



Evaluation Report

2013



Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. When I first envisaged the concept of Midfest I was confident that the communities of Midlothian would lend their support and their creative talents to what we were aiming to achieve. They had been clear that many of them had been waiting for such an opportunity for some time.



Needless to say they did not let me down and I am very proud to be introducing this report, which reflects the spread in both geography and talent we were looking for. My thanks go to all who helped engineer an ambitious project in its first year – our partners, sponsors and audience members - without whom we could not have achieved so much. I am confident we can take the lessons learned and create an even bigger and better Midfest in coming years and am looking forward to seeing Homecoming and Commonwealth related activities woven into the programme for 2014. In fact, the communities are already engaged and leading the discussions for next year's programme of events.

Councillor Lisa Beattie

Cabinet Member Education, Skills and Communities

Executive Summary

Midfest was a new venture for 2013, set up to demonstrate the value and importance of arts, music and culture to both our local communities and visitors to Midlothian, letting them sample - and contribute to - events taking place across the area. This first year provided a testing ground for ideas and a chance to see which artistic channels provide the best engagement within communities. It also allowed Midfest to establish a brand and for a set of partners and collaborators to become associated with the brand.

Midfest ran from 21-29 September 2013 – an arts, crafts and cultural festival celebrating and showcasing the wealth of artistic talent across the creative spectrum within Midlothian and from further afield. What started as a Council initiative became a cross-community endeavour in which local people helped shape and participate in the programme of events.

The Festival at a Glance

- 60+ events including music, art workshops and exhibitions, drama, comedy and storytelling
- Core Council Working Group provided in-kind support to facilitate venues, programme of events, funding, logistical requirements, marketing and promotion
- Over 20 of the events were undertaken on a voluntary basis from a range of community participants including local churches, village halls, folk groups, bands, artists and authors
- Over 35 venues were involved, including schools, libraries, village halls, care homes, Melville Castle, and the National Mining Museum

Events

Events were hosted across a wide range of interests and skills. This included:

- 38 musical performances including jazz, folk, blues, choral, soul and drumming
- 8 craft workshops including arts, printmaking, felt making and weaving
- 10 talks/storytelling including literature and cultural discussions and interactive sessions in schools and libraries with children, and a ghost tour of Dalkeith
- 11 art exhibitions with a range of exhibitors including sculptors, painters, weavers and glass makers
- 1 film night
- 1 comedy night

Partners, key supporters and host venue organisation:

- Dalkeith Country Park
- Dalkeith Arts, Music and Events
- Loanhead Miners Welfare Club
- Leith School of Art
- Melville Castle
- Middleton Village Hall
- Midlothian Tourism Forum
- National Mining Museum Scotland
- Pathhead Music Collective
- Penicuik Arts Association
- Queen Margaret University
- Rosslyn Chapel
- Temple Village Hall
- Scottish Youth Theatre
- St Nicholas Buccleuch Church,
Dalkeith

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The continued growth of the Midlothian economy is a key priority for Midlothian Council. Midlothian's tourism sector has experienced consistent growth in visitor numbers over recent years, even after the 2008 recession. Tourism has been identified as one of seven key economic sectors that are expected to play a major part in the future success of the Midlothian economy¹. In addition, the Council has committed in the past 12 months to working more closely with communities to co-design and co-deliver services, to reduce inequalities and to improve the quality of life for communities. These underlying themes were direct drivers in the concept, the design and delivery of Midfest, which acknowledges the value of arts and culture to both health and wellbeing and our local economy.

Aim: to stage an arts and cultural festival with a diverse programme of events, talks and activities which showcase our aspirations for Midlothian's identity, economy and capacity, which is both firmly rooted in the communities but which attracts visitors to the area.

- To run stimulating and enjoyable performances, workshops and exhibitions for a wide range of audiences, throughout Midlothian
- To provide an entry point for local people from varied demographic profiles to engage with artistic endeavours
- To showcase local talent and promote Midlothian as a destination for artists and performers based elsewhere
- To work with host venues to demonstrate their capacity to make arts more accessible within their communities

¹http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/press/article/638/working_together_to_boost_midlothian_tourism_over_the_next_three_years

2. Content

2.1 Programme Structure

Midfest had the ability to promote existing activity already taking place in Midlothian and to incorporate new events into the area. In undertaking a facilitation role, the Council was able to contribute to the programming, event coordination, budgeting and promotion of all events as a collective whole, affording each act/venue greater profile than they may have otherwise been able to achieve.

The programme avoided prescriptive rules on event types or themes, aiming to be as inclusive as possible and promote the involvement of local organisations and, in some cases, afforded communities the opportunity to host events that they would not normally have booked. The festival relied not only upon the contribution of the Management Committee within the Council but also contributions of time, energy and resources from organisations that ran their own events under the Midfest banner. Running costs for individual events were, in the main, donated in-kind.

2.2 Form of interaction

Events were hosted across a wide range of interests and skills. This included:

- An opening event at Dalkeith Country park which presented a varied programme of music, dance, craft stalls, artistic demonstrations and interactive opportunities for a range of audiences
- 38 musical performances including jazz, folk, blues, choral, soul and drumming. Of this 13% were artists from outwith Midlothian, including one international choir. The Pathhead Music Collective presented 'Music in the Heid' over one weekend, offering gigs, parades, drumming and a family ceilidh.
- 8 craft workshops including arts, printmaking, felt making and weaving
- 10 talks/storytelling including literature and cultural discussions and interactive sessions in schools and libraries with children, and a ghost tour of Dalkeith
- 11 art exhibitions with a range of exhibitors including sculptors, painters, weavers, glass makers
- 1 film night
- 1 comedy night

2.3 Midfest Venues

More than 30 venues housed events for Midfest. It should be noted that, as well as the urban areas, rural communities also hosted events across the county.



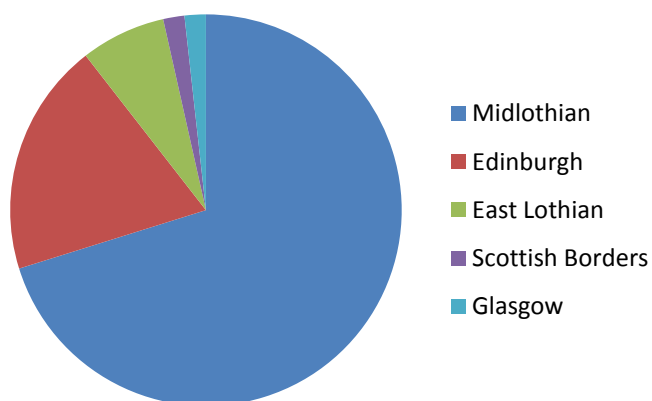
3. Audience Participation

3.1 Who were in the audiences?

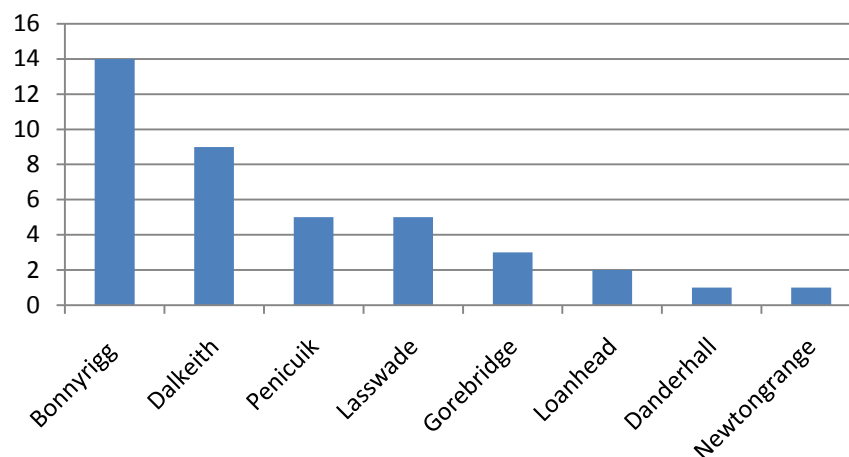
- Local residents
- School groups
- Church groups
- Visitors to Midlothian
- Care home residents
- Children in Kinship Care
- Dignitaries including MSP, Provost of Midlothian, Representative from the Norwegian Consulate

3.2 Audience numbers

There were over 500 visitors to the Dalkeith Country Park for the launch day. Over 100 of the visitors were surveyed. They told us where they had travelled from:



Of those who travelled from Midlothian there was a spread from across the County:

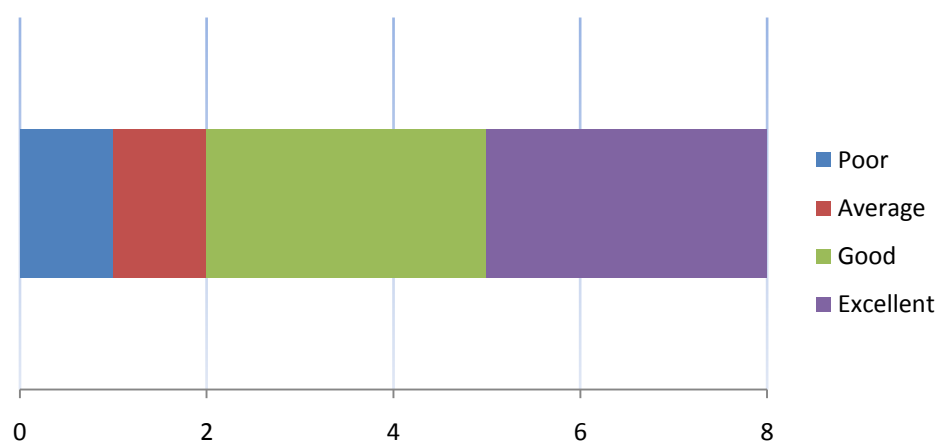


It should be noted that the Country Park also hosted a Memory Walk for Alzheimer's Scotland on the day, which benefited both organisations for footfall and cross promotion.

Of the events the Council sold tickets for:

- 42% of the events sold out
- 57% of the events met all costs from ticket sales
- The cumulative monetary shortfall of the events which the Council sold tickets for represented 12% of the total costs associated with these events i.e. they were 88% self-funding
- 100% attracted new audiences to their venue, as reported by the venue coordinators following the events

For these events, we asked the venue/artist their view on occupancy for the event. They rated this as follows:



This demonstrates that even though not all the tickets were sold, 75% of those asked thought the occupancy was either good or excellent.

Occupancy was rated as good/excellent for the venues in both town centres and also in rural settings. Two success stories were that of Middleton Village Hall and Temple Village Hall, where the committees agreed to host folk evenings during a weeknight – quite outwith the ordinary programme of events. Both rated the occupancy as good, with Middleton Village Hall reporting a 50% mix of local people and 50% new to the venue. The finale, at Melville Castle, received 95% occupancy, despite ticket prices being over 50% higher than all other events at £20 each. Attendance for this event was 75% from within Midlothian, the remainder of tickets sold were to Edinburgh residents.

There was disappointing attendance at the Jazz night at Loanhead Miners Club. However at the point this was organised, the Club acknowledged this fell outwith the ordinary form of events held at the Club and the lesson learned was to either have undertaken a much higher degree of event-specific marketing or to have chosen a different event for this venue.

3.3 Schools

All schools were invited to be involved in the first year of Midfest and they participated as both performers and audience members:

- 3 primary schools took part in storytelling with Allison Galbraith, within the school day
- 2 primary schools took part in drumming workshops within Dalkeith Country Park
- 2 primary schools took part in art workshops in Dalkeith Country Park
- 4 school groups/bands played in Dalkeith Country Park
- Newbattle High School and Lasswade Centre hosted musical events for Midfest

Lessons learned:

1. Those who did engage told us they enjoyed the events
2. Some schools felt they or their pupils did not have the funding to contribute to events, others were able to make a per head contribution
3. Not all schools who initially sought to engage were able to on the day, for a variety of reasons including travel and staffing. The practical elements of attending events will be considered with greater detail going forward
4. School musical performances were very welcomed at the launch day. Parents, friends and family all appreciated them being offered slots and welcomed the 'local' aspect of the day

Extract of feedback from one Head Teacher:

Yes, our children managed to get along to drum with Trash, accompanied by their parents. Unfortunately, not all who signed (literally) up for it could go, but those who did enjoyed it immensely. Please see below, which was written by one of our pupils in the October newsletter, sent to all parents/carers last week - a full copy of the newsletter is on our website. The pupil has given me permission to let you see it.

Thank you once more for allowing our children and families this opportunity.

Drumming with Trash at Midfest

On Saturday 21st September I had a chance to play the drums with a group called Trash at Dalkeith Country Park. I went in the dungeons and made sounds on the dungeon walls and tree stumps. I liked playing the drums and using the drumsticks to make sound. My mum was able to join in too and we hope to go back next year as it was so much fun. The whole Midfest event was really good fun because there were ice creams and hot dogs to eat and varieties of dogs, sheep, bulls and horses to see and there were paintings and models of dragonflies and dogs to buy.

Written by Pupil, P5

4. Financial summary

The Council contributed both in-kind and cash contributions to support the inaugural year. This was to facilitate:

- Branding, programming and promotional activity
- Providing premises and staff for hosting of events
- Developing partnerships
- Infrastructure costs including ticketing, launch day costs, licensing
- Artist and professional fees

The in-kind contribution from the Council is estimated to be £57,365 (breakdown to be found in Appendix 1).

Breakdown of Cash Income and expenditure:

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Ticket sales	4,412	Artists fees	7,466
Stalls	570	Opening event	4,004
Donations	500	Publicity	2,183
		Sundry expenses	156
Total	5,482		13,809

The residual difference was funded by a number of Councillors' Ward Environment Revenue funds.

In addition the volunteer time provided at no cost would have been in excess of £4,800 and the contribution from host venues £3,350.

When establishing this festival, the aim was to ensure as many communities as possible benefitted from arts events. The intention was not for the ticket sales to meet the artists' fees as some elements were subsidised or provided without charge to ensure this aim was met.

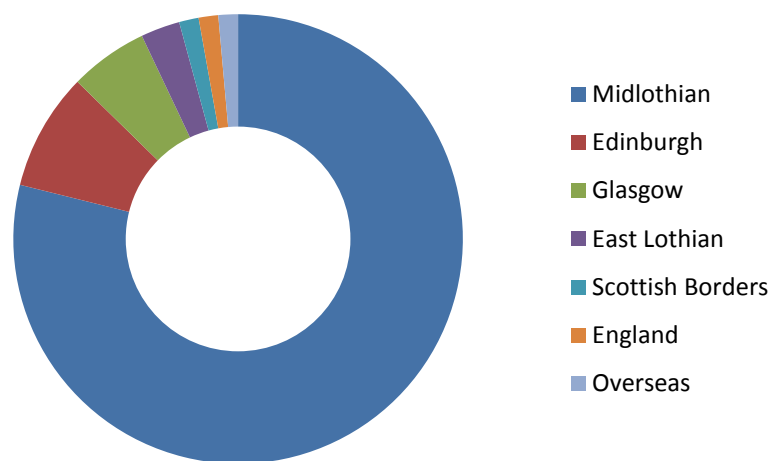
Finally, the economic impact of the event includes:

- New visitors to venues from within Midlothian (which was desirable for promoting repeat business)
- Some new visitors to Midlothian from other areas in Scotland although this can be maximised through the programming for future events

- Request to distribute programmes to interested stakeholders including the Army (which has significant barrack population in Midlothian), the Police and the University, demonstrating an interest in the arts profile of Midlothian.
- Repeat bookings for Melville Castle and the caterer for this event following the Jazz evening they hosted
- The ability for the Pathhead Music Collective to support further funding applications based on the success of their Midfest ventures

5. Content Provision

77% of the events were provided by project partners and local organisations from within Midlothian. The remainder were organisations from elsewhere:



Fewer than 10% of the events were staffed by Council staff – all others were hosted by the venues and self-staffed under the management of that venue. There was therefore a significant contribution from all the local communities where events took place.

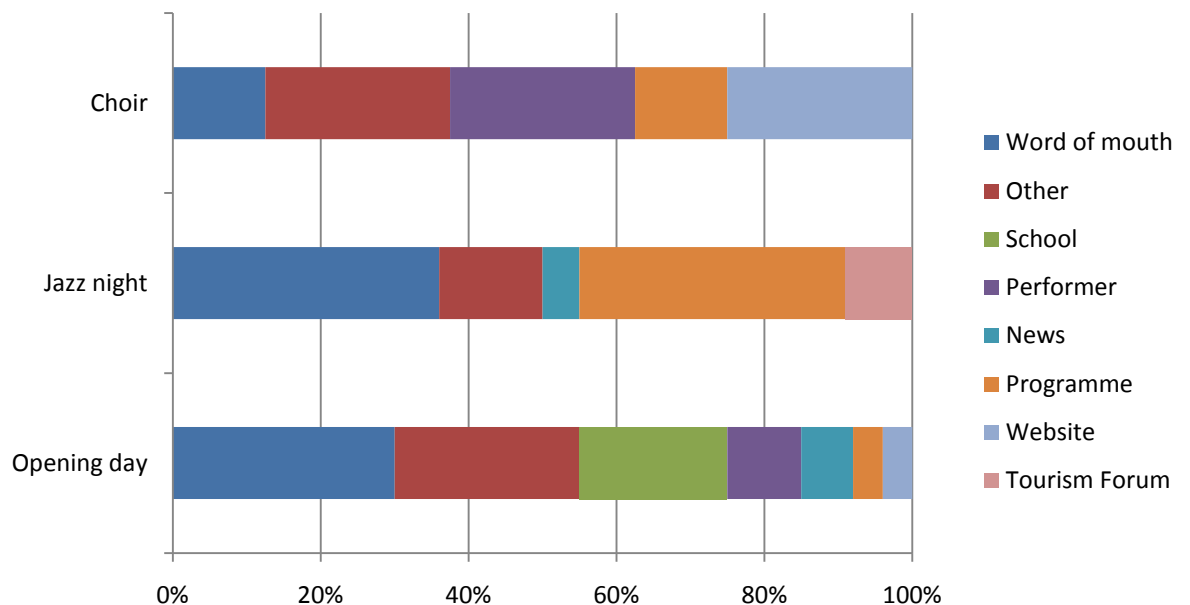
In addition there were 3 volunteer stewards recruited from Queen Margaret University.

6. Evaluation

6.1 Measures of success

6.1.1 Raise awareness of events

We conducted sample surveys after three of our events, all of which attracted different types of audience/different price points (139 responses in total). They told us where they had heard about the event they attended:



This demonstrates that word of mouth was, collectively, an important factor in attracting attendance to events. The programme had mixed levels of success but the news and the website are clearly avenues which need to be better utilised for future events.

6.1.2 Engage a wide range of audiences

Given the wide number of events in the programme, we saw a range of events attended by different clientele – some events were attended by invitation and were for specific groups:

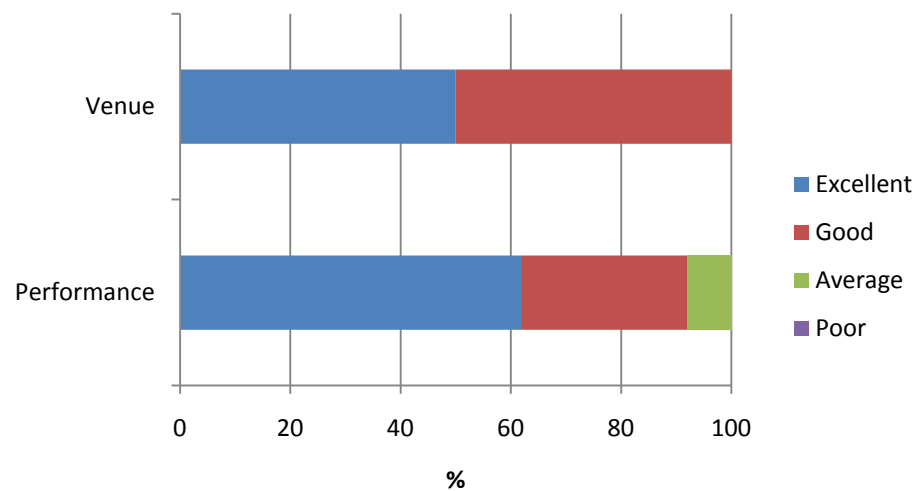
- the care home residents at Newbyres and Drummond undertook art workshops with Kirstie Hustler
- a majority of family participation at the launch day
- local residents attended local events
- the jazz spectacular attracted adults across the age spectrum, including a table booked by Newbyres Care Home

There are two challenges for next year:

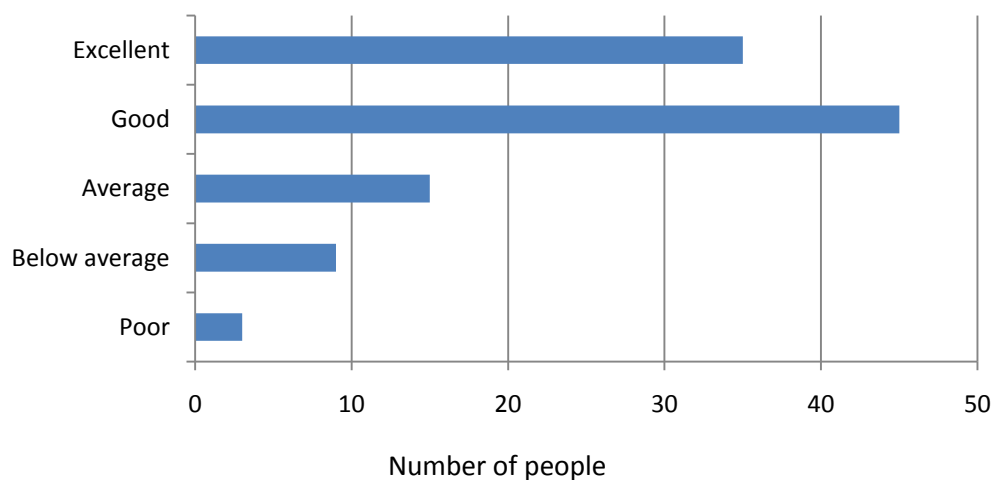
- to increase the volume of tourists from outwith Midlothian, or Scotland, to events. This will be through more ambitious programming and marketing activity.
- to run events that will attract teenagers and young adults as they were less represented across all events within the programme.

6.1.3 Run enjoyable events

For the ticketed events we surveyed we were given feedback about the performance and the venue, which in the main was favourable:



For the launch day at the country park we asked people to rate the day on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):



75% of the attendees rated the day as good or excellent. 86% rated it as at least average or better.

However, we did learn through this process that whilst utilising a shared venue can add to the footfall and range of visitors, it did prove difficult to manage the parking and afford access to both artists who were performing through the day and for participants who arrived by taxi due to mobility issues.

In addition we had split our site to two points, at the gates to the Country Park and within the stables area. With hindsight, the majority of activity and footfall was located in the stables area and whilst this did not reflect in the feedback we received from members of the public and performers/exhibitors, it may have been better logistically and benefitted the artists, musicians and crafters if the site had not been split in this manner.

6.1.4 Price events at an affordable level

Of those we asked at ticketed events, all agreed the ticket price was good or excellent.

We are confident therefore that the ticket price did not deter audience numbers.

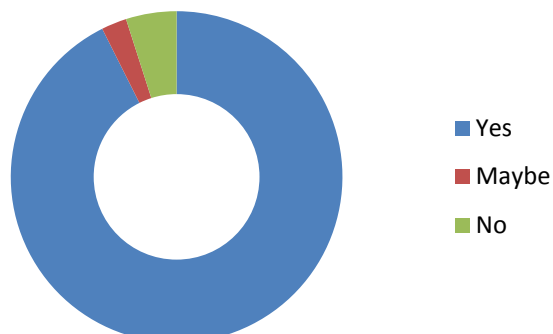
All the venues hosted events within the programme without charging a hire fee. This helped to secure ticket prices at the levels selected. However, those which also sold food and/or drinks were able to secure revenue from this.

By way of example, our event at Middleton Village Hall secured enough from ticket prices to pay for the artist, make a small contribution towards overheads and took over £300 at the bar.

As with Midfest 2013, we would again work with the venues to determine pricing for each event at a level which is both realistic for local people, considered good value, and helps to make the event attractive to the target audiences. We will do so constructively through dialogue with communities, artists and venues once programming activity commences.

6.1.5 Encourage future arts festival

When surveying attendees we asked if they would come back to another similar event in the future. The answer was a resounding yes:



93% of those asked (75 people) would come back to a similar event to the one they attended at Midfest.

6.2 Evaluation comments

Feedback from host venue:

"The night was a great success. My usual panic regarding numbers was unfounded due to those paying at the door. Local ticket sales and door sales came to £300 which was great. He was such a nice lad. Amazing voice and his guitar playing was exceptional. From those I have spoken to they really enjoyed the night well worth coming."

Feedback from artists:

"Thank you again for the opportunity to perform in Midfest. We certainly enjoyed the occasion and I know that our Norwegian friends also enjoyed taking part. Your obvious attention to detail made a very enjoyable evening special for us. Thank you for helping me out with quite a complex piece of organising and please thank the willing people at the Church."

"The storytelling went well and all of the schools said that they had enjoyed the sessions very much. To be honest the teachers all seemed surprised that they had enjoyed it so much! I found it a very enjoyable experience, as the children really were enthralled and such a lovely age-group to work with."

"What a pleasure that was!! Such a great event & so well attended! Thank you!! Thrilled to be involved!"

Feedback from stallholder:

“The Midfest launch event seemed to go really well and was very popular. I hope everything else went as well throughout the day as the stalls section we were involved with.”

Feedback from attendees of events:

“Congratulations to you all for pulling together Midfest, a lot of hard work but what a success from where I was watching. Saturday night was brilliant, great crowd of people, good entertainment, super night. Art Centre and Palace events thoroughly enjoyed as well.”

“Thoroughly enjoyed the evening”

“Lovely atmosphere, very sociable and really appreciated the opportunity to dance!”

6.3 Media coverage

Midfest Twitter reached 7,652 accounts.

Press coverage of events included:

- Write up of the Big Draw and opening event in Edinburgh News
- VisitScotland report on Midfest in The Herald
- Several reports in the Midlothian Advertiser

7. Where can things get better for next year?

We are confident that the events were run in a collaborative fashion across communities in Midlothian and that those who attended them were positive about their experience. It being our first year there were inevitable lessons to be learned as reflected in the SWOT analysis presented in Appendix 2.

Next year we would hope to benefit from:

Earlier planning – to secure the best possible programme and to maximise publicity and community engagement.

Clearer communication – to ensure all parties involved are fully briefed

Internship opportunities – to encourage opportunities for those learning about event management and to bring new skills and manpower to the management committee.

Greater use of networks – inc. Midlothian Tourism Forum and the Food and Drink Network – to maximise the profile of Midlothian for our visitors and best promote local business opportunities.

8. Conclusion

This year's pilot of Midfest started to initiate greater awareness and thinking about cultural activity in Midlothian and, given the range of events incorporated into the programme, created accessible opportunities for artistic activity. We achieved what we set out to do: have an array of events across the county which covered a spectrum of artistic media, provided by both local artists and those from further afield. Programmed events were determined in discussion and dialogue with communities which helped to engage with audiences, including those from rural areas, schools and care home residents. We were told by those attending the events they had enjoyed them and would like to come back to future Midfest events.

This being the inaugural year there were inevitable lessons to be learned and the collation of feedback has helped inform this process. In the main we propose to work on the following areas in developing Midfest 2014:

- Focus on Homecoming 2014
- Improved attraction for visitors to Midlothian – through more ambitious programming and active marketing
- Creating sustainability of the Midfest brand through ongoing community involvement
- Attracting external funding including sponsorship where possible

Appendix 1: Breakdown of non-cash contribution from Council

Activity	Notional Cash Value
	£
Committee staff time	42,000
Property usage	870
Facepainting	150
Manning and setting up of venues	263
Licensing activity	100
Stakeholder meetings	594
Risk assessment activity	250
Follow up work after events	417
Volunteer recruitment and induction	126
Programme activity	2,595
General administration	10,000
TOTAL	57,365

Appendix 2: SWOT analysis from the Management Committee

Strengths

- Council and community combined forces for programming
- Breadth of programme achieved
- Proximity to Edinburgh attracted new audiences and performers
- Financial model provided uplift to venues if ticket and bar sales were good
- Good connections with community venues and artistic network
- Price, value and quality were all recognised by those we asked
- Appetite for future Midfest recognized

Weaknesses

- Started planning later than ideal
- Untested model of working meant learning as we went
- Financial limitation within programming
- Committee Membership not always consistent
- Some elements were uncoded at outset
- Some stallholders/artists/participants not entirely satisfied

Opportunities

- Programming can develop from starting place in 2013
- Greater confidence in brand
- Ability to link in with Homecoming 2014
- More venues may look to take part
- Target markets can now expand
- Opportunities for interns
- Greater funding opportunities after lessons learned from year 1
- More planning time in year 2
- Funding to attract more ambitious programming will in turn attract more visitors

Threats

- Ability to secure finance
- Time required to set up and sustain momentum
- Political and governance support required
- Need to secure the buy-in of performers and also audiences for year 2
- Economic climate remains difficult, pressure on disposable income