



**cultúrlann
uí chanáin**



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

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Analysis of Droichead Project 2012 - 2015

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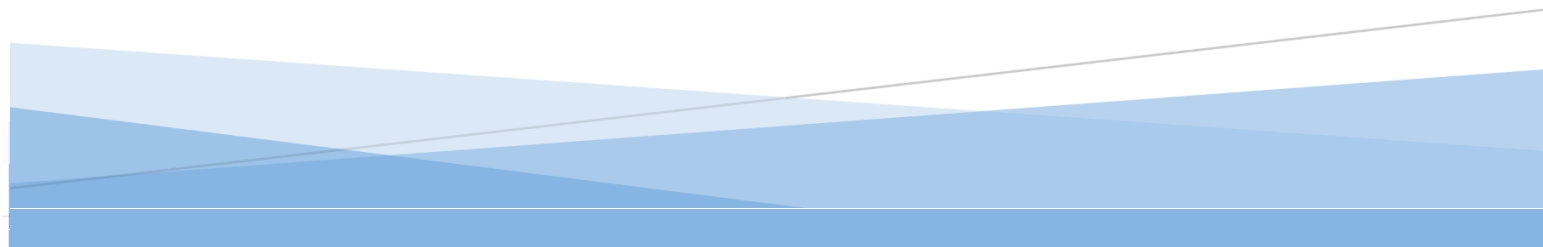
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Executive Summary

An Gaeláras has undertaken an analysis of the impact of the Droichead project, which took place between 2012 and 2015. The Droichead project grew out of relationships developed between An Gaeláras, based in Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, whose purpose is the promotion of Irish language and culture, and the Londonderry Bands Forum (or LBF), who are commonly viewed as one of the most visible representatives of the local Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) community in the region.

This report focuses on the following areas:

- Attitudes of participants before project engagement
- The risk/s of engagement
- The experience of engagement
- The impact of the engagement
- Changes (if any) to community tensions in the city
- The next step for this engagement
- Hopes for the future
- Attitudes
- Recommendations

- **Attitudes of participants before project engagement**

Research participants described varied attitudes before their engagement with the Droichead project as ranging from scepticism and mistrust, to those which viewed the engagement as a unique opportunity to display positive aspects of their culture.

- **The risk/s of engagement**

Many felt that the engagement as too much of a risk for those outside of the process (such as politicians) to support and many were viewed as wanting to wait and see the outcome of the engagement, rather than support it from the outset. The key to eliminating a sense of risk for members of bands themselves in relation to the engagement process appears to have been information and relationship building in ensuring that any concerns about the event were addressed prior to, and during, the project

- **The experience of engagement**

The Fleadh afforded an opportunity to address what was felt to be a gap in cultural representation and expression in the city during this period. it afforded the LBF an opportunity to showcase PUL bands in terms of their abilities, as well as ensuring that bands also accessed resources available while Derry~Londonderry held the title of City of Culture. The location of some of the Fleadh events – in the traditionally PUL Waterside area of the city as well as the Cityside area of the City - meant that some of the concerns held by participants were addressed. It was also

felt that this gave them an opportunity to showcase their abilities to both new and old audiences.

- **The impact of the engagement**

The impact of the engagement was described in overwhelmingly positive terms with respondents emphasising growing inter-communal trust, a growing political awareness, the capacity for sharing through music, as well as opening up the city, both socially and physically.

- **Changes (if any) to community tensions in the city**

The majority of views on this issue centred on movement and use of space, and how this had been opened up by the bands engaging with the Fleadh. It is important to note, that some research respondents viewed this as having a positive impact on both sides of the community. It also had particular positive ramifications for young people in the city, with many making and maintaining contact across communal boundaries as a result of this contact.

- **The next step for this engagement**

There was also a sense from these participants that existing work needs to be built upon and promoted in its own right, given the impression it made on the participants. This placed particular emphasis on the educational resource and how it may be taken forward in future, particularly in light of the decade of centenaries. There was also interest in the development of an Irish language focus. However,

this would require similar sensitivity and pre-planning to that of the initial Culturlann engagement with the LBF.

- **Hopes for the future**

Research participants emphasised how this engagement, while based on a shared love of music, has the potential to inform events and issues beyond the immediate focus of the programme. These points made particular references to issues of the continuation of creating and fostering both intra and inter-community resilience.

- **Attitudes**

This research also included a qualitative aspect, with an online survey being disseminated to those who participated in the project. It focused on the following areas:

- How long were you involved in this project?
- Did you have any concerns about engaging with this project?
- Did you enjoy engaging with this project?
- In your view how has the project impacted community relations in the city?
- In your view what were the most enjoyable aspects of the project?
- Would you like to see this project taken forward?

- **Recommendations**

On the basis of the research which engaged with project materials and participants, this report makes the following recommendations:

- **Relationships are the basis for engagement**

This project evidenced the need for close relationships between key leaders in the organisations involved. These individuals were key in the formative stages of the project, and were the cornerstone of ensuring that the project was driven forward, as well as moving it beyond the initial project outline towards more ambitious engagement (such as that witnessed at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis).

- **Future engagement should seek to continue on the basis of intra and inter-communal development**

This project was perceived to have had a positive impact on inter-communal relations in Derry~Londonderry with areas of shared understanding developing on the basis of a shared appreciation and understanding of music and associated cultural practices. However, this engagement was also emphasised by participants as having a positive impact on communal relations and understanding *within* the PUL community as it gave rise to an increased sense of confidence in their abilities, empowered them to challenge prevailing stereotypes of bands and gave them an

opportunity to learn about their cultural practices. This evidences the multi-levelled impact of engagement of this nature, and requires development in this context.

- **Impact on physical and social spaces in Derry~Londonderry**

The Fleadh specifically was viewed by participants as initially opening up “safe” spaces in Derry~Londonderry for bands and for musical appreciation, more generally. This compliments efforts, such as those by the City of Culture, for example, to ensure the creation of more “shared” spaces within the city, which participants viewed as essential to the creation of contact and better relations in the city, particularly amongst young people. According to research participants this has continued to inform

- **Music as a shared experience**

This project emphasised the power of the arts in creating shared space and understanding for individuals and groups of perceived differing backgrounds. In this context, music provided participants with a shared focus and interest which transcended prevailing perceptions of difference and division. It also acted as a gateway into other areas of commonality and interest (such as language and other cultural practices). This evidences the need for a project founded on shared interests rather than emphasising perceived differences from the outset.

- **Develop connections beyond traditional contact work – builds resilience**

This project emphasises the need for creative and innovative approaches to programmes aimed at building relationships that goes beyond traditional contact work, towards areas of genuine engagement on a practical and meaningful basis.

This report emphasises the perceived inter and intra – communal resilience built on this basis.

1. Introduction

An Gaeláras has undertaken an analysis of the impact of the Droichead project, which took place between 2012 and 2015. The Droichead project grew out of relationships developed between An Gaeláras, based in Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, whose purpose is the promotion of Irish language and culture, and the Londonderry Bands Forum (or LBF), who are commonly viewed as one of the most visible representatives of the local Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) community in the region. The Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin website describes this project in the following terms:

“Droichead is a cross-community project which promotes inclusivity and cultural diversity through a programme of language and arts activities aimed at engaging and uniting communities”

It is important to have an understanding of what led to the engagement of two groups which may have previously been viewed as occupying different spheres of the cultural divide in the region. During the course of 2012 a unique relationship developed in Derry~Londonderry between two organisations that might have been regarded as representing opposing perspectives in the divided politics and culture of Ireland, north and south. One was An Gaeláras, based in Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, whose purpose is the promotion of Irish language and culture. The other organisation was the Londonderry Bands Forum (or “LBF”), who are commonly

viewed as one of the most visible exemplars of the local Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) community. It must be noted that this engagement arose from a strategic objective adopted by the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann Executive Committee in May 2102 to make the 2013 Fleadh “inclusive of the entire community in the city”. This eventually culminated in these two groups, despite their perceived differences, being publicly seen celebrating their cultural identity during the 2013 Fleadh in Derry~Londonderry, as part of the wider City of Culture events in that year.

This ongoing engagement is reflected in the continued co-operation to date (e.g. International Pan Celtic Festival 2014 & 2015 and the Londonderry Bands Forum (LBF) participation in the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2014 in Sligo). The capacity building that has taken place through this engagement has had ramifications beyond the cultural realms, with the LBF being invited to give a presentation at a fringe event at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2015 – without a doubt, a significant and historic move within the political arena of the island of Ireland. The cross-community agenda of this engagement has expanded ever since through dialogue and shared events.

This research seeks to measure the impact of the Droichead initiative and evaluate the impacts on the general community, with a particular focus on how it has impacted on the PUL community in the city of Derry~Londonderry. This is with a view to establishing what experiences and impacts of the project can be built on,

and also what issues need to be addressed in the future to ensure continuing positive relations between the groups, and wider community, in question.

1.1. Background

Established in 1984, the main purpose of An Gealáras is the promotion of the Irish language and culture with the provision of Irish language classes, arts & music events, events for young people & the general public. People from various backgrounds attend events in the venue. Every week up to 300 adults attend language classes, 200 attend music classes, 1,601 children participate in Irish language classes (as part of Léargas, a project aimed at children in English-medium schools) and more than 20,000 attend events during the year.

The strategic aims of An Gaeláras are:

- To promote awareness of cultural identity between the Irish-speaking community and those within the PUL community through the provision of cultural awareness classes and events within the PUL community;
- To increase the numbers of Irish-speakers, in Derry and in the North-West by providing for the teaching of Irish, through classes and courses, to all of the people of Derry in a way that is accessible, tailored and effective;
- To develop a vibrant Irish-language arts sector within Derry City and the North-West through the provision of courses, classes, events and examples of excellence across a broad range of traditional arts;

- To become as self-sufficient as is possible and to seek to achieve a high level of sustainability so that funders can be assured that they are getting value for money.

An Gaeláras was the lead partner in delivering Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2013, the biggest music and traditional arts festival in Europe. Having sought funding in 2012 to ensure that the Fleadh was inclusive and that people from the PUL community would participate, they sought to provide a programme of activities which facilitated, enabled and encouraged the participation of the PUL community in the Fleadh. This was the first engagement of its kind with bands from the PUL community, the success of which is reflected in the continued engagement to date e.g. International Pan Celtic Festival and the Bands participation in the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2014 in Sligo. The engagement during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2013 between An Gaeláras, an organisation whose purpose is the promotion of Irish language and culture and the Londonderry Bands Forum, who are the most visible representatives of the PUL community, is a recent example of the successful work of these organisation's to both reach out and increase understanding of other traditions. In this case, particularly as the two organisations involved are in terms of the Northern Ireland experience, seen as still poles apart and the antithesis of each other.

Educational Resource

As part of the Droichead project, a learning resource was developed. This resource is aimed at Key Stage 3 for delivery in schools and communities with groups of up to thirty learners. The purpose of this resource is to:

“...show how that which is usually associated with contention, disagreement, violence and division was used as a means of bringing communities together, resulting in the celebration of the cultural diversity of an 'other'”

A documentary was produced during the Fleadh. It outlines the attitudes of individuals partaking in the engagement process. Echoing the aims of the wider programme, participants described the focus on the Fleadh in an engagement process in the following terms:

“Music used as common ground”

“If we can meet each other as musicians we can break through some of that history and hostility”

“focus of dialogue on music”

The importance of this tool is elaborated on in this research with particular interest in what the next steps for this engagement may be.

1.2. Context

It is important to contextualise the enormity of such an engagement given the positioning of bands, by evidencing how they have been conveyed in existing research. Northern Ireland has been described as having a wide ranging, and at times, politically sensitive, parading season, which is most concentrated between the months of March and September, and the parading tradition is generally perceived as “a manifestation of the communal divide between Catholic and Protestant groups”.¹ However, despite this focus on parading as divisive, it is important to also illustrate parading and its associated culture/s as encompassing music, practices and networks which go beyond this particular representation. The scale of band parades in Northern Ireland is evidenced in the statistics on the numbers of band parades taking place, which as in 2013 show an increase of almost double the number of parades which took place in 2005 (2,120 in 2005 and 4,637 in 2013).² It is also necessary to unpack the perception of parading as primarily constituting a contentious issue. The then Chair of the Northern Ireland Parades Commission, Peter Osborne, evidenced this misconception in the following statement:

¹ Ray Casserly. “Blood, Thunder and Drums: Style and Changing Aesthetic in Ulster Protestant Bands”. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*. Vol. 45. (2013), 143.

² Paul Nolan. *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report 3*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. (2014), 157.

"... (just) 225 of the total of 4,500 were deemed contentious or sensitive in 2012-2013 including the 51 weekly parades by Portadown District which has the same restriction applied. Taking that as the same parade and restriction, it would leave 174 contentious parades out of a grand total of just under 4,450."³

These statistics exemplify the apparent disconnect between the reality of band parades and how they are emphasised as sites of contestation. Rather parading may be considered as a non-contested and normative feature of life for the vast majority of communities and spaces in which it occurs in both urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland.

In the context of this research, bands play a huge role in the lives of many living in the region. In 2011, it was estimated that there were approximately 700 active bands in the region.⁴ Marching bands in Northern Ireland have played an integral role in the nature of protest since the late 1960s and were also active in political demonstrations and protests such as the campaign against the Anglo Irish Agreement in 1985, and the dispute at Drumcree in 1996. Ramsay describes how "this sometimes led them into confrontation with nationalists and with state security forces and the Orange Order frequently blamed the bands for trouble at

³ "Facts not hype on numbers of parades" – says Parades Chairman Peter Osborne" November 1, 2013. <http://eamonmallie.com/2013/11/facts-not-hype-on-numbers-of-parades-says-parades-chairman-peter-osborne/>

⁴ G. Ramsey, "Band Practice: Class, Taste and Identity in Ulster Loyalist Flute Bands. *Ethnomusicology Ireland* 1, (2011).

such events".⁵ In terms of the nature of bands and their engagement in protest, some commentators have equated band expression more generally with a legacy of that community's historical affiliation with the British military⁶, others have sought to engage with bands as a type of social movement engaging in specific forms of protest. The key component here being the fact that they are physical movements.

In addition to this, recent research by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum also explored the rationale behind band membership. It found that the following were motivating factors in encouraging individuals (particularly young people) to join a band:

- family connections;
- friendship and belonging;
- protecting their culture;
- fun and enjoyment; and
- learning a musical instrument.

Similarly, this research also sought to gauge perceived benefits of band membership. It found that the following were perceived benefits: a sense of family;

⁵ G. Ramsey, Band Practice: Class, Taste and Identity in Ulster Loyalist Flute Bands. *Ethnomusicology* (2011), 2.

⁶ Northern Ireland Youth Forum, *Sons of Ulster: Exploring Loyalist Band Attitudes Towards Culture, Identity and Heritage* (2013),5.

friendships and travel; treated as an adult; and sense of pride.⁷ These findings evidence the profoundly individual, and collective, focus of the experience of band membership. This research also explored the issues of bands and expressions of identity and culture. This revealed the following:

- There is a significance associated with being a member of a band;
- It aids in helping individuals understand their heritage and historical significance of how bands emerged;
- Bands inform the wider community about their culture through music and their uniforms;
- Bands are closely aligned with communal commemoration; and
- There is a perception that bands are demonised by individuals and groups from different backgrounds.⁸

These findings reveal the complex interplay of identity and culture in relation to the tradition of bands (and parading) in PUL communities.

⁷ Northern Ireland Youth Forum, *Sons of Ulster: Exploring Loyalist Band Attitudes Towards Culture, Identity and Heritage* (2013), 14-15.

⁸ Northern Ireland Youth Forum, *Sons of Ulster: Exploring Loyalist Band Attitudes Towards Culture, Identity and Heritage* (2013), 26-27.

1.3. Aims

The aims of this report are to explore and measure the impact of this engagement, particularly with reference to attitudinal changes of those who participated in this process. It explores and analyses the following areas:

- Scepticism of those involved before and after the engagement.
- Risks involved in participating in this engagement.
- The experience of the engagement.
- The impact of the engagement.
- Changes if any in community tensions within the City.
- Are there any changed perceptions of the 'other'.
- The next step for this engagement.
- Hopes for the future.

1.4. Methodology

This research was conducted between November 2015 and February 2016 and involved a number of distinct and intertwining approaches:

- Background research into the rationale of the engagement, including: reviews of documentation; audio-visual material and stakeholder discussions;
- Delivery of a series of interviews, focus groups and personal testimonies with band leaders and members;
- Quantitative representation and analysis of participants' views; and
- The production of this report outlining findings and recommendations for future engagement.

Researchers also recorded and collected written notes from the discussions which are used in the remainder of the report to inform findings and recommendations for future work. Quotations have been anonymised.

2. Areas of Focus

In seeing to establish the impact of this project, the following areas were considered in the course of this research:

- a) Attitudes of participants before project engagement
- b) The risk/s of engagement
- c) The experience of engagement
- d) The impact of the engagement
- e) Changes (if any) to community tensions in the city
- f) The next step for this engagement
- g) Hopes for the future

These themes were used in the focus groups and interviews to guide conversations in a semi-structured format.

2.1. Attitudes of participants before project engagement

Over the course of this research, participants were questioned about how they felt prior to engaging with this project. This provides us with a sense of the positions individuals held in relation to engagement of this nature. Responses varied from scepticism and mistrust, to ones which encompassed views on the engagement as a unique opportunity.

In relation to issues of trust, many participants evoked a sense that many of these issues with regard to the project were as a result of the wider political environment, rather than any specific issue with the organisation, groups or individuals associated with the programme themselves:

A lot of us had issues of trust, we asked ourselves can we trust Culturlann because of strong Sinn Féin links we asked "is this part of the Trojan horse mentality or what's their real motives", so there was a lot of that we needed to work through.

Therefore, the challenges of ensuring the engagement was inclusive of those it sought to reach were apparent from the outset and may be seen as being subject to wider than the wider political environment, revealing the importance of relationships at the ground level in relation to this project.

An awareness of these challenges was echoed by research participants who had experience of attempting to engage bands in initiatives which may have been deemed to be "outside their comfort zone":

...my gut feeling was not in a month of Sundays will they go for it [the Fleadh]. As it turned out, it amazed me the leadership and willingness to be part of it, not to say it wasn't a difficult process because there were other sceptics within the bands forum as well, and it took a number of things for it to happen.

The "number of things" referenced here was elaborated on as being primarily focused on considering the intended nature of the engagement, as well as the nature of the relationships being built between those in more senior roles in the two organisations. This sense of scepticism or mistrust quickly abated on this basis with band representatives describing this shift in perception in the following terms:

It turned very quickly that there was very little negativity from the bands, the only frustrating element was the unionist political leadership. They [political leadership] were sceptical and kept their cards very close to their chest, right up to the launch of the Fleadh...

This effective disconnect from the politicisation of the event was viewed as an enabling factor for participants.

There were also research participants who were keen to emphasise the fact that there had been a history of Loyalist band engagement with the Fleadh, for example. There was a perception that this involvement had been compromised by the politicisation of the event in a sense that did not resonate with those from a PUL background (i.e. republicanism)

We were not sceptical about engaging because our band had played in Fleadhs before in the early 1980s - it wasn't new for us. We had the view that it was a really good thing for bands to do, so maybe we influenced at the residential some of the thinking to do it. The problem with the Fleadh here [for many] was that a lot of the people in the organising committee would have been politically motivated [i.e. involved in republican politics]

This is an important point as it evidences the point that perceived political interference, both unionist/loyalist and nationalist/republican, was viewed as having a negative impact on the perceptions of the Fleadh in terms of PUL engagement. Therefore, there appears to be an awareness on the part of participants that such cultural events and initiatives should not be subject to politicisation, regardless of background.

Other research participants evidenced a willingness from the inception of this engagement, viewing it in empowering terms for bands and the PUL community, more generally. The project was described in terms which afforded those engaging

with bands an opportunity to promote the nature of their music and cultural practices, and one which they are empowered by:

I wasn't worried I was excited because I wanted to show what Protestant band culture is all about and it isn't just about offending people, we are just trying to display our culture just as much as anybody else.

Therefore, attitudes to this process of engagement are evidenced as being wholly dependent on the involvement of band members from the outset to ensure an awareness of a lack of politicisation, from any political representatives or ideologies. It also reveals the appetite for programmes such as Droichead which afford opportunities for groups to represent their culture and cultural practices (in this case music) in what they determine to be an authentic way.

2.2. The risk/s of engagement

It is important to recognise that there was a perceived level of risk existed for many, both in the bands, and those working towards ensuring a successful outcome of the engagement. However, many felt that the engagement as too much of a risk for those outside of the process (such as politicians) to support and many were viewed as wanting to wait and see the outcome of the engagement, rather than support it from the outset:

The risk for us was something happening, nobody in the unionist community came out and supported us, aside from the people on the ground. Politically though, I'm sure there were people sitting at home wishing something [bad/negative] would happen and when it didn't happen all of a sudden everybody wanted a part of it.

Others felt that the general feeling was that bands had previously simply had not been involved with initiatives of this nature, given the location and history of attitudes to bands, that that was simply a risk in itself:

It's a risk for somebody to put on a band uniform and to walk through the town. Years past someone walking in a band uniform would have been deemed stupid and dangerous, and people would say we deserved what we got. I thought it was amazing to see band uniforms walking about. We had other people telling us we were selling out and all that nonsense.

This sense of a history of ostracising bands meant that the risks associated with this type of engagement were as a result of the experience of many of the members who had experienced negativity from those in the city and from backgrounds which were now attempting to initiate the type of engagement outlined in this research:

Of course, it was strange, people sitting across the table saying they want unionist band, the same people who didn't want us to take part in the city. That created the notion that it was tokenism. But the idea didn't go away, there was a lack of understanding about what the Fleadh was, we thought it was going to be a Sinn Féin music thing, people had no idea how big or what it was about.

The key to eliminating a sense of risk in relation to the engagement appears to have been information and relationship building in ensuring that any concerns about the event were addressed prior to the engagement:

There a lot of honesty at the start of the engagement and building of trust which has continued to develop. There was an honesty about what could and couldn't happen. Marching bands want to march and this was our opportunity and to be quite honest they were honest in fact they told us what could and could not happen in terms of our security.

The focus on music and the Fleadh seemed to act as an effective buffer from any risks associated with engagement of this nature. Research participants described

the risk of expanding upon this engagement to incorporate Irish language classes, for example:

Not to me personally, but there is a risk to keeping people on board and there is stuff that comes up, where there can be negative reactions, there is a very fine line that has to be tread. There was one member of the band who got such a hard time he had to leave the class. He came always wanted to learn Irish his whole life and then got ostracised from the broader community and it's a shame. For the band community that burned their fingers a bit and they took a step back. So St Columb's Park House can engage with the language but we (speaking as LBF) can't at this stage. That's where that ended.

This point emphasises the need for constant reviewing of attitudes to the process and ensuring that approaches to inter-communal and inter-cultural sharing are gauged and pitched in response to the particular circumstances of participants. The example of Irish language classes as being viewed as beyond the reach of a particular member of the initial programme evidences the varied and differing journeys each participant is on.

2.3. The experience of engagement

Discussions on the experience of the engagement during this process centred on: music; location of the Fleadh; and other cultural symbols. The broader City of Culture programme in Derry~Londonderry in 2013 was perceived by some as being removed from PUL band culture. Therefore, the engagement with the Fleadh afforded an opportunity to address what was felt to be a gap in cultural representation and expression in the city during this period:

There was a time when City of Culture when the program was being seen as too one sided and not inclusive enough. I was on the culture board and it was a concern. By doing this it showed the bandsmen were engaged, that they recognised that they had every right to be recognised during City of Culture year. They realise they were going to gain a hell of a lot of brownie points, in terms media and public persona, but also in terms of accessing the resources associated with the City of Culture.

This individual emphasised an awareness of the benefits of engagement with the City of Culture in a broader sense, in that it afforded the LBF an opportunity to showcase PUL bands in terms of their abilities, as well as ensuring that bands also accessed resources available while Derry~Londonderry held the title of City of Culture:

The whole dynamic with the UK city of culture made it easier to work and we had a lot to offer and show. We are proud of what we do and in a setting

where people could hear it and not in a parade setting so people can hear it and say "Jeez, that's quite good". That was it, to show our range of talent and the range of ages [involved], young and old.

However, echoing earlier sentiments, some research participants had reservations about the engagement with the Fleadh, due to perceptions at the local level. These concerns were addressed by the Comhaltas director and gave a sense that the main purpose and concern of the LBF involvement in the Fleadh was essentially focused on the music:

The clinching factor was when the director of Comhaltas spoke to the bands, you could feel how unbelievably genuine he was. Where we were maybe sceptical of local personalities involved in the Fleadh, such as Gerry and all. Comhaltas, regardless of Culturlann, are pure musicians, there was a genuine interest in hearing what we could do.

This focus and emphasis on music in relation to the Fleadh, was in the views of the research participants, supported by the location of some of the events – in the traditionally PUL Waterside area of the city as well as on the Cityside, meant that some of the concerns held by participants were addressed. It was also felt that this gave them an opportunity to showcase their abilities to both new and old audiences:

To be honest doing this gave the bands kudos in the unionist community, people saw us stepping out and playing and decided they wanted to make the trip over and see what it was about.

Such was the importance of the location of the event in terms of bands feeling able to access the event that many thought that this was key in ensuring the engagement of many of the band members. This is echoed by a research participant in the following terms:

What helped a lot was that the gig rig was placed on the Waterside, "on home turf" as it were, if it had of been at Guild Hall Square or the Bogside they wouldn't have went. I think because they chose a good neutral venue was a good choice.

Concerns over cultural displays at the Fleadh were also eased by the apparent awareness on the part of the organisers of the Fleadh, for the need for sensitivity with regard to cultural symbols and emblems at the event. This was emphasised in relation to flags, particularly the tricolour, which some research participants may have been off-putting, especially younger band members:

For such a young band I was very proud of them, with some quite staunch Protestants, I thought it was good of them to look outside the box. It didn't take that much convincing, they seen it as a challenge and different and give it go. You are always going to get the odd ones, the negatives, but from my point of view, I found it very positive. Give the Fleadh organisers their dues,

there was not that outpouring of tricolours, they did go down the route of more colourful flags.

The description of the engagement was therefore focused on the cultural practices, as well as the positive experiences of how the involvement of bands was taken into consideration with regard to inclusion and the perceived overall success of the process .

2.4. The impact of the engagement

A key concern of this research was to establish the perceived impact of the engagement has had. The responses centred on trust, a growing political awareness, the capacity for sharing through music, as well as opening up the city, both socially and physically.

The theme of trust (or lack thereof) was repeated throughout this research. Indeed, this was attributed to the “us and them” sense upon which many research participants viewed living and patterns of movement in the city, as being based on. An interesting finding of this research was the capacity for an initiative such as this to unpack this to increase a sense of a shared identity based on the city as a whole:

You can't underestimate the impact City of Culture had. I grew in this city hating it, going to a Protestant school in republican area during the hunger strike, my ambition was to leave this place quickly as I could. There wasn't a sense of ownership where City of Culture brought every together to have "an us against the rest of the world" attitude.

This extended to movement within the city and how comfortable people felt about expressing their identity, as well as having that identity respected:

One of the greatest photos that wasn't taken was a band member walking through Guild Hall Square carrying the biggest drum, it was surreal and you thought "this city has moved and we're in the middle of making this happen".

This also spoke to a growing sense of ownership over the effective transformation of the city.

The issue of politics and political representation was one which permeated many of the discussions in the course of this research. Many of the research participants felt that this engagement evidenced how far ahead of their traditional political representatives they are:

...the DUP promised to have representation on the stage [at the Fleadh] and then they didn't turn up. They keep a distance, for me it showed a lack of understanding of their constituents, they didn't know whether to support it or not, so they ignored it. And then when it became a success they tried to jump on bandwagon.

This was in contrast to some of the transparency they felt had resulted from the engagement with the Fleadh, in relation to republican politicians and politics. Some of the research participants felt that a semblance of mutual understanding had been established between members of the bands and those from the republican community, which was based on relationships built during the course of the engagement:

When you meet Gerry on a personal basis and get away from the Sinn Féin mask and genuine friendships build up and there is a concern that Sinn Féin have another agenda and they have never been any secret to us what they need for a United Ireland to happen, that proper unionist engagement needs

to happen and we are part of that engagement and they have been upfront with us, so we don't feel that they are hiding.

This awareness, and crucially, understanding, of alternative political and cultural identities, meant that some research participants felt empowered to differentiate themselves from traditional political narratives which set bands apart. This is encompassed by one band member in the following terms:

But since that that's where the idea of alternative forms of leadership has sprung up, that there is another voice that isn't through mainstream politics, that people like bandsmen can have a strong constituency that they can use without going through the political process.

Indeed, the impact of this empowerment has witnessed the development of relations between bands and the Comhaltas to such a level that the bands have attended the two subsequent Fleadh events, evidencing the genuine commitment to the relationships and approaches development during the initial engagement:

...we have been at the next two Fleadhs and stepped outside Culturlann and gone to Sligo.

The experience of the engagement also resulted in a perception that the band members had the overwhelming support of their own communities during the course of the process. This has also been seen to have changed and impacted the nature of how their community is viewing the accessibility of the city, in both physical and social terms:

They got nothing but support from the community, nothing negative after the Fleadh. I am surprised now that I see so many boys from here going over the town now to socialise, who might not have before.

Research participants directly correlated what they viewed as the positive changes in confidence amongst their group, their ability to feel accepted in particular spaces in the city, as well as a widening of social circles beyond traditional communal barriers as attributable to their engagement with the Droichead project.

2.5. Changes (if any) to community tensions in the city

This research also sought to establish if the programme had had any impact on inter-communal tensions in the city. Echoing earlier views, the majority of views on this issue centred on movement and use of space, and how this had been opened up by the bands engaging with the Fleadh. It is important to note, that some research respondents viewed this as having a positive impact on both sides of the community. It also had particular positive ramifications for young people in the city, with many making and maintaining contact as a result of this engagement:

I can say that when I went to watch the Fleadh, there was huge amounts of people watching it, the bands playing in it allow people to say, "you know, the bands are playing, so let's go see", it was a draw. And if the Fleadh had of been only one side, maybe you wouldn't have had Protestant people there. It allowed people to come into the city. Young people in this city are totally engaged with each other.

This engagement was also viewed as changing perceptions of bands and why it is they play music and parade. This led to the bands being able to engage in events they would not have previously, and opened up their traditions beyond what research participants viewed as being misinformed stereotypes:

I'm sure that the engagement did a lot of good easing tensions, but the impact of that whole city of culture year that normally wouldn't have happened. Like the Caw flute band leading the Foyle Cup parade. My bands

played in the Playhouse. We didn't care to be demonised, but then we realised, with people coming up and giving us history about the marching bands, that the bands weren't just something about "the troubles".

Other examples were offered of how the project which led to the LBF involvement in the Fleadh have impacted tensions in the city. This was viewed as being reflected in the normalisation of many formerly contentious events/parades:

The parade for the Pan-Celtic festival that featured loyalist bandsmen and traditional Irish is an example how parades should take place. Next Saturday is the London parade, five or ten years ago that was horrendous, there were spit barriers up, protests and police. Now there is no spit barriers, and people are going about their business. The work that Culturlann did during the Fleadh has helped that and helped change the image of bands in the broader nationalist community.

It is important to note that there were some issues in terms of tensions resulting from the engagement, which was particularly evident in relation to the participation of the LBF in the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in the wake of the Fleadh:

From engaging, the only fall out we have felt is from the Ard Fheis and speaking there. But, that was contained to a social media campaign that involved one or two individuals. There was nothing widespread about it and it was dealt with. But it showed that playing at the Fleadh is one thing, but speaking to Sinn Féin is whole different ballgame and we need to be careful

about how we go about this, in hindsight had there been no negative publicity we probably would have disappointing because it would have shown apathy or lack of interest.

This is a revealing observation in that it illustrates the careful steps that are required in ensuring that participation in such events are reflective and mindful of wider communal views. However, it was also limited and gave those involved in participating in the Ard Fheis an opportunity to initiate and/or continue important conversations in their community about engagement of this nature.

There was an apparent awareness amongst many of the research participants that the impact of engagement such as this may be both positive and negative. While much of that described is positive and has enhanced the experience of individuals engaging with bands in the city, it is also important to be mindful of the capacity of a project such as this to have unforeseen implications of such engagement. This calls to mind "do no harm" principles. While obviously a key concern of Culturlann and LBF, it is important that those involved continue to avoid or mitigate any potential negative impacts of engagement of this nature. These "negative" impacts may be any of the following:

- Worsening divisions between conflicting groups;
- Increasing danger for participants in peace activities;
- Reinforcing structural or overt violence;
- Diverting human and material resources from productive peace activities;

- Increasing cynicism; and
- Disempowering local people.⁹

Therefore, “do no harm” must be a key component in the development and application of the positive processes developed in the course of Droichead, and any initiatives in its wake.

⁹ M. Anderson & L. Olson . *Confronting Wars: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners, Reflecting on Peace Practice Project*. (Cambridge MA: Collaborative for Development Action), pp22-28.

2.6. The next step for this engagement

Research participants were also questioned about their views on how this engagement could potentially be taken forward. There was also a sense from these participants that existing work needs to be built upon and promoted in its own right, given the impression it made on the participants. This placed particular emphasis on the educational resource and how it may be taken forward in future:

...I want us to make it work, ourselves and Culturlann, I want to be in the schools with Gerry and Lisa and people from Comhaltas and tell the young people how we worked out our difficulties and explaining how they can go forward. I feel they don't feel as strongly about it as us, they are happy to have it done and move onto something else, whereas our ethos is, we can make a huge difference with it promoting it all over Northern Ireland and to do that it needs both of use working together.

The overwhelming focus of research participants was also on how this engagement should be developed in the current educational initiatives, as well as developing them to explore areas of mutual understanding. This went beyond the use of the educational resource structured educational initiatives in schools, for example, which would involve the direct involvement of band members themselves:

...a joint education initiative, that type of work is important. Also our own work where we are accessing Catholic schools trying to de-mystify the negative image that bands have. That needs to happen.

This awareness of a need to "de-mystify" bands also extended into the bands themselves learning about historical issues and traditions which may not have been open to many of the participants prior to such engagement:

Whatever you get the band to do they'll do within reason and they are very keen for next coming to the year of centenaries of learning the history and not just the Somme, they are willing to learn all about the history around that time, Irish history in general, because that's something we as Protestants didn't learn in school. They want to know what was happening in Ireland, the Easter rising and partition.

These aspirations for learning beyond traditional communal boundaries, are with a view to increasing a "shared" sense of belonging and community identity. There was a sense in speaking with participants that the history and narratives of the 1916 Rising and the Battle of the Somme were of particular importance in challenging inter-communal stereotypes and ensuring that the relationships initiated in current engagement is built on and developed:

One very obvious one is the commemoration of 1916. There is opportunities there... I feel the commemoration is best done in a shared way rather than single identity. Because I feel that all of us, and I come from a unionist

community and I hate using that word, but am unionist by political convictions, but I think you have to be examining your history, challenging your history and it might be to revision and maybe it might to used politically as it been and certainly in terms of my studies the way the first world war was viewed in the Republic and the Easter rising is being used and I think it would be more beneficial to everyone if we were sitting down together and looking at what really is our own shared history

The issue of developing the use and awareness of the heritage of the Irish language was also referenced as an area which may provide an opportunity to increase a sense of shared identity between communities which have traditionally been viewed as occupying different cultural spaces. According to one participant this has the ability to ensure a sense of confidence in culture which does not depend on the fear of "the other" for its identity:

It would be very interesting to do because the whole Presbyterian angle on speaking Irish it's not widely known. See the more you can grey the areas, the better, so let's just grey a few more of them up. The issue is in the Loyalist areas is....They feel anything that's shared is lost. Good relations should be about painting the world beige, we should be allowed our blues and greens if we want them.

2.7. Hopes for the future

In discussing their hopes for the future, many of the research participants discussed the impact of the existing and ongoing engagement, and how a shared love of music has embedded relationships and has the potential to be developed on:

I know we asked the boys in the band one time how they'd feel about learning an Irish instrument, and they would be up for that. Where they had someone come over or they go and they got to try each other instruments out, maybe someone like that would work, I do think when you key on the music they are quite up for it.

However, many emphasised how this engagement, while based on a shared love of music, has the potential to inform events and issues beyond the immediate focus of the programme:

The engagement with the Fleadh, you can see the legacy today but it's hard to keep that engagement going. The great thing with their shared love of music and the connection to Droichead is that they ultimately want all the young people coming through to have the best opportunities, to access the young people who can't afford an instrument. There is a real social justice angle that connects. Access to music and the development of young people, that's their shared agenda.

Other research participants felt that Droichead has provided the foundation for genuine communal resilience in relation to future tensions which may occur between individuals and groups in the city:

There are risks to be engaged with one another but that is less now with the good work done. But a lot has to do with what's going on externally, if there are flags protest or incidents it can impact here, the good thing is the people will try to minimise and manage [tensions, as a result of relationships built]

This is a key point in relation to the overall project which indicates the power of a focused approach (such as music) in working towards a much broader and holistic end in terms of relationship building.

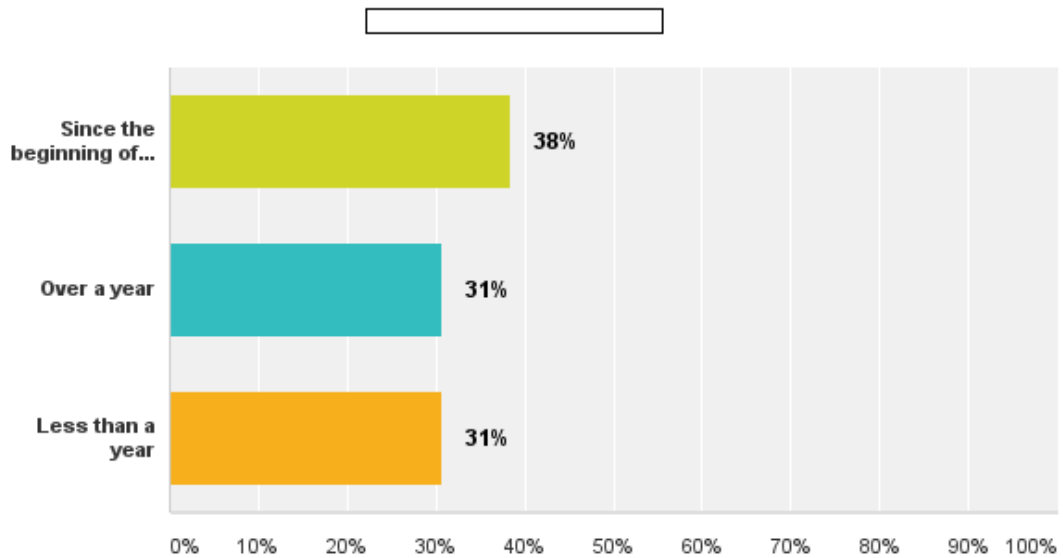
3. Attitudes

An online survey was created and disseminated to many of those who took part in the process and this section details quantitative data and analysis, as well as qualifying comments, from a range of participants.

- **Q1. How long were you involved in this project?**

The initial question sought to establish the average length of time participants had been involved in the process.

Q1 How long were you involved in this project

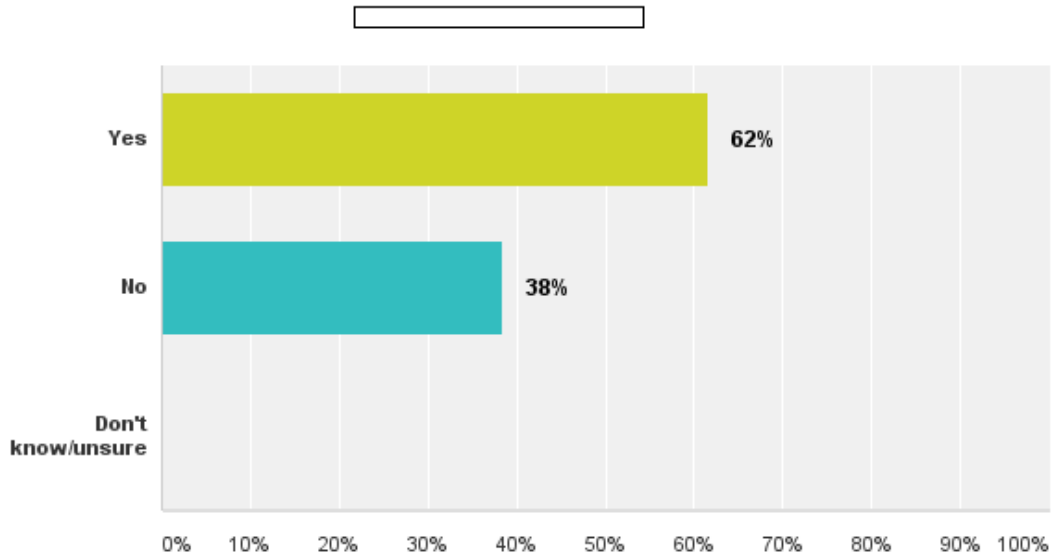


A range of timescale options were presented to survey participants, with results revealing differing lengths of times of engagement. The majority (38%) had been involved for the entirety of the process. However, a significant proportion have been involved in this engagement for either over a year (31%), or less than a year (31%). This would suggest that as the programme developed an increasing number of individuals became involved

- **Q2. Did you have any concerns about engaging with this project?**

It was also important to gauge if participants had had any concerns prior to their engagement with the programme.

Q2 Did you have any concerns about engaging with this project?



The majority, just under two-thirds (62%) indicated that they had had prior concerns to this process. The survey also afforded participants the opportunity to expand on this and leave additional comments. These comments were varied in their focus, but may be characterised as being focused on the role of the LBF in the process: The comments were as follows:

As a protestant I thought this would have been taken over by the republican movement

Yes - I was concerned that the LBF involvement would be tokenistic

Issues of safety were also raised in relation to prior concerns about the project:

"Concerns over security in the locations of the performances"

"I had concerns for safety of the band"

Some participants were also concerned with the wider perceptions of the PUL community of the engagement process:

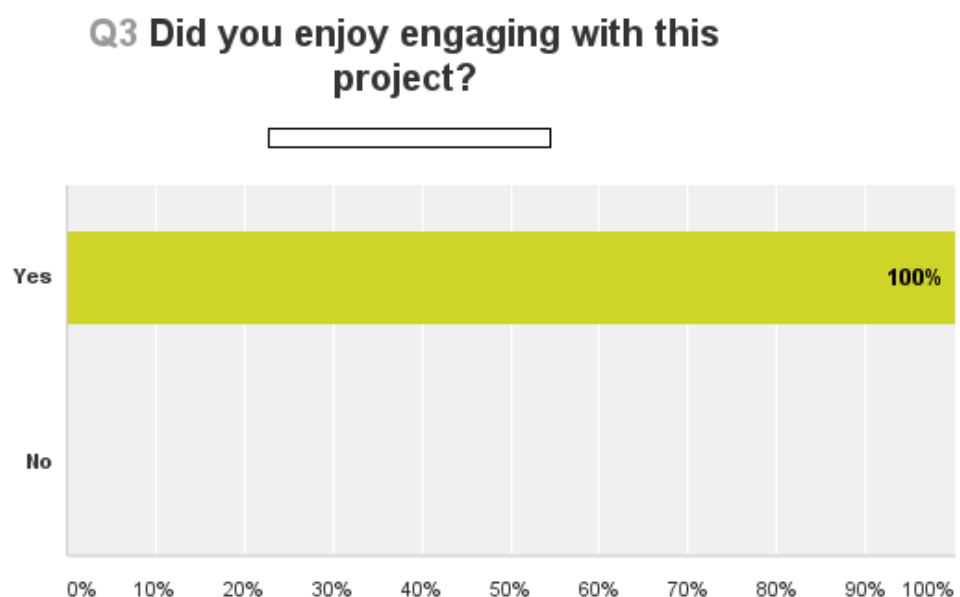
"Worried about strong views within the local loyalist community"

"the obvious - as being a band member and part of the PUL community"

"My only concern was how the rest of my community feel or react"

- **Q3. Did you enjoy engaging with this project?**

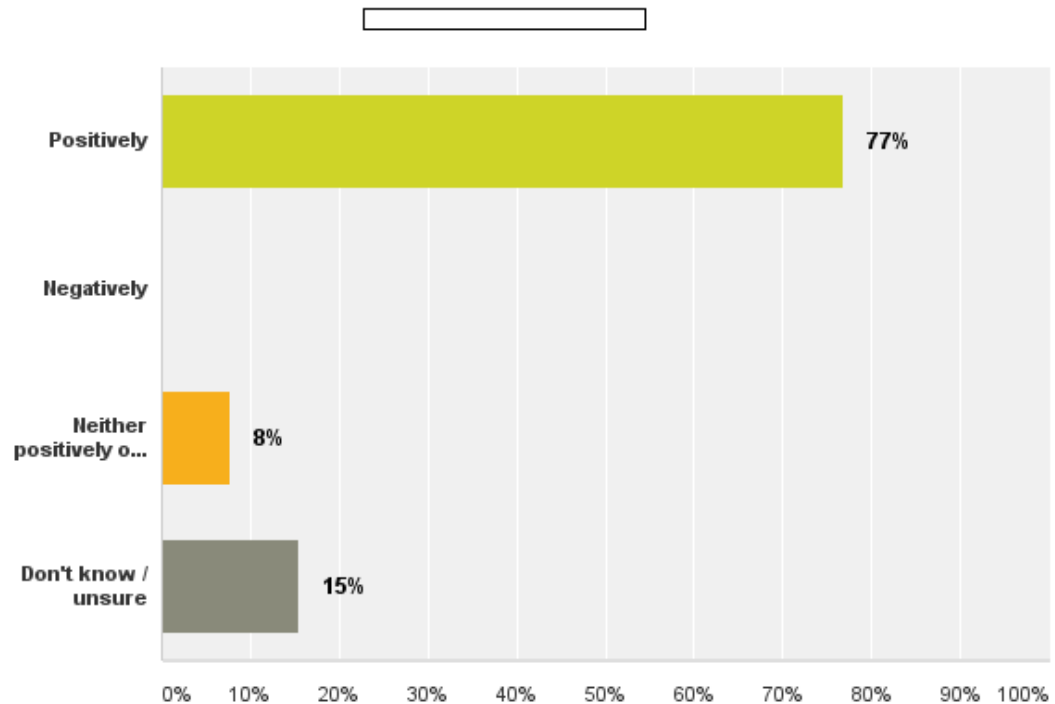
The survey also queried how much participants enjoyed engaging with this project. All of those who took part in the survey indicated a positive response in relation to this question.



- **Q4. In your view how has the project impacted community relations in the city?**

The survey gave participants an opportunity to indicate how/if they felt the engagement had impacted the nature of community relations in the city. The overwhelming majority (77%) indicated that they viewed the impact as positive. 15% stated that they “didn’t know” or were “unsure”. Only 8% viewed the project as “neither positively nor negatively impacting community relations in the city”. No participants viewed the project as having a negative impact.

Q4 In your view how has the project impacted community relations in the city?



Participants were also invited to leave any additional comments on these views. Comments focused on perceptions of "the other" community towards band music and the PUL community:

"It has shown that the majority of both communities are interested in the music and culture of "the other side" I think it helped show that we are more alike than different"

"more acceptance between different traditions etc by some"

"gave us a chance to educate the nationalist people of the city in respect to the marching band culture of Londonderry which was widely misunderstood and blatantly discriminated against via the media"

Some participants referred to relationship building and the creation of shared understanding as a key feature of their experience of the project:

"From 2013 my own band played with a brass band from Strabane and have created friends from this and we also played together during the fleadh and socialised after the events"

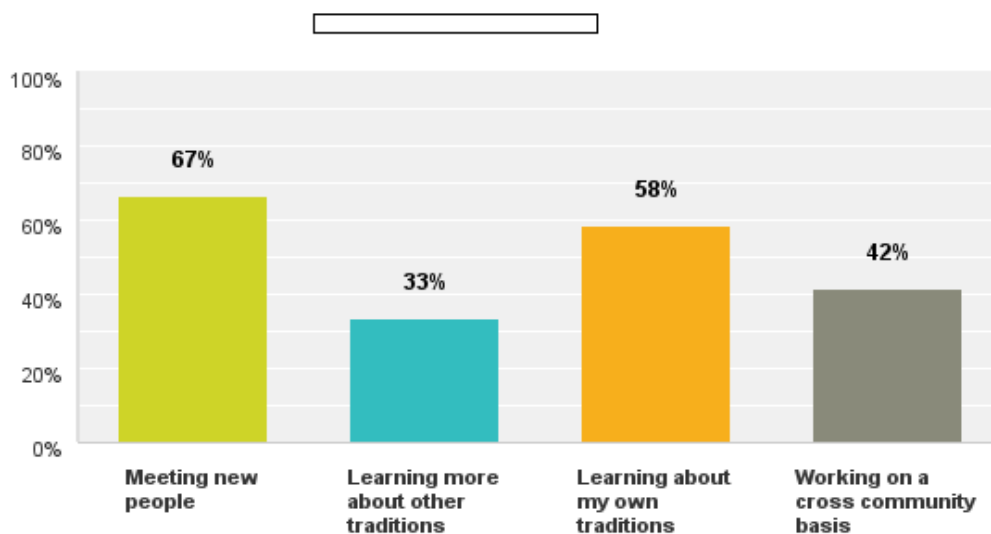
"To play our music and to be welcomed and appreciated by people from all parts of Ireland was great feeling"

"Promoted understanding of differing cultures, and acceptance of mine"

Q5. In your view what were the most enjoyable aspects of the project?

The survey also attempted to gauge what the most enjoyable aspects of the process were. This is important as it may inform any future engagement, going forward.

Q5 In your view what were the most enjoyable aspects of the project? (tick all that apply)



The opportunity to meet new people was identified as the most enjoyable aspect of the process by over two-thirds of participants (67%). This was closely followed by 58% of people who indicated that it had given individuals the opportunity to learn more about their own traditions. Just under a half of participants (42%)

evidenced that working on a cross-community basis was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the engagement, with a third (33%) selecting “learning more about other traditions”.

Participants were also invited to expand on these points to include any other area or aspect of the engagement they found enjoyable. Comments focused on the representations of bands more generally, and in ensuring that these representations were informed by bands themselves:

“Playing music to a wider audience who respected what we were doing”

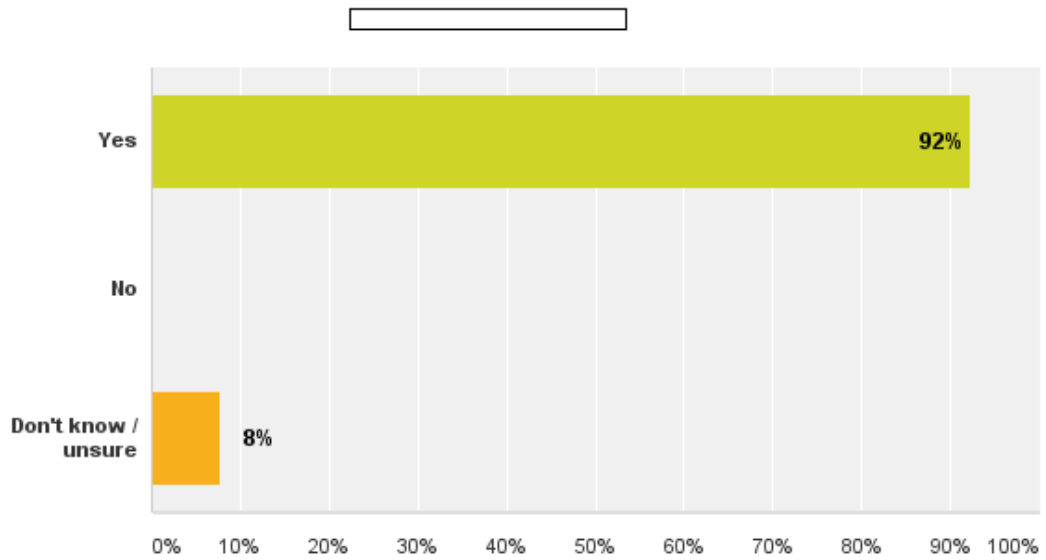
“The opportunity for Bands to be seen in a more realistic and positive light”

“Being able to show case a tradition that has in many ways be demonised”

The final specific question of the survey sought to establish attitudes to the expansion or continuation of the project. The vast majority (92%) want to see it taken forward, while only 8% “didn’t know” or were “unsure”.

- **Q6. Would you like to see this project taken forward?**

Q6 Would you like to see this project to be taken forward?



The final section of the survey offered participants the opportunity to elaborate on any other points they wanted to make. Some of these comments are documented below and outline viewpoints centred on the importance of initiatives such as that being explored:

It was a brave move from both sides and it shows that this city once again is miles ahead of the so-called capital of the country.

Great project to be involved in gave the band a chance to show people who otherwise wouldn't see our musical ability first hand without the bias of the mainstream media portray

Me and members of my band enjoyed playing at these events and I believe the image of my band the William King memorial flute band has been changed as we play a wide range of tunes not just "kick the pope" tunes. I believe music has brought the community within the area together.

All those parties engaged could benefit by co-operating or being involved from an early stage and on an ongoing basis

4. Recommendations

On the basis of the research which engaged with project materials and participants, this report makes the following recommendations:

- **Relationships are the basis for engagement**

This project evidenced the need for close relationships between key leaders in the organisations involved. These individuals were key in the formative stages of the project, and were the cornerstone of ensuring that the project was driven forward, as well as moving it beyond the initial project outline towards more ambitious engagement (such as that witnessed at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis).

- **Future engagement should seek to continue on the basis of intra and inter-communal development**

This project was perceived to have had a positive impact on inter-communal relations in Derry~Londonderry with areas of shared understanding developing on the basis of a shared appreciation and understanding of music and associated cultural practices. However, this engagement was also emphasised by participants

as having a positive impact on communal relations and understanding *within* the PUL community as it gave rise to an increased sense of confidence in their abilities, empowered them to challenge prevailing stereotypes of bands and gave them an opportunity to learn about their cultural practices. This evidences the multi-levelled impact of engagement of this nature, and requires development in this context.

- **Impact on physical and social spaces in Derry~Londonderry**

The Fleadh specifically was viewed by participants as initially opening up “safe” spaces in Derry~Londonderry for bands and for musical appreciation, more generally. This compliments efforts, such as those by the City of Culture, for example, to ensure the creation of more “shared” spaces within the city, which participants viewed as essential to the creation of contact and better relations in the city, particularly amongst young people. According to research participants this has continued to inform the widening of their social circles, as well how they use spaces within the city, with many feeling more able to enter previously “off limit” areas.

- **Music as common experience**

This project emphasised the power of the arts in creating shared space and understanding for individuals and groups of perceived differing backgrounds. In this context, music provided participants with a shared focus and interest which

transcended prevailing perceptions of difference and division. It also acted as a gateway into other areas of commonality and interest (such as language and other cultural practices). This evidences the need for a project founded on shared interests rather than emphasising perceived differences from the outset.

- **Develop connections beyond traditional contact work - builds community resilience**

This project emphasises the need for creative and innovative approaches to programmes aimed at building relationships that goes beyond traditional contact work, towards areas of genuine engagement on a practical and meaningful basis. This report emphasises the perceived inter and intra – communal resilience built on this basis.