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# Plymouth Pride 2020

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## The History of Plymouth and Plymouth Pride

Pride in Plymouth is a non-profit Community Interest Company which was formed to bring people and groups together to celebrate and promote the diversity and talent that exists within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities of Plymouth.

We work, in various ways, towards challenging and eliminating the discrimination and social isolation which have historically been an issue for LGB and T communities, in the United Kingdom and beyond, in the past.

As part of this work, Pride in Plymouth has, since 2012, organised and run an annual pride event in the city to create visibility and a temporary large scale space where LGBT+ people feel safe to express this aspect of their identity. Pride also provides a space where the wider city population can learn about the diversity that exists in the city. This event has grown substantially since its inception in Devonport Park in 2012 and the 2018 event, on Plymouth Hoe, was awarded a Herald City and Waterfront award.



Heritage and a sense of place in the city and its past is at the key of our outreach work as a great deal of our engagement centres around our nationally award winning community archive which was created through participation with the LGBT+ community as well as Plymouth City Council's Arts & Heritage Service and Plymouth University. Plymouth.

Throughout its history, Plymouth has been a port and home to the all the naval and military services. With homosexuality not being something that could openly be expressed in the services until the year 2000, that mind set had traditionally created a sense of LGBT lives being something to be lived undercover until the turn of the century. One interviewee of our history project recalled that, "For years people had said there was no way we could have a Gay Pride march in Plymouth. You know people would just be too worried about being seen by employers and neighbours and all sorts". That, coupled with a particularly brutal homophobic murder in 1995 led to Plymouth being seen as a place that would never celebrate Pride in the same way as other cities had.

The Plymouth LGBT Archive project began in 2011 and has been the cornerstone of Pride in Plymouth's work ever since. The project arose due to the lack of LGBT+ narratives in recognised archives and, through the collection of oral history interviews with members of the city's LGB and T communities we staged a direct intervention to reach out to these individuals and reflect these lives and their place in the city's history. This process still continues alongside our normal work and feeds into the yearly Pride celebrations. The initial events attracted over 1000 people and, after two years, our move to Plymouth Hoe in 2014 was prompted to make full use of the city's waterfront location and also to enable a parade in which was significantly longer and travelled a greater distance than Plymouth's only previous attempt at a pride parade in 2009. While organised by a previous LGBT group in the city is seemed significant this was a first attempt while Pride parades commenced in the late 60s for many other cities in the

UK. It felt significant that Plymouth's first attempt at such a display did not occur until around forty years later in 2009 due to the somewhat "unspoken" natures of LGBT lives until the archive project.

## Why 2020?



Since its inception, the regular format of previous Plymouth Prides has been a daytime summer event taking place in August. The event tends to start at 12pm with the parade through the city centre and then runs until 9pm at night when a series of parties at differing city locations are options for people wishing to carry on with the event. The afternoon event then includes speeches, music and entertainment along with stalls, information stands and traders.

Plymouth Pride is now the largest pride event in the South West beyond Bristol and the time seems right to make an application to be UK Pride in 2020. The day is more than just a one day event though and instead is a celebration of the ongoing work going on with Pride in Plymouth throughout the year. This includes the ongoing archive work and also work with the local police in tackling hate crime, work with young people in schools and with the children's charity Barnardo's. We support an increasing number of LGBT+ asylum seekers who find themselves in Plymouth, after fleeing persecution, due to its role as a dispersal city. We also find ourselves increasingly working with local businesses who wish to improve their offer for LGBT+ employees and customers. In the last two years, we have been approached by various firms and groups to put on additional events during the week prior to the day and in 2018 the major shopping centre, Drakes Circus, collaborated with Pride in Plymouth to create a week long

programme of events. These have included film showings, poetry nights, make up sessions and parties. For Plymouth Pride 2020 we have begun to take a more imaginative approach and are looking at week of events right across the city, prior to the day, which will include talks, exhibitions and workshops to create spaces around the city to explore LGBT+ heritage and our place in the city's present and future.

As a Pride organisation that values heritage and its place in our culture, 2020 is a particularly significant year for Plymouth as it marks the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower from Plymouth UK to Plymouth Massachusetts. The city is using this as a unique opportunity to commemorate the legacy of the passengers and crew who undertook the journey and to highlight their stories and heritage, which is embedded in communities across the UK, US and Netherlands.

The Mayflower 400 programme has been created to leverage this opportunity, aligning 11 core destinations in England with wider local, national and international partners and over 20 million US citizens descended from the Mayflower. It will deliver a world-class series of events, public art and wider content that will commemorate this exceptional voyage and provide a major ongoing impact across the partnership, knitting together communities, inspiring creativity and culture, driving economic growth, and promoting understanding and education.



Mayflower 400 will champion the values of freedom, faith and personal liberty that informed the original journey, and which continue to be articulated in the special relationship between the UK, US and Netherlands. At the same time, the commemoration will recognise the impact of the Mayflower's journey on Native American communities and address themes of colonialism and migration, providing an accurate, inclusive account of the Mayflower's legacy.

Also, following conversations with the Mayflower 2020 team, we are presently investigating links with other pride organisations based in other cities around the UK, who are part of the Mayflower commemorations, while also looking more internationally at links with Pride organisations in the United States.

As a result of all these factors we feel that Plymouth Pride 2020 has the potential to build on our ongoing work, to make a strong application to be UK Pride (and therefore achieve national and international attention for that year) and also be one of the major Mayflower events taking place in the city.



## **The Event in 2020**

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020 for the main stage event but to be preceded by a dedicated Pride Week in various locations around the city with support from businesses, groups, artists, theatre makers etc. Indeed, a yearlong programme is planned with discussions currently taking place around a LGBT+ literary festival in Feb 2020 to mark LGBT History Month.

**Location:** Plymouth Hoe, Royal William Yard, Drake Circus Shopping Centre and various locations around the city

**Timings:** The main event will run from 12.00 with the beginning of the parade until 9pm

in the evening.

**Size:** The event currently attracts around 10000 people to the main event on the Hoe. With the additional week off events happening throughout the festival that will increase greatly.

**Budget:** Currently the event cost around £12000 and we have secure a further £13000 contribution from Plymouth Culture to assist in our plans to increase the scope of the event in 2020. In conjunction with this, we have been invited to make an application to the Arts Council for further funding so this is taking place currently.

While we are keen to expand Plymouth Pride it remains fundamental to our work that the event is a free, non-ticketed event which is completely accessible for all of the LGBT+ community but also the city at large. In this way, it becomes an inclusive space in which any remaining barriers to communication and understanding can be broken down. Plymouth City Council fully supports Pride in Plymouth in this endeavour and are keen to see the even become the largest community Pride in the South West and beyond.

**Visitor Support:** As mentioned previously, more and more city businesses are working with us now to increase their offer for LGBT+ employees and customers. Local hotels, retailers,

We truly believe the 2020 could be the year that Plymouth Pride truly builds upon the distance it has travelled over the last seven years and develops itself into a significant community pride that provides something for the LGBT+ communities in the South West of the UK that is a significant celebration of who they are and can impact on their place in current culture for years to come.

