



## Bringing our Salford community together



### Peel Park Fire Garden October 2017 and Peel Park party April 2018

Not long after we opened our [Cobden Works](#) outdoor arts creative hub in August 2017, we turned our attentions to staging a [Fire Garden at Peel Park](#) in Salford, as part of its celebrations following a Heritage Lottery Fund restoration project. This was followed by a Peel Park party in April 2018.

Both of these events are just two of many examples of how Walk the Plank seeks to engage with a wide range of communities that surround our Cobden Street based in Salford.

On both of these occasions we worked in close partnership with the people and communities of East Salford to come together through the re-opening of Peel Park following a HLF restoration project.

This was accompanied by a small day time event – Peel Park Party – which had originally been planned for August 2017 (before the Fire Garden) but in the end took place in April 2018.

*“A very well put together spectacular event exceeding expectations and filling the park with people”*

**Friends of Peel Park**

## Community engagement and working together before the events

Over 20 workshops took place in creative writing, flag making and lanterns with a variety of different groups in a number of locations, including Cobden Works as part of our first weekend Fun Palace held in October 2017. This was linked to the national [Fun Palace](#) initiative aimed at putting culture at the heart of local communities.

Awarding-winning Manchester-based writer [Louise Wallwein](#) created a short poem that was recorded by a student from Salford University, and visual artists Fi Smith, Jo Foley (supported by Debbie Cunliffe) delivered flag and lantern workshops to create bunting and light for the performance: more information on the partner organisations can be found in the programme for the evening event.

We also worked with the Visual Arts, Dance and Music departments from the University of Salford to create content for the performance, and supplemented this with professional performers Gav Cross (Joseph Brotherton) and Fionnuala Dorrity (the spirit of the Park Keepers). Walk the Plank also attended the Friday Fiesta at the University of Salford to let students – particularly new students – know about the event and the park. Some of the University's Visual Arts team were also in the parade.

A project manager from Walk the Plank supported the Friends of Peel Park and the Park Ranger to programme and deliver the daytime event.

*“It was great seeing how happy the young people were displaying the work they had done, and enjoying the whole project ... the highlight of the project for me was being able to go to Peel Park and see the outcome of making the lanterns”*

**University of Salford lecturer**

3,000 people attended the Fire Garden

288 people participated in the creative workshops and 142 people (including students from University of Salford and Pendleton) volunteered as part of the event

500 people attended the Peel Park Party

For more information on both events please see the programme that was handed out. With the evening Fire Garden there were some challenges as a result of the park not being finished, and this particularly impacted on the dance performance. The daytime event highlighted that the role of the Friends group was changing moving forward to being more hands on rather than lobbying / advocacy.

## AFTER THE EVENT – LEARNINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Debrief meetings took place with:

- Pendleton College
- University of Salford
- Contacts from the workshop programme
- Salford City Council

- Friends of Peel Park

We discussed having a daytime event annually moving forward led by the Friends and a night time event that including both the University of Salford and the local community once every two years.

## **UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES**

The students from Pendleton College have maintained a relationship with Walk the Plank, and have been involved in Manchester Day and Pride 2018

The Working Class Movement Library workshops highlighted that the bones of Thomas Paine had come to Salford nearly 200 years ago in 1819

SAYO Sparky took part in a workshop, visited the event and used some lanterns for the Witches Walk at the end of October. This relationship has continued into 2018 and we are exploring ways of working together in the future

A resident involved in a local flood group has continued to liaise with Walk the Plank and is part of the planning team for our Fun Palace in 2018

*“As it was free (and this was really pushed this in the publicity), lots of families came – young children in prams as well as older children. There was a quality to the Fire Garden of ‘nothing like this ever happens in Salford’ ... only parents and families that have a bit of money left over can see things like this (and not those who have more month than money!): many residents had never experienced anything like that in their local park”*

**East Salford Neighbourhood Officer**

*“Something magical happened somewhere ordinary ... a creative and enriching project that actively engaged local people: a job really well done – would love to see more partnership work in the future”*

**Feedback from delivery partners**