Guidance for presenting Outdoor Arts under post-lockdown restrictions.

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OUTDOOR ARTS SECTOR INTRODUCTION

The Outdoor Arts sector is extremely diverse, taking place all over the public realm, in streets, parks, squares, on roofs, rivers, and beaches, across cities, towns and villages, in festivals in fields and on highstreets.

Outdoor Arts includes many different art forms including theatre, dance, music, carnivals, puppetry, pyrotechnics, mela, visual art, digital art, and outdoor circus.

In 2019 OutdoorArtsUK listed 592 Outdoor Arts events, including 13 key street arts festivals, 18 melas, and 35 carnivals across the UK.

The Outdoor Arts sector works on a huge range of scales, from enormous parades and large outdoor festivals, to small local events and high-street performances.

Participation can range from a mass community cast of hundreds, to a cast of just one.

Events are not just concentrated in the summer months, with the recent expansion and popularity of winter events; 31 light-art themed Outdoor Arts events were listed in 2019 on the OutdoorArtsUK website, and 23 lantern parades and winter carnivals.

OutdoorArtsUK currently represents over 300 members working in the Outdoor Arts sector, including agents, artists, companies, curators, festivals, funders, producers, local authorities, production companies, programmers and venues.

Returning to work post-lockdown presents unique challenges to the sector as well as opportunities.

This guidance is largely taken from OutdoorArtsUK's current research with input from artists, producers, festivals and companies working in the sector. It is not exhaustive and is intended as an adaptable checklist to be implemented with a common-sense approach and should reflect updates and shifts in current government policy.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

All artists, festivals and organisers should, of course, work on a specific Covid-19 Risk Assessment, and share this with their team and colleagues.

- Companies and artists should share their risk assessments with festival bookers, local authorities and gateholders of the outdoor space or spaces they utilise, agencies and other contractors. Festivals should share their Risk Assessments with companies, production managers, artists, crew and volunteers.
- Even at this stage, it would be sensible for every company to start work on a Covid-19 Risk Assessment for their work, with the hope that there will be the opportunity to get outside again soon. Even some considered notes on safety measures at this time could be useful for potential bookers and other stakeholders.
- Many festivals and companies have production managers they have worked with who are very experienced at writing and actioning Risk Assessments and method statements. Given that a Covid-19 specific Risk Assessment is an ever-evolving entity, it would be worth considering an external assessment of your plans and planning for suitable updates in line with new policy.
- Festivals and companies should liaise to make sure they are not duplicating work and costs, but this is an opportunity for collaboration and to create Risk Assessments that can be used again and shared with others.

GENERAL COMPLIANCE

- Government advice is constantly changing and developing, so all method statements, practices and Risk Assessments should be updated to reflect these developments as they occur. Anything you work towards should reflect the latest guidance on social distancing, public gatherings and general safety advice.

Work in 'Bubbles'

To achieve this, the Outdoor Arts sector should consider working in 'bubbles', and these groups should be subject to health monitoring. The numbers of people working together and gathering in groups, should reflect the latest government advice. Outdoor Arts working bubbles could include:

- Artist Team Bubble: the full company performing in a single show (or a small repertoire of shows) should work in isolation from everyone else - including in rehearsal. This allows for contact between performers, particularly important for dance and circus work. This group might also include the creative director or choreographer.
- Production Team Bubble: the full team involved in the build, rigging, cabling and running of the show work in isolation. This acknowledges that some aspects of this work may require close contact, particularly at get-ins and get-outs, stage and set builds.
- Public Facing Team: the stewards, security, volunteers and supervisors should work as a team and where possible maintain their own individual distance. Working as a bubble allows for a certain amount of interaction and to work in small teams (which may be particularly important for volunteers).
- Producing Team Bubble: where possible, those who might be office based, should continue to work from home or at social distance. This includes producers,

programmers, bookers, marketing and comms team and volunteer managers. Inevitably, many of these roles require on-site work at production time, so individual social distancing measures should apply.

PERFORMANCES

Some types of Outdoor Arts may be more suitable than others, and everyone should consider adapting their work to these different circumstances.

Static Street Shows

- The backbone of many Outdoor Arts festivals are static shows. Traditionally, these shows would gather a dense crowd in a close formation (the 'circle show').
- Artists and producers should work together to consider ways of mitigating against audience contact – this may mean that part of the performance includes actions to keep audiences at a distance from both the artists and each other. This might include chalking, taping or other space demarcation as part of the performance or as part of the festival set up. Depending on the site, the festival may be limiting numbers to help this process, but stewards and security guards can be part of this process.
- Many street shows include audience participation, which may no longer be appropriate and could be alienating to audiences. Artists should consider creative solutions to replace or replicate this aspect of their work – in some cases, this may require a radical rethink of the nature of the performance.
- Many dance, acrobatic or physical performances include close contact between artists, and in the present circumstances, this could make audiences uncomfortable or confused. It is worth considering communicating to them the circumstances under which the work is being presented safely. Often artists live and work together as family or as a company, or they have been rehearsing in isolation/bubbles, so this is a helpful explanation.
- Where artists collect cash from their audiences (busking or hatting), it is worth considering a contactless way of collecting - much as shops are encouraging contactless payments – perhaps the festivals may be able to help with this.

Processions, Carnival and Parades

- Major city parades or carnivals attract large crowds gathered on streets. At present, this would not be appropriate without a logistically challenging set of precautions in place to keep people at a distance.
- It is worth considering different places and different scale of event. A parade moving to smaller local streets and taking a much longer route where audiences watch from their homes is a possibility.
- Working at a smaller scale with less participants would help make the work more accessible.
- The 'backstage' work in creating carnivals could be a good focus for community engagement at this time when people are looking for creative activity.

- Although it goes against the instinct to attract a large crowd, it is worth considering less publicity for larger events.
- Pre-event communications could outline measures that are being taken, as well as expectations on how audiences should adhere to social distancing measures.

Park Events – Festivals, Melas and Music

- Many festivals, melas and community events take place in parks, which provides an opportunity to control attendance numbers either on a ticketed scheme, timed entry or one-in/one-out control.
- The layout of many parks means that there is an inbuilt infrastructure (fences, toilets, catering etc) which means that there are potentially less costs to festivals.

Participatory Events

- Events in public spaces regularly involve community participation. Carnivals, lantern parades and community events could still consider this, but it would be essential to encourage people to work within their own social bubbles and maintain social distancing during public activity.
- Events which include dancing and dance instruction could consider ensuring that participants only dance with people from their own social bubble and adapt use of space to provide smaller areas for each group. It is probably best to avoid large group movements

Installations, Digital and Light Nights

- Many Outdoor Arts events and festivals include installation work, particularly in light festivals - this has potential advantages in the present climate.
- Durational work means that large numbers can see it over a long period of time.
- If installations take place in enclosed spaces (courtyards, small green areas), numbers can be controlled or ticketed. Smaller, intimate shows and one-on-one performances in imaginative spaces can also be a good way to keep numbers down while keeping activity high.
- Light nights can take place in less-predictable weather, meaning that a later programming period is available, so this could be useful depending on the latest developments in the pandemic.
- Fire gardens and other use of small pyrotechnics can engender automatic social distancing (people tend to move with care around fire). They also have the advantage of being seen at distance.
- Digital work and projection mapping on buildings have become popular in recent years and can be repeated many times, which is a good thing for spreading out audience numbers and, again, can be enjoyed at a long distance.

Walkabout Performers

- Walkabout acts could present challenges to social distancing, as one of their main attractions is courting direct audience interaction. However, thematically, some acts

are designed to do the opposite and scare people away (!), so it may be a good time to consider wider programming.

- Many walkabout performers can move away from crowds at a fast pace, and this could be very useful in breaking up crowds. They should work with the festival to ensure that stewarding complies with the social distancing.

BEING CREATIVE WITH SAFETY

Masks

- Generally, wearing face masks seems like a good thing to encourage where any gathering is happening.
- In performances there are already many forms of outdoor work that include an element of mask work – many animal outfits and character costumes may already have face covering that could be adapted for safer use.
- Festivals could consider giving away or selling branded masks.

Stilts

- Stilt performers in walkabout and static shows have inbuilt social distancing – obviously the performers are high above their audiences and the scale of many stilt costumes tends to keep audiences at bay. Stilt shows could be a consideration for bookers in the early stages of lifting lockdown.

Aerial

- Aerial shows have two strong features that could be useful in the current climate. The height of the performers means that they are at a social distance from their audience. As the performances are at height, a larger number of people can see the show from afar, which could be very useful for an audience which is spread out.

Self-Contained Performances

- Many shows exist in self-contained structures - including puppet booths, mobile jukeboxes, plastic domes and structures built in to vehicles. Many of these are deliberately designed to keep audiences at a distance from the performance, so these may be useful assets for safer programming.

Bikes, trucks and other vehicles

- Some shows and performers incorporate the use of vehicles in their work, and many could be adapted to do so. Using mobile trucks as a stage allows performers to move safely and potentially perform to large numbers at a distance. Some shows take place on bicycles or use them as a means of transport. These are all good options for a different approach to Outdoor Arts programming.

FESTIVALS - URBAN

Urban festivals generally attract a large footfall – some audience stumble across the event by accident and others are regular attenders. It is important that these large-scale events

are planned and operated with considerable risk mitigation in mind for the safety and comfort of both audiences and artists.

Planning

- When planning a festival, programmers' primary objective should be to consider the safest type of work to programme which will not put artists or audiences unnecessarily at risk. Work which takes into consideration creative distancing ideas such as static installations, self-contained structures, work at height or durational pieces where audiences do not need to gather may be more suitable choices for urban festivals with limited space.

Venue and Performance

- Artists, producers and programmers should work together to consider the best location to host a festival. Moving a festival to a smaller, isolated location (such as a courtyard, a single street or a car park) will allow programmers to control audience numbers and better manage the flow of people attending.
- Where shows might normally play at ground level, providing a stage would allow clearer distancing between artists and audience. Also, a performance at height allows more people to see from further away, allowing the festival to implement social distancing over a wider area.

Audience Limitation

- Although currently most urban festivals are free to attend and do not require confirmation of attendance or a ticket – programmers and producers should consider audience control initiatives such as timed entry, limited capacity events and no-ticket-no-entry polices to better enforce social distancing and regulate audience numbers.
- Where an event cannot be ticketed and is still free to attend – programmers should consider measures including clear, visual signage as well as stewarded queue entry to regulate audience numbers and encourage compliance by modelling good behaviour. The inclusion of both audible and visual announcements should be taken into consideration to accommodate for audiences with disabilities, sensory challenges and different language skills.
- Many festivals include alcohol sales as part of the catering offer. This may cause issues around social distancing behaviour. Festivals may wish to consider family friendly no-alcohol areas and should put into place suitable security staff and methods for dealing with anti-social behaviour caused by drinking.

Audience Management

- It is important to separate pedestrians from vehicle traffic, and to preserve room for other pedestrians to pass. This will present challenges in urban festivals or where space outside is limited. Festivals whose entrance is in a densely settled area may need to arrange with neighbouring properties and public safety authorities to allow early audiences to wait on adjacent streets. If a queue consistent with social

distancing would cause the line to extend into a road or pedestrian path, should determine where to safely queue patrons while preserving emergency access.

- Through ticketing and controlling who attends festivals, programmers can inform audiences ahead of their visit of operational matters which will be important for them to understand before visiting such as bring your own food and drink, face masks and handwashing products.

Audience Communications

- Although instinctive to attract a large crowd, it is worth considering less publicity for larger events to reduce the risk of overcrowding or last-minute audiences which could overwhelm an event and force it to close.
- Clear live communication with audiences via social media, website, email and apps/push notifications will help remind audiences of the health rules and expectations and can be sent at regular intervals from date of purchase through day of show.
- Where possible, programmers should encourage audiences to avoid using public transport (which the running of the event could place extra pressure on) to attend the event and to walk, cycle or drive if able.

FESITVALS – RURAL

Rural Festivals face many of the same challenges as urban festivals (see above), however, their location presents some unique challenges and opportunities:

Venues and Performance

- Rural festivals are well placed events that can take advantage of the wide-open spaces they often happen in. Programmers should consider work which can take advantage of being performed in a larger space and may not be suitable for performance elsewhere.

Scale

- The nature of some rural locations means that events can be programmed on truly epic scale – a light installation on an entire mountainside, for example. This would allow for mass audience engagement with inbuilt and highly efficient social distancing.

Ticketing

- Due to their isolated and remote location, rural festivals are often ticketed, limited entry events. To prevent overcrowding at the festival entrance, producers should consider ways to schedule staggered entry in order to minimise lines for searches, bag checks, and ticket scanning. This could include scheduled arrival times, virtual queuing, multiple entrances and exits and a limited number of unscheduled entries to accommodate audience stuck in traffic.

- Artist programming in rural areas allows for greater range of work as the space may be less restricted than urban areas.

DRIVE-IN FESTIVALS

- Although not a popular style of event prior to the pandemic – discussions and developments of drive-in festivals have begun to emerge. These seem like a sensible adaptation for the producers to make when planning events.
- Drive-in events could include stationary work which audiences 'drive by', performances which can be viewed at a distance from a vehicle or immersive performances where performers move amongst stationary vehicles.

PRODUCTION, TECHNICAL and RIGGING

- All production work should be accompanied by suitable method statements and live briefings to ensure that visiting and onsite crews are working safely together.
- Where show equipment is delivered by external contractors, production managers and crew should be aware of any arrangements. Ideally equipment will arrive sanitised and isolated, but arrangements should be made if this is not the case.
- During performance and technical work, sanitation and cleaning controls should apply to any scenery and equipment used in the show. Consideration should be made to doing this with aerial equipment, which may need additional support from the artists.
- Particular attention should be paid maintaining hygiene on shared radio-microphones and sound equipment.
- Musicians should only use their own instruments and be responsible for their maintenance.

Dressing Rooms

- Allocation of dressing rooms for performers should prioritise the usage of bubbles. If not possible, dressing rooms should be large enough so that social distancing between performers in bubbles can be adhered to. Shared dressing room facilities should be adequately cleaned to adhere to health and safety guidelines.

Travel

- In order to minimise company and artist travel, this is a good opportunity for festivals to connect with local performers and companies.
- Where further travel is necessary, artists and production staff should travel within their own working bubble where possible.

Volunteers

- Outdoor Arts events have a long tradition of working with volunteers in many capacities. The festival and technical teams should inform and engage with volunteers on an equal basis to employees to ensure their safety.

- Special briefings should outline how volunteers should engage with the public and adapt traditional roles (crowd management, leaflet distribution) to comply with current guidelines.
- Volunteers should not be allocated 'policing' roles such as refusing entry or ejecting people from site. A clear system of informing appropriate staff should be put in place for such matters.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

- OutdoorArtsUK – an ACE-funded national membership and strategic organisation which brings together the many diverse parts of the Outdoor Arts sector.
- XTRAX - an Outdoor Arts development organisation which supports the programming, management, delivery and evaluation of outdoor work and administrates the Without Walls consortium.
- NASA – (National Association of Street Artists) a membership organisation of artists, performers, designers and makers who create work in outdoor contexts.
- The Mela Partnership – a national membership organisation which supports the development of the sector and support and mentors the next generation of Mela Makers.
- Global Carnivalz – a carnival resources organisation which promotes a healthy carnival sector in the UK and beyond.
- EEA – (Emergency Exit Arts) one of Britain's pioneering outdoor arts companies with a strong focus on community engagements
- 101 Outdoor Arts – a major centre for artistic residencies, creation of new work for public spaces and innovation in site-specific and outdoor performance.

SOME KEY UK FESTIVALS

- Canary Wharf Winter Lights
- Light Night Stoke-on-Trent
- Light Up Poole
- Brighton Festival
- Norfolk and Norwich Festival
- Salisbury International Arts Festival
- Bedlam Fair, Bath
- Fusion Festival, Gravesend
- DAGFEST, Dagenham
- Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, London
- Manchester Day Parade
- Isle of Wight Mardi Gras: Biosphere Island
- Timber Festival, Feanedock
- Hat Fair, Winchester
- National Theatre River Stage, London
- Streets Ahead Picnic in the Park, Manchester
- Mouth of the Tyne Festival, Tynemouth, North Shields

- [Taliesin Dance Days, Swansea](#)
- [Bristol Harbour Festival](#)
- [Dundee Summer Streets Festival](#)
- [Merchant City Festival, Glasgow](#)
- [Stockton International Riverside Festival](#)
- [Boomtown Fair, Winchester](#)
- [Journeys Festival International, Leicester](#)
- [Just So Festival, Rode Hall Estate, Cheshire](#)
- [The Big Feast (Appetite), Stoke-on-Trent](#)
- [Notting Hill Carnival, London](#)
- [Devizes International Street Festival](#)
- [Leeds Carnival](#)
- [Freedom Festival, Hull](#)
- [SO Festival, Lincolnshire](#)
- [Bell Square, Hounslow](#)
- [London Mela](#)
- [Totally Thames, London](#)
- [Out There Festival, Great Yarmouth](#)
- [Derby Festé](#)
- [Bournemouth Arts by the Sea](#)
- [Llawn, Llandudno](#)
- [Dashehra Diwali Mela, Manchester](#)
- [The Winter Droving, Penrith](#)
- [Lightpool at Blackpool Illuminations](#)
- [Lord Mayor's Show, London](#)
- *[Lumiere (Artichoke), Durham](#)*