

# GLOW Light Festival 2023

Impact Report



# OVERVIEW

GLOW Light Festival had its second edition 15-18 February 2023 and was extended from Grove Park to take in new town centre locations. GLOW was presented in partnership by PB Events, Culture Weston, Weston-super-Mare Town Council and the Grand Pier.

GLOW was supported by Arts Council England, the National Lottery Community Fund, Weston-super-Mare Town Council and Historic England as part of their High Streets Heritage Action Zones' Cultural Programme, and was sponsored by the Grand Pier, Severnside Community Rail Partnership, GWR and Bristol Water.

GLOW transformed public space with spectacular and enchanting illuminations, site-specific light and sound installations, projection mapping and live performance, showcasing artwork from renowned national and local artists and the community.

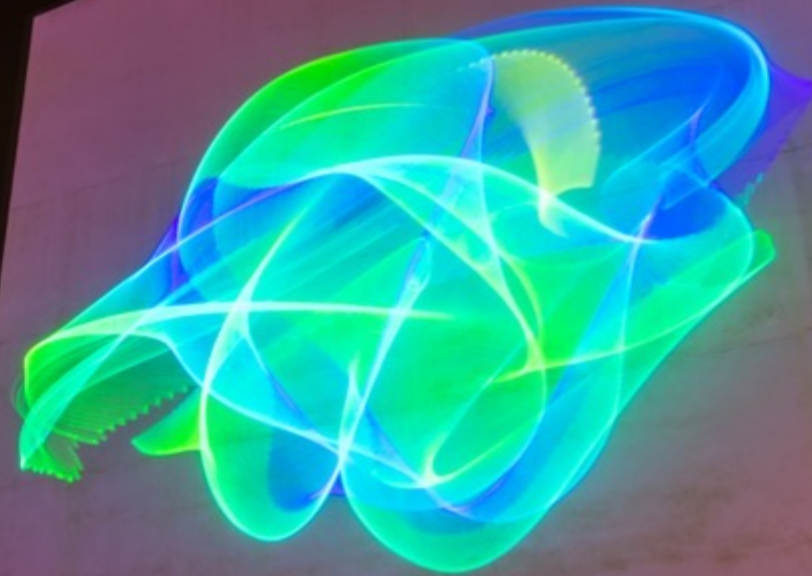
An imaginative participation programme brought together many of Weston's local communities to place community involvement, voices and stories at the heart of the festival.



# PROGRAMME AIMS

Programme objectives:

1. Animate – bring visitors and vibrancy to the town centre through creative and cultural activities during a traditionally quiet period for the night time economy
2. Showcase – grow Weston’s reputation as an exciting, dynamic and outward looking cultural destination
3. Inclusive – offer high quality accessible creative and participatory opportunities to residents of all ages and backgrounds across Weston and create an inclusive event for all
4. Talent development – showcase and engage local creatives and artists, and create opportunities for young people to develop creative skills through co-production projects
5. Collaboration – build capacity across Weston’s creative sector and deepen partnership working
6. Sustainability – deliver a sustainable programme that raises awareness and encourages action on climate change



# ANIMATE

**Bring visitors and vibrancy to the town centre through creative and cultural activities during a traditionally quiet period for the night time economy**

GLOW outcomes:

- Estimated 20,000 attendees, 18,500 visited Weston specifically for GLOW
- 4 new illuminated town centre installations at the Grand Pier, Princess Royal Square, Dolphin Square and the High Street
- 64% of visitors said that GLOW improved their perception of the town
- 93% of attendees visited with other people, including friends and family
- 68% of attendees visited with children under 16
- 82% said GLOW was a unique experience compared to other events they have attended
- The number of visitors to GLOW from outside Weston increased by 17% compared to 2022



# ANIMATE

## GLOW Light Festival impact:

- 27% of attendees were visiting from outside of Weston
- 67% of attendees did other activities while visiting GLOW including visiting a restaurant, café, pub/bar, shopping, and attending other cultural or entertainment venues
- £287,000 spend in Weston was associated with those visiting GLOW
- £204,000 spend is estimated to be additional and only occurred as a result of GLOW taking place
- Organisers of GLOW spent £42,000 in the local Weston economy and a further £44,000 in the wider West of England
- The average attendee spend per head was £13. Visitors staying overnight was £122 including overnight accommodation
- For every £1 of public subsidy, £2.40 of private income was leveraged and spent in the local economy



# SHOWCASE

**Grow Weston's reputation as an exciting, dynamic and outward looking cultural destination**

GLOW 2023 marketing and PR outcomes:

- 2,500 people watched a 30 minute live streamed tour of GLOW
- Coverage on BBC News online, Weston Mercury, Visit Bristol, Visit Weston-super-Mare, Somerset Live, Visit Somerset, Bristol Parent, Bristol Mums and others reaching over 200,000 people
- 3 broadcast interviews on BBC Radio Bristol and BBC Points West reached 350,000 people
- GLOW event posts on social media from Culture Weston reached 77,000 people
- 63% of visitors to GLOW from outside of Weston said attending has increased the likelihood that they will return to the area again
- 83% of attendees said visiting GLOW made them more likely to attend other local arts/cultural events in the future



# INCLUSIVE

**Offer high quality accessible creative and participatory opportunities to residents of all ages and backgrounds across Weston and create an inclusive event for all**

GLOW outcomes:

- 89% said GLOW was inclusive and welcoming for all people and groups from different cultural and social backgrounds
- 86% said GLOW enhances the sense of community in Weston
- 88% said GLOW brings about a sense of local/civic pride in Weston
- 86% said attending GLOW enabled them to experience something they normally wouldn't
- 81% said the Pay What You Decide tickets were very good value
- 50% of attendees were 'infrequent cultural attenders' (attending cultural events or participating in arts and cultural activities twice per year or less)
- 430 participants involved in community co-production projects



# INCLUSIVE

We sent out an evaluation survey to all ticket bookers post-event, and we received 554 responses. The demographics of survey respondents were as follows:

- 29% were aged 35-44 years, 25% were aged 44-54 years, 19% were aged 55-64 years, 14% were aged 65+, 10% were aged 25-34 years and 2% were aged 16-24 years
- 73% said they lived in Weston-super-Mare, 14% in North Somerset, 10% from wider South West England and 2% from the rest of the UK
- 15% of respondents identified as D/deaf, disabled or having a long-term health condition. The percentage of people who identified as being disabled in North Somerset was 17%, based on Census 2021 data.
- 95% identified as white and 2% as Black, Asian and ethnically diverse, compared to 95.7% and 4.3% respectively in North Somerset based on Census 2021 data





# INCLUSIVE

GLOW worked with an access and inclusion consultant and a focus group to adapt plans to ensure that GLOW was as accessible as possible.

Accompanied tours were available for attendees with access needs and arranged for community groups including SWAN who brought 80 young people from South Ward, Refugees Welcome North Somerset, Theatre Orchard youth, We Are With You, Off The Record and YMCA.

*'I wanted to say a massive thank you from RWNS and the residents at the Savoy Hotel. 5 RWNS volunteers accompanied about 16 residents to GLOW on Saturday evening. The guys seemed a little apprehensive at the start, we realised they had not been out as a group before or gone to any events since arriving at the hotel last October.*

*As they started to go around the park any anxieties lifted and they really, really enjoyed it. It was amazing seeing them taking loads of photos, laughing, messing about and just having the opportunity to be young lads. This evening was the first time I had seen them genuinely seem to be enjoying themselves with light behind their eyes.*

*I had loads of comments about how beautiful it all was, how clever (we genuinely couldn't work out where the sensors were for the trees that lit up when you hit the stumps!!), and how grateful everyone was for the opportunity.'*



## **INCLUSIVE**

Three of the installations were co-produced by local artists with community groups from around Weston.

## **GLOWTOPIA**

Created by Weston-based artist Helen Wheelock and Create Together – over 50 repurposed lampshades were decorated and hung from the trees.

## **ENTWINED**

Entwined was a new artwork co-created by Weston-based visual artist Bev G Star and service users from We Are With You. The multi-layered piece using photo-luminescent materials, unfolded throughout the day-night cycle with variations in colour and illumination, inspired by the natural surroundings. Bev, who also hosts the Humans of Weston podcast and radio show, aims to encourage people to tap into their imaginations by providing the inspiration and tools to empower their own sense of creative curiosity.

## **NEST**

Local students from Walliscote Primary School took inspiration from 'Pigeon' to create their own illuminated nests filled with ideas and dreams that they hope will take flight in the future. Nest was on display in the window of Weston Artspace on the High Street throughout GLOW.



# TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Showcase and engage local creatives and artists, and create opportunities for young people to develop creative skills through co-production projects

- 41 paid employment opportunities created for artists, creatives and specialists
- 254 days of employment created for artists/creatives
- 4 Weston-based emerging professional artists were commissioned to co-create new illuminated artworks with community groups
- 17 out of 21 artists presenting work were female or artworks from female-led organisations
- 47 volunteers contributed 420 hours at GLOW Light Festival
- An Emerging Producer, Will Crawford, was recruited to support technical production and volunteer coordination
- Collaboration with Weston College performing arts students to create a new illuminated outdoor walkabout show



# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Create opportunities for young people to develop creative skills through co-production projects.**

Four of the installations in Grove Park were co-produced with children and young people from around Weston.

## IN MY HEAD

Young people from Worle YMCA and Boombox Youth Project collaborated with Weston-based artist Dylan Barker to produce this piece. With the themes of light and darkness, young people wanted to explore the subject of mental health. One side of the head depicted how young people would describe their mental health. The other side is a collage of symbols that young people said would bring light to dark times.

## FUTURE PLAYGROUND

Future Playground is a new animated projection artwork being created by Bristol-based illustrator and designer Jasmine Thompson working with young people from the North Somerset YMCA youth service and Weston College art students to creatively explore issues around climate justice focusing on the global extinction crisis to raise awareness of young people's perspectives on the need for climate action.



# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## FIRE GARDEN

Fire Garden was a large scale, sculpture co-created by Somerset based artist, fabricator and pyrotechnician Felix Rowberry and WTF (Women Teaching Fabrication). Felix worked with young people from South Weston Activities Network to co-design and produce a new fire sculpture through a series of metalwork and welding workshops.

## SPEAK FOR THE TREES

A new, audio installation exploring climate change devised by Weston-based poet and youth worker Sophie Shepherd in collaboration with young people from Boombox and Off The Record. The project engaged a diverse youth group to explore spoken word and poetry with an environmental theme. The work captured the thoughts, views and concerns about climate change of a younger generation for all to hear.

*'I enjoyed creating the poem and expressing how I felt.'*

*'I enjoyed hearing it in person with my family and friends. I'm quite proud.'*

*'I enjoyed feeling like I had a voice in an incredible experience'.*

*'I enjoyed creating something cool and wacky. I felt empowered and proud hearing it.'*



# COLLABORATION

**Build capacity across Weston's creative sector and deepen partnership working.**

Much of the GLOW programme was powered by the knowledge, imagination and passion of local residents through collaboration with community partners to showcase the best of Weston's creativity and culture.

Fifteen local partners were involved in creating artworks and delivering the event Weston Artspace, South Weston Activities Network, Weston College, OTR, Boombox Youth Project, YMCA, Create Together, We Are With You, Friends of Grove Park, LGBTQ+ North Somerset, Refugees Welcome North Somerset, Culture Weston, Grand Pier, Weston-super-Mare Town Council and North Somerset Council.

New partnerships were developed with artists and arts organisations nationally including Quays Culture (Lightwaves – one of the UK's largest light festivals) to explore potential for co-commissioning/co-presenting work that will support future presentation.

The Grand Pier, Weston-super-Mare Town Council and North Somerset Council supported the presentation of installations outside of Grove Park.

Creative, technical and production support was provided by PYTCH.



# SUSTAINABILITY

**Deliver a sustainable programme that raises awareness and encourages action on climate change**

GLOW foregrounded the theme of climate change and nature through a number of artworks and pieces designed to make audiences stop and consider our impact on our natural world (in a positive way).

Artworks highlighted creative use of repurposing materials which aimed to stimulate conversation and ideas around developing creative solutions and action on climate change.

The festival was entirely powered from the grid using mains power using electricity from a green supplier – meaning no generators!

The programme was predominantly made up of local artists, supported by South West based organisations and local volunteers to minimise the amount of travel required to bring the event to life.

The vast majority of all the materials used in the events have been repurposed for further use or recycled.

Bristol Water sponsored the installation 'Every Drip, Every Drop' that highlighted the company's water saving campaign and the importance of water conversation.



## PARTNER FEEDBACK

*'I am writing to say what a brilliant event this year's Glow is - I went last night. If it's possible it's even better than last year. I think the additions of the installations on the seafront have really added to it and I wondered if you might do some videos of the birds and the abstract work on the Premier Inn as they are both wonderful to watch. Last week I went to the Bristol Light Festival and given we are a much smaller town Glow compares really well - brilliant installations and same great vibe particularly with lots of kids there.'* – Cllr Helen Thornton

*'What a truly magical day... Thank you to everyone who joined us to design and make our community fire pit which will be displayed at the amazing GLOW and then be returned to us, so that we can use it for future community events. I absolutely loved seeing your (the young people involved) ideas be drawn onto metal and then watching as you carefully cut them out. Well done for facing your fears and trying the welding. Together we have made some beautiful things a huge thank you to Culture Weston for providing this incredible opportunity for our community'* – Kally Critchley, SWAN Youth Participation Networker

*'Excellent evening. Thank you for arranging. The families and young people had a really good time. It is such an important thing you are doing broadening the horizons and cultural borders of our community.'* - John Wheatley, Chair, SWAN





# AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

*'I really enjoyed my evening. I would not normally go out in the evening in WsM. Out with my mum (75) daughter (15). A beautiful evening weather wise and nice to do something as a family.'* – survey respondent

*'Mesmerising, like experiencing another world.'* - survey respondent

*'So many folk have been involved, myself included (in a very small way) and I have to say, it's been a blast and I hope others feel the same. This is what events of this sort should be, totally inclusive, so lets have some more please.'* - survey respondent

*'I thought the idea of involving the public in some of the installations made this Glow stand out from others I have been to.'* – survey respondent

*'That was absolutely amazing I can't believe this was in Grove Park .One of the best shows I have ever seen. The people who put all their hard work into this should be Congratulated for something I never thought I would see in Weston.'* – survey respondent

*'It was great to have something local , with interactive art and inclusion of local groups.'* – survey respondent

*'Absolutely brilliant. My mum was using a mobility scooter and a welfare officer escorted her around due to uneven terrain and dark, the Officer was very kind and informative.'* – survey respondent



# THANKS TO FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS



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