



# Mela

PRESTON CITY MELA

Celebrating Multi Cultural Arts, Culture and Heritage

Saturday 14th July 2018

**Evaluation report: compiled by Gulab Singh MBE and Jenny Paul**



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## CELEBRATING MULTI-CULTURAL ARTS & HERITAGE 14 JULY 2018

### OVERVIEW

Preston City Mela now in its third year delivers a free, family-oriented event. This provides a perfect setting for meaningful integration, interaction and learning between people of all ages and cultures. The Mela is firmly established within the City's calendar of cultural events. The collaboration between Preston City Mela, Preston City Council, Community Gateway Association and GS Consultancy Limited has received financial support from the Arts Council of England (North West) and has successfully grown year on year.

The word *Mela* is deeply rooted in the Indian subcontinent, meaning 'fair'. Mela have traditionally played an important role in connecting communities. This is still the case and modern day Mela's incorporate art, culture, music, dance and food. Mela provides a backdrop for community cohesion, bringing together people from all walks of life to showcase cultural traditions and heritage.

Preston City Mela aims to offer a platform for up and coming North West artists to perform alongside International artists. Artists not only engaged with the general public at the event but also with smaller groups in Independent Living Schemes and at the Harris Library.

This year, Preston City Mela set out to:

1. Promote, develop and retain South Asian art forms in Preston and across Lancashire.
2. Showcase local artistic talent.
3. Use South Asian arts, as a key enabler to promote community cohesion, breaking down cultural differences and engaging people from all walks of life.
4. Contribute to a vibrant and diverse City offer, it links to Preston's main cultural programme.
5. Establish a quality cultural offer for Preston and Lancashire.
6. Contribute to the positive health and wellbeing of Preston's residents and visitors.

*Preston City Mela photos and video clips can all be viewed on the web site:  
<http://prestoncitymela.co.uk/the-2018-event>*

We would like to thank all the collaborative partners [ Preston City Council & Community Gateway Association] , the Arts Council of England [NW], artists, community stalls holders, volunteers, VIP guests and most importantly the public who attended and made the Mela a success. Thank you.

### EVENT PLANNING AND DELIVERY

During 2018, Preston City Mela held four outreach sessions within Independent Living Schemes and at the Harris Library, prior to the main event held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

### OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Contents of the outreach programme within the Independent Living Schemes and at the Harris Library were developed collaboratively with Community Gateway Association Managers, community workers and Harris Library staff. Artists were allocated to specific sessions and leaflets were produced under the Mela branding and disseminated prior to the sessions taking place.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEME – COMMUNITY GATEWAY ASSOCIATION

30<sup>th</sup> June

Indian block printing by ArteeCraft  
Henna Artist, Mohini Soni & Manisha Chauhan

7<sup>th</sup> July

Birds of Paradise origami by ArtFull  
Persian Drummer, Arian Sadr  
Henna Artist, Yogni Patel & Mohini Soni

Two sessions were held within two Independent Living Schemes run by Community Gateway Association. Tenants, family members and volunteers were invited to take part in pre-Mela activities. Both events were well attended with a total of 48 people of all ages benefiting from the activities on offer and sampling traditional Asian food.

Positive feedback was received from the artists regarding the organisation, publicity and welcoming by the volunteers and staff at the centres.

ArteeCraft assisted participants to learn traditional Indian block printing skills in order to create their shopping bags. Participants showed great enthusiasm and provided an excellent opportunity for interaction with community members.

*These pre-Mela sessions created a buzz for the upcoming Preston Mela 2018.*

*ArteeCraft*

Henna artists at both sessions showcased henna techniques and a range of different patterns.

ArtFull's taster session included three different activities for participants to engage with: bead making with rolled wallpaper, origami birds of paradise and stringing the birds and beads to make hangings for the main Mela event. Elderly

*I enjoyed applying henna to everybody, was lovely to see people's reactions to the henna.*

*Henna Artist*

residents had a go at the bead making and the origami and a couple enjoyed making the hangings so much they stayed with for the whole session. Children were also present and thoroughly enjoyed created something to take home. Some residents suffering from arthritic hands found detailed manipulation too difficult, however they were able to enjoy the spectacle and the colours on display.

Persian drummer sessions were also provided to tenants and well received. Participants returned on the Mela day.

Despite not having all worked together previously, Independent Living Scheme staff and the artists came together to deliver a well organised event with plenty of variety at each session. The events were not too busy allowing residents to sample the different crafts and activities on offer at their leisure without having to queue or go far from home to access workshops.

Feedback for the sessions was extremely positive:

- *Ooh I did enjoy it. Wasn't it fun? I don't think I can use the bag I made, it's too nice.*

- *The event was well attended, well organised and the entertainment ie crafts was excellent. The food was superb.*

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**Lessons Learnt:**

For Independent Living Schemes staff, the sessions provided an opportunity to foster new connections for future activities.

1. Future arts based programme to include staff awareness session as an introduction to cultural awareness.
2. Consider introducing arts based activities, linked to particular ethnicity groups, as part of the organisations Equality and Diversity programme, for example:
  - a) Vaisakhi (Sikh festival)
  - b) Eid (Muslim festival)
  - c) Black History Month (Afro-Caribbean)
  - d) Diwali (Hindu and Sikh festival)

**HARRIS LIBRARY**

Two sessions were held at the Harris Library, positioned alongside the café, at which a total of 30 people attended. It was hoped that these sessions would attract a greater number of people, however, it is felt that a combination of nice weather and the World Cup, including an England match, contributed to a lower than expected turnout. This did mean however, that the sessions were delivered within a relaxed atmosphere and artists were able to introduce and promote their activities with participants on a one to one basis.

<b>1<sup>st</sup> July</b>	<b>Henna (artist Bhagya Lakshmi) Ebru Marbling Arabic Art (artist Banu Adam, Arts2Heal)</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Henna (artist Bhagya Lakshmi) Screen printing (artist Kim Graham, Gold Thread Bobbins)

Although Henna painting is usually quite popular at the Mela event, generating a long queue of people waiting to experience the art form, the taster sessions were fairly quiet.

The Ebru Marbling workshop delivered by Arts2Heal provided an interactive platform suitable for all ages to engage in. The artist commented that due to the steady flow of participants, they were able to give support to individuals to take part, making the experience enjoyable despite abilities and/ or learning difficulties. From the response received, it was clear that Ebru Marbling was very much a new experience for the participants. Many asked further questions about the types of paints used, the

water solution and type of paper used. Some took notes and were keen to develop the art further, enquiring about further workshops and courses.

The visitors were keen to take part and enjoyed the experience, where possible, (with the exception of those that were too damp ) visitors took their artwork home or took photographs and were excited to show off their pieces to family/ friends, many of the younger children said they would take their creations into school to show their teachers.

From the perspective of promoting *Ebru* for mental-health it was a really successful event. Visitors commented on the therapeutic, relaxing attributes of marbling.

The Screen Printing workshop, delivered by Gold Thread Bobbins was well planned, providing vibrant colours and interesting techniques. The groups' social media was used to advertise the workshop however there were no participants at this session. This is perhaps due to the side room location, weather and the session clashed with both the England World Cup match and a music event on the Flagmarket. The Harris Library itself received very low visitors on this day also.

All feedback received from participants at the Harris Library sessions were rated as 5 stars and comments included:

- *It's great that something like this is going across cultures*
- *Very exciting for kids and families*
- *Great fun, really enjoyed it and so did everyone else!*
- *Really nice and the younger kids could have a try*

A special thanks was extended to the staff and volunteers of the Library who provided excellent support and assistance.

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### ***Lessons Learnt:***

Suggestions for future events included if feasible have a week long Pre Mela where activities can be spread out and include more information around the history and background of both the Preston City Mela and the commissioned artists.

1. Develop a timeline plan leading up to the Mela, to visit key groups with the Mela taster sessions and leaflets to encourage attendance in the lead up sessions for example: children's centres, youth clubs/community centres and colleges targeting younger age groups. This could be done more formally and pre-arranged with staff at the clubs/centres.
2. Workshops at the Harris need to be more visible. Through ensuring the workshops use dry materials (not water and paint), the workshops can easily be moved if required. Consider planning activities where the outcomes can be used in the Mela as stall decorations or be displayed in the Harris.

3. Some people didn't know what the Mela was. Creating a small area in the Harris during the lead up to the Mela with information about what the Mela is and where it comes from would generate publicity and marketing.
4. Secure more volunteers to help on the day. A callout for volunteers could be issued by the Harris in the LEP.

## PRESTON MELA EVENT PROGRAMME

The Preston Mela main event was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and the summer weather did not disappoint. The music and variety of workshops and information stalls on offer attracted large crowds to the Flagmarket throughout the day.

The event provided 15 performances, 15 workshops, 17 information stalls, two food stalls and numerous opportunities for audience participation and engagement. A total of 42 invites were sent to selected dignitaries to attend the event as a VIP guest including a celebration lunch. A total of 69 people attended the pre Mela hospitality session, with a further 21 volunteers ask to join this provision.

Preston Cadets and Preston Mela volunteers were on hand during the day assisting performers, artists and stallholders with supplies of water and ensuring that people were directed in a seamless manner. The Cadets also captured feedback from members of the public on the day. The Event Compare was provided by Jay Acharya who kept the crowd engaged throughout the day and introduced stage performers.

Due to the Preston Market being closed, Preston City Council were unable to provide car parking facilities for artists and contributors to the Mela programme, therefore an alternative arrangement was sought. This did mean however, that some of the performers had to carry heavy equipment further, which was reflective in the feedback. Preston Community Transport and Community Gateway Association agreed to provide two vehicles to help transport tenants from Independent Living Schemes homes who would have otherwise struggled to attend the event.

An arrangement was reached with the Catering providers to offer meal vouchers to all stallholders and performers. Due to the unexpected increase in artists, some of these were catered for as part of the VIP and volunteer hospitality provision.

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## EVENT FEEDBACK

A total of 29 people were surveyed by the Preston Police Cadets. 72% of respondents stated the event was the main reason or one of the reasons for their visit to the City. Twenty-one individuals had attended the 2017 Mela Event and all stated this was the specific reason for their return to the 2018 event. The performances were rated *very good* by 86% and 79% stated they were *much more* likely to visit further outdoor events in the City.

## Performers Feedback

Feedback was captured from a number of the performers on the day and reflects the positivity, community cohesion and celebration atmosphere of the day. A full compilation of all feedback from artists, stallholders and VIPs is included in Appendix 1. Some highlights are included below:

- *The audience dancing and getting involved says it all. There was an Indian lady and our drummer from the Ivory Coast dancing together. It is a real mixture of cultures coming together. **Drumroots***
- *It has been nice to see so many people from different backgrounds getting involved. It shows how the North West is community based. The world would be a sad place if there was just one culture. **Liverpool Hung Gar Kung Fu Club***
- *Bollywood dancing gives my students the chance to showcase and be proud of their cultural heritage. **MK Dance Academy***
- *As someone who was born and bred in Preston I would like to thank Gulab Singh for bringing this cross cultural event to our city. **Russell Hogarth, UCLAN***
- *I felt the Mela achieved its purpose and was successful in 'celebrating diversity' with all the communities coming together as one. **Nagina Ali, Lancashire Constabulary***
- *One of the best yet with a really diverse audience of people dipping in and out. Lots of young people too which is always good to see. **Lorraine Norris***

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following provides a number of recommendations for future delivery of Preston City Mela, taking into account feedback received from the outreach sessions and the Mela day.

1. Recruit and train two local artists who have expertise in performing arts and cultural crafts to take lead responsibility for developing Mela contents programme alongside the linguistics planning.
2. Establish a working group made up of key stakeholders and Mela project delivery team to plan and implement future Mela cultural arts programmes.
3. Consider increasing the artistic stage performing time and reduce contents to allow for greater public participation.
4. Increase workshop / craft artistic input in particular for children-based activities which attract large crowds on the day.
5. Calligraphy workshops only to be commissioned for outreach sessional work.
6. Consider different options to include VCFS stall holder's involvement to reduce non-attendance on the day.
7. Commissioning of artistic input needs be more detailed, ensuring that group numbers are captured to help plan with the delivery.
8. Develop the outreach programme across different cultural themes and settings.

## PRESTON CITY MELA PROGRAMME BUDGET

### Income

Preston City Council	£ 2,000
Community Gateway Association	£ 2,200
Arts Council England	£14,425

### In Kind

Preston City Council	£ 9,000
Community Gateway Association	£ 2,000
Total Budget for Event	£29,625

Cash Available for Event **£18,625**

### Overview of Expenditure

	Allocation	Actual
Artistic Spending	£ 9,760	£ 9,548
Marketing & developing Audiences	£ 1,000	£ 1,012
Overheads	£ 7,215	£ 7,320
Assets Buildings Equipment	£ 450	£ 530
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£18,425</b>	<b>£18,410</b>

### STAGE PERFORMERS

- *We would like more time at future events so we can see and engage with other artists. It would be nice to combine performers in future. It's the crowd and people who keep you going. **Samba Drummers***
- *The event seems to be getting better every year and is already very diverse but we need to see more diversity in Preston as a whole. **Carnaval***
- *Very good event but the sound system had no reverb which is needed for instruments. Preston is much better than other Melas I have attended as the audience seems more appreciative. **Vijay***
- *The Preston Mela has improved from last year. People seemed to know what to expect so were able to enjoy the performance more. There was an issue with parking so far. The audience dancing and getting involved says it all – there was an Indian lady and our drummer from the Ivory Coast dancing together. It is a real mixture of cultures coming together. Very like Manchester Mela in terms of different cultures. **Drumroots***
- *People walking past were attracted straight away and I was able to give them demonstrations. I have undertaken three rounds of workshops so far. People who participated in the Independent Living Scheme workshop came back today to have another go. They have had a great time out. I love the vibe of the City. Reverb for the soundsystem could be improved for performers. **Persian Drummer***
- *Absolutely loved it. The atmosphere was great and there has been a great mixture of stuff happening. Quite responsive audience and it was great fun. **Arjays Violinist***
- *We perform at a lot of events all over the place. The Preston Mela has been so well organised with the food, parking, changing facilities for the artists. The way the event has been run has been superb, second to none. It has been nice to see so many people from different backgrounds getting involved. It shows how the North West is community based. The world would be a sad place if there was just one culture. Can't help but get involved. **Liverpool Hung Gar Kung Fu Club***
- *PM gives identity to multicultural crowd who live in Preston, specifically the Gujarati society who have a large reach at events like this. It provides opportunities to come participate. I teach Bollywood dancing and this gives my students the chance to showcase and be proud of their cultural heritage. The event has been very well organised. **MK Dance***
- *So much better organised today. This year everything has been managed so professionally. There were some teething issues but there has been fantastic support from the team. Overall it has been a much better experience than last year. I only wish we had more time and more funding. **Compare***

### WORKSHOPS

- *My experience was thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding. I'm glad that I was given the opportunity to participate and would love to participate again if such events were to be organised in the future. **Mohini Soni, Henna Artist***
- *The event was very well attended and we worked with around 80-100 people. We had both children, adults and family groups working with us, everyone enjoyed the activity and made a bird to take away. We also had a number of children coming back to make extra birds to put on their ribbons. There was a very good and relaxed feel to the whole event, it was very well managed and there was always someone around to ask questions. At times the DJ was very loud, which was hard to work against when explaining*

how to make origami to people . The drumming was very good but also very Loud especially when they were walking around , or showing people how to drum but it was a great positive event , which we enjoyed being part of. **ArtFull Origami**

- This year has been fantastic. The requirement on this stall is to colour 52 Commonwealth flags. Everyone has been too enthusiastic. We even saw some elderly people helping colour alongside children. Car parking facilities could be improved for stallholders. **Commonwealth Flags**
- This workshop is always difficult due to supply and demand. Weather has been great for drying the fabric prints. People love it – the process is great for participants. We attend the Mela every year. **Gold Thread Bobbins**

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## STALLHOLDERS

- I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making myself and Arts 2 Heal a part of this hugely successful and enjoyable event. It was a true celebration of the diverse and vibrant community we are proud to be a part of.

Our Marbling workshop was extremely busy throughout the day, we continued beyond the finishing time to ensure no-one felt left out, the passion from the visitors was amazing. Visitors of all ages and background took part in the Ebru marbling and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The verbal feedback received on the day was very positive, with relaxed conversation and laughter both. Many took photographs and asked detailed questions regarding the Ebru, we gave out notes of the materials used and techniques for preparation so we are very confident we inspired many to explore a new hobby. Many of the visitors engaged in discussion in terms of benefits to mental health, whilst others highlighted frustrations of the lack of wider opportunities (such as the festival) to explore these types of arts on a regular basis, particularly in view of local community centres no longer able to offer arts workshops.

The atmosphere was full of energy and lively, the event was extremely well organised with such helpful and friendly staff. Clear instructions prior to the event which covered everything from parking to refreshments, this helped ensure the day ran smoothly and was enjoyable. **Banu Adam, Arts2Heal**

- I was at the Mela with my colleagues from the Community Cohesion Team, Police Cadets and of course our Chief Inspector Jonathan Clegg. I have always attended Preston Mela's in the past, however I felt this time there was a real community Buzz – the atmosphere was just amazing!! I felt the Mela achieved its purpose and was successful in 'celebrating diversity' with all the communities coming together as one. I was tweeting throughout the day and received really good response from everyone – and communities out of Preston want us to inform them of the next year's Mela. The highlight of the day was the dance by all the VIP's and Gulab Singh. Overall, brilliant Community Event – perfect for community engagement and for bringing communities together. **Nagina Ali, Police**
- The event is bigger and more lively than last year. Weather is also supporting. It has been a wonderful day – never had a dull moment. Lots of things for people to do. Better than last year as so many things so not as many queues as last year. **Arteecraft**
- Like that there are lots of different organisations so that people are able to get information. The organisation was very good and there has been good entertainment. The weather has played a big part too. **Sahara**
- Our organisation has done well with promoting the services we provide, in particular, coffee mornings and courses. We have been received absolutely fantastically about getting women together and giving them support in respectful way and ensuring they are not alone. **Lancashire Women's Centre**
- The event has been well organised and we have been very busy. Everyone has enjoyed it. As soon as I show one person, more people come. As soon as people see the steel drums they come to have a look. This is a very multicultural event. **Preston Steel Connections**

- *The Preston Mela has been a brilliant event. There have been some fantastic acts on. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves. It has also been good to see the Mayor, Chief Inspector and various dignitaries getting involved and letting their hair down. From our point of view, we turned up and we knew where we had to be, everything has been explained to us. Everything has been spot.* **Lancashire Volunteer Partnership**
- *This event is very important for us as we get a lot of community engagement. Our cadet mascot dancing and greeting people shows the other side to what cadets do. A lot of people do not know that cadets come to a lot of community events. This is all about getting engagement for us. In terms of improvements, the cadets noticed that there were no activities this year.* **Preston Police Cadets**

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## VIPS

- *Anna and I could not have enjoyed ourselves more on our visit to Preston City Mela on the flagmarket on 14 July. Arriving straight from the train, we were immediately refreshed by the marvellous cooking of Davinder and others. Then we watched a number of high quality and entertaining performers, before visiting all the many stalls assembled around the Flag Market. We also had a good opportunity to catch up with other VIPs in the civic parties as well as many members of the public.*  
*May I congratulate you and everyone else involved on your organisation of such a splendid occasion. Yet again, it demonstrated the great diversity of our community in Lancashire and the help and support that many groups and organisations give to each other.* **Lord Charles Shuttleworth**
- *Thank you for inviting us to Preston Mela festival. It was a great event, a true celebration diversity of different cultures!!!! Well done to all involved!* **Kailash**
- *Many thanks to you and the team for a wonderful event. It was a real pleasure to be there. Thank you for the great hospitality* **Rachel Clegg Pro- Chancellor UCLan**
- *It was just wonderful. Thank you for all you do to make Preston such a wonderful place to live. May God continue to bless you in all you do.* **Andrew R. Pratt the Bishop of Blackburn's Interfaith Advisor**
- *Thank you Gulab it was a wonderful afternoon. One of the best yet with a really diverse audience of people dipping in and out. Lots of young people too which is always good to see.* **Lorraine Norris**
- *It was good to be able to meet you in person yesterday and also it was brilliant to be able to share the Mela celebrations with you and your friends and colleagues yesterday. The whole event, the setting, the weather and the many, many people there to enjoy it really made for a wonderful occasion. You must be delighted that all your hard work and that of others who were there supporting you resulted in a very successful and joyous occasion. Thank you for your invitation which was really appreciated by Dave and myself.* **Ann & Dave Djordjevic CGA Board Member**
- *Many congratulations and well done to all your organising team and volunteers. This is just a little note from Richard and me to say thank you very much for your invitation to attend the wonderful Mela event on the Flag Market in Preston. It was a most enjoyable, entertaining, well attended and organised event. Greatly assisted by the excellent weather we are currently enjoying in the U.K. Your kind hospitality was enjoyed by us and all your guests and an excellent event to meet friends old and make new ones too.* **Charu & Richard Ainscough**
- *Well done, very well organised and maintaining South Indian culture. Everyone I spoke to had a good time.* **Ishwer Tailor MBE DL**
- *Yesterday's event was fantastic. I thought the entertainment was wonderful, my compliments to the ladies who provided the food. I meet a lot off really nice interesting people, and once again thank you for inviting me to attend.* **Veronica McLintock**
- *The Preston City Mela on Saturday 14 July was a tremendous success and it brought together community members from around the region. It also highlighted the breadth of talent within our city and beyond.*

*The community stalls around the flag market provided much-needed information and support. As someone who was born and bred in Preston I would like to thank Gulab Singh for bringing this cross cultural event to our city.* **Russell Hogarth, UCLAN**

## APPENDIX 2 – MELA CONTRIBUTORS

### ARTISTS STAGE PERFORMANCES

Jay Acharya Compares – Music Tracks	Tohr Panjabian Di Bhangra Group
Red Rose Ragga – Classical Music Mix	Liverpool Hung Gar Kung Fu Chinese Lion
Caribbean Carnival Dance Troop	Dance Team
The Worldwide Samba Drummers & Dancers	PR Dholi’s Players
Vijay Venkat Musician Bansuri Performance	Arian Sadr Persian Drummer
Drumroots	Preston Steel Connections

### ARTISTS WORKSHOPS

ALISON Chris Davis	ArtFull Bernie Velvick
Persian Drummer Arian Sadr	GLL Smoothie Bike Kerry Cross
Gold Thread Bobbins Kim Graham	Preston Steel Connections Tracey Edwards
Arts2Heal Banu Adam	Caricature Artist Ben Hunt
ArteeCraft X3 Commonwealth Bunting, African Mask Making & Wooden Block Printing on Fabric [ Shreya, Rakesh & Vijay]	Henna Artists : Yogni Patel, Manisha Chauhan, Kiran Hussian, Mohini Soni, Bhaggya Reddy

### COMMUNITY STALL HOLDERS

Community Gateway Association	Lancashire Constabulary & Preston Police Cadets
Lancashire BME Network	Caritas Care
University of Central Lancashire	Preston City of Sanctuary
Let’s Grow Preston	NHS Greater Preston CCG
Lancashire Women Centre	Galloways
Dragonfly Holistic	Sahara in Preston
Disability Equality NW	INTACK
ABL Health	The Larder Catering

