

FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL

Festival Evaluation Report 2022

17-18 June 2022
South Beach
Lowestoft



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Cover image: Winds of Change Opening Parade, Adam Barnes
Inside image: MoonDance Silent Disco, Mykola Romanovsky



Image: Beach Wellbeing Session, Malachy Luckie

Welcome

First Light Festival celebrates and showcases Lowestoft's unique most easterly location, offering fresh perspectives of the town as a growing creative hub and a rich cultural tourism offer for the east of England.

Building on the success of our inaugural festival in 2019 and our adapted community focused projects over the last two years of the Covid pandemic, it was wonderful to be able to produce our second, free access, First Light Festival on South Beach Lowestoft in June 2022. Bringing together local communities and welcoming visitors from further afield, it was a packed weekend of cultural activities, science exploration and shore-side wellbeing events.

The festival also saw the opening of the newly re-developed East Point Pavilion, First Light's new base and a crucial element of cultural place-making in the town.

In what became one of the hottest summers on record, extreme bad weather curtailed some of our activities but audiences of more than 35,000 people supported what was a vibrant and joyful festival.



Image: Genevieve Christie, CEO

More than 190 events and activities included diverse music to watch and take part in, such as our new, New Dawn stage, showcasing the impressive talents of emerging young musicians from our locality.

In addition, music tech students worked on placements with our lighting, sound and stage management team to run the stage.

As well as stellar performances from jazz supremo Andy Sheppard, upcoming stars Secret Night Gang, and Congolese artist Juanita Euka, we staged two community performances to open and close the festival, and welcomed community choirs, the First Light Ensemble of talented local classical instrumentalists, and 'Lowestoft Gold' musicians on our Gardens Stage.

We worked with all 22 Lowestoft schools in the town for music and visual arts projects as well as Lowestoft Sixth Form College and East Coast College, and with special schools and community groups including the Dragonfly unit and Otium Centre for young people with mental and physical health disorders.

Our new Planet Positive zone launched our environmental programme around active engagement in a positive climate agenda, enjoying enthusiastic engagement from thousands of families.

First Word, our new theatre, poetry and spoken word zone brought the work of new writers and a range of regional performers to fresh audiences.

Our partner DanceEast engaged people of all ages in festival dance, from an electric ceilidh to dance along to 'Grease'.

Meditation, yoga and drumming formed part of our non-stop wellbeing activities and our Cosmic Pirates children's zone saw storytelling and interactive activities across the weekend.

Thank you to everyone who was part of the festival, and made it such a success - here's to 2023!

Genevieve Christie,
CEO First Light Festival C.I.C.



Image: Dance-Along Grease Workshop by Glasshouse Dance, Malachy Luckie

Attendance & Feedback

As in 2019, we were blown away by the huge turnout, which was particularly astonishing given the adverse weather. We worked with Suffolk Police, East Suffolk Council and the Audience Agency to document the demographics of our record-breaking Festival turnout.

35,000+

estimated in-person audiences across the weekend, an increase of **20%** on 2019's Festival attendance



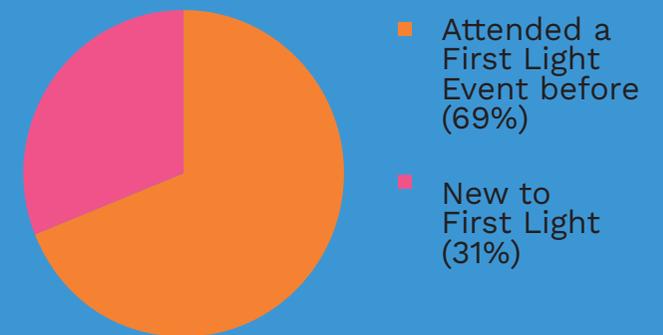
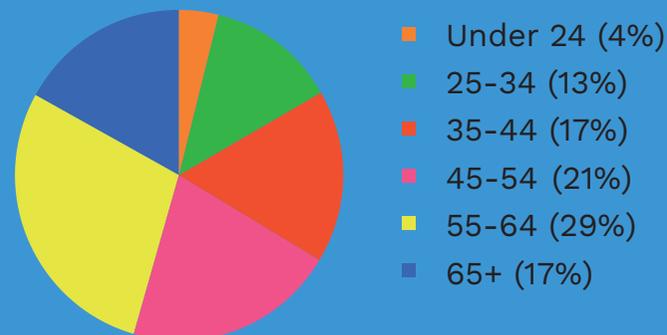
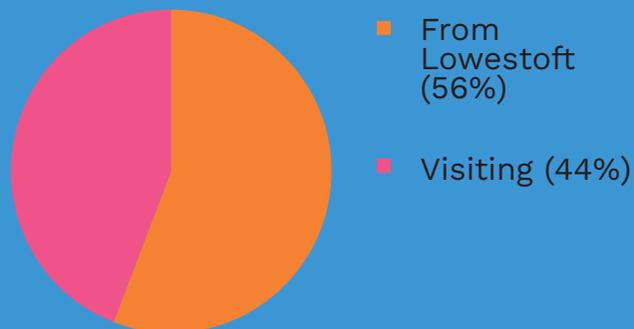
“

Just wanted to say thanks so much for an absolutely brilliant weekend. Superb fun for all the family, from painting stones to bandstand comedy. Bring on next year!

Audience Member on Facebook

Image: Late Night Comedy at the First Word Theatre Tent, Mykola Romanovsky

Audience Demographics



Of the 810 audience members we surveyed...

92% said it was a high quality event

93% rated the whole experience as very good or good

96% thought it was good for Lowestoft's image

93% felt it was welcoming for the whole community

92% believed it encouraged participation in community life & events

89% said it enhanced the sense of community



Great to see new talents coming through and our schools and community groups involved in helping to bring our town alive.

Audience member, Instagram

“

This is a chance for the community to come down and show other people from miles around, maybe from other parts of the country, to see what a lovely, lovely place we have here... It's just a wonderful experience

2022 Volunteer

The whole weekend was brilliant - there was so much to do. We loved the variety of music, art, environmental education, food & drink on offer.... It shone a gorgeous light on Lowestoft, we had no idea how lovely it is there. The seafront is incredible!

Audience member, e-survey

Thank you to all who were involved. Myself and my partner absolutely love it, such a great event. Can't wait till next year, wouldn't miss it for anything!

Audience member, Facebook

Image: First Kite Fly-along Finale, Adam Barnes

“

The festival was so welcoming to all walks of life. It was such an inviting site, bringing so many different types of people together. There wasn't an exclusive feel... I was so energised!

2022 Freelance Crew Member



Image: Audiences at Les Spaine, Mykola Romanovsky

Social Impact

At its heart, First Light is a community event that uses the arts to create, celebrate and unite.

A Source of Pride

96% of survey respondents claimed that First Light is good for Lowestoft's image, while 78% can be considered 'promoters' of the Festival, rating their willingness to recommend the event to others at 9 or 10 out of 10.

A Stronger Community

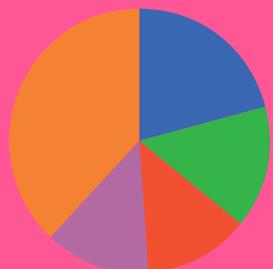
93% of survey respondents felt the event to be welcoming to the whole community, 92% suggested it encourages participation in community life and events and 89% felt the Festival enhances the sense of community.

“ First Light brings together lots of people from different sections of society who maybe wouldn't mix and mingle together... It goes through all sectors of the community.

2022 Volunteer

Reflecting our key mission of growing cultural engagement in Lowestoft and its hinterland, First Light has significant reach within communities who traditionally have lower engagement in the arts.

Audience Spectrum Demographic Breakdown



- Up Our Street (21%)
- Trips & Treats (15%)
- Frontline Families (13%)
- Home & Heritage (13%)
- Other (38%)

Up Our Street

Conservative and mature households who have a love of the traditional (Lower Engagement)

Trips & Treats

Suburban households, often with children, whose cultural activities usually are part of a day out or treat (Medium engagement)

Frontline Families

Frugal, semi-urban renting families, light on arts and culture but heavy on community (Lower engagement)

Home & Heritage

Reasonably comfortably off households, occasional audiences for popular arts & entertainment, and museums (Medium engagement)

Economic Impact

Benefits / Hard Outcomes	2019 Statistics (Actual)	2022 Statistics (Actual)
Employed Roles Created	4	7
Freelance Roles Contract	115	153
Attendees	30,000+	35,000+
External Investment	£261,870	£295,498
Sponsorship & Other Income	£26,301	£101,178
Food & Drink Traders	14	20
Artisan & Crafts Traders	21	31
Number of Volunteers	99	116
Links with Schools & Colleges	9	22
Art Organisations Involved	16	19
Other Organisations Involved	8	16
Number of Artists, Facilitators and Performers Involved	248	448

£23

average spend per head (up £3 on 2019)

100%

local hotels and B&Bs booked

35%

new attendees to the Festival



Image: Makers Market Trader by Mykola Romanovsky

The Festival supports several strands of the East Suffolk Business Plan, including

Delivering greater financial sustainability

By increasing the number of visitors to the town, the Festival supported local businesses, and increased the contribution that tourism makes to the local economy (currently £74m per year)

Delivering cultural activity

A proven way of increasing the number of visits to East Suffolk

Enabling communities

Making people feel proud of where they live. The programme included innovative, engaging work about the town's past and future relationship to the sea, celebrating Lowestoft's position as first place to see the sun each day.



Image: Juanita Euka on the Sunlight Stage, Adam Barnes

Press & Marketing

We greatly increased our online visibility and in-person marketing, reaching local and national audiences.

In the Media

- **23 national features** in radio, print and online magazines, including the Daily Telegraph, iNews and Waitrose Weekend
- **46 regional features** in print and online magazine, including 6 page pull out in Lowestoft Journal
- **4 television features** from This Morning/Loose Women, BBC Look East and ITV Anglia, including a live broadcast from the beach
- **20 BBC Radio and Community Radio interviews** across Norfolk & Suffolk.

In Print



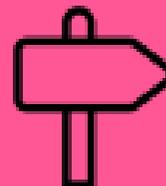
20,000

brochures, 10,000 more than in 2019



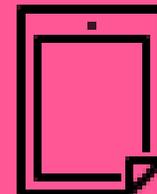
10,000

leaflets



100+

roadsigns



200+

posters, including at all major East Anglia train stations

Digital

Social Media

- We **gained 2,000 followers** across Instagram and Facebook in June alone, with **3,500** across our 2022 campaign as a whole.
- We reached audiences of **500,000+ on Facebook** and **150,000+ on Instagram** – increases of **303%** and **544%** from 2019, respectively.
- While our Instagram account attracted visitors from across the world, our Facebook page was distinctly Lowestoft-facing, with **46.9%** of followers from our town.
- **56%** of festival-goers said that they heard about the event through Facebook - a higher percentage than any other form of print or digital communication.

Website

- We nearly doubled the number of web sessions from 44,000 in 2019 to **84,000 in 2022**.
- Compared to the 2019 figures, the traffic from organic searches was **up 98%** for this year.
- The Google Ad campaign that we ran promoted the event appeared **1.92 million times**, generating **17,206 clicks** through to the website
- From the total **1,918,944 ads** that were shown, 912,188 of these were shown to targeted demographics, within our target locations, which included **Outdoor Enthusiasts**, **Green Living Enthusiasts** and **Frequently Attended Live Events**.

Working in Partnership

For 2022's Festival, we collaborated with a record number of national, regional and local partners, further developing relationships with cultural organisations, schools and colleges, community groups, artists and businesses to help us curate the programme and increase the depth of opportunity for audiences to get involved.

- The Steering Group which guides our work has expanded to representatives of **15 key local educational, community, statutory and business organisations**
- **24 local, regional and national Programme Partners** helped to curate the line-up of events, up from 11 partners in at 2019's Festival
- Ranging from local start-ups to nation-wide infrastructure companies, we collaborated with **27 Sponsors, Supporters and Partners**



Image: SAY's the album:skool edition, Malachy Luckie

Funders



Partners & Sponsors



Participation & Engagement

A key tenet of First Light is our commitment to rooting our work in the Lowestoft community. This year we offered a series of creative lead-in projects to encourage year-round engagement with the Festival. **92%** of participants surveyed agreed that the Festival **encourages participation in community life and events** and **89%** said it **enhances the sense of community**.

Winds of Change

Our Winds of Change Opening Parade engaged **15 schools** and **7 community groups** in pre-Festival art workshops and on our celebratory march along the promenade to the Festival site.

The Light Returns

The Festival opened with a performance of specially commissioned anthem, The Light Returns, written by Lowestoft musician John Ward, which engaged a further **4 schools**, a **60 strong community choir** and **7 Lowestoft musicians**.

New Dawn

For our first New Dawn project, we developed an apply to play programme with **6 East Anglian music organisations** to offer early-career, unsigned acts in the region a professional festival showcase. The result was **79 applications** from young musicians and groups, **22** of which were chosen to play across the Festival weekend.

In addition, music tech students worked on placements with our lighting, sound and stage management team to run the stage.

First Kite

Over **2,000 kites** were designed, created and flown by **18 schools** and **5 community groups** as part of our First Kite Festival project, supported by Lowestoft Rising CEP.

“

It was great to get experience in the real world. The talent was amazing and I'm grateful for the opportunity. I liked the fact that I was working both independently & as part of a small team because it meant I had creative freedom to do what I wanted to do whilst also fulfilling the major "brief".

Local music tech student working on New Dawn



Image: Winds of Change, Malachy Luckie



Image: The Light Returns, Malachy Luckie



Image: TSG performs on New Dawn Stage, Adam Barnes



Image: First Kite Workshop, Mykola Romanovsky

“

Fantastic weekend, brilliant people. Can't wait for next year! Well done for organising us volunteers!

2022 Volunteer
on Facebook



Image: Our 2022 Volunteers

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of our team. For the 2022 Festival, we recruited 116 brilliant volunteers who undertook a range of tasks including event stewarding, artist liaison, box office, litter picking, information and wayfinding.

Supported by Kirkley People's Forum, we targeted recruitment so that **40% of all volunteers were from our immediate surroundings of Kirkley Ward**, ensuring that local people played a key role in bringing the Festival to life.

We offered volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills, cultivate valuable work experience, make new connections and most importantly have fun. Ahead of June, they were given training to prepare them for working at the Festival and to boost their confidence, including a briefing on the background of the Festival, tasks they would be expected to undertake and how to respond in the case of an incident.



116
volunteers



40%
were from
Kirkley Ward



165
shifts



654
hours of
work

Access

Hosting a Festival on a wide, sandy beach poses big accessibility challenges, but we are working hard alongside disability groups to ensure that as many people can be as involved as possible.

- We provided **BSL interpretation for 13 performances and workshops** across the weekend
- We **livestreamed the Festival** throughout the 24 hours, reaching 30,000+ people on Facebook and Youtube
- We introduced a **free dial-up buggy taxi service** to take audiences with mobility issues around the seafront site
- We improved physical access to beach venues through **temporary trackway**, and rented out East Suffolk Council's two **beach wheelchairs** for free to anyone who needed
- We shouted about our access offer in our communications, introducing **'What to Expect' symbols** and **terrain information** to almost all of our 190+ event pages.



Image: Two audience members enjoy the opening of East Point Pavilion, Adam Barnes

Environment

First Light Festival is inspired by Lowestoft's natural environment – the beach, sun, sea, sky and stars. We are committed to minimising our impact on the environment by ensuring we work to high environmental standards through our programming and production practices.

- The bowling greens were transformed into **Planet Positive** – a new zone developed in partnership with University of Essex, Cefas, Natural History Museum and Association of Suffolk Museums offering interactive displays and talks to engage audiences in positive action for climate change.
- We powered our Planet Positive zone by **solar power** for the first time, which we hope to build on for 2023.
- We encouraged audiences to travel by public transport by partnering with Greater Anglia to put on extra **late night train services**, building a temporary **bike park** and offered **discounted tickets** for campers not travelling by car.
- We worked with a high percentage of **regionally-based acts**, with a very limited number of artists travelling internationally (2 out of 250+ in 2022)
- We required all traders to use sustainably-sourced produce and to reduce meat consumption by offering a **vegetarian and vegan option**. All consumables had to be **reusable, compostable, and recyclable** – no single use plastics are sold or given out on site.
- We **reused installations, signage and all décor** commissioned for the festival, as well as borrowed and shared equipment with other local festivals and partners where possible.

We understand that there's still room for improvement, and so we are committed to continuing to learn, experiment, challenge and grow our best practice, along with our partners.

A survey of festival-goers undertaken by Buckinghamshire New University and A Greener Festival found that 43.1% of respondents say they have changed their behaviour as a result of green initiatives encountered at a festival.



Image: Wheel by John Christe, Adam Barnes

Opening East Point Pavilion

The First Light Festival weekend also saw the opening of the re-developed East Point Pavilion – our new base on the seafront, offering an assortment of independent street food traders, house bar, and the space and infrastructure for us to develop a year-round schedule of music, performances and events.

A centrepiece of East Suffolk Council's vision to rejuvenate the seafront and help enliven the town's leisure and tourist attractions with interiors created by HemingwayDesign, it was marvellous to see thousands of visitors' flock to the Pavilion over the opening weekend.

Since launching, the fully accessible Pavilion has become a distinctive location for the town, and we look forward to growing it as a hub for food, drink, culture and community.



Image: Audiences at East Point Pavilion, Luke Witcomb



Planet Positive Science Dome, Mykola Romanovsky



Elvis McGonagall at First Word, Adam Barnes



First Kite Fly-along Finale, Malachy Luckie



Animation Workshop, Adam Barnes



Circus Skills Workshop, Mykola Romanovsky



Meditation Workshop, Malachy Luckie



Folk Dance Remix's Ceilidh Jam, Malachy Luckie



Lowestoft Rising Workshop, Malachy Luckie



Folk Dance Remix's Ceilidh Jam, Malachy Luckie



NWRVR at New Dawn, Adam Barnes



Alexander Costello, Adam Barnes



Charlie Dark at the Fishers Gin Beach Club, Mykola Romanovsky



Juanita Euka on the Sunlight Stage, Adam Barnes



Image: FolkEast present Sam Kelly and the Lost Boys, Mykola Romanovsky



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