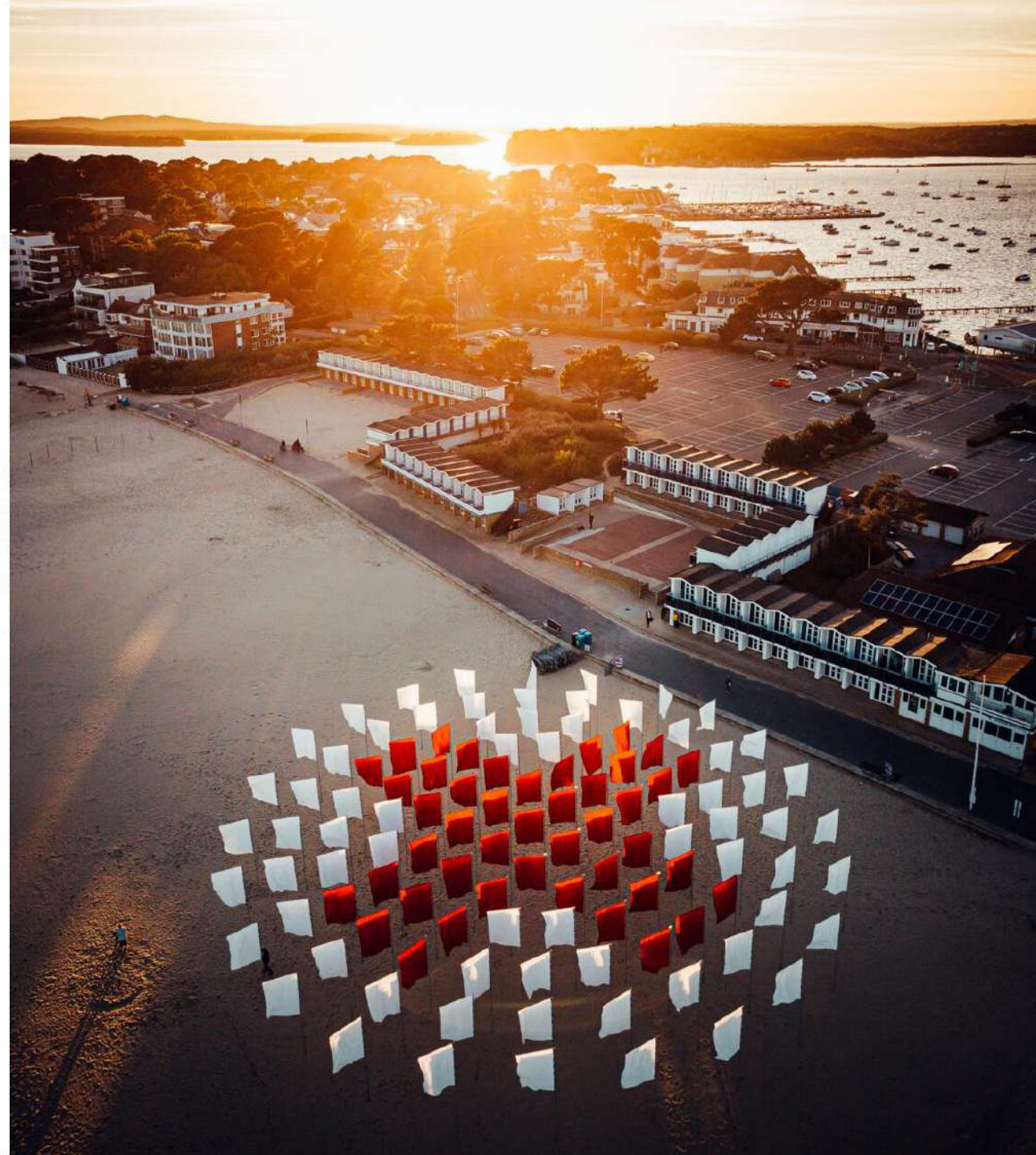




# 2020 IMPACT REPORT



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**







Arts by the Sea is an outdoor combined-arts festival, based in Bournemouth, funded by BCP Council and Arts Council England. We are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

## Who are we?

We work with high quality artists to deliver our mission to:

*Combine high-profile, inspirational, spectacular outdoor events with local participation, increasing engagement in culture and enhancing a sense of community by combining culture, people and place.*

[2020 was our 10th year.](#) We completely reformatted the festival in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and share some of our challenges and successes in this report.



# A Covid-secure festival

With **public safety** our first concern, we worked with our artists, the Safety Advisory Group, Public Health Dorset and BCP Council to design a brand-new festival for 2020, providing:

- A much-needed dose of **cultural activity** for our audience – for those attending live events and those shielding at home.
- **Support for the arts and events sector**, employing artists, event staff and suppliers, keeping the industry going.
- **Support for town-centre businesses**, attracting footfall and increasing dwell time and promoting the local offer.

Our incredible team worked tirelessly within ever-changing government guidelines to redesign the entire festival, while staying true to our mission to support talent development, provide culture to under-served communities and host and a diverse and accessible festival offer for all.

*“Taking into account the horrendous 2020 we have had, this was a highlight of the year. Thank you to everyone for making the evening so bright for my daughter and I” (Audience feedback)*







## Our audience

Our audience is normally a local one, with 20% coming from outside Dorset (national and international). This year we saw the effect of travel restrictions and the decision to stay local reflected in our audience survey responses:

- 81% from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, 9% from the rest of Dorset and 10% from outside the county. No students, international students or international visitors completed our survey (as expected).
- 76% have visited the festival before, **24% were new audience** - possibly a result of hosting our first event (*In Memoriam*) in Poole.
- A higher than usual percentage this year (**91%**) **visited with other people**, taking the advantage of one of the only events on offer during the pandemic to reconnect with friends and family at a live event.
- We aim for a programme accessible to all. Our audience reflects BCP's demographics (82% white British) but this year we also reached a 6% Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Groups, and a 6% Disability audience.

# Live events

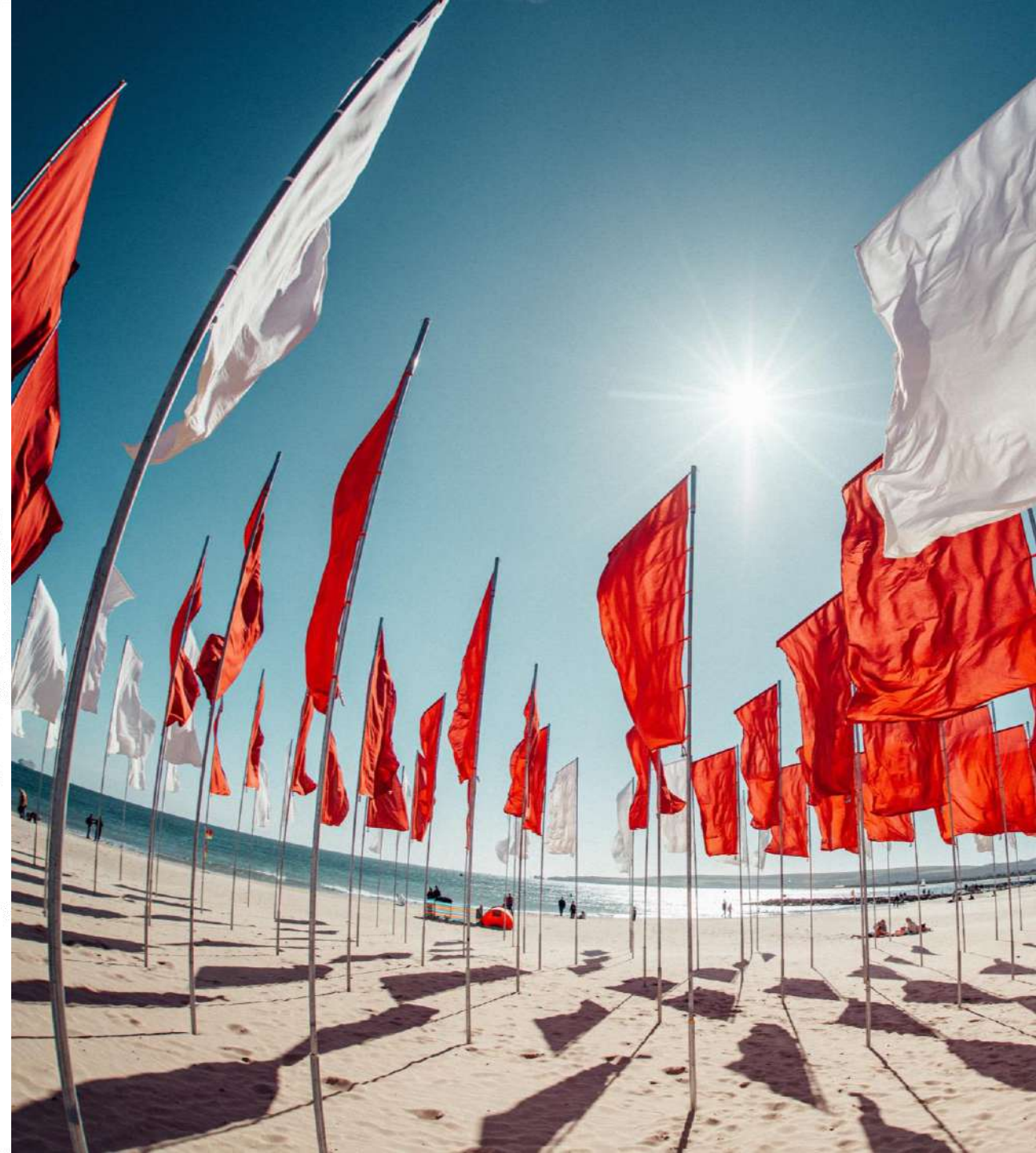
We hosted **7 live events** over the course of 10 days and provided **over 7,500** people with a Covid-secure live event experience.

[In Memoriam](#) by Luke Jerram  
[Fire Garden](#) by Walk the Plank  
[Sea of Light](#) by Ithaca  
[The Windbreak](#) by Cold War Steve

The festival hosted or supported 105 artists and delivered 33 live or digital new commissions.

- 94% of audience rated the *quality of the events* Very Good or Good, and 92% Very Good or Good for the *whole experience*.
- 86% rated Arts by the Sea 8 or higher when asked if they would recommend it to a friend or family member.

*"I'm so grateful to you all for going ahead with this year's event and for giving us a safe public event where we could reflect and be grateful for all we have" (Audience feedback)*





# Online programme

We created a **brand-new online programme** this year which is still available on our [website](#), for those who couldn't come to a live event or who were shielding at home, including:

- 7 Creative Online Workshops for families.
- 7 Music performances filmed especially 2020.
- 9 of our favourite street theatre shows and performances re-edited for 2020.
- A series of 8 Podcasts to experience on the move.

**395,500 total digital reach** achieved over festival month

We also captured **3 live-to-digital** events creating 360 camera immersive experiences and drone footage so people could experience the live events at home.

- A total of 34 new pieces of online content.
- 55 artists worked with us on the online programme
- 33 new live or digital commissions delivered in 2020

*"I thought the online service was extremely good... Thank you for sharing the footage online" (Audience feedback)*

ur

Like · Reply · 3 w

**Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Festival**  
29 September at 15:33 · 🌐

Tune into this comedy dance performance by **Kitsch & Sync Collective** ✨ Pioneers of all things vintage, retro and wonderfully absurd, expect an infectious blend of surreal characters, quirky choreography and stylish costumes ✨

Click to expand

5:17 / 15:58

30 1 comment 22 shares

Love Comment Share

all

Write a comment...

Most relevant



## Participation

Providing opportunities for people to participate in creative activity is an important part of what we do. In 2020 we devised 3 Covid-secure projects that could still provide an in-depth audience experience.

- **Process.** **17 participants** took part in 14 workshop sessions ranging from Haiku, to drama to printmaking (100 attendances overall) culminating in 12 hours of live exhibition time.
- **Speak to the Sea.** 12 hours of facilitated reflection time engaging **270 walk-up participants**.
- **Postcards from Memory.** **54 participants** provided postcards about personal journeys followed by exhibitions at two Bournemouth libraries a digital exhibition on our website.

*“This was SO needed in my life. I was going through so much emotional turmoil during the project; having this focus pulled me out of the depths of that and gave me some structure and accountability. I felt like I was contributing to something meaningful.” (Participant feedback)*



# Audience Development

Piloted in 2019 and re-developed to be Covid-secure, we delivered our **West Howe Community Party**. This project aims to:

- Bring Arts by the Sea creative activity to under-served communities.
- Provide long-term opportunities for residents to take part in large-scale festival participatory events.
- Expand across the conurbation into other underserved communities.

We worked with **22 artists** on our West Howe Tale Trail and safely engaged **250 local residents** in a treasure-trail of **6 live performances** in the heart of the West Howe community spaces.

*“We were bored, went for a walk and now it’s better. Now it’s great! I would like to see more in the area – I think that children and everyone would like that. I enjoyed playing with the bubbles, catching them and stuff like that. We’ve been to the beach and the playground during lockdown, but more stuff like this would be fun” (Audience feedback)*

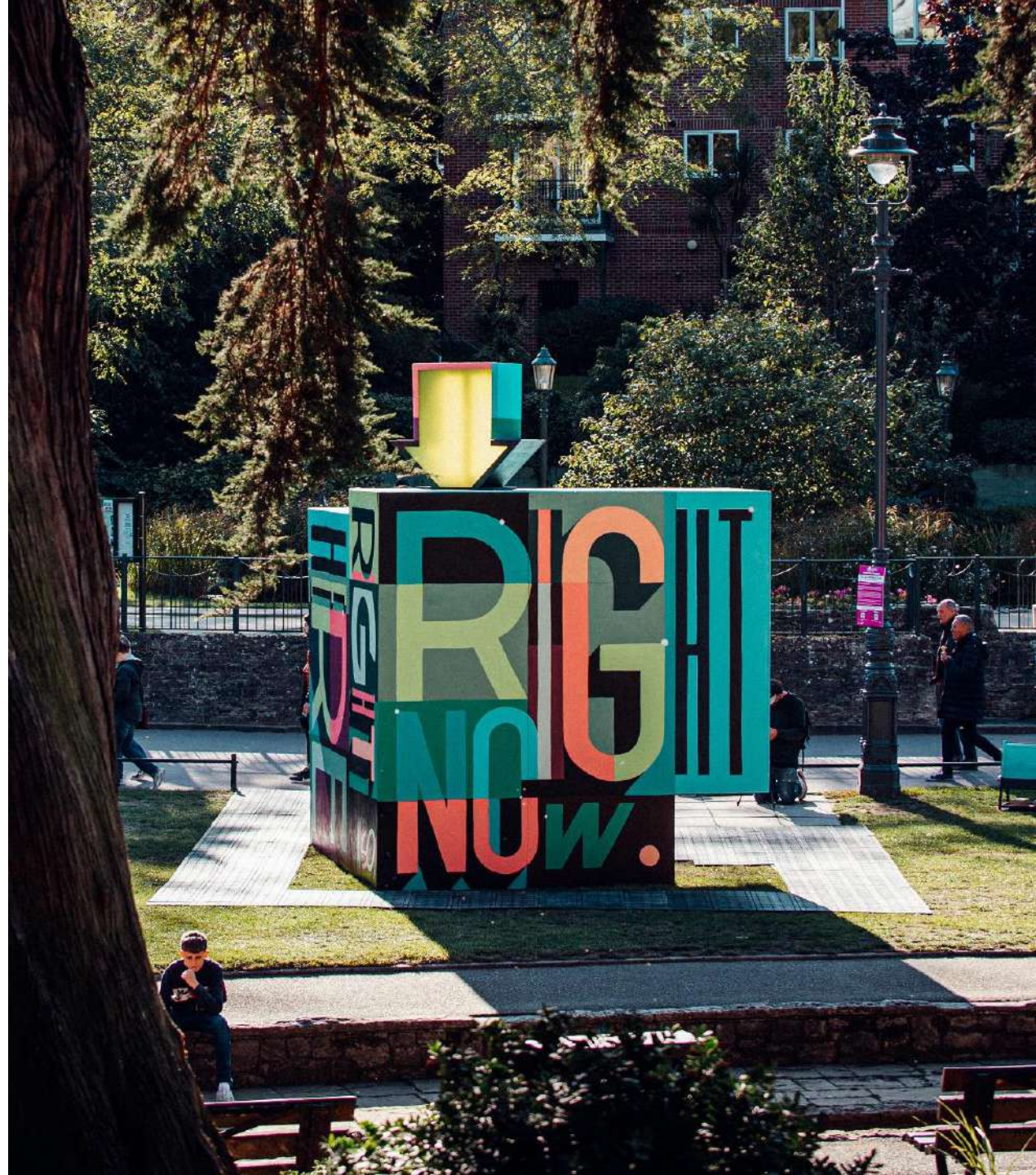




# Talent Development

Arts by the Sea supports the development of emerging and established artists, strengthening the sector and offering opportunities for the creation of new work.

- 2020 saw **£20k invested in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole artists** in our Open Call for commissions. Artists received mentoring from experts in their field and their work will be showcased in the 2020/2021 festivals.
- Covid-19 allowed us to redirect budget into a **Trainee Producer Scheme**, pairing seventeen 18-25 year olds with industry leaders Emergency Exit Arts. Their development will be supported through 2020/2021 and they have the opportunity to create something for the 2021 festival.
- Our **annual work placement for university students** was postponed in 2020 due to Covid, but this year our 2019 intern won the **Henley Prize for Outstanding Creative Events Management Dissertation**, awarded for its “**excellent primary research on an important area of arts policy**”. The work was inspired by our audience development project in West Howe.





# Economic impact

In a normal year with a live audience of 130,000, our visitor spend is estimated around £3M. Even in the midst of a pandemic and a live audience of only 7,500, this year we estimate our **visitor spend at over £140,000.**

- **30% of our audience also visited a restaurant or café** while at a festival event, 10% went shopping, and 9% visited a pub or bar.
- 8% of our audience stayed in Bournemouth overnight, and **79% of those were in paid accommodation** (an average of 3 nights each, equating to over 1,000 nights).
- 5% visited a historic site and 4% visited another arts or cultural activity while at the festival.
- We offered Bournemouth Town Centre Gift Cards as incentives for completing our survey.

*“just to let you know the card arrived, thank you very much. It will encourage me to go into Bournemouth to do some Christmas shopping when we can”.*

We also created a complete pack of resources in our Business Toolkit for partners to use to encourage visitors to the town.

**92% Strongly Agree or Agree that Arts by the Sea is good for Bournemouth’s image.**

*“ I own a few bars and restaurants in Bournemouth and I want to thank the Arts by the Sea Festival for organising this, particularly in this Covid world there’s so little going on. It’s so important for businesses just to demonstrate that things can be done safely. Here we are outside, it’s ticketed, numbers are controlled, it’s really well managed. It’s encouraging people into the town centre, inevitably when they’re in the town they’ll go for a meal, maybe go for a drink, use the taxis – it supports the local community and it just makes people feel good again. So big thanks for this great event and thanks for organising it.”*  
*(Mark Cribb, Urban Guild)*





# Community Impact

We value our amazing volunteers, and this year made the difficult decision to cut back on the opportunities we could offer due to Covid-19. We worked with a core team of **8 volunteers** who contributed **118 hours** over the festival.

*“I enjoyed being able to work with other volunteers (even if we did have to socially distance!) and bring a Covid-secure event to our town of Bournemouth. I loved supporting the community, seeing the amazing artwork and lending a hand.”*  
(Volunteer feedback)

Our mission is to enhance a sense of community by combining arts and culture with the local people and our incredible coastal location.

- 90% Strongly Agree or Agree that Arts by the Sea is **welcoming for the whole community.**
- 85% Strongly Agree or Agree that Arts by the Sea **encourages participation in community life** and events.
- 86% Strongly Agree or Agree that the festival **enhances a sense of community** in Bournemouth.

*“It was a riot of light, music and colour, in what has been a very dark and dull year for everyone. It reminded us of how important art and community is. It was intellectually and visually stimulating and felt Covid-safe as it was so well organised and marshalled. Thank you”* (Audience feedback)





# Environmental impact

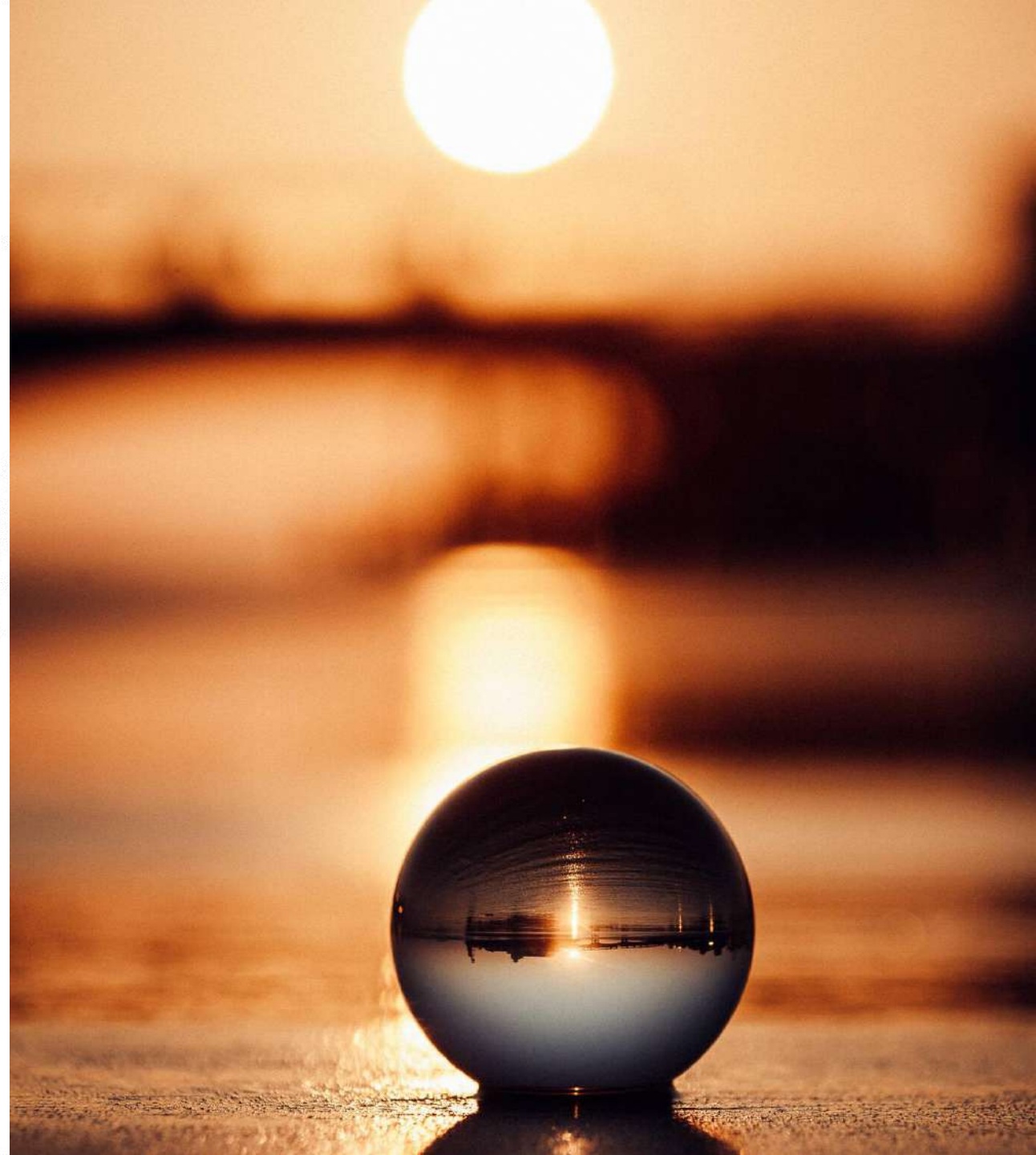
Arts by the Sea is committed to becoming more sustainable, reducing our environmental impact and using our platform to share that message with others.

We do this through **artistic choices** in our programme, via the **Environmental Policy, Action Plan and Green Riders** we share with artists and suppliers, and by hosting a **Green Hub** every year for local environmental organisations.

Covid-19 meant we were unable to host our Green Hub or offer the usual free bike MOTs and community beach clean this year, but we continued to promote our annual projects:

1. **Refill**
2. **Recycle**
3. **Sustainable Travel**

Our largest environmental impact is CO2 emissions from audience travel and this year (due to Covid-19), we've seen a reduction in CO2 due to reduced live audience numbers and the introduction of the digital programme.





# Diversity and accessibility

We aim to champion diversity within our artistic content, our community projects and in the audience we programme for.

- Our engagement projects *Process* and *Postcards from Memory* were targeted at people who might be **feeling isolated or unable to connect** through digital means.
- Our Trainee Producer Scheme was targeted to attract applications from those from **underrepresented communities** such as those who identify as disabled, LGBTQ+, Black Caribbean, Black African, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Arab, Latinx and others.
- Our Open Call for Commissions is supporting **minority ethnic led** local organisations Umoja Arts Network and It's all About Culture, in creating new work for the 2021 festival.
- We worked with **diversity-led organization** Global Local to champion ethnically diverse artists through the digital performance programme.

We design all our events to be as accessible as possible. In 2020 our live events included:

- Accessible viewing areas
- Accessible toilets
- An Accessibility guide
- Our online programme included performances and workshops with a BSL option or Sign Supported English.







# Marketing

We deliberately under-marketed our live event programme this year to avoid unregulated crowds to help maintain public safety. Even though our ticketed events were solely advertised to our mailing list, both Fire Garden and Sea of Light performed at an average of **82% ticket redemption rate**.

Our brand new digital programme performed extremely well and we gained valuable insights into optimized publication times, linking between different digital platform, the benefits of premiering content for immediate view vs providing content to be accessed at any time.

**251,061**

total Facebook reach for our digital programme

**106,042**

unique viewers for our digital programme

**395,500**

total digital reach over the festival month (including digital programme and social media)

**41,047** views

**82,611** reach for live-to-digital events (Fire Garden and Sea of Light)

**84,294**

website page views

**14.5M**

estimated press reach

**20,438**

new website users in 2020

**137,077**

total video views on Facebook

**663,470**

impressions on Facebook

**1450+**

daily reach on Facebook across BCP (over 6 months)



# Artist feedback

It was even more important for us this year to provide opportunities for artists to showcase their work, and to offer commissions and mentoring for artists to develop new work – either in live or digital forms.

**“It gave me as an artist and my creative studio an opportunity to explore new ideas and expand our skills. It was a fantastic opportunity to develop my creative practice.”**  
(Artist feedback – Rick Walker)

**“We learnt a lot about new ways of using digital to deliver high quality community projects and we are already using this learning in designing future projects”**  
(Arts & Wellbeing Organisation CoCreate)

**“I am hugely grateful to Arts by the Sea for finding a way to run the festival online and by creating some quality content for audiences at home to engage with. With so many cut-backs in the creative sector, being offered the gig made a significant difference”**  
(Artist feedback – Josh Elwell)

**“That Arts by the Sea even went ahead was tremendous, and because it did, we were able to do really valuable and deeply meaningful work with people affected by Covid. Process had a significant impact on people's wellbeing, and sense of self. I have nothing but positivity for the festival and this opportunity.”**  
(Arts & Wellbeing Organisation CoCreate)

**“This festival has been a huge lifeline for me personally. I expected it to be cancelled and the whole project to be postponed, but Arts by the Sea has had the courage to go ahead. I had wanted to develop this idea for some time and this commission gave me the focus during the Covid lockdown. [My mentor] really helped force me to bring ideas out from my mind and into reality”** (Artist feedback – Guy Dowsett)





# Audience feedback

Unsurprisingly, after months of being indoors with few highlights to look forward to, the highest motivation for attending a festival event this year was:

**“to do something new or out of the ordinary”.**

- The audience survey showed that the other main motivations were: “to enjoy the atmosphere”, followed by “to be entertained”, “to be inspired” and “to spend time with friends and family.”

We also surveyed people about their engagement with culture online since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 50% Strongly Agree or Agree that they have discovered new forms of arts and culture online.
- 45% say they are viewing more online arts and cultural content now than before the Covid-19 crisis
- 42% that they are engaging with arts and culture online to relieve feelings of stress and anxiety.

**“It was so lovely to be able to attend with my family. It felt like it had been a long time since we had enjoyed an experience together. Thank you for going ahead in challenging circumstances.” (Audience feedback)**





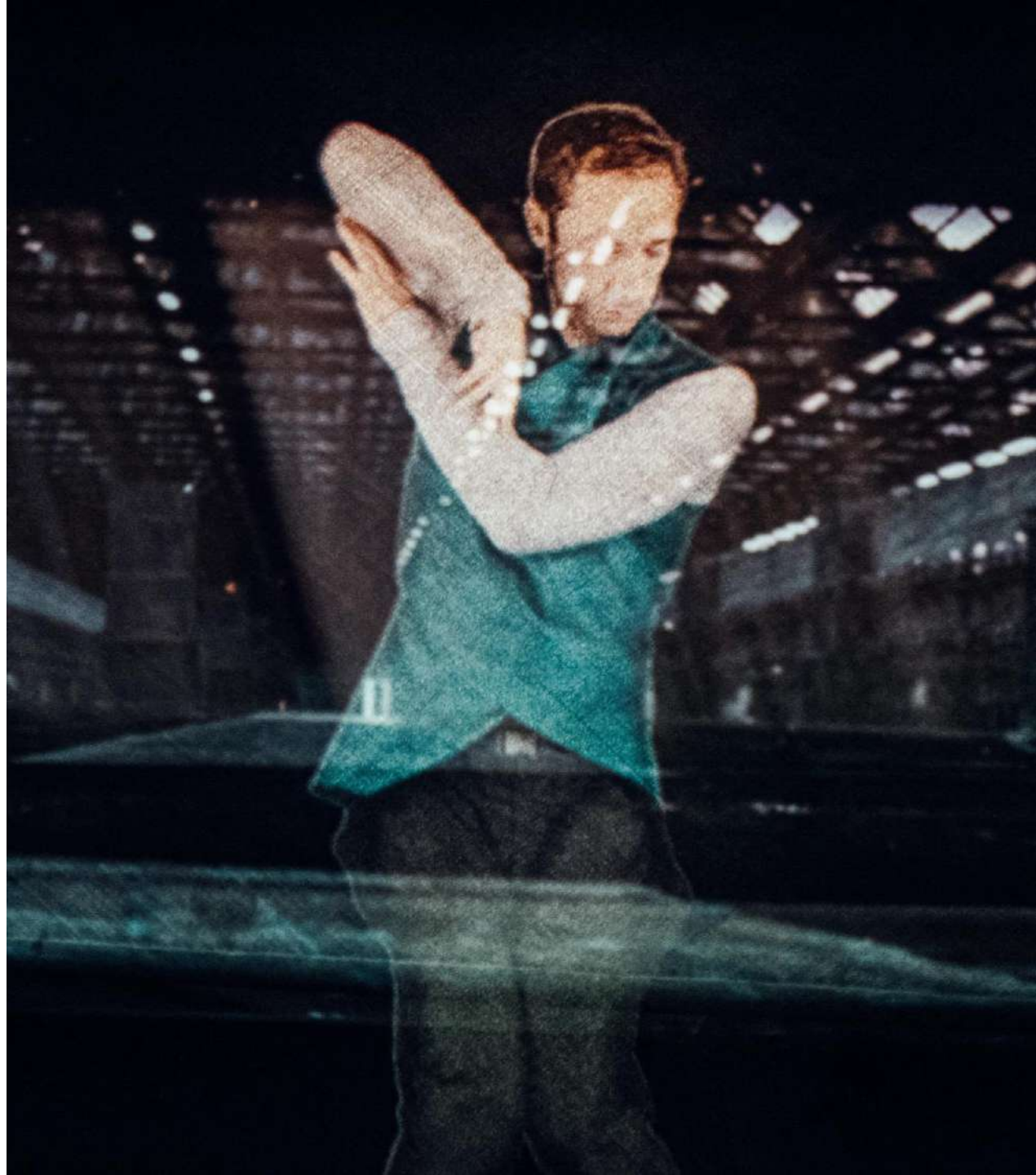
# Partnerships

Arts by the Sea benefits from a huge range of creative and practical partnerships which help us extend our reach and provide artistic content of outstanding quality to our audience.

This year, special thanks go to:

BCP Council, Arts Council England, Without Walls, Pavilion Dance South West, the Mela Partnership, Emergency Exit Arts, CoCreate, Continental Drifts, Glocal Local, Nutkhut, Bournemouth & Poole Libraries, the West Howe Community Trust, Stowe Family Law, local businesses including Urban Guild and Ojo Rojo, our Artists, our Volunteers, and our Steering Group.

**“What I love about outdoor work is that anyone and everyone can experience it. Often events are free, so it brings people from all walks of life together, in one place to celebrate the diversity of different artforms and the creativity we can all share”  
(Harpreet Kaur – Without Walls)**





# National profile and sector development

Arts by the Sea is proud to share our experiences and learnings with the rest of the outdoor arts sector, providing valuable knowledge to our partners and raising our own profile and that of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

This year we have:

- Presented at b-side festival's Assemblies – talking to industry colleagues and the CREATE cohort of Young Producers about 'the nuts and bolts of making work with and for our communities during Covid'.
- Presented at a series of Without Walls webinars for industry colleagues on 'Delivering Covid-secure Outdoor Events'.
- Shared logistical advice on producing Covid-secure events with 100 members of the Local Authority Event Organisers Forum.
- Shared programming information and advice with colleagues from the Mela Partnership including Birmingham Hippodrome.
- Provided mentoring to the Bridlington Arts Festival and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museum.
- Taken part in an international benchmarking review of leading European coastal festivals.
- Produced an industry report to be shared with national partners and colleagues on the delivery of this year's festival.



**"It really was a highlight of the year in Bournemouth, it's inspiring and something to be proud of that our town tries new things and broadens peoples' horizons" (Audience feedback)**





**See you next year**