





Saxon Warrior Parade over Kingston Bridge

Introduction

This evaluation captures some of the achievements, challenges and opportunities that characterised a special year of celebration for the borough. The conclusions drawn from the evaluation will be used as a launch pad to shape the borough's new Cultural Strategy and deliver a lasting legacy for Kingston 2025.

Marking the 1100th anniversary of the crowning of King Athelstan, in Kingston, as the first King of a unified England, a myriad of local organisations came together to create Kingston 2025, a flagship cultural programme. As themes and ideas coalesced, community organisations shaped a vision for a bold and imaginative celebration of Kingston's history and sense of place.

From the opening event of 'Athelstan Amongst Us' on the 3rd of May in Kingston's Ancient Market Place, to the final event in November 2025, the borough's creativity shone through. Community involvement didn't just shape Kingston 2025, it delivered it.

"When we first identified a wish to mark the 1100 anniversary of the crowning of King Athelstan in Kingston, I don't think we could have anticipated the scale, impact and joy of the cultural celebration that this report describes so powerfully."

Kingston 2025 showed the Borough at its best, coming together to showcase the full diversity, complexity and talents of our community. That so many residents and visitors were able to enjoy such a wide range of experiences and opportunities is thanks to the enthusiasm, commitment and ingenuity of many communities, partners, funders and council officers - too many to name. I wish to thank all of them for showing why culture and creativity must remain at the heart of our thriving community."

Councillor Andreas Kirsch, Leader of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames



Kingston 2025 in numbers

Across the seven month programme 50+ events took place, attracting 100,000 visitors to the borough and generating hugely positive feedback with:

- 98% of people saying they enjoyed the events
- 86% of people saying they learnt something new about our history.
- A staggering 723 people volunteered their time to support the core public events, either performing, stewarding or undertaking heritage research.
- More than 6100 people participated in learning activities and workshop sessions
- 3000 school children engaged with the programme in targeted activities.

“It was clear how much care and passion went into every detail. Events like this are so important for Kingston – they help to build a strong sense of community, bring people together across generations and backgrounds, and remind us how art and collaboration can connect us in meaningful ways”

Freedom Puls Band Manager

The programme also reached new audiences drawing in people who do not traditionally attend cultural events.



Saxon re-enactors entertaining crowds in Canbury Gardens



Kingston Carnival Parade

The result is a blueprint for celebrating England’s history in a way that embraces our diverse, modern society, profiling stories less heard through free intergenerational public events and projects shaped with the community.

“When I first heard about plans, I thought how is a Saxon King from 1100 years ago relevant to my community, but then I began to understand how Athelstan symbolised the uniting of different people and kingdoms and I could see a way to tell the stories important to us.”

Korean British Cultural Exchange at the Premier of the Finding Home documentary.

Intentions and Ambitions

Three overarching themes emerged from discussions with community participants to underpin Kingston 2025:

- Sharing our Stories
- Celebrating Our Place Together
- Looking to the Future

The Kingston 2025 ‘Community Team’ identified some key Programme Objectives:

- Raise the profile of culture and the role it can play in the Borough
- Strengthen relationships and networks
- Record and uncover lesser known histories for future generations
- Reach new audiences, changing perceptions of Kingston
- Tell a new confident and diverse story of Kingston
- Try new things and have some fun!

By blending the past and the present through collaborative storytelling, Kingston 2025 was able to achieve its aims of being diverse, inclusive and much more than a Saxon celebration. It brought communities together to share their different histories, customs and traditions. It also changed perceptions of Kingston.

Working with consultants Shared Intelligence, a perception survey of 200 people carried out at the start and end of the programme (400 surveys in total), revealed that Heritage had become more strongly associated with Kingston by the end of the programme, moving up two places in characteristics associated with the town centre. This demonstrates that Kingston’s 2025’s broad aim of telling a more confident and contemporary story of Kingston through a diverse programme of events, did positively impact perceptions of the Borough during the year.

Participants and audiences told us that the strong heritage focus, combined with consistent branding and messaging across community events, amplified communications and drove positive engagement.

I think the events were incredibly well thought out and planned. Every single person I saw looked like they were having an amazing time no matter which event it was. I was so proud and happy to be a part of the celebrations for the Borough and I can’t wait to be part of something again next year!

Quote from participant

Generous funding of £178,000 secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, supported much activity: including community grants; major public events; the Kingston Glamour Exhibition at Kingston Museum and a significant community heritage research project which culminated in a co-curated exhibition, Kingston Unwritten developed with volunteer history researchers.

Overall Kingston 2025 increased positive perceptions of the borough, reaching an all time web traffic surge on the Heritage Homepage, the primary information site for Kingston 2025 with 1,571,976 visits over six months, representing a 74.3% monthly traffic increase compared to the previous 12 months.



Community Drummers at Athel’s Town



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh watches the River Cultures Festival flotilla at Minima Yacht Club

Quality and Programme Impact

During 2024 the Culture and Heritage Team worked closely with internal and external stakeholders to develop a shared vision for Kingston 2025 that resonated with communities across Kingston. The importance of this work is reflected in the project evaluation carried out by Shared Intelligence which reveals that partners were primarily motivated by a desire to celebrate, strengthen and promote Kingston's cultural diversity.



Kpop dancers performing at the opening event

The role of partners

15 out of the 21 partners who responded to the survey were involved in Kingston 2025 across multiple events and in a variety of ways including planning and organising, project delivery, co-creation of events, facilitating creative and heritage workshops and conducting research.

Building engagement was key to the programme's success, with all teams within the council doing their part to generate interest through front-facing customer roles. A small senior programme board ensured the strategic commitment of council resources and a diverse and broadly based Community Team helped the Programme to reach beyond our usual networks.



River Cultures Festival community flag-bearer

From the start, a key ambition was to work with new people, reach new audiences and provide opportunities for new relationships to develop.

A tangible outcome of this approach was the involvement of 130 community connectors and the huge number of people participating in the programme. As advocates for Kingston 2025 they worked with their own communities alongside a cohort of volunteers who organised their own activities and supported the larger public events within the programme.

Another key finding from the Partners' Survey is that Kingston 2025 helped to strengthen networks even for partners with pre-existing strong connections.

A staggering 6127 people learnt new skills and contributed to the creative outputs of the programme by participating in one of the 220 workshops delivered by partners as part of the core Kingston Council funded programme. This includes 3000 children who were involved in a variety of targeted activities and projects, across local schools.

With the extensive training and workshops it was like doing a mini-degree!

Quote from Community Research Volunteer



Capoeira performers at Kingston Carnival

Kingston 2025 was a highly complex programme delivered by Community Partners working alongside the Culture and Heritage team. Major public events showcased the borough's heritage and creativity and drew in huge audiences of at least 100,000 across them.

Figures were estimated using multiple methods of counting including video and photographic evidence, clickers, timed visual estimates, ticket sales, volunteer registration and venue capacity. From the audience surveys 98% of people strongly agreed that they enjoyed the event they attended. Audiences also strongly agreed (between 74% and 92%) that they felt part of a new community event or more connected to Kingston as a place, demonstrating the positive impact on inclusion,



Crowds witness the return of the Saxons to Kingston!

Audience Feedback

Audiences were also asked what they found most memorable. They said they enjoyed the events for three reasons in particular:

- watching a spectacle
- seeing stories performed
- learning something new

Community participation in the Flotilla during the Rivers Cultures Festival together with the Saxon parade and the horse and falconry displays, were given special mention by audience members. Audiences also particularly enjoyed learning about different aspects of Kingston's history with Kingston Unwritten and Kingston Glamour exhibitions receiving many positive comments in surveys and visitors' books.

Really superb exhibition! So nicely balanced across such a range of connected subjects. Specially like the architectural aspects.

Comment in Kingston Glamour exhibition Visitors' Book

Branding and Communications

The commitment of focused and strategic Council communication resources paid dividends. Distinctive branding, developed by the Communications and Engagement team, enabled community stakeholders to badge activities as part of the Kingston 2025 family. A generous approach to tagging partners and sharing original social content from partner accounts showcased authentic voices of the community, capturing the imagination of audiences by juxtaposing stories of the past with the here and now.

Audience reach across multiple channels:

- 90+ pieces of coverage tracked from 30 outlets
- Social media views exceeding 1.4million
- 180 hugely positive social posts using #Kingston2025 or geolocating at events posts shared 1,800 times
- 100,000 people attended 50+ events
- Local businesses reported increased footfall and a positive community atmosphere
- Viral Reach: The campaign achieved 1,571,976 total views across platforms via our own social channels, with a peak of 900,151 views in September 2025.
- High Engagement: The campaign generated 15,733 total reactions and 2,034 shares across social platforms. Instagram proved the most effective channel for positive sentiment.
- More than 200 user generated social media posts were made with the hashtag #Kingston2025 or event geolocation by residents and visitors, media, partners and artists.
- Media Relations: Face to face engagement consistently led to more prominent, in depth, supportive coverage and the relationships have been leveraged to further culture and heritage coverage in Kingston.
- Content: Over 600 social media posts made across Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, and WhatsApp. Corporate web content was structured and highly visible.

Linking the diverse participatory community activities over a concentrated period through three overarching themes resulted in a programme which generated a palpable sense of togetherness at a time when national tensions were seen to be splitting communities apart. Our mission is to build on this legacy in the coming year to inform a new cultural strategy focused on creating opportunities for all our communities through cultural inclusion, creative health and wellbeing and the creative and visitor economies.

“We will be using the momentum of Kingston 2025 to produce a legacy programme for primary and secondary schools over the next 9 years.”

Founding Director, Children’s International Film Festival



One of the many dynamic performances at the East and South East Asian Festival (ESEA)

Engagement Highlights

Amplifying the programme through partner activities

Individuals and organisations engaged with Kingston 2025 in multiple ways - as event organisers, volunteers, stewards and workshop leaders - contributing to a dynamic programme with community collaboration extending beyond the borough.

This snapshot, although not intended to be comprehensive, provides an overview of the breadth, scale and ambition of the programme.

Collaboration, inclusivity and creativity

During the Kingston 2025 programme we hosted visits from our cultural counterparts in Oldenburg, Germany (the borough's sister city) and Seocho-Gu District (Seoul) South Korea, which saw special performances from the world-class Seocho Philharmonia Orchestra with the Little Angels Korean Children's Choir performing during Fuse Festival. The Piccola Banda Wind Quintet, featuring award-winning young musicians from Oldenburg, performed with Kingston's Youth String Ensemble. These initiatives forged new relationships and enabled existing partners to showcase and amplify their own creative programmes.



Historian & podcaster Tom Holland at All Saints Church



The Community Brain's Mini-Day Procession

The Community Brain collaborated with Kingston University to shine a light on 60 years since students won a prestigious European fashion prize via an exhibition, publication and the Mini Day rally.

Ariadne's Thread staged Kanthas of Friendship, a community textile exhibition in the Market House and the Korean British Cultural Exchange celebrated East South East Asian Culture with a Kpop competition and outdoor festival.



Kanthas of Friendship pop-up installation

All Saints Church became a hub for the official 1100 Anniversary commemorations of the crowning of King Athelstan, hosting and organising events including the unveiling of their Seven Saxon Kings Tapestries with associated talks, a special lecture by popular historian Tom Holland on Athelstan's legacy and a 1100th civic Anniversary Service commemorating the coronation in 925.

Representatives from Tamworth (the location of Athelstan's court) and Malmesbury (Athelstan's burial site) participated in celebrations, with Malmesbury dignitaries completing a pilgrims walk on foot and bike to Kingston.

As part of the official community celebrations, South West Trains organised a memorable train naming ceremony at Kingston Station,

with the Bishop of London blessing a newly named 'Athelstan' train with school children from King Athelstan school in attendance and Tiffin Sixth Form choir performing, marking Kingston 2025 and the Railway 200 anniversary.



Athelstan train-naming ceremony, Kingston Station

RBK Community grants

Eleven community grants were awarded to local organisations to support Kingston 2025, funding projects ranging from RBKares - Cloak of Hope textile project to New Malden Town Centre Partnership's Good Food Green Fair. Throughout the programme local organisations were able to pursue their own projects and interests across the borough on Kingston 2025 themes.

In collaboration with the Council's Culture and Heritage team, the Stanley Picker Gallery commissioned artist Diana Puntar to create Chimera (H+R-A) An Alternative Heritage Trail featuring artworks that explored the transformation of historical objects, placing new sculptures within existing heritage sites to question the role of monuments in shaping collective memory and cultural identity.



New public art created by Ian Wornast

The Stanley Picker Gallery also staged an exhibition 'A Journey Through Kingston' featuring ActionSpace artist, Ian Wornast. Ian was commissioned to create a new landmark art piece for the new Unilever Campus and the exhibition showcased preparatory works documenting Ian's creative process. Kingston Carnival celebrated its 25th anniversary by joining forces with the River Cultures Festival. A hugely colourful and memorable weekend on and off the river, brought thousands of visitors to Kingston with hundreds of community participants involved. As one member of the public said:

"From the dazzling costumes to the uplifting rhythms, the streets were alive with energy, love, and community spirit."

Audience Feedback, instagram

The programme continued into the Autumn with the East South East Asian Festival in the Marketplace, with a host of colour, music and dance performances, including the popular Funky Chickens, back by popular demand.

"Another super interesting and diverse day in Kingston market place, right on our doorstep...loving this town"

ESEA Festival, Audience Feedback

In October, Quilombo Marcus Cabeca School of Capoeira, organised Solto O Jogo 3, at Kingston University. Teams from France, Germany, Spain and the UK competed in a spectacular competition that celebrated the creativity, style and unity of this historic martial art. The event also featured a vibrant food and craft fair bringing Brazilian colours and flavours to Kingston

Widening Creative Opportunities - Children and Young People

Kingston 2025 showcased the creativity of children and young people through events like 'Bridging Kingston' a specially commissioned musical journey through Kingston's history. Composer and writer, Cheynne Gibbs-Singh, worked with 100 children from different schools, as actors and co-creators to stage two public performance at the Rose Theatre.

Over four days 25 local primary schools involving 1250 children joined together to celebrate 'Our Beautiful World' with new songs reflecting children's experiences and thoughts on living in Kingston.

Young Film Makers were championed at the launch of the new Children's International Film Festival, supported by BAFTA and other industry partners during the Kingston International Film Festival, with more than 1000 children participating. Young musicians and film-makers collaborated to create 'Echoes of Kingston' an archival film of Kingston, accompanied by a live musical performance at the Rose Theatre, which culminated in a fully-fledged awards ceremony attended by the Children's Laureate, Frank Cottrell-Boyce.

More than 770 children participated in Adventure Through Young Eyes, a series of school workshops led by Hayes Ng, a PHD student at Kingston University. The workshops explored migration stories and invited young people to explore living in Kingston through creative mapping to visualize the places, people, and experiences that shape their daily lives. Hayes is currently seeking funding to develop the project further.

Story Storks worked with teachers and over 400 pupils from King Athelstan School, to devise a new play about their royal namesake that culminated in a sold-out performance at All Saints Church!



Children performing 'Bridging Kingston' at the Rose Theatre



Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

The National Lottery Heritage Fund played a huge role in supporting major public events and heritage development and participation in the Kingston 2025 programme including:

Athelstan Amongst Us Launch Event, 3rd May

Athel's Town 2 day Saxon Encampment and Re-enactment

River Cultures Festival, including artist led workshops and creative engagement

Four targeted community grants increasing inclusion and producing specially curated films and creative content

A community research project culminating in the co-curated pop up exhibition: Kingston Unwritten, oral histories and film

Kingston Glamour; Art, Innovation and the Suburbs exhibition at Kingston Museum

The final strand of the NLHF Community Research Project is Decolonising Kingston. This project will be delivered with Kingston Race and Equalities Council to coincide with their 50th anniversary and will be completed at the end of September 2026.





Opening night of Kingston Unwritten exhibition, featuring the Community Researchers



The Community Research Programme explored different strands of Kingston's heritage through a wide range of activities, including talks, discussions, exhibitions, workshops, research, commissions, films and oral histories. These activities also enriched the content of the large scale public events with many groups acting as translators or facilitators.

Groups involved included Bengal Heritage Global, KCL Legal Clinic and Water Keeper, Namaste Kingston, ITC Tamil School, Learn English at Home, The Dialogue Society, Kingston Association for the Blind, Residents of Cleves Almshouses, Minima Yacht Club, Kingston Race & Equalities Council, Tamesis and Thames Rowing Club and many more.

A core group of 9 community researchers contributed to exploring 'our voices less heard' and 'Kingston's changing landscape' with topics ranging from Market Place traders; the history of the Jews in Kingston; environmental activism to including aspects of what it feels like to be a child of those serving in the Armed Forces.

The group met regularly at Kingston History Centre and completed 12 training sessions covering: research, interviewing, using audio equipment, writing summaries, ethnographic research, archival research, blogging, sound design and co-production.

Together the researchers interviewed 39 people to contribute content for the Kingston Unwritten exhibition on various topics. Interviews were recorded and played at listening stations and as part of the exhibition's sound design. The group worked with a film-maker to create a film about their interests and experiences which was screened during the exhibition, while a shorter film captured the opening night.

During the heritage research project a total of 45 workshops were delivered, exploring the overarching themes and tailored to suit specific groups or organised as free, public sessions for all ages with 27 groups participating. Included in the 45 sessions above, 10 archival and community research workshops were organised with different groups, (at their request) reaching a total of 270 participants.



Kingston Glamour Exhibition

The Kingston Glamour exhibition at Kingston Museum focused on the theme of Suburban Dreams, Art, Innovation and the Suburbs. The exhibition provided an alternative perspective to the trope of suburbs being boring 'inbetween' places by exploring how Kingston was marketed in the mid-20th Century as a 'glamorous' destination and a place of cutting edge entrepreneurship and innovation. The exhibition featured the less well known history of the Mini Cooper in Kingston alongside trail-blazing women with local connections such as furniture designer Betty Joel and fashion designer Mary Quant.

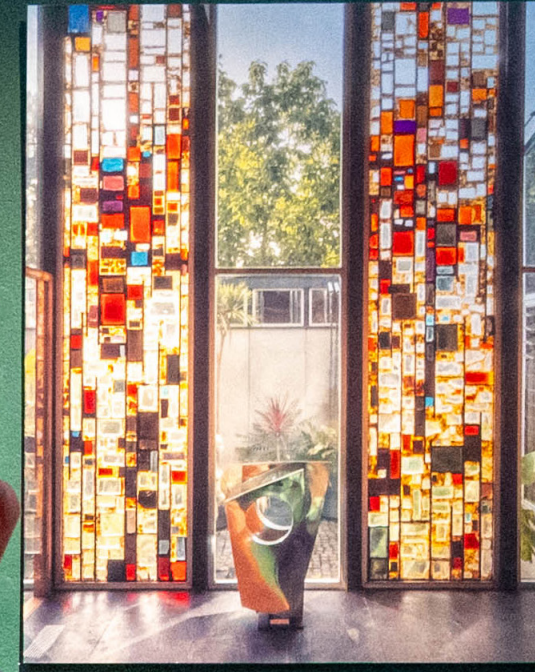
Equally important - the exhibition linked to wider activities delivered by other partners, such as Fashion Fortnight (a collaboration between Kingston University and The Community Brain) and a huge Mini-day rally focused on the story of the development of the Mini-Cooper in Surbiton, which related to the themes of the exhibition, demonstrating strong partnership exchange and co-operation with The Community Brain in particular.

Kingston Glamour closed in January and a series of talks attracted 108 visitors. The total number of visitors for the exhibition was 12,348 with 74% of visitors saying they had learnt something new about Kingston's history. The exhibition also succeeded in attracting new visitors with 38% of respondents saying it was their first visit to Kingston Museum.

STANLEY PICKER: PATRON OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

"This is a fantastic exhibition. It makes you even prouder to live in this beautiful borough of Kingston upon Thames. Let's bring glamour back!"

Visitors' comment book



A stunning panel from the Kingston Glamour Exhibition

The Stanley Picker Gallery

Generous funds from Stanley Picker dedicated to building the Stanley Picker Gallery, a purpose-built gallery dedicated to contemporary art in the very heart of Kingston upon Thames. (Jonathan Black, The Picker Collection, 2013).

Supported by the Stanley Picker Trust, Stanley Picker Fellowships in Art for contemporary practitioners to create an innovative body of new work at the Stanley Picker Gallery at Kingston University.

Former Stanley Picker Fellowships include prize winner Elizabeth Price (2007), Design (2009), more recently The (2011) and Barbara Delmar (2022) aspects of the Picker House and its a direct inspiration for their respective commissions.

Julian Turner's sculpture 'The Stanley Picker Gallery' at Kingston University, 2015. Photo by Steve Stone.

For more information visit the Stanley Picker Gallery website: www.stanleypickergallery.com



Creative Youth's exhibition in the Market House Creative Youth were commissioned to explore the past, present and future of Kingston's Market Place. In October a week long pop up exhibition in the Market, entitled Ghosts, Manifestations and Visions, showcased young people's artwork on a 'global' marketplace theme as a backdrop to free public workshops. Visitors were invited to choose a 'ticket' which directed them to one of 8 indoor market stalls, with students and artists facilitating conversations with the public on the 'Market Place of Ideas' concept.

During the exhibition Kingston International Film Festival showcased archival films on the Market Place and trained students and young film-makers in documentary film-making. Participants created their own films

focusing on the history of the marketplace, highlighting its traders and users in this year of celebration. The interviews they conducted are captured in a documentary film A Market Place for the 21st Century and can be viewed on the Heritage website.

Creative health charity Rosetta Life delivered a project about perspectives of place and identity with Kingston Young Carers, in collaboration with other young carers from Southampton and Bloemfontein, South Africa.

This youth-led project aimed to connect young carers remotely, offering creative, social and skills development opportunities through a safe and inclusive creative online programme. In Kingston the group focused on the river and the natural environment. They received training in film-making using a 360 degree camera, with footage captured by the group during the River Cultures Festival. The final film featured all three groups, with spoken word, poetry, music and screened in a 360 dome at Kingston University to parents, carers and the general public.

Thames Rowing Club, Minima and Tamesis participated in a smaller research project working with a graduate trainee, to create outdoor exhibition panels which showcased the heritage of the three clubs at the River Cultures Festival. Through interviews and archival research the panels featured the river's natural environment and leisure and industry heritage as well as some of the historic boats participating in the flotilla.

National Lottery Heritage Fund - Creative Outputs	People Engaged
Athelstan Amongst Us - Street Theatre Launch	2500
Athel's Town: Saxon Encampment and Reenactment	7000
Carlos Cortes River Cultures Festival Outreach	616
River Cultures Festival	15000
Kingston Unwritten Exhibition, Oral Histories and Film	779
Kingston Glamour Exhibition	12848
21st Century Market Place Project	202
Adventure Through Young Eyes School Project	770
4 Community Grants	344
Total Physical Engagements	39280



A Saxon warrior prepares for battle at the two day event Athel's Town: Saxon Encampment and Reenactment 21

Bringing History to Life - The Kingston Story

Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund enabled ambitious, large scale public events to take place that not only brought history to life, but provided a huge range of opportunities for communities to get involved.



The Kingston 2025 programme was launched with Athelstan Amongst Us, a specially commissioned street theatre piece involving community players and performers, that offered an action-packed and somewhat irreverent take on Kingston’s history right in the centre of the Ancient Market Square.



In July the two day Athel’s Town Saxon Encampment and Re-enactment, brought a horde of Saxon warriors and villagers to Kingston to set up camp in Canbury Gardens. The parade of warriors over Kingston’s historic bridge and accompanying falconry displays and battles delighted audiences with its spectacle and immersive approach to bringing history to life. Visitors were able to experience some of the traditional crafts and skills of Saxon times, demonstrated by experts in the encampment with community stalls featuring blacksmiths, potters, weavers and bee-keepers providing an atmospheric experience.



“Fabulous day, brilliantly organised, with something for everyone. We loved the parade, the demonstration fighting and the birds of prey, not to mention the music. Seriously well done. Looking forward to the next event!”

Feedback from audience member on instagram.



Visitors were also treated to a thoroughly 21st century experience. Using mixed reality members of the public were provided with headsets to view a 3D animated statue of King Athelstan. The project was developed by Dr Jarek Francik and his project team from Kingston University in collaboration with artist Alan Birkenshaw.



The River Cultures Festival flotilla heads towards Canbury Gardens

As part of the build up to September’s unique River Cultures Festival, artist Carlos Cortes worked with communities to facilitate conversations on different riverine cultures and traditions. Together they created Navigate, a project about personal journeys, stories and histories, reflected in the boats, motifs, flags and other artwork created. A total of 23 workshop sessions took place engaging 616 participants.

“I’ve been watching it gradually coming together on my runs down the towpath - how fabulous to have such a big opening! Congratulations on all the hard work!”

Comment on the opening of the new Athelstan Garden



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh opens the new Athelstan Garden

The visit by HRH Duke of Edinburgh to open the new Athelstan Garden, created by the Friends of Queen’s Promenade was another notable highlight. HRH also visited Minima Yacht Club to meet guests and take the salute from the Flotilla at the River Cultures Festival which, for the first time, involved communities dressing and travelling on boats according to their own cultural customs. Tamil drummers and Korean dancers and Hindu idols representing Lord Ganesha and the goddess Durga - linked to the Hindu Festival of Durga Puja - made the Flotilla a truly multicultural and magical river celebration with more than 70 boats participating under the command of Thames Alive.

Many community groups disembarked to participate in activities and performances at Canbury Gardens. Over 30 stalls entertained the crowds alongside live performances including Korean fan dancers, an opera singer, and Freedom Puls band.

Smoking Apples captivated family audiences with two performances of their entertaining and informative puppet show, Upstream and Folk Dance Remixed provided family maypole dancing workshops!



A confused land-based 'punter' entertains crowds

Roving entertainers included Punt, a surreal two-man boat drifting through the crowds guided by two Oxbridge Graduates and The Visitors, a group of three eye-catching aliens, enjoying their day out by the river!

Throughout the afternoon Tamesis, Minima Yacht Club and Thames Sailing Club organised a variety of sailing races for different crafts and ages. Bathed in glorious sunshine crowds were also able to enjoy a variety of music performances, organised by Paper Garden Records at the newly opening Eagle Brewery Wharf.

To capture the key events we have commissioned a Kingston 2025 showcase film to ensure we document the scale and breadth of these significant public events across the six months of activities for the borough archive.

Volunteers - a critical role in delivery

Kingston 2025 volunteers were critically important to the success and impact of the programme. Alongside the invaluable contribution of the Community Connectors, volunteers fulfilled a specific role in building participation, undertaking a variety of essential roles as detailed in the table below:

Stewarding	140
Community researchers	59
Demonstrations, workshops, talks	216
Performances involving volunteers	308
Total Number	723
Number of new volunteers	102

These figures capture the numbers of volunteers involved in the core strands of the programme delivered by Kingston Council. We were unable to collect volunteer numbers for the whole programme, because of the scale and complexity of partner involvement. The numbers collected demonstrate the central role played by volunteers in delivering the Council-led events and the scale of volunteering required to deliver a programme of this complexity.

From the 140 stewards who volunteered, 102 were new volunteers who came forward to support events. The 59 community researchers includes 3 volunteers who received curatorial and archiving training. A total of 2 volunteers led workshop sessions, living history demonstrations or history trails and talks. The number of volunteers involved in performing underlines the massive creative contribution many individuals made to Kingston 2025.



"It was a lovely event, thanks for organising it! Such a beautiful location, very smoothly organised, very helpful and caring volunteers. It was an honour to demonstrate cutting and leading glass."
Participant, Athel's Town

Volunteers at the launch event on 3rd May in the Market Place

Building an Archive for the Future

Kingston 2025 has delivered a rich archive of photographic and digital material that will significantly diversify the borough's archive and add to the stories of civic celebrations of the past.

The Archive will catalogue all aspects of developing, creating and delivering Kingston 2025. The wealth of new creative content features research into hidden histories and untold stories, films of the key public events, audio recordings, exhibition materials and oral and written histories. All material, once digitised and catalogued, will be made available online via the Kingston Heritage website with physical materials held at Kingston History Centre.



A round-up of memorable events in pictures

Legacy and Reflection

We have learned so much from the experience of working with Kingston's communities to deliver Kingston 2025 as well as the feedback we have received.

Perhaps above all, we have heard from residents, visitors and businesses that this investment in culture and community brought great benefits in terms of building pride and sense of place, mutual understanding and community cohesion, health and wellbeing, and bringing life to our borough by providing affordable and inclusive ways for families and friends to enjoy time together.

People valued the sense that something special and sometimes unexpected was happening and that everyone was welcome.

The diverse programme of events demonstrated the value of trying new things in new places, illustrating the potential for cultural activity to bring enhanced life to our civic spaces, whether at Canbury Gardens with Athels Town, the riverside for the River Cultures Festival or the streets of the borough through the Mini Day Festival.

There were practical lessons too. Kingston 2025 clearly evidenced the benefits for the public and partners of embracing a broad range of cultural events in a coherent programme that could be jointly promoted, supported and celebrated. The challenge will be to identify a sustainable approach that can be carried forward into future cross-borough collaborations.

Likewise, the programme showed us that maintaining the benefits of greater cultural activity in the borough will need investment in the infrastructure and resources to support that, which - in a challenging funding environment - will require a strong case for investment and creativity in identifying more diverse sources of support.

Perhaps above all, it was always essential for us that the themes and framework of events for Kingston 2025 was developed and delivered with a wide community team - reflecting their own aspirations and talents. Many new partnerships and collaborations have prospered as a result of this and we are confident that these relationships will continue to flourish in different ways and many more will develop.

A key aim of Kingston 2025 was to celebrate the rich history of the borough and diversify the stories that we tell by providing opportunities for creativity and engagement to those who don't always enjoy those advantages; this work has only just begun.

These lessons, partnerships and community relationships will help us to build on the legacy of the programme. In particular, starting in 2026, they will help to shape and inform a collaborative borough-wide Cultural Strategy that will articulate the central role that cultural and creative communities will play in the life of a thriving Kingston.

That conversation starts here.

**Scott Furlong - Programme Director,
Cultural Strategy and Visitor Experience**

**Kathryn Woodvine - Arts & Culture
Partnerships Lead, Project Lead Kingston
2025**



Thank you to all the participants, volunteers
and communities who made
Kingston 2025 so special



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON
UPON THAMES