LIVERPOOL IRISH FESTIVAL

Bringing Liverpool and Ireland closer together

FESTIVAL REVIEW 2017

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Cover image: Guests at *Song of Love* at the Metropolitan Cathedral, *Liverpool Irish Festival 2017*. Detail only © E Smith, 2017

2017 HEADLINE ACHIEVEMENTS

- 9,336 visitors to 69 events 3 exhibits showcasing 127 artists, speakers and creatives over 10 days, compared to 8,812 visitors (6% growth), 53 events and 4 exhibits showcasing 107 creatives (19% growth) in 2016
- LIF2017 received visits from 30 of 40 Liverpool post codes and many more (intern)nationally (broken down later)
- LIF 2017 worked with 55 partners, including venues, sponsors and funders (up from 30 in 2016)
- 96.6% of visitors rated LIF2017 as 4 or 5 out of 5 (up 2.6% on 2016)
- 97% of visitors are quite or very likely to recommend LIF (up 1% on 2016)
- LIF2017 had a press reach of 6.5m.

It should be noted that in 2017, the *Liverpool Irish Festival* was supported by *Arts Council England* (£30k), the Irish Government *Emigrant Support Programme* (£10k), *Liverpool City Council*'s *Cultural Investment Programme* (£23k), Tourism Ireland (£2.5k) and a personal donation of £500, from a festival friend, meaning that in 2017, the *Liverpool Irish Festival* raised a total of £63.5k. At the time of writing, a number of trust and foundation applications have been submitted and await approval whilst ongoing plans for 2018 applications are in train. It has been noted that City Council support will continue, subject to Cabinet approvals. *Emigrant Support Programme* applications open early in 2018 and - subject to suitable project evaluation and processes - *LIF* aim to build further on their relationship with *Arts Council England* as well as *Tourism Ireland*, *Culture Ireland, Arts Council Ireland* and many more.

Deidre McKenna offers a tour of her exhibit *An Béal Bocht* at *The Florrie, LIF2017*

OVERVIEW

Liverpool Irish Festival 2017 developed from 2016's theme of 'conviviality' to question what Irishness means today. It used some existing networks and partnerships and developed new ones, developing 60+ events in 30 venues.

Using the question "What does Irishness mean today?", the programme explored multiple narratives, developed three trails and inspired many discussions about the various communities, creative practices and stances that make up views, identities, gateways and barriers to Irish culture.

As with 2016, the team aimed to create and develop warm and positive touchpoints, with partners and audiences, delivering an expansive, broad and accessible festival. We generated a nexus of activity and a critical mass of debate, exhibits and connections, focussing on historic and contemporary practices, discourse and creativity, all centred on Irish culture and its relevance to Liverpool.

In keeping with our previous Festival Review, we have managed – once again - to generate a considerable amount of data: 342 paper and 20 digital, compared to 557 paper and 49 digital in 2016, showing decline in all feedback of roughly 40%. This decline in feedback completions is likely to occur for a number of reasons – fear of data sharing, lower volunteer share across an expanded programme and people leaving events quickly due to travel issues brought about by closures and strikes. Evaluation like this does not come easily. Paper feedback was collected by a committed team of volunteers engaging 1-2-1 in the field for earnest and useable data. A more expansive, digital form is harder to engage participants in during 'rich media' times, but we made every effort to gain as much intelligence as possible and extrapolate interesting information in an informative and critical manner. We're pleased to report that audiences deemed *LIF2017* 'fun, interesting and informative', just as in 2016, but "entertaining and excellent" have also crept up in the rankings. These 5 descriptions account for over 20% of all words used to describe the festival.

As in 2016, *LIF2017* took place in a mix of high end cultural spaces and community level venues, adding variety and depth to the programme and its atmosphere.

Something *LIF* aims to build on in future is public realm and high profile work. Due to the funding deadlines and turnaround issues faced in 2016-17, we did not progress as much public realm work as we hoped, but a point of learning here is that public realm work takes considerable time. Working with the City Council and *River Festival* the during the summer, allowed us to reach c 1,800 people, whilst staging the *George Ferguson Dance School* at *Liverpool Pride* (witnessed by c.1,500+ between the main stage and *Walker Art Gallery* performance locations), were probably our best attempts at this. We shall certainly take part in such events again, to raise profile, engage audiences and support the city agenda.

Ideally, we would build on these pilots, to generate events with even greater artistic weight, resonance and legacy to truly underpin the festival, creating a large-scale spectacle to rival the *Irish Sea Sessions*. Despite trying to beat the funding curve to create longer planning cycles, lead times were still short and thus large scale spectaculars still not possible. However, we will continue to work towards securing a high profile, annual performance and artist commissions. Knowing what we know, building longer lead times and following a long-term strategic lead for fundraising for and commissioning are essential to enrich the artistic integrity and reputational value of the festival.

LIF2017 improved the previous number of channels used for discourse, continuing its delivery of in-conversation events, family days, seisiúns, essays and blogs, which allowed us to engage deeply with audiences, whilst working with multiple arts collaborators and agents (i.e., *Liverpool Philharmonic*, *Liverpool Comhaltas*, *Script Shop*, *Museum of Liverpool*) encouraged high numbers of people to engage whilst improving local interest/knowledge. The multi-disciplined programme meant visitors attended for 3.2 days each (from digital reports, showing a decrease of 0.2 of a day) across the period. 2017 reiterated that 'closed events', specific to individual relationships (i.e., lecture given at the *John Moore's Film School*), can bring many added benefits (volunteers, knowledge sharing, artist interactions and event attendees), but it was in the free, social events where the festival felt its warmest and most effective.

Leading with an expectation that we build long-term relationships with future years in mind, allowed *LIF* to work with yet more artists, venues and connections than before. Anecdotally, we understand that 100% of those involved want to be again. In 2018, *LIF* aims for 80% of artists and collaborators a) wanting to work with *LIF* again and b) believing *LIF* to be an important cultural contributor to the city and its programme. We aim to evidence the value *LIF* brings to the UK arts and culture offer and understand our value to Liverpool's international position and 'cultural excellence'.

LIF's ability to relationship build, means we have worked directly with more artists, more venues and more partners. We developed essays, brochures, trails, posters, art works and stories, working with 127 artists, creatives and supporters (47 local, 28 national and 52 international), compared with 107 artists in 2016 (25 local, 19 national and 63 international) and showed work from many more for whom we do not have monitoring information (i.e., dance schools, *Comhaltas*, *Melody Makers*, play performers, etc). We generated an in-house volunteer team; developed 93.3 exhibition days (81 in 2016) and more besides!

Analysing data and feedback from audiences, artists, stakeholders and the Board, *LIF* understands that *LIF2017* may not have engaged as many people as 2016 – but attendees saw an improved quality of programme, maintained a high quality of experience and has laid a strong platform for 2018.

A year of research, piloting, speaking with communities and developing the programme has shows us that we deliver something unique to the field. We are the only arts and culture led Irish festival in the world!

Because our festival is *of* and *for* Liverpool we are unlike any other. Our specificity is our USP. Because we address Irishness and Ireland's diaspora (population and culture) as a spectrum of ideas and abilities - rather than pigeonholing 'Irishness' as a singular notion – we draw multiple communities to us and share creative culture beyond the Liverpool, Liverpool Irish and Irish of the city. Our focus on distinct cultural stories, rather than specific societal cultures 'on the Island', offers dynamism and relevance. *LIF* continues to engage audiences in the artistry of Irish culture without being deliberately elitist, though finding room to include and share elite work. We invite audiences to join us as makers and co-creators, whatever their experience and we develop friendships – artistically, professionally and personally – in ways individuals experience deeply. Thus, we believe *LIF* is a compelling festival with a bright future, fit to engage audiences (new and old), develop rich connections and provide meaningful, long-lasting experiences. There is an appetite to import stories, but also 'export' the *Liverpool Irish Festival* to tell Liverpool's stories abroad. In this way, we hope to create and spread connections, develop opportunities for exchange and truly 'bring Liverpool and Ireland closer together'.

We'd like to thank our artists, partners, sponsors, collaborators, volunteers, organisations, venues and friends, along with each and every visitor and audience member for helping to make *LIF2017* the success it was. Thank you! Please, join us again for *LIF2018* (18-28 October).

Emma Smith

Emma Smith, Director -
Liverpool Irish Festival

Audiences enjoying *The Eskies* at the
Liverpool Philharmonic Music Room, LIF2017
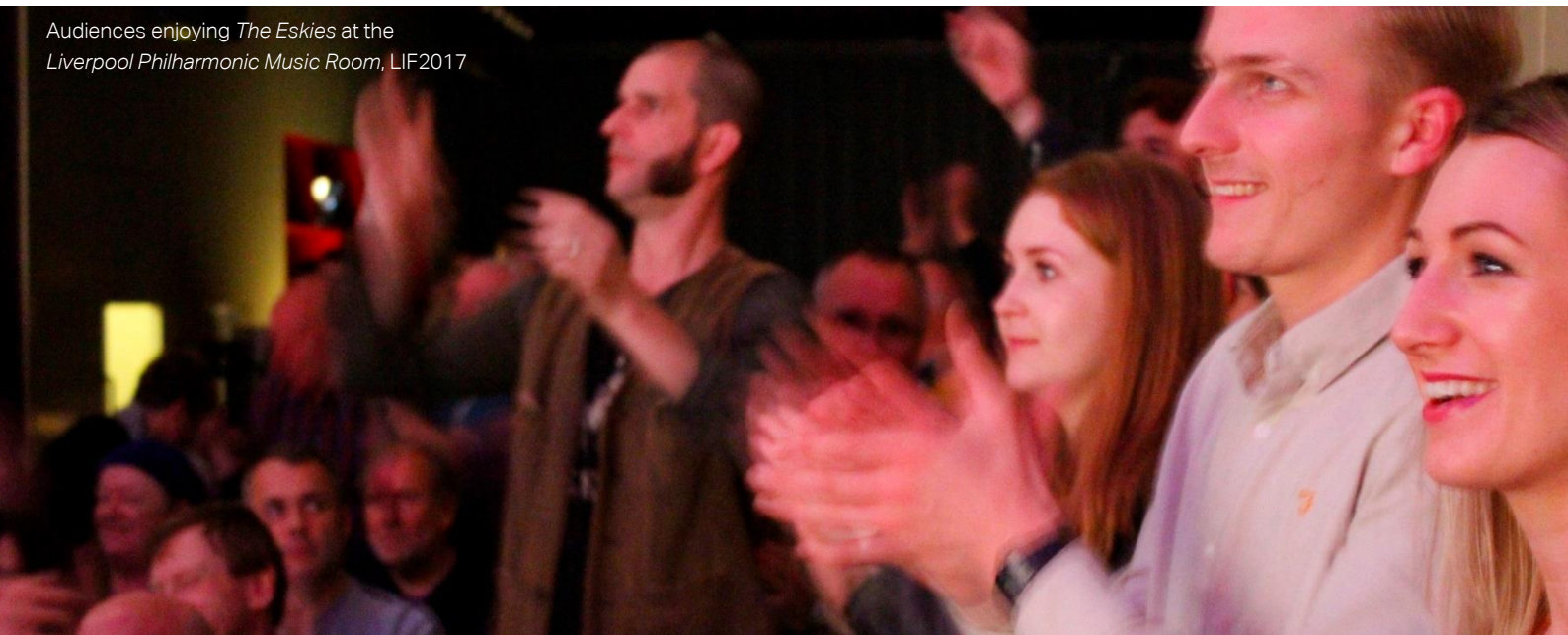
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A FESTIVAL?

Participants and visitors*

	Events	Exhibits
Expected	6,495	1,030
Achieved	7,252	1,253
%>	111.65	121.6

*All these figures are derived from audience counts taken at events or calculated extrapolations from automated door counts.

Audience attendances

Workshops	17	436
Performance	31	5,088
Event	16	2459
Other	1	100
Exhibitions	**3**	**1,253**
Total	**69**	**9,336**

Arts Council England defines audience engagement in these categories to help determine depth of engagement versus passive exposure. *LIF*'s workshops and 'other' (including walks, tours, etc) demonstrate a high rate of firm engagement.

Between 24 Oct 2016 and 29 Oct 2017 (final day of *Liverpool Irish Festival* 2017) the Festival Director worked for 196 days…

- participating, leading or engaging in 188 individual meetings
- sending 6,479 emails (33 per day, down 15 per day on 2016!)
- delivering monthly Board meetings, including strategic direction documents, brand guidance, website updates and festival collateral, along with a Visioning Day in Jan 2017.

LIF2017 delivered 69 events, across 96 sessions* over 11 days, as well as 3 exhibits, generating 93.3 exhibition days.

* It is worth noting that *Arts Council England* determine a session as a morning, afternoon or evening, so if an event spans a number of hours, it may be worth more than 1 session, hence 69 events totalling 96 sessions (72 if we don't count the Materials Library, which was included in counts in 2016).

ANNUAL NON-FESTIVAL ENGAGEMENT

As well as running its own festival, the *Liverpool Irish Festival* also made contributions to events across the cultural calendar. These collaborations flag-waved for the festival, but also built our audience engagement, adding 3,700 participations to our annual total. We collaborated with *Connected Irish* on the creation of a St. Patrick's Day programme; undertook 5 hour stage takeovers for the *Smithdown Road Festival* and the *River Festival* (same principles, different acts) and gave presentations at *Liverpool Pride.* These activities are hugely important in reaching different audiences, but also build our reputation for not only tolerating, but actively supporting other creative forms, communities and knowledge sectors. They demonstrate to everyone that we are multi-disciplined and committed collaborators. They deepen our relations with partners and activate new creative opportunities, allowing us to work with more artists and offer our mailing and social media readerships activities across the year, rather than just once per year. In 2018, *LIF* intend to work with no less than

- *Liverpool Mental Health Consortium* on the *Liverpool Mental Health Festival*
- *Liverpool Pride*
- *Mellowtone* on the *Smithdown Road Festival* and/or *Africa Oyé*
- The City Council on the *Three Festivals Tall Ships Regatta*
- *The Institute of Irish Studies* on the *Literature Festival* and exhibits about 20 years of the Good Friday Agreement.

As well as building our audience figures, these satellite events allow us to split the risk of diminished festival activity in testing times. Weather conditions and industrial action can have a significant impact on audiences and only having one space in the calendar year leaves us vulnerable to the impact of such issues. Spreading activity – as well as developing a high point that we are recognised for – allows us to build audiences, offer opportunities and pick up engagement beyond the remit of the festival.

BASIC FESTIVAL FACTS AND FIGURES

	2016				2017			
Live programme build:	No of each	% of live prog	Visitors/ participants	% total audience	No of each	% of live prog	Visitors/ participants	% total audience
Workshops (ceílí classes, family day, student lecture)	5	9.43	1046	18.78	17	23.61	436	4.67
Performances (*Committed*, *Body and Blood*, etc)	14	26.42	2124	38.14	31	48.85	5,088	54.5
Events (talks and musical seisiúns)	27	50.94	2052	36.84	16	25	2,459	26.34
Other (St Patrick's breakfast)	7	13.21	347	6.2	1	1.39	100	1.07
TOTAL	**53**	**100.0**	**5,569**	**100.0**	**69**	**96**	**7,525**	**87**

NB The table above considers the 'live programme build' so doesn't include the exhibits. However, the % total audience if of the entire programme (therefore including exhibition audiences) to show the % make up of audiences for the 100% of the programme.

FESTIVAL FIGURES

Total audiences were 24% above anticipated figures based on original programme predictions. High yielding events included the *Family Day* at *Museum of Liverpool*, Christy Keeney and events across the year (as described above). *LIF's* growth (6% imcrease on annual audiences), despite lower than anticipated festival attendances, was made up of gains across the annual portfolio and which lifted festival activity.

Sell out events included Orla Guerin, Greg Quiery's book launch and *The Whistlin' Donkeys*. An mentioned, we had lower attendance at some events than anticipated, associated with an array of concerns, which affected not just festival attendance, but ticket sales across the city. These include:

- Late core funding approvals
- Hurricane Ophelia
- *Ryanair* flight lay offs
- Liverpool Lime Street closure + train strikes
- Bus strikes
- Storm Brian (greatly affecting attendance on Saturday 21 Oct)
- City planning clashes (i.e., *CHIC* and *LIMF*).

The late notification of core funding hampered us for a number of reasons. Without knowing what core funding we would receive meant we did not know how we could distribute other funding to confirm programme, copy and print runs, etc. It meant that the Director remained part-time until mid-September, meaning that capacity was compromised and that resource was spent on confirming programme and signing off on copy later, meaning print distribution was later than hoped. We can tell that this had an impact, because our ability to pull people in from the North West region was reflected in the attendance figures and post code breakdowns.

The fact that we were able to draw 5,356 people to the festival, in the face of all of the above is in itself an achievement to be proud of. That we underpinned the festival with additional activity across the year is also a substantial piece of learning that really helps solidify the importance of partnership working and collaboration. If we had not faced such incredible obstacles, it is fair to assume we would have attracted in excess of 6,000. At 6% growth every year, in 10 years we will have doubled the size of the festival.

It is also worth noting that, unlike in 2016, large exhibitions such as the Easter Rising exhibition and *Biennial* tie-ins were not available this year and thus exhibition figures, which often underpin overall figures do not this year.

Exhibition figures

Exhibition figures are - in the main - extrapolations of building figures. We have used a 15% rate for the *Bluecoat Display Centre*, based on the necessity to pass the window display within the shop to access the till. However, this does not account for those who look in to the display from outside (considerable) and so is believed to be a conservative estimate for those who stopped to enjoy Christy Keeney's eye-catching ceramics, as part of the Display Centre's rolling programme known as *In the Window*.

Average ticket price*

No of tickets paid for	2016 Total raised	2017 (1,550)
2,714	£45,373.00	£19,362.50
Average price of paid event ticket	£ 16.72	£7.35
Av across all events (including free events)	£ 4.25	£3.47

* Based on the average price of tickets (the value between full and concession prices, multiplied by the number of purchases made). Does not account for comps or free events.

Average ticket price

Of 69 events programmed, 40 were ticketed (with 34 being pay to enter) leaving 38 free. The estimated income against every ticket created, based on average prices only – not till receipts – amounted to £19,362.50 (less than 2016). Actual income in should be in the region of £12,194.50, based on average ticket prices, though this income is shared across venues. As in 2016, *LIF* did create some % split deals with venues including: *Liverpool Philharmonic Music Room*, *PictureHouse, The Capstone, the Liverpool Irish Centre* and *The Unity,* ranging between 5-50%, from which small income has been made. In future, *LIF* must consider increasing profit shares, as there are gains to be made against strands of the programme, though it is important to remember that free events must feature in order to drive engagement and fulfil *Liverpool City Council Cultural Investment* and other funders' obligations, as well as maintaining our egalitarianism, charity status and barrierless entry.

Using average ages ('Av' shown in table below) we have calculated an average audience member's age to be 32, compared to 51 last year. This reflects our attempts to attract younger people, the nature of the programme and our distribution. We can see significant gains in the 20-44 age group, made primarily from losses to the 65+ group. Ideally, *LIF* will invest in and develop more contemporary means of collecting information from audiences. Our current digital survey struggled to attain completions and seems very labour intensive compared to new systems. Whilst our paper feedback forms are good for general feedback, they are somewhat outdated, short and sometimes difficult to interpret.

Average audience survey respondent age

Age	(Av)	2016				2017		
		Digital	Paper	Total	%	Combined	%	Variance
Under 16	8	0	7	7	1.16	11	3.05	-1.89
16-19	17.5	0	10	10	1.65	25	6.93	-5.28
20-24	22	0	46	46	7.59	95	26.32	-18.73
25-44	34.5	4	115	119	19.64	52	14.40	5.23
45-54	49.5	8	78	86	14.19	75	20.78	-6.58
55-64	59.5	20	152	172	28.38	90	24.93	3.45
65+ (*Life* expectancy = 81*)	73	16	123	139	22.94	5	1.39	21.55
Prefer not to say	36.5	1	1	2	0.33	8	2.22	-1.89
Completions		**49**	**532**	**581**	**95.87**	361	100	-4.13
% answering question		100	95.51	95.87				
Total form fillers		**49**	**557**	**606**				

* *The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study 2013* (GBD 2013)

Ethnicity data

With regards year on year (YOY) figures for ethnicity, we have had some issues this year. Our feedback forms asked people to specify "Ethnicity and nationality" in a freeform manner. This resulted in a lot of incompletions (such as 'white', 'black', 'Scouse', 'UK') and part answers.

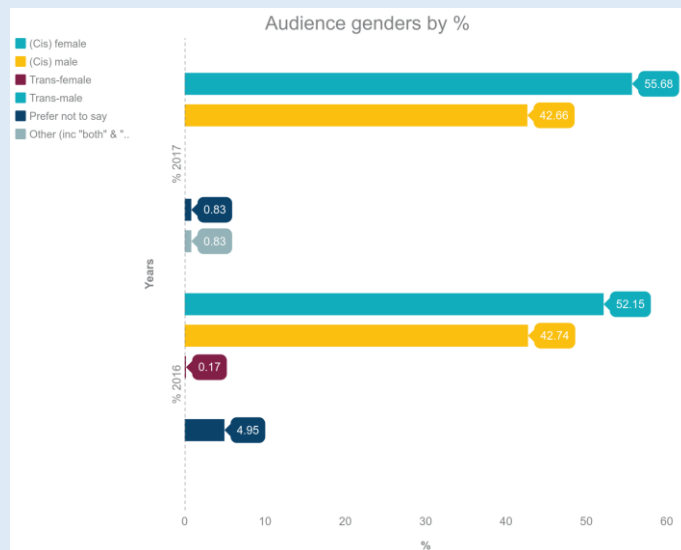| Ethnicity	2016				2017		Variance
	Digital	Paper	Total	%	Combined	%	
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	2	3	0.55	0	0.00	0.55
Asian or Asian British - or other Asian background, not otherwise listed here	0	1	1	0.18	6	1.66	-1.47
Black or Black British - African	0	2	2	0.37	0	0.00	0.37
Black of Black British - Caribbean	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Black of Black British - Other	0	0	0	0.00	2	0.55	-0.55
Chinese	0	4	4	0.74	0	0.00	0.74
Mixed - White and Asian	0	2	2	0.37	1	0.28	0.09
Mixed - White and Black African	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Mixed - any other mixed backgrounds	1	4	5	0.92	0	0.00	0.92
White - British	25	339	364	67.28	70	19.34	47.95
White - Irish	19	118	137	25.32	26	7.18	18.14
White - Anglo-Irish	0	0	0	0.00	1	0.28	-0.28
White - any other White backgrounds	1	4	5	0.92	9	2.49	-1.56
Unknown ethnicity - Irish	0	0	0	0	74	20.44	-20.44
Unknown ethnicity - British	0	0	0	0	104	28.73	-28.73
Unknown ethnicity - Anglo-Irish	0	0	0	0	15	4.14	-4.14
International mixed ethnicities	0	0	0	0	16	4.42	-4.42
I would prefer not to say	0	0	0	0.00	24	6.63	-6.63
Other	2	16	18	3.33	0	0.00	3.33
Not known/did not answer	0	0	0	0.00	14	3.87	-3.87
Completions	**49**	**492**	**541**	100	362	100.00	0.00
% answering question	**100**	**88.33**	**89.27**				
All British and Irish ethnicity groups					290	80.11	

Having cleaned the data and adjusted for political answers (i.e., "Scouse", "European" and "UK vs British answers) we have done our best to make the results understandable, but it did throw up some anomalies. We cannot assume that everyone who told us they were 'white' were British or Irish _or_ that everyone who told us they were 'British' or 'Irish' were white, thus the results are as good as we can get by taking logical views of the data, such as 'Scousers' being added as 'Unknown ethnicity – British', adding in 'Anglo-Irish' and attributing 'UK' citations as 'British'.

'White British', 'White Irish', 'Anglo-Irish', 'British' and 'Irish' audiences generate just over 80% of our audience, compared to 82% in 2016. We have seen small growths in the international audience and with freedom of choice, many more people have identified themselves as Anglo-Irish rather than one or the other, suggesting that 2016's figures only helped to tell part of the story, by defining 'British' and 'Irish'. This particular questions needs reviewing for 2018, especially in view of intersectionality and ensuring we seek to understand a difference between gender and sexuality – which we have not previously. We might also want to consider further treatments to community identities, which include nomadic groups, Roma and Sinta, too. Ways of addressing this in the future include targeting non-Irish communities to share in Irish culture, considering programming for multiple-histories and identities and thinking about the Irish as a complex global diaspora with Mexican-Irish, African-Irish, Asian-Irish heritages and many more besides. In total, we had 24 nationalities described, not including those who were unknown or preferred not to answer the question. This shows an interesting audience range, though it is still a predominantly white audience.

Gender and audiences

Audience gender

Gender	2016		2017		
	Combined	%	Combined	%	Variance
(Cis) female	316	52.15	201	55.68	-3.53
(Cis) male	259	42.74	154	42.66	0.08
Trans-female	1	0.17		0.00	0.17
Trans-male	0	0.00		0.00	0.00
Prefer not to say	30	4.95	3	0.83	4.12
Other (inc "both" & "so such thing"	0	0.00	3	0.83	-0.83
Completions	**606**	100.00	361	100	0.00

Audience genders by %

Legend:
- (Cis) female
- (Cis) male
- Trans-female
- Trans-male
- Prefer not to say
- Other (inc "both" & "..

% 2017:
- 55.68
- 42.66
- 0.83
- 0.83

% 2016:
- 52.15
- 42.74
- 0.17
- 4.95

Our audience gender figures show we have increased our female audience share. This could be accounted for by the female focussed programme. We also see a slight increase in non-cisgendered/non-binary audiences, expected given our work with *Liverpool Pride*. This would have shown a dramatic rise if we had undertaken feedback at *Liverpool Pride* and the *River Festival*, given the large data samples we could have drawn from. This is a note for the future – we must get feedback at events that sit outside the festival, to truly understand our impact and reach. Reaching non-cisgendered audiences should be a focus for the future. Our low nonbinary figures may be representative of *LIF* lacking relevant content, but – as stated last year: a lack of evidence is not a compelling argument for radical change. However, it is something to note, particularly as advocates for the Creative Case (see below) and our work across the Irish diaspora. It is hoped future feedback will show a shift towards matching national trend figures (0.4%) for nonbinary attendees.

Mick Hannigan, Director of *IndieCork*, speaking at *FACT*

Audience post code breakdowns and analysis

Audience post code breakdowns

All responses	Responses - 2016	%	Responses - 2017	%
Liverpool	339	61.97	223	64.45
Chester and Wirral	99	18.10	56	16.18
Warrington/St Helens	17	3.11	6	1.73
London* (all)	14	2.56	10	2.89
Llandudno and Powys	10	1.83	3	0.87
Preston	9	1.65	3	0.87
Wigan	9	1.65	1	0.29
Belfast	5	0.91	2	0.58
Manchester	5	0.91	5	1.45
?	4	0.73	0	0.00
Crewe	3	0.55	1	0.29
Blackpool	2	0.37		0.00
Dublin	2	0.37	5	1.45
Edinburgh and Glasgow	3	0.55	1	0.29
Bradford, Halifax, Leeds and York	2	0.37	5	1.45
Inverness	2	0.37	0	0.00
Nottingham	2	0.37	0	0.00
Stockport	2	0.37	0	0.00
Torquay	2	0.37	0	0.00
Birmingham	1	0.18	0	0.00
Blackburn and Bolton	1	0.18	3	0.87
Coventry, Derby and Leicester	1	0.18	2	0.58
Durham	0	0.00	2	0.58
Gloucester	1	0.18	0	0.00
Guildford/Woking	1	0.18	2	0.58
Lancaster	1	0.18	0	0.00
Northampton and Kettering	1	0.18	2	0.58
Norwich	1	0.18	0	0.00
Oldham	1	0.18	1	0.29
Paisley	1	0.18	0	0.00
Plymouth	1	0.18	0	0.00
Portsmouth	1	0.18	0	0.00
Other international/Queensland, Australia	1	0.18	11	3.18
Shrewsbury	1	0.18	0	0.00
Southend-on-Sea	1	0.18	0	0.00
Ispwich	0	0.00	1	0.29
Stoke-on-Trent	1	0.18	0	0.00
Jersey	0	0.00	1	0.29
	547	**100.00**	**346**	**100.00**
London (East London)	2	0.37	2	0.58
London (North London) + St Albans & Romford	4	0.73	4	1.16
London (North West London)	2	0.37	3	0.87
London (South East London)	3	0.55	0	0.00
London (South West London) + Sutton	2	0.37	0	0.00
London (West London)	3	0.55	1	0.29
	16	**2.93**	**10**	**2.89**

Post code breakdowns are a good indicator for understanding where marketing penetrated well and where audiences travel from. Our post code data shows us that we have a high percent of audiences traveling regionally and nationally and have significantly increased our international travel reach.
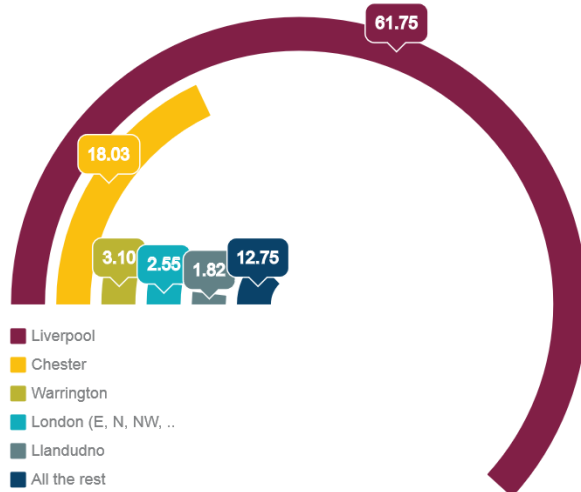
A comparative study (seen below) between 2016 and 2017 shows that compared to last year we have only managed to secure visits from 30 of the 40 Liverpool residential post codes. However, this is drawn from a smaller data sample than 2016s and shows us that our work in South Liverpool created significant gains.

This indicates an improved understanding of the brand in certain locations and shows that our work there is developing audiences, showing that our audience development, programme strategy and marketing considerations have had an effect.
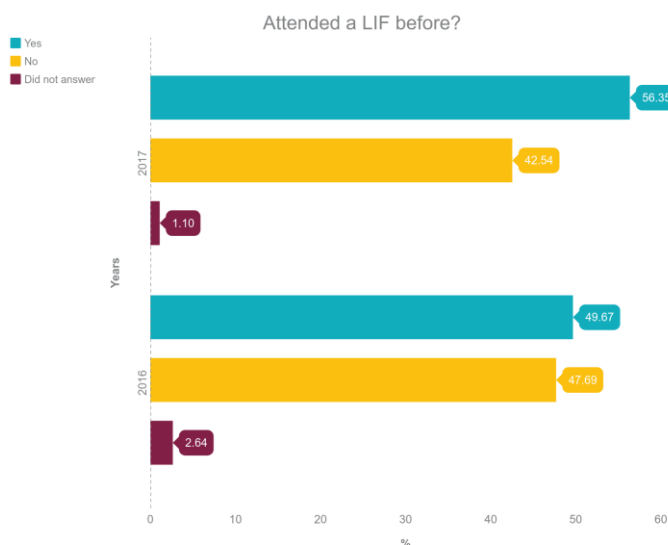
As mentioned above in relation to intersectional data findings, we must also collect post codes at events across the year, not simply the festival, in order that our data reflects the diversity of visitors to our different events.

	Location	Authority	2016			2017		
			339	✕	5461	223	✕	6017
			Attendees	% of respondents	Liverpool visits	Attendees	% of respondents	Liverpool visits
L1	City Centre	Liverpool	13	4	209	13	6	351
L2	City Centre	Liverpool	1	0	16	0	0	0
L3	City Centre, Everton, Vauxhall	Liverpool	14	4	226	10	4	270
L4	Anfield, Kirkdale, Walton	Liverpool	8	2	129	2	1	54
L5	Anfield, Everton, Kirkdale, Vauxhall	Liverpool	5	1	81	3	1	81
L6	Anfield, City Centre, Everton, Fairfield, Kensington, Tuebrook	Liverpool	8	2	129	5	2	135
L7	City Centre, Edge Hill, Fairfield, Kensington	Liverpool	18	5	290	4	2	108
L8	City Centre, Dingle, Toxteth	Liverpool	32	9	515	21	9	567
L9	Aintree, Fazakerley, Orrell Park, Walton	Liverpool, Sefton	3	1	48	4	2	108
L10	Aintree Village, Fazakerley	Sefton, Liverpool, Knowsley	2	1	32	1	0	27
L11	Clubmoor, Croxteth, Gillmoss, Norris Green	Liverpool	7	2	113	2	1	54
L12	Croxteth Park, West Derby	Liverpool	10	3	161	9	4	243
L13	Clubmoor, Old Swan, Stoneycroft, Tuebrook	Liverpool	20	6	322	9	4	243
L14	Broadgreen, Dovecot, Knotty Ash, Page Moss	Liverpool, Knowsley	4	1	64	4	2	108
L15	Wavertree	Liverpool	19	6	306	16	7	432
L16	Broadgreen, Bowring Park, Childwall	Liverpool, Knowsley	8	2	129	3	1	81
L17	Aigburth, St Michael's Hamlet, Sefton Park	Liverpool	45	13	725	47	21	1268
L18	Allerton, Mossley Hill	Liverpool	30	9	483	15	7	405
L19	Aigburth, Garston, Grassendale, Mossley Hill	Liverpool	9	3	145	10	4	270
L20	Bootle, Orrell and Kirkdale	Sefton, Liverpool	3	1	48	2	1	54
L21	Ford, Litherland, Seaforth	Sefton, Liverpool	5	1	81	1	0	27
L22	Waterloo	Sefton	4	1	64	6	3	162
L23	Blundellsands, Brighton-le-Sands, Crosby, Little Crosby, Thornton	Sefton	11	3	177	4	2	108
L24	Hale, Speke	Halton Liverpool	2	1	32	0	0	0
L25	Belle Vale, Gateacre, Hunts Cross, Woolton, Halewood	Liverpool, Knowsley	9	3	145	11	5	297
L26	Halewood	Liverpool, Knowsley	2	1	32	4	2	108
L27	Netherley	Liverpool	3	1	48	1	0	27
L28	Stockbridge Village	Liverpool, Knowsley	1	0	16	0	0	0
L29	Lunt, Sefton Village	Sefton	0	0	0	0	0	0
L30	Bootle, Netherton	Sefton	5	1	81	3	1	81
L31	Maghull, Lydiate, Melling, Waddicar	Sefton	4	1	64	1	0	27
L32	Kirkby	Knowsley	0	0	0	0	0	0
L33	Kirkby	Knowsley	4	1	64	0	0	0
L34	Prescot, Knowsley Village	Knowsley	3	1	48	0	0	0
L35	Prescot, Whiston, Rainhill	Knowsley, St Helens	3	1	48	5	2	135
L36	Huyton, Roby, Tarbock	Knowsley	4	1	64	0	0	0
L37	Formby, Little Altcar, Great Altcar	Sefton	5	1	81	0	0	0
L38	Ince Blundell, Hightown	Sefton	2	1	32	0	0	0
L39	Ormskirk, Aughton	West Lancashire	11	3	177	5	2	135
L40	Burscough, Mawdesley, Scarisbrick, Rufford, Holmeswood	West Lancashire, Chorley	2	1	32	2	1	54
			339	100	5461	223	100	6017

Top 5 post codes travelled from

- Liverpool **61.75**
- Chester **18.03**
- Warrington **3.10**
- London (E, N, NW, ..) **2.55**
- Llandudno **1.82**
- All the rest **12.75**

Top 5 post codes travelled from, with int'l & 'all the rest'

- International
- Liverpool
- Chester and Wirral
- London* (E, N, NW, SE..)
- Warrington/St Helens
- Manchester
- All the rest

Liverpool **64.45**, Chester and Wirral **16.18**, International **4.62**, **2.89**, **1.73**, **1.45**, All the rest **7.23**

Attended a LIF before?

- Yes
- No
- Did not answer

2017:
- Yes **56.35**
- No **42.54**
- Did not answer **1.10**

2016:
- Yes **49.67**
- No **47.69**
- Did not answer **2.64**

In simpler terms, to the left is a diagram of the top 5 places (nationally) that people came to *LIF* from in 2016 (2017 is below). Both were aggregated from paper and digital surveys. *LIF*'s post code breakdowns show we received almost 65% of our audience from Liverpool, with a further 20+% coming in from the North West. Over 7% travel nationally to visit and the festival receives almost 5% of visits from the rest of the world. This significant gain on last year seems to be built from national visits, which we need to consider in 2018's distribution campaign.

Extrapolated across the festival, the figures suggest that *LIF2017* welcomed 432/4.63% (48 in 2016) international visitors, 1,970/21.1% (vs 2,376) non-Liverpool North West visitors, 6017/9.82% (vs 5,441) Liverpudlians and 917/64.45% (vs 947) national visitors.

If out of town visits account for 432+947 (1,379) visits, based on a city visit multiplier of 0.4% this means we generated 551.6 overnight stays. Without using our festival day attendance rate of 3.2days (which would triple this figure) and using the [Liverpool Hotels Update 2016](£70.03), *LIF* believe we encouraged a minimum hotel income of £221,519.18a significant increase on 2016.

Cultivating and inspiring audiences
Over half this year's audience identify as re-attending, compared to 2016 when under half did, bearing witness to the fact we are seeing repeat visits.

Will you attend a LIF again?

(Legend: No / Did not answer / Yes)

Values shown: 1.38, 95.30, 3.31, 95.30, 3.63, 93.56, 2.81, 93.56
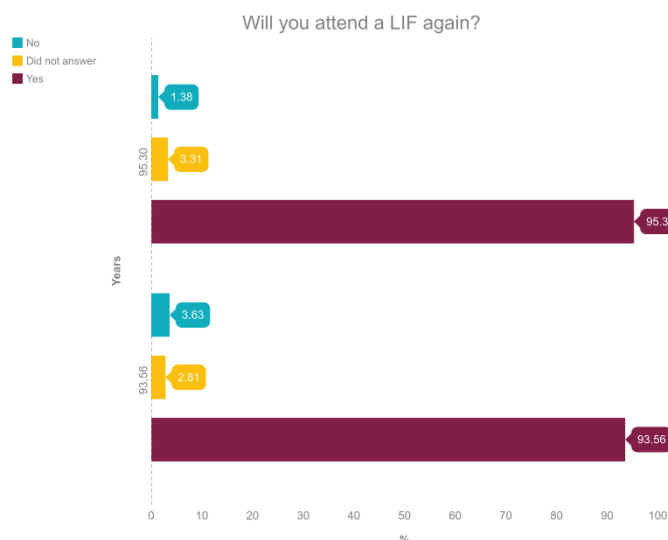
Asked if they will return, 95.30% say they will – an increase of 1.74% on 2016, which is an incredible achievement!

A strong gauge of how audiences feel about their experiences is whether or not they would recommend it to others. *LIF*'s survey respondents were asked to mark their answers according to a

- very likely (5*)
- quite likely (4*)
- might/might not (3*)
- quite unlikely (2*)
- very unlikely (1*) range.

96.6% (vs 96.29% in 2016) of those who responded to the question said they would be 'very' or 'quite' likely to recommend the *Liverpool Irish Festival*! Again, this growth is excellent news!

Although only asked in the digital survey, 65% of the audience stated that their main reason for travelling that day was to attend *Liverpool Irish Festival* events. This marks a drop from 83% in 2016, which may indicate that people are beginning to tie their tourism visits with practical errands and/or city breaks, which might account for the drop as people consider their city visit the main 'purpose'. From a tourism perspective, extrapolated against visits, this could mean that *LIF* inspired/instigated 6,068 journeys!

As in 2016, the digital survey also asked questions rating services the festival provides, such as the quality of the exhibits, events, welcome, venues, publicity and promotion, signage and signposting, venue locations, festival hub, social media website, enewsletter, etc, but with so few respondents it is difficult to scrutinise these to any great effect. Nothing in the figures suggests extreme negativity towards anything, but as always arises in such surveys signage could be improved.

The Creative Case: Performers, volunteers and Board members

Artists	2016 No.	2016 %	2017 No.	2017 %	Var %		2016 No.	2016 %	2017 No.	2017 %	Var %
Female artists	39	36	52	49	13	Local	25	23	32	30	7
Male artists	68	64	55	51	-13	National	19	18	26	24	6
Paid	7	7	19	18	11	International	63	59	49	46	-13
Unpaid	100	93	87	81	-12	**Total**	**107**	100	**107**	100	
Artists & non-artists											
Female artists	50	38	61	48	10	Local	45	34	47	37	3
Male artists	82	62	66	52	-10	National	23	17	28	22	5
Paid	10	8	22	17	9	International	64	48	52	41	-7
Unpaid	122	92	104	82	-10	**Total**	**132**	99	**127**	100	
Non-artists		%									
Female non-artists	11	44	9	45	1	Local	20	80	15	75	-5
Male non-artists	14	56	11	55	-1	National	4	16	2	10	-6
Paid	3	12	3	15	3	International	1	4	3	15	11
Unpaid	22	88	17	85	-3	**Total**	**25**	100	**20**	100	
Relationships											
Artist shown	89	67	86	68	1	Technician	0	0	0	0	0
Board members	4	3	3	2	-1	Producer	10	8	1	1	-7
Curator	0	0	6	5	5	Volunteer curator	0	0	0	0	0
Partner	4	3	10	8	5	Volunteer	17	13	9	7	-6
PR	1	1	1	1	0	Staff	0	0	0	0	0
Speaker	7	5	11	9	4	**Total**	**132**	100	**127**	100	

The *Creative Case* is an important initiative being led on by *Arts Council England* to readdress diversity by creating deeper inclusion in any *ACE* funded work. *LIF*'s figures in this area are notional, but do show us some interesting areas that we could look to improve on.

ACE's aim is not simply 'equal opportunities repackaged'. It fundamentally alters how we consider diversity within our work, embed positivity for diversity in our organisational philosophy and conduct our work by creating meaningful content. Of the 127 artists and non-artists we worked with, we can show certain trends, i.e., we did create a better ratio of female:male artists in 2017 than in 2016, higher proportions of national artists and slightly lower 'international artists' than in 2016. It also shows that we don't monitor sexual preference well enough (see table and information that follows).

	2016		2017	
Sexual orientation	Artists	Non-artists	Artists	Non-artists
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)	3	0	2	0
Heterosexual	39	15	63	10
Other	0	0	6	0
Not known	65	10	36	10
TOTAL	**107**	**25**	**107**	**20**

This short table demonstrates 7.4% (vs 2.3% 2016) of our artists and non-artists self-identify as LGBT, whilst 58% are heterosexual. We don't know the preference of 33% of our practitioners and this is something *LIF* can change with content inclusion and improved monitoring. The *Office of National Statistics* believe c.1.7% of England's population self-identify as LGB today, though other sources suggest as high as 10% (*Kinsey Report*). Our figures should reflect this as a minimum.

Last year we suggested that because we didn't know an artist's or non-artist's sexual preference, we were not behaving discriminatorily, but a core tenet of the *Creative Case* is that we "need to talk about it, until we don't need to talk about it". As sexual preference is still widely discriminated against, *LIF* needs to demonstrate that it is working positively to drive the 'creative case' forward. Our ability to investigate our artist's sexual preference has not moved on from 2016 and therefore our results are still only notional.

The lack of known funds ahead of this year's programme accounts for the majority of artists we worked being unpaid. That said, they do show we have paid more artists this year than previously and it is fair to say that although in certain cases *LIF* have not paid artists directly, we may have negotiated a day rate for them with our partners, which we cannot claim here. Often these are worked in to reciprocity agreements (i.e., programme in exchange for affinity/promotion) and also accounts to some extent for the low percentage deals on box office, which often times are waived in order that an artist is paid.

	2016		2017	
Ethnicity	Artists	Non-artists	Artists	Non-artists
White British	30	19	40	15
White Irish	75	4	59	4
White other	2	1	7	0
White & Black Caribbean	0	1	0	0
White & Black African	0	0	0	0
White & Asian	0	0	0	0
Mixed other	0	0	0	1
Asian British	0	0	1	0
Indian	0	0	0	0
Pakistani	0	0	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0
Asian other	0	0	0	0
Black British	0	0	0	0
Caribbean	0	0	0	0
African	0	0	0	0
Somali	0	0	0	0
Yemeni	0	0	0	0
Nigerian	0	0	0	0
Black other	0	0	0	0
Other ethnic minorities	0	0	0	0
Not known	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**107**	**25**	**107**	**20**
Grand total		**132**		**127**

As with 2016, we have undertaken no disability monitoring and therefore cannot provide details on this. This is an area of work we must address in future, but has not been raised as an issue to date. However, to fulfil our belief in tolerant working and thinking about how disability is managed in our city, the venues that we use, the content we commission, the partners we work with and the language we use is hoped to be disability friendly. Another consideration for the *Creative Case* is where *LIF*'s practitioners come

from. Access to aspiration and working across areas of deprivation as well as wealth are important factors to recognise and considering how this is supported in future is a concern. This should relate to our work on dovetailing work to support diverse audiences from varying post code areas. Peculiar to *LIF,* its work and the city trends (though unsurprising given our connections) are *LIF*'s scores for working with 'White Irish' (almost 47% vs 60% in 2016) as opposed to 'White British'. However, what we are clearly failing to attract – across our artists, Board members and volunteers - are non-White practitioners. This is evident in our audience feedback and worth considering when commissioning work, content and multiple-histories/futures for later festivals. Considering Ireland's and Liverpool's complex and diverse identities this is a concern and suggests we are not working (or monitoring) in these communities well enough. Certainly, projects such as *#IAmIrish* and *#At Home Abroad*, should help to address this imbalance, but it is worthy of note and addressing as part of our programme.

PR FACTS, FIGURES AND TRENDS

Social media growth summary	Aug 2016	Last review	%>	Dec 2017	%>
Facebook	3,777	4,007	6.09	4,332	8.1
Twitter	3,470	3,656	5.36	3,871	5.8
Instagram	132	185	40.15	266	43.7
*Mailchimp**	1,727	1,650	-4.46	1,681	1.8
Total	9,106			10,150	

* *LIF's Mailchimp* data is very clean. Our average open rate for email newsletters across the year is 43.78% - up on 2016's 38% - beating the industry open rate of 23.34%. We have an average click rate of 13.54%.

Twitter: 3,871 followers, Following, 1,345, Tweets in total 2,736.

October	September	August
• 97 Tweets (85% on 2016)	• 37 Tweets (89% growth)	• 6 Tweets
• 2,871 profile Visits (90% of previous year!)	• 894 Profile Visits (64% of 2016)	• 368 Profile Visits
• 89 new followers	• 49 new followers (70% of previous Sept growth)	• 3 new followers
• 106k Tweet Impressions (99% previous year)	• 34.3k Tweet Impressions (49% of 2016)	• 6,468 Tweet Impressions
• 314 Mentions (82% of 2016).	• 90 Mentions (50% increase on previous year)	• 22 Mentions.

The @LivIrishFest *Twitter* account now has over 3.8k followers. It remains a key social network for engaging with press and artists, if not consumers as much as other channels. The top mentions remain those by either partners or media outlets.

Twitter – as a media stream - is more content rich/heavy than *Facebook*, based on more for updates and news. For *Twitter*, the content has to be richer and more engaging, which means the essays worked well in terms of reaching a new online audience. We should use Twitter more to support our online content. *Twitter* is populated by more 'opinion formers' who raise profiles, even if they don't necessarily attend events.

Facebook: During October 2017 *LIF* gained a reach of 41,971 (91% of reach gained in 2016). Top sources for page the @LivIrishFest *Facebook* page include: *Facebook, Google, Liveproolirishfestival*.com

- 4,331 Likes
- 4,265 Followers
- 3.9k video views
- 1.2k minutes of videos views.
- Promoted posts

- *Body and Blood* - 2,976 people reached, 77 link clicks
- Festival event page promotion - 2,189 people reached, 201 Engagements
- *In:Visible Women* event promotion - 2,519 people reached, 28 link clicks.

Rich content performed best. *LIF's Facebook* live posts – especially live filming - had excellent engagement. It's worth remembering *Facebook Live* is under a year old, so it's possible they have tweaked their algorithm to appear more frequently in people's feeds (which may be working to *LIF's* advantage). The media pieces (web based essays, playlists, etc) continue to form good content, largely because of their profile and how many times they can be shared, thus reaching more people.

On *Facebook* our audience is built of 56% women, 42% men with the majority aged 25-44 (28%). 3,235 are UK based; with 649 in Ireland. We have 1,419 *Facebook* followers/friends in Liverpool; 296 in Dublin and 125 in Belfast. We also have followings in Cork, Derry and Newry.
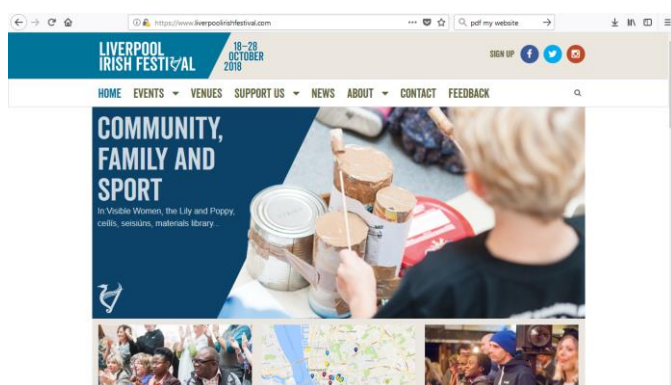
Thumbnail website, Dec 2017

LIF website: *LIF* launched a new website in Sept 2016), which means comparing YOY figures is tricky. Last year's web development meant very high engagement with the new site, meaning we'd expect to see a bit of drop off, though we would always hope to see growth.

We know that *LIF* has encountered far more web traffic and web interaction in 2017/2016 compared with previous years.

This includes:

- 11,753 sessions
- 7,642 users
- 40,426 page views
- 3.44 pages per session
- Bounce rate 51%
- 62% new sessions.

Most popular landing pages:
1. Events
2. Music-song
3. Events page2
4. Events Page 3
5. Venues
6. Orla Guerin
7. Events Page 4
8. Talks and tours
9. About us.

While the festival's website figures show a strong performance, they are down on last year.

The number of sessions is down 7%, users by 14%, page views by 11% and pages per session down 5% to 3.44 pages per session. That said, during the course of the festival, the website hit a higher peak than it did in 2017. Organic search is up by 30%, direct visits up by 35% and social traffic is up. Referral from other locations and email marketing have dropped and it is difficult to understand why this might be, especially given the increase in partners, etc. One line of thinking is that without editorial support from *The Echo*, which has been received in previous years, links people would usually follow from these articles would no longer cause referrals.

These latest statistics demonstrate that the website is simply performing better. This is proved by the fact that people are spending over a minute on each page (reading essays, finding more events and using more pages).

LIF can therefore extrapolate the new site is working harder for the festival than the previous one, providing a successful central resource for the festival, reinforcing the work done elsewhere. It would be good to add more content year round and link it more to our social media feeds. Videos, pod casts and rich content must be pursued further.

Best performing page: After the home page, the best performing page is events (accounting for 14.3% of website traffic; 7,688 page views, of which 4,642 were unique (date range from day after 2016 festival to last day of LIF2017).

Press achieved

- 45 pieces of coverage, more than double that of 2016 in which we secured 20+ pieces of individual coverage
- 40.4k page views; 146k *Tweet* impressions and 42k reach on *Facebook*
- Profile raising and providing engaging content on social media
- Draft reach of press 6.5m, significantly lower than 15.5m in 2016, which is odd considering the number of pieces of coverage achieved. We believe that this reflects the drop in local support, trailing/wayfinding and interest pieces that the local media will support today, significantly the Echo not running arts features any more. It is hoped this will change now that a new Arts Editor and arts freelancer role have been appointed.

Mailchimp: From the last day of *LIF2016* to the last day of this year's we have issued 16 enewsletters compared to 10 enewsletters sent between 24 Aug-11 Nov 2016. Over that period the lists have stabilised at about 1,681 with a further list of c.240 emails which need cleaning and testing. List engagement peaks in the run up to the festival, but overall we have a list engagement of 41%. During the festival we receive good (39.4% up on 2016's 31%) open rates having a direct focus on the audience as possible consumers/punters. It's inevitable *LIF* receive more interest from event announcements as we habitually use the enewsletter as a driver for engagement rather than a news service. *LIF*'s lived-experience shows the former tends to perform better with our list. That said, *LIF*'s list average of opens exceeds the industry average - 35% vs 23% - with a click rate of 6.8% versus an industry average of 3.3%. Whilst we do well, we should make this list work harder.

By the time the festival is in flow *LIF* are not the only organisation telling people about the festival. The best performing eshot was – surprisingly – an enewsletter entitled *Liverpool Irish events, news and opportunities this February*, which gained 670 opens and 116 click throughs. *Events go live for Liverpool Irish Festival 2017* (12 Sep) performed well, with 619 opens and 190 clicks.

When comparing YOY launch emails (all sent in August) we can see the development:

- 2015: 778 subscribers, 434 opens, 29 clicks
- 2016: 1,681 subscribers, 791 opens, 269 clicks
- 2017: 1,596 subscribers, 613 opens, 190 clicks.

The launch email worked far more successfully in 2016 with a larger list, strong data, greater interaction and pushes to the website. It is becoming harder to engage people in subscribing to our enewsletter list and fewer people are willing to provide email addresses. We believe people are becoming fatigued by the number of enewsletters they are sent from multiple companies and there is a concern about data sharing. New general data protection regulations may have an effect on these lists and we will need to be mindful of this whilst evaluating in 2018.

Distribution

Following a very similar distribution plan to 2016, our distribution shows a good range and proves it was worth targeting some of our friends 'further afield ', i.e., on the Ireland, in London and other Irish Community centres. Feedback shows that we need to send more print to Manchester and Wirral, Birkenhead and the North West region and perhaps more to North Liverpool areas, to improve attendance. The biggest thing about this is also getting the information out there early. In 2018, we will aim to have listings and brochures out in mid-August/early September.

Timing is critical. Undertaking one distribution drop off is the most affordable option by far. However, staggering a campaign, for instance with a short listings of headline acts initially, may peak interest. Dropping collateral as early as possible gives people both the opportunity to plan, but also to become bored of print, so it is important to get this as close to 'right' as possible. Articles extend the life of the print in advance and beyond the 'calendar' aspects of the listings, whilst late dispatch allows for last minute programming. We need to address this and find ways to allow for late programme, which don't hold up the brochure. This is where our digital channels should step up and work harder for us. Thus, core programme should be signed off no later than June/July (for positive marketing campaigning and PR trailing) with final programme signed off by late July/early-August for copy sign off, print and dispatch a.s.a.p.

TESTIMONIALS

Descriptors

All survey respondents were offered the opportunity of describing the festival in three words or 'descriptors'. Of the 934 entries a number of phrases stood out. Where words are incomplete, they have been searched as the start point, e.g., 'inspir' will refer to all instances of 'inspired' and 'inspirational', while 'educat' searches against 'education', 'educational', educate' and 'educated'. The top three words this year are the same as those received last year!

All descriptors	934 Occurrences	in total % of total use
"Fun"	70	7.49
"Interesting"	39	4.18
"Informative"	28	3.00
"Entertaining"	27	2.89
"Excellent"	25	2.68
"Lively"	17	1.82
"Inspir"	16	1.71
"Great"	16	1.71
"Music"	15	1.61
"Friendly"	14	1.50
"Good"	13	1.39
"Cultur"	13	1.39
"Very Good"	12	1.28
"Inclusive"	11	1.18
"Educat"	10	1.07
"Thought-Provoking"	9	0.96
"Diverse"	9	0.96
"Lovely"	7	0.75
"Engag"	7	0.75
"Amazing"	7	0.75
"Stimul"	7	0.75
"Brilliant"	6	0.64
"Fab"	6	0.64
"Relevant"	6	0.64
"Bespoke"	1	0.11
"Community"	1	0.11
"Self-reflective"	1	0.11
"Imagin"	1	0.11
	324	34.69

Suggestions/feedback

Digital respondents were offered an opportunity to make one suggestion to improve the festival, the following are a direct transposition (unexpurgated) of those suggestions:

- Taking it on tour throughout the year and bringing that experience back to the Liverpool flagship event
- If I knew there had been a mail list I would have come earlier in the week
- I thought it was great - but a genealogy exhibit / event my draw some more interest.
- Bigger splash on launch night with more emphasis on what is to come in the festival - launch on a weekend night rather than a thursday might be worth considering.
- Maybe organise the traditional music sessions on both weekends at the same venues - I love them.
- Visible Women on a bigger stage!
- Better promotion of events live In:Visible women around feminist groups.
- Plan it and advertise it now.
- It's become too arty-farty, needs to get back to its roots and have more traditional Irish events and music. I hadn't heard of any of the artists in this year's festival line up. The programme of events has become dull in recent years so I've stopped going to the festival and it used to be a real highlight of my year. Bring back the coach tour!
- Better advertising and include more Irish music venues. I met so many venue owners who didn't know the festival existed.
- More bar venues around town encouraged into playing different genres of Irish music from Trad, to popular to contemporary

- MORE FINANCIL BACKING TO EXPAND
- Vey happy the way it is nothing I could suggest to improve it

Additionally, some email feedback has come through, again unexpurgated:

Emails:

Gerry Ffrench: Congratulations, I thoroughy enjoyed Friday, and just wish I could have helped more [re *Visible Women*].

Sue Rynhart: I'm back home in Dublin now! Wow I had such a great time. I feel rejuvenated Emma. That's from meeting you and the women. Mamatung women have blown my mind with their energy and powerful spirituality. Emma and Ailbhe for their magnificent voices and songs, Gerry is so awesome, we swapped cds & I'll be listening to her on the way to sing at Cork Jazz fest tomorrow. I am so happy to have met you Emma & loved hanging out last night. Thank you for enriching my interactions with women artists and thank you for keeping me connected. I loved the whole experience

Karen Siddle: Wonderful. The creativity and imaginative angle was brilliant. I am so proud to live here […].

I am Welsh so have Celtic roots.
Loved Orla and the two female politicians.
Saw a film at FACT as well.
[…]Look forward to next year!

Male, 59 re *The Lily and the Poppy*: Shame the debate/discussion was dominated by the abortion question. Women's issues can be so much wider.

Female, 80 re *Family Day at Museum of Liverpool*: Love the Museum. I come every year to hear Comhaltas musicians and Melody Makers. Great to see young children playing.

Female, 27 re *Kelly's Traditional Session*: Lowkey; talented; effective. go hiontach ar fad maith thu!

Response

It is heartening to hear that people want to see the festival a) be better supported and b) grow. Of the comments made, only one appears to dislike the direction the festival has taken and yet it is this direction that marks the festival our as unique and from which it draws its place in the world. Notes on planning and expansion have been taken, but moving back to being a music driven festival is not an

option for us. Doing so would lose us considerable opportunities, mean we lost breadth and would reduce our partners. It would put us in competition with other Irish festivals in the country and would lose us our USP. To take positives from the comment, it means we are being seen as multidisciplinary, contemporary and artistic, which means – according on our mission – we are doing this right!

Based on the feedback above and our findings using this data analysis the recommendation of this evaluation is for the festival to focus on the following six points to improve festival delivery:

FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

Based on the feedback above and our findings using this data analysis the recommendation of this evaluation is for the festival to focus on the following six points to improve festival delivery:

1 **Create a headline show** – a 'tent pole' event around which other festival events hang and from which we can make a lot of media noise. This may include working with a large name or concept that helps us generate something on par with - or excelling - the *Irish Sea Sessions*. A headline is critical.

2 **Partner buy in**. Some partners are excellent at supporting us online, carrying promotional material and featuring us in their day-to-day work. We need to build this in to our partnerships across the board and get everyone singing our praises to their audiences and networks. We must make more of this.

3 **Early programme sign off and boardcast**. Unforseen and uncontrollable issues delay this in 2017, so it is all the more important to achieved it in 2018. Doing so will allow greater media circulation and gives more time to plan their attendance. It also takes the pressure off the team to fulfil planning, marketing roll out, PR and volunteer training at the same time and creates a different calendar cycle that spreads the weight of work more evenly.

4 **A public realm commission** that furthers the core values of the festival, with a legacy beyond Year One. Viewed as an ongoing festival project, rather than something which is simply bought, it must galvanise festival interest whilst it is being created and when shown. Its outcome must not only last for the festival, but should leave an impression that carries the festival's name beyond the festival period.

5 **A festival club** for social seisiúns and festival artists. Less formal than 2017's, but with more tech than 2016, festival clubs should follow tentpole events offering a genuine social space in which performers and audiences interact and share experiences, building on the core quality and integrity of festival commissioned work and spaces. A truly original strand of the festival, the club should offer an alternative to the seisiúns run weekly in pubs across the city.

6 **Using our long-term strategy** to build and underpin the festival, in all senses. With this strategic support, we must continue to build funding, income stream generation and expertise all of which is plotted on an objectives cascade and with a considered infrastructure to develop the festival more thoroughly for the future.

These points are festival delivery specific and are not quite the same as the organisational strategy, which is being developed in line with the existing objectives cascade and business plan. These recommendations, should help to inform the artistic elements of those plans, not replace them.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR LIF, THE ORGANISATION

In line with the business plan and the resulting objectives cascade, *Liverpool Irish Festival* have determined six annual objectives and three futureproofing objectives, which are the main focus of all none-festival programme or delivery work.

Organisational objectives

- Create a collaborative headline show
- Invest time and resource in strong partner reciprocity
- Sign off programme, print & distribution early & generate richer more timely PR & volunteer recruitment campaigns
- Secure & develop a public realm commission that builds community & provides legacy
- Redevelop the festival club to generate income and rep
- Trust and use *LIF*'s strategic plan to drive the festival & its capabilities, supporting the import & export of talent & taking the festival to other shores, encouraging & improving international visits, from artists and audiences

Futureproofing

- Sign off and implement long-term strategy generating ambitious ideas & firm reputational growth within the cultural landscape of the region & beyond, building on & expanding evidence
- Formulate a cohesive strategy for future years income
- Ensure *LIF* is positioned effectively – financially, politically and in partnerships - to achieve its goals & gain influence.

They span developing an artistic core of events and exhibits; improving reputational positioning, fundraising and income stream generation; organisational development, aspiration raising and marketing (incorporating audience development). It is hoped that by undertaking these aims, we will make the *Liverpool Irish Festival* as strong and robust as we can, setting on a strong footing for the future.

THANKS

It is not possible to list all the names of those involved in *Liverpool Irish Festival 2017*, though we attempted to list all of the artists, partners and venues in this year's brochure. We extend our thanks to all our partners and their staff; our venue hosts and their teams and volunteers; our own volunteers and Board members, artists and collaborators. They are found in our networks and our supporters, sponsors and friends. In addition, they are those who came before today's team and many that we have met during and since this year's festival. We thank them – and you - all.

FUNDERS

Supported using public funding by **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

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