



OPTIONS TO MOVE TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A REPORT FOR NEW MILLS FESTIVAL CIC

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an options appraisal for the future direction of the New Mills Festival and a modelled financial plan for how the festival might move forward with paid resource in place. A new vision and aims for the festival are proposed and recommendations on how the festival could structure its key programmes of activity over the year with associated income targets on the financial plan.

NOTE: Since the writing of the report there have been some changes in the organisation. Although none of the main content has changed some of the key recommendations/options have adapted based on the changes.

INTRODUCTION

New Mills Festival is a vital cultural organisation based in the High Peak, Derbyshire. The festival brings visual art, music, performance to the town every year, and plays a key role in bringing community organisations together to present an opportunity for residents and visitors to engage in two weeks of culture on their doorstep.

New Mills Festival (NMF) has been operating for 30 years and on a busy year, the annual festival events attract up to 30k visitors and the programme includes:

- 2-week annual Community festival
- Music programme spread over the year
- Lantern parade
- Arts Trail

NMF is registered as a community interest company and has a board of Directors. There is a risk that because of the sheer volume of work within the management of the festival that it is not sustainable long term as a volunteer run festival.

The director team want to maintain the high quality and as such, need to source funding to develop the organisation with a clear structure, vision and team to secure the future of the festival for the next generation and maintain its position as a key proposition in the visitor economy and for the local community.

The need to create greater commercial sustainability Furthermore, the festival has recently had a grant rejected because they are concerned about the future sustainability of the organisation.

NEW MILLS FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

New Mills Festival is a registered CIC and has a team of voluntary directors who also manage the operation of the organisation. The New Mills Festival started as a two-week community festival but does much more than this in terms of the programme and the directors are involved with running events throughout the year. Therefore, New Mills Festival is an organisation that does more than just the two-week community festival. The aspiration is for the New Mills Festival organisation to be fully recognised as the anchor cultural institution for New Mills.

The organisation is not currently in receipt of any grants but have been successful in securing some ACE funding for previous projects. There are a number of events during the year that generate income and profit and this report focuses on the four main programmes that the organisation runs.

NEW MILLS FESTIVAL PROGRAMMES

This report will focus on the four 4 key programmes of work that New Mills Festival runs and for the purpose of this report, 'Bubblefest' has been included in the Community Festival.

- 1. Community Festival** – This event runs for two weeks during September and is very well attended. Events and art projects are submitted by local people to the festival committee for inclusion in the programme and organisers curate and produce a series of events that happen over the two weeks. The organisation does not directly run any events during this time except 'Bubblefest' which generates some income. All other events are run by the local community who might sell tickets and donate back to the festival.
- 2. Light Up/Lantern Parade** – This is an extremely well attended event featuring a lantern parade under the town and a street party on the high street. Attendance numbers are capped 7500 to access the lantern parade to ensure that everyone can get through safely and 14,000 in total to the street party. Tickets to the lantern procession are only £1 each to keep the event affordable for local families. Walk the Plank are engaged to run the elements that involve fire. This is the most expensive production that the organisation runs and the last event did not cover cost. The ticketing structure could be amended to ensure that this very popular event contributes back to the organisation. This is currently run at the end of September, directly after the Community Festival but only occurs every other year, alternating with the Arts Trail.
- 3. Arts Trail** – The Arts Trail takes place every other year part of community festival and invites artists, both local and further afield, to submit work. Art is displayed in windows throughout the shops in the town centre and visiting is free. Artists contribute a small fee to cover the cost of the brochure. This is a very fundable activity.
- 4. Music Programme** – The director team run a successful music programme with approximately 4 events taking place over the year with known acts. The last event was 'The Unthanks' at New Mills Art Theatre and tickets sold out. The music programme is ambitious, and events are profitable. There is opportunity to grow this programme to make more financial contribution to the organisation.

VISION, MISSION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

To allow the New Mills Festival to move into a more sustainable future structure we have developed a new Vision, Mission and Aims to give the organisation a clear strategic view on what its purpose is.

We have spent time with the full director team, and more specifically with two of the festival directors. We have run workshops and 1:1 meetings with a view to developing a new core vision/mission for the festival along with aims and objectives.

The purpose of having a robust vision and mission is to create a focussed, but aspirational starting point. A simple aspiration that is easy for people to buy into and to convey a set of guiding aspirations/deliverable outputs to drive the organisation forward from a strategic and operational perspective.

By way of definition, vision is an aspirational statement which is futuristic, and the mission gives more information about how this will be achieved. The aims are the core elements of your mission broken into themed delivery aspects and there are key objectives that sit within these. All of these sit together to provide a clear direction of travel and are hierarchical with different time aspects.

A clear set of aims will also allow the organisation to communicate its purpose more clearly to potential funders and partners and to anyone who has a role working with NMF.

We propose the following for the next 3-5 years:

Vision: Celebrating our vibrant and diverse community

Mission: Growing a thriving and engaged creative community for our town

Aims:

- Remain at the heart of the town as a sustainable community arts organisation that reaches people of all backgrounds (accessibility and inclusion)
- Develop and run an Arts and Music programme that celebrates local community and fosters creative growth (education & talent development)
- Generate opportunities for local people to engage with art that they might not expect to see locally (ambition and quality)
- Positively contribute to the Creative ecosystem by growing and nurturing the network and practitioners (professional development)
- Contribute to a thriving economy in New Mills (business/suppliers)

Objectives:

- Generate footfall from outside the area that contributes to the town economy
- Develop a local volunteer programme that celebrates our community and gives people opportunities to be involved and develop skills
- Run a community steering group that meets regularly and is engaged in the programming
- Develop a fundraising strategy that allows the festival to operate a high-quality operation and sustain a core staff structure

- Create partnership opportunities for local businesses and individuals to show their support to the CIC
- Develop and run an all-year-round programme which features: music, arts and community events. Specifically: Community Festival, Arts Trail, Music Programme, Light Up New Mills
- Offer tools, mentoring and networking opportunities to local people that want to produce events/show work
- Work in partnership with local organisations such as (DCC, MPDD, HPCA, Visit New Mills, The Tent People, Glossop Creates) to ensure a cohesive and marketable offer
- Work with other local creative arts organisations to develop a place-based approach to youth engagement, talent development, funding etc
- Employ a core (staff or freelance) team to lead, coordinate and run the annual programme
- Develop a board of directors that strategically advise, steer and mentor with ultimate responsibility over the successful running of the organisation, but not delivery
- Develop a social and economic impact report with a local academic partner to understand the impact of the festival which can be used in funding bids and communications to partners

With future aspirations set out and an agreed set of objectives this will enable better decision making on what NMF does and how it goes about doing them.

FINANCIAL & RESOURCE PLANNING

In order to put a sustainable financial proposal together that can be delivered by NMF, Field 19 asked the director team to give estimations on the amount of management resource that is currently fulfilled by the volunteer team to run the four events featured in this report. We also requested estimations on income and expenditure for these events.

What is the current situation?

Overall Resource Requirement

- In total, organisers estimate that to run the above events take approx. 88 days of management time over the course of the year (note – this includes the Arts trail as well as the community fest which currently runs every other year)
- In addition to the management, there is also volunteer time required to deliver the marketing and compliance aspects of the festival and this is estimated to be 75 days.

Scheduling

- There are some pinch points within the schedule with the community festival running straight into the lantern parade. This could benefit from developing some space in between the events to ensure enough planning/preparation/production and promotion time, also giving the events clear identities.
- The Arts Trail has been rescoped to run biennially because the resource requirement with everything else is too great.

New Mills Community Festival

- This is made up of events that are run by the community and NMF organisation provide the resource to coordinate and market the activities, which accounts for 22 days of management time.
- NMF do organise one event during the community festival which is the Bubblefest event and this generates profit of approx £1k profit with 6 days of management time.

Music Programme

- Currently, the most profitable strand of work is the music programme which generates a surplus of approx. £5k and goes back into funding the community festival – this requires 10 days of management time.

Light Up/Lantern Parade

- The lantern parade is the 2nd most significant income generator bringing in approx. £14k per year although the cost of running this is higher than the income meaning a shortfall of £7k.
- The lantern parade is historically very well attended, and a ticketing structure was bought in over recent years, tickets only cost £1 and are sold in local shops and online. There is interest from people outside the town and there could be a potential to introduce a 'non-resident' ticket at a higher price, to cover the shortfall and move the event into profit

Community Festival

- The Community Festival should start generating some income and we believe that there is an opportunity for NMF to operate a ticketed opening/closing party for local community/artists. There is also huge potential to develop some corporate sponsorship packages here and to apply for grants - because of the nature of this festival and the fact that positive community

impact through the arts is at its core. We discussed asking the community organisers to contribute but it was felt that this could create a barrier to people taking part.

General

- There are currently no significant sponsors, patrons or partnership packages available at any of the events. This can and should form part of a fundraising strategy and plan for the festival

PROPOSED FINANCIAL PLAN AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Having reviewed the current structure and resource requirements Field 19 have put together a new financial plan which New Mills Festival organisation could work towards over the next 1-5 years. This plan sees the creation of two new two new part time posts to manage and coordinate the annual programme of activity and also to procure some marketing resources.

In addition, the plan requires some changes to the organisational structure and clearer branding to ensure that each of the key strands of work has a financial plan and commercial targets in place.

Possible organisational structure:

New Mills Festival (CIC) the organisation, is rebranded/ recomunicated as a local arts and music organisation that runs a yearly arts programme



Governed by the CIC Directors who provide leadership and oversee the company and the achievement of its strategic vision & aims, including financial sustainability.

Executive Team

PT Project Manager and Project Coordinator who run and organise the key projects under the below sub brands, that make up the annual programme, assisted by a contracted marketing resource to oversee communications including website and social media.



Within these strands of activity, there will be paid production and technical support where needed.

Possible Annual Programme:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Music	Arts Trail		Music		Music	Community Festival		Light Up NM		Music

Financial Plan

The full financial sheet is attached as appendix 2 and the is a shot below with accompanying notes. In summary, the financial plan aims to generates £116.5k from the four strands above which will sustain two part time roles in the core.

INCOME	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
Project Income				
Music Programme Ticket Sales - Event 1	9,500.00	10,925.00	12,563.75	32,988.75
Music Programme Ticket Sales - Event 2	9,500.00	10,925.00	12,563.75	32,988.75
Music Programme Ticket Sales - Event 3	9,500.00	10,925.00	12,563.75	32,988.75
Music Programme Ticket Sales - Event 4	9,500.00	10,925.00	12,563.75	32,988.75
Sub Total	38,000.00	43,700.00	50,255.00	131,955.00
New Mills Community Festival - Launch Night Tickets	4,500.00	5,175.00	5,951.25	15,626.25
New Mills Community Festival - Grant from local councils	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	12,000.00
New Mills Community Festival - Sponsorship from Local Business	5,000.00	6,000.00	7,200.00	18,200.00
New Mills Community Festival - Bucket Collections	2,500.00	2,750.00	3,025.00	8,275.00
Sub Total	16,000.00	17,925.00	20,176.25	54,101.25
Arts Trail - ACE Project Grant	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	30,000.00
Arts Trail - Sponsorship from Local Business	5,000.00	6,000.00	7,200.00	18,200.00
Arts Trail - Bucket Collection	1,000.00	1,100.00	1,210.00	3,310.00
Arts Trail - Grant from Local council	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	6,000.00
Sub Total	18,000.00	19,100.00	20,410.00	57,510.00
Light Up New Mills - Traders pitch fees/other income	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	15,000.00
Light Up New Mills - Ticket Sales	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	45,000.00
Light Up New Mills - ACE Project Grant	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	30,000.00
Light Up New Mills - Bucket Collection	2,500.00	2,750.00	3,025.00	8,275.00
Sub Total	32,500.00	32,750.00	33,025.00	98,275.00
Other Income				
Patrons, partners and individual giving to the NMF Organisation	2,000.00	2,400.00	2,880.00	7,280.00
DCC Grant for Storage Facility	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00	20,000.00
	12,000.00	12,400.00	2,880.00	27,280.00
TOTAL INCOME	116,500.00	125,875.00	126,746.25	369,121.25
Forecast Project Expenditure				
Music Programme - Event 1	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	15,000.00
Music Programme - Event 2	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	15,000.00
Music Programme - Event 3	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	15,000.00
Music Programme - Event 4	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	15,000.00
Community Festival Launch Night	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	6,000.00
Community Festival Other Costs	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	4,800.00
Arts Trail Costs	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	18,000.00
Light Up New Mills - Walk the Plank	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	12,000.00
Light Up New Mills - Other Costs	17,000.00	17,000.00	17,000.00	51,000.00
Sub Total	50,600.00	50,600.00	50,600.00	151,800.00
Other Expenditure (Overheads)				
Storage and workshop facility	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	30,000.00
Insurance and finance support	1,850.00	1,850.00	1,850.00	5,550.00
Project Manager for 30 hours per week (£36k FT)	29,000.00	29,000.00	29,000.00	87,000.00
Project Administrator for 20 hours per week (£25k FT)	13,300.00	13,300.00	13,300.00	39,900.00
IT and Mobile Phone for Staff	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	6,000.00
Freelance Marketing Support (£800 pcm)	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	28,800.00
Sub Total	65,750.00	65,750.00	65,750.00	197,250.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	116,350.00	116,350.00	116,350.00	349,050.00
SURPLUS	150.00	9,525.00	10,396.25	20,071

Notes on financial plan

- The finances included are indicative and aim to show that each event could look to draw upon different income streams to secure a central resource. They are also optimistic and have been developed to show financial sustainability. Any future financial plan would benefit from some scenario planning.
- Music programme based on 4 events generating £9.5k income per event with an average ticket price of £31, selling 300 tickets and an expenditure figure of £5k per event (based on expenditure from last years programme). Showing a 15% increase in income year on year.
- Community Festival Launch Night tickets is based on 300 people paying £15 per ticket. Expenditure for this night is approx. £2k with some equipment/venue gifted in kind
- Community Festival Grant is based on a £5k investment from the local authority or other local funding pot
- Community Festival Sponsorship is based on 10 organisations paying £500 each for a sponsorship package to include branding at events, on programme, VIP tickets to launch night, supporter info on website etc OR 1/2 paying £2500/£5000 for exclusive naming rights
- Community Festival Bucket Collection is based on £250 collected and 10 separate events. This could also be done using wireless card machines at each site and a volunteer at each one.
- Community Festival 'Other Costs' is taken from the costs given for previous years.
- Arts Trail bucket collection based on 1000 attendees donating £1 each.
- Arts trail local council grant based on securing £2k from HPBC or NMTC as a contribution towards the event.
- Arts Trail Sponsorship is based on 10 organisations paying £500 each for a sponsorship package to include branding at events, on programme, VIP tickets to launch night, supporter info on website etc.
- Arts trail cost is based on £6k of the ACE grant being spent on the direct project costs and a £4k contribution to overhead.
- Light Up New Mills traders fee and other income based on figures given for last years event
- Light Up ticket sales based on 7500 paying on average £2 each (this could be split between residents/non-residents with different ticket prices).
- There are two core roles included in this plan and the values shown are for approx. 20/30 hours. There is some headroom in here to cover on costs such as NI but if taken forward this should be assessed in more details.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

There are various ways that NMF could choose to progress to achieve the proposed vision, aims and to begin working towards a sustainable financial plan as proposed above. The next part of this report analyses the strengths and weaknesses of four options.

Option 1 – Change Nothing

Description	The CIC director team continue to run the NMF events as a volunteer team. The team is at capacity and has no additional time or resource to develop commercially or to be more ambitious with its artistic programme. There are no surplus funds to pay staff and there is no formal fundraising strategy in place.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone understands the current process and there are systems in place • Good relationships and people will get stuck in (good will) • The community appreciate the organisation and the work it does
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to be able to secure core resource • Puts a lot of pressure on certain individuals who are not paid to do the work they do. • Organisations run purely by volunteers are not seen as sustainable by arts funding organisations • Members of the team feel overwhelmed, and motivation is low • Creativity and more strategic thinking are stifled because people are stuck in the doing and the detail
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a well-respected organisation and event and there is a lot of good will from the community
Threats/Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The festival directors may leave putting the event at risk • The main producer/director leaves • There is no continuation plan in place, and it may be hard to attract someone else into this role as there is a lot of responsibility that comes with it.

Option 2 – Raise capital through 2022 fest and bring freelance producer in

Description	Use festival capital to bring in a resource to produce specific element of the festival (music) with a focus on securing new income and increasing revenue. Whilst this resource is in place the director team can focus on developing a commercial fundraising strategy and looking at how each of the strands of NMF are branded and communicated.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can start to develop a commercial blueprint for other strands ● Get expert and specialist resource with previous experience ● First step towards engaging paid resource ● Contracted staff is more flexible than directly employed
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A specialist freelance producer with the right skills will cost more than directly employing someone ● They could work with NMF for six months and then go – the brief needs to be very clear about what needs to be delivered and not watered down with administration.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn from a professional that has experience of paid work within the industry ● Open a new professional network and possible future resource ● Create a longer-term plan for the music programme with good financial sustainability
Threats/Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The producer may get drawn into other elements of delivery without a clearly structured brief/contract

Option 3 – Develop a fundraising and commercial strategy, then employ people

Description	Use festival capital to bring in a specialist consultant develop and implement a fundraising strategy over six - twelve months, secure funds and bring in core staff as per the proposed financial plan.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting a specialist organisation to look at the revenue streams, branding and commercials will provide a route map to becoming a sustainable organisation ● Will allow the organisation to go for grants and bids with a clearer view on the future sustainability ● The festival director team could train people up and have paid resource to manage the events and fundraising. ● Once in place, the director team could be freed up to pursue other creative endeavours, building relationships with key stakeholders/funders and to provide the strategic street to the employed team.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The longer duration of this option my lead to continued burn out of festival director ● The organisation is still quite complex and more work would need to be done on getting the structure right before procuring a fundraising consultant
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting the fundraising strategy in place will lead to greater long-term sustainability ● Taking the time to develop a fundraising plan first would give the organisation more confidence about the appointment of a member of staff ● It would also allow the team to get the required HR policies and procedures in place ● The time spent during the fundraising development could be used to offer the director team some board training
Threats/Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The main festival director may leave putting the while event at risk

Option 4 – Strip the programme back

Description	Reduce the amount of work that needs to be done by removing some of the strands of work from the CIC organisation. For example, could the lantern parade be given to another organisation to run?
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would allow the team to focus on a couple of key events and ensure that the marketing and quality is as expected, whilst ensuring that there is not too much on any one volunteer
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volunteer model is not deemed good practice by funders such as Arts Council and the continuation of this long term could lead to more failed funding bids. From an inclusion and equality perspective funders believe that people should be paid fairly for the work they do.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having someone employed in a role to develop a commercial blueprint and partnership arrangement could be enough to start to apply for grants to generate more income leading to greater sustainability
Threats/Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a risk of bringing someone on and the music programme not generating as much revenue as projected putting income at risk • The organisation structure and branding around the music programme will need to be adopted or it will be more difficult to sell to partners.

Option 5 – Pause and Review

Description	Take into account all of the options listed and discussed and take some time to review the best direction of travel. Part of this option could also include the identification of key business and delivery partners that could get more involved to help move the festival forward in a more sustainable way inviting businesses to work with the CIC director team in a more strategic/commercial way.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would allow the team to give this decision enough time and thoroughly think through the implications
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be no events in 2023
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By reflecting and taking a different approach NMF could improve the structure of the delivery model • Equally, if the decision is taken to discontinue, opportunity for other events may emerge
Threats/Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biggest risk would be to pause and then go again with the same volunteer-based model. The organisation would be no further forward in terms of sustainability and the pressure would be shifted to other volunteers who may or may not have the skills to deliver events safely.

Summary

Having analysed the options and discussed with festival directors at a meeting 1st November 2022, option 5 has been agreed as the best option. After pausing and reviewing, it might be that there are different elements of this report put forward for consideration by directors to the community.

Before the above was settled upon, option 2 was seen as providing a good first opportunity for the festival to work with a paid producer and start to get a blueprint for the other strands. Whilst this is happening, the director team could also look to bring in some fundraising support which would cover elements of option 3. NMF could review progress after 6-12 months and if there is no progression, move to option 4.

CONCLUSIONS

NMF events are well attended and well respected by the local community, which is exactly what this organisation is about. All are organised by a purely volunteer team who love what they do but are running out of momentum to keep going in the way that they are.

The festival needs some paid staff who will manage and coordinate the programme, allowing the festival director team to become the strategic governance of the CIC ensuring that it hits its aims and is commercially sustainable, which will also allow it to secure additional funding.

Across the board on the community events, ticket prices are low and income limited meaning that there is only just enough to cover the project cost, with no surplus contribution to overhead. There is scope here to increase income partly through increasing ticket prices (without creating a barrier to attend) but also by introducing more of the events that are profitable (music) and by securing funding for the community festival and Arts Trail.

Therefore, in order to move forward in the most sustainable way, the organisation will either need to employ specialist resource on a freelance basis to run elements of the CICs work, taking the pressure off to allow directors to look at the fundraising strategy, OR strip back its work and rebuild when more funds come in.

The risk of continuing as is could lead to burn out of people and will not lead to any further strategic thinking around direction, funding and ultimately on the quality of what the NMF presents for the town. In a worst-case scenario, key members of the team could choose to leave with no succession plan in place thus putting the whole festival at risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. New Mills Festival CIC becomes the organisation that adopts the above vision, aims and objectives which should be owned at a strategic level by the directors. There may need to be some repositioning work on the NMF brand as an organisation that runs events and programmes throughout the year.
2. Create clear public identities for each of the key projects that NMF runs and structure as a programme of work that runs throughout the year and consider working towards an annual programme that spreads events equally across the year to reduce pinch points and enable resource to be more equally spread over the year both in terms of management/effectively as possible.
3. NMF becomes a commissioning organisation that works with key partners to develop and deliver the core strands of activity that are central to the vision/mission. This could be on a risk or reward basis where the identified partner would build a commercial model, resource the activity and work with NMF to market the programme. This would need to be a phased approach.
4. Develop a commercial and fundraising strategy and plan that will enable NMF to provide a centralised resource to coordinate and market activities – this could be outsourced to a marketing or advertising specialist.