



Hey! Earthlings!

A Field Guide to Connecting

A Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit for Multi-Cultural Projects



PARTICIPATE
ART CONTEMPORARY
SPACE
COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Witam

Slav

ہیلو

Ciao

Merhaba

你好

Hey! Earthlings!



مرحبًا

Hola

Γειά σου

привіт

Olá

Здравейте

नमस्कार

স্বাস্তি

Bonjour

A Field Guide to Connecting

Contents

- Aims and scope
- Ethical Framework
- Hey! Earthlings! story
- Key Learning Points
 - Ingredients for success
 - Potential pitfalls and challenges



Introduction

This set of guidance was created by Participate Contemporary Artspace CIC (Participate).

It draws on their experience of delivering Hey! Earthlings! a participatory arts and heritage project which took place in Shropshire during 2025 and was supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

How to use the Field Guide to Connecting

The Guide provides some key reference sheets, such as the Ethical Framework and Ingredients for Success which include prompts and practical advice to help develop and deliver multi-cultural arts and heritage projects. This is supplemented by information from our case study Hey! Earthlings! project describing our approach supported by sample documents.

Aims

To share our experience and help other practitioners deliver multi-cultural community arts and heritage projects effectively

Scope

A practical guide for practitioners and organisations delivering participatory arts and heritage projects engaging under-represented people from diverse cultures and backgrounds

Target audience

- Artist peers/creative practitioners
- Community workers and organisations
- Fundraisers seeking funding for similar projects



Ethical Framework

The ethical framework lies at the heart of this Guide. It aims to embed respect, honesty and understanding in working with participants, with our supporting organisations and with each other.

The framework provides a reference or set of prompts to guide actions and relationships throughout the project from beginning to end.



HEY! EARTHLINGS!

Ethical Framework

Authentic, inspiring, inclusive

An asset based project
Collaboration created from all skills + abilities
Experts of our own lived experience
Make new roots + routes which connect us
with heritage, nature + lived experience

Legacy

Toolkit to share learning
Transferable skills + confidence
New nature + heritage connections
New artist learning
New learning for organisations involved
Increased community connectivity

Protocols

Respect teachings/religion
Be non-judgemental
Only share stories/teachings with permissions
Ask about expectations of protocols so all is
clear
Confirm confidentiality + safeguarding
Consider our environmental impact

Accessibility

Check everyone's access
Remove barriers to participation
Consider physical access,
communication, wellbeing
+ financial accessibility

Look after each other

Check in
Reflect
Ask for support

Engagement

Seek permission
Face to face communications
Use translators/BSL
Return with final project
Continue engagement

Trauma Informed approaches

De-centring the individual and moving
rather towards collaborative problem solving
See the problem as separate from the person
Increase confidence + sense of belonging
Re-storying, telling positive stories
Holding

Respect

Listen + ask respectful questions
Consider others' feelings
Important questions to ask
Who is in the space?
Is anyone being left out?
How can we change that?
What are the barriers?
Have everyone's ideas been heard + taken
seriously?
Is the environment safe + nurturing?
Does everyone feel that they belong
and that they can speak up?

Connect - Look for Joy - Play

Connecting people – taking notice of nature –
being physically active – learning new skills –
giving to others

Reciprocity

Giving back to community
Growth in community – rootedness/nature
connectedness/feeling heard
Recognise compensation/rights/credit
Share with others when agreed

Treating everyone the same

Who holds the power?
What steps can be taken to empower everyone?

Growing + Learning

What are our skills?
Can we share our skills?
Where are the opportunities to learn + grow?
Encourage and nurture participants to
contribute/share skills

Ask the beautiful question

What is the word for tree in your language?
What is the same, what is different?

Honesty

Acknowledge histories
Consider our own position
Understand expectations + set achievable aims
Acknowledge + translate from original languages
Recognise story/cultural origins
Credit all involved
Be clear
Informed consent

Compiled by Jill Impey with information from:

1. A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories. Prepared for ImagineNative, 2019
<https://www.imagenative.org/year-round/publications/>
2. Dr Sandra Dowling Anthropologist Writer/Researcher.
3. Tree of life Methodology, Ncazelo Ncube-Mliilo.

Artists holding
creative spaces
for connectivity

The Sharing of
Self

Hey! Earthlings!



Fostering of
Belonging

An Exchange of
Humanity





“Hey! Earthlings! offered something truly life-changing, a space where people can simply be, connect with nature and local heritage, and rediscover joy through simple, creative acts, all within a non-judgmental and loving environment. That is priceless.” Participant

Hey! Earthlings! Project

A person is shown from the chest down, holding a plant with small white flowers. They are wearing a light-colored top and a dark patterned strap. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a person holding a plant, with a faint world map visible in the center.

We are all Earthlings – we live on the Earth, we depend on it and on each other

Hey! Earthlings! aims are above all related to welcoming diversity, sharing what we have, and the quality of kindness.

The project has been about people who have moved across borders, or with connections overseas, working with those offering welcome

Participants were invited to share stories, their creative work and perspectives through walks and workshops. In the process, we aimed also to build stronger connections to local nature and heritage at sites in Oswestry and Shrewsbury.

Creative work was then shared in a cabinet displayed at a series of exhibitions in local public venues. The exhibitions aimed both to celebrate what the participants made and also to engage a public audience and promote wider empathy and understanding.

It would be nice to think that everyone will return to these places again, or go to similar places, and remember joyfully that we are all Earthlings.

Project Team

Led by Participate artists:

Jill Impey, Jean Atkin, and Andrew Howe

Working alongside:

Community co-ordinators:

Anna Martin and Marina Churm

Evaluator and mentor:

Cerin Mills

Supported by local artists:

**Jamila Walker Thomas, Mariia Hlukhova,
Kate Shelest and Niki Holmes**



Participants

Before applying for funding, we consulted community groups, such as Shropshire Supports Refugees and English learners at North Shropshire College to establish project need and scope. Inclusivity was important so that we welcomed anyone who had come to the UK or who had family connections overseas, and that we did not only focus on particular communities. During the project, community co-ordinators engaged with groups they had connections with and with other community leaders who could help link with a wider network.

The event participants were all ages from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds living in Shropshire including:

- young people from the Bulgarian Schools in Oswestry and Shrewsbury
- two groups of asylum seekers living in a hotel
- newly settled Ukrainian people
- people who came to us through
 - Shropshire Supports Refugees
 - North Shropshire College
 - Shropshire European Organisation CIC
- a women-only group located via Telford Mosque, Shrewsbury Muslim Centre and Craven Arms Mosque

Group size varied between 12 and 20



Funding and partners

The project was led by
Participate Contemporary Artspace CIC

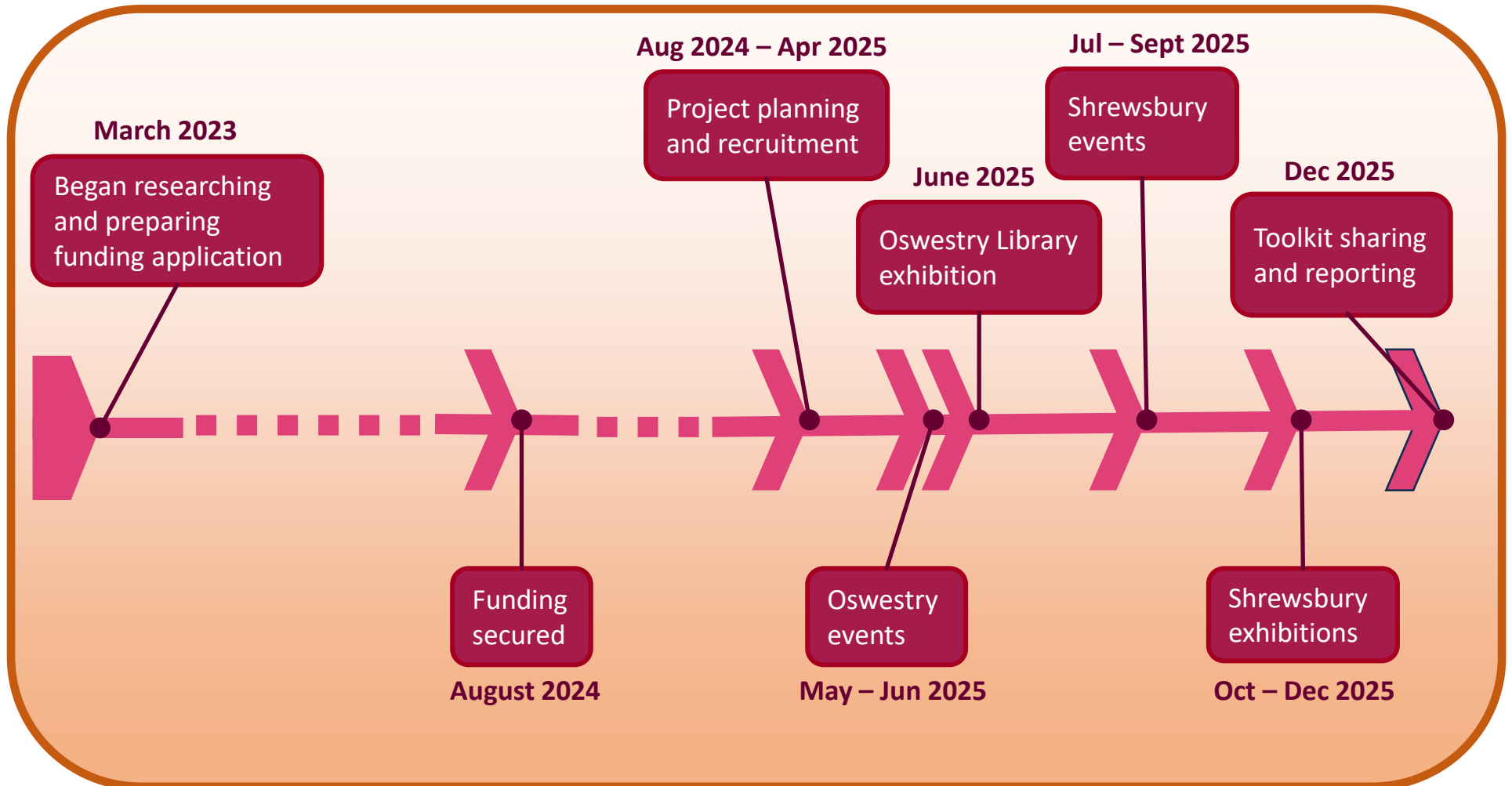
Funded by the
National Lottery Heritage Fund

Main partner:
Shropshire Supports Refugees

Supporting organisations:
English Heritage, Shrewsbury and Oswestry
Libraries, Shropshire Archives, Shropshire
Wildlife Trust, North Shropshire College,
Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire
European Organisation CIC



Project Timeline



Locations and Heritage Focus: Old Oswestry Hillfort

**Why did we
select this site?**

Historical
importance

Significance of
borders / boundaries



A place to look
out from

Place of early
settlement
and safety

Close to the town, familiar to some,
offering somewhere accessible to
return to

Biodiversity and
access to nature

Workshop Venues: Oswestry Memorial Hall and Oswestry Library

Why did we
select this site?

Safe, welcoming
and comfortable

Adaptable spaces for
creative activities



Good
facilities

Already hosting similar
community events

Accessible places close to
town centre and Hillfort

Locations and Heritage Focus: Doctor's Field, Shrewsbury

Why did we
select this site?

Historical
importance

Biodiverse Countryside
Site with community
orchard

Flood meadow close to River Severn and
ideas of journeys, movement and
boundaries



An invitation to
be curious and
explore

Connection to
Charles Darwin

Close to the town, familiar to some,
offering somewhere accessible to
return to

Workshop Venues: Darwin House, Shrewsbury

Why did we
select this site?

Historical
importance

Connection to
Charles Darwin

Accessible and close to
the town

Adaptable spaces for creative
activities indoors and outdoors

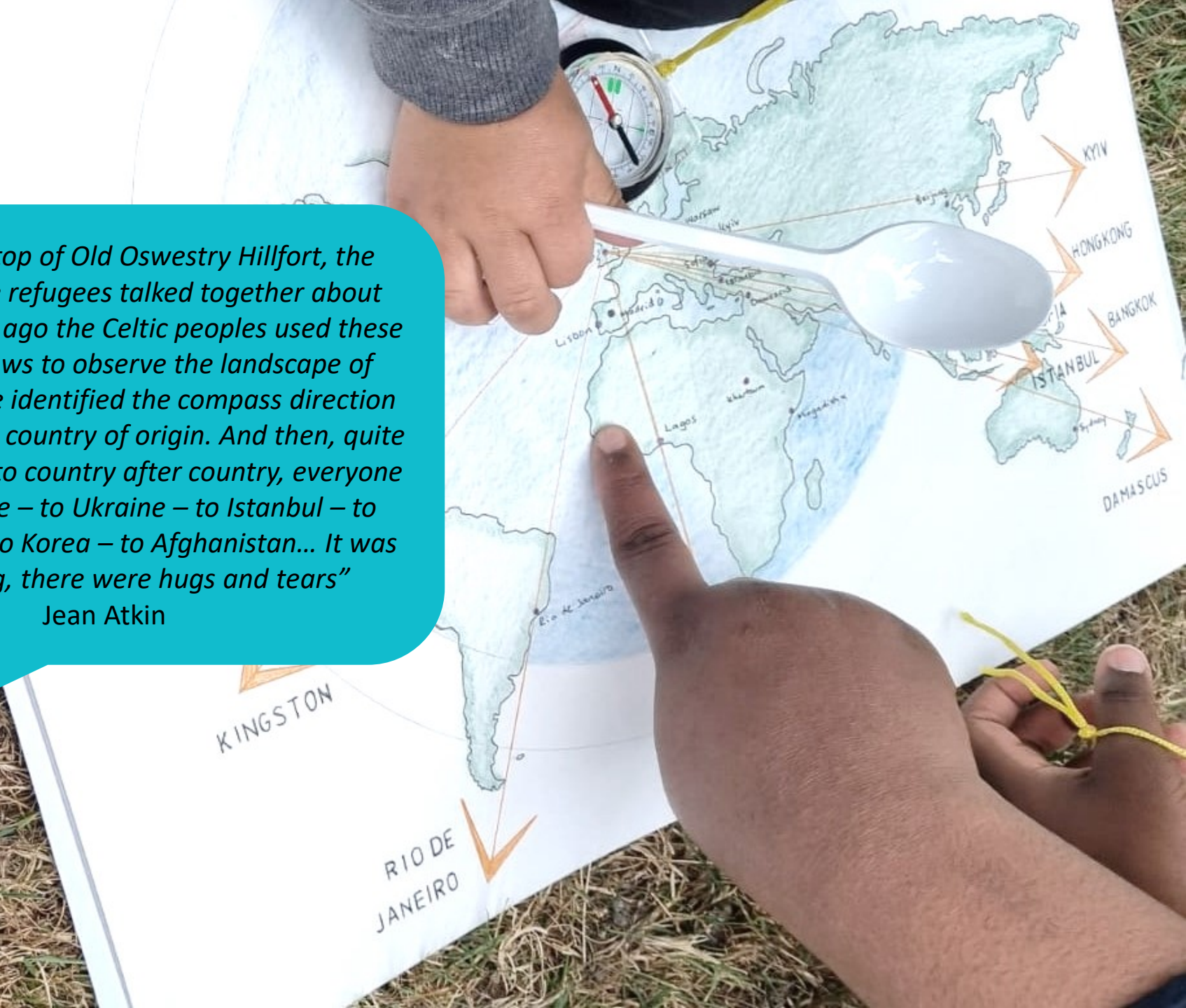
Good
facilities

Safe, welcoming and
comfortable



"On the very top of Old Oswestry Hillfort, the artists and the refugees talked together about how 3000 years ago the Celtic peoples used these same long views to observe the landscape of home. Then we identified the compass direction of each person's country of origin. And then, quite spontaneously, to country after country, everyone began to wave – to Ukraine – to Istanbul – to Sierra Leone – to Korea – to Afghanistan... It was very moving, there were hugs and tears"

Jean Atkin



Walks and Exploring Nature

Each outdoor event commenced with an introduction session to welcome each other by sharing names and languages, followed by a grounding meditation. Short gentle walking routes were planned in advance with careful consideration given to accessibility and health and safety.

The project team took turns to invite people to try a range of activities, combining play, free exploration, learning and connecting with each other. The rhythm of the walk changed between slow paced immersion in nature and conversation to more energetic games with pauses to reflect and exchange stories

Activities included:

- Grounding meditation
- Listening using various microphones and hydrophone to reveal aspects of nature not normally experienced
- Foraging for creative activities and making journey sticks
- Sharing stories and words about nature
- Singing and dancing
- Learning about historic and natural heritage
- Compass activity to orient ourselves against local landmarks and global directions
- Parachute games
- Sharing food, cooking and gathering around a fire

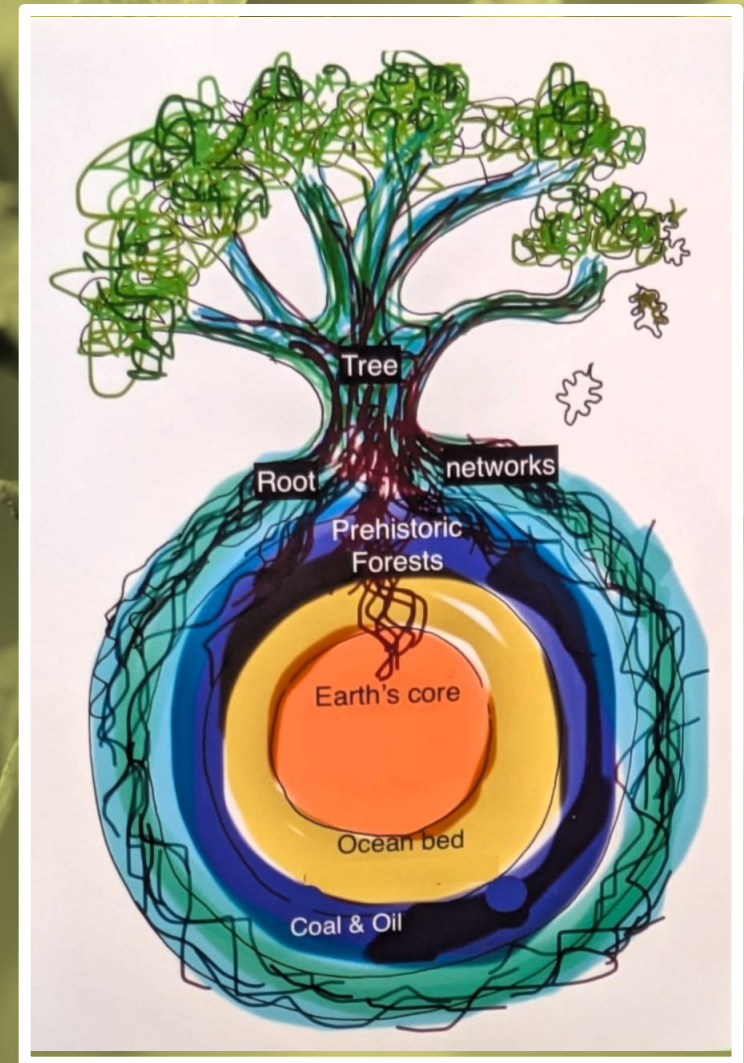


Nature Connection

Research by the University of Derby shows that increased nature connectedness can encourage pro-environmental behaviours which could help to protect the specific heritage sites and wider environment. Five pathways of nature connection were in mind as a basis for selecting activities for engagement: aesthetics, contact, empathy, compassion and meaning

Activities encouraged multi-sensory exploration of the sites, paying attention to the present, noticing details and self-expression through writing and sharing of stories. By encouraging nature connection, the events helped enable participants to:

- Compare common or shared experiences from other places
- Build a sense of belonging and rootedness
- Be physically active and enhance health and wellbeing
- Express feelings and memories that the sites evoked through writing and sharing of stories.



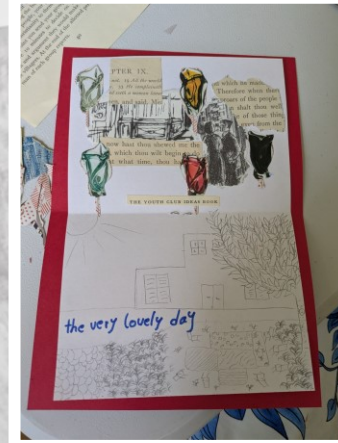
Connecting with each other

The events offered multiple ways for people, who had not met before and who were coming to unfamiliar places, to feel welcome and find common ground with each other. Creating conditions so that people were comfortable speaking and hearing their first language was important for making the events a more welcoming experience.

Walking gently facilitates informal group cohesion whilst creating a fluid, dynamic space for people to talk and make chance encounters with each other and with the surrounding environment. Other ways that people connected included

- Sharing names, meanings and words of welcome
- Bonding through creativity and shared experience
- Translating for each other
- Sharing food and song





Creative Activities

Having gathered inspiration during the walk, participants were offered a range of creative activities. This was a relaxing time to reflect on their experience and a chance for people to express thoughts and memories.

This was also an opportunity to learn or share new skills. It was an unexpected pleasure to enable two young Ukrainian creatives to lead part of a workshop session themselves and develop their professional experience.

Activities included:

- Collage, drawing and book-making
- Collaborative poems
- Cyanotype printing with collected plant materials
- Making films, editing videos captured during the walk
- Photography and working with polaroid images
- Embroidery
- Monoprinting
- Mandala making



Sharing

All work was created by participants or co-created with the lead artists and shared digitally and in exhibitions. Sharing created work with a public audience was an important element of the project for promoting empathy and understanding more widely.

A cabinet made from recycled furniture was used to display artworks, film, sound and poems/writings.

Involving participants in the exhibitions, helped them to feel ownership of these events, building a sense of empowerment and self-confidence. Some participants took part in curating the cabinet to gain some transferable skills.

Entry to engage with the Cabinet was always free. In each venue we hosted a welcome and celebration event for participants and public audiences to gather and view finished work. There were performances of writings, creative activities and sharing of food.

Digital outputs will remain as a resource beyond the end of the project, accessible via our project website and via Shropshire Archives. Selected soundscapes will be presented as an immersive geolocated audio trail at the heritage sites.

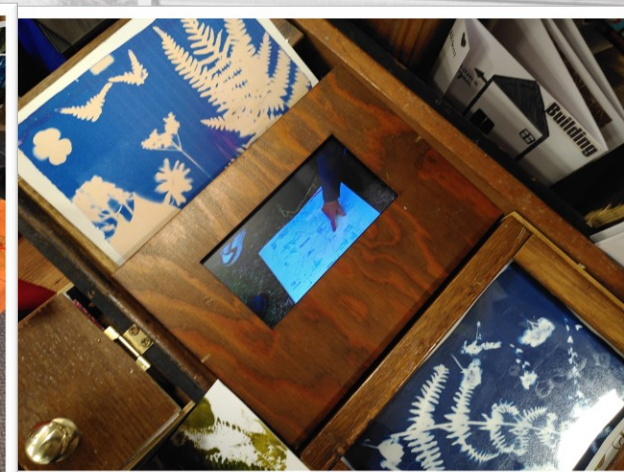


Reimagining the Cabinet

Cabinets like this one have long been used to collect and display the unfamiliar — often telling stories about people rather than with them. This Cabinet invites us to do things differently.

Here, people who have moved across borders and those offering welcome have worked together to share stories, objects, and perspectives on their own terms.

Rather than turning lives into curiosities, this Cabinet asks us to be curious with empathy — and to reflect on how we might tell richer, more respectful stories in the future.



PARADISE APPLES

A day when through our shoes
we felt acorns under our feet.
When we heard a cat out miaowing.
When the acorns creaked.

*How once she made rosehip syrup
with a Ukrainian grandma.
How she softened the hips in a thermos,
hot water and sugar, the taste
of perfume and fruit.*

A day when under spreading sister oaks
we identified oak apples, knopper galls,
silk button spangle galls.
And we laughed and said what
could be the purpose of an oak apple?

*How she picked up apples and remembered
gathering fresh peaches
in the Swat valley in northern Pakistan.
How she's by the river Severn
and thinking of Naran Kaghan.*

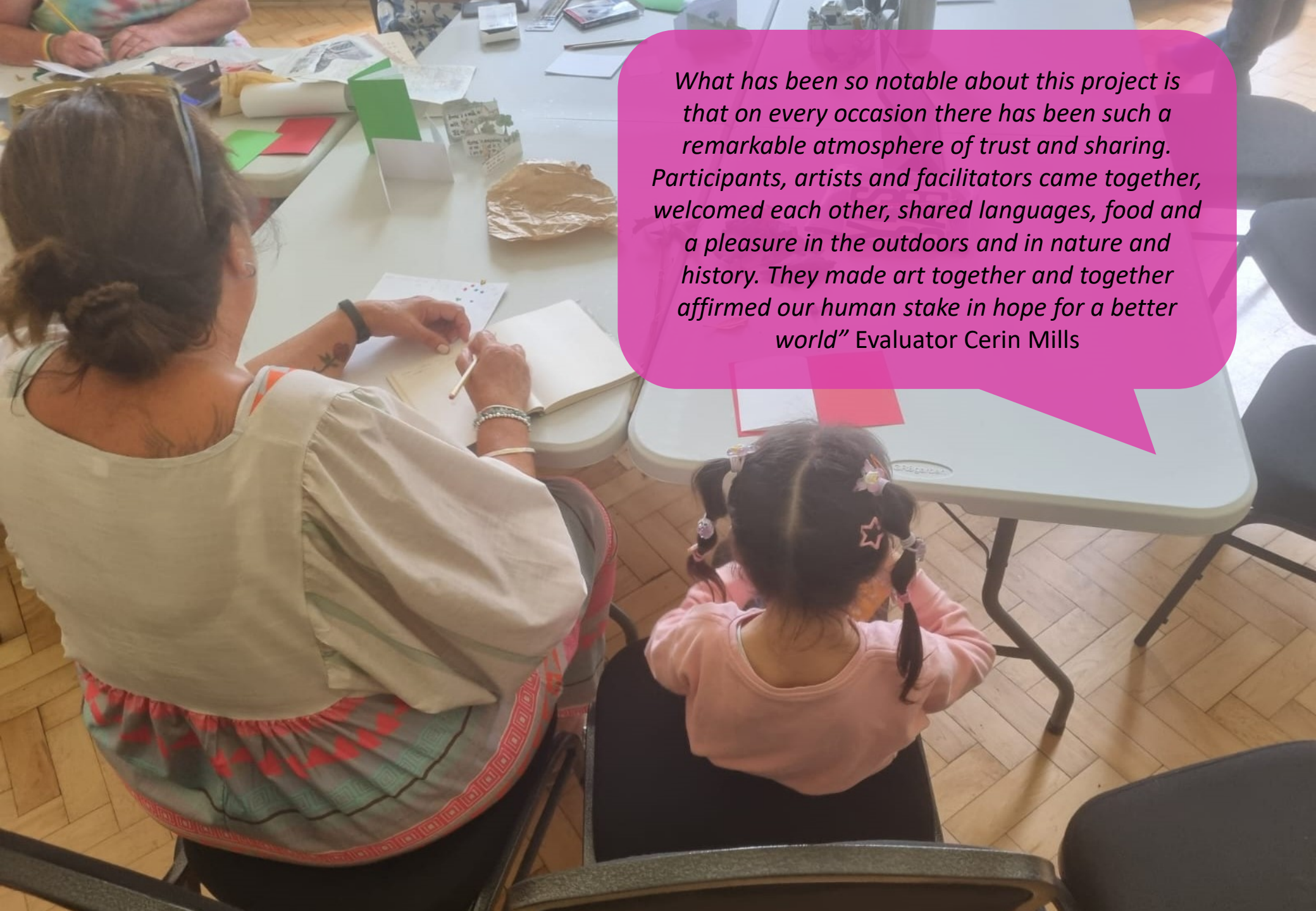
A day when we walked through long grasses
and bit into apples. When apple juice
was both sweet and tart.
When we walked through the smell
of windfalls turning to cider.

*How once she knew a cure for every harm –
pressed plantain, and celandine
on cuts to make them heal.
How once grandpa gathered
paradise apples, rayco yabloko,
and brought them home.*

27 September 2025: collaborative poems made with the
words of women participants from Croatia, Pakistan,
Denmark, Turkey, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Bahrain.

Editing by Jean Atkin

HEY! EARTHLINGS! at Doctor's Field, Shrewsbury



What has been so notable about this project is that on every occasion there has been such a remarkable atmosphere of trust and sharing. Participants, artists and facilitators came together, welcomed each other, shared languages, food and a pleasure in the outdoors and in nature and history. They made art together and together affirmed our human stake in hope for a better world” Evaluator Cerin Mills

Ingredients for success

Planning and project management

- Sufficient time and resources
- Communications and Engagement Plan – for communicating with project team, partners and participants
- Detailed site planning and preparation
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation informing delivery of future events
- Welcome and support volunteers
- Contingency planning

Reaching and Engaging Communities

- Dedicated community workers
- Finding the “community champions”
- Consultation with communities to seek buy-in and to scope events
- Accessible promotional materials
- Safe and convenient transport

Participant focused

- Responsive to individual needs
- Sensitivity to needs of specific community groups
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Reframe participants as creators, contributors and part of a community

A Welcoming and Safe Environment

- Accessibility and Inclusion Plan
- Health and Safety plan and risk assessment
- Engaging activities for all ages and abilities
- Social Model of Disability
- Remove barriers wherever possible
- Encourage or facilitate communications in other languages
- Translation and interpretation
- Safe, accessible and comfortable venues

Reaching and Engaging Communities

Reaching and engaging people from under-represented communities, some of whom may have experienced trauma, or have feelings of alienation, loss or displacement requires sensitivity, honesty, empathy understanding, respectfulness, local knowledge and the ability to make people at ease and want to take part.

Project aims and objectives will determine the approach to reaching communities e.g. whether to run similar format events with several different communities to widen impact; or a progression of different events over a period of time for a smaller focused community group, which may offer more potential to learn new skills, build self-confidence, and stronger bonds with place and each other.

Recommendations:

- Dedicated community co-ordinator role key to engaging groups they have links with
- Identify and connect with “community champions” – people who are embedded in communities and in regular contact with potential participants
- Work with supporting organisations to reach wider networks
- Timely promotion of events with clear information
- Bespoke, accessible sign-up forms and ways to book
- Transport costs provided to offer equality of access

Specific Cultural Awareness

Some aspects of a community project may be perceived as barriers to taking part by certain cultural groups. Considerations to take into account include:

- Importance of translation:
 - during working sessions by peer participants and
 - of writings and other artistic outputs for sharing
- Awareness of cultural sensitivities- e.g. need for prayer room, women's only groups as appropriate with female group leaders, dietary requirements, communication styles
- Involvement of participants in food sharing
- Importance of returning artworks to participants and how to do this for transient participants
- Acknowledge differences with curiosity and respect
- Be aware of potential interracial or intercultural dynamics

Event Planning

The background image shows a group of people at an outdoor event. In the foreground, a person is seen from the back, wearing a large, textured, grey wig and a red hat. They are holding a large, light-colored umbrella. Other people are visible in the background, some wearing hats and jackets, suggesting a cool environment. The ground appears to be grass or dirt.

Multi-cultural arts and heritage projects can be complicated, with multiple lead roles, activities, locations, community groups with different cultures/languages, subject to adverse weather and with the potential for unexpected changes to cause disruption. A robust plan with built-in flexibility is an essential and this needs:

- Detailed planning communicated to all to manage expectations, allow for contingency actions and aim for 'no surprises'
- Clarity over roles and responsibilities
- Risk assessments in place for everything - including emergency contacts for artists and leaders
- Consideration given to both outdoor and indoor spaces
- When including walks outdoors, the route should be planned in advance to check for safe access, timings, availability of toilet facilities, and relevant points of interest
- A bespoke, site/group specific plan to address the uniqueness in every event
- Work with heritage or environmental specialists to understand the site and be able to share key information at an appropriate level of detail
- Ongoing critical reflection post-event to inform the delivery of subsequent events

Connecting to Place

People who have travelled from overseas to an unfamiliar place may have suffered many losses: of home, identity, culture, agency, assets and dignity. The opportunity to explore and become familiar with a place can, therefore, be very important in building meaning and belonging.

Connecting with nature can awaken a sense of universality – every Earthling knows the sun, the moon, the weather, trees and so on. It also serves as a reminder that for more-than-human life, the Earth has no borders.

- Look for opportunities to make connections between the local and global, perhaps by aligning visible landmarks with distant places
- Language plays a major role in creating a sense of place, so encourage the sharing of names for rivers, trees and other features
- Learning about the historical importance of places provokes thinking and talking about the significance of other places people have known elsewhere
- Listen out for stories or memories of elsewhere that the place evokes through multi-sensory exploration or discussion

Workshops

Factors to take into account when planning activities for workshops include participant needs and interests, the range of skills and experience of event leaders, venues and facilities, time available and whether workshops are one-off events or part of a series with the same group.

Some recommendations:

- Accessible activities and flexibility to change where the group seems to want to go
- Factor in need for activities that can engage all ages at different levels and abilities
- Include games and physical tasks to break down barriers, encourage conversation, teamwork and joy and build trust and friendship

- Experienced creative leaders and community workers working side by side
- Allow time and space for relaxing, socialising and quiet time
- Look for opportunities to promote collaboration so that people can take turns, share perspectives and learn from other's lived experiences
- Be clear about agreeing participants' consent for sharing work and how it should be presented, credited or translated during the workshop or in public events.
- Ensure that created work may be taken away by participants or arrange to return it after exhibitions

Holding Space

Creating safe conditions where everyone feels at ease and able to express themselves requires skill, awareness and quiet leadership. It takes time to build trust and this begins with clear, consistent communications. Try and keep instructions simple and manage expectations.

With the potential for some participants to have traumatic histories, it will be helpful for one or more team members to have experience in Trauma-Informed Practice – with an awareness of potentially triggering situations and how to respond.

Some recommendations:

- Create opportunities for equal participation, and look out for the more confident or fluent speakers dominating activities or for anyone being excluded
- Preserve choice and agency
- Allow for pauses, translation and non-verbal communication
- Validate feelings and stories without pressing for personal details or being judgemental
- Check for signs of understanding, and don't always assume that a nod means someone has understood when they just want to be polite
- Be prepared to listen, show patience, negotiate or agree consensus, enable, smile and be open to whatever arises

Challenges and potential pitfalls

The preceding Ingredients for Success and associated recommendations aim to address the following key challenges and potential pitfalls:

- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Inclusion and engaging with under-represented groups
- Accessibility for people of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- Safeguarding risks with vulnerable people, some of whom may have recently experienced trauma
- Health and safety risks with unfamiliar natural settings or activities
- Not knowing numbers or identities of participants until very close to events requiring rapid responses, flexibility and ability to make late changes to plans

Links to Supplementary Information

Resources available via the Participate website:

www.participateart.org/

Grounding Meditation

[vimeo.com/1141396588/
17d2098827?share=copy](https://vimeo.com/1141396588/17d2098827?share=copy)



Ethical Framework

bit.ly/Ethical_Framework



Example sign up form

Bit.ly/Earthlings-sign-up



Example risk assessment

bit.ly/Earthlings_risk



A Selection of Soundscapes

[www.participateart.org/
hey-earthlings/](http://www.participateart.org/hey-earthlings/)



Further Guidance

Creative Equity Toolkit is a project run by Diversity Arts Australia and The British Council:

<https://creativeequitytoolkit.org/>

Contemporary Visual Arts Network toolkit 'For Visual Arts organisations when preparing for equity and inclusion work':

https://cvan.art/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CVAN-Toolkit_01.pdf

Artist Henna Asikainen website and links to Future Pasts project and work with D6 Culture:

<https://www.hennaasikainen.com/html/work.html>

<https://1900.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/news/future-pasts/>

<https://www.d6culture.org/henna-asikainen-digital-story.html>



Thank you!

There are many people and support organisations who helped us with the Hey! Earthlings! project, and apologies to any we may have missed here. We would particularly like to thank:

Our partners **Shropshire Supports Refugees** and **Stanislas and Hannah** who despite all the busyness have been a great support and provided us with help and advice.

Ornela Angelova – and everyone at the Bulgarian School. We are hugely grateful for all your work with us on this. **Martina Boshell** of Telford Together with Refugees for connecting us with asylum seekers living in Telford. **Kate Fejfer** at the Shropshire European Organisation

Sister Sophie and Sister Ashia at Telford Mosque

Eloise Moore from Shropshire Wildlife Trust, who lit a great fire for us to cook sausages.

Tatiana and Mariia and Katya. It was such an unexpected and wonderful surprise to be able to involve new people in helping to lead some of the activities at the recent events.

Jamila Walker Thomas and Niki Holmes, artists who brought their skills to some of the workshops.

The many kind people who have **translated** for us – Aya Mostafa (Arabic), Rehana Tabassum (Urdu), Minhajur Rahman (Sylheti Bangla), Yuliya Lavrenchuk (Ukrainian), Sohrab (Farsi)

Glyn Jones for enabling us to work in Darwin's House

Paul Newman and team at Oswestry Memorial Hall for making us so welcome

For supporting the project throughout and hosting us at Shrewsbury Library, we say thank you to **Katherine Berry** and the staff. Thank you to **Siobhan Shaw** and all the staff at Oswestry Library, and also to staff at The Gateway. And thank you to **Sarah Davis** and her team at **Shropshire Archives**.

English Heritage for allowing us to run events at the hillfort. To **Tim Malin** for sharing his expert knowledge of the archaeology.

Julie Howe at North Shropshire College for allowing us to get to know and work with some of the English learners.

Keith Ashford from Participate, a great support throughout the project.

And very importantly, we are grateful to the national lottery players and the funding from the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. None of this would have happened without their support.



www.participateart.org