

Panel Discussion Transcript

Building an LGBTQIA+ Friendly Nottingham

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Alma Solarte-Tobon

Hello and welcome everyone to this online panel discussion Building an LGBTQIA+ Friendly Nottingham. My name is Alma Solarte-Tobon and I'm the Creative Producer at City Arts. I'm delighted to be here with you today. This conversation is a culmination of a series of workshops led by local creatives Ben Macpherson, Chan Fagan and Evie Osbon. These workshops brought together voices from across the community and resulted both in a public event and a printed publication that celebrates and explores LGBTQIA+ experiences in Nottingham.

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Alma Solarte-Tobon

The project has been delivered by City Arts with a generous support of Nottinghamshire's Rainbow Heritage and Nottingham Poetry Festival. Funding for this initiative comes from the University of Nottingham Institute of Policy and Engagement, through the Civic Impact Champion programme. Today's discussion will be hosted by journalist CJ DeBarra, and we're thrilled to be joined by a brilliant lineup of speakers Dr Hongwei Bao, David Edgley, Sam Harvey, Chan Fagan and Lucy Buckle, also known as the Nottingham Forager.

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Alma Solarte-Tobon

The format for today's event will be a 45 minute panel discussion, followed by 15 minutes of responses to comments and questions from the audience. You're warmly invited to add your thoughts or questions in the chat throughout the session. While we may not be able to respond to everything, we'll do our best to engage with as many as your contributions as possible.

Thank you again for being here. Let's get started.

00:01:40:01

CJ DeBarra

Hello. My name is CJ. I am the founder, researcher and journalist, responsible for the Nottingham Queer History Archive. We are an archive that was founded in 2022 to research, record and share Nottingham's rich LGBT history. And I'm delighted to be here today and joined by an absolutely amazing panel of creatives, performers and activists. It's an absolute honour, to be joining all of you. And I just want to say thank you to City Arts for inviting me, to Alma and Joe in particular. Thank you.

00:02:23:09

CJ DeBarra

So, I'm going to ask people to introduce themselves because I always think they can, you know, people can do a far better job than anything I can do. So if we could start with, Hongwei Bao, if possible.
So if you'd like to say a few words about yourself.

00:02:43:12

Hongwei Bao

Sure. Hi, everyone. My name is Hongwei Bao. I'm an Associate Professor in Media Studies at University Nottingham. I'm a cultural historian of queer history in China and the Chinese diaspora. At the same time, I'm also a writer, I write poems and, fiction and playwright, stage plays, and so.

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CJ DeBarra

Lovely. Could we have Chan Fagan.

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Chan Fagan

Hello. I'm Chan. I am an artist, a deejay and arts programmer, predominantly working in Nottingham. I'm the co-organizer of 'Transsexuals', which is a party predominantly for trans people. It's kind of open to lots of different people in the city. Yeah.

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CJ DeBarra

Lovely. That's perfect. David Edgley.

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David Edgley

Hello, I'm David Edgley, I'm a volunteer on Notts Rainbow Heritage, which is a LGBTQIA+ history project that started in 2008 and at the age of 80, I'm also a bit of a historical object myself.

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CJ DeBarra

I love that. Can we get Lucy Buckle?

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Lucy Buckle

Hi, my name is Lucy, otherwise known as the Nottingham Forager. And I host inclusive walks around our city, mainly focusing on wild food and foraging but occasionally focusing on queer history. I've been an active member on the scene now for the last twenty years. And myself and my wife, now both promote different kind of events across city. We do the queer history walk, as well as being active members of the Rainbow Vision group and so, thank vey much for having me

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CJ DeBarra

Okay. Can we, finally, last but not least, Sam Harvey.

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Sam Harvey

Hello. So I'm Sam. I'm the founder and co-director of the Nottingham Pastel Project. So we are a, trans rights advocacy and lobbying group based here in Nottingham. We do a lot of behind the scenes work, I think what we're best known for at the moment is our 'Your Spaces Too' campaign which is promoting trans inclusive venues around the city. And also we're spearheading the work on the Nottingham Rainbow Quartet, which we announced last Saturday.

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CJ DeBarra

Congratulations on the Rainbow Quarter. That's a fantastic win for the city. And it's I'm really, really pleased to see it. That in mind, what I thought we'd do to sort of kickstart the event is to talk about, how we find Nottingham today, so what people's views of, you know, quote unquote, the scene actually is. So what I would like to do, is to put this into different areas, if that makes sense.

So if I could ask, actually it might be good to start with yourself Sam, around the Pastel Project and in particular how you, how safe you find Nottingham at the moment?

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Sam Harvey

Yes. So I think it's a tricky one at the moment because one of the things that we find is a lot of, queer people find it, difficult to, I think, talk about a lot of the issues that are affecting them in terms of safety. So, we've been speaking with various groups around the city from, Nottingham Victim Care, to the police around making sure that, queer individuals are able to feel safe within the city.

So a lot of that, I think, comes from community led initiatives. So one of the things we've been doing is speaking to, the LGBT Foundation in Manchester and their Village Angels project, which is looking at setting up a community led safety initiative. So I think that's massively going to help combat a lot of what individuals feel in terms of, being unsafe when they go out and about in the city.

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Sam Harvey

An interesting thing we have found from speaking to people, though, is, a lot of this isn't from necessarily a lack of queer venues. So we found the, for example, obviously, 'Propaganda' closed a couple years ago, but we found there's not a massive call for specifically, gay bars, for example. And actually, by integrating more with the non LGBT population in Nottingham, actually, what that's doing is building a lot of acceptance for LGBT people.

And kind of like normalizing, I guess the word would be, on nights out, and kind of out and about in the city. So I think that's one of the things that we've picked up from with our work.

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CJ DeBarra

It's a really interesting point, because we are at kind of this weird stage with lots of our venues actually closing and how that's really changing our nightlife in particular. So, Chan, I'd like to pick that point up with yourself. And what is queer nightlife like at the moment?

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Chan Fagan

I would say we have quite like a thriving queer scene in Nottingham. I think it largely focuses on drag and kind of cabaret performance style events. I think there has been a bit of a lack in terms of like queer focused events that primarily like explore, like, the dance floor and really want to create like kind of like the sophisticated, like, dancefloors.

I guess that's kind of one of the reasons why myself and like my co-organiser Autumn started 'Transsexuals', which is a party we run, as we want to be able to create really great, like, nights and showcases, like trans deejays, without that kind of focus on drag, as we do. There's a lot of drag in Nottingham, and I think there's a real kind of quality of the Nottingham queer scene. It's very present.

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Chan Fagan

I do feel like for me personally, as a queer organiser, I wish we had more like dedicated queer venues. I think there are a lot of different types of events I'd like to see happening in the city that are not present, especially when it comes to just like sober socials and that kind of thing. Yeah.

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CJ DeBarra

Again, a really good point, and it's great to see somebody actually taking the initiative to be the change that they want to see on their scene as well. So that's fantastic. Speaking about sort of sober events and, and maybe switching more into the arts, Hongwei, I'd like to talk to you about how you find Nottingham's queer arts scene at the moment.

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Hongwei Bao

Sure, Nottingham's queer art scene is very vibrant. I know most of the, all the cultural organisations are very queer friendly and inclusive, even if they're not queer specific organisations are, there are good representations of queer artists and queer events. There are also community initiatives, such as the Queer Up Duck Festival that took place last year and Queer Arts Collective, Write Queer, Queer Reading Group and Outspoken Arts and so on. These are great, but I also want to point out that, those organisations activities are very poorly funded. This is partly because of the kind of shrinking funding from Arts Council England, but also so, it's it has a knock on effect on community activities and involvement and participation of the community.

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CJ DeBarra

I couldn't agree with you more on that point. As somebody who is currently going for funding from various places, it's erm, yeah, it's a struggle. What I would like to do, because as somebody that's been collecting oral histories of LGBT people around the city, I know that there is a lot of talk about, you know, how good the scene was in previous, in every other decade apart from the one that we're currently in.

I hear that a lot. So I'd like to, ask David, you know, for his opinion. Coming from somebody that has documented so much of Nottingham's history.

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David Edgley

I came to Nottingham in 1966, and at the end of the 1960s, what was there for me? There was a small social group and a couple of bars, I've never been a bar or pub person, so there was next to nothing. A couple of days ago I was doing a bit of research... here it is, upside down, and from the limited resources that I've got, I've found that, I've got over 85 events, activities, meeting places. So, in the 1970s, it's improved a little bit. There were bars there were clubs, but the bars at that time were very much under the rainbow. It was the private party situation, you had to know who were there. Some of the clubs were outstanding, but in terms of the range of things, I feel it's a lot better now than it was then.

As I say, I'm an old codger, if I'd been 80 in the 1970s, what was there for me? Absolutely nothing. There are a few things now that cater for older people. That's what I've actually been looking at, where are the gaps and there are quite a few, which I won't mention now, we may come back to it later on, but I don't think it was all that wonderful in the 1970s and 80s. There were wonderful elements, but overall I feel things are better now than they were.

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CJ DeBarra

Yeah, I've had I to be honest, I think I've had predominantly the other view, which is people going, oh, I preferred the 80s or I prefer the, you know, the twenty-tens or whatever you want to call that particular decade. I know that one, one particular decade that people are really nostalgic for is the noughties. So I know with yourself, Lucy, we spoke an old interview, about a year ago about the what Nottingham scene was like at that point.

Could you tell me a little bit about the noughties and 2010s?

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Lucy Buckle

Yeah. So, I mean, I arrived, fresh face in Nottingham 20 years ago from a very rural part of Derbyshire. And it took me three days to find 'NG1', and probably about another three days to come out. So it really was, there was so many places to go. It was, it was overwhelming to, a new person.

But as I got older, I slowly started going less and less. And then post-lockdown, a lot of those places weren't there anymore. But, at its time, you know, there were there was a whole area you could spend the night bar hopping, going from place to place. But it was all very, very focused around drinking, and, and, don't get me wrong, I was very happy with that at the time. But again, as you get a little bit older, you don't want to be going out every night of the week, just to be able to interact with other queer people. So for me, I'm kind of in agreement. I absolutely loved my time being kind of a young in my early 20s party in in Nottingham, but as a 38 year old living in Nottingham, I feel like the scene now is far more broad.

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Lucy Buckle

We've got loads more happening. And it's not all focused around alcohol. But there's still definitely a place for that. And I'd say during those times, kind of 20 years ago, we'd got the big nightclub NG1. There was AD2, there was The Foresters, there was Central, plus loads of other kind of little pop up bars that kind of came and went.

So it was a huge scene back in the day, and people used to travel, you know, I lived in the city, but used to bump into people who'd come down from Birmingham, from Derby, people used to come from all over to visit our gay bars. And I don't think that's so much the case anymore, but we've definitely still got a scene. It's just changed quite a bit.

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CJ DeBarra

All of those venues that you listed, by the time I got here in 2012, I had such incredible, like FOMO [fear of missing out] from listening to people's wonderful stories because everything was gone by the time I got here. Excluding NG1 that I think changed around 2014, so yeah. So we're going to talk about barriers that exist for LGBTQ+ people in accessing some of these things because there are still barriers for us.

I'd like to ask Chan to talk about, what barriers you think that are around culture.

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Chan Fagan

I mean, I think like the first and most obvious one is money. I think often things come back down to money, whether that's money in terms of like individual people, like traveling to spaces, being able to afford tickets for events. I think in terms of like funding, I think often if you're like, grassroots DIY kind of collective, you might not have the experience or the confidence to apply for funding. You might not know where to go, you might not know who to even go to for advice on looking for funding, might not be something you've ever even heard of. So I think there's a real lack of like, education and support around accessing funding. And kind of more broadly like resources for the community in terms of like bodies, like people organising and coming together.

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Chan Fagan

I think we need more like hands on deck and more, individuals joining what exists already and putting in the time, to ensure that we have like a thriving, lasting scene. Because ultimately, like, things start because individuals choose. But then if there isn't enough kind of cushioning around that, then if those individuals decide to leave will stop, then that really valuable kind of organisation or collective or event that exists just disappears. So I think there really needs to be some sort of like structure infrastructure. I don't know, some, some sort of foundation, that can kind of like hold these things together and often that's like resources. And that often comes down to money, in my opinion.

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CJ DeBarra

I couldn't agree with you more. It is an it's an incredible barrier to people accessing any of our events. But not just that. But like you're saying, the organisational side of it, as well as dependent often on funding. Hongwei, can I ask, if you have anything to, to add around barriers to accessing culture?

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Hongwei Bao

Sure. Sure. I came to Nottingham about 13 or 14 years ago as a, kind of, migrant. So of course, me, at that time, although there were many events, there were many, venues in Nottingham,

but I couldn't access them. That was because of many reasons. And the language is one of the reasons. So all the venues were advertised in English. Their information was only accessible in English. And also there was also the matter of representation. So when I went to those events, I went to some cultural shows, etc., I could only see, for example, sometimes, white and queer's lives, so in a way, actually East Asian voices are pretty much, you know, invisible. So I thought that if there were more kind of representations of diversity, of diverse voices in the scene, I would probably feel more, felt I felt more welcome.

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Hongwei Bao

But things have changed, I noticed that in the past ten years we see more and more diverse, representations from global majority and also within the LGBTQA+ spectrum, etc.. So I would say that, the cultural things are becoming more diverse, which is great, and, more kind of outreach to diverse communities are still needed.

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CJ DeBarra

I really agree with you on that front because, you know, there's not an awful lot of events that consider disabled people through access. I was really, really pleased to see, BSL interpreters at pride. And you know, so there are so many different parts of the community that are often not included in our events, and that needs desperately, desperately needs to change. Can I ask Lucy for your thoughts around, around barriers and culture?

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Lucy Buckle

Yeah. I mean, I'm pretty much with everybody else with the financial side of things. Finding funding is incredibly difficult, and I know that from, from, personal experience. But what I've also found is that the community is quite willing to support each other a lot of the time. And although there's definitely a portion of the community that are struggling financially, as you know, there is across the whole of the country. What I found with my kind of walks is by offering things on a pay as you feel basis, by giving people sliding scales, it's allowed a bit better access, for people to come, And, and organising things that don't require anybody to spend any money is, is really quite important. But the other thing that I found, especially over the last kind of year or two, is not to shy away from having focused events.

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Lucy Buckle

So I think some great events over the last year or so, in particular, one that springs to mind, was the 'Love Letter to Lesbians' that I attended. And I think over the, at least myself personally, and I know quite a few of the people in a sort of strive for inclusion and wanting to make everybody be welcome and everybody be accepted. We forget sometimes that actually sometimes more specific and narrow events are required, and all valid. And I think sometimes having something that appeals directly to you, is also another way to kind of grab people's attention and, and get them accessing different things that they may not necessarily feel are aimed at those of, if it's kind of directed at everybody else.

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CJ DeBarra

I agree with you, there's a lot of fantastic, different events coming up, particularly that are, I mean, I feel like Nottingham's got it, got something for everybody at the moment in terms of, you know, whether it's, it's, drag or it's, you know, it's art or it's poetry, whatever it is that we do have, like a fantastic array of things on.

So I'd like to ask the same question, but I'd like to change it slightly. So the same but different. I'd like to ask what barriers there are to, accessing services, support services in Nottingham. But I'd like to start with, Sam at the Pastel project.

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Sam Harvey

Yeah, absolutely. So I think one of the things that we're seeing a lot of is the main barrier comes around knowledge and education from those services. We found a lot of, particularly in Nottingham, a lot of the institutions throughout the city, whether that's focused around health care, community safety, support, they're very willing to help, but they're very unsure about what steps they need to take specifically when supporting the LGBT community. So I think what there needs to be a lot more of is education and but also engagement within that education and training. So one of the things we're looking at bringing in is training packages for institutions and stuff, networks that can be delivered, things like that. Because I think what happens especially, so I'll take an example of the, so we saw in April the Supreme Court ruling, and the EHRC [Equality and Human Rights Commission] guidance around toilets. One of the things we saw a lot of were venues who still wanted to be supportive of trans patrons, proclaiming, okay, we'll just do away with, single gender toilets altogether. We'll make it gender neutral. And we have to go and explain to them as what we were hearing from patrons of those venues. Is that actually, you know, you're kind of jumping the gun a bit to take soon on that.

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Sam Harvey

You're capitulating to what these people are wanting. And what essentially should happen here is you should just keep allowing trans people to access the toilets that align with their gender identity, because that is according to the law, what should be done. So I think a lot of services throughout the city are quite willing to do what they think is supportive, and I think sometimes that makes them slip up a bit. And what they really need is to engage with the community directly and to sort of get that training to speak to their patrons, to speak to their service users, and to essentially make sure that they are, creating a safe and inclusive environment as possible. I think that's definitely what we've been saying.

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CJ DeBarra

I do agree with you on that point. I think there's a lot of panic and a lot of confusion and a complete lack of knowledge and education, like you're saying, particularly around the issue with toilets and the Supreme Court ruling and all the rest of it. Can I ask the same question to David Edgley.

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David Edgley

One of the barriers that I think I'm aware of is the anticipation of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, people who have experienced that on several, many occasions begin to expect

it, when often it's not there. And therefore the organisations that they imagine might be homophobic, etcetera, need to do something to wipe away those ideas. And, as Sam said training is quite important. I've done training for over 100 organisations. One of the issues relating to that training, is that it's often not mandatory. So the people who turn up, all the people who don't need the training,

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David Edgley

One issue that nobody's mentioned is people who are in care homes, again, that my age, this is a prospect. This is staring me in the face, perhaps in a few years in the future. There was research at the University of Nottingham about 12 years ago, and they asked, various care homes their opinions on this. And the vast majority said, we don't have any of those people in our home. Well, the putting their heads in in the sand, so, as I say, that that is an issue that I am concerned about and I really don't know how I should take it forward.

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David Edgley

There are police statistics that show an incredible rise in queer hate crime over the past ten years or so. I think from 2012 to 2022, it went up by a factor of six.

The police will say, is this because the hate crimes are increasing or because people are more confident in reporting? I think it's both. So there are issues in terms of, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, both real and imagined.

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CJ DeBarra

That's a really good point around the care homes and one that isn't raised nearly enough. It's something that I would love to talk to you about outside of this event as well, because it's certainly an area, that I have, that I'm keen to see what can be done in. So what I'm, what I've, what we've been hearing is the good, the bad and the current state of Nottingham scene, which is, you know, it's in a good place post-Covid. It is in a really good place. But what I would like to do is talk about the opportunities that are there, because we all know there are some places where it could be better. So I'd like to start with talking about the opportunities around culture and nightlife. So if I could ask, maybe if I could ask Sam.

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Sam Harvey

Yeah, absolutely. So I think one of the things with Nottingham is it is a fantastically diverse and queer inclusive city that doesn't get anywhere near as much attention around those things. So one of the things we're really keen on doing, especially with the launch of the Rainbow Quarter, is boosting Nottingham's standing in the kind of national rankings of queer inclusive cities. One of the things we're really looking at doing by bringing about the Rainbow Quarter is encouraging more queer spaces to open up, whether or not that's pubs, bars, cafes, social groups, that kind of thing, and also making queer communities and queer tourists, for example, realize that, you know, Nottingham has that potential for alongside cities such as, you know, Brighton, Manchester, that kind of thing.

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Sam Harvey

One of the thinking really keen on as well, which we've launched, is our consultation alongside the launch of The Rainbow because we directly want to hear from members of the queer community on what that would look like, ideally when it's launched, because we're very keen on making sure that it's not just one organisation that shaping this. It's being talked about and discussed and shaped across, like the Nottingham queer community. So, I think that's one of the things for opportunities is just making sure that, you know, we already do so many fantastic things. Let's make sure that they reach a wider, a wider audience as possible.

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CJ DeBarra

But that's wonderful. And I do agree with you nothing about us, without us as well. So having things like focus groups and have, having those conversations with the community, that's, that's the only way really to get something like Rainbow Quarter that accurately reflects how diverse a community we actually are. So I might ask, David, again, for your for your thoughts around, opportunities within culture.

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David Edgley

It's quite difficult in terms of taking those things forward when you haven't got the money to do it. You know, I was doing some training last week, and, the organisation, where I volunteer, it was referred to as Nottinghamshire's Rainbow Trust, and trusts are organisations that give out money. I have to say Nottinghamshire Rainbow Heritage, which has no money whatsoever. So, it's been mentioned several times that in terms of getting support and getting grants at this present time, it's becoming increasingly difficult. And at this stage, being 80 I have a senior moment, could remind me the question CJ.

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CJ DeBarra

No problem. Opportunities around accessing culture.

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David Edgley

One issue again, it is an old codgers concern is the provision of daytime events, my days of late night clubbing or even bars, more or less past, certainly late night clubbing. And I look forward to having things that are going on at a more reasonable time. The opening of the Pride Shop on Maid Marian Way is, I think, a wonderful innovation for this city. There you have got, a queer run cafe. It's open six days a week, it's open mornings and afternoons, and it also puts on a whole range of interesting activities. But, yes, more things going on in the daytime would be useful for people, around my age range.

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CJ DeBarra

Agreed. And that's a wonderful plug for the Pride Shop as well. Who, we, well, the Notts Queer History Archive currently have an exhibition there that showcases lots of the, different magazines and zines and photographs that have been donated as well. So I'd like to ask opportunities around accessing services, for example. So if I could ask Hongwei for your opinion on this.

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Hongwei Bao

Well, I think that what immediately jumps to my mind is, is, kind of multi-cultural and diverse, nature of the community. I teach at a university, as we can see, actually, there are two universities and some colleges and international companies, etc. they attract queer people from all over the world and all of them bring their own cultures, experiences, etc.. So this diversity of queer culture is being reflected in our scene, but, probably needs better representation. In relation to access to services with regard to cultural organisations, or organisations such as, the, The Playhouse, Nottingham Contemporary and, New Art Exchange, etc. they are doing great work and some organisations put on specific queer events, such as queer art exhibitions or queer plays, etc. and I wish there could be more of these events.

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CJ DeBarra

I completely agree with you. I think there's some fantastic work being done around, better representation of different groups within the community, but there is so much more scope as well. But far, far more to be done. Could I ask the same question to Lucy about accessing services?

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Lucy Buckle

Yeah. So, I mean, I'm, again, I'm pretty much in agreement with, with everybody else's, there's always more, and variety and diversity that we can be including. But again, I think also focus things, so having services that are provided for lesbians, for trans people, for non-binary people, for gay men, I don't think we should shy away from kind of narrowing it down sometimes. And making those services sort of more direct, and, and more informative for this specific, area of the community that we're serving because it's a big umbrella and I'm very much, we're all under the big umbrella together. But I think especially when we're talking about accessing service and anything else, really, sometimes more direct, approaches are required. And I think that's something that's, sometimes a little bit lacking, perhaps in Nottingham. But we've definitely got, lots of organisations that are working towards that and I've seen more of that, especially over the last couple of years, of people not kind of shying away from, kind of directing things at specific groups, not just everybody, all under one umbrella.

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CJ DeBarra

I agree with you on that. From because we, we do have incredibly diverse events that do go to groups rather than just the broader, everybody go to the one thing, which is fantastic. So I'd also like to ask Chan for your thoughts on opportunities, when it comes to accessing services as well.

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Chan Fagan

So I used to live in Manchester, and they had like, an LGBT foundation, something I think about often is the lack of the kind of centralized kind of physical space for queer people in the

city. I think we could really benefit from something that was kind of, detached from, like, institutions and was kind of like a co-operative, collective led, kind of space, that could act as that kind of centralised hub where people can go for information, for awareness raising, to access things like counselling, any sort of like support and advice of lots of housing, benefits, whatever. That could also be like a social space as well. I think that kind of comes back to that thought around like dedicated queer venues. I think someone in the chat said something about those might look different to how they use their own. I think when I think about queer venues, I often think about community centres and spaces for people to come together that really serve the community and meet unmet needs currently.

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Chan Fagan

I think there's been a real flood of like new events, and, organisations and services like post-lockdown and kind of like, as Covid, the kind of landscape is changing, like during, after Covid. And so I think there's a real like kind of fruitful moment of opportunity, which I think we kind of maybe need to do more of as a community, and like collectively to kind of grasp on to, to ensure that we can meet these unmet needs within the city.

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CJ DeBarra

It's a really good point around the community centre thing, because we almost actually going from a, history point of view, we were very close, we got so close to actually having one that started in the late 70s and 80s, up to 2005, so, it's just such a shame that The Outhouse Project didn't continue. That would have been hopefully all of the things that you've just mentioned, Social Hub and all the rest of us as well. So...

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Chan Fagan

And I'm also just, sorry to add to that point as well, around like, housing co-ops, I know there was interest, I was chatting to some kind of people based in Notts who are queer and new here and want to start housing co-ops, and I think more kind of things around that as well, that are also kind of like people for people, and don't rely on like, policymakers necessarily. I think. Yeah.

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CJ DeBarra

Absolutely. So I'm just conscious of the time. So I know we're going to do a Q&A in a few minutes, but what I would like to hear is from collectively, well, from, from all of you, what you think would make the city more inclusive, supporting and affirming for LGBTQ people. Would anyone like to go first, or shall I pick at random? Because I will.

Okay, Lucy, do you want to go first?

00:38:00:29

Lucy Buckle

Yeah. So it's a big question. And I don't for one moment think that I have all of the answers, by any means, but, I think what we were saying about actually asking the community, and not letting a very small group of people or just a small group of kind of people in charge, decide on, on the fate of Nottingham's queer scene and queer people. And I think in order for us to

do that, it's, it's really important that people kind of step up themselves a little bit, and I'm a firm believer in if you don't see the event that you want, the service that you want, if you are in a position to do something about it, then you absolutely should. And that doesn't necessarily mean you've got to fund everything yourself and do everything yourself.

00:38:44:03

Lucy Buckle

That's the way these things get started, is because somebody pushes it forward and somebody decides actually, "no, this is this is something that's lacking and I'm going to do something about it". So for me, like I try and do my part, I put on events that I want to see and the events that I'd like to go to. But I think it's sort of over to everybody else as well. We've all kind of got to pitch in, and create the Nottingham that we want to live in. It won't just happen by itself, unfortunately. So for me, it's about listening to the community, and getting to all parts of the community as well. We are a big community. And everybody kind of, you know, we get slack for adding more letters and more colours to our rainbow, but it just means the community's got bigger, and it's more encompassing and we need to make sure we're servicing all of that and all of those voices are heard.

00:39:35:10

CJ DeBarra

Agreed, and I've been to some of your events as well, and they are fantastic. So please, please, please keep doing them. And, other people, so that's the challenge for you as well if you're able. So, can I pass the same question to Hongwei?

00:39:50:02

Hongwei Bao

Yeah, sure. It's a big question, but I will focus on representation. Representation matters, and whether we can see queer people in different organisations and whether we can see, role models and whether there are kind of rainbow flags and trans seen, signs and so on. These matter a lot, we would encourage, the organisations and councils, etc., to be more proactive, you know, when supporting queer people by making public statements that they support queer rights and trans rights. And specifically, well, concerning my kind of work at university, I also think that, there is, you know, a queer generation gap between the older generation and younger generation of queer people. And, last year we had as a privilege to bring David to campus to talk about Nottingham Queer History to university students, and students felt that they have learned so much, and I hope that there could be more of such communication, more of such education, of opportunities to bring queer people different generations together.

00:41:13:28

CJ DeBarra

I completely agree with that. The representation really matters and it is it is as simple as putting out statements and adding rainbow flags to your venue and actually, you know, going to Sam and becoming part of the 'Your spaces too' campaign, you know, all of those things. It is particularly at the moment because it is grim out there in terms of the political climate. Can I ask actually, Sam, I might ask you now that I've, that I've sort of mentioned you. So if you'd like to answer.

00:41:44:00

Sam Harvey

Yeah, absolutely, I think obviously we've talked a lot about the barriers in terms of, for example, funding, I think the current statistic at the moment is of every hundred pounds donated to charity, I mean, only 20% of that is for LGBT causes. And I think one of the things that really help with that is if we as a community can make it so that our footprint on the city gets too big to ignore. So, you know, one of the reasons why I think we've seen so much success in the Pastel Project is because, A- we've got some very LGBT friendly people on board within the city, whether or not it's, you know, Councillors, MPs, that kind of thing. But I think the bigger the presence we have, the harder is to ignore. So, for example, you know, I know there's several LGBT sports teams, various, socials have a specific like a particular LGBT spin off. And I think by making sure that we're constantly a voice in the room, we're constantly kind of pushing back against any harmful narratives about us, then that makes it so that we are given more of a seat at the table.

00:42:45:24

Sam Harvey

And I think it gets to the point where sometimes we have to, you know, stop worrying about necessarily being, you know, polite and fitting into the boxes that were put in, say, we need to make sure that we're creating those spaces for us. And yeah, that's how I think we expand throughout the city, and that's how we get that representation, and that's how we get the services that we need and we deserve.

00:43:07:02

CJ DeBarra

Excellent points. Can I ask David, actually to the same question?

00:43:16:21

David Edgley

There's a push at the moment to close down on EDI [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion], going on the United States, going on in Reform, good heavens, and it's something that we need to push back on because equality, diversity and inclusion is important for everybody, but particularly important for us. So going back to things we mentioned before, the idea of promoting training, is vital. It costs money, unfortunately, so some organisations see it, that it's at the bottom of their priorities. Also Hongwei mentioned young people and young people need to know what things were like not 50 years ago, not 40, but 25 years ago. 25 years ago, there were over 20 areas where the law actively discriminated against people like us. And it's so easy to turn the clock back. They need to know about this.

00:44:13:08

CJ DeBarra

I completely agree with that. As a queer historian, I find that it is absolutely frightening to watch all of the, the rights that we have now, how recently a lot of those have actually been really hard fought for and won. And you're quite right, we have a push back on EDI and all of those things. So they can be taken away from us very, very quickly.

Can I ask Chan for your views as well?

00:44:41:08

Chan Fagan

I guess so, I just wanted to echo what David was saying around kind of intergenerational conversations. I think that's really important as a way to kind of fortify our sense of local identity and also belonging, and also like our individual, like queer identities as well.

00:45:01:08

CJ DeBarra

Perfect. I am conscious of the time, we are bang on quarter to. So we are going to take some questions. Should we take some from the from chat or. Oh, there we go. So first one we have: Hi, Franklin. "I personally think we need more dedicated queer venues, but maybe they look different to how they used to. How can we prevent the community being used for gentrification?" Would anyone like to answer?

[Lucy puts her hand up]

Go for it.

00:45:37:17

Lucy Buckley

So I think having them queer led is incredibly important. And that doesn't mean that the entire venue must be queer staffed, but I think having, queer led venues, if they're going to be queer venues, and it's important that the people behind the scenes are part of the community. But like we were saying, maybe they don't all look the same now. The addition of the Pride Shop, as David was saying earlier, is a wonderful addition to our scene and it's a it's another venue, it's a queer owned venue. It's a queer led venue, but it's an entirely different kind of space for us to enjoy. I really like the inclusivity of the city, and being able to kind of go in lots of different spaces, but there is definitely still a space, in all cities, I think for specific queer venues.

00:46:29:07

Lucy Buckley

And, and the only way that they're going to stay sort of happening is if they're supported. And that involves queer people going out and spending money in those venues, but having different spaces, and just making sure that they are, sort of genuine in their offerings. It's great to have, a flag up, but you can't just put a flag up, if that makes sense.

00:46:52:00

CJ DeBarra

That's a great answer and I just want to shout out to how many people in our city actually do pop-up events as well. So they actually go into what is sometimes a straight venue and actually reclaim that space for one night, for one event, for one workshop, whatever it might be. And we're very, very lucky to have that as well.

Can I ask for another question?

So we go to maybe go to the chat. Oh, perfect. Franklin, again, "I'm sensing that funding bodies view the LGBTQ community as a more risky group to support than they used to in terms of public opinion and increasing right wing sentiment, potentially." [Franklin]

Would anyone like to comment on that? And you wanted to. Anyone want to comment on, [Lucy puts her hand up]

00:47:48:07

Lucy Buckle

I'll go again. I, I can I know from even just looking at Pride this year, you can see that a lot of the corporate sponsorship has gone down. And some of that is Pride committees, not agreeing with perhaps the ethics of some of those businesses, but a lot of it is businesses pulling out. And I think it is something that we're definitely seeing, not necessarily like a sort of low level, we've still got some great charities and trusts in the city centre that they're doing magnificent work, between them. But, some of the larger companies, especially, you, that you can sort of feel that they're perhaps a little bit worried about the backlash and even down to some of the big chains not having such a big deal around Pride Month, not getting involved in our Pride celebrations in the city. You've definitely noticed a shift over the past couple of years, with corporations seemingly less wanting to be aligned with that, definitely.

00:48:51:22

CJ DeBarra

I do agree with that. I work in EDI, offering training around LGBT and disability, and I have to say, I've noticed, directly notice the drop in people booking this year over the last like year. It's, it's very, very noticeable and we need to, try and somehow keep going despite that. But it is it is incredibly difficult at the moment.

So someone could grab me another question from the chat. Okay, I think this might be sort of partially cut off here, but... "I think it's more, I think it's difficult to get more hands on deck because LGBTQ+ people are so exhausted." Amen to that... "especially at the moment with the political climate feeling so difficult for many/all of us, how do you all resource yourselves to keep going so much?" [Pippa Armstrong]

Would anyone like to?

00:50:00:00

Sam Harvey

I'll take this one.

So I think for our organisation, it's been one of those things where we slowly, exponentially started to grow in terms of the support we've received. So one of the things with The Pastel Project is we're entirely 100% volunteer run, which makes it very easy to be flexible. It also means that, you know, we don't have to worry about things like staff overheads, every penny that goes towards us, can go directly to the activism work we do. It can go towards resources, to event bookings, that kind of thing. And the way we also help operate is because it's volunteer run, it makes it really easy for people to drop in, work on the project and drop out, and it helps prevent that level of burnout. Now that we've got, for example, a lot more structure within our organisation, we're a lot more open to if people have ideas for a project in particular that they'd like to work on.

00:50:47:09

Sam Harvey

We really welcome and encourage people to come to us to talk about that. We do have a small pot of funding through various grants. We've had some very generous fundraising campaigns run for us by various groups across the city. And that essentially means that whilst we will always have a constant underlying presence on social media, as funding ebbs and flows, that means we can then do bigger, grander things. And, but then also when funding levels and, energy levels dip, that also means that we can still manage to keep going through all that.

00:51:26:21

CJ DeBarra

It's a really good point around burnout, particularly around having volunteers from the queer community actually come and work with and boost your organisations as well. I mean, I'm forever saying I'd love more people to come and get involved in the Notts Queer History Archive as well. You know, please. So can we have another question? Perhaps we've got time. Okay. So, "Notts Pride has been mentioned a couple of times. What do Notts Pride need to stop doing, continue doing and start doing to be part of making a more LGBTQIA+ friendly Nottingham." [Craig Martin]

Would anyone like to take this particular one?

00:52:24:25

Chan Fagan

I think may be some kind of consistency in terms of frequency across the year and, and not just being, like these like big events. Either just around Pride or like the Winter Pride Ball, which was really amazing. But I think, I'm curious about how Notts Pride could maybe get involved with supporting smaller, happenings, throughout the year.

00:52:56:24

David Edgley

Can I mentioned that Pride are all sort of expanding in that direction. For the past two years, they've been joint, runners of these celebration awards evening, and LGBT History Month and this year, and I think in previous years they have celebrated IDAHOBIT [International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia] day on May the 17th, so it isn't just at the end of July. They are expanding, but of course, they are a limited organisation in terms of their resources and that, like we've all mentioned, there aren't restraints on how much you can do. And in terms of burnout, one thing that is really important is, do not take on more than you can manage. And at the moment they are taking on what they can manage if they kind of expand, hooray! But they are moving in that direction.

00:53:47:11

CJ DeBarra

Would anyone else like to add anything to that particular question?

00:53:55:19

Sam Harvey

Yeah, I think in terms of what they need to keep doing, I think they've managed to strike, from personal opinion, a really important balance between, you know, essentially in not being massive corporate sellouts, but also being pragmatic enough to find the funding where it's needed. So I think that's something I'd like really encourage them to keep going. I think they have a really fantastic ethos when it comes to who they'll partner with, the level of visibility they and like standing, they give the community within Pride itself. I think that's really important. For example, you know, the community stage will always be, mostly championing, well entirely championing queer artists, but it will also be the main focus on local artists. I'm not just biased because I gave a speech there on Saturday, but I think it's that level of, yeah, being able to sense of the community, but also as well making sure that they have the necessary funding, I think, to keep doing what they're doing.

00:54:55:04

CJ DeBarra

Yeah. It's a, it's a very it's a very good point because it's such a delicate balance of trying to keep all the different areas of, you know, our community happy. I, I would like to add that I'd love to see them look at, like, quieter events. I'm neurodivergent, myself and my partner, we struggle massively with Pride every single year. We love it, but it's often very overwhelming for us. So maybe, you know, adding something like quieter spaces, headphones or any of those sort of things as well. Might be something to look at.

Lucy, you had your, you had your hand up there. Yeah.

00:55:38:11

Lucy Buckley

I was just going to, kind of give them the compliment there. I know a lot of people, especially who've been in the city for a good while now, we all kind of remember Pride very fondly at the Arboretum. And everybody, we all kind of talk about it in this very rose tinted way, but actually having Pride in the city. For me, now I've got used to it, but, it incorporates so many different venues and it really, for me, like, I know I can't, I always get teary eyed when I see the whole city just absolutely filled with rainbows. And I, I was lucky to work with, a really nice venue this time around. And we weren't even anywhere near on the sort of main pride parade route, but the city just absolutely came alive.

00:56:15:24

Lucy Buckley

And that's. I just want to see more of that. So, more venues getting on board, and making an authentic contribution to Pride. I think it's really important, especially now we've got the Rainbow Quarter, sort of happening and all the venues that kind of surround it. I think it's really important that for Nottingham City Pride that it is held in our city.

And I'm a big fan. That was it.

00:56:40:24

CJ DeBarra

Agreed. I think it raised a really good point around the emotional side of it as well, because I find that the, you know, looking back over the march and seeing absolutely everybody having such a great time coming together, but also, you know, keeping it what it is, a protest at the end of the day, it's it is a hugely emotional experience and something that Notts Pride do really, really well.

We still have time for maybe one more question. So if I could get one up on the screen.

Okay. This is from Alex. So "with discussing history between different age groups, there have been some divides where, where the generation divide and politics creates a divide before common ground can be found. Is there anything that can be done to bridge that gap?" [Alex Poole]

[Hongwei Bao raises hand up]

00:57:35:19

Hongwei Bao

Can I? So, what I suppose that to me, a communication, conversation would probably be the only way out. And I actually don't see such a difference, of course, in these our different

opinions with regard to how an organisation, how an event should be organised and how to, for example, promote an event, etc. but overall, we're all promoting gender sexual diversity. So the aim is the same. I suppose that bearing in mind that we share more similarities than differences and then try to step into other people's shoes or understanding other positions better, yeah, I think that's more kind of community discussions between different age groups would be helpful.

00:58:30:16

CJ DeBarra

Absolutely. So discussion and also having compassion, for people as well. Chan, would you like to, add.

00:58:39:10

Chan Fagan

I think as well, a lot of that comes down to how conversations are facilitated and who has the right kind of mediation skills. In order to create settings and spaces where those kind of frictions between generations can be smoothed out and managed? And I think often that's not a large consideration. You just people just plunk a group of people in the space and just like let things unfold without really thinking about like, proper people management. So yeah, that's something I think about.

00:59:13:04

CJ DeBarra

And it's certainly something to think about in terms of, you know, events going forward as well, if that's something that can be addressed deliberately for, you know, we spoke about having those, very, those more sort of directed events towards like, oh, this one is for lesbians or this is for trans or this is for, you know, whatever it might be. Maybe that's something that, the event organisers amongst us could have a look at. Is there anybody else who would like to add something to that?

Nope. Okay.

So we've got have we got time for one more now? Yes, I, I'm being told, no, and yes. No.

Okay. [laughs] So that's it, I think I just want to say thank you to all of our, wonderful, wonderful panellists this evening. You guys have been absolutely amazing, and you've given some real food for thought as well.

So and again, thank you to City Arts, for having us as well.