by a workshop for a group of boys from the two local schools. They attended the workshop and performed as part of the performance in the evening, and then stayed to watch the entire event.

Pre-show a group of fifteen boys from two local schools attended a workshop with the lead dancer from the company. Some of the boys had been involved in another project called ‘Boys Dancing’ so were not new to dance but all the group were expected to stay after the workshop and perform moves they had learned in the workshop. Whilst clearly a challenge some of the boys felt nervous about, it was clearly a factor in significantly boosting the number of those attending the performance as the boys joined the audience for the whole show, along with their families who had turned out to support them. Was the experience of the workshop more likely to make them go to see dance in the future? Some said yes and some, no. One participant offered a very interesting insight. “It’s a bit like me with rugby – I like playing it but I don’t really like watching it”.

Although venue staff were worried in advance about numbers attending on the night, the hall was relatively full. There were over fifty people in attendance, but more than fifteen of these were participants from the workshop and a good proportion of the rest were family and friends. Of the rest, many had taken advantage of a £5.00 ticket offer and as the survey indicates many audience members had never been to a live dance event before. Survey results showed that for 77% of the audience affordability was a key factor and 68% thought the performance would be unusual or something new. Apart from affordability, familiarity with the venue and its reputation were clearly factors in persuading people that it would be good quality and worth the risk. Most, 74%, found the venue to be family friendly and 59% expected the performance to be of high-quality. Interestingly, 12% of the 35 surveys completed indicated that attending the venue was more likely to make them volunteer there, a much higher proportion than any other performance surveyed in this study. Although it is impossible to make strong claims around this figure this may have something to do with the very high visibility of volunteers in running and supporting the events at the venue.

Although the performance was challenging to the extent that it was unfamiliar to many in the audience, conversations during the interval and directly after the show pointed to the fact that most had found the experience rewarding and something that they would be prepared to repeat.

These findings were supported by the very many positive comments included in the open comments of the post card surveys, of which these are a representative sample: “Inspired me to try out and experience more dance. Really powerful and unique.”; “A really excellent performance extremely worthwhile and exceeded my expectation”; “Amazing work so grateful for Arts Alive and the companies that tour rurally. Improve my quality of life”; “Just a fantastic opportunity to see such powerful inspiring work in such an intimate and friendly space - really good to bring my 13 year old to this which is kind of work / art form she won’t have seen much”; “The curtain raiser by local boys was wonderful. Great to see profession contemporary dance in Wem” and “What a brilliant evening - made more special by local boys' performance”.

3.7.6 Impacts and learning

Reflecting on the Case Study, a range of impacts are evident.

Benefits and Impacts

Evidence collected through the case study interviews, focus group and the audience survey indicate that Rural Touring Arts activity in Wem Town Hall has:

- Been an important driver to local volunteering at the venue
- Promoted community cohesion through the events
- Contributed to local skills development, particularly among volunteers
- Led to the development of other arts and cultural activities
- Encouraged people attending the venue for non-arts activity to then go on to participate in arts activity.
- Contributed to community development through fostering other activities and partnerships
- A driver for promoting a broad range for arts events at the venue
- Promoted greater participation in the arts particularly through workshops and special projects (e.g. Boys dancing)
- Volunteering drives volunteering in a range of other projects and impacts positively on broader community capacity

Good Practice

- The Scheme: Promoting diversity through the choice of programme; Partnership work with other schemes to develop innovative projects and promote participation and community cohesion
- The Venue: Strong sustainable volunteering model; ability to implement variable pricing to promote riskier programme; high visibility of volunteers to promote the concept of volunteering

3.8 Looking Across the Cases: The Business Model

The diversity of Scheme company structure was reflected in our seven Case Studies.

These varied from a company like Black Country Touring who are a registered charity, with National Portfolio Organisation status, which has been in existence for twenty-two years, to Spot on Lancashire, which is not a company at all but a project run wholly by a small company, Culturapedia, who themselves run a variety of local and regional projects and work as part of a consortium with Cheshire Rural Touring. Live & Local are not a charity but a not for profit company, limited by guarantee, that covers no less than seven NRTF areas and are responsible for the schemes within two of our Case Study areas, the Warwickshire and Staffordshire scheme and the Nottinghamshire scheme. The Warwickshire and Staffordshire scheme and the Derbyshire scheme have taken on the full Live & Local branding, in comparison to the Nottinghamshire Scheme, which still bears the name of the company that used to be responsible for delivering it, Village Ventures. This is the same position also for the Worcestershire Scheme (Shindig), the Lincolnshire Scheme (Rural and Community Touring) and the Leicestershire Scheme (Centre Stage).

All the Schemes articulated the same core mission, reflecting ACE funding aims to bring high quality arts (and by definition professional arts) to people who would otherwise not have easy access to it – in this case in rural areas.

With straplines such as “Surprising Shows in Surprising Places”, Schemes described their mission as:

“Help voluntary groups to choose and promote high-quality professional performances for their local community venue. At the heart of the scheme is the opportunity to bring people together to enjoy high-quality, affordable, memorable and uplifting live entertainment.” (Scheme Director)

“Promoting professional arts events in partnership with local people bringing high-quality and affordable arts events to within easy travelling distance of every person in X, Y and surrounding areas. By working with rural communities we aim to bring good quality local, regional, national and international artists and films to local venues so that people living locally can have access to exciting, moving and entertaining performances.” (Scheme Director)

Where organisational form did have potential further implications was when promoting professional rural touring was part of a wider mission remit and organisational framework. For example, Creative Arts East describe themselves as an “arts and community development charity” focussing not only on the quality and accessibility of their work (including to disadvantaged communities) but, in addition, seeking a portfolio of innovative projects which support education, health and wellbeing and skills development.

The Director of Creative Arts East explained that the lack of local infrastructure to support local arts, and continued reduction in local arts development funding, implied the need to develop capacity locally through a broader cultural remit, beyond a focus on touring arts. Not unexpectedly the comment on challenging funding levels was echoed across all the cases; the reduction in cultural and social funding across the (funder) board has meant that it is getting ever more challenging to deliver effective work in rural areas - and that many of the Schemes’ independent promoters are finding it harder and harder to promote and sustain their work.

“Well the problem that we have is that not every community has a village hall and not every community has a library or not every community has a sort of community minded pub and so if they only have one of those, you know, it’s even harder but also you know, outside work and parish councils and thinking about fairs and fetes and festivals and market places, just, you know, that’s what rural touring schemes need to do it, so diversify where they work and how they work because otherwise it does all just come down to this one individual and it’s not sustainable on that base.” (Scheme Director)

At the heart of the Scheme touring model is the relationship between a Scheme and a local Promoter or agency. While Schemes do sometimes undertake direct promotion, most rely on developing a relationship with a local promoter who is offered a menu of potential performances from a designated list at a subsidised rate. The level of the subsidy and how the subsidy operates, as well as the availability of other incentives such as marketing support, depends on a number of factors including the level of challenge in promoting the work and the difficulty in attracting audiences.

Each Scheme operated a different model of subsidy to their promoters but all the Schemes in our Case Study areas appeared to operate under the same general principle that "...the more challenging the arts event is likely to prove to promote, the higher the level of subsidy will be offered". For example, Spot On Lancashire operate a star rating system with their menu of shows which enables promoters to choose more challenging work with a higher subsidy or a show which is likely to appeal more easily to their audience but which might attract a lower subsidy. Although there is no general quality judgement put on less challenging works, Schemes agree that the Arts Council expect promoters to show a range of works and to spend some time operating outside of their and their audiences comfort zone in order to bring a wide range of diverse, quality arts events to a rural audience.

Across our Case Studies, it was apparent that there is a substantial variety of approach to promoters. Each area clearly has a list of "dependable" promoters who may programme anything between one and four shows a year. Generally, these promoters will have established a good audience for their shows, know what their audiences like and be aware of the level of risk they are comfortable in taking when taking on shows to promote. Given the scale of events taking place, day-to-day contact with promoters may be limited, but all Schemes illustrated an in-depth knowledge of their promoters and a recognition of their strengths and weakness and areas in which they may need special support. Live & Local (and their related schemes), for example, have a team of geographically based field workers who have local office bases and are available to visit local schemes to work directly with promoters when needed..

This relationship between Scheme and Promoter may be further supported strategically by the national activities of NRTF; one example is the Rural Touring Dance Initiative (<http://www.ruraltouring.org/work/rural-touring-dance>), which featured in two of the Case Studies. This has been operating since 2015 and was initiated originally as dance, and in particular contemporary dance, was underrepresented in rural touring arts. This project offers a menu list to Schemes and promoters and offers a number of incentives ranging from financial support to marketing support for using acts covered under the Initiative. It has offered training and other support also to artists who want to develop work in rural areas. The result, as evidenced by the survey results, has been a considerable increase in the number of contemporary dance performances taking place in rural areas as well as the number of artists developing work suitable for touring to rural venues.

In addition to their core promotions, the Case Study Schemes illustrated a range of development initiatives, which aim to develop new audiences, new works, and new ways of working. Some examples of these included:

- *Commissions:* These are direct commissions of new work designed for a particular audience or target group. For example, in 2015, Black Country Touring, working with Shropshire's Arts Alive, working in partnership with Kali Theatre, commissioned "My Big Fat Cowpat Wedding" which focussed on an intercultural marriage of Clare, a Shropshire farmer's daughter, and Arjun a city dweller. In its development the show brought communities together from across the urban/rural divide and toured in a mix of rural and urban venues to sell-out audiences.
- *Special Projects:* Each area to a greater or lesser extent recognised the importance of special projects for a more strategic approach to developing their work or addressing particular issues. For example, the previously cited Rural Dance Initiative was a national project, utilised by some of our case studies, which aimed to address the

underrepresentation of dance in rural touring. Locally, two of our case study areas, Creative Arts East, and Black Country Touring, have developed Young Promoters schemes aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of young people in both attending events and promoting them.

- *Developing artists:* Each of our Case Study Schemes recognised the need to develop new work suitable for rural venues and also a need to develop artists with a willingness and the right approach to work in small rural venues. Sometimes this can be addressed through special commissions and sometimes through special initiatives such as the Regional Dance Initiative. There were also some examples of regionally initiated projects. For example, in February 2019 The Northern Consortium and North East Artist Development Network (NEADN) launched a development programme for up to six artists and companies to create new work suitable for rural touring, which includes training, mentoring and a showcase event. More locally, Live & Local run a programme they call DART (Developing Artists For Rural Touring) which gives special support to artists wanting to develop work for rural venues but who lack the contacts, knowledge and experience to set up work. This is not necessarily aimed just at artists at the beginning of their career but may be attractive to highly experienced artists looking for new audiences.

Two major challenges were repeatedly mentioned across the Case Studies: funding cuts and succession. Following austerity, Local Authority funding cuts have seen paring back to almost only the delivery of statutory services. This has had major impacts on local arts funding, including in some Scheme cases its total removal. More broadly, these cuts have impacted also on the services and partnerships that Schemes may previously have engaged with and utilised; one example given was the massive reduction in numbers of youth and community workers who would previously have supported promotion and events, another was loss of venues.

The critical impact has been on support available to promoters. At first, Schemes have absorbed some of the financial impacts of cuts (fewer shows, tighter subsidy) but continued funding cuts were reported to be impacting directly now on promoters – both with lower levels of subsidy on offer and fewer promoters prepared to take the financial risk involved in rural touring arts.

Relatedly, and concerning succession, the Case Study research has highlighted what appears to be a national trend of ageing promoters. Promoters who may have got involved in the scheme ten, or in some cases twenty, years ago, are reaching an age where they feel they may need to step back from being engaged in the pressure of promoting. Some venues have been able to address this issue by developing succession plans that have brought in new people or passed on the responsibility to committees or even other venues; others have had to reduce their number of yearly shows or stop completely as volunteer promoters have stepped back or retired from promoting altogether. All our Case Studies highlighted this issue and it appears to be a structural problem nationally, related to the lifecycle of rural touring and as the rural touring programme reaches greater maturity.

3.9 Looking Across the Cases: The Venues and Promoters

From hill forts to old barns, from converted cattle sheds to state of the art community centres, the range and type of venue which is used on a regular basis to promote rural touring is startling in its diversity. While the national picture, not surprisingly, reflects the large number of village and parish halls used, our Case Study areas included a town hall, a primary school, a special school, and a large community centre as well as three state of the art village halls that incorporate flexible facilities for high-quality arts provision.

In the last twenty-five years many of these venues had seen drastic improvements, and in the case of Devoran, in Cornwall, and Borwick and Priest Hutton in Lancashire, the halls had been completely rebuilt incorporating many of the features of a state of the art performance venue

such as flexible staging, lighting, Public Address systems and so on. Most of the others had seen improvements to their overall facilities, which had a direct link to their use as arts venues.

It is therefore possible to see the importance of rural touring in promoting and developing suitable arts venues in rural areas ('building infrastructure'), as well as simply arts events.

In Lancashire, the promoter talked about how working within the rural touring scheme both raised their aspirations about what they wanted for their venue but, also, how it supported their fundraising and enabled them to have a much better venue than would have otherwise have been possible. This ultimately led them to be able to host a wider range of high-quality artists that could meet their aspirations:

"I still think the architect did a fantastic job on doing what was a fairly basic building but making it really, really attractive. But through doing the promoting we realised what we were missing and used money we earned from the shows to buy new lighting, new sound equipment and eventually a new stage." (Promoter Borwick and Priest Hutton)"

Notwithstanding artistic creativity to 'adapt', venues matter. Meeting statutory requirements, supporting accessibility, just the basic infrastructure for artistic events. Many rural touring artists are fully aware of the constraints – bringing their own lighting, sound systems, etc. for example – but there are limits, especially when seeking to attract the highest quality and/or newest forms. Venue relates directly, also, to ticket sales – the key revenue stream alongside public funding.

While there is no necessary relationship between the venue in which performances happen and the promoters who undertake the task, it was notable in all our Case Studies that the promoters had a link, and usually a strong link, with the venue. They tended either to be members of the managing committee or members of a subgroup tasked with handling arts events.

As with venue, there is no set formula for who becomes a promoter. In the case of volunteer promoters, it is often people who got involved because they have a passion for the arts that they wanted to share with others:

"The thing that really, really appeals is getting somebody who is a world class musician, let's say, and you being able to see them in a very small, intimate environment and being able to speak to them. You just get totally involved in the music that they're producing. To see them in your own village hall is absolutely priceless, I think. That's one of the drivers ... bringing in people who are just absolutely top of their game is wonderful." (Volunteer Promoter).

Alternatively, it is because volunteers could see the civic benefits for the local community in having high-quality, professional arts events in their village or community:

"It's quite selfish from the point of view that I want to see the village being a vibrant place and I want to try and encourage the community aspect of it and I want people to feel as though they're living in a place that's alive. They are the motivations for me, so don't think it's all altruism, it's not. We just want to live somewhere where there are things going on." (Volunteer Promoter)

"...if we want to have things, we've got two choices, really. We can either live in a very sterile environment, culturally, or we can live in a very busy and active and rich environment but usually we need to do that ourselves, at least to initiate and fulfil it ourselves and usually we need some sort of support from some external group." (Volunteer Promoter)

The stereotypical profile of promoters is of an enthusiast, often early retired, who has some time on their hands. As with all stereotypes, this preconception is as interesting for the number of promoters who depart from it as those who conform to it. Our Case Studies showed that most people involved in promoting rural touring were indeed volunteers; however, their

motives varied, and although many of them were retired, they tended to be the type of people who were actively involved in promoting many of the cultural and social aspects of village life:

“So everybody’s who’s involved in this is involved in something else. History Society, Women’s Institute, cricket club, church, school, I am the general factotum aren’t you.” (Volunteer Promoter)

Two of our case study community promoters were actually employed by the venue in which they promoted. One as a Town Hall Manager and one as a Centre Manager in a community centre. Many of the schemes in our cases also pointed to other examples in their areas of librarians, head teachers and community workers who had taken on the promoter role in relation to a venue and how effectively it worked. What was notable was that where venues had **professional workers**, the rural touring events tended to be a complement to a very full programme of activities and promotions and were used more strategically to drive aspects of their programming or to pilot new and innovative performances. Very active and effective volunteers were used who supported the events, but they were not ultimately responsible for delivering them and this translated also to a tendency to have less community involvement in the task of selecting and planning any artistic programme.

In both these instances they also had strategies for training and supporting volunteers (see Volunteers, Section 3.10). This was in contrast to the venues who only had volunteer promoters, where they often struggled to attract more volunteers to take on important roles or where volunteering was more ad hoc in nature.

Our case studies showed that rural touring has played an important part in improving facilities for rural communities, but there appear to be a number of growing tensions in the model. The decline in funding was cited by all the promoters we interviewed as either making it more difficult for them to continue promoting rural touring events and/or one of the reasons why they were considering stopping or reducing the number of promotions.

Equally, the life cycle of the rural touring project was evident - a number of key promoters are considering stepping back or stopping altogether. In one Case Study, the four core volunteers are well over retirement age and the members of the group who take on most of the responsibility had been involved for over seventeen years. When asked to comment on why no one else had come forward to get involved one of them said: “No one wants to take it on. Nobody younger wants to come and help.” (Volunteer Promoter). Asked directly if arts promotion would carry on if they withdrew, they replied that they thought it would not.

3.10 Looking Across the Cases: The Volunteers

Volunteering sits at the heart of the rural touring programme. Most of the promoters are volunteers, every performance is supported by volunteers and many of the venues are run exclusively by volunteers; even those venues who employ professional staff utilise the help of a network of volunteers in promoting and supporting performances.

Historical NRTF data suggests that in any one year there is something in the region of 110,000 volunteer hours committed to supporting rural touring¹². Given that during the five years of study, there were 9,467 performances in 4,354 venues this would mean that each performance had something in the region of 58 volunteer hours associated with it.

Our Case Study evidence would suggest that this substantially underestimates the amount of **volunteer time dedicated to supporting rural touring performances**. In Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall in Lancashire, for example, when researchers arrived at the venue three hours before the show was due to start, five volunteers were already hard at work in the venue putting up temporary staging, arranging tables and seats, helping the artists unload equipment and liaising with the artist’s technician in order to integrate the hall’s lighting and projection

¹² <http://www.ruraltouring.org/about>; accessed 18 February 2019

facilities into the technical requirements for the show. Behind the scenes other volunteers were preparing a meal to be eaten by the artists and their team before going on stage. As show time arrived, other volunteers arrived to operate ticket sales and regulate the door and seat audience members. When the show finished members of the audience stayed behind to help clear away the chairs and tables and put away the temporary staging. Volunteers helped the band load their van, put away the staging and it was a volunteer who swept the hall at the end of the night and switched off the lights and locked up, long after everyone else had gone home.

In Caunton Dean in Nottinghamshire, different volunteers take on responsibility for ticket sales, for poster distribution and for preparing food as well as preparing the venue. In Devoran, in Cornwall a group of volunteer parents organise a whole programme of children's shows and activities.

Even in venues with professional staff, the amount of volunteer time dedicated to a performance far outweighs the amount of professional time. In Wem Town Hall, for instance, for the performance of Just Us dance company, there was one duty manager on duty during the whole event; however audience members arriving at the venue bought their tickets from a volunteer in the box office, ordered and were served their pre-show and interval refreshments from a volunteer and were greeted and seated by volunteers. At the end of the night volunteers cleared the hall and put away seating. Night after night, this scene is repeated in all the venues participating in rural touring.

Every performance is supported by a rich network of volunteers and volunteer labour, but it is important to understand that volunteering goes far beyond preparing the venue and helping out on the night.

A point emphasised repeatedly through the study fieldwork is that 'voluntary' does not equate to poor quality. Artists interviewed talked about the professionalism of locally-run venues. Promoters talked with pride about the different roles that volunteers took on and the professional way they carried them out. Schemes themselves operate a contractual relationship, which demands the same kind of accountability from volunteer promoters as it would from professionals.

This is a very important point. While the NRTF and local Schemes offer a range of packages of support to promoters, there is very little practical support around supporting volunteers and volunteering as such. Venues that have paid staff, have some capacity to run schemes to recruit and support volunteers, but the reality for most voluntarily-run venues is that most promoters rely on a group of people to help them out who receive very little in the way of support or training. Usually they are people who have self-nominated or are known previously to the promoter. Often the groups of volunteers stay relatively fixed over time and promoters often say that it is difficult or impossible to get new people involved.

"People tend to mix and match for other activities but no one come forwards for the arts" ... no-one younger wants to come forwards to help you see" (Volunteer Promoter)

Although it is understandable that there may be a reluctance for new people to get involved, interestingly our audience survey responses (Section 3.12) indicate that there is a small but significant number of local audience members who would be willing to get involved and to help out. This would appear to be an opportunity for future development and could contribute both to sustainability and to succession planning in local venues.

Our Case Studies indicated, as does the literature, that there are a range of motives for people to volunteer at rural touring events. One volunteer started to help-out because his wife was volunteering, another found that it was a great way to meet people after moving to the area and developed a range of friendships as a result. All the volunteers we talked to expressed a real sense of pride and enjoyment from their volunteering.

“We get a buzz out of it and people enjoy themselves obviously... and when people come up at the end of the show and say that was a blooming good show. Best yet or whatever.”

“I do get enormous satisfaction from the village hall being a success for putting on things that people enjoy and making a bit of money. I do get emotional. You know, I mean I enjoy it coming to fruition and when it comes off we all have a good time.”

“I never ever would have thought, ‘I’ll go and watch a ballet’, and it’s just changed me and enabled me to watch things and see things that I never thought I would enjoy even. Some of them are hard work ...”

“Just remembered, I forgot to say why I was doing it and it’s the same reason as everyone else has, as in it’s nice to meet people and I genuinely believe the same things as you, the Town Hall is important but also for selfish reasons that, because I have used it for myself as a venue to do my art, where I have received some income, so it only seems fair to balance that with supporting it on a voluntary basis as well.”

The benefits of volunteering are many and varied. Our conversations with volunteers, promoters and with schemes identify many benefits both to individuals and to communities that accrue from volunteering. These range from the individual skills and health and wellbeing outcomes to the more macro community benefits related to increased community capacity, richer social and cultural interaction and civic society. Some of the things volunteers reported to us included the following quotes:

“It anchors you to the community.”

“It’s enabled me and now makes me watch things I never thought I would watch.”

“I really wanted to put something back into the community.”

“It makes you more positive about where you live.”

Individual volunteers were much more likely to talk about their personal benefits, often related to a greater sense of involvement, friendship, purpose and pride with being involved and associated with touring events.

“... and so I came here because I returned back to the village after a bereavement and really was looking for an out to get to know people. So, that, yeah, and have met lovely, lovely people”.

Yet it was notable also that many people who started volunteering on rural touring activities had ended up being involved in other projects and skills and confidence learned through being involved in the touring events had soon transferred to other activities.

For example, we gathered many examples in our study of how volunteering on arts events often leads to and generates other arts activity. In one example, in Borwick and Priest Hutton in Lancashire, a core group of volunteers were so inspired after hosting professional acts in their local hall that they decided to form their own ceilidh band, and which is now a fixture at many local events and has proved both an asset to the local community as well as of great personal value to those involved. Another example was in Wem, where an individual who saw that after attending a film performance, the audience tended to stay and chat about the film, through this experience she was inspired to introduce film performances as part of her volunteering with U3A.

Rural touring, then, both builds and further enables community capacity. In Caunton Dean in Nottinghamshire, for example, the local history society was set up partly as a result of interests and social contacts fermented at rural touring events. Today, many of those involved in supporting the rural touring events now also support local history society events. As a result of the experience gained through rural touring events the organisers know what goes into planning and promoting events and have the mechanisms for publicity such as the parish magazine and word of mouth networks, and which they have the skills to exploit. They now

host guest speakers. Equally, all the village events benefit from this skill and legacy; village fetes, MacMillan coffee mornings, bring and buy sales, Christmas events, all reflect the fact that there is an embedded knowledge of what goes on into promoting successful events that interviewees connected back to having been fostered through rural touring experience.

Another example, from Borwick and Priest Hutton, illustrates very graphically how volunteering can lead to very practical and substantial economic outcomes. In this part of Lancashire, the local speeds for broadband were extremely slow and many people had been talking about how this was hampering the development of business and other initiatives locally. The promoter in conversation with other volunteers he worked with at the memorial hall on arts events saw the opportunity to do something about it. The immediate circle of people he asked to support him were the same group of volunteers who supported the arts events. Over two years this group met one day a week to physically dig and install the community broadband across the local countryside which resulted in the local community installing a hyper-fast broadband infrastructure at a fraction of the cost that it would have been if a professional company had undertaken the work. Already after two years, there are reports of more local businesses springing up and at least one media company has relocated to the area as a result of the development¹³. Although Borwick and Priest Hutton is a particularly strong example of the knock-on effects of volunteering, it is a powerful reminder that many people who start off volunteering in one area of activity often get involved in other volunteering when the opportunity arises

“Really, in an area like this, you’ve got huge human potentials. People with tremendous talents and experience and so on and often an enormous willingness to get involved and work hard and all the rest of it, but most frequently what’s missing is anyone to catalyse that process. I mean, if you’re prepared to do that, I mean, for me, relatively small amounts of effort can get a huge payback in terms of what you can achieve.” (Volunteer Borwick and Priest Hutton)

Our Case Studies indicated how volunteers involved in rural touring events are involved in a myriad of ways in their local communities. Although rural touring events are just one of the many activities that volunteers support, they enjoy a symbiotic relationship with other areas of volunteer activity, and if rural touring wasn’t always the catalyst which started many volunteers off on their volunteering journey, it continues to sustain and develop this critical capacity for rural communities well beyond the arts.

3.11 Looking Across the Cases: The Artists

The research sought to interview the performers involved in the touring events selected as part of the Case Studies. This proved only semi-successful. There is little to no capacity to interview immediately before, or after, performances – artists are rightly focused on preparation on arrival at often unknown venues, and afterwards normally have further journeys ahead. Thereafter, the nature of touring implies an intense season of daily performances making ‘time to be interviewed’ both difficult to schedule and undertake. It is the case also that the research sought potentially challenging reflection by artists about the nature of the performance developed, in the context of rural touring and rural audiences.

The four artists interviewed were able to give some important feedback about the challenges and benefits to them as artists of undertaking rural touring work. While it is recognised that there are some arts companies that specialise in developing performances exclusively for rural settings, and there are others that target certain types of venues such as libraries, most companies involved in rural touring are skilled at adapting their performances to a variety of small venues and spaces and often play to audiences in both rural and urban

¹³ For a fuller story see https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/5393a5/this-rural-community-is-building-its-own-gigabit-fibre-network and <https://b4m.org.uk/>

settings. It was notable that all the music acts brought their own sound and lighting equipment as well as their own instruments. Not surprisingly a puppet troupe had to bring their own fold down puppet theatre. While musicians seemed to be used to adapting to makeshift stages none of the theatre performers or dancers we talked to expected to use a venue stage in a rural venue – they all expected to be able to perform in the round or, as in the case of one venue to perform on the floor in front of the stage. This meant in many cases whole performances being re written and rehearsed to fit the venue it was likely to find itself in.

All of the artists interviewed reported that rural touring work was very different from touring to city centre venues or venues in urban areas. Differences included the size and scale of the venue, the appropriateness of the venue for arts performance and the level of facilities offered for artists. While there was generally a level of acceptance that facilities at rural venues would be less sophisticated than those in urban centres, many of the artists we interviewed expressed a high regard for both the venues and the level of professionalism from the promoters in rural venues.

One artist interviewed referred to their experience in a “shiny city centre venue” as “soul destroying” because she really did not think any thought or preparation had been put into her company’s performance: “there was no-one there from the venue, there was hardly any audience”. She compared this to her experience at one of the rural venues in our Case Studies, which by contrast was really welcoming:

“the people really want you there, they are doing everything to make you comfortable, the hall’s tiny but, you know they have the attitude that ‘we can make it work’” (Touring Artist)

All of the artists we interviewed expressed their appreciation of the warmth of the audiences at rural venues. One of the interviewees explained:

“I really like it when we work in rural places like village halls, I love the fact that you get a real cross-section of the community that come out to see the shows and you get all ages that come to those.”

Interviewing several members of a band touring from Canada directly after their performance, each of them expressed their preference for small scale venues, particularly in the UK and France where the audiences would be made up of groups of families and friends often from the same rural community. One of the members of the band referred to a certain “magic” that often happened at such events that did not happen in larger halls or festivals. In our Case Study performance which involved the group, and for which we were undertaking an audience survey, there was a point during their performance when the whole audience spontaneously rose to their feet, clapping and dancing even though the song was sung in French and the style of music, Quebecois, was unfamiliar to many people we talked to in the audience. The group confirmed that this was not unusual and was typical of the response in rural venues.

While most of the artists had wide ranging experience of touring in rural venues, one of the companies, a contemporary dance company from London, was touring in rural venues for the first time. Each of their performances was accompanied by a workshop, which in our example involved the lead male dancer running a workshop for boys from two local schools. The boys then had a chance to showcase the results of their workshop as part of the evening’s performance.

The Scheme Manager in this area talked about the importance of bringing urban artists and urban cultures to rural settings.

“I think there’s a real problem with getting diverse artists in to rural touring. One, because they’re completely oblivious to the market. Two, they have no idea how to make it work for those spaces” (Scheme Manager)

In our Case Study, these artists had specifically adapted their work for the likely venues and although many of the audience had never experienced live contemporary dance before, the

survey results indicated that the audience were both surprised and gratified at how engaging and entertaining the experience turned out to be. These comments from the audience in our venue in Wem were typical of the very many comments we received:

“Good to see so many young people here experiencing something new.”

“Inspired me to try out and experience more dance. Really powerful and unique.”

“Just a fantastic opportunity to see more powerful and inspiring work in such an intimate and friendly space.”

“Wonderful to see live dance in our small town.”

While there appears to be a rich diversity of performances from a broad range of artists taking place through the Schemes, many of the artists are on tours during the key spring and autumn rural touring seasons of venues who are part of the scheme and are putting on shows subsidised by Arts Council England. It is likely, then, that they will secure bookings from a range of venues putting on subsidised shows. This gives them the kind of artistic freedom that is difficult to come by in the private sector unsubsidised sector, however as comments from promoters and schemes confirm it is not just a case of bringing the same show from a city venue into rural settings.

If you are an artist or company who is selected to be part of the Scheme it is likely you will be able to undertake a wide ranging tour of rural venues, but only if you have the right experience and the right show for a rural venue. This emphasises the importance of artist development schemes run by the NRTF and some local schemes such as Live & Local, which give artists a chance to gain experience, insight and training into developing their work for rural venues and audiences and, ultimately, in having the opportunity of being accepted onto the programme. This isn't just important for emerging artists but could be just as important for artists with a number of years of experience.

3.12 Looking Across the Cases: The Audiences

In each of the five Core Case Studies an event was visited and audiences provided with a survey to complete at its end. The events were:

- 1, Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial hall: Bon Debarras – Canadian folk band
- 2, Caunton Dean Hole Community Centre: Kit Holmes and Al Greenwood: Jazz and Blues inspired pop duo
- 3, Devoran Village Hall: “Chalk Circle” devised dance piece performed by a Scottish Company called Curious Seed
- 4, Pens Meadow School: “Da Silva's Marionette Circus” Noisy Oyster Puppet Theatre
- 5, Wem Town Hall: Just Us Dance Company

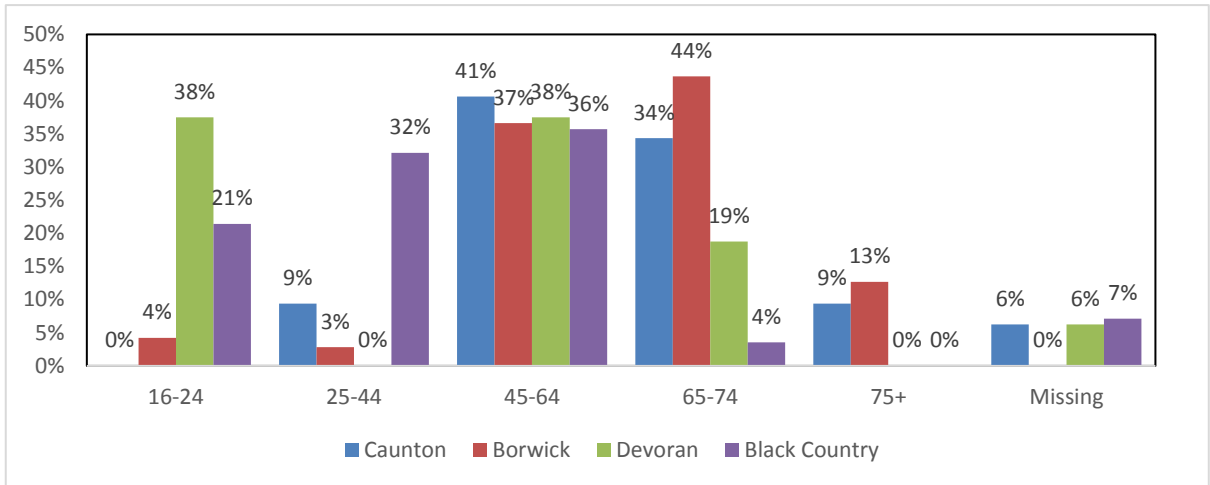
A variety of individual audience survey results have been reported in the Case Studies above. The following analysis has aggregated the survey results across the Case Studies, response numbers per question range from 146 to 176 responses.

3.12.1 Audience socio-economic characteristics

In total 60% of audience members at the events were female and 33% male; 8% did not answer this question. The range was from 50% female up to 71% female attendance share across the case events.

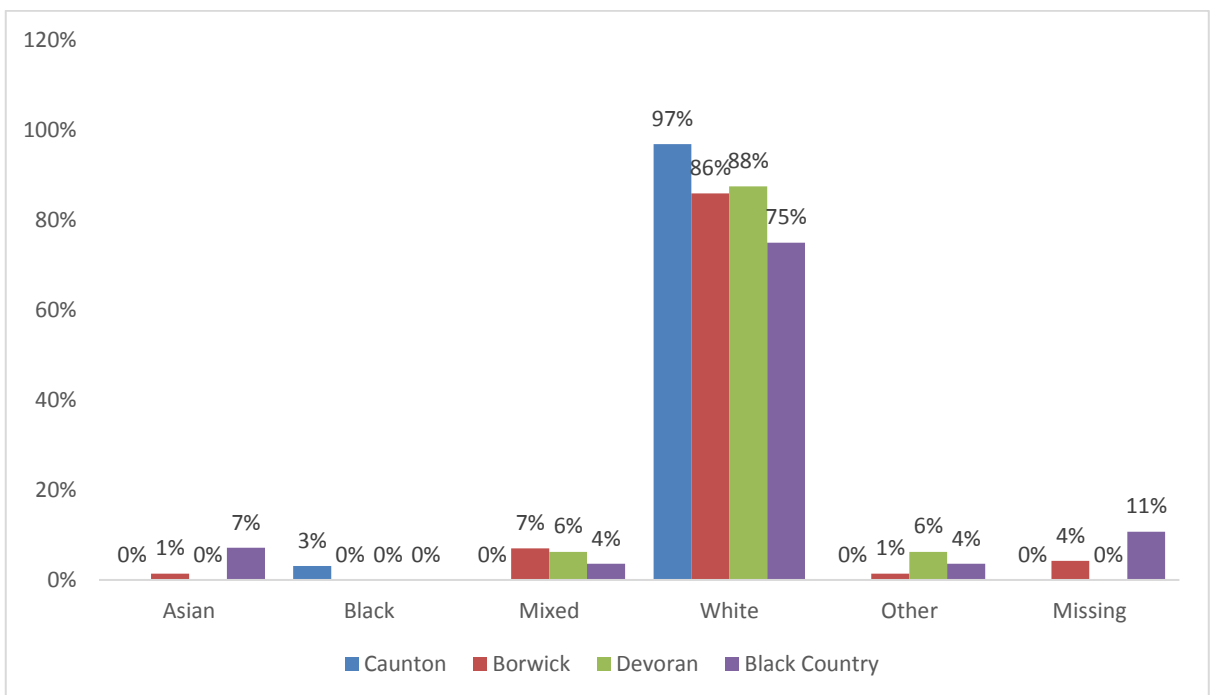
Age range was wide (Figure 3.3 below), taking adults only (age 16+), with the majority of audience within the 45 – 64 years age range (37% for all Case Studies), and tallying with the median age for the cases of 47 years.

Figure 3.3 Audience Age Range across Visited Events



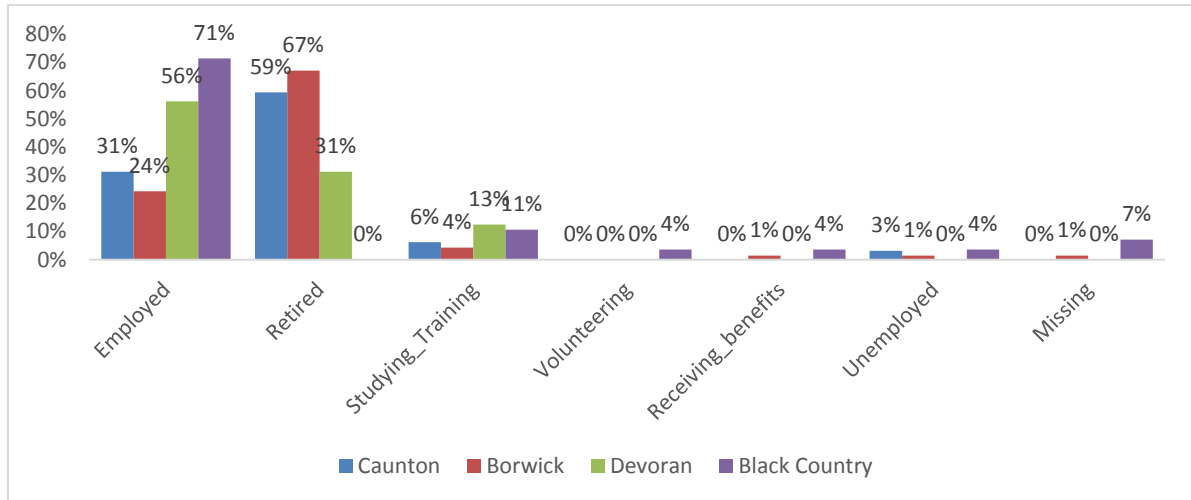
In terms of ethnicity (Figure 3.4 below), the audience was overwhelmingly British White 86%, but BME audience was still proportionately slightly greater than population characteristics across the cases (10%, with 4% no response).

Figure 3.4 Audience Ethnicity across Visited Events



In total, 10% of the audiences reported a long term disability, in line with local population characteristics. Overall, 49% of the audience were Retired, 38% Employed and 7% Studying/Training (Figure 3.5 below).

Figure 3.5 Audience Employment Status across Visited Events



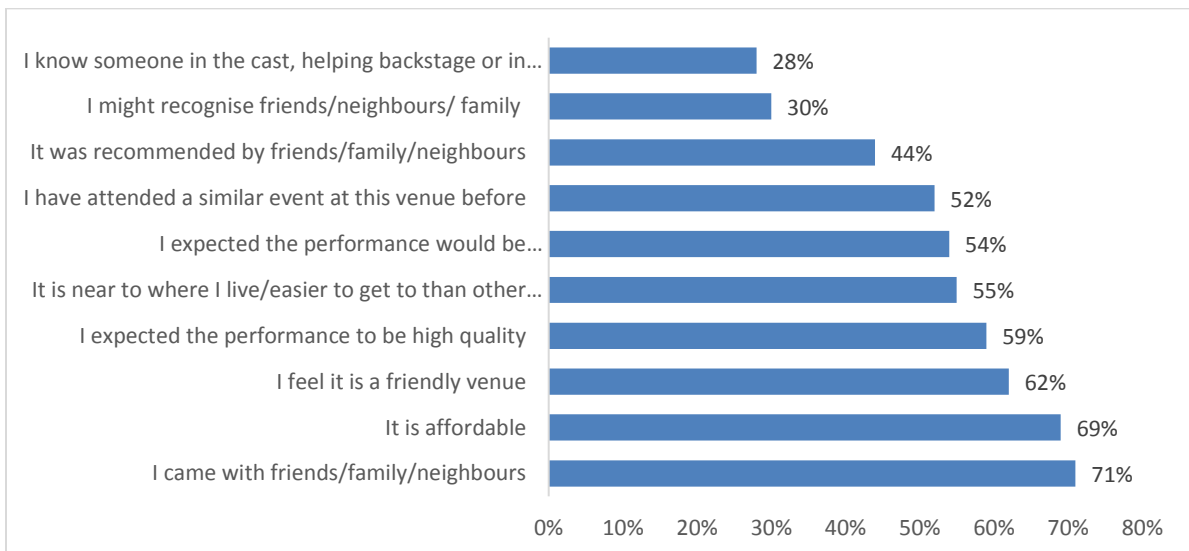
3.12.2 Why attend?

In the previous 12 months, 75% of the Case Study event audiences had travelled more than 25 miles to see an arts event, 25% had not. Just under half had not attended a similar arts event at the venue before.

When asked what had encouraged them to attend the event (Figure 3.6 below), the highest of multiple responses possible, at 71%, was 'I came with friends/family/neighbours' followed closely by 'affordability' (69%) and 'I feel it is a friendly venue' (62%).

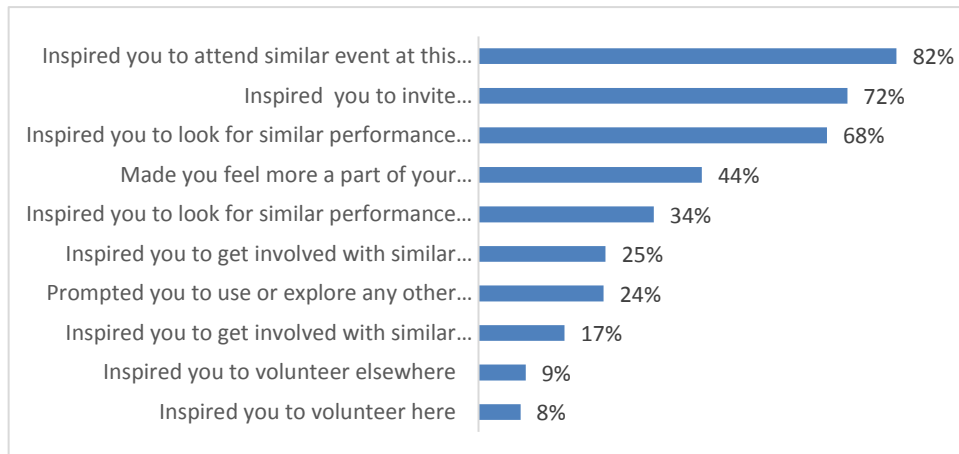
The next highest, at 59%, was 'I expected the performance to be high-quality', and 54% 'expected the performance would be unusual / something new'.

Figure 3.6 Case Study Audiences, 'why attend?'



On considering the event (Figure 3.7 below), the highest response amongst multiple responses possible was, at 82%, 'inspired you to attend similar event at this venue'. Similarly, the audience was 'inspired you to invite friends / neighbours / family to the next similar event her' (72%) and 'inspired you to look for similar performances nearby' (68%). In comparison 'inspired you to look for similar performances further afield' scored half as much at 34%. For 44% of the audience, they suggested the event 'made them feel more a part of your community'.

Figure 3.7 Case Study Audiences, 'attending today's event'



When asked to reflect personally on the event attended (Table 3.1 below), Case Study audiences responses were overwhelmingly positive, noting their attendance at a 'high-quality event', which was absorbing, caught the imagination and which they would wish to talk about to others. The performance changed their mood for the better, though was not necessarily emotionally moving.

For a significant minority the work was not, however, challenging or a new art form.

Table 3.1 Case Study Audiences, 'on reflection'

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	25.0	68.0	7.0	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	55.0	49.0	1.0	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	42.0	55.0	3.0	0.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	29.0	40.0	26.0	2.0
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	42.0	53.0	5.0	1.0
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	45.0	50.0	4.0	1.0
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	32.0	48.0	17.0	3.0
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	49.0	45.0	7.0	1.0
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	18.0	48.0	28.0	6.0
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	40.0	57.0	3.0	0.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	54.0	45.0	1.0	0.0

3.12.3 Individual ripple effects?

The Core Case Study research methodology included an attempt to follow-up with audiences several weeks after they had attended an event. Audiences were asked to leave contact details – email or telephone. It was expected that this task would be challenging and it proved to be so. Around a half of the initial 176 respondents left contact details. During the period of research, there was heightened media exposure around data protection and online activity and scams. If anything, telephone (cold) calling had even greater negative exposure around pensions, banking and other issues.

Box 3.1 provides some of the answers from amongst the 40 follow-up survey respondents.

Box 3.1: Attending Rural Touring Arts: Audience Ripple Effects?

"I think 'inspired to attend other similar events' was my selection because the event was in some ways challenging but also accessible being at a venue close to home. I think I realised that it was beneficial to see performance that was alternative (to what I have often experienced) and contemporary - and this is something we are less likely to find in rural Shropshire... So I would go to something like this more often as a result and also might be interested in forming more developed experience/relationships with performance groups like these by seeing them again and seeing the projects develop further. I think it enriches the culture of our small community and broadens thinking which helps with empathy and reduces culture clash etc. I would like to think the performers also gained something enriching too."

"We enjoyed the Chalk about so much, we went hunting for other quirky things that were showing around the area"

"Going to such events triggers the imagination and inspires me to seek out other arts events in the locality. It makes you happy to live in Wem as it makes you feel connected to a world bigger and beyond your doorstep."

"I was brought up in this area, a bit further down the Lune valley. I've lived away and moved back. On balance I prefer living in the countryside to living in the city but I do enjoy the stimulus and diversity of city living which is missing in the sticks. There is very much of a mono culture, you're surrounded by ... and you survive by keeping your views to yourself. You live to the soundtrack of guns going off every time nature shows any healthy signs of recovery. These events are a godsend reminding you of what bright and intelligent people exist in the world and they feel like exactly the kind of thing that should be happening in what could be a far more diverse and beautiful place."

"I felt inspired by the dancers to take up a dance class and also go to a ballet, but unfortunately I have not had the opportunity to do this yet."

"I wanted to see if it was possible to bring a show like this to my village, and if that meant helping out, I am fine with that. I haven't been able to actually book a show, but have helped with selling tickets on the door for a local film night. I also arranged for a community group to see a local theatre group."

3.13 Returning to Matarasso

In undertaking our research into the impacts of rural touring arts, we were conscious that we were walking in the footsteps of an arts researcher and practitioner who undertook a landmark study into rural touring in 2003. In 2004, François Matarasso published 'Only Connects' (Comedia: 2004) which, for the first time, articulated not only the scale and reach of the practice of rural touring arts but also its ranging impacts.

For this research we decided to return to two of the areas visited during Matarasso's original research - one in a 'remote rural' scheme area and one in an 'accessible rural' scheme area - to undertake 'longitudinal' research into four communities, two in which rural touring had continued and two in which for various reasons it no longer took place. Our aim was to investigate potential changes over time in relation to rural touring arts, including sustainability of the practice as well as the longevity of outcomes and impacts – a sense of the cumulative rather than longitudinal per se. Given the substantial time that had elapsed since Matarasso's 2003 research, and the inevitably limited nature of our research return, we recognised the exploratory nature of this investigation, that such areas would have been subject to substantial processes of change but, also, the potential of enduring issues of rurality and the (touring) arts.

3.13.1 'Only Connects'

In 2004 François Matarasso published Only Connects, a report that was the outcome of research undertaken in 2003 by François and a team of researchers commissioned by the NRTF. The NRTF were particularly interested in examining the impact of their members' work and its contribution to rural arts. Although there was much anecdotal evidence for its impacts and effects up until then, there had been no sustained attempt at attempting to capture the evidence at a national level. The significance of the research cannot be underestimated. It was the first study of its kind into the outcomes of the work that by then was twenty years old. It was also the application of an evidence-based methodology to consider the rural touring contribution to the arts and cultural opportunities of rural communities, including what transpired as the considerable benefits for the wider communities in which they took place.

Matarasso's broad ranging study involved a national survey of all the Schemes as well as audience surveys at many community events and a range of case studies based on visits and interviews. Based on this data, Matarasso and his team built up a picture of the outcomes of rural touring arts both at a micro and macro level and documented a range of important case studies.

The report identifies some of the key issues relating specifically to rural touring arts as opposed to rural arts in general, and made important distinctions between 'isolated' and 'accessible' rural communities and the range of venues and variety of activities associated with them. The research outlined for the first time the developing infrastructure of promoters, venues and artists involved in rural touring activity and provided evidence that they could contribute to sustainable social, economic and cultural impact in rural areas.

Matarasso argued that "rural touring is not a poor substitute for the kind of experience offered by urban arts venues. It is qualitatively different in several respects" (Matarasso 2004:12). Rather, rural touring brings a group of local people together in a familiar venue whose motive for being there is social as much as it is cultural and in doing so it builds a sense of community.

Matarasso detailed how rural touring arts depended on the kind of local voluntary commitment and organisation which, simultaneously, empowers communities to act on their own behalf through working together and developing confidence and skills which can have a wide ranging impact.

Thus, in writing about the positive outcomes and impacts, Matarasso acknowledged and articulated the connection between the arts, locally organised activity and community development which he argued “does not conceive of the arts instrumentally, but as an independent practice which can have significant outcomes on community organisations, networks and ‘community life’” (Matarasso 2004:89).

Building throughout the document, Matarasso identified how rural touring saw the strengthening of existing community organisations through capacity building, networking and volunteering and bringing people together positively, and which fostered community cohesion by reducing isolation, breaking down age barriers and, even, enhanced local democracy.

On returning to two of these same communities fifteen years later we wanted to find out if some of these aspects and impacts had sustained and/or changed over time (ac/cumulation), including where professional rural touring had ceased.

3.14 Cumulative Case: Warwickshire – Eathorpe and Bulkington

Warwickshire Rural Touring dates back to 1986, largely through Local Authority activity, and by 1994 had developed the model that is essentially the basis of what they do today. The Scheme Director joined the company in 1992 and set up a company called “Warwickshire Community Arts” to take over the work from the Local Authority. It was later renamed Live & Local to better describe what they did. A company limited by guarantee, the Scheme Director was keen to emphasise that they are not a charity and do not talk so much about social aims as other schemes. He explains that model they use is essentially the same now as it has been for the last twenty years:

“I think fundamentally the core model has not changed, it is about facilitating other people to choose and promote professional arts within their community...Unless a community group and usually a voluntary-led community group, chooses to take part in a scheme and choose a show and promote a show, nothing happens and that’s the core to it, that’s the USP, it’s that way round.” (Scheme Director)

He believes that the people they work with are not “art activists but community activists” using the arts to achieve social aims. He also believes that the Matarasso study was fundamentally important in highlighting the social and economic impacts of rural touring, for the first time naming and explaining community development processes linked to rural touring that no one had articulated before:

“I mean we may not have identified it as community capacity building or health and wellbeing or whatever it is, we didn’t call it that because we didn’t know what to call it in those days. What François did for us is put it into properly worded, properly researched, properly backed-up, properly posh words.” (Scheme Director)

3.14.1 Bulkington Village Community and Conference Centre: A centre with a continuing programme of Rural Touring Arts



Bulkington is a large village with a population of 6,302 within its ward and well connected to Warwick, with good transport links including regular bus services and close proximity to motorways. Only 44% of the inhabitants are in social classes 1-4, lower than the English rural and England average, its population density is approaching that for England as a whole, and substantially above England rural average, and the village is ageing with a median age of 51 set against a rural average of 45 years. The long term disability rate is high at 13.3% (England average of 8.4%) and it is more ethnically diverse than England's rural areas at 3.9% BME of the total population. In total, 79% of the of the working age population are in work with many people historically employed in the car industry and in the local hospital.

Bulkington Village and Community Conference Centre is an old school that was taken over by the local community working with the Parish Council in 1990. It is a large-scale centre including a library, doctor's surgery, children's centre and very active community centre. The community centre has a large programme of activities including many arts and crafts. The centre has a full-time manager and part time administrator. They receive no grants though some of the activities are subsidised, for example adult education classes and Live & Local arts events. The hall used for events is the main hall of the old school and they have a full programme of arts and entertainment events, of which only four a year (reducing to three) are funded by Live & Local. The manager has been in post for seventeen years.

The centre manager books and programmes many arts promotions, classes and workshops but explains that they value Live & Local because it provides quality artistic acts that they could not otherwise afford and it gives them the chance to test them out and develop an audience.

Many of the acts they book through Live & Local are given follow up bookings for which they are paid an unsubsidised fee. They programme mainly music events but also literary events and theatre on a less regular basis. They have a very faithful core audience with many people attending more than one show a year according to the manager. They used to have an active committee for the Live & Local events, but now Volunteers are no longer involved in the programming but play a crucial role in every other aspect of the event promotion from distributing leaflets to ushering and clearing up to running the community café and bar.

The ex-chair of the centre, recently retired, explains that when the school became redundant in the 1980s the local community decided to take it over instead of seeing it go to a private developer. They set up a steering group, founded a charity and eventually raised the money to buy the building. The next step was to persuade the library, the GP surgery and the Children's Centre to relocate there and the income that this provided funded the renovation of the centre, creating a community hall and bookable spaces from the rooms that were in the central school buildings.

Although Live & Local events form a very small part of what they do, the centre manager sees it as fundamental to the success of the centre:

“With Live & Local you know what you're getting. It's a trusted body who's providing quality acts basically.”

She believes their audiences see the centre as a safe trusted area where they will come to more or less any event, just because it is taking place locally. In the process,

“you're actually giving them an introduction to arts events that they wouldn't otherwise have.”

She is certain that the quality of their Live & Local events has driven the quality of the rest of their programme and contributed to the centre being a magnet to cultural organisations, clubs and activities and helped it develop a reputation for its high-quality arts programme.

When asked about the legacy of twenty-three years of Live & Local events, she suggests the role of rural touring arts in their success:

“We wouldn't have the events we have today without that initial contact with Live & Local. It is as simple as that. It's a stepping stone isn't it, to the quality acts. And giving us a safety net to be able to do it and to explore it further and know what we're doing works. And to expand on that. As I say, if we could have more acts through Live & Local we would. But we just can't. We can't because the funding's not there for Warwickshire.” (Centre Manager).

In the past five years Warwickshire County Council subsidy has reduced and finally cut completely.

3.14.2 Impacts and legacy

Community cohesion: The centre manager believes that a large part of what the arts events do is reduce social isolation:

“maybe people that are on their own, but they know that if they come out there's going to be a bar, there's going to be somebody to sit with and it doesn't really matter...they're coming just for the night out, because it's somewhere that they can walk, they feel safe.”

She feels that this is one of the major contributions they have made during their time in existence.

She also feels that their reputation as a trusted “safe space” built up over many years has attracted people who would not otherwise come to arts events and cites the example of audience members with disabilities who come with parents or carers.

“We have developed relationships with people that come that have got disabilities that some of the carers or the mums of these younger adults wouldn’t necessarily take to certain environments where they’re just putting on a show or whatever, because they don’t know how their child or the young adult is going to react or whatever in public. But this is an environment they’re really happy to bring them to. They have a great time. They’re up and dancing or whatever. With nobody looking at them or making them feel uncomfortable or being judged or whatever.”

Access to arts and culture: Through the touring programme the centre has provided access to quality cultural events in an area that would otherwise not be served and its legacy can be seen not only in the continuing popularity of the programme but also in the broader breadth and number of arts activities and events that now happen in the centre and the number of people who come to it from the local community.

Community capacity: Apart from the legacy of a new building brought into use for the local community, Bulkington centre has contributed enormously to the cultural sector in the area - providing a space for cultural activity and cultural organisations. It has also developed a strong volunteer base linked to its touring shows and this has benefited the rest of the activities at the centre particularly through the efforts of the volunteers and the development of the bar and community café.

Economic benefits: The recently retired chair points to the many economic impacts from touring shows, noting the innovative use of a fish and chip supper provided by the local chip shop as part of the ticket price for some shows to the provision of a barrel of beer ordered in from the local brewery to be sold at touring shows:

“Yes, it spreads the wealth around a little bit at least. I imagine the local fish and chip shop, when he gets an order for 70 mini fish and chips, he’s rubbing his hands, but good for him” (Retired Chairman)

Legacy: With an unbroken programme lasting twenty-three years the legacy can be measured by the consistency of their audience for rural touring arts events as well as by the large number of people accessing the venue for arts activities on offer at the venue every week. Their model for delivery is sustainable in so much that bookings and promotions are through a paid member of staff and while this may reduce the levels of what Matarasso calls empowerment, it does mean that their delivery is sustainable over time.

3.14.3 Eathorpe Village hall: A centre where there is no longer a programme of Rural Touring Arts.

A small settlement of roughly 42 houses, with a high 76% of the population in social classes 1-4 as against a rural mean average of 63%. Its median age is 46 years, which is about average for rural villages in England. It has no shop or pub and the post office closed recently, making the village hall the only real local amenity. The impression is of an affluent community with expensive private housing with those working or retired being professionals or retired professionals. Our interviewees confirmed that most people they knew had been incomers and as their children grew up and moved away, they tended to move on. In the last five years, there had been a churn in the make-up of the village with many long-term residents moving away, driven by life changes and the housing bubble, to be replaced by another generation of newcomers, mostly younger families.

Eathorpe Village Hall started promoting arts events in 1988. Until 2015 it had a regular and varied programme of touring arts events mainly through Live & Local but this ceased when the two main promoters, a husband and wife team, moved away from the village in 2016. There is currently no rural touring taking place. The present hall, built in 2003, a large open hall with flexible screened glass wall/door overlooking open fields replaced the previous hall, an insubstantial wooden structure built to celebrate the coronation. We interviewed the two promoters who were responsible for programming the hall during the period of study, from

1998 to 2015 and who also presided over the period when the new hall was commissioned and built.

The couple explained that they originally got involved by organising a photographic exhibition about the history of the village in 1999. This attracted the attention of Live & Local and through conversation they had the idea of putting on an arts festival, funded with the help of Live & Local, in the village to celebrate the Millennium. Events took place in a tent and in the (now closed down) village pub. The festival was well attended locally and well received by the village, to the extent that the dream of building a new hall suitable to house celebratory and arts events worthy of the village was born.

They raised the first money for the new centre from a Warwickshire Countryside Council grant which they added to through local fund raising, mainly through putting on community events, culminating in a large donation of £25,000 from a local benefactor, taking the total up to £340,000. They feel the fundraising and vision for a new hall galvanised the whole community:

“I mean I’m not saying that that everybody in the village got involved but we had meetings in the village hall with I think something like sixty percent of the households in the village were represented. If you had a bigger village here you wouldn’t be able to do it. But yeah, it was quite an achievement really.”

The resulting building, a highly impressive village hall, is a tailor-made arts venue with excellent acoustics and installations such as staging and lights. It was launched with another festival of Live & Local events in 2003 involving three separate music acts on three nights. Throughout the years they were promoting the arts they developed a successful formula of putting on one or two larger Live & local events per year and, in between time, putting on a range of smaller, sometimes non-professional shows. The couple also talked about the importance of the relationship with Live & Local, which could be flexible to suit local needs:

“I mean one of the things that I always think was so good with Live & Local was the fact that it wasn’t just shows on the Live & Local list. For example, we had Andre Lazarof, the Belgian pianist, who plays in places like Chicago Symphony Hall and London Symphony Hall. Can you imagine how good that was...? I mean even the cost of hiring a piano of the quality that is required for him was enormous and trying to afford to do it without Live & Local’s support would have been very difficult.”

The promoters explained the importance of quality acts but were not certain that always meant they had to be professional in the formal sense, but they did have to be good. They cited the experience of allowing another promoter to programme events at the hall for a time who started promoting acts of lower quality which then had an impact on numbers prepared to come to the Rural Touring events.

“You’ve got plenty of groups that are desperate for bookings. But unfortunately, they weren’t very good and this really impacted on our reputation for a time ... And if you get a show that is good then you get people saying I’ll come to everything.”

The couple were certain that most of the people who came to their shows were local and would not have travelled further afield for arts events:

“I think there were people who would come to shows in Eathorpe which, who didn’t normally ever go to theatre shows or anything... And if you get a show that is good then you get people saying I’ll come to everything.”

One of the real problems they faced was getting enough volunteers willing to take on responsibility for promoting which meant that the main business of organising and promoting continued to rest on their two shoulders. Most of the volunteers at events were part of the committee of the village hall, one of their number, a recently retired woman who still lives in the village and organises events at the village hall explained the problem:

“You know, we have had fetes and things in the past but it’s the same old story that you know, it’s really difficult to get people, new people involved...”

Finally, when the two main promoters moved away in 2016, this put an end to regular Rural Touring arts events in the village. The one remaining volunteer we talked to managed to put on one arts event in in 2016 (a non-subsidised concert) with a little help from the previous promoters, but found the experience overwhelming. She does not, however, rule out trying it again and sees the possibility of recruiting new volunteers from some of the newly arrived residents:

“I think a lot of people would say and probably would miss the fact that we are not doing as much as we did before. People have asked me, you know ‘is there anything coming up, are there any shows coming up’, I haven’t taken it on, but I think I could be persuaded to certainly run one or two events during the year if there were the sort of things I think I could sell tickets for.”

3.14.4 Impacts and legacy

Assets: The most obvious impact and legacy of the rural touring shows is clearly the village hall itself. Its creation both arose out of the same energy that the rural touring arts shows created and then fed the enthusiasm for more events over the next ten years or so. This programme drove a whole programme of spin off arts promotions and related community activities. These include annual Christmas lights, beer festivals and a regular monthly community meal.

Community capacity: At a time when the community’s capacity was under threat from the closure of the shop and the pub and the population was going through a period of rapid change over, it is clear that the village hall and the programme of arts events spearheaded by the rural touring events were a constant reference point that activated village life. The fact that this was built on the activism of a few people and it came to an end when those people left the village, illustrates how ephemeral community capacity (driven by the rural touring model) can be. This should not be taken necessarily as reason to underestimate some of the long-term effects of this kind of work and that sometimes needs time to resurface. Matarasso himself refers to the lifecycle of rural touring and that sometimes you need to create a gap to allow others to step forward. For Schemes, the rural touring model is based on an unwritten ‘rule of thumb’ that every year 10% - 15% of promoters are likely to withdraw from the scheme, at least for a time. In this instance, interviewees talked about the possibility of reigniting the scheme in the village.

Access to arts and culture: It is apparent from what the promoters and the volunteers told us that not only did the Live & Local subsidised events leave a legacy of an amazing arts facility and a roster of high-quality acts that played there, it also created a hunger for attending high quality, professional arts events from an audience who would not have accessed it elsewhere. An interesting question is what these people are now doing to access the arts or whether they have stopped attending events until the scheme is reactivated in their village hall.

Legacy: Probably the greatest legacy is represented by the village hall which, although underused at the moment, has the capacity and fitting to support contemporary and regular arts events. Another legacy, if fading, lies in the local people who attended arts events there over the last fifteen years of its existence and the rich and varied programme. As one of the promoters says:

“Well there were so many shows that we would never have dared to put on - I mean the importance of Live & Local is difficult to underestimate I think.”

3.15 Cumulative Case: Creative Arts East – Bergh Apton and Welborne

Creative Arts East (CAE) cover Norfolk and Suffolk and has a portfolio of work that includes rural touring arts, rural cinema and participatory projects. It was founded twenty-five years ago as a rural touring project funded by the Arts Council to take performances to a few communities in Norfolk. From there, CAE has grown and evolved into an arts development organisation bringing touring arts, cinema and participatory projects to some of the remoter parts of rural

England. The Scheme Director explained that at heart they were still a rural touring organisation:

“Rural audiences, rural communities and isolated individuals are still at the heart of our charitable mission and though we have a portfolio which is wider now than just rural touring all our work is linked to or grows out of the provision of rural touring”

Like many other Schemes, they understand the importance of special projects to stimulate or support certain developments, and in the case of CAE these are time limited, funding specific and they are based on need:

“So, for instance, we go into rural high schools and we train young people in how to, themselves, become community programmers.”

Talking about the impacts of the work the Scheme Director acknowledges ACE’s priority for professional and innovative work but thinks it is important to keep a balance between quality and accessibility:

“Our major challenge is getting that balance right between work that challenges them and work that takes them on a journey. We just have to be really mindful of what drives people to put on a show and what drives people to buy tickets to attend that show and it is not about the arts, it is about the social coming together, it’s about raising money for the playground, it’s about, you know, making sure Brenda down the road has sort of had a cup of tea.”

Having joined the Scheme in 2011, the Scheme Director was not working for the organisation when Matarasso undertook his original study in 2003 that resulted in *Only Connects*. They were in post when he conducted his follow up study looking at rural touring in Norfolk and Suffolk which resulted in his book in the *Regular Marvels* series called ‘*Wider Horizons*’, published in 2015. Both publications reference each of the case study communities in our study and point to the wide range of impacts that each group of promoters had on their villages. The Scheme Director thinks the importance of each example is that they both show what can happen when rural touring arts is combined with activists who want to achieve something more than just promoting shows in their village hall. She cites the example of the founder of the Welborne Arts Festival, one of case studies, who was able to attract a wide range of people to support his vision in his own community, which resulted not only in a regular arts festival but a reconstituted and refurbished village hall and year-round programme of events in the village.

In recent years, the Scheme has identified the importance of succession and sustainability in rural touring:

“so many schemes seem to be based on the vision of one person.... if that person gets ill or leaves or sort of you know, burns out, which happens regularly it’s a huge issue for longevity.”

Recently the Scheme has been successful in attracting money from the Esmee Fairburn Trust which they aim to use to develop training packages for existing promoters to think about how they market to younger people or how they bring younger people in to shadow what they’re doing. Ultimately, she thinks the future and sustainability of rural touring lies in thinking of it as more than simply programming a village hall:

“I think if we look at the community as the asset and not the village hall, then the promoting host within that community can change depending on the resources that are there.... What rural touring schemes need to do is to diversify where they work and how they work because otherwise it does all just come down to this one individual and it’s not sustainable on that basis”.

3.15.1 Bergh Apton Community Arts Trust: a continuing programme of Rural Touring Arts

With a median age of 52 years, against a rural average of 46, and with 68% of residents being in social classes 1-4 (well above the average for rural England), it is hard to see how this cluster of houses numbering about 186 households scattered across the Parish of Bergh Apton just outside Norwich has developed such a reputation for the arts. It has a village hall in the old wooden school house, which was refurbished in 2015 and is used by the Parish Council as well as a wide range of groups, a post office that reopened in 2016 as well as a plant centre and farm shop. It is well served by a bus service connecting it to Norwich and the surrounding villages.

The Bergh Apton Community Arts Trust is different from most of the case study examples in that it does not have a single building which it uses as a venue but utilises the whole village as the venue. It is often cited in other studies looking at the impact of rural touring as a 'classic example of success' and is commended by the Scheme Director and by Matarasso himself. This is an interesting point in itself as unlike virtually every scheme it neither has a hall or a regular calendar of performing arts events. One of the reasons we decided to visit it was because it received a full write up in Matarasso's Only Connect and because arts work has continued since then with many of the same organising team who featured in that original study in 2003.

When Matarasso undertook his study in 2003, it included the renowned Bergh Apton Sculpture Trail, a project the village hosted six times between 1997 and 2011. This took place in private gardens and public spaces and involved a total of sixty artists in creating site specific work. The trail reputedly attracted over 10,000 people during three weekends in May/ June 2011. The 2011 Trail also saw the premier of their show "Mighty Water" a community commission, based on the "Mystery Play" tradition and involving a cast of local people. This was the first in a series of participatory performance projects specifically commissioned by the Trust.

In 2003 Matarasso, writing about their achievements found that "BACAT's success depends on a small number of imaginative local people, with time, energy and a strong sense of the kind of community they want to be part of. With experience in teaching, business, farming and other fields, they have come to arts development relatively late in life. In doing so, they have established a way of working which is absolutely steeped in a voluntary ethos, but completely professional in its standards and expectations."

Although they are not a traditional rural touring arts venue they have received consistent support from Creative Arts East scheme, and though they do not programme regularly in the way that a conventional venue would programme they have brought financial investment to the arts in the Parish, as well as a wide-ranging group of artists prepared to come to present work there. They have also provided additional promoting opportunities for local artists and for local people, giving them the chance to participate and perform in professionally staged arts productions.

One of the things that marks the organising group out from other promoter groups is that at least half of them are practising artists or had an interest in the arts, which was one of the main reasons to get involved. Interestingly the group stopped promoting the sculpture trails in 2011 and turned their interests to other arts projects. As one of the volunteers said:

"They had rather outgrown us and by then sculpture trails were ten a penny".

They moved on to creating participatory community plays, and although these were staged with the involvement of professional artists they included up to one hundred community cast members.

Another volunteer commented on the experience of working with professional artists both on the sculpture trails and then later the mystery play projects:

"So it's the combination of the amateur and the professional which actually works quite well, so long as everybody knows their place in a sense."

One other volunteer commented that although many of the group had arts backgrounds it was important to understand why they were bringing artists to work with them:

“There is a specific role for the professional which the professional can develop, whereas we are the facilitators really, we’re not the artists, we provide creative ideas but it needs the creativity of the professional as well.”

When asked about the secret of their longevity and continuity as a group of promoters one volunteer suggested that it was about never assuming that you were going to repeat what you did before and never knowing what you are going to do before you decide on an idea that works:

“And then to take our idea and spin it into something magic. We never decide, ‘Right in two years’ time we’re going to do another one’. We never do that. We wait and let the idea form.”

3.15.2 Impacts and legacy

Community capacity: The wide range of volunteers necessary to put on large arts projects such as community plays or to host sculpture trails means that it is unlikely that there is any household that has not been touched in some way by the activities organised by the trust. The organising group itself has brought a huge organising capability to the village that did not exist before and the positive benefits of the work noted by Matarasso in 2003 have multiplied many times.

Community cohesion: In a sense, BACAT has put Bergh Apton on the map and brought thousands of people there who would not otherwise have visited it. Members of the organising group cited this as a very positive thing for the village as community members were encouraged to throw open their doors and allow perfect strangers into their homes to view art. It meant that the local community met hundreds of people they had never met before some of whom may have lived at the end of their road while others had travelled literally across the world to get there. The 2014 mystery plays, based around the legend of Rood, involved inhabitants from 11 neighbouring villages, again illustrating the point that the projects have had a key role in bringing communities together.

Access to arts and culture: Undoubtedly the Trust has had a huge impact on access to the arts for local people, either in attending or participating in events. This was certainly the case with the sculpture trails; the community productions have been more hands-on in a sense and many local inhabitants in Bergh Apton and surrounding villages have had the chance to perform in a professionally staged production perhaps for the first time in their lives.

Legacy: Although the reputational legacy is huge this is clearly matched by the record of local involvement, essentially twenty-two years of arts development led by local residents engaged in the delivery of high-quality arts projects. Or twenty-two years of participation in projects that have showcased the village and valued local skills. The Trust has an important role in the local community and its activities have fostered many allied arts projects from painting classes at the village hall through to the foundation of the Anteros Arts centre, providing support to local artists.

3.15.3 Welborne Village Hall: A centre where there is no longer a programme of Rural Touring Arts

Welborne is a small village in the Parish of Runhall, South Norfolk. In the parish itself, which is home to three villages, there is a total of 137 households and 406 inhabitants. Of these a relatively high 64 % of the population are in social classes 1-4 and the median age is a relatively young 43 years, below the rural average of 45 years. Its population is almost 99% white British. It comprises a cluster of houses spread out along a country lane and at its heart is a small village green, next to which is the old school room, now village hall, which is now

owned by a charitable trust and wholly used for community activity. There is no shop or local pub or bus service, so the village hall represents the main community facility.



Most of the developments focus around the development of the village hall based in the old school room. We interviewed one of the members of the committee at the time who remembers contacting Creative Arts East round about the year 2000 and the result was a Creative Arts East exhibition which they put up in their hall. They put on refreshments and about 130 people attended. After the success of the first events the then committee decided to apply for funding and to put on an arts festival which became a regular fixture of village life until 2015. As the same volunteer explains:

“The next year I applied for an award through a grant and we got a marquee over on the garden there. We curated our own exhibition, plus Creative Arts East came back with their touring exhibition and so it eventually turned into Welborne Arts Festival. We did eleven in all over fifteen years.”

When Matarasso visited in 2003 there had already been two festivals and the group were planning a third. At the time Matarasso saw the organising group had the potential to use “projects like the arts weekend for the regeneration of the village life.”

In some ways, the experience of the village hall group has been that the arts festival has driven lots of other village activities as volunteers who got involved in organising the festival went on to organise other activities. One of the volunteers we met was an artist who supported the development of Christmas craft fairs, another committee member went on to use his experience of running the bar in the arts festival to host and organise a beer festival which became a regular event, alternating with the arts festival.

Not surprisingly the organising group have received consistent support from CAE and the hall itself has been used for music and other events - one year they promoted Kathryn Tickell through the rural touring scheme and raised over £1,000; another year they put on literary events and were successful in attracting Louis de Bernières.

Apart from live arts the hall hosts four cinema events a year with an audience of upwards of 40 people. One of the volunteers explains its contribution to village life:

“When I first moved here and I saw what was going on I thought what a brilliant idea. One of the first events I came to was one of the films, and I’ve loved the films here ever since. We had like, four films last year. I think they have an average audience of about 40 which for a little place like Welborne is amazing.”

The founding member of the arts festival explains the importance of the arts for him of having quality arts events in a village venue:

“I think it’s that dividing line between entertainment and fun and the arts and it’s somewhere in the middle where it changes for me from one to the other. I suppose it’s the demand, you’re not just... it is this engagement of being inspired feeling as opposed to just enjoying yourself and having fun.”

It is with regret that he explains that he moved away from the village in 2015 and the arts promotions and the arts festival ceased. Although he remained a member on the board of CAE and continued his involvement in the arts he felt he had to step back from promoting itself. The village hall itself remains active with a round of community quizzes, community meals and other activities; there is a sense however the village has lost something very special with the demise of the festival and the arts programme and that is something they will probably not get back. As the founder says:

“my disappointment is that we’ve lost the momentum now and my feeling is that we probably we won’t regain the momentum.”

3.15.4 Impacts and legacy

Assets: As with many of the venues we have researched, it is the venue itself that remains one of the greatest assets and a long-lasting impact from rural touring arts. In this case Welborne was not the recipient of a large endowment to build a new state of the art arts facility, but the committee who were active in promoting the arts festivals and arts events were also the backbone of the group that saw the development of the charity in 2000 that eventually took over the ownership and running of the hall. This remains at the heart of village life. It was the impetus from organising the arts festival that fostered a proactive approach to the programming in the village hall that has made it the lively place it is today.

Community capacity: Community organising in a village the size of Welborne quite often is down to the efforts of a few people and, when one of them leaves, that often signals a crisis from which it will take time to recover. What remains apparent is that the arts projects have contributed to the social and cultural capital of the village to the extent there are now people with skills and experience who are still organising events in and for the local community. Welborne is not a community that has forgotten what the arts can do and it’s not a community that has forgotten how to organise events; it is just a community that has stopped organising arts events and feels the loss. As one of the remaining volunteers on the village hall committee says:

“I think the arts festival was a fantastic thing but because we still do the beer festival, we still have this whole village involvement in putting something on. I think if we lost the beer festival and the arts festival, it would be a real loss for the village.”

Access to arts and culture: Not everyone attends arts events and not everyone likes to participate in community activity, however, arts events give the community access to arts events and activities that they would not otherwise attend. Over the fifteen years of its

existence the festival and the arts promotions at the hall were attended by a large number of people who, the promoters believed, would have not otherwise visited arts events or had arts experiences.

Legacy: Fifteen years of activity raised the profile of the village to the extent that it is still being cited in reports. Villagers still feel that the festival defines a part of themselves and when they talk about it now they talk about it with a sense of loss. The community activity that continues is in part at least a product of all the work that the main promoter and the volunteers put into the arts events over the years. And the sense of pride which comes as being part of something special is what gives people the energy to keep get more involved and stay involved. As one volunteer puts it:

“I’ve played, I think, a bigger part in village life, increasingly over the last seven or eight years, which I thoroughly enjoy. It’s all part of being part of the community and being a bit of a leader in the community. So, that’s where I’m coming from, and I’ve been involved with the organisation of events over the last seven or eight years which includes rural touring arts.”

3.16 An interview with François Matarasso

François Matarasso (March 2019): An Interview

Having undertaken the research and visited some of the schemes that featured in the original research, one of our researchers was able to interview François himself about his reflections on rural touring and, most particularly, what had changed since he published his original report.

“The thing about rural touring is that it changes very slowly as a practice. I’m not sure that anything that I said fifteen years ago, I would see much need to change. The pace and ways in which I think it will have changed, or is changing, are to do with changes in society as a whole. Rural England isn’t where it was fifteen years ago, for a variety of reasons but they’re not changes that are specific to rural touring. It’s more to do with the context in which rural touring happens.”

So, what is it that is so distinctive about Rural Touring Arts?

“We need to remember that people have been gathering in halls for as long as there have been communities to listen to story tellers, to listen to musicians, to be entertained and consequently what happens in rural touring, without sentimentalising it at all, or romanticising it, is part of that long continuity. The heart of the reason why it’s different from a town centre arts centre is because the audience know each other. That contributes to the other thing that is distinctive, which is that rural touring events become part of shared memory, part of what builds community. So, for both of those reasons, I think that it is a very distinctive kind of artistic experience.”

How valid is it to be looking at its impacts?

“I think that there are problems with how things get justified, The foundation of justifying public expenditure on rural touring should be that the people in rural areas have the same rights as people anywhere else. There shouldn’t be a need to prove change to justify your access to funding, because people who go to the national theatre are not required to prove that they have changed. I think rural touring does have significant outcomes for people who are involved in it, in whatever way they’re involved in it, and a rural touring performance can be disproportionately important and consequently it does create ripples that run on. I don’t happen to think that equipping village halls with expensive arts equipment is a particularly important or necessarily desirable outcome of that but that’s a personal view. I think the more important things are the relationships and confidence and the empowerment that comes with that work.”

For the Arts Council it is very important that Rural Touring is undertaken by professional artists and companies because they believe this is an indication of quality, is that a necessary connection?

“I don’t connect professional and non-professional with questions of quality. They’re entirely separate: whether something is good or not does not relate to whether it is professional. Whatever professional is, it’s defined by whoever’s doing the defining. I believe what the Arts Council does and supports is very important and valuable, but it’s not always as important and valuable as those concerned think it is!”

In our research, what appeared to be important was that artists were bringing in something unfamiliar, perhaps the only thing that was important was that they were good artists?

“I think that’s exactly the point, one of the things that I question in some of the discourse about publicly funded art is there’s a kind of implicit belief that somehow people who are not professional, people who are not part of that arts world, are not interested in quality.”

Another important issue for the research has been about the sustainability of Rural Touring Arts especially in working through voluntary promoters and centres.

“I think the art world has a very simplistic idea of what sustainability means. All communities go through cycles and in small communities those cycles are more evident than in, in most. So, you can have a dynamic councillor or somebody on the village hall committee who is full of energy and makes a lot of things happen for a while and then for all sorts of reasons, that person either ages or their job takes them away somewhere or they just run out of steam, then there will be a dip. I’m not sure that the dip is a problem. Often, sooner or later, somebody else puts their head above the parapet and says, I want to make something happen. It’s in the nature of voluntary and community-led work that it fluctuates like that.”

“I think the underlying truth of these villages is that most of them have been there for between one and two thousand years and they have survived a lot more than the Arts Council. They change and adapt themselves, I grew up in a village that is today nothing like what it was when I was a child: to take just one simple example, when I was a child, everybody worked on farms except the vicar, now hardly anybody works on farms. The whole character of that place has been turned inside out but it’s still carrying on. It’s finding out what place it’s going to be now.”

Should we be concerned about the people who live in villages but don’t attend rural touring events?

“It’s back to the missionary idea. The arts council is very concerned that everybody should love what they do. I think the audiences for rural touring are more diverse socially and more representative of the places where it’s happening than audiences often are. They reach a lot of people: in communities, people doing voluntary work are using their own networks. You can have expectations about a professional marketer in an arts centre and how they should be reaching the whole of their potential local audience but I don’t think it’s fair or realistic to bring those expectations to a sixty-year-old lady who’s programming things in her village hall because she thinks it’s good for the community to have social events.”

We are living in a time when funding is being reduced for the arts as in public services generally, are there any specific issues that relate to Rural Touring Arts?

“I think the mantra of doing more with less is, frankly, dishonest. I don’t hear anybody saying that public schools should be doing more for less: somehow it only applies to people who already don’t have very much.”

Fifteen years after the publication of Only Connects, any final reflections?

“When I was originally approached to do that research, I had very low expectations. I couldn’t see how something that was so small scale could have very much of an impact, but my thinking was completely transformed. I’ve often used rural touring as an example of the value of community development as a practice and as a principle, of how it is possible to empower people in very profound ways. That remains true, but, like a lot of things that rely on non-professionals, I think that it is massively under-estimated and under-valued by people who think that professional work, whatever that means - they usually it means their work - is more valuable and more than necessary than anything else.”

3.17 Conclusions on the Cumulative Cases and Matarasso

In Only Connects Matarasso outlines a whole range of ways in which rural touring supports local communities and community development. Many of his findings are echoed strongly by our Case Studies. Rural communities are (complex) 'places' and in a state of constant change and while rural touring events add something special to community life, they can only be viewed as one contributing factor to changing rural life. Matarasso argues rural touring can contribute to reducing the effects of isolation and to developing community cohesion in communities while also strengthening the capacity of local communities to organise and to develop themselves.

While the quality and the professionalism of the work is important, it is equally of value to look at the reason why people attend rural arts events and how they benefit. He argues that the social reasons for attending are as important and the contribution that the events make to village life in general are as powerful as any artistic reasons. Moreover, he believes that in a time of reducing expenditure we should not be trying to justify their existence through simply demonstrating its impacts, rather he believes we should be arguing that people who live in rural areas have the same rights as people who live in towns to attend and enjoy the arts.

On revisiting areas Matarasso's research project had visited fifteen years ago, it was possible to gauge some of the cumulative effects of continued touring activity. We found that rural touring arts had:

- Enabled communities who would otherwise be excluded to attend and enjoy arts events;
- Increased participation in the arts through participatory projects and events;
- Increased the audience for the arts by developing a taste for attending arts events from people who would not otherwise attend them;
- Contributed to people's wellbeing and sense of community by developing safe spaces to socialise and meet people;
- Directly supported the development of assets, primarily through the improvement and development of community facilities;
- Brought financial investment into communities in the form of arts grant, local fundraising and investment in related projects;
- Contributed to local economies through increased spending in the local community and through the need to acquire goods and services to support events through local suppliers;
- Contributed to the capacity of communities through increased volunteering, and the development of allied and related projects; and
- Empowered individuals to take a more active role in organising and decision making in their communities.

It was of some concern that in two of the four communities we visited promoters had stepped back and arts promoting had come to an end. In one of these communities it was possible to see the potential of a relaunch of the scheme through a former volunteer whist, in the other, the remaining volunteers had moved on to promoting other activities to promote community life.

In trying to understand rural touring. Matarasso argues that we should not draw strong conclusions from communities in which promoting stops. The point Matarasso makes is that nothing good lasts for ever and we should not be judging the success of rural touring simply in terms of its ability to sustain a continued programme of events over time. Rather we should take the long view when looking at Rural Touring Arts and understand that every community has its life cycles and that rural touring is no different.

4 Investigating Rural Arts in Non-Touring Scheme Areas

The aim of this research strand was to investigate the possible benefits and impacts of other, often amateur, arts-based activities, rather than professional Touring Schemes, with their focus on quality as determined by ACE funding. One accessible rural case, Berkshire, and one remote rural case, Devon, was selected. In the spirit of co-design and partnership these cases were undertaken by NRTF with oversight and direction by Coventry University.

4.1 Stanford Dingley, Berkshire

Stanford Dingley, Berkshire, is a small village (and civil parish) with 80 residential properties, situated in a rural setting in the west of Berkshire. Its population is approximately 179 (2011 Census) and there has been little expansion of the village in recent years. Housing is largely dispersed along the two key roads that cut through the village and most is privately owned, with some small shares of social housing and private renting.

There are two pubs and a small church but no shop or post office and the nearest primary school is close by in the neighbouring village of Bradfield Southend. The village is fifteen minutes south of the M4 motorway but with few major roads nearby, and is surrounded by a number of other small villages. The closest towns are Newbury to the west and Theale to the east. There is no regular or frequent bus service.

The arts activity investigated is led by the Chair of 'The Friends of St Denys' Church'. The Friends of St Denys' Church is a charitable non-secular organisation (established 2017) that aims to ensure that the fabric of the village's 1,000 year old church is conserved for future generations. The Chair is an events manager by profession and also leads the various local arts and culture events that take place in the village, and sometimes beyond. The activity is locally self-funded and is not part of the NRTF or a promoter for any regional Rural Touring Scheme.

The Chair of the charity essentially leads a group of volunteers in organising local events, including planning, organising and delivering exhibitions, talks and film screenings; they may be looking to run music events in the future. Events are run for the benefit of the local community and fundraising for the church charity (and other charities on occasion). For arts and culture based events this usually involves one large event and one small event per year. Venues include the small Village Hall, a local (privately owned) Barn and the church, amongst others.

One event was a large Art Exhibition held in the privately owned old barn (privately owned) in September 2018.

"... we did an exhibition in September which was seventeen artists connected to this village ... in a local barn, a large barn ... we had about five hundred people in five days. So, it was really successful, and every artist was asked to submit four bits of work and then we had a pop up café there and a shop of buying lots of things, and all the artwork was for sale. So, it generated a fair bit. We made about five grand in sales, of which we took 20% of the sales of the images... the pictures. So Denys' [church charity] made about a grand, £1,000 and the café made about £500." (Chair)

For the Chair and the volunteers, this event took a lot of effort – firstly the (very full) Barn needed emptying and cleaning. Then the exhibition infrastructure needed to be set up along with curating the exhibits. The marketing also involved substantial effort – flyer design, print and manual delivery, Facebook, emails and word of mouth. All this took around six weeks.

Another event was the Archive Day (Nov 2018 – the small event) held in the Club Room, in the Village Hall:

"We've got a lady ... in the village, who looks after a massive archive, about people that used to live in the houses. There's always been creative people in this village

... there's a lot of fascinating history ... It's always with someone who is really proactive and cares about the history, and they made a book. So, they used it all to write and create a book about the village, which is now out of date, ten years old, maybe more, and then... so the idea for the archive was just, there's been quite a lot of new people move in to the village, and I don't think that they know about the archive and somebody saw one of the books recently, and was like, oh my god, my house is in it. I was like, yes, there's a whole book on houses from... so we decided that, for the Friends of St Denys', we would do an archive day, to draw attention to the archives, try and add to the archives. So people were invited to bring things and also to help scan the archives, because they're really poorly preserved, and we had about sixty people in one day... Again, we had a café ... and the conversations started, especially with the older people in the village, started to share stories ... it raised awareness of the Friends, and awareness of the archives and the hope is to get another really eager person who might take the archives on" (Chair)

The effort for this archive event involved: the creation of spreadsheets to divide up the necessary tasks: a number of meetings to co-ordinate activity; setting up the room the day before the event (the Club Room was hired), and; on the day, laying out all the archives and refreshments.

The Chair stated that the majority of people who volunteer for assisting with the arts and culture events are retired. Some younger mothers also expressed aspirations to be involved but often had too many other commitments to offer substantive support. The organisation essentially relies on a very small core of volunteers who make the events happen. Nevertheless, a participant in the Volunteer Focus Group did highlight that, more broadly, an increasingly diverse range of people were getting more involved:

"Yeah and I think, so the average, I don't know what the average age is, there is a lot of people in their sort of early forty, late thirties, early forties who've [volunteered]..." (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

In terms of motivations for volunteering, the main reasons suggested were to gain personal satisfaction and develop the sense of community:

"I would say it's just the enjoyment of seeing people getting together, chatting, meeting up, of the sixty-one people, sixty plus people, that came through the door for the archive weekend, we had two new house couples came through that had only moved in, one was only about two or three days before" (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

"Satisfaction of a job well done maybe at the end of an event, you know, we all sit back and go, phwoar but that was great, and enjoyed it and everybody who came enjoyed it ..." (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

"... what do you get out of it, the, when I stood there and watched this because I tend to not take a role, I tend to just be making sure everything's sort of running and I stood there and you watched all these people and you had a beautiful day and everyone was having such a good time and, you know, when people talk about it, you know, for days afterwards and say, that's what is, I think when you can get a community" (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

"It just makes you proud of where you live I think. That's why I love it." (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

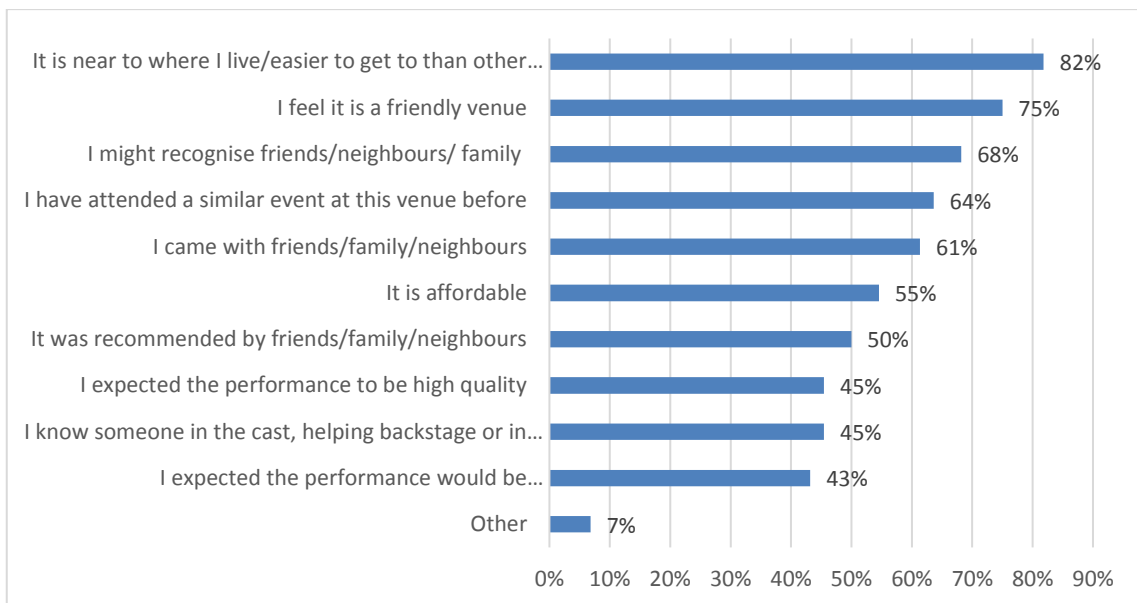
Based on the events, and arts and culture activity in the village, a postcard (completion on the day) and on-line survey were undertaken.

Three quarters of the respondents were female, all White British, and just over 40% in the 45-64 age category. A third of respondents were aged between 65 – 74. Just under a fifth were aged between 25 – 44. A third were retired, almost 60% employed, and the remainder studying

or volunteering. In the past 12 months, two-thirds of respondents stated that they had travelled more than 25 miles to an arts event.

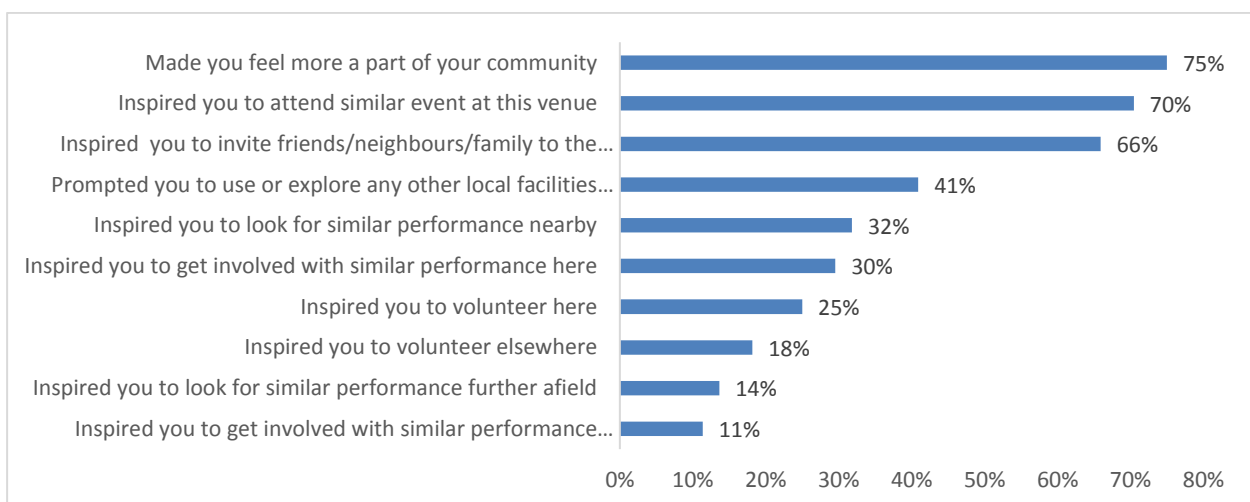
Respondents were asked what had been the most important things that encouraged them to attend the event(s). Figure 4.1 (below) highlights the importance of local proximity and access in terms of attendance (82%), the importance of friendliness (75%) and potentially meeting up with friends/neighbours/family (68%).

Figure 4.1 Attending arts events in the village



In terms of outcomes from attending events (Figure 4.2), the most common response was that of the event making people feel more a part of their community (75%). There was also strong interest in attending similar events (70%) as well as to invite others along (66%).

Figure 4.2 Attending arts events in the village



When asked to reflect personally on events attended (Table 4.1 overleaf), respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the event was of a high-quality, was absorbing, made them feel good, and that were likely to talk to others about it. For a minority, the work was not especially challenging, or caught their imagination or a new art form.

Table 4.1 Village arts events ‘on reflection’

<u>The audience said...</u>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>I was confident that this would be a high-quality event</i>	58.0	42.0	0.0	0.0
<i>I was really absorbed by the performance</i>	30.0	70.0	0.0	0.0
<i>It really caught my imagination</i>	31.0	53.0	13.0	2.0
<i>I felt challenged by some of the ideas</i>	29.0	55.0	13.0	3.0
<i>I really 'got' what it was about</i>	46.0	51.0	2.0	0.0
<i>I am sure I will want to talk about this to others</i>	56.0	44.0	0.0	0.0
<i>The performance was emotionally moving</i>	34.0	63.0	3.0	0.0
<i>The performance changed my mood for the better</i>	40.0	57.0	0.0	3.0
<i>This was a new type of art form for me</i>	3.0	62.0	32.0	3.0
<i>I'd like to see more of this kind of show</i>	31.0	36.0	22.0	11.0
<i>I am sure this was a high-quality event</i>	54.0	46.0	0.0	0.0

Note: answers are in percentage values adjusted for the number of missing replies.

4.1.2 Reflections

It is clear that without the work of the St Denys’ Church’ Events Committee, there would likely be no cultural or creative activities or events within the village.

When asked for one word to describe what all the effort was for, the Chair and Volunteers repeated the word ‘community’, which held a number of aspects:

“At the arts event, you’ll see people who go to church and to the pub, and you can introduce those people to each other, where otherwise, their paths wouldn’t cross, unless they were walking dogs, and then they might now know each other. So, it does create that space.” (Chair)

“... galvanising people to care about their village. I think you get a lot of people from London or town people now moving in to the village and they can start off not really engaging in the village ... living in a village is very different to living in the city, and you have to engage if you live in a village because we’ve got a ‘dredge gang’ here that sort the river out – they do all of the drains. They clear the leaves from the church, which harps back to a long time ago, when everyone pre-Council Tax, was expected to sort and clean, like the farmers do, and the hedges and things, and the footpaths. The village has to... if they want to live somewhere nice, then they have to engage in it really.”

There was a clear recognition that in undertaking such arts activity, events needed to be high-quality, well designed and managed:

“People are really conscientious and they will really make a big effort to make it seem professional, slick, a very beautiful... so things are set up well and people... they'll put their time in. They want to make sure they get it right. I've never been to an event which wasn't well organised in this village, anyway.”

To do so, however, currently requires substantial time and effort by a core group of volunteers:

“Well, evenings and weekends, holiday if it was on a week day, I'd have to take holiday. Yes, evenings and weekends. All the committees meet in the evenings and for instance, Denys' meet every couple of months and say okay, what are we going to do, and then we have planning meetings outside of those and we have board meetings I guess.”

Reflecting the common challenges of village-based arts activity, the size of the Village Hall is very small which limits the size and nature of the events that can be organised. One response was to maximise use of other possible venues in the Village -, such as the (in-kind) use of a privately owned 18th century barn. Notably, refurbishment of the church had recognised the importance of arts and culture in the village:

“Yes, so we want to do the exhibition again and also the church is being refurbished to be more of an events space. So, I can see the Friends of St Denys' using it for maybe concerts or some kind of show anyway, maybe even theatre, you never know. It's about 80, 90 seats.”

This desire to programme activity reflected also issues of accessibility to arts and culture. One issue is the cultural capital of London – only sixty miles away once you make transport connections. Nearer regional venues would be Newbury and Reading and two ‘struggling’ regional theatres were mentioned – Water Mill Theatre and Corn Exchange Theatre. The Water Mill Theatre does undertake its own rural touring to some of the local villages but, overall, there is no arts and culture provision in the village (or local ones) other than that provided by the events group.

In response to the potential to engage in a Rural Touring Arts Scheme, it was felt it was not a well-known thing, not necessarily appropriate and a clear preference to rely on the cultural resources available from local people was expressed:

“... the events that happen here, like the World War One talk, he's from the village ... we've had another guy who was in Afghanistan talking. He's from the village. So...you get people you know ... somebody's sisters daughter who is an opera singer, or something like that, or somebody knows someone... it will always be through somebody they know rather than cold calling ... or whether there'll be like the ... which is the next town, we'll use them. Because people know them ... the Water Mill, everybody knows, so they would trust that ... a very well-known theatre company versus a semi-professional or am-dram – they wouldn't necessarily, from the name, know the difference. So, it's a funny one.”

4.2 Bow, Devon

In central Devon lies the medium-sized village (and civil parish) of Bow, comprised of around 400 residential properties and a population of around 1,093 (2011 Census). Housing is primarily privately owned, though with a small share of social housing and privately rented stock, clustered to the south of the main road that cuts east to west through the village.

The village has a primary school, a general store (Co-Op), a garden centre, a doctor's surgery, a post office in the Village Hall, a pub, a medical centre, and a small industrial-commercial estate. The village is northwest of the M5 motorway (45 minutes' drive) but with two major roads nearby, and is surrounded by many other villages. Exeter is the nearest major centre (45 minutes' drive) and there are some local bus services.

This case is self-funded and not part of the NRTF, nor a promoter for any regional Rural Touring Scheme. The 'promoter' organisation is Bow Village Events Committee and the key volunteer promoter is the Chair of that Committee. This is not to be confused with the Bow Village Hall Committee, which looks after the Village Hall building itself, though both Committees work very closely together.

Bow Village Events Committee primarily focus on organising and delivering music events for the local community. The main event for the last ten years has been the (free) 'Heart of Devon' Summer Music Festival, taking place annually during one day in June, on the Village's recreational ground (main stage, owned by the Village Hall organisation) and in the large Village Hall (smaller set, and a relatively new facility).

The 'Heart of Devon' Summer Music Festival involves a wide range of musical artists (main stage in the recreation ground; smaller set in the Village Hall), market stalls, a large bar, small bars, food and other amenities. The Festival primarily involved artists selected by the key promoter (including bands or artists who are local to the village). The Festival audience has grown rapidly each year for the last decade.

It is resourced through in-kind volunteering, local donations and sponsorship from local businesses. It is considered inclusive as it is free, which (it is suggested) attracts a far broader crowd than fee charging festivals – but it is also of high-quality, including paid-for artists.

The most recent 2018 festival was estimated to have attracted 2,000 people. However, the 2018 Festival was to be the last – the Committee decided it had become too challenging to manage, becoming 'a victim of its own success'. This has resulted in a shift in focus to run a higher number of smaller events in the Village Hall. One gave more detail about why the Festival was terminated:

"... every village has got a festival now, of some description, and it's the only one in this area that's free. And so it's very well attended. So I think if the festival ever did continue it would have to continue on a pared down basis" (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

"Manageable and less stressful ... if we put an event on we've got to enjoy it. There's no point in putting something on where everything is just an absolute stressful thing for you. You don't even get any joy from the event itself... otherwise there's no point in doing it. It's got to be enjoyable to yourself." (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

In terms of volunteers involved, these are somewhat younger than commonly found in such organisations, possibly reflecting the larger scale of the village with its broader demographic, and also music interests. Organisation of events relies very heavily on the Chair of the Events Committee and committee members and other volunteers on an ad hoc basis.

Most core volunteers on the Events Committee have been involved since the start or for at least five years, suggesting a high commitment from this small core group. Whilst almost all volunteers agreed to cancel the Festival due to the challenges, this resulted in a drop off of numbers of volunteers from the Events Committee.

In response, the Events Committee had undertaken a volunteer invitation to the whole village (demonstrating succession planning). They received twelve positive responses from 400 invitation drops – whilst sounding low, most said they could assist with four or five events a year, so the sustainability of the programme of smaller events was considered to be secure.

In terms of the programme of smaller events, tribute acts are the most popular events, though the main purpose is to bring in more folk bands and new upcoming artists. One example was a folk band event at the Village Hall (Greg Russell and Ciaran Algar, 14 Sept 2018). Whilst such bands often have smaller followings they are also very committed, so people can often come from much further afield, meaning new people often come to Bow for the first time.

A balance has been struck – tribute bands generate strong income, allowing for more 'niche' folk artists and new artists. Almost all smaller events are now fee-charging – ticket sales

generate good income streams and the Village Hall bar brings in good income, so the group generate a far better income stream than with the Festival (which was free and often loss-making):

“The average artist would be 80% of the takings... if it's really successful financially, and I don't mean that, because there are lots of ways of being successful, but financially is if the door pays for... the 20% that we get pays for the hall, the advertising, the licence or whatever, all those other things. If that's taken care of, so the money is then just on the bar, that's brilliant, that's a brilliant thing for me.”
(Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

The Events Committee has been fortunate to have a small group of people who have specific skills (or have developed them) around promotion – such as website design (including new GDPR policies and processes), social media promotion, posters and flyers. Further volunteers (including those on the Village Hall Committee) have been involved in activities ensuring the events are delivered: for example, checking tickets on the door; programme and raffle ticket sales; heavy lifting and organising of all the technical music equipment; serving at the various bars; manning stalls; stage management roles (setting up, packing away); litter-picking (and proper recycling), and; 'keeping the bands happy' with refreshments in the 'green room'. Volunteers also deal with the car parking for events, which was substantial and very challenging for the Festival, ultimately using up to three fields. A £3 fee per car generated income but people attempted to avoid the fee, resulting in street parking issues – the Committee hired costly security guards to police this issue.

4.2.1 Reflections

At one level the Events Committee has been a victim of its own success – the recent Heart of Devon Summer Music Festival attracted around 2,000 people from the local and wider area, in one day. There is no question that the Committee's activities dramatically improve access to arts and culture for the local area's residents (both within Bow and for neighbouring villages and beyond) – Exeter is the main centre for arts and culture events which is at least 18 miles away (so a car is considered essential):

“Absolutely, yeah, and that's one of the reasons obviously why we do it. It is barren for arts in this area it really is. Yeah part of the Heart of Devon, we did start up this community choir, which is kind of running on its own.” (Chair of Events Committee)

Indeed, there is evidence that it has driven local, potentially professional, creativity as a 'platform' for local artists onto record labels. Two examples were cited - one local band and one classical artist – where promotion at the Festival by the Events Committee, and good quality audio visuals of performances on the Heart of Devon website had supported awareness and commercial development.

More broadly, the promotional strength of the Committee in determining local arts activity was evident:

“I would have to have seen the artist ... even with the tributes [tribute bands], I would want to know somebody had seen them and I wouldn't go by just blurb and the thing I really drive home to bands particularly, and this came true in the festival, you need to have a video of a live performance with good sound quality so that promoters can make a judgment call... So I have made that point several times to them, if I hadn't seen you, I would have never booked you” (Chair of Events Committee)

“That's a little bit true of the smaller events... the people who do come from outside quite often we'll get really good feedback about the village hall, and about the venue and I think I've seen some Google references saying, 'Great venue, they always put on a good event'.” (Volunteer Focus Group participant)

It is clear that this has a number of positive social and economic benefits:

“Within communities within villages there are circles of friendships and sometimes you're in one circle and you never meet, really engage with someone in another circle and its good when those circles touch and cross, even just for a brief while. You feel like you're making new acquaintances and its good.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“One of the nicest things we ever did was an Abba night, and I'll always remember, it was a generation thing, and to have 10 year olds coming up on stage dressed up as Abba (laughs) and you know, right down through the generations ... the community thing of that it really struck home to me.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“... I have had people come to me, ‘Oh we're thinking of coming to live here, because you do such great things here’. I have had absolutely... that... so we do get positive things as well...“...and the school is at full capacity at the moment, and it hasn't always been.” (Chair of Events Committee)

“... I do quite like the fact that actually it's put Bow on the map. People who would never come here come to the event. And certainly I've heard that from the garden centre ... it brought a lot of business and generated a lot of business afterwards because they actually saw, they came to the village and realised what it is.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant).

These benefits include of personal pride, ‘feel good’ and well-being:

“And without us creating that memory they wouldn't have it and there isn't much going on in Mid Devon really is there? Event wise, and gig wise.” (Volunteer Focus Group member)

“I mean as I say, going back to that event, there was a moment at the end, and I thought, this is so why we do this, this is absolutely why we do this ... you realise you know, the participation of the audience.” (Volunteer Focus Group member)

Yet, arguably, and in comparison to many other rural instances, as victims of their own success the volunteer promotion model is coming under pressure due to ever-increasing demands including, possibly, professionalisation:

“We're a victim of our success, I think it [the Festival] got too big.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“And we needed a break [from the Festival]. It was affecting family life.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“You feel a lot more appreciated in the smaller events, you get a lot more personal thanks with people coming up at the end and saying thanks before they leave.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“There is a lot of ‘if someone doesn't do it, it will collapse’. There is a lot of, what's the word? Perhaps moral pressure, so if someone doesn't do it, it just won't happen.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“Dealing with people who think you are paid for what you do and not a volunteer.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“I don't know whether people are... anti-establishment or whatever, but if you're in a position of power, and I should say for the tape I'm making quotation marks with my fingers, they think you're a fair target.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“I'm sure people appreciate it, but they didn't demonstrate it and when you've worked for over a year to put something on and it's taken for granted you think, ‘Why am I sacrificing so much time on this?’. Maybe if we take a break.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“People become very unrealistic about expectations.” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

“... for instance an artist from before ... but they did think that I am a promoter and I am making money out of this. I did put them straight. But they think because that's the way of their world isn't it?” (Volunteer Focus Group Participant)

Today, then, the decision has been made, reluctantly, to end the Festival - that attracted all types of people including families – including a recognition that the programme of smaller events is now fee-charging and somewhat more oriented to adults:

“I would argue to be honest that the Festival was the only event that got every age group here.” (Chair of Events Committee)

“...so I asked if people would like, be interested in exhibitions, children's entertainment or lots of things... We want a good mix so we're going to try and cover all these different genres [of music] that people have said they're interested in and come up with a plan, so that's my next job for the next month really.” (Chair of Events Committee)

In response to the potential to engage in a Rural Touring Arts Scheme, this case study focused primarily on local events, although it is clear that the Heart of Devon Music Festival reached out well beyond the village of Bow in terms of its audience. Moreover, the Bow Events Committee has organised, assisted and delivered events and activities in other villages in the wider surrounding area.

Villages in Action (<http://villagesinaction.co.uk/events/>) is a rural touring scheme that includes Bow (and covers Devon more broadly). The Scheme relied heavily on funding from Arts Council England (South West), Devon County Council and from District Councils, which was dramatically cut in 2016/17 after many years (source: Villages in Action 2016/17 Annual Report). The scheme was originally run by a group from another village, and later on Bow was asked to take it on, which they did – but there have been challenges and they now work with others in this programme when they can:

“I think when they started out, I think they were really good to start... the Village Hall [Committee] did the Villages in Action, funny enough it wasn't us, then they decided, because it isn't a money-making exercise is it? They thought it would be, but it isn't, so they then said, 'Look do you want to take it on?' and we [Events Committee] did, and the first one was really successful but we did find that because of the constraints of having to put people up [in accommodation]... we're not that kind of village, there's a lot of villages in the area that really do well with them, where they've got people with five bedrooms, spare bedrooms they can put them up. They're not paying the village hall for the hire, that's another thing, so it tends to be the village hall that's actually running them. And they haven't got the outlays we've got so it is more economical for us to do our own, however, it's the theatre acts, or the things a little bit different that we would be more interested in and which we've done... that was the most recent thing.” (Chair of Events Committee)

Interviewer: “And having access to a programme of work that's already been selected as good quality...?”

“Yeah absolutely. I think that's where they did come into their own, it is really... and I did, I knew them very well and I still... we link with them and we help promote some of their stuff.”

Encouragingly for the future also, Heart of Devon are being 'joined' by other arts organisers in the area:

“Well theatre's funny because again that's a bit of a surprise really. I suppose people think of theatre, and we've always done it around children really, so they kind of think, 'Oh yeah, that's more like a pantomime' and there's a group started in the last

four years, five years is it? Bow Productions, and they're very much the younger generation coming in, which is great, and they do their own thing. Which is why we've pulled back from the theatre a bit, because we don't want to tread on their toes" (Volunteer Focus group Participant)

4.3 Conclusions

Finding our 'non-Touring Scheme' rural arts locations proved problematic – principally due to the extent and reach of Touring Schemes which have built a substantial history of activity and geographical reach across England's rural areas.

The extent of arts and culture activities taking place in the two cases, given the scale of the village contexts, was both of scale and relatively diverse. A range of factors (available venues, volunteer interests, village size, levels of volunteer capacity), in addition to the freedoms (but also the risk) of self-organising, have resulted in unique profiles of arts and culture in each case. Furthermore, there were other activities not formally viewed as arts and culture (such as community events more broadly) that were clearly taking place in the village in addition to and alongside the events and activities covered in the cases.

There were both similarities and differences between these investigations and the Rural Touring Scheme Case Studies. Similarities included: small but dedicated core groups of volunteer promoters; an ethos of delivering high-quality events and activities, and a commitment towards broadening diversity of experience. The key difference is funding sources and support networks and the influence this has on types of performance and event – whether the drive for commercially lower risk tribute bands but also, and often conversely, seeking to support and bring forward available local talent, skills and creative resources in the village and its surroundings (for example, archives).

The recognition did exist as to how the support and financial assistance from Rural Touring Schemes could enable and catalyse more activity, including more challenging but potentially less 'popular' ('risky') arts events, and act as an arbiter and demonstration of quality – but this was set against 'local freedom' of arts activity.

Concerning impacts, the commitment to sense of community and place arguably dominates as the driver of activity – with arts and culture one of the local communities' 'means'; and impact is realised through the individual and selfless motivation and commitment of community-orientated volunteers (with, in some instances, both positive and negative impacts on well-being).

It should be noted, of course, that these two investigations appear to be substantial exemplars of rural self-organisation in the arts and culture arena, and should not be taken as representative of all rural settings – many of which may be unlikely to have such a talented resource and volunteer base as has been identified here.

5 CONCERTA: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 The ACE Research Grants Programme and CONCERTA

The role of the Research Grants Programme is to generate evidence to:

- better understand the impact of arts and culture;
- make the best case for arts and culture in the context of reduced public spending; and
- promote greater collaboration and co-operation between the arts and cultural sector and research partners.

Through CONCERTA, NRTF and Coventry University have created a new research partnership to develop understanding of the evidence base for an under-researched arena of arts activity – rural touring.

Employing a broad, multi-method approach, the Report provides an updated national overview of the organisational characteristics, activities, benefits and impacts of the ACE-funded English Rural Touring Schemes.

Utilising Scheme surveys, Touring Scheme organisations and activities have been mapped within a GIS system to support Scheme intelligence and development. This has produced a digital map archive of over 700 maps, including map packs provided to each Scheme. A series of Case Studies have investigated the touring arts model to provide further insight on its operational models, richness and diversity of activities and, ultimately, the range of individual and community impacts generated.

Bringing arts activity - and quality, diverse, and challenging arts activity - to a substantial range of accessible and remote rural areas, rural touring has been shown to be integral to catalysing and supporting community life in English rural areas, especially as other village ‘anchors’ have diminished.

Nevertheless, the rural touring model faces a number of key issues to its sustainability and continued health. The Case Studies have shown a number of good practice responses to such challenges and, in partnership with NRTF, the aim of this research has been to support the response to such challenges.

5.2 The Impacts of Rural Touring Arts

Table 5.1 (overleaf) summarises the range of impacts of rural touring identified by the research.

The act of bringing touring arts to rural areas (engagement and participation) generates a range of individual and community benefits, including personal development and well-being, community assets and capacity and, ultimately, stronger rural communities.

Table 5.1 The Impacts of Rural Touring Arts

<p>Promotes participation in the arts and creative activity</p>	<p>Engagement Participation Inspiration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides and catalyses high-quality, accessible, affordable, arts activity in people’s own local rural communities • Encourages engagement with the arts and creative activity, including a broader appreciation of the arts and its diversity • Inspires audiences to attend other, and a wider variety of, arts and culture events • Inspires people to take up a personal interest in the arts and creative activity – and raises the aspirations of those who already participate • Potential individual health and well-being outcomes given generation of emotion, thought, challenge, captivation, empowerment, etc. through engagement and participation
<p>Builds art and community assets</p>	<p>Activities Buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops new programmes and strands of village activity, including the identification, rethinking and re-using of existing assets • Provides an income stream for local activities, facilities and employment • Supports the provision of new community centres and facilities, including their development as arts venues • Acts as a ‘magnet’ to other arts activities to encourage the development of cultural hubs, venues and events • Contribute to, and potentially form, ‘community anchors’ – and their capacity to deliver broader services, and social, economic and rural development
<p>Generates individual and community capacity</p>	<p>Volunteering Skills Networks Activism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings local people together to plan and support activity in arts and culture – volunteering • Develops individual confidence and skills • Generates volunteering, interest groups and social networks • Generates voluntary activity and self-organisation beyond the arts – community activism
<p>Builds stronger senses of community</p>	<p>Inclusion Identity Cohesion Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings people together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces social isolation and builds (new) social relationships - Provides non-threatening environments (e.g. for challenging experiences/ people with protected characteristics) - Promotes diversity and challenges stereotypes - Develops community cohesion • Develops a sense of pride in, and belonging to, community • Reduces fear and contributes to community safety

5.3 Further Determinants of Impact: Rurality, Quality and Time?

The research sought, in addition to detailing touring arts impacts, to investigate a number of proposed determinants to the nature and extent of impact.

5.3.1 'Rurality' and Rural Touring Impact

'The rural' was evident in the research through a number of dimensions:

- The principal rationale for funding of rural touring as articulated by ACE is 'to reflect the respective needs of rural and urban communities so that people are not disadvantaged by where they live'. As ACE consults on its future strategic framework, this report has provided evidence that Rural Touring Schemes are providing highly significant accessibility to the arts for a substantial minority of rural community members (including those, for example, who will not or cannot travel easily, those with protected characteristics, and those who seek a safe, non-threatening environment to socially engage). Affordability is a further issue, with clear evidence that Scheme subsidy is overcoming market failure also such that rural communities will enjoy more challenging, diverse, professional – and perceived often as commercially risky – arts experiences that would not otherwise have been promoted;
- In reflecting the respective needs of rural communities, the research sought evidence of rural differentiation in regard to rural touring arts and impact. Aspects arising include that:
 - The Rural Touring Scheme map, 2016, is noticeable in its national coverage of England, bar what are often termed 'the Home Counties' (see Figure 1.1) - it reflects the policy goals of spatial rebalancing;
 - From the mapping, more remote rural (as against accessible rural) areas reported a greater diversity of art-form type;
 - Concerning a 'rural aesthetic', if asking: 'does rural touring offer something that is very different to arts productions that might be provided in the urban context?':
 - evidence was provided that artists and events do have to adapt to the very substantial diversity of venues, facilities and spaces available – and do so as part of their creativity;
 - mentioned by artists, and a reiteration of Matarasso (2004), the substantial community-driven basis of many rural audiences is distinctive - rural touring events become part of shared memory, are part of what builds community, and that shared memory often remains locally intact many years on; and
 - 'Local culture' and its performance is significant for some places – place identity – such as Cornish culture in one of our Case Studies, but there was limited evidence of or support for generally greater impact if performances are tailored to the particular heritage, culture and character of places.
- Given the substantial impacts of rural touring concerning 'community development in rural areas' - or what might be termed aspects of rural development - rural differentiation may be better articulated as sensitivity to the nature and principles of 'place', including both rootedness in the local relationships between people and place and awareness of and response to the wider dynamics of changing (rural) places (such as accessibility, demography, infrastructure, etc.)

5.3.2 Quality and Rural Touring Impact

ACE has a key expectation of quality of arts and arts experience achieved by its funding; for Rural Touring Schemes this means the provision of professional arts.

There was strong recognition amongst promoters that the Rural Touring Schemes do provide access to distinctive high-quality arts opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to access. Such understanding and recognition of quality continued through expressions by volunteers of their motivations for giving up their time – to bring professional acts to *their* community - and within the audience surveys undertaken.

More widely, research interviews across the touring model surfaced how the long history of rural touring has left a subtle but clear legacy and influence across English rural arts activity. Through their long run offer of pre-selected, professional activities – both strategic and subsidy-rated – the Schemes provide ‘a benchmark framework’ for arts quality in their rural regions which often acts as an implicit framework for promoters when considering performances. The Impact Tool roll-out is likely to tighten and reinforce this (implicit) framework.

Quality was also seen to have a relationship with ‘audience challenge’, and a ‘tension’ with commerciality; whilst a trade-off constantly to be negotiated, examples were given of win-win performances.

Whilst in this context quality is associated with the performance, there was a much broader quality driver mentioned on numerous occasions around event organisation – and that a poor quality offer could rapidly damage reputation and the future sustainability of a venue.

This dimension highlighted that when in discussing such organisation what was invariably meant was organisation by volunteers and, arguably, growing evidence that the skills and demands of organisation are demanding ‘professionalisation’, in similar vein to broader trends across volunteering and civil society.

Some Schemes and venues have begun to recognise this, including the development of training offers to volunteers. One expected outcome of this development would be a further enhancement of the benefits to individuals volunteering in response to rural (touring) arts.

5.3.3 Time and Repetition in Rural Touring Impact

Rural Touring Schemes have now been in place for several decades, and by returning to Matarasso the research sought to reflect some of this longevity. It did not expect, as happened, to find itself interviewing promoters and volunteers who had continued throughout those decades!

That it did so, in some senses, reinforced the earlier message of Matarasso as to how rural arts activity is embedded with and generated through the ebbs and flows of the ‘long durees’ of rural community life. In several instances the research was able to trace the long run influence of rural touring in building village / arts infrastructure, assets and capacity through time – including the shared community memories of previous historical performances. It was in this sense that there was strong support from Schemes for ‘repetition and impact’ – in keeping momentum, and, ultimately, building long run (arts) community.

Rural Touring Schemes directly influence the ebbs and flows of repetition and activity but, inevitably, these are set within the wider dynamics of ‘English rurality’, including issues of accessibility, demography and infrastructure. Thus it was that in two of the four ‘revisits to place’, arts activity had ceased. Yet, as for Matarasso, this reflects the enduring lifecycles, waxing and waning of rural village life and the sense that there will always be a mix of ‘embers, flickers and flames’ in rural arts and culture; indeed, one area of lapsed activity hinted at new arts life once again on our visit.

5.4 Rural Arts in Non-Touring Scheme Areas

Through two localities the research included investigating the possible benefits and impacts of other, often amateur, arts-based activities, rather than professional Rural Touring Schemes, with their focus on quality as determined by ACE funding.

Finding 'non-Touring Scheme' rural arts locations proved problematic – principally due to the extent and reach of Touring Schemes which have built a substantial history of activity and geographical reach across England's rural areas.

The extent of arts and culture activities taking place in the two cases was both of scale (relatively) and relatively diverse. A range of factors (available venues, volunteer interests, village size, levels of volunteer capacity), in addition to the freedoms (but also the risk) of self-organising, have resulted in unique profiles of arts and culture in each case.

Similarities with Rural Touring Scheme Case Studies included: small but dedicated core groups of volunteer promoters; an ethos of delivering high-quality events and activities, and a commitment towards broadening diversity of experience.

The key difference is funding sources and support networks and the influence this has on types of performance and event – whether the drive for commercially lower risk tribute bands but also, and often conversely, seeking to support and bring forward available local talent and creative resources in the village and its surroundings (for example, archives).

The recognition did exist as to how the support and financial assistance from Rural Touring Schemes could enable and catalyse more activity, including more challenging arts events, and act as an arbiter and demonstration of quality – but this was set against 'local freedom' of arts activity.

Concerning impacts, the commitment to sense of community and place arguably dominates as the driver of activity – with arts and culture one of the local communities' 'means'; and impact is realised through the individual and selfless motivation and commitment of community-orientated volunteers (with, in some instances, both positive and negative impacts on well-being).

5.5 Issues, Challenges and Good Practice Responses

In providing an updated national overview of the organisational characteristics, activities, and impacts of the ACE-funded English Rural Touring Schemes, a number of issues were raised (Table 5.2 overleaf).

These are reported below and, unsurprisingly, these centred around aspects such as: funding and sustaining the rural touring arts model; strategy and rationale (and achievement of them); and, operational effectiveness.

Table 5.2 Issues for Rural Touring Arts

Issues	Description
Funding Quality Performances	<p>The reducing subsidy model reaching a point where it is becoming unviable to programme</p> <p>Financial models and pressures leading to lack of risk and 'safe programming' – can communities be rewarded for riskier programming?</p> <p>What is quality anyway?</p>
Limits of the model	<p>Touring model focusses companies on touring performances only - missed opportunities for innovative workshops/ community arts/ targeted commissions etc.</p> <p>Contradictions of promoting high-quality professional events through unpaid volunteers – and the growing challenges of 'professionalisation'</p> <p>Skills concentrated in the hands of a small number of people</p> <p>Spread too thinly?</p>
Diversity	<p>Achieving cultural diversity throughout the rural touring model</p> <p>Lack of work around protected characteristics</p>
Succession	<p>Narrow and shrinking group of ageing promoters – and volunteers</p> <p>Limited work to develop skill and succession in communities</p>
Who benefits and who comes to events?	<p>Are touring shows catering for an audience who would access the arts anyway?</p> <p>Could the spending have more impact if it was better targeted?</p> <p>What do we know about the local people who do not attend?</p>

Positively, the research was able also to point to examples of responses to such challenges across the Schemes. Table 5.3 (overleaf) provides some examples of Good Practice identified during the research programme.

Table 5.3 Good Practice Examples in Rural Touring Arts¹⁴

Organisation	Description
NRTF	Programmes to promote excellence and innovation at a local level e.g. Rural Touring Dance Initiative (partnership with The Place, Take Art and China Plate)
Schemes	<p>Targeted development schemes for promoters (Young Promoters Scheme Black Country Touring and Creative Arts East)</p> <p>Collaboration and joint projects between schemes for strategic outcomes (Shropshire and Black Country “My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding”)¹⁵</p> <p>Using programming to challenge racism and promote diversity (Spot on Lancashire, “The Chef Show”)¹⁶</p> <p>Targeted support for Promoters (Village Ventures/Live and Local - patch based link workers)</p> <p>Tailored support schemes for artists (Developing Artists For Rural Touring (DART) Scheme, Live and Local)</p> <p>Transparent, tiered risk-based subsidy rating for different performances (Spot on Lancashire)</p> <p>Pitching Meetings bringing local promoters together before each season to consider the whole menu of shows as a group, talk through what would work for them and organise dates together (Carn to Cove)</p>
Venues	<p>Volunteer support and training (Wem Town Hall)</p> <p>Community capacity building (Borwick and Priest Hutton)</p> <p>Driving wider programming through the use of rural touring programme to test out/ pilot approaches/art-form/ artists (Bulkington Community and Conference Centre)</p>

5.6 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Given learning from this research, further enhance the NRTF Annual Survey instrument. Consider how this supports sector level development of impact reporting.

Recommendation 2: NRTF to consider further the role of Rural Touring Schemes within current policy horizons over and above engagement and participation in the arts, such as in ‘supporting anchors of local community/rural development’, ‘contribution to civil society capacity’, ‘enhancing social cohesion’ and, ‘delivery of health and well-being’.

Recommendation 3: Continued recognition and development of NRTF sector support to Schemes – communication and feedback; training, dissemination of reports, guides and resource packs (‘help fuel’); and, strategic programmes to promote excellence and innovation at a local level.

Recommendation 4: For the sector and its stakeholders to consider strategic responses to key challenges raised by this Report: Succession and Sustainability; Sustainability: funding and finance; and Diversity and Cohesion.

Recommendation 5: To consider research on Rural Touring Arts and Health and Well-Being as a potential emerging research priority.

¹⁴ These examples are drawn solely from the Report Case Studies. Good practice examples exist across the RTS

¹⁵ For further details see Annex 6.

¹⁶ For further details see Annex 6.

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Annex 2 Participating Rural Touring Schemes

- 1 AIR in G Arts in Rural Gloucestershire
- 2 Applause Rural Touring
- 3 ArtERY live & LiveLincs
- 4 Arts Alive in Shropshire and Herefordshire
- 5 Arts Out West
- 6 Artsreach
- 7 Beaford Arts
- 8 Black Country Touring
- 9 Carn to Cove
- 10 Centre Stage Leicestershire
- 11 Cheshire's Rural Touring Arts
- 12 Creative Arts East Live!
- 13 Highlights Productions Ltd
- 14 Lincolnshire Rural and Community Touring
- 15 Live & Local (Derbyshire)
- 16 Live & Local (Warwickshire and Staffordshire)
- 17 Northants Touring Arts
- 18 Rural Arts ON Tour
- 19 Rural Arts Wiltshire & Rural Arts South
Gloucestershire
- 20 Shindig (Worcestershire)
- 21 Spot On - Lancashire's Touring Network
- 22 Take Art
- 23 Village Ventures Nottinghamshire
- 24 Villages in Action

Annex 3 Online Touring Scheme Questionnaire

Start of Block: About your Touring Scheme

Q1 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF TOURING SCHEMES - RURAL TOURING ARTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

This questionnaire survey is designed to collect some information about your Touring Scheme, the activities it undertakes and the impacts these have in rural communities. We invite you to take part in this Arts Council England funded research, which is being conducted by the NRTF in collaboration with Coventry University to assess the contribution of professional rural arts to local community development in contrasting English rural communities. The survey is designed to take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Your answers will remain both confidential and anonymous (except with your explicit consent) in any research outputs/publications. The project has been ethically reviewed by Coventry University. Your data will be held securely on the University's SharePoint for Research and permanently deleted 5 years after the completion of the project. You have the right to withdraw your data from the project by contacting the lead researchers within 14 days of completing the survey. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact Dr Philip Dunham (p.dunham@coventry.ac.uk) or Dr Michelle Newman (m.newman@coventry.ac.uk) at Coventry University, or the NRTF Project Manager Sally Anne Tye (sally@nrtf.org.uk). Your help is very much appreciated. Thank you for your participation.

Q2 First, please tick 'yes' below to confirm that you have read and understood the above information and that you consent to take part in the survey... **Confirmation of informed consent**

YES I have read and understood the above information and I consent for my data to be used as described.

Q3 Now please could you tell us something about your Touring Scheme...

Please tell us about your touring scheme.

In the box below please write:

The name of your scheme

The address of your scheme

Name, role and email address of person completing this survey

Q4 How long has your Touring Scheme been established?

- Less than 2 years (1)
 - 2 -5 years (2)
 - 6 - 9 years (3)
 - 10 years + (4)
-

Q5 How many staff in total do you have on full time or part time equivalents? (i.e. headcount)

Q6 How many Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees do you have on full time or part time contracts?

- 1 - 2 (1)
 - 3 - 5 (2)
 - More than 5 (3)
-

Q7 How many other workers regularly [i.e. at least once every 2-3 months] undertake work for you on a freelance temporary basis?

- 1 -4 (1)
 - 5 - 8 (2)
 - More than 8 (3)
-

Q8 Are you an ACE National Portfolio Organisation?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q9 How many companies do you regularly programme per year?

0 - 5 (1)

6 - 10 (2)

11 - 15 (3)

16 - 20 (4)

More than 20 (5)

Q10 Approximately what was your turnover for the latest financial year?

£75,000 or under (1)

between £75,000 and £250,000 (2)

Over £250,000 (3)

Q11 In the latest financial year, approximately what percentage of your income came from:

Arts Council England: ____ (1)

Local Authorities: ____ (2)

Charity/Trusts: ____ (3)

Private donors and sponsorship: ____ (4)

Heritage Lottery: ____ (5)

Ticket sales: ____ (6)

Crowdfunding: ____ (7)

Other [please specify]: ____ (8)

Total: _____

End of Block: About your Touring Scheme

Start of Block: Rural Touring Activity

Q12 Now we would like to learn more about your rural touring activities and their impacts....

Q13 You have kindly supplied information to the NRTF concerning your rural touring performance work over the past 5 financial years. For the latest financial year, please indicate the number of performances/events that were delivered through the following models

	Performance only [no direct interaction with community except as audience] (1)	Participatory [community members involved in developing the artwork prior to performances] (2)	Interactive [audience participation only during the performances] (3)	Residencies [artist spends time in community creating new work] (4)	Workshops [to promote greater understanding or impact of work] (5)	Training [community or group receive training in aspects of theatre or the arts] (6)	Other please specify (7)
Children/Family (1)							
Christmas themed entertainment/show (2)							
Dance (3)							
Film (4)							
Literature/Spoken Word (5)							
Music (6)							
Musical Theatre (7)							
Outdoor Arts (8)							
Plays/Drama (9)							
Workshops (10)							
Other (11)							

Q14 Using + or – followed by a percentage value to indicate an increase or decrease, please estimate the extent to which each method of delivery has increased, decreased or stayed the same over the past 5 financial years. If there has been no change, please indicate this by entering 0%. Again, if your Touring Scheme has been in operation for less than 5 years, please answer this question in relation to its first year of operation.

Column1	Performance only [no direct interaction with community except as audience] (1)	Participatory [community members involved in developing the artwork prior to performances] (2)	Interactive [audience participation only during the performances] (3)	Residencies [artist spends time in community creating new work] (4)	Workshops [to promote greater understanding or impact of work] (5)	Training [community or group receive training in aspects of theatre or the arts] (6)	Other please specify (7)
Children/family (1)							
Christmas themed entertainment/show (2)							
Dance (3)							
Film (4)							
Literature/spoken word (5)							
Music (6)							
Musical Theatre (7)							
Outdoor arts (8)							
Plays/drama (9)							
Workshops (10)							
Other (11)							

Q15 Please comment on the reasons for any significant changes (by 'significant' we mean a value of + or - 20% or more for any particular art form activity/model of delivery)

Q16 Based on your experience, please place in rank order what you consider to be **the best 5** activities from the below list in achieving the individual and community benefits specified. Please enter 1 for the activity that you think is most beneficial, 2 for the second most beneficial and so on until you identify your best 5. Please enter '0' for the two activity areas you do not include in your best 5.

	Extent to which it can engage a wide range of people from the local community [e.g. age, socio-economic status, ethnicity] (1)	Extent to which it can build individual skills (2)	Extent to which it can build individual self-esteem and confidence (3)	Extent to which it can reduce problems such as loneliness, social exclusion and isolation in the rural community (4)	Extent to which it supports and encourages the development of new social networks, community projects or groups (5)
Performance only [no direct interaction with community except as audience] (1)					
Participatory [community members are involved in developing the artwork prior to performances] (2)					
Interactive [audience participation occurs only during the performances] (3)					
Residencies [artist spends time in community and makes new work] (4)					

Workshops [to promote greater understanding or impact of work] (5)
Training [community or group receive training in aspects of theatre or the arts] (6)
Other. Please specify (7)

Q17 Please provide details below of 2-3 touring arts activities/performances from your programme which you consider to have been the most successful in terms of creating benefits for the rural community.

	Please describe the activity (1)	What were the key benefits? (2)	When did this take place? (3)	Where did this take place? (4)	Why was it successful? (5)
Activity 1 (1)					
Activity 2 (2)					
Activity 3 (3)					

Q18 Please provide details below of 2-3 touring arts activities/performances from your programme which you consider to have been the least successful in terms of creating benefits for the rural community.

	Please describe the activity (1)	What were the main issues? (2)	When did this take place? (3)	Where did this take place? (4)	Why was it less successful? (5)
Activity 1 (1)					
Activity 2 (2)					
Activity 3 (3)					

Q19 Please give details of any further evidence of positive impact (e.g. evaluation reports carried out by you, venues, community organisations etc.) which you are willing to share with us

Q20 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

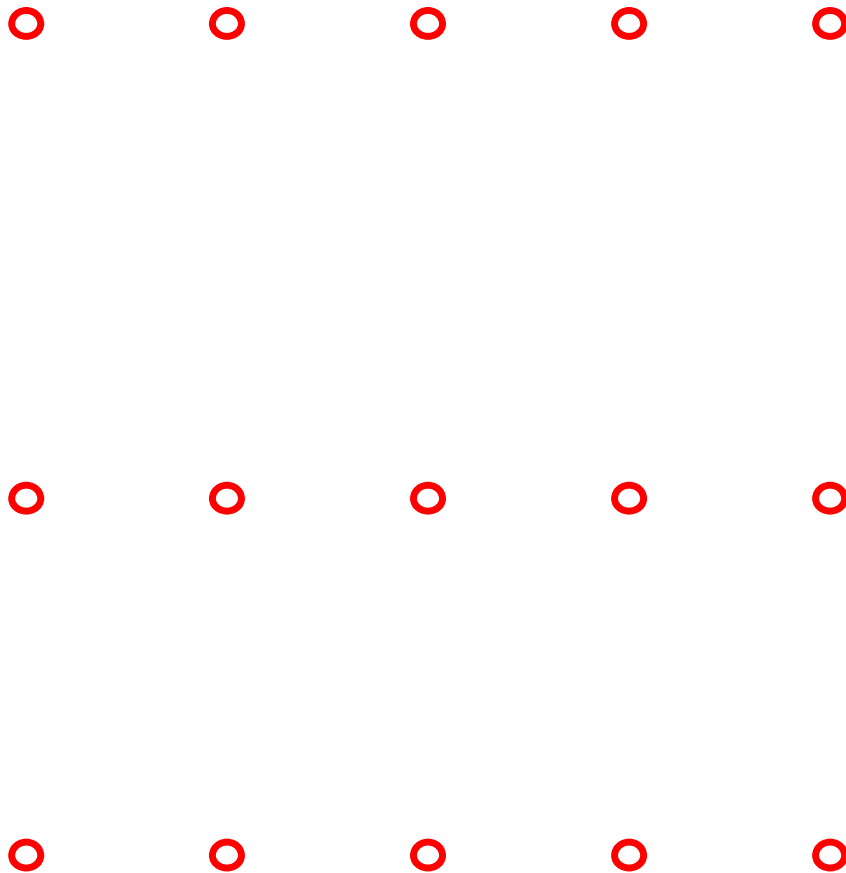
	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
The positive impact of rural touring theatre is intensified / maximised when it is repeated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

more than once in the same community (1)

The positive impact of rural touring theatre is intensified when the work is tailored to the particular heritage, culture and character of the places where it is delivered (2)

A high quality event can maximise positive impact regardless of where it is developed and delivered (3)

Professional quality is the most important factor in determining positive impact (4)



Q21 Finally, do you have any additional comments to make concerning the benefits of professional rural touring arts to contrasting local communities?

Q22 Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire survey. Your support is very much appreciated.

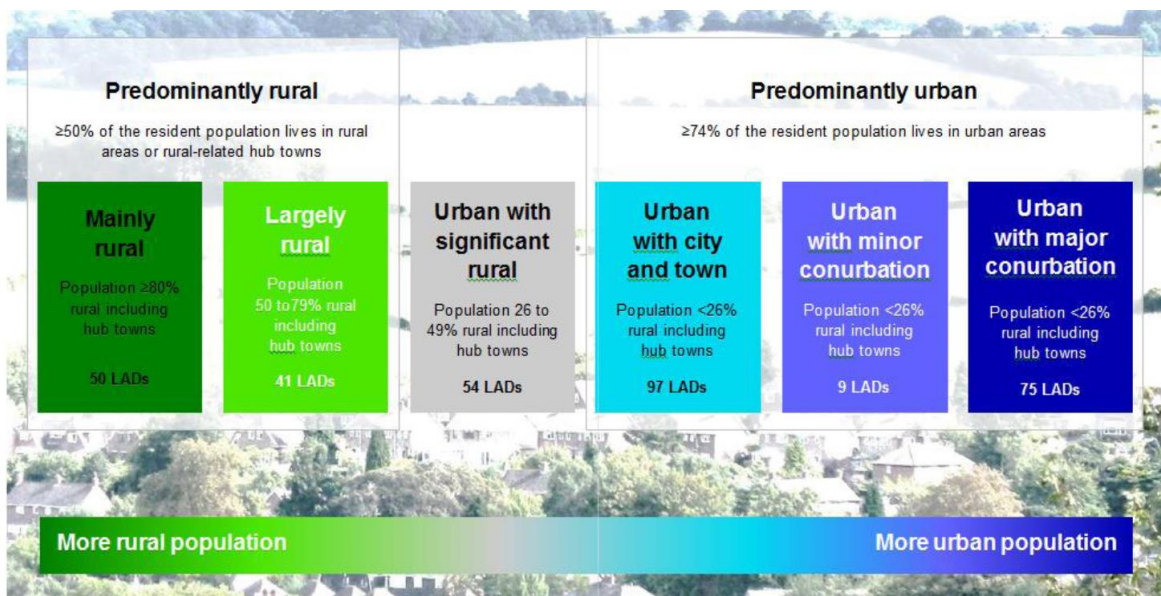
End of Block: Rural Touring Activity

Annex 5 The Selection of Case Studies

The **Five Core Cases** were selected such that: two were located within Rural Touring Scheme areas classified as ‘remote’ in the 2011 RUC for Higher Level (County) Geographies; two were located in Rural Touring Scheme Areas classified as ‘accessible’; and the fifth chosen was Black Country, the one ‘urban’ classified Scheme that exists.

Originally undertaken for Local Authority Districts, and now also applicable to Counties and Unitary Authorities (the scale utilised here), this classification places geographical areas on a six point scale from ‘Mainly Rural’ to ‘Urban with Major Conurbation’ (Figure A5.1 below). The ‘Predominantly Rural’ (comprising the sub-categories ‘Mainly Rural’ and ‘Largely Rural’) descriptor was used to refer to those Scheme areas that might be referred to as relatively ‘remote’ from larger urban centres, and the ‘Urban with Significant Rural’ descriptor to define those Scheme areas that are relatively ‘accessible’.

Figure A5.1 The 2011 Rural Urban Classification for Higher Level Geographies



Source: DEFRA, 2018

In addition, within the Scheme areas, selection of the communities for detailed analysis was then informed by the Small Area Geographies classification detailed in Table A5.1 overleaf. The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies classifies Census Output Areas into 10 categories of location, based on population size, predominant settlement form (town/fringe, village, hamlet and isolated dwellings) and settlement context (sparse or non-sparse).

An important distinction between the Higher Level Geographies classification and the Small Area Geographies classification is the former’s recognition of rural ‘hub towns’. The Small Area Geographies classification places all Output Areas that are located within built up areas (settlements) with populations of 10,000 or more people into the ‘urban’ category, with the remainder, by implication, being classified as ‘rural’. Settlement form and context are then used to subdivide these geographical units into the 10 point classification detailed in Table A5.1 (below).

Table A5.1 The 2011 Rural Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies

Categories of Location at Neighbourhood Level

- Urban: Major Conurbation (A1)
- Urban: Minor Conurbation (B1)
- Urban: City and Town (C1)
- Urban: City and Town in a Sparse Setting (C2)
- Rural: Town and Fringe (D1)
- Rural: Town and Fringe in a Sparse Setting (D2)
- Rural: Village (E1)
- Rural: Village in a Sparse Setting (E2)
- Rural: Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings (F1)
- Rural: Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings in a Sparse Setting (F2).

The Higher Level Geographies classification adopts a similar approach with regard to population size thresholds, but dispenses with the physical landscape elements of form and context and allocates the resident population of what have been identified as rural 'Hub Towns' to rural areas. Hub Towns are those with populations of between 10,000 and 30,000 people, but which are known to provide extensive services to a surrounding rural population. The Higher Level Geographies classification detailed in Figure A5.1 (above overleaf) thus develops a six point scale from 'mainly rural' to 'urban with major conurbation' in which the conventional 10,000 population threshold between rural and urban is distorted to enable the population of Hub Towns to be assigned to rural areas.

The two **Cumulative Case Studies** followed this same classification approach to the Core Case Studies but where remote and accessible needed to match communities studied previously by Matarasso (2004).

Given all of the above, the final Case Study selection was as overleaf in Table A5.2.

Table A5.2 Case Studies

Core Case Studies					Cumulative Case Studies	
Accessible		Remote		Urban	Accessible	Remote
Village Ventures, Nottinghamshire	Spot On, Lancashire	Arts Alive, Shropshire and Herefordshire	Carn to Cove, Cornwall	Black Country Touring	Live & Local, Warwickshire	Creative Arts, Norfolk
Caunton Dean Hole Community Centre	Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall	Wem Town Hall	Devoran Village Hall	Pens Meadow School	Bulkington Village Community and Conference Centre Eathorpe Village Hall	Welborne Village Hall Bergh Apton Village Hall

Finally, the two **‘Non-Scheme’ Rural (touring) Arts Investigations** followed the same rurality selection criteria also but, in addition, sought to find localities that had not been touched by the Rural Touring Scheme at some relatively recent point in time.

The accessible rural case was Berkshire (Stanford Dingley), and the remote rural case was Devon (Bow).

Annex 6 Good Practice in Rural Touring: Example Projects from the Case Studies

Partnership - My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding

My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding grew out of an urban/rural community exchange project – Black County Green Country - organised in 2014 by Arts Alive and Black Country Touring. It aimed to promote greater exchange of ideas and experiences between rural and urban communities. The project involved a primarily Muslim community in Smethwick, the heart of the Black Country, and a community from an isolated rural village, Snail Beach, in Shropshire.

Kali Theatre were commissioned to develop the light-hearted show based on a mixed marriage between a Shropshire farm girl and her urban suitor. Research included exchange visits between groups and extensive community research. As the Black Country Scheme Director remembers, the whole project promoted a range of experiences that otherwise would not have taken place:

“When the Shropshire group came here, they wanted to go to a Mosque, because they didn’t feel like they were ever going to get the opportunity otherwise, and they wanted to visit various other temples and sites, and then they went to Bhangra dancing workshops.”

Initially, in 2014, the show was seen by over 2,000 people at 24 performances in urban and rural venues across the West Midlands and beyond.

In Autumn 2016, with £63k funding from the Arts Council’s Strategic Touring Programme, My Big Fat Cow Pat Wedding undertook a seven-and-a-half-week tour to 37 venues across 11 Rural Touring Schemes. Previously, the Schemes had chosen the show for their Scheme areas after Kali performed extracts of the show at a Rural Touring Conference.

Good Practice: Challenging Islamophobia - The Chef Show

“The Chef Show” grew out of a mentoring scheme that Spot on Lancashire ran with five other Schemes. It was designed to enable artists to make a pitch for new work to be toured across rural venues for which they would then receive support and mentoring. Stephen Escreet, a director who runs his own production company, Ragged Edge Promotions, took advantage of the scheme to make a pitch for an idea that would challenge racism in rural market towns. As a Spot On Scheme Director remembers:

“Stefan Escreet is a producer and director up in Cumbria and he’d observed Islamophobia in rural areas, and had noticed that people would talk about Muslims negatively but then go to the curry house on a Friday night and not connect these things together. So, he worked with writer Nick Ahad and developed a production based around stories they researched in northern market towns.”

Each night the show would involve the show’s two main actors playing father and son characters who have differing ideas on how to run their family restaurant, and a chef from a curry house, local to whichever venue they were playing, who would cook live on stage during the production. The audience would then have an opportunity to sample the food cooked as part of the show.

The show played to sold out venues across northern venues in small towns and villages in 2017 before embarking on a national tour in 2018 being performed in mainly rural venues as far apart as Devon, Norfolk and Cumbria.

Annex 7 List of Interviewees

Case Study 1

Borwick and Priest Hutton Memorial Hall

Keith Brady – Volunteer

Ken Dunne – Promoter / Volunteer

Eric Brady – Volunteer

Eric Rooney – Volunteer

Bon Debarras – Artists

Spot on Lancashire – Rob Howell (Director), Stephe Jessup, Sue Robinson (Director), Lindsey Wilson

Case Study 2

Caunton Dean Hole Community Centre

Pat Wilson – Promoter Volunteer

Irene Crossley – Joint Promoter

Joy Fawcett – Volunteer

David Fawcett – Volunteer

Live & Local / Village Ventures – John Laidlaw and Sophie Kirk

Case Study 3

Devoran Village Hall

Rebecca Hazzard – Volunteer

Charlotte – Volunteer

Joke Snell – Volunteer

Gilly Roberts – Volunteer

Dickie Souray – Audience member

Christine Devaney – Artist – Curious Seed

Carn to Cove – Tim Smithies and Claire Sexton

Case Study 4

Pens Meadow School

School Pupils

Becky Lynch – Teacher

Nik Palmer – Artist (director) – Noisy Oyster Puppet Theatre

Black Country Touring – Steve Johnson and Natalie Kidman

Case Study 5

Wem Town Hall

Rose Horner – Promoter/Town Hall Manager

Sarah Zacharek – Town Hall Staff

Emma Bedford – Town hall Staff

Sarah Vincent – Volunteer

Julie Bushel – Volunteer

Liz Mayer – Volunteer

Liz – Volunteer

David Drew – Volunteer

Arts Alive – Sian Kerry

Case Study 6 (Cumulative Case)

Live & Local Warwickshire

John Laidlaw

Eathorpe Village Hall

John French – Promoter

Sue French – Promoter

Maggie Smith – Volunteer

Bulkington Conference and Community Centre

Fiona Wyatt - Promoter/Centre Manager

Joss Kemp – Staff Member

Brian Liggins – Volunteer

Case Study 7 (Cumulative Case)

Creative Arts East

Natalie Jode

Welborne Village Hall

Mike Webb – Promoter

Ian Ferguson – Volunteer

Sally – Volunteer

Bergh Apton Village Hall

Pat Mayanetski – Volunteer

Kevin – Volunteer

Chris – Volunteer

Pete Larne – Volunteer

Liz – Volunteer

Non-Scheme Investigation –Stanford Dingley, Berkshire

Holly Lombardo – Volunteer Promoter, Stanford Dingley Events Committee

Anne Briar-Banks – Keepers of Archive and members of Stanford Dingley Events

Barry Potier – Chair of Stanford Dingley Events

Anne McCurdy – Friends of St Denys' Committee

Hilary Dent – Previously Chair of Activities Committee

Non-Scheme Investigation – Bow, Devon

Mick Richards – Volunteer Promoter, Heart of Devon

Steve Rogers – Bow Village Hall Chair

Gill Evely – Bow Village Hall Treasurer/Finance

Matt – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Emily – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Lucy – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Mark – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Jo – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Mark – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Yvonne – Volunteer, Heart of Devon

Owen – Volunteer, Heart of Devon