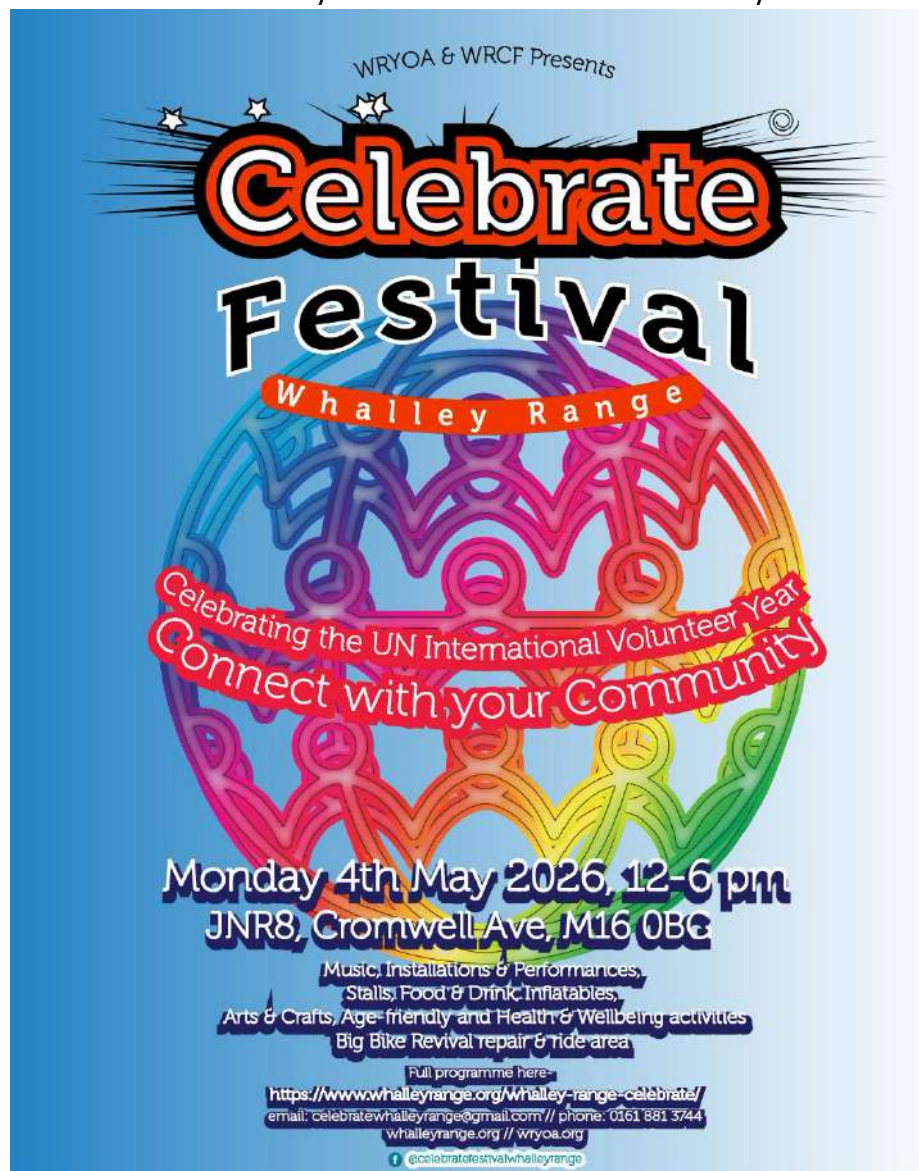




FESTIVAL REPORT 2026

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Photos by members of the local community





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INTRODUCTION



The annual Celebrate Festival 2026 took place at JNR8 in Whalley Range – the home of both Whalley Range Community Forum and Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association - on Monday 4th May between 12 noon and 6pm - celebrating its 29th anniversary!

As so often we followed a UN theme and this year chose to observe an International Day of Volunteers. We interpreted this as 'Volunteer - connect with your community'. Similar to the year before 'Cooperate - build a better world' this theme is inspiring but not easily represented visually.

We prepared for the event by engaging with local community partners to better understand how they saw the role of volunteers in their organisation, and what special associations the concept held for them. We had a huge and varied response, with different ideas. Jenny from St Margaret's mentioned that you could never recruit normally for the sorts of roles that volunteers organically fill - how do you advertise for a cake baker and encourager? The sentiment here was people will find their own place in the organisation if it is inclusive.

We contacted local schools and had local artist (and Celebrate regular!) Lotte Karlsen come into schools to do her workshop designed especially for the festival to incorporate the theme of volunteering - circle of hands. This was done using fabric purchased for previous Celebrate 'Crossing Oceans', which helped to keep the workshops more sustainable.

The main stage was positioned in the Methodist Church in front of the cross, with chairs laid out for the audience. The Jo Rose stage was positioned to the right of the path as you are facing JNR8, aimed at a slight diagonal for better acoustics. As we did not allocate a specific Stage Manager for this one was provided for us by Songsmith Solar.

Inflatables were positioned in the front right of the church facing on to Egerton Road in the long grassy space. These were monitored and numbers were kept in line with our risk assessment. We ascertained that this was the area most likely to result in injury so we

decided to site our first aid responders close by. This also gave them easy access to the road in case of a serious incident. .

We had an area called Storytellers Corner, with a sign made by this year's Festival Support Lucy Beever. Here we had programmed various storytellers and we also put the facepainting in this area, which provided an instant audience for the storytellers and also relieved the crowds in the busier area.



As we did not have the climbing wall this year due to us being at JNR8 we decided to get Mez from MAD to run their Side Quests activity for older children which was very popular!

The Information point was located in the JNR8 grounds by the Clarendon Road entrance and was run by a group of dedicated and motivated volunteers including Catharine who also made a huge effort to support the event in the lead up.

For food and refreshments we had Tibetan Kitchen back in the fold, with Kaana also serving hot food. Exclusive Scoop were back on ice cream duty, with Tom saying it was his busiest ever event and running out of flavours! Coffee Cranks suffered a flat tyre but through determination managed to get to the event in time to dish out coffee.

We then had stalls, workshops and our arts and crafts marquee in the grounds of JNR8 running down the passage and over out into green space facing Egerton Road.

Visitors received their free copy of the festival programme on the way into the event at both gates, this year due to the festival being held in a place of worship we did not do a raffle.

ABOUT CELEBRATE FESTIVAL

To enable community capacity-building, local people are recruited to provide art, music, and workshops as well as showcasing work at Celebrate, which is run by volunteers from the community, members of Whalley Range Community Forum and Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association, both based at the JNR8 Youth & Community Centre.



Celebrate aims are:

- **To celebrate the talent, diversity, and resources of Whalley Range**
- **To promote a positive image and improve the quality of life in Whalley Range**
- **To encourage participation of different communities within the area and work from an anti-discriminatory framework**

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to everyone who made the Celebrate Festival possible this year.

A huge 'thank you' to our team of dedicated volunteers old and new - without whom the festival would not happen.

Many thanks to all the musicians and artists, Manchester City Council, Alexandra Medical Practice, Whiz Youth Project staff and volunteers, Whalley Range Community Forum, Age Friendly Whalley Range, the Whalley Rangers and the Hare Krishna team.

Thanks to all the local businesses and supporters who took out adverts in the festival programme and those who donated raffle prizes.

Thanks to David Lim and Liam Packham for photographing the day.

Funding for the event was generously provided by Manchester City Council (via WRCF), MCC Neighbourhood Investment Fund (Whalley Range Ward), and the Big Bike Revival. We also rely heavily on donations from supporters of the festival.

The Festival Committee are hugely grateful for the professional assistance of our project coordinators and artists. The Festival Coordinator was Jess Coulson, who was supported by Lucy Beever.



Celebrate – pre-festival activities:

Celebrate worked with a number of local artists who provided pre-festival activities for a range of groups and local primary schools.

This year we were unable to programme our arts and crafts workshops for kids in JNR8 over half term because the space was being used for the play scheme. Learning from previous years, we kept the artists working with established groups but made sure that we advertised them in case other people wanted to attend.



We managed to work with the WRYOA girls group this year, with Jemima Lawton helping them to make a sign for their own workshop they ran at the festival.

Lotte Karlsen did workshops with Time to Change and also St Margaret's CofE Primary School and Manley Park Primary School to create one large collaborative textile piece. It was called 'Circle of Hands' and involved volunteers, community groups as well as the schools. Lotte used the silks from our 'Crossing Oceans' Celebrate to keep it more environmentally and financially sustainable.

We also had local artist Becky Lattin - so local she lives on Cromwell Avenue! - come in and work with the Whalley Range women's group and the afternoon crafting group making phenotype prints.



We had a pop up performance in Manley Park with a couple of Senegalese percussionists who encouraged some audience participation! This was carefully timed to coincide with the Friday before Manley Park Primary School broke up as we knew there would be lots of families present.

We also synced this up with Jo Capstick's workshop so that there was really a mini festival feel to the afternoon / evening! We made sure to print off flyers for the upcoming event and hand these out with help from the kids.

Part of our reason for choosing this was the success of the Vibe Bombers pop up in the park the previous year. We were unable to do a similar open jam in Nip and Tiddle because the venue has since shut down.

Garden planting and dyeing

The collaboration with local artist Mobius Jo and Cromwell/York/Milton Gardening group continued. Last year they worked together and with local children to sow seeds in some of the planters next to JNR8. The garden was worked on and improved in the lead up to Celebrate with them even installing a small bench. Jo uses plants grown here and around other sites in Whalley Range to run workshops illustrating how these resources can be produced hyper locally. Some of her locally grown dyes were used in the Bird Box CIC crafting sessions.



Site & Security:

Securivision security returned to the festival again as our preferred local security service provider. Noor met Rick and Jess for a site visit and walk around a week before the festival to help us make final preparations safely.

On the day itself, we went through the site plan, risk assessment and production plan including radio policy. Noor introduced the coordinator to the team there and plans were made for regular check ins with security.

The set up was different because we were at JNR8 this year. Learning from the experience of previous years at JNR8 the primary role for security was to manage the closure of Cromwell Avenue. We assigned one security to the junction with Alport Ave and one to Clarendon Rd, with one roaming. We also had volunteer stewards (not SIA) at each barrier keeping the pedestrians safe on Cromwell Avenue.

Generally the security team were helpful and efficient. There were no incidents for them to respond to however they were helpful for crowd management.

Access:

The festival had two public gates, with the main entrance located on Cromwell Avenue and a secondary entrance on Egerton Road. Cromwell Avenue was coned off at either end and we used the road itself to site some festival activities including Big Bike Revival with Cycling UK and Tibetan Kitchen. We flyered extensively about this and also put messages in the local WhatsApp group so residents would know what was happening.

We asked stall holders and other service providers who were checked in by security staff to unload goods and equipment between 8am and 11am, with restricted access after this time. We did gates at 12 noon, however because of the amount of local volunteers who helped set up the festival there were people in the festival before then. We had volunteers on duty at both public gates. Stallholders and performers were encouraged to use the Cromwell Avenue entrance to begin with, as Egerton is a busier road, but then this moved to arrival at Egerton for musicians once the event began.

The information point and main entrance for the public was on Cromwell Avenue, which included sign in sheets for artists, crew, and volunteers. Programmes were available at each public gate.



Stages:

Both live music stages were provided and managed by Songsmith Solar. As last year, the festival coordinator is a live music promoter so we decided that she could programme both the stages instead of having separate music programmers.

It is important to the steering committee to have a very local line up. We strive to be respectful of the heritage of the event and ensure we included people who have previously played, but also to be conscious of including people who might be new to the area.

Once more we first of all consulted with stakeholders to see who they would like to see perform, then we did an open call out using social media to try and engage with new performers including posting on industry specific WhatsApp groups. This year we had less engagement from artists applying to play so ended up relying more on direct asks to musicians. We also had quite a few no's from prospective artists because it was exams, and also bank holiday Monday a lot of people were away.



We had a reduced set up for the Main Stage because we were inside the church. Once again, Des Basterfield from Songsmith took on the role of engineer and MC for the Main Stage, also playing music between acts.



The Main Stage performers line up featured a debut from St Margaret's School violinists. Unfortunately Rock Out School pulled out the day before due to a family emergency and could not attend. Cave Man and Chia Kali then performed, both of them returning from last year. The Rosettes were a new addition, a young teenage group whose mum has previously been involved with Celebrate. Then The Magic Pennies, who include Georgina Fox (from last year's zine project), Matt Bierrum (local resident) and Dave Slavin (a musician whose first ever gig was at Celebrate Festival about 20 years ago!). Open Voice Choir who are Celebrate regulars were able to perform (we missed out last year) and the stage was closed by Phellotape (excellent musicians who live off Withington Road).



We worked with Tony Curry on the Jo Rose acoustic stage and programmed that to have solo / duo music performers interspersed with poets. Programmed as an acoustic / spoken word area, with a high energy electronic and bhangra set by Dhol Mafia, this was a chill space. We were also conscious that because the area was much smaller than the park anything too loud would limit the ability of festival goers to chat and socialise with each other.

We also included the Thai Boxing demonstration on this stage as there wasn't really room for it inside. Dhol Mafia provided percussion during the demonstration which added to the drama!



Tony Curry did an excellent job as always of programming a diverse group of poets with different backgrounds, he also acted as MC for the stage and did fantastic hosting. At one point the festival coordinator judged that the music was too loud, especially considering the amount of children so requested it was turned down.

Stage line ups:

MAIN STAGE - indoors (in church)

13:00pm St. Margarets Choir and violinists - local school performance

13:45pm Cave Man- Hip-hop Storytime combines live beatmaking, rap and poetry together into a journey through space and time

14:30pm Chia Kali- Jazzy soulful sounds

15:00pm The Rosettes- Chorlton trio mixing indie covers and originals.

15:50pm The Magic Pennies- Psychedelic folk rock with serious live energy

16:30pm Open Voice Choir (Whalley Range legends /Celebrate regulars)

17:00pm Phellotaphe- Double bass, vocals and sticky sounds

Jo Rose- Garden

12:15pm Tony Curry- presenting fresh local talent

12:30pm Shelli Le Fay- Ethereal folk from a woodland mystic

13:10pm Anna Percy- Wild feminist work shaped by love, loss and nature.

13:30pm Dhol Mafia- Dynamic rhythms bringing pure celebratory energy.

14:00pm Colin Anderson- Poetry rooted in family, observation & the obscure.

14:20pm Thai Boxing Demonstration by WRYOA-Whiz Youth Project

15:00pm Jenny Pilkington- Spoken word blending wit and upbringing.

16:30pm Paddy Elliot Walker- Upbeat soul and motown

17:10pm Elliot Perlic- Deep-feeling queer poetry with unmistakable good vibes

17:30pm Tony Curry- presenting fresh local talent

Des also reported from his end that it was plain sailing for him with both stages well attended and appreciated. He also said it was a good mix of programming!

Marquees:

The Arts & Craft marquee was provided by Matt from Festival Marquees. They also delivered furniture, including round and trestle tables, folding chairs, deckchairs and pedestrian barriers that were distributed across the site efficiently on the festival day.

Radios:

Due to a miscommunication when booking the radios we then had to source some the day before the event. Harry Bayford from Complete Event Services stepped in and delivered radios to us for less than we would have been renting them from the other provider.

Radios worked well throughout the day, each person that was given a radio was asked if they needed to have any training. All radio users did a radio check before taking them. They were taken home by Festival Coordinator and then collected by Complete Event Services a few days later.

Health & Safety:

First Aiders from Ambutech were present on site all day, which was detailed in the programme. All staff, security and volunteers were briefed on how to contact them via the radios. We decided that the most likely place on site to result in injury was the inflatables section near the Montessori Garden because of the increased risk. Although we had risk assessed it and deemed it safe enough to go ahead with, first aid being nearby was another precaution because in an emergency every second counts.

We did a site walk around with security the week before the event and another one on the morning of the event to highlight any risks. We also briefed volunteers and staff to raise with us any potential health and safety issues.

Publicity:

The festival's flyer and poster were designed by Lotte Karlsen and the programme was designed by Alison Chisholm. A5 Flyers and A4 & A3 posters were printed and distributed ahead of the event, and programmes were distributed on the day.

Printed publicity was distributed via the local primary schools: St Margaret's and Manley Park Primary Schools had flyers delivered for distribution to all pupils.

The posters were put in shop windows and on trees in the area by committee members and volunteers - who also distributed the flyers to local businesses, households, and schools. We also asked local community members to help with distribution.

We had to order another PVC banner which was used in front of JNR8 on the railings.

We got information out to Laura Cassidy, MCC Community Development Officer for Chorlton, Chorlton Park and Whalley Range, who has a newsletter for community events and had our event featured in there.

We also made sure to lock in with community groups well ahead of the event and send out our promotional materials to them, even if they couldn't be involved on the day. We also made sure to take on board our own advice and kept up conversations with regular groups throughout the year.

Once again Jess Coulson and Chris Ricard coordinated together to make sure information went out on the Celebrate Account and also the Whalley Range Community Forum Facebook pages and the Forum's website. Chris also produced regular posts and distributed information locally and put up posters in and around JNR8.

We messaged local artists and musicians to share our social media posts and distribute information. There is room for improvement here but overall we built significantly on our work from last year.

Local Community groups and artists shared social media posts and digital posters. Information was sent out to the 40+ Mutual Aid WhatsApp groups that were started during the pandemic to support residents. All of this provided a significant increase in engagement and had an impact in reaching a wider audience.

We can infer the success of our increased publicity efforts from quantitative data from our social media accounts and also from the fact that our pre festival activities were particularly well attended with several of the sessions fully booked up.

--- FESTIVAL ATTRACTIONS ---

Arts & Crafts Marquee:

The Arts & Crafts marquee featured a range of free workshops for the whole community with sessions run by local artists including zine making with Georgina Fox. There was also textile weaving with Nayna Lad, carpet collage with Gulnaz Fatima, circle of hands silk workshop with Lotte Karlsen and making with nature with Thea Luckock. All workshops were well attended by different groups.

A strong piece of learning we enacted was to stagger the workshops out a little, so they didn't all finish at the same time. This worked really well and is something to continue next year. It also means that we don't have the same level of overcrowding in the tent with everyone trying to get to the tables at the same time. We also reduce our need for tables because we are using them at different times instead of all at once.

We also spread the arts workshops around the site a bit more, because of the reduced size, to reduce overcrowding.



Storytellers Corner

This year we turned the Montessori Garden into Storyteller's Corner with a lovely sign made by Lucy Beever. This was an area aimed at younger children, or anyone who wanted to sit down in a more relaxed environment. We had Iris Skipworth telling stories about nature and folklore, Iona Garrow with a puppet show and story about inclusivity and Karim Mbaye telling traditional Senegalese folktales.

We also positioned the face painter Sunita here because face painting is traditionally very popular and we knew it would help provide a bit of an audience for the storytellers before they had even started, as well as easing congestion in the main space.

Site Art:

This year we employed event assistant Lucy Beever to help set up and monitor art around the site. We used the silks from Crossing Oceans in the trees at the Egerton Road end of the grounds to create a chill out space where we also ran a drumming session. We also supported Bird Box to create a volunteer tree which was a large cardboard tree structure where people hung art made at the Bird Box area around the theme of volunteering.



Interactive Performers

This year we had a bubble performer booked from Cequin Circus who did regular performances around the site in full costume throughout the day. This was on the back of them being booked for the neighbourhood parties last year and being widely enjoyed.

We also had MAD hosting their SideQuests activities in full costume. This was an interactive series of games between older children that got them engaging with their environment. They were based out by the tree near the silks to help ease congestion on the main area.



Inflatables:

The inflatables were provided this year by Ben'n'Jack's Bouncy Castles from Stockport. After some deliberation I decided to site the inflatables on the small lawn opposite the Montessori Garden rather than on the larger lawn. I booked a large slide and a soft play area. There was some concern that the slide would not fit, but all was well. The equipment was delivered late, and I made the wrong call in allowing children on before I had time to fence off the area for crowd control purposes. This led to a certain amount of chaos but control was eventually established. Both inflatables were very popular and well used all afternoon. The soft play area and ball pool featured jets of air which children could balance balls on which was very popular. My thanks to all the volunteers, especially Gaz for the double shift.

The combination of inflatables with facepainting and storytelling in the Montessori Garden made for a very busy children's area and it would be good to somehow recreate this combination when we return to Manley Park next year.

Rick Walker

Health and wellbeing and Age-friendly marquee

The Health and Wellbeing and Age-friendly information stalls for the 29th Celebrate Festival were held inside the JNR8 hall this year.

Residents visited the stalls to find out about local and wider health initiatives, and to find out what's on locally.

Noticeboards featuring details about the Whalley Range Community Forum and the Age-friendly Whalley Range & Chorlton network were on display, with advice and signposting to mental health support, information about the exercise, health and social groups meeting weekly at JNR8, information and volunteering opportunities from local community groups - and healthy living information to take away.

Stalls and activities included intergenerational Arts & Crafts with Jo Capstick from Common Cloth: a workshop focused on making weatherproof folders to hold information about what's on locally to attach to the age-friendly benches in the area.

Sahara South Asian Dementia Support Service for Alzheimer's Society hosted a stall for people concerned about memory, those living with dementia, and their carers.

Sickle Cell Care Manchester hosted a stall with advice and information about sickle cell and the support available.

Manley Park Methodist Church provided cake and conversation – and people added wishes and prayers to the community tree.

Information displayed in the hall included cost of living and energy advice, support for people struggling with food and bills and free sanitary products.

Check out the Whalley Range Community Forum website at <https://whalleyrange.org> and Facebook page for news about our physical and mental health and social activities, support services and regular events at:

JNR8 Youth & Community Centre, 82 Cromwell Avenue, Whalley Range M160BG.

Call Chris on 0161 8813744 or email communityforumwhalleyrange@gmail.com

Contact agefriendlywhalleyrange@gmail.com to find out about our activities for older people and how to get involved with the Age-friendly Whalley Range & Chorlton Network.

Chris Ricard, Whalley Range Community Forum



Accessibility:

Manley Park Methodist Church/JNR8 and its grounds are fully accessible. We hired additional toilets that were situated outside by the rear access ramps and included a wheelchair accessible toilet.

Information:

The information stall acts as the information hub for everyone involved in the festival, and those attending e.g for lost property, directions etc. Having a radio contact point always ensured access to coordinators. Information about W/R Youth Opportunities Association, one of the two Festival main partners, was on display. Information regarding the second lead partner W/R Community Forum was on display in the hall.

At each public gate, as visitors arrived, they were given a programme and talked through the site map and what would be happening where .

We used QR codes this year to access copies of the programme and the feedback /evaluation form.

Local groups had free stalls, and displayed noticeboards, leaflets and newsletters etc. about their activities locally.

Volunteers:

As always, a dedicated and tireless team of volunteers old and new worked hard all day to ensure the smooth running of the event.

Volunteers are given the opportunity to help in several areas of the festival throughout the day, including as photographers, greeting attendees at the entrances, handing out programmes, and carrying out evaluations, setting up and clearing away, serving refreshments to Celebrate volunteers, managing the inflatables. They are given a Celebrate food voucher for refreshments in the volunteers food area.



As the Festival focus was on volunteering and 'Connecting with your community' we had aimed to encourage more local volunteering, and particularly to look at the processes of involving more volunteers in partner projects particularly Celebrate. JNR8 hosted a Volunteers Fair on the 28 th March for people interested in volunteering and for local groups with volunteering opportunities. The event was coordinated by WRCF, with contributors from several local groups.

We explored volunteers registration, support and training, identifying and developing peoples strengths/interests (used at the Time to Change group with potential volunteers) and seeing volunteering as a possible link to employment.

A session on volunteering contributing to your CV was carried out with young women from the Girls at WHIZ project, who also planned and ran a very successful flower making stall at the festival.

We were very pleased that 20 people from the Time to Change mental health and well-being group volunteered on the festival day, involved in activities to suit their requirements e.g. seated information giving at the information stall, quiet litter picking at the end of the day.

Cycling UK :The Big Bike Revival:

The popular bicycle repair and information service returned as an integral part of the Celebrate activities, running free Bike Fix sessions at JNR8, on the festival day and for 5 consecutive weeks. Hosted by Time to Change, delivered by the Bike Hive based in Alexandra Park, the team of volunteers, and trained mechanics repaired 50 bikes, and gave bike related advice, and safety equipment to over 100 people. In addition, seven new adult riders were taken on a led bike ride, along the Fallowfield loop.



Many people who attended had bikes that were out of use, often due to a lack of access to tools, pumps, puncture repair outfits or were lacking in confidence and information.

Going Forward: As a result small repairs/ and tyre inflation will be available on a drop-in basis at the weekly Time to Change sessions (Fridays 5-7 at JNR8) as well as a small bike loan scheme for occasional riders, and those having more extensive bike repairs carried out.

Bike Hive continue to deliver a range of cycling activities including repairs and the sale of reconditioned bikes from their base in Alexandra Park.

Catering: Food, ice-cream, and coffee:

We were happy to welcome back Tibetan Kitchen who located their food van on Cromwell Avenue, they had a great selection of food and our local favourites. We also invited back Kaana to the festival, Kaana were new to Whalley Range last year and have been getting to know local residents since. They once again made sure to offer very reasonable meal options on their menu. I was happy that this time they were very successful and had to go back to their restaurant three times to restock and keep up with orders!

Ice cream was once again provided by Exclusive Scoop, who have a very good balance of prioritising sustainability, quality and price. They were busy right up until 6pm and also ran out of stock. Coffee Cranks were there to provide refreshments but unfortunately suffered a flat tyre on the cycle in so were very late. There were complaints about the lack of coffee but I feel like a flat tyre is one of those accidents it is hard to plan around.

All of our food traders are local independent businesses who did well from the event, so we definitely succeeded in supporting our residents there.



Whalley Rangers stall hire:

We worked with Whalley Rangers and hired 9 of their gazebos for stall holders, which they transported and installed, but we had to dismantle and drive back.

We had a good mix of information stalls that included

- Second hand book stall
- LGBT Foundation: information share about the LGBT+ Extra Care housing scheme in Whalley Range
- Friends of Alexandra Park / Gentle Steps
- GM Friends of Palestine
- Chloe Yas Art
- Vegan Organic Network
- Congo Children Trust

Treasurer's Report 2026

This year we returned to our base of the JNR8 community centre, and our original festival May day. This was primarily as we had not been able to access any large grant funding, and using JNR8 means that we reduce costs by not having to rent some large marquees/ staging etc. Whalley Range Youth Opportunities and the W/R Community Forum worked jointly to raise funds from grants, as well as carrying out local fundraising from businesses and on the day fees and donations. Both organisations contributed worker time, and Volunteers.

This year the overall cost of the festival and pre and post festival workshop activities was approximately £17,000 (£4,000 from MCC and £1,000 Cycling UK grants (via WRCF), and £10,000 from donations (via WRYOA/Celebrate accumulated income from donations/fees). The cost of running the festival in Manley Park in 2025, with pre festival workshops/activities and the post festival Exhibition and launch of the Nourish food zine was approximately £29,000, (this included a grant of £10,000 from Awards for All , £6,000 MCC, £2,000 Cycling UK (via the WRCF) and £11,000 (via WRYOA/Celebrate accumulated income from donations/fees).

Income from donations and fees contributes towards our running costs, e.g. charges for a programme advert covers the costs of the festival programme.

2026 Festival day income was

- gate donations £300 (£410 2025 in Manley Park).
- programme adverts £320 (£420 in 2025)
- 'pitch' fees from commercial stalls £285 approx. (£270 in 2025).

Unfortunately we could not use our card reader for donations and payments, as the system was 'off line'.

Musicians, performing at pop up gigs in the run up to the festival and on the day were paid modest fees, and workshop leaders, coordinators, and stage managers are paid according to our sessional and day rates.

Following our aim of providing a low-cost accessible festival we made all activities free, not charging for entry, workshop activities, information stalls, face painting, or the inflatables.

Again, we have tried to reduce costs; by using recycled materials e.g. the silks used for the 'banner' making workshops.

We prioritised local traders, and for the provision of services e.g. the Whalley Rangers for gazebo hire; ISKCON/'Hari Krishna' for volunteers' hot food; the Bike Hive for delivery of the Big Bike Revival activities, and the Coop on Withington Road for a donation of refreshments for volunteers.

The festival is not self-sustaining, we depend on grant funding and donations to provide Celebrate activities each year. Also the festival would not be possible without the teams of volunteers who help with setting up and clearing away,' peopling' the gates and collecting donations, and of course the steering group.(We thank Celebrate volunteers with a system of food vouchers for refreshments in the volunteers food area).

Many thanks to all who have contributed in a variety of ways for making this another successful year.

Carol Packham
(Treasurer)

Evaluation

Celebrate 2026 – Analysis of Feedback Forms

This year we put a volunteer in place specifically to collect feedback. This had a positive impact with 195 responses mainly by people using a QR code linked to a google form.

I have included three years' worth of analysis but please bear in mind the sample sizes were smaller in 2025 and 2024 so it may be hard to make a direct comparison.

Number of Responses	2026	2025	2024
	195	88	57

Where do People Live?

		2026	2025	2024
Whalley Range	89	46%	55%	68%
Chorlton Park	29	15%	6%	0%
Out of Manchester	34	17%	12%	13%
Moss Side	9	5%	1%	4%
Old Moat	9	5%	5%	0%
Chorlton	8	4%	20%	9%
Hulme	7	4%	0%	0%
Fallowfield	5	3%	0%	0%
Levenshulme	4	2%	0%	0%
Rusholme	1	1%	0%	0%
Other Manchester ward	0	0%	1%	6%
Total	195	100%	100%	100%

How did People Travel to Celebrate?

		2026	2025	2024
Walk	107	55%	58%	63%
Private vehicle	43	22%	22%	20%
Cycled	29	15%	20%	12%
Public Transport	14	7%	0%	5%
Other	2	1%	0%	0%
	195	100%	100%	100%

Walk/Cycled/Public Transport		78%	78%	80%
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Most people walk, cycle or get public transport to get to Celebrate, showing what a local festival it is and its green credentials.

Gender

		2026	2025	2024
Woman	106	54%	64%	65%
Man	81	42%	35%	28%
Non-binary	6	3%	0%	7%
Pansexual	1	1%	0%	0%
Trans masc	1	1%	0%	0%
No answer	0	0%	1%	0%
	195	100%	100%	100%

Age Range

		2026	2025
<16	47	24%	26%
16 - 25	8	4%	4%
26 - 39	39	20%	24%
40 - 64	85	44%	27%
65 - 74	12	6%	16%
75 - 90	4	2%	3%
	195	100%	100%

We did not ask the question about age in 2024.

Ethnicity

	2026
White British	122
White European	15
White Scottish	1
White Other	1
White Jewish	1
White Irish	2
Mixed - White/Afro-Caribbean	9
Mixed - White/Indian	1
Mixed - White/Asian	1
Mixed - White/African	2
Mixed - White Asian	2
Mixed	4
Black British	3
Black - Afro-Caribbean	1
Black - African	1
Asian - Pakistani	8
Asian - Sri Lankan/Malaysian	1
Asian - Other	3
Asian - Kashmiri	4
Asian - Indian	3
Asian	3
Arab	4
Did not answer	3
	195

Because of the number of different ethnicities, I have summarised them into the following broad areas:

		2026	2025	2024
White	142	73%	67%	76%
Asian	22	11%	15%	14%
Black	5	3%	0%	5%
Mixed	19	10%	14%	5%
No Answer	0	0%	4%	0%
Other	7	4%	0%	0%
	195	100%	100%	100%

Disability

		2026	2025	2024
No	156	80%	72%	84%
Yes	37	19%	28%	16%
Prefer not to say	2	1%	0%	0%
	195	100%	100%	100%

What Responders enjoyed about Celebrate

People valued the event primarily as a welcoming community gathering where live music, family activities, and varied stalls created opportunities for connection, inclusion, and a relaxed local atmosphere.

Themes most frequently mentioned:

Community belonging — strongest driver of positive experience.

Atmosphere — relaxed, welcoming, friendly

Live performance — especially music

Family participation — children's activities highly valued

Variety of activities/stalls — broad appeal across ages/interests

What we could have done better at Celebrate

The majority of comments were positive, like “Nothing”. That means the dominant sentiment is satisfaction, with suggestions being mostly refinements rather than major criticisms.

Where there were constructive criticisms, they can be grouped as follows:

1. Space / venue size

This is the strongest practical suggestion.

People repeatedly mention:

- needing more space
- feeling crowded
- wanting the event back in the park
- stalls spread out more

2. Food and drink provision

People wanted more refreshment options, especially simple affordable drinks and broader food choices. The coffee providers had a puncture on the way to Celebrate which delayed the provision of hot drinks.

3. Accessibility / comfort

A notable inclusion theme.

Suggestions include:

- quiet spaces

- sensory recovery space
- breastfeeding area
- more seating
- clearer child supervision
- reduced noise

People appreciated the event, but some wanted more comfort and accessibility support, particularly for families and neurodivergent visitors.

4. Signage and communication

A strong operational theme.

People mention:

- better signage
- clearer naming
- better awareness
- more advertising

5. Payment / donations

A smaller but repeated practical point. Visitors wanted easier ways to financially support the event.

- contactless donations
- QR codes
- card payments

What do you want to see next year?

Many respondents want the event to continue in the same spirit, suggesting the existing format is well liked and worth building on rather than changing significantly.

Respondents largely want the event to continue in its current form, with the main requests being a return to a larger outdoor venue, more food and drink provision, expanded activities for children, and an even broader programme of performances and community stalls.

The feedback suggests growth rather than reinvention:

- keep the community-focused atmosphere.
- scale up venue and space.
- broaden food offer.
- increase family activities.
- expand entertainment and community participation.

Where there were ideas put forward for next year, they can be themed as follows:

1. Bigger venue / return to the park

A significant number of people want the event back in Manley Park or a similarly larger outdoor setting, largely associated with having more room and a festival feel.

2. More food and drink options

Very consistent request. Food and refreshment options were a key area people wanted expanded, especially informal drinks (tea/coffee) and greater variety.

3. More activities for children and young people

Families would like more age-diverse provision, especially for older children rather than just younger children. The return of the climbing wall was mentioned.

4. Expanded entertainment and performances

People want the creative programme to continue and expand, especially live participatory entertainment.

5. More stalls and community groups

There is appetite for broader community representation and increased participation from local groups.

6. Better promotion and information

Some people only discovered the event by chance and would like stronger local promotion.

Conclusion

Celebrate was widely perceived as a positive, inclusive and well-organised local gathering. Feedback indicates that attendees strongly value its community-building role and wish to see it continue. Future planning should prioritise maintaining the welcoming atmosphere while increasing capacity, improving practical facilities, and expanding activities for a growing audience.

Kate Richardson, Admin Support Whalley Range Community Forum
18th May 2026



::: GET INVOLVED :::

We are always looking for people to get involved in our volunteer-led festival: we aim to run Celebrate activities and events throughout the year.

If you would like to get involved in our Celebrate projects and the planning of Celebrate 2027 – please get in touch.

Call JNR8 on 0161 881 3744 | Email celebratewhalleyrange@gmail.com

or pop in to JNR8 at 82 Cromwell Avenue, M16 0BG

Facebook: Celebrate Festival Whalley Range

Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association is a registered charity established in 1982 to widen opportunities for young people in Whalley Range. We provide facilities and resources in and around JNR8 on Cromwell Avenue, including JNR8 under 12's Playscheme, Celebrate, Whiz Youth Project for 12-25's with cookery, Thai boxing, group discussions, job/training support and volunteering opportunities.

The main aims of the project are as follows:

- To reduce the risk of youth nuisance, antisocial behaviour and drug misuse
- To create community cohesion and active citizenship
- To raise the aspirations, motivation, and confidence of young people
- For the project to be as reflective as possible of the young people we serve and their needs.

The Whalley Range Community Forum (WRCF) is a voluntary representative residents group formed in 1995 to facilitate and improve communication between members of the community and those who serve/represent Whalley Range. The Forum acts as an umbrella organisation, bringing residents and local services together to address local issues through promoting consultation and community cohesion – and encouraging participation. WRCF supports new community groups to access funding to set up their own groups.

WRCF is a foodbank referral service and hate crime reporting centre - and addresses resident's priorities by facilitating health & wellbeing classes/courses at JNR8 in term times.

Celebrate, c/o JNR8 Youth & Community Centre, 82 Cromwell Avenue,
Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 0BG

Tel: 0161 881 3744// <https://www.whalleyrange.org> // Email

communityforumwhalleyrange@gmail.com <https://www.wryoa.org> // Email: info@wryoa.org

