
Dorset AONB's Maiden Castle takes centre stage in powerful new short film celebrating the region's beauty - safeguarding it for future generations

Local people can support *Green Space Dark Skies* by submitting their own stories of landscape memories

A powerful new film is celebrating an extraordinary gathering that took place in Maiden Castle, Dorset AONB last month. Artists and community groups from around the region came together on 11 June, as part of the UK-wide project **Green Space Dark Skies**, led by Walk the Plank as part of the UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK festival.

Together, they explored Dorset AONB's extraordinary landscape by making a magical journey at dusk. Across a stunning tableau of poetry & performance, music & dance and low impact light art they created something truly remarkable. This gathering was captured and is now released as a film available to watch **INSERT WEB LINK HERE**.

Green Space Dark Skies has been designed to draw attention to how we safeguard the future of our countryside and our rights to access it. The Dorset event was one of a series being made at rural locations across the UK. And there are still opportunities for people to get involved by submitting their own experiences and memories of being in the landscape to the Green Space Dark Skies' citizen science survey: <https://greenspacedarkskies.uk/green-space-stories/>.

The short film's energy shows how Green Space Dark Skies brought diverse groups together – the low impact Geolights showing the joy & delight on participants' faces.

The words of poet and writer Zakiya McKenzie were central to the live gathering and narrate the film.

In her words: *"This place sprawls across time. Telling the tale of ground packed and bound by those who placed evergreen stories within reach. Stories in safe keep. Across ramparts and mound with beauty beneath. We dig for old fragments and assemble them until night..."*

Participants in the film were part of creating the artwork in the landscape using movement and specially designed Geolights by graduate engineers at Siemens. The creative team for the gathering was led by local producers Activate Performing Arts. Dorchester rapper Isaiah Dreads and choreographer Subathra Subramaniam joined Zakiya McKenzie in devising a unique atmosphere.

Subathra Subramaniam said: *"Watching 600 people do the Namaskar together was incredible. The silence and the focus in that space was magical. Not just watching it - but being part of it. The participation in Dorset AONB was truly beautiful, the commitment people had to be together and really be part of something."*

"I'll never forget the energy and the joy that was present from the moment people arrived to the moment they left. You could see it, hear it and feel it. It was a shared joy. Choreographing that many people was a very humbling and special experience for me."

Subathra is confident the gathering will have a lasting legacy for Dorset AONB. She added: *"Lots of people had never been to that site before. I hope it's given them a sense of what it can be like in those spaces - and hopefully they'll be back to enjoy it and be outdoors more in the future. And the important thing to understand is that these big participatory arts experiences are happening all around the country, they're available and inclusive for everyone."*

Rapper Isaiah Dreads said: *"I had the chance to be musical director for this project and made a selection of tracks made from natural sounds recorded in Dorset AONB. I have written countless songs in the same location the event took place and it was sick to see it filled with people having a good time. Things that get people together to appreciate our county can only be a positive. My highlight was seeing everyone holding their lights and moving in sync, I loved seeing everything come to life."*

Engaging with diverse audiences who don't usually access the great outdoors is key to Green Space Dark Skies. Among the Dorset community groups who took part in the gathering and feature in the film are: 13th Weymouth Guides, Allsort'd, Arts University Bournemouth, Big4Littlemoor, Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Indian Community, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole looked-after Children & their foster families, Chapelhay community members, Dorchester Islamic Centre, Dorset Blind, Grace the Space, The Parks Foundation Parks in Mind group, and People First Dorset.

Emily & William, from People First in Dorset, said: *"The final movement involved all groups coming together to make a tear drop. Our group was right in the centre. At the end we all clapped to say thank you. We both felt privileged to be there, especially as we'd never done anything like this before, with so many people being part of something bigger and celebrating nature together, in particular our local magical hillfort. The whole experience was different, exciting and moving."*

Dorset-based Activate Performing Arts work around the South West and exist to uplift and connect people by bringing extraordinary events to unexpected places. Kate Wood, the organisation's executive and artistic director said: *"We were so pleased to work with such a wonderful team, the artists, production, volunteers and participants who made the event a real success. You can see the joy reflected in the film. The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a truly inspiring landscape and we hope the event and the film shows the importance of our green spaces through a creative act."*

Green Space Dark Skies is led by Walk the Plank and commissioned by UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, the ground-breaking UK-wide celebration of creativity in 2022. It is one of ten commissions developed with expert teams built around STEAM: Science, Technology Engineering, Arts, Maths.

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK said: *"Green Space Dark Skies perfectly demonstrates the innovation and creativity we have seen harnessed through the development of the ten UNBOXED projects to explore new ideas for a better future. By engaging artists, engineers, landowners and members of the public to create a series of unique experiences, Green Space Dark Skies will both enhance people's understanding of our natural environment and relationship to the countryside as well as show the power of creativity to inspire change."*

The Green Space Dark Skies journey continues across the UK until September. Everyone is welcome to become a Lumenator and help create art within beautiful landscapes.

Green Spaces Dark Skies: <https://greenspacedarkskies.uk/>

Green Space Stories: <https://greenspacedarkskies.uk/green-space-stories/>

UNBOXED: <https://unboxed2022.uk/>

For further information and images

Green Space Dark Skies regional, please contact Paul Drury-Bradey | Culture and Social Impact | paul@cultureandsocialimpact.co.uk | 0751 3121502

Images can be downloaded at <https://greenspacedarkskies.uk/media-centre>

For UNBOXED, please contact Jeanette.Ward@unboxed2022.uk | 07729 930 812

Listings information

Green Space Dark Skies part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

23 April – 30 September 2022

About Green Space Dark Skies

Green Space Dark Skies is part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, is produced by UK outdoor arts pioneers Walk the Plank working in collaboration with technology company Siemens, the University of Salford, National Parks UK and The National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which are responsible for the management of the project's event sites; and working with diverse artists and creative collaborators in different locations, including integrated circus company Extraordinary Bodies, the

collaboration between Diverse City and Cirque Bijou, Activate Performing Arts, film production company CC-Lab and Red Herring Productions.

About UNBOXED

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions and bring people together. It features free large-scale events, installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities take place from 1 March to 2 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Dover and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

About Walk the Plank

Walk the Plank's team of outdoor art experts work together to dream up, create and produce outstanding moments of outdoor theatre and participation. They have a long track record of making large-scale events that bring people together in public celebration. This is based on their ability to come up with big ideas that connect people from all paths in life. Storytelling is at the heart of everything they do, and the arena for their work is the great outdoors. Their mission is to enrich lives through shared creative experiences.

About UK National Parks

There are 15 National Parks in the UK, covering 10% of Great Britain.

National Parks are visited over 100 million times each year. 2021 saw the 70th anniversary of the first four National Parks – Peak District, Dartmoor, Lake District and Snowdonia.

About Siemens

Siemens is a technology company focused on industry, infrastructure, transport and healthcare.

From more resource-efficient factories, resilient supply chains, and smarter buildings and grids, to cleaner and more comfortable transportation as well as advanced healthcare, the company creates technology with purpose adding real value for customers. By combining real and digital worlds, Siemens empowers its customers to transform their industries and markets, helping them to transform the everyday for billions of people.

About Activate Performing Arts

Activate exists to promote, support and produce performing arts projects in our communities. Bringing world-class events to unexpected places, like town centres, village squares, beaches and hilltops. And we've been doing it for over 30 years. Our aim is to break down barriers and reach the widest possible audiences, while celebrating our natural landscape and sense of place. Supporting our performing arts community is at the heart of everything we do. We bring people together, offer advice, and provide access to learning and resources. In everything we do, we have just two rules. **Anything's possible. And everyone's invited.**

About The University of Salford

The University of Salford is located in the heart of Greater Manchester. They have more than 20,000 students, 2,000 staff and a global community of over 170,000 alumni. They pioneer exceptional industry partnerships leading the way in real world experiences by preparing students for life. They work with industry to co-create the curriculum producing job-ready graduates primarily in health and wellbeing, engineering, digital and creative sectors. They are continuing to invest in their campus and facilities with a £300 million masterplan that will make them fit for the future.

About The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of AONBs. It does this by taking a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with our membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals.

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