

Chair's Report for AGM 2019 of Nailsworth Festival

Once again the committee were able to present a very wide range of successful events in the Town over Festival week in May with informal feedback to the effect that it was one of the best programmes overall in recent years.

Both the Market and entertainment on Festival Saturday worked well and there was much better take up of the Children's sports event, run with the Youth Club, which was moved from the Sunday to the Saturday. Festival Saturday is always rather weather dependent and we were lucky this year. The large number of young families in the Town enjoying the entertainment and activities was very evident throughout the day. While most were obviously local families our sample data showed that a number of people had travelled from further afield. We are grateful to the Town Council for their financial support towards Festival Saturday. This enables us to provide an event which is accessible to the whole community without cost. We were able to collect some information about participation which has been compiled into a separate evaluation report for the Council.

Over the whole week we presented 13 evening events which were generally very well supported. The highlight in terms of popularity and ticket sales was TV presenter Sabet Choudhury which sold out several weeks beforehand. As usual the classical concert was of very high quality and sold well as did the other music events, with the exception of the Saturday evening. It was agreed that the group were not really appropriate to our usual demographic. The talks and drama events were all enjoyable and sold at least enough to cover costs which is our main aim. As in previous years events involving performers from the Town were the least well supported. The committee feels this is due to the expectation of professional contributors at Festival events. Nevertheless, we will continue to include some events which celebrate community partnerships within the Festival. The workshop at Mother Goose and the Shortwood "Open Studio" were also successful in this respected and broadened the range of events on offer. Partnership with Ruskin Mill provided an exhibition as well as the usual Folk Concert and as always, the Wine Tours were popular.

We were especially pleased with the Children's Events this year all of which were developed in partnership with other providers (Youth Club, Playcircle, Library). Playcircle's performances were a magical experience for young families and were very well supported.

Ticket sales were strong throughout with both the system for on-line and local sales being developed further to promote efficiency. The committee continue to be grateful to Town Information Centre volunteers for their support in this area. Although on-line sales continued to increase proportionally this local outlet remains very important to the viability of the Festival. Overall there was a 23% increase in the value of ticket sales from 2018 to 2019. Having a card machine available to support sales on Festival Saturday and at event box offices was very useful.

The media strategy which now includes social media use appears to have been effective as reflected in ticket sales. The committee did a great job in distributing brochures and most shops in the Town displayed the support signs we provided. The website supported ticket sales well and is clearly effective as a first contact with the Festival. It was agreed that in future we will add into the contracts for performers the requirement that they place information about the Festival on their own website/facebook etc. Some routinely do this but not all seem to place their Nailsworth performance in their national information.

Sponsorship remains vital to our ability to put on the quality and range of activities in Festival week. Most sponsors are local, and this year we extended the approach of linking more of them to specific events where appropriate. We are also grateful to our loyal band of Festival "Friends" who continue to provide practical and moral support to the Festival overall, as do several regular volunteers. The treasurer's report will give the detailed financial position but the committee were very pleased to find that as well as presenting a high-quality range of events and activities we were able to do this with a small financial surplus, always better than a negative balance!

There were no accidents or incidents reported at any of the events. As always, the management of traffic with the road closures presented some challenges. The committee have identified some additional signage which may help the bottlenecks in the future.

Once again, I would like to extend my personal thanks to members of the committee for their individual contributions and commitment. It is truly a team effort and a privilege to work with such a skilled and enthusiastic group in order to deliver this important community event for the Town. Especial thanks to Gill Saville and Ian Crawley who stood down from the committee after this Festival for all their work over a number of years as part of the team.

Mary Saunders, Festival Co-ordinator
October 2019