

FRED EVALUATION

SECTION 1 - AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Fold's Artistic policy

To provide and promote access to art in the rural environment.

To support work that is rural, innovative and fun.

Aims and Objectives of FRED

- To support and promote the work of artists working in rural environments
- To encourage innovative practice
- To change perceptions of art produced in Cumbria
- To network and link artists across the county and beyond

Strategy for measuring the success in meeting aims and objectives

- Quality of projects
- Feedback from artists and audience
- Response from media
- Feedback on / hits on website
- Audience figures

How far did FRED go to meeting its aims and objectives?

FRED was conceived as a direct result of research carried out by Fold into the viability of a coordinated festival of artist-led events across Cumbria and beyond. Feedback from this research revealed that artists in Cumbria were disillusioned by projects being talked about which never materialise. For that reason it was felt essential that a small-scale event should happen in 2004, to test some ideas out and experiment with the festival format.

It was also recommended through the research that a coordinator be employed as a central one-stop point of contact for all artists. Hilary Thorn was appointed FRED coordinator for her wealth of experience in managing large numbers of artists in a range of projects.

The original intention of the festival was to join-up existing events and create momentum for artists to realise new innovative projects. Due to the short time-scale, it was impractical for artists to apply for funding through the normal channels so a sum of money was raised to offer artists support for new projects in the form of bursaries to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

As a result artists produced new work with very little financial support (bursaries ranged from £50 - £300) and within a very small time scale (from acceptance of project to opening was 2 months). Despite these constraints the projects were

innovative, fun, diverse and engaging. They were accessible to a broad spectrum of people not just due to their public locations but also by their visual impact. The range of arts practice, the variety of ways in which projects were delivered, the diversity and ingenuity of location and the quality of the work produced was of an exceptionally high standard making FRED a rich experience for both participants and audience.

Feedback from the artists predominantly focuses on the opportunity that FRED gave them to produce new work in an unusual context as part of a larger event. This sense of inclusion works towards artists feeling less isolated due to the nature of their practice or their geographic location and encourages them to continue making new work.

Many artists state that by providing the festival structure and dealing with permissions, locations and marketing FRED alleviated this responsibility from them enabling them to concentrate on their work. This support is something that is often daunting, time consuming and problematic, and artists are often untrained in or unsure of the processes required to realise work of this nature

No other support structure currently exists for artists practicing outside of the gallery and there is no platform to bring the work of these artists to the attention of a broader audience locally, nationally and internationally. By enabling 33 projects to happen in 52 unique public settings FRED took art into people's day to day lives and ensured an audience outside of the regular gallery visitor. This highlighted the range of arts practice happening within Cumbria (and beyond) to a local audience as well as to national and international audiences.

By bringing artists together for one event FRED provided a marketing platform for artists to use to their benefit. Feedback from artists suggests that this was a very attractive opportunity to promote themselves and encouraged them to make work that would maximise on this potential. Artists such as Julian Claxton actively used the media within their projects and other artists such as Anna Saczek and Adele Prince produced work that would specifically use this structure to promote themselves and seek further work.

FRED enabled artists to produce work that they had wanted to produce for some time. In particular Julian Claxton used FRED to investigate an area of interest in UFO phenomenon. FRED served as a springboard for his work, which will now develop outside of the festival, and also brought his work and his investigation to the attention of thousands of people nationwide.

FRED also enabled artists to make work in a way they may not have considered previously, for example Jan Hicks and Lee Fitton are felt workers but as part of FRED turned their felt into 3ft high parrots to be displayed around their local town thus showcasing their skills to a much wider audience, and pushing the boundaries of a traditional craft.

FRED worked with artists across the whole county, many of whom had no knowledge of each other's practice. By bringing together 64 artists to work over the same time period FRED provided the opportunity to build infrastructure and network artists in order for them to continue to support each other and feel supported. This groundwork will directly feed in to The Cumbrian Network being developed by Fold with Kate Brundrett.

Section 2 - THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - INTRINSIC AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

It was essential that local communities felt involved and FRED's main aim this year was change perceptions locally as to what art could be and the role of artists in the community.

FRED added value to areas it was found in by building intrigue and profile raising through a far-reaching marketing campaign. An event like FRED encourages artists and young people to remain in the area by creating a proactive and exciting environment in which to live and work; Innovative projects encourage creative involvement and encourage active participation in the arts through demonstration of good practice.

By giving people the opportunity to experience and get involved in an unusual and fun arts event it extended the visitors experience of art in an accessible manner and made people feel included in something exciting that was happening in their area.

Artists largely used local services and businesses to deliver their projects, contributing to the local economy and sustaining local creative industries.

A small number of artists' projects (Ali Holman Marr, Kate Brundrett, Christine Stringfellow, Jazzelle Gearty, AsArt) gave local people the opportunity for a more hands-on approach to art. These were incredibly successful and well attended.

FRED encouraged tourists to visit other areas of Cumbria outside of the Lake District by spreading projects throughout the county and increased their experience of the region as a whole. It attracted people to the county specifically for the festival without focusing on one particular area.

SECTION 3 – AUDIENCE AND MARKETING

The FRED team delivered widespread marketing both locally and nationally distributing stickers, flyers, postcards and posters prior to the event. 20,000 leaflets were dropped in Cumbria, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Lancashire, London & Bristol. We had extensive local coverage in the newspapers and on the radio as well as national coverage on several radio stations. Information was readily available at Tourist Information Centres across

the county and beyond. Artists were encouraged to maximise on the publicity opportunities offered by the scale of the event, as well as being responsible for distributing marketing material in their own localities. Word of mouth was found to be an incredibly effective marketing strategy locally, nationally and internationally, with enquiries coming from rural France and Singapore. Locally people were talking about FRED and the marketing produced a sense of intrigue, if not confusion!

All publicity directed people to the website which enabled us to keep information up to date and available to a local, national and international audience.

Local and national Radio, TV and press were contacted throughout the festival lead up and delivery. Cumbria Tourist Board press office provided support in reaching the national media.

The short lead in time meant that there was no opportunity for national coverage in magazines and listings guides prior to the event, and no opportunity to forge formal links with other events and festivals such as the Liverpool Biennial. In future years we would look to raise our profile at events such as this, and in particular look at links with events leading up to Liverpool's year of Capital of Culture in 2008.

One artist developed an I-Spy-style book that was available for sale locally over the period of the festival that gave further insight into the work. Due to time and financial constraints it was not possible for the I-Spy books to be available for sale at all necessary outlets and the sales that would have fed into our budget were low.

As a pilot year, it was only possible to achieve small projects, and they were spread over a very large geographical area. Although nationally people knew about FRED it did not encourage many visitors to the region specifically for the event. Artists were also largely unknown.

With a longer lead in period FRED could have taken advantage of tourism and travel brochures, B+B and Hotel marketing opportunities, forged links with YHA's and current tourist attractions. Focus days could be developed with Key tourism partners to develop joined up marketing strategies. While the majority of FRED was accessible via public transport, more concrete links could be developed. Holiday packages with coach tours and guided walks would increase access to the event. We would develop stronger links with other arts events, exhibitions and galleries both locally and nationally to enable reciprocal marketing and support.

Developing larger events and projects, as well as including some key well recognised artists from the region, would encourage a national audience to travel specifically to the region.

Due to financial restraints all marketing (including the website and all flyer and poster design) was done in-house. This was found to be incredibly time consuming and exhaustive and diverted energies away from other core

management roles. The tight time and print deadlines resulted in incorrect information appearing on the publicity flyers. specific lead up marketing for individual events also suffered from tight resources.

Working with the Cumbrian Tourist Board was invaluable. Their support, contacts and experience gave FRED the profile it needed in order to attract national coverage and maximise on the marketing potential. The Cumbria Tourist Board stated that FRED was an exciting and easy event to market as a way of encouraging visitors out of season as October is an otherwise slow month but excellent light and colour!

This impact demonstrates the importance of having a skilled marketing role for the festival to ensure effective media coverage.

The tone of the marketing this year was light-hearted and fun. The benefit of this was that it was attractive to a younger audience, it looked intriguing, and it enabled us to present a new and unusual event to both an arts and a non-arts based audience in a non-threatening manner. It also served to attract people by the suggestion of a fun art experience. The failing of this strategy was that potentially the festival was not taken seriously by the art world, that it didn't suggest that serious issues could be addressed, and that it was confusing as to the nature of the event.

A marketing and communications post would be developed.

With a longer lead in period we would be able to distribute marketing materials earlier and to a wider audience.

A marketing strategy would be developed that took into consideration other events in the region, tourism and local target groups.

With longer lead in, projects would be developed more fully and earlier to enable more pre-festival publicity.

SECTION 4 - FINANCE

What was the impact of the funding available to FRED?

Limited funding resulted in the difficulties stated in each section above. The main restrictions, which should be avoided in the future, were:

- Not being able to pay artists for their time
 - Not being able to fund more adventurous projects
 - Not being able to pay all staff
 - Not being able to fund a marketing or education post
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SECTION 5 - ORGANISATION

How effective was the planning of FRED?

FRED staff worked effectively as part of a team. Due to time constraints to the team worked responsively and there was not always the time to ensure effective organisational structures were followed and it was sometimes difficult for job roles and responsibilities to be defined.

How effective was the delivery of FRED?

All 33 FRED projects were achieved successfully and on time and all artists were happy with their projects.

Each project was unique and had different aims and objectives, therefore the individual success needs to be measured differently for each artist. Some achieved huge audience figures, largely made up by 'accidental' viewers, some received a high level of media interest, some encouraged viewers to participate, and some were visually striking. The success of FRED has to be measured by the impact of the festival as a whole, and the benefit to the artists involved.

How could the organisation and delivery of FRED be improved?

Artists need to have one clear point of contact to avoid confusion and loss of information.

More time would enable the team to work more closely with participating artists to develop projects and therefore content further. A more spread out time period for the festival would enable all FRED artists to be assisted in installing their work if needed.

How successful was the selection / commissioning process of FRED?

A longer lead in time would enable FRED to do a wider spread call out for submissions both locally and nationally so that there is a larger number of proposals to select from. More established artists did not submit due to lack of money and time to develop projects.

Including artists from outside the region greatly enhanced the national marketing potential of the event. It gave artists and audiences the opportunity to experience the variety of work being made nationally and to make links with other artists and creative groups and networks. By bringing in artists from outside the region FRED exposed them to the creative potential of a rural environment as well as the type of work being produced in the region.

Adele Prince (car park ticket sculptures) was the only artist commissioned to produce work specifically for FRED. This use of project as publicity and vice-versa was particularly attractive to the media and is a model worth pursuing in future. Although commissioning artists is an ideal way to bring in higher profile

artists, a balance has to struck with artists developing and realising their own projects to maintain the sense of ownership in evidence by this years artists.

SECTION 6 - NETWORKS

As part of their projects some artists held video and D.J. evenings that were well attended but these were confined to Kendal.

All participating artists have now been invited to become part of The Cumbrian Network, and a networking event that will showcase FRED projects is being organised for January.

Feedback from artists has highlighted the demand for Focus days for artists to discuss ideas and proposed projects prior to the festival. Social events during the festival would enable artists to visit each other's work and meet each other, discuss their participation and experience of the festival and to explore ways of building on their involvement.

This year the involvement of galleries and other arts organisations was small, mainly because the organisations were wary of involvement in such a new and risky idea. With the first successful FRED achieved, the interest from these organisations has risen. They now know what to expect, and with a longer lead in may well accept an invitation to become more involved.

SECTION 7 – EDUCATION AND CONTEXT PROGRAMMES

FRED supports an unconventional type of arts practice, which can leave people feeling confused. By providing a context for the work, enabling artists to present their ideas and projects, and being open about the processes involved people feel more comfortable about engaging with the work. If people are involved in their local projects then they feel a sense of ownership over the work that aids in developing local support for the future sustainability of FRED.

Contextual events provide a deeper insight into the projects and work towards educating and informing audiences about this type of practice. This will enable FRED to develop more ambitious projects, as people will be more comfortable with the meanings and purpose of the art being introduced to their community.

FRED seeks to promote innovative arts practice and an education program would enable us to raise issues for discussion and debate that would aid in the development of artistic practice and contextual thinking as well as by presenting these ideas as possibilities to a broader audience

What would enable FRED to improve its educational impact?

An education post to develop relationships and forge links with local communities and schools, arrange presentations and talks about the project in the lead up to the festival would extend the legacy of the event and bolster local understanding and support.

Tours and focus days would highlight projects in specific, under-visited areas and help connect the individual projects more physically.

A Toolkit for artists to help maximise on their involvement with the project would aid individual artists with their own promotion and develop their own marketing skills beyond the event.

SECTION 8 – KEY POINTS

What are the biggest challenges FRED faces?

- Lack of finances
- Lack of time
- Lack of Man Power
- Lack of specific skills
- Lack of resources

What are the key things we would do differently or better?

1) Longer run in for planning and marketing

FRED came together in 3 months with a paid staff of 1 and 3 volunteer positions. The team delivered 34 projects by 64 artists in 52 locations within a budget of £15K. The team worked in an incredibly responsive manner and had little time for reflection or development of ideas. The organisation was tight and effective and worked well as a team in supporting each other and being flexible to the various demands as they arose. A more structured approach would have been ideal, and one that longer timescales and confirmed funding would facilitate

2) Education / Contextual events

In order for audiences to get the most out of the festival and to encourage more local interaction we would develop and deliver talks, seminars, workshops, events and activities to support and contextualise the aims of the festival and the work included. This is essential in building and educating audiences in order for the festival to grow and develop.

3) Networking and focus days for artists

Working with such a large geographic spread of artists made it difficult for them to meet and interact with each other. Artists also found it difficult to get to see each other's work. Given more time and resources networking days can be developed with The Cumbrian Network in various regions whereby artists can meet to discuss ideas, share information, develop projects and forge links. The aim would be that these would develop to include artists not participating in the festival in order to include and involve as wide a range of practitioners as possible.

4) Training and development support for participating artists

One of the key weaknesses of the applications received was the quality of their written content. FRED would work with other organisations to provide training in writing effective proposals, understanding funding opportunities and how best to take advantage of them, basic project management and delivery skills. A toolkit for artists would also enable them to take full advantage of their involvement in the festival and basic advice as to how to maximise on marketing opportunities.

5) Contract for participants

A simple contract outlining responsibilities and deadlines for completion of various stages of artists projects would help the smooth facilitation of the overall event.

6) Reliance on email has been problematic.

At various points within the lead up to the festival 3 intrinsic email accounts experienced severe problems resulting in the loss of much important email correspondence.

It is important that all FRED email accounts use paid-for email accounts with sufficient back-up support, and that important information is also forwarded by post.

Key suggestions from participants

Festival to be held earlier in the year. The main reasons being:

Weather

Academic commitments

Number of Tourists

OTHERS AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Training to be provided for staff to enable us to meet the challenges of ensuring the success of the festival, e.g.;
 - Fundraising
 - Project Management
 - Assertiveness
 - Curatorial skills
 - Organisational structures
 - To develop and encourage international links and introduce cultural diversity as part of the festival.
 - To develop a showcase of the work that was produced during the festival after the event. (i.e. to develop legacy)
 - To look at the possibility of some projects becoming more permanent.
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FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

The best things about FRED

- Audience participation in projects
- Being able to realise a project that they had wanted to do for a long time.
- Making work as part of a team / festival / larger event
- Taking work to a different audience and challenging notions of what 'rural art' can be.
- Opportunity to discuss and develop proposed work / ideas
- Covering a wide geographical area
- Good publicity
- Good logistical support and not having to deal with administration
- The surprise element
- FRED ALERT signs
- Working outdoors
- It was fun!

The worst things about FRED

- The weather
- Time scale for producing, developing, promoting work was too short
- Publicity incomplete and difficult to read
- Not having the time to see other artists work
- Feeling isolated
- Not enough images on the website

- Not being paid

Key suggestions for improvement

- Festival to happen over longer time period
- More time to make and develop work
- More money for projects and to pay artists
- More opportunities to meet other FRED artists
- Pre-event get together to discuss ideas
- More opportunities to promote individual projects
- More permanent / semi permanent works
- Clearer instructions as to how to find work