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Ring of Gullion
Landscape Partnership



Project Evaluation Final Evaluation Report

February 2017



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1.1 BESSBROOK MODEL VILLAGE PROJECT

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council secured £55,000 to deliver the Bessbrook Model Village project through the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership. This project allowed the unique and rich history and heritage of Bessbrook as a model village to be re-engaged and better interpreted. Much of this history and its connection with its people had been lost in recent times.

It aimed to do this by creating innovative interpretation, developing the local skills, knowledge base and networks, engaging with the local community in a fun way and hosting intergenerational and cross community workshops. The Model Village Project aimed to deliver the following:

1. A fun interactive website and a searchable artefact database. Artefact's images and information will be gathered at community 'Show and Tell' events, and from the local primary school's small private collection.
2. Six historical docu-dramas - a mix of interviews and scripted historical dramas to interpret the most fascinating historical events of Bessbrook's history.
3. Secondary school children and NEETs trained in a combination of the following; Media; Art for community engagement; or Artefact and historical interpretation.
4. A strong community network that bridges the political, religious and generational divide.

1.2 BESSBROOK MODEL VILLAGE PROJECT BACKGROUND

Bessbrook grew up around the linen industry, and was named after its founders wife, Elizabeth (Bess) Nicholson and the river (brook) that runs through it. It was founded as a model village – 'model' being used in the sense of an ideal to which other developments could aspire, with spacious streets and squares surrounding a large linen mill owned by the Quaker Richardson family. As a social experiment it is similar to the model of the better-known Bournville company town founded by the Cadbury family near Birmingham, England, however it predates this development by more than 30 years. It is likely that the precedent on which it was based was the industrial village at Portlaw, County Waterford, Ireland, founded in 1825 by the Quaker Malcolmsen family.

Among the principles on which the village was based was a philosophy of 'Three P's' - there should be no public houses, no pawn shops and no police. It was the Richardson's belief that without a public house there would be no need for a pawn brokers or police station, and it remains that way today. At one time, Bessbrook linen was among the finest in the world and the mill provided most of the employment in the village. Tenement houses were constructed for the mill workers, many of which were of such good quality that they are still inhabited today. Each house also had an allotment garden for the growing of vegetables, and the area of the village where they were situated is still known as 'The Gardens', although the allotments themselves have been replaced by further housing. Most of the buildings in the village are constructed of local granite.

Bessbrook is an unusually mixed village, with representation of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic denominations. The village also has a Quaker meeting house. This is set in the demesne of The Woodhouse, which was inhabited by the Richardson family until the 1980s.

In recent times the model village's varied history and the connection with its people has been lost. Much of this heritage project focused on capturing memories, culture and traditions and creating a collection of objects (arts workshops, photographs, documents, books, etc.) to illustrate what life was like living in a self-contained model village through key periods in its history - from its establishment through to the closure of the mill, during 'the Troubles' and through to the current day. The project aims to engage and better interpret Bessbrook's heritage and allow people to be proud of their village again.

1.3 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation report is to provide an independent, post programme review of the Bessbrook Model Village project. This evaluation process has assessed the overall project delivery since commencement in September 2016.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To evidence programme impacts in line with agreed targets and performance measures a number of consultation activities were utilised. Both qualitative and quantitative measures were employed to gather this information. This included:

- Review of the background information, HLF correspondence and award letter.
- Review of interim evaluation pro-forma completed by Programme Coordinator.
- Ongoing liaison with Programme Coordinator throughout duration of programme delivery.
- Direct consultation using interview, facilitated sessions and telephone consultation with:
 - Project beneficiaries (54)
 - Steering group members (2)
 - Service provider (1).
- Attendance and observation of programme delivery:
 - Show and Tell event
 - Project Launch
 - Media training session
- Online survey – issued to participant sample (25)

The information gathered from this process has been analysed and presented in this section using the following structure:

- Quantitative Evaluation Findings
- Participant Survey Findings
- Qualitative Evaluation Findings



2.2 QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION FINDINGS

To provide a context within which further findings can be set and analysed the programme's quantitative findings are presented below:

Arts Workshops

Primary Schools

SCHOOL	WORKSHOPS	PARTICIPANTS
Bessbrook Primary School	3	57
St Joseph's Primary School	4	128
St Peters Primary School	3	87
TOTAL	10	272

Post Primary Schools

GROUP	WORKSHOPS	PARTICIPANTS
St Pauls High School	4	120
Newry High School	4	120
Newtownhamilton High School	4	80
TOTAL	12	320

Community Groups

GROUP	WORKSHOPS	PARTICIPANTS
Bessbrook Chest Heart and Stroke	4	80
Bessbrook Irish Language Group.	2	24
Bessbrook Library	2	12
Bessbrook Day Opportunities at the Arc	2	20
St Joseph's Primary School	1	30
St Peters Primary School	1	30
Bessbrook Primary School	2	60
TOTAL	14	256

In total **36 workshops** were delivered engaging **848 participants**.

Project Launch Event

A formal project launch event was held 6th June 2017 in the Bessbrook Town hall. Whilst the programme delivery had commenced in late 2016 this was an opportunity to invite key stakeholders to a formal programme launch. It took the form of a question and answer session with a panel of local 'personalities' Alf McCreary and Graham McAleer, who had grown up in the Bessbrook and worked in the local mill etc.

Show and Tell Activity

An event held on 4th July 2017 in Bessbrook Town hall which allowed residents to bring artefacts and items of historical and cultural significance to Bessbrook. The event also presented an opportunity to have these items examined by museum curators, as well as being photographed and scanned for inclusion in the Living History online resource.

Living History Resource

A local school has a mini museum which contains artefacts donated by local residents. Its location and the issues surrounding school access (term time, opening hours and child protection etc.) has meant access to this valuable resource has been severely limited. This programme element saw the recording, photographing / scanning and uploading of this information in to an online format and essentially a Living History Resource. It was complemented by a show and tell event (detail above) that encouraged residents to bring along and have documented their artefacts / items of cultural importance. The documented information was also incorporated into the Living History Resource. To date, the Living History Resource has recorded and documented dozens of artefacts / items and can be accessed by www.bessbrook.org

Media Training / Docu-Dramas

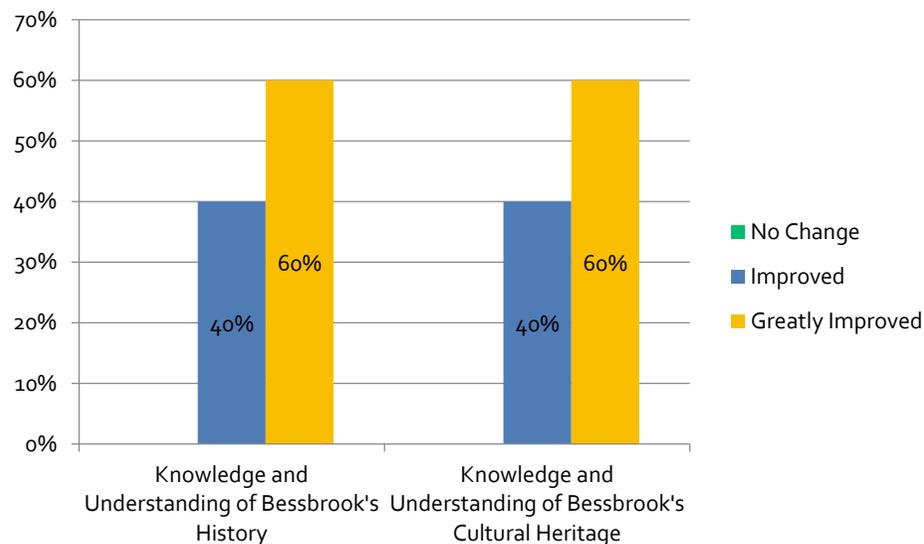
Five NEET young people engaged in a programme of media training (six sessions) which culminated in the production of 6 docu-dramas. With the support of the media training provider, the young people were responsible for the scripting, filming and producing short films (five-seven minutes in duration), which were based on historical and cultural heritage themes (between 1850-1920). The themes included:

1. The Mill
2. The Tramway
3. The Village
4. The National School
5. Derrymore House
6. The Bessbrook Model Village Archive Project

2.3 PARTICIPANT SURVEY FINDINGS

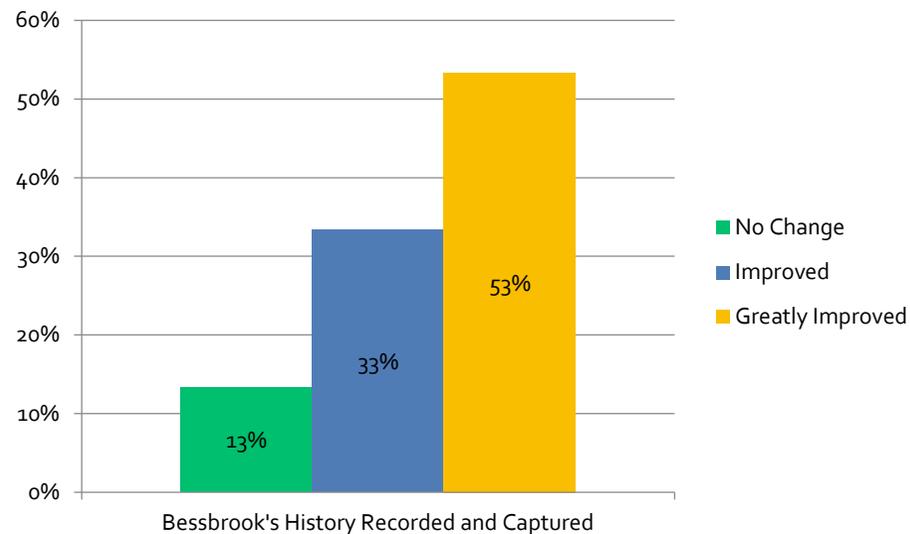
In total 25 individuals and groups responded to the participant survey. The following text presents finding emerging from these responses.

Knowledge and Understanding Of Bessbrook's History and Cultural Heritage



The graph shows all respondents indicated their knowledge and understanding of Bessbrook's history and its cultural heritage had either improved (40%) or greatly improved (60%). Further comments indicated that whilst many had a fair level of knowledge and understanding the project allowed this to be expanded and increased using dedicated cultural heritage programme content, particularly examining village residents and their stories, as well as the various buildings / physical heritage in the area. Respondents also suggested the programme delivery exceeded their expectations.

Capturing and Recording Bessbrook's History for Future Generations

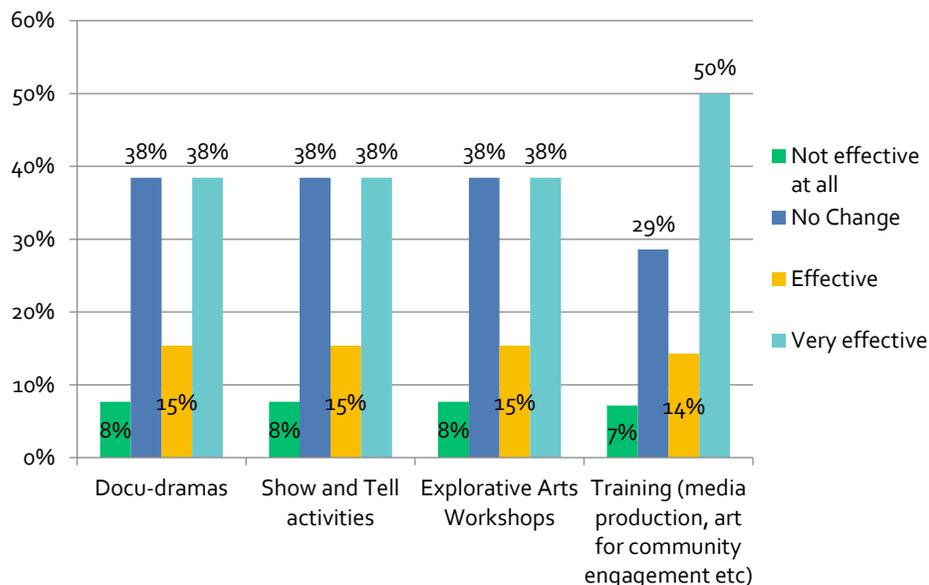


In total, 86% of respondents indicated recording and capturing Bessbrook's history for future generations had either improved (33%) or greatly improved (53%). 13% of respondents suggested there was no change in their opinion as a result of the programme delivery.

There was a feeling the archiving and artefact database programme element had played an important role in this capturing and recording process, but the promotions and profiling of its availability and accessibility could be improved to allow a greater number of people the opportunity to avail of it. It is worth noting that the archive will be live at the end of September 2017 and this is likely to improve respondents feedback

Effectiveness of Programme Methods to Gather and Record Bessbrook's Historical Information

Respondents were asked which of the programme elements represented an effective way of gathering and recording the village's historical information. Options included the four main programme elements – Docu-dramas; Show and Tell activities; Explorative Arts Workshops; and Training (media production and art for community engagement etc.). The graph below outlines these responses:

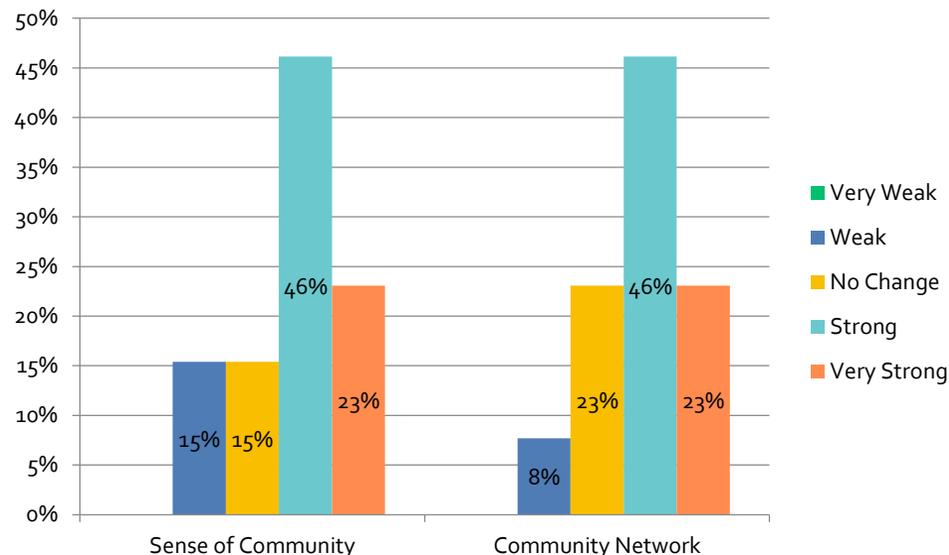


Combining the number of respondents indicating the programme gathering and recording methods were either effective or very effective gave a total of 53% across Docu-dramas, Show and Tell activities, and Explorative Arts Workshops. Similarly, combining the same responses for training represented a total of 64%. Of interest, across the Docu-dramas, Show and Tell activities, and Explorative Arts Workshops the same number of respondents indicated No Change as those who indicated they were very effective (38%). Respondents outlined that programme elements were innovative and used different approaches to engage specific target audiences. Particular reference was made to the very successful Show and Tell activities.

8% of respondents indicated all four programme elements were not effective at all in gathering and recording Bessbrook's history. When probed regarding this perception it was obvious the respondents had little or no knowledge of these programme elements and expressed an interest in accessing further information.

Sense of Community and Community Network Strength

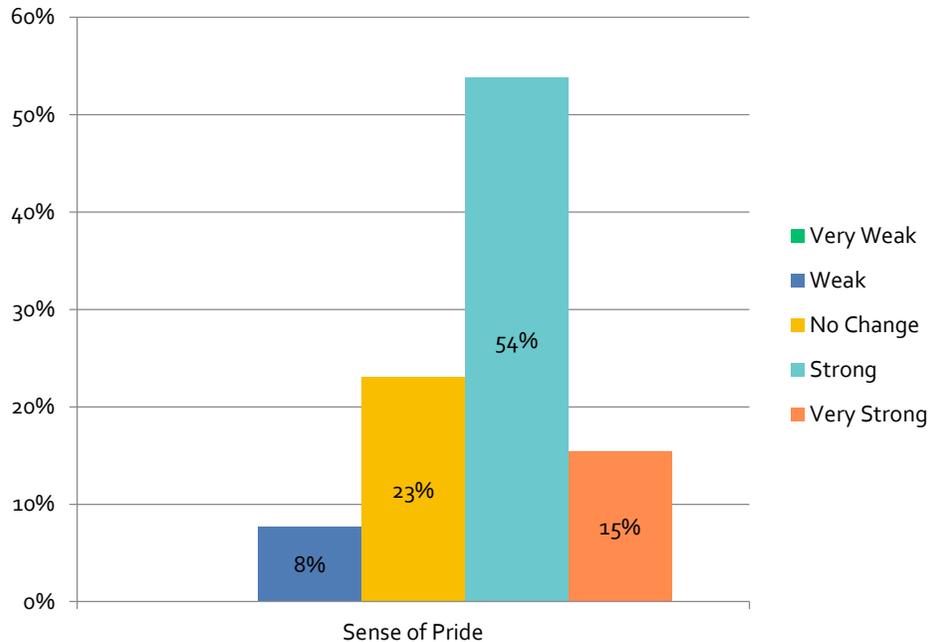
Respondents were asked how they felt the programme had impacted the Sense of Community and the Community Network in the village. The table below presents their feedback:



With regard to Sense of Community 71% of respondents felt it was either strong (48%) or very strong (23%) as a result of the programme. An equal number of respondents indicated there was either No Change or Weak (15%). Similar responses were presented regarding the Community Network element of the question – a combined total of 71% of respondents felt it was either strong (48%) or very strong (23%) as a result of the programme, with 23% indicating no change. A reduced number of 8% suggested it was Weak. Whilst mostly positive, further respondent feedback indicated a number of key people within the community played an integral role in holding that sense / network together and there was a concern those people taking a keen interest in Bessbrook's history and cultural heritage was reducing with time.

Sense of Pride in Bessbrook

Respondents were asked how they felt the programme had impacted the Sense of Pride in Bessbrook. The table below presents their feedback:



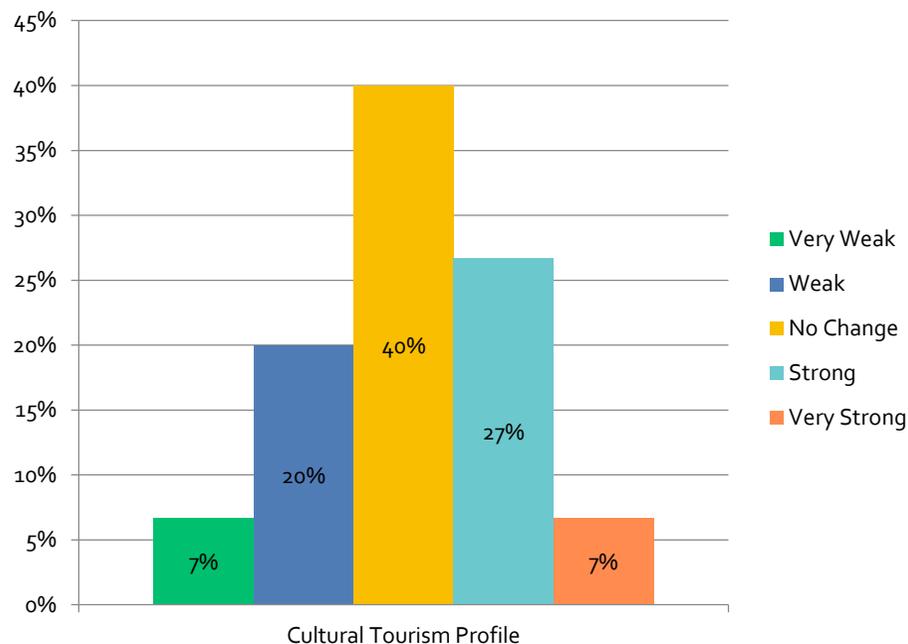
Overwhelmingly 69% of respondents believed the sense of pride in Bessbrook was either strong (54%) or very strong (15%) as a result of the programme delivery. A number of respondents indicated this was a result of the programme's ability to allow local people to explore and examine their own and the area's history, make connections with those who lived during the period (particularly for young people), and access artefacts and items and learn their story and background.

Only 8% of respondents indicated the sense of pride remained weak post programme delivery, but there was little evidence from survey responses as to why respondents felt this way.



The Prominence of Bessbrook's Cultural Tourism Profile

Respondents were asked how prominent they felt Bessbrook's Cultural Tourism profile was as a result of the programme. The following graph outlines respondent feedback:



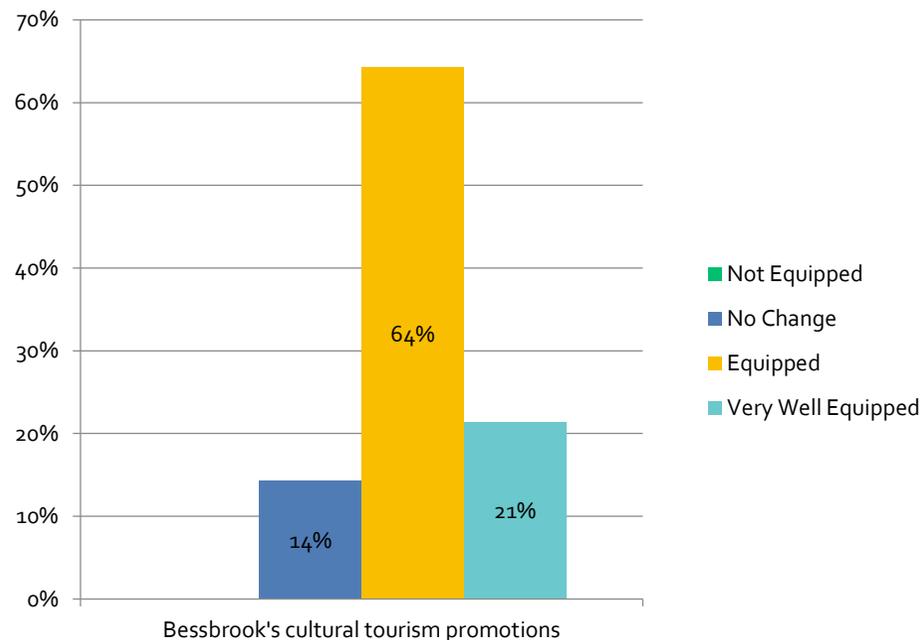
40% of respondents indicated the village's cultural tourism profile experienced no change as a result of the programme – this was contextualised with further comments outlining the requirement for greater advertising, and particularly, use of the online newsletter.

There was a view that what tourism activity that did exist in the area was helping a great deal and that the Bessbrook community was making a difference to the overall tourism product across the wider Ring of Gullion area. However, there was a feeling more could be undertaken to enhance and increase this significantly.

It was also apparent that several significant capital investments are due to begin in October 2017, including work at Derrymore Estate, a river walk and a walk along the tram line, which could further enhance the cultural tourism offer around the Bessbrook area.

Participant's Ability to Promote and Profile Bessbrook's Cultural Heritage

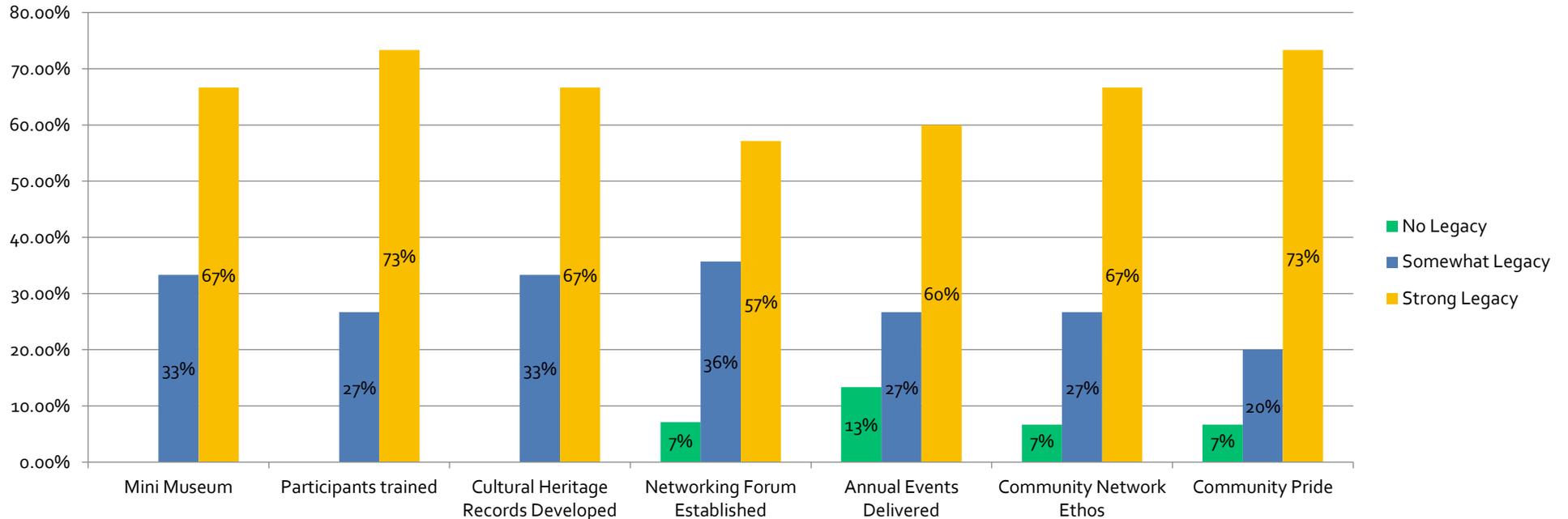
Given the programme's focus of creating a legacy and developing people's ability to play an active role in promoting and profiling Bessbrook's Cultural Tourism Cultural Heritage respondents were asked to indicate how well equipped they felt to carry out this role based on their programme involvement and experience. The following graph outlines these responses.



85% of respondents indicated they felt they were Equipped (64%) or Very Well Equipped (21%) to undertake this role, thus suggesting the programme had adequately provided them the skill, knowledge and experience to play this role in the future. Further comments indicated more people now have greater knowledge of the Bessbrook area and can speak comfortably about it. Pertinently, several comments highlighted that the Bessbrook Model Village project has raised the awareness of Bessbrook's potential as a cultural and tourism attraction.

Project Legacy

Respondents were asked what they believed the project legacy was across all the main elements of delivery. The graph below outlines their responses:



The graph shows respondents suggest there has been strong legacy across all project elements of between 57% and 73%. Additionally, respondents also indicated there was some legacy accrued as a result of the programme delivery across all project elements of between 20% (Community Pride) and 36% (Network Forum Established). Overall this evidences the strong legacy of the programme as indicated by programme participants.

Interestingly, a small number of respondents indicated there was no legacy across the Networking Forum Established (7%), Annual Events Delivered (13%), Community Network (7%) and Community Pride (7%).

When probed further regarding a rationale for this lack of legacy respondents indicated whilst the programme delivery was very good and impactful it would have and could in the future benefit from greater profile, advertising and promotions. Respondents believed this could particularly maximise the overall project profile, the village's rich historical and cultural heritage.

2.4 QUALITATIVE EVALUATION FINDINGS

Dedicated qualitative consultation was conducted to complement the participant survey activity. This consisted of:

- Direct interviews with staff and programme delivery personnel.
- Attendance and observation at several programme delivery elements (i.e. show and tell event, media training and programme launch).
- Informal consultation with programme participants / attendees during programme participation.
- Telephone consultation with a range of programme participants including schools, walk participants, art workshop participants, artefact owners etc.

This consultation followed a consistent consultation structure and is presented thematically below:

Programme Delivery

- The **enthusiasm and impetus generated by the programme delivery brought about a natural 'morphing' of the programme where other ideas and programme elements where enhanced, increased and extended.** This clearly showed the potential for further heritage based work in the area. However, this in turn brought additional pressures to the programme and consultation feedback indicated the programme would have benefitted from a longer delivery period to complete all anticipated programme elements.
- Overwhelming consensus that the **programme resulted in more villagers having greater pride in Bessbrook and greater participation in historical and cultural heritage activities.**
- The Living History **online resource**, informed by the programme's Show and Tell event and mini museum provided a **valuable resource to allow villagers, residents and programme participants access to another learning tool** that stories could be constructed around and historical and cultural information could be documented.

- The programme allowed **village residents**, particularly those who had moved out of Bessbrook, **to meet and re-engage old friends and reminisce of village life and its cultural heritage.**
- Participants engaged in a **broad range of historical culturally significant topics** including for example, sporting history / success, links to more recent history (aircraft production), mill / linen production, physical heritage (i.e. mill, chimneys, village green, housing, shops etc.).
- For those who have moved away from Bessbrook **this programme gave them an opportunity to re-engage and re-ignite their affiliation, connection and sense of community within Bessbrook.**
- The programme has **raised awareness of Bessbrook and its historic and cultural value within the local geographical area** (outside of Bessbrook but within the Gullion area).



2.5 GENERAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY FINDINGS

Staffing and Resources

- The programme **experienced some delay and disruption with an unforeseen and unfortunate change in programme delivery staff**. Whilst both the initial and replacement programme officer performed as expected, the delay in replacing the initial staff member led to an increased reliance on volunteers and Steering Group members. This impacted the pace and timing of programme delivery, which in turn impacted the impetus built early in the programme and the availability of participants to attend programme activity (during summer / holiday period).
- The programme allowed participants and village residents to **genuinely appreciate the scale and depth of village history and cultural heritage of Bessbrook available locally, raise awareness of its existence and more importantly how to access and avail of it**.

Steering Group

- There was a **generous acknowledgement that the programme had whetted the appetite of many across the village to get involved in activities that were very unique to Bessbrook, culturally significant for the area and demonstrated the potential for further programme delivery in the future**.
- Many steering group members **played an active and central role in the programme, both in its strategic management and its direct delivery**. In that sense, steering group members' involvement matched expectations. There was feedback from steering group members directly to indicate **they felt frustrated as they felt they couldn't provide more of their time** to assist the programme due to other commitments.
- Consistent Steering Group member feedback **commended programme delivery staff including Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership staff for their professional and highly skilled delivery**. Having a **dedicated staff resource was critical** to the programme delivery and ensuring the programme met expected outcomes and achievements.

Promotions and Communications

- The programme received significant exposure through local press and social media, as well as, ongoing inclusion in the Ring of Gullion's monthly newsletter and website. To provide context to this between late April 2016 and late June 2017 the programme:
 - **secured an estimated £1353.78 worth of local press coverage**
 - **19,930 people reached through 13 facebook posts and 918 post clicks**
- Whilst extensive, there was a general feeling that the **programme would have benefitted from greater publicity and promotional activity** ensuring maximum exposure. There was also an **acknowledgement that programme outputs completed late in the programme delivery would allow this enhanced and wide ranging promotional activity to occur and present other avenues through which people could be engaged in this historical and cultural heritage activity**. This included for example, the docu-dramas and the Living History online artefact resource.

Partnership Working

- There was **substantial evidence of practical and resourceful partnership working between the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme and the Model Village programme staff**. Whilst this may seem obvious given the background to the programme development and delivery, but importantly, this was recognised by programme stakeholders who may wish to further develop this partnership beyond the duration of this HLF award.
- There was **initial scepticism regarding the programme deliverers from outside the Bessbrook area which may have impacted participation early in the programme delivery**. However, trust and credibility was built during early programme implementation with attitudes changing as time progressed. This clearly demonstrates the level of engagement and genuine partnership / relationship building developed throughout and through the programme.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Bessbrook Model Village programme has provided an opportunity for Bessbrook residents to reignite their involvement and active participation in the village and what it means to them. From media training to show and tell, arts workshops to an online living history resource it provided a varied and impactful engagement programme for local residents to showcase the best of Bessbrook. Using direct and indirect evidence this evaluation has demonstrated the outcomes of programme delivery for those who have been impacted.

Programme participants' knowledge and understanding of Bessbrook's history and cultural heritage had increased and improved as a direct result of their programme participation – even for those who had a fair level of understanding previously.

The data collection programme elements have represented a very practical tool for local people to appreciate and understand the Village's history and cultural heritage.

Training (media production, art for community engagement etc.) represented the most effective method of gathering and recording Bessbrook's historical information.

There was a strong sense of community as a result of the programme and particularly a strong sense of community network. This could be directly linked to the development of the community forum and the programme's ability to bring people together for a common purpose of learning and sharing their historical and cultural heritage.

There was also a strong sense of community pride demonstrated by respondents as a direct result of the programme delivery.

Many respondents, including those who had moved away from the area, indicated they still retained that sense of community and pride in the area and the ability to return and reignite those feelings through the programme was invaluable.

There is a need to draw together the cultural tourism aspects of the village into a wider network of tourism offerings across the Ring of Gullion area. Findings indicated there were many benefits for the local community of Bessbrook but there didn't appear to be a strong link into a wider tourism offer. This was particularly contextualised in many respondents

commenting regarding the significant success enjoyed by the Ring of Gullion in tourism terms, leading to a feeling that Bessbrook could play an important role in an overall offer.

Significant legacy was accrued as a result of the programme delivery demonstrated across all programme elements. There was a strong feeling this legacy presented an opportunity to build and enhance the programme delivery in the future utilising the various successful programme elements. This particularly included training participants, the living history online resource, engagement in general history and cultural heritage related events, and genuine partnership working across a wide community spectrum.

Overall the programme has whetted the appetite of Bessbrook residents as well as the wider Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership to further develop a much enhanced programme in the future, one which builds on the solid foundation development by this programme.



4.1 INTRODUCTION

This final evaluation process has generated a range of findings, that have in turn been used to inform the development of practical and logical recommendations. Outlined in the following table, these recommendations aim to provide advice and guidance to improve and enhance future programme delivery within the funded period and beyond.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE
Increase the level of advertising and promotions undertaken to profile programme outcomes.	There have been very notable programme successes, many of which the community and programme participants are keen to ensure gain maximum profile, and in turn, increased number of local people benefiting from their availability and accessibility. This is particularly true of the Living History database compiled and produced.
Secure resources to retain and maintain Bessbrook's historical and cultural heritage information.	There are a number of key people living in or around the Bessbrook area who have and continue to play a central role in maintaining and passing on Bessbrook's rich and varied history and cultural heritage. There is concern these key, influential people are reducing with very little evidence of individuals who could replace them. Whilst this is inevitable in many ways, given the personal stories and experience of these key people, this places a greater importance on the ability to gather, record and make accessible the village's heritage information, as well as build local people's capacity to undertake this role.
Further engage young people in Bessbrook heritage projects on an ongoing regular basis.	Respondents suggested there were many and varied benefits for young programme participants. It was felt, this was an essential element of any future programme given the reducing number of older people who have traditionally played a central role in promoting and profiling Bessbrook's heritage.
Secure resources to employ an officer to drive any future programme.	The programme delivery benefitted significantly from dedicated officers to support its volunteer base to successfully implement this programme. This programme has clearly demonstrated to its stakeholders the potential for an enhanced cultural heritage programme around the model village. However, consultation evidence has suggested the impetus and speed with which any new, larger programme could be implemented would benefit from a dedicated staff member. This would again focus on support and assistance to a committed volunteer base, and importantly, the legacy elements of this programme delivery (i.e. trained volunteers, engagement of a greater number of residents in historical and cultural heritage activities, mini museum, docu-dramas etc.).
Any future programme should take cognisance of opportunities identified through the current programme and use a foundation to build a more extensive programme.	This programme has allowed participants, staff and steering group members to identify a range of other potential projects, that should form the basis for any future programme. These opportunities include for example, the creation of a dedicated accessible facility to showcase artefacts, restoration of the tram carriages etc. Additionally, the outputs of this programme should be maximised (i.e. use of the docu-dramas as an online resource and engagement tool) in further developing any future programme.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE
Provide a more permanent and accessible facility that can accommodate the artefacts documented throughout the programme.	The programme has allowed a large variety of artefacts and items of historical and cultural significance to be documented and detailed. All have been logged on an online resource and some are displayed in the local primary school. The accessibility to the school is limited given its restricted opening times (term time / school day) and relevant child protection issues. It is recommended that access to these valuable artefacts and information could be maximised by securing a dedicated facility that could accommodate all artefacts safely and securely, but also offer greater access than provided currently by the school.
Develop an annual show and tell event	The ability to provide village residents an opportunity to showcase and profile their personal memorabilia related to Bessbrook is critical to maintaining an ongoing interest in cultural heritage and the history of the area. Whilst Landscape Partnership Scheme staff will facilitate the increase and enhancement of the Living History database on an ongoing basis the Show and Tell event will also provide a significant opportunity to add and enhance the living history online resource on an ongoing basis. It is hoped it will continue to generate and stimulate engagement in historically and culturally significant activities related to Bessbrook for many years to come.
Continue to expand and develop links to the tourism offered provided by the Ring of Gullion	The cultural heritage of the village and it's historical significance can be used to further enhance the tourism offer from the Ring of Gullion as well as allow Bessbrook to tap into and avail of similar tourism benefits as those experienced by the Ring of Gullion.

