

Appendix 5

Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market – Summary of Positive Impacts and Community Engagement

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1 Introduction

Research commissioned over more than a decade by Marketing Birmingham, and more recently by the West Midlands Growth Company has consistently evidenced the positive impact of Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market (BFCM) in attracting footfall to the city centre in the critical pre-Christmas trading period and its impact in boosting the local economy. In 2021 the West Midlands Growth Company commissioned research from The Research Solution to evaluate the event and the economic impact of the BFCM on the City. The report shows that 74% of people questioned would not have visited Birmingham on the day that they did if the Frankfurt Christmas Market had not taken place. 86% of visitors said that they would return next year with 5% undecided. 48% of visitors were from the West Midlands with 52% from outside the West Midlands. Crucially, the expenditure generated by visitors to the BFCM was in the region of £240 million (despite the Omicron impact) and was sufficient to support 7,140 jobs – 5,370 directly and 1,770 indirectly – of which 5,255 FTE jobs were additional.

The BFCM provides much in the way of decorations and lighting, including the giant Christmas tree on Victoria Square and the Nativity scene, enhancing the attractiveness and 'Christmassy' atmosphere in the city centre. Last year this led to the financial magazine Forbes Advisor ranking Birmingham number 1 in terms of the most 'Christmassy towns and cities in the UK'.

https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/personal-finance/2021/11/24/uks-most-christmassy-towns-and-cities-2021/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

Whilst the commissioned research and positive media coverage are easily accessible there are many other positive aspects of the BFCM designed by the event organisers to support and reflect the Birmingham / Frankfurt engagement and positive benefits to the people of Birmingham, and the wider West Midlands, on multiple levels that are less well-known. The following summary is not exhaustive

but provides a snapshot of some of the less well-known aspects of the BFCM such as prioritising local suppliers, and community and charity engagement. Author's note: some of the points listed below were not implemented during the 2021 market due to health and safety considerations (building works on the market footprint and Covid-safe planning) but will be reintroduced as and when appropriate.

2 Economic Impact

Suppliers

BFCM organisers and major stallholders actively pursue a policy of using local suppliers for services and products that do not impact the authenticity of the market. Where possible suppliers are sourced from within Birmingham or failing that from within the West Midlands region. Small businesses are contracted wherever possible, e.g., paper rolls for card payment machines are not sourced from Barclaycard or even Costco or Bookers but rather from a family-run business in Oldbury. Examples from previous markets include:

- Laundry Services: Pinfolds Dry Cleaners (City centre)
- Generators: Central Power Services Ltd (Cannock)
- PAT Testing: Redland PAT Testing (Rednal)
- Gas Safety Testing: JB Caravan and Trailer Services (Burntwood)
- Fire alarm installation and testing: SRC Fire Safety Ltd (Coleshill)
- Medical and Ambulance cover: Rapid Response (Cannock)
- Health and Safety Consultant: Helen Overton & Associates (Tamworth)
- Fire extinguisher servicing: SK Fire Protection (Digbeth)
- Glazier: Central Plant Glazing Ltd (Oldbury)
- Gas supplier: Hire Shop (Birmingham) Ltd (Alum Rock)
- Toilet hire: Wernicks (Walsall)
- Toilet cleaning services: B6 Squeaky Clean (Edrington)
- Fruit and Vegetable suppliers: Edward Alain Cook Ltd (Birmingham Wholesale Market)
- Paper rolls for card machines: Midland Retail Supplies (Oldbury)
- Christmas tree recycling: Rutland Sheds (Bearwood)
- Plant hire: Media Access Solutions (Hall Green)
- 2021 Covid Testing: Midland Health Ltd (Edgbaston)
- Forklift repair: Advances Forklift Services (Handsworth)
- Construction materials: multiple suppliers within Birmingham
- Waste management (warehouse sites): Sherringtons (Southside)

BFCM organisers directly contract services from BCC, including Waste Management, Highways and Events. Services are also contracted from Acivico. In 2022 BFCM paid over £60,000 for waste management alone.

BFCM Expenditure in Birmingham (during market)

Organisers and stallholders themselves make significant expenditure in the city. This includes:

- Stallholder spend on accommodation
- Stallholder and staff spend on food, shopping, etc
- Rental of warehousing
- Business Rates (Victoria Square and leased warehousing)

BFCM Expenditure in Birmingham (outside of market period)

- The organisers maintain an office in city centre and employ local staff all year round (2FTE)
- Maintain warehouses in the city and pay ground rent and business rates to BCC
- BFCM paid for the installation of two new water standpipes on New Street

Employment (directly at market)

- Employment of local staff to work on stalls (300 +)
- Employment of local musicians for stage programme
- Employment of local staff via partners such as the security company

The BFCM works with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Restart programme to offer return to work opportunities for the long-term unemployed. In 2022 the BFCM has also employed staff with disabilities who have a DWP support officer to assist them into work.

3 Charity Engagement

- Royal British Legion: as part of the programme of cooperation with RBL (observing the 2-minute silence on the 11th and opening late on Remembrance Sunday) the BFCM supports the Poppy Appeal raising a four-figure sum in 2021 and 2022.
- Prizes to local charities for raffles / fund-raising activities (ad hoc basis) e.g. donation of food and drink tokens to Acorns Children's Hospice for participants in the Santa Fun Run in 2019
- Performance sessions on stage at weekends specifically for charity choirs to promote their charity (often linked to collecting money with a permit from City Centre Operations)
- Charity information stand on the steps in Victoria Square to highlight the work of charities (e.g. blood donation 2018 and 2019)
- Food (both prepared and ingredients) donated to United Community Activity Network (UCAN) and partners at the end of the market – coordination via BCC officer Panikos Panayioutou
- Donation of change to Lord Mayor's charities
- Christmas trees distributed on Christmas Eve to families in need / charities. This follows a successful pilot launched in 2018. This scheme has been run with the support of Homebase in Selly Oak who provide the equipment for the trees to be netted for transportation. (Unclaimed trees are sustainably recycled.)

4 Community Engagement

- Special schools programme: visits by children in Birmingham with special needs to explore the five senses. The BFCM provides free drinks for 'taste' and Wilsons Funfairs provide free carousel rides for 'feel'. On average 1,000 children per year take part in the visits.
- Saturday and Sunday mornings the stage is used to showcase community choirs and music featuring performers from schools, community groups, performing academies and a variety of other organisations in the city
- The BFCM loaned the Nativity Scene to St Chad's Cathedral annually for its Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services over a c. ten-year period. When a new Nativity Scene was commissioned for Victoria Square the previous one was permanently donated to St Chad's.
- Schools engagement: in 2019 the BFCM working with BCC organised an art competition in the city's schools to design the market's iconic red paper bags to mark the 20th anniversary of the market. The winning design by a pupil from St Columba's Catholic Primary School was printed on 100,000 paper bags and the pupil helped the Lord Mayor to officially open the market by switching on the lights. Similar initiatives are planned for future anniversaries.
- School visits by schools within Birmingham and from further afield
- Promoting inclusiveness: e.g. a BFCM manager took part in a show on Unity FM discussing employment opportunities compatible with Muslim beliefs and how / when to apply
- Host visits by police cadets

5 Tourism / Reputation

- BFCM organisers work with coach companies and group travel organisers to encourage and promote visits to Birmingham during the market period
- BFCM organisers are currently exploring the possibility of providing free food and a drink to coach drivers when companies register their visit in order to capture better data about coach visits
- Supply of text and imagery to accommodation providers and national press
- Positive media coverage both in the UK and Europe
- TV coverage in Germany
<https://www.msn.com/de-at/finanzen/top-stories/einziger-deutscher-weihnachtsmarkt-in-england/vi-AAR4L3N>
- Positive media coverage extends outside of Europe, e.g. 2018 saw an unexpected surge in Chinese visitors to the market (both UK based and tourists) after an article in the China Morning Post listing Birmingham as one of twelve beautiful Christmas markets in Europe that readers should visit
<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/travel-food/article/2174724/12-beautiful-christmas-markets-europe-you-should-visit>
- Winner 3 years running of What's On Best Outdoor Event in Birmingham (2017, 2018, 2019)
- Multiple requests received annually by BFCM, BCC press office and Film Birmingham for permission to film at BFCM

The German British Chamber of Industry and Commerce (GBC) hosts a networking event in Birmingham each year timed to coincide with the market. The BFCM supports the event which starts indoors at a GBC member organisation and then moves onto the market. This event sees the GBC Director General and his staff travel from London to Birmingham to facilitate the event. Although the event is classed as a 'regional' event it is advertised to GBC members nationally and usually has a good turnout.

BFCM organisers regularly receive approaches to establish new markets elsewhere in the UK and abroad and / or requests for help and advice / sharing best practice based on the success of BFCM and its benefits to Birmingham. In the past three years approaches have included:

Requests to establish and run new markets: 2 local authorities in London, 1 English city, 2 private commercial partners in London, 1 commercial partner in the West Midlands, 1 Chamber of Commerce in the Republic of Ireland, a number of overseas local authorities and marketing organisations

Requests to provide stalls to existing markets: 1 from a English city, 1 from Northern Ireland, 1 from the Republic of Ireland

Requests for advice / help: numerous including one major UK city

6 Christmas in Birmingham

- Loaned infrastructure free of charge to the City Social Christmas Event (for local traders) in the Navigation Street underpass for a number of years as it sought to establish itself
- 2021 Partnership working with the other Christmas events and Colmore and Central BIDs on marketing activities to promote Christmas in Birmingham including a financial contribution. BFCM has again invested staff time and a financial contribution to partnership working in 2022.

7 Corporate Social Responsibility (selected points)

- At the past two markets (2019 and 2021) the majority of staff have been paid above the Living Wage. From 2022 all staff will be paid at or above the Real Living Wage
- Modern Slavery: BFCM has actively implemented a modern slavery policy and in 2021 reported a suspect to West Midlands Police
- Partnership working with City Centre Retail Chaplains to facilitate chaplaincy support for visitors and staff to the market

8 Environment (selected points)

- From the outset BFCM has used real mugs and glasses
- Fat and oil used at the market is recycled for bio-fuels
- BFCM has switched to LED lighting
- Plastic bags were banned in favor of paper bags more than a decade ago
- Over the past two markets organisers have been phasing out single-use plastic where possible and will continue to work on reducing single-use plastic
- Reduction in food waste by donating foodstuffs to charities in the city
- Christmas trees donated to charities and families in need – the remainder are recycled
- Website encourages visitors to use public transport
- Use of modern, high-efficiency generators with low emissions. Used only as needed and switched off overnight.

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Birmingham, March 2023