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# **Preston Mela Evaluation Report 2017**

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August 2017**

## Table of Contents

FORWARD.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION .....	4
2. PLANNING AND DELIVERY .....	6
Stage Programme .....	6
Workshops .....	7
Community and Public Sector Providers .....	8
Marketing and Publicity.....	9
Events Plan and Risk Assessment.....	9
Traditional Catering Provision .....	9
VIPs Invites .....	11
3. EVALUATION .....	12
Evaluation methods .....	12
Evaluation Summary .....	12
Stage Artists .....	14
Workshop Artists .....	15
Community & Public Sector Service Providers .....	17
Visitors .....	19
Capturing Visual Aspects of Mela and Outreach Workshops .....	20
VIP Guest Feedback .....	25
4. SUMMARY ACCOUNTS 2017.....	27
5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS .....	28
MELA Structural / Organisational .....	28
MELA Contents .....	28
APPENDIX A - Messages from Dignitaries .....	30

## FORWARD

I am extremely pleased and grateful for the presence and support of our dignitaries who joined us for Preston Mela: Lord and Lady Shuttleworth, Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, The Mayor of Preston and Mayoress Councillor Brain Rollo, The Mayor of South Ribble Borough Council Councillor Mick Titherington, Chairman of Lancashire County Council Councillor Terry Aldridge, Mr Andy Rhodes Chief Constable of Lancashire and Mark Hendricks Member of Parliament for Preston.

Holding public events has become very challenging, not least for security reasons. It is imperative that we strive to live our lives within as normal a routine as possible and celebrate the freedom and values of equality and diversity. Considerable effort is required to ensure public safety is at the forefront.

With the current economic climate, securing funding for this year's Mela has been very challenging. We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors and grant awarding bodies for their continuous support and commitment that has helped ensure the Mela is a major focal point in Preston city's arts and cultural calendar. The showcasing of Preston Mela would have not been possible without the financial contributions and technical support from:

- Preston City Council;
- Community Gateway Association; and
- Arts Council of England.

I am also grateful to the many volunteers and organisations that supported the event by booking stalls and supporting our programme booklet. Furthermore, I am indebted to those organisations and individuals who have assisted with the planning, commissioning and delivery of the event, namely:

- Tim Joel, Richard Baxter and Rita Whitlock, Events Team, Preston City Council;
- Paul Kelly, Community Empowerment Manager, Community Gateway Association;
- Chris Davis, ALISON;
- Jenny Paul, Project Worker;
- Kyra Milnes, Harris Museum;
- The Police Cadet volunteers;
- Catriona Andrews - Graphic Designer Preston City Council.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With roots in the Indian subcontinent, the word Mela signifies 'Fair'. In rural tradition, Mela's were and still are of great importance in connecting communities. In its modern usage, it is not only a South Asian but also an intercultural festival incorporating art, culture, music, dance, food and heritage. Mela provides the backdrop for community cohesion, bringing together people from all walks of life to share traditions and cultural experiences.

This family oriented event provides an opportunity to share rich cultural heritage with the mainstream population. Mela provides the perfect cohesion and participation setting by creating an opportunity where communities and people of all ages can come together to have fun and learn. This unique, colourful and free event is brought together by aiming to promote meaningful integration and interaction between the diverse groups within Preston.

Preston Mela has been in place for more than 15 years and made a major contribution to the City's cultural programme and during the Guild 2012 celebrations. For seven years I held the post of Chairman of Preston Mela Trust to ensure this cultural event demonstrated improvement year on year. Since my retirement from the Trust there has not been a Mela event in Preston between 2013 and 2016.

Preston Mela is a self-financing event, which is not for profit. Once again, I am indebted to our sponsors and funding bodies.

In 2015, I was approached by Preston City Council Events and Cultural Services, to work in partnership to introduce South Asian arts into the Preston City Cultural Calendar. In my final Chairman report of 2012 I made a number of recommendations for the future sustainability of the Preston Mela event. Two of these are pertinent to the current work:

8. **Location of Mela:** To reduce infrastructure costs, consider relocating the Mela to the town Centre as an option as this will capture Sunday shoppers. Suggested sites for use would be the main market for stalls and stands; the old fish market for catering / food outlets; Bailey Street for fun fair linking to the Flag market for stage and performances.
9. **Touring Programme:** Build on the success of the Guild 2012 and consider having aspects of Mela attached to other events in the city calendar such as the Riversway Festival etc.

I took up this challenge and set up G S Consultancy Limited to lead this work programme and focus on recommendation 8 (above). I am hopeful that recommendation 9 will also become a future activity. In 2016, I responded to Preston City Council's commissioned opportunity for new events for the Flag Market Summer Programme and delivered a pilot Preston Mini Mela. This broke with the tradition of holding a high profile event in the park and moved to a smaller, city center location, which could be delivered within a small-managed budget. This meant that artistic input had to be locally sourced to help reduce overheads but more importantly, it allowed for new and emerging local artists to showcase their skills.

The emergence of Preston Mela in its new format on the Preston Flag Market site is beginning to establish itself as part of Preston city's cultural calendar. The Mela programme strives to provide quality interaction between different groups through traditional music, art, dance, food and crafts and an opportunity for service providers from both the public sector and voluntary organisations in Preston to showcase their services.



## 2. PLANNING AND DELIVERY

The planning for Preston Mela and the development of the programme started in September 2016. The programme was built on the successful Preston Mini Mela pilot held in the flag market (July 2016), as part of the Preston City Council summer Flag Market programme. Performing artists and workshop facilitators were approached via an expression of interest form to gauge interest, availability, detail of the activities and costs. This informed the Arts Council England application, in collaboration with Preston City Council and Community Gateway Association.

Community and public service organisations were also approached in the same way. The intention was to offer 8 communities stalls a free place at the Mela as they provide added value to the event. The interest was such that 14 stalls were given a place at the event.

### STAGE PROGRAMME

Artist	Performance
Jay Acharya & Henna Soni Compares - Music Tracks	Compares to introduce the performing artist, maintain audience interest and participation.
Desi Sangeet (More Music)	A new Indian Music ensemble for young people created with the Lancashire Music Hub. It is open for young people to join at any time and is beginning to make new performances in the district.
Abhinandana MK Dance Academy [3x performances] Traditional Indian Folk dance / Bollywood Dance Medley/Flash dance Workshop	An organisation based at Gujarat Hindu Society Centre, Preston. It will present Indian classical, folk and Bollywood dances to showcase the traditional and cultural heritage of India. This is a rich culmination of dance, music and vibrant costumes.
Drumroots	Africa traditional drumming group.
Amy Fields Violinist Bollywood Tunes	Amy is one of UK's premier solo Bollywood, classical, pop, rock and fusion electric violinists.
Bollywood Dance Extravaganza! Sitaare Dances	An all girls group of Bollywood performance in the heart of Preston, giving people an exciting and colourful dance to watch, take part in and enjoy.
Vakhri Punjabans Gidha Group Dance	Vakhri Punjabans is an all girls' Bhangra and Gidha team which travel all across UK to promote the Punjabi culture.

Funky Dhollis & Band Baja Group	Dhol and musical instruments playing Bhangra and Bollywood tunes.
Nachda Sansaar Bhangra Group	Traditional Punjabi mixed gender dance group.
Preston Dhol Players	Dhol performance and audience participation.

## WORKSHOPS

Workshop Artists	Theme
Smoothie Bike Stand, Preston City Council	Healthy eating activity promoting daily intake of fruit and veg by making your smoothies on the back of a bike.
Henna, Manisha Chauhan	Five individual artist each using, Mehndi (henna) to create traditional tattoo patterns on hands and arms.  Each artist had their own style and designs
Henna, Bhaggy Reddy	
Henna, Nirali Parekh	
Henna, Kiran Hussian	
Henna, Alefiya Patel	
Nail Design, Mallia Reynolds	Nail art techniques and designs.
Face Painting, Dilshad Rajani	Eye popping and jaw dropping face painting created by Dilshad, a make-up and special effects artist.
Gold Thread Bobbins, Kim Graham	Individuals will be invited to print their own bag.
Music Workshop & Schools Project, ALISON	Capturing feedback from the pre event workshops undertaken by ALISON.
ArteeCraft - Rangoli Patterns Viraj Gandhi	Naturalistic freehand community floor mural giving preference to nature (birds, flowers) while using vivid outlines to express the patterns. The designs can be any shape and size, in colourful powder with heavy outlines in white sandy powder. Creative activities designed to inspire and ignite imaginations. Try your hands on Rangoli patterns and create beautiful motifs using colourful powders.
ArteeCraft - Kite Making Rakesh Ghodke	Patang - Traditional kites using Indian concepts and materials Discover how to construct beautiful geometric kites. Learn how to make an Indian Fighting Kite, known in India as a 'Patang'.

ArteeCraft - Calligraphy Shreya Ghodke	Showcasing the significance of Indian calligraphy. This hand-lettered inscription depicts strokes and gives 'spirit' to the drawn characters and sophisticated penmanship style using special pens, brushes and bamboo dip pens. Using the art of Calligraphy creating designs on canvas and cards
Silk Painting, Jane Blackburn	Traditional painting on silks.
Climbing Wall, GLL	Outdoor climbing wall.
Bouncing Castle	Hussian Occasions -Children's' bouncing castle.

## COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SECTOR PROVIDERS

Organisation	Theme
Disability Equality (NW) Ltd	Furthering the rights of Disable people across the North West.
Preston Volunteer Police Cadet	Promote Cadet service and recruitment drive.
Greater Preston Clinical Commissioning Group	Promoting local health services.
Galloways	Promoting specialist services for the blind.
Age Concern Central Lancashire	Raise awareness of the charities activities and services in support of older people locally.
What Women Want Project	Promote physical activity and recreation activities for women.
Lancashire County Council Family Information Service	Provision of information for parents looking for childcare and discussing family support and childcare needs.
Caritas Care	Fostering and adoption information.
Preston City of Sanctuary	Promote the services and networks of City of Sanctuary.
INTAG	Promoting activities at Intact aimed at promoting social inclusion and health and wellbeing. In particular, dance projects, Creative Connections, art journaling and arts and crafts projects.
Lancashire Heritage Unit	Promote Commonwealth /Sikh forces involvement in WW1 as part of national commemoration.
Lancashire Constabulary	Promoting police services.
University of Central Lancashire	Promoting science and creative courses.
Community Gateway Association	Promoting services offered by Community Gateway Housing Association.

## MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

Design briefs were drafted and presented to the Preston City Council Print and Design team, who came up with the final design for Mela 2017. This required close liaising with the designer to ensure that the printed material had the same imagery and theme.

One month before the event, all artists and stallholders were provided with the publicity materials asked to disseminate the A5 flyer and programme booklet (PDF version) through their communication networks and social media outlets to maximise publicity for the event.

This was followed up by providing printed materials to all contributors to disseminate flyers and programme booklets, both within their organisation and to their clients. All South Asian food outlets in Preston and those businesses that advertised in the programme booklet were provided with posters, flyers and booklets to help with marketing the event.

Partnership organisations were asked to utilise their own social media networks to promote the event. On the day of the Mela, both visitors and VIPs tweeted about the day.

## EVENTS PLAN AND RISK ASSESSMENT

A detailed Events Plan was compiled by the Preston Mela Production Manager, which included a full risk assessment in collaboration with artists and contributors. This document was submitted to Preston City Council for approval one month prior to the event date.

## TRADITIONAL CATERING PROVISION

It was challenging to secure South Asian catering establishments for event. Although there was considerable interest, no bookings materialized. This led to a reduction in income generation. A different approach was required to ensure there was a provision of Asian food outlets for visitors. The Larder, a local social enterprise which aims to deliver healthy and sustainable food messages, was approached for assistance. Two members of The Larder volunteered to take part in Mela programme and it was agreed that the booking fee would be waived. The two chefs that took part are:

- **Lakshmi:** *Lakshmi Appadorai Baker is a mother, a lawyer by qualification and TV presenter, producer and newsreader by experience. Due to her personal challenges with health, she became very interested in nutritional therapy. This led her to see food as medicine and she now been cooking delicious meals that are healthy, to suit individual needs. She is also a passionate propagator of 0% waste. Due to hailing from multicultural Malaysia, she can make meals out of almost any ingredient you give her to the touches of western, Indian, Chinese, Malay, Malaysian, Italian or Thai flavours. Give Lakshmi recipes from any other region in the world and she could to make it, as she loves making something that tastes different almost every other day. Lakshmi is also very passionate about making delicious, low sugar & gluten free cakes and desserts.*



- **Sara:** *Sara Dishes was born and brought up in Preston and has her roots from both the Gujarat and south Indian regions of India. Sara has the ability to cook a diverse range of foods ranging from idli, dosa, pav bhaji, samosas, and pakoras to differing curries biryanis right up to pizzas lasagne pasta and pies including Lancashire potato pie. She has been cooking since the age of 11 and over time developed a great passion for multi cultural food and love to eat and feed. Sara started cooking for fundraiser and charity events, which lead to a great demand from family, friends and elderly from the local community.*

It is anticipated that both Lakshmi and Sara will use this experience at the Mela to progress their business ventures in Asian foods. In addition this experience will provide a great opportunity to work together at future Mela and South Asian art events.

## VIPS INVITES

Over 40 VIPs guest representing institutions, organisations, business and the community were invited to attend and experience the Mela programme. A number of high profile guest provided a message for the Mela programme booklet outlined in **Appendix A**. VIPs provided added support to the event and also participated in the Mela activities including craft, dance and playing the Dhol.



### 3. EVALUATION

Evaluation is a very important aspect of any piece of work. Preston Mela places significant importance on evaluation to measure success, identify key learning, future improvements and finally, accountability.

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#### EVALUATION METHODS

Three different evaluation forms were implemented, aimed at workshops facilitators, community stallholders and visitors. Preston City Council's evaluation form was used to capture visitor responses relating to the Mela and also to inform the "On the Flag Market and In The Harris" summer programme. Police cadets facilitated the visitor forms and the project worker who also undertook the analysis captured the other evaluation forms.

For stage artists, we tried to capture a qualitative quote of their experience after completing their performance. This became difficult as artists were dashing off straight after their performance.

The ALISON project Community Media Productions, captured the event on video and through photographs and undertook outreach consultations sessions in schools and with community groups. Their findings are outlined within the *Capturing Visual Aspects of Mela* section below.

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#### EVALUATION SUMMARY

- There were a total of ten stage performances. For this group, some feedback was received via email after the event due to the difficulties in obtaining feedback on the day. Future consideration needs to be given to appointing a stage manager to ensure seamless coordination not only of feedback but also of all performances on the day.
- Artists fed back positively both in terms of their participation and audience engagement and spirit.
- Fifteen workshops were delivered which included a range of music, arts and crafts showcasing South Asian culture. Feedback suggests that artists thoroughly enjoyed delivering the workshops and individuals enjoyed taking part whilst learning about different designs, patterns and sounds. There is a need to attract more young people in terms of the artistic input and consideration should be sought regarding targeted workshops.

- The workshops were situated between the community and public sector provider stalls, which worked well, however at busier times this meant that people were queuing within a small space. Feedback was received that the stage music prohibited some of their work and this should be considered when designing the layout of future events.
- Fifteen community and public sector providers held information stalls on the day. This proved a great success and visitors demonstrated considerable interest and interaction. The day provided an excellent opportunity for a range of community and public sector providers to showcase and provide information on the services on offer to the local community. The Mela has been overwhelmed by the interest from the organisations wishing to take part in the 2018 programme.
- Police cadets facilitated twenty-three visitor evaluation forms. The overall event and the quality of performance and activities were well received by visitors. The impact the Mela event has had is clear; 78% of respondents commented that they were either much more likely or more likely to visit other outdoor events.
- The event contributed to 57% of respondents stating the Mela had encouraged them to visit Preston City Centre again (30% were much more likely and 26% were more likely).
- ALISON was commissioned to provide visual aspects of the Mela and support feedback/evaluation, which included capturing the event on the day by film. In addition, 2 sessions with 26 local children were held prior to the event. Feedbacks from 35 individuals were received about the future direction of Preston Mela and 79 flowers were made.
- Feedback was received from the people who had been coming to Preston Mela's for years and those who had only recently discovered it - they all loved their Mela. A number of people referenced the importance of its celebratory nature and this was particularly pertinent for some during these "economically difficult and divisive times".

With an event of this size, it is extremely difficult to quantify the number of people who attended the event and benefited from the range of performances, activities and information stalls. Taking into account workshops and community stall feedback and from general observations it is estimated between 3,500 to 4,000 attended the Mela during the course of the day.

The interest to take part in next year's programme has been overwhelming with 100% of all workshops, community and public sector providers expressing an interest to be part of Mela 2018. A further 7 community stalls have already made contact wishing to take part next year.

## STAGE ARTISTS

Ten artists and groups performed on the day. It was difficult to coordinate artist feedback after their performance alongside coordinating the next performers and paying the artists for their input. Based on previous experience it is very unlikely that feedback from performing artists will be obtained post the event, even if it forms part of their contract. The project worker however, contacted each of the artists the week after the event to obtain feedback. The feedback received via email and by telephone is captured below.

In future, consideration needs to be given to having a stage manager to ensure artists are on time and ready to perform, capture feedback and make payments for their input.

*Working with VIPs to demonstrate Dhol playing was a pleasure, especially when they were so willing to have a go!!*

**Deepak Singh PR Dholis**

*Thanks for inviting us to a wonderful community event. The atmosphere showed good community spirit. We hope that we have the opportunity of working together again*

**Jag Kumar on Behalf of Nachda Sansaar**

*The event was brilliant and well put together. The audience was really appreciative of the dance performances and very encouraging. This is what led us to do some audience participation, which we hadn't anticipated.*

**Kiren Kaur on Behalf of Vakhri Punjabans Gidda Group**

Consideration should be given to the stage setting where new, local talent can be showcased. One option would be to hold a dedicated slot for a talent show, perhaps asking a local artist group to manage this task.

*The Mela was amazing. Our African drummers really enjoyed performing!*

**Jamie on Behalf of Drumroots**



## WORKSHOP ARTISTS

A total of fifteen workshops were delivered on the day reaching approximately 1,392 participants.

Artist	Feedback	Participants No.
Smoothie Bike Stand, Preston City Council	Great event. Ran well - Food for stall holders was appreciated. The stall was well received and the audience enjoyed the smoothies.	92
Henna, Manisha Chauhan	Thank you very much for giving me this work and I really enjoyed it and I would really like to work again any other event thank you.  People were very interested in the henna and the designs. They enjoyed it very much.  They loved very much and liked the patterns on their hands.  Everyone was happy all the time.	100+
Henna, Bhaggy Reddy		125
Henna, Nirali Parekh		80+
Henna, Kiran Hussian		200+
Henna, Alefiya Patel		80+
Nail Design, Mallia Reynolds	Very popular and busy.	40
Face Painting, Dilshad Rajani	Very enjoyable	75
Gold Thread Bobbins, Kim Graham	Everyone participated to print their own bag. It was a fabulous day we had such a good response from everyone who came to print a bag. Thanks for inviting us to be involved, we had a great time.	100
Music Workshop & Schools Project, ALISON	Managed to record a number of people for the mix but the music on stage was very loud so prohibited some of the work. The decoration of the robot was popular with children.	90
Rangoli Patterns, ArteeCraft	Everyone enjoyed making rangoli designs and learnt new skills.	90-120
Kite Making, Artee Craft	Awesome response and keen interest from kids and elders.	70-90
Calligraphy, Artee Craft	Session was very well received and enjoyed by all ages.	75-90
Silk Painting, Jane Blackburn	Very popular. Many enjoyed it so much that they would like to do it again. We ran out of silks!	50+

Climbing Wall, Preston City Council	The session was well received. There was a big queue at the end with parents clamoring to get their children on.	60
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The Mela Production Manager sent an email to all workshop artists, thanking them for their valuable contribution to help Preston Mela be a success. A number of emails were received providing additional feedback of their experience of the Mela programme.

*We had a wonderful day and thank you to everyone who made it such a lovely event. I shall be in touch soon when I have managed to complete the community silk painting that was produced at the event to arrange delivery of it to you.*

**Jane Blackburn Freelance Community Arts & Project Manager**

*Big thanks to you too Gulab! It was a fabulous day; we had such a good response from everyone who came to print a bag. Thanks for inviting us to be involved we had a great time.*

**Kim Graham Gold Thread Bobbins**

*Thank you very much for giving me this work and I really enjoyed it and I would really like to work again any other event thank you.*

**Manisha Chauha. Henna Artist**

The workshop artist input has been a success due to the choice of artistic provision available at the event. The craft sessions ensured there was considerable audience participation and something for the all the family.

What worked well was having workshop artists situated between the community and public sector provider stalls. This ensured that people waiting to get involved in the craft sessions



could engage with other stalls. However, due to the queuing at these stalls it may be worth considering zone areas, such as children activities at future events. Furthermore, there is a need to attract more young people in terms of artistic input. This may require having targeted workshops for this age group. Community and public sector service providers.

## COMMUNITY & PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Fifteen community and public sector providers held information stalls and based on the numbers from their evaluation forms reaching approximately 2,207 people.

Organisation	Did the event meet your expectations?	Visitors No.
Disability Equality (NW) Ltd	Yes, lots of people came to our stall.	150
Preston Volunteer Police Cadet	Yes	100+
Greater Preston CCG	Yes, it was brilliant. Really busy, diverse stalls and very engaging entertainment.	100+
Galloways	It was a brilliant day, and I am already looking forward to the next one.	40+
Age Concern Central Lancashire	Yes, we provided information and awareness of Age Concern services.	300
What Women Want Project	No feedback received.	57
LCC Family Information Service	Yes the event has been very well run. Great information prior to attendance. Tables, chairs etc. Very helpful people working at the event. Also a nice family atmosphere.	40
Caritas Care	Yes, the level of entertainment both on stage and the stalls was excellent.	60
Preston City of Sanctuary	Yes. We distributed leaflets and the volunteers provided information.	20
INTAG	Absolutely. Great, well organized event.	90+
Lancashire Heritage Unit	Yes, well planned. We provided information on the role of the Indian army in WWI	300-400
Lancashire Constabulary	Yes, well planned.	100+
University of Central Lancashire	It was a good event. More tables and space would have been beneficial.	200-250
Community Gateway Association	Yes. Really well planned and delivered. We had the weather! Wonderful atmosphere.	300
Sara Dishes	The event more than met our expectations!	200+

The Mela Production Manager sent an email to all Stall Holders following the Mela event, thanking them for their valuable contribution to the success of Preston Mela. A number of emails were received providing additional feedback of their experience of the day.

*Preston Mela was a fabulous event; I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was able to engage with the diverse community of Preston. Thank you to you and all your volunteers for looking after us all.*

**Nagina Ali, Police Link Worker, Preston Police Ops Centers, Lancaster Road North**

*I will ensure all staff that attended are thanked for their contributions including of course the cadets. It was a fantastic event and so positive to be able to engage with such a wide audience on a positive note from a police perspective. We had lots of interest from people keen to work with us planning career opportunities and many interested in the cadet scheme.*

**Helen Chadwick, Workforce Representation Co-ordinator, Lancashire Police HQ**

*And thank you so much for your help in getting us up and running - and congratulations on a very successful event.*

**Linda Tompkins, Social and Community Inclusion Manager, UCLaN**

*It was an extremely well run event with a lovely friendly, family atmosphere. Congratulations to you and your team for organizing this event so well.*

**Warren Marchini, Information Officer, Lancashire Family Information Service, Lancashire County**

*It was good to see you and good to see such a vibrant and colourful Mela! Thanks for providing the stall and for having us on the day.*

**Iain Pearson, Executive Director, Age Concern Central Lancashire**

*A big Thank you to you too, for organizing it all. It was a brilliant day, and I am already looking forward to the next one.*

**Angie Turner, Sight Loss Advisor, Galloways**

Having community and public sector service providers at the event proved a great success. The number of people that visited these stalls demonstrated considerable interest and interaction. More importantly, it added value to the programme and helped occupy people's time whilst waiting to get involved with craft activities. Had this provision not been in the Mela programme, craft stalls would have been overwhelmed and unable to cope. The interest from community organisations is such that more groups have been in contact post Mela requesting to take part in the 2018 programme. If we increase the numbers this will, of course, have implications for ensuring we have enough equipment to accommodate in terms of infrastructure support.

## VISITORS

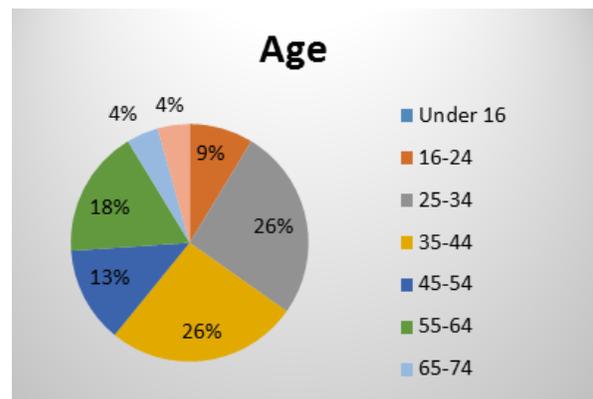
Taking into account workshops and community stall feedback and from general observations it is estimated between 3,500 to 4,000 attended the Mela during the whole day.

23 visitor evaluation forms were completed on the day. 52% were female respondents and 48% male. Of those interviewed, 26% stated they came to Preston specifically for the event and for 17% it was one of the reasons for visiting the city.

The breakdown of age for the day is shown:

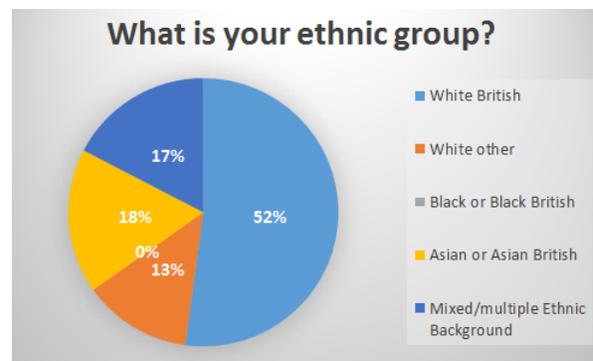
- **Age:**

- o 9% aged 16-24
- o 26% aged 25 - 34
- o 26% aged 35 - 44
- o 13% aged 45 - 54
- o 17% aged 55 - 64
- o 4% aged 65-74
- o 4% over 75

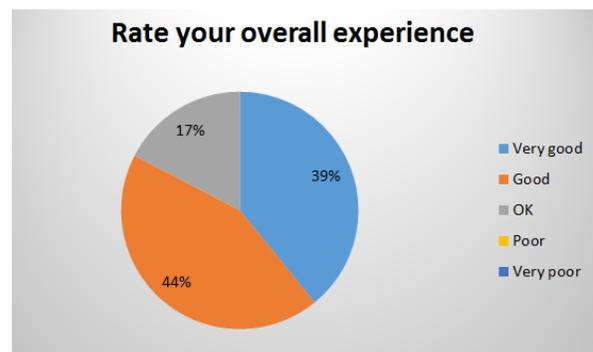


- **Ethnicity:**

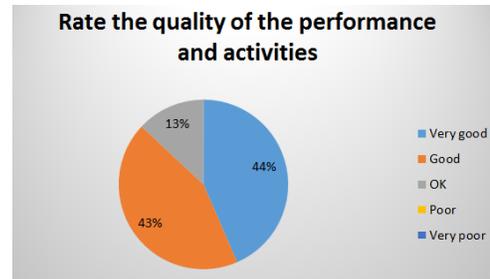
- o 52% White British
- o 17% Asian or Asian British
- o 17% Mixed / multiple ethnic backgrounds
- o 13% White other



In terms of the publicity for the event, the majority of respondents, 52%, was passing by on the day and came to the Mela. Word of mouth accounted for 22%, social media 13%, the programme contributed to 9% and 4% accessed the information via Preston City Council's website.



The overall event and the quality of performance and activities were well received by visitors. It is clear by the responses that the Mela has encouraged visitors to attend future events. A total of 78% of respondents commented that they were either *much more likely* or *more likely* to visit other outdoor events. Furthermore, the event contributed to 57% of respondents stating the Mela had encouraged them to visit Preston City Centre again (30% were much more likely and 26% were more likely).



The number of visitors forms completed was low and does not fully represent the demographic profile of the people that had attended. However, from the completed forms and verbal feedback captured on the day by the ALISON project, this demonstrates that the event reached its target audience in terms of age and ethnicity.

#### CAPTURING VISUAL ASPECTS OF MELA AND OUTREACH WORKSHOPS

ALISON was commissioned to provide visual aspects of the Mela and support feedback/evaluation. Their input had 3 elements to it:

- Document in film the event on the day.
- Sessions with local children on the Brookfield estate prior to the event, to promote Preston Mela and what it stood for.
- Get feedback on the day of the event from people that attended, gathering their thoughts about the future direction of Preston Mela and getting a flavour from them of what life in South Asia was like.

#### FILMING

There were no major issues on the day, other than the usual scenario at Mela, where there is so much going on that it's easy to miss things. In order not to spoil the event for audience & participants our priority was to proceed in a low profile manner and capture in an informal style.

The film can be found on the Preston Mela website here <http://prestonmela.co.uk/images>.



## **PRE-EVENT SESSIONS**

ALISON carried out 2 sessions in our local school (14 children) and 1 at a local children's club at the community centre (12 children). Initially we assessed through some simple questions the children's present knowledge of what Mela was and then worked our way through some factsheets with them so they had a better understanding of the event, South Asian culture and the significance of colour in the expression of that culture.

Then we asked them to build a rocket with us (representing future Mela's) and create a number of different types of flowers that could go towards the decoration of the rocket on the day of the event.

Of the 26 children that we worked with 22 were white British, 1 Latvian, 1 African and 2 were of mixed race - only 1 had even heard of Mela (their father was from South Asia) but they had never been to Preston Mela. 1 of the other children had been to the Preston Mela before, but hadn't at the time realised what it was they were at.

Needless to say a lot of the information we were conveying to them was new - although within their schools some had previously learned a little information about Sikh, Hindu & Muslim religions. Of all of the children we worked with 7 (plus other family members) actually made in to our stall on the day of the event - which wasn't bad being as a number were away on holiday during Mela. As well as developing a better understanding of South Asian culture - while creating, the children were also questioned about how they express their own cultural background. A few of them had been in the Guild and so they understood that that was a 'celebrate Preston' event - but few could initially make any connection to how activities they did as a part of their everyday lives, might be seen as a part of their own cultural heritage. We continued the conversations and enabled them to see how school plays, concerts, football matches, fundays etc. were ways in which they expressed their culture - but they could see how having a special day like the Mela focused such expressions.

The creative tasks that the children were set meant that they developed skills in:

- The use of cardboard to create robust structures (the rocket)
- Basic henna designs
- The use of card, tissue papers & paint to create different types of flowers for decoration
- How colours contrast and compliment each other
- Working as a part of a team.

## FEEDBACK

On the day of the Mela we took the rocket that the children had created to the event so that other children could create more flowers and decorate the rocket. The volunteers were also asking people their thoughts about what they felt 'Future Preston Mela' would look like.

Next to the rocket activity we also had an audio set up that was there to record recollections of life in South Asia, to create an audio soundscape. People were prompted by listening to a number of sound effects recorded over there, incl. busy city traffic, the countryside, children playing, elephants, ceremonies, markets etc.



### FUTURE MELA ROCKET

35 (4 were not South Asian) responses about Mela's future were recorded throughout the day and all together 79 flowers were made for the rocket (this is being continued back in Brookfield in order to complete the decoration of the rocket). From the people we spoke to and comments people made, such as "I like it just like it is, but bigger" and "keep it the same"; "Preston Mela is Preston Mela". We got the strong feeling that within the people we spoke to, the mainstay is to look back and celebrate tradition rather than look for changes for the future.

A few people talked about the desire for more ambition “bigger stars” and made reference to the scope of the Mela’s that had happened on the park, but there was an understanding of the funding implications this idea raised. Contrary to that some people talked about how they liked the “intimate” location of the Flag Market. Also quite a number when they talked about the performances paid reference to the fact that they “recognised the local talent” and how it “makes sense” to tap into “performers from Preston”.

There was also an appreciation of the “variety of people on stage” and the fact that it included “the Violin Lady” and “African music”. One particular person (who was very much into getting information), thought it would be good to learn more about the cultural influences on the South Asian music, food etc.

One person also talked about the need for “activity, in-between Mela’s” and how that could develop even more local talent, through “talent competitions like Gateway were doing (but focusing on the South Asian community)” or “Preston making its own Bollywood film ..... in the City”.



On the whole people were saying that ‘going forward’, they were very proud of what was already on offer at Mela and wanted more and improved quality where possible - “great food”, “a chance to be together and reminisce”, “good music & dancing”, “do creative things” etc. etc. It seemed much more of a struggle for them to think about future possibilities and visualise how future Mela’s may look. A couple of people understood that “technology would play a bigger part”, but they couldn’t imagine what that would look like. Or how technology might help “promote tradition”.

*Conclusions, negative practical observations, positive suggestions and recommendations:* the people who had been coming to Preston Mela’s for years & those who had only recently discovered it - they all loved their Mela. The desire to ensure it continues was tangible, “it has to continue for all our sakes”. A number of people referenced the importance of its celebratory nature, “here people experience the joy of living”, and this was particularly pertinent for some during these “economically difficult and divisive times”.

We didn’t record people’s ages when we spoke to them but the suggestion was that everyone who made comments was probably over 25. One of the Mela’s main strengths is the

fact that it is a family event, from very young children to elders (and has a healthy racial mix too, particularly in its present location which attracts passers-by). The one age group that is more obviously missing is teenagers - and they not being there probably suggested that the 'offer' at present isn't attracting them. For some people the music was too loud (in between acts particularly), "I've struggled to chat with people". The food stall was not enough, "the queue did not go down all afternoon, I was looking forward to some nice Indian food for days leading up to the Mela, and in the end I didn't get to try anything". Some people felt there could be more diversity in stalls & activities - "trying on different types of Asian clothing". "Traditional games for children to play". "A chill area to try meditation & yoga". "It would have been great to have a chai stall where you could sample different teas". "An information stall, about weather differences, population, crops, history - life in India". "Asian cooking classes". Asian artists just "doing their thing".

One person felt that some of the health/wellbeing/services stalls were "irrelevant" but a number of people mentioned that they were a "good addition" and "an opportunity to learn about new things" - a couple of people mentioned it was "difficult to talk" with them at the event because of the noise.

While there are benefits to keeping the range of activities in close proximity it may be worth considering other layouts that could take advantage of clearly signposted 'areas' that have a different feel about them.

Lots of things are obviously right about Preston Mela and the strong attendance attests to this. The suggestions people made were merely tweaks or additions to what happens already and can be incorporated relatively easily if there are people available to volunteer their time into making them happen and increased funds. The 'good will' around the Mela will surely help to sustain it and with all such events, delegating responsibility to a growing range of volunteers (including teenagers) will be key to its future.

Preston Mela is relevant to many and vital to the cities cohesion of cultures. But fostering and developing teenage interest (and ownership of) will also be a vital element to its future survival. We would be more than happy to help facilitate a couple of sessions with mixed gender 12 to 16 year olds and 17 to 21 year olds to see what they want out of future Preston Mela's - ultimately aiming to make a young persons sub group out of the participants, one that programmes things at Mela 2018 (maybe even teaming up with the Blaze project, TEC or other youth based projects). Exploring the Preston Mela vision through their eyes will help Preston Mela maintain its energy into the future, develop what it does best and potentially become one of the more 'progressive' Mela's in the UK.

## SOUNDSCAPE

The practicalities of recording where our stall was located were difficult and in hindsight this element of our work would have been better inside the Harris. That said, we did record a number of people's comments about the sound effect prompts on the day and we are presently gathering more voices, post-Mela. We helped a number of people to record the sounds of traditional instruments into the parts of the soundscape that already had basic beats within it. This was done through the mic & people playing percussion instruments or by participants using the USB touches pads to produce the traditional sounds into the computer. Once there are diverse ranges of voices the soundscape will serve as a nice online accompaniment to the filmed documentation.

### VIP GUEST FEEDBACK

Post the Mela the Production Manager sent out a thank email to VIPs for their support and involvement. A number of emails were received from VIP guests providing feedback of their experience of the Mela programme/ event.

*Many thanks for the invite. You did a great job. Preston is a better place because you and your family are in it.*

**Andrew R. Pratt Blackburn Diocese Bishop's Advisor and Co-ordinator for Inter-faith Work**

*It was my pleasure Gulab, indeed a fabulous day well done and thanks to all your volunteers. Let's meet up in October to discuss 2018 gfta and also get you more involved in the Mela network run by Nutkhut. I think a partnership with Sue & Rob at Culturapedia/Spot on Cheshire rural touring could also assist the mini Mela touring to rural events and County shows-very exciting potential.*

**Angela Chappell, Arts Council of England**

*Just to say how much we enjoyed Saturday's event and to say thanks for inviting Carole and I. It was great to meet so many lovely genuine people working hard for their communities. The food and entertainment was superb and contributed to a wonderful afternoon. Please thank all those involved for their kindness and hospitality.*

**Mick, Cllr Mick Titherington Mayor of South Ribble**

*Thank you for your kind email. Mandy and myself thoroughly enjoyed the day, the food, music, dancing, stalls, guests and your hospitality certainly made it a lovely day. Please pass on my thanks and appreciation to all involved. They rightly deserve to be congratulated. Good to see you and look forward to seeing you again before long.*

**Prof Mike Thomas, Vice Chancellor UCLan**

*Ann and I had a marvelous time at the Mela on Saturday. We both greatly enjoyed the company of all your guests and meeting many people on the stands. The entertainment was first-class. Thank you very much indeed for inviting us. Please pass on my congratulations to everyone involved in planning and organising the day, including the excellent refreshments. Well done you and I hope you were very proud of what you achieved.*

**Charles, Lord Shuttleworth, Lord Lieutenant of Lancaster**



*It was indeed a splendid afternoon, shared with great company. Many thanks to everyone who supported the event, but we must remember that the main driving force is obviously yourself. So many thanks to you for organising the event. It was great to see so many people enjoying themselves, which was evident from the smiles on their faces. Thanks also to your wife for the wonderful food and I must admit that I did enjoy having a go at the Dhol. Please keep up the enthusiasm and good work that you do.*

**Andrew Upton, Director of Community Regeneration , Community Gateway Association**

*Thank you my friend for the kind invite and the opportunity to be involved. It was without doubt an amazing success and I like many others had a thoroughly enjoyable time. A special thank you to your dear wife for the lovely food and warm hospitality. Nigel and I and the UCLan Creative Communities Group members covered the social media side and managed to post a lot of photographs from the day. Congratulations again and I'm looking forward to seeing you soon.*

**Russell Hogarth | Honorary Fellow, Community Engagement Ambassador**

## 4. SUMMARY ACCOUNTS 2017

### OVERVIEW

<b>Preston Mela 2017 Overview of Accounts</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Preston City Council Grant in two payments £1,800 & £200		£2,000	
Community Gateway Grant		£1,500	
ACE Grant in two payments £8,865 & £985		£9,850	
Income from Booklet adverts / catering stalls		£400	
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>£13,750</b>
Stage Artists	£4,762		
Workshop Artist	£2,525		
Marketing & Publicity	£746		
Infrastructure [Insurance, Stewards Accountant Fees]	£850		
Hospitality VIPs & Artists and Debriefing Meeting	£600		
Stationary, travel & Consumables - Contingency	£365		
Evaluation	£800		
Project Management Fee	£3,500		
Total Expenditure			<b>£14,148</b>
Over Expenditure			<b>-£398</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,148</b>	<b>£13,750</b>	<b>£398</b>

The target for generating additional income from stallholders and booklet advertisement was £700. There was a shortfall of £300 due to no catering booking. There was an additional expenditure of £50 that was not budgeted for a DJ to support the compares. The project management fee was based on 20 days, instead 38 days was spent on this project. These additional days will be a lost occurred against the project. Furthermore the shortfall of **£398** will have to be off set against the project management fee. Details breakdown of all income and expenditure will be included in the Arts Council of England post event return.

## 5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluations and general feedback for Preston Mela 2017, a number of emerging themes have emerged, these being:

- More BME community involvement;
- Introduce specific children and young people provision, ensuring its age appropriate;
- More involvement with the Harris Museum engagement and community programme;
- A greater involvement of partnership organisations and governance arrangements.

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### MELA STRUCTURAL / ORGANISATIONAL

Time is required to be spent on developing a sustainable structure that will ensure Preston Mela has a sustainable footing is the City's Cultural strategy and calendar. The outcomes of this development work will be:

1. Explore the feasibility of establishing a partnership group to oversee Preston Mela production.
2. Introduce governance arrangements for the partnership group.
3. Identify organisations and individuals to take on dedicated roles as project workers or organisation "in-kind" support.
4. Amend and update all Mela booking forms in preparation for 2018.
5. Investigate the poor uptake on South Asian catering provision at Mela and make recommendations for future Mela events.
6. Create a Preston Mela website for marketing, publicity and hosting evaluation reports.

Funding would be required to implement the above developmental work.

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### MELA CONTENTS

Taking into account the learning and feedback from the 2017 Mela programme and the evaluation, the following actions require consideration:

1. Develop a 3 year plan for Mela and investment.
2. Liaise with local BME community groups / structures to take a greater involvement with their presence and content at Mela.
3. Explore the scope of having a dedicated children's activity zone for crafts and arts.
4. Consider having a one-hour slot on the performance stage for a childrens talent event.

5. Consideration needs to be given to having a stage manager in future events to ensure artist are on time and ready to perform, capture feedback and make payments for their input.
6. Identify which creative activities could be implemented at the Harris Library/ Museum prior to the Mela main event.
7. Undertake insight work on ward demographic profiles and consider leaflet drops within those wards, which have a high BME population.
8. Due to the interest shown by Community and Public Sector service provider organisations who took part in this year's Mela, consider increasing the number of stalls in the 2018 Mela programme.
9. Include electronic computer beat music to attract young people.
10. Introduce food demonstrations as part of the traditional food provision.
11. Hold a visioning event with local artists to consider the contents for 2018 Mela.
12. Expand the Mela experience to a touring programme across Lancashire.



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## APPENDIX A – MESSAGES FROM DIGNITARIES

*"As Her Majesty's representative in Lancashire, I am delighted to support the Preston Mela and very much look forward to attending this year, the 70th anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan. It demonstrates the valued diversity of our community and I congratulate everyone who works so hard to ensure that this traditional and popular festival takes place."*

**Lord Shuttleworth KCVO, Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire**

*"At a time when communities across the world are suffering from war and terrorism and becoming more and more inwards looking, I'm proud to say Preston remains a mix of diverse communities in harmony with each other. Mela, long a Preston tradition, has and continues to be a beacon drawing communities together while celebrating our diversity. I look forward to it again this year."*

**Councillor Brian Rollo, Preston Guild Mayor**

*"The sights and sounds of this unique event make it a great occasion, and one which I'm really looking forward to attending. This is also an opportunity for us to bring people together to celebrate one of the communities that makes up our diverse county."*

**County Councillor Terry Aldridge, Chairman of Lancashire County Council**

*"I am delighted to represent Lancashire Constabulary at the Preston Mela to celebrate the diversity of our communities and present a united voice in these challenging times. Mela has become an annual event that represents the strengths within this great County"*

**Andy Rhodes, Chief Constable**

*"I very much look forward to the Preston Mela every year as it's a significant event in my summer social calendar. The Mela is a wonderful opportunity for Preston folk from all different backgrounds to come together in a wonderfully diverse and colourful celebration and as the City's MP, it gives me great pleasure to partake in this celebration. I am proud to represent such a diverse constituency with people who have roots in many parts of the world.*

*Preston has a proud heritage of being a friendly and welcoming city with an equally proud tradition of celebrating our unique differences through the arts, culture, music and food, I do hope you will join us."*

**Mark Hendricks, Member of Parliament for Preston**

*“As the Mayor of South Ribble, I am incredibly humbled to have been invited to attend the Preston Mela. Never has there been a more important time for communities to come together and celebrate the rich, vibrant and diverse cultures, which exist right on our doorsteps. The Mela will be a fantastic celebration of art, culture, music, dance, food and heritage - all of which I can't wait to sample in abundance.*

*I am proud to be part of this event.”*

**Cllr Mick Titherington, Mayor of South Ribble BC**

*“The University of Central Lancashire is proud to support and participate in Preston's Mela Festival and to celebrate the South Asian Arts and Culture collaboration within our local community.*

*Wellbeing is not just an individual health status but also a sense of community and belonging. The Mela in Preston is a fabulous event which promotes pride, community and cultural diversity.”*

**Mike Thomas, Vice Chancellor UCLAN**

*“Gateway is passionate about people and Preston and that's why we are delighted to be sponsoring the Preston MELA in 2017. The Mela is a real reflection of community cohesion, people coming from across the Preston community for a day of celebration and appreciation of the South Asian culture and heritage.*

*We are proud to have sponsored the newly reinvigorated Preston MELA for the past two years, and to see it take place in the heart of the City. The Preston Mela is one of the highlights of our year. Come and say hello. We can't wait to see you there!”*

**Irene Bailey, Chair Community Gateway Association Board**

*“Arts Council England is delighted to be supporting Mela in Preston in 2017. The Mela is an important date in Lancashire's cultural diary and popular with the whole community. Its an opportunity to celebrate the towns diversity via South Asian arts, crafts and cuisine taking part in activities or enjoying as an audience everyone's welcome - its a great example of community cohesion in Preston.”*

**Angela Chappell, Relationship Manager, Combined Arts; Arts Council England**