

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY GROUP CITY OF CULTURE GRANTS REPORTING FORM

2018-19

1. NAME OF LEAD APPLICANT: **Glenn Noble**
2. FACULTY/PROFESSIONAL SERVICE/RESEARCH CENTRE: **FAH**
3. TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT: **Theatre in the Parklands**
4. NAME(S) AND AFFILIATIONS OF ADDITIONAL APPLICANTS/COLLEAGUES:
Jes Rowe, Joshua Patel, Gareth Price-Baghurst, The Fabularium
5. NAME(S) AND INSTITUTIONS OF EXTERNAL PARTNERS (IF ANY):
6. AMOUNT AWARDED: **£5000**

DID YOU STICK TO YOUR BUDGET? (If no, please explain why)
YES

7. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT (up to 200 words):
- 8.

This was a pilot project to develop a small tour-able performance event in July 2019 and to represent the context with which to grow strategic partners, community participants and audiences for the establishment of annual Theatre in the Parklands initiative from CU and The Fabularium and provide a unique offer to Coventry as it builds towards 2021.

Working in partnership with The Fabularium, current PA undergraduates and recent graduates created a new piece of promenade performance work, 'Tales and Trails' and presented it in two of the 'lesser used' parks and woodlands in Coventry over two weekends. The work was planned and designed following workshops and consultation with community organisations in close vicinity of these green spaces (**Friends of Nauls Mill Park, Pride in Finham and Wainbody Volunteers & Friends of Kenilworth Road Woods, Friends of Canley Ford, Friends of War Memorial Park**), and created in June 2019, with performances in July, prior to the end of the school term. For Undergraduate participants, the project acted as a work experience placement between 2nd and 3rd year, and for recent graduates an early employment.

The work was part commissioned by Wild Rumpus, with whom SMPA/The Fabularium have collaborated since 2015 and the piece was also be presented at the Just So Festival in August – giving the student and emerging performers an

experience of an extended run of work, and performance experience at an award winning national festival.

9. DID YOU RECEIVE ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S ETHICAL COMMITTEE FOR YOUR PROJECT?

10.

No – the work was a traditional performance project in its output and the meetings/consultations with community groups were initiated and run by Fabularium staff. Full Risk assessments for the public events were completed for both Cu and City Council purposes.

11. HOW DID YOUR PROJECT ALIGN WITH THE CU GROUP CULTURAL STRATEGY? (up to 200 words):

The project was explicitly as framed as a **Cultural Event and Activity, of Coventry, by Coventry, for Coventry**. The August platform at Just So festival continued our work of flying the **From Coventry** flag.

At the heart of this project is **Community engagement** providing both participatory opportunities within local communities and bespoke performance work for local green spaces and the surrounding local residents/parkland users.

The work was designed as a Promenade performance experience to encourage audiences to be active and explore their local greenspaces in a collective experience. This promotion of **Health and Wellbeing** is both important for physical but also mental wellbeing, and speaks to place-making and local pride strategies.

As with the establishment of the Fabularium itself, this project is designed over-time, to contribute to the critical mass of opportunities within the city for graduate retention and enterprise, contributing to the **Economic Growth** of the city. **Education and Lifelong Learning** are key factors, as skills training of emerging graduate artists and the community participation aspect will be delivered as cross-generational engagement.

12. HOW DID YOUR PROJECT CONTRIBUTE TO THE UK CITY OF CULTURE? (up to 200 words):

It acted as a pilot and taster of what COC2021 can offer to local community areas within their own environs. We hope the project will further build to present a memorable, high quality, large numbered public event for 2021.

The project may also build (with subsequent applications to the CU – culture grants, Coventry2021 and ACE) to offer a major body of work across the summer of 2021

and with the intention (and time to develop) a sustainable position beyond the culture year. The experience of delivering a similar project on Merseyside means that there is great deal of best practice that can be shared with Participants, City Council parks unit, Groundwork West Midlands, CU BA Events Management course team and students, and local community organisations that can envisage new uses for their local parks and greenspaces.

From this project onwards, professional artists from a range of art forms will be contracted to deliver training and skills within the projects and an association with the national membership organisation Outdoor Arts UK has already been established and a meeting of their stakeholder board is taking place in Ellen Terry building on Feb 7th to contribute to the planning overview of this initiative and to bring a wide range of UK artists to Coventry. CU championing outdoor Arts as a contribution to CoC2021.

13. WHO ARE/WERE THE BENEFICIARIES/AUDIENCE OF YOUR PROJECT? (up to 200 words):

Primarily, Coventry University PA students, recent graduates, Community Organisations (Friends of parks groups and their constituents/volunteers) Local residents of the immediate parks and green spaces (Coundon, Spon End, Canley, Wainbody and Finham residents) and wider Coventry audiences.

A build strategy was implemented across late May and June with visits and workshops to engage local schools for weekday matinee performances, with a broad public performance on the weekend in each location. For this Pilot year, we capped attendances at 100 for each performance, so capacity was within the means of the project as it develops across year one.

14. WHICH OF THE CORPORATE PILLARS DID YOUR PROJECT SUPPORT AND HOW? (up to 200 words):

- **Education and Student experience** is explicit to this enhancement training and work experience initiative for our UGs and gradates
- **Corporate and Social Responsibility** is key to this – as a CU project it ‘gives back’ to the residents and communities of Coventry. In the face of growing frustration at the scale of CU spread in the city centre, this represents a hearts and minds offer.
- This is pilot project aimed at establishing a new annual initiative with local **impact** and longevity.
- **Enterprise and Innovation** are also key to this project through the development of the graduate retention initiatives (Fabularium, Noctium etc) that come from the SMPA course.

15. DID YOU ACHIEVE THE OUTPUTS OF YOUR PROJECT?

YES

We created a high-quality performance event for local communities around two local parks and green-spaces in Coventry, and developed engagement activities to draw audiences from local schools, community groups and activated participant volunteers to support the events. We were able to bring a range of stakeholder 'to the table' to highlight potential arts contexts for the greenspaces we utilised and these discussions are continuing for more diverse community-led initiatives (tbc) in these local environs. The project represented a summer engagement/work placement context for a range of MPA students and a first employment stage for a number of recent graduates

We utilised the project development period to cement relationships with Outdoor Arts UK and in so doing have secured the OAUk conference for November 2019 in Coventry and we (MPA) will act as co-hosts for this national profile event, providing access and a live brief in stewarding and animating the event for our students.

We have further developed our relationship with Wild Rumpus, an award-winning outdoor arts organisation that presents a range of festival events around the world, and with whom a significant number of our graduates have gained employment. Our 2019 participants all engaged in the preparation and performance of related animations at the Just So Festival in August 2019 and have utilised this as a further stage of professional development

The impact of the project has been to inspire local community groups to move forward on a number of restoration projects and greenspace maintenance plans – notably, (and within the timeframe of completion of our performance project and the submission of this report):

- The groundwork and restoration of the Medieval Animal compound within the woodland area on Coat of Arms Bridge Road, immediately behind War Memorial Park and adjacent to the route take for the performance in July;
- The further clearance of the pathways/Spinney path running along both sides of the Kenilworth Road, between Kenpas Highway and Gibbet Hill (some 2 miles of woodland);
- The instigation of forest school activities and utilisation of some of the performance zones from this project as 'outdoor classrooms' and learning spaces by Stivichall Primary and Woodside Avenue Playgroup;
- Proposals from Friends of Nauls Mill Park to City council for greater access provision and heritage focussed restoration within the park and immediate

vicinity- a green corridor linking Nauls Mill park to the city centre by Belgrade Theatre in under discussion.

16. HOW WILL/DID YOU PROMOTE YOUR PROJECT? (up to 200 words):

We promoted the event via direct meetings and briefings, local community group social media accounts, and traditional print/e-flyer marketing. As audience capacity was relatively low, we framed this as a pilot to all stakeholders, in order to stay within our means.

17. WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOUR PROJECT? (Legacy/continuation etc?)

We await confirmation of the next capacity build round for the CU-grants and continue in discussion with partners (Friends groups, Fabularium, Starfish Collaborative etc.) about associated ACE applications to develop a further stage.

18. WOULD YOU BE AVAILABLE/INTERESTED IN ATTENDING A SHOWCASE ON 10TH SEPTEMBER TO PROMOTE YOUR PROJECT TO COLLEAGUES IN THE CU GROUP? Yes

19. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION THAT COULD HELP COLLEAGUES WHO MAY WISH TO APPLY IN FUTURE ROUNDS (up to 200 words): I am happy to offer advice verbally via TEAMS or direct contact to brief and advice on potential projects

20. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE REGARDING YOUR PROJECT THAT YOU'D LIKE TO INFORM THE CofC STEERING GROUP ABOUT?

IF YOU WISH TO PROVIDE IMAGES/QUOTES – PLEASE ENSURE YOU ARE GDPR COMPLIANT AND STATE WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE ABLE TO USE THEM TO PROMOTE YOUR PROJECT.

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO BRIN JOHAL-SKALSKI (ab2726@coventryac.uk) BY NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY 31 JULY 2019.