

2024

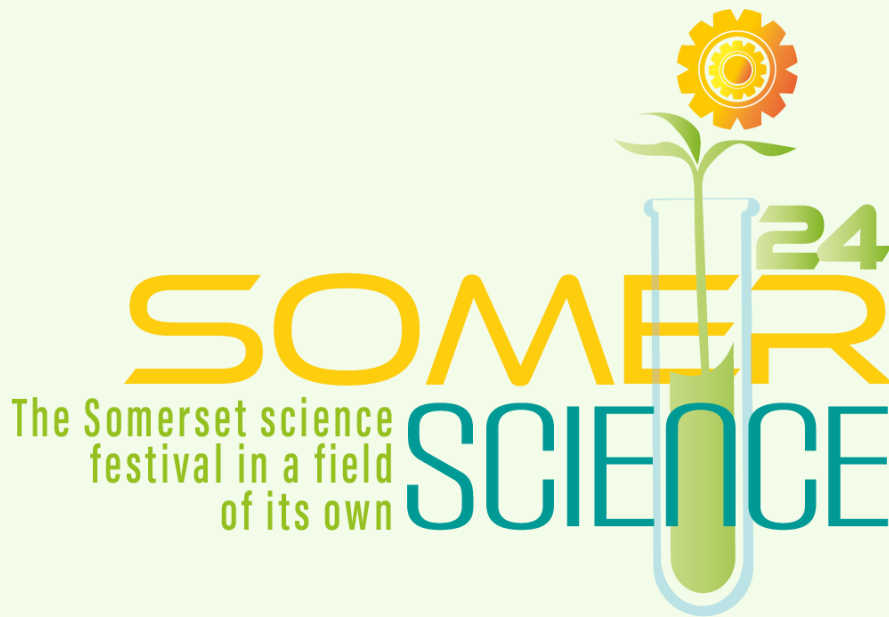
Somerscience Festival Evaluation Report



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The Somerscience Trust

5/1/2024



Evaluation Report

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Introduction

Somerscience Festival was held in South Somerset on 6th May 2024. This was the festival's second year but first at our new main venue of Haynes Motor Museum. Once again, we sought to support The Somerscience Trust's stated aim "to advance the education of the public in Somerset in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to promote public engagement in all aspects of STEM developments."

The expected outcome for the second festival was to be building on the interest awakened in the first year. We would count the festival as successful this year if we could: Afford a minimum of 15,000 engagements by young people from South Somerset. Recruit at least 70 contributing organisations and 100 discrete activities. Achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees. Improve on the baseline of visitor numbers and demographic profile achieved in the first year. Effect positive change on attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors leading eventually to a quantitative increase in STEM uptake at GCSE, A/T Level and STEM destinations after school.

The target audience was the young people of South Somerset and their families as this would address the inequity of access to STEM engagement opportunities found in rural areas and this area, which was in the bottom 10 of 387 Local Authority areas for such opportunities according to the British Science Association's 2022 survey.

This report documents how outputs and outcomes were measured and explains what these were.

Success Criteria

1. Afford a minimum of 15,000 engagements by young people from South Somerset
2. Recruit at least 70 contributing organisations and 100 discrete activities
3. Achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees (measured by survey and recognising that experts/researchers, informal educators/explainers, STEM employers and public may each have different goals)
4. Improve on the baseline of visitor numbers and demographic profile achieved in the first year
5. Effect positive change on attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors, leading eventually to a quantitative increase in STEM uptake at GCSE, A/T Level and STEM destinations after school.

Somerscience 2024 in Numbers

- Total visitors – 5428 (600 more than 2023)
- Venues outside of Haynes saw 958 visitors
- 25% were very local (Castle Cary and Sparkford)
- 12.8% Yeovil – which has some of the most deprived areas of the county
- 62.7% in total from the target South Somerset & rural areas
- Gender breakdown 47/53% M/F
- Ages: 42% under 18 (mainly 4-15); 38.7% 30-50; 17.3% 50+; 1.6% 18-30

- Social media reach has increased considerably – we now have 1350 followers.
- Facebook post reach was 38, 938 in the run up to the festival with engagement of 6, 616.

- 99% of visitors judged the quality of the festival to be Good or Very Good
- 92% of visitors who expressed an opinion would recommend the festival to their network.
- 85% of visitors felt the festival gave them a better understanding of STEM and 73% a better understanding specifically of STEM careers
- 86% felt the festival had a positive impact on their belief that STEM is relevant to their daily life
- A shift of 30% was reported in positivity of visitors' attitudes towards STEM before and after the festival
- At least 80% of professional contributors reported Good or Excellent
 - The number of interactions they had with target audience
 - The level of engagement from the audience
 - The quality of interactions they had
 - The gender reach of the festival

Evaluation Approaches

Our rationale for evaluating this year's festival was based on the above success criteria and the commitments made in grant funding applications:

There will be an in-depth review evaluating inputs, outputs, outcomes and attempting to assess the longer term impact. Inputs, by survey, include satisfaction levels with the resources, venues, pre-festival communications and overall organisation.

Outputs include, by venue registration data and interview, numbers of contributors and visitors attending, broken down by demographics, number of engagements, whether individual activities worked or could be improved. Outcomes, by intercept and retrospective online survey, will include quantitative data on whether attitudes towards STEM have become more positive, whether visitors are more likely now to engage with other STEM activities, whether they have a better understanding of various component aspects of STEM, whether they are more likely to consider choosing a STEM subject or career pathway and whether they are more likely to consider STEM as relevant to their lives.

Qualitative outcome data will be collected via comment cards or graffiti wall and coded as positive or negative. To assess overall impact we will be looking for evidence of increased interest in STEM pathways and destinations noted by schools or participating companies but acknowledge that this will be impossible to spot in the first years, expecting a cumulative effect once the festival is established as an annual fixture.

Schools ‘Temperature Check’

We used a quick method to sample attitudes to STEM in schools participating in the TCS GoIT Challenge or engaged in other ways, prior to the festival day – In the form of a ‘hands-up’ activity, that teachers easily did with their classes and sent us the results. Results collection simply by email, as a tally of hands ‘up’ to each statement.

Only one of the schools taking part in the TCS challenge returned their survey results, which are summarised below. In future years we will need to reconsider our process for collecting data on prior attitudes to STEM in our local schools.

Total number of young people in this group	29
Year group of young people surveyed	5
I enjoy learning in this subject (Science/STEM)	6
My teacher often uses stories and examples of real life problems to help me learn in this subject.	0
What I learn in this subject is important to everyday life.	17
I think I can do well in this subject.	8
In this subject, I learn about different jobs linked to science, D&T, engineering, maths or computing.	7
At school I learn how to work as part of a team and solve problems.	22
In school, I meet people that work in science, D&T, engineering, maths or computing	1
When I grow up, I could get a job doing science, D&T, engineering, maths or computing	14
I would like to learn more about science, D&T, engineering, maths or computing when I am older	7
I get the chance to take part in STEM activities, such as clubs and competitions.	1
I take part in STEM trips with school to places like museums, workplaces and science fairs.	0

Programme Review

Reviewing the programme reveals 93 planned individual activities and 70 separate organisations engaged; however, on the day, it became clear that many of the billed ‘activities’ were in fact multifaceted, for example the Royal Navy had a large team of volunteers on hand delivering multiple activities.

It is safe to say that **both parts of success criterion 2 are met.**

Visitor Count

Volunteers were stationed at entrances to festival sites with tally counters. The overall ‘visitor count’ obtained by totalling each individual tally and discounting any overlaps was 5428, which is 600 more than 2023; however, significant footfall made counting every entrant impossible and there was a 2-hour initial period at the main Haynes venue where the count did not take place, therefore the accurate total number of visitors was higher than reported here.

Registration data suggests that 42% of attendees were under 18 and approximately 49% live in South Somerset, which yield a ballpark figure of 1117 ‘young people from South Somerset’. Success criterion 1 targets 15,000 engagements from this group, which would require interaction with just 12.5 of the 93+ activities on offer.

Success criterion 1 fully met and success criterion 4 met in terms of exceeding 2023 visitor numbers.

Social Media Review

Social media reach has increased considerably, we now have 1350 followers. Facebook continues to give us the best social media audience – mainly female and in their 30s or 40s so likely to be parents planning days out. Facebook post reach was 38, 938 in the run up to the festival with engagement of 6, 616. Instagram reached 303 accounts, engaging 31 so still much to do to make this latter medium work for us.

Selection of positive comments and posts from social media:

“A remarkable achievement with something for everyone.”

“Really busy at Haynes but we had good fun. Well done to all involved.”

“Thank you, especially enjoyed Psychexcite at Ansford.”

“Lovely time at Haynes. So many activities for kids.”

“Lovely day, thank you to all involved. We had a great time.”

“A wonderful event. Well done.”

“We didn’t even get into the main hall and heard we might have had a lucky escape it was so busy. Outside was brilliant, Caryford Hall was brilliant, the Mill on the Brue was quiet and brilliant (when we eventually found it).”

“Thank you so much to everyone involved. It really is amazing that you managed to offer all this for free! My 5-year-old found lots that she enjoyed and found interesting.”

“We had a fantastic day thank you.”

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“Wow, wow, wow! What a fabulous day yesterday. We had the family staying and we all participated. They were all amazed at everything. The exhibitors were great and responsive to young children, the science shows were fun, the bus worked well so all in all a great day.”

“Somerscience good for all ages!”

“It was fantastic and overall very accessible (wheelchair user).”

“Today was great – thank you so much! I came with a 17-year-old and an 11-year-old and we all had a really good time. Beautifully organised, and plenty to engage each of us.”



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 **King's Bruton** @KingsBruton · May 6

We are proud that some of our @KingsBruton pupils are representing #KSBMotorSport and #KSBPsychology @HaynesMotor today @somerscience.

#KSBCommunity #KSBQuality #KSBSuccess #OurKingsBruton @KSBDT @KSBPsychology



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 **Exeter Science Centre** @ExeSciCentre · May 6

Fantastic day taking #OurWorldFromSpace to the @somerscience festival 🥳👏🌍 Huge thanks to our volunteers Theo & Caitlyn for all their help today 😊

If you came along, please share your feedback! It only takes a couple of mins & is so helpful for us: tinyurl.com/ESC-OWFS-feedb...



  2  6  181  



And feedback to consider when planning next year’s festival:

“Too loud and crowded for my autistic kids.”

“Two days would be better to spread out the number of visitors... still a great day though!”

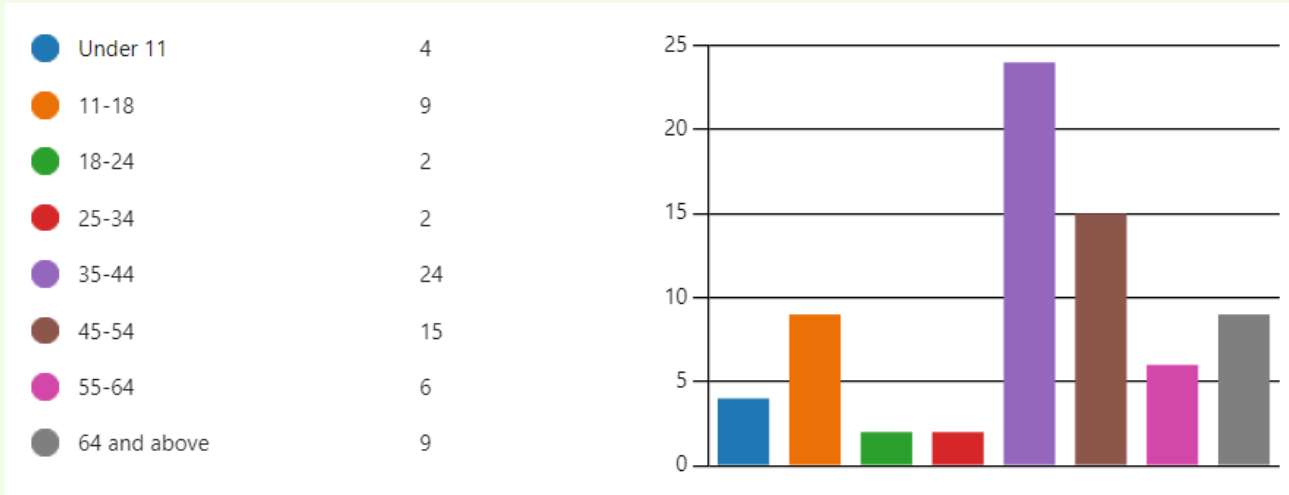
“Thank you for a brilliant day! The only suggestion I could think of is to spread it out over a weekend. There was SO much to see, but we will certainly be back next year to see what we didn’t this time!”

Contributing to fulfilment of **success criterion 3**.

Visitor Survey

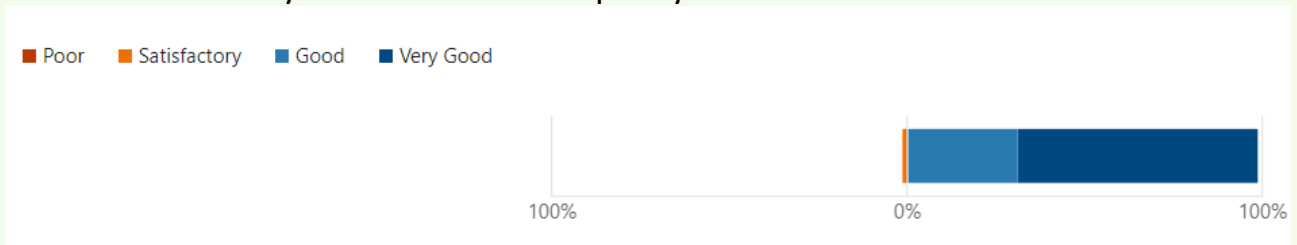
There were 71 responses to the attendee feedback survey, which was facilitated by QR code link to an MS Form. QR codes were printed on A5 flyers, which were handed out by volunteers across the festival sites. Participation was incentivised with the offer of entry to a prize draw with the opportunity to win a £50 John Lewis voucher.

1. Which age category do you belong to?



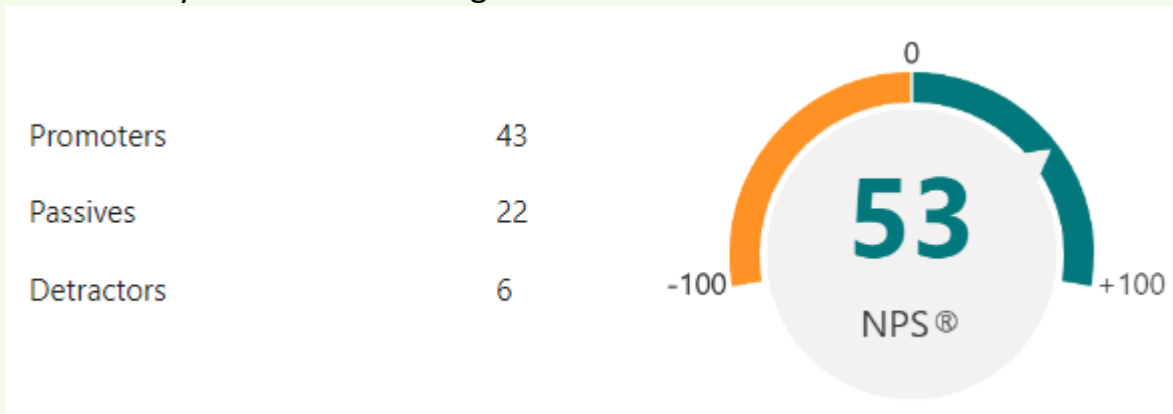
The largest group of respondents to this online survey were from the 35-44 group. In fact, 39% of responses came from 35-54-year-olds. This is more a reflection of the mode of response gathering, rather than the age profile of all attendees; on the day (anecdotal observation and registration data) there were more young people in attendance. Other methods were used to capture feedback from the younger attendees e.g. graffiti walls.

2. How would you rate the overall quality of the festival?



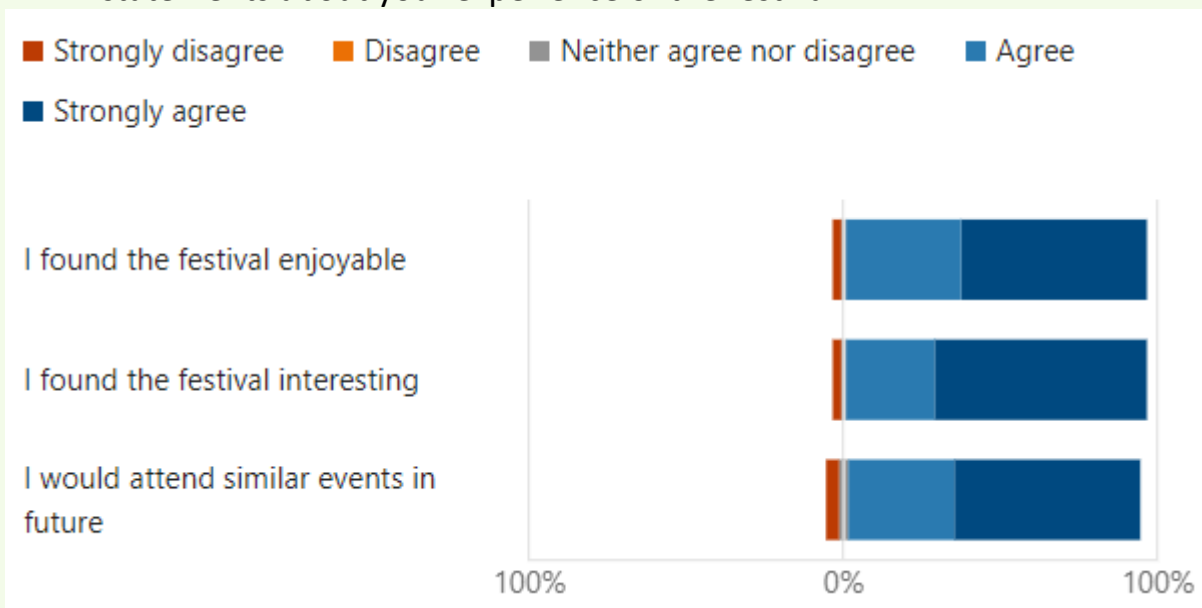
67% responded 'Very Good'. The overall 'Good' – 'Very Good' percentage was 99%, which talks to **success criterion 3**. For comparison, last year's festival was rated 52% 'Very Good' and 90% 'Good' – 'Very Good' therefore the significant improvement should be highlighted!

3. How likely are you to recommend visiting SomerScience Festival to a friend, family member or colleague?



This year's net promoter score is essentially identical to last year's, which is interesting in of itself, given the improved perception of 'quality this year' (Q2). A greater proportion of the 'passives' answered 8 out of 10 this year, which puts them on the cusp of 'promoter'.

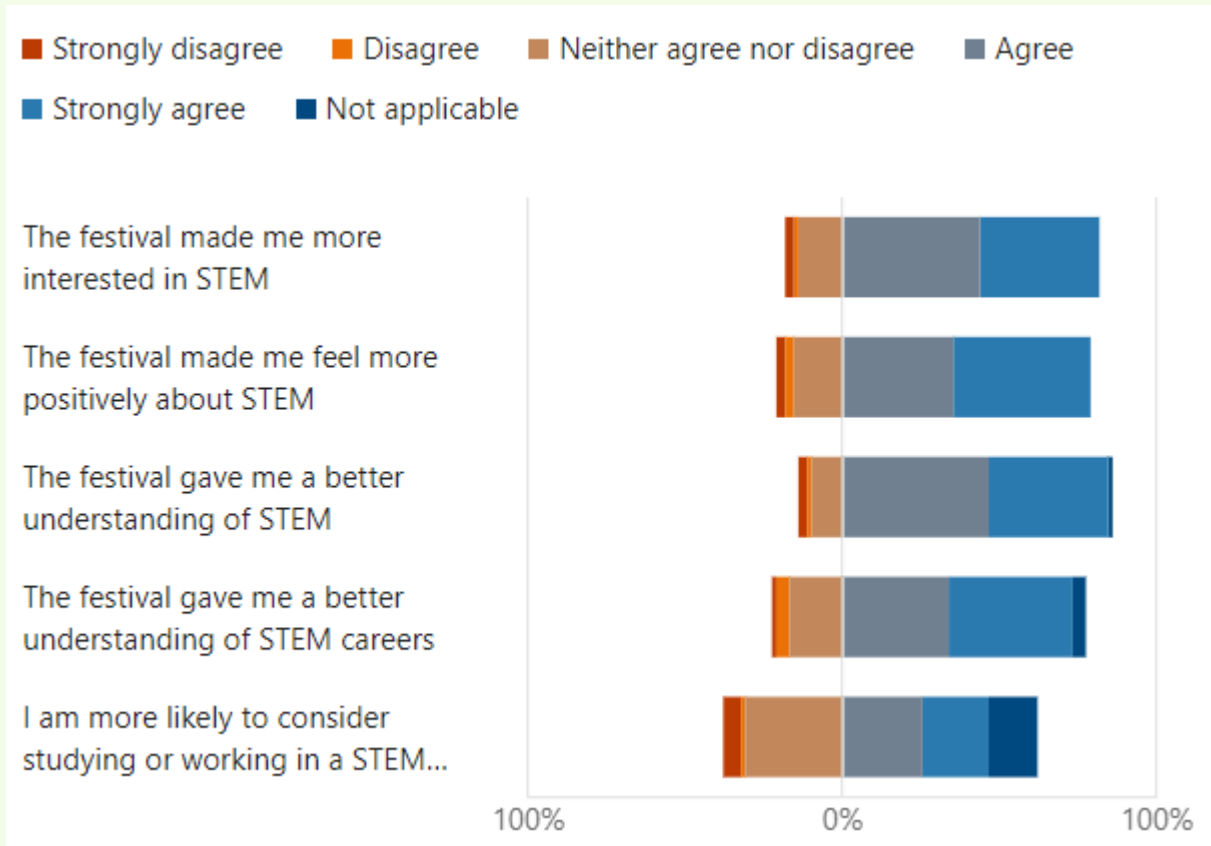
4. Please use the scale below to state how much you agree with the following statements about your experience of the festival:



97% found the festival enjoyable, 96% found it interesting and 94% would attend similar events in future. Similar percentages to 2023. Another positive towards **success criterion 3**.

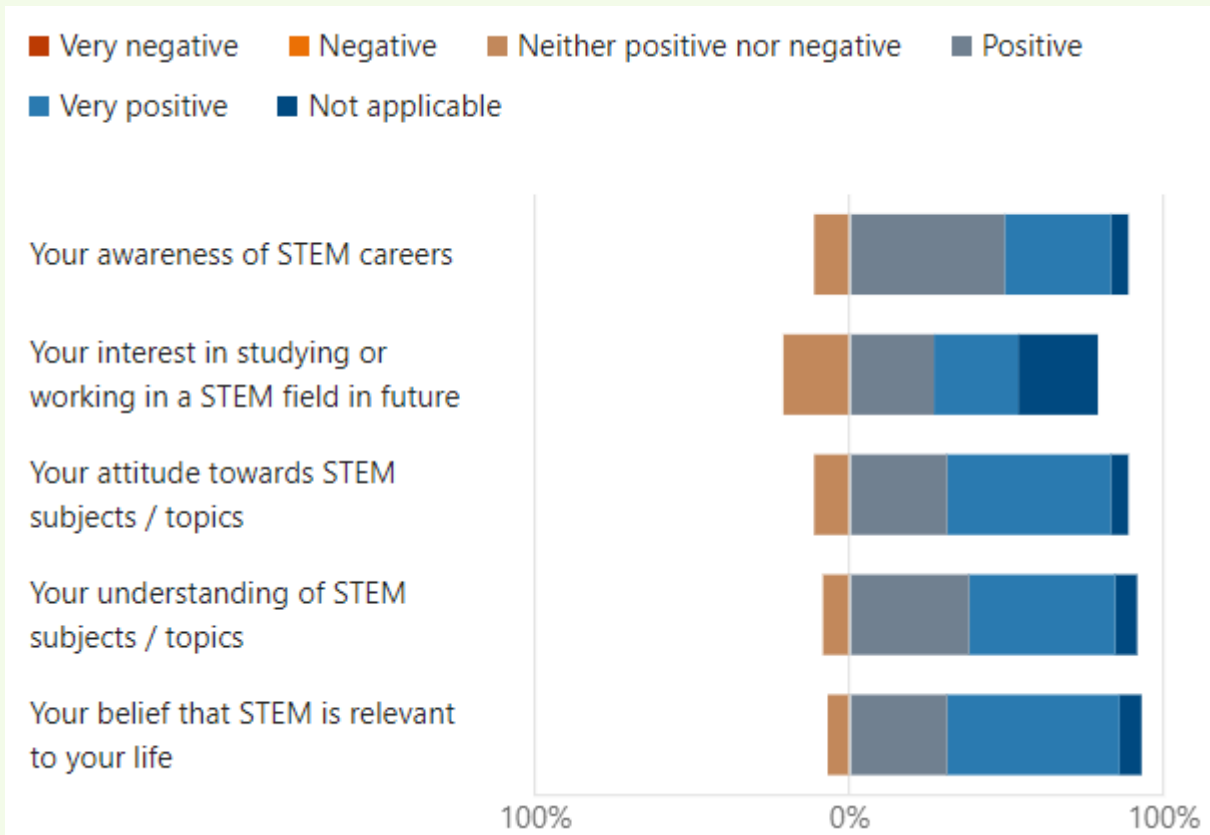
5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about how the festival impacted you?

We use 'STEM' to refer to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine.



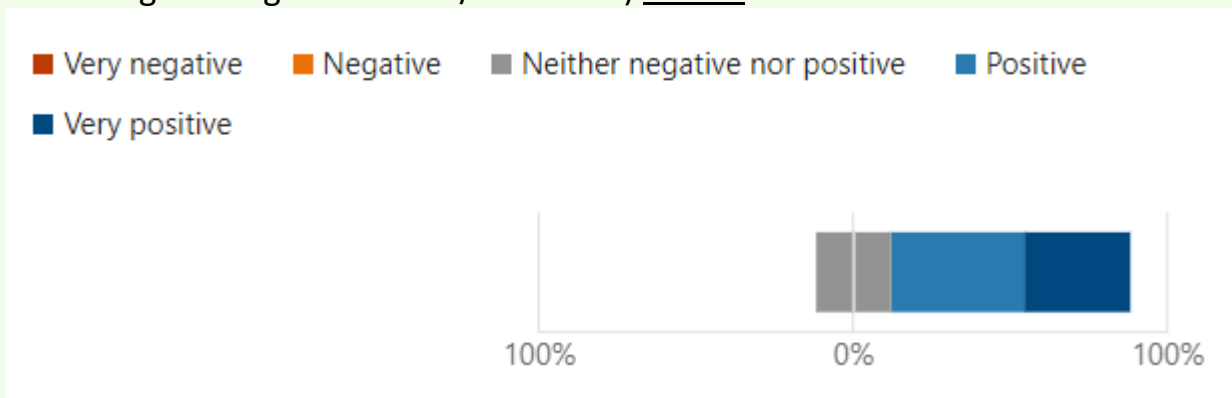
Talking to **success criterion 5** – Based on this data, the festival has positively impacted attitudes to STEM for most. Most pleasingly, 47% said that it made them more likely to consider studying or working in a STEM field, which is up from 37% in 2023, a significant increase. It must be remembered that, since a large proportion of those who completed the survey were parents, they are presumably already in a set career hence the higher amount of ambivalence/not applicable on this measure.

6. How would you describe the impact of the festival on:
We use 'STEM' to refer to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine.



A marginally more positive set of responses when compared to 2023. The most significant difference is seen for the first part of this question – STEM Careers: 83% positive in 2024, versus 78% in 2023, which suggests that the contributors' offer in 2024 was either more geared towards destinations and careers, or that it hit that mark more effectively. Once again, positively contributing to **success criterion 5**.

7. How would you rate your attitude towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths / Medicine) **before** the festival?

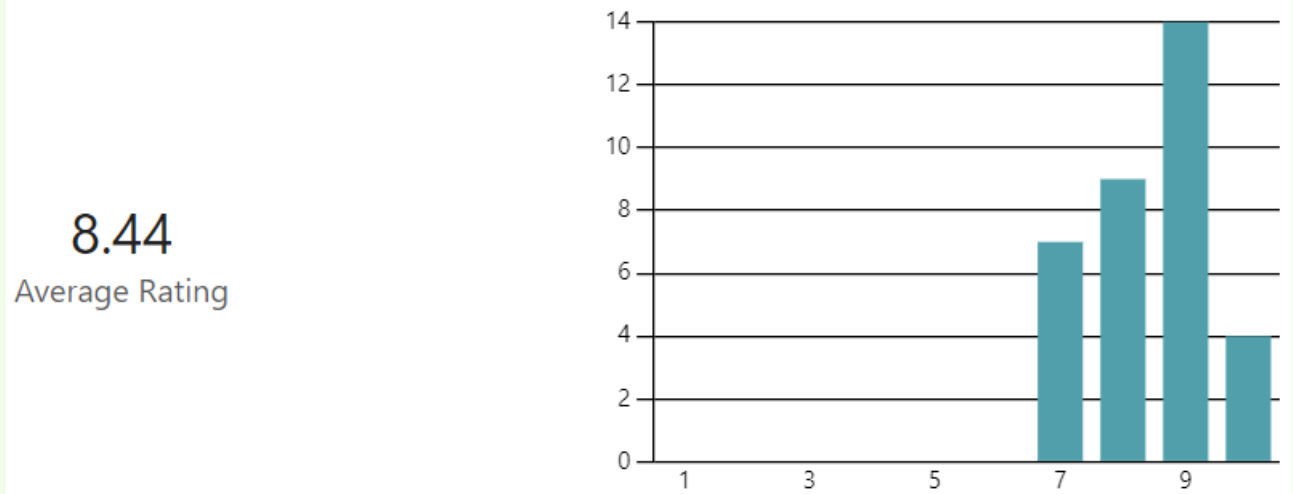


42% 'Positive' and 34% 'Very Positive'. In 2023 the respective figures were 49% and 28%.

Contributor Survey

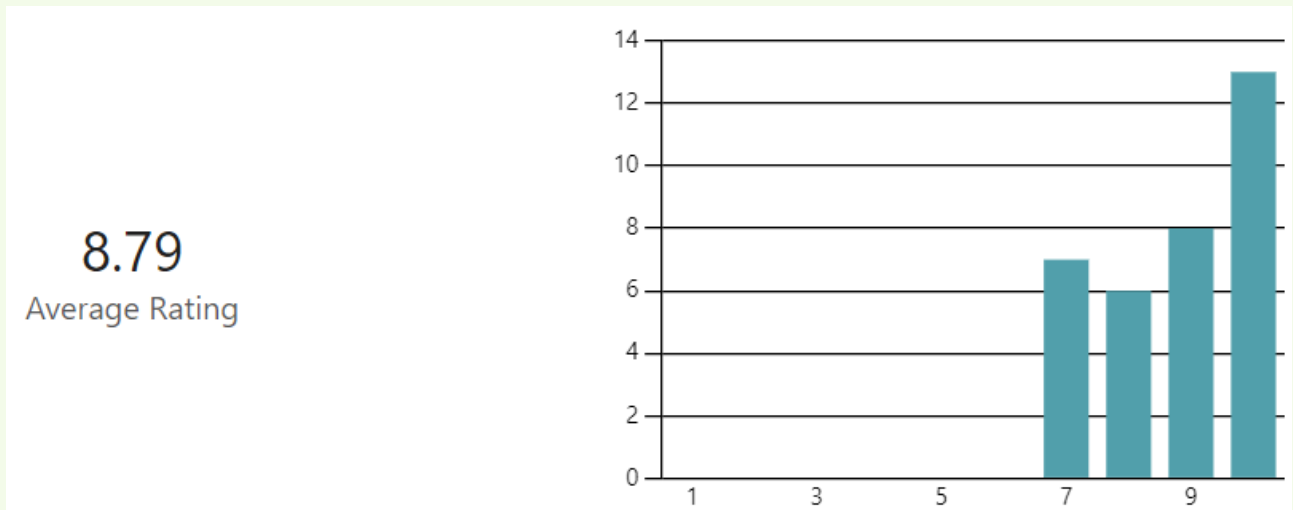
There were 37 responses from contributors to an MS Form survey, which was shared by email post-festival. A summary of the responses is provided below.

To what extent did the festival meet your expectations?



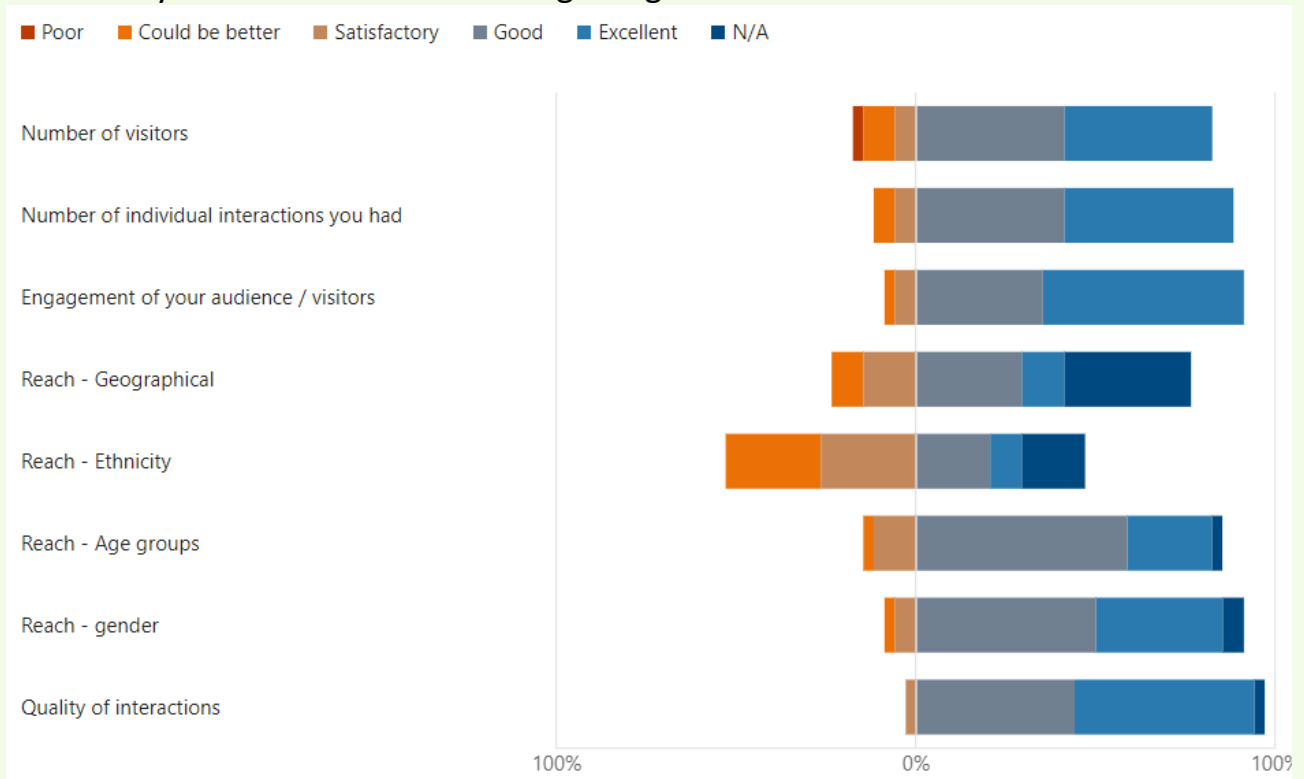
A positive response from contributors overall. Some stated that it was their first experience of presenting at a STEM festival; however, those with experience stated that Somerscience 2024 compares favourably. A good proportion also fed back that the festival afforded them valuable networking opportunities with fellow contributors. One comment worth noting, which arose in several instances, is that the day is a long one for contributors with few opportunities to have a break. However, few contributors would favour spreading it across more than one day as this would compound problems of recruiting to man the activities.

The festival was free for contributors. Based on that, please rate overall value for time invested.



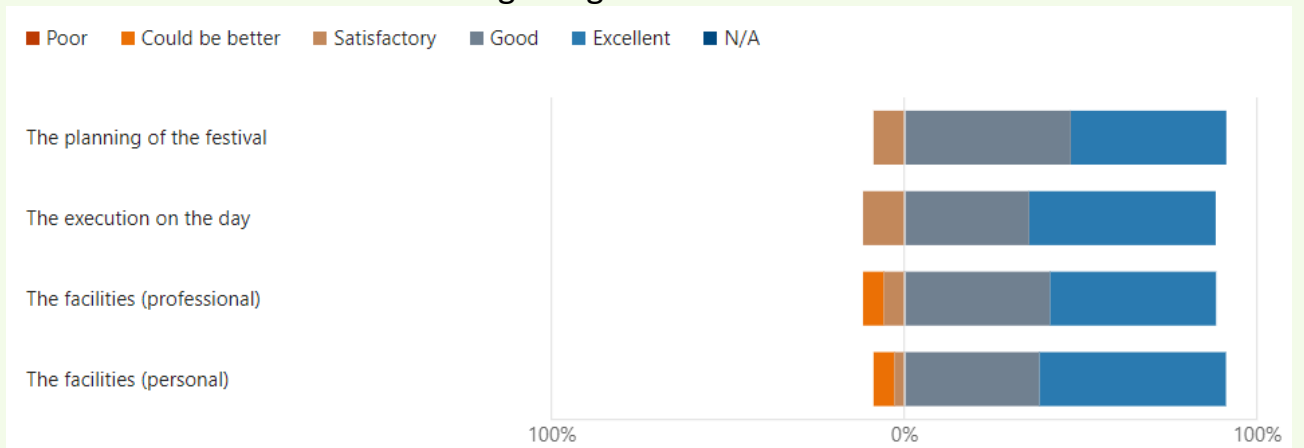
62% of those responding gave this year’s festival the top two ratings and there were no ratings below ‘7’. It is fair to say that **success criterion 3 is achieved from the perspectives of attendees and contributors / participants alike.**

On the day - Please rate the following using the scale below:



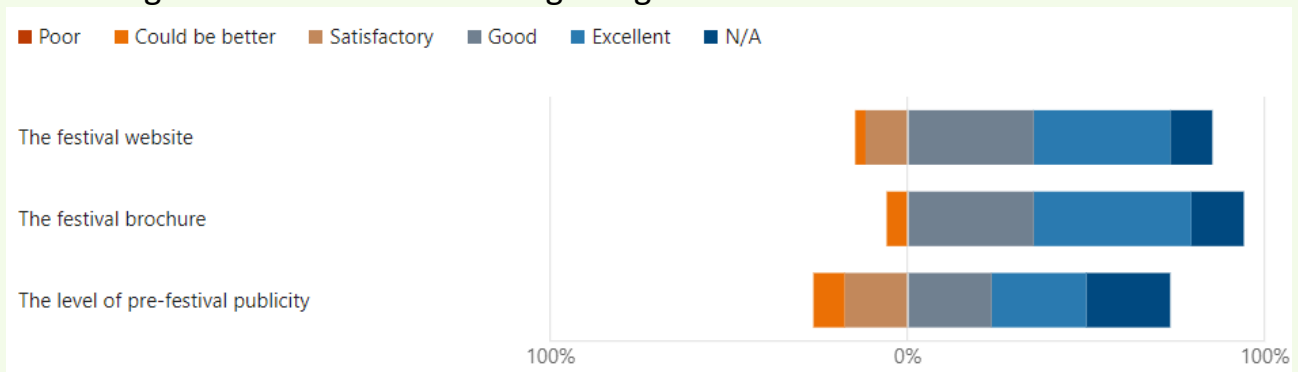
Responses to this question closely mirror those from the 2023 contributor survey. Exhibitors and presenters were by and large positive about all aspects, with ‘Reach - Ethnicity’ being identified as less successful than other areas; however, we must acknowledge that Somerscience is a local STEM festival, targeted at rural South Somerset, and the ethnic make up of our immediate area is more homogenous than most.

Overall - Please rate the following using the scale below:



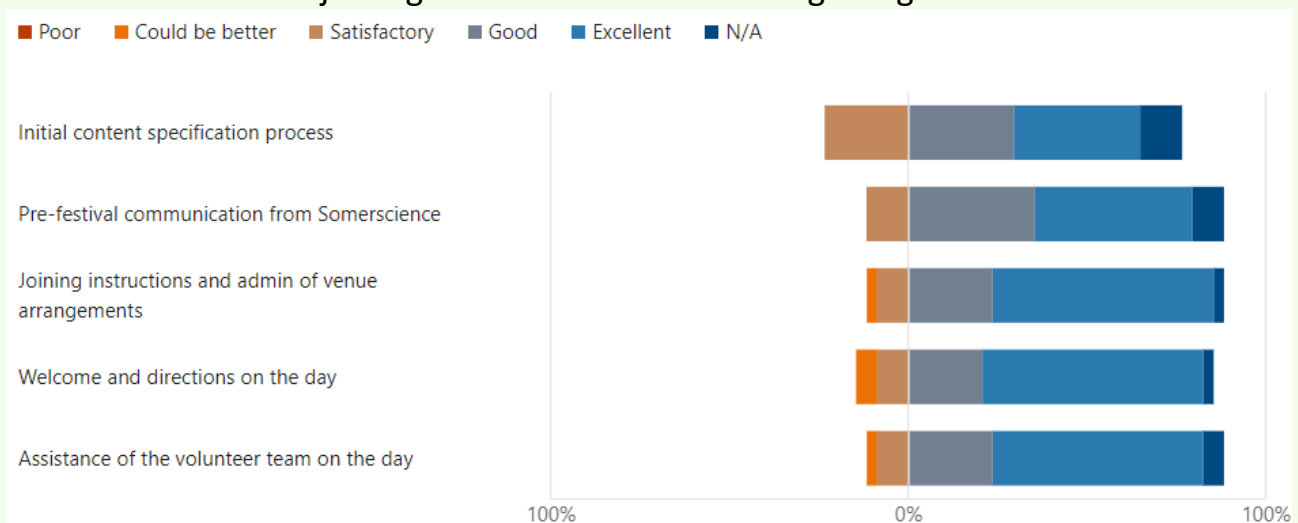
All areas rated at close to 90% ‘Good’ – ‘Excellent’ or above. Some contributors fed back that the inside space at Haynes felt overcrowded and uncomfortable at times, enjoyment of outside activities depended heavily on the weather (mercifully sunny) and the day was a long one for exhibitors, without a break. To a certain extent this is par for the course at such events if they are successful enough at drawing visitors throughout the day, however now we have 2 festivals completed, we might better manage expectations in this regard.

Marketing - Please rate the following using the scale below:



Again, high levels of satisfaction; however, some would have liked to have seen more publicity in the run up to the festival, including on social media. That said, most (88%) contributors were satisfied with the number of visitors on the day. There was a difference between satisfaction levels about numbers at peripheral venues and the main Haynes and Caryford venues. The comments about a need for more publicity are belied by the numbers of visitors and the fact that local publicity, Facebook and schools distribution were cited as the main ways people had heard about the festival!

Communication and joining - Please rate the following using the scale below:



All rated 80%+ ‘Good’ – ‘Excellent, with the exception of ‘Initial content specification process’. Individual feedback comments suggest that a minority of contributors felt they were required to provide details about activities in advance, which were yet to be decided, and that the initial specification form was not in an editable format, which made responding difficult – This was not the case but a minority of contributors did seem to experience problems editing it. Those specific comments aside, it is fair to say that **success criterion 3 is fully met.**

Some specific contributor feedback quotes are included below, which again reflect the overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the 2024 festival:

“Overall, it was fantastic and we had some great conversations with people about the work we do!”
(RSPCA)

“I just wanted to drop you a quick note to say how much we all enjoyed Somerscience. It was a superb event, and your volunteers were an absolute credit to you. Everything ran very smoothly, and we had

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so many great interactions with the public, volunteers, and other stallholders. Well done on pulling together such a great festival!” (MRC)

“Thank you for inviting us to be part of the Somerscience festival 2024, it sounds like it has grown a lot already since last year’s start in a large marquee, and is continuing in that trend! It is brilliant that this is such a large and free family-friendly event right in the heart of Somerset – I heard some people bemoaning the fact that it was only on for one day (they wanted two days or more!).” (Explorerdome)

“A massive thank you to you and your team for organising the festival yesterday. I don't think our team has ever been to an event where we've been consistently so busy for so long. It definitely seemed busier than last year. Looking forward to seeing the report and the survey.” (IOP)

“It was great to be there and I’m glad I was even able to say hello to you in person at some point. It was a busy and fruitful day with lots of engagement between ourselves and general public plus networking with other participants. Following the introduction to the security guys first thing, (very good general briefing at the start thanks), I did wonder if things would kick off in the ‘ask the scientist’ session when one youngster asked about flat earth theories, but it was all managed in good humour. Haynes Museum was a great venue with the spaces used well – gratifying having a queue to get in – it felt like an exclusive nightclub.” (NPL)

“Thank you for making this event happen and with such a roaring success.” (Thales)

Registration Data

Volunteers stationed at the various entry points across the festival venues were able to engage visitors and ask them a set of questions. Insights from those responses are summarised below:

- Venues outside of Haynes saw 958 visitors.
- Visitors travelled from:
 - 25% were local (*Castle Cary and Sparkford*)
 - 12.8% *Yeovil – which has some of the most deprived areas of the county*
 - 8.2% Glastonbury & Wells
 - 6.6% Bristol
 - 5.9% *Somerton*
 - 5.6% Shepton
 - 5.2% *Bruton*
 - 2-4% Frome, Sherborne, Wellington. Taunton, Bridgwater
 - People came from as far afield as Sheffield, Derby, Woking, Stevenage, Cirencester, Dorchester & Salisbury. One from Rotterdam!
- From registration data:
 - Gender breakdown 47/53% Male/Female
 - Ages: 42% under 18 (mainly 4-15); 38.7% 30-50; 17.3% 50+; 1.6% 18-30
- People heard of the festival via:
 - Local publicity (posters, newsletters, etc.) 23.9%
 - Facebook – 23.5%
 - Having attended last year – 16.8%
 - From a friend or colleague – 13.4%
 - School – 8.7%
 - Word of mouth – 5.7%
 - Passing By – 2.7%
 - Exhibitors – 1.6%
 - Home education group – 1.01%









Success criterion 3 refers to improving 'demographic profile' from the first year of the festival. The focus of any improvements was not pre-defined. For future festivals, with design in mind, it would be prudent to identify specific aspects of demography that require improvement; that way targeted strategies and interventions can be planned.

Demographic data is largely comparable across the two years, with slight (not significant) shifts away from local South Somerset visitors (52% became 49%) and under-18s (45% became 42%).



What did you like best?!

Rubik's cube
 Making Maths puzzles - all of it
 3D printer
 Helicopters RSPCA Robots
 It's bigger than last year.
 Aug the Duffell stuff (wants)
 Leonardo
 Robots
 RSPCA
 Institute of physics
 Uni of Southampton (Biophotonics)
 Learning how to take water

What did you like most!

RSPCA  Small but Mighty (RSPCA)
 making a hover 
 LEONARDO HELICOPTERS 
 3D Printer
 Stickers 
 Helicopter 
 VR Headset 
 thevifation 
 Henry haven VR headset 

WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST?

VR
 I loved the virtual reality
 Wildlife!
 Winning the Science competition
 using the bikes!
 we built a robot called Jeff & made him move!
 Legominidstroms
 engineering  RSPCA 
 the robot cars!
 Thales - stem - making circuits
 The Virtual Reality Leonardo thing BIKES.
 national grid cycling
 national weightlifting, Russian balls
 The microscope
 LEGOs
 HELICOPTER MAKE I want to run
 the Robot clan!

What did you like most!?

buying the ink colours 2x
 Building the circuits
 The NPL (National Physical Laboratory) stand was MIND BLOWING & INTERESTING!
 Building robot with Thales
 Building the circuits at Thales
 Leonardo VR headset
 VR helicopter
 Space dome!
 Flying Helicopter
 Paper Flying helicopter
 THE VR
 BOTH THE VR
 EMIT
 everything!

Tell us a STEM fact

Paper is in helicopter blades!
 Uranium One uranium cell = one tonne of coal
 clean water
 Tooth Hydrogen
 Bubbles can do complicated Maths!!!
 - Really Complicated!
 not even a computer can solve
 look after teeth
 Orca's wearing seaweed hats!
 You have to use a special chemical to make the bottom bad Middle okay top best.
 I loved it Thank you!
 I loved the bike racing thank you xx
 Thank you
 Pony shoes are proud by spitting
 I loved it Thank you!
 Thank you!

TELL US A STEM FACT

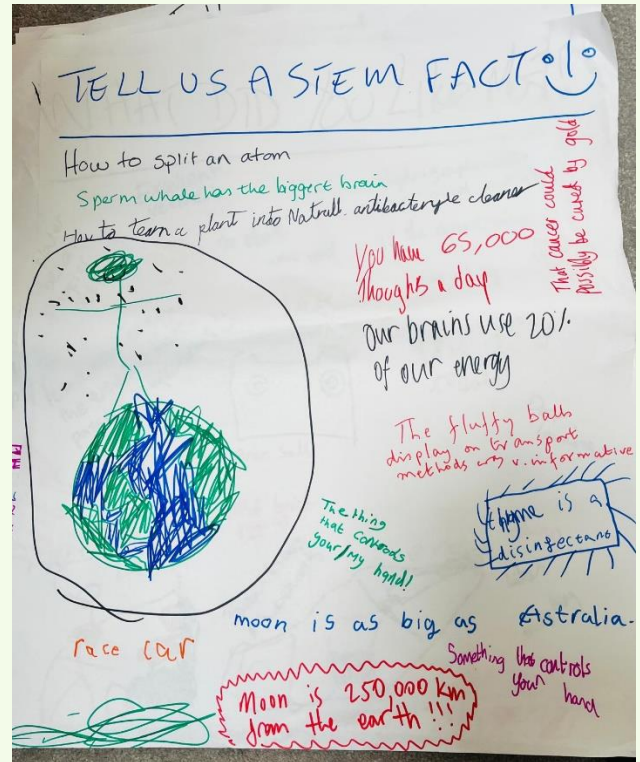
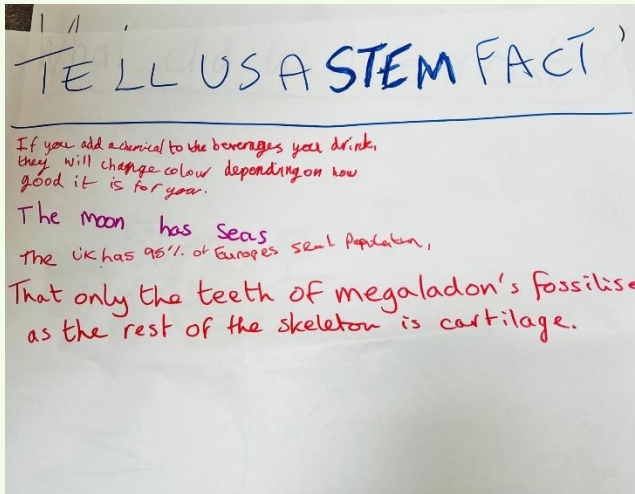
A Europe in knowledge MP.
 Many adults talk for less than 5 mins to their children about internet
 Sagtey
 Orange iodine + starch = purple iodine
 DCCAS are dolphins
 Shark's eggs are called 'Mermaid's Purses'
 there is on such fin of vegetables
 To tell ships with sound
 SAGTEY is important
 MICROSCOPE
 Turtles live for 14 years
 Miss Harvey

Tell us a STEM fact

Mum knows facts
 The chlorophyll in the leaves of a plant or tree collects the energy for photosynthesis.
 Energy can't be created nor destroyed
 Gravity on the moon
 The faster you pedaled the more power
 Starts & ends
 They filter the air that pilots breathe from 21% to 94% oxygen
 The sun is actually a star.

Tell us a STEM fact

it holds up the flower + holds it in the ground
 bees can count up to 4 without training and compare the sizes of numbers
 THIS ONE → It stands for Science, technology, engineering and Maths!
 A red faced caterpillar will rear up when threatened and even spray acid!
 Wombats have square hips!
 Feeds the flower
 An elephant can stand on a helicopter rot. They hold a flower
 it carries water to different parts
 lizards can stick out their tongue



Two questions were asked on the graffiti wall. Many responses to 'What did you like most/best?' singled out hands-on activities, including 'pedal power' from the National Grid team and Leonardo's helicopter activity. The 'Tell us a STEM fact' question was designed to draw out an indication of engagement with and learning from festival activities; pleasingly, many of the facts recorded on the wall were directly taken from talks or activities delivered on the day.

Conclusion

Based on information from the various modes of evaluation, the judgements against our success criteria, set out prior to the festival are as follows:

Success Criteria	Judgement	Comments
1. Afford a minimum of 15,000 engagements by young people from South Somerset	Fully met	Registration data suggests that 42% of attendees were under 18 and approximately 45% live in South Somerset, which yield a ballpark figure of 1000 'young people from South Somerset'. Success criterion 1 targets 15,000 engagements from this group, which would require interaction with just 15 of the 93+ activities on offer.
2. Recruit at least 70 contributing organisations and 100 discrete activities	Fully met	93 planned individual activities and 70 separate organisations engaged; however, on the day, it became clear that many of the billed 'activities' were in fact multifaceted.
3. Achieve a quality experience for participants and attendees (measured by survey and recognising that experts/researchers, informal educators/explainers, STEM employers and public may each have different goals)	Fully met	99% of attendees rated the quality of the festival as 'Good' – 'Very Good'. Contributors gave the festival an average rating of 8.44 / 10 in terms of meeting expectations.
4. Improve on the baseline of visitor numbers and demographic profile achieved in the first year	Fully met	Approximately 600 more visitors in 2024 compared to 2023. No pre-defined target / focus for demographic profile improvement, so removed from scope to revisit in future years.
5. Effect positive change on attitudes towards STEM and STEM careers from visitors, leading eventually to a quantitative increase in STEM uptake at GCSE, A/T Level and STEM destinations after school.	Partly met	47% of attendees said the festival made them more likely to consider studying or working in a STEM field. Post festival, 'Very Positive' attitudes to STEM became 63%, an increase of 21%. No work has yet been done on tracking changes to uptake of STEM qualifications or destinations, given this is only year 2 of SomerScience. One to monitor in future years.

Learning Points

- The decision to reduce the number of venues from 12 in the first year to 6 this year was vindicated with most visitors expressing pleasure that there was so much to do at Haynes that they stayed all day, and the free shuttle buses working better to move people between the fewer venues. This indicates that we could usefully do with further rationalisation to house everything under one roof IF we can find a venue in the area that will fit all the activities AND have space appropriate to those activities (talks, workshops, shows etc) and the greater number of visitors. This would, however, reduce the visibility of the festival and the positive effect on the local economy and community so will need to be carefully considered.
- Linked to the above is the fact that we need to find a better solution for the stage shows and galvanising visitors to gather at the start of each hourly event on stage. The stage last year was adjacent to the marquee and did not work well as most people were wandering in and out of the marquee. This year the stage was set in front of the Haynes Museum, but its appearance was not sufficiently exciting to be a draw whilst the microphones were not loud enough to draw an audience at the start of each show. The solution to this will not be apparent until we have decided on the venue for next time, but, if at Haynes, we could better site the stage in The Paddock area amongst all the outdoor attractions and we need to have very visible large signs with what is happening every hour.
- Contributor expectations need to be better managed probably by even more communication. There were a number who mentioned that they hadn't seen the festival publicised when in fact a huge promotional campaign took place including physical posters and banners, leaflet drops, school visits and distribution of brochures, social media – FB, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn – weekly then daily posts and sharing to all community groups in the target areas, press articles and radio advertising and interviews. Next year we can share these with contributors to give them confidence and encourage more specifically that they also advance publicise their presence at the festival so that we benefit from their reach too. Some contributors also wanted shorter hours, free lunches, and drinks etc. We need to explain to them exactly what to expect especially as it seems quite a number were first-time exhibitors and hadn't been prepared by their company or institution. Clearly shorter hours would impact the number of visitors and activities we can accommodate and free lunches etc would have to be paid for by someone, not really feasible when we do not charge a fee for contributors to exhibit. It may be that a contributor briefing session/webinar would better prepare them for what to expect than the written joining instructions we sent out. This is done for volunteers so could also be repeated for contributors.
- Now we know that we can draw large visitor numbers, serious thought needs to be given to make the festival more amenable for SEND youngsters and/or parents. All venues and activities were wheelchair accessible, but we have been made aware that the event is particularly appealing to young people on the autistic spectrum yet this very demographic cannot cope with the crowds we draw. So, we will think about either a dedicated quiet space or a quiet preview hour specifically for this group.
- We were pleased this year to have some schools and colleges take part as exhibitors but were disappointed that some who were due to participate pulled out at short notice. This was usually because they could not find teachers to accompany the children on a bank holiday. This also impacted participation in the digital Somerscience Challenge which schools were to work on throughout the school year leading up to the finals on stage on the day. Next year we need a more foolproof way to involve the schools or their young people as individuals in the festival activities so that it has impact beyond the day itself on their STEM learning.