

Open Cambridge 2024- Evaluation report

Open Cambridge (OC) is an annual festival of events celebrating culture and heritage throughout the county. Run in conjunction with the national Heritage Open Days festival, OC provides an inclusive platform to highlight extraordinary spaces, places, and people. Taking place over ten days, the festival aims to bring together the Cambridge community to celebrate, discover and explore across the city.



Overview

Open Cambridge 2024 ran from Friday 6th – Sunday 15 September and comprised of 70 individual events which ranged from exhibitions, film screenings, talks, performances, walking tours, garden tours and open sites with a mixture of in-person and online events.

Within the collegiate university 11 Colleges* and 14 University departments/institutions** took part this year. Open Cambridge also enables us to build and nurture relationships with civic and community organisations. This year, 18 external groups took part†, some for the first time including Cambridge United Football Club, Marmalade Lane Co-housing project, Cambridge Access Surgery and the Friends of Histon Road Cemetery (see appendix 1 for full list).

We thank everyone who contributed to the festival this year. Thanks to the support of the University of Cambridge and the generosity of our sponsors Cambridge BID.

Open Cambridge: In numbers

This year the programme included 70 events. Number of events remain consistent to previous years and for the second consecutive year, we have seen the number of events return to pre-pandemic levels:

2023: 82 events
2022: 84 events
2021: 59 events (hybrid, 31 in-person, 28 online)
2020: 31 events (all online)
2019: 87 events
2018: 86 events

We are continuing to see consistent participation from the Colleges and University departments/institutions and are seeing new community partners interested in taking part year on year:

2024: 25 University + College, 18 external contributors
2023: 28 University + College, 20 external contributors
2022: 31 University + College, 25 external contributors
2019: 30 University + College, 17 external contributors
2018: 31 University + College, 12 external contributors

Open Cambridge 2024 received >11,000 public visits. It is hard to get an exact figure given the number of drop-in events and we rely on event coordinators collecting attendance numbers and asking people to fill out evaluation surveys.

We are really pleased that numbers are now back to pre-pandemic event delivery numbers.

2023: >10,000
2022: >10,000
2019: >14,000
2018: >10,000

In 2019 the slightly higher attendance was driven by a large event at Eddington which was programmed within Open Cambridge as part of their place making strategy. It was great to see the festival being used in this way and Eddington continue to be part of Open Cambridge, this year with a focus on sustainability.

The programme was launched on Monday 12 August at 10am. The Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory tour was fully booked within 7 minutes. The waiting list was halted at 250 people but would continue to grow. We ended up putting on a second tour for those on the waiting list which was fully booked within 6 minutes of being released.

There were over 900 bookings (for the 30 events we are taking bookings for) on the first day and over 43,000 views of the website on the first day with over 5,000 unique users. 14 of the events we were taking bookings for were fully booked within 24 hours.

[What did our audiences think?](#)

We carried out visitor evaluation via an online survey sent out to those attending festival events. To date, we have had 417 responses which is in line with the 10% margin of error generally accepted to determine a valid sample size.

93% of people thought the event they attended exceeded or met their expectations and 97% of people would recommend an Open Cambridge event to a friend.



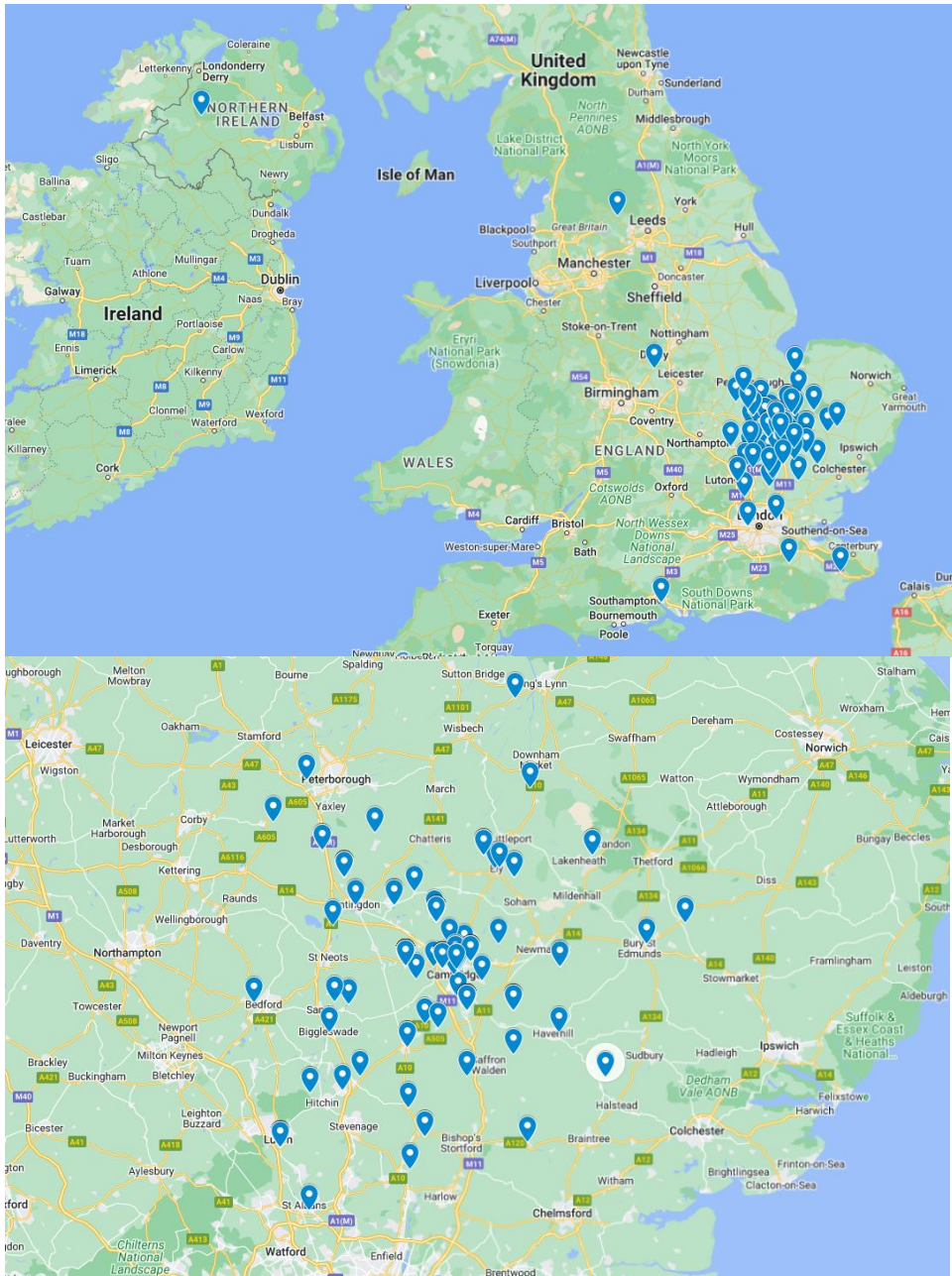
We wanted to understand why people decided to attend Open Cambridge events. Many attendees commented that the main reason they attend OC events is the opportunity to see inside the University and Colleges which are usually closed off to them. They want more of this!

Other reasons listed for attendance were general interest of a topic, personal connection, wanting to learn more and had previously attended similar events.

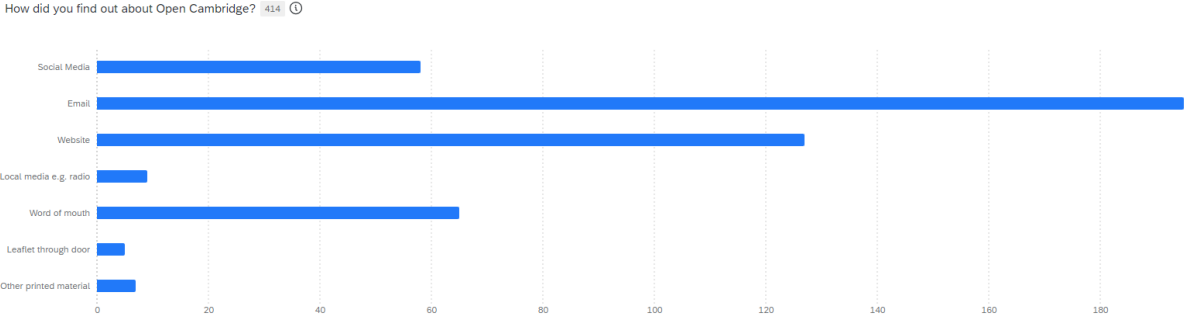
We asked people to indicate their location. This enables us to engage our local engagement in relation to further afield. An interactive map plotting this data is found here:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Jdddqgw8-W-2faj6TIMxMma5rtSyws&usp=sharing>

We had people travel from as far out as Northern Ireland, King's Lynn, Kent, Southampton and North London. Closer to home, people travelled from Bedford, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough, Newmarket, Hitchin and Huntingdon.



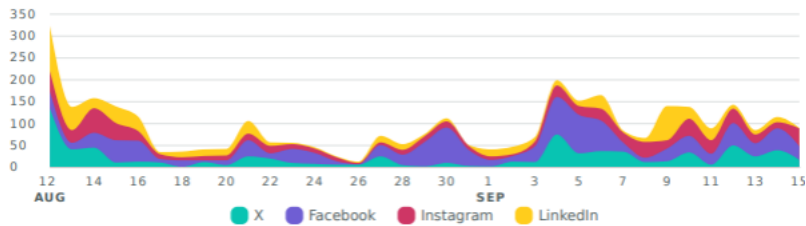
The two top ways people found out about Open Cambridge was via email (47%) and via the website (31%).



Engagement

See how people are engaging with your posts during the reporting period.

Engagements, by Day



We were able to post twice on the main University of Cambridge channels (Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn). These gain over 300,000 impressions and over 10,000 engagements which include likes, shares, comments, bookmarks/saves and link clicks.

We had less press coverage this year, but this was something we were conscious would happen. We can see from data that very few people find out about Open Cambridge from the media, so we did not spend money on an external consultant this year. We were interviewed on Cambridge 105, Greatest Hits Radio, That's TV West Anglia x2 and BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. Online stories appeared on BBC Online, Cambridge Independent, Greatest Hits Radio as well as print stories in the Cambridge Independent.

The full list of press coverage can be found in appendix 2.

What our visitors said

Open Cambridge is a welcoming event. It gives us opportunities to explore wider & deeper in and about Cambridge.

Excellent event to visit places in and around Cambridge where wouldn't sometimes get the opportunity to visit, also a prompt to visit local places of interest

It was so nice to go to some of these events and see parts of Cambridge I haven't seen before.

I've been coming to Open Cambridge events for years now and have never been disappointed

We have recently moved from Birmingham to a village south of Cambridge. We have been delighted to have this opportunity to get to know our new city and its impressive history.

Thank you for organising the Open Cambridge events. So good to visit places that are not usually open

Great event, very informative and so good to finally see the dishes up close having seen them in the distance for so many years (Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory tours)

The whole event was extremely well organised & the guide presented the tour in a professional way & was very knowledgeable & made everyone feel very welcome & the biscuits was a nice touch. (Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory tours)

Well organised. Thanks very much for putting on an overflow event, we didn't get on the original one. (Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory tours)

Made me proud to come from Cambridge again & want to attend matches again. (Cambridge United Football Club tour)

It was great to be able to visit as have cycled past on many occasions. We went to a football match the next weekend as well as a result of visiting. (Cambridge United Football Club tour)

It was super. The three ladies were SO knowledgeable, friendly and imparted the information in a serious yet fun way. Not pompous. Also, I felt privileged to be able to wander around such a prestigious place. (Senate House tours)

A very informative and entertaining tour led by a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. I would highly recommend it. Very well worth visiting. (Ascension Burial Ground tour)

It was brilliant! Having someone providing the context of what we were looking was fundamental for a better understanding of the history of the place. (Madingley American Cemetery tour)

I thoroughly enjoyed the Farm tour and Whipple Museum Library rare book event very much! Staff at both events were extremely welcoming, knowledgeable and engaging. Both events were unique experiences and a privilege to attend. I am an alumna who graduated 30 years ago - I had not heard of the farm or Whipple Museum when I lived in Cambridge, but I am very grateful for the opportunity to visit them now.

Appendix 1

*The Colleges that took part are Corpus Christi, Girton, Homerton, Selwyn, Sidney Sussex, St John's, Trinity, Robinson, Wolfson, Churchill and Newnham.

**The University departments/institutions that took part are the Department of Physics (Mullard tours), Department of Archaeology, Department of Earth Sciences, Eddington, Sainsbury Laboratory, Sports Centre, Senate House, West Hub, Whipple Library, University Farm and Museum of Zoology

†External organisations and groups that took part include Cambridge Museum of Technology, Cambridge Quakers, Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge Tourist Guides, All Saints Church Cambridge, Cambridge American Cemetery, Town End Nature Reserve, Mill Road History Society, All Saints Church Cottenham, Cambridge Buddhist Centre, Bottisham Air Museum, Abbey House, Ancient India and Iran Trust, Westminster College, Cambridge United Football Club, Cambridge Access Surgery, Friends of Histon Road Cemetery, Friends of the Parish of the Ascension Burial Ground, Marmalade Lane Co-housing and Cambridge Rape Crisis.

Appendix 2

1. 6/8/24: **Cambridge 105**: Zoe Smith on Breakfast show with Julian Clover (<https://cambridge105.co.uk/breakfast-06-08-2024/>)
2. 6/8/24: **That's TV West Anglia**: Zoe Smith, programme overview (<https://x.com/ThatsWestAnglia/status/1820890079864164787>)
3. 17/8/24: **BBC Online**: Football club to share rich and colourful history (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgrdnnvppyo>)
4. 21/8/24: **Cambridge Independent**: Star attractions at Open Cambridge (page 42)
5. 3/9/24: **That's TV West Anglia**: Zoe Smith, opening weekend overview (<https://x.com/ThatsWestAnglia/status/1831036940981780888>)
6. 4/9/24: BBC Radio Cambridge: Zoe Smith, programme overview (starts 37 mins: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0jic8h0>)
7. 6/9/24: **Cambridge Independent**: Open Cambridge 2024: our guide to the highlights (<https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/whats-on/open-cambridge-2024-our-guide-to-the-highlights-9382088/>)
8. 6/9/24: **Cambridge 105**: What's On bulletins throughout the day
9. 8/9/24: **Greatest Hits Radio**: Zoe Smith, programme overview and online piece (<https://hellorayo.co.uk/greatest-hits/cambridgeshire/news/series-of-free-events-for-open-cambridge-2024/>)