

The logo for 'dingy butterflies' features the text 'dingy' in a lowercase, rounded sans-serif font, with 'butterflies' in a similar font below it. To the right of the text is a stylized butterfly icon composed of two overlapping circles; the front circle is filled with diagonal hatching lines.

Dingy Butterflies CIC is a social enterprise that works across Gateshead, developing community art projects and events with artists, residents, local communities and organisations. We work with local residents and artists in co-creating projects that explore alternative economics and futures; community wealth building models; increase participation and local decision making; improve creative and digital skills; and support local services in health, wellbeing and community engagement. Through creativity we want to rethink the place where we live, work and play, with the intention of tackling the inequalities that are felt in our communities.

www.dingybutterflies.org

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INTRODUCTION

This report looks back on the work Dingy Butterflies CIC undertook from March 2020 to June 2021. This time period starts with the first lockdown and the sixteen months that followed.

When the pandemic struck and the first lockdown came into effect in early 2020, Dingy Butterflies CIC were in the process of re-evaluating the work we had been doing over the last few years. As a community and place focused creative organisation - based in Gateshead, North East England - we were exploring ways to become more community-led and focused, develop further creative projects with artists and sustainable in the long term.

Finding ourselves confined to our homes and away from the people we worked with, did not mean our work stopped. It made it more urgent and required us to adapt quickly, rethink our role in supporting people, and be more resilient. It focused us on our purpose and objectives, and to act quickly to support people and organisations in this time of need. We adapted to new ways of working and communicated through online technology with our peers, but understood the needs of our communities and our role in supporting them. In this report we show:

1. How, through creativity, we supported our community in this difficult time.
2. How we have developed as an organisation.
3. How we are thinking about the future direction and our evolution as a community-led organisation

The report is concerned with how we have worked with communities, local organisations and artists and creative people in Gateshead over 2020 and 2021.

REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR GONE BY, NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE...

When the country first went into lockdown in March 2020, we, at Dingy Butterflies CIC, started to wonder what our role was during this difficult time. We asked ourselves many questions and not always felt we had the answers. We were left wondering how we were going to run community projects and events, how we were going to connect to people and support our creative community. Most importantly we questioned how we could be useful through creativity in a time of need.

However in times of crisis, comes resilience, community spirit and solidarity. This time of need required us, and others, to adapt, think quickly and be flexible to support the most vulnerable in our community in Gateshead. It also gave us an opportunity to stop, think and consider our future direction and values. In particular how we can support our local creative community, and those most vulnerable, immediately as well as in the long term.

Conversations with organisations, individuals and community groups in Bensham & Saltwell and the wider Gateshead community, questioned how we would engage those with little or no digital technology in the community. Many organisations in the early stages of lockdown went fully online turning their community engagement output digital. We realised that this would not work for us and the communities we work with. Many lacked access to digital technology and were digitally excluded, lacking both

equipment, such as laptops and services, such as wi-fi.

Alongside this we continued to explore strategies of community-led work through alternative economic, social and community models, such as community wealth building as a means to tackle inequalities and disadvantages. These run deep within the recent and current political climate - ten years of austerity, the potential implications of leaving the EU, and the effects of COVID-19. We wanted to find ways to combat this, by exploring and implementing collaborative ways of working, such as co-creation, to support individuals, the diverse communities in Gateshead as well as our local creative community. Working collaboratively and with each other rather than on behalf of others is integral when working in such communities.

I was really interested in how this project was focused on connecting to people without internet access – something I hadn't heard other charitable organisations do it helped fuel my creative practise in a time where I myself was struggling with the lockdown, a personal creative practise can be quite isolating in the best of times. This project came at a great time to help focus and have a change from my own work. Having to factor in the way other people learn and work was a great way to start feeling connected to the outside world again and thinking outside of my own 'bubble'

Daisy Macari, artist



CONNECTING AND CREATING IN GATESHEAD

June 2020 – June 2021

2

Creative programmes produced supporting the wellbeing of people living in Gateshead.

1

Report written exploring Community Wealth Building for the Best of Bensham Collaborative

1

Key note presentation at 'Mapping Gateshead: Current Creative & Cultural Landscapes'

13

Artists commissioned from across Gateshead including visual artists, contemporary artists, creative writers, poets, actors/performers, an art therapist, illustrators, designers, a beekeeper!

£24,000

Funding received from:
Arts Council England,
Best of Bensham Collaborative
and Catherine Cookson Trust

'10x10 Creative Gateshead', 2020
Art created by Gateshead Carers



14

Gateshead organisations collaborated with, including Bensham Grove Community Centre, Gateshead Council, Best of Bensham Collaborative, Shipley Art Gallery, The Comfrey Project, Gem Arts, Big Local Gateshead, Tyneside Mind, Gateshead Carers, ReCoCo, Young Women's Outreach Project, St Chads Community Project, Creative Youth Opportunities, The Chev.

10x10 CREATIVE GATESHEAD

10x10 Creative Gateshead brought together 11 Gateshead based artists in collaboration with community and creative organisations and groups across Bensham and Saltwell. The programme came out of conversations with Gateshead residents and organisations concerning how we could support the wellbeing of local residents who needed support in this time of emergency and who have little or no access to digital technology. There was a concern that, as the world went digital, people who were digitally excluded would not be able to access support and services.

Through a successful funding bid to Arts Council England Emergency Fund, and further support from Best of Bensham Collaborative and the Catherine Cookson Trust, a call out was made to artists living and/or working in Gateshead. From nearly 40 proposals eleven were chosen and teamed up with organisations in the Best of Bensham Collaborative. The artists worked with members of each organisation to develop two activities each, one for adults and one for young people.

These booklets showcased a diverse mix of art forms and innovative ideas that helped people learn new creative skills or rediscover old ones. Activities had a connection to Gateshead allowing participants to find out more about their local area or to explore new places. The aspiration was for individuals and families in the area to feel more connected to their local community.

Five hundred of both booklets were printed and 200 of each came with art materials and were delivered via our community partners. Information on each artist and the organisations involved was included. The booklets were also downloadable from our website, and through our partners for the wider community of Gateshead and beyond. Artwork created by the community was presented as an online gallery on our website.

<https://www.dingybutterflies.org/10x10-creative-gateshead/>

It's great to have something to take your mind away from what is happening at the moment in the world.
The Comfrey Project volunteer



'10x10 Creative Gateshead', 2020



10x10 CREATIVE GATESHEAD

11	11	2	2	2
Gateshead Artists	Community Partners	Mental Health Organisations	Food Parcel Schemes	Primary Schools

16 Gateshead organisations gifted with **1020** booklets

195 booklets with art materials to adults

199 booklets with art materials to young people

324 further booklets to young people

302 further booklets to adults

The Artists...

Barbara Keating, Bridget Hamilton, Daisy Macari, Iris Priest, Julia Leonovs, Katie Bell, Liv Hunt, Pui Lee, Saya Naruse, Shiori Naruse, Tess Denman-Cleaver



Community partners...

refugee services, mental health organisations, a young women's project, creative organisations, Big Local area, carers organisations, older people groups, an art gallery, community organisations and social enterprises, food parcel services, young peoples' projects and primary schools.

The funders...

Arts Council England, The Catherine Cookson Trust and the Best of Bensham Collaborative

10x10 CREATIVE GATESHEAD



Julie Leonovs, '10x10 Creative Gateshead', 2020

I was partnered up with an organisation where a lot of the packs were going to people who have English as a second language. This challenged my work creatively which in turn has benefited me as an artist. I have maintained the relationship post the project and now volunteer with them regularly and plan to come back later in the year to run creative sessions.

Liv Hunt, theatre-maker and facilitator

It was an exciting way to link our volunteers with innovative, creative activities that would help engage and support them during lockdown. We really liked the idea of working with one particular artist to develop ideas collaboratively that were very accessible especially for people whose first language may not be English.

Katherine Lowe, Session Coordinator,
The Comfrey Project

It has given me something positive to think about and to be proud of. The experience has definitely reinforced a strong desire in me to help those who are struggling within the community and I definitely think if I can make positive changes to improve the mental health and overall wellbeing of others then that can only be a good thing!

Pui Lee, artist

Pui demonstrated a wonderful and deep understanding of our client group and of the importance of good mental health for our overall well being. Her understanding of poor mental health was incorporated so superbly into the work.

Lisa MacDonald, Wellbeing and Resilience
Projects Manager, Tyneside and
Northumberland Mind

10x10 CREATIVE GATESHEAD

I liked the fact that we could choose what to do with the knowledge that there was a whole team in place to make sure everything was delivered quickly and effectively. It gave me an opportunity to just get on with some simple physical making, and a chance to meditate on what is really important during lockdown. A chance to think and notice what is of essential value in a changed and changing world during a pandemic.

Barbara Keating, artist and beekeeper

We have been awarded the funds for a bee garden and some raised beds for local families. Barbara's inspiration was behind the funding application and so will have an impact here. So, overall the groundwork has been done in raising awareness, and flagging directions for future involvement.

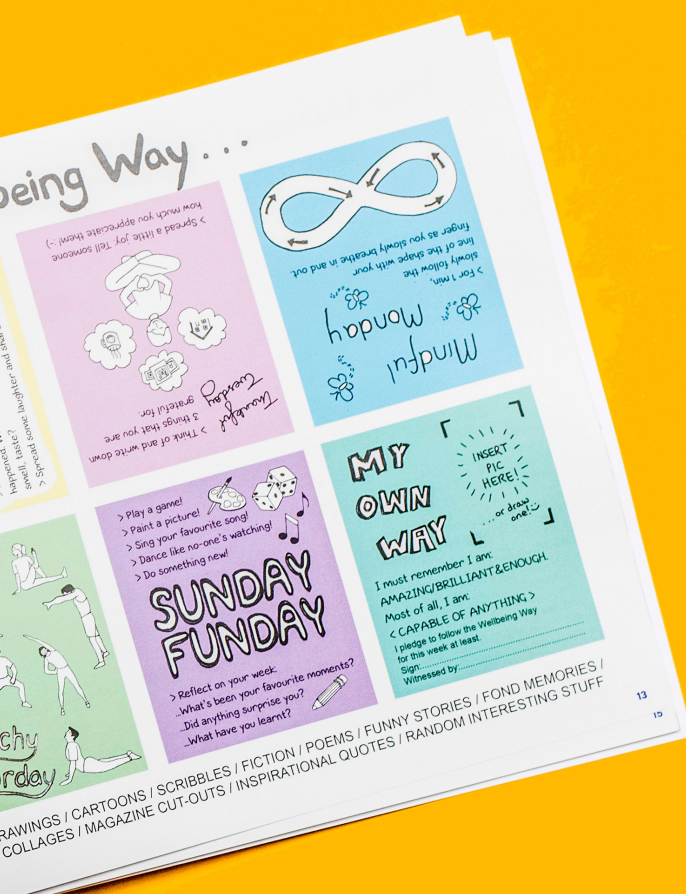
Chris O'Toole, Community Learning Manager,
Bensham Grove Community Centre

We had worked with artists previously but with '10x10' were much more involved with the recruitment of artists and developing the ideas through our local partners. The creation of activity packs from each of the 10 distinct partners was a clever way to reach many more people than would have been able to attend a session – it helped to create a sense that there was something happening in the community. This was a well considered set of activities that worked really well in the current context. It has brought benefits to local people and artists alike. Brilliant model for future work. We will be keen to collaborate with Dingy Butterflies and other local artist and organisations as we develop.

Jayne Hopkins, Best of Bensham Collaborative



10x10 CREATIVE GATESHEAD



'10x10 Creative Gateshead', 2020

We have had 18 carers engage in the project. This has meant they have had extra support via the pack. We are going to carry on the group as a creative group.

Nikki McCann and Emma Cockburn,
Gateshead Carers

'I've been going through a tough time over the past few months/years. I enjoy doing arts and crafts, I can get engrossed in what I'm doing and it takes my mind off my worries for a while.'

Gateshead Carers participant

This project seeded joyful and creative activities in ways that made reading pleasurable and reduced the fear of text in a highly visual way. It will give them a chance to have a small measure of creative control in a time when so many choices have been taken away.

Kirstie McAlpine, Borderline Books

It was full of wonderful ideas to support people coping as families within Gateshead during the summer period. We have such great local creative talent who have also been finding COVID-19 restrictions very difficult to survive economically. Through these creative activities they have helped to reduce isolation as well as support communities to make new connections.

Ednie Wilson, Gateshead Council Libraries
Arts and Heritage Service

10x10 PART 2

'10x10 Part 2' was a continuation of the work produced in '10x10 Creative Gateshead'. It took place at a time when organisations were starting to slowly open and we were beginning to be able to meet in person. Supported by Best of Benham Collaborative and funded through the DCMS, it involved employing 12 artists, 10 of which took part in 10x10 Creative Gateshead and teaming them with a local organisation.

The artists could use the paid time to run a creative workshop with their partner organisation, or spend the time to develop an idea for the future with the organisation they were teamed with. Depending on the artists and participants' situation, workshops and events took place online or in person in a venue with Covid social distancing rules in place.

This was an opportunity to continue the work we developed with '10x10 Creative Gateshead', to test run workshops online and in a socially distanced world, and feed into future projects and opportunities to continue working in Bensham & Saltwell with Gateshead artists.



10x10 PART 2

12

Gateshead
Artists

12

Community
Partners

100+

Participants

10

Workshops

2

Project
Opportunities

The Artists...

Barbara Keating, Bridget Hamilton, Daisy Macari, Iris Priest, Julia Leonovs, Katie Bell, Liam Scarth, Liv Hunt, Pui Lee, Saya Naruse, Shiori Naruse, Zivia Katz



Saya Naruse, Gem Arts, '10x10 Creative Gateshead Part 2', 2021

Community partners...

refugee services, mental health organisations, a young women's project, creative organisations, carers organisations, older people groups, an art gallery, Jewish girls group, community organisations and social enterprises, and young peoples' projects.

The funders...

Best of Bensham Collaborative

I have really enjoyed today. It was so nice to see everyone and I really enjoyed the music Liv played at the start. I have enjoyed creating my writing today. It gives me something nice to focus on. The session was really fun and made me think of how I describe things differently. I enjoyed linking my senses to the writing.

Comfrey Project participants

'Really enjoyed the session yesterday.....Thanks to Saya for being so patient and to you all for looking after us in such a creative way.'

'Yesterday was an interesting session as well as informative. I did a little more research about Hanami Festival and Sakura forecast. It's so interesting to know the history and story behind things. It's amazing to know other cultures. Altogether a great session and Saya delivered it very well.'

Gem Arts participants

'I liked the workshop and it was fun making the shapes. I didn't think my picture was going to look that good but it did.'

'I liked doing it and I made some more pictures after our youth club zoom cos I like doing it.'

Creative Youth Opportunities participants

'All the children asked Daisy when she was next coming back, they all enjoyed it thoroughly and were entertained the whole time.'

St Chads Community Project participants

We had a lovely time making the bee hotels and want to see Bees using them. It was good fun.

Bensham Grove Community centre participant



Saya Naruse, Gem Arts, '10x10 Creative Gateshead Part 2', 2021

Community Wealth Building

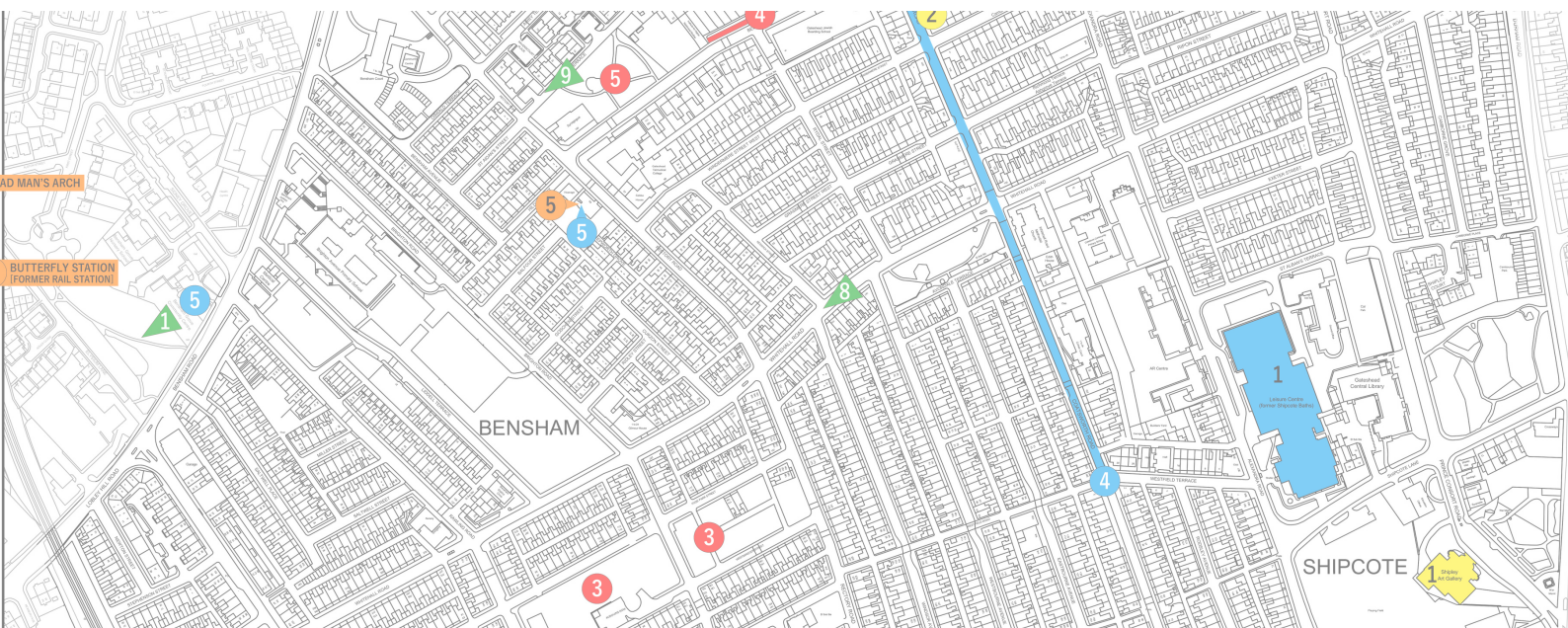
In late 2020 we were invited by the Best of Bensham Collaborative to research and write a report about alternative economic models and social structures that could work in Bensham & Saltwell. Conversations with collaborative members over the last year were concerned with what the future of the community would look like after lockdown and how we can support people. The report looked into ideas around Community Wealth Building, social enterprises and co-ops and how we, as a group of community organisations, could support people in taking control of their community and reorganise the local economies with the intention of tackling the inequalities and disadvantages that are felt in communities. The report can be found on our website called [Alternative Economies: Exploring new ways of working in Bensham & Saltwell.](#)

Mapping Gateshead

On 10 February 2021 we were invited to deliver the key presentation at the 'Mapping Gateshead: Current Creative and Cultural Landscapes', an AHRC research project between Northumbria University and Newcastle University in collaboration with Gateshead Council. This was the second of three online events that surveyed and critically re-imagined creative and cultural activity in Gateshead exploring the past, present and future. The presentation can be found on our website called [Mapping Gateshead: Current Creative and Cultural Landscapes.](#)

Prosper North

In February 2020 we were invited to take part in the Creative United programme Prosper North. This was a free business support programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Northern cultural heritage organisations. It involved a mix of free, tailored 1:1 business support, workshops, webinars and meetups to enable an increase in income and impact, and to become more resilient and explore social investment. This was initially going to be in person, with mentor support by Arts Consultant Vanessa Rawlings-Jackson, but became an online programme as a result of the lockdown. However with the programme becoming online and focused on how creative organisations could survive during the pandemic, mentored by Vanessa, the programme has greatly influenced the work we have undertaken in 2020 and into the future as discussed in this report.



Over the last year we have worked directly with thirteen Gateshead artists and creative people and over thirteen local organisations. One of the aims of all the work we have undertaken in 2020 and 2021 has been to support local artists during this difficult time. We will take this on in future work, through developing projects and opportunities for Gateshead artists and other creative people, to create new art and develop their art practice in a supportive environment. This will include being a champion and advocate for best practice and fair pay, alongside working with local artists, organisations and residents of Bensham & Saltwell. It will involve working with artists, creative people and local residents as co-creators, co-curators and key decision makers in both the creative and strategic sides of the work we do.

I have only been working freelance full time since January 2020, so the opportunity to meet other local artists and discover more about their work has been brilliant. It was good to work to a specific brief and intended audience during a time that has felt quite hard to be inspired. It has taught me a lot about pitching for commissions and how to work with different creative organisations.
Bridget Hamilton, Writer & Creative Producer

During lockdown I had found it hard to find the motivation to look for new projects to get involved with, or even to just go out and take more photos. I found this project united us artists and organisations and allowed us to feel more connected and inspired during lockdown. I really enjoyed the whole process and felt very privileged to be able to contribute to the project. It made me realise how much we have lost touch as a society and how important it is now, more than ever to encourage creativity, mindfulness and a more thoughtful peaceful way of life.
Saya Naruse, performer and actor

'10x10' encouraged me to continue being creative at a time with limited opportunities. It certainly gave me faith and hope in the future of community arts in such uncertain, scary times for creative's. It also allowed me to collaborate in new ways and think around barriers for 'virtual/ distanced engagement'. It helped me develop a more fluid and responsible approach to collaborative working, as activities were not prescribed by the call out, I allowed the participants to shape the activity they wanted to see in the booklet, whilst maintaining my creative input and facilitation style.
Katie Bell, artist



FUTURE PROGRAMMES & DIRECTION

What then can we do and what is our role in supporting communities in Bensham & Saltwell?

The last year has enabled us to think about our position, values, aims and goals and how we work with people, organisations and artists. We have solidified ongoing partnerships and worked with artists and organisations we haven't worked with before developing new relationships and partnerships. As a small community art organisation with the equivalent of 0.5 full time staff the amount of work and connections we have created has been astonishing. It is something we are immensely proud of and shows what we can do when given the opportunity. We have adapted, reflected and created spaces to work within not just for us, but for local artists, residents and organisations and explored economic and social alternatives and ways of living and being.

The effects of the pandemics will be felt for a long time, and communities, including the one's we work with, will feel these effects and be challenged by them. Going forward we want to create new spaces, develop new partnerships, and support Gateshead artists to create new art and explore new ways of working. We want to work with local people and organisations to develop projects and ideas through engaging with creativity and exploring new ways of living, working and playing within our community. This will be done by:

1. Working closely with local artists and creative people to develop a creative programme exploring the social, economic and environmental issues affecting our community.
2. Developing a long term programme working with community wealth building as a starting point.
3. Supporting artists and organisation through fair pay and equitable decision making.
4. Supporting and instigating community led local leadership models and ways of co created working and decision making.
5. Participatory action research as a model that acknowledges existing knowledge and skills and new collective knowledge.

This can only be done through increasing our capacity and levels of resource, which can only be done through increased support. It would allow us to be more embedded in the communities we work with as well as led by them in the long term.

Living in Gateshead I think it very important to support the arts and culture of the North East. I think this project spoke to me as I believe that art is so vital in human life and any chance to support children and adults to be creative is such an exciting and important thing especially during a pandemic.

Shiori Naruse, Print and Pattern Designer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all the artists and organisations and individuals we have worked with over the last year and those who have supported our work and advised us in our future direction.

In particular Vanessa Rawlings-Jackson as our mentor on the Prosper North programme, our board of directors, and members of the Best of Bensham Collaborative.

Thank you also to our funders Arts Council England, Best of Bensham Collaborative and the Catherine Cookson Trust during this time

If you want to find out more about the work we have done in the past and be involved in and support our future work visit: www.dingybutterflies.org

To work in partnership with us as an artist or organisation you can contact Ben on info@dingybutterflies.org



WHAT ARE THEY?

'Fireworks displays' 'Roads' 'Essential Things' 'Public Toilets' 'Museums' 'Restaurants' 'Housing' 'Transport' 'Street cleaning' 'Phone boxes' 'Cinema' 'Care homes' 'Charities' 'The Council' 'Hospital' 'Parks & Gardens' 'Bridges' 'Buses' 'Police' 'Trees - we

Our old house is fallow now, a ghost, a husk, in a dry field in sniffing distance of the chip shop. The council scattered seeds for grass there but the birds ate them before the rain even had a chance to fall. The wind will bring others, straggly goose grass, dandelions, it will resist order and grow a different kind of



Image credits: Dingy Butterflies CIC (pages 3, 16), Dominic Smith (page 2) Gateshead Carers (pages 4, 7), Daisy Macari (page 10), Saya Naruse (pages 11, 12), Toby Lloyd (page 16), Tom Hewitt (page 16), Marion Botella (pages 5, 6, 8, 9, 14,16) and graphics by Morph Creative (front cover)