Event Manager’s Year-End Overview
INTRODUCTION

Island of Culture was an initiative by the Isle of Man Arts Council to celebrate the end of a 10-year National Arts Development Strategy for the Isle of Man. Details of the strategy and its updates can be found here: https://www.gov.im/media/622523/iomartsstrategydoc.pdf.

The Mission statement for Island of Culture—

“2014 is the year in which we celebrate our Island of Culture through dance, music, theatre, the visual arts and literature, cultural festivals, film and digital innovation, and leave a lasting legacy for creativity and the arts in the Isle of Man.”

EVENTS MANAGER ROLE

As Events Manager for Island of Culture my role was to bring to fruition the aims of the Isle of Man Arts Council. During the first few months of the contract this included the resolution of issues relating to the website and increased discussions and outreach using social media. Time was also spent meeting with various organisations, individuals and groups regarding their plans and raising awareness of Island of Culture, available funding and details of the Manx Passion.

Social Media was used throughout the year to promote events and successes from the year. Although this is a useful medium for disseminating information newspaper, flyers and radio advertising was also used. There will always be a number of people within the Isle of Man community who are not engaged with local media and therefore will not receive this information. With these people in mind the promotion of Island of Culture continued in a number of exhibition formats including the opening exhibition, Royal and Southern Agricultural Shows, Tynwald Fair Day and Isle of Man Food and Drink Festival. These exhibition events were used to promote the work of the Isle of Man Arts Council, demonstrate uses of funding and promote Arts Council-funded events, allow promotion of cultural events and to discuss Island of Culture. Island of Culture branded merchandise was utilised with canvas bags, pens, badges and ‘bugs’ given out to members of the public. In particular, the variety of badges created conversation with the public. More about these events can be seen in the monthly events list below.

EVENTS OVERVIEW

Throughout the year hundreds of events, workshops, gigs and exhibitions took place across the Island under the banner of Island of Culture. Events were organised by individuals and groups, with funding by Isle of Man Arts Council. There was definitely something for everyone available. As well as public events the Department of Education and Children supported Island of Culture through work within schools, details of which can be viewed at https://www2.sch.im/groups/decislandofculture2014/.
Below is a sample of my year as Event Manager. This is by no means as exhaustive list but will give a idea of my year with Isle of Man Arts Council

**January**

*Public Exhibition*

January saw the Launch of Island of Culture with an exhibition within the Villa Marina Arcade, highlighting cultural groups and arts information for the Island. Sloh Slaynt provided live music and members of the Creative Network gave demonstrations of their work. This event was attended by approximately 50 people over the course of the day.

*Viking Parade and Fireworks*

With support from Peel Commissioners and Vikings of Mann, a Viking parade was held on 6th January to publically launch Island of Culture. This was attended by approximately 150 people. The parade concluded with the lighting of a bonfire on the beach with a short fireworks display. The parade was led by Geoff Corkish MBE MLC, Chairman of Island of Culture and Michael Lees, Event Director, with John Shakespeare playing bagpipes.

*Launch Reception*

Guests were invited to an official launch and drinks reception held in the Villa Marina. Fifty invited guests attended, including Financial Partners who were presented with Isle of Man Arts Council Loan Collection pieces for display throughout the year.

Ballakermeen Otto Choir performed and speeches were given. An exhibition of Isle of Man Stamps and Coins from throughout history were displayed, including the images from the Juan Moore Stamp issue.

*Qudos: Believe in Yourself Workshops*

Qdos Creates performed 20 workshops over 10 days with 15 different schools. These workshops involved a total of 559 pupils from school years 5, 6 and 7.

The Believe in Yourself workshops were aimed at developing confidence, self-esteem and raising aspirations using dance and theatre.

**February**

February saw a selection of meetings, including with Port Erin Traders and Local Commissioners, promoting the Island of Culture initiative.

In addition, February saw the WW1 Commemoration event public meeting. This meeting was attended by 45 members of the public and representatives of invited groups. The original plan was to recreate the signing-up of Manx Men in preparation for leaving for war. The parade was to leave from the Brown Bobby and end at King Edward Pier. Further information regarding the WW1 event can be seen during ‘August’ below.
March

*War Horse invited guests live streaming*

Invited guests attended the Studio Theatre, Ballakermeen, for a special screening of War Horse. This helped highlight the unique opportunities that Live Streaming brings to the Island. Live Streaming continues at both The Studio Theatre, Ballakermeen and Broadway Cinema.

Live Streaming gives a unique opportunity to experience a show without the expense of travelling off island. Full details of Live Streaming events can be found at [www.villagaiety.com](http://www.villagaiety.com).

April

*Manx Passion*

After months of planning the Manx Passion play arrived. With a cast of over 200 – including ponies, goats, ducklings and lambs – this was a truly epic performance. The weather was kind and an audience of 1,228 enjoyed the various performances around the Island:

During the week of the Manx Passion, it was a privilege to attend each venue and assist in the sourcing of animals, guiding the public and assisting with the removal of event props at the end of each performance. The assistance with a pony named ‘Donkey’ for Rushen Abbey and sourcing of lambs for Maughold were particular personal highlights.

May

*The Planet Suite Performance*

Isle of Man Symphony Orchestra and Slaithwaite Orchestra joined together to perform The Planets Suite and was very well received by all who attended. Glenn Worrall from My Movie Crew provided a ‘star film’ which gave a beautiful backdrop to the music.

*WOSAT*

During May Bank Holiday weekend, The Creative Network opened their studios, set-up temporary work spaces and welcomed the public in. This was an excellent event including Yarnbombing (decorating street furniture with knitted or crocheted wool) of various part of Peel. A truly wonderful event that will hopefully repeat in future years. The use of Yarnbombing happened at a number of different events during the year as a means of creating discussion and publicity.
July

*Tynwald Day and Mark Kermode’s visit*
Tynwald weekend was extremely busy with the set-up and execution of the Tynwald Fair exhibition stand and Mark Kermode’s visit.

Having a presence in the Homecoming tent enabled the distribution of merchandise (bags, pens and badges) and allowed discussion with the public and promotion of events. Mark Kermode, Joint Patron of Island of Culture with the Hon Clare Christian, MLC, President of Tynwald, attended Tynwald as an official guest, accompanied by his mother. Mark Kermode then performed at a sold out ticketed event at Noa’s Bakehouse – Ten Things I Hate About Film – which was followed by a movie. This event was well received and was used as a promotion for Isle of Man Film Festival.

*Schools Play Festival*
The Schools Play Festival ran for three days at the Gaiety Theatre. The three schools taking part were Ramsey Grammar School, Ballakermeen High School and Castle Rushen High School. All three schools took a different approach to the festival. Ramsey gave the pupils decision-making responsibilities without the need for much technical training, Castle Rushen had a full technical team with them that were able to learn about the corner, lighting and sound and Ballakermeen gave a slick performance with a cast made up from all school years. It is hoped that this event could become an annual event, with partner schools being sourced from England/Scotland/Wales for additional performances.

*Douglas Carnival*
Use of the Island of Culture Horse Tram, and location of a vehicle and volunteer driver to pull it, led to an interesting carnival float.

*Southern Agricultural Show*
Exhibition space within the Heritage Tent gave a talking point for welcoming guests. The tent housed photographic memories, children’s competition art work and entries for the Arts Council-funded sculpture competition. Over the two day exhibition 300 canvas bags were distributed along with badges, bugs and pens.
August

WW1 Commemoration Parade

After uncertainty for a number of months, the WW1 commemoration parade managed to go ahead, downscaled from the original plans, with support from Manx Legion members and Cadets. The parade was well attended and Isle of Man Steam Packet Company assisted with taking the wreath to sea. BBC Northwest attended to film the event and included the footage as part of Northwest Tonight.

Royal Agricultural Show
During the two days at the Royal Agricultural Show we had a 20x20 Marquee area near the main arena to utilise. The Royal show was well attended and as with previous exhibitions merchandise was distributed.
Silk Painters exhibited artwork created by St John's School pupils and the Floral Art Group created a stunning display.

**Lloyd Mayor workshop and Talk**
As Youth Ambassador, Lloyd Mayor was so busy we were limited on the dates available for his visit. As such the workshop and talk were held at the end of August. Ten pupils attended the workshop with approximately 30 people attending the talk. Lloyd was able to work well with the pupils, giving insight into life as a dancer and the particular technique of the Martha Graham Dance Company.

**September**

**The I Love Culture Show**
There are very few things I can add to what has already previously been discussed regarding the I Love Culture show produced by Stage Door Entertainment. Hall Caine competition stories were used within the show. As the Food and Drink Festival was taking place during the same weekend the opportunity was taken to discuss the show with many members of the public and stall holders, leading to an increase in ticket sales (delaying the start of the show slightly).

**Inner Tuba**

Jon Hodkin, through Manx Arts Development, brought his Inner Tuba recumbent tricycle back to the Island for a visit to take his performances to 15 schools, four health facilities, five nursing homes and seven youth clubs, scout troupes and care facilities. Jon’s talks about his camping exploits and how to make music with ‘unusual’ objects were well received.

**Manx Litfest**
The third Manx Litfest took place in 2014. This was by far the most successful festival for Manx Litfest. With an increase in skills within the organising committee we were able to put together a successful, entertaining and educational festival programme. Manx Litfest is an event that I am incredibly proud of and hope that it continues to be part of the cultural calendar for many years to come. Full details can be found at [www.manxlitfest.com](http://www.manxlitfest.com)

**October**

**MusicLab**
Coordination of schedules, sites, schools and public visits took a number of months to plan. However, when MusicLab finally rolled onto the Island, the week passed
seamlessly with over 500 primary and secondary school pupils completing workshops. The public open day attracted nearly 300 people. Since experiencing the Cello within MusicLab my own daughter has asked (and is starting) to learn the Violin (a compromise from the Cello).

**Jason Evans and Inner City Brass**
Youth Ambassador Jason Evans visited the Island with his quartet Inner City Brass. On arrival at the airport I escorted Jason and his colleagues to Manx Radio for two interviews (a pre-record and live). In the evening Inner City Brass performed at Peel Cathedral to an audience of approximately 80. The following morning a mixed age group of musicians took part in a masterclass led by Jason.

**November**

**Employment and Skills Exhibition**
Joint exhibition stand with Mike Reaney from DED Creative Industries, promoting and talking about creative careers with students and members of the public. This was an opportunity to talk about bursaries, suitable courses and roots to career.

**TEDxDouglas**
This inaugural event was established with the TEDster Chris Stott. The event took place over three sessions with Davy Knowles, Astronaut Ron Garran and others providing short talks on their chosen subjects. All talks were filmed and shared via YouTube. We hope to hold another event during 2015. The Youth Arts Centre made an excellent venue for the event with assistance from Castle Rushen High School pupils with lighting and sound. Paul Watson and Owen Cutajar provided technical assistance.

**Lantern Workshops and Parade**
Lantern workshops took place over four days with over 100 lanterns created. This event was open to everyone and free of charge. Lanterns were then used in a parade following the turning on of the Christmas lights in Douglas. The Parade concluded with Christmas Carols in the Villa Marina arcade. A truly wonderful start to the Christmas season.

**Save the Children Christmas Tree Festival**
The Island of Culture entry into the Christmas Tree festival took three days to build. The installation was created using willow to construct two boxes which were then covered in images from Island of Culture events. The installation was removed on 6th January and received a special commendation.
December

Thanksgiving Service
The Island of Culture Thanksgiving Service took place on Tuesday 16th December. It was an eclectic service with varied performances, readings and a good audience despite the weather. Island of Culture calendars were distributed on this day.

Conclusions
I would like to take this opportunity to thank Isle of Man Arts Council Members for giving me the opportunity to be involved in Island of Culture. I have found the year to be both challenging and rewarding.

I would also like to thank Jan Cowan, Emma Callin and Penny Hardman for their support, patience and guidance during the year.

Although Island of Culture is over I will be continuing my work with Manx Litfest, TEDxDouglas and supporting the Youth Arts Centre where possible.