



# *Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops*

## Evaluation Phase 1

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for Leicestershire County Council

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*“there is the transfer of skills that takes place; the workshops require keen observation followed by finely targeted thinking before pencil can transmit thoughts and feelings to paper. These are immensely useful skills in day-to-day life and can enrich one’s contacts with people at many levels”*

### Acknowledgements

Enormous thanks are due to Nikki Clayton, Open Museum Projects Officer, not just for her help in compiling this report, but also for her commitment and enthusiasm in co-ordinating seven series of Behind the Scenes poetry workshops over the past 9 years. Nikki’s work on the programme has had a profound impact, which this report attempts to reflect. Significant credit is also due to the County’s previous Literature Development Officers, Chris Jones and Kerry Featherstone.



I would also like to thank all the Behind the Scenes poets, site hosts and participants, but especially those who took the time to complete the evaluation questionnaire.

## Executive Summary

### About Behind the Scenes

1. Behind the Scenes is a programme of participatory poetry workshops held at museums, heritage and cultural sites, mainly in the County of Leicestershire (although there have been a small number of events in Leicester city and Rutland).
2. The workshops take place at times when sites are not usually open to the public, and/or offer access to archives, collections and objects not currently on public display.
3. The programme was initiated in 2003. Since then there have been seven series of Behind the Scenes workshops, each series comprising between four and eight workshops.
4. Since 2003, a total of 45 workshops have taken place at 19 different venues, offering (in total) up to 675 opportunities for individual participation.
5. Established local poets facilitate the workshops. The programme mainly employs practitioners from within the County. A total of 13 poets have led Behind the Scenes workshops to date.
6. Each series of workshops has concluded with the publication of an anthology, and (except series VII) with an anthology launch event/reading.

### Staffing and finance

7. The programme has been managed by Leicestershire County Council's Heritage Services (and Library Services between 2003-2009).
8. The requirement of Leicestershire County Council to make savings of £74million by 2016, together with ongoing changes to the staffing structures of Community and Wellbeing Services (incorporating Libraries and Museums), presents a very challenging context for the future delivery of the programme.
9. The programme has been primarily funded from Leicestershire County Council's core budgets for the Open Museum (and for Literature Development until 2009). There has been some external funding from Renaissance East Midlands and the Discover Like Darwin festival.
10. The external funding from Renaissance East Midlands, which has supported the programme since 2009, ends in March 2012.
11. The delivery costs have been between £1,000-£2,000 per series (depending on the number of workshops in a series), not including overheads or core staff costs.

### Strategic context

12. Phase 1 of this evaluation demonstrates that the Behind the Scenes programme meets the objectives of the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-13, the County Council's Adults and Communities Three Year Plan 2010-13, and NEF's Five Ways to Wellbeing.

### About this evaluation

13. This report represents the findings of Phase 1 of an evaluation process – a questionnaire survey distributed to previous Behind the Scenes participants, venues and workshop leaders.
14. Phase 2 of the evaluation, a focus group meeting, will take place on 8 February 2012.
15. If funds can be found, there may be a Phase 3 of the evaluation process, comprising an Options Appraisal for the future development and delivery of the programme.

### Findings

16. 60% of questionnaire respondents had been to 5 or more Behind the Scenes workshops.
17. The programme has enabled local people to develop their writing skills. The number of respondents rating themselves as ‘beginner’ writers dropped from 25% to 0% as a result of the programme, with the number of respondents rating themselves as ‘experienced’ or ‘professional’ increasing from 45% to 65%.
18. The top three benefits of the programme were seen as ‘creative inspiration/motivation’ (95% of respondents), ‘fun and enjoyment’ (90%), and ‘skills development/learning’ and ‘creative challenge’ (both 80%).
19. The programme has affected people’s perceptions of what museums and heritage sites have to offer (80%) and increased interest in local history and heritage (75%).
20. The programme has benefited the County’s tourism industry. 55% of respondents visited the same site again following a Behind the Scenes workshop. Of these, 91% took others with them on their return visit.
21. 55% of respondents were inspired to visit other local heritage sites as a result of attending a Behind the Scenes workshop.
22. Creative work produced as a result of Behind the Scenes has reached a regional, national and international audience through publication, performance and broadcast.
23. 75% of respondents said they would ‘definitely’ like to see Behind the Scenes continue. A further 15% said that if the programme ran again, they would consider attending.
24. 90% of respondents said that they would be willing to pay for attendance at future Behind the Scenes workshops.
25. 95% of respondents said that they would be willing to pay for future anthologies.
26. There is potential to develop the scheme further through running workshops at different times, or offering additional opportunities through Behind the Scenes. For example, 80% said they would be interested in ‘One-off special workshops/courses for writers who wish to develop their creative writing further through more challenging work’.
27. The programme has so far served a primarily adult audience, including a significant percentage (40%) of people in the 60+ age group. Possibilities for future development may include exploring how younger target groups might be reached.
28. Other possibilities for future development could include considering how the programme might best reach the diverse communities in the city of Leicester.

## About Behind the Scenes

### The history of Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops

The Behind the Scenes programme was first initiated in 2003 as a partnership project between Leicestershire County Council’s Library Services (Chris Jones, Literature Development Officer) and Heritage Services (Nikki Clayton, Open Museum Officer). The idea was to increase access to and interest in Leicestershire’s museums, archives and heritage sites through the chance to (just like the title of Kate Atkinson’s wonderful novel) go ‘Behind the Scenes at the Museum’. Participants would be able to access heritage spaces and museum collections and archives at times when they were not usually open to the public.

The County’s Heritage Services were interested in facilitating access to the main heritage collections for new audiences and in new ways. The Open Museum had identified, through previous outreach work, that using museum objects and spaces had been particularly successful in inspiring creative activity. Meanwhile, the Literature Development Officer’s role was to engage local writers and offer new creative writing opportunities. A partnership was formed to work towards the aims of both services.

The idea was to offer professionally facilitated creative writing workshops with local poets, using the unique surroundings of heritage sites as stimulus; providing opportunities for local communities across the County to actively engage with both literature and heritage, and develop their own creative skills. The workshops would be open to everyone and create a friendly, supportive and inspiring environment for writing poetry.

### Delivery

The Literature Development Officer and Open Museum Projects Officer identified venues around the County. To date these have included:

- County Council run museums and heritage sites (Snibston, Donington le Heath Manor House, Harborough Museum, Melton Carnegie Museum, Century Theatre)
- Independent and other museums (Hinckley Museum, Bell Foundry Museum, Ullesthorpe Windmill, Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum, Moira Furnace)
- Specific collections and archives at the County Council’s Collections Resources Centre, the Library Service’s County Reserve, and at other sites (e.g. Snibston)
- Other County Council run sites and resources (Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre, County Record Office at Wigston, Sherrier Centre at Lutterworth)
- Wider organisations including the City Art Gallery (Leicester), Art de Jardin sculpture garden (Rutland), Rutland Water/Hambleton, and the Atkins Building (Hinckley).

*“It is not just the writing aspect but it is also the opportunity to access collections of ‘things’, some of which are not normally accessible in the ordinary way.”*



workshop and seeing people exploring and reflecting on objects and spaces in ways they may not previously have considered.

Initially, Behind the Scenes used County Council run museums, collections, heritage sites and stores. However, through external funding from Renaissance East Midlands, a series of workshops at four independent museums/heritage sites was held in partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland Museums Forum. In some cases, discrete workshops were also held at these sites for other local groups (for example schools). The programme has developed over the years to incorporate a wider range of sites such as the City Art Gallery, Leicester and Art de Jardin, Rutland. A broad geographical range of locations throughout the county has been ensured in each series.

### Links to other projects

Other projects have been inspired as a result of the success of Behind the Scenes and its impact on those who take part. Some examples are:

- The Lyric Lounge's *Write Way Up* project in 2009, which commissioned new work from five poets, inspired by the Open Museum's 'Resource Box' collection. Commissioned poets (selected by audition) were mentored by poet and playwright Kevin Fegan, and their commissioned work performed as part of the Lyric Lounge festival. The project also incorporated a day of drop-in participatory writing activity using the Resource Box objects. The project was organised by Lydia Towsey and Pam Thompson, both of whom had had previous involvement with Behind the Scenes and acknowledged the contribution of the programme in inspiring their project.
- Inspired by her experiences as a Behind the Scenes workshop leader, Deborah Tyler-Bennett led workshops using the *Street Style, Sport Style* exhibition at Richard Attenborough Centre, Leicester.
- A member of Heritage Services staff, who support and participated in a Behind the Scenes workshop, not only went on to attend other creative writing opportunities but also organised a series of mental health poetry workshops, using Beacon Hill as inspiration.



### Series to date

There have been seven series of Behind the Scenes to date:

#### Series I - 2003 - Anthology titled *Some Intrinsic Value*

Workshops took place at the Natural Life and Working Life collections at the Collections Resources Centre in Barrow-Upon-Soar, the Road Transport and compound stores at Snibston, the Mining collections and store at Snibston, and Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre at Birstall.

Workshops were delivered by poets Pam Thompson, Helen Johnson, Robert Hamberger, Mark Goodwin, John Gallas, and Deborah Tyler-Bennett.

Series II – 2004 – *Just Disturbed Spirits of Dust*

Workshops at the Record Office in Wigston, Holly Hayes, and the Home & Family Life and Fashion collections at the Collections Resources Centre.

The poets were Chris Jones, Robert Hamberger, Mark Goodwin, Helen Johnson, Deborah Tyler-Bennett and Pam Thompson.

Series III – 2005 – *The Trick of Watching*

Workshops at Holly Hayes, the Library Service’s County Reserve at Rothley, the Open Museum’s stores at the Sherrier Centre in Lutterworth, Snibston Discovery Park Locomotive Shed, the Record Office, Donington le Heath Manor House, the Archaeology reserve and the Fashion reserve at the Collections Resources Centre.

Poets were Robert Hamberger, Chris Jones, Mark Goodwin, John Gallas, Pam Thompson, Katie Daniels, Helen Johnson, and Deborah Tyler-Bennett.

Series IV – 2006 – *You Hear Us On Wires*

Workshops at Hinckley Museum, the Fashion Gallery at Snibston, Harborough Museum, Donington le Heath Manor House, the County Reserve, the Record Office, the Natural Life collection at the Collections Resources Centre, and the Sherrier Centre.

The poets were Deborah Tyler-Bennett, Robert Hamberger, John Gallas, Helen Johnson, Mark Goodwin, Chris Jones, Pam Thompson and Katie Daniels.

Series V – 2007 – *The Skin Between Two Worlds*

Workshops at Donington le Heath Manor House, Bell Foundry Museum, Leicester City Art Gallery, Wing Sculpture Garden, the Working Life and Natural Life collections at the Collections Resources Centre, and Hambleton/Rutland Water.

Poets leading the workshops were Katie Daniels, Mark Goodwin, Deborah Tyler-Bennett, Robert Hamberger, Pam Thompson, Chris Jones, Alison Dunne and John Gallas.

Series VI – 2009 – *The Smallest Part of Truth*

Workshops at Ullesthorpe Windmill, Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum, the Bell Foundry in Loughborough, Moira Furnace, the Fashion and the Natural Life collections at the Collections Resources Centre.

The poets were Mark Goodwin, Deborah Tyler-Bennett, John Gallas, Alison Dunne, Katie Daniels, and Michael Tolkien.

Series VII – 2011 – *Absence of Ghostly Corners*

Workshops at the Atkins Building in Hinckley, Melton Carnegie Museum, the Century Theatre at Snibston, and the Sherrier Centre.

Poets were Sue Mackrell, Katie Daniels, Rob Gee and Kerry Featherstone.

***“The concept of using historic buildings and museum exhibits as a jumping off point is wonderful and gives the opportunity to ‘travel’ geographically and in time which takes us all beyond our own experiences. Fantastic!”***

## Staffing and finance

The programme was founded and co-ordinated by Leicestershire County Council's Literature Development Officer (Chris Jones until 2004, and subsequently Kerry Featherstone) and Open Museum Projects Officer (Nikki Clayton). The post of Literature Development Officer (part funded by Arts Council England, East Midlands) was made redundant in April 2009 and since then, the programme has been entirely managed by Nikki, with assistance from support staff.

The programme has been funded primarily from Leicestershire County Council's core budgets (Open Museum, and Literature Development until 2009). Series VI and VII were partly funded by external funding from Renaissance East Midlands, which ends in March 2012. Two workshops in series VI were funded by the Discover Like Darwin festival budget (a Leicestershire Museums initiative in 2009).

The delivery costs for Behind the Scenes have been between £1,000 - £2,000 per series, depending on the number of workshops provided.

The main resource implications of the programme have been:

- Staff time for planning, co-ordination, attendance at workshops, and follow-up work including co-ordinating and attending launch events, and the preparation of the anthology and its production with support from the County Council's design team;
- Although there has usually been no charge for County Council run venues, use of other venues has incurred a charge for venue hire and staffing costs (for out-of-hours use);
- Provision of workshop refreshments;
- Fees to workshop leaders. Poets have been paid to make a pre-visit to the site; to deliver the workshop; and for travel expenses;
- Launch events (venue hire where applicable; refreshments and staffing);
- The cost of designing, printing and distributing promotional leaflets and anthologies;
- Travel expenses for staff attendance at workshops;
- Proportionate overhead costs, including postage.

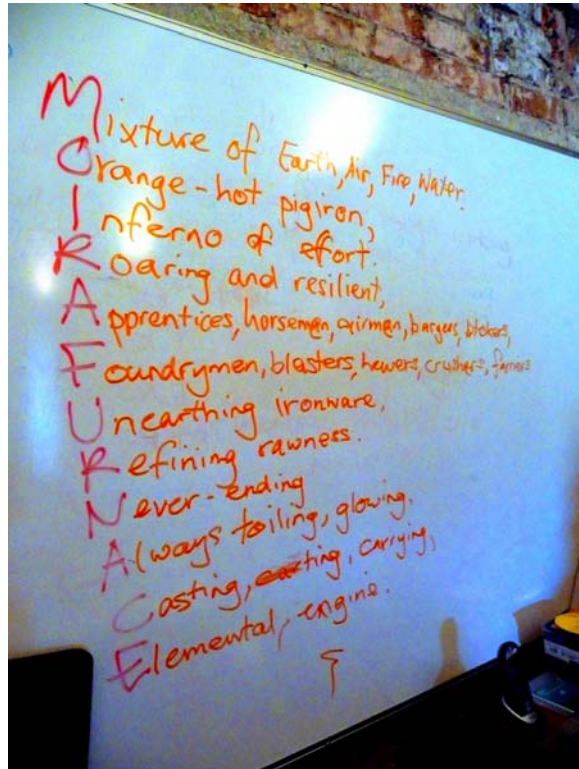
*“Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops are a brilliant way to learn more about our history and culture and to stimulate creative writing.”*

## About this evaluation

### Purpose of the evaluation

The Behind the Scenes programme has now been running for nearly nine years. Over that time, new venues and poets have come on board, and methods of working have become established, but the overall format has remained largely the same. Evaluation provides an opportunity to look at what is working well; identify gaps; discover what impact has been made; and consider how the programme might develop in the future.

Since 2009, the programme has been largely funded through external funding from Renaissance East Midlands to the Open Museum. The financial year 2011/12 is the final year of this funding, which means that the future of Behind the Scenes is currently unresourced, and therefore uncertain.



Furthermore, since the Literature Development Officer role was made redundant, it has been challenging for Nikki Clayton to act as sole co-ordinator for the programme, alongside other projects and responsibilities. Now, the future of the Open Museum Projects Officer role is also uncertain. The requirement for Leicestershire County Council to make savings of £74million by 2016, together with restructuring throughout Leicestershire County Council's Communities and Wellbeing Services, presents a challenging context for future delivery.

These challenges mean that it is imperative that we take stock and look at existing initiatives, asking: what are the benefits of this initiative? Is there a need for it? How might it develop to reflect changing priorities? What is the most efficient and effective way of delivering this service in a challenging climate?

The first phase of this evaluation seeks to answer the first two questions, and provide an evidence base for the demonstrable need for and benefits of Behind the Scenes.

*"I am grateful to everyone who has worked hard to run the Behind the Scenes workshops which I feel that I have benefited from over the years that I have attended. They helped me have the confidence to produce a book to raise money for the church that I attend. I think it is vital that this service remains to help others to benefit as I have done."*

### Scope of the evaluation

At the present time, the scope of the evaluation is limited to the findings of a questionnaire survey sent to previous service users, site hosts and workshop leaders. This report aims to provide an evidence base to assist the County Council or an alternative provider in identifying the impact, key benefits and strengths of the programme when considering its future development, funding and delivery options.

It is intended that the evaluation process will continue with a focus group meeting (phase 2) in February 2012.

If funds can be found, the evaluation could be extended further to include an Options Appraisal (phase 3), considering:

- Options and ideas for the development and delivery of the work programme
- Financial and staffing implications
- Marketing the programme
- Other initiatives and providers (local and regional context); potential links to other programmes
- Potential delivery partners
- Potential sources of funding and income generation
- Ways forward and recommendations.

This evaluation process is being funded by the Open Museum.

*“the experience of being ‘in the space’ enabled them to empathise and to make leaps of imagination that they may not have been able to do otherwise. The novelty and excitement of having access to sites and buildings not normally open to the public offers a frisson of pleasure and excitement; sharing the experience with other writers keen to explore ideas and language is inspirational and productive, and can fuel the desire to continue to explore ideas and to write.”*

### Methodology

A questionnaire survey and covering letter/email was distributed to 18 site hosts, 12 workshop leaders, and 59 participants in November 2011. Questionnaires were circulated primarily via email, or by post where no email address was on file. They could be returned by email or hard copy to the independent evaluator (Katie Daniels) or to Nikki Clayton. In total, 20 responses were received (22.5% return rate).

The evaluation was carried out by Katie Daniels, a freelance arts development consultant specialising in stakeholder consultation, organisational and strategic development, and evaluation. Katie has excellent knowledge of Behind the Scenes, as she is also a professional writer and published poet, and has led Behind the Scenes workshops at five different venues in series III, IV, V, VI and VII. Katie has also participated in a further nine Behind the Scenes workshops as a participant.

## Strategic context

### Strategic context

Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-13/Leicestershire Performance Framework

Phase 1 of the evaluation has demonstrated that the Behind the Scenes programme meets the following priority outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy's Performance Framework:

#### *2.1 Stronger communities where people are involved, engaged and play a role in decision making (Stronger Communities)*

Sub-outcome:

2.1.1 Social capital is enhanced, particularly through work benefiting the priority neighbourhoods

Behind the Scenes has developed a strong network of followers, including a community of 'regulars' who have formed friendships.

A number of Behind the Scenes venues fall within or are very local (within 5 miles) to priority neighbourhoods, for example: Ashby Museum, the Bell Foundry, Donington le Heath Manor House, Hinckley Museum, Harborough Museum, Melton Carnegie Museum, Moira Furnace, and Wigston Record Office.

#### *2.6 Improved community cohesion through shared learning and recreation (Sport and Culture)*

Sub-outcomes:

2.6.1 To strive for everyone to participate in the cultural life of the county and for cultural provision to embrace issues of equality and access

2.6.2 To support learning through the provision of opportunities for people to value heritage and the diversity of cultures

Behind the Scenes has offered a total of 45 creative workshops to date at heritage and cultural sites across Leicestershire and Rutland. Each workshop has up to 15 participants, so there have been up to 675 opportunities for individual participation since 2003.

80% of attenders said they had gained skills development/learning from Behind the Scenes. 80% also said the programme affected their perception of what museums and heritage sites had to offer, and 75% said Behind the Scenes had increased their interest in local history and heritage. One respondent described a benefit of the programme as, "Simply meeting other people with different attitudes and knowledge from myself."

***"the unexpected & unknown in people & place is exciting & challenging."***

#### *4.4 An enhanced, accessible natural environment with improved protection (Cleaner and Greener)*

Sub-outcome:

4.4.3 Local communities use, understand and appreciate a well-managed natural and historical environment

Behind the Scenes has had a demonstrable impact on increasing visitor numbers to heritage sites, as detailed under priority outcome 5.2 below. The programme has made use of 19 different venues since 2003, plus a number of different collections stored at these sites. When asked to rate the importance of different aspects of Behind the Scenes, 90% of service users rated as 4 or 5 out of 5 (5 being ‘a vital aspect of the programme’) the “unique experience because of the locations offered”, while 95% rated as 4 or 5 out of 5 the chance to “handle objects/see collections close up”. The programme has facilitated engagement with, understanding and appreciation of the County’s historical environment.

*5.2 An improved image for business and tourism and recognition as a centre for innovation (Economic Development & Enterprise)*

Sub-outcome:

5.2.2 Increased visitor economy and cultural tourism

Following attendance at a Behind the Scenes workshop, 55% had been inspired to visit the same site again (of these, 91% took other people with them on their return visit). Similarly, 55% had been inspired to visit other local heritage sites. 65% said the programme had changed how they relate to museums and heritage sites. One site host commented, “We have had a number of people visit the natural history collections/attend identification workshops as an outcome (having learnt about the collections area through the Behind the Scenes programme)”.

*6.1 Improved physical health, well-being and community cohesion through enhanced access to sport, recreation and cultural activities (Sport and Culture)*

Sub-outcomes:

6.1.1 Increased high quality access to arts, recreation and active pursuits, including through the provision of appropriate, accessible facilities

6.1.2 Everyone is able to participate in the cultural life of the county and this provision addresses issues of equality and access

50% of attenders said that attending Behind the Scenes had improved their well being, and 55% said it enabled active use of their leisure time. 65% said the programme offered a chance to socialise with like-minded people and form friendships.

***“a significant early step of my social and poetry rehabilitation after 18 months of being virtually housebound... It gave me the confidence to begin to reconnect with other groups. “***

*6.6 The health and well-being of older people is increased (Older People)*

Sub-outcome

6.6.1 Older people have access to a wide range of cultural and learning activities

40% of the Behind the Scenes users who completed the evaluation questionnaire were in the 60+ age group.

*6.8 Improved mental health and well-being (Healthier Communities)*

Sub-outcome:

6.8.2 Vulnerable people have better mental health

50% of attenders said that Behind the Scenes had increased their confidence/self-esteem and 50% cited improved personal wellbeing. 75% cited personal development as a benefit of the scheme, 60% gained mutual support, 70% gained pride in their achievements and 90% ‘fun and enjoyment’.

*“Practically saved my sanity, as I’d spent most of the winter caring for a family member who’d been very ill. The whole experience of ‘getting out of myself’ was probably more useful than any doctor’s visit!”*

#### *7.1 Access to facilities and services is enhanced across the County (Access to Services)*

Sub-outcome:

7.1.1 Improved access to employment, education, housing, sport, leisure, recreation and culture, health and social care, community facilities and food shopping, specifically for vulnerable individuals/groups/communities for whom access is a particular challenge

The programme offers recreation and cultural opportunities at a range of venues across the county, including many within 5 miles of priority neighbourhoods. Respondents to our questionnaire included older people (40%), unemployed people (10%), and disabled people (10%).

*“because the workshops have run so consistently over the last few years, I now have the pleasure of a sense of involvement with local writers and their writing, and far less of a sense of isolation.”*

#### *7.2 High quality and accessible services and facilities in rural areas (Rural)*

Sub-outcomes:

7.2.5 Reduced isolation of older, disabled and young people living in rural areas

7.2.6 Broader access to visitor sites and the wider countryside

Many Behind the Scenes venues are in rural areas and market towns. The programme not only provides high quality opportunities for those living in rural areas, it also attracts visitors from a wider area to sites within the County.

#### Leicestershire County Council Adults and Communities Three Year Strategic Plan 2010-13

Behind the Scenes has been delivered by the County’s Adults and Communities Department.

The department’s three-year plan has five key strategic aims:

1. Understanding the needs and aspirations of the people of Leicestershire
2. Developing strong, inclusive, supportive and independent communities
3. Promoting the health and well-being of individuals and communities
4. Increasing people’s choice and control
5. Continually improving the way we work with people

Behind the Scenes makes a particular contribution to the second of these five aims, under which the department states that, “We will ensure people are aware of the wide range of

learning, cultural, recreational and sporting opportunities available to them, making sure these are as easy to access as possible.”

However, as described earlier, the programme also makes a demonstrable contribution to wellbeing in line with the third of the key aims; specifically mental, emotional and social wellbeing.

This evaluation offers an opportunity to re-assess the programme and consider future direction, in line with the fifth key aim, which states that, “We will listen to what people tell us, constantly striving to be better and more efficient, so we make the best use of the resources we have.”

#### NEF’s Five Ways to Wellbeing

- Connect
- Be active
- Take notice
- Keep learning
- Give

The contribution that the Behind the Scenes initiative has made to the wellbeing of its participants can be clearly identified through the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework. The programme offers the opportunity to connect with others; make constructive use of recreational time; absorb and reflect on our heritage environment; learn and develop skills; and feel part of both a local community and a community of interest.

*“I was aware that I felt absolutely comfortable, that we were a group of people from various parts of the County meeting as a community with a shared interest, who would not normally have contact with each other.”*

## Findings

### Section A. Your experiences of Behind the Scenes

#### 1. How many Behind the Scenes poetry workshops have you attended?

One	Two-four	Five-ten	11-20	More than 20	No reply
20%	10%	30%	20%	10%	10%

Behind the Scenes has built up a loyal following and a number of ‘regulars’ over the years. 60% of respondents had been to five or more workshops. The feedback received through the questionnaire should be considered well informed.

#### 2. How would you describe your skills and experience in creative writing:

(a) when you first attended a Behind the Scenes workshop; and (b) now?

The responses showed real progression. 25% rated themselves as ‘beginner’ writers when they first attended Behind the Scenes; this dropped to 0% when rating current skill levels. The number of writers now classifying themselves as ‘experienced’ or ‘professional’ was 65%, compared to 45% at first attendance.

*“Behind the Scenes effectively launched my professional creative practice”*

#### 3. What did you get out of attending the Behind the Scenes workshop(s)?

Respondents identified benefits as follows:

Creative inspiration/motivation	95%
Fun & enjoyment	90%
Skills development/learning	80%
Creative challenge	80%
Personal development	75%
Pride in my achievements	70%
Benefit from contact with a professional poet	65%
Constructive criticism/feedback	65%
Chance to socialise with like-minded people	65%
Mutual support	60%
Active use of my leisure time	55%
Improved personal well-being	50%
Increased confidence/self-esteem	50%
Professional development	25%
Other	25%

Other benefits described included, *“Improved observational skills. Thinking outside the box”* and *“Simply meeting other people with different attitudes and knowledge from myself”*.

A site host described the *“Benefit of collections being referenced to new audiences. Chance to identify collections for a new form of engagement.”*

**4. Behind the Scenes offers the opportunity to access museum collections, stores and spaces that may not normally be accessible to the public. Have you found this opportunity:**

Affected your perceptions of what museums/heritage sites have to offer	80%
Increased your interest in local history and heritage	75%
Increased your knowledge/understanding of local history	70%
Changed how you relate to museums and heritage sites	65%
Inspired you to create further poems about local history and heritage	60%
Inspired you to visit the same site again	55%
Inspired you to visit other local heritage sites	55%
Any other effect/benefits	30%

*“The workshops have been great and the facilitators have helped me to view objects in different ways. I don't think it would be the same if I just visited a museum, it helped to concentrate your mind in a different way.”*

The programme has had a clear impact on increasing visitor numbers to heritage attractions, with over half of respondents returning to the same site and over half visiting other local heritage sites as a result of their involvement. Of the 55% who visited the same site again, 91% took others with them on their return visit.

A site host comments:

*“We have had a number of people visit the natural history collections/attend identification workshops as an outcome (having learnt about the collections area through the Behind the Scenes programme)... As a curator managing a collection area used, it has informed additional ideas and projects run with visiting groups... At the time it enhanced my position and attitudes as the host Curator of the Museum.”*

A workshop leader comments:

*“I have a particular interest in writing about local history and heritage sites, and it has increased my enthusiasm to continue to seek opportunities to lead creative workshops on similar themes. Participants in workshops such as these often give a personal and unique perspective which may otherwise be lost, for example, several of the participants in the Atkins Building workshop had worked in the hosiery factories, and others could recall family stories and memories which they expressed in lively, evocative poems.”*

Other benefits of going ‘Behind the Scenes’:

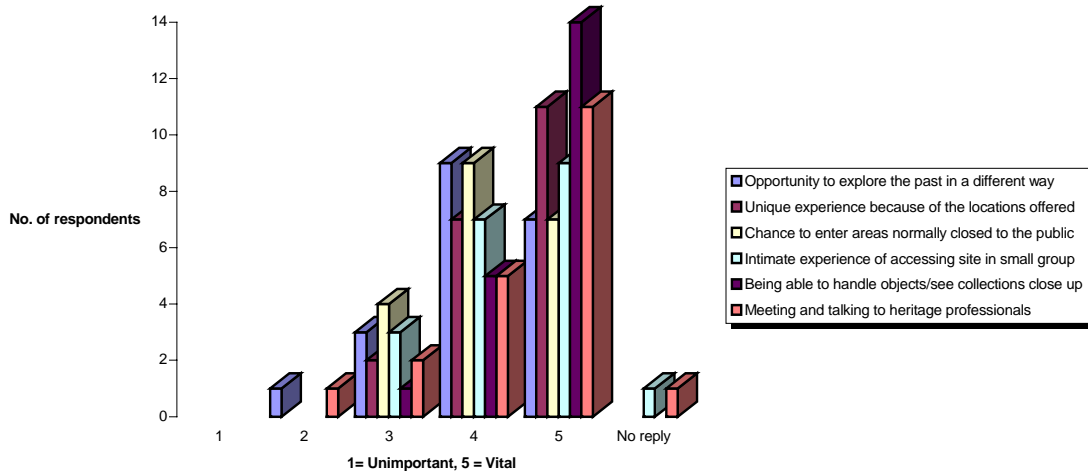
*“Greatly assisted when needing to research a subject.”*

*“Inspiration for Kegworth museum development.”* (Participant who works as a museum volunteer)

**5. Please rate how important the following aspects of Behind the Scenes are to you, on a scale 1 of 5 (1 being 'unimportant', 5 being 'a vital aspect of the programme').**

Most participants rated 'being able to handle objects/see collections close up' as a vital aspect of the programme (95% gave this aspect 4 or 5). Another aspect scoring notably highly was 'unique experience because of the locations offered' (90% rated 4 or 5).

How important to you are the following aspects of Behind the Scenes?



*“It was quite a unique experience, especially going round the building in the dark, when there's a lot more atmosphere. Often when you visit places it's easy to feel rushed. Much nicer to pause.”*

**6. Has your attendance at a Behind the Scenes workshop encouraged you to attend or get involved in other writing workshops/groups/events?**

45% said Yes; a further 20% said Maybe. A site host commented, *“I would think of other venues if publicised for myself as a customer”*. Respondents cited a whole host of opportunities they had accessed as a result, from writing groups and other workshops to courses, readings, festivals and open-mic events. Comments included:

*“Joined a writers’ circle & attended other workshops & day seminars on writing. Met lots of published writers. Attended events at Loughborough Uni & De Montfort Uni. Was part of a Crystal Clear Creators writing project (on slavery).”*

*“More confidence in speaking to an audience and giving public performances.”*

*“Already part of groups that exist, but the experience decided me to form a Rutland group.”*

**7. Have any of the poems you produced at Behind the Scenes workshops since been published? (Above and beyond publication in Behind the Scenes anthologies)**

35% said Yes. It is evident that the creative work produced through Behind the Scenes is reaching a regional, national and international audience. Publications included:

- Poems included in individual full-length collections – over 20 poems in total in Michael Tolkien’s *Exposures* and *Taking Cover* (Redbeck Press) and *No Time for Roses* (Poetry Salzburg); poems in *Catch* by Katie Daniels (Redbeck Press) and *Else* by Mark Goodwin (Shearsman)
- Anthologies including the *Soundwrite 2011 Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (two poems by Joanna Watson)
- National literary magazines including *Other Poetry* (D A Prince), *Poetry Salzburg* (Mark Goodwin), *The Interpreter’s House* (Joanna Watson), *Tremblestone* (Mark Goodwin), *The Delinquent* (Mark Goodwin), *Litter Magazine* (Mark Goodwin)
- Regionally based literary magazines such as *The Coffee House* (Paul Maslowski, Mark Goodwin)
- Performances at readings, tours, arts events, festivals and open-mic events (Sue Mackrell, Paul Maslowski, Mark Goodwin)
- Online publication including sites such as *Great Works*, *Raunchland*, *Shadow Train*, *Stride Magazine* and *Dusie* (Mark Goodwin, Sue Mackrell)
- Radio broadcast on Radio Wildfire (Mark Goodwin)

“Thanks very much for letting me have two copies of *The Skin Between Two Worlds*. I must say I have enjoyed this a lot more than some of the periodicals of a national standing that I have been looking at recently.”

**Section B. The format of the Behind the Scenes programme**

**8. Behind the Scenes workshops are facilitated by established local poets. Do you think this is:**

Very important for the quality of the workshop experience	90%
I’m not sure how important it is	0%
Not important – the workshops could be led by other Council or museum staff, by non professional writers or by volunteers	0%
No reply	10%

Although the use of local professional writers as workshop leaders is the main cost of providing the programme, it is strongly evident that this is seen as a vital aspect of the service provided.

**9. What do you think of the range of venues and poets offered?**

Although the majority response was ‘Good range, quite happy with the choices available’ (50% for venues and 60% for poets), there was also a feeling that ‘it would be nice to see some new ones’ – particularly with regard to venues (35% of respondents).

	Good	OK	Limited	No reply
Venues	50%	35%	5%	10%
Poets	60%	25%		15%

A large number of venue suggestions were made, together with a smaller list of possible poets. These are included at Appendix A.

**11. An anthology of poems is produced at the end of each series of Behind the Scenes, and this is usually celebrated at a launch event. Do you find the launch event and anthology:**

	Launch event	Anthology
An important element of the programme	65%	80%
Boosts my confidence/self-esteem to read my work to an audience/see my work in print	40%	65%
Inspires me to write more poems	40%	60%
Interesting to read/hear other people’s work	50%	75%
Interesting to see/hear what happened at other workshops	45%	55%
Inspires me to attend future Behind the Scenes workshops	50%	55%
Nice but not really necessary	5%	0%
Unimportant	0%	0%

Although both the launch event and anthology were seen as important elements of the programme, the anthology held greater value for respondents.

*“Without such social/literary intercourse, a writer has no real ‘live’ impetus to change and experiment, seek out new inspiration and techniques. Invaluable.”*



**12. Have you ever been to a Behind the Scenes launch event?**

60% of respondents had been to at least one launch event (40% had been to more than one). A further 35% would have liked to, but had been unable to attend. One respondent commented, *“The opportunity to read work in a positive and supportive environment is affirming and a great boost to confidence, and can encourage less experienced writers to participate in open mic events.”*

**13. What is your preferred format for the Behind the Scenes anthologies?**

‘In print’ was the answer for 70% of respondents. 10% preferred website publication; 20% didn’t mind what format it appeared in. No respondents stated ‘email’ as their preferred format.

One respondent expressed their views: *“Unfortunately the anthology [series VII] was only published online [by email]... It was disappointing that the work was not published in an anthology, as I know how much workshop participants gain in self-esteem and confidence to see their work in print.”*

**14. Would you be willing to pay for a printed copy of future anthologies? How much would you be willing to pay?**

95% said they would be willing to pay (one respondent did not reply). Just over half of respondents said they would pay between £1 - £3.49 for the anthology, but with over a third offering to pay between £3.50 - £6.99, it would be reasonable to price the anthology towards the top end of the lower bracket (e.g. £3.00).

£1.00 - £3.49	55%
£3.50 - £6.99	35%
£7.00 - £9.99	5%
£10.00 or more	0%
No reply	5%

*“it offers unique and stimulating opportunities for writers at all levels, to share ideas, to develop their writing and to see a writing project through from inception to publication.”*

**Section C. Future development of the programme**

**15. Would you like to see the Behind the Scenes programme continue?**

Yes – definitely!	75%
Yes - if it ran again then I’d consider attending	15%
I don’t mind/not sure	5%
Not really - I think it has run its course	0%
No reply	5%

Supporting comments included:

*“It would be a tragedy to break up the community/network of Behind the Scenes poets.”*

*“This is an invaluable stimulus to grass-roots writing & to response to our heritage. It fulfils an important cultural requirement, stops elitism!”*

And from a workshop leader:

*“Limited other regular workshopping opportunities available in this area - & it's such a special experience. Plus, I get work & professional development from it (as a poet), so it's helping my creative business to thrive.”*



**16. In the past, Behind the Scenes workshops have usually taken place on weekday evenings, from 7-9pm. Would you be interested in:**

Workshops at other times of day (weekdays)	Morning	Afternoon	
	35%	45%	
Workshops at weekends	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
	50%	60%	35%
All day workshops	During the week	At weekends	
	25%	65%	

Respondents were interested in workshops at other times, particularly all-day or afternoon workshops at weekends.

One respondent commented, *“I would actually prefer workshops during the day (especially during the winter months).”*

*“the workshop is not just the event plus the days after, but also the anticipation and expectations beforehand, and how they feed the imagination.”*

**17. Would you be interested in additional opportunities through Behind the Scenes, e.g.:**

One-off special workshops/courses for writers who wish to develop their creative writing further through more challenging work	80%
Extended writing courses (e.g. 6-8 weeks)	55%
Follow-up sessions after workshops (to facilitate critical commentary and self-editing on the work that has been produced)	60%

There was a strong interest in extending further the opportunities available through Behind the Scenes, particularly in the form of one-off development workshops.

Respondents also made other suggestions for developing the programme, specifically, delivering additional sessions online.

Comments included:

*“These are all brilliant ideas and I would sign up - and pay a modest fee - for all of them.”*

*“Because cost is always a big consideration could courses/follow-up sessions be arranged online? I've had hugely successful interaction with tutors & fellow students in this way when studying with the OU.”*

**18. If it became necessary for us to charge for attendance at a Behind the Scenes workshop, what would you be able to pay (for a standard two-hour workshop)?**

£1.00 - £3.49	20%
£3.50 - £6.99	40%
£7.00 - £9.99	20%
£10.00 or more	10%
I would not be able to pay	0%
No reply	10%

All respondents were willing to pay, although one respondent noted that, “If Behind the Scenes workshops carry a charge in the future it will seriously curtail my ability to attend.” Another suggested, “You might offer a concessionary rate eg for those who are unemployed/on benefits/have a disability/special circumstances that make payment difficult.”

The highest proportion gave a figure in the £3.50 - £6.99 bracket; the balanced number of respondents in the price categories below and above suggests that a mid-range price could be appropriate (e.g. £5.00).

**Section D. Last words**

**19. Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about Behind the Scenes, its effect on you and/or what you would like to see happen in the future?**

These comments have been included as Appendix B to this report. An additional statement offered by Paul Maslowski, a regular Behind the Scenes attendee, is included in full at Appendix C.





**23. Your ethnicity:**

White British	Other White	Chinese	Asian/Asian British	Black/Black British	Mixed race	Other	No reply
85%	5%						10%

Leicestershire’s population as a whole is 92.8% White British (1.9% Other White). However, there are clear opportunities here to identify venues and poets that reflect the more diverse communities in the city of Leicester.

**24. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**

10% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled; 15% gave no reply.

**25. Your contact details**

Respondents’ contact details have been collated separately and will be used for the purpose of calling a focus group meeting for those who expressed a willingness to be involved in further consultation. The list of contact details will then be returned to Leicestershire County Council.

*“Thank you for everything Behind the Scenes has done to enrich my life”*

## Appendix A – Suggested venues and poets

### Venues

Questionnaire respondents made the following suggestions:

- Kegworth Museum (a separate respondent, a volunteer at the museum, offered: “If Kegworth Museum can be of service in providing a venue, we would definitely love to be able to do so. There would be no charge as we open the museum to the public anyway.”)
- Jewry Wall Museum
- Belgrave Hall
- National Space Centre
- Cotesbach (interesting hall and grounds with converted outbuildings, already involved in ‘climate days’)
- Great Central Railway
- Donington Motor Museum
- East Midlands Airport – Museum of Flight
- Mountsorrel Quarry
- Foxton Locks Museum
- Bosworth Battlefield Museum
- Charnwood Museum
- DMC
- Phoenix Square
- Curve
- De Montfort Hall
- The Old Grammar School, Market Harborough
- Wigston Framework Knitters’ Museum
- Behind the scenes at theatres?

Some venues that have already been used for Behind the Scenes workshops were suggested, including:

- Snibston Museum
- Donington le Heath Manor House
- Perhaps a hidden garden somewhere, where it would never have been noticed. The Museum at Hinckley springs to mind
- More visits to the Wing Sculpture Garden [Artdejardin], and Rutland Water (using Hambledon Village Hall)



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

*Special thanks are due to Sue Mackrell for her in-depth list of suggestions for linked venues, reproduced below.*

Perhaps linked venues, e.g.:

- Newarke Houses Museum - Regimental Displays linked with locations, and people associated with the First and Second World Wars, maybe with the War Memorials Project (Centenary of beginning of First World War 2014.) Could be linked with oral history of Second World War, and projects such as Bruntingthorpe Lightning Preservation Group, or the code-breaking Listening Station at Beaumanor Hall.
- Ashby Museum linked with Ashby de la Zouch Castle.
- Agricultural history, relating to museum artefacts such as farm machinery, photographs etc., Hough Mill, Stonehouse Farm.
- Writing memoir and family history based on photographs, artefacts and written evidence, possibly based at the Records office.
- Writing about character, based on evidence of historical characters in museums - famous characters (e.g. Daniel Lambert, William Wilberforce, The Herricks of Beaumanor Hall), but also exploring lives of ordinary people in the past, looking at different perspectives e.g. gender, class, race, faith. Linked with records e.g. of freed slaves in Leicestershire, or workers in the industrial revolution, for example, frame knitters, workers in the Bell Foundry in Loughborough, or those in workhouses. Writing about characters from the past who lived or worked in particular locations. Exploring life stories of refugees and immigrants. Writing about women's, or men's lives in the past, or the life of a particular family, based on museum artefacts.
- Workshops exploring writing based on Industrial Heritage Trails – writing on landscape, machinery, the lives of colliers, millworkers, etc.
- Theme based workshops, e.g. childhood linked with Toybox Gallery at Snibston.
- Writing about transport, linked with Leicestershire Transport Heritage Trust, Snibston and Foxton Locks museums, and contemporary locations e.g. Leicester London Road Station, Leicester Forest East Service Station, East Midlands Airport, Loughborough Steam Railway or Shackerstone Station.
- The Hallaton Treasure, at Harborough Museum, perhaps linked with writing about archaeology.
- Bosworth Battlefield Centre linked with archaeology, artefacts, written historical references and Shakespeare's play - imagining the experience of those involved in the battle, landscape, and location.
- Science and geology based workshops at New Walk Museum, Snibston or Charnwood Museum.
- Art based workshops focusing on paintings/sculpture at New Walk Museum.
- Food at Melton Carnegie Museum linked with writing about Melton Mowbray market or local Farmers' Markets.



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

- Writing based on a walk around particular locations, perhaps looking at photographs/images of the place in the past. Possibly focused on area in Leicester around Guildhall, St Mary de Castro, 'Black Annis's Gateway'. Literary connections - Shakespeare's company possibly performed in the Guildhall, Chaucer was married in St Mary de Castro.
- Writing about a place in a particular era in history, e.g. Donington Manor or Leicester in Medieval times, or Roman, focusing on the Jewry Wall Museum, perhaps linked with archaeology. Other workshops could focus on Grace Dieu Priory, perhaps on the periods before and after the Dissolution.
- Hinckley Museum could be a focus for a walk exploring history of the town and writing about history of framework knitting, Luddites, bread riots, Chartists, the market, famous connections – e.g. Joseph Hansom, John Cleveland, Robert Chessher, Charlotte Brame, Robert James Lees, George Canning, and Shakespeare's reference to Hinckley: *And Sir, do you mean to stop any of William's wages, about the sack he lost the other day at Hinckley fair?* (Henry IV part 2).
- Writing ghost stories linked with ghost walks, or historical fiction based on local history.
- Mythology – Roman mythology perhaps based at Jewry Wall; Celtic and Viking mythology based on museum artefacts, e.g. The Hallaton Treasure.
- Seasonal and anniversary/commemoration dates e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembrance Day, Black History Month, National Poetry Day; seasonal celebrations e.g. Diwali, Eidh, Christmas/solstice etc.
- Workshops based on environment, natural history, and history of landscape, e.g. Burbage Common, Charnwood Forest, Rutland Water. Could be linked with BBC Springwatch/Autumnwatch.
- Workshops based on museum events e.g. touring exhibitions, artists in residence or visiting speakers.
- Workshops based in some of the smaller Community museums e.g. Diseworth Heritage Centre, perhaps looking at how to use a census as stimulus for creative writing; or the Sir John Moore Foundation, writing about a Victorian School, perhaps linked with Beaumanor Hall.
- Working with local history and heritage groups, e.g. Friends of Hinckley Museum or Bottesford local history group.

### Poets

Perhaps Jean Binta Breeze might be involved?

Nathan Lunt (one of the decadent romantics, Leicester).

I think you have a nice balance, but would like to see more of John Gallas - I love his energy.

I would like to lead a workshop at Kegworth [Museum] (Sheila Sharpe).

Both David McCormack & I [Sue Mackrell] would love to be considered for future workshops.

## Appendix B – Last words and additional feedback

“It is not just the writing aspect but it is also the opportunity to access collections of 'things', some of which are not normally accessible in the ordinary way.”

“I realised yesterday evening, that over time, I have received a far greater and intangible benefit: that is to say, sitting round the table...nattering with people about what 'works' or doesn't, I was aware that I felt absolutely comfortable, that we were a group of people from various parts of the County meeting as a community with a shared interest, who would not normally have contact with each other. My previous attendance at the workshops has always been qualified by a certain amount of unease at not knowing people very well. But I realised yesterday that, because the workshops have run so consistently over the last few years, I now have the pleasure of a sense of involvement with local writers and their writing, and far less of a sense of isolation.”

“Many thanks for an enjoyable evening at Ullesthorpe Windmill. It was quite a unique experience, especially going round the building in the dark, when there's a lot more atmosphere. Often when you visit places it's easy to feel rushed. Much nicer to pause. The workshop was really good, too, opening our minds to different ideas.”

“Thanks very much for letting me have two copies of TSBTW [The Skin Between Two Worlds, anthology series V]. I must say I have enjoyed this a lot more than some of the periodicals of a national standing that I have been looking at recently.”

“I just wanted to thank you for bringing this workshop to Ashby Museum yesterday. It was really interesting and inspiring to watch the writers at work, and all the participants seemed to enjoy their experience! It is great for our museum to be involved in these kind of events, and I enjoyed it too! We would love to host any similar kind of work in the future.”

“Belated thanks for organising the excellent workshop at Ashby de la Zouch Museum last Monday...I enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and having the opportunity to see some fascinating objects. Katie Daniels provided some interesting ways of using these and I liked her gentle approach. Although I decided not to read any of my scribbles, I gathered lots of ideas for writing about things which might never have otherwise occurred to me; and learned something about my writing process, which is always useful. I'm now mulling over ideas for two possible poems... Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops are a brilliant way to learn more about our history and culture and to stimulate creative writing. Thank you for all your hard work organising the series. I'm really glad that I braved the dark unknown to have my first glimpse behind the scenes and I'm now looking forward to Deb's workshop at the bell foundry on 10th.”

“It has been fascinating to look at poems produced in all the workshops I didn't go to: another way of experiencing ghosts, I suppose. I only attended the workshop at Snibston, where it was the chance to get inside the theatre, and go backstage that was the real pull. I'd always wanted to test the space and what it felt like, and it was much more atmospheric than the rather bland foyer - although that did all the required front of house stuff.”

“the workshop is not just the event plus the days after, but also the anticipation and expectations beforehand, and how they feed the imagination.”



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

“Great workshop at the bell foundry museum last night; thank you! I’ve been researching the casting and tuning of bells in preparation for a poem or two since 06.00 this morning—how’s that for inspiration and/or dedication and/or madness and/or insomnia?! Thanks too for providing decaf coffee. Looking forward to Ullesthorpe Windmill.”

“Many thanks for all your efforts and hard work in keeping the poetry workshops alive and well... It is very hard to assess the value of poetry workshops, especially for someone like me who shrinks from being published or offering work for comment by a workshop group. So why do I keep coming back year after year? That's easy to answer. First of all one learns from contact with others who see things with different eyes and outlook from one’s own. This stretches and enlarges one’s world view. Next there is the use of language itself - emotive rather than purely practical. Then there is the transfer of skills that takes place; the workshops require keen observation followed by finely targeted thinking before pencil can transmit thoughts and feelings to paper. These are immensely useful skills in day-to-day life and can enrich one’s contacts with people at many levels...I just know how highly I value what I get out of the workshops and hope they will be able to continue.”

“I certainly enjoyed the workshops I attended and found them really valuable in refining my writing skills. My students from Groby also got a lot from them and found them very inspiring, so I hope they will continue!”

“The workshops have been great and the facilitators have helped me to view objects in different ways. I don't think it would be the same if I just visited a museum, it helped to concentrate your mind in a different way. Shall be really sorry if we don't have any more.”

“The Behind the Scenes workshops in Museum venues across the county have been an invaluable resource and source of inspiration to writers at all levels. As a creative writing tutor, and workshop leader for the scheme, I've seen my students’ work blossom at these events, and the resulting publication develop students' confidence in sending work elsewhere. As a poet, the workshops have been inspiring to me, and it has been a real privilege to work in settings not always open to writers and writing groups. I hope that this vital scheme can find the funding to continue, and think that the scheme has, thus far, enriched everyone involved with it, and the bodies that funded it. Such enrichment should continue, and Leicestershire should be proud of hosting such schemes.”

“I have already enjoyed reading (when I should have been working at the museum!) the poems – brilliant... Personally, I have found the workshops a marvellous way of meeting people with shared interests, seeing all the wonderful places in which they were held, and of course having the opportunity to share my work with others. I have really loved working with all of the poets who led the workshops. There is a need for the workshops to continue. Many of us out there have talent but could never afford to publish our work, nor do we have the contacts that enable us to do this.”

“Behind the Scenes effectively launched my professional creative practice - it was the first workshop I ever led. As such, it's really important to me, and I've always thoroughly enjoyed my involvement both as a workshop leader and as a participant. The sessions are inspiring, intimate and offer something special and different as a workshop experience. I really value the opportunities they provide, and the effect they've had on my writing and my professional practice.”



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

“I appreciated enormously the opportunity to lead a workshop at the Atkins Building. As a member of Creative Hinckley it enabled me to share my enthusiasm for the building and its regeneration from a hosiery factory to a thriving arts centre. I was delighted at the creative and perceptive responses demonstrated in the workshop, which were later developed into insightful and thought provoking poems. Feedback and lively discussion with the participants enabled me to develop my own work in interesting and unexpected ways. Several of the participants have subsequently joined Hinckley and Bosworth Arts Network and are often keen to continue to discuss their writing with me at the monthly meetings.”

“The contribution that the workshops make to the wider community is as follows:

1. The opening up of the collections held within the different venues to the wider community who may never see for themselves what is held within Leicestershire otherwise
2. The opportunity for writers to have a market for their work and to share with others
3. The continuing need for established poets to share their work and to use it for the benefit of others.

I hope all of this helps and that it is not too long before we can continue the workshops.”

“I really enjoyed the Behind the Scenes experience as I have only occasionally penned a word or two in poem form before and never shared with others in this way. Friends have also expressed an interest in the workshops and we would all be sad to lose something we have only just found.”

“The concept of using historic buildings and museum exhibits as a jumping off point is wonderful and gives the opportunity to ‘travel’ geographically and in time which takes us all beyond our own experiences. Fantastic!”

“I have been meaning to write to give you some feedback since the launch of *The Smallest Part of Truth* but my struggle with my cognitive impairments got the upper hand...My feedback on the venue for the launch of the anthology was that it was a well-chosen space. I liked the spaciousness of the open area and, given the modest turnout, the way we were able to sit round in a circle and read our poems in a formally informal - informally formal? - and intimate way. If there were more participants at a future launch, you could probably retain something of that intimate feel by keeping the reading in the foyer area, even if we sat in rows, rather than holding it in the theatre. (That would be my preference.) As with all Behind the Scenes events, you created a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. As I mention at the bottom of the questionnaire, attending and reading at that launch was a significant early step of my social and poetry rehabilitation after 18 months of being virtually housebound. As well as enjoying the evening, it gave me the confidence to begin to reconnect with Soundwrite and Leicester Poetry Society (Word! will be next, I hope). It was your understanding and support that encouraged me to make it: thank you. Now we must get further funding for Behind the Scenes so it can continue to flourish...”

“intriguing and very stimulating”

“the unexpected & unknown in people & place is exciting & challenging.”

“This is such a brilliant project. I'm so glad it has continued to run. Anyone in their right mind would see what a beneficial process this has engendered through the local writer network.”



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

“As a poet/facilitator, the scheme has been an important part of considering, reconsidering and inspiring my own writing, both from the venues and objects themselves, and from the interaction with workshop members and the various kinds of writing they do. Without such social/literary intercourse, a writer has no real ‘live’ impetus to change and experiment, seek out new inspiration and techniques. Invaluable.”

“I was very interested in the fact that I wrote a poem in Chris Jones' workshop at Donington-le-Heath (2006 possibly?) despite all the things that normally crush me: other people, being outside, time limits, being given a theme (though this was a generously wide one so I could do my own thing). The poem was more or less finished in the workshop (an even bigger shock)”

“Discovering and attending the Behind the Scenes workshops was one of the most constructive things I did in 2009, at a time when I was only working one day a week and had limited contact with the local poetry scene. Behind the Scenes introduced me to some interesting places in Leicestershire; some fascinating local history; new opportunities for writing poetry in a stimulating and supportive environment; and to an amazing group of people, including some talented poets. Since then, after 18 months of serious illness when I was too ill to even think about writing, attending and reading at the launch of the anthology *The Smallest Part of Truth* was a significant early step of my social and poetry rehabilitation. It was an enjoyable reading and reunion. It gave me the confidence to begin to reconnect with other groups. I have found Nikki Clayton to be a very enthusiastic, supportive, sensitive and encouraging facilitator.”

“Thank you for everything Behind the Scenes has done to enrich my life. Please let me know what else we can do to help this innovative project continue in the future.”

“I am grateful to everyone who has worked hard to run the Behind the Scenes workshops which I feel that I have benefited from over the years that I have attended. They helped me have the confidence to produce a book to raise money for the church that I attend. I think it is vital that this service remains to help others to benefit as I have done.”

“It would be a travesty if it were to close. It’s something that helps to keep the older among us out of mental institutions.”

“I feel it will be a great loss if the workshops cannot be continued. Access to fellow writers, particularly well-experienced and published writers, is vital to encourage creativity, share ideas, offer critiques, extend one’s experience. Writing can be a very lonely and isolating experience without the opportunities presented by the workshops.”

“I have loved every attendance at the workshops and would gladly go again even if it was in a different format.”

“I feel the present format has worked well and both the teaching & learning experience have been memorable; at least 20 significant poems in my collections have derived from starting points in these sessions.”

“The workshop I went to, some years ago now, was a special, memorable day. I'm not a Leics resident so felt privileged to attend. Weekend, centrally located workshops would be great for me as a non-local, non-driving person. Any chance of liaising with other councils in Midlands?”



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

“I have a particular interest in writing about local history and heritage sites, and it has increased my enthusiasm to continue to seek opportunities to lead creative workshops on similar themes. Participants in workshops such as these often give a personal and unique perspective which may otherwise be lost, for example, several of the participants in the Atkins Building workshop had worked in the hosiery factories, and others could recall family stories and memories which they expressed in lively, evocative poems. For others, the experience of being ‘in the space’ enabled them to empathise and to make leaps of imagination that they may not have been able to do otherwise. The novelty and excitement of having access to sites and buildings not normally open to the public offers a frisson of pleasure and excitement; sharing the experience with other writers keen to explore ideas and language is inspirational and productive, and can fuel the desire to continue to explore ideas and to write.”

“I hope the funding for Behind the Scenes continues – it offers unique and stimulating opportunities for writers at all levels, to share ideas, to develop their writing and to see a writing project through from inception to publication.”

“I would very much like them to continue, they have been really valuable in developing my writing skills and for many other reasons too numerous to mention here”

## Appendix C – A statement from Paul Maslowski

### *Behind the Scenes (BTS): what does it mean to me?*

Amazingly, the BTS series of poetry workshops has been running for eight years now. Unfortunately, I only became aware of BTS at the very end of BTS III with a quite magical introduction at Donington-le-Heath Manor House in September 2005 – a place I had not previously visited or been aware of. I will never forget that first workshop. In particular, I remember how I felt. I was scared by the talent of those leading the workshop as well as by those taking part. In equal measure I was awed by the wonderful writing I heard. This led me to feel stunned and I confess I didn't read out that first time. However, by the time I left I felt joyous – this was exactly what I had been craving for over twenty years. On the way home something started to happen – it was as if doorways were opening in my mind. I had to pull over in to a lay-by. I have no recollection of how long I was there but I remember it being pitch black as I sat writing poem after poem. Needless to say, I was hooked.

I used the word 'unfortunately' at the beginning of the last paragraph because ever since I stepped in to the BTS world the contribution that Behind the Scenes has made to my life has been phenomenal. I just wish I had been able to catch the whole of series III as well as series I and II.

I had written since I was 15 without outlet when Behind the Scenes came to my attention. I believe my first point of contact was the then Leicestershire County Literature Development Officer, Kerry Featherstone, who I went to see give a lecture on 19<sup>th</sup> Century & war poetry. It was he that introduced me to the world of BTS. Together with the sterling work done by Nikki Clayton (and later in collaboration with Mark Goodwin) the team have produced workshops to what can only be described as a gold standard.

Every workshop has pushed me further in my writing. Through exploring new places with new approaches my writing has grown over the years of BTS.

Through meeting tutors of a very high calibre I have had publications in Coffee House and of course not forgetting the BTS Anthologies themselves. I have also made friendships that endure.

One of the beauties of BTS is the different and unusual places that workshops have been held. This has not only helped a community of writers but also provided a showcase to promote interesting and unusual (or forgotten) venues. Some of these I have been back to repeatedly – writers love to write in places of energy.

BTS put me on the path to finding my voice. Ultimately this has led to me performing in Edinburgh 2011 during the Fringe as well as holding exhibitions of paintings & some of my poetry around the world.

#### *Knock-ons:*

Directly because of BTS I was invited to join the Inky fish poetry group.

I have read at Rhymes & Wine in Loughborough thanks to BTS tutor Deborah Tyler-Bennett. I have performed at Word! in Leicester thanks in no small part to BTS tutor and now Book Doctor, Alison



## Behind the Scenes Poetry Workshops – Evaluation Phase 1

Dunne and a wealth of Leicestershire based poets. Because of the above I took part in the Lyric Lounge in Leicester in 2010 which was great fun and served to promote the art of writing. I have also performed at Hubmarine in Derby and had an Edinburgh Fringe run which was one of the best experiences of my life. All thanks to BTS!

### *Development Ideas*

- I am sure there would be scope to have some kind of exhibition of the BTS work over the years together with all the other work that has been inspired by it – paintings, calligrams, installations etc.
- Great Central Railway – a living museum currently running between Loughborough and Leicester North. This would be great to explore and there must be so many stories that could be teased from the rails. With each station representing a different era there is scope for a ‘poetry day behind the scenes’ where workshops run at each station and maybe even on the trains...
- Donington Motor Museum – writing at speed &/or poetry that really drives to the heart of the matter
- East Midlands Airport – Museum of Flight
- Mountsorrel Quarry – ‘cut poetry’, carved poetry..any chance of this one?
- Foxton Locks Museum – evocation of former ages, barges, bargees, horses, transport...
- Bosworth Battlefield Museum
- DMC, Phoenix Square – ‘the nature of film’, ‘behind the screens’ etc...
- The Curve – ‘The Transparent Stage’
- DeMontfort Hall – ‘behind the scenes’

### *Thank you*

I want to say a huge thank you to those who have organised BTS and lead workshops. Also, to all the writers who have supported the workshops over the years. It has been fantastic to see how people, museum collections and sites can be brought alive through the written word. When people ask me what BTS means to me I can only say that the contribution BTS has made to my life is simply priceless. Long may it go on inspiring and developing people and places!

*Paul Maslowski, October 2011*