

Towards a Single Customer Engagement Platform

Background to City of Culture 2021

On 7 December 2017, Coventry was awarded the Title of UK City of Culture 2021. The City of Culture team is now in the process of planning the year itself, and the infrastructure to support it. The year itself will aim to bring 2.5m visitors into the city, distribute over a million tickets for events, and see an increase in visitor spend of 20%. 80% of the local population will experience at least three events through the year, and over 16,000 locals will be involved as active volunteers and participants.

Purpose of this Project

To consider the opportunities for implementing a single customer engagement platform, providing a ticketing 'portal' through which customers could buy tickets for City of Culture 2021 events in the same basket (even though they may be supplied by different cultural organisations) and access to other information and services to enhance their visit.

We are looking to start conversations with

- Ticketing middleware providers
- Web design and integration specialists

In order to implement, test and deliver a solution for 2021 and potentially beyond.

Aims of the project

For audiences:

- To provide a single live inventory of events for Coventry 2021
- To offer (on mobile, desktop and tablet) a single place from which to find out about events and purchase tickets for any City of Culture event, in one basket
- To facilitate many forms of ticket distribution and collection, including city-wide collection points and mobile ticketing

For Coventry Residents:

- For GoCV card holders, the ability to register for specific offers or deals, exclusive to Coventry residents

For existing cultural organisations with in-house ticketing systems

- To integrate (via API) with their existing ticketing/booking systems
- To make live ticketing inventory available via the City of Culture web channels in real time, without the need for managing allocations
- To support a single point of content entry (at origin) with content and events pulled through into ticketing and listings

For small/new producers without ticketing systems

- To provide a simplified setup to enable them to have their events ticketed on Coventry 2021 without the need for investment in their own box office system
- To provide basic sales reporting in real time
- To provide relevant services to event promoters, such as door lists, etc. in order to manage admission

For Coventry 2021

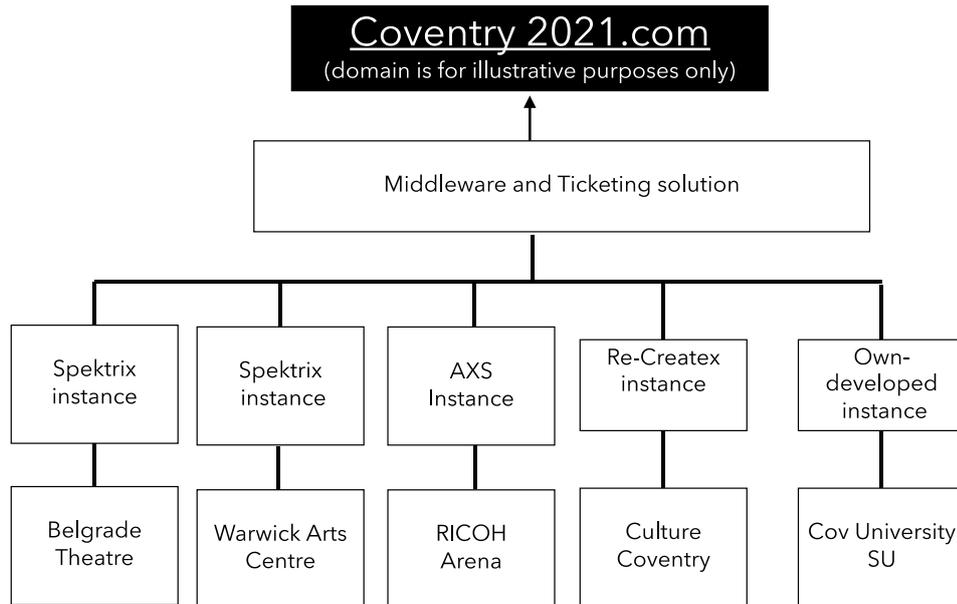
- The ability to 'ticket' directly on the system for any events solely produced by the City of Culture team, including free and 'timed entry' events.
- To enable ticketing / data collection for free and outdoor/off-site events as well as paid for and in-venue
- Ticket collection/delivery across various channels as well as physical points within the city
- The ability to build listings/what's on information from the ticketing inventory and supply listings feeds to other sites
- To enable data capture, including relevant GDPR consents, as well as the relevant permissions to pass data back to existing producers or venues where possible.
- The ability to run reports and analysis
- To facilitate research or evaluation from those who engage with City of Culture events through this portal (primary research and via analytics)
- The ability to integrate fully with email distribution software
- To provide a springboard from which to develop other services for City of culture attendees eg. travel, hotels, etc.
- To support a 'ticketing services' operation, to provide services to smaller promoters, or those without access to their own systems. This may include providing basic sales reporting; hiring hardware such as scanners and ipads for door entry; and possibly staffing for events as required.
- To explore the possibility of established cultural partners selling 'for each other' live from the originating venue's inventory.

Technical structure

- a) Live ticketing inventory from existing cultural organisations made available through a single portal

The diagram below shows how the five main venues' ticketing and content inventory would flow through (via API) to a middleware solution, which would then provide the single ticketing portal for events to be purchased from Coventry 2021 in a single transaction.

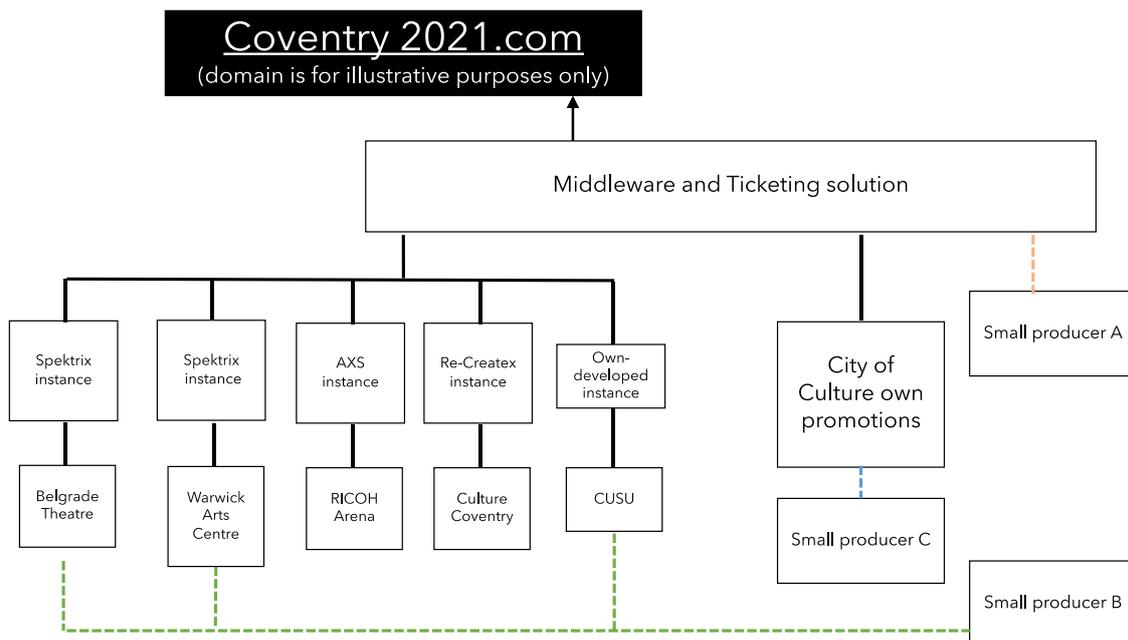
The RICOH arena has recently moved onto a new ticketing system AXS, Warwick Arts Centre is due to switch over to a new *Spektrix* system in Summer 2019, Culture Coventry is introducing a ticketing system *Re-Createx* for the first time, and Coventry University Students' Union is in the early stages of developing its own ticketing system for gigs and events across the city.



b) Live inventory from existing venues, plus ticketing for Coventry 2021 and independent producers

In addition, we will need the ability for

- Coventry 2021 to set up and ticket its own events directly onto the middleware system
- A variety of options for smaller producers to be explored, such as:
 - o Smaller producers to set up their events directly on the system (eg. A) (with some moderation from the Coventry 2021 team)
 - o Smaller producers to sell via one of the existing cultural organisations (eg. B)
 - o Coventry 2021 to set up and ticket events on behalf of smaller producers (eg. C)
- We will need to consider how (if possible) cultural partners could in effect sell tickets for each other – either by access to the central system as users, or via another route.



How data would be collected and managed

It is envisaged that Coventry 2021 would be the data controller for tickets purchased on its own domain, and therefore gain the relevant permissions for marketing communications in line with GDPR. This is a similar model to a standard 'ticket agency' model.

However, it would be imperative that the following data could be 'passed back' to the existing cultural venues via the API link:

- Name and relevant ticket details (to allow admission)
- Relevant data permissions relating to the venue (which would be asked at point of sale)
- A code enabling the venue to identify bookings made via this channel (for analysis purposes)

In addition, we would require the system to integrate with **Audience Finder** (the Audience Agency analysis tool) so that we can generate the analysis required for Arts Council England and other funders, as well as with Google Analytics for our own monitoring purposes.

All events held by the middleware system would need additional coding and reporting functionality for the City of Culture team such as the ability to code events that meet particular requirements for evaluation and reporting. (eg. 'Intergenerational events', 'Outdoor events' etc.).

We would also like to explore the possibility of the system using the **GoCV** Card database as a 'look up' facility for Coventry residents, enabling their contact details to be 'fetched' from the GoCV database (with the individual's consent under GDPR) along with any concession entitlement, which is also stored on that system.

Business model

In order for the Coventry2021 site to attract as many people as possible, whilst not upsetting the ecology of current audience relationships with venues across Coventry, it is currently envisaged that no additional booking fees will be charged to customers buying tickets via this route.

However, in order to pay for the system, Coventry 2021 may (similar to most ticket agencies) charge the promoter/venue a small 'inside commission' for processing the tickets (% tbc), and pass on relevant credit card processing costs. This has yet to be discussed, but the system will need the ability to charge inside commissions if necessary.

It is envisaged that ticket delivery costs would be borne by the customer. For example 'print at home' or 'mobile tickets' may be free, but ticket collection or postage may incur a small charge (tbc)

Ticket volumes

At this stage it is impossible to be precise about the numbers of tickets going through the system, but we expect annual ticket sales through the system to be in excess of 100,000 in 2020 and 300,000 in 2021.

Next steps

We're interested in having conversations initially with potential providers of a **middleware ticketing solution**, based on the information provided above and estimated ticket volumes.

Format for submissions:

Please submit the below by 12pm on Monday 21 January to Laura McMillan, Director of Operations and Legacy at Coventry City of Culture Trust on laura.mcmillan@coventry2021.co.uk.

1. Company credentials and background
2. Examples of similar projects
3. A description of how you would approach this project in terms of:
 - a. Methodology
 - b. System architecture
 - c. Timescale
 - d. Inter-dependencies and how you would manage them
4. Proposals for indicative costings based on:
 - a. One off costs:
 - i. System / software development including API integrations
 - ii. Set up and installation
 - iii. Hardware
 - iv. Training
 - b. Ongoing costs:
 - i. Annual software licensing costs or per ticket fees
 - ii. Hosting
 - iii. Support

For more information, or discuss the project further, please contact:

Katy Raines, Partner, Indigo-Ltd: katy.raines@indigo-ltd.com

Or

Laura McMillan, Director of Operations and Legacy, Coventry City of Culture Trust:
laura.mcmillan@coventry2021.co.uk