

BUSINESS

How people power helps ensure communities can become Hive of activity

Crowdfunding platform playing a vital part in creating a buzz



ON SONG: Above and below, acts during the Folk and Maritime Festival.



By **Debbie Hall**

Business Reporter
d.hall@hulldailymail.co.uk

THE Smugglers, The Ant Farm Collective and Hull's own sea shanty group, Spare Hands, were three of more than 70 acts that performed in the city's annual Folk and Maritime Festival.

At least 8,000 people were treated to their music, as well as displays of morris, sword and clog dancing, over the three-day event earlier this month.

The festival has been run in different guises since 1990 and this was one of the most successful so far.

The problem with such growth, however, is that the festival, which is free to attend, now costs almost £20,000 to put on.

The financial crisis has not helped, an era of cuts that has forced Hull City Council to reduce funding from about £20,000 only a few years ago to less than £8,000 today.

The organising committee, led by 50-year-old folk musician Mark Pollard, lobbied hard for local businesses to stump up extra cash, while a real ale festival was held to raise funds.

The Minerva pub and British Waterways Marina made contributions of £2,750 and £3,000 respectively, but this still was not enough.

The festival faced a shortfall of more than £5,000, which would have seen the removal of at least one of the 13 stages scattered throughout Hull's Old Town and marina areas.

That might not sound like much, but Mr Pollard believes he was faced with cancelling "30 or 40" acts.

"It's always been a case of scrambling around for resources," said Mr Pollard.

The committee turned to the #MakeHull crowdfunding campaign, where a group of local businesses known as "Pioneers" are using the Spacehive platform to crowdfund for civic projects in the city.

Their aim is to regenerate Hull by encouraging people to put forward schemes that could be helped through their backing. Mr Pollard says the Pioneers did not need the festival organisers to raise lots of money.



HAVING A BALL: A Cage Cricket project in Westminster.



SLIDE AWAY: Above and right, a park and slide event in Bristol, helped by Spacehive.



ON THE MOVE: Dancing near The Deep during the Hull Folk and Maritime Festival.

Picture: Mick Lickiss, Sage Creative

#MakeHull a better place ...

SPACEHIVE has already raised £5m of funding for projects across the UK, each with an average value of £26,000.

There is a Spacehive project in more than 70 cities, towns and villages across the country.

Workshops for project creators will be held in Hull next month to generate ideas on how to transform the city.

Visit www.spacehive.com/initiatives/makehull to play your part.

He said: "They wanted to see that people were chipping in, even if it was only a couple of quid, to prove there was interest and then

they would come in with bigger figures."

All of the committee members play in bands and they used their skills to their advantage.

The organisers held gigs led by two of their bands, The Hillbilly Troupe – an eclectic group renowned for mixing folk with punk, ska and Americana – and Beggar's Bridge, for which Mr Pollard is the lead singer.

A collection bucket was sent around the venues, with audience members asked to contribute a few pounds or even just some loose change from their pockets.

Mr Pollard said: "We got the money then, about £200, a hundred names, and all those names went on as contributors.

"It was a way of getting those people who wanted to contribute and making it easier for them."

As a result, the festival had 130 individual backers, a weighty enough base to convince the Pioneers to plug the remaining £2,500 funding gap.

Mr Pollard was relieved – he had worried that all those thousands of folk revellers would be let down by a lack of acts.

"It doesn't bear thinking about, really," he said.

Instead, Mr Pollard and Beggar's Bridge could focus on taking to the GMB Comrades Main Stage and entertaining the fans with their songs based on East Yorkshire folklore.

■ If you have a great idea to help transform Hull, then upload your idea to www.spacehive.com/initiatives/makehull, start crowdfunding and you could receive a pledge of up to £5,000 from the #MakeHull campaign to help you achieve your goal.

