

*Milton Keynes  
Summer of Culture 2012*

*EVALUATION AND ECONOMIC  
IMPACT STUDY*

*Executive Summary*

*Autumn 2012*





## Milton Keynes Summer of Culture - At a glance

**Total estimated attendances for the range of Summer of Culture events is 161,000  
A further 70,000 watched the Olympic Torch Relay**

**£4.771m expenditure in Milton Keynes by audiences at Summer of Culture events**

**The total economic impact is estimated to be £6.4m gross, £4.9m after allowing for  
additionality**

**£197,000 investment by Milton Keynes Council in Summer of Culture and  
International Festival has levered £978,000 additional funding in total across all  
participating events and organisations**

**Over 6,000 volunteer hours were contributed**

**58 jobs in the arts and culture sector safeguarded by Summer of Culture  
675 new posts and creative opportunities created for Summer of Culture events**

**32 new commissions and UK premieres**

**Footfall and parking figures for central Milton Keynes indicate that there were  
more visitors this summer compared to 2011**

**81% agreed' that: '*this event has made me more likely to attend similar events in  
Milton Keynes in the future*'.**

**£1.6m was spent by participating event organisers on goods and services**

**82% agreed that '*Milton Keynes is a good place for events and festivals*'**

**68% of those who attended events now have a more positive view of culture in  
Milton Keynes as a result of their Summer of Culture experience**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the evaluation and impact study for the inaugural Milton Keynes Summer of Culture 2012. The Summer of Culture is a collective term for the arts and heritage projects, events and festivals which took place in Milton Keynes from May to September 2012, bringing together for the first time a range of event organisers and stakeholders across Milton Keynes under one banner.

**The aim of Summer of Culture was to promote ‘world class MK’ through a range of cultural programmes under one banner to connect events and increase public engagement. Through ‘distinctive arts and heritage’ Summer of Culture aims to demonstrate the intrinsic social and economic impacts of its cultural offer.**

Summer of Culture was a multi-layered partnership project with specialist providers from across the city including:

- Milton Keynes Council
- Festive Road
- The Stables
- MK Gallery
- MK Parks Trust
- Destination MK
- Independent Cinema MK
- Arts & Heritage Alliance
- Heritage Consortium

The key events taking place in Summer of Culture were:

- § Arts & Heritage Open Places
- § IF: Milton Keynes International Festival
- § Festival Fringe
- § Dance Festival
- § Islamic Arts and Culture Festival
- § Godiva Awakes and Proms in the Park
- § Heritage Open Days
- § Pushwanger Exhibition
- § Olympic Torch Relay

The artistic aim of Summer of Culture was to encourage ‘**Milton Keynes to flourish with artistic energy**’. This is the vision from the current Milton Keynes Arts Strategy.

In this evaluation we tested the impacts of the Summer of Culture against the following performance indicators:

1. **Cultural development in Milton Keynes**
2. **Economic and financial impacts**
3. **Expanding audiences and perceptions**

Milton Keynes Council as the initiator and coordinator of Summer of Culture invested £69,314 from one-off resources in line with both the Corporate priorities for the Council and the Arts strategy. In addition, the Arts Development Officer led the coordination of Summer of Culture with support from other members from the Community Facilities team. The total value of the officer time was £22,244 (including on-costs), making **the total investment by the Council from its arts and heritage resources of £91,558.**

Milton Keynes Council was able to secure £96,587 from Arts Council England to specifically to support Summer of Culture. The Council investment also levered in £26,500 of funding from partners such as the Parks Trust and Milton Keynes Community Foundation to support the overall Summer of Culture campaign, making a **total of levered**

**in funding by the Council of £123,087.** This is in addition to any support from these funders for individual special events within Summer of Culture.

There was a further financial commitment of £106,000 from the Economic Development department of the Council to the International Festival, which itself levered in a further £424,000 of funding from the Arts Council and Lottery.

The central marketing and publicity of Summer of Culture was supported by Destination MK as the body responsible for promoting all aspects of Milton Keynes.

## Headline findings

### Cultural and social impacts

§ **Arts and cultural activities are improving the image of the city:** 68% of those who attended events now have a more positive view of culture in Milton Keynes as a result of their Summer of Culture experience

§ **Bringing international and culturally diverse artists to Milton Keynes:** there were 32 premieres and commissions which boosted creativity and innovation



§ **Cultural leadership and support:** Milton Keynes Council played a key role by grasping the opportunity presented by London 2012 to initiate the Summer of Culture to showcase the range and vibrancy of culture in the city

• **Summer of Culture achieved a joined up approach** by involving cultural organisations, city businesses and the local authority, extending the reach of culture.

§ **A cohesive cultural offer:** it enabled the cultural offer of Milton Keynes' to be showcased and presented to audiences in a cohesive form; this has led to greater awareness and appreciation both by the cultural sector and by audience

§ **New confidence in culture:** New partnerships and a shared sense of direction MK Summer of Culture has created opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between the city's cultural leaders, organisations and artists

### Financial and Economic impacts

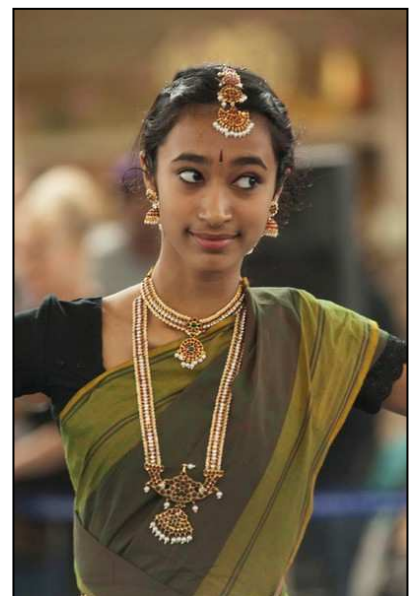
£91,558 investment by Milton Keynes Council in Summer of Culture and £106,000 in the International Festival has generated the following returns:

- £123,000 funding levered in to the Council to support the coordination and delivery of Summer of Culture
- £855,000 further funding drawn in from other funders and sponsors across all the participating organisations

- 58 jobs and creative positions in the arts and culture sector safeguarded by Summer of Culture
  - 675 new part posts and creative opportunities created for Summer of Culture events
  - £1.569m was spent by participating event organisers on goods and services
  - 6,000 volunteer hours were contributed
- § The total estimated attendances for the full range of Summer of Culture events including the International Festival is 161,000. There was £4.771m expenditure in Milton Keynes by audiences at Summer of Culture events, including those people attending the International Festival (before allowing for additionality)
- § **The total gross, unadjusted economic impact is estimated to be £6.409m**  
Allowing for additionality by adding multiplier effects and discounting for deadweight **the net economic impact is estimated to be £4.887m**
- § The economic and financial impacts are broadly in line with festivals and events of similar size, though there is currently a shortage of summer of 2012 evaluations with which to benchmark
- § Event organisers estimate that attendances were up on similar events on previous years and parking figures for central Milton Keynes also indicate that there were more visitors this summer compared to 2011. Footfall in the city centre was very slightly down on 2011, but this compares well to sharper drops in retail footfall in the country as a whole.
- § City businesses are now more aware of how culture contributes to creating a successful city, opening new doors for partnership and investment

### **Expanding audiences and perceptions**

- § **Arts and cultural activities are making Milton Keynes a more attractive place to live**
- 161,000 attendances at Summer of Culture events, including the International Festival
  - A further 70,000 watched the Olympic Torch Relay
  - MK Summer of Culture has been valuable in providing residents and visitors with opportunities to engage with culture
- § **New audiences and new opportunities for culture**
- 52% of audiences interviewed said they made their first visit to a cultural event this year during the Summer of Culture
  - The programme's inspiring arts made use of public and unusual spaces, many events were free, so cost of ticket was not a barrier to participation
  - Fun and quirky events in unusual venues





attracted audiences: street bazaars, cycle-powered green cinema, beach huts, music on buses, the Spiegel Tent and the events in parks

- The Boat Project, a yacht created by artists Lone Twin from thousands of wooden donations was moored in Centre: MK shopping centre, enabling many thousands to experience something beautiful and special

#### § **Creating an appetite for culture**

- The Summer of Culture has given audiences an appetite for cultural events. 81% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that: *'this event has made me more likely to attend similar events in Milton Keynes in the future'*.

#### § **Changing perceptions of Milton Keynes by creating cultural experiences**

- 68% of surveyed attendees either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My perception of Milton Keynes as a good place for arts and culture has improved'.
- This was further corroborated by the 82% who agreed or strongly agreed that 'Milton Keynes is a good place for events and festivals'.
- Therefore, the Milton Keynes Summer of Culture has had a direct influence in putting Milton Keynes upon the map as a cultural destination.



## **Recommendations for the future of Summer of Culture**

It is recommended that this inaugural Summer of Culture should be the first in a regular programme in future years, based on the strength of support from event organisers and stakeholders, the reaction from audiences, support from business and the overall financial and economic impact.

There are nine recommendations for future programmes:

### **1. Clarity about the nature of Summer of Culture**

There needs to be clarity about what Summer of Culture is – is it an actively curated programme of events and content, a marketing brand or just a collective way to gather events that would happen anyway? The suggestion is that Summer of Culture should develop over the years, starting as a brand which residents see every summer, which becomes associated with Milton Keynes as a place for high quality cultural activities.

### **2. Communication and publicity**

The key lessons learned for publicity and communications were:

- Start the planning and marketing delivery even earlier
- Get extra help for the marketing effort and commission an audience development strategy and plan from a specialist agency to define marketing objectives, support Destination MK and identify the level of resource needed.

- Provide a branding toolkit for participating organisations
- Create visibility in other areas of high footfall such as the railway station
- Social media and the website were important, but a mixed campaign is needed to drive people to the detailed information that is available electronically.
- Involve the business organisations, particularly the central shopping centres earlier

### 3. High impact moments

The importance of high impact moments during the summer programme were unanimously recognised by organisers, stakeholders and business – for example the Fire Gardens in the International Festival. The inclusion of a number of such high impact moments will be essential to the success of the whole programme.



### 4. Quality balanced with inclusion

A balance needs to be found between providing opportunities and encouragement for new talent and groups and delivering high quality. In future Summers of Culture, there needs to be a strong creative purpose to push up quality and to have a process for filtering to ensure all events included in the Summer of Culture programme meet a minimum standard.

### 5. Nurturing and capacity building

The new partnerships and collaborations between partners, event organisers and performers has been one of the strongest outcomes from Summer of Culture. The process of working together and focusing on a project will stand the city's cultural sector well in developing future initiatives.

### 6. Having a suitable focus

The summer of 2012 with the London Games, the Torch Relay and the International Festival provided a focus for grabbing the attention of the audiences. In future years it will be important to find a replacement focus which will capture the imagination of the public. It is suggested that the Summer of Culture be spread over just two or three months, and the high impact moments might be concentrated into four weekends.



### 7. Annual or biennial

The International Festival is biennial. This might suggest that Summer of Culture should also be biennial. However, there are arguments for keeping momentum going by having annual Summer of Culture and on balance the recommendation is that Summer of Culture should be annual, but it might not be of equal intensity in every year.

### 8. Greater involvement from the business sector

There are clear net economic benefits arising from Summer of Culture. Business interests have been quick to recognise the potential and the feedback from the business community

is that they would like to be involved earlier in the planning process, to have some say in the programme and to be more active.

### **9. Sustainability**

In keeping with many other arts and community based festivals Summer of Culture is likely to always need some additional funding for it to be viable. There is likely therefore to be a need for ongoing investment from Milton Keynes Council – justified by the economic and financial returns, which will only increase as the reputation of the brand increases.

Current business sponsorship is low, with the exception of International Festival, and well below that secured by other festivals, and it should be possible to increase this, particularly if the links to the business community and increasing visitor numbers are maintained.

