

# Our Willington

Hello my name is Emma and I go to school in Willington. On Saturday 5th October I participated in an event that showcased the very heart of our community. Our Willington was a unique, multimedia sound, light and performance event where the voices of Willington shouted loud! However, my journey to Our Willington started well over a year ago. On Saturday 30th June 2018 Willington played host to the Man Engine, and I, with my school, was a member of the Man Engine Choir. Our whole community was then overjoyed when the Man Engine won the "Best Event - Durham" category in this year's Journal Culture Awards. Since the Man Engine, I have kept in close contact with Northern Heartlands and was delighted when they announced they would be holding another event in Willington. I jumped at the chance to be a part of another event for our community!

On the night, it was amazing to see so many people from our community at the event. Before the event, I was lucky enough to be interviewed by Lonely Tower Film and Media, in order to give my perspective on Willington for the film. However, being a teenager I did not feel like I know enough about what Willington has to offer, and so my interview mainly consisted of my hopes and dreams for the future of Willington. This meant I wasn't quite sure what to expect from the film. After all, I only know Willington as the place many young people commute to every day for an outstanding education - I've never really explored what else it has to offer. On the night it was inspirational to hear so many different views in the film, ranging from young to old. Our Willington has made me realise that we truly have a place that we should be proud to call home. Not only should we remember the coal mine that once filled our area, but we should also remember the glory days like when Willington won the football at Wembley! We should also look towards the future with aspirations in our minds...

Leading up to the event, I attended many rehearsals for the Our Willington Choir. I can remember feeling quite nervous as these were songs that we had written ourselves, so we were not sure what the reaction would be from our community. Earlier this year Northern Heartlands worked with Opera North to create some beautiful songs that reflect the Northern Heartlands community, in order to create a Community Opera to be performed next year. The song we wrote in Willington, called "Crook and Willington Girls" was a song about what we would do in our area if we had a million pounds. Not that anything in our area particularly needs changing, but the song talked about how we can do anything (even change the world) if we only put our minds to it! By hook or by crook, we can make it happen! All of our songs received such a warm reception on the night, and got the reaction they deserved. It was nice to see so many people swaying along to the songs we had created!

Above all, on the night I remember feeling cold! To the people of Willington, thank you for braving the Autumn weather to come to the event. It was amazing to see so many people from our community in the one place, at the same time! The film talked about how the young and the old don't always see eye to eye, but when we come together as a community, such as for Our Willington, we are unstoppable! Together, we were able to reflect on the past, but also look towards the future with our united aspirations. What would we do with one million pounds in our community? We could do anything, if only we put our minds to it! On that cold Autumn night, the voices of Willington shouted loud and were heard by all.

These are our hopes. Our dreams. Our Willington.