



### **WAMfest Felixstowe (Women Arts and Music)**

Funding from Felixstowe Town Council was very gratefully received and was initially secured to create a one-day community arts festival to celebrate International Women's Day on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2021. However, due to the pandemic, this had to be postponed and it eventually took place over the weekend of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2021. A second event took place on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022 for International Women's Day 2022.

Research had informed that WAMfest was the first event of its type celebrating *International Women's Day* in Felixstowe. This was an opportunity to engage a very creative community from the town and beyond. It drew interest from the county of Suffolk, as well as from other counties/countries on social media platforms, with articles in the East Anglian Daily Times, Interviews on Radio Suffolk, Felixstowe Radio and Ipswich Community Radio, thus gaining a positive profile and PR for the town and supporting the tourism economy and the equality and diversity agenda.

The vision was to create an event that supports women (mainly musicians/performers, visual artists, authors) to have a platform to present their performances/art/literary products.

Women are traditionally under-represented in music festivals, and many of the participants will have been adversely affected by Covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, it was important to the team to ensure that some payment (at least expenses) was secured for the artistes participating.

A vibrant and colourful mural depicting positive images of women was created on the hoardings opposite the Orwell Hotel by Colombian artist Catalina Carvajal from February through till August.



Two videos were created; one was released for the weekend of the original event, International Women's Day 2021, to celebrate and later in the year to promote the deferred event in September. An exhibition of women's art was held on the weekend of International Women's Day at 142 Hamilton Road gallery.

A Spanish dance workshop took place at the Two Sisters Arts Centre to raise awareness and promote the Festival, and it was much enjoyed by all participants.

The WAMfest launch party took place at the Two Sister's Arts Centre on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September in the presence of the Deputy Mayor Sharon Harkin. The programme included Big Mama Funk, and the specially formed Felixstowe Ukulele Ladies. ITV, Look East and Radio Suffolk broadcast live from the venue raising the profile of the event and Felixstowe as a creative and cultural hub. The programme on 4<sup>th</sup> September included two choirs of at least 80 participants, a ukulele band, and buskers performing in the town centre on the Triangle and a dynamic audience of approximately 1000 people viewed the event during the day.

40 artists exhibited at 149 Hamilton Road for the week from 3<sup>rd</sup> September attracting much interest and many visitors.

The programme at the Orwell Hotel took place all day on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September and included Internationally acclaimed professional classical singer Christina Johnston, 6 internationally published writers/novelists, 2 all-female bands, individual singers and a female led band.

On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the original intention of celebrating International Women's Day in Felixstowe was achieved by mounting Women of Song, with the return of the choirs, the Ukulele Ladies and three solo singers performing at The Triangle in partnership with the Felixstowe BID. In the evening the event continued at the Two Sisters Arts Centre; two singers made their return to the stage after many years, plus a first-time performer of 13 years old, a 14 year old and a professional folk singer completed the day to much praise.

WAMFEST Felixstowe were pronounced third in Suffolk in the East Anglian Festival Network poll which, for a first -time event was testimony to the support from the local community.

There is much potential for expansion and planning, and discussions are taking place for WAMFest Felixstowe 2-2 in September 2022. Due to the exposure that two promotional videos have given to the event, as well as press coverage, online interviews and significant social media coverage, there has been a marked increase in interest and engagement since the original event.

Funding was used to secure artists, venues, sound services, art materials including displays, marketing and PR, insurance cover

A total of £1650 was collected for the Lighthouse Women's Refuge through the events held.

Photos and videos from can be viewed on

<https://www.facebook.com/WAMfestFX>

Instagram @wamfest\_Felixstowe

[www.wamfestfelixsowe.art](http://www.wamfestfelixsowe.art)

[Things to do: Authors and music set for WAMfest Felixstowe | East Anglian Daily Times \(eadt.co.uk\)](#)