

HP_CCT_HTC_Interview_20_March_2019

Date: transcribed 17th February 2020
Comments: anonymised March 2021
Duration: 01:14:56

KEY:

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

I: = Interviewer 1

I2: = Interviewer 2

R: = Respondent

CT1, CCT3, CCT4, CCT5, CCT6, CCT8 = Other CCT colleagues

O1, O2, O3, O4 = Other persons connected to CCT

MCA1 = Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience Project Members

(Irrelevant discussion 00:00:00 - 00:00:29)

I: Interview with [R] from the Churches Conservation Trust on the 20th March, 2019. This is the final interview that we're conducting regarding the Mapping Contemporary Art and the Heritage Experience project. [R], what we're going to do is go over the questions that we feel have been constant throughout the project and your reflections now on how that experience has been for you. I think at the very beginning of our interviews with you we asked you what you felt about contemporary art.

R: I was very honest [laughter].

I: You were very honest, could you tell us now, has it changed? What do you feel about contemporary art and what that means now?

R: Do you know, I think it has changed, I don't think about it with horror now and think: "There's no way I'm going to that exhibition," so I think that's definitely changed. I'm much more open to going in and seeing new things. I still don't like a lot of the stuff that I go and see, which I think is okay, but at least I can say that I've been and had a look now, so that's great. I get where its place is now, if that even makes any sense, before, to me, it was just in a box and it was for a certain group of people to go and look at at a certain time and now I get it could be for everybody, so I think that's good.

Even in the work that I'm doing now, I'm managing the interpretation consultant who have actually based two pieces of art interpretation on the Gogmagog

principles, which is great, I never would have thought of doing anything like that before. So I would have been quite traditional rather than contemporary. So we're going to have two beautiful pieces in the Canny Space that are actually based on what Matt did with Gogmagog, which is perfect.

I: That's interesting, so the interpretation of Holy Trinity Church which is now called the Canny Space?

R: It's a working title, we're going to rebrand it, yes.

I: It's got references to Gogmagog?

R: Well, the couple of things we've managed to negotiate with Matt, is we're going to have the peal taken out of Gogmagog, so we'll have the peal as part of the interpretation in some form. But yesterday I commissioned two pieces of work with [CCT5] who did the technical stuff. Actually this will be the third piece, we've already commissioned one piece for [them] to work on, but these two are particularly soundscapes. One is very much like Gogmagog in its format in that it's all story lead, it's layered, anticipating different audiences will interact with it, and it's an hour long. So it's very like the way Matt did Gogmagog.

We kind of knew that we wanted a soundscape based on the work that Matt had done, but I didn't know what it would look or feel like. Obviously [CCT5] has worked with Matt, so he was really keen to have it similar but not the same, it's going to be great. It's going to be a narrated audio timeline of the history of the church. Instead of using local people, we're going to use actors, because there's a very specific message that we want to give that piece of interpretation. It's great, I've commissioned it separately to some of the other stuff, it's great to find [CCT5], [they] understand[] the space, [they] worked with Matt and we really liked the work they've both produced, so it was just a no-brainer, really.

I: It's a great legacy and impact of the project?

R: It is and it's quite a big piece of work, we're just working out budget at the minute, but it's thousands of pounds, it's not hundreds, and our interpretation budget isn't massive, but [their's] is the biggest piece. So the sound piece is the most expensive, biggest piece of the interpretation because we think it's important.

I: Is that part of the Heritage Lottery Funding?

R: Yes.

I: The impact on you personally, by being involved in the contemporary art commissioning with Matt, [CCT5] and [CCT4], has been quite strong?

R: It has, it's been really significant. I have a friend who used to work for CCT as well, [they were] working on the Worcester project, who has a new job curating a community arts weekend in Worcester. I introduced [them] to Matt. I invited [them] up, [they] came up to see Gogmagog which is a hellish five-and-a-half-hour journey because I just thought it was absolutely brilliant and I knew that [they]

would get it because [they work] in the art world. I think Matt's going to potentially be doing a bit of work with [them] in the future, so that's all good. [They] said: "I never would have come if you hadn't said 'you need to come and hear this, this is just absolutely amazing'."

[Them] coming up, I was talking to [them] about interpretation, and [they] said: "You don't need any more interpretation, [R], this is the kind of thing you should be looking at in the space," and I was thinking: "You're completely right." I kind of thought that already in my head but we were starting to go down the traditional interpretation route, pulling a face now, of labels, and text boards and stuff like that and that never, ever has felt comfortable. So what we've managed to do is negotiate with HLF to change the interpretation plan, managed to negotiate with the team, so we've got a real mixture of stuff in there now. We do have four sound pieces out of the 20.

I: That's really good, so you've managed to go back to the HLF and say...

R: We'd like to revisit it, yes.

I: Would you have thought of doing sound pieces?

R: I wouldn't have, no. There's a team of people we've got to please, I suppose, and CCT are really traditional in their interpretation. So, for example, I went to Bolton, that was the last project we did, and they've got a history wall, it's cut out people about the length of this room and it's all text based and that was the bee's knees for them when they opened it. It's been open for four years now and it's stayed exactly the same. That was the route that we were particularly thinking about to start with but I was always, even from starting the work with Matt, thinking this is an entirely different way of looking at things. The space is too special to fill it up with boards and text and stuff like that.

They're going to be very different to Gogmagog, they're going to be individual experiences and we're going to have headphones because of the business plan nature of the space. But our HLF monitor was very... interpretation is always on the agenda, always wants to visit interpretation because [they] never ever got the original plan, we had a different consultant, [they] never got it, [they] said it didn't flow, it didn't fit together, [they were] really worried about it, every time we meet [they want] to revisit it. I think, it was maybe about October November time, I revisited it with [them] and said: "We want to change this, we want to not do this, we want to do this instead, we're looking at this in a completely different way," and [they were] like: "Yes, that's absolutely fine."

I: That's really good.

R: It is, it's great. And for them to get it as well, because it was the one thing that [they] kept saying: "Can we just look at this on the agenda, can you just explain this to me?" I changed two more things since the last time I met [them], I'm actually looking forward to meeting [them] in a couple of weeks and saying: "This is where we are." What's really good as well, the interpretation consultant that we have, that we employed, is we gave [them] the brief, not all, but three quarters of

these pieces of interpretation will be co-created with the local community and that's very much based on what Matt tried to achieve as well, well, did achieve I think. That's making [their] job much harder, [they're] spending much more time on it than [they] would have done if [they'd] just gone out to tender or whatever, but [they] get[] it too. [They] saw Gogmagog as well, [they] came to visit it a couple of times.

I: Who's that?

R: [They're] called [Name], [they're] from [Name of Organisation], we've employed [them] to oversee the interpretation plan and pull it all together with [their] contacts. It's great, I'm super excited that he's got the CD through, I can't wait to have a copy and listen to it again. I keep thinking about how, potentially, we can bring it back at a point to Holy Trinity at some point and bring it back again.

I: We'll get on to that. I think also, it's worth noting that Holy Trinity Church had an impact on Matt as well to produce that work and to work with [CCT5] and [CCT4]. Now, of course, he's got the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award which is really significant. So I think, as a critical mass of work, and Gogmagog was very important in that, so for him, we'll see.

R: I don't think it would have worked so well if it hadn't have been Matt, we were really, well you'll know, we've gone backwards and forwards about: "Is this right for the space? We don't want people to come in and do it to us." At the very beginning I was like: "Contemporary art is done to people." Actually some of the exhibitions that I've been to, even in the last year, are still done to. I've looked around and thought: "I literally don't understand this." I went to an opening arts exhibition with a friend, it was her exhibition on the day, it was the paintings, it was all really beautiful, I just didn't get it. Even though she was like: "Well, this is this," and I was like... Whereas Gogmagog I got, it just made sense to me.

I: Do you think that's because you were involved in it and you could see the thought processes? It's difficult to say.

R: It's really difficult to say because I was involved in it. I think probably because I was involved in it, because we worked so closely together, I honestly can't say. It'll be interesting to see what [CCT5's] new soundscape piece is, because I'm not going to be involved in that, I've just commissioned that piece, [Name of Interpretation Consultant] will oversee and I will only sign it off in September when it's finished. So it'll be interesting to see if I feel the same about that.

What's really interesting is I had to reign myself back in, yesterday in the meeting because we were discussing the final bits before we'd sign off the brief, I had to stop myself from being really prescriptive because I want it to be as good as Gogmagog and I think [CCT5] was really annoyed because I kept saying it needs to be high quality, it needs to be as good [laughter], it can't be just this, if you need extra days please let us know and I can sort that into the budget. [They] must have just been sick of us and lived and breathed Gogmagog and [they're] amazing, [CCT5], so it will be of the quality, but I felt like I had to keep on saying and saying that for the space. It's definitely suited the space, it definitely set the

bar and so everything now, I judge against that which is really bad, I know, but hey.

I: I think that's good.

I: Yes, (unclear 00:13:07) different experiences of things.

R: It was just great, it was great to work with him.

I: It was a really good piece of work.

R: It was a fantastic piece of work. I think, for me, I walked past that blooming bell peel on that board for the last five years and I've read it but it's never sunk in, it's never been of any importance to me because the bells are just another bit of the story that only appeals to some people, that's what I thought to start with. It took Matt to go: "There is a story behind this and this is really interesting and did you know this?" I was like: "Actually, no?" That's been really interesting because I've been able to talk to [Name], the interpretation consultant, and said to [them]: "These are they key dates and the timeline, but I don't want you to just tell the story of the church that everybody knows, can you delve in the archives and find out if there's any female voices for this? Or can you go to Durham records office and have a look to see if there's anything around this," so it's more about people rather than place now. I think if I'd done the interpretation plan this time last year it would have been very much about place, but now it's very much about people, which sounds a bit bonkers.

I can't articulate that in any other way, I don't know how to explain it any other way, but that's how I keep thinking about it. How does heritage from the past... which people have passed through the doors, how does it affect people now, how are people going to find out about the stories of the past today and also how are they going to contribute to stories of the future, that's changed my way of thinking a little bit like that.

I: Rather than the built heritage.

R: Which is what we would've done, in terms of interpretation, the church was built at this time, this is the architect, this is this, and these are the significant events. Actually, it's very much about people and place now rather than just about the place. That's actually been really good for the team as well, for regeneration, once a month we catch up with projects and we used to give: "We're at this stage," but we don't now, we talk about the things that we've learned over the last month and the things that have been really interesting and people are really interested in what's going on in Sunderland and they were really interested in Matt's work. That's good because the rest of the team are looking at different ways now and interpreting stories. If I had the money I would have Matt as an artist in residence in that space, honestly, I would, I think he would be tremendous and it would be super exciting to see what he came up with but I can't because we can't afford him.

I: He's off on his trajectory.

R: I know he is. It's nice to have known him when he was here (unclear 00:16:07)
[laughter].

I: **You're actually touching on lots of things that we need to know about which is really great. It's been really successful with Matt and you've had a good relationship with him, we've talked about Matt quite a lot, would you promote the use of using artists in other... from now on, with other projects?**

R: I absolutely would, I had a bit of a not so great experience with an artist as well in the last year for a different piece of work, a very small commission. I think I definitely would but that is very much to do with his approach, I definitely would. If I was saying to the team about: "He's a contemporary artist for historic spaces or use contemporary art for interpretation," I would definitely say... but I think you've got to get the right person.

I: **What about the selection...**

R: The selection process was brilliant, I really felt that because we were so, I don't suppose we were arty, but we were like: "No. We know the space really well, we know the community, this is what we want," and you allowed us to have that conversation with you, it was just perfect for us.

I: **I just want to dig a bit deeper there. The selection process was the writing of a brief and then sending it out and inviting?**

R: Yes.

I: **The experience that you've had which hasn't been so great, did you go through that process?**

R: No.

I: **What happened, did they come to you or did you go to them?**

R: We had a really small piece of work, £1,500. They were doing work for somebody else and they were recommended to us by somebody else and we went to them with a brief and said: "Can you please do this?" and it wasn't delivered at all and it took a lot of managing. In the end it's public money, so in the end we had to compromise with what we got for our money which leaves a bad taste in your mouth really. I think had we gone out for an open call, and now I realise, even though it was £1,500 or £1,800, that's not a tiny bit of money, you can still get good work for that, we still should have had better work for that. The way that we went through the selection process was perfect and that's what we should be doing from now on. I think we have actually built into our programme that there will be three small artist commissions for the next three years, that's part of our activity budget, they'll be small, we're only talking a couple of thousand but we will work through a selection process and we will have a call to project.

I especially liked them coming to the space on the day because, I think, not only do you get chance to see the space and how we interacted with it but it also gave

us the chance to see who'd done some homework. So who was really interested in the building rather than just interested in the money or the commission, that for us was... [CCT1] and I came away from that day thinking: "We really don't want to work with that person, no matter how good their work is, but actually these couple of people are interesting and they've obviously done their research and stuff," so I think it's really important for us to meet them and have a walk around.

I: In previous interviews you talked about the site visit, I think you said you would love the opportunity to actually take those people to the neighbourhood as well as just the church?

R: Would have, yes, we just didn't have enough time really, I would have liked it to be, we could have had a full day, we could have had lunch, we could have went to the pub and walked around and they would have got a feel for it. It's a very strange place and I think you've really got to get beneath its surface first before you can even achieve anything. We'd definitely do it that way again.

I: I think that was essential part of really getting it, also, you being available to ask those questions from the artist.

R: The difficulty is having to balance that time, I'm externally funded to do a very specific job and this is [CCT3's] baby with [CCT8], and it sat with [CCT3's] team and the difficulty that we had to start with was that, in our team, we looked for new uses for old buildings, interpretation and community engagement and all of that is a vital part of it, our daily job is to save that building. Whereas [CCT3's] team is very much about development's trust and new partners and stuff. It was really difficult for me to juggle my time and to say to the team: "I think it's really important that I spend some time on this." It was a struggle at times, a lot of the time I've spent my own time in meeting Matt or met him in work time but had to make that time up to do other stuff but I think it's important. I was slightly worried about [CCT3] going and so it's who picks that up and sees whether it's important, especially as we've got a new strategy. For me, it really gave us profile, it really did. All I can do is be this old little voice now saying it's really important and it was a great piece of work.

I: Okay, that's great, is there anything else that we need to ask about contemporary art and how you feel about that now?

I2: I was going to add, I suppose it's your reflections, but your direct experience and involvement with it. I was wondering whether the local community or the feedback from the community and the audience for Gogmagog and whether that's still in the memory?

R: It's still in the memory, it was talked about on Monday night, we had a public meeting, about something different, about the organ, and it was actually mentioned then. Somebody, "I hope you're not putting any more of that stuff in, I didn't even like it," and what was really good was that somebody in the audience went: "Well, that's your opinion, isn't it? Lots of other people liked it." I was like: "Yes!" [laughter] they were really good. So it is still in the memory and somebody asked me when it was coming back, which I think is really nice. People

loved having it there. It's really hard to judge whether it was the combination of the church being open on a Saturday and Sunday, which it's not normally, and/or Gogmagog, it's really hard to judge why people actually came on a Saturday and Sunday because that's really unusual for us to have visitors on Saturdays and Sundays.

I have a list of people who want to buy if it's ever released on a DVD or a download. I think it needs to have a space somewhere, I just don't know where that space might be but people do get it. The community, especially the ones who were involved really, really got it, which I knew they would. What was really nice was that all the young creatives got it as well. Obviously sometimes they just want to play rock tunes and stuff like that. [CCT4] and [CCT5] still talk about it and they're still as excited today as they were when they first started it and [CCT4] was saying: "This is the best thing I've ever done and excited for it to be so different," it'd be interesting to talk to them about how it's impacted them.

I: Yes, it would be.

I: Did you (unclear 00:24:26 - 00:24:29), about records of numbers of visitors and whether your visitors changed?

R: We did, I gave them to you, didn't I?

I: I just couldn't find them anywhere, but I think we have got a record somewhere.

R: I gave them all with the dates, didn't I? I might have something in the file, I'll have a look back through it. We will have recorded visitor numbers and all those visitors came and heard it and it was on, or came because it was on, so I don't think it would be far away from the visitor numbers. I'll pull the visitors numbers from the visitors file, it was something in region of 1,700 visitors I think, I'm sure that's right, but there might be more.

I: It'll be interesting to know if they were different. I know we didn't do a visitor's survey type thing.

R: We didn't keep post codes or anything either. To be fair, [O4], she did every day, there were repeat visitors, I know that, there were people who came at the beginning and came at the end which is always good, they wanted to hear it again. I think some people came when it was noisy and wanted to hear it when it was quieter and have that personal experience. There were a lot of young people who came which is interesting and there were a lot of people who travelled from outside of the area which is really good for us, because it's not just about that local community, even though it's their story. The space should have a regional draw, lots of people came from the region.

I: We've got our own (unclear 00:26:11) visitor impact, what we did, so we've got a little bit of that as well.

I: We've got impact on that. We talked about contemporary art and it'd be interesting to go over your interview right from the beginning to see whether... you did have very strong views which was really great.

R: I did, like Baltic.

I: You talked about paperclips.

R: Honestly, I'm scarred by the whole paperclip thing, I cannot remember the name of the woman, that's how impactful it was, I was like: "Really?" and [Partner's Name] was like that and I was like: "No, I want to go and get a drink." I was thinking: "This is an hour of my life I can't get back." [laughter]. That's how I used to think, I was like: "I'm not going to see contemporary art, this is just hours of my life," because we're on the trajectory down now after 50, I was like: "No, I'm not going to see it, it's a waste of time," whereas now, I'm like: "Yes, okay, we'll go and see it."

I: A bit more curious?

R: I'm a bit more curious, yes, definitely.

I: I'm quite interested in the language of contemporary art. Whether that puts you off?

R: It did, we talked about that to start with, I was like: "This is not for me, this is definitely not for me," I was trying to get [Child's Name1] and [Child's Name2] to come. [Child's Name2] would come because [they're] more forward thinking and [Child's Name1] was like: "No, that's definitely not for me." It is, it's the language. When we were trying to promote it. Obviously with the team we talk about contemporary art and historical spaces and the research. In every day conversations, I don't think I've ever talked about it being a piece of contemporary art, we've always talked about it being a co-created piece of work with the community, Gogmagog, beautiful soundscape, and telling the stories. I've never, ever, said: "You need to come and have a look at this contemporary art." So I still haven't quite got to the point where I can explain it to other people to get them to come but maybe you don't need to [laughter].

I: Let's go on to heritage. We talked about what does heritage mean to you, which was a really big question, I remember, you went: "Ugh" and it was really big. Has it changed the way that you think about heritage now or the presentation of your site? You've talked a little bit about that, I think you've talked quite a lot about that actually, are there any more reflections that you can offer?

R: Well, for me, I'm from a non-heritage background, so when I came into this job it was about the building heritage definitely, and it was about the church and finding a new use for the church and then telling the story of the church, but it's not about that now, it's really evolved. It's about it being at the heart of that community and it's about people and place, not just the place. So, for me, definitely layers of history and heritage that need to be uncovered and the way that Matt did with Gogmagog seemed to be a really good way to do that. So it's made us think,

there's 20 things on this interpretation plan, and not one of them is boring or traditional, they're all a bit quirky, they're all a little bit different. There is room for that written narrative, but that's downloadable, there's not going to be very much in the space whatsoever. No, it definitely made me think about heritage different, I actually might stay in the heritage world now.

I: Might you?

R: I might [laughter], I might.

I: (Over-speaking 00:29:39).

R: I may do.

I: Do you think it's changed the way the volunteers thought about the presentation of their site? You are a small team, with a small number of volunteers. How many of them were involved in Gogmagog?

R: Three. [O1] loved it, absolutely loved it. I think it really changed [their] perspective, [they] came to hear it four or five times, [they were] like: "It's just amazing what you could do with a few old doors and stories and sound." [laughter]. [O2] just didn't get it at all, [they] did not get it, but [they are] nearly 90, [they] wear[] a hearing aid, you have to really shout at [them]. [they're] like: "What is this?"

I: Did [O2] question it? Or did it go straight over [their] head?

R: It just went straight over [their] head, [they weren't] interested in any way shape or form. I think what's interesting about [O2] is, I think it's not that [they're] losing interest with the church, the changes are very difficult for [them] to cope with. [O2] wanted quite a lot, when people came in on the weekend, [O2] just wanted to take them round on a tour and talk about the architecture and the church and that's [their] love. I don't think [O2] got that we were trying to interpret it another way, [O2] doesn't get anything about what we're trying to do, so that went straight over [their] head. [O3], who is also old, can be difficult, I didn't get it to start with and [they don't] like it but [O3] does get it now and [they see] that there are other ways of telling the story. I think [they] thought it was going to be completely different. I don't know what [they] thought it was going to be, but [they] said: "This is not how I thought it was going to be, at all," but I think [they] get[] it. It's hard because they're older. They're very set in their ways. [O1] is older, [O1's] a very similar age to me, obviously not old, but older but [they were] blown away by the piece, really [were].

I: So, hopefully that will have an impact?

R: I hope so. They're not really volunteers but are counting as our volunteers, which is HTAG, which is our ambassadors group. Every single one of our ambassadors group came at one point to see Gogmagog and every single one of them liked it and they're completely different backgrounds. University, the council, the college, the ambassador's theatre group, Sunderland Music Education Hub, The Culture Company. Local person, [Name], who loved it. Every single one of them said: "Wow, this is great." We set the bar for them. We can see what it is that you want

to do in here and I've been constantly saying: "This is not another community centre, we've got enough community centres in the East End, this needs to be a new culture and heritage hub and the things that we do in here can't be sticking and gluing, I think that really set the bar. They got that this is where we're going with it and [s.I whilst we're not linked 00:33:02], might not be 100% behind it, actually we see where we're going and this is really good. So the feedback from HTAG was really good.

I: That's good.

R: HTAG - Holy Trinity Advisory Group. They were our advisory group, they're our ambassadors group now, we've rebranded them. Once there is nothing to advise on for a little while [laughter].

I: I think you've answered the next thing which is about interpretation and whether it's had an impact on your understanding of how you can interpret heritage properties and I think you've answered that. Do you want to ask something about engagement?

I: We've asked about the experience.

I: I think you touched upon this right at the beginning in that how Gogmagog is going to be referred to within the future plans for the Canny Space, I think you'd said the peal will still be there?

R: The peal will still be there, we're not sure what form yet, which is something that we're working out with [Name of Interpretation Consultant] and [CCT5]. We're having six of our pews converted by the college into individual sound and vision experiences. So the idea is they make new furniture out of these old pews, three pieces of furniture, one covering each century. We're not sure what they'll look like. We've got a bit of a brief idea, [Name of Interpretation Consultant] is still working on that as to the themes of each one. I think we envisage that the peal will be in one of them, if not, it'll be incorporated into the soundscape in some way.

Definitely, [CCT5] was talking about incorporating some of the Gogmagog peal yesterday into the soundscape, but also what was really interesting is he wants to get the bellringers back into the tower because we can ring the bells now, we have the go ahead to ring the bells. So Matt had them recording on their handbells, we're going to get them back into our tower, play the bells, which are going to be recorded in the tower and they're going to be recorded outside at different points around Sunderland and then pulled together so it's as if you're... when you listen to it in your headphones it's as if you're out there - that's the plan. So that's definitely going to be part of the soundscape. It's just working out where and when it goes.

I did talk to the team about whether Gogmagog could come back as a whole installation about how it was and I suppose there's the slight reluctance in that the way that it was set up with the eight speakers was there for that particular time when the bells were silent and it did its job then. Obviously when we're reopened we'll be able to play the bells and is there really a need? I would say: "Maybe not," but I would also say to them, which I have said, is we don't want to lose all that

storytelling, even individually as the four separate pieces, the four [s.I stop it 00:36:28] stories, without the peal that's really beautiful, the composition is really beautiful. We need to think about how we can use that, obviously I need to talk to Matt about that because it belongs to him, [CCT5] and [CCT4] but we need to see if we can include it in some way. If it could come back at a later date then I don't see why not.

I: Afterwards, there's often a longing to bring things back. Quite a few commissions that I've worked on there's a longing to bring it back, but actually you have to question why.

R: It was of the time. I think that's what we're starting to question now. I did think we would bring it back for the launch, it'd be really beautiful and it did attract a lot of people and because it was so loud and when the doors open, but maybe using elements of that in what we're trying to do and then it'll be in new pieces, it will actually do the same thing and maybe it was of its time. I just feel, I don't know, it's not my baby but I do have a bit of an affinity with it, really.

I: I think you talked in the earlier interviews about the role of the Soup Suppers and whether that engagement and research... that seems to be very important building the momentum and expectation for the project, they happened and then the project happened.

R: We've built the Soup Suppers into the business plan. It's probably changed since the last time we chatted. In the business plan was the Vestrymen's Dinner and that was a bigger soup supper, that was going to be £30 a head, very exclusive, only 24 people could come. That's still is the plan, to have that as an annual fundraiser, that will be managed by an event company, that will be the plan and yes we'll do soup and maybe a bit more, starter and pudding. Whilst it's not going to make us very much money, it might not even turn a profit, I've actually built the Soup Suppers as a monthly thing into the activity and business plans. I can't say that will definitely be in there because I'll be handing over to a new centre manager, we're hoping that they'll just take the plans that are written and just go with them. Yes, it's in there as a monthly thing. It's a really nice way of engaging with the local community. The people who're involved still talk about soup suppers, so really enjoyed them. I think it's just really nice way of getting people together and I think that's what the space needs, just somewhere where you can be really welcome, where there's no agenda and literally just come together for a bit of food, play a bit of music and look at some old photos or whatever it is, guest speaker.

I: You talked about them being quite atmospheric? With candlelight and a blanket to keep you warm.

R: It was amazing, and it'll still be like that. It'll be even more atmospheric because it's going to be painted to dark green, the original 18th century colours, we're going to insert a fire, but it'll be a Dimplex one, because it'll not be warm. We'll still not have all those lights, we'll still have atmospheric lights, it'll still be exactly the same. If it hadn't been for Matt doing it, I would never have thought of having a soup supper. I don't know why I didn't think of it but I didn't, it never entered my

psyche. I'd quite like for them to continue and be an open invitation to people. So some of the Soup Suppers, I think the first one was really well attended, the middle waned slightly in numbers, then the last one was really well attended. They all worked in completely different ways, didn't they?

I: It was really good.

R: It was great, it was really good.

I: That was a really thoughtful way of keeping people involved.

R: Also bringing together the musicians with the bell ringers, with some of the local people, the fisherman and the volunteers. It was great, it was a really nice mix of people who had, on paper, had nothing in common, but they had Matt in common, so they came to listen to progress and see where it was at, so it was great.

I: I think you've covered my questions about engagement and the volunteers. The audience - can you reflect now, it's finished now, what we're discussing in this interview is the legacy and whether it has. In your opinion, when you think back, how do you feel that the audience engaged with the work? What's your memory of how they engaged with it?

R: There's some people who really stand out for their engagement and that probably sounds really weird, I probably shouldn't give any names on your dictaphone. There's the head of a new NPO who I had to sit on a board with, I suppose the impression is that they do culture in Sunderland, they do it and nobody else does it. I'd invited [them] about four times to Gogmagog and [they] couldn't manage it. [Head of new NPO] came to, I think it was the last Soup Supper, where we had the men singing and there was the performance of Gogmagog before the Soup Supper, so very different to what we had done before. Gogmagog was playing, some of the keelboat singers were there singing and [Head of new NPO] stood in the room and [they] began chatting as it was playing to another colleague and [they were] was just stood there for about 40 minutes and didn't move.

My other colleague, who is [Name], [Name of Organisation] manager said: "[Head of new NPO's] absolutely in awe of what you've managed to achieve here." [They] rang the next day and said: "I wish I'd come before, that was absolutely amazing, I'm going to tell the team to come." So that really stuck out in my head, I'm not sure if [they] thought that we could achieve something that brilliant and that they were the only ones that could do that. So that was great.

I think, [Name of Local Person], [they] really stand[] out for me as well. [Name] is pretty open to most stuff. [They're] local. [They're] pretty open. [They were] like: "This is wonderful. Every time I come back I hear something different." [They] really liked when the space wasn't full of people. [They] sought out a time to come on [their] own when [they] knew it would be fairly quiet. I was really surprised, when people first started coming in, they were walking around and people were chatting and fairly quiet. But over time, I used to pop down on a Saturday and Sunday and there would be loads of people sitting and listening for ages. I'm not sure that I thought that we would get that. I thought people would just come in and be there for a few minutes and not listen to the whole piece. Lots of people

questioned when it was starting or when it would restart so they could listen to it all from the beginning which is not what I'd anticipated either. Even if people were coming in halfway through, they wanted to stay or come back to listen. It was mad, strange.

I: I remember a few comments about people not knowing where they were in the sequence and wanting to know when it was going to start and when it was going to end, so they knew where they were.

R: Even though Matt had done that lovely piece of narrative, it was really lovely, I think it was quite hard, because he knew it inside out as did [CCT5], [CCT4] and so did [O4] by the end of it, and [O4] could say: "This is where the cholera bit is starting," or whatever. I think it was hard for people to tell the difference between each bit. I think the only bit that you could instantly tell was the cholera bit because it was so dark. Especially, the last two, even I found it quite hard, that's not a criticism in any way shape or form. Matt did try to cover it in his leaflet, but I'm not sure people did get that. I don't know how we could have done it any differently, we did think about restarting it at 10:00 and then at 11:15. We did think about doing it like that. Matt wanted it to run on a loop. Maybe next time we do it differently.

I: They're good reflections on how could we have made that better for the audience.

I: Although it was good being a duration (over-speaking 00:45:40) couple of the focus groups, which is a slightly different experience, certainly people had time and we encourage them to sit through the whole thing. Maybe if you knew and you can identify which bit, you wouldn't do that, you had to work it out.

R: I think there was something about reading it, because obviously they all know the story of Holy Trinity, bearing in mind there's no other interpretation in that place, there's some people coming to that church for the first time and listening to the story but not actually getting the story, they would be just listening to the piece. Even though we had a really brief history, I think it was hard the place that in the piece if you've never been there before, but obviously they'd lived and breathed the piece, they knew it off by heart. By the end of September, I'd been there six weekends in a row, I was just like: "I can actually sing this bit." [O4] was like: "You're so funny," and I was like: "I was singing it last night in my head."

I: I think that was my question, is there anything you think that could have been improved upon?

R: I don't even know if that's an improvement. It probably would have spoiled the piece if it had stopped or whatever. It would have been too great to improve the publicity around it, we don't have a massive budget for publicity, we didn't do a leaflet drop, we're still not connected to the right cultural networks. It's disappointing, I sit on the cultural partnership group, for Sunderland I sit on the LCEP which is the Local Culture and Education Partnership and I sit on the cultural partnership learning group and only one of those people came to see it

and there are about 80 people on those three groups, so that could have definitely been improved, I don't know how we could have got those people there. I don't know what they were anticipating and it's a shame that [Name] from the cultural company only came at the end of it, because I think if we'd have managed to get [them] to the opening night preview then [they] might have spread the word a bit. It's definitely something on publicity and something on really making sure that those movers and shakers who could have influenced other people to come, were at night, if not that night then the next couple of weeks.

I: Yes, that's a good reflection that maybe a dedicated other night? What do you think about it being just open at weekends?

R: That was so difficult for us in terms of capacity and volunteers, they did a great job. I think it was probably the best solution all round for it to be open Saturday and Sunday, there's not much passing traffic during the weekend, during the day it's not a place you visit, it's not a place you walk past on a night, you've actually got to seek it out as a visitor's destination. I think if we'd been open for a couple of years then it could have been open during the week and we would have had lots of people come. But Saturday and Sunday were the best for the time and where we're at in the programme definitely.

I: I've definitely picked that up in other interviews this morning about the logistics and there was concern about key holders and how we would manage that.

R: It was an absolute nightmare, it was difficult because we didn't inherit the project but we inherited the commitment that CCT would have to the process and completely man it. Our staff team are not based here, I'm the only one based in the North East, the rest of them... even though the North team are based in Leeds, a lot of them are further south. The team that actually started this whole process are based in London, so for them to be able to manage it, capacity wise, was always going to be an issue and I think that's something that we have to deal with internally and did deal with internally, it's just communication issues, this is not going to work unless you have a rota of people. In the end I think we were really lucky that, last minute, [O4], as a paid volunteer, we actually paid [them] to do that. Apart from one weekend, [they] did every weekend which was great because then [they] got to see repeat visitors come and [they] really knew the piece inside out and [they're] an artist [themselves], so [they] definitely get [] it. It was a big issue, capacity was a massive issue.

I: Somebody is phoning you on your phone [laughter]. You've talked about whether showing the work widened the audience, a different audience came, had that been sustained?

R: Everybody that came who wanted to, joined the mailing list, so we do have people on our mailing list now when we didn't. We've got more people on Facebook. [O4] was great about saying: "If you want updates on the project..." I think we've got about an extra 100 people who follow the page and follow on Twitter since, which is great considering we only have 700 people on the page anyway, which is great. It's just over six. The mailing list - we do actually get people interested in other events as well, we had a couple of people who had come to see Gogmagog,

come to see our Christmas event. Our Christmas event was really small, there were only 30 tickets, so to have people who have never been before, because it's such a popular event, was really good. That can only be good for us in the end, building that audience.

I: You're in a funny time, aren't you?

R: We are in a really difficult time.

I: This isn't a normal venue, it's something that's changing.

R: It's changing so rapidly as well.

I: That's what made it very difficult, I remember from the first conversations when we're setting up the project, maybe it's different heritage sites to the other ones we've worked with anyway, but it was very different.

R: But closed as well, in flux. It would be interesting to revisit it again once we've been running for five or ten years, but I think it really worked for the time. I know there were some members of the team that were slightly worried, we talked about having it outside so it was completely visible and that but it definitely worked for us. We had more visitors during Gogmagog than we've had for the last three years, it does show that it generated foot fall as well. It helped that we had Tall Ships in at the time as well, which was perfect. What really made us think, is that because we thought the bells were going to be silent forever, it was the sounds that drew a lot of people and a lot of the passers by in. Some people actively sought it out and came and made a special trip, but some people came in because of the sound and the doors were open, which was interesting.

I: I know, when I was there on the focus group days.

I: People were just coming in.

I: A community policeman came in, in uniform, and said: "This is never open, so we'll come in," and they came in and they came and took some of the leaflets away back to the police station.

R: They've been in to see it. [Name of PC] the PC has been in and said: "It's really cool, this." [laughter] "It's pretty cool," as they do, policeman speak. It's good for us. Audience development is a massive issue for Holy Trinity, Canny Space, whatever we're going to call it going forward. It's not in the city centre, it's in that deprived community, it has a really unfair reputation, it's the one red risk on our risk register is audience development because that space has to be self-sustaining in the next three years and it is huge concern. But I think it shows that people will come if people put the right stuff on. If we manage to market a bit better and we'd already had a developed audience, I think it would have been even better. A good learning curve.

I: Talking of an interim regeneration stage, but once it becomes the Canny Space, this new arts music venue, do you see this kind of commissioned projects having an influence on the future programming of Canny Space?

R: It's gone from being a heritage hub, which is what it was going to be, we talk about it as new cultural and heritage visitor experience, visitor's destination, that's how we talk about it now. The way that we've programmed things is there will be arts-lead things, there will be exhibitions. A lot of that is to do with the business plan because those things make money, but a lot of that is to do with how people have engaged with the project, not just the Gogmagog, but the things that we've been doing over time. I definitely think there's a space there for anything cultural and that includes stuff like this, absolutely. We've built some budget into our budget to try some small scale things. If I was staying, but it will be one of the recommendations, is I would certainly be looking to Arts Council to fund some future pieces of work with this. We've already started to map out a funding application with a partner with MIND who have moved into next door to us, new neighbours. I know them really well from a past life and from where they were before.

I know the CEO and the deputy CEO, they're right next door in the old school what used to be [s.I head of England 00:55:46] project. They've taken that over, they've done it all up and we started talking to them about health and heritage and how heritage can have a really big impact on taking control of your own mental wellbeing rather than concentrating on mental health, actually concentrating on things that make you feel good. Obviously heritage sites make you feel good, so we've started talking to them about scoping out a really big bid, probably to reach into communities. In that, it'll have some sort of arts-based focus. What we have been talking about is having artists in residence based in the space. Potentially, that we share in another project, the Hylton Castle Project, we've been talking to them about our experience, so potentially sharing it across two heritage sites. When I think about artists now, I just don't think about people who paint.

So we started talking about artists, we were thinking about all the different genres of art, so that could be somebody to do performance, or it could be contemporary art, it could be dance or whatever. When I started talking about this to the group, I had to catch myself and think: "Bloody hell, she's talking about artists and not just painters doing rubbishy painting or doing things with paperclips in the Baltic." Actually what's been really good is Hylton Castle have really embraced that idea. It may or may not happen but it's nice to be able to talk about things like that now and think about that space being a conduit for stuff like that, there's definitely a place for it, definitely. That community really needs it as well.

I: **That's really good.**

I2: **Obviously, we talked about your experiences with this particular project and the Holy Community Church, but in terms of the communication across your team and back to head office and the CCT team more broadly, I'm just wondering about, that's how this project or your experience has that been able to feed into these other levels of CCT. In terms of partners we've worked with, other partners have had much more experience and more active in terms of contemporary art approach and the CCT team who were just beginning to do that.**

R: Baby steps.

I: **Yes and I'm just wondering what's happened there?**

R: [CCT3], [they're] part of SMT, so [they] would give regular feedback, we shared a lot of pitches and a lot of updates and we have an internal newsletter that goes to all staff called NewsBetter, so [CCT3] and I have shared that. [CCT3] did a really good write up not only on NewsBetter but in our Pinnacle magazine. That Pinnacle magazine goes to all of our members who subscribe to CCT and that went to over 2,000 people nationally, so that was great. I think the difficulty is, [CCT3] was really, really passionate about it, [CCT3] loves art in all forms and really wanted to build that relationship with Arts Council, [they're] actually leaving.

[Their] team has been, some of the jobs have been reassigned or rewritten, and their development team's role now is very much about the development of the trust. I suppose it's way down on their agenda. What I have done is I have talked to our CEO, [Name of CEO], about Gogmagog and about how it's given us visibility and how there's opportunities to do other pieces of work around research and obviously they open up funding avenues but around research and around art. We should look at our churches in other ways and engaging communities in other ways. [They] listened, I don't know whether [they've] got it or not. The real difficulty is we're at capacity with lots of people being made redundant and I just wonder whether our business is safe in historic churches and whether they see this as important as it should be. To me it could be a really good way of saving historic churches, we could have more cultural and heritage hubs with funding from other sources and more community engagement and stuff.

I: **Do you think they regard it as: "If we're going to do that we're going to need more capacity," rather than: "Let's look at what we've got now and whether we can change our way of thinking?"**

R: Yes, because you've got nobody in SMT driving it forward I think it might be seen as a bit of an add on and a bit of something extra for people to do. If you haven't lived and breathed it, it's really hard to understand, my team get it, that's because I talk about it and a lot of them have been up to see it. But the wider CCT they're so embroiled in their everyday whatever they do, every day, but sometimes it's just isn't in their psyche, which is hard, but I think it is seen as an add on.

I: **It's not unusual.**

R: Is it not? I think it would be different if [CCT3] was staying because I think, obviously, [they're] really passionate about it. [CCT3] sees the difference that it makes and knows the difference that it can make. So without that voice now at SMT, there's nowhere for my voice to go unless I collar the CEO, which I quite often do, but that's not the normal chain of command, if that makes sense?

I: **I know it's difficult, people move on and all that work you've done (over-speaking 01:01:38).**

- I: I think as [MCA1] said, the partners we're working with are all very different. You've got the National Trust which of course is quite experienced, whereas now, English Heritage were in a different place. So to have the CCT who were new to it, it was interesting, as a partner and you are a small organisation.**
- R:** I would like to continue it if there were any opportunity to, but I think it would be one or two people pushing for that to be continued and there would be conversations about capacity and who is going to manage it and stuff like that, so it's not a whole organisation buy in, I don't think, I may be completely wrong, but that's not what I'm picking up, I don't think, really. If we had the capacity, [CCT3] and I talked about having a dedicated worker across the Trust to look at opportunities. If there was the opportunity to have that, I don't know, [Name of CEO] could magic the money from... But I think if there was somebody whose remit it was, because it's got that label on it, then it would be seen as being part of it, but just as an add on to people's jobs.
- I: Is the MoU, the Arts Council, is that still alive or is that [s.I another initial... 01:03:05].**
- R:** Live, that won't get picked up now, I don't think, now that [CCT3] is going. They have completed their two pieces of work.
- I: What pieces of work?**
- R:** They had to do two pieces of work, they had two Arts Council funded pieces that weren't finished, that hadn't been evaluated, they have finished them now, Thankful Villages was one, I think.
- I: Oh Thankful Villages, yes, and the one that we did... my goodness. That's been wrapped up?**
- R:** I think so.
- I: Thankful Villages didn't go anywhere, did it?**
- R:** It's finished apparently, it's being evaluated.
- I: You mentioned another project in Worcester? What was that one?**
- R:** Our Worcester project is another regeneration project with Sound and Art in St Swithun's and [Name], who did the same job as me there, [they were] from Chester-le-Street and [they were] great, living in Worcester. That was very different to Holy Trinity, it's right in the centre of Worcester, it still has all the pews and everything, they've done some amazing stuff with sound and art and music, their audience is very different. They're doing a lot of work with the prisons and young people. They've just recruited a centre manager who has come from an arts background. He used to manage an arts gallery, I think it is, so he's really looking at plans for there.

I: So, actually, it has continued, the CCT as an organisation, is engaged in the arts.

R: We are, yes.

I: Not in a strategic way?

R: Not in a strategic way, Sound and Art at St Swithun's is called SASS. That evolved because of [Name], [they do] the same job as me, [they] did the feasibility, [they] did the consultation but [they come] from an arts background, [they] used to manage a gallery [themselves], so [they're] really passionate about the arts. When [they] started doing the partnership work, the feasibility study, the consultation, [they] said: "This is what I think the new use should be, but it's very much lead by [Name]," it wasn't regen team or even CCT it was [them] saying it. Actually this is a good fit for us, [Them] and I speak and we're friends, and [they] said: "That's really good, have you thought about this?" and because we have the same age buildings we've done a lot of stuff together.

We've got [Name], who has come from an arts background as well, although they are revisiting their plan, so that will be another new use. They were six months ahead of us, now they're six months behind us, they're not on site yet. So when that opens, it's going to be renamed, that will be sounds, arts and something else and it will still have an arts focus on it.

I: I think that's my questions, because I was interested in the organisational legacy.

R: Sorry [laughter].

I: That's interesting.

R: Is [Name of CEO] coming, have you invited him to the conference? Our CEO, [Name of CEO]?

I: No, we probably haven't got the (over-speaking 01:06:23).

R: I think it would be interesting to see what [their] thoughts are, [they're] obviously very different to [Name] who was our last CEO and had a clear vision. We have a new strategy which is going to be launched on 1 April and it's very much about putting churches back into the hands of communities. Not my team, my team is the only one that's stayed the same, but CCT have totally been restructured, we've got rid of a lot of posts and put a lot more people on the ground in communities. So [they] told us what [their] new strategy is but I'm sure there's other stuff that [they haven't] yet shared. It'd be interesting to see what [they] thinks about it.

I: Do you know about our exhibition?

R: Yes, that's what I meant, sorry.

- I: **(Over-speaking 01:07:12) the exhibition at the Hatton Gallery.**
- R: Oh yes.
- I: **With Matt's Gogmagog in there and then we've got the conference. So the exhibition happens first and then we've got a conference on 29 and 30 July.**
- R: I don't know if I thought they were two different things, I thought they were the same, so that's all good.
- I: **I can't remember if we're doing an exhibition launch, whether that's part of the conference.**
- R: Is the exhibition still on when the conference is?
- I: **There will be, during the exhibition, we're not having an exhibition launch at the beginning, what we're doing is during the conference there will be an evening where we've asked Matt to get together the choir as well.**
- R: How lovely.
- I: **Probably The Keelman singers?**
- R: The Keelman singers, they were amazing.
- I: **To actually do a performance.**
- R: Brilliant.
- I: **Which we've asked him to do and fund making the CD, which is really good.**
- R: I know, bless him, he sent me an email saying: "I'll make sure you get a couple of copies."
- I: **You'll get more than that, I'm sure.**
- R: Thank you darling.
- I: **We need to go through the conference structure with you, because we didn't know whether [CCT3] was still around.**
- R: [They] will still be around but next Friday is [their] last day, [they're] leaving next Friday.
- I: **Then we need to think about the CCT involvement in the structure of the conference.**
- R: [They] will have a completely new, fabulous job, that [they haven't] shared with everybody yet, but it's for a global company which is in America and the UK so I suspect [they] will be travelling quite a lot I would think. Very much back to what

[they were] doing before when [they] worked for the [Name of Organisation] or whatever [they] did, so very similar to that. I'll miss [them].

I: You're with CCT until?

R: December.

I: December, that's good.

R: Yes, until December, my contract is until December so that's all good. I've put the dates in my diary already which have been agreed. I put the dates for the conference in the diary, it's been agreed to support that with some regen time I just need to get the breakdown of the day.

I: Yes, we'll work that out, we need to be more specific about the conference.

R: That's absolutely fine, so other days are in the diary anyway, it's not an issue. I think they see that, so they have to go through their diaries and we fill out these time sheets and I was saying to [CCT6] that this is my last interview with Gogmagog, and [CCT6's] like: "Oh, right great, no further involvement?" and I said: "Well actually no there's a conference," and [they were] like: "Okay, no problem." So [CCT6] hasn't got an issue with it, it's just we have to justify our time.

I: Absolutely, just one thing. I've suddenly remembered [CCT3] presented Gogmagog at some conference?

R: He did.

I: Some arts conference?

I: I just wondered if you knew of any other...

R: I don't know.

I: I might ask [CCT3].

R: Because they've been in transition, it's been difficult to catch up with [CCT3] about Gogmagog. We used to talk all the time before the restructure. I do know [they have] done that, definitely.

I: [They] did, because somebody heard [them].

R: I suspect [they've] told the world. It's probably worth giving [them] a quick call. I think [they're] answering emails at the minute. [They're] probably just inundated with stuff. I just keep ringing [them] and ringing [them] saying: "Ring me!"

I: I'll text [them]. That's the end, I just want to say, we were really, really pleased that you were part of this project.

- R: Oh good, that's great, I know at the start you were like: "It's not going to work," [laughter].
- I: **I have to admit I was rather concerned.**
- R: Sceptical? [laughter] I could see it in your face I was thinking: "[They're] just going to have a heart attack." [They were] like: "[They're] not getting this."
- I: **I was rather concerned.**
- R: I know you were.
- I: **It was about capacity.**
- R: It was about capacity.
- I: **It was about organisational capacity, not your capacity or your passion, it was about organisational capacity. So, I really was concerned about that. But do you know what, it's been such a successful project, I think it's had an impact on all of us.**
- R: That's good to hear.
- I: **Not only Matt, which the place has, but all of us as a team.**
- R: I think he thinks I'm a bit bonkers, mind [laughter].
- I: **It was fantastic, and I can still hear...**
- I: **It was in terms of those focus groups, it's brilliant, it's a really moving piece.**
- R: It is really emotive.
- I: **The whole experience was incredibly moving and working in that space. It would be interesting to see what it's like experiencing it outside of that space.**
- R: It would be.
- I: **It was very, very powerful.**
- R: It was really emotive and churches are emotive places anyway. A few people have had tears which I think is always a good thing.
- I: **Absolutely, do you remember we [s.I bought 01:12:48] our museums? They all loved that piece.**
- R: They wanted to stay, didn't they?
- I: **Yes, that was the piece they felt had the most impact.**

R: Did they? That's really good, I know they wanted to stay. You were like... they were like: "Come on, we've got to go."

I: **They still, and because we're nearly at the end of that programme now, they still reference that piece.**

R: That's good to know.

I: **It's a fantastic piece and how it brought the space alive.**

R: I think that, for me, is the biggest plus, is it really did bring the space alive. It cemented the fact that we are really up against it with that space. Even HLF know that it's a big ask to make it work and to make it sustainable. But it shows that you can do some amazing things and you can bring that space alive and it really set the bar, I think, for us. It helped having Sarah on board, Sarah is from an arts background and she really set the scene with active programme to start with, but it's definitely set the bar and people know what to expect now - pompous art shite apparently [laughter], that's all they kept saying to us: "You're not going to put any pompous art shite in there are you?" I was going: "Actually, we are." "What do you mean you are? Well, we'll not come." "What do you think you're listening to now?"

I: **(Over-speaking 01:14:08)**

R: I know, but this is Gogmagog, "Well this is what you're classing as..." "Yes, I know but this different, we like this." "Well this is kind of the thing we're going to..." "Oh, well that's fine." I think, for me, I think you don't have to put things in a little box and call them contemporary art, actually, you can just engage people by calling it by its name, whether Gogmagog or whatever, and that's a really good learning curve for us as well. It's not to theme things as a heritage talk, obviously you have to do that in paperwork, but it would be "An evening with..." or a soup supper, do you know what I mean? So that's good for us as well, I think we're bad at putting things in boxes in CCT.

I: **I think that's it, thank you so much [R] this is your final interview.**

R: You're really welcome. I know, I'm quite sad.

[End of Recording]