

HEBDEN BRIDGE HANDMADE PARADE 2025



Photography credits: Ian Hodgson and Craig Shaw

IMPACT REPORT

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THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



PROJECT OVERVIEW

On Sunday 22 June 2025, the streets of Hebden Bridge burst back into colour, music, and magic for the 14th **Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade** – the first summer parade since 2022. Handmade have made spectacular art in communities for fifteen years, and their summer parade is one of Hebden Bridge’s finest traditions.

This year’s theme, **Water, Woods, and Wilderness...The Calderdale Way**, paid tribute to the landscapes, wildlife, and culture of the valley. From dancing bluebells and canal boats to a cheeky Silly Goose and a giant beating heart, the parade embodied the sights, sounds and spirit of Calderdale itself.

The parade showcased **large-scale puppets** made by professional artists, alongside colourful costumes and **community art** made at open workshops by hundreds of participants. It was accompanied by live parade bands Katumba, SkiBand, Fat Cat Brass Band, BLAST Furness and the Handmade Fantasy Street Band, which were formed specifically for this parade. New and experienced stilt-walkers of all ages, a specially choreographed dance troupe, and a group of unicyclists dressed as honking geese also featured.

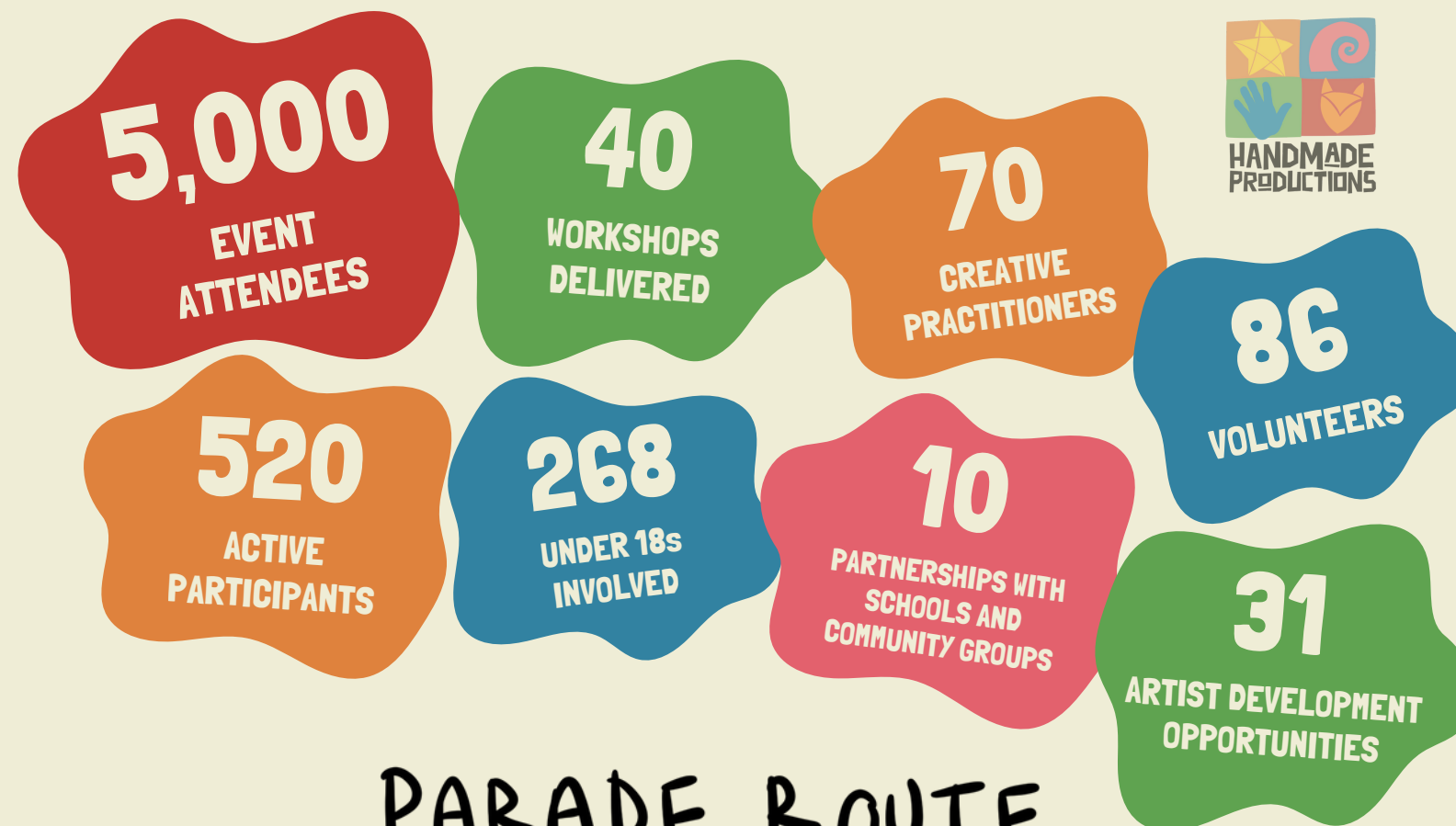
Handmade Productions opened their workshop on Victoria Road in Hebden Bridge to the public for the two weekends prior to the parade so people could make their costumes. There were public parade workshops for people who wanted to learn to stilt-walk, to play in the Handmade Fantasy Street Band or to join the dance troupe.

An 11-day Giant Puppet Masterclass run by Andrew Kim of Thingumajig Theatre attracted participants nationally and internationally.

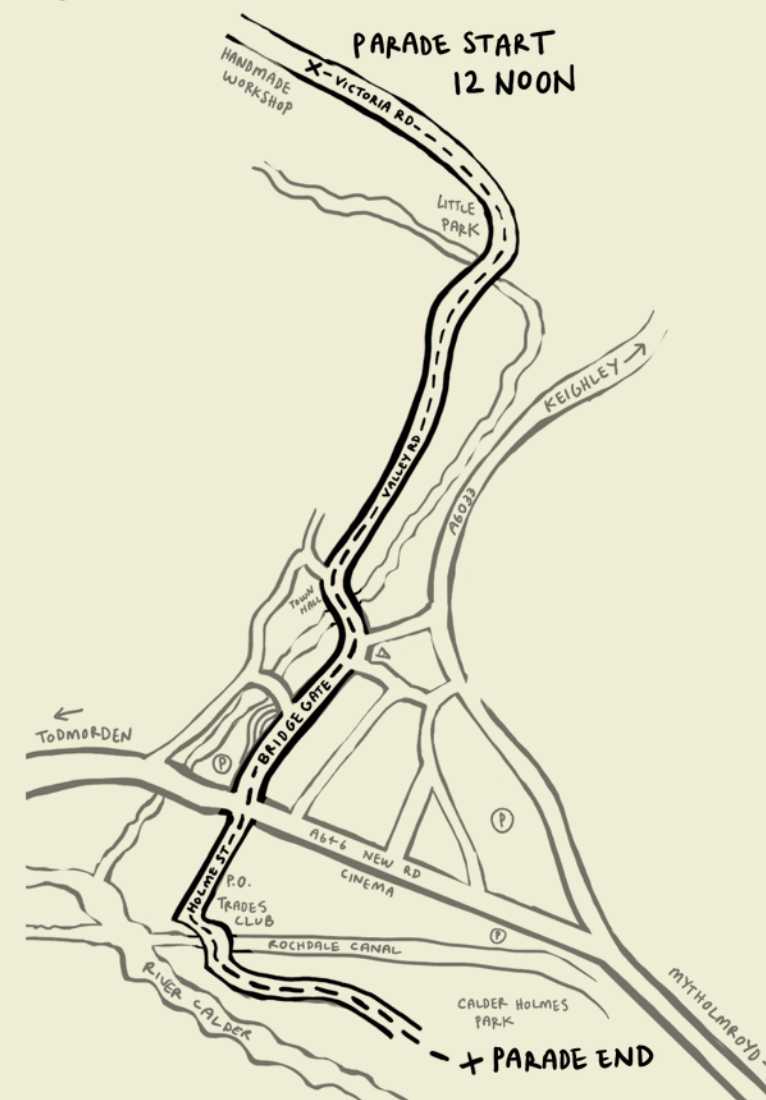
The project involved outreach with local primary and secondary schools – including Ravenscliffe High School, for children with special educational needs – as well as local community groups Calderdale Young Carers, Making Friends, and Happy Valley PRIDE.

The project was supported by over **80 volunteers**, who assisted with tasks such as creative making activities, front-of-house at public workshops, and collecting donations.

Approximately **520 participants** made up of local people, community groups, artists, and musicians set off at 12 midday from the Handmade Productions workshop on Victoria Road and went down Valley Road, through St George’s Square and Bridge Gate to finish at Calder Holmes Park for the ‘Picnic in the Park’, a mini-festival of live music, cross-cultural creative activities, and food stalls from local vendors.



PARADE ROUTE



IMPACT OVERVIEW



The Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade 2025 made a significant and enduring contribution to Calderdale's creative offering, ensuring that the parade remains a key event on Calderdale's cultural calendar. The event supports development in the creative arts, nurturing artistic and arts administration skills in Calderdale and beyond.

The parade supports and aligns with UK government's mission to drive growth across the creative sector: the performing and visual arts is one of the 'highest potential subsectors' in the Creative Industries Sector Plan, which launched the month the parade took place.

This impact study draws on data collected throughout the project’s lifecycle. **127 surveys** were collected pre-event from artists, workshop leaders, group facilitators, and participants; **268 surveys** were collected from audiences, volunteers, and local businesses at or after the event to gather feedback and evaluate impact.

While the parade was a celebration of Calderdale and its community, the event had a wider geographic reach and impact. People travelled from Gloucester, Worthing, Wales, Luton, Stoke-on-Trent, Liverpool, Newcastle and even as far as Berlin, Germany, to see the event.



Data collected demonstrates the project's considerable multi-dimensional impact: fostering community cohesion, providing emotional uplift during challenging times, successfully implementing inclusive practices, showcasing exceptional artistic creativity from all ages and levels of experience, and generating cultural and economic benefits for the local area. Data evidenced engagement with both new and returning people – of retaining historical or existing connections as well as securing new ones. The consistent themes of joy, community, creativity, and inclusion indicate the event's success in creating a transformative experience that resonated deeply with participants and audiences alike.

Audience Map



1.2 ARTISTIC & CREATIVE GROWTH

The parade had significant **cross-cultural impact**. While Handmade's focus is on the visual and performing arts, **music** is also integral to the event. Alongside four professional or semi-professional community street bands, a Handmade Fantasy Street Band was formed specifically for the event. Over 20 people from the local area were brought together by Handmade to rehearse and perform together at the parade for the first time.

Words and poetry were part of the creative activities in the Picnic in the Park, featuring Winston Plowes' Spoke n' Word, a poetry-generating bicycle that created a community poem about the parade. The piece was a mixture of voices, sensory and emotional observations, both solemn and humorous.

For volunteers, creativity and learning featured prominently as both an experience outcome and motivation, demonstrating the project's success in providing skill development opportunities. When asked to give three words to describe their experience of the parade, volunteers answered:

'Creative, challenging'

'Rewarding, inclusive, inspiring'



The Handmade Parade Is...

Hearts full of laughter,
cracked open with smiles that last after.
A meeting with costumes so marvellous and grand,
big bass drums booming across the land.

It's fish floating high in the sky,
babies in boats, their first joyful try.
Joy in the fields, where dancers sway,
teens on stilts in their bright array.

Happiness felt in the music's beat,
friends dancing together in bare feet.
Sharing food under silvery clouds,
a shy sun peeking, shining down on the crowds.

It's the cheeky duck making you shake,
the fun and the laughter, make no mistake.
Remembering years of fun with kids now grown,
colourful smiles, and joy well-known.

Giant flowers and bees in the air,
a rainbow peacock with feathers to spare.
The badger and fox in a dance so sweet,
a heron honking, a rhythm to meet.

Families of deer in costumes parade,
the wind spirit's favourite, in the shade.
The music and drumming, a beat so fine,
a colourful moment, forever in time.

In a yellow vest, picking up the mess,
we found a party, I must confess.
A drive for life, no plans in sight,
a stylish show, pure delight.

Today I met costumes so dazzling and bright,
living in the moment, everything felt right.
The duck's feather's details, the gleam in its eye,
a spectacular day, reaching for the sky.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CPD Training

The 2025 parade budget enabled 9 members of the Handmade Production artist team – including **Francisca Sierevogel** and freelance artists **Sandra McCracken (Eye of Newt Theatre)** and **Laura Sutcliffe-Tasker** – to attend a 1-day puppet performance training session run by master puppet-maker **Andrew Kim (Thingumajig Theatre)**, ahead of the parade on Sunday 22nd June. The session provided a valuable opportunity for the team to spend dedicated time considering the performative aspects of puppetry. There was also a public callout and 3 other local artists attended.

Giant Puppet Masterclass

The parade involved an 11-day **Giant Puppet Masterclass** run by **Andrew Kim**. The masterclass was fully subscribed and had considerable geographical reach, attracting 12 national and international participants: artists from Hebden Bridge, Halifax and across England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as participants from Germany, the US and Japan.

Participants paid £650 to attend this course which provided a rare opportunity to learn the skills and techniques needed to design and create processional giant puppets.

Legacy

As a result of the Giant Puppet Masterclass, **two new large-scale puppets** were produced for Handmade Productions: the **big goose** and the **badger**, which featured for the first time in the 2025 parade. These works valuably contributed to Handmade's collection for future events.

Handmade Productions paid for local freelance artist Laura Sutcliffe-Tasker – who works regularly for the organisation – to attend the course, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the long-term creative and professional development of local artists. The masterclass enhanced Laura's professional practice in a variety of ways, giving her new tools, techniques, and confidence to work as part of a team.



Internships

Handmade facilitated **3 internships** for the parade - Izzy Semphill, Betsy 'Boo' Mills and Ciara Sturges.

All interns experienced various roles during their time working on the parade, such as supporting artists to prep and deliver public workshops, designing and creating a costume piece for puppeteers, assisting with setting up on parade day and performing in the parade.

When asked how the experience benefitted her, Izzy Semphill said:

"It has provided experience of freelancing (which I'm considering as a career path) and 3D/outdoor art (which is outside my comfort zone). [Handmade] has an amazing presence and reputation in the Calder Valley and beyond, so I feel like having this experience on my CV has helped me to establish myself within the local artists' community"



Schools

Handmade artists visited local primary and secondary schools across Calderdale to deliver workshops for children to make pieces of artwork for the parade, engaging with all ages and levels of ability. Children at **Scout Road Academy** and **Riverside Junior School** made butterfly puppets and leaves for the trees in the woodland section of the parade. Children at **Ferney Lee** made bunting for the big heart puppet, an emblem of love and affection for the Calder Valley.

Approximately **15 children** from **Ravenscliffe High School** joined the 2025 parade, with Artistic Director **Fran Sierevogel** delivering a half-day costume workshop with them where children made costumes for the water section of the parade. Ravenscliffe provides secondary education for children with clearly identified special educational needs and (having taken part in the last two Hebden Bridge parades) has an established relationship with Handmade Productions that was maintained and strengthened through this year's event.

IMPACT

2.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL COHESION

A dominant theme in the feedback was **community connection**, with the word 'community' representing the 3rd most frequent word used when respondents were asked to describe their experience. Event audiences consistently identified how the event brought people together:

“It really showcased the incredible talent in our community and our amazing kids are the beating heart right at the centre of that”

“It brought the community together. Exactly what Hebden needs. My children were amazed”

“A wonderful day surrounded by happy people with real community spirit. It lifted my spirits and my faith in humanity”

For volunteers, **creating connections and a sense of community** was a strong motivating factor. When asked their reason for volunteering with Handmade Productions, answers included:

“To help build community”

“To do something fun for the community - Hebden is going through a strange time”

“Being part of a community activity”



IMPACT

2.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL COHESION

OUTREACH

The project involved substantial outreach work with a range of **local community groups** – **Happy Valley PRIDE**, **Making Friends**, and **Calderdale Young Carers** – as well as local primary and secondary schools. This was part of a strategy by Handmade Productions to engage new and/or disadvantaged individuals and groups of all ages and levels of creative experience, and to provide a forum for connection and community spirit.

Happy Valley PRIDE

Handmade's work with the local charity **Happy Valley PRIDE** represented a recognition not only of the strength of the LGBTQIA+ community in Hebden Bridge and surrounding areas, but of the continued need to support and promote equality and inclusion through engagement with the creative arts.

Handmade have an established and strong relationship with Tim Whitehead and Darren Spruce who run Happy Valley PRIDE and their volunteers.

As part of the summer parade, Handmade ran one workshop in which the group made a large-scale PRIDE peacock costume in the light blue, pink and white colours of the Transgender Pride Flag. The costume represented support for the trans community and made reference to the Supreme Court ruling in April 2025 that the legal definition of a woman is based on biological sex.



Making Friends

The 2025 summer parade developed and strengthened an established relationship with **Making Friends**, a group of asylum seekers across Calderdale. The parade provided a valuable opportunity for Making Friends members to meet, socialise, and engage in creative activities in a safe and welcoming space. Both the making workshop and the parade itself revealed the powerful potential of making art together and creating connections.

For some members of the group, the Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade was the first time they have been able to engage in creative activities since leaving their home countries.

‘The Handmade Parade team were welcoming and helped our group of asylum seekers to be fully involved in the creativity and to have fun’

Kate Higham, Making Friends Leader



Calderdale Young Carers

Handmade delivered an Arts Award EXPLORE course with Calderdale Young Carers who support approximately 600 young carers across Calderdale. Freelance artists Mel Daniels and Gil Burns delivered four 2.5-hour sessions to 7 young people in the 3 weeks leading up to the parade, and all participants then performed in the parade. Led by Mel, the young people each made a squirrel costume with a headdress, tail and a giant acorn to carry. The Arts Award also involves a reflective element, a portfolio which documented the activities.

The Young Carers enjoyed the creative experience of getting involved with the parade, reporting some transformational impacts on certain individuals:

“...[one boy] has speech and language issues and can really struggle to make himself understood, but we really saw a change in him in the workshops. He just loved that environment...He volunteered himself to speak when we were playing the games, which he never would usually. His confidence really grew”

Vanessa Graham - Young Carers Coordinator

Although they enjoyed the creative activities, the group struggled with the written reflective element and some of the young people lacked confidence during the parade itself. Gil reflected that more training and consideration should be given to the planning process to ensure that the delivery is tailored to meet different groups and their needs.

3. WELLBEING & PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION



Joy and uplift emerged as central impacts from audience feedback. The event provided significant positive emotional benefits, particularly in a time seen to be characterised by social and political difficulty.

“ At a time with such awful world events it was a real ray of sunshine to attend the parade...[it] demonstrated a cohesive community spirit ”

“ The event lifted my spirits, got me out into the community and enabled me to feel I had a valid place in society ”

“ The event was absolutely fantastic, my 5-year-old son was thrilled to see his friends and classmates in the parade, and is adamant that he wants to join next time! ”

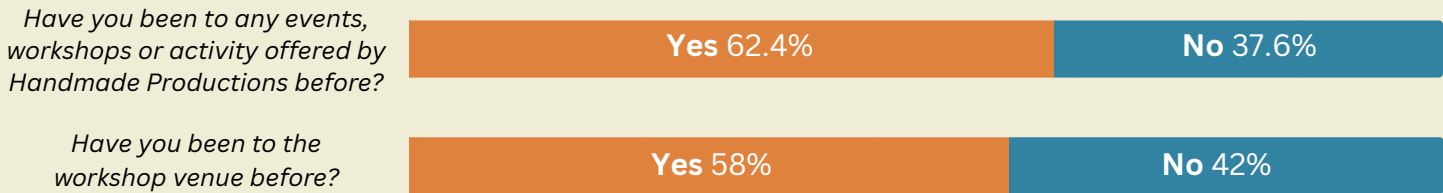
A sense of delight and enjoyment also emerged strongly from workshop participant feedback. The word ‘fun’ appeared in 38% of responses, alongside variations like ‘joyful’, ‘enjoyable’, and ‘exciting’, indicating that the workshops in the run-up to the event themselves provided substantial emotional and creative benefits.

Accounts of personal transformation:

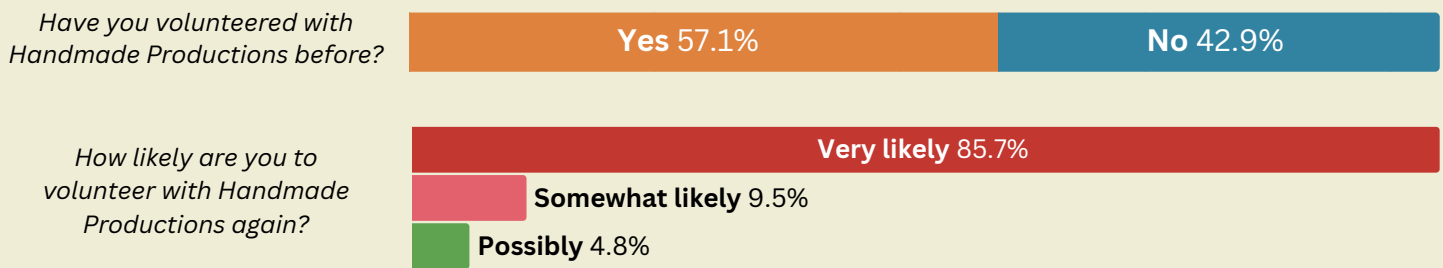
- ‘It made me want to get more involved with art which is something I have not prioritised recently’
- ‘Really enjoyed the making sessions as a family and our daughter who struggles with anxiety was able to take part and felt really proud of being part of it on the day of the parade’

4. SECURING & MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



VOLUNTEERS



Participants described repeat engagement and personal attachment to the event:

“ Wonderful community event. I played in the band at the last Handmade Parade & loved it ”

“ I’ve done it before and it’s really nice to be part of it, despite my creative ineptitude ”

Workshop participant feedback also revealed an emphasis on long-term engagement, involving a commitment to or enthusiasm for future involvement, and indicating that engagement would be lasting and sustainable.

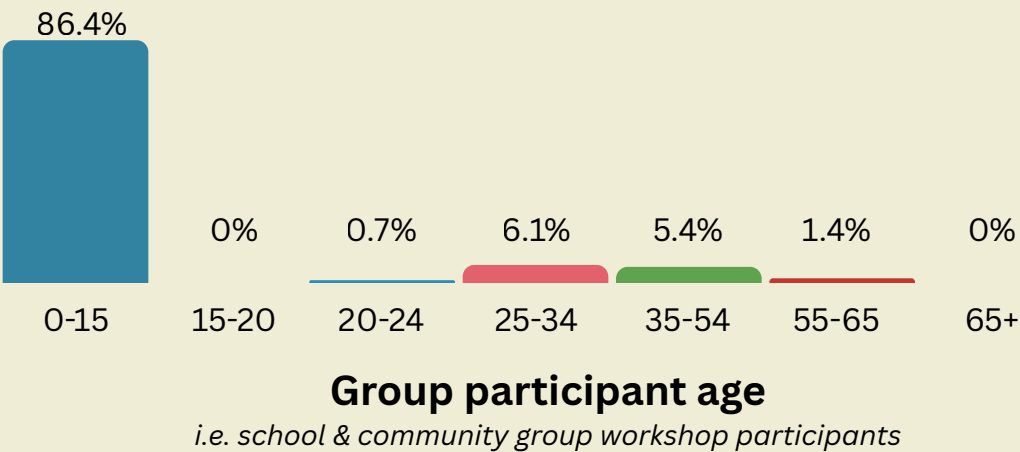
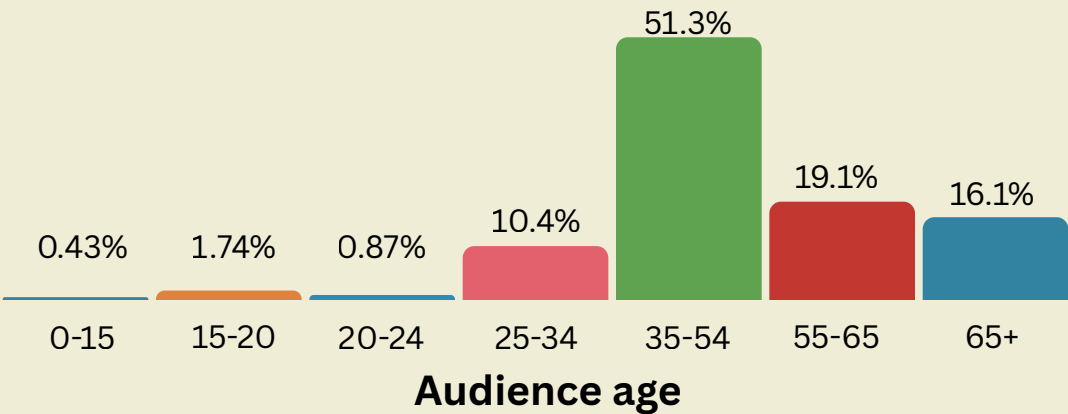
- ‘Will definitely join more events’
- ‘Made me want to get more involved with art which is something I have not prioritised recently’
- ‘Want to help out more’

5. INTERGENERATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The parade engaged people of all ages, particularly the under 15 and 35-54 age groups. The event facilitated **family participation** and **skill-sharing across generations**.

“An experience for our whole family. Our kids are very shy but they felt part of the magical Handmade Parade community which gave them the confidence to create and wear their costumes”

268
UNDER 18s INVOLVED
IN THE PARADE



6. SUPPORTING LOCAL SKILLS IN ARTS ADMINISTRATION

The parade presented **skills and employment opportunities** for local freelance artists, event organisers and administrators to secure paid contracts, contributing to their professional development as well as to the cultural infrastructure of Calderdale. The project and event management team was already familiar with the parade. **Daisy and Matt Lee** of **Leeway Creative Production** have produced a number of events previously for Handmade, and **Katherine Greenwood** project managed the last Hebden Bridge parade in 2019. The team's experience and familiarity with the parade not only benefited the event but also enabled freelance staff to build optimally on their experience and skills.

Stewarding roles were paid at the National Living Wage. Event Manager Daisy Lee noted that the steward team was particularly proactive and effective this year.

Feedback from stewards was also overwhelmingly positive:

'Thanks for having me it was a joy!'

'Happy to steward or puppeteer anytime'

'It was a great day'



IMPACT

7. WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS: ACCESS & INCLUSION

Accessibility represented a core part of our operational processes throughout the project, clearly appealing for access needs during sign up for workshops and providing access support where required. For example, one of this year’s stewards is deaf and required a BSL interpreter and access to training and briefing. The event itself also featured RevOLOtion accessible toilet facilities, contributing significantly to the accessibility of the 2025 parade.

‘**Inclusivity**’ was mentioned in audience feedback **25 times**, demonstrating the event’s success in welcoming diverse participants.

“It was wonderful to witness this event, particularly the fact that all ages were involved and it was inclusive of everyone, whatever their background, abilities or gender”

“My child said the parade made him feel good about himself. He struggles with low self-esteem but he felt valued here”

“I loved seeing people of all ages, ethnicity, sexuality and gender joining together for the pure joy of it”

The **audience, volunteer** and **participant** experience was also characterised as inclusive and welcoming, indicating successful accessibility efforts both pre-event and during delivery. The word ‘inclusivity’ was the **5th most frequent word** used by all survey respondents in all categories when asked to name three words that described their experience.



Combined word cloud for all survey respondents who answered the question ‘Please give three words to describe your experience’. The bigger the word, the more frequently that word was used in by respondents. The question was answered by 365 people, made up of workshop participants, volunteers, live event audiences, group facilitators and artists/workshop leaders.

CASE STUDY: HARPER KRATZ

The 2025 parade included a new initiative to mentor an emerging visual artist with disabilities, offering a paid position with 1-to-1 support. The initiative demonstrated significant positive impacts:

Tailored personal and professional development: The programme delivered substantial development outcomes for Harper, an emerging artist who lives with chronic pain, limited energy, and anxiety. The role involved developing ideas for a medium-sized costume to the parade theme. Harper gained valuable real-world industry experience and reported feeling inspired to be working alongside passionate creatives, helping them prepare for their forthcoming gaming design course at university.

Creative confidence: The mentoring programme boosted Harper’s confidence, particularly through facilitating make-and-take activities on parade day, motivating them to seek future volunteer opportunities with Handmade.

Creative and community impact: Harper contributed thematic ideas and successfully created a foraged creature costume that integrated well with the parade. Their innovative use of 3D modelling and cardboard prototypes showcased diverse creative approaches. Beyond their individual work, Harper contributed to broader activities, assisting other artists and participating in public engagement.



ACCESS AUDIT

The summer parade 2025 budget allowed for an access audit by specialist advisor **Chris Cammiss** to be carried out both for the parade and the Handmade Productions workshop as a venue. The audit identified a range of successful inclusive practices by the organisation as well as areas for improvement, as follows:

Communication and marketing: The parade webpage received positive feedback for its design and content approach: ‘Overall, I like the Guide very much – it’s very well laid out, fully comprehensive, and informative. Good job!’ The online guide to the event achieved its primary objectives of providing clear, complete information in an organized format that served most users effectively.

Handmade workshop: The space (where most workshops took place) was recognised as a particularly accessible space. The audit identified a physical features that enable access and participation, such as the large roller-door goods entrance and step-free concrete floor. It is well-lit, offers clear pathways for wheelchairs, and spare wheelchairs are on site for those who need mobility support.

Recommendations for improvement: Replace handwritten elements with typed text to improve readability for users with visual impairments. The handwritten parade route map may be difficult to read for some users; this should be converted to a digitally created version with clearer typography and higher contrast for better accessibility.

8. IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESS & ECONOMY

The 2025 event generated mixed impacts for local businesses, revealing significant variations in experience based on **location**, **business type**, and **proximity** to event activities.

Disparities of impact related to business location

A critical theme emerged around location-based advantages and disadvantages. Businesses closer to the main parade route experienced different impacts than those on peripheral streets. Issues relating to business location created uneven economic benefits, with some businesses feeling excluded from the positive impacts.

‘On Market Street, we were cut off from the central activities’

Inconsistent customer patterns

Many businesses reported inconsistent customer patterns during the event, experiencing intense crowds followed by periods of quiet. This created concentrated demand (which was sometimes difficult to meet) rather than sustainable business activity throughout the day.

‘Loads of people at same time, then quiet. Business in waves. Lots of takeout’

‘Really quiet both before and after parade’

Customer behaviour vs. business expectations

A significant challenge identified was the mismatch between event attendance and actual spending. Several businesses noted that parade visitors were not converting to paying customers. While the event drew crowds, this didn’t necessarily translate to increased business revenue for all establishments.

‘Regular customers couldn’t park...people just came for the event, not shopping’

‘Customers come for event, not here to spend money...[they] want to sit in seat, but not spend money at cafe’

Infrastructure and accessibility issues

Parking and access challenges emerged as a recurring theme, affecting both regular customers and business operations.

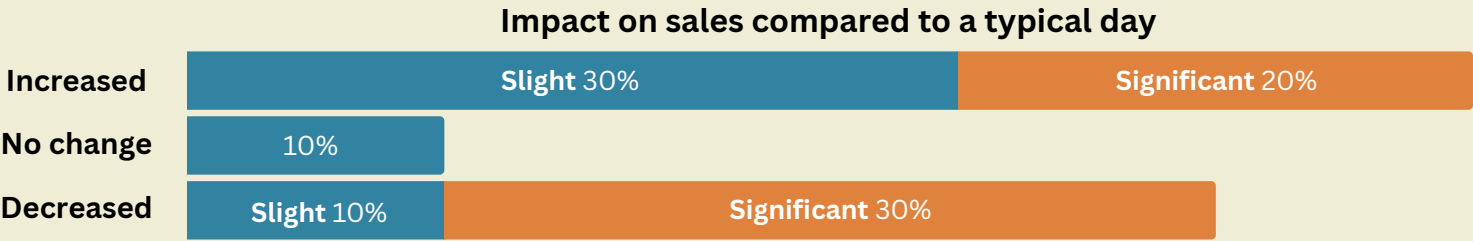
‘Not as busy as previous years, but like many other traders, I have noticed a drop in footfall since the increased parking charges’



Positive business impacts

50% of businesses reported a positive economic impact:

‘We get a lot more custom on parade day and it makes a livelier atmosphere’



Despite highly mixed impacts, **100%** of businesses surveyed were supportive of the event. The event was recognised as valuable in ways other than economic:

‘People can’t get in for crowds of people but I’m not saying stop it. It’s a lovely family event’

Business recommendations for improvement

Businesses provided constructive recommendations focusing on better integration and food service provision, suggesting that puppets or creative activities could be kept in town for longer to keep people using businesses. Some even suggested removing food provisions in the park to encourage visitors to return to the town centre for refreshments.

Summary

There is room for improvement in how the Handmade Parade supports or integrates with local commerce. While the event successfully creates community engagement and family-friendly atmosphere, feedback demonstrated a number of challenges:

- Converting event attendance into business revenue
- Ensuring equitable geographic distribution of benefits
- Managing crowd flow to sustain business activity
- Navigating infrastructure constraints that limit accessibility

The mixed feedback suggests that while businesses recognise the event’s community value, strategic adjustments are needed to maximise positive economic impact across all participating local establishments. The most successful businesses were those that could capitalise on increased foot traffic, while others struggled with logistics and customer conversion challenges.

STRATEGY FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS & BEST PRACTICE



1. CREATIVE

A key area of concern this year was the excessive amount of voluntary time members of the artistic team devoted to the parade on top of their contracted paid hours. A strategy will be necessary in order to strike a better balance here to ensure that the creative team's time commitment remains aligned to the budget. Reducing the number of public workshops from 4 to 3 days (i.e. the 3 Saturdays prior) to the event will help to address this.

The summer parade presents an excellent model for Handmade as an organisation, particularly in terms of the strength of the collaboration within the core artistic team. There is potential for this parade to inform other (smaller) Handmade Productions projects and events.

There is also scope, budget permitting, to develop and extend the A level internship programme, involving repeat engagement with Calderdale College students.

Making It Together was fully subscribed and the most common request for improvement in participant feedback for these sessions was more sessions, and extended time for workshops:

'Slightly longer workshop. Timings worked as time went really quickly and we did finish in the time allowed, but I feel we had to rush'

'More sessions to finish the items'

'I'd love more sessions to get involved in more'

2. PROJECT & EVENT MANAGEMENT

The event presents considerable scope for nurturing and developing project and event management skills locally in relation to logistics, operations, arts administration and organising large-scale outdoor events.

The 2025 project and event management team identified specific areas for improvement for future summer parades, notably:

Project management should begin earlier than March for a June parade, to allow for onboarding, Spark Day, and publicity and marketing planning.

Better advertising and outreach were consistent themes for improvement in workshop participant feedback:

'More advertising - I think more people would love this'

'Better advertising to the general public e.g. posters, not everyone knew about how to get involved'

'Workshop wasn't as well advertised as previously... we were looking out for this and found it but might not have noticed otherwise'

More food traders and a wider variety of traders were needed in the park, and this would also bring in additional income. The 'no meat' stipulation may have excluded a number of traders. In future Handmade will consider 25% local or organic meat with the remainder vegetarian or vegan with a view to sustainability. A bar in the park would also add to the Picnic in the Park and generate more income. Handmade might usefully establish connections with local breweries and bars for future parades.

STRATEGY FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS & BEST PRACTICE



3. ACCESS & INCLUSION

One Making It Together workshop participant who is neurodivergent suggested that a written, visual instruction would be valuable for those who find sequential instructions challenging, and particularly for those who are new to these activities:

‘As a new attendee who is neurodivergent I would have [...] benefitted from some adjustment to the delivery of instructions. I sometimes struggle to process verbal instructions that are being delivered quite fast, especially in relation to a new process. I would recommend having a visual aid such as a print out available to refer back to’

Handmade Productions will continue to offer disabled artist mentoring. Harper Kratz’s mentoring was a valuable learning opportunity for both Harper and the organisation, highlighting key areas to refine for future inclusive creative placements. In particular, Harper felt the initial guidance was lacking and noted that a stronger connection with the lead and assistant artists would have helped them better understand the section themes. There was also a need for better integration with the team of professional artists, more structured briefing processes, and recognition that an 80-hour commitment may exceed capacity for some disabled participants. Additionally, Harper would have benefited from puppeteering and performance skills to enhance their engagement on parade day.

The access audit by Chris Cammiss highlighted that Handmade should focus on developing clearer, more prominent online messaging that actively communicates an event’s commitment to accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that people with disabilities feel explicitly welcomed and informed about available accommodations.

Future parades will also include a clear brief around print and digital design for people with access needs – in particular, improving visual accessibility in online materials, e.g., handwritten elements replaced with typed text to improve readability for users with visual impairments.

The parade webpage would also have been improved by more mobility planning information (for example, giving people prior knowledge of the hill over the canal) and more explicit communication about accessibility (for example, noting that the workshops are accessible and people of all ages and abilities are welcome).

Handmade will investigate the feasibility of an accessible viewing platform, in order that people with access needs can both view the event and exit safely.

Improvements to accessible toilet facilities at the Handmade workshop – widening doorways and expanding interior space to meet accessibility guidelines – is a priority for the organisation. Location access to the workshop also presents a significant challenge, as there is no public bus route to the venue. Handmade might consider shuttle services or partnerships with local transport providers for the future. Systematic Blue Badge parking management with appropriate spacing, advance reservation systems, and dedicated supervision to ensure accessibility standards are maintained, would improve the organisation’s accessible parking.

A full BSL interpreter fee will be incorporated into the budget in future parades for any member of the stewarding (or other) team requiring access support.

4. SUSTAINABILITY

The 2025 summer parade enabled Handmade Productions to develop and refine techniques for making puppets weatherproof using alternatives to plastic. Large-scale puppets are designed to have a long lifespan and are always reused.

Social media posts encouraged people to visit the parade on foot, where possible, or using public transport.

The 2025 parade offers a starting point for data gathering on environmental responsibility relating to waste, energy use and participant, audience, and supplier travel. These data will offer a framework for target setting and learning in the future.

CONCLUSION

HANDMADE LESSONS

The Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade 2025 had a transformative impact on local culture, creativity, and community engagement, while also highlighting important Handmade lessons for the future:

- The summer parade significantly contributed to Calderdale's creative offering, fostering artistic innovation across ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Professional, emerging and new artists alike benefited from targeted development opportunities, leading to new skills, creative confidence, and an enhanced local arts infrastructure.
- Community engagement and cohesion thrived, with connections strengthened across a range of local groups – Happy Valley PRIDE, Making Friends, Calderdale Young Carers – as well as local schools and volunteer networks.
- The parade's inclusive approach facilitated meaningful participation for people with individual needs and strengths, and feedback overwhelmingly indicated the inclusive, welcoming nature of the event. Although more consideration should be given at the planning stage with regards to supporting groups and their additional needs for the Arts Award.
- Access initiatives also uncovered specific areas for future action such as more accessible online messaging and mentoring programmes that are more integrated into the creative team.
- Intergenerational involvement benefited both the creative making and parade experience, making space for family participation and skill-sharing.
- The event supported local freelance arts practitioners, offering a significant opportunity for paid work and professional growth.
- Key recommendations for future parades: additional time costed for artistic contributions, earlier project planning, expanded food and drink options at the Picnic in the Park, sustainability targets and strategy, and more comprehensive accessibility provision.

The Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade 2025 affirmed the importance of large-scale, inclusive, community-based art events and identified critical lessons in creative excellence, accessibility, engagement, and sustainability, to inform future practice.

