



**Museums at Night / Amgueddfeydd yn y Nos**



### Connect! competition resource pack for venues

You've downloaded this pack because you're interested in taking part in the Connect! competition – welcome! This pack contains helpful tips and suggestions for every stage of the competition process, right through to running your successful Museums at Night event and the legacy that will follow from it. Even if, after reading these suggestions, you decide not to submit an event idea, we hope this will still be a useful resource.

#### What is Connect!?

Connect! is a chance for venues to work with a contemporary artist, perhaps for the first time; use the experience of a competition to reach out to new audiences; develop their event-planning skills and create a legacy that will last beyond the night of the event.

#### Keep in touch!

You may like to take advantage of the monthly Museums at Night email newsletter. If you're not already receiving it, [sign up here](#) to ensure you don't miss out!

Nick Stockman, Campaigns Manager  
01273 623278 [nick@culture24.org.uk](mailto:nick@culture24.org.uk)

Rosie Clarke, Campaigns Officer  
01273 623336 [rosie@culture24.org.uk](mailto:rosie@culture24.org.uk)

#### Contents:

- 1) Why take part?
- 2) Generating your event idea
- 3) Submitting your event idea
- 4) Final idea selection
- 5) Planning your public outreach
- 6) The public vote
- 7) Funding for all
- 8) Working with your artist
- 9) Marketing your event
- 10) On the night

- 11) Evaluation
- 12) The Connect! legacy

### 1) Why take part?

Culture24 has run the Connect! (formerly Connect10) competition in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and the cultural and heritage venues who participated reported seeing many benefits.

- Creative content: Connect! provides a rare opportunity to bring a top contemporary artist to create a unique, participatory event at your venue – something that might not otherwise have been possible. One venue commented, “**Smaller venues can host bigger names through this campaign and also take a risk that normally they couldn’t because of money**”.
- Audience development: A Connect! event, with the associated publicity, can both increase visitor numbers, and provide a way of attracting new audiences. The public voting stage can be a very effective vehicle for local outreach, and staying in touch with voters means that many will return to the venue to attend the event they voted for. This can lead to long-lasting relationships and repeat visits from these advocates.
- Money: Winning venues receive a bursary of £3000 to support their event, enabling ambitious and creative event programming. The venues who come in second place will receive a £300 bursary towards their alternative Museums at Night events, while those who come third will receive £200 each and fourth and fifth will receive £100 each, helping everyone to be part of the festival.
- Fame: You will receive full PR and marketing support from Culture24: our independent PR agency will help you to get local coverage of your participation in the competition, and of your Museums at Night event. The attraction of well-known and respected artists creating a new experience in your venue is a great hook for news coverage.
- Friends: During the public voting stage of the Connect! competition, reaching out to local advocates can build long-lasting relationships with other organisations. In 2013, Dragon Hall in Norwich galvanised social media support from other organisations across the East of England where they are located. Even the smallest venues have an equal chance of winning if they devote time and energy to attracting supporters and partners: the Working Class Movement Library’s successful bid for Connect! photographer Simon Roberts in 2012 was assisted by promotional support from their local football team, FC United of Manchester.
- Legacy: Culture24’s aim is that all participating venues should derive long-term benefits from being part of the Connect! competition, whether in terms of raising their profile, attracting audiences or trialling artistic event planning. We encourage all venues to consider recording video of their events, and definitely to take photographs which can be used for further publicity and advertising. Your Connect! experience may feed in to how you work in future; for example, Connect! artist Susan Stockwell was so inspired by the event ideas presented by her three shortlisted venues that she ended up working with all of them.

### 2) Generating your event idea

We will be announcing details of the six participating artists, writing a feature about each of them and showing examples of their work on the Museums at Night website [www.museumsatnight.org.uk](http://www.museumsatnight.org.uk). Take a good look at each of the six artists, their history and what they hope to create, and consider whether you can see a connection between their work and your venue, collections, location or projects.

Bring up the idea with the rest of your team: other staff or volunteers may well have creative ideas about what the artists might do where, and how the project might fit in with your organisation's aims and objectives. For example, if one of your key objectives is to engage a certain audience segment, would an event with one of the artists be a particularly compelling offer to this group? This is a great opportunity to receive funding to be bold and experiment with an event that isn't typical of your usual work, and may not be what your usual audience expect, but which could attract a very different crowd to explore your venue for the first time.

One venue that won a Connect! artist in 2012 commented: **"I don't think we would have had the courage to do something on such a huge scale if it wasn't for the Connect! competition... as an organisation we are not terribly confident in working with creative artists. For it to be so successful means that I now have license to experiment again!"**

The Connect! project also aims to leave a successful legacy for all the participating artists, venues and audiences – so what would success look like for you? Would you like 20 visitors to have a fascinating time creating something that they can take away with them, for instance, or would you rather have 80 families interacting with an artwork during a three-hour event, or is your aim to build marketing or event management skills in your team?

It's also important to consider whether your team has the time to devote to outreach, generating public votes, planning and marketing the event, communicating with visitors, budget monitoring and ensuring it's a success on the night: the Connect! process is much more of an involved commitment than running a standard Museums at Night event, and will take longer than you might think.

It is a condition of participating in the Connect! competition that you update your venue's record on Culture24's DDE database, ensuring that it has a photograph, a description, and that your opening hours and prices are correct. You can use this to promote your events, activities and educational resources all year round, and if you've never used our database before, this is the perfect time to start.

### **3) Submitting your event idea**

Once you have buy-in from everyone in your organisation, it's time to submit your event idea. If you'd like to discuss your plans with Nick or Rosie first, we're only a phone call away on 01273 623336. The simple event submission form will be open until **5pm on Friday 20 March 2015**. In addition to your contact details and artist selection, we'll be asking you to outline more about your event idea. Questions will include:

- Your reason for choosing this particular artist, and the connections you see between their work and your venue, collections or location (maximum 100 words)
- Details of the event: what will happen, the format it will take, how it will involve audience participation, whereabouts in your venue it will take place, and any other information you want to tell us (maximum 200 words)

- The type of audience you're aiming to attract with this event (maximum 100 words) – [audience development tips](#) can be found on the Museums at Night website.
- A very basic budget outline explaining what you will spend the £3000 prize money on (maximum 100 words) – don't forget that the artist's fee, travel and accommodation costs will already be covered, but you will need to budget for artists' materials. Obviously you won't know all the details at this stage, but we need to see that you've considered approximate costs (e.g. £500 artists' materials, £200 technical support, £200 marketing)

In 2014 we received almost 200 entries in total. Those that made it through to the public vote stage had really considered their goals and how they would work with the artists, and painted a compelling picture of exciting, creative and unique events in their submissions.

#### 4) Final idea selection

The next stage of the competition involves Culture24 working with the six artists to narrow down a shortlist of up to five possible events for each artist, to go through to the public voting stage. Ideas from all venues – large or small, city or rural – will be considered equally: it's about their creativity and how exciting the event ideas are for the artists.

The criteria event ideas will be judged on are:

- innovative interpretation of the artists' oeuvre, evidencing an appreciation of the artist's practice, medium, interests and previous work
- a strong audience engagement element
- that they demonstrate the practical means to deliver the event successfully
- that the venue demonstrates it can deliver its idea within budget
- that legacy and/or a shareable resource is built into the event plan

Culture24 will notify all venues who submitted event ideas by **Tuesday 31 March** about whether or not your idea will be going through to the public vote stage.

If you are not successful at this stage, we hope you will still run a Museums at Night event, and that the time you spent thinking about artistic event planning will prove useful.

If your event is shortlisted to go through to the public voting stage, you'll need to plan how you will reach out to get people to vote for you to win the artist.

#### 5) Planning your public and media outreach

Culture24 will help you write press releases if necessary, and will provide a bank of information about the artists and downloadable images of their work which you can use for PR.

Which local media outlets (radio stations, newspapers, magazines and blogs) can you approach? Are their particular groups that this event will appeal to, and how can you best reach them?

If you make the most of the advocacy opportunities that the Connect! competition offers, the 'hook' of the story and the extra publicity around it provides an excellent chance to engage with your current audiences and highlight your offer to new fans. While they are voting to bring the artist to your town, this is a great chance to begin interacting with them through social media channels and invite them to sign up for further messages from your organisation.

Marketing tactics that worked well for venues seeking votes over the last couple of years included:

- using existing marketing channels like email newsletters and social media reaching out to other local arts and heritage venues inviting them to contact their networks to bring the artist to their local area
- placing information on local council websites and intranets including a link to the vote in their email signatures
- staging a photocall – for example, the ss Great Britain filmed local schoolchildren on board the ship doing jelly impressions to publicise their bid for the Jellymongers Bompas & Parr visiting local school assemblies and markets to drum up votes creating a persuasive video such as [this one from BACKLIT in Nottingham](#), raising the profile of their campaign to bring artist Mat Collishaw back to the city he grew up in.
- placing printed publicity material around their venue to capture votes from visitors who were already interested

## 6) The public vote

The public vote will be open for two weeks from **Friday 1 May – Saturday 16 May**. The voting widgets will be hosted on the Museums at Night website, and your goal will be to secure as many votes as possible for your venue.

Once a vote has been cast, the widget will display the percentage of votes that each venue has. However, for the final few days of voting, we will hide the percentages so that the announcement of the winning venues is a surprise.

## 7) Funding for all

Winning venues receive a bursary of £3000 to support their event, enabling ambitious and creative event programming. The venues who come in second place will receive a £300 bursary towards their alternative Museums at Night events, while those who come third will receive £200 each and fourth and fifth will receive £100 each, helping everyone to be part of the festival.

Our goal is to help every venue that takes part in the public vote stage of the competition to be part of the festival: several runner-up venues re-purposed their Connect! event idea to involve local artists running a similar interactive event instead, while Northern Print (which narrowly lost out on winning Mat Collishaw) had a video linkup with the winning venue BACKLIT, and live streamed his artist Q&A session for their visitors.

**Match funding:** Each venue that wins the competition must guarantee to spend a minimum of £830 on the event. This must be evidenced in the form of a spreadsheet accounting for the expenditure on a line by line basis. Match funding may consist of any expenditure that relates to the event including but not limited to staff time, equipment hire, payments to contractors, refreshments, travel relating to the event, photographic or film documentation etc. Match funding may not consist of any expenditure already covered by the project budget including; artist fees and expenses or costs paid for by the £3,000 grant.

## 8) Working with your artist

Each artist will make a research trip to their winning venue, accompanied by a representative from either Culture24. Your initial plans may change: while the goal is to create a unique high-quality

artistic experience, the process will involve a dialogue between artist and curators. Bringing the artist in to explore your venue and ask questions gives you the chance to show off your space and collections, to fine-tune the details of how your proposed event will work practically, and to confirm how the bursary will be spent, as well as highlighting any particular challenges, constraints or risks that will need to be managed.

We also suggest that you take a photograph and a statement from the artist during their research trip which you can use for publicity purposes.

Culture24 will cover the costs of the research trip, together with the artist's fee, transport and accommodation costs during the event.

## **9) Marketing your event**

As soon as details of your event are confirmed, please register the event listing in Culture24's database so you can benefit from the associated publicity immediately.

Your event will be included in Culture24's PR campaign for the festival, which attracts significant media coverage every year. Should you wish to, you will also have the opportunity to write a case study about your experiences for the Museums at Night website.

However, we strongly encourage you to build on local coverage of the Connect! poll by continuing to promote your venue and activities through your local media channels, in partnership with other local businesses and organisations, and via email newsletters and social media. Culture24 will issue a revised version of the Museums at Night PR toolkit, along with logos, poster and flyer templates which you are welcome to customise and use to promote your events.

## **10) On the night**

- We encourage you to plan ahead and work out a reasonable timetable together with the artist for how you will set up any necessary equipment for the event, and how crowds will be managed.
- How many staff or volunteers will be needed?
- Will there be different stages to the event, and will visitors stay in one place or progress through different spaces?
- The event will be interactive and participatory, but will everyone participate in the same activities at the same time, or work their way around a series of activity stations or entry points?
- What resources will be required to deliver this safely?
- Do you have a café where visitors can enjoy a meal or sit down to discuss their experience over a glass of wine or tea and cake?
- How will the clean-up be managed?

We strongly suggest you take photographs to record your event as it happens, and to consider both filming the event and capturing vox pops from your visitors.

## **11) Evaluation**

Culture24 will be evaluating the Connect! competition, and will carry out telephone interviews with all participating venues following the Museums at Night festival weekend. We will ask you to

distribute visitor surveys on the night, and will also follow up with the artists to gain an understanding of how the process worked for them and what aspects may need tweaking for 2016.

## **12) The Connect! legacy**

Being part of the Connect! competition, collaborating with the artist and running a participatory event should have enduring outcomes for your venue, for your audience and for the participating artists.

Trialling this new way of working may encourage your organisation to programme more artistic content or to collaborate with more creative artists in future. It may give your team the chance to try new ways of audience development, outreach and marketing communications, to learn new skills, and to develop confidence in involving the public in interactive experiences.

The weekend's activity may leave you with new resources: objects, trails, video or images. It could potentially lead to a lasting relationship with the artist.

The Connect! experience should also expand your audience reach: increasing the numbers of interested subscribers for your email newsletters and social media channels, who will not only read your updates but will also give feedback to help shape your future programming.

Finally, working with busy, in-demand and idiosyncratic artists can be challenging but is also rewarding. It pays to have a flexible attitude towards the artist and the competition in general. Everything you thought you knew about the event could be turned upside-down after the first site visit – or it may not. The unpredictability of this project is part of its great charm! We are always at the end of the phone line should you need help or advice.