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Artists in Communities

Glasgow Life

Final Evaluation Report Summary

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Executive Summary

Glasgow Life's Artists in Communities 2022-23 (hereafter AiC) is a hyper-local programme of 15 art projects which aims to increase access to creative and cultural opportunities, improve wellbeing and develop socially engaged artistic practice.

From November 2022 to August 2023 23 artists working on 15 projects partnered with 49 third sector organisations, 39 schools and other cross sector partners to directly engage 7,622 people in artistic and arts-based activities. Many of these took the form of weekly workshops that produced artworks, performances, experiences and participation in community and Go Live! events as part of the UCI Cycling World Championships across the city in the summer of 2023. These experiences pleased, surprised, challenged, inspired, educated, empowered and moved residents of all ages, and of different ethnicities; including many residents without the means to access existing modes of creative expression. These projects enabled residents' cultural citizenship in a variety of forms, ranging from dance to spoken word sound recordings to bike rides; all giving people the confidence to express themselves creatively in public. The key findings of the research are as follows:

Outcome 1: Accessibility

This intended outcome was met successfully. Physical accessibility was achieved through cross-sector partnerships primarily with third sector organisations and primary schools. Two indoor shopping centres also provided increased accessibility.

Intellectual accessibility was achieved through effective interpersonal skills and expert facilitation. Artists' attention to their mode of delivery, including welcome, care, listening, responsiveness and encouragement was key.

Intellectual accessibility was also achieved through relevant and meaningful content. A wide variety of people responded creatively to a wide variety of subjects, some introduced by the artists (for example movement or cycling and sustainability) and others that arise from the place-based developmental priorities of the participants. For groups motivated primarily by creative expression the subject matter was a less significant driver. For other groups a project was only successful because it elaborated on the pursuance of their social and civic priorities

Mutually beneficial cross-sector partnerships

The third sector and schooling sector in particular provided access to people wanting creative and cultural opportunities. This art programme has benefitted these other sectors by generating wellbeing, teaching creative skills and providing opportunities for people to exercise their cultural citizenship.

Outcome 2: Wellbeing

This intended outcome was met successfully at different levels of creative, collaborative and social practice, ranging from a sense of pride in achieving a form of creative expression (self-actualisation), to co-creating artworks with other groups of people previously unknown (bridging social capital), to performing or exhibiting art addressing subjects of local or social significance. By offering experiences in a scaffolded and progressive way many participants reported joy and pride at their artistic accomplishments.

Outcome 3: Practice Development

This intended outcome was met satisfactorily by learning more about a participant group or a social context, learning new creative techniques, learning new approaches to engagement or by learning to a greater level of complexity about the dynamics of interactions in different settings.

Collaboration

Collaboration was a contributing factor to the achievement of all three intended outcomes. It increased opportunities for participants to creatively express themselves, stretch themselves and meet new people, and exposed artists to other practices. Collaboration occurred due to geographical proximity or having shared artistic practices. The greatest amount of artistic collaboration occurred with a dedicated peripatetic artist with a distinctive practice. Levels of collaboration varied from providing access to participants to increase their creative expression to enhancing social and cultural events based on participants' creative collaborations. In terms of practice development collaboration is most effective when it is between artists with different practices or when less experienced practitioners collaborated with highly experienced ones.

Broader social and civic outcomes

A variety of broader social and civic outcomes were achieved by the programme, although arising from relationships and capacity building that pre-dated it. Ten of the fifteen projects provided evidence of an increase in social agency through participation. This took a variety of forms ranging from having a presence in cultural life, speaking out on a range of social and environmental issues, taking ownership of disused public space, advocating for the cultural interests of communities at a strategic level, and supporting residents to act as professional musicians and facilitators of cultural experiences. Differences in mode of practice and the health of participants also influenced whether broader social and civic outcomes were achieved.

Enriching local community events and contributing to the visitor experience

Following on from this almost all projects contributed to large community events such as Gala days and thematic festivals. Seven projects contributed to the *Go Live!* programme of events held to promote cycling and wellbeing during the UCI Cycling Championships, and one project contributed to the UCI opening ceremony. Where a local need was identified artists collaborated to co-create new events in hyper local areas. The most significant impact of these events for participants was the pleasure and pride in sharing their new artworks publicly and in doing do enhancing the cultural life of other community members.

Artists in Communities (AiC) Programme Strategy and Aims

Artists in Communities is designed to build on the successes of previous work. One of Glasgow Life's strategic priorities is to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of local communities. It also aims to support, connect and inspire the artists that work across the city. These aims produced three strategic objectives or intended outcomes:

1. Communities have increased access to creative and cultural opportunities in their local area (content and activities reflect the unique culture within each area).
2. Participants and communities have improved wellbeing (including positive sense of self, sense of community connectedness, improved relationships, and engagement in the world).
3. Artists in Glasgow have increased opportunities to develop their socially engaged creative practice.

Outcome 1: Communities have increased access to creative and cultural opportunities in their local area.

Increased access has been achieved through hyper-local activities, cross-sector partnerships with third sector organisations and schools, effective interpersonal engagement and facilitation skills, and subjects of interest and concern to participants. Some activities reflect the unique culture of the area, but an equal number reflect shared socio-political and environmental concerns or introduce culture that is new to participants.

Physical: Existing local times & places through cross-sector partnerships

Taking activities to nearby, indoor and outdoor locations where people already attend (through partnerships with schools, shopping centres, voluntary groups and charity organisations) at specific times. The majority of partnerships were ones that enabled engagement with residents in places they already frequented. In return the artistic proposals available have enhanced what these organisations are able to offer to their members and service users.

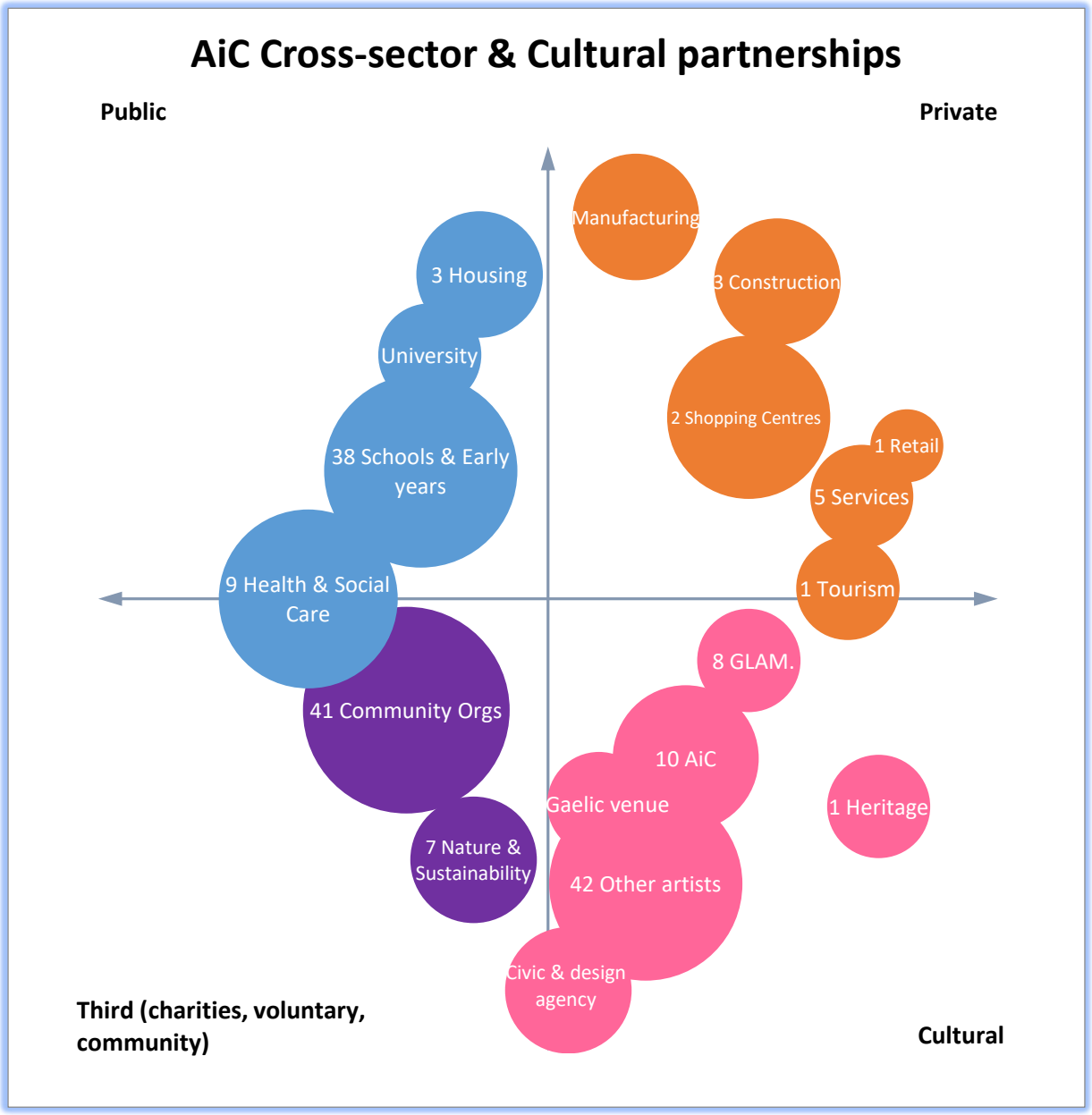
Intellectual: Subject matter

- Responding creatively on subjects important to people
- Content provided by artists providing interest and creative inspiration
- Enabling shared ownership of activities between different groups through creative contributions
- Content provided by participants engaging further participants
- Meeting a need to practice an art form, Gaelic, or media technology
- Making permanent public art where people live
- Co-creating subject matter.

Intellectual: Communication

- Using methods not requiring spoken English
- Employing facilitators with language expertise

- Using participants' first language or most culturally relevant language (E.g. Roma, Gaelic)
- Conversations as an entry point to creativity
- Welcoming, kind and gentle encouragement
- Skilled facilitation providing access to a variety of artforms



Summary

The fulfilment of this outcome is the basis for achieving any other creative, civic and social outcomes. The evidence and information provided illustrates a wide variety of locations, subjects and art forms used to address the key priority of widening cultural participation in Glasgow's diverse population. The programme has been successful in the range of ages and vulnerable groups engaged with in *their* community settings. There were some difficulties in

gaining access to engage with high school age children through schools. Relative to their representation in the urban population there was a relatively low level of engagement with second and third generation Scottish South Asians. The next section focuses on wellbeing effects arising from cultural participation.

Outcome 2: Participants and communities have improved wellbeing.

The programme has improved the wellbeing of participants and communities. This includes a positive sense of self, self-actualisation, improved relationships, engagement in the world, an increased sense of civic agency and acting on issues that benefit others. Artmaking has helped some people to cope with serious chronic health challenges and outdoor art and engagement processes have led people to spend more time in green and blue spaces with other people.

Summary

Every project provided routes to greater wellbeing through participants' own artistic and arts-based actions. No single art form stands taller in this regard because it is the actions and experiences of participants that generate wellbeing. Many of the projects introduced participants to new artistic and cultural activities to explore subjects that resonated with them. By offering these in a scaffolded and progressive way many participants have reported joy and pride at their artistic accomplishments. This demonstrates that whilst it is important to reflect and celebrate participants' cultures there are also wellbeing benefits to introducing new cultures.

Wellbeing was also generated by participants witnessing the social role their creative activities play in a variety of public sharing formats. Through the presentation and sharing of artworks these voices were heard, seen and witnessed not only by other group members but also wider audiences in their geographical communities and in some cases in central Glasgow (at the UCI Championships opening ceremony). The many different cultural and artistic events that brought people together across the projects also increase wellbeing by providing a pleasurable experience that participants co-created. When contributing to their annual Gala days residents tangible contribution to the life of their neighbourhood and area is enhanced. This strengthens existing bonds and creates new relationships through shared artistic performances and experiences. The mass choirs (Glasgow Barons) described here are just one example. The UCI opening ceremony, Finish Line final event and many local gala events which AiC participants and artists contributed to in the summer of 2023 provide many other examples of creative activities enabling active contributions to public celebration event formats.

It is widely recognised that activities believed to be of benefit to others increase participants' wellbeing and the litter picks/community clean-ups of the *Sharing Cowlairs* project, and Clean Air campaign with Walker & Bromwich, are evidence of this type of activity. Whilst not artistic activities, they are curated with a socially engaged artistic perspective and evidence

artists participating in communities' lives, making artistic contributions to other cultural activities. Socially engaged creative practice encourages this wider engagement with the world by using artistic approaches and creative activities to activate participants' agency, which in turn generates wellbeing effects and sometimes broader social and civic outcomes.

Outcome 3: Artists in Glasgow have increased opportunities to develop their socially engaged creative practice.

Practice development has taken the forms of learning creative and engagement techniques, increased understanding of the wider social context, and increased understanding of residents and their settings. Collaborations have contributed significantly to practice development. The programme has provided some opportunities for reflection through sharing practice events and researcher interviews focused on practice development.

Types of practice development

- Improved understanding of the wider social context
- Learning, adapting and responding to communities
- Developing practice through Collaboration
- Learning and using engagement methods
- Learning and using creative techniques
- Building the capacity of other artists

How has practice development been achieved?

- Building on previous work: existing relationships with participants
- Glasgow Life resources, support and trust in artists

Benefits of Collaboration with other artists and non-arts organisations

- Expanding the range of experiences artists and participants have,
- Learning and applying new ways of working and using new art forms,
- Comradery and enthusiasm for each other's work.

Summary

Through this commission artists learnt about the context, participants and places they work with and learnt new creative and technical skills for artmaking which strengthen their practices. Collaborations have significantly contributed to practice development when they involved working together in delivery from the beginning of organising an activity through to its completion. Alongside the encouragement of collaboration the other features of the programme contributing to practice development are the openness of the artists' brief allowing responsive working and the production budget allowing artist to work at a greater scale. Where projects are highly responsive in their subject matter, the opportunity to work with communities previously worked with allows artists' practice to develop in line with the demands of the communities' broader civic goals. The number of other artists that commissioned artists have involved in the projects is also noteworthy and ensures that the

developmental benefits of the programme have reached a significant number of artists working in Glasgow.

Broader social and civic outcomes

In almost all cases these outcomes are the product of collaborative relationships that were established before this programme began. These examples suggest that the presence of an artistic actor with a social focus provides participants with an independent 'in my context but not of the context' reference point, to explore their needs and imagine future possibilities with.

- Campaigning for cleaner air in Glasgow
- Culturally supporting local campaigners
- Self-organising community ownership and stewardship of disused land
- Countering material deprivation and changing perceptions of place
- Representing community voice at a strategic decision-making level
- Supporting the increased involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in their communities

Summary

Many of these outcomes concern how art can give participants a voice in the public realm, or exercise their cultural citizenship. Where they do not, for example when stakeholders outside the community have been engaged by an artist, or participants have been paid for their artworks and performances; artistic activity in the public realm is still a significant feature leading to the outcome. There are a number of factors that contribute to explaining how these outcomes have been achieved and why it has not been possible for all projects to achieve additional social outcomes. Some of these civic activities are only possible when artists have worked with groups for some time and participants are in a material and health position to pursue these. This is not the case with some of the participants in this programme who for reasons of frailty, ill health or material deprivation need to focus on day-to-day survival. This increases the importance of using the time and funding available to build participants' capacities to work independently or opt to achieve more feasible, shorter-term creative goals for participants. Differences in mode of practice also influence whether broader social and civic outcomes are achieved. Lastly, some artists work far more than they are paid to do because they are personally invested in the social or civic aim, for example when they are a resident of the community or share the commitment to a civic goal. This is their choice to a certain extent, but it is also to do with the professional ideology of socially engaged creative practice and public service.

Programme Assessment and Recommendations

This section provides an account of the extent that programming, artistic and community development strategies and activities have met the programme's objectives. The responses from participants and observations of a variety of projects detailed above demonstrate the impact the programme has had on creative expression, cultural experiences of new and greater social connection, pride and connection to place, self-worth, requesting changes, and practice development.

Outcome 1: Accessibility

There were three essential elements to achieving accessibility in this programme, the physical location and time, the communication and facilitation skills of the artists, and the subject matter of the activity. Cross-sector partners, particularly in primary schooling and the third sector, were essential to engaging with known and new participant groups. The findings will be useful to both Glasgow Life and socially engaged artists wanting to widen participation and work in non-traditional spaces. More detailed observational research of artists facilitating activities at the early stage of their projects would provide a more detailed understanding of how working relationships are initiated and sustained, and the different methods for achieving this. Many of these engagements are based on relationships held between individual artists and schools or third sector organisations, so it is important to identify the extent to which accessibility is based on a trusting personal relationship compared to the general offer of artistic provision, subject matter and art form. This knowledge could inform the design of future programmes to maximise impact.

The programme has been successful in the range of ages and vulnerable groups engaged with in *their* community settings. There were some difficulties in gaining access to engage with high school age children through schools. Relative to their representation in the urban population there was a relatively low level of engagement with second and third generation Scottish South Asians.

Outcome 2: Wellbeing

The programme achieved the full range of wellbeing effects, at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social levels. Wellbeing effects were increased when artworks were publicly or privately shared, and when the artworks and experiences expressed gave expression to an issue of wider social importance or affirmed the shared social experience of a particular community of place or a social group, for example asylum seekers and refugees.

The programme confirmed much of what is already known about the relationship between creativity and wellbeing. Creating art evokes a sense of personal achievement through its challenge (self-actualisation). These artworks engage others by providing a basis for social connection; and enable the participants to exercise their cultural citizenship by publicly expressing what is important to them and others.

Many wellbeing effects are relatively short lived but they create an appetite for more creative activities, and often open up an appreciation for others creative activity.

Outcome 3: Practice Development

All the artists involved believed that they had developed their practice through learning either more about art, the communities they worked with or the wider social context. What they learnt either increased the creative skills they could work with or deepened their knowledge of the context they were working in. This programme contained examples of different forms of socially engaged creative practice and art practices that met a need for creative expression. These practice differences highlighted some significant issues for programme design and creative practice.

The development of a mode of practice can mean different things to different people. It could be argued that learning a new technical or creative skill or learning more about the social settings and wider context of a group of participants, does not equate to the development of a mode of practice. Instead, if development is linked solely to effectiveness then it could specifically refer to developments in the *effectiveness of how the work is carried out,* with objectives for decision-making processes, engagement with social and civic issues, and the co-creation of experiences and artworks. Therefore, future support for the development of *socially engaged* creative practice could more narrowly focus on the development of skills for empowering communities in the pursuance of broader social and civic outcomes through the arts. This focus on how to enable people to be self-determining cultural citizens would encourage both participants and artists to look beyond funding-limited periods of creative activity and towards ways of building cultural citizenship on a more permanent basis. In turn, this could encourage greater financial support from private and public funders with civic and social responsibility aims. If there is not clarity on what the purposes of a socially engaged creative practice are, then there is a risk of the scope of socially engaged creative practice being narrowed to meeting gaps in creative provision. The commitment to providing everyone with creative opportunities by increasing accessibility is distinct from providing opportunities for people to exercise their cultural citizenship through engaging in a socially engaged creative process.

Arts are a mechanism for exploring broader social and civic outcomes.

Following on from this, the programme has demonstrated some of the different ways that broader social and civic outcomes can be achieved directly and indirectly through socially engaged creative processes. These indicate differences in the scale and type of issues communities are addressing, a variety of social-artistic practices, and the aims and interests of the organisations involved. These range from providing opportunities for participants to publicly share work, taking part in strategic decision-making discussions, amplifying voices concerned with social and environmental justice, and countering material deprivation. The open brief, broad intended outcomes and length of project time without a requirement for

artworks, allowed artists to work in an emergent way with participants, so that they could listen and discover what was important to participants. In other cases artists and participants already knew what they wanted to achieve because they had worked together previously, so the commission provided a means to develop work that had already begun. Given these successes there is a case for providing a civic fund for community organisations to apply for directly with artists of their own choosing, or to be matched with artists who can demonstrate a shared commitment and experience in working towards specific civic or social outcomes through artistic processes. In some cases this would also require supporting communities to develop their organisational and governance capabilities, so they can meet the requirements of a formally constituted group.

Developing cross-sector partnerships

This programme has benefitted private, third and schooling sectors to a great extent. This reflects the current circumstances that these sectors are working in, and the variety of ways that socially engaged artistic activity can benefit the core purposes of these sectors, in particular, generating wellbeing, teaching creative skills and providing meaningful purpose. This is a mutually beneficial relationship because these sectors provide access to the places where people lacking creative and cultural opportunities are.

Third sector

What the third sector lacks in resources and capacity is offset by their passion and commitment to meeting social challenges. Artists partnered with many small organisations to provide highly valued opportunities for creative self-expression. Other organisations found an opportunity to raise awareness of an issue or work directly towards providing solutions. It is important to note that outside of schools, in less formal third sector and public settings, artists are working in fluid spaces where other activities compete for participants' attention. This is the trade-off for widening participation in arts and culture by these means. The benefit to organisations that partner with artists is that they are meeting the cultural needs of their members, and in so doing are supporting creative, social and wellbeing benefits for them, which can ameliorate or mitigate the challenges they are facing. The challenge that both the third and cultural sectors face is that they are relatively resource poor and so need to attract finite funds in a highly competitive public funding environment.

Working with schools

Funding of children's services (education and looked after children) has increased over the decade beginning 2012 (Local Government Benchmarking Framework, 2021/22). However, initiating work with schools can be difficult and time consuming. Given the number of schools that have engaged and the numbers that haven't but have a need for cultural provision, a school-specific programme with arrangements already in place via GCC, and with longer placements that fit to the school year, would be highly beneficial. Supporting engagement with secondary schools is needed in particular, both with arts and non-arts students. Arts projects that are offered as part of integrated, project-based learning

(S.T.E.A.M.) may provide one route into high schools. The Walker & Bromwich collaboration with Sunnyside Primary School included elements of this approach.

Retail sector

In places where they are involved (and involvement will increase due to reduced public funding, the development of business improvement districts and other infrastructure and climate plan projects), private companies benefit from the experience and insight of artists who have longstanding relationships with communities. The work of Rebecca Fraser in Forge Retail Park, Parkhead; and Mandy McIntosh in Springburn Shopping Centre show that art has a role to play in revitalising retail spaces as civic and cultural spaces, with art that is either informed by local interests or is community created and place-based.

Artistic Collaboration

The programme guidance encouraged artists to collaborate with one another and many did successfully. The opportunities for collaboration were most often with artists working in adjacent areas, to co-produce public sharing events. Collaboration was achievable when projects had a shared artistic focus (for example musical performance) or when there was a dedicated resource available for collaboration (for example Mairi Morrison's dedicated peripatetic role in the Northeast). In these cases there was a clear benefit to collaboration because it brought groups of participants with shared interests and experiences together. The second benefit of collaboration is practice development which requires sustained co-delivery and this needs to be organised and planned in advance. To encourage collaboration in future, the specific objectives for it could be distinguished at an earlier stage so that they can be incorporated into activity proposals. Future proposals should consider the resources required and available for collaborations to be successful. Are the benefits of collaboration significant enough to warrant making it a requirement of future commissions? Evidence from this programme suggests that it is when the collaboration is between artists with different practices (for example, Hannah Brackston and the Village Storytelling Centre). It is highly likely that it is also beneficial when a highly experienced practitioner collaborates with a less experienced one. This programme shows that there are benefits to collaboration for artists, participants and organisations from different sectors working towards the same goal; and that these are not mutually exclusive. However it would be beneficial for future programmes to devise clear pathways for desired impacts for each party in order to identify which collaborations are likely to be most effective.

Delivering an integrated cultural presence at community and UCI Cycling Events

Eleven artist teams generated increased cultural citizenship through co-produced community and Go Live! events. The courage and trust needed to exhibit ones new art in public places should not be underestimated, especially for participants new to art. Many projects supported community events like gala days in the areas they worked in by co-creating banners, flags and other artworks including songs for these events. Responding to

need or desire, some went further by producing new events or co-producing existing events and providing creative workshops and performances. Seven projects contributed to the UCI opening ceremony, and the *Go Live!* programme of events held to promote cycling and wellbeing. Two projects about social and environmental justice did have potential issues due to the British Cycling team having a sponsorship relationship with an oil company. With environmental activists aware of this and community events linked to the championships a disruption to a community event was only narrowly avoided by a campaign group seeking to disrupt the event. The UCI theme did not necessarily conflict with participants' aims for projects, in fact it worked well with some groups. The cycling theme was wide enough for interpretation in different ways (e.g. as movement or travel) that were relevant to different groups of participants.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Whilst the programme did engage a number of diverse ethnic community members as participants, ethnicity data of participants was not collected so an accurate assessment cannot be made. Of the commissioned artists only two out of twenty-two are diverse ethnic community members and most are of a similar age and experience of working in the sector. Glasgow Life should take efforts to make future commissions more appealing and more accessible to younger artists from diverse ethnic communities by providing entry level opportunities to collaborate with more experienced artists. There are arguably many people in Glasgow who are ready for this opportunity.

Supporting continued work

What is unclear at this stage is whether this increased social capital and cultural citizenship will be sustained, built on and developed, and if so how. A number of projects mentioned exhaustion in communities caused by the level of socio-economic need that they are supporting voluntarily through their third sector organisations. This restricts the extent to which creative and cultural opportunities can be engaged with. Guidance on how best to support and engage communities in these situations and which organisations could be partnered with to help communities address these capacity challenges would be useful. Some of these communities also seek the organisational and governance skills needed to build capacity with their communities so that they can create positive improvements. This is one of the questions being explored by Impact Funding Partners' Democracy Matters Community Engagement Fund 2023/24.