



Inclusive Exeter New Exonians Project Final Evaluation Report

September 2025

'It (the documentary) gives an idea of the lives and challenges that ethnically diverse groups have experienced living in Exeter. I feel proud that despite our challenges, we not only persevered but we are contributing to the city in our different fields of expertise.' Community member.

'For me, the film demonstrated the individual stories of those who were interviewed. They have decided to stay and live here because Exeter is a beautiful place to live. There are many opportunities, jobs, and public facilities that are essential for people living in Exeter. Living in a diverse community showed social cohesion, unity, and strengthened the wider community.' Audience member.

'The project has been amazing. There are some things to learn but overall, it's been really good. We have shared the stories of ordinary men and women ...'
Delivery team member.

Richard Malfait (Independent Evaluator)

R. Malfait Consulting Ltd.

Email: r.malfaitconsulting@btinternet.com

Telephone: 07808 297859

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Project outline and summary of outputs	3
3. Findings – impact, challenges and learning.....	4
Impact and difference made by the New Exonians Project	5
Key strengths and achievements in the project delivery	7
Challenges and possible learning areas:.....	7
4. Project follow up – stakeholder suggestions.....	8
5. Recommendations	10
6. Concluding comments.....	11

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the independent evaluation of the New Exonians Project (also subsequently referred to as 'the project'). The project was led and delivered by Inclusive Exeter through a core partnership of the Devon Bengali Association, the Filipino Community Association, the Exeter Malayalee Association and Bitpod (a subcontracted, specialist videography company). It was funded on a one year basis by the Heritage Fund and commenced in June 2024. The broad aim of the project was to capture and raise awareness of the heritage stories of people from ethnically diverse communities who live and/or work in Exeter, by producing and sharing a short documentary style film.

The final evaluation of the New Exonians Project was commissioned by Inclusive Exeter and undertaken by Richard Malfait, an independent evaluation consultant and the author of this report. The evaluation was completed during the period July to August 2025 and its purpose was to explore the impact and learning achieved through its delivery. Contributions in the final evaluation process were made by a combined total of 20 individuals. These included 12 members from the three migrant

heritage communities who were interviewed and featured in the New Exonians documentary. A further eight individuals from Inclusive Exeter, Bitpod and two other professionals working in peer organisations also contributed in evaluation consultations. The final evaluation process also reviewed and drew upon feedback gathered by Inclusive Exeter in the community workshops and screening events that formed part of the project delivery.

All contributors in the evaluation engaged openly, reflectively and constructively in the final evaluation process which is greatly appreciated. Special thanks are extended to the people from migrant backgrounds who shared their time and stories in the making of the New Exonians documentary and who also supported the evaluation process.

The New Exonians documentary can be found in the archives of the South West Heritage Trust and can also be viewed on YouTube by clicking: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04pC233J4V8>

2. Project outline and summary of outputs

The New Exonians Project was established by Inclusive Exeter to capture and share the heritage stories of people from ethnically diverse communities who live and/or work in Exeter. The main vehicle and output of the project to fulfil this purpose and to share the heritage stories was the production of a short documentary entitled 'The New Exonians'. The broad outcomes that the project and the New Exonians documentary aimed to achieve or support were set out in Inclusive Exeter's grant application to the Heritage Fund and are summarised below:

- Capturing and sharing the heritage stories of people from migrant backgrounds who have settled and built new lives (and communities) in Exeter.
- Widening understanding of the people who live and work in Exeter.
- Increasing empathy between cultures and enhancing social cohesion.

- Supporting integration, reducing isolation and improving the sense of wellbeing of people from ethnically diverse communities.

The project was led by Inclusive Exeter but delivered through a partnership approach that included: the Exeter Malayalee Association; the Filipino Association; the Devon Bengali Association; Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter Phoenix. Key events including engagement and preparation workshops with community members and event screenings are shown in the table below:

Workshop/screening event	Date
Filipino Community Association – community engagement workshop	16th Sep 2024
Devon Bengali Association – community engagement workshop	14th Oct 2024
Exeter Malayalee Association - community engagement workshop	21st Oct2024
The Filipino Community Association’s Christmas Celebration	21 st Dec 2024
The Exeter Malayalee Association’s New Year’s Celebration	25 th Jan 2025
Exeter Library (public screening)	22 nd April 2025
Exeter Phoenix (public screening)	23 rd May 2025
Royal Albert Memorial Museum (public screening)	24 th May 2025
Killerton House (public screening)	20 th June 2025
The Devon Bengali Association’s Eid Reunion	22 nd Jun 2025
Online hits/YouTube viewings (to September 2025)	119 viewings

3. Findings – impact, challenges and learning

‘(The film) made me look back on my journey to UK. Others can know about how and why people are coming to UK. People with different dreams and expectations of life and how we are dealing with new changes.’ Audience member.

Feedback on the New Exonians documentary was collected by Inclusive Exeter at each of the community workshops and viewing events that took place within the project delivery. The full and

collated analysis of this feedback is available from Inclusive Exeter on request. The event feedback is consistently very positive and correlates closely with the project feedback gathered independently in the final evaluation consultations with stakeholders.

In the final project evaluation, all stakeholders, including community members, the project delivery team and external stakeholders were asked if they 'agreed or disagreed' that the process of producing and sharing the New Exonians film was making (or is likely to make) a positive impact against its intended aims and outcomes. Their collated responses are shown in the table below:

Intended outcome / difference to be made	Agree	Partial	Disagree	NR/DK ¹
Widening understanding of the diverse communities who live and work in Exeter	18 (90%)	1 (5%)		1 (5%)
Supporting integration of new and diverse communities	15 (75%)	3 (15%)		2 (10%)
Reducing isolation	10 (50%)	5 (25%)		5 (25%)
Improving wellbeing	12 (60%)	3 (15%)		5 (25%)

Impact and difference made by the New Exonians Project

'Watching this film helped me to understand other peoples' backgrounds and to see other people from other cultures as being part of our wider community. Since I have watched this film, I feel more comfortable mixing with people who are from a different background to me.' Audience member.

Evaluation stakeholders who were consulted in the final evaluation process agreed that the New Exonians Project has produced a valuable, informative legacy resource (in the form of a short documentary) that successfully captures and shares some of the experiences and stories of people and communities who have migrated to the UK and settled in Exeter. The process of making a

¹ NR/DK – 'No response' or 'I don't know'

documentary of this type was a new and valuable learning experience for Inclusive Exeter and for the partner and community organisations who helped to make the film. In this context, the project has been a very useful pilot which can inform future consideration and possible implementation of follow on initiatives that build on its delivery. The main areas of impact, value and achievements of the New Exonians Project, as described in event feedback and evaluation consultations, are recorded in more detail in a separate document (which is available for review from Inclusive Exeter). The findings are summarised in bullet form below:

- The project succeeded in 'giving voice to' and sharing the stories of migrant community members who are proud to be part of Exeter's evolving and diversifying community.
- The documentary captures and shows the pride, strength and dignity of people and communities from migrant backgrounds who have made the city their home and have become the 'new Exonians'.
- The quality of the filming and final documentary production by Bitpod was professional and the main project output is of a high standard.
- Community members enjoyed sharing their stories of migration and settling in Exeter, of overcoming challenges and of living, working and contributing in the wider community.
- Audience member feedback after screenings confirms that they found the documentary content interesting and informative. Audience members have especially enjoyed listening to the personal stories of migration to the UK and of settling in Exeter.
- The documentary is described a helpful resource for raising awareness and understanding of migrant experiences in Exeter. However, in audience feedback, significant numbers of viewers said they would have liked the story sharing content to have been broader and in more depth. Several suggested having a closer focus on fewer individuals if there is a follow up initiative.
- The wider impact and value of the documentary against the project's broader aims (for example including awareness raising and supporting cohesion) over a longer term will become clearer over time after it has been seen by more people and more diverse audiences.

Key strengths and achievements in the project delivery described by stakeholders included:

- The production of the New Exonians documentary has created a valuable heritage record and community resource. It successfully captures the personal stories and experiences of people who came to Exeter from abroad to build new lives and communities.
- The collaborative partnership working between Inclusive Exeter, community based groups and Bitpod reflected their shared commitment to the project and enabled its aims to be successfully delivered.
- The flexibility and commitment of Bitpod (the production company) in 'going the extra mile' ensured that challenging deadlines (for example during holiday periods) were met and that high quality in the documentary production was achieved within the constraints of a tight budget.

Challenges and possible learning areas suggested by stakeholders included:

- Early changes in filming methodology, the withdrawal of the first production company and switching to a second company to ensure professional quality of documentary caused a short delay in getting started.
- Achieving project targets for interviewee participation and balancing this with the story sharing aims of the project in a 'short film' documentary format was challenging. The depth and scope of the shared stories that could be achieved was impacted.
- It was difficult to identify a cross section of interviewees whose stories, experiences, availability for filming and communication skills aligned with the purpose, needs and time frames in project delivery.
- It was realised that the need to film good quality and usable 'first time' interview footage within tight time frames and budgets would be hard to achieve within the project's original plan to train community based volunteers to conduct interviews. The decision to engage a specialist company (Bitpod) to conduct both interviewing and filming roles was probably the safest approach to

ensuring the capture of good, useable footage within deadlines and budget constraints, thus enabling the final production of a high quality documentary.

- Scheduling and coordinating dates for key delivery workshops, filming interviews, editing processes and allowing time for final review and completion processes was challenging. In part this was because of the relatively short project completion time combined with a slightly delayed start, but it was also compounded by the difficulties of communication and progressing tasks with interviewees and teams during national and religious holidays.
- Exploring and capturing difficult experiences (for example relating to housing, racism, finding work, etc.) in the context of filmed interviews and conversations was difficult. Audience and delivery team members in feedback and evaluation consultations reflected that these are known to be common experiences for many migrants and felt they were not represented in the film content. Several reflected that some more content and references to such experiences would have given a more realistic balance and been useful in helping the project achieve its aims.

4. Project follow up – stakeholder suggestions

All evaluation stakeholders were asked whether and if so how they would like the New Exonians Project to be followed up or built upon. All respondents were keen for the project to be followed up with similar documentary style initiatives that share personal and community experiences of the challenges but also the positive impacts and shared benefits of migration. The ‘what next’ suggestions from all stakeholder groups are listed in bullet form below:

- *Inclusive Exeter and its partners can take this forward to shape even more impactful and community rooted work in the future. The future projects can grow even more and vibrant, connected and sustaining.*
- *Share and use this video with the wider community to share stories. Showcase it.*
- *I would love there to be more films like this.*

- *I think there is scope for a further documentary.*
- *Do a follow up - our city is multicultural. So it's better to involve other people or communities.*
- *Aside from the film, I think another way (of raising awareness / supporting integration) is to hold forums with ethnically diverse people as speakers. This is an interactive way where the public can directly ask questions.*
- *I'd like to hear from people from all parts of the world. Would like to hear more about cultural differences, values and celebrations. How we as a community could share our skills, stories and learn from each other.*
- *Future work could go further by partnering with local institutions like the University of Exeter to weave in migration data, historical roots ... it helps audiences place personal stories in a wider social and historical framework.*
- *Do more like this - it will help the ethnic minorities.*
- *Think about doing a short series of more in depth personal stories as a follow up – each could focus on different challenges. Different contexts – at our drop in sessions we work with people who have been trafficked, racism, slavery, trauma for example. All people who are trying to make Exeter their home.*
- *Do follow up films with more recent stories about peoples' experiences. Not as 'lite' next time. Maybe include a story of an asylum seeker and refugees.*
- *Include more diverse communities and their voices. Use social media and other platforms to maximise reach and impact. Including family and sharing their ideas too would be great.*
- *Include more people and communities next time.*
- *It (the NEP) was good but I think it could have gone deeper about some of the bigger challenges like racism. But this would be hard with limited time – good that it had a balance. The current format would need to be different to go into more depth about the challenges and personal stories more. For now, this was good. It came at a good time – with Reform getting more popular.*
- *Look at different generational families and how things have changed (or not) over time.*
- *Have a community follow up event. I would like to hear from people from all parts of the world ... more about cultural differences, values and celebrations. How we as a community could share our skills, stories and learn from each other.*

5. Recommendations

The recommendations offered below draw upon the event and screening feedback gathered by the New Exonians Project team and also on the final, independent evaluation consultations with community members and other stakeholders. The recommendations assume the possibility that initiation of a similar or follow through project may be considered in the future (as supported by evaluation feedback).

1. **Continue to promote and share the New Exonians documentary widely** – to a range of audiences and especially targeting the wider community of Exeter to raise awareness and achieve the project's intended outcomes over the longer term.
2. **Review and consider the learning points and follow up ideas suggested by stakeholders** – to inform project follow up and planning processes (these are listed under heading 4 above).
3. **Consult prospective delivery and 'expert' partners early in project concept discussions** – especially in project models that include activities and specialisms that are not embedded in the normal practice and structures of the lead organisation and project partnership.
4. **Review the delivery model and ensure supporting project budget** – to ensure access to necessary skills and expertise (in the project team or on a subcontracted basis) alongside realistic costing and delivery time frames against the project activities.
5. **Consider alternative approaches in identifying prospective interviewees** – ensuring that selection criteria prioritise and enable the engagement of people that fully meet the needs of the project. Criteria may include (for example) the relevance of their experience (as a migrant or refugee), gender and age (etc.), but could also include other factors, for example communication skills, comfort in front of a camera, background documentation (photographs, artefacts, etc).
6. **Consider best options and different formats for shaping and conducting and filming interviews** – several evaluation stakeholders suggested that a follow on project could aim for a more

conversational, facilitated style of on camera dialogue between peers or between a project worker and the documentary subjects (rather than between an experienced but more detached production team interviewer). This alternative approach could be an attractive option in several respects, for example enabling difficult experiences such as racism to be more comfortably shared and sensitively explored. However, it would likely require training, coaching and learning curve allowances to be factored into project planning, timeframes and budgets. It may also be a more challenging (and riskier) approach in follow on projects where time and budget require filming to produce 'first time' useable footage that can be edited into the documentary format.

7. **Documentary production, pre-screening review and editing** – aim to factor in sufficient time to enable pre-screening review and editing by the project delivery or steering group as part of the project plan and time frame.

8. Concluding comments

I hope that this short report provides a useful summary of the impact, value and learning that has been achieved through the delivery of the New Exonians Project and that it will usefully inform Inclusive Exeter's planning and delivery of future work. The project has clearly been well delivered and the New Exonians documentary has successfully captured and is sharing heritage stories and personal reflections of individuals and community members from migrant backgrounds. These stories may otherwise have been lost or unavailable to the wider community and audiences. Inclusive Exeter, Bitpod and the other organisations who worked in partnership to successfully deliver the New Exonians Project can be proud of this achievement.

Richard Malfait, Independent Evaluator

R. Malfait Consulting Ltd.

Email: r.malfaitconsulting@btinternet.com Telephone: 07808 297859