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ENGLAND



Preston
City Council

CULTURAL SERVICES REPORT

Preston City Council

2024 - 2025



SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL DELIVERY AND IMPACT



CITY EVENTS
3,049,834
PEOPLE REACHED



**WORKED
WITH
203
ARTISTS**



89 **LOCAL EVENTS
OR ACTIVITIES
SUPPORTED**

236 **1549**
HARRIS **COMPLETED**
VOLUNTEERS **HOURS**



THE GUILD LOUNGE
4587 VISITORS
25 NEW ROLES CREATED
34 PRODUCTION COMPANIES SUPPORTED



203 **33**
HARRIS **ARTIST**
EVENTS **COMMISSIONS**



**LOCAL GROUPS
SUPPORTED**

**CARNIVAL, WINDRUSH, FRIENDS
OF WINCKLEY SQUARE, PRESTON
PRIDE, PRESTON CITY MELA,
PRESTON CITY WRESTLING +
JAZZ FESTIVAL**



£1,041,441
INCREASED VISITOR SPENDING



1,460,022
INCREASED FOOTFALL



46,455
INCREASED VISITOR NUMBERS

“

Volunteering for the Harris allows me to be involved with our local community in a spiritual way. Being in connection with the general Preston public gives me a sense of security both socially and economically by sharing my thoughts and views. It helps me to be involved - **Raj, Harris Volunteer**

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“

Volunteering at the Harris is a great way to make friends, develop new skills and give something back to the community. I really enjoy it! - **Charlotte, Harris Volunteer**

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We are proud to be supporting the Harris Your Place project, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. Working with Preston City Council, this exciting initiative will provide a sustainable home for the Museum's collections, which will ensure that they are accessible for local communities and visitors to learn more about the city's rich heritage.

"We know that heritage can play a huge role furthering a sense of pride in local communities which in turn can boost the local economy, and this project is sure to be a wonderful example of that - **Helen Featherstone, Director, England, North at The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

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I have the pleasure of working with Preston City Council on a number of different culture related projects, including Preston Jazz Festival. Preston City Council have been providing invaluable support for this festival since 2018. This support has included financial contributions underpinning bid activity, hence enabling us to amplify and bring more money into the city for cultural activities. Also we have benefit from operational and logistical support including the use of venues and spaces. Equipment such as chairs for performers and sit on, gazebos to ensure the show can go on if the weather takes a turn for the worse, and marketing support to make sure we reach our communities and maximise impact. The whole team is great to work with, very knowledgeable, professional, and super helpful. I would also like to thank Tim Joel and Cllr. Anna Hindle who support our work and ensure Preston is a great place for culture - **Tony Rigg, Preston Jazz Festival**

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"Culture is the heartbeat of our city. This year's successes show what's possible when creativity is backed by community and commitment. From our internationally recognised festivals to grassroots workshops, Preston has embraced culture in all its forms. These achievements are a testament to the people of Preston: their passion, their participation, and their pride." - **Councillor Hindle, Cabinet Member for Arts and Culture at Preston City Council**

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THE HARRIS YOUTH PANEL

The Harris Youth Panel has been busy! They have been helping to create a plan for the public programme that The Harris is going to trial to visitors when we reopen. The panel are specifically thinking of visitors that are young people ages 12+. They are involved in the bigger picture of what young people in Preston want and need through attending consultation sessions with the **Preston Youth Forum*.

The forum ran a youth consultation exercise across Preston with 1400 young people aged between 8-25 to gather the views of their life in the city. The consultation revealed that young people want improvements in four main areas: Safety, Health, Financial and Future. The Harris' Youth Panel have decided to focus on two of the main areas that the city-wide consultation revealed: Health and Future. This will hopefully include regular monthly sessions on skills for living, along with weekly drop-in advice sessions for health and wellbeing, delivered where possible in partnership with colleagues from the Preston Youth Forum, with a nice balance of fun of course! The programme will include social things like film nights and creative arty projects.

The Harris Youth Panel meet on the first Wednesday of the month at the Birley Artists Studios, 5 - 7pm

**The Preston Youth Forum brings together youth service providers from the voluntary, community, faith, social enterprise and public sector from across the city. These services have worked hard to understand the issues facing young people, aged 8 to 25 in Preston and the Youth Forum are looking to work together and provide better support to help young people live to their full potential.*

NO.9 ARTIST & MURAL ANNOUNCED

We're delighted to announce the mural artist chosen for No.9, our new young people's space within The Harris!

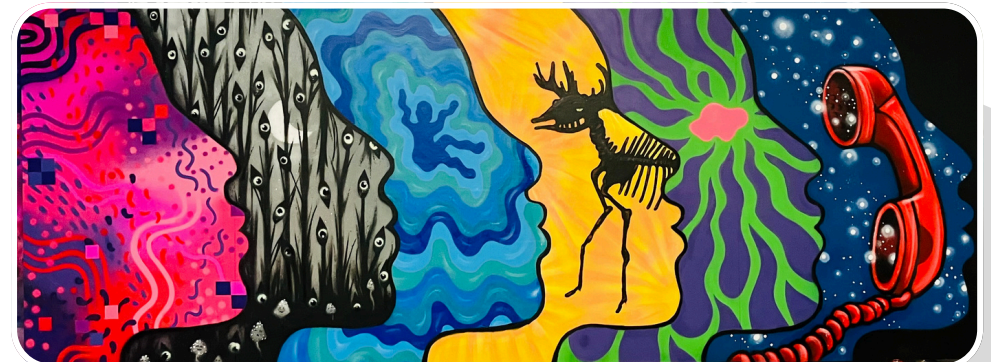
After a huge amount of interest and a large number of applications, our Harris Youth Panel have chosen Becki Miller, aka MOZE, a mural maker, sign painter and illustrator based in Manchester who knows Preston and The Harris well.

Over the last couple of months, Becki has been working alongside the Youth Panel to create a mural. In her own words:

“

The piece I've been working on for No.9 is representative of some of the ideas from the young people that I've spoken to. What I noticed when I was speaking to them is that they were quite caught up in their identity, it means a huge deal to them, as it does to a lot of people. With this piece, I'm trying to represent the fact that we're all different, yet we're all the same in a lot of ways as well. There's no reason why we can't stand shoulder to shoulder and be together.

”



NEW ACQUISITIONS AND ARTIST COMMISSIONS

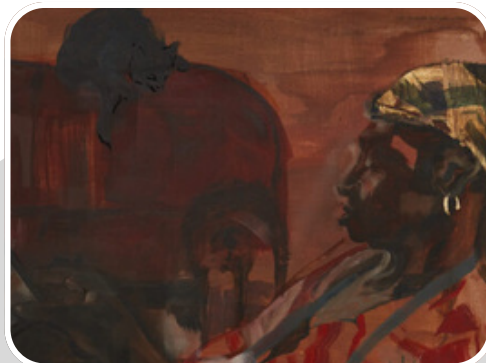
EMMA PREMPEH

Emma Prempeh's practice delves into the concepts of distant memories. The starting point to her work is the matter of blackness – the tonal properties of the colour establishes the ground to her paintings and provides a cinematic basis to invoke memories of events, people, and places.

Family and generational continuity is often the subject of Prempeh's paintings, relational ties are explored through the depiction of her mother and grandma and their experiences. Prempeh sees her grandma's home as a place of refuge and comfort with her home being an expression of her cultural identity.

The Harris has relatively few works by women artists, particularly figurative paintings which explore experiences of identity, representations of diversity and intergenerational family life. *It's the People That Make a Home* and *1936* are important additions to the collection, they will form part of a major redisplay when the Harris reopens in 2025. With particular focus on narratives that explore identity, heritage and a sense of belonging, The Harris has an ongoing commitment to working with local communities including Preston's Windrush generation and descendants.

Presented by the Contemporary Art Society, 2023/2024. Courtesy of the Artist and Tiwani Contemporary. Photography by Deniz Guzel.



BAA'S GOLD

Heta Patel aims to challenge assumptions about how we look and where we come from. This painting comes from a body of work that grew out of a robbery that his grandmother (called Baa, which means 'mother' in Gujarati) suffered in 2015, during which her gold jewellery was forced from her wrists. Patel's deeply personal paintings 'seek to retrieve Baa's gold', which for the artist is a metaphor for everything that has been taken from his family via the systematic racism experienced in the UK since his birth and before.

This painting forms part of a new collection of works that explore the many facets of family life, chosen because of your feedback through the Harris Your Place project.

Presented by the Contemporary Art Society through the Collections Fund at Frieze, 2021/22.



THE STRAWBERRY DRESS

Introducing our latest acquisition, the Horrockses Fashions Strawberry Dress! This beautiful strawberry-print cotton dress with matching belt has a scoop neckline with a bow at the centre, short sleeves and a below-the-knee length, full skirt. The original strawberry-print was created in 1952 by Brigitte Dehnert. The strawberry-print dress and matching jacket were designed as part of Horrockses Fashions Spring/Summer 1954 collection.



FAMILY LIBRARY ILLUSTRATOR

Lucy Mulligan, a Lancashire-based illustrator, has been working on some fantastic images for our family resources as we prepare to reopen The Harris. We put out a 'call out' to find an illustrator, and Lucy's vibrant style quickly stood out, capturing the imagination of children during the selection process. We tested early drafts with families at our May half-term events and made some adjustments based on their valuable feedback. We can't wait for you to see the final results of her work.



GALLERY TWO ANNOUNCEMENT

Our programme advisory group has been busy behind the scenes. This group has been chosen to make sure that the views of the community are reflected in our programming decisions. This group has gone through the first round of applications for the new Gallery Two exhibition space and have chosen the first two shows. We are excited to announce the first exhibition in Gallery Two when we re open will be...

Ocean Mother

Saroj Patel is a Preston-born artist who creates intricately detailed, tactile sculptures that invite playful audience interaction. She works with a diverse range of materials, drawing from Indian and Hindu traditions, alongside found objects such as bicycle wheels and high chairs to build structure. Born and raised in Preston, Saroj has traveled to India with her family since the age of three and continues to be captivated by its sensory richness - vivid colours, textures, tastes, and sounds.

Her sculptures celebrate Indian culture, and also serve as a means of exploring her relationship with her upbringing. Through her work, she seeks to create an empowered space that embraces all aspects of her identity, bridging seemingly conflicting perspectives. She challenges rigid notions of ethnic identity through an open-minded exploration of her own experiences. Seeing her practice as inherently spiritual, she strives to foster connections between people, place, and culture.

Saroj has fond memories of visiting The Harris Museum as a child - exploring the library, wandering through the art galleries, and being captivated by the paintings on the stairwells. One piece that left a lasting impression was *The Golden Gates* by William Shackleton, a painting featuring a magical underwater scene where vivid blues and greens spark her imagination. Now, she is deeply honoured to return to her hometown to present *Ocean Mother*, a profoundly personal and important exhibition.

Ocean Mother explores the untold stories and rich experiences of South Asian mothers, delving into how these women navigate identity through the lens of motherhood.

Many of the mothers interviewed were either born in or currently live in Preston, making this exhibition a heartfelt tribute to the community. Through sculpture, texture, and form, Saroj weaves together narratives of strength, love, and heritage, inviting audiences to connect with these deeply personal journeys.

Through intimate conversations with British South Asian mothers, Saroj Patel asked how histories, traditions, and culture shape their identities and discovered the active role they play in embracing and teaching their cultural heritage to their children. These extraordinary mothers break boundaries and craft new narratives for South Asian women.

This exhibition also delves into Saroj's personal connection with her mother, Sushila, who was born and raised in Gujarat, India. Aged 19, Sushila embarked on a transformative journey, migrating to the UK and becoming a mother to three children by the time she turned 22. Saroj's mother faced struggle, loneliness, and conflict. Yet, her stories are woven together with threads of resilience and courage. Like many women of her era, her experiences inspire the next generation to forge new opportunities and create more inclusive futures for themselves and their children.

Ocean Mother celebrates heritage and the enduring power of maternal stories. These stories resonate across generations, weaving into the fabric of our shared human experience.



WORKING WITH LANCASHIRE CONSERVATION STUDIOS

We are thrilled to announce a partnership with Lancashire Conservation Studios, who will be undertaking the meticulous treatment of over 90 treasured objects from The Harris' collection. Over the coming months, a variety of artworks, sculptures, fashion pieces, and other key historical objects will undergo expert conservation, cleaning, and repair in preparation for their inclusion in the highly anticipated new displays when we reopen in 2025.

The scope of the conservation work is extensive, ensuring that some of the most iconic pieces from the collection are ready to shine once again. This includes glazing selected paintings to protect them during display and carefully mounting fragile historic textiles on specially crafted mannequins, safeguarding them for future generations.

Among the objects receiving conservation are collection favourites like the beloved marble sculpture Clytie by G. F. Watts, which will experience cutting-edge laser cleaning technology to restore its original brilliance.

The conservation efforts will also bring to light several rare pieces that have not been seen by the public for many years, such as an elegant cotton and silk dress dating back to the 1850s, a portrait of Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas Grimshaw, leader of the Royal Preston Volunteers, painted in 1801, and an intricately crafted Victorian mother-of-pearl tea caddy. These pieces, many of which have remained in storage, will be restored to their former glory, ready to be displayed in the new galleries.

Caring for The Harris' collections will continue with the installation of new state-of-the-art conservation-grade shelving in the basement in January 2025. Designed to safely house and preserve collections, this upgrade ensures that generations to come will be able to enjoy the artefacts and stories that make The Harris so special.

This vital conservation work has been made possible with Heritage Lottery Fund and a wide range of local and national funders as part of the Harris Your Place capital project, and through the generosity of The Textile Society's Museum, Archive & Conservation Award 2024, which has funded the restoration of key pieces from The Harris collection.



CONSERVING THE ALEXANDER FRIEZE

A new chapter begins for the Alexander Frieze at The Harris Museum, Art Gallery and Library, thanks to awards totalling £25,000 gifted generously from the Pilgrim Trust, Henry Moore Foundation and Friends of the Harris to support conservation and redisplay of the Alexander Frieze.

Standing as one of the most striking features of The Harris, the Alexander Frieze is a large-scale sculptural work by Bertel Thorvaldsen, depicting Alexander the Great entering Babylon in 331 BC. The sheer size and intricate detail of the piece present a significant conservation challenge, requiring expert care to ensure its long-term preservation.

Now, with the support of the funders, conservation specialists Mareva Conservation have begun the process of assessing, stabilising, and conserving this historic masterpiece. This work forms part of Harris Your Place, a major project designed to protect and enhance The Harris for future generations.



JOHN WELD EXHIBITION

John Weld (1813 – 1888) was a Victorian landowner, antiquarian, naturalist and amateur painter who lived at Leagram Hall near Chipping. During his lifetime, he made detailed records of many aspects of his local area and beyond.

Ann, who has been volunteering for the Harris for 15 years now, would like to tell you a bit about the John Weld Project, and working with his extensive portfolio, encompassing a thick ledger titled “Flora and Fauna of Leagram and Neighbourhood”.



I have been privileged to undertake a wide variety of activities, including family workshops, a welcomer and as a Costumes Collections Champion.

This year, knowing my skill in transcription and calligraphy, the Harris' Fine Art Curator, Lindsey McCormick, invited me to assist in the transcription of a portfolio written by John Weld in the mid 19th century. This information will contribute to an exhibition in 2025. It also demanded my knowledge of Latin, of ornithology and of the geography of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. I have also learned how to input the information to the digitised records of The Harris Collections.

My obvious enjoyment of this task has led to my being invited to continue to record other portfolios by John Weld. One never knows when those long ago school lessons may be recalled, encouraged by the skilled and appreciative Harris staff!



WORKING WITH THE FOXTON

The Harris is working in partnership with The Foxtan Centre and has been delivering an art project for adults every Friday afternoon since January 2023, making art together to improve wellbeing. The Foxtan Centre is a Preston-based charity with a longstanding commitment to working within the local community, supporting both adults and young people. Through this collaboration, we aim to inspire, uplift, and showcase the transformative power of art.

In 2024, we hosted two exhibitions with The Foxtan Centre. The first exhibition took place at Preston Bus Station, and explored the 5 steps to mental wellbeing using art, with a specific focus on connecting with other people and learning new skills. At the exhibition, people were captivated by a remarkable group art project, where individual small canvases came together to form a large-scale artwork. Exhibition visitors had the opportunity to admire individual artworks created by the talented artists from the Foxtan Centre Art Group.

The second exhibition took place towards the end of 2024 at Fishergate Shopping Centre. The theme of the exhibition was for the artists' work to be inspired by the art at The Harris. Inspirations included L.S. Lowry, Bridget Riley and Bob and Roberta Smith who are all included in The Harris' collections! With a colourful array of pieces, it was a beautiful way to brighten up the darkening days as Autumn turned to Winter. Selected pieces by the Foxtan Artists were even up for sale!



THE SAHARA PROJECT

In 2024, The Harris collaborated with Sahara in Preston to create an exhibition celebrating South Asian Heritage Month (18th July – 17th August). Sahara is a voluntary organisation that works predominantly for the benefit of black and minority ethnic (BME) women in Preston. They provide free help, support, and opportunities for women to learn and progress in life.

Since November 2023, Harris staff and volunteers have been working with a multicultural group of around 30 women. The women have been drawing, painting, sewing and collaging to explore different themes. The group was inspired by the ideas of freedom, culture, identity, and working together to create something beautiful.

The group had the chance to see colourful and interesting objects from the Harris' collections to get them inspired and the ladies have shared their own special and interesting personal objects with one another; sharing stories and childhood memories.

‘FREE TO BE ME’ EXHIBITION

The Harris' work with Sahara culminated with the 'Free To Be Me' exhibition at Fishergate Shopping Centre. The exhibition was held from 18th July – 17th August to celebrate South Asian Heritage Month (SAHM) 2024.

On display was a creatively decorated Anarkali-style dress made out of 25 pieces of corduroy and silk by over 20 women from Sahara's Coffee Afternoon Group. With SAHM's theme 'Free to be Me' in mind, the women embellished, painted and embroidered the dress with personal responses of identity, faith, family and hobbies.

The exhibition was a beautiful example of community and how individuals can be stronger together. Not only was this project a strong collaboration with the women from Sahara, but also had strong involvement from our Harris Volunteers.

Jennifer Futter (Harris Volunteer and designer of the dress) said it was an "energising experience, working in a team with diverse ideas and objectives."

The final project outcome surpassed my expectations and served as a reminder of what we can achieve when we work together. I look forward to being a Harris volunteer again utilising and passing on my creative skills".

This exhibition was on display during a time where many from the South Asian community may not have felt free to be themselves. The Harris is proud to have celebrated South Asian Heritage Month with a diverse community group from Preston, despite the far-right protests and riots. Everyone deserves to truly feel "Free to be Me".



ENCOUNTER FESTIVAL

The Encounter Festival has become a cornerstone cultural event in the Preston city event calendar, delivering far-reaching benefits beyond its specified outcomes. By celebrating culture through arts, performances, and public installations, the festival has brought together communities from diverse backgrounds, encouraging participation and engagement in ways that strengthen civic pride.

Encounter Festival continues to reach new audiences, with nearly one in five visitors experiencing arts and culture for the first time and a growing number attending from outside of the city. The latest evaluation report highlights that the festival is diversifying its audience, with visitors in 2024 representing 16 of the 17 recognised ethnic identities, up from 11 the previous year.

Visitors described the festival as a 'welcoming and inclusive space' that brings communities together through shared experiences. One attendee commented: 'Amazing that a festival of that scale is in Preston; to be part of it was an amazing opportunity.'

The festival continues to create opportunities for artists, performers, and organisations, supporting local talent and attracting nationally recognised acts. Over 2,000 artists and performers participated in 2024, who credited Encounter Festival as an important platform for their development. Supporting young people is a core strand of the Encounter Festival programme, working in partnership with youth centred organisations who commented: 'Young people are getting the chance to develop their production skills, event organising skills, project management, all of those things.'



THE MET

The MET catered for an average of **245** visitors per week and a total of over **1,000** community members and culture seekers over the month of July 2024.

The MET has had a significant impact on the Preston community beyond its original objectives, serving as a dynamic space for social and cultural interaction. By bringing diverse events directly to the doorstep of key audience demographics – particularly those in lower socioeconomic backgrounds - has fostered stronger community ties. The MET tent's presence has helped build connections between different social groups, fostering collaboration among local artists and organisations. Feedback from participants reveals a sense of pride and belonging that extends beyond individual events, showing that The MET has become a valuable cultural asset for the community of over the past two years.



RADIO 2 IN THE PARK

In September, Preston's Moor Park was the vibrant setting for BBC Radio 2 in the Park, as global superstars like the Pet Shop Boys, Sting, and Sugababes drew thousands of music fans from across the country. Over three days, the festival welcomed 68,100 attendees, sparking a major economic boost for the city. This brought over £5 million in visitor spending, creating jobs and supporting local businesses throughout Preston.

The BBC-hosted event attracted both local residents and visitors from across the UK. Around 13% of attendees were from Preston itself, while the majority were from further afield. It is estimated around 16,000 visitors stayed overnight, and a further 31,000 came for day trips, making Preston a vibrant hub over the course of the weekend.

This influx of visitors led to an estimated £2.4 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) for the city of Preston, helping to support an estimated 2,100 jobs in the city during the three-day event. The figures provided exclude expenditure by Preston residents. However, local attendees spent an estimated £434,000 during the event, further adding to the local economy.



Radio 2 in the Park in Preston not only provided unforgettable entertainment for thousands but also left a lasting positive impact on the city of Preston, highlighting its potential as a host city for future large-scale events. Radio 2 in the Park has shone a spotlight on Preston and provided national media coverage from March this year helping to put Preston on the map.

“

*I'm so pleased the event has had such positive impact for the local economy, businesses and communities. All of us at Radio 2 would like to thank Preston City Council and the people of Preston for the incredibly warm welcome they gave Radio 2 in the Park when the station decamped to the city in September. We were delighted to broadcast live from several local venues during the build-up to the epic weekend in Moor Park and were proud to shine a light on this fantastic city across our shows during the event weekend and beyond - **Helen Thomas, Head of Radio 2***

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*Preston City Council were great to work with on the delivery of Radio 2 in the Park in Moor Park. The proximity of Moor Park to the north of the city centre makes it very accessible to the main transport hubs of the city and Moor Park being adjacent to PNE football ground offers a great deal of hard standing particularly for accessibility customers. The park itself offers a capacity of over 30 000 for standing customers with a huge main arena space - **Rhys Hughes, Head of Live Music & Events at The BBC***

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THE GUILD LOUNGE

This revitalised venue was created in response to fill the void left by The Guild Hall's closure in an attempt to enhance the local entertainment scene with a diverse events programme running from October 2024 through March 2025. Making the change from a bar space to a studio theatre, The Guild Lounge hosted a variety of events, including live music performances from well-known artists, theatre productions, a regular comedy club, family-friendly entertainment, festive shows, community performances, and unique one-off events.

As part of the venue's transformation, a 350-seat studio theatre was developed to provide an intimate, dynamic setting for performances in just a few short months. A significant step in establishing Preston as a go-to destination for quality live events, helping to re-engage audiences and bring vibrancy back to the city's nightlife. The venue is managed in-house by the Preston City Council's Cultural Team who have created the programme with input from theatre professionals, ensuring a blend of high-quality performances and a platform for local talent. Preston residents and visitors attended shows weekly from Thursday to Saturday, bringing these audiences back into the city centre. The programme included additional events programmed during school half-term weeks, providing entertainment options for all ages.

Preston City Council's efforts to open this venue reflect a broader strategy to revitalise The Guild Hall.



4,573
TICKETS
SOLD



£94,768.78
TICKET INCOME



2,853
EMAIL
SUBSCRIBERS



3,100
TOTAL
FOLLOWERS



3,143,755
TOTAL SOCIAL
MEDIA REACH



37,736
TOTAL SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT



29,700
TOTAL SOCIAL
MEDIA REACH



1,038 BRAND
AWARENESS SCORE

1,600,793
TOTAL SOCIAL
MEDIA REACH

141,695
VIDEO VIEWS

4,826
TOTAL SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT



1,513,262
TOTAL SOCIAL
MEDIA REACH

32,910
TOTAL SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING AND PRESTON CITY COUNCIL EVENTS

Grassroots, organised events that celebrates Preston's identity and celebrates our communities.



£151,925

IN FUNDING FOR 2024/25

OUR INVESTMENT LEVERS IN

£300,000



2,454,231

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED



LOCAL EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES
SUPPORTED, INCLUDING

LETS GROW PRESTON SPRING FAIR
PRESTON CARNIVAL KING & QUEEN
PRESTON CARNIVAL
PRESTON JAZZ FESTIVAL
VOLUNTEERING FAIR
LANCASHIRE DISABILITY PRIDE
WINDRUSH
PRESTON CITY MELA
PRESTON CITY WRESTLING
SHOWCASE
AVENHAM CLASSIC CAR SHOW
SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY
PRESTON PRIDE
WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY
WINCKLEY CHRISTMAS CONCERT



£1,041,441

INCREASED VISITOR SPENDING



1,460,022

INCREASED FOOTFALL



46,455

INCREASED VISITOR NUMBERS

CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL



Marketing Reach: 160,798
Visitor Figures: 13,000

YOUNG JAZZ IN THE SQUARE



Marketing Reach: 78,858
Visitor Figures: 500

WINDRUSH FESTIVAL



Marketing Reach: 93,808
Visitor Figures: 4,000

PRESTON CITY MELA



Marketing Reach: 47,396
Visitor Figures: 5,000

PRESTON CITY WRESTLING



Marketing Reach: 130,823
Visitor Figures: 1,200

PRESTON PRIDE



Marketing Reach: 61,715
Visitor Figures: 3,000

GET IN TOUCH



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Preston
City Council

