Thousands visit Northumberland’s summer arts and culture programme

Wednesday 12 September, 2018

Great Northumberland, a summer of free events across the county, finished on Saturday 1 September with a parade through the England’s most northerly town, Berwick-upon-Tweed followed by a concert which celebrated all facets of Northumberland, from the coast, to the hinterland, the people and the spirit.

Devised and delivered by Northumberland County Council and inspired by the Great Exhibition of the North, Great Northumberland was the branding of all the arts, cultural and heritage events across the county to make planning a summer in Northumberland fun and simple. Hundreds of events took place across the region from June to September, many of which were family-friendly and over 80% of which were entirely free of charge.

Venues from all over Northumberland were invited to list their events for promotion on the Great Northumberland website (which has since been entered into the Good Web Guide Awards) which allowed visitors to the site to view a calendar of events spanning the entire summer. In addition to the wealth of activities happening across the county, Northumberland County Council created brand new experiences for visitors and residents.

Thousands of visitors attended the core Great Northumberland series of events, which spanned Blyth to Stamfordham, Mickley to Morpeth, Hexham to Berwick and everywhere in between, with venues reporting record-attendance, sell-out events and positive audience feedback, some highlights include:

Complete sell-out for OUT THERE by Mortal Fools, an immersive theatre experience that took place in the landscapes around Prudhoe, Northumberland. Attendees took a leisurely walk through the scenic Northumberland countryside interacting with cast members and props as they experienced what it was like to explore the world for the first time through the eyes of the young stars of the show.

5,000 people descending upon Blyth Beach to see an installation of over 600 handmade sail cloth flags. The flags were made by some 400 local school children, plus members of the local community, artists and creators from Headway Arts, all to celebrate the voyages of Captain William Smith, the first captain to discover Antarctica.

Record visitor numbers to Cheeseburn Sculpture in Stamfordham, who saw over 1,200 people attending in just three days over the Bank Holiday weekend, their highest ever number of visitors in their four-year history. In total, approximately 2,100 people visited Cheeseburn to see a special Great Northumberland exhibition and performance, in which artist Joseph Hillier worked with dancers Lizzie J. Klotz and Maria Vincentelli to create sculptures of dancers in motion as well as live pop-up dance performances in and around the ten acres of landscaped gardens.

Carnival Capers at Seaton Delaval completely sold-out and attracted brand new visitors to the National Trusts with early indications suggestion 75% of visitors were first-time attendees.

A brand-new song, The Great Song of the North, composed especially for Great Northumberland by Dominique Le Gendre, it is a musical ode to Northumberland. Performed for the first time as part of the closing event of Great Northumberland to a sell-out crowd at The Maltings Theatre & Cinema, the song suite was performed by the community choir and Music Co-OPERAtive Scotland (McOpera), formed of players from The Orchestra of Scottish Opera.

“We are delighted to have welcomed so many visitors to Northumberland this summer,” commented Peter Jackson, leader of Northumberland County Council, “we are incredibly proud of all our county has to offer, and we hope that we can continue to demonstrate just how great Northumberland is.”

Sign up for the Great Northumberland newsletter on the website to hear first about future activity. Find out more at greatnorthumberland.co.uk.

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