



Positive Images Festival 2021-2022 report

Executive Summary:

Preparations for the 2021-2022 Positive Images Festival began at a time when lockdown restrictions were still in force. After a brief hiatus, we embraced new ways of working. In partnership with our member organisations, we devised a year-long programme to celebrate Coventry's special year as UK City of Culture.

We participated in Coventry Welcomes Festival 2021, for which we arranged 3 events. The festival was officially launched at an extraordinarily well-attended Multicultural Concert of Music and Dance, held at the Ukrainian Centre. Other high profile events arranged by us included: the joint Multicultural Craft & Food Fair and Community Information Fair; a free evening of poetry; When Music Meets Poetry workshops; our annual Peace Festival Poetry Competition; Positive Images & Words Exhibition; Artist Residency and our finale poetry event at The Tin.

Our member organisations held cultural events, awareness events, poetry sessions, celebrations for festivals from diverse cultures and exhibitions.

Some of our members showcased their talents through events forming part of the City of Culture programmes.

We continued with our role as an umbrella organisation and started issuing monthly updates.

At the end of May 2022, Colin Scott – Chair of Positive Images Festival and Mehru Fitter – Secretary, stepped down after 28 years' association with the festival. They thank all members, participants, artistes, volunteers for their unstinting support over the years; our funders, Coventry City Council and Coventry City of

A new Executive Committee is now in place.



Background information about Positive Images Festival

Positive Images Festival, a community-led festival, aims to: celebrate diversity; showcase local talent; encourage partnership working; provide volunteering opportunities; and promote community cohesion. By public demand, the festival which began as a one day Multicultural Book & Craft Fair in 1994, blossomed into a huge annual summer celebration. It underwent a dramatic change in the early part of 2021. Covid-19 had a drastic effect on our carefully made plans, which had to be changed for compliance with lockdown restrictions.

We also made a conscious decision to support Coventry's special year as UK City of Culture with a year-long celebration from May 2021 to May 2022.

Currently, we have 200+ members. We hold planning meetings every month.



Positive Images Festival participated in the corporate **Coventry Welcomes Festival 2021**, contributing 3 events, all held online:

***Blackout Poetry.** The 2 facilitators – Theo Ioannou and Emilie Lauren Jones, encouraged people to use items they had in their homes. They were pleased with the quality of work produced. Participants were of varying ages. One of the participants was a published poet!

The facilitators would have liked contact with participants before the session so that they could have been reminded about the need to collect packs for use in the session.

Feedback from participants: They found the session beneficial – they had learned a new way of creating poetry.

***Putting the flags out for Coventry Welcomes**

Although there were not many in-person participants, those who joined the session found the experience extremely valuable and useful for their mental wellbeing. They also appreciated the opportunity to keep themselves busy.

The session included three facilitators, Emilie Lauren Jones – Coventry Poet Laureate 2021-2023, Kate Hills – artist and Positive Living coach and Seyedeh Naseriniaki of Chrysalis Craft. They worked well together and were able to add little insights into each other's sections of the session..

Seeing the poster on Social Media, an organisation providing care for people with learning disabilities requested a special session for its members.

Our comment: People found the online booking system daunting.

PIF Poetry Workshop

The workshop delivered by Emilie Lauren Jones on YouTube was extremely well-attended. Paper copies were sent to those who requested them. It was very encouraging to receive positive feedback from attendees: "Superb"; "I really loved the poems".

(Detailed report available)



The hugely talented Year 5 pupils of **Manor Park School** spent a day with Emilie Lauren Jones as part of this year's Positive Images Festival and created Blackout Poems. Their creative work can be viewed on our website www.positiveimagesfestival.co.uk/blackoutpoetry



Pupils proudly displaying their Blackout Poems

Here is a comment from Tracy Brown, Assistant Head Teacher: "I just wanted to say a HUGE thank you for your visit. You were such an inspiration to our children (and teachers) and they have been non-stop talking about it ever since. Thank you so much and we really do look forward to doing some work with you again."

Events organised by us:

Monthly poetry workshops:

Emilie Lauren Jones continued to deliver her free monthly workshops. Participants have enjoyed new challenges, such as, writing a prose poem and exploring poetry written by poets from diverse backgrounds. At the February 2022 poetry workshop, attendees looked at the work of Warsan Shire, a Somali British poet, and wrote poems inspired by her piece called *Home*.

The July poetry workshop, delivered on YouTube, attracted an encouraging number of poetry enthusiasts, some of whom sent positive feedback. "Another superb presentation. High standards maintained."

On 26th September, Emilie held her first live poetry workshop since the pandemic began. Here is positive feedback from a participant in the September workshop:

"Thanks for running the workshops as well as you do. Workshops are an excellent opportunity to write quickly about subjects that we hadn't thought of ourselves. I've tried setting myself workshop style challenges, and it simply does not work, the challenges have to come from someone who is not me. It's also interesting to hear how other poets respond to the challenges."

Multicultural Craft & Food Fair and Community Information Fair



Information provision and Coventry's vibrant cultural heritage were highlighted at the joint **Multicultural Craft and Food Fair & Community Information Fair**, held in Broadgate on Saturday 4th September. Launching the joint fair, the Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNicholas, pointed out that diversity was Coventry's major strength. He praised our festival for its promotion of community cohesion.

Performances, which included drumming, dancing, singing and a Tai Chi demonstration were popular with visitors.

What came as a surprise was that in spite of other major events such as the Godiva Festival going on at the same time, the fair still attracted a fair number of visitors.

All 25 participating organisations filled in the evaluation questionnaire. Here are the findings:

1. 21 organisations found the **arrangements of the day** very good and 4 good.
2. All organisations indicated that they had received enough **information prior to the event**.
3. 23 organisations found the **venue** very good and 2 good.
4. 14 organisations found the event very **useful**, and 11 useful.
5. 24 organisations indicated their willingness to **participate next year**.
6. **No. of visitors** ranged from 10 to 670. 3 organisations received more than 200 visitors each and 3 other more than 100 each.

Organisers' comments: The organisation of this year's fair proved to be very challenging as we had to wait for the lifting of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. This uncertainty caused some of our regular participants to pull out.

We thank: Coventry City Council's Events Team and the Environmental Health Officer for guidance provided; participants; the technical team; and our volunteers, who worked exceptionally hard to ensure the smooth running of the fair.



The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress visiting stalls



Kadence Music drummers

An extremely positive comment was passed on to us by one of the stallholders:
 "The public fed back how much they had enjoyed the event. Quite a few visitors to our stall were from out of town - Leamington Spa, London and Rugby. They were visiting Coventry and to see our stalls there was an unexpected surprise. Coventry residents said the same - an unexpected surprise."
 (Detailed report available on request)

*On the same day, Prior Deram Park was the setting for **Canley Big Lunch**, held from 12.00 noon to 4.00pm. Within the space of 4 hours, 700 visitors, representing the diversity of Coventry, were welcomed. The presence of large numbers of young people was a remarkable feature of the event.

An elated Dr Nor Aziz, the organiser of this annual event, remarked: 'This is our fifth community big lunch event and the best so far. We had over 700 visitors. Also, we had an encouraging increase in number of teenagers involved and contributing to this was the activities we had provided to cater for this age group. The assault course provided by Eventurous was very popular - we had Mums and daughters, siblings and many others queuing from start to finish. Everyone had a great time and had shown a great sense of community spirit.'

*Our **Free poetry night**, with a galaxy of national and local poets, was held on Saturday 23rd October. It was compered by Emilie Lauren Jones, Coventry Poet Laureate 2021-2023. The open mic session unearthed emerging talent in Coventry. An attendee, who had travelled a fair distance to attend the poetry night, remarked how enjoyable the poetry event had been.

Art & Craft Workshops:

Every month, *Create to Motivate* arranged two free arts and crafts women only workshops, where participants had fun and took their creativity to new heights. Sessions were delivered by Kate Hills and supported by Positive Images Festival. All workshops took place at the WATCH Centre. Materials were provided. Participants found these workshops to be a lifeline, enabling them to combat loneliness and stress.

Artist in Residence Workshops:

Funding from the Arts Council of England enabled us to appoint Mary Courtney as Positive Images Festival's Artist in Residence at the Central Library. Mary was on hand to advise people interested in developing their own art form. Mary also arranged free drop-in art workshops for children and adults for the *Making Faces Project*, inspired by gargoyles and green men on buildings in the city.

380 people attended 24 afternoon sessions between August and October 2021. Attendees included: Albanians, Syrians, Eritreans, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Iranians, Polish, Chinese; homeless people; wheelchair users; teenagers with autism; members of Grapevine; people with learning difficulties and members of Headway Group (which caters for people with head injuries). Visitors included students from Coventry University and researchers from the University of Warwick.

Mary also produced an audio recording of a Coventry story for Coventry Libraries' *One Million Reads Story Bench*.

(Detailed report available on request)

Positive Images Peace Festival Poetry Competition 2021

Positive Images Festival's poetry competition on the theme of ***Faith, Hope and Love*** attracted a record 93 entries, one of them from as far as The Republic of Ireland.

The judging panel, comprising Emilie Lauren Jones, Kate Hills – the then Vice Chair of Positive Images Festival and Joe Reynolds – the 2020 Competition winner, was highly impressed by the incredibly high quality of poems submitted. This made judging very challenging.

The award ceremony, held at the Central Methodist Hall on 20th November, was very ably compered by Emile Lauren Jones. It began with the reading of poems submitted. Each reading was followed by a thunderous applause.

The winner was Dangermouse aka Scott Healy, who received a prize of £100.00. Two runners up received £60.00 each and 6 highly commended entries £30.00 each.

Attendees found this an enriching experience and provided the following written feedback:

Their favourite aspect of this event: Local people reading out their poems; the friendly atmosphere and interacting with poets; the poem reading was very well done by all the readers; event open to all; no charge; meeting people; the range of poems; food - the samosas were fabulous.

We were very lucky to have two wonderful Coventry University volunteers – Simona Pustova and Dominika Gorelik, who staffed our display, received visitors and registered them. Our 47 visitors showed a keen interest in our display of booklets of past poetry competitions.

We thank Coventry City Council's Events Team for the small grant awarded to us.

A booklet of selected poems was published. Each participant of the poetry competition received a free copy.

A detailed report is available on request.

Music meets poetry workshops at Fargo Village

2 evening workshops on the theme of *When music meets Poetry*, were facilitated at Fargo Village by Raef Boylan.

In the first workshop, leaders Andrea Mbarushimana and Mahendra Patel, performed a short, unrehearsed piece to demonstrate and encourage everyone, then split the group into pairs of poet plus musician. Each pair performed and got feedback.

In the second workshop, leaders John Bernard and Amy Kakoura spoke about their experiences of musical performance. John played a YouTube video of a spoken

word film he'd done with music. He then gave participants the theme of 'Love' and asked them to write a poem that they felt would work with music, while Amy played a melody for inspiration. Amy then spoke to participants about ways to expand their vocabulary and ability to communicate with musicians about what type of ambiance/effects they would like (things like layers, tempo, mood). Each participant was invited up to the mic to read the poem they'd written while Amy adapted her tune on the keyboard to work best with their words and style of delivery. People experimented with using different instruments and playing them into the mic, and Amy looped each sound so that the group had created a collaborative piece of music.

Participants of both workshops were invited to be part of the event on 21st November.

Some of the comments received: A great event; attendance via Zoom; the possibility of including visual arts as well; an excellent opportunity for collaboration between professional artists and non-professional creatives.

Performance event on 21st November

11 participants from the 2 workshops performed at the event. Some of the poets read additional poetry without music. There were opportunities for people to network and talk to each other about writing and music and collaborative creativity. The poets and musicians all engaged really well and confidently. Amy, Mahendra and Barry did a great job of spontaneously providing music for performances on request. The audience seemed keen for other events like this one and were excited to hear Positive Images Festival had more workshops and performances planned for 2022.

(Detailed report available on request)

*Positive Images Festival commissioned 10 local emerging artists to create a piece of work for the ***Positive Images and Words*** exhibition on the theme of *Eco-friendliness*. 17 applications of a very high standard were received. Successful applicants attended workshops at Finham Library, with facilitators Emilie Lauren Jones and Kate Hills. The exhibition was launched on 26th March at The Litten Tree Exhibition space. Visitors were impressed by the creativity of artists.

Here are some visitor comments: "Fantastic work"; "Great messages conveyed"; "Very thought-provoking"; "Worth a visit!"; "A secret hideaway of fantastic art creations"; "A lot of food for thought. Amazing, diverse creations."

Profiles of participating artists can be viewed on our website www.positiveimagesfestival.co.uk/imagesandwords

The project was funded and supported by Coventry City Council and Positive Images Festival.

***Finale event**

Positive Images Festival's yearlong celebration ended on Saturday 21st May with an extremely enjoyable and well-attended event – **Poetry Meets Music**, held at Tin Music and Arts, Canal Basin. Compered very ably by Emilie Lauren Jones, the programme featured: reading of poems by Shahnaz Akhter of the University of Warwick, and Emily Rose Galvin, the first female Staffordshire Poet Laureate (2017-2019); a stunning mix of melodies and spoken word by performers from the local poetry and music scene and an open mic session. The evening was brought to a close with songs by the talented singer/musician Rosie Winder. The event highlighted the prolific poetic talent in Coventry. Attendees commented on the quality of all the performances, the wonderful way that the music and poetry worked together and the mix of topics and styles.

And here is a comment from a performer: "Everyone sounded really clear and there was an excellent range of styles and sounds. The samosas were extra tasty and I really loved the acoustics in The Tin."

Event/s arranged by our members:

Coventry Libraries and Information Service

***Coventry Libraries** arranged Free English Conversation cafés and produced a monthly calendar of activities.

***Allesley Library** arranged a display for The History of the World in 25 cities.

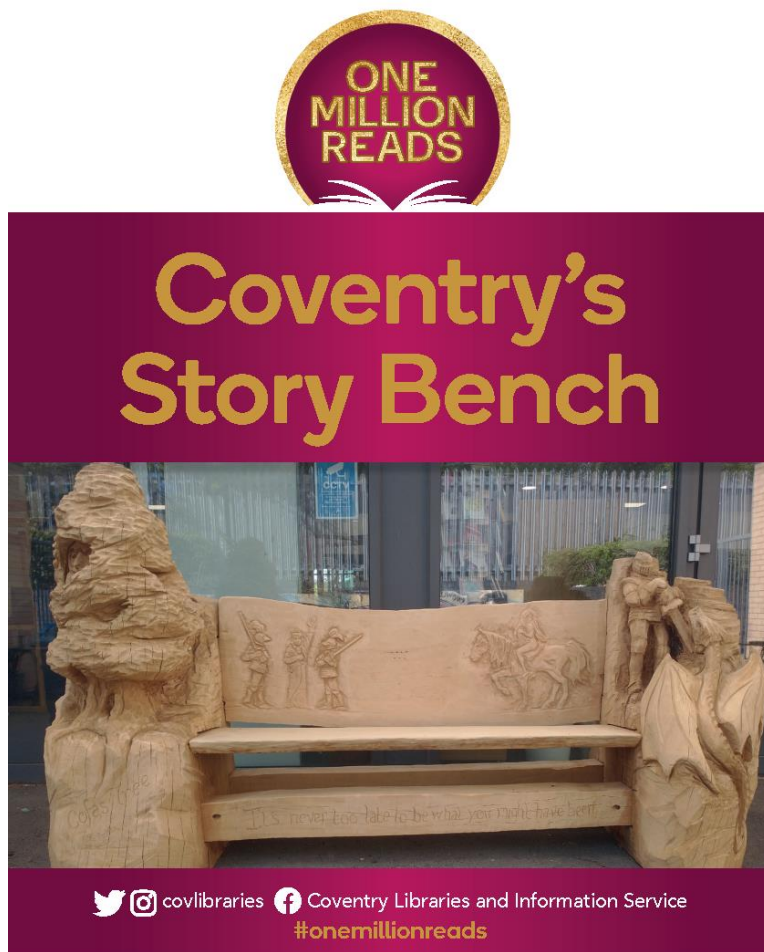
***Bell Green Library** invited people to share their stories about their CV2 postcode and the surrounding area. This community-focused project explored "**How places feel**" and what makes a neighbourhood become a "**Home**". The project was a collaboration between Bell Green Library, CV2 residents and commissioned artists Georgiou and Tolley. From 4th to 9th April, the library arranged a week of exhibitions and special activities, discovering and celebrating the stories, voices and sounds of communities living in and around Riley Square. Activities included a guided walk around Riley Square; an invitation for local residents to be photographed as part of the project; and a travelling exhibition.

***Earlsdon Library's** input: an Open Day, with storytelling, crochet workshop and exhibitions; participation in the City of Culture Trust's Window Wanderland project; *The Time Machine* – a children's theatre event (in conjunction with City of Culture Trust; storytelling. Also hosted a photography exhibition from Kenilworth Art Group;

*As part of Thriving Communities **Tile Hill Library Garden Project**, 2 local artists arranged workshops for people of all ages.

*The library service collected 60 second-long audio files of stories about Coventry's real or mythical past. A bench was commissioned by the city's library service as part of the One Million Reads campaign to get people in Coventry to read 1,000,000 books by the end of May 2022. A carved bench has been installed at Tile Hill Library in the garden courtyard. Visitors to the library can hear wonderful stories as they explore the bench. A booklet has also been produced. It has written versions of

stories, children's activities and information about how the Bench came to be. Copies of this free booklet can be picked up from Tile Hill Library.



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



This is Africa



This ambitious programme brought together several individuals, organisations and creative practitioners, who delivered show-stopping events to celebrate African culture and heritage and promote unity within the Black community. **The Highlife Centre** led and co-ordinated the co-creation and co-production of all events.

This exciting series of events kicked off with ***We are Warriors African Cultural Night***, at which the colours and sounds of Africa were recreated through drumming and dancing. The performances were of an extremely high standard and the organisation was superb. The Lord Mayor – Councillor John McNicholas and Chenine Bhathena – Creative Director of Coventry City of Culture spoke very positively about Coventry's principal asset, its diversity. The event was graced by the High Commissioner of Sierra Leone.

Beatz Africa proved to be an enjoyable music event, with exciting performances from local, regional and national Afro beats artists.

The ***Coloured Synergy Festival*** brought together 3 multicultural festivals – *Embrace Africa*, *Sahyadri Colours of India* and *Caribbean Cultural Festival*, in one location, Coventry Rugby Club. The day featured information stalls; stalls selling Asian, African and Caribbean cultural items; food stalls; and performances highlighting the cultural heritage of diverse communities. Audience participation in dance items was a very pleasing feature of the event.

Unity through sports, a community event, included games such as competitive football, rounders, sack race, egg & spoon race, skipping, scrabble and much more.

Black History Month was marked through: The Living Culture Exhibition; Black Business Expo; Sankofa African Couture – a fashion show; and regenerate – a performance arts piece which tells the “Black History” from the beginning to the present times.

Christmas in Africa, aimed at 5-11 year olds, was the final event of the year.

For International Women's Week, Highlife Centre arranged a 2 day conference ***She Speaks*** to inspire and empower women of colour.

Highlife Centre has also been holding Confidence Building & Business Awareness sessions for those not in employment and in receipt of benefits.

Environmental matters:

****Gabrielle Back***, our Environmental Ambassador, received over 1,000 entries for the *Climate Change Poster Competition*. The best 3 entries were exhibited at COP26 in Glasgow. A further 500 were displayed at the *Around the World Project Exhibition* in October/November.

Gabrielle also initiated the *Tree of Pledges project*, for which individuals were invited to pledge to do something to help the environment. The pledges are made on leaves. A giant tree, incorporating all these pledges, will go on display shortly.

****Green Week*** was arranged by a partnership of the University of Warwick, Coventry University, Coventry City of Culture Trust and Coventry City Council.

Health & Wellbeing Events:

****Arty-Folks*** arranged: free online “Pick me up” lunch and learn workshops to mark World Mental Health Day; and Art for Wellbeing courses.

***FWT**: arranged: free online workshops to support Refugee & Leave to Remain women; Child & Maternal Health programmes to BAME women (through Mamta); and hosted women only workshop sessions delivered by Kairos WWT as part of the Feeling Safe Initiative and sessions on household and family finances, delivered by Central England Law Centre. A lead member of Coventry Women's Partnership, FWT collaborated with other partners and arranged programmes to improve economic outcomes for vulnerable women.

***Sahil** organised free online classes on Health & Wellbeing and participated in the Generate Festival at Blue Coat School.

***Singing for the Brain Group** held Zoom meetings every Wednesday. The group celebrated National Poetry Day by listening to thought-provoking poems written by Rabindranath Tagore, Mirza Ghalib and other famous writers from South Asia. They also enjoyed a YouTube video of the Bengali song "Ekta Chalo Re", sung by the legendary singer, Shreya Ghoshal, and translated into Hindi/Urdu and English. Though physically separated, members had an enjoyable Zoom meeting.

Outdoor events:

*In partnership with acclaimed theatre company Paines Plough, **Belgrade Theatre** presented Roundabout 2021 – a festival of 4 brilliant new plays: *Really Big and Really Loud* (about losing your voice and going on a big adventure to find it again); *Hungry* (which looked at food, grief and class); *Black Love* (an uplifting musical) and *May Queen* (set in Coventry), in a unique pop-up theatre located in the grounds of Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre.

***BOPA** arranged a summer event at the Canal Basin.

***Friends of War Memorial Park** celebrated the Park's 100th birthday on July 9th 2021 with a *Rededication Service* in the presence of The Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, The Lord Mayor and other dignitaries. There was a message from the Queen and the new Community Sensory Garden created by volunteers was opened. The Friends, working with the Council, restored and refurbished the memorials beneath the memorial trees in the Park. They also created a Remembrance Tree Trail and a Memorial Benches audio tour (leaflets available in Park Visitor Centre).

***Godiva Trust** created a Covid Memorial Garden at the War Memorial Park. Heritage Open Days, To mark Heritage Open Days, the Godiva Sisters arranged their annual *Dame Goodyvers Daye event* through a colourful procession from Broadgate to Priory Gardens, the venue for varied performances. On 8th March –, the Trust arranged workshops, presentations by *International Women's Day* inspiring speakers and an entertainment programme. At the event, attendees were invited to write on a leaf the name of a woman who had inspired them. These were then put up on pink trees.

***Starfish Collaborative** arranged: *Breath of Fresh Air Wellbeing* sessions at Moat House Park; and the *Woodland Library Project* to enable people to enjoy creative and cultural activities in beautiful natural green spaces.

Learning events:

***Fablab** and **Eco Furniture Factory** arranged: **Construction Skills Certification Scheme** for training and qualifications to work on construction sites; *Kev's Corner Sessions* for hints and tips on the completion of DIY projects around your own home; *Upcycling Textiles*, focussing on how to turn old materials and fabrics into something new, using a combination of traditional textile skills and digital technology; women only *Introduction to Digital Fabrication*, which showed attendees how to create their own computer graphics and use them for different purposes; *Repair Café* –teaching skills to repair broken items around the home.

***Hillz FM** arranged radio training programmes for different age groups and collaborated with BBC CWR for City of Culture Trust's programmes on 7th and 8th August.

***VAC** - arranged Anti Hybernation Party and delivered a free 6-week Skills for Volunteering course for women at FWT.

***WEA** started 3 new courses in September 2021 – Early Years Assessment, Practical IT Skills and Practical Maths Skills.

Other contributors:

***Coventry Association for International Friendship (CAIF)** worked with Coventry-Dresden Arts Exchange and others to arrange the Coventry-Dresden Friendship Festival during Coventry Peace Festival 2021. CAIF also participated in international Zoom meetings to mark the 80th anniversary of Coventry's first step towards the international twinning movement. CAIF also hosted an international Zoom Conference on the *Rebuilding of Mosul*.

***Coventry Against Racism (CAR)** held an online zoom meeting with 2 excellent speakers – Councillor Dr. Kindy Sandhu and Jacqueline McKensie. Their presentations were followed by an animated discussion.

***CRASAC** marked its 40th Anniversary with a Survivors' Art Exhibition and hosted a lunchtime webinar to look at the findings of a report by the Independent Inquiry for Child Sex Abuse.

***Ekta-Unity** arranged a Welcome Back event in October to mark the resumption of their full day-to-day activities.

***Emilie Lauren Jones**, community Connector for Finham and Styvechale, worked with over a hundred people, who shared photographs, stories and historical knowledge of the area for the project *Stories from our Streets – Finham and Styvechale*. Local Councillors and our MP took part in recorded interviews. The film based on these contributions is available to view on YouTube. The link is <https://youtu.be/lvgYO8blPh0>

As Artist in Residence for Coventry Hall Methodist Church, Emilie arranged several events on the theme of Hope and Peace.

***Herbert Art Gallery & Museum** showcased the work of the 5 nominees for the *Turner Prize 2021* and hosted the *2 Tone Exhibition*. Coventry Transport Museum arranged *Our Future Moves* exhibition.

*I was one of the panellists at Coventry City of Culture Trust's extremely well-attended conference on **Co-creation**, held at Coventry Transport Museum on Thursday 26th May. It attracted local people as well as people from outside the city. Three cities competing for the title of UK City of Culture 2025 were also represented. During the breakout session, I explained what co-creation means to Positive Images Festival, outlined the challenges encountered and shed light on our evaluation procedure. Attendees were introduced to different perspectives offered by Alice Williams – Producer North East, Collaborative Team; Scott Burrell – Executive Producer, Bexley Three Rivers; and myself. The session was well-received.

At this same conference, our Poet Laureate – Emilie Lauren Jones, accompanied by Navkiran Mann, gave a scintillating poetry performance: they read a poem they had composed on the day, based on their visits to the different sessions.

***Wellness Junction** – marked International Women's Festival, with inspiring presentations on the theme *Break the bias* and celebrated Christmas and Vaisakhi. This was a very inclusive event. The festival of Vaisakhi was marked in April.

***West Indian Heritage Community Action Group** held a science event to enable young people to engage with science. During Black History Month, it launched its first FREE pop up cinema screening of Black Panther. WICA also arranged the screening of the film *he Greatest Showman* at Canley Community Centre.

Post-Festival Events:

***Hillfields Readers Group**: produced a monthly newsletter; arranged monthly meetings; and celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at its *Open Day* on Saturday 4th June. The programme included: poetry reading by members of the group and Emilie Lauren Jones – Coventry Poet Laureate; Bharathanatnam dance performance by Chitrakalaimanram – Centre for Performing Arts; and storytelling by Imagination Café storytellers.

*A *Peace Picnic* was held on 10th June 2022 in Coventry Peace Orchard. The picnic was organised by the **Normandy Day UK** Charity and **Cardinal Newman Catholic Secondary School**.

*After a 2 year absence **Styvechale Open Gardens** was back on 12th June. There were up to 15 lovely mature suburban gardens open, with many of them providing refreshments and plants for sale. At this extremely well-organised event, there was plenty to see and some wonderful ideas to take home. The sum of £5,032, raised from the sale of plants, refreshments and raffle tickets, was donated to Myton Hospice, Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie charities.



Exhibitions:

*In **Capturing Coventry**, a remarkable photographic exhibition, students of Hereward College shared their images of the city's buildings and architecture.

Exhibition venues were: Central, Earlsdon and Foleshill Library. Lucy Winter, Co-ordinator of Earlsdon Library said, **"Thank you so much for choosing to use our space - we've loved having the images up and they've attracted quite a lot of attention from our regular users."** A delighted Debbie Jones of Hereward College reported, "The Coventry market stall, Sitting Rooms of Culture, has been selling our postcards for us and the organiser, Kirsty, said: she loves them all."

*Photographer Donna Bridgewater captured people's emotions during lockdown through portrait images, which formed part of ***Getting Through This***. This remarkable exhibition enjoyed a long season at the Shop Front Theatre.



Looking back...

We continued to function as an umbrella organisation, circulated members' newsletters, initiated monthly updates, and kept the membership informed about funding sources, training opportunities and City of Culture Trust's programmes. We were delighted to see some of our members actively involved in events marking Coventry's special year. Several enquiries about performers, our monitoring arrangements, governance, etc.. were answered.

During the year we produced guidelines for work on posters/flyers, a Complaints Procedure and a Data Protection Policy Statement.

Links have been forged with the local media. Also the increasing use of Social Media has helped to increase our reach.

We responded to Culture Change Coventry's *Strategy Refresh* document and contributed to *Cultural Shift* – the Council's partnership with the University of Warwick. The project aimed to find ways in which culture can play a role in moving the city forward.

Members of our Executive Committee have represented the festival at: National Lottery Round Table; Cultural Heritage Teams Call; Coventry Community Forum; Coventry City of Culture Trust meetings; and events such as Discover Bulgaria, Equality Day.

On 31st May 2022, Colin Scott and I stepped down as Chair and Secretary respectively. Our journey over the years has been challenging as well as rewarding. Our membership continues to grow. The festival continues to acquire a fresh look each year through the inclusion of innovative events.

The festival was the proud recipient of Coventry City Council's Community Cohesion 'award in 2013 and the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2016. Coventry City Council's Anti Hate Crime Strategy cites Positive Images Festival as a model for good practice in supporting cohesion, integration and diversity.

We thank: Coventry City Council's Events Team; Peter Barnett CBE – Head of Libraries, Advice, Health and Information for his unfailing support; Coventry Libraries and Information Service; Coventry City of Culture Trust; our performers, who have proved that Coventry is a storehouse of talent; our funders; the local media; Chatterbox Magazine; our funders and our volunteers for their willing assistance at all times.

I end this report on a very positive note with a sample of compliments we received:
"Positive Images Festival has always been an inclusive festival"

"It is always a pleasure to participate in this festival."

"I have great admiration for all the great work that your organisation does for the people of Coventry."

Colin Scott and I felt privileged to be at the helm of a festival that has lasted so long without its own money or paid staff. We wish the new Executive Committee every success as it steers the festival to new heights.

Report prepared by:

Mehru Fitter MBE