



terrestrial



Arts adventures in Weston-super-Mare: Evaluation Report

Tom Spencer (Terrestrial)
& **Dr Roz Stewart-Hall** (Independent Evaluator)

Contents

Introduction

- 3** About Terrestrial
- 6** The story of a year of arts adventures

Approach to Evaluation

- 25** Has Terrestrial made a difference in Weston-super-Mare (and if so, how?)
- 27** The original aims

People

- 28** Supporting community groups and artists to go on creative adventures together
- 51** Building trust locally in the value of collective community art-making

Place

- 64** Galvanising the creative community of Weston-super-Mare
- 73** Increasing the visibility, dynamism and quality of arts provision in Weston

Process

- 82** Encouraging artists to take risks and develop their practice
- 89** Exploring and testing a new model of commissioning, producing and sharing community arts projects

Learning

- 95** Principles to carry forward
- 96** Challenges to address
- 100** Actions
- 102** Evaluation recommendations

- 104** Links & further reading

Cover image: *Abandon* (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Voices of Worle choir rehearsal (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Introduction

Terrestrial

Terrestrial produces community arts projects, events and adventures in the south west of England. The company's primary approach is to support inspiring artists and local community groups to 'co-create' projects together.

"These projects might result in a performance, a film, or a community feast, but they always begin with a journey into the unknown."

"We think that artists are great explorers. They are brilliant at leading people towards unfamiliar terrain – sniffing out important questions, sharing skills, gently crafting stories, getting the party started."

“We believe that creative exploration should be open to everyone; we support artists to collaborate with people who might not normally go on – or feel like they’re invited on – these kinds of adventures.”

– From Terrestrial’s Mission Statement

Long-term collaborative projects – dreamt up by artists and communities working together – are the heart of Terrestrial’s work. But the company also responds to local interests and concerns, and looks to build capacity and confidence in the area’s arts ecology more generally. In Weston, Terrestrial provided varied opportunities for local artists to develop their work, took part in strategic planning exercises, supported independent businesses, and hosted public debates and social gatherings.



Spies in Schools: The Raven’s Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Guerrilla Media Unit at Loves Café (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Weston-super-Mare

Terrestrial launched its work in Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset's largest coastal town. While just a short hop south-west from Bristol and Bath, Weston has its own unique identity as a seaside town undergoing major changes. It is home to a lively and fast-growing population, supports a wealth of community activity, and is surrounded by an inspiring natural landscape of long muddy beaches, hill forts and views across the channel to Wales.

Terrestrial spent two years getting to know Weston. Before any public activity was announced, Terrestrial hosted a series of residencies: producers and visiting artists volunteered with local groups, they developed a relationship with North Somerset Council, and fostered close partnerships with local charities, clubs and independent businesses.

A year of arts adventures

From Autumn 2018 – Autumn 2019 Terrestrial produced a series of arts projects in Weston-super-Mare. From dance to documentary-making, each adventure followed its own path, but was co-created through the year by visiting artists and local community groups. There is a film following collaborators from each of these projects on Terrestrial's website:

www.terrestrial.org.uk

These projects focused on the process of building ideas and stories together over time, rather than working solely towards a finished product. However, the **Terrestrial Festival** in November 2019 offered a public audience the chance to experience elements of each of these projects (along with community gatherings, feasts and discussions).



Abandon performance (photo by Adam Leppard)



Abandon performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Abandon

Over the course of several months, dance artists Clare Reynolds and Ania Varez, along with Terrestrial Director Tom Spencer, met with groups and staff at Addaction Weston, the local branch of the national addiction and mental health support charity (now known as We Are With You).

From these initial meetings, a core group of collaborators was established – each with experience of addiction and recovery. The group met regularly to explore dance and creative writing. Members of the group also took responsibility for recruiting their peers to join the project, and the team grew to a weekly gathering of 10-15 people.

At first these sessions were self-contained – an afternoon of disco, a series of free-writing exercises, some improvisation techniques – led and structured by Clare, Ania and Tom. But, after some successful flash-mobs on the High Street, the group made a clear decision to work towards a bigger performance event built from their own original ideas. They settled on a theme for their work: freedom (and the many things to feel free from). And the title was chosen: Abandon, which they enjoyed as a marker of multiple-meanings: the hopeful abandon found in dance, music and escape; the feeling of being abandoned by people and systems; and the desire for people to abandon expectations and judgements.

Some members focused on writing for the show and created letters, poems, provocations and stories. Others wanted to concentrate their energy solely on dance – which was devised as a mixture of large sequences with the whole ensemble and smaller duets. The majority of the group did both, with weekly rehearsals to develop physical material and more ad-hoc meet-ups to feed back on one another’s writing.

By the time of the Terrestrial Festival, Abandon had become a full-scale dance and spoken word performance – created and performed by the group. The show took over an empty unit in Weston’s central shopping centre. The group covered the walls with their original writing and filled the space with bold and emotive dance, supported by additional professional collaborators (composer, lighting designer, production manager).



Abandon workshop (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Abandon performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

More than 200 people attended the two festival performances, many of whom were moved to share their strongly-felt responses to the work (extracts included in this report). As well as followers of Terrestrial's work from Weston and further afield, the group made a concerted effort to invite their peers from the recovery community: a cohort of staff and service users from a local rehabilitation centre came as a group trip, as well as people connected through Narcotics Anonymous meetings and supported housing.

After receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from these audiences (both formal and through casual conversations around town), the group expressed interest in devising their own workshops to encourage new members to take part in similar activities. It was at this stage that the Covid-19 pandemic arrived and made in-person meetings impossible, but the group have stayed in touch remotely.

Voices of Worle

A group of older residents of Worle (a suburban village in the east of Weston) collaborated with composer Verity Standen and filmmaker Adam Laity to explore personal histories and storytelling.

Each member of the group was individually recommended to take part by Terrestrial's partner organisation for the project: Big Worle, a local community development charity. Most of the group are regulars at Big Worle's Coffee Morning (aimed mainly at isolated older people).

This project began with a series of conversations. Each person sat down with Verity over several sessions in their own home (fuelled by tea and cake) to tell the story of their journey to Worle. The oral histories they recorded are rich with moving recollections and surprising details. Some of the group have a lifetime's experience of the local landscape, while others have travelled far and wide and settled here more recently. Verity writes choral music, so she's fascinated with voices. She encouraged each person to share their favourite songs and consider their memories of particular sounds – from bird song in the garden to the whispers of loved ones.



Voices of Worle performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Voices of Worle storyboard (photo by Adam Laity)

The group then delved into their personal archives and shared old photographs and keepsakes – from ice dancing skates to an antique meat grinder – which brought out new stories, and started everyone thinking about telling their tales through images.

During Verity's maternity leave, Terrestrial facilitated a handover of the project's creative lead to Adam Laity. As a cinematographer, Adam has a trained eye for striking visuals. He led the group through a series of exercises designed to help them to consider their surroundings in terms of light, framing and perspective. Armed with a disposable camera, each resident then created a storyboard of ideas for moments that could be captured on film. Based on these storyboards, Adam worked with each member of the group on a portrait film.

While the films were being edited, Verity created a choral song for each Worle storyteller – inspired by unique phrases and features from their oral histories – which she worked with 25 local community singers to develop and rehearse. So at Terrestrial's Festival each short film was accompanied by a live pop-up choral performance. The entire 'premiere' event took place twice over the festival weekend: first at Big Worle's Hub for local supporters and friends of the storytellers, and then at Weston Museum for a wider public audience. The six portrait films (featuring extracts of the original music) are now available for free on Terrestrial's website.



Voices of Worle performance at Big Worle (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Voices of Worle performance at Weston Museum (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Spies in Schools

Over the course of a year, theatre artists Nigel Barrett & Louise Mari made regular visits to eight Weston primary schools. They appeared to the children as scientific researchers, private investigators, undercover dinner ladies and corrupt police officers.

The schools are all members of the Extend Learning Academies Network and span the town's geography and a range of demographics, from relatively prosperous suburbs to the most deprived wards in North Somerset.

Senior teachers were keen to encourage collaboration between the different schools, and Nigel and Louise were drawn to working at scale, so it was decided that the project would bring together all of the Year 5 students across the schools: in total nearly 500 nine and ten-year-olds.



Spies in Schools filming (photo by ELAN Schools)



Spies in Schools. 'Agents' preparing for the party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Such a large group of young collaborators limited the depth of engagement that the artist team could have with each school. However, across the year Nigel and Louise were able to visit each of the 15 classes at least eight times and thereby establish cooperative relationships with the children, as well as with school staff (who were encouraged to take part throughout).

The process began with research into the children's favourite games (in the playground, with families, online) – casting each class as a group of 'experts in imagination'. When it became clear that many of the children had limited experience of live performance, Nigel and Louise gathered a team of performers to stage a short participatory show in each school playground as inspiration for imaginary play. Several teachers noted that these pop-up performances (and the responses to them) were instrumental in building enthusiasm amongst both children and staff for trying out new ideas and games.

As Nigel and Louise's workshop visits continued, the children demonstrated a keen appetite for spy stories and undercover adventures – they revelled in puzzles and riddles, and showed great sensitivity in imagining what it would feel like to be someone else. So this became an ongoing theme for the work: each child and teacher was helped to create a 'secret identity' – complete with profession, ID card, fake signature, and elaborate backstory – and Nigel and Louise began sculpting a fictional world around the children's ideas.

While Terrestrial had originally hoped to run this project through to the Autumn like the others, it became clear that it was impractical to span two academic years, so the finale was planned for the end of summer term 2019. Nigel and Louise worked with a team of volunteers recruited by Terrestrial, as well as a small group of professional collaborators and local emerging artists, to stage a huge performance event.

Through a series of performer visits to each school, postal packages, and video messages played in classrooms, the story of the event built up over a fortnight. Each of the 500 children and members of school staff received a personalised invitation with a secret code built into it. And, on the morning of the party, 'undercover agents' arrived at the eight schools to help the children create their own costumes. So by the time the disguised young partygoers marched through Weston to gather at the seafront, they were fully immersed in a spy adventure. They arrived at the town's well-known ex-lido Tropicana to find it transformed into a decadent disco, with a huge festival-style DJ set-up and cabaret performers hosting the action.



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Across the day, children formed teams with peers from other schools and took part in a series of challenges, which all fed into the story of saving Weston from an arch-villain 'The Raven'. The final celebration saw actors speeding away across the beach on the back of a ranger truck while the victorious children danced.

As Covid-19 made it impossible to return in-person to schools for follow-up activities, Nigel and Louise worked with the show's designer Amy Pitt to create a website with further challenges for the children to try out at home or in school, as well as an additional chapter to the Raven story.

SpyKidsWanted.com now exists as free resource for anyone to take part in spy training, inspired by the collaboration with Weston children, and Terrestrial have promoted it through multiple networks to families home-schooling through the pandemic, with more than 3,000 visits during the early 2021 UK lockdown.

Guerrilla Media Unit

The Guerrilla Media Unit was a crew of Weston-based artists that collaborated to create original 'myths' using contemporary media.

There were three main aims for the project: first, to offer opportunities to local creatives to learn and share new skills across a range of media; second, to harness the tools of 'fake news' (social media stories, 'mockumentaries' etc.) to plant some playful and positive stories into Weston – where local media and outside opinion often focus on negative images of the town; and, third, to forge a series of overlapping community connections by doing these things.



Guerrilla Media Unit workshop (photo by Georgina Bolton)



Guerrilla Media Unit workshop (photo by Peter Goodrum)

The group was facilitated by John Norton (theatre director, DJ and BBC Radio Producer) with local artists Karen Blake & Peter Goodrum. The group had fluctuating membership over the course of the year, with a core group of around 15 collaborators and a much larger number taking part in one-off workshops and mini projects. John and Terrestrial had originally envisaged a formal partnership with Weston College. However, while some current and former students took part in activities, the majority of GMU members described themselves as 'keen amateurs' looking to learn new skills.

Every few weeks, the GMU would host a visiting artist to offer a mini-masterclass, across a wide range of themes including wildlife cinematography, film and sound editing, creative writing, and social media manipulation. At meetings between these workshops, the group would put their new skills to work making mini-projects. Several of these took the form of short news-style stories (eg. 'Weston-super-Dog saves 7-year-old boy from eel'), with accompanying original images, and were put out on the group's Facebook page: The Seagull. Others became playful poster campaigns (eg. 'Missing: Steepholm Island – please return the Bristol Channel').

Where possible, the GMU would try to collaborate with other local groups and partners to create their stories. For instance, one workshop was co-created with a home-schooling group: children were encouraged to design new interventions for the town centre (eg. 'A light-up dancefloor in the middle of the High Street'), and the GMU then had a local architecture firm turn these ideas into fully-scaled planning drawings that they distributed around the town.

Over the course of the year, the group chose one narrative to work on as its largest project: the story of the Severn Serpent (Weston's answer to the Loch Ness Monster). This spawned several mini-makes: a sculpted 'giant jaw-bone', a carefully photoshopped and aged '1930s post card', a '1950s naval recording', an 'ancient map' etc. These components all fed in to a 12-minute documentary film that was conceived, filmed and edited by the group: 'There's Something in the Water', in which several local collaborators (sea swimmers, coastal litter-pickers, town councillors) were interviewed about their sightings of the beast.



'Severn Serpent Jawbone' created by the Guerrilla Media Unit (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Guerrilla Media Unit event at Loves Café (photo by Paul Blakemore)

The Guerrilla Media Unit took over Loves Café (an independent café and event venue) for the opening night of Terrestrial's Festival. Public audiences could explore gallery-size versions of all the mini-projects created through the year, listen to some tall tales told live by local storytellers, and watch the premiere of the Serpent Film, which has since been seen online by more than 15,000 people.

Two members of the Guerrilla Media Unit have gone on to set up an independent production company providing film work for local charities. Several of the community connections (eg. with the 'Cleaner Coastlines' volunteer group) have been joined up with subsequent projects. And, through his role at the BBC, John Norton has supported the creation and recording of a new play for Radio 4 based on the story of the Severn Serpent and the GMU's work.

Weston Artspace

Throughout the research phase, and the busy year of projects, Terrestrial sought opportunities to support local artists alongside welcoming visiting practitioners. They often, for example, paired local emerging artists to the projects as performers, assistants and facilitators.

Many Weston-based creatives they spoke to (both emerging and well-established) discussed the lack of affordable space in the town, and very few opportunities for gathering with peers. So, in spring 2019 Terrestrial negotiated rent and rates-free use of an empty shop on the High Street, and opened Weston Artspace as a community artist studio. The studio provides free space for creatives to meet, work, develop skills and share ideas.



Weston Artspace public open day (photo by Peter Goodrum)



Weston Artspace members' exhibition

After some initial building works (installing accessible toilet facilities, improving security etc.) the space was launched with a series of public workshops. More than 300 people attended drop-in 'Make A Mess' and 'Make Some Noise' free opening events, as well as targeted skills workshops for photographers, dancers, writers and more (all facilitated by local artists, supported by Terrestrial).

While the primary aim for the studio was to provide making and meeting space for local artists, Weston Artspace also continued to host public workshops and events throughout the year – from open studios to yoga sessions, poetry circles to debates. And many of the Guerrilla Media Unit masterclasses were open to the public at the studio.

Weston Artspace also provided a home venue for Terrestrial's projects – Abandon, the GMU and the Voices of Worle choir all used the space regularly. All in all, there were more than 2,000 recorded visits to the studio across its first year.

Weston Artspace now has more than 100 members, and operates entirely independently, led by a group of local member artists – with Terrestrial on hand for any advice or input if needed. The team has already successfully fundraised to cover running costs, a part-time producer, and a series of small High-Street commissions for local artists.



Weston Artspace shop window

Company-in-Residence

Alongside Terrestrial's projects, studio and special events, the company fostered open-ended relationships with local partners who could help support future creative opportunities in Weston.

Perhaps the most significant of these was with North Somerset Council. The local authority underwent significant changes during Terrestrial's time in Weston: elections brought in entirely new local leaders, and with them a far greater interest in supporting the arts than had been present for many years. And Arts Council England deemed Weston a priority area for investment in the South West. Terrestrial, in the words of Richard Blows (Transformation Lead at North Somerset Council), played an 'instrumental' role in developing the local authority's new Culture Strategy, which has community collaboration baked into its core principals. And this consultancy-style relationship also helped to build the foundations for what is now Culture Weston – an independent initiative to support Weston's creative sector, delivered by peer organisation Theatre Orchard.

Some of Terrestrial's project partnerships also grew their own offshoots. For instance, while working with Big Worle on 'Voices of Worle' Terrestrial learned that the charity wished to make their community hub more vibrant and welcoming, so they helped to oversee a community-led makeover of the space with artist Megan Clark-Bagnall.

And, through what Director Tom Spencer describes as a '*door's open, kettle's on*' approach, Terrestrial also offered informal drop-in advice sessions for a range of local individuals and organisations. From helping emerging theatre companies to plan their first funding applications to discussing community development with cafes, these conversations fed into a model of Terrestrial operating as a 'company-in-residence' in Weston rather than simply a producer of projects.

Approach to Evaluation

Has Terrestrial made a difference in Weston-super-Mare (and if so, how)?



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

This report focuses on the principal aims that Terrestrial identified for the company's work in Weston, and presents stories, images, and other evidence to explore the extent to which these aims have been met. The final section then lays out key learnings from the evaluation, as well as recommendations for the future.

This report tries to foreground the words and experiences of people involved in the projects wherever possible, with short comments and analysis to thread these testimonies together.

Evidence has been collected from a range of sources including:

- Interviews with community collaborators, audiences, artists and the Terrestrial team (recorded at various stages of each project).
- Images, videos, notes etc. that document the process of making and sharing the projects that Terrestrial supported.
- Written feedback from audiences at Terrestrial's festival events.
- Results from a series of online surveys of people in Weston who experienced Terrestrial's work.
- Quantitative data about who engaged with projects.



Big Worle 'Welcome Home Party' (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Terrestrial's work in Weston was driven by six key aims, grouped into three themes: people, place and process.

People

- 1.** To support community groups and artists to go on creative adventures together.
- 2.** To build trust locally in the value of collective community art-making.

Place

- 3.** To galvanise the creative community of Weston-super-Mare.
- 4.** To increase the visibility, dynamism and quality of arts provision in Weston.

Process

- 5.** To encourage artists to take risks and develop their practice.
- 6.** To explore and test a new model of commissioning, producing and sharing community arts projects.



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

People

1. To support community groups and artists to go on creative adventures together.

“I had a chance meeting with someone... [and] a year later, having gone on a personal journey that never in my wildest dreams could I have ever, ever imagined, it's been fantastic for me... it has helped me through some very difficult times. It's given me focus. I've learnt to work with other people that I'd never seen before... the whole thing has opened me up to all sorts of new possibilities, and alongside that I have learnt new skills along the way.

Peter Goodrum – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

Planned partnerships and organic developments

After an initial period of research, Terrestrial's starting point for projects in Weston was to pair inspiring visiting artists with existing local community groups.

“From day one, we were asking ourselves what the legacy of this work could be. We wanted to help seed some ambitious ideas in places where they'd have a good chance of growing – where there were people and resources to provide support alongside us and after us.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

In some cases, these strategic partnerships held fast through the length of projects. *Spies in Schools*, for instance, was driven by a strong relationship with the central team that administrates the eight primary schools.

“While it often felt quite daunting to organise a project with several hundred children, it was made possible because of the collaboration with the ELAN team who act as a hub for the schools. Through a single contact we could pass messages and establish agreements between the artist team, 8 headteachers, 15 class teachers and all of the children. And, having tested that process with us, there's now a group of people that could take that approach forward to future bold, creative collaborations across multiple schools in the town.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

For other projects the partnerships were less clear and grew more organically. In *Abandon* the initial relationship with local charity Addaction was vitally important for the artists to learn more about the community they were working with.

“There was something specific about the group of people we were working with and the huge journey they had been on that made it feel really profound, and I felt that from the very beginning. I shadowed some sessions at Addaction in the beginning and I could see how working together can support people in recovery and that

was something the group already had, but it was important to witness.”

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

But in the process of trying to build support for the project, the artists and Terrestrial found they had a more enthusiastic reaction when they presented the project away from Addaction, and handed over recruitment to the group itself.

“[A] key learning for me is to just let the group do their thing too. It’s insane how much we tried to get a group in Weston together and then the answer was just Chris [a peer support worker met through Addaction], literally just him, inviting people he knew. The learning from that is that you just need one person, one champion is all you need. So keep spending time drinking coffee and chatting, keep doing those sessions that might not go anywhere, they only need to reach one person. The rest will follow.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

In response to this, Terrestrial directly employed Chris and another Support Worker they had met through Addaction (and maintained a relationship with the charity that provided advice and specific training) but produced the project independently.

The *Guerrilla Media Unit* was even more fluid, as some collaborators were consistent throughout the year and others dipped in and out for specific mini-projects.

“We’ve had a real range of people coming in and coming and going, some people staying with us for a long time, other people staying for shorter periods of time.”

John Norton – Artist, *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

With such a variety of projects – each with their own creative identities, rhythms, and practical concerns such as safeguarding – it became clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to partnerships was not appropriate.

“We learnt quite quickly that some beautiful things could happen if we allowed these groups of collaborators to follow their shared

instincts, to communicate with one another quickly and directly. But sometimes that meant a trade-off with our strategic partnerships... Our Voices of Worle storytellers, for example, felt more comfortable in their own homes or on walks around the area than in the Big Worle office – but that meant the local charity weren't present for some of the richest creative activities, so it's harder for them to take that learning forward.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)



Abandon workshop (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Multiple reasons for collaborating

Interviews with collaborators from each project demonstrate that people chose to engage with Terrestrial's work for a variety of reasons. For some it was about developing skills:

“We come together, we share skills and we learn off each other.”

Gary – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

For others it was the opportunity to work with professional artists:

“It’s a first-time experience, being able to work with professionals and they’re just absolutely amazing, they just find that way to bring out the best in people without them really noticing that it’s happening.”

Clyde – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

For some the projects offered opportunities for personal development:

“There’s a lot of fear, but overcoming that and doing it and actually creating something... that I’ve had input in, it’s a really good, lovely warm feeling.”

Chris – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

For certain collaborators the driving force appears to be a desire to get stories ‘out there’:

“I was just so excited to be there and to be involved... I thought it really was important for those messages to be told, so every time we started singing I kind of got carried away with myself.”

Jess – Choir Member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

And some of Terrestrial’s youngest collaborators simply looked forward to the opportunity to play:

“It brings a bit of excitement... it’s like a break from learning... Everyone found it really fun and was getting really engaged with what we were doing.”

Adam – ‘Agent’ (Year 5), *Spies in Schools* (video interview, November 2020)



Guerrilla Media Unit event at Loves Café (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Co-creation: a step into the unknown

Co-creation is an increasingly used term within the arts landscape. Terrestrial's work could be described as 'community art', 'socially-engaged art' or 'participatory art', but all of these have somewhat confusing and overlapping usages. Co-creation implies an explicit sharing of power, decision-making and ownership (rather than a tokenistic involvement of community groups). It suggests that an art project has been created *with*, rather than *for*, a community of collaborators. The national Co-Creating Change network, coordinated by Battersea Arts Centre, suggests that:

“Co-creation encourages every individual to activate their creative potential and realise their own ability to make change.”

www.cocreatingchange.org.uk – accessed September 2020

Terrestrial's approach to co-creation is, like the company's attitude to partnerships, founded on a clear set of principals but flexible to the specifics of each project.

“We describe a project as *a journey into the unknown* because nobody knows where it will lead. We build trust amongst collaborators before we talk about what the outcomes might be. We believe that this trust is what allows brilliant and authentic ideas to surface, but as artists and producers we have a body of experience exploring the unknown – so it’s our job to make sure everyone feels safe on the adventure.

Sometimes when we look back on a specific workshop, or a whole project, it feels like we might have been too prescriptive – that our collaborators ended up simply following an artist’s ideas when they could have co-authored them. And sometimes we wonder if the invitation has been too open – that people felt lost and would have liked clearer guidance, or wanted an artist to offer specific inspiration. We try to keep learning, and keep responding to the specific needs of each project.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

It is clear that each of Terrestrial’s projects in Weston followed a different shape. But interviews with collaborators from each project suggest that they felt a level of ownership over the process, and that they were valued as *co-creators*.

“The beauty of the Guerrilla media unit, somebody can have an idea and we run with that... nobody’s idea is rubbish, it’s ‘let’s think about it’... all decision making is inclusive.”

Peter – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2020)

“We’ve created all of the content, we’ve been guided and advised and helped with the transitions, but all of the content is ours.”

Chris – performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)

“Children have enjoyed the days so far. The unknown is exciting. Individual stories were shared describing children being drawn out and animated during activities... [The] theme continues around secret identities, born out of the children’s own interest in spies/undercover stories.”

Lynn Winter – ELAN Schools lead, *Spies in Schools* (Project Meeting, May 2019)

“Everyone in the room felt like we were a part of a creative process, the whole way through, no one felt like you were showing up and being told ‘this is what you’re doing’ and going home and learning it, it was much more of a fluid thing... it felt like we were part of the creation of that work.”

Jess – choir member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview 2020)

And it is also clear that the professional artists facilitating these projects saw their roles as *co-creators* rather than sole leaders or authors of the work.

“The thing that I felt was different about this project was that, from the very outset, it was about coming together to create the project. It wasn’t me flying in with my skills and just getting them to go along with it. It was very much about meeting head-to-head and saying ‘how do you feel about this’... that lengthy process, and really feeling like we were coming at it together.”

Verity Standen – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)

“It was a very long, complex process with many different parts because we were figuring out as we went along what was best and most useful to or for the people we were working with.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

One of the most important things we can actually do is make a group of people, and I feel like we have managed to do that – to make connections between people who are here and will still be here and know each other and feel confident in each other, working together when we are gone.”

John Norton – Artist, *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2020)



Coffee Morning at Big Worle (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Gentle Beginnings

There is a tension in the field of co-creation around how projects first get off the ground. Any process, however collaborative, needs a starting point. Some sort of intervention needs to take place to ignite the process. It is often a difficult balancing act for an artist or organisation to initiate a project without prescribing its full form.

Terrestrial's projects in Weston all began with a research phase, in which project facilitators asked questions and created frameworks.

“We went in and we just tried to find out what the children were interested in, played some games... The children said they were really interested in spy adventures and escape rooms and we thought: okay, well that's the start.”

Nigel Barrett – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (video interview, November 2020)

“In the very early days I asked them about their view, their favourite view out of their house and that sparked some really lovely

discussions about Worle itself, what sort of a feel it had and how much they felt part of that or if they felt separate from that.”

Verity Standen – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)

“The idea was to create a community arts space, [but] Weston Artspace wasn’t in existence right from day one... We had a series of public meetings, and out of those public meetings we worked out how and what and why... how we could put this building to use. And Weston Artspace came about as a result of that process.”

Peter Goodrum – Guardian, *Artspace* (video interview, November 2020)

The ability to facilitate these kinds of starting points is clearly a specific skill, predicated on a trust in the potential for all kinds of people to contribute meaningful ideas and stories. These carefully-considered opening questions and first workshops are evidence of Terrestrial’s commissioned artists taking a first step into the unknown, with an invitation for their collaborators to step out with them.

“I think the children have got better ideas than we have, really.”

Louise Mari – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (video interview, November 2020)

“We had this one session where we introduced the idea of a disco, and finding the feeling of disco, and finding the feeling of losing yourself with that kind of music and that kind of dance. And everyone just seemed to love that – it was a really high moment, where people made their own dance routines.”

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

For some of Terrestrial’s artists, the drive to keep the process open to new ideas – especially early on – is articulated as a political choice.

“In the UK, perhaps because of where I come from and how I feel about colonisation, I find it so hard that art is established and what a product will look like is so determined. So I like to fight against that and to be joyful about being confused together a little bit, or joyful about being lost together a little bit.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

“The GMU idea [of a fake news agency, with multiple people contributing stories] was to try and harness the world of fake news, which is a fundamentally divisive medium, and to flip it for non-divisive aims... to try and take control of that stream of un-reality and harness it for coming together and for social good if you like. Not like an enormous social good but just the positive act of coming together and owning our own mythologies.”

John Norton – Artist, *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

Once the initial seeds of these ideas were planted, the artists and Terrestrial gave space for their community collaborators to create their own journey through the work.

“I have learning difficulties and I’d never touched a camera, never touched a computer, I can’t read, I can’t write, but I watch them and study them and that’s how I learnt and because me and Gary are good mates, he helps me out a lot more, so I get the extra tuition from Gary as well as the group.”

Shean – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

“To start with... after you’d gone, I thought ‘I don’t know what that was all about’. But as it went on... I kept thinking, ‘oh I should have said this, or I should have said that’. So it was bringing back memories for me as well... it was good.”

Paula – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview 2020)



'Collaborator Talks' at Terrestrial Festival (photo by Adam Leppard)

No 'us' and 'them'

As the projects evolved, they each moved through a number of different phases – with new collaborations and opportunities presenting themselves along the way.

“We had a few shake-ups to our teams over the course of the year: one of our artists went on maternity leave, another was unwell for some time. Whenever we brought someone new into a project, we tried to make sure there was a healthy trust-building period. And that every artist – whether popping in for a single workshop or facilitating a whole project – signed up to the same ethos. We believe that everyone is an expert: the artists hosting a group might have particular skills, but their local collaborators are experts of their own experiences, their stories, their hometown.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

During *Voices of Worle*, the shape of the project changed as artist Verity Standen (principally a composer) passed over relationships with the Worle elders to Adam Laity (a filmmaker).

“I came onboard... to visualise the stories they told. We talked about items, visual items that they had – like old photographs, or mementos or talisman or tokens that we could use to visualise some of the stories they had told us.”

Adam Laity – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

“You were filming and that was good as well – it was a new experience. You didn’t just come in the house and say ‘I’m going to do this and I’m going to do that’. You did discuss it with us... we did have a say all the way through.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)

And then, as the final chapter of the project, a whole new group of local collaborators joined as a choir to perform original songs – composed by Verity while she’d been away from the project on maternity leave – to accompany the films.

“Verity was really good at working with such a big group of people and getting everyone to feel involved and engaged with it... When she introduced us to each song, she’d play us an interview that she had with them and it would be this person talking about their day-to-day life, and it felt like we kind of got to know them. And we got to move forward and make this song about them... it was really exciting... Working with someone who was still creating this music while you were in the room with her was a really different experience to how I’ve worked with music before... she let us have input and we talked about the people that it was about and the affect we wanted the music to have.”

Jess – Choir member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

The flexible and empathetic nature of the artist-facilitators is key to the development of a space in which creative adventures can take place. Several of the *Abandon* performers express how important it was to feel supported to create their own content, rather than being ‘taught’ in a traditional professional-amateur hierarchy.

“Never have I ever felt separate from them or that – because I don’t have the training or haven’t done the work or haven’t been to the places they’ve been to – I still didn’t feel any less than them... which is a beautiful thing.”

Eliza – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)

“There’s been nothing that we haven’t put into it ourselves at all. All of the dance moves come from dances that we’ve done ourselves... They’ve let us be a part of the whole process. We’ve had writing – they’ve let us lead the way.”

Jono – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)

“Although they’re professionals in their areas or their fields that they work in, it’s never felt like that. We’ve been encouraged to be ourselves. We’re not professionals, and learning that there’s something quite magical in the fact that we’re not – and that we’re doing this really raw – it’s been really freeing.”

Chris – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)



Preparing Festival Community Feast (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Voices of Worle performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Evoking stories and feelings

The act of co-creation – people coming together over time to share ideas, express themselves, develop skills, challenge one another and have fun – evidently elicits powerful responses for many people involved. Terrestrial acknowledge that the company’s data collection, through which to demonstrate the power of this practice, was at times limited. But this was the company’s very first programme of work, and there is a clear sense of what is important for the organisation going forwards: to understand how it feels to take part in their projects.

“We are of course interested in formal structures that help to show the impact our work has on people. And we’ve definitely missed some opportunities to capture some of that evidence. But we are, I hope, always listening for feedback that people give us in their own way and on their own terms. We believe in the potency of making art together, and we want to describe that journey through personal stories.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

“I like dancing, in fact I love dancing. But I haven’t for a long time, and this has just reawakened my passion for dancing.”

Clyde – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

“[A] particular success [was] encouraging and including children who wouldn’t normally take part in whole-class activities, and children with limited spoken English. Children selecting names for themselves inspired empathy: girls choosing boys names and vice versa, names from other cultures.... Staff enjoy being part of the game and children seeing teachers in different roles.”

Lynn Winter – ELAN Schools lead, *Spies in Schools* (planning meeting notes)

“Honestly, I’m terrified doing it, and I can be quite self-conscious doing it. But as you do it you kind of grow into it a bit and... you become more comfortable and enjoy doing it and it’s fun. I feel like I’ve got a lot of energy when I’m here. There’s a lot of fear, but overcoming that and doing it and actually creating something by the end of it – that I’ve had input in – it’s a really good, lovely warm feeling.”

Chris – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

“We did enjoy doing it, it was interesting, to bring everything back that you thought you’d forgotten about. It wasn’t until you start talking that things come back in your mind.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)

“I’ve had a moment and I’ve cried, but I’ve been really happy as well... I’ve had goose bumps... at watching and hearing other people... I’ve had moments of just crying, it being so beautiful.”

Eliza – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

As these reflections from community collaborators show, some people are very conscious of the process affecting them while it is happening, while others notice reverberations at a later stage.

“The impact of the Guerrilla Media Unit was much bigger than we originally thought it would be, and we didn’t realise that until we had the participatory talks as part of the festival. Listening to some of the

people who had come to the group and hearing things like them saying ‘it’s changed my life’... it was really quite emotional actually to hear people speaking of how much it had meant to them.”

Karen – Community Producer, *Terrestrial* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

“We wouldn’t probably of said it at a coffee morning. What we told you folk, we probably wouldn’t have dreamt of telling anybody at a coffee morning, but as it came out in the film, it flowed, it just automatically flowed, so everybody felt alright.”

Paula – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November. 2019)

Interviews with collaborators from each project give a clear sense of being ‘heard’ by the artists and partners they worked with. For some people, particularly those involved in *Abandon* and *Voices of Worle*, this feeling of being listened to is articulated as a new experience brought about through *Terrestrial*’s work.

“That was the first time I think... I don’t think we’ve got much of a voice, no. We are sort of in the background, they don’t listen to us, we’re not there.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November. 2019)

“I’ve always considered myself creative, but I’ve never done anything with it. I’ve never had an outlet for it, and I’ve never had support... So it’s been really nice to have the space to share it and talk about it and be encouraged.”

Chris – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)



Abandon performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

From process to performance

Just as starting points for co-created projects can be contentious (considering who has the power and resources to initiate collaborations) so too can ideas around performance and public sharing of the work. If not managed carefully, and open to discussion and change from all involved, a final ‘event’ can feel like a pre-determined outcome rather than a shared ambition that grows from the process. This could inhibit the opportunities for collaborators to inform the shape, scope and nature of how a project might unfold.

“We all valued the process. But it was also the case that there was an internal wish of Terrestrial to do a show or a final work, which I found a bit difficult... Having said that, by the very end they all wanted to do a dance piece and it meant so much to everyone, so it was just in the very beginning. I found arriving in a town with this intention of making work a bit strange; I feel it’s a bit like the saviour artist, or maybe a slightly colonising model.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

These tensions became more noticeable in some projects than others. And because Terrestrial placed significant trust in facilitating artists to guide the shape of each project, the different tastes and experiences of these artists greatly influenced the ways that each project developed towards its final stages.

“We tried, in principle, to encourage a sense of radical openness – we wanted our community collaborators to feel like they could kick-out, or totally re-arrange, any ideas we’d arrived with. But in practice some of the artists we worked with really wanted to angle their work towards a finale event from the off. Sometimes that was due to limited time, but mainly it was a preferred methodology – they believed in the power of ‘making the show’, of working towards a defined goal, and wanted to offer clear invitations for what people were signing up for. We grappled with this quite a lot, and in the future I think we’ll try to lay out our co-creation principles more clearly so that everyone spends a bit longer exploring the unknown. But we’ve also learned that not all our work needs to follow the same shape: a truly co-created project can happily sit alongside a collaborative, participatory, artist-led project. We do, however, need to be clearer at describing the differences between these approaches.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

There can be, as artist Ania Varez notes, some problematic ambitions lurking around community art – notably the idea of ‘saving’ communities, or ‘giving them a voice’ (which is in fact disempowering, as it implies that people with different experiences of culture are somehow ‘less than’ or ‘voiceless’). However, when talking about the journey from process towards performance, Terrestrial’s commissioned artists demonstrate a clear sense of wanting to foreground the experiences of their community collaborators.

“In my experience of making performances together, those sorts of dance and creative activities – where you are moving together and literally supporting each other by sharing weight, using touch in a really beautiful way, moving together by improvising – to me those things just really embed a culture of support and really create a place where people start to open up and trust each other...”

We did lots of improvised flocking exercises where we try to move as one and they really loved those exercises. And we took them out in the street and practiced doing them in front of people... That was really a highlight because in the street some people came and joined us, and did it with us, so that was a bit magic... I think they realised as a group that people could really enjoy watching that and watching them move.”

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

“It was an opportunity to work with children from all those schools and bring them all together, which is really fantastic. Also, it was a brilliant opportunity to get the children into the town, and to flood the town with this amazing image of all these children dressed up... in these crazy costumes and moustaches... It makes the ordinary extraordinary, and all of a sudden the children made the town come alive...”

“It culminated in them going undercover to the Tropicana on the sea front... where they had to infiltrate the Raven’s Birthday party, find out who he was and unmask him because he was poisoning the town and stealing money – which they did, so they saved the town and saved the world!”

Nigel Barret – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (artists’ feedback session, August 2019)

Some of Terrestrial’s projects in Weston spent the full year working towards a major event, while others only thought about public sharing in the final weeks. But all of the projects were represented in some way at the Terrestrial Festival in November 2019, so audiences could experience elements of these very different adventures.

“You go on a journey with somebody who is joining you on this creative endeavour. And at the beginning they are not very confident, they don’t know what... the point of the whole thing is... They haven’t been encouraged to feel creative, or feel like a story maker. And to go through that journey, and to go through the iterations of recording the voice and talking about sounds and then bringing in the visual side of things, drawing story boards, taking pictures... to

actually filming with them and going through that process... [Then] we actually finally showed the films, and they could see how good they looked and how funny there were, or how wonderful their stories were and how other people enjoyed those.”

Adam Laity – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

“I think having a room full of all these different people who they don’t know telling their stories back to them and they could see that all these people had listened, was a really special moment”

Jess – Choir member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

“It was a fantastic weekend. It really was good. And to see those dancers and their stories, everybody’s stories... it wasn’t just one thing, it was everything and the emotions that come out of it, brilliant, amazing... it felt very special... we felt really special.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

“It’s made us feel like we are part of something big.”

Eliza – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

Audience responses to the festival events will be discussed later in this report. It is worth noting at this stage, however, that the network of Terrestrial’s community collaborators in Weston had grown by the time of the festival, due to the inclusion of other peripheral activities alongside the main projects. Local teams orchestrated an exhibition of local artists’ work at Weston Artspace, offered free creative activities for families (inspired by the *Spies in Schools* project), and invited people to gather for shared meals and talks. This culminated in a community feast, for which anyone was welcome to join staff from local café Loves to learn and share recipes, agree a menu and prepare it for the public.

“It was buzzing, it was brilliant... We did a community feast, where people came into the café, helped us cook and then we served it up in the shopping centre... The pride I felt, in the shopping centre, seeing everyone tuck in... people from all walks of life, people that may not think they like vegetarian or vegan foods – but it was free and it was there so they ate it and they loved it and they came up for seconds and they wanted the recipes.”

Anna Southwell – Loves Café (video interview, November 2019)

The pulling together of all these projects and extra activities into a festival became a creative task in itself: people learnt new skills, formed new friendships and overcame challenges.

As evidenced by extensive feedback from community collaborators, the attitudes and skills of the facilitating artists were integral to the journey of these projects. Through their carefully considered invitations, gentle steering, and responsive approaches to long-term collaboration, the artists hosted ‘dynamic spaces’: environments that enabled stimulation and innovation. These were spaces in which creative adventures could take place. While some projects deviated from Terrestrial’s original plans or ideal methods of co-creation, they were unified by an ethos of – to use artist Ania Varez’ words – being ‘joyful about being lost together’.

‘A personal journey that never in my wildest dreams could I have ever, ever imagined.’

Pete – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

“I would say I really recommend them because they have good imaginations, and they could help people.”

Patricia – ‘Agent’ (Year 5), *Spies in Schools* (video interview, November 2019)

“The emotions from the others... none of us would probably say these sort of things what we’ve gave, because we probably got confident with you folk, that we all gave something different, and I think that listening to all the others was brilliant and the actual song and singing to my bit was just amazing, it was brilliant.”

Paula – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

In numbers

Terrestrial recorded 3,604 engagements (each time one person attended a workshop, event etc.) as part of their main programme of long-term projects across the year, 982 engagements with one-off public events such as pop-up workshops at Weston Artspace, and 755 engagements across the Festival long weekend.



'Saturday Spyday' at Terrestrial Festival (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Decorating the Festival Community Feast (photo by Paul Blakemore)

2. To build trust locally in the value of community art-making.

Just as people choose to take part (or not) in arts activities for a huge variety of reasons, there are myriad ways that people can experience 'value'. There are scores of studies demonstrating how involvement in collaborative arts projects such as the ones Terrestrial initiate can – amongst other things – improve wellbeing of the people involved, develop specific skills, and bring disconnected communities together. A good gateway to this research is CultureCase – a resource that presents academic publications in an accessible format to 'help advocate for the value of culture' <https://culturecase.org/>

While there may have been benefits such as these felt consistently by people involved in Terrestrial's work in Weston, the company does not have comprehensive data (eg. a wellbeing study that compares people's experiences before, during and after a project) to ratify any such findings.

However, this section of the report uses the words of Terrestrial’s community collaborators, local artists and others to express some of the individually felt benefits of these projects in their own terms. These testimonies are important to share as they give a sense not only of personal feelings, but of the rippling-out effect of co-created arts projects: through artists and direct collaborators to audiences, wider supporters, and stakeholders such as local councils.



Guerrilla Media Unit workshop (photo by Georgina Bolton)

Skills development

Several people discussed the new skills they learned during their time collaborating with Terrestrial’s team of artists, often highlighting that they had not previously felt able to access such experiences.

“I’ve learnt quite a few new skills since I’ve been here. Before I used to operate just my little GoPro camera and my phone camera, but since

I've been with the group I've learnt new skills and I've gone on to use proper video cameras... Because everything I've learnt has been self-taught, because I've never had the chance to go to college or university to learn about the things I'm interested in, so... the ArtSpace was actually perfect for my needs."

Gary – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

"There was a guy, another Matt, from BBC radio who came down and did a workshop about podcasting and how to record sound, which was very interesting and I've never done anything like that before..."

Matt – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

"It's hard to find the opportunity to do that [kind of singing]... It's hard to get involved with that outside of some sort of educational environment... and with such a wide range of people as well."

Jess – Choir member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

Terrestrial's survey of local artists involved in Weston Artspace shows that people also developed wider skills in facilitation and planning.

"Having a chance to get involved in proposal development. Sitting in on meetings with arts organisers & council staff. Really helping me to learn about how to make things happen."

- Local Artist (anonymous Weston Artspace artists' survey)

"Developing my mindful art workshops - something of a leap into the unknown, which was so positively received."

- Local Artist (anonymous Weston Artspace artists' survey)

"I feel like it's given me the skills to be able to work with people and get the best from them, so it's not me planning things, it's me being able to facilitate the community planning things."

Karen Blake – Community Producer (artists' feedback session, August 2020)

The value of these learning opportunities therefore stretches beyond the immediate groups working with Terrestrial during the year, as some of these local artists now feel better prepared to lead community-facing projects of their own.



Abandon performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Increased confidence

Across multiple different projects and elements of Terrestrial's programme in Weston, people talk about improvements they've felt in their confidence.

"Some of the things that I probably wouldn't have felt comfortable sharing, I've been able to explore that and encouraged to do it in a creative way. It's given me a lot of confidence."

Chris – Performer, *Abandon* (video interview 2020)

I'm loving it because I've never done anything like this ever in my life, just going out and interviewing people about ghost stories and stuff like that... it's really good and has given me the confidence to actually go out and talk to people. Because I have a problem with mental health... it's bringing me out my shell and it's helping me more to mix with people, talk to people and go out."

Shaun, *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, 2020)

"It's been a great experience, confidence building, esteem building."

Jono & Eliza – Performers, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)

“At the beginning when I became involved in this project, I really had no idea where my role was going to go, and my confidence has developed hugely... I don't even know where my comfort zone is anymore because I was just thrown out of it so many times... It's given me the confidence to think about how we can take this space forward over the next year... and it's allowed me to make links with the community to find some really interesting people who've got some really great ideas”.

Karen Blake – Community Producer (video interview, November 2019)

And it wasn't only people involved directly in the core projects who experienced these benefits, as Terrestrial sought out opportunities to collaborate with other local partners.

“We did a community feast, where people came into the café, helped us cook and then we served it up in the shopping centre... I was a little bit nervous about it, I was nervous about people coming in and me having to show people how to cook... That helped me, myself with confidence. I've been doing it for ten years but I've never done anything like that, so that showed me some new ideas of what I could do within the community.”

Anna Southwell – Loves Café (video interview, November 2020)

These comments demonstrate a groundswell of confidence amongst people involved with Terrestrial's work. The recurring mentions in interviews of people trying things unlike anything they'd previously experienced chimes with Terrestrial's key drive to 'explore the unknown' with 'people who wouldn't people who might not normally go on – or feel like they're invited on – these kinds of adventures.' Several of these collaborators suggest that these totally new experiences have fostered a confidence to explore further and try new things in the future.



Festival Community Feast (photo by Adam Leppard)

Community unity

Several comments talk about ‘unity’ and ‘bringing people together’ as a positive experience of Terrestrial’s projects and events. For some, this was about strengthening ties within a group – such as the people involved in *Abandon* (many of whom knew each other previously as members of a recovery community in Weston but had not gathered as a cohesive group before the project) and the Voices of Worle choir.

“It’s brought us closer together, it’s created some unity within our group, we are all there for each other.”

Jono and Eliza – Performers, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2020)

“It allowed me to know the arts community, to get in touch with the Artspace and led to the singing community growing closer.”

Choir member, *Voices of Worle* (anonymous artists’ survey)

Some people also noted the impact of meeting people involved in other projects, such as Jean (one of the Voices of Worle storytellers) reflecting on meeting the *Abandon* cast.

“They’re labelled – and you think that’s how they are – but once you start speaking to them it’s a different ball game, because the things they have been through and the things they do now are fantastic. I admire them.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2020)

Several people involved as volunteers also highlighted how much they had enjoyed taking part, and the positive feelings associated with supporting others in their community.

“Helping the kids get ready for spy day when I was pretending to be a secret agent. Such fun.”

Volunteer, *Spies in Schools* (anonymous artists’ survey)

“Being part of something bigger – using my time in a memorable way and working and meeting other volunteers.”

Volunteer, *Spies in Schools* (anonymous artists’ survey)

When it came to the Festival, community unity was a key theme in audience feedback. The Guerrilla Media Unit storytelling night, for example, fostered a sense of goodwill and collective merriment amongst many people who attended.

“Guerrilla Media Unit at Loves – absolutely electrically entertaining eve. Brilliant film re the monster eel, exceedingly carnival atmosphere and best of all beautiful people.”

“A sense of community.”

“Feeling of community spirit. That with will things can change for the better in Weston.”

Audience comments (anonymous feedback forms)

The Voices of Worle performance also left audiences feeling connected.

“I felt very moved by the voices project. I loved the video and how it made me feel like part of the community.”

Audience comments (anonymous feedback forms)



Voices of Worle choir rehearsal (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Inspiration to get involved

Some audience members at the Festival events felt inspired by the projects to get involved in similar activities.

“Incredibly moved and inspired by the power of the arts to invoke community and caring attitude. I am inspired to work on projects like this, I want to learn more.”

“Excited, inspired and like I wanted to get involved.”

“Inspired and energized.”

Audience comments (anonymous feedback forms)

Those involved in *Abandon* made a specific invitation to Sefton Park Rehabilitation Centre (which several of them had previously attended) and Terrestrial supported staff and current residents to attend a Festival performance. Verbal and written feedback from this group mentioned how the performance was not only enjoyable and relevant, but had also been a positive influence on their recovery journey.

“Inspired to continue with my recovery.”

Audience comment (anonymous feedback forms)



Guerrilla Media Unit workshop (photo by Peter Goodrum)

Trust in co-creation

“I think the atmosphere around the work that Terrestrial is doing has shown the people of Weston that it can be a unique creative space and how important people are to this cause.”

Local Artist (anonymous artists’ survey)

It is clear from interviews with other stakeholders in Weston that Terrestrial were invested not only in producing their own projects, but also in fostering wider support for the creative community and creating frameworks for others to develop their ideas. An extensive film interview with Anna Southwell, owner and chef at Loves Café (an independent venue hosting live music and other events) offers an articulate example of this.

“Initially I was just part of a conversation amongst our community about what Terrestrial was going to bring to the town and... I felt that there’s a number of us who’ve been in Weston for about a decade, that have been trying to shake things up a little bit, but not really with a framework or any support. And when Terrestrial came along it felt like we almost had a validation for the things we were trying to

achieve in the town to make it better. A lot of expertise came along with Tom to help us embed what we were trying to do into the town... I feel like in Weston an identity was missing for that culture and its grown dramatically over the last 12 months.

“There was a real can-do attitude, and one of the things we suffer with here is a bit of a can’t do attitude, a bit of apathy, and I think it’s grown over the years because we haven’t had any support from the authorities so there’s been some individuals who’ve been trying to strike a change but... it’s expensive to do it yourself, it costs people money and time and when it has felt like it’s been unappreciated people get deflated, so people start things up but maybe don’t follow them through. But because Terrestrial had a plan and a time frame, it just happened, they made it happen for us.”

Anna Southwell – Loves Café (video interview, November 2019)

Anna goes on to specifically mention Terrestrial’s role as a connector with the Local Authority. Her comments suggest this is partly due to specific skills and experiences that the company brought, and partly due to increased confidence and unity amongst local groups and a general optimism that creative ideas can become a reality.

“Terrestrial bridged the gap between the people and the council in some ways. There are certain conversations that people don’t know how to have with members of the council in order to get things moving. So we may have the passion and the ideas, but not necessarily the know-how. I felt that Tom was able to bridge that gap for many people, so people would come up with these great ideas and they happened, and that just hasn’t happened in Weston for many years.

“The weekend festival that was put on was incredible. It obviously highlighted all of the work that had been done over the 14 months, but the most important thing for me was the coming together of all the different parts of our community. What often happens in small towns is there’s segregation: it’s fragmented. People think that other areas of our community aren’t their sort of people, so they don’t reach out to them... I think that what happened was because

Terrestrial was reaching out to all corners of the community – regardless of skill or location or background – when it was brought together as a festival, people had no choice but to meet each other and mix and people formed friendships. People formed new alliances and they are moving forwards with it... already things are in place from people that met each other during the time.”

Anna Southwell – Loves Café (video interview, November 2019)

Keen to determine whether this trust and optimism was reciprocated from the Council, independent evaluator Dr Roz Hall conducted a lengthy interview with Richard Blows: ‘Transformation Programme Manager’ at North Somerset Council and a key contact for Terrestrial’s work at the Local Authority. He lays out a significant shift in understanding and attitude at the Council towards community-led arts projects, inspired in part by Terrestrial’s work.

“The general effect is that a group of individuals within the authority have been exposed to what socially-engaged practice looks like and what it can achieve and so that will inform our thinking and how we will take our strategy and agenda forwards (albeit there are still a lot of challenges in delivering that).

“Our overall approach is based on the idea of ‘creating the conditions for interesting things to happen’ and for people to follow down that path. I think what Terrestrial have done is to prepare the ground, produced the conditions whereby something can follow and that is part of the legacy. It’s not just the local authority, it is also that there are now a connected group of individuals who have a network and a space (Artspace) and therefore I would hope they will have the confidence to keep on moving forward themselves.”

Richard Blows – North Somerset Council (evaluation interview, July 2020)

Richard comments on the challenges of securing Weston Artspace as a site (North Somerset Council own the building). There were several months of negotiations to get a meanwhile lease in place.

“The process of securing that building and then getting the team in there was somewhat painful but it provided a lot of learning. That was really significant in its own right.”

Richard Blows – North Somerset Council (evaluation interview, July 2020)

It therefore appears there were multiple layers of influence on the Local Authority: exposure to new ways of working, creating the conditions for local artists to pursue their own projects, overcoming specific procedural challenges around leasing Council-owned space, and – crucially – a shift in long term thinking and planning.

“The net effect of all of this activity (Terrestrial, alongside Theatre Orchard and Culture Weston) is that we now have placed heritage, arts and culture as a core element of thinking about placemaking in Weston. That in itself represents long term programme of change, whereby it may be ten years before we are doing some of the things we are thinking about now. It’s the butterfly effect really, so what happened with Terrestrial will have effect with the ten-year plan for heritage, art and culture and for the wider placemaking programme for the town, contributing to the reinvention of Weston as a 21st century seaside town and place that comes to be seen as somewhere you would visit to engage in challenging and novel experiences and spaces. It’s hard to predict how these things will all come together in the next ten years, but already things have come together to enable us to begin thinking like that and to begin laying plans based on it.

“Now we need to guard the flame and realise the outcomes. As part of our post-Covid recovery planning we are able to invest a small amount in arts and culture activity, which again is incremental progress towards a different type of offer and one that would not have been considered two years ago. My colleagues recognize that they should not and cannot try to predetermine the exact outcome of this type of arts intervention, but that we should see some really interesting activity as a result.”

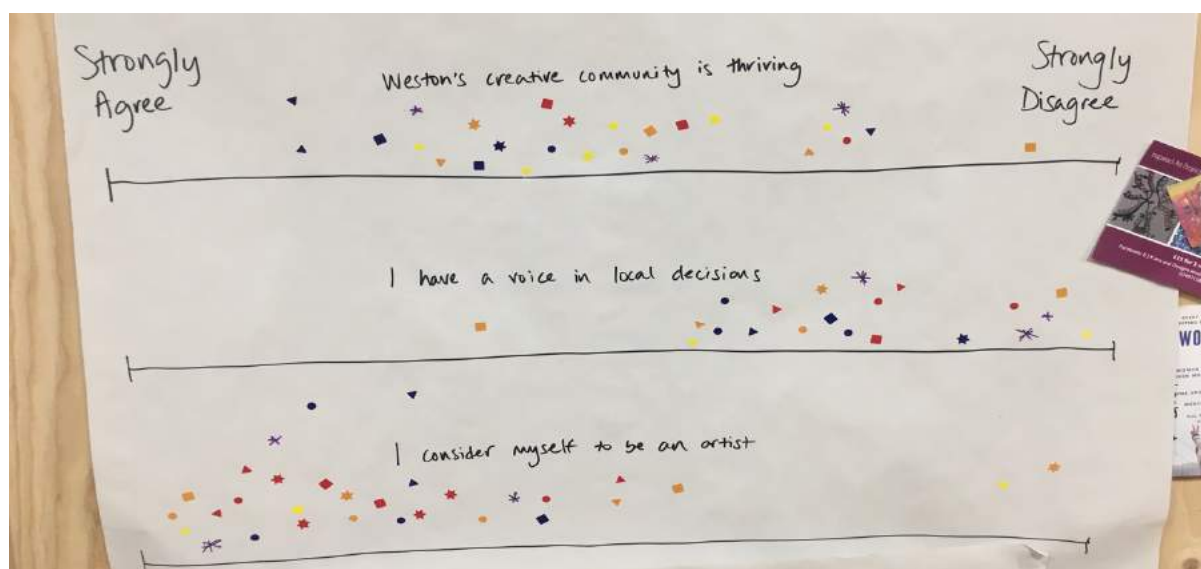
Richard Blows – North Somerset Council (evaluation interview, July 2020)

It will certainly be interesting, as Terrestrial move on to work elsewhere in the coming years, to keep track of the arts landscape in Weston and see whether this trust in co-creation lives on and these principles of community-led, non-prescribed activity remain in place for the future. Terrestrial have evidently built strong connections amongst a range of groups – from the community collaborators on their key projects to local artists, businesses, and the Council – so should be well positioned to monitor attitudes from a range of different perspectives.

“When I think about the legacy of our work in Weston, there are things I can point to – like a shop on the High Street that is now a home for artists, or a new culture strategy at the Council that directly lifts from ideas we’ve initiated – but there are also profound personal stories.

There is someone who has, since collaborating with us, started full-time training in dance. There is a local photographer who told me he’s always wanted to teach that now runs classes. There is someone we first worked with as a volunteer who is now employed by another arts organisation to lead community work... I can’t claim that any of that happened *because* of Terrestrial’s work in Weston, as people’s lives have countless influences. I am, however, deeply proud that we played some part in these people’s stories, as I am of the scores of other relationships we formed – many of which we won’t ever know the full story of.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)



Capturing opinions at Weston Artspace open day



Spies in Schools volunteer (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Place

3. To galvanise the creative community of Weston-super-Mare.

“A central focus for Terrestrial as an organisation is facilitating opportunities for people who wouldn’t normally get involved with arts activities. So when we began our research in Weston, we thought we would work exclusively on our own projects – bringing together visiting artists with specific community groups. But as soon as we hit the ground, we realised that there were large numbers of local artists who were looking for ways to come together, get involved with projects, and make themselves more visible. We would have been foolish not to ride that wave of energy and see what we could do to support local creatives alongside other community groups.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

Once this aim – to support local artists – was established early in Terrestrial’s research process in Weston, they made various efforts to facilitate local artist-led activity. The most sustained and visible of these was the setting up of the community artist studio Weston Artspace. First, the company negotiated a ‘meanwhile’ temporary lease with North Somerset Council to take on an empty shop unit on Weston High Street. Next, they made the space safe and more accessible: fitting new toilet facilities on the ground floor, installing a key fob entry system, creating a set of policies and a ‘handbook’ for members and visitors. And, finally, Terrestrial hosted a range of profile-raising activities: free public open days for people to walk in from the High Street and try things out, a series of specific skills workshops (a photography day, singing and dance events, screen printing etc.) and several social events to welcome potential members. By the end of this initial wave of activity there were already more than 50 local artists signed up as members, and by the end of the first year this number had more than doubled.

“We were able to use some of our funding to get Weston Artspace open, and to pay artists for their time helping us get people excited about the space with a series of events. But I think the most useful thing we could offer was a clear, confident vision. This was a space for everyone: people who make their living through their arts practice and people who want to try something out for the first time. The Council expected us to bring in income through membership fees, whereas we felt very clear that access to the space should be free, and we fought for that (and the zero-rent, zero-rates lease which made it possible). That was partly about removing financial barriers – and I think a more vibrant group of people got involved than would have done otherwise. But it was also about offering a different kind of relationship: everyone co-owns the space, they help clear up, share tools and materials, pitch in with one another’s events, agree what the space can be used for, and set the agenda for where it’s going next.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

Although it came about in quite a different way to Terrestrial's other key projects, Weston Artspace was co-created with a community of local artists. Anyone in Weston can become a 'member': they have a chat with some of the other artists, go through an induction process, and then get a key. Terrestrial's survey of member artists at the end of the first year show several benefits that support the 'galvanising' aim.

82% felt they had developed their practice

62% worked with new people or new places or contexts

50% are now part of new networks

75% feel Weston-super-Mare is different due to Weston Artspace

There were more than 1,000 recorded entries in the Weston Artspace sign-in book in its first year (in addition to public workshops, events and 'open studio' days). Five local artists volunteered to take on roles as 'Guardians' of the space, helping induct new members and look after the building. And Karen Blake, one of these artist-guardians, was also employed by Terrestrial as a community producer.



Decorating the Sovereign Shopping Centre for an event (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Peer support

There are many comments about the positive impact of peer support amongst local artists: feeling part of a community, learning from others, and working together.

“I feel that there is a support structure in Weston to help me with my creative pursuits. Before this, I felt on my own.”

“I have seen the value of meeting as a group to paint and draw and to talk about the activity whilst doing so.”

“I feel part of something exciting locally – a creative community. Not something I’ve really felt before in Weston. Giving me and others a sense of belonging and shared pride in our town. I’m feeling more and more confident to contribute – that it really is open for anyone to get involved.”

“Meeting great people of different ages. Having fun enjoying being creative with others. Realising just how many creative people there are around North Somerset and Weston in particular.”

“I think it has really helped a lot of artists in Weston with both business support and mental health, understanding you are not alone.”

“The many artists in and around Weston, working alone or in small groups, seem to be coming together more effectively.”

“It has provided a focal point for Weston’s hitherto largely invisible creative community, given a new use to an empty high street shop unit and demonstrated that communities of interest can successfully self-organise given the freedom and space to do so. In this last respect Artspace was a precursor to the kind of community organising we have seen though Covid-19.”

Local artists (Weston Artspace anonymous artists’ survey)



Weston Artspace open day (photo by Peter Goodrum)

An inclusive and welcoming space

Comments from community collaborators that took part in Terrestrial's main projects talked often about the warmth of the invitation. There are clear signs from the survey of member artists that this welcoming approach carried across into the way people experienced joining and using Weston Artspace.

“To me the most outstanding virtue of this place, is that whoever comes through that door and is interested is immediately made welcome.”

Peter Goodrum – Guardian, Weston Artspace (video interview, November 2019)

“I feel free to be myself and get on with my craft”

“A feeling of unity and connection.”

“Helped me through bereavement.”

“Being invited to get more involved. Karen in particular has made me feel really welcome and encouraged me loads. I'm really grateful for this.”

“The camaraderie. Making connections.”

“Encouragement from others about my practice.”

“Offering a safe, supportive environment for the arts to flourish.”
Local artists (Weston Artspace anonymous artists' survey)



'Make A Mess' open day at Weston Artspace (photo by Peter Goodrum)

Different artforms coming together

Some members highlighted the energy that comes from people with very different artistic experiences sharing the same space.

“It's great to hang out with other visual artists, but hanging out with other people who are doing completely different disciplines from you takes my ideas in a completely different direction... and that's the beauty of this place because its evolving and I'm probably not the

only one whose work is evolving in a different way through hanging out with a really wide variety of people.”

Karen Blake – Community Producer (video interview, November 2019)

“Terrestrial coming along and opening up this free space with free workshops where they really wanted a variety of people in the room, they really wanted a diverse group of you... that kind of changed everything in terms of the arts here because that was seriously lacking.”

Jess – Choir member, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

“I don’t think there is another place like this in Weston... where you can actually have artists who have basically nothing to do with one another, but they end up meeting because of the space. I don’t feel like there’s a place where I would be able to meet any of the performing artists that come down here, or the painters like Karen, or just in general people that do other things than photography, I myself wouldn’t know... how to meet those people... it gets your creative juices going.”

Matt – *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)



Big Worle 'Welcome Home Party' (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Big Worle(wind) Makeover

In addition to the set-up of Weston Artspace, Terrestrial also supported a small infrastructure project with local community development organisation Big Worle (partner on the Voices of Worle project). Big Worle's management wished to improve their community hub – making it more colourful, welcoming and useful to local people – and had funding to do so but expressed a lack of confidence in working with creatives to make it happen. Terrestrial brought in artist Megan Clark-Bagnall (supported by local emerging artist Meg Smith – recruited through an open call), who spent two weeks visiting every group that uses the community space to gather their ideas. The result of this process was a re-enlivened community hub, opened with a series of 'mini-makes' workshops and a celebratory 'Welcome Home' party to re-open the doors.

"I've enjoyed thinking with my hands this week"

"I never knew this space was here, it's a little gem."

"Thanks for teaching me something new and something I can afford to do at home."

"I can't believe something that easy is so effective."

"Before this it was just four magnolia walls."

"It actually looks bigger like this."

"Wow so colourful. I love it."

"It's like I've got a cool trendy cafe on my doorstep. Except this is better than a cafe."

"It's so important to have a warm inviting place like this for community to come together. It makes you feel lucky."

"The place makes me feel warm."

Workshop participants and party attendees at Big Worle



Guerrilla Media Unit storytelling event (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Optimism for the future

Positivity about the long-term developments is a key theme in several people's comments, suggesting that Terrestrial's support of local artist activity has helped to light a touchpaper amongst various individuals and groups.

"It feels like, for the first time – and I've lived here forever – there's a real bubbling of opportunity going on. So it's riding that wave and keeping it going, which with our community feels completely possible.

"We are coming together as a community and building something really important, so that's been wonderful... We've got this space for however long that we've got it, but what's more important is that Weston ArtSpace is a community of people; so the building is great, but what's going to be enduring is the community we've built."

Karen Blake – Community Producer (video interview, November 2019)

"I believe there is a real sense of community in Weston Artspace and that the longer it exists that sort of feeling will grow and it just touches everybody."

Peter Goodrum, *Guardian*, *Weston Artspace* (video interview, November 2019)



Voices of Worle performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

4. To increase the visibility, dynamism and quality of arts provision in Weston-super-Mare.

Unlike many arts organisations, public events are a relatively small part of Terrestrial’s work. Most of the company’s resources are spent working with specific community groups over a long period. However, at several points throughout their time in Weston – and particularly around the festival at the culmination of the year – Terrestrial welcomed public audiences to experience the work.

“We try to give greater value to the process of exploration and creative discovery, where people are trying new things together, than to the product of a ‘finished’ artwork. But we do think it’s important to welcome a wider audience to this work, so that other people can see how enlivening it is. And, for some community collaborators, the act of getting an event together – learning about technical production elements, being part of final rehearsals and film edits – offers a bunch of exciting new experiences.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

Also, due to its prominent position on the High Street, Weston Artspace is in some ways always public – even when the door is closed, passers-by can see inside to artists at work, meetings etc. And the artist-guardians curate a regularly changing ‘Artist of the Moment’ window to showcase the work of different members.

Of the people who responded to an open survey:

82% felt Terrestrial raised awareness of the importance of the arts in Weston

73% felt Terrestrial made the arts more visible in Weston

89% felt Terrestrial’s events were ‘better’ or ‘much better’ than they expected

73% felt Terrestrial improved the reputation of the arts locally

“We were heartened by the feedback from festival audiences. Almost everyone wanted to take the time to share their thoughts on the events. There are lots of people, I think, who feel that community-led work is important as a process but somehow inferior when it comes to performance – or that you must somehow be connected to the work to enjoy it. Of course it’s great to have the friends and families of people who’ve made the work come along and be part of a celebration with them, but we want to show that (if properly supported) co-created projects can be just as thrilling to public audiences – people just coming for an evening out – as a professional touring show.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

“We wanted it to have the highest production values, to make it worth people being part of it.”

Karen Blake – Community Producer (video interview, November 2019)

Terrestrial received more than 150 written feedback forms from audience members over the festival weekend. While ‘quality’ is difficult to measure, there are various markers we can use to consider audience experience. People were invited to say, on a scale of 0–10, how engaging, relevant and inspiring they found the event, as well as how it compared to their expectations.

95% audiences ranked the work as between 7-10 'engaging' (with 66% choosing 10/10)

90% audiences ranked the work as between 8-10 'relevant'

90% audiences ranked the work as between 8-10 'inspiring'

89% audiences found the experience better than their expectations (with 65% saying 'much better')

This sense of exceeding expectations is backed up by written comments, such as this parent's reflection on taking part in the Spy Adventure Trail created by the Spies in Schools artists as part of the festival.

"My daughter said, 'this is so much better than I thought – I can't believe we are actually being followed.' We both got so involved in it, completely immersed in playing out our identities and being real spies."

Audience comment (anonymous feedback form)

Many answers to open questions such as 'how did you feel while you were experiencing the event?' suggest that audiences found the events to be of high quality, often mentioning beauty, surprise and impact.

"Elated. Made me question, uplifted, educated"

"Overwhelmed by its impact and beauty. Tearful at times. Joyous at times."

"Sad, joyful, pride, love, admiration, community, hope."

"Brilliant, adventurous."

"Totally moved! Laughed, cried, brilliant."

"Amazing and wonderful how it all came together."

"I felt the strongest sense of community and hope. This event was extremely important to happen in Weston right now."

Audience comment (anonymous feedback forms)

Another useful, qualitative measure of quality is to consider the strength of people's emotional response to an artwork. A significant proportion of audiences (especially for *Abandon* and *Voices of Worle*) mentioned the emotional power of the work.

"Emotional. The stories were moving, interspersed with some laughter. The musical arrangements were amazing, executed perfectly by the singers."

"Blown away, I could not stop crying. Shit man that was so fucking powerful."

"Emotionally connected to thoughts and feelings from those in the play as these are emotions that do not get spoken about."

"Every emotion under the sun."

"Emotional, had shivers a lot! Very happy."

"I didn't know what to expect but I found it very moving. I thought everyone done amazing. Very, very emotional."

"A very joyous and uplifting experience from the heart. Felt elated and surprised."

"A mix of many emotions. It was very extreme at times."

"Extremely energised throughout the uplifting pieces. I also felt emotional and tearful from both the readings and the movement. Very powerful hard-hitting pieces. Thank you!!!"

"I felt it! So beautiful yet powerful. Such unique connection between performers."

Audience comments (anonymous feedback forms)

Some audiences added how the events made them want to join in – another useful indication of quality.

“Emotional, powerful, inspiring, made me want to join in and feel free. Amazing!”

“Exhilarated, fortunate to be part of something so open and heart wrenching, desperate to dance, filled with love for all the people involved.”

“Excited, inspired and like I wanted to get involved.”

Audience comments (anonymous feedback forms)

Furthermore, many people noted the authenticity and honesty of the work as a positive. This could be seen as a direct impact of co-creation, with the community collaborators’ lived experiences at the heart of the work.

“Very emotional and really inspired, amazing creativity and bravery, such an honest performance from such incredible human beings.”

“Emotional. Impressed by the words and imagery. Felt real!”

“The realness... the love of being part of a team.”

“The honesty of storytelling with peoples’ personal journeys.”

“All of it as it touched my heart. What comes from the heart touches the heart.”

Audience comment (anonymous feedback forms)



Abandon performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Demographics

The festival enticed a wide range of audiences. Just as with their approach to collaborators, Terrestrial were keen to engage audiences who don't normally attend these kinds of events (alongside those who do). The audience feedback forms asked the questions "How regularly do you attend arts events? (shows, gigs, exhibitions etc.)?" and the responses show that this desired range was achieved. Particularly noticeable is that 25% who answered said they 'hardly ever' or 'never' attend arts events.

How Often	People %
All the time	13%
Often	28%
Sometimes	30%
Hardly Ever	13%
Never	12%
No answer	4%

Audience ages were also varied.

Age range	People %
0-19	6%
20-34	33%
35-49	30%
50-64	16%
65+	12%
Prefer not to say	0%
No Answer	3%

When audiences were asked if they felt 'welcomed and looked after', 89% of people responded with a score between 8-10 (out of 10). This is a useful indicator that Terrestrial's festival felt welcoming to people with a range of different experiences of arts events.

Finally, looking at the postcodes of audience members we see that 49% came from Weston-super-Mare itself; this includes areas like Worle (on the edge of Weston) as well as the town centre. 15% came from Bristol, 12% from the wider South West (including Stroud, Cheddar and Exeter) and 6% came from the rest of the country (as far afield as London, Staffordshire and Cumbria).

Postcode data (included in this report's appendices) also shows that audiences were drawn from a wide cross section of environments in terms of indices of deprivation (a UK government measure of different neighbourhoods in England), with a large proportion of people (41%) coming from the top 30% 'most deprived' areas. Further to this, some audience members gave no postcode but indicated elsewhere on the form that they didn't have a permanent address (for example those currently resident at a rehabilitation facility). This supports the case that Terrestrial's festival events appealed to, and were accessible to, a broad range of audiences.

Considering public events were a relatively modest part of Terrestrial's work in Weston, the festival was clearly visible and welcoming to people within the town and further afield. Without comparable data from other organisers' events, it is difficult to prove any of the desired increase or change in the way audiences see arts provision in Weston due to Terrestrial's work, although the proportion of people who felt the work exceeded their expectations could be seen as a positive shift. What is clear from the festival feedback is that a broad range of people considered the work to be of high quality, emotionally powerful and relevant to their lives.



Parents & Tots Dance workshop (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Impact on other organisations

Another way to consider the legacy of Terrestrial’s work is to look at how elements of the company’s approach have been taken on by others as part of Weston’s wider cultural provision.

Weston Artspace now operates as an independent organisation, primarily focused on supporting practicing artists in the town. However, alongside providing space and peer support for artists generally, the team at Artspace have been running special projects with specific community groups – for example a screen printing and painting project in partnership with Gooding Disability Services – which could be seen as carrying the flag of Terrestrial’s community partnership approach.

Richard Blows from North Somerset Council summarises the role that Terrestrial played in the founding of new local initiative Culture Weston.

“I would also have been really happy if Terrestrial had carried on working in Weston–super–Mare, so it follows that what is required is some sort of ongoing continuation of that style of working.

I think we have elements around, and Tom has been instrumental in organising what has become ‘Culture Weston’... an initiative backed by NSC and ACE SW to take forward arts and culture development in the town and working through a consortium of local interests. Theatre Orchard is leading that work but it has behind it a collective of key stakeholders and partners of whom Terrestrial has been involved from the outset. So I think it will continue to reflect Terrestrial’s approach and the complementary work undertaken by Theatre Orchard and others and represents a very specific continuation of what has come out of Terrestrial’s work.”

Richard Blows – North Somerset Council (evaluation interview, July 2020)

Culture Weston now runs a busy programme of public events, artist development, courses and workshops in Weston–super–Mare. It is impossible to directly trace from Terrestrial’s work to any of this activity, but many of the projects share approaches, local partners (such as Big Worle and Loves Café) and facilitating artists with work that Terrestrial initiated.



‘Saturday Spyday’ at Terrestrial Festival (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Voices of Worle performance (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Process

5. To encourage artists to take risks and develop their practice.

Taking time

Several of Terrestrial’s facilitating artists commented on the length of the engagement process, with each stage of their work given longer than they would usually have.

“Partly through slowness, because we’ve been here for a year making a 12 minute doc... One of the most important things we can actually do is make a group of people and I feel like we have managed to do that, to make connections between people who are here and will still be here and know each other and feel confident in each other, working together when we are gone.”

John Norton – Artist, *Guerrilla Media Unit* (video interview, November 2019)

“It’s really lovely to come in and not trying to impose the idea of a show that we want to make, but just work with them, play games, have fun and see what they come up with and then to try to make their ideas manifest and their imaginations manifest and then some of the stuff is just wild, that we would never have imagined.”

Nigel Barrett – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

This was echoed in comments from people on the ground in Weston, who found this long structure offset concerns about artists ‘parachuting’ in to the local environment.

“I have a feeling where I have seen lots of things in the town before where people are parachuted in and don’t really engage with the town, whereas there was something about what happened and people staying for a year, it made it feel like the people engaged really mattered and it felt really authentic, especially for the people involved.”

Karen Blake – Community Producer (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)



Abandon workshop (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Working in new contexts

Each of the artists talked at some stage about these projects taking their work in new directions: working with different kinds of partners, in different kinds of places, at a different pace or scale.

“I learned a lot, my work is usually specific to the area where I live and work, in Stoke, and in the beginning I had concerns about that, dropping in somewhere, what I could offer the place, so I’ve learnt a lot about working in a place that I don’t really know. So working with Terrestrial has given me a great idea for a framework, for a really sensitive process, so that’s something I really got from it.”

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

“I think that there was not a single thing that I felt I knew before I was there... I have spent the whole year thinking about the things that are important to me in the arts. But not just thinking about this in my room... actually thinking about it and coming back to the group and doing something with it.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

For Louise and Nigel, lead artists on the *Spies in Schools* project, the scale and multi-partner make-up of the project brought with it particular challenges.

“Working with so many classes each week and having some teachers turning up and saying how much the children are benefitting from it, and then other teachers just screaming at the kids and threatening that they can’t participate... Coming to understand the differences between teachers, the politics of the classrooms.”

Louise Mari – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

This project was a clear reminder that one person’s ‘exploring the unknown’ is another’s ‘I don’t understand what’s happening’. For artists used to working with producers, arts organisations and people with lots of experience of participatory work, this is a useful lesson to adjust pace and communication to suit the specific nature of partnerships.

“We thought we were being quite prescriptive, but the teachers were horrified that we didn’t know what we were doing in the end. But they were very good about supporting us and they were very good about trusting us.”

Louise Mari – Artist, *Spies in Schools* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)



Voices of Worle storyboard (photo by Adam Laity)

Responsibility

“We were quite privileged to be invited into people’s homes and for them to open up. It felt quite a privilege and a responsibility to try to represent people in ways that they would be comfortable with and enjoy.”

Adam Laity – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (artists’ feedback session, August 2020)

For several of Terrestrial’s artists, working in these different contexts came hand-in-hand with a feeling of increased responsibility – the desire to do justice to the partnerships.

“Feeling for a long time that I wanted to offer something to these people who were so honest. It felt challenging, but when things settled it felt amazing. It went from something tricky sometimes to people sharing in a really beautiful way and working with a rhythm between us. So it was hard and then beautiful and heartfelt.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)



Guerrilla Media Unit event (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Working with peers

As well as working in new community contexts, several artists worked in direct collaboration with other facilitators in ways they hadn't before – especially Ania Varez and Clare Reynolds on *Abandon* and Verity Standen and Adam Laity on *Voices of Worle*. In both of these examples, the artists describe the learning experiences of this collaboration.

“I am earlier in my career than Clare. I felt like in this position I was learning from her as well as contributing with my experience to the space. It felt like a nice balanced exchange... There was always a gentle conversation between us about that process of co-facilitating, we always talked about it, but in a gentle way.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

“Working with Adam was really new to me, and I learned a lot from it.”

Verity Standen – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (artists' feedback session, August 2020)

The facilitating roles on these projects morphed as they went on, with Terrestrial responding to changes in artists' positions. This process was not always easy for the artists, as an extended evaluation interview with Ania Varez articulates.

"Clare became sick and Tom offered me the opportunity to take the lead role for a couple of dance sessions. At that point, I was a bit freaked out as it felt a bit like stepping into someone else's shoes, somehow. But at the same time I felt capable of doing some sessions and also felt really excited about it. Like this is absolutely what I want to do and knowing that Tom and Karen would be there to support me I thought 'let's do it'. It was a bit intense but it was ultimately okay...

"I'm (ironically, considering I want to work with others) quite easily overwhelmed by people, by their feelings and by noticing the dynamics in the room (in simple terms, but also in more political, structural ways). So I've been on a really nice journey for a bit understanding what I need to feel my most capable, and I guess for me it's a mixture of preparation, openness and small little tools to keep myself available instead of overwhelmed.

"I struggled quite a lot in that part of the process, mental health wise. I wanted to do a good job and I really cared about the group and I was trying to be honest with myself as well, and take it as a learning process that was at the same time generous to people... that was the hardest bit, but it lasted quite a long time.

"Then Clare joined again and everything kind of fell more into place. I was happy to give up a bit of the "leadership" to her, but I also felt like I had more to give than when we first started...

"It felt much easier than it had... I guess because of the mixture of Tom and I knowing each other better, Chris bringing the right people and Clare coming with quite a specific offer... I ended up organically in a role that I didn't expect to have, I guess more of co-leading with Clare and Tom. I was very happy to be there and very grateful for it. I did still feel quite a lot of anxiety as it felt like swimming in waters that were too deep for me, but as soon as I walked into the room and saw

the people we were working with and Clare and Tom, it was always not about me, it was about all of us, there was something bigger and more full than my anxiety. In the period that followed I had some of my most fulfilling experiences ever. That point felt so rich and beautiful.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

These experiences, considered alongside the benefits felt by Weston Artspace members listed in previous sections, suggest that artists were certainly challenged by working with Terrestrial. Overall, working in these new contexts, style and scales seems to have contributed to positive artistic development. However, as Terrestrial develops its work in the future it would be beneficial to also grow capacity and resources for supporting artists through volatile environments and shifts in responsibility (such as Ania describes here) – especially given how much the artists evidently care about the work and people involved.



Big Worle Makeover illustrations by Laurie Stansfield (photo by Paul Blakemore)

6. To explore and test a new model for commissioning, producing and sharing community arts projects.

While the artists and producers involved all had prior experience of this kind of work, the programme in Weston was the Terrestrial's first major activity as an organisation. So the company was testing its approach: not just within each community partnership, but in how they overlapped and combined.

“I think generally, in the arts, we understand how transformative individual community projects can be – what they can mean for the people involved. And we hear a lot about the impact of huge initiatives – cities of culture, major international festivals, the Arts Council's ‘Creative People and Places’ projects. I suppose we were interested in the middle ground: small enough that we can maintain a personal relationship with everyone involved (and quite nimbly transform whole projects if we need) but large enough that there is some cross-pollination – that people hear about these very different projects going on at once and feel like something is really happening in the town.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

As we can see in the comments from community collaborators, festival audiences, local artists, the Council and others listed above, Terrestrial's work resonated in Weston beyond the workshops of individual projects, yet each work had its own unique identity and set of participations.

Linking and amplifying what already exists

“What’s beautiful about what Terrestrial have done is, I guess, to really celebrate what is already there. So it hasn’t been necessarily creating totally new stuff, but it’s been looking for the lovely stuff that’s already happening and the lovely people that are already maybe connected in some way and then bringing together artists and their art forms with those people and those places, to create something magic. So it just raises some things up that might not normally get seen or heard, or some people that might not normally get seen or heard... What I’ve seen from the other projects, and from our project, is that everyone feels really galvanised to carry on and not necessarily needing a whole lot of support to carry on, but actually going, ‘we’ve got this far, and we’ve done this, and all we have to do is talk to these people and join those dots”.

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

As this comment from Clare attests, Terrestrial were engaged from the start in a process of looking and listening for what was bubbling in Weston, and responding to local interests, rather than simply *producing*. The founding of Weston Artspace (and its presence in the town long after Terrestrial’s projects concluded) is a physical testament to this, but it is also apparent in the way that artists and collaborators talk about the journey of co-creating their projects.



Guerrilla Media Unit event (photo by Paul Blakemore)



Abandon workshop (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Facing the challenges of co-creation (and advocating for them)

“The impact of a group like Terrestrial is that they offer an invitation... it starts a conversation – it starts a sense of possibility in a journey – and that’s certainly what I feel like Verity and I went through with our lovely Voices of Worle participants.”

Adam Laity – Artist, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

As discussed earlier in this report, Terrestrial’s work began with a clear set of these invitations: specific community groups were selected, and artists with specific skills were brought in to facilitate projects. As the projects progressed, however, some of them shifted to meet the interests of collaborators, or timescales, or changing capacity of partners.

There is an ongoing challenge for organisations such as Terrestrial: how do they celebrate – and advocate for – this way of working, while also acknowledging and interrogating the fundamental power imbalances that remain? For instance, how might this work change if the community groups

were involved in the selection of the artists? Does each project need to work towards a 'product' of some kind? Who sets the timescale, location and budget of each stage of a project?

“We were looking at people’s strengths and what they were interested in doing, and how they were interested in contributing, whose writing might become part of the story and gradually trying out lots of stuff and... making notes of what felt it could slot together to make a show. Really noticing where they felt comfortable and what their strengths are so we could help them to shine – but they are very shiny people anyway, so it didn’t take much.”

Clare Reynolds – Artist, *Abandon* (video interview, November 2019)

Despite the generosity of Clare’s approach, this statement also makes clear the leadership role that she and other artists held throughout *Abandon*: making creative decisions and planning tasks with an eventual show in mind.

“Hosts, guides, facilitators, leaders, supporters, champions... these are all great things for artists to be, but they don’t all mean the same thing. There is a constant push-and-pull between making use of an artist’s skills and experiences while supporting others to feel true ownership over creative decisions. When to make suggestions and when to give space for a group to discover its own way of doing things. I believe that our projects in Weston lived up to our own principles of co-creation, and I will continue to shout about the benefits of this way of working, but I’m very aware that there are still plenty of elements that we need to keep questioning.”

Tom Spencer – Director, *Terrestrial* (evaluation interview, January 2021)

As mentioned in earlier sections, one of the key stakeholders of *Terrestrial*’s work in Weston was North Somerset Council. The Local Authority were able to witness up-close several new ways of working: long-term co-created projects, creative takeover of a retail space, multi-school partnerships and engagement with local independent businesses. And it is clear that Director Tom Spencer spent significant time and energy making sure *Terrestrial*’s work – and the principles that underpin it – was understood by contacts at the Council.

“I would not be thinking like that had I not spent the amount of time I’ve spent talking to Tom and seeing what the outcomes looked like and how the approach and method works. When the world returns to its axis, I hope that we can use all of this to get more investment from ACE and elsewhere.

“This is turn might allow and connect Terrestrial-style activity to mitigating the long tail of effects from Covid, or things that Covid has made visible, in communities.

“Finally, NSC also now has a Corporate Plan for the next four years that commits us to more meaningful community engagement and sustained action to address inequality across North Somerset, and again there is a link between the kind of work that Terrestrial has demonstrated and how we think about ‘creative’ interventions to tackle those issues.... Considering how this might work is directly influenced by what I’ve seen and the contact I have had with Terrestrial.”

Richard Blows – North Somerset Council (evaluation interview, July 2020)



‘Make Some Noise’ workshop at Weston Artspace (photo by Jess Hicks)

Developing new models

Terrestrial had planned a range of on-the-ground activities in Weston for 2020. However, like so much cultural life, these plans were interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The company has produced a separate evaluation report on its work in 2020-21, but it is worth noting that Terrestrial's testing of new approaches has continued through this time.

The Guerrilla Media Unit's work reached a broad new audience with the BBC Radio 4 Play 'The Search for the Severn Serpent'. And the *Spies in Schools* project also has a specific digital legacy, as Terrestrial commissioned the artists to create a free website-version of the challenges and stories they had developed with school children in Weston. 'Spy Kids Wanted' is now available as a complete, self-contained spy training programme, to be completed at home or in classrooms – which has been visited more than 5,000 times since it was created.

Away from Weston, in place of in-person research residencies, the company hosted a series of 'Remote Residencies' – opportunities for community artists to explore their own local landscapes, while connecting with Terrestrial and peer artists. And, while it has been impossible to physically explore different towns that the company might work in next, they have instead concentrated on learning more about a diverse range of practices happening around the country through a set of 'Conversations with Community Artists' – all available on Terrestrial's website.



Spies in Schools: The Raven's Birthday Party (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Learning

Principles to carry forward

Longevity is important

Many artists, community collaborators and wider stakeholders praised the lengthy period Terrestrial spent in Weston, saying this longevity helped them to build understanding and genuine dialogue with partners.

Trust in everyone's ideas

The fine balance of co-creation tilts both ways: local collaborators expressed pride in their own ideas being central to the work, but also valued the skills and gentle leadership of facilitating artists.

Stay fluid and responsive

Several projects changed quite dramatically over the course of the year, and by being nimble and responsive Terrestrial were able to use resources effectively and make sure the work remained relevant to those involved.

Hold your nerve

By trusting in the value of 'exploring the unknown', even when projects felt strained, Terrestrial supported others to experience the benefits of non-prescriptive creative processes.

Don't underestimate the benefits of public sharing

Terrestrial's approach is process-led, with exploration (rather than presentation) at its heart. But responses to the festival and other events demonstrate the powerful amplifying effects of welcoming broad audiences to experience this work.

Join the dots between projects

Artists and collaborators enjoyed experiencing one another's work, and stakeholders such as the Council benefited from seeing different types of community engagement happening simultaneously.



Community Feast (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Challenges to address

It can be hard to communicate what is not visible

Much of Terrestrial's programme in Weston took place 'behind closed doors' with specific community groups. But people would sometimes, understandably, make assumptions about the work based solely on what was visible to the public.

"We had it with Artspace: there were some people who came in with a very clear idea of what they wanted it to be. So there was always a bit of a tension between people who strongly felt it should be a space where we ran workshops all day every day and who felt if artists were hanging out talking all day it was a waste, but others who felt that was the important thing."

Karen Blake – Community Producer (artists' feedback session, August 2020)

Terrestrial's website and social media channels were kept up to date with news from the various projects, but Weston Artspace was the main public 'face' of the work in Weston and at times there was little obvious connection to the things that were happening across town with different groups. It will be important, in future programmes, to think about all the ways and places that Terrestrial can tell the story of the work.

Projects can be misrepresented

“We were told a load of rubbish... we were told it was for loneliness... but then when you came in it was nothing to do with that.”

Jean – Storyteller, *Voices of Worle* (video interview, November 2019)

As this comment demonstrates, one of the risks of partnership working is that partners may describe projects in ways that others might not feel comfortable with. In this case, a hypothetical secondary benefit (alleviating loneliness) was evidently presented as the primary aim of the work. No major harm was done in this instance, as Jean became a key storyteller in *Voices of Worle*. However, it is important that all partners agree how a project is being framed to potential collaborators; of course, this needn't mean that partners follow instructions from Terrestrial, rather that these things are discussed and mutually agreed – how a project is first presented is a crucial element of co-creation.

Ensure that everyone 'signs off' key decisions

Decision making can be slow in co-creation processes; for people to feel their opinions are valued they must be involved in making choices, and this can present challenges if groups are only meeting infrequently.

“There was a difficult moment in the process of launching our festival brochure. In one of our *Abandon* workshops, we discussed and agreed wording of the marketing copy for the show with the group. But not everyone was present that week, and it transpired someone not in the room that day wasn't initially happy with how the group's experience of addiction was described. The other members of the

group talked through their reasoning, and this person then gave us full blessing to use the wording we'd printed, but we were very disappointed by our oversight.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

There is often time-pressure on decisions such as marketing, so it's essential that these kinds of discussions are begun early in a process to allow for checking and re-checking with everyone that the decision affects.

Language can disempower

It is important to resist the urge to overstate the role of the artist or the project when talking about what has happened. For example, one artist interview describes 'giving people a voice'; this suggests that these people were somehow voiceless before. It is more accurate and in keeping with Terrestrial's principles (and certainly less divisive) to suggest that people have been supported to platform their voices, or to voice their ideas. This feeds into a wider debate in socially engaged practice about shifting a culture of language away from artists, charity workers and others 'saving' or 'empowering' the people they work with towards a language of collaboration and equity. It would be useful for these issues to be discussed by everyone working with Terrestrial, so that the vocabulary used is reflective of the company's principals.

Lack of diversity can cause damage

“Into this first programme of work I carried a lot of energy, research, hope... But I also carried my own biases and what I see now to be quite limited networks. We ran an 'open call' for initial artist residencies in Weston, but I've learnt that it's not just about saying an opportunity is open to everyone – it's about who's sharing that opportunity, where it's being shared and how. I don't regret commissioning some previously known and trusted collaborators as part of our programme, but I wish we had done more to encourage other voices to work alongside those existing connections.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

Artist Ania Varez, who first encountered Terrestrial through the residency open call, talks openly on reflection of those early experiences.

“When I met Terrestrial in the residency of 2018, I spent a week with people who in my eyes presented as white, married, straight, with kids... talking casually about getting a grant of £20k which was more money than I’ve seen in my entire life and in my brain could potentially get my mother out of Venezuela and save her life... The problem is the system... feeling outnumbered all the time in the art world is a common feeling and it’s just a hard space to be in.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)

As these comments from Ania attest, a lack of diversity in arts projects is by no means simply an issue of representation and accessing opportunities, it can be unsettling or harmful for the people who are involved in the work to feel ‘othered’ from an otherwise monocultural group. Ania goes on to discuss personal lessons taken from the process of developing *Abandon*, though these are valuable lessons for the organisation too.

“I... felt supported by them and, even if it wasn't enough to make me feel calm, it was enough to make me feel I could stay and do my job. And I was aware that the group came with all sorts of emotions, traumas, excitement, vulnerability, and experiences, and to share their journey of being creative was the most exciting thing and I just really wanted to be a part of that. I have some work to do with myself to be confident in spaces. Now I have some good ideas on how to nourish myself to feel more prepared, and ultimately I hope it'll get to a point where these power dynamics won't matter. I also understand now that being in diverse spaces (or organisations, structures) helps more than I thought, which is good learning for me... I think it would really help if there were different people in the room and as part of the team.

“Terrestrial did the best they could in providing a safe space for me and everyone... The fact that I found it hard, and felt there were gaps, doesn't mean that I didn't find it incredible and believe it had awesome repercussions for the group and the town.”

Ania Varez – Artist, *Abandon* (evaluation interview, July 2020)



Voices of Worle choir (photo by Paul Blakemore)

Actions

Terrestrial have established a set of actions based on the issues encountered during this first programme.

Inclusive teams

“We’re a fleet-of-foot organisation. The vast majority of our resources (time, money, communications etc.) are spent on the artists that work with us. So we’ve made it a primary objective for our next phase of work to meet and commission artists from a broad range of different backgrounds – especially the protected characteristics that were underrepresented in our work in Weston. Our next challenge is to apply the same principles to our Board and other teams.”

Tom Spencer – Director, Terrestrial (evaluation interview, January 2021)

The evaluation report of Terrestrials Remote Residencies programme details how Terrestrial went about this first stage of work, with plans for further improvements.

Artist handbook

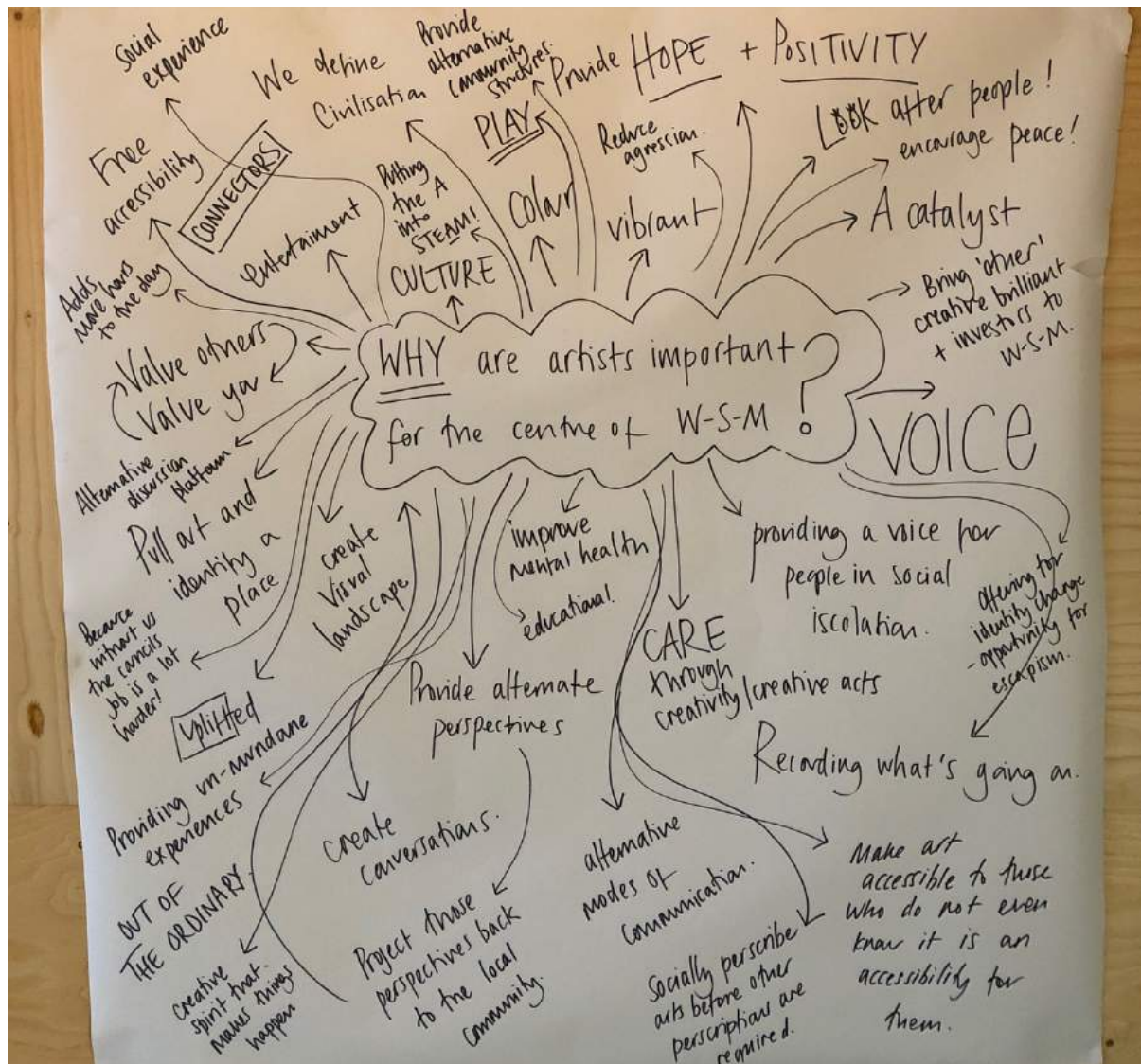
Terrestrial plan to create a handbook for artists facilitating future projects, which will include the company's key principles, lessons from previous projects, an access toolkit (created in partnership with disability consultancy company Attitude is Everything) and a set of starting points for partnership conversations.

Sense making sessions

A key recommendation from independent evaluation consultant Dr Roz Hall is to host regular 'sense making sessions' – these are structured conversations between teams, artists, partners etc. to give time and space to ensure there is shared understanding of the work (as an alternative to 'focus groups' or 'evaluation workshops'). These could involve group discussions, one-to-one conversations with peers, object or image-based elicitations (asking people to choose items and talk about how they relate to the current issue), movement-based elicitations (asking people to move in different ways based on their feelings about a certain theme) or mapping exercises (there are some more detailed examples included in the appendices).

It is hoped these would overcome issues such as misrepresentation of projects to potential collaborators, as well as to support cross-pollination of ideas and learning.

Terrestrial's artists spoke regularly about wishing to gather and share experiences, but the overlapping timelines of projects – as well as dispersed locations – made this difficult in person. One silver lining of the Covid-19 pandemic for work of this kind is that online meetings have become normalised, so there is an established structure for regular check-ins to supplement in-person gatherings.



Terrestrial 'Local Advisory Group' meeting notes

Evaluation recommendations

In addition to the 'sense making sessions' discussed above, Dr Roz Hall has provided a series of recommendations for how to improve Terrestrial's evaluation processes.

Evaluation Planning Template

This structure is designed to help map out aims, as well as how and when evidence will be gathered. It was used retrospectively in preparation of this report, and at the start of Terrestrial's subsequent Remote Residencies project.

Aims / Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Evidence to be collected	How to generate and collect this evidence	When to collect it

Objectives / Outputs	Output indicators	Evidence to be collected	How to generate and collect this evidence	When to collect it

Data collection

Terrestrial collected only minimal data from the people who engaged with different elements of their programme. It is important to capture more detail and monitoring information not only to tell an accurate story of each project (eg. not just how many engagements but who came to which elements of a project, how regularly etc.) but also to help measure the company's progress against ongoing aims, such as reaching more people from certain areas or with protected characteristics.

Online/offline surveys

Audience feedback forms were very useful for gathering immediate responses from festival audiences, as they could be completed on the spot. But these require significant work to transcribe, and there may be some people who feel more comfortable answering in their own time. It would be useful, therefore, to have these kinds of surveys available in both paper and digital forms (with the same questions so that answers can be collated).

Two specific additions to these forms that would be useful are 1: an option for people to list 'no fixed address' (as well as 'prefer not to answer') when asked about their postcode. And 2: more alternative answers for 'how did you hear about this event?' to allow for passers-by or unexpected attendances (as a handful of people wrote that they simply chanced upon Terrestrial's events).

Links & further reading

Media Coverage

Weston Artspace was written about in the *Guardian* newspaper as part of a feature on 'meanwhile' spaces.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/may/02/meanwhile-spaces-the-empty-shops-becoming-a-creative-force-across-the-country>

Karen Blake gave an extensive interview to *Somerset Live*

<https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/how-art-project-revived-former-3332638>

The *Weston & Worle Mercury* (the town's local paper) featured Terrestrial's work at various stages:

Early partnerships

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/arts-projects-promised-for-weston-super-mare-4538928>

Opening Weston Artspace

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/terrestrial-moves-in-to-weston-super-mare-4537846>

'Make A Mess' & 'Make Some Noise' open days

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/weston-s-terrestrial-arts-hub-hosts-messy-workshops-4540814>

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/weston-super-mare-event-hailed-a-success-4541044>

Volunteer call-out for *Spies in Schools*

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/terrestrial-appeals-for-volunteers-for-street-show-4544380>

Festival preparations

<https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/weston-prepares-for-terrestrial-festival-4549996>

Terrestrial's work was also featured on BBC Radio 5Live, BBC Radio Bristol and Bristol Community FM.

Documentary Film

A 30-minute documentary, following Terrestrial's projects in Weston is available on the company's website. Its premiere was moved online due to Covid-19. Artist and commentator Francois Matarasso discussed the film in an emotive blogpost at the peak of the first 'lockdown' in the UK.

“Last Friday, a film premiere was scheduled in the town of Weston-super-Mare and, like so many other artistic creations on which people have worked so hard, it was cancelled – or not entirely. The film was streamed online instead, because it could not simply wait for better days. The film is about local people's efforts to *create* their own better days through a series of projects created with artists. There's a beautiful dance piece performed in an empty shop, a clever, surreal exploration of fake news through film, a lovely musical composition rooted in remembered sounds, and a life-affirming performance about spies involving hundreds of primary school children. The projects were developed over a year by a group called Terrestrial, whose work has helped bind many local artists and groups into a creative community working for the future of Weston and its people. Now that so many of us are stuck at home, I hope this film will reach a much wider audience. It's as good as what you'll find on Netflix and very different. It will repay your attention.

“The film is a reminder of the joy and sense of possibility that good community art can create, but there is sadness too in watching it. It's not only the artists who are spending their days at home, unable to go out or work. It's the people who make art with them, the people of Weston who invested themselves so fully in these projects. And that is repeated across the country, across the world...

“Community and participatory art is the antithesis of social distancing. It exists – always, but never only – to bring people together. Its absence is being missed now by hundreds of thousands. This is what we are working to protect so that in months to come we can rely on its processes to bring us back together and help bind our hurt.”

François Matarasso (*A Restless Art*, April 2020)

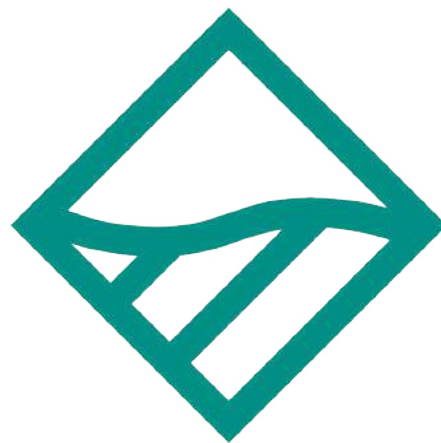
Terrestrial's work is supported by



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

**JERWOOD
ARTS**



www.terrestrial.org.uk