

# RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL



Event Evaluation 2023

NOTTINGHAM  
EVENTS



Nottingham  
City Council

# Background

The East Midlands' biggest free festival was held on the Victoria Embankment from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 August 2023. The event has been staged annually for the last 40 years along the banks of the River Trent.

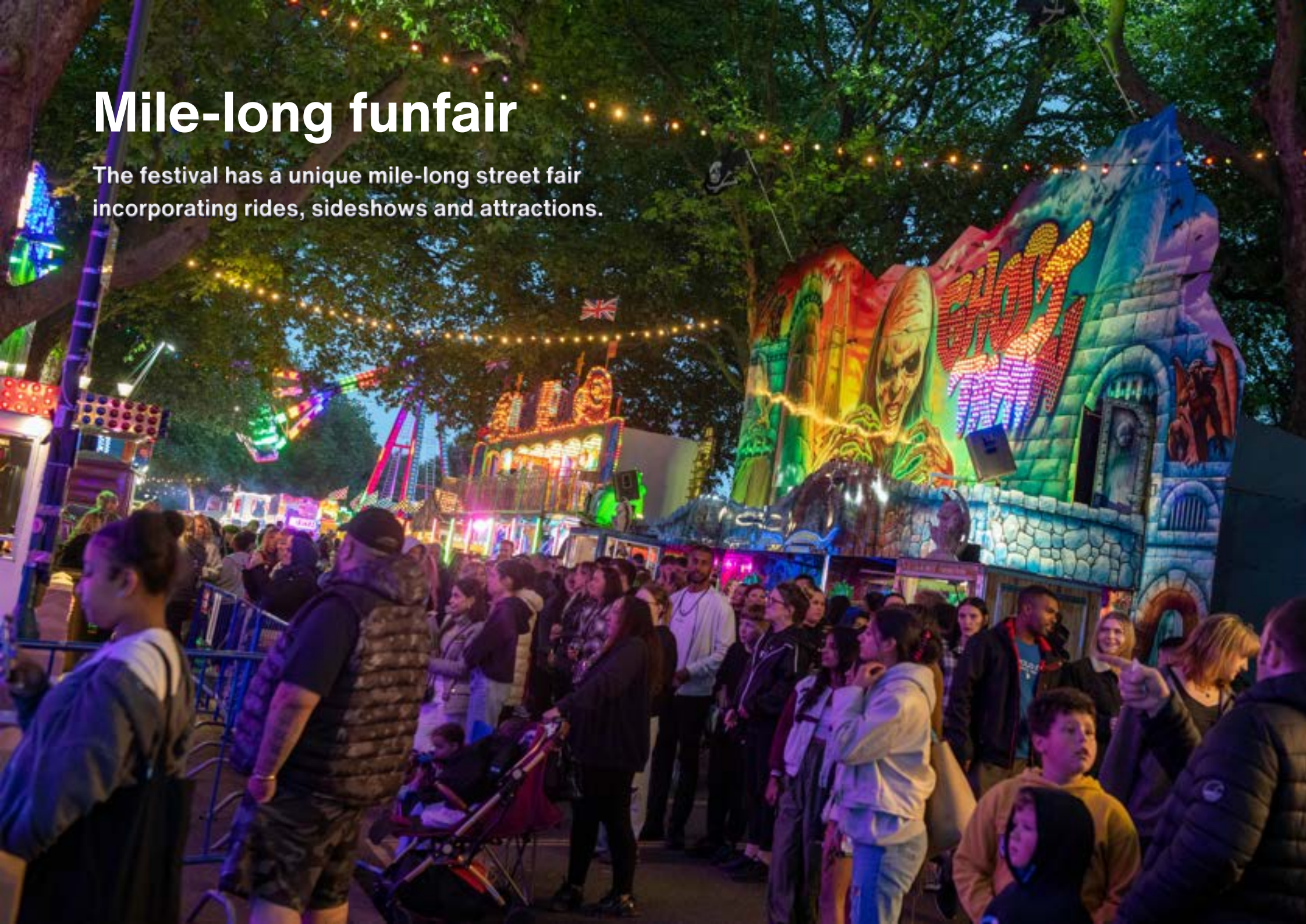
In a city that traditionally turns its back on the Trent, the festival allows people to come together to celebrate summer, Nottingham and its river. The event attracts visitors from across the city and further afield.

This year the festival was impacted by heavy rain on the Saturday, which resulted in a reduction of 100,000 visitors compared to 2022. Despite this there were around 47,000 attendees across the weekend.



# Mile-long funfair

The festival has a unique mile-long street fair incorporating rides, sideshows and attractions.



# Food, beverage and retail

There are two market areas - an outdoor market featuring 30 stalls, and a further 65 traders selling crafts and gifts from a traditional marquee (managed by The Craft People 2000). There were also four bars and 16 food traders operating at the event.



# Local voluntary sector

The festival offers opportunities for local voluntary groups to engage with visitors.

This year, organisations included the British Legion's Poppy Appeal, Nottingham College and Nottingham Trent University.



# Music programming

Music has always been at the heart of Riverside Festival, and each of the three music stages has a defined programming strategy.

Over **5,000** stage line-ups were downloaded

Get stage line-ups  
straight to your phone





The Monument Stage is programmed to ensure exciting and innovative global beats, and world music performances that are not usually seen in Nottingham. This reflects the diverse communities that we have in the city and region. Festival audiences enjoyed artists performing Senegalese, Cajun, Afrobeat, Berber, Congolese, Cuban and Bhangra music.



The Big Top Stage hosts a diverse variety of music over the weekend. On Friday, DJs and a live saxophonist played a range of dance, pop, house and hip hop music. The emphasis shifted on Saturday to provide an outstanding programme of folk, in what is widely acclaimed to be the 'best free folk stage line up in the UK'. Choral groups and a jazz band performed on Sunday.





The Bandstand Stage hosted local bands and singer-songwriters, giving them the chance to play to thousands and offering significant new audience exposure.

With professional quality stage production, it's an ambition to have every successful up and coming Nottingham artist play the festival.

# Free children's activities

Wolly the Clown offered circus skills workshops for children in the Little Big Top area, featuring stilt walking, mini tightrope, plate spinning, juggling, novelty bikes and space hoppers. There was also a family show each afternoon with hilarious physical comedy and breath-taking stunts.



# Fireworks

For many, the highlight of the festival is the firework display, in what is the largest free display staged in the city each year.

There are displays on Friday and Saturday night at 10.30pm.

Audiences peaked at an estimated 15,000 each evening to watch the ten-minute display.



# River activities

The Riverside Festival Dragon Boat Race returned, with 17 teams competing over the 200m course. **£3,500** was raised for Nottinghamshire Hospice.



# Key outputs



**47,000**  
attendees (down  
100,000 from 2022)



**48**  
bands/artists



**633K+**  
digital marketing  
reach



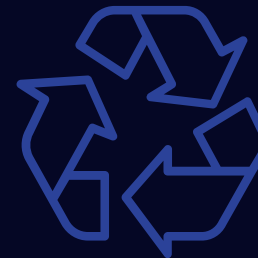
**61%**  
regional visitors who  
travelled by car



**£2.29**  
cost per head  
(up from £0.39 in 2022)

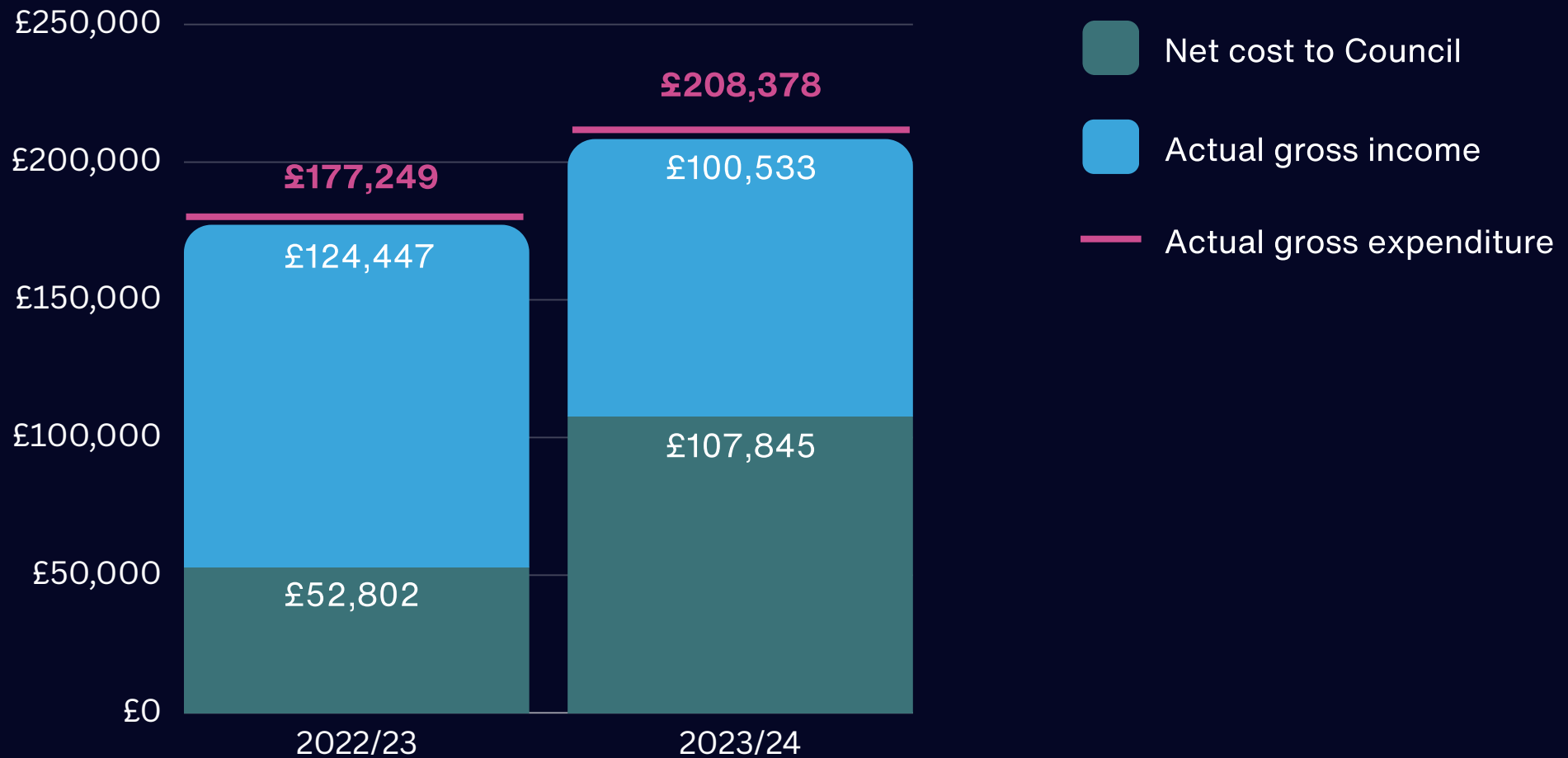


**309**  
advance car parking  
tickets sold



**3,000**  
recyclable cups used

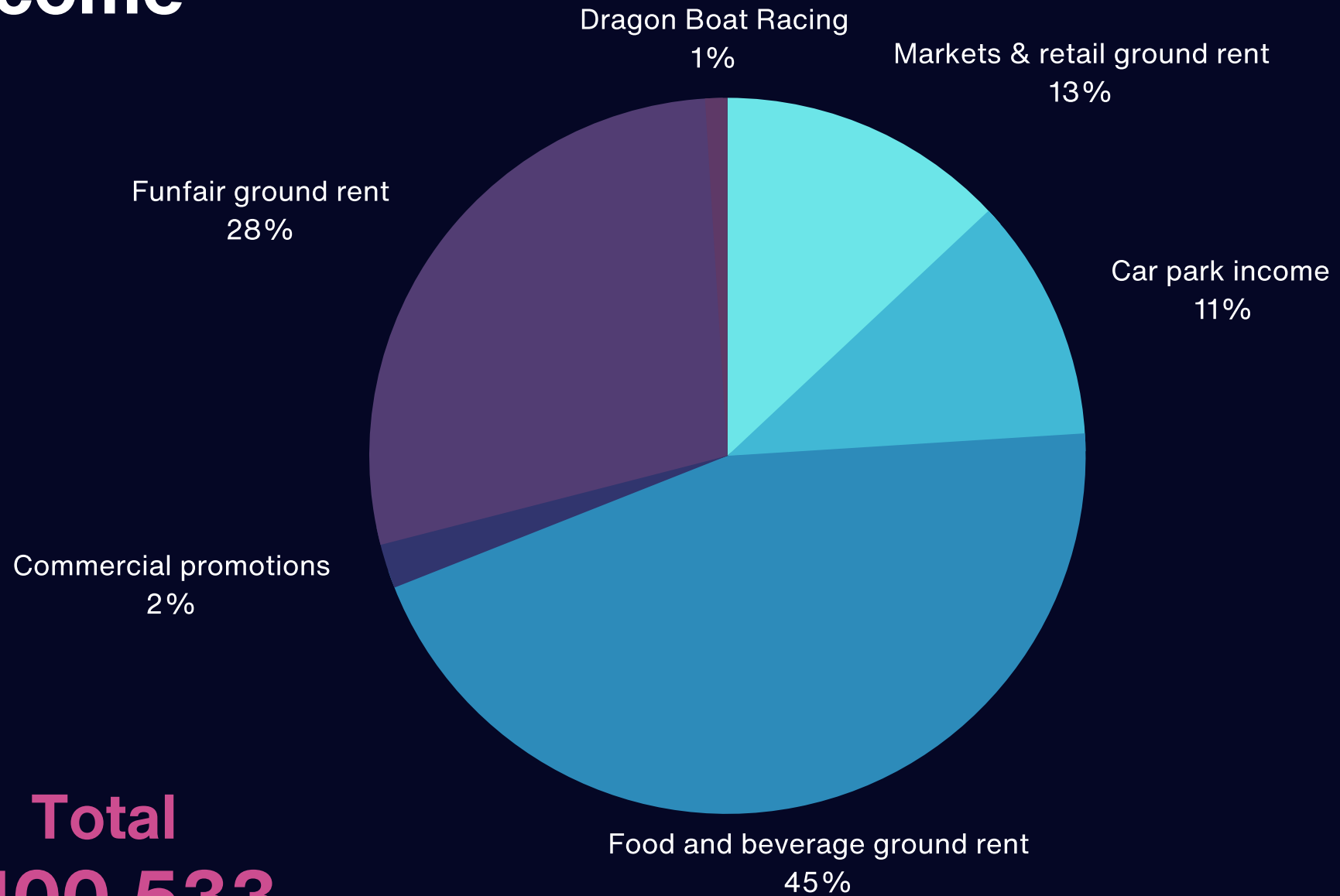
# Yearly budget comparison



Excludes waste management costs

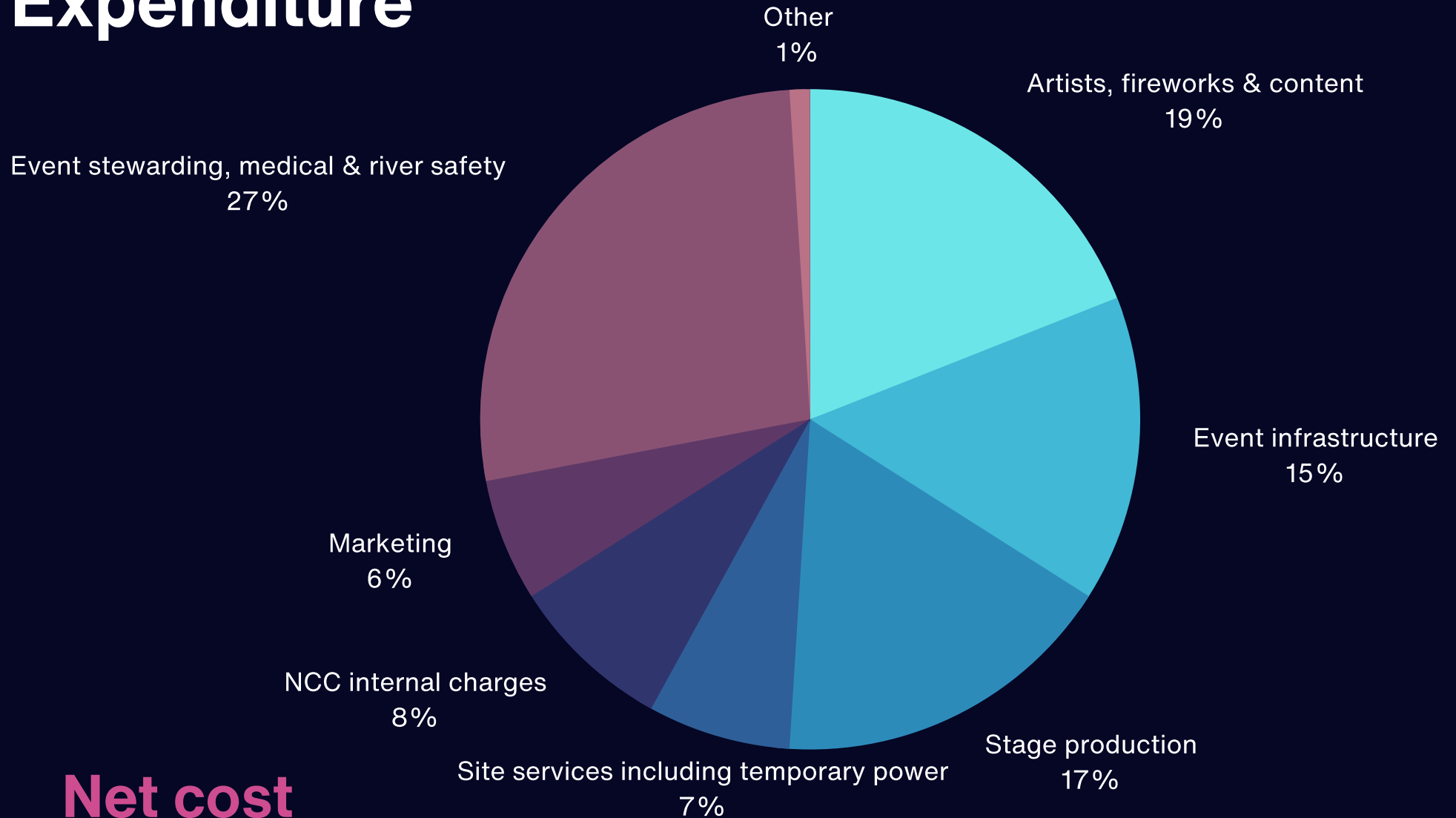
The festival was cancelled due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021

# Income



**Total**  
**£100,533**

# Expenditure



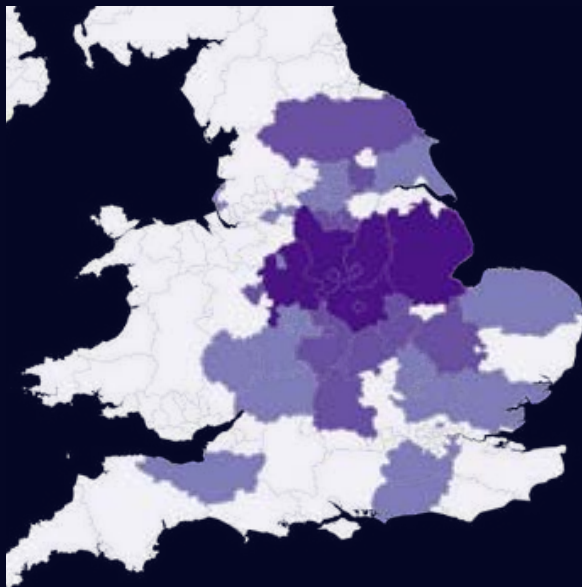
**Net cost**  
**£107,845**



# Advance car park bookings

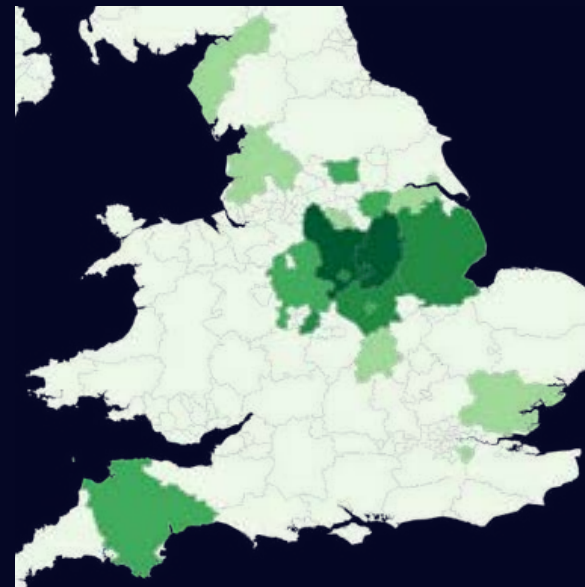
Advance car park bookings were introduced in 2022 for Riverside Festival. These were sold via the Council's ticketing partner Gigantic. **1,204** were sold in 2022 and **309** in 2023. In 2022 the majority were sold for Saturday (56%) and in 2023 the best-selling day was Sunday (54%). This correlates with the torrential rain seen on the Saturday, causing less people to travel and visit the festival.

## 2022



71% of bookers were from Nottinghamshire, 14% from Derbyshire, 6% from Leicestershire, 1% from Lincolnshire and 1% from Staffordshire.

## 2023



72% of bookers were from Nottinghamshire, 14% from Derbyshire, 5% from Leicestershire, 2% from Lincolnshire and 2% from Birmingham.

# Digital marketing

## What's On Nottingham & My Nottingham



**Impressions:** 185,082  
**Reach:** 194,605  
**Engagement:** 11,550

**Paid ad:** £273  
**Reach:** 46,086  
**Engagement:** 1,729



**Impressions:** 52,528  
**Reach:** 31,524  
**Engagement:** 1,605

**What's On Nottingham  
website event page views**  
**Total:** 53,561 (pre-event)  
**Friday:** 13,409  
**Saturday:** 9,573  
**Sunday:** 8,088



**Impressions:** 31,695  
**Engagement:** 817

Organic social media reach  
increased by 84% from 2022



NB the My Nottingham Facebook page was de-activated from 28 June - 11 July

# E-newsletters


Riverside Festival was featured in four What's On Weekly emails:

- **52,224** subscribers
- **118,279** total opens
- Open rate **38%**
- **3,475** total link clicks

It was also included in five newsletters sent to My Nottingham Latest News subscribers:

- **44,197** subscribers
- **136,785** total opens
- Open rate **39%**
- **938** total link clicks

**Riverside Festival this weekend**



The East Midlands' biggest free festival returns to Victoria Embankment this weekend!

**Opening times**

Friday 5pm-11.30pm  
Saturday 12pm-11.30pm  
Sunday 12pm-6.30pm

The festival features live music stages, a mile-long funfair, street food, children's workshops, market stalls, bars and more activities. The spectacular firework displays take place on Friday and Saturday at 10.30pm.

Three stages will host live music over the weekend, featuring world music and innovative global beats, local DJs playing crowd-pleasing tunes, up-and-coming Nottingham artists, and one of the best free folk stage line-ups in the UK. [Read the full stage line-up](#)

On Saturday and Sunday, in the Little Big Top area, younger festival goers will be able to brush up on their circus skills. The interactive workshops will feature stilt walking, plate spinning and juggling with Wolly the Clown, who will also be putting on family shows each afternoon.

**How to get here?**

**Bus**

Plan your journey by [NCT](#) or [Transman](#) buses. For just £8 the Groupride ticket allows unlimited travel on all NCT buses for up to 5 people (max 2 adults). After the fireworks, frequent shuttle buses will operate from Victoria Embankment back into the city centre.

**Tram**

The closest tram stop to the festival is Meadows Embankment, which is on the Clifton Line. Trams will operate every 10 minutes. The £8 Group ticket allows all day travel for 5 people (up to 2 adults and 3 children). You will be able to use all the Park and Ride car parks to get a train to the festival.


**Car**

[Book your parking in advance](#) for just £8 per car (it's £10 on the day). The car park is accessed from Queens Drive (A453) and will be signposted from the A52 and the A60. The postcode for the car park is NG2 2GU.

Read more: <https://www.visitnottinghamshire.co.uk/whats-on/nottingham-riverside-festival-2022-0495471>

**WHAT'S ON WEEKLY**

**This weekend: Riverside Festival**



**Fri 2 - Sun 4 August  
Victoria Embankment**

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[Read more](#)

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[Book car parking](#)

# Media coverage

Two press releases were issued pre-event to local and national media outlets. Coverage was featured by Left Lion, ITV, Nottingham Post, West Bridgford Wire and My Nottingham News.

BBC Radio Nottingham (full evening show) and BBC East Midlands Today (weather) broadcast live from the festival on Friday evening.



# Advertising

6 sheet posters (shared with Nottingham Beach) were installed on City Information Panels and bus shelters around the city for 4 weeks. Railing banners and London Road lamppost banners were in place for 2 weeks.

The festival was also advertised in Left Lion magazine and on screens at Loxley House and the Tourism Information Centre.



# Signage

Totems were installed around the festival site and next to each stage, showing the music line-ups for each day. The totems also included wayfinding and information signage.



# Transport



Bad weather impacted tram usage on the Saturday, however Sunday travel was higher than the weekends before and after.

**Weekend before: 98,893 (due to Nottinghamshire Pride)**

**28/07** 37,077

**29/07** 37,913

**30/07** 23,903

**Weekend during: 88,210**

**04/08** 33,288

**05/08** 29,250

**06/08** 25,672

**Weekend after: 86,651**

**11/08** 33,050

**12/08** 32,479

**13/08** 21,122

## Nottingham City Transport

Additional buses were deployed on top of the normal service over Trent Bridge:

### Friday night

6 buses

### Saturday night

12 buses

### Sunday daytime and night

7 buses

Usually there would have been four extra buses operating on the Saturday afternoon, but these weren't needed. Four buses could have handled the demand on the Sunday.

Only **12%** of visitors travelled to the festival by car, with **88%** of attendees travelling by more carbon-friendly means

# Visitor and resident feedback

 **Karen Head** recommends Nottingham Riverside Festival.  
9 August · 🌐

Great fun and entertainment for all the family.

 **Bashers** @TheBashBuzz · Aug 5

The best #firework display I've seen in a good while! Well worth the wait. You're welcome. I was too busy enjoying the moment I only took a few cool shots! 📸 #RiversideFestival #Nottingham




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 **Jeremy Prince**  
The DJ performances in the big top were awesome 👍  
9 w Like Reply Hide

 **Ashley Blackwood Slater**  
I went yesterday it was a lot of fun see you 2024  
9 w Love Reply Hide 2 ❤️

 **Sam Jkr**  
Woow, I went yesterday it was amazing 😄  
9 w Love Reply Hide ❤️

 **Kelli Scott**  
Amazing fireworks last night 😊  
9 w Love Reply Hide ❤️

 **Louise Chloe James**  
I went Friday night and the children loved it. My son works on it and he loves doing what he does.  
9 w Love Reply Hide ❤️



# Visitor and resident feedback

 **Natalie Hatton** recommends Nottingham Riverside Festival. 6 August

A great atmosphere, lots of fairground rides for all ages, plenty of craft stalls & lots of food & drink stalls scattered around, not to mention many other activities. An amazing day out for people of all ages ❤️

 **Nigel Oseland** recommends Nottingham Riverside Festival. 5 August

Bit wet today but three stages of great music, loads of food stalls and beer. And it's free entry.



**1881Café**  
VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

### What a fantastic Riverside Festival

Thank you for your lovely feedback on the Riverside Festival. Well done to Nottingham City Council's events team for organising such a brilliant event.

- "Just wanted to say how fabulous the festival was again. The live music was amazing - such a wide range and some of them local bands.
- ... the organisation re. roads, setting up and clearing and minimising disruption for residents was excellent.... well done to all involved."
- "I very much appreciated the extra road signs".

 **inspireLtd** @inspireLtd · Aug 7

Fantastic day yesterday taking part in the Nottingham [#RiversideFestival](#) Dragon Boat Race! Albeit we won't be qualifying as professional rowers anytime soon, it was a fun-filled day with family and friends - good work team! 🇬🇧



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