

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE ORGANISATION OF THE PROJECT

- (i) The celebration was organised by an REC committee chaired by Denise Chaplin with assistance from Dr Sarah Smalley. Project officers were appointed to carry out specified tasks.
- (ii) The project was supported financially and in kind by a wide range of sponsors. The total funding of under £70K over two years was not a large sum on which to run a bi-national festival.
- (iii) The aims and objectives of the project were widely publicised in order to help those organising events achieve the purpose of *Celebrating RE*.
- (iv) The organisers had a clear vision of the kinds of national and local events that would contribute to the celebration of RE, and commissioned and published a helpful series of articles on 'what you can do' on the website.
- (v) The target 'audience' of the project was also clearly identified as those able to influence policy making and curriculum design, practitioners, those with an expressed interest in faith and belief issues and those needing to develop their understanding about Religious Education. This was a truly inclusive project.
- (vi) The celebration was publicised through a website, social media, publicity leaflets, a PowerPoint presentation for general use, 'pull up banners', bookmarks distributed to public libraries, endorsements from 'the good and the great' and published articles and features, mainly in RE journals.

THE CELEBRATION MONTH

- A number of 'big events' took place; notably the high profile English launch in the House of Commons.
- There is no means of knowing how many activities and initiatives took place in the name of *Celebrating RE*. Over 100 events were logged on the website and a number of these were additionally repeated in different venues, making the total higher. Information sent in for the legacy album showed that many individual school, class, SACRE and faith community events had taken place without ever having been recorded on the website. 27 competitions were organised centrally, and others locally.

EVALUATION

What worked well?

- Overall the project's objectives were met and every constituency that could be involved in RE was engaged in some way.
- The general mood was celebratory; this was communicated within and beyond schools through events put on in a wide range of venues and with local media coverage
- Many people reported how events had achieved what was perhaps the most important objective of the project by raising public awareness of the nature of modern RE and of its contribution to the individual and society. This was particularly evident in the large scale events involving hundreds of participants.
- The website was and remains excellent (as was all the publicity); an attractive, informative, approachable and above all developing portal for the celebration. It provided an effective link between the English and Welsh arms of the celebration.
- The organisers of this complex event are to be praised for their hard work, commitment and ultimately considerable success.
- In terms of value for money, the celebration achieved a great deal for the relatively modest amount of funding available and harnessed the energies of many who participated on a voluntary basis
- The collective impression given by the events recorded in the legacy album is one of excitement, commitment and activity across England and Wales (<http://flipflashpages.uniflip.com/2/53875/95669/pub/>)

What could have been done better?

- Fundraising would probably been more successful in the hands of a professional fundraiser.
- The evaluation of the project, although considered briefly early on, was not built into the project structure and hence was a more complex task than necessary.
- The take up of the competitions was disappointing; possibly there were too many.

What is unknown?

- The total number of events, people involved etc
- The extent to which all the objectives were met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Those planning a similar event in the future may wish to consider the following recommendations based on this evaluation.

1. Appoint a professional fundraiser at the outset (n.b. 2 and 3 below depend on successful fundraising)
2. Nearer the event appoint an experienced press officer.
3. Include evaluation in the project planning and appoint an external evaluator at the outset who can monitor the progress of the planning as well as report on its conclusion. Ensure that evidence of success is available.
4. Clarify and agree in a single form the aims, objectives and success criteria of the project.
5. Consider further ways of raising awareness of the project, particularly among teachers.