



CREATIVITY IN THE UK

Press release

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CREATED BY THOUSANDS, ENJOYED BY MILLIONS DATA RELEASED FOR UNBOXED: CREATIVITY IN THE UK

- UK-wide programme of ten major commissions achieves audience of 18 million through live, digital and broadcast
- Delivered across the four nations of the UK, the programme sets a new model for cultural programming, with investment in cross-sector creativity and collaboration
- 1.7 million young people and families have taken part in UK-wide learning, volunteer and participation activities
- More than 6,000 jobs and paid development opportunities have been supported across science, engineering, technology and the arts

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, today announces data setting out the impact of its entirely free programme of ten major commissions delivered across the four nations of the UK in 2022. Designed to be accessible and inclusive to all, UNBOXED has brought people together at live events throughout the UK, and through digital and broadcast content, achieving an audience of over 18 million. The announcement marks the close of the live programme at the weekend.

Live events have been attended by 2.8 million in 107 UK-wide locations featuring thousands of individual community events; 13.5 million have engaged with content commissioned for broadcast and digital platforms – a number that continues to grow; and 1.7 million have taken part in learning, volunteer and community participation activities. Many of the locations throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are towns, cities and rural areas less well served by major cultural programmes. The programme has explored important new ideas and possibilities for the future, from sustainability to the power of the human mind, to innovative new ways of storytelling.

Learning, volunteering and public participation opportunities, throughout the UK and online, include school trips, lessons, assemblies and workshops, poetry and coding competitions, community growing initiatives and citizen science projects. Schoolchildren and families have taken part in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths (STEAM) activities that were linked to the curricula in each of the four nations.

UNBOXED has contributed to the UK's creative landscape through investment in research and innovation and by supporting more than 6,000 employment and paid development opportunities. The programme has explored new ideas through a unique cross-sector collaborative approach to programming that featured funded research and development during the pandemic, supporting many creative organisations and freelancers through that period.

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Creatives from science, technology, engineering and the arts (STEAM) have been supported to design and deliver the programme from neuroscientists, astrophysicists, computer programmers and structural engineers to poets, musicians, artists and set designers to create pioneering projects. Young and emerging creatives have also been given access to training to develop their professional skills and gain valuable experience.

Phil Batty, Executive Director, UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said: “From the outset, UNBOXED has invested in new collaboration between organisations and individuals that drew on the creative innovation within science, technology, engineering and maths, as well as the arts. It has enabled thousands of creative minds to experiment and work together on major creative projects, producing a groundbreaking programme designed to explore new ideas. I am proud that through UNBOXED, we have been able to create joyful memories for millions of people in communities across the UK.”

Dame Vikki Heywood DBE, Chair of Board, UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said: “I am delighted that we are able to demonstrate the significant impact of the work of thousands who created a festival enjoyed by millions. The scale and ambition of UNBOXED underlines the breadth of the creative engagement in the population of the UK and demonstrates the value and power of creativity to transform how we live together and understand each other.

“The legacy of this programme of thousands of events and activities in 107 places, broadcast across the UK and reaching 85 countries will be wide-reaching, from permanent and touring installations for future public entertainment, to improvements in learning through scientific research and teaching resources. The personal impact on the thousands of young people who have been involved in UNBOXED has been inspirational. UNBOXED is proud of the strong part it has played in the COVID recovery of the UK.”

The UNBOXED international programme has reached over 85 countries, and forged new cultural collaborations and shared experiences, to showcase UK creativity. The programme brought together a global community of researchers and practitioners to further vital conversations about the role of collective creativity and innovation in building better futures.

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. Northern Irish, Scottish and Wales creative talent has been showcased in each of their respective nations through the commissions *Our Place in Space*, *Dandelion* and *GALWAD: A story from the future*.

Minister for Sport, Tourism and Civil Society, Stuart Andrew MP, said: “Since March, ten groundbreaking commissions have taken culture to the doorsteps of millions in communities right across the UK. UNBOXED formed innovative creative coalitions in programming that inspired people who attended events, got involved online or watched on TV.

“As the festival draws to a close, the scale and reach of this project and what it has achieved is clear to see. UNBOXED has pulled in new audiences to arts and culture, brought people together and showcased the world-leading creative talent and innovation we have right here on our shores.”

Department for Culture Permanent Secretary, Colum Boyle, said: “Northern Ireland has been fortunate to have a number of the UNBOXED commissions visit our shores over the past year. Collaborations such as our own *Our Place in Space*, show what can be achieved when our creative, science, technology and art sectors work together. The legacy of this festival will benefit local communities for years to come.”

Scottish Government’s Culture Minister Neil Gray said: “I’m pleased that we have had the opportunity to engage with the many Dandelion events and activities here in Scotland. Dandelion saw thousands of jobs supported for creatives and contractors. There were also great levels of participation with nearly 600,000 people taking part including nearly 90,000 school pupils and over 500 communities being encouraged to sow, grow and share – for years to come.”

Dawn Bowden, Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, said: “I was delighted to take part in many events associated with GALWAD which was an exciting celebration of creativity, based on co-creating, and involving diverse communities right across Wales.

“The work of GALWAD championed the Welsh Well-being of Future Generations Act, as well as being a showcase to Welsh creative talent on an international stage. It was also an investment in the creative and cultural sectors, creating opportunities for under-represented talent and supporting the creative industries.”

A final evaluation of the programme is being undertaken by KMPG on behalf of all four governments and the four delivery agencies, which will be published in early 2023.

Download UNBOXED commission images: <https://bit.ly/37WtAUl>

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Notes to editors

1. **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. Live events and activities have taken place from 1 March to 20 November 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Southampton and from Omagh to Swansea, and across broadcast 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.

The UNBOXED projects were commissioned following a paid three-month research and development (R&D) programme, from November 2020 to January 2021. The rigorous assessment process involved more than 500 creatives, including more than 100 freelancers from across the UK, drawn from science, technology, engineering, arts and maths. The original open call-out for the R&D resulted in 299 submissions, involving almost 3,000 individuals and organisations.

2. About the ten UNBOXED commissions

UNBOXED commissions have created opportunities for families and communities to come together and reflect on who we are and how we connect with one another. [About Us](#) is a journey through 13.8 billion years of history from the Big Bang to the present day told through a spectacular lightshow combining an original score by composer and musician Nitin Sawhney CBE, choirs, poetry and multimedia installation in Paisley, Derry-Londonderry, Caernarfon, Luton, Hull and London. [Our Place in Space](#) is a scale version of our solar system as an 8.5km sculptural trail, designed by artist and author Oliver Jeffers with astrophysicist Professor Stephen Smartt. The Our Place in Space trails have been visited four locations – Derry-Londonderry, Belfast, Cambridge and Liverpool – and will open at the Ulster Transport Museum in the spring.

UNBOXED commissions have explored new ways of telling stories through digital and broadcast media. [Green Space Dark Skies](#) is a series of compelling films created in some of the UK's most outstanding landscapes with a finale shown as part of a BBC Countryfile special. The project invites us to consider how we care for our natural world. Siemens graduate engineers developed low emission geo-positioning lighting for the project, which have the potential to change the outdoor events sector. Inspired by Wales' Future Generations Act, [GALWAD: A story from our future](#), commissioned by Creative Wales, is a human story of contemporary Wales that offers a glimpse of Wales 30 years from now and asks what would happen if the future tried to contact us. GALWAD has showcased a new kind of innovative cultural event with a story told in real-time, over the course of a week, blending live performance, digital and TV drama in Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Ffestiniog. It culminated in a four-hour finale on Sky Arts.

Commissions have offered opportunities for young and emerging creatives to develop their professional skills. [StoryTrails](#) is the UK's largest immersive story-telling experience inviting people to experience towns and cities around the UK like they have never seen before through 3D, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and an immersive cycloramic cinema. 50 emerging creatives have been recruited and trained in the innovative use of new technologies to bring StoryTrails to life, in the libraries of their hometowns. 15 libraries, in Blackpool, Bradford, Dundee, Dumfries, Omagh, Newport, Sheffield, Lambeth, Lincoln, Southwark and Swansea, have played host to StoryTrails in a partnership with The Reading Agency and access to the project continues in each location through the technology by UNBOXED.

Central to the UNBOXED programme is cross-sector creative collaboration. [SEE MONSTER](#) combines engineering, science and art to transform a decommissioned North Sea offshore platform into one of the UK's largest public art installations. This world-first aims to inspire conversations about reuse, renewables and the great British weather. SEE MONSTER was located on the seafront in Weston-super-Mare where it extended the tourist season for the town. [Dreamachine](#) is a powerful new immersive experience exploring the limitless potential of the human mind. It brought together Turner Prize-winning artists Assemble, Grammy and Mercury nominated composer Jon Hopkins, Professor Cognitive and Computational Neuroscience at the University of Sussex, Anil Seth and a team of leading technologists, scientists and philosophers and has led to original scientific research into the way our minds are unique.

[Tour de Moon](#), a festival created by and for young people, travelled in convoy around England, to Bletchley, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Grimsby, Huddersfield, Blackburn, Barrow in Furness, Newcastle, Plymouth, Southampton, Farnborough, Crawley and London, with a mission to imagine better futures. Hundreds of young people, aged 18 to 25, have been supported to develop new work for the project.

Community participation has played an important role in the UNBOXED programme. [PoliNations](#), a spectacular city centre garden in Birmingham, celebrated the diversity of the UK through the lens of its

plant life. Giant architectural trees and thousands of plants transformed Victoria Square into an urban oasis, hosting free events, workshops and performances including live music, dance, spoken word and drag. People were brought together to contribute to the planting and the space also became a place for quiet contemplation for the people of Birmingham. [Dandelion](#), commissioned by EventScotland, celebrates sustainability through community growing, bringing together music and art with science and technology to inspire people to 'sow, grow and share' food, ideas and stories. The programme engaged with people in towns, cities and villages all over Scotland, in urban and rural settings from the Borders to the Western Isles, creating new points of connection for individuals and communities, through events, festivals, installations, learning and community engagement.