
Prejudice and Pride

An analysis of visitor engagement and response

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A list of RCMG research projects is available from <http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/research/rcmg.html>

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Introduction and context

Prejudice and Pride at the National Trust

The National Trust initiated a national public programme called ‘Challenging Histories’ 2017-19, in line with their 2015-20 strategy ‘Playing Our Part’, which sets out to develop an ongoing series of thought-provoking events and exhibitions.

The ‘Challenging Histories’ theme for 2017—*Prejudice and Pride*—focused on exploring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) heritage to chime with 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967. As part of the 2017 national public programme the Trust collaborated with the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. A team of researchers led by Professor Richard Sandell and including artist and curator Matt Smith worked across the Trust and with a group of around 12 properties to research and reveal LGBTQ histories. The collaboration was built around a number of focused aims and high-profile activities, and aimed to support the Trust’s ambitions and strategic priorities, in particular:

- To provoke people to think differently about history, identity and the world today.
- To increase the relevance of the Trust to people’s lives today.
- To support the Trust to develop its capacity to facilitate and enrich contemporary debate around place and identity.

Working closely with a cohort of properties, key staff and volunteers, the researchers explored the following research questions:

- How can we offer diverse audiences (new and existing) authentic, engaging and meaningful experiences and purposefully engage the public in debates surrounding LGBTQ history, culture and equality by researching, acknowledging and presenting the LGBTQ histories and associations in the places, stories and collections of the National Trust?
- How can we contribute to new thinking and practice related to the presentation of LGBTQ histories within the international heritage and museum field?
- How can the Trust develop and sustain its capacity to engage audiences around challenging histories?

This research team and a number of creatives (including artists, filmmakers, designers and composers), worked particularly closely with two properties – Kingston Lacy and Felbrigg Hall – to research, design and realise creative responses to the LGBTQ histories and stories at each site.¹

¹ For more information about the *Prejudice and Pride* programme and the creative interventions at Kingston Lacy and Felbrigg Hall visit – <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/prejudice-and-pride-1/prejudice-and-pride>

Visitor research

In 2017, a distinct research team from RCMG was commissioned by the Trust to undertake an in-depth evaluation and visitor study of *Prejudice and Pride* and conduct fieldwork at a number of properties. The team comprised of Professor Jocelyn Dodd, Director, RCMG; Dr Sarah Plumb, Research Associate, RCMG; and Jennifer Bergevin, Research Assistant and Teaching Fellow at the School of Museum Studies.

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)

As part of the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, RCMG combines academic rigour with practical experience of museums, galleries and heritage sites. Research teams are brought together to meet the specific needs and requirements of each project and their work to date has enabled RCMG to develop a unique set of skills, experiences and perspectives in capturing, analysing and interpreting the perspectives, experiences and voices of users, and non-users, of cultural organisations. Over the past 15 years, RCMG has developed considerable specialist expertise in this area, bringing academic rigour and innovation in research methods to bear on the challenge of understanding how museums, galleries and heritage sites effect change – in some form or another – in their audiences. Visitor research projects have included being commissioned by the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (GoMA) to evaluate their social justice programme *sh[OUT]* in 2009-2010 which promoted Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) human rights. The aim of the evaluation was to better understand the factors which have shaped the approach to this work and the ways in which a range of constituencies respond to, and engage with, the social justice programme.²

Research focus

The visitor research for *Prejudice and Pride* set out to enable the Trust to understand and capture evidence of the impact of its work on visitors, specifically in relation to these three key priorities:

- How are visitors prompted to think differently by the *Prejudice and Pride* programme?
- How does the programme impact visitors' (and Trust members') perceptions of the Trust's relevance to contemporary lives?
- How does the programme enrich understanding and stimulate debate about contemporary issues?

This report details the visitor research project and shares the findings of *Prejudice and Pride's* impact on visitors.

² For more information about the evaluation of the social justice programme *sh[OUT]* visit (2009-2010) – <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/sh-out>

Research methods

A mixed methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods, was utilised to generate data from diverse sources and multiple perspectives. This approach provided both breadth and depth to the evidence: quantitative research methods proved remarkably effective in revealing the overall proportions of supportive and negative responses to *Prejudice and Pride* across participating properties, whilst qualitative approaches, at a smaller number of sites, were essential in generating a more nuanced understanding of visitor engagement and response.

Three research methods were used, including:

1. Self-completion comments cards.
2. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews.
3. Emails and letters about the programme sent to the Trust by visitors and Trust members.

Comments cards

Self-completion comments cards were carefully designed, piloted and subsequently used across nine sites that actively programmed for *Prejudice and Pride* and a small number of Pride events. These included – Beningbrough Hall, Felbrigg Hall, Hanbury Hall, Kingston Lacy, Knole Park, Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Smallhythe Place, Sutton House, Wightwick Manor, and Birmingham, Exeter, Manchester and Plymouth Prides. The comments cards were administered and collected by Trust staff and volunteers. A total of 1522 comments cards were completed and returned.

The comments card (figure 1) stated ‘In 2017 the National Trust launched Prejudice and Pride. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked’ and asked visitors to respond to the question ‘Why does this matter today?’ Visitors were invited to write or draw their responses. Visitors were also invited to fill in further demographic information about themselves on the reverse of the card (figure 2).

Responses were firstly analysed through a particular lens to broadly understand the overall proportions of supportive and negative responses to *Prejudice and Pride*. They were then analysed in an open-ended way to interrogate the ideas emerging from them – these ideas were then developed into thematic categories to explore the visitors’ experiences and impact of the programme.

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

Please write or draw your response



Figure 1 Front of the Prejudice and Pride comments card

Please tell us something about you.

This information will help us understand our audiences and their views. You do not have to answer the questions if you do not want to.



National Trust

Age

Please write age if under 16 _____

- 16-25 26-35 36-45
 46-55 56-65 66-75 76+

Gender _____

Sexuality _____

Ethnicity _____

Nationality _____

National Trust Member Yes No

Property/Event _____

Date _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this response card. Your views are very important to us.

Please hand your completed card back to a volunteer, or place it in the box provided.



Figure 2 Reverse of the Prejudice and Pride comments card

Semi-structured interviews

Data was additionally collected in the form of semi-structured interviews that were approached in an open and conversational manner. Over ten days, 86 in-depth interviews, with 161 visitors, were carried out by RCMG researchers at five of the participating properties – Kingston Lacy (conducted over three days), Knole Park (two days), Smallhythe Place (two days), Sutton House (two days) and Wightwick Manor (one day). These took place from June to September 2017, during the height of the *Prejudice and Pride* programme of activity. Interviews lasted from 20 minutes to over an hour and were carried out with the visitors in the way that they had visited, for example – individually, in couples, and in small groups of family and friends.

The interviews explored people's responses to and experiences of events, exhibitions and installations that were part of the national programme, as well as their perceptions of the Trust's relevance to contemporary lives. Responses to the questions raised in the interviews, and conversations elicited as a result of the interviewing process, were analysed without a prior framework or structure to explore emergent ideas and themes, which were categorised and applied across the responses.

Visitor data from the comments cards and interviews was collected both directly after *Prejudice and Pride* specifically programmed events and as part of a general visit where visitors engaged with the programme through an exhibition, installation, intervention or new form of interpretation, as well as during the week and at weekends.

Emails and letters

Alongside the interviews and comments cards, a small number of visitor and member responses from emails and letters sent directly to the Trust were also collected and analysed as part of the broader visitor research.

Visitors participating in the study

The research focused on working with adults and some young people engaging with the programme through school visits (Sevenoaks School, Knole Academy, and St Mary's School at Knole Park), or attending with their families. Although an activity and response sheet for younger children visiting with their families was created to gauge children's responses to, and engagement with, the programme, very few children participated in the study. Participants of the research study came from a range of ages, but most were adults and many were retired. The majority of participants were white and British, however, participants who were interviewed as part of the research came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The overwhelming majority of visitors who participated in the research and engaged with the *Prejudice and Pride* programme (particularly those visiting properties), were members. Many had been members for a significant period of time and shared a strong support and loyalty for the Trust. Many were motivated to visit Trust properties whilst on holiday, some lived locally taking a trip to the property due to the weather or were looking for something to do on the spur of the moment, and a number were making the most of their membership

since retiring. A number of people visited properties, attended events or participated in workshops with the specific aim of engaging with *Prejudice and Pride*. However, significantly, the majority of the interviewees had not visited specifically for *Prejudice and Pride* and its associated activity but, rather they had come across it as part of a general visit and National Trust experience.

Key findings: The headlines

The following findings are drawn from the data collected as part of the visitor research and evaluation of the *Prejudice and Pride* programme.

Data collected on-property and at Pride events:

- 72% of visitors supported *Prejudice and Pride*.
- 12% of visitors responded negatively to *Prejudice and Pride*.
- 16% of visitors offered ambiguous/obscure comments about *Prejudice and Pride*.
- 100% of visitors to Pride events supported *Prejudice and Pride*.

Data collected on-property only:

- 71% of visitors supported *Prejudice and Pride*.
- 13% of visitors responded negatively to *Prejudice and Pride*.
- 16% of visitors offered ambiguous/obscure comments about *Prejudice and Pride*.
- The largest proportion of negative responses (37%) were collected from Felbrigg Hall. Nevertheless, even at Felbrigg Hall 51% of visitors were supportive of *Prejudice and Pride*, and the remaining 13% responded ambiguously.
- At Knole Park, Hanbury Hall, Sutton House and Kingston Lacy over 80% of visitors supported *Prejudice and Pride*.
- The largest proportion of ambiguous/obscure comments about *Prejudice and Pride* came from Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Smallhythe Place and Beningbrough Hall.
- Visitors' responses to, and engagement with, *Prejudice and Pride* fell along a continuum or spectrum in terms of the level and depth of criticism, acceptance, understanding, empathy, support and active championing of the themes it raised.
- *Prejudice and Pride* stimulated reflection and shifted attitudes in many visitors, and inspired action in some.
- Many visitors to *Prejudice and Pride* were emotionally moved and responded empathetically.

Quantitative findings

One of the reasons we wanted to collect data from a larger number of respondents was in order to gauge and broadly understand the overall proportions of support towards (and criticism of) *Prejudice and Pride* and the Trust exploring, revealing and celebrating LGBTQ histories and cultures.

1522 comments cards were completed and returned from nine participating properties and four Pride events. Figures 3 and 4 show a breakdown of the number of responses, alongside percentages, collected at each site. As the figures show, some sites collected and returned significantly more comments cards than others. For example, Kingston Lacy collected 311 comments cards over a two-month period during their *Prejudice and Pride* exhibition EXILE, and Beningbrough Hall collected 44 comments cards over a four-day live portrait painting and artist in residence event. 68 comments cards were collected at four day-long Pride events across the country, and 251 comments cards were collected at Felbrigg Hall from July till September whilst the newly-commissioned and created film 'The Unfinished Portrait' was shown at the property as part of the national programme.

Properties	Quantity	Percentage
Kingston Lacy	311	20%
Sissinghurst Castle Garden	290	19%
Felbrigg Hall	251	16%
Sutton House	179	12%
Wightwick Manor	131	9%
Hanbury Hall	114	7%
Knole Park	69	5%
Smallhythe Place	65	4%
Prides	68	4%
Beningbrough Hall	44	3%
Grand Total	1522	100%

Figure 3 Number of responses collected through the *Prejudice and Pride* comments card at each participating National Trust site and four Pride events

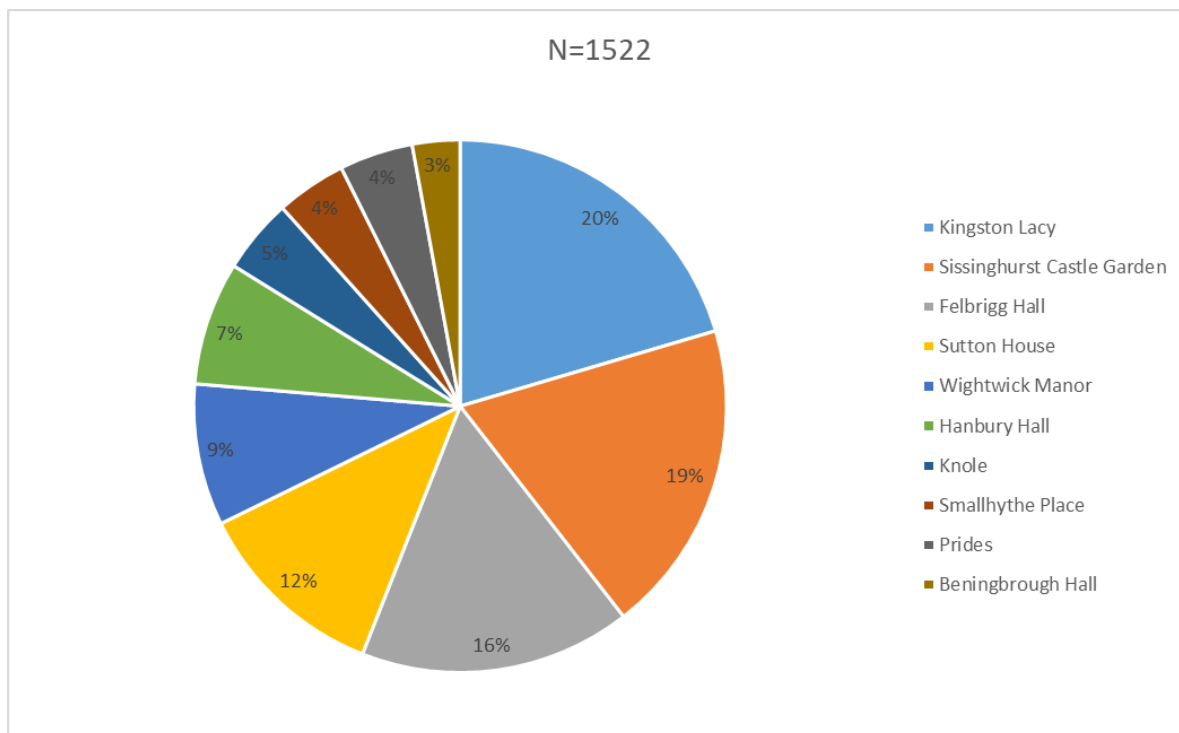


Figure 4 Percentage breakdown of responses collected through the Prejudice and Pride comments card at each participating National Trust site and four Pride events

Our initial analysis of the 1522 comments cards collected – a broad view of whether the responses were supportive or critical of the Trust putting on a programme that explored and presented LGBTQ history and culture – revealed that **72% of visitors were in support of *Prejudice and Pride***. Only **12% of visitors responded negatively** to the programme, whilst the remaining **16% offered ambiguous or obscure comments** (see figure 5). These three broad categories can be understood as:

Supportive – to distinguish responses which were predominantly positive in terms of support for the programme or the themes of LGBTQ history, culture and rights. Where a response made a negative value judgement on the quality or final execution of the associated exhibition, installation or event, but did share support for *Prejudice and Pride* and the broader theme of LGBTQ history, culture and rights being explored and presented by the Trust, it was judged as a supportive response.

Negative – to distinguish responses that were predominantly negative in terms of a lack of support or demonstrating objections to the programme or to the themes of LGBTQ history, culture or rights being presented at and explored by the Trust. If a response was positive in relation to the execution or quality of the associated exhibition, installation or event, but did not support the broader aims of the programme, or, for example, felt that *Prejudice and Pride* fell outside of the Trust's remit, this was deemed to be a negative response.

Ambiguous or obscure – to distinguish those visitor responses that proved difficult to categorise as either supportive or critical, which were judged to be irrelevant to the programme or the theme, or could not be interpreted due to being entirely illegible.

The categorisation of comments cards as either 'supportive', 'negative' or 'ambiguous' inevitably relied on the researchers making a judgement regarding which category the response 'best fit'.

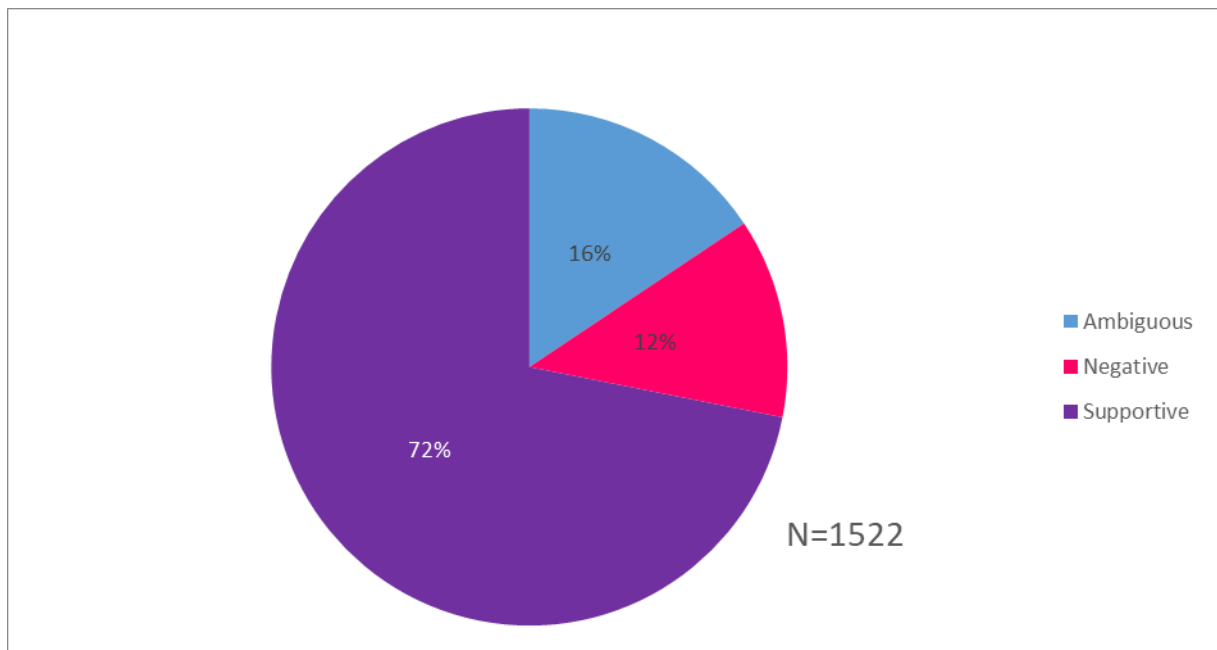


Figure 5 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards across all properties and Pride events

Not unexpectedly, we found that 100% of visitors to Pride events were supportive of the programme (figure 6), but with a relatively low number of people completing comments cards – 68 people – this equated to only 4% of the total respondents.

Prides

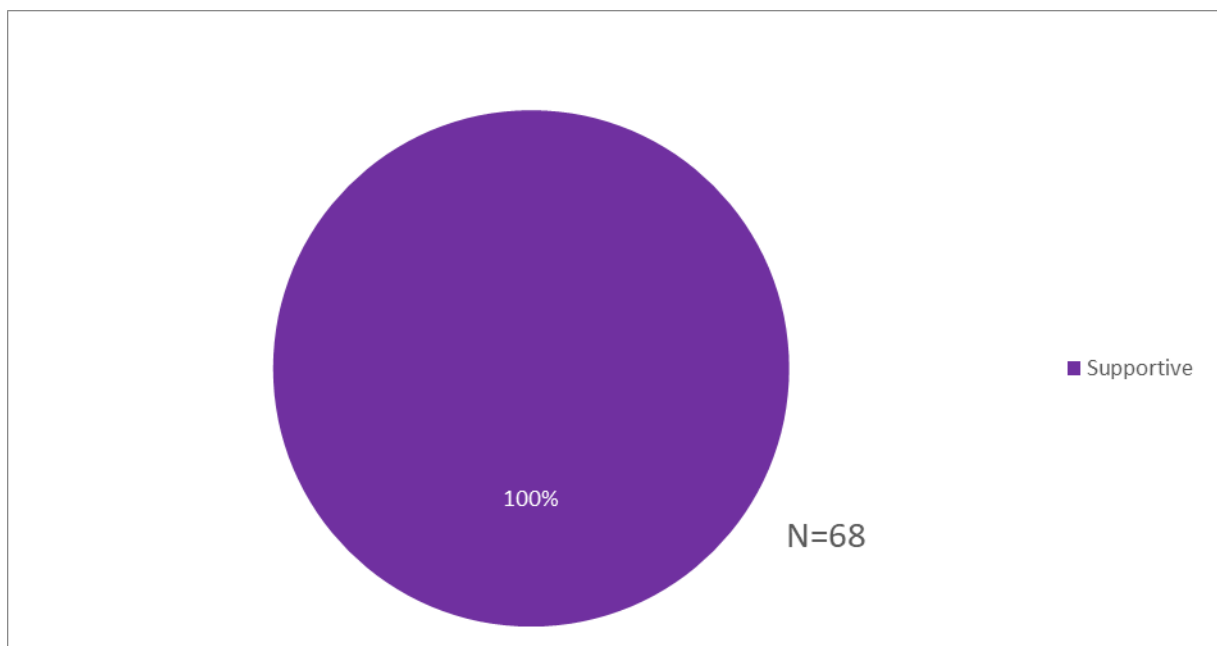


Figure 6 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Manchester, Exeter, Birmingham and Plymouth Prides

Excluding the responses from the four Pride events and solely focusing on visitors who experienced the programme directly on-property, we still found that **71% were supportive** of *Prejudice and Pride* (see figure 7).

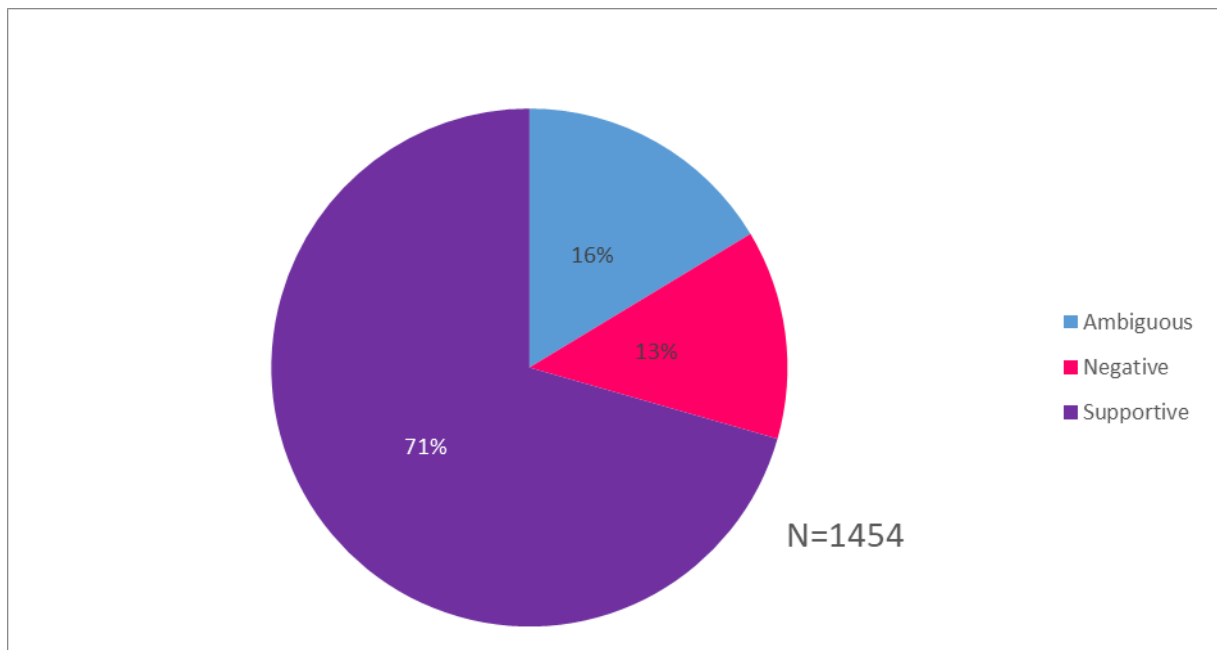


Figure 7 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards across all properties, excluding Pride events

Felbrigg Hall

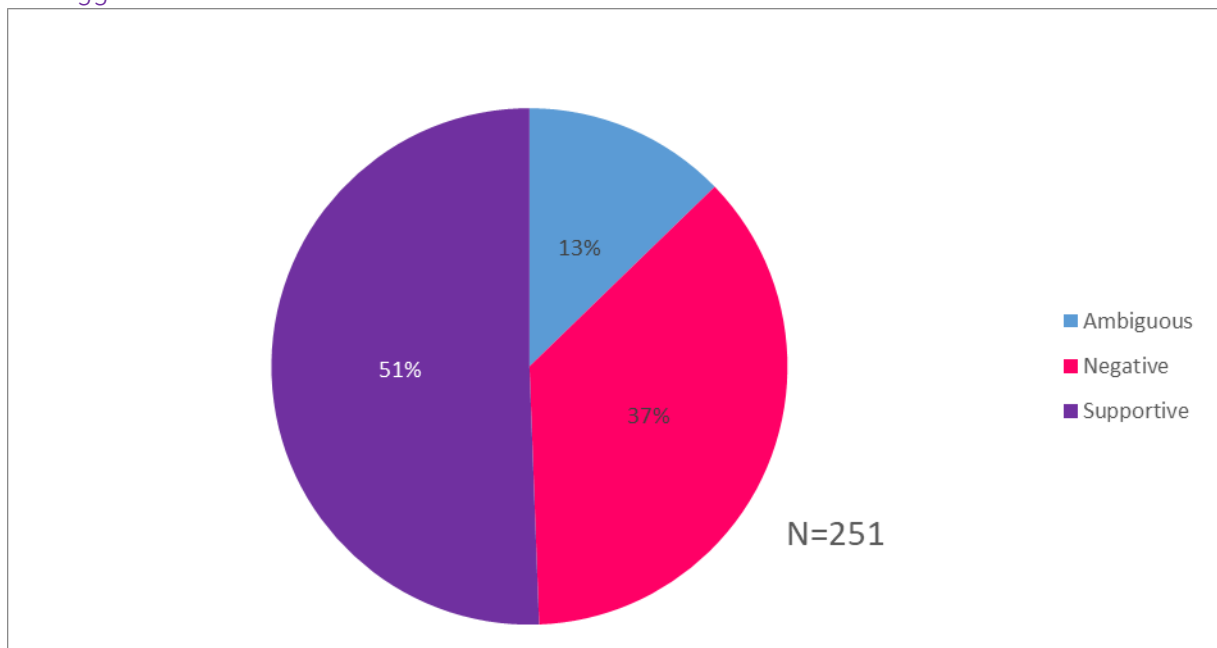


Figure 8 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Felbrigg Hall

Felbrigg Hall in north Norfolk (who presented the newly created film 'The Unfinished Portrait' which explored the Hall's last squire Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer) was subject

to the most critical and controversial press coverage during *Prejudice and Pride*³ and not surprisingly received the largest proportion of explicitly negative responses (37%) across the participating properties. Nevertheless 51% of Felbrigg Hall visitors were supportive of the aims of *Prejudice and Pride*, and the remaining 13% responded ambiguously (figure 8).

Where properties programmed specific events, workshops and performances for *Prejudice and Pride*, and, in particular, where visitors were required to pre-book a ticket or reserve a place, we found a higher proportion of positive responses, with visitors sharing their support for the programme. For example, the majority of comments cards collected from Knole Park in Sevenoaks, Kent, were gathered after performances of *Orlando: The Queer Element*, an immersive theatrical and cinematic experience that explored gender and the history of sexuality by Clay & Diamonds. Attendees included secondary students from three schools (Sevenoaks School, Knole Academy, and St Mary’s School) as well as general visitors attending an evening performance. 90% of respondents were supportive of the programme, with only 1% responding negatively (figure 9).

Knole Park

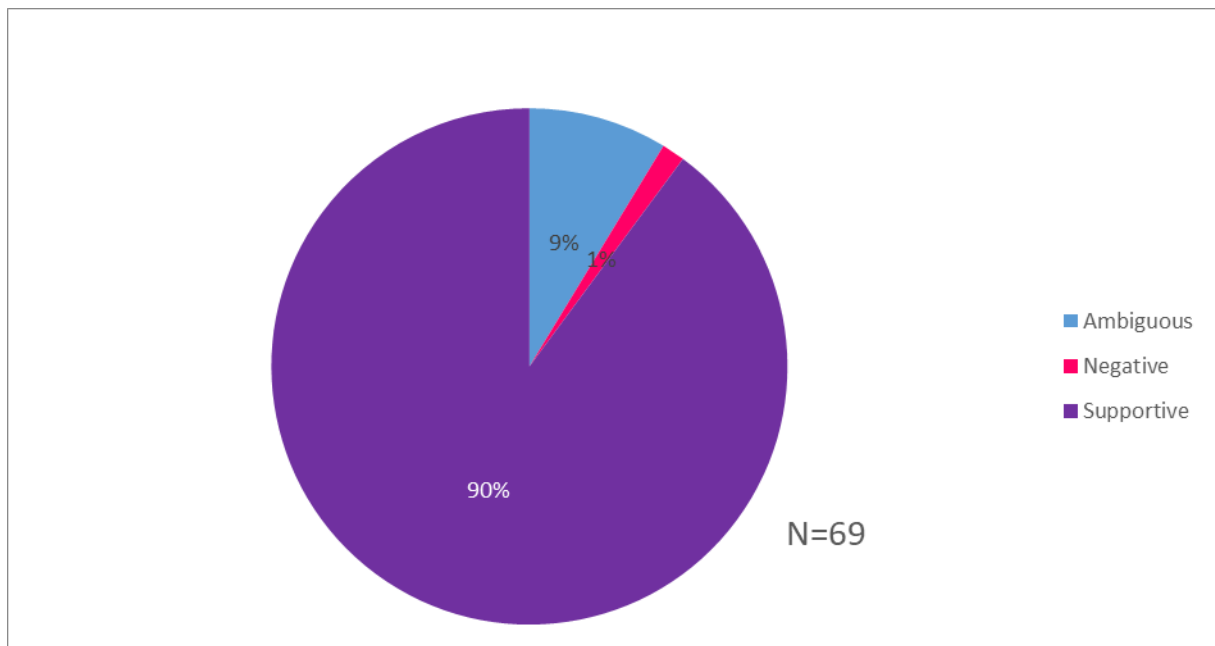


Figure 9 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Knole Park

In a similar way, Beningbrough Hall near York programmed a four-day event, where artist Tanya Raabe-Webber painted four different people’s portraits live, whilst having conversations with the sitters about their diverse perspectives on LGBTQ identity, freedom and expression, inviting the audience to join in the dialogue and respond creatively. In analysing the comments cards collected as part of the event we found that 68% of visitors responded with support, a small number negatively (2%) and a high proportion ambiguously

³ See RCMG (2017) for a fuller discussion of the Felbrigg Hall project and surrounding controversy. Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) (2017) *The Unfinished Portrait: Researching & presenting the life of Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer, Felbrigg Hall*, RCMG <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/prejudice-and-pride-1/THEUNFINISHEDPORTRAITresearchreportfinal.pdf>.

(30%). This may be due to the fact that many of the responses were drawn and did not directly relate to the programme or themes of LGBTQ history, culture, rights and identity or were difficult to categorise as either supportive or negative (see figure 10).

Beningbrough Hall

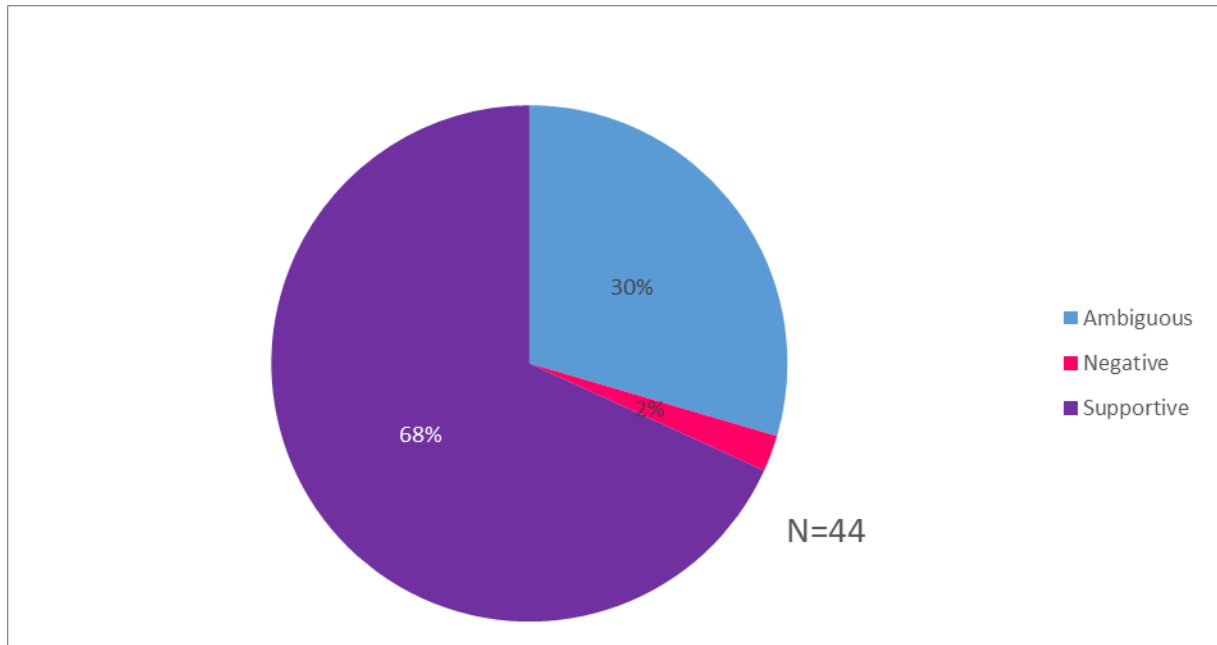


Figure 10 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Beningbrough Hall

Hanbury Hall

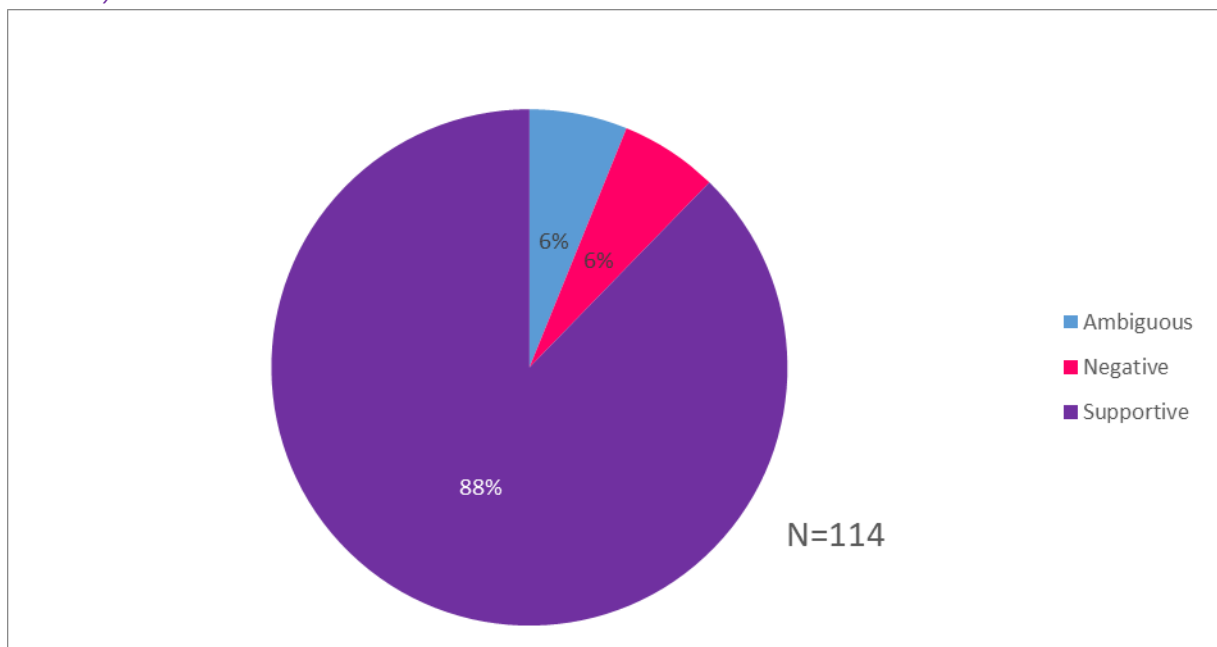


Figure 11 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Hanbury Hall

The majority of properties that actively programmed activity as part of *Prejudice and Pride* used a combination of approaches, which included a mixture of events, performances, talks

alongside mounting exhibitions, installations and integrating new interpretation in to the property as part of a wider offer. In every case a majority of respondents offered positive comments in support of the programme and the Trust revealing and celebrating LGBTQ history and culture. For example, 88% of visitors offered support at Hanbury Hall, located in Worcestershire (figure 11), who highlighted the dramatic Thornhill paintings that adorn their staircase and ceilings and explored the story of Achilles depicted in the work, focusing on his relationship with his lover Patroclus. Hanbury Hall invited artist Tom Marshman to create an artwork and performance in response to the painting and the chaotic nature of love and desire.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden (home of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West), and Smallhythe Place (home of Edy Craig, daughter of Ellen Terry, and her female partners Tony Atwood and Christopher St John), both in Kent, presented a number of exhibitions that highlighted the history of the people who owned and lived at the properties, alongside programming talks, performances and poetry events exploring how they challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality. Comments analysed from Sissinghurst Castle Garden revealed that from a large proportion of cards collected (290), 59% of respondents were supportive, 8% responded negatively and 33% ambiguously (see figure 12). At Smallhythe Place only 3% of the comments were negative, 66% were positive and the remaining 31% ambiguous (figure 13). The comments cards that were ambiguous at both Sissinghurst Castle Garden and Smallhythe Place included a large proportion where visitors had doodled or scribbled with no direct response to *Prejudice and Pride*.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden

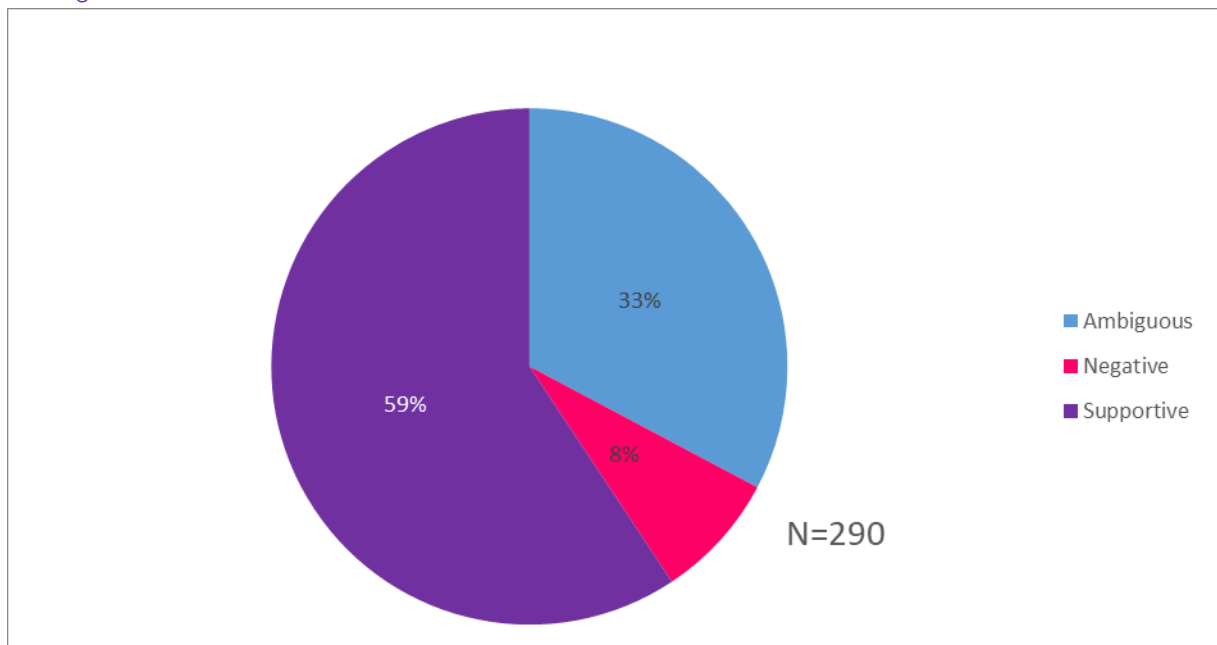


Figure 12 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Sissinghurst Castle Garden

Smallhythe Place

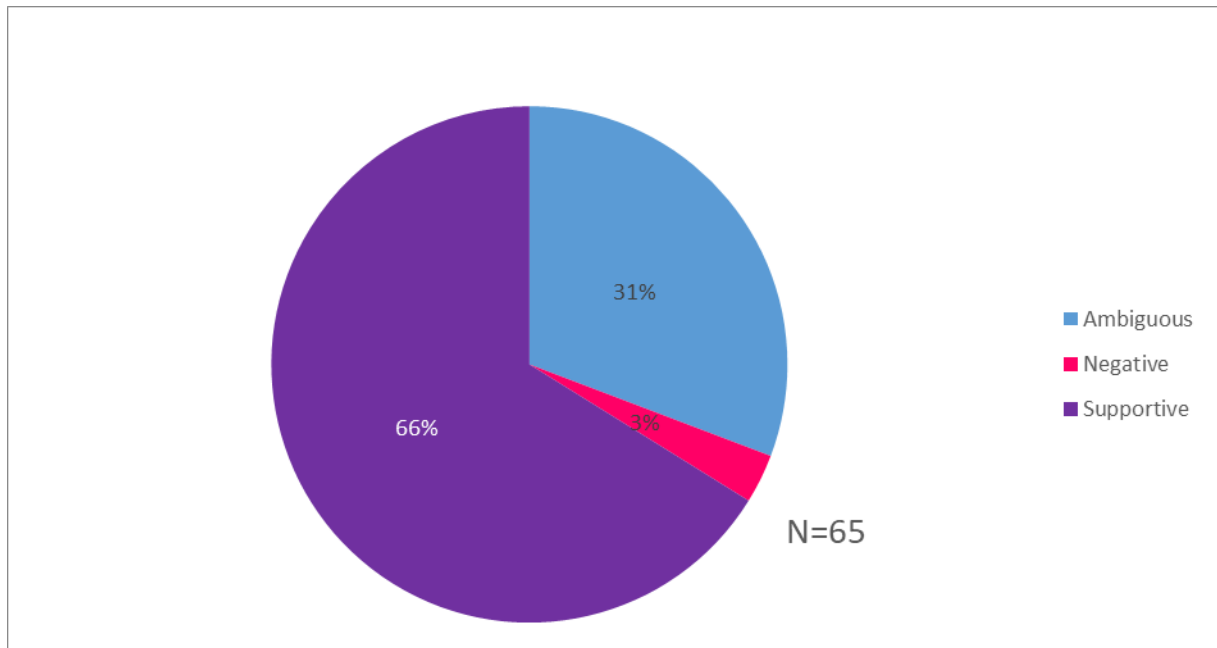


Figure 13 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Smallhythe Place

Wightwick Manor

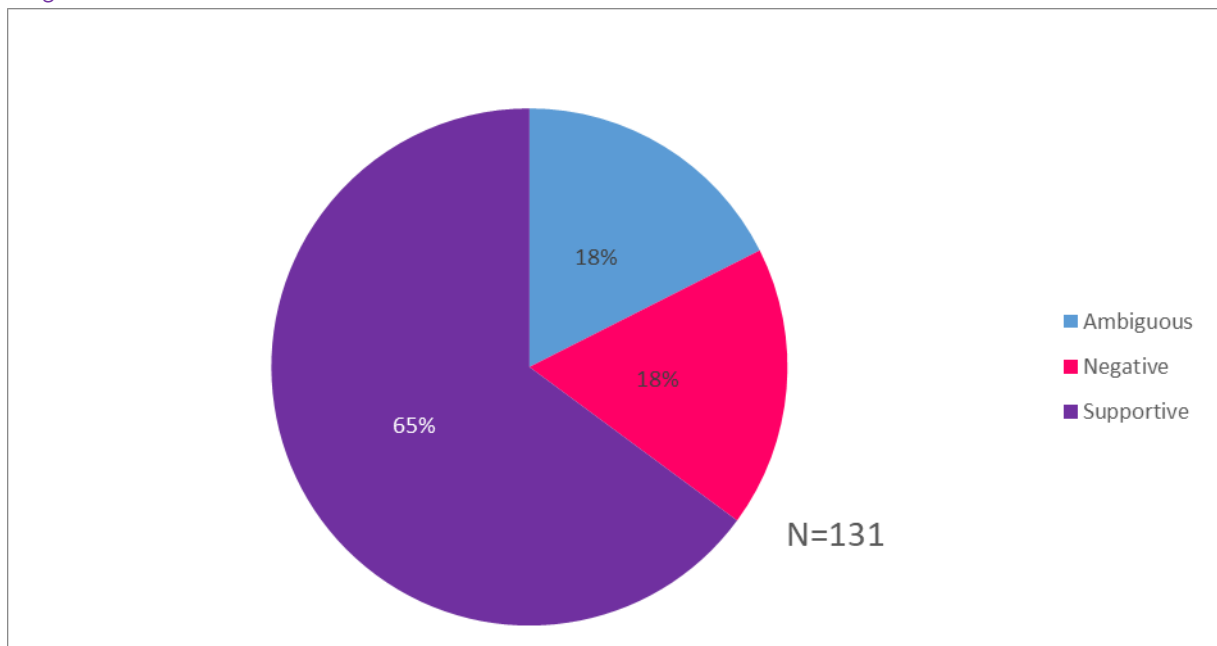


Figure 14 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Wightwick Manor

The comments cards collected from Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton, also revealed support for the programme with 65% of responses being positive (figure 14). This property revisited and reworked a number of their interpretation panels, alongside programming talks, to explore their rich collection of pre-Raphaelite paintings and drawings by Simeon Soloman from a new perspective. Working with artists in residence Simona Piantieri and Michele D'Acosta, Wightwick Manor also presented a new film to further interrogate and

reveal LGBTQ histories associated with the property, including how Solomon’s career was cut short when he was arrested for an illegal sexual encounter with a man and spent the rest of his life in poverty. Wightwick Manor also saw a slightly higher proportion of negative responses (18%), which might have a relationship with a number of controversial and negative press pieces appearing in the media during the height of programming (this point will be explored further later in the report).

Properties Sutton House and Kingston Lacy presented ambitious, large-scale exhibitions and installations that were threaded throughout the properties as part of a broader visitor offer.

‘Sutton House Queered’ was a year-long programme of exhibitions and events developed by, and with LGBTQ communities, including the ‘School of Anarchy’ exhibition and the ‘Weirdo Zine Fair’. Based in Hackney, London, Sutton House collected 179 comments cards, showing 84% of visitors supportive of *Prejudice and Pride* and a very small proportion offering explicitly negative responses (figure 15).

Sutton House

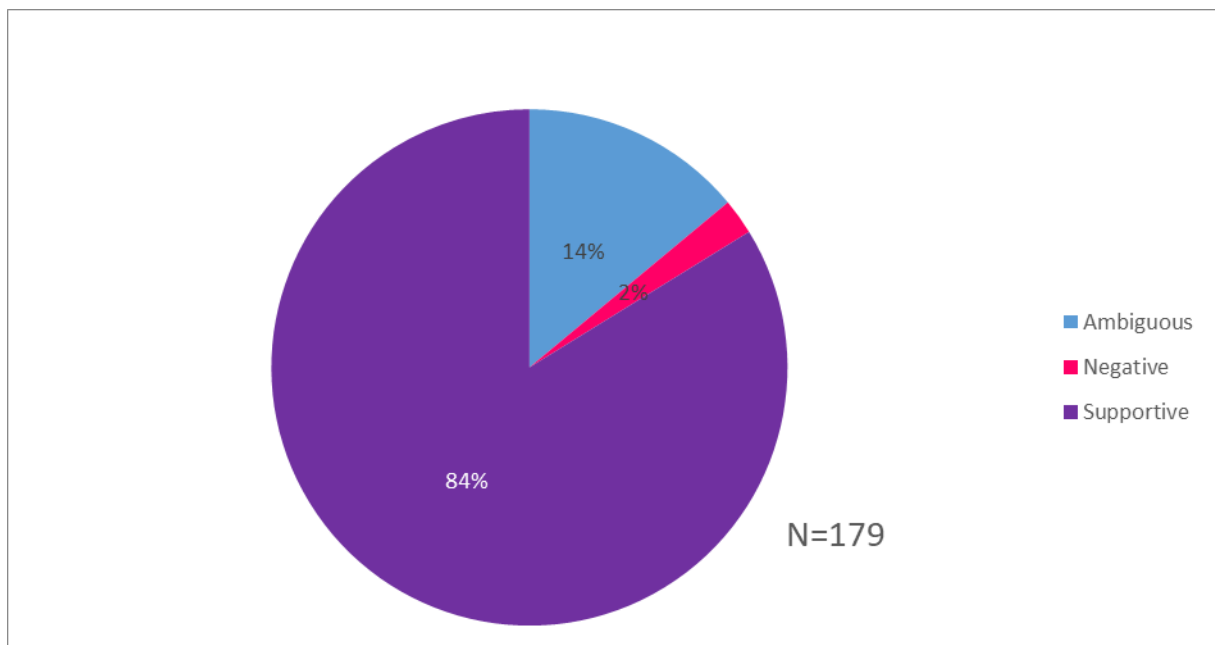


Figure 15 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Sutton House

Working in collaboration with Richard Sandell and a number of creatives, Kingston Lacy in Dorset mounted the research-led installation EXILE that considered one of the most remarkable stories of Kingston Lacy – William John Bankes’ exile in 1841 – revealing how this story helps visitors to understand the house they see on their visit, as well as inviting visitors to reflect on its relationship to the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBTQ community today. As figure 16, shows a significant majority of visitors responded with support (83%) for the Trust programming *Prejudice and Pride* and the revelation and reinterpretation of historic LGBTQ stories at their properties. Specifically, at Kingston Lacy, many of the negative responses (12%) often commented on the high quality of the installation, but believed that *Prejudice and Pride* went beyond the remit of the Trust.

Kingston Lacy

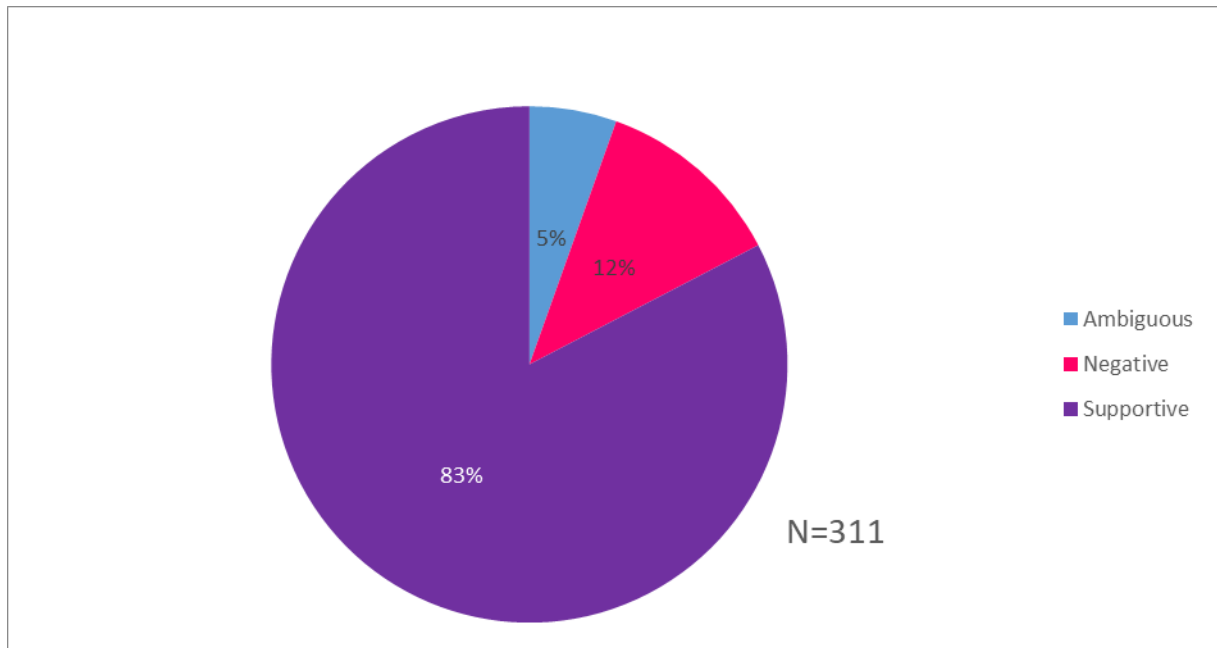


Figure 16 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards at Kingston Lacy

Media attention and influence on visitor responses

Comments cards were further organised in groups depending upon which month they had been completed by visitors. Figures 17 and 18 show the shifting proportions of supportive and negative responses made by those engaged with the programme.

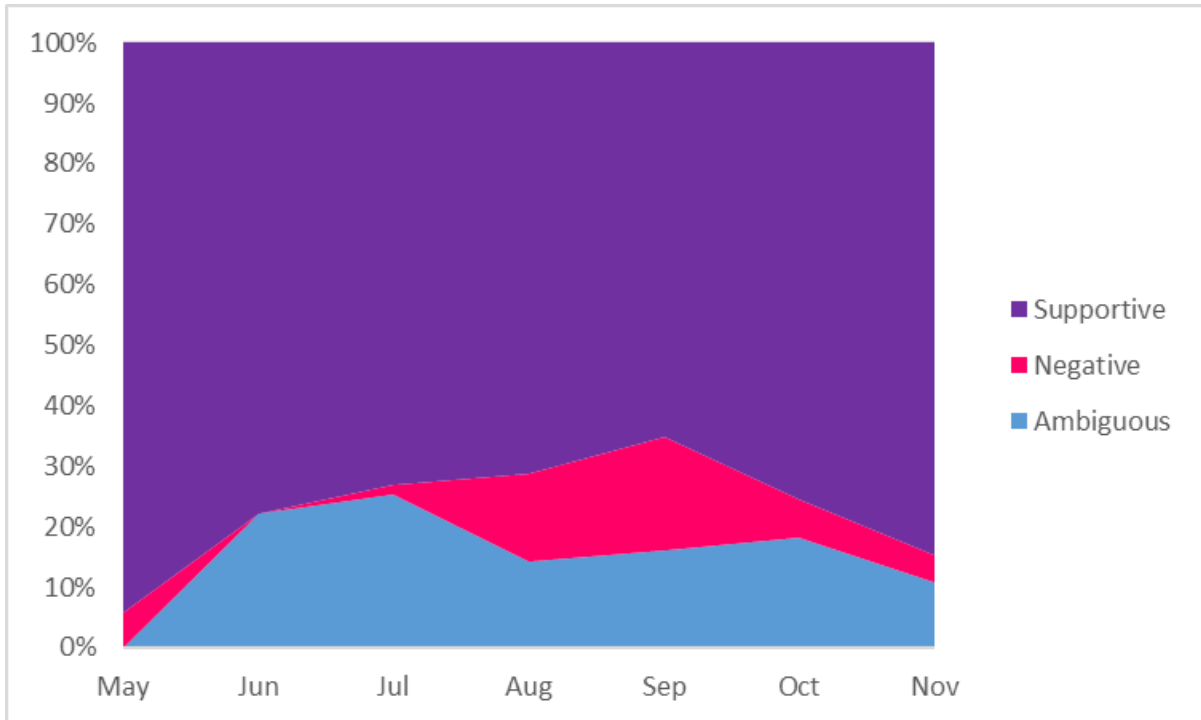


Figure 17 Percentage of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards across all properties and Pride events by date, May – November 2017

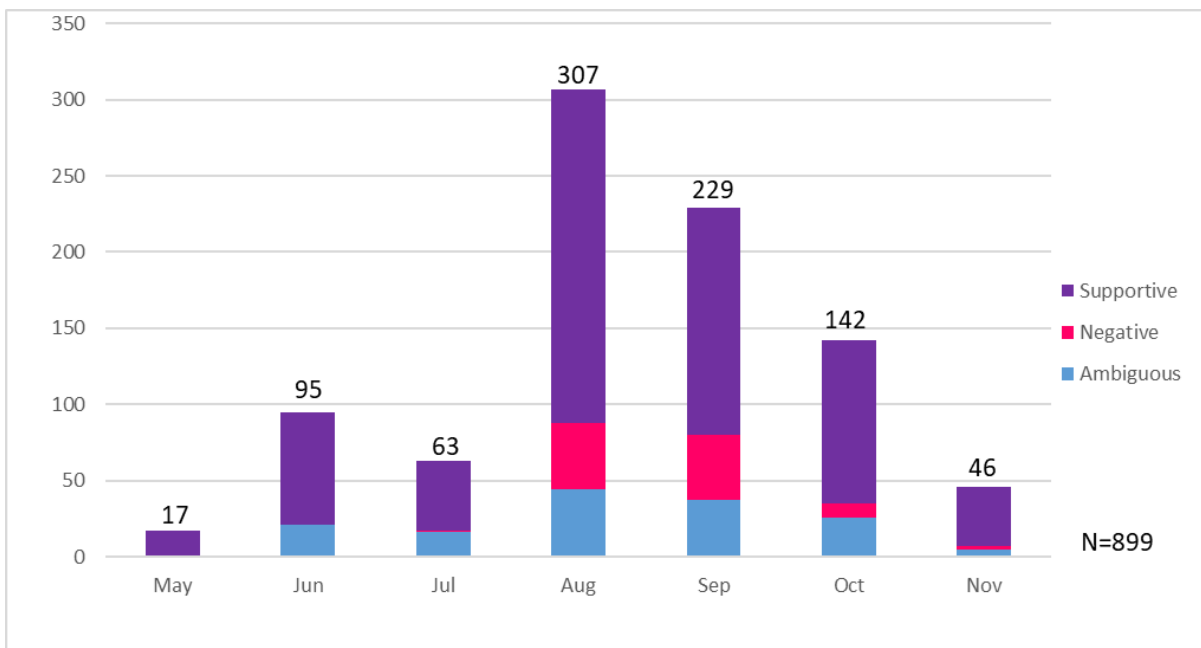


Figure 18 Number of supportive, negative and ambiguous visitor responses collected from comments cards across all properties and Pride events by date, May – November 2017

From a total of 1522 comment cards collected across all participating properties and Pride events 899 comments cards included the date it was filled in. Of those 899 cards there is a noticeable spike in August and September of negative responses to *Prejudice and Pride*. Jumping from 2% (1 negative comments card) in July to 14% (44 comments cards) in August and 19% (44 comments cards) in September.

A number of critical press pieces about *Prejudice and Pride*, published at the end of July and in August and September, sparked controversy and, inevitably, will have shaped some visitors' responses. For example, an article published in the *Daily Mail* in September (Levy 2017) in response to activities at Kingston Lacy and Felbrigg Hall described the National Trust as becoming 'obsessed with "trendy PC thinking"' and the programme as 'totally inappropriate'.⁴ The language and tone in these press stories were echoed in many of the most critical and negative responses from visitors, pointing towards the significant influence of mainstream media in legitimising and reinforcing particular perspectives, as well as seemingly swaying public opinion. The report will explore these issues in further detail in the next section.

However, the overall majority of comment cards collected in August and September showed support for the programme – 71% (219 comments cards) in August and 65% (149 comments cards) in September. This broad-brush analysis begins to complicate the impression that might otherwise be gleaned from press coverage and social media analysis where vehemently expressed criticism appeared to dominate. Interestingly, this finding resonates with a previous research project conducted by RCMG for Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art's *sh[OUT]* in 2009-10. Here, programming that sought to celebrate LGBTQ lives similarly attracted national and international controversy – dominated by a group that called for senior managers to be sacked and funding to be withdrawn – although in-depth analysis of visitor experiences revealed a more complicated picture with a majority supporting the gallery's intentions.⁵ These findings point to the ways in which mainstream media often operates to amplify criticism, fuel controversy and, in doing so, eclipse the richness and diversity of ways in which audiences have responded.⁶

A couple visiting Kingston Lacy were pleasantly surprised by their experience of *Prejudice and Pride*, after reading the piece in the *Daily Mail* the day before their visit. Below is their conversation, instigated by the interview process:

Respondent one: *I think some of the press that we read before we came here, we were coming anyway, it's probably very, shall we say "narrow". When I've walked*

⁴ Levy, A. (2017) 'National Trust's latest PC stunt: New exhibition at historic property features 51 ropes to commemorate men who were hanged for being gay', *Daily Mail*, 19 September 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4900892/PC-National-Trust-s-exhibition-men-hanged-gay.html>.

⁵ Sandell, R., Dodd, J. and Jones, C. (2010) *sh[OUT]: An evaluation of the Social Justice Programme of the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (GoMA) 2009-2010*, Culture and Sport Glasgow / RCMG <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/sh-out/An%20evaluation%20of%20shOUT.pdf>.

⁶ For a fuller discussion of this, see Sandell, R. (2012) 'Museums and the Human Rights Frame' in R. Sandell and E. Nightingale (eds) *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, Routledge: London and Routledge: New York.

round I don't think it's been too in your face, it's not intrusive, rather thought-provoking.

Respondent two: I think having read the paper yesterday and coming today I see it differently. I would go "oh yeah, why are they putting this on? Is it really necessary?" But when you actually come and see it, it just feels more relevant actually seeing it in the flesh, in person... it's the story of the house.

Respondent one: I would say come and visit, don't rely on the national media for your view which you take down the pub. Go and visit it and see it first.

As the above discussion demonstrates, and the broad analysis reveals, in spite of the media outrage, the picture is a positive one. The detailed visitor study shows that in fact even amongst the most negative of property visitor responses there is a considerable degree of openness and support for the *Prejudice and Pride* programme.

Qualitative findings: Complexity and nuance

The broad-brush analysis of the visitor comments captured on the cards is helpful in gauging the overall proportion of support for, and criticism of, *Prejudice and Pride*. However, visitors' engagement with, and responses to, the programme were diverse, complex and multifaceted.

Further open-ended analysis of visitor responses from the comments cards, alongside a qualitative and emergent analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted at five of the participating properties, and the emails and letters sent by visitors and members, revealed a spectrum of diverse points of view, alongside complex and nuanced reflections (some of which have been captured and presented in figure 19).

The complex ways in which diverse visitors engage with and respond to cultural experiences can be challenging to capture and make sense of. Drawing on the well-established research methodology of interviewing used in social sciences, and through taking a semi-structured and conversational approach, allowed visitors to share their thoughts and perceptions in their own way. Importantly, the process of interviewing created opportunities for visitors to reflect on their experiences and begin to work through their emerging thoughts and ideas, eliciting rich, nuanced, and considered responses.

The research set out to capture the fullest range of responses to the programme and to listen to and understand all views and opinions, from the most positive to those who were vehemently opposed to *Prejudice and Pride*, as well as those potentially eclipsed by the polarised character of the media controversy. In particular, we were interested in understanding the impact of the programme on visitors' thoughts, feelings and actions.

As we have seen from the comments cards, the majority of visitors were supportive of *Prejudice and Pride*, but how was this support manifest? In what ways did visitors articulate their support for the programme in the comments cards, interviews, and letters and emails?

The research aimed to create opportunities for visitors to express their views openly without censure or judgment. Care was taken to avoid leading questions, enabling a wide array of perspectives, opinions and viewpoints to emerge. Although positive comments were in the majority, with most visitors supportive of the Trust's decision to present LGBTQ-themed stories, the ways in which this support was expressed (and the reasons underpinning it) were wide ranging, complex and varied. The report now considers the key themes emerging from the visitor study through the range of visitor engagement and response to *Prejudice and Pride*.

A spectrum of engagement and response

**PROMISCUITY
AND GAY
BEHAVIOUR IS
WRONG**

**WHAT ABOUT
STRAIGHT
HISTORY?**

Latent homophobia was revealed in some comments, with a small minority expressing overt prejudice towards LGBTQ people.

A number of comments asked why a minority group were being celebrated, as opposed to straight history.

**I WISH THE
NATIONAL TRUST
WOULD STOP
HARPING ON
ABOUT LGBTQ
ISSUES**

Some visitors believed the National Trust should be concentrating their efforts elsewhere, believing that LGBTQ people no longer faced prejudice.

**THE NATIONAL
TRUST IS GETTING
TOO POLITICAL**

Visitors questioned the relevance of the programme to the National Trust and felt it was outside of their remit.

**I FEEL WELCOME
NOW**

A number of LGBTQ visitors expressed the value of seeing themselves represented at the National Trust.

**LGBTQ HISTORY IS
IMPORTANT AND
IT'S RIGHT WE'RE
TALKING ABOUT IT**

For some visitors the programme presented important LGBTQ role models, and for others helped them to realise that LGBTQ people have always existed.

**WE SHOULD ALL BE
FREE TO BE
OURSELVES AND
LOVE WHO WE WANT**

Visitors shared personal experiences of being different, as well as stories of family, friends and colleagues facing discrimination, showing empathy.

**IT IS NEEDED
NOW MORE THAN
EVER**

Many visitors reflected on the current political climate, and the importance of supporting the LGBTQ community in times like these.

Figure 19 A spectrum of visitor engagement and response with Prejudice and Pride

'I feel welcome now'

The value of representation

Several visitors discussed the need for LGBTQ visibility and a more inclusive and honest approach to presenting histories. One visitor to Sutton House, who wasn't a member and described themselves as an Italian-American lesbian, left a comments card that recognised the significance of full representation of all constituents, stating that they: *'Think it is important for the "National" Trust to represent the whole nation in all its differences.'*

Visitors and Trust members from the LGBTQ community welcomed seeing their community represented through the stories told and the symbols presented, for example, the rainbow flag flying above the house at Kingston Lacy, the rainbow oak leaf logo on promotional material offsite and at Pride events, or a volunteer wearing a rainbow lanyard at Felbrigg Hall (see figure 20). In this process their views of the Trust were also shifted, as one member and visitor to Kingston Lacy revealed during her interview:

I'll take away the feeling I had of when I drove up the drive to a, you know I don't mean this but, to a stuffy National Trust house and I saw the rainbow flag flying and I had my heart just... it gave a little "oh my god I'm being represented", that's what I'll take away.

Similarly, a visitor to Sutton House, responding through a comments card, felt a deeper connection with the Trust through seeing their community presented. They commented that:

This programme has re-introduced me to the National Trust as an adult. I have always enjoyed exploring history through NT but have not ever felt as personally welcomed into the Trust as part of my community as I do today thanks to Sutton House. I would love to see more properties getting involved in Queer Heritage.

Several visitors commented on the significant contributions made by LGBTQ people to both the Trust properties and the nation's identity, history and culture. For one visitor, interviewed at Smallhythe Place, representing diversity through celebrating it, rather than *'judging it'*, alongside highlighting the good in everybody as *'everyone's becoming rainbow coloured anyway'*, presented a way forward in moving towards *'acceptance and harmony in the future'*. Identifying as part of the LGBTQ community, she remarked on how excited she was to see the Trust *'openly acknowledge that gay people exist, that they are valuable in society, not useless, and that we and everyone has a part to play in society'* through a *'focused and special programme'*.

FH86

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

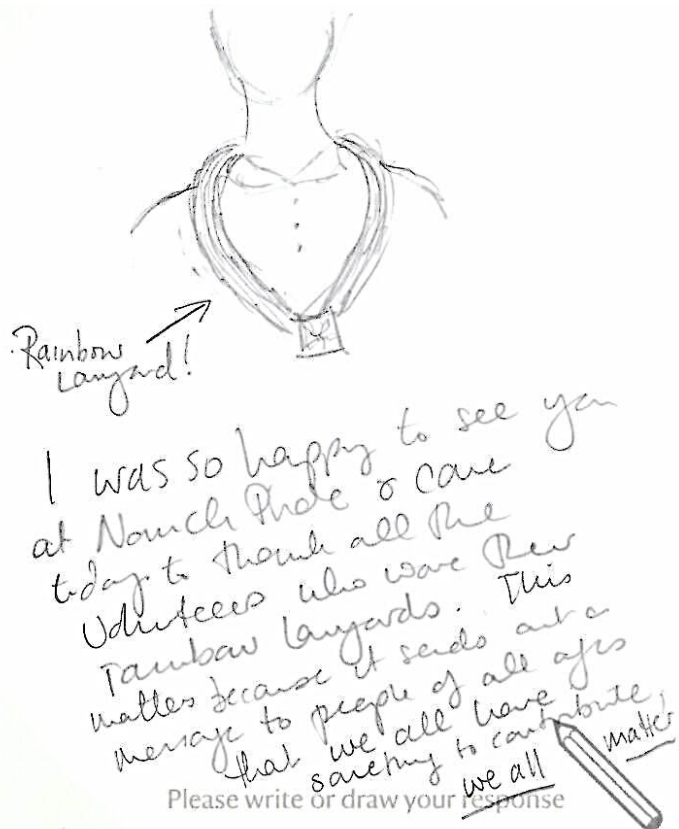


Figure 20 Comments card collected from Felbrigg Hall – ‘I was so happy to see you at Norwich Pride & came today to thank all the volunteers who wore their rainbow lanyards. This matters because it sends out a message to people of all ages that we have something to contribute, we all matter’.

However, a few visitors to *Prejudice and Pride* remarked upon the lack of diverse representations of the LGBTQ community across the programme. Other visitors questioned why the Trust wasn’t exploring intersectionality in any depth. One visitor to Sutton House spoke passionately about the need for telling LGBTQ stories of black and Asian people, sharing her experiences, as a black bisexual woman, of racism and prejudice from other members of the LGBTQ community, suggesting that issues of intersectionality might have been fertile ground for the Trust to consider and explore as part of the broader programme.

Another visitor to Sutton House saw a connection with her own experiences of interconnected discrimination and the exhibition on show. Participating in the ‘Weirdo Zine Fair’ and visiting the ‘School of Anarchy’ exhibition, she described her background as a special educational needs teacher working with disabled young people, stating how, so often, ‘*people perceive people with disabilities as not having a sexuality or not having a gender identity*’, they are seen as ‘sexless’ or lacking sexual desires, which makes this especially difficult for young LGBTQ disabled people. She later went on to comment on how she plans to share the questions raised by the fair and exhibition with her students, stating that:

I can go to my students and show them this, because I also know some of my students are queer, sometimes they can’t put their words there because of their backgrounds, and seeing things like this from their own voices, so it’s not me telling

them how they have to feel, it's someone in the same situation as them, telling them "hey guys this is alright". So, for me that was really empowering and amazing.

For many visitors, both those from the LGBTQ community and those who aren't, found that *Prejudice and Pride* was the first time the Trust had talked so openly about LGBTQ history.

'LGBTQ history is important'

Acknowledging the value of hidden histories

The value of seeing lesser known histories celebrated at National Trust properties was also raised by many visitors as a way of acknowledging that LGBTQ people have always existed and are just as much a part of history as any other group.

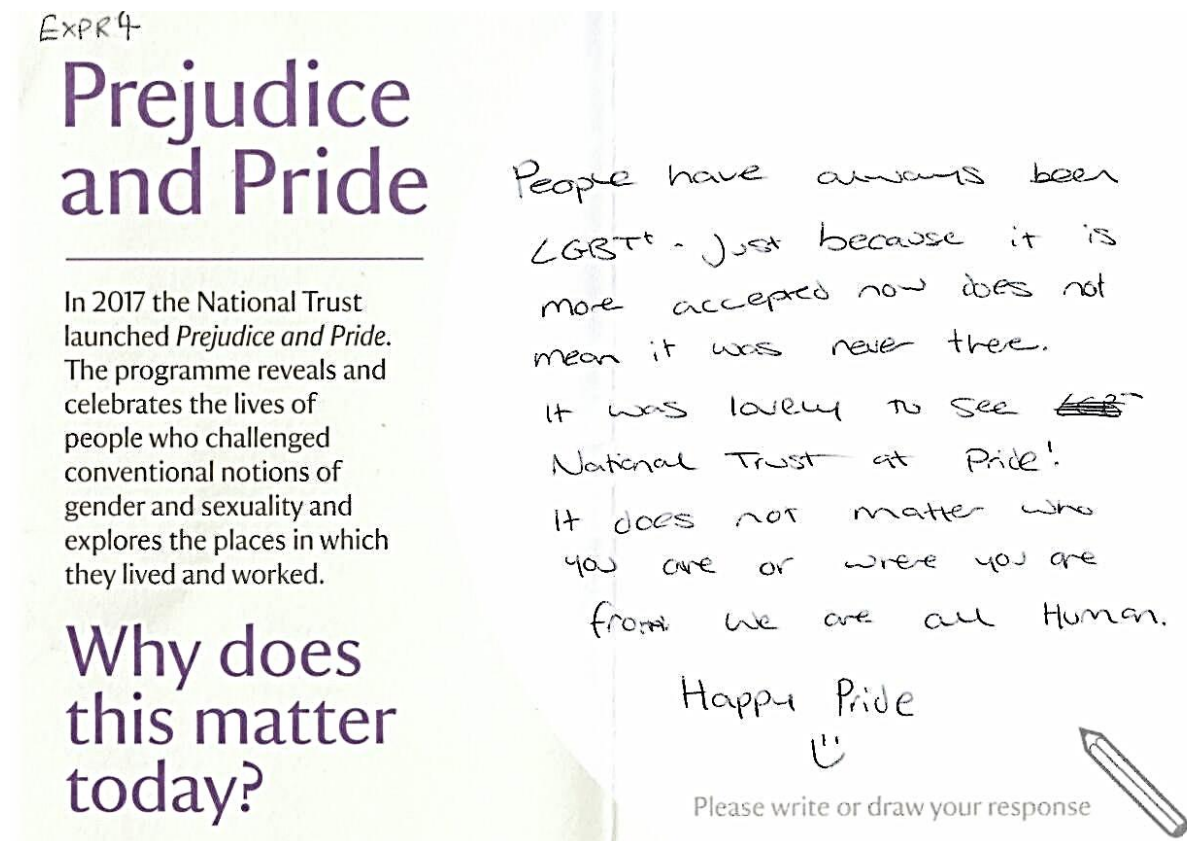


Figure 21 Comments card collected at Exeter Pride - 'People have always been LGBT+. Just because it is more accepted now does not mean it was never there. It was lovely to National Trust at Pride! It does not matter who you are or where you are from we are all human. Happy Pride :)'

Prejudice and Pride highlighted for visitors that LGBTQ histories that have always been there (see figure 21 – a comments card collected at Exeter Pride), but haven't always been articulated in an appropriate way or even told. Through the year-long programme many visitors reflected on the need to 're-dress the imbalance', and draw out stories that have been hidden or erased. One member and visitor to EXILE at Kingston Lacy, who described herself as between 26-35 years of age, female and bisexual, responded at length on a comments card about why programmes such as *Prejudice and Pride* matter today, stating:

To answer: 'why does this matter today' you only need to look at some of the other comments on display here, criticising the NT for 'championing LGBT' or 'bringing

politics into it'. LGBT people have been as much a part of our history as heterosexuals – Kingston Lacy wouldn't be the spectacular destination it is without the efforts of a gay man. LGBT people have been persecuted, murdered and erased from history over centuries – it is long since overdue that we redress the imbalance and uncover those 'secret histories'. Well done NT for standing up to bigotry and ignorance – I await the day when exhibitions like this one are no longer 'news' but just part of our fascinating and diverse heritage.

Other visitors described the programme as a way of '*combatting the invisibility and lessening of the accomplishments of LGBTQ figures in history*' alongside '*contextualising and reconciling mainstream British history*'. One visitor, interviewed after visiting EXILE at Kingston Lacy on holiday with his girlfriend, described it as simply '*telling the truth*', going further by suggesting that:

You cannot deny the history and you should not deny the history... do not write off your history, even if you find it offensive or do not like it. It's your history and that's how we learn.

Several visitors recognised the ways in which they had learnt more about LGBTQ people and the significant roles they played in the nation's history, alongside specific contributions they made to the properties they owned and lived in. Another member visiting EXILE, who completed a comments card and described herself as female, heterosexual and aged between 66-75 years, shared her thoughts on the cultural and historical impact of LGBTQ individuals and how Kingston Lacy would not be as it is today if William John Bankes had not gone in to exile:

These moving & discrete installations have greatly increased my understanding of the historical and cultural impact of LGBT lives in the UK and Kingston Lacy in particular. They demonstrate how integral William John Bankes' sexuality was to the development of the house and its contents. How LGBT people are becoming integrated in society but that discrimination still remains, not only in other countries, but also in the UK. Thank you NT!

Similarly, a visitor originally from Taiwan visiting Kingston Lacy with his partner, discussed during an interview how Bankes contributed as much to the cultural wealth of the house as any other member of the family. Later reflecting on how his contribution and the story of how he collected and sent back his works of art should be a prominent part of the property's interpretation for members and non-members alike to learn about:

I think for me the important thing is for the visitors, or even just the members to recognise the contribution LGBT people made to history and art as well and that William John Bankes actually restored the house to the highest glory and the entire collection of his artwork, was because of him, therefore it's here. And he's actually contributing as much as most house owners.

Other visitors described not telling these stories as '*leaving a gap in the history of our country*', while many saw the programme and the stories it shared as an opportunity to

learn about how far we've come as a society, and about how 'things have changed for the better'.

For some visitors *Prejudice and Pride* played an important part in presenting positive LGBTQ role models as one visitor shared in the comments card below (figure 22):

Thank you national trust for helping to give voice to LGBTQ+ history. As a young gay man I had so few visible role models. I hope that any young LGBTQ+ people visiting your Prejudice and Pride events get the important message that they are not alone. Our history is important [sic] and it's right that we are talking more about it.

KL240

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

Thank you national trust for helping to give voice to LGBTQ+ history. As a young gay man I had so few visible role models. I hope that any young LGBTQ+ people visiting your Prejudice + Pride events get the important message that they are not alone. Our history is important and it's right that we are talking more about it.

Please write or draw your response

Figure 22 Comments card collected at Kingston Lacy

However, a small minority of responses revealed that some visitors believed LGBTQ to be a modern-day experience, or something that was fashionable and attention-seeking. For example, one couple asked during an interview:

Is it more exotic to have a kid that wants to change gender than to have a normal gay?

Later going on to comment that:

There was a chap who decided at 55 that he wanted to be a woman; that seems very strange as well.

A young person attending *Orlando: The Queer Element* at Knole Park, sensitively reflected on how participating in a day-long performance and workshop learning about Vita Sackville-West and her connection with Virginia Woolf's character 'Orlando' (who changes gender over time), with his school group had helped him to develop a better understanding of gender identity and opened up his eyes to the experiences of people who identify as genderqueer:

I guess I feel like I'm more educated on being genderqueer I think. Before there was still the shadow of the idea kind of lingering that maybe kids say they're genderqueer because they just want to explore their identity or because they think it's a cool concept rather than something that actually exists – although I know that sound really prejudiced. But yeah, I think like exploring today you kind of see that it's not so different at all... I feel like some people, especially maybe younger teens, might try to apply labels to themselves in hopes of being able to feel satisfied with something that they don't quite yet understand. So, they might decide that they're something or something else because it makes them feel comfortable knowing that something, that what they are, exists and I think genderqueer, agender or genderfluid is something that I hadn't really educated myself much on – for me it was like more mythical and more fantastical so I thought 'oh but is that really, like, a thing?'. But I think having learned today that it is, it doesn't seem so, I guess, unusual.

For many more visitors, this further demonstrated the imperative for programmes like *Prejudice and Pride* to challenge assumptions that LGBTQ identities are something new or a recent phenomenon: 'it highlights the fact that it's not a modern-day thing, it went on all those hundreds of years ago'. Another visitor commented that:

It matters because I hear it said even now today, I heard it on the radio yesterday, someone in another country say that LGBT lives and identities were something that only happened in humans and was recent, it was a modern thing, it was some sort of modern horrible idea that people had come up with, some kind of perversion. When you tell the stories of people going back and back and back you realise that actually LGBT people have been around since there were people and our idea of how acceptable that is has changed throughout time. So, what this house represents is one of those time when we were very unhappy with that idea, it was probably different way before and it is different now.

A significant number of visitors reflected on their experiences of growing up at a time where 'you didn't speak of it... anything to do with homosexuality' and that although LGBTQ people have 'always been there' they can now be 'more free, more open, hopefully without persecution.'

Questions about class were raised by some visitors, who recognised that most of the LGBTQ individuals celebrated as part of the programme were in privileged positions and in many cases evaded persecution, whereas the: *'working class + the poor had no such good fortune, if they didn't toe the line of the times, the church + the law would all too often come down hard on these poor souls'*. Others asked where the stories of ordinary LGBTQ people were, commenting that it: *'would be good to have a representation of working class gay lives where it was not so easy to be out'*. These comments from visitors at Smallhythe Place and Sissinghurst Castle Gardens raise important questions for the Trust. These visitors felt that issues of privilege (connections, money, influence, education) were not fully explored, as another visitor from Kingston Lacy highlighted in relation to the soldier that Bankes was caught with, where he pondered: *'what happened to the soldier? We don't know what happened to the soldier whether he actually was killed, because he may not have had money, that was one of the initial questions that I wanted to ask.'*

'We should all be free to be ourselves and love who we want'
Personal experiences of difference

BH11

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

We all need to be able to be "free to be me."

We can only be our fully authentic selves if we are allowed to live in ways that mean we do not have to hide parts of ourselves. In so many parts of the world people are persecuted for who they are we in our free society must do everything we can.

Please write or draw your response

Figure 23 Comments card collected from Beningbrough Hall

We all need to be able to be "free to be me." We can only be our fully authentic selves if we are allowed to live in ways that mean we do not have to hide part of ourselves. In so many parts of the world people are persecuted for who they are in our free society must do everything we can.

As the above comments card (figure 23) presents, many visitors strongly believed in freedom of expression and the 'right to be ourselves'. We also found visitors' personal experiences of difference and diversity impacted the way they engaged with the programme. Visitors used the comment cards and interviews as an opportunity to describe their responses to *Prejudice and Pride*, including emotional engagement or accounts that shared personal relevance or meaning. One young visitor to a performance at Knole Park stressed that:

To say it was emotional is too small a word. It brought up things I've wanted to voice to my parents but haven't been able to... It mattered today because it's one step closer to showing the world that I matter.

A large proportion of visitors who did not themselves identify as part of the LGBTQ community, but declared personal connections with LGBTQ people appeared to find it easier to engage with themes raised by the programme and responded empathetically to those facing prejudice. Many visitors spoke about their distress seeing family members or friends experiencing prejudice because of their sexual or gender difference, and one visitor wrote about their concern for their son and his boyfriend openly showing their love in public, as figure 24 shows:

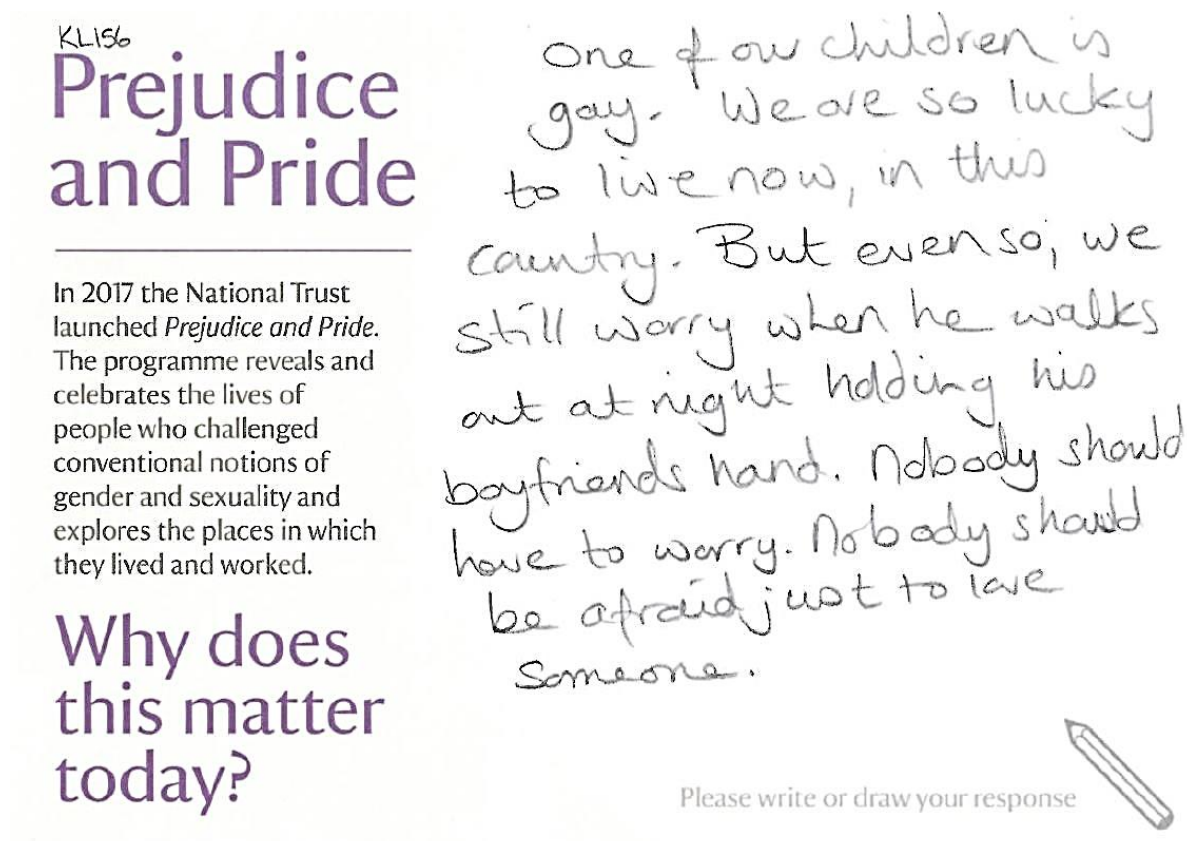


Figure 24 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy – 'One of our children is gay. We are so lucky to live now, in this country. But even so, we still worry when he walks out at night holding his boyfriend's hand. Nobody should be afraid just to love someone'.

Another visitor to Kingston Lacy, who described herself as aged between 46-55 years of age, female and straight, shared her very personal experience of being married to a man who

hadn't come to terms with his sexuality and feared being his true self due to societal prejudices. She revealed how this not only had a significant impact on her ex-husband, but also her, commenting that:

As the ex wife of a closeted gay man (who is still only partially out) I know that fear and prejudice still exists in the UK. Prejudice from the straight community affects straight men and women as well as gay men and women, because it pushes individuals into hiding and the wearing of a mask. There are still far too many men and women who feel they cannot come out, and try to force themselves into being straight. Confronting prejudice is needed for straights as well as gays!

Visitors also spoke of their compassion towards LGBTQ colleagues and acquaintances, for example, one visitor to Sutton House also voiced her experience as a manager tackling workplace discrimination against a gay colleague, stating '*there is no place for prejudice in society today [and] nobody should be judged on their sexuality*'.

Several visitors asked: '*what is normal, anyway?*' and spoke about the fact that '*we're all born different and we all have different thoughts and views*' and that '*everyone is different and you have to accept that*'. One visitor to Beningbrough Hall expressed in a drawing showing that '*nobody fits in a box*' and the consequences of forcing people to fit a mould (see figure 25 below):

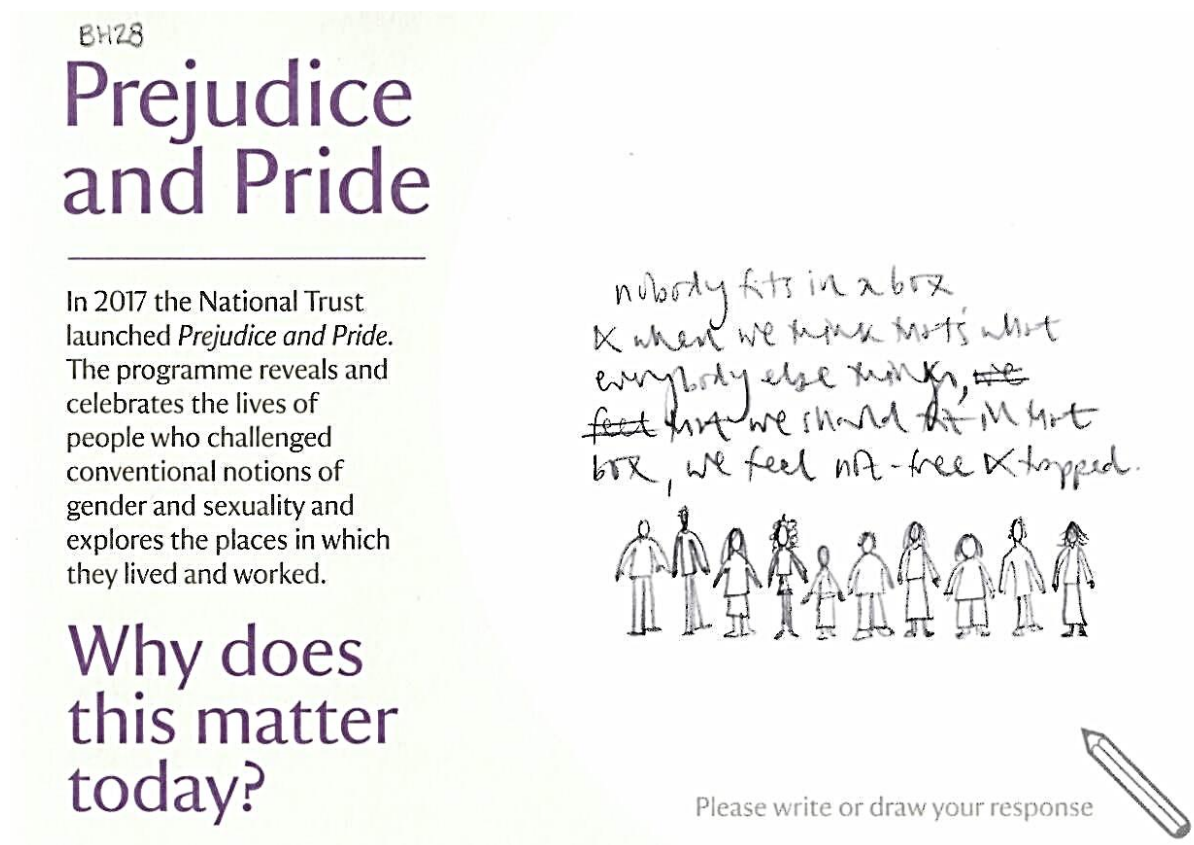


Figure 25 Comments card collected from Beningbrough Hall – '*nobody fits in a box & when we think that's what everybody else thinks that we should fit in that box, we feel not-free & trapped*'.

Others who were not part of the LGBTQ community, but had experiences of being treated unjustly due to their differences, in many cases being 'othered' by individuals and society, reflected on the stories told through *Prejudice and Pride* in a considered and nuanced way. A volunteer and attendee of a performance at Smallhythe Place told of her experiences growing up with disabilities, recognising '*that we all have prejudices*', but that we need to be more consciously aware of them and '*curb it*' through having '*more love in your life*'. Another disabled visitor from Germany who visited Kingston Lacy shared a more empathetic position and her personal experience of being overlooked and undervalued, stating that:

For me discrimination is a known thing and it's really important and some of my friends are homosexual women and men too. So, it's really important to talk about it. Yes, with the wheelchair persons are not talking with you because they think I cannot talk.

Admiration for the Trust openly highlighting the stories of LGBTQ members of the Sackville-West family was offered up by a family visiting Knole Park, drawing parallels with their own experiences of prejudice due to individual and societal attitudes towards difference, in particular, autism. The following is a conversation between the family (mother, father and son), elicited as part of the interview process:

Respondent one (mother): *I think it's great, I think the more it's made 'normal', it's 'normalised' the better. And we find that, our son has autism, and that's being 'normalised' more now, rather than just being a separate group of people, like gays and bisexuals and lesbians as well, but you know we're all different so we always think it should be encompassed, don't we?*

Respondent two (father): *Well... of course the more we understand about people the less prejudice there is and the less hatred there could be, so yes, I'm all for it [Prejudice and Pride]. The more open the better.*

Respondent one (mother): *And I think it's really important, as I said we do have gay members of our family, but people that don't they can be very biased only because they don't know about it, it's ignorance. Even really good friends we've got, when we've said to them, for instance, my niece is getting married this year to her female partner, they looked on quite horrified until they've met them and realised actually they're just normal people.*

Respondent three (son): *And, you know, they can be like that to people with autism as well, it shows you really.*

Respondent two (father): *It's a general thing really, there can be prejudice with the unknown. So, the more open it is the better. And congratulations to the Trust for bringing it out.*

As this family recognised, and the in-depth research of *Prejudice and Pride* revealed, visitors who had little prior connections with LGBTQ people sometimes found it difficult to relate and were less likely to empathise with the stories told. A visitor interviewed at Kingston Lacy remarked that they felt the programme '*wasn't important at all*', and later asked: '*why*

would I think about it?’ Some visitors felt uncertain, even uncomfortable, with LGBTQ issues, and a large number of individuals reflected on the fact that they *‘had never thought about it before’* when asked whether a programme like *Prejudice and Pride* mattered to them.

In spite of this, many visitors relished the opportunity to reflect on the concerns raised by the programme and appreciated the chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings.

‘It’s needed now more than ever’

The relevance of the *Prejudice and Pride* to people’s lives and society today

Many visitors spontaneously made connections between the histories and narratives they encountered on-property and the contemporary political climate, referencing the present-day relevance of the programme, the importance of supporting the LGBTQ community and the timeliness of the Trust’s position.

For example, one visitor to Felbrigg Hall stated that *Prejudice and Pride* is, *‘Very important always but especially so in the Trump and ISIS era’*. A couple visiting Kingston Lacy in September brought up the imminent vote on same-sex marriage in Australia considering what they had seen in EXILE and, in particular, the historical changes in UK law. Another couple visiting Wightwick Manor, also in September, spoke about Brexit. They drew parallels between historical intolerance of minority groups and the current political climate, suggesting that *‘people are always looking for someone to blame’* in difficult and divided times and that *‘it is all too easy to place the blame on minority groups’*. Two separate couples visiting Smallhythe Place in June, and a small exhibition about the lives of Edy Craig, Tony Atwood and Christopher St John, were prompted to voice their concerns about a story emerging in the news that week which highlighted the potential undermining of the rights of women and LGBTQ people posed by closer ties between the government and the Democratic Unionist Party. One of the visitors reflected on why programmes like *Prejudice and Pride* matter today, stating:

It strikes a chord because I didn’t really know who the DUP were and we were discussing yesterday what their policies were and we were quite horrified by their very old-fashioned policies and not accepting, and that for me is very concerning in current times. So, these sorts of exhibitions are great for raising awareness, trying to reduce prejudice and educating people.

Other visitors acknowledged how far we have come as a society, but also stressed the need to not *‘rest on our laurels’*. A number of visitors understood how long it has taken society to reach a place of acceptance, alongside showing a heightened anxiety around how *‘it would not take much to get back to a state of the bad old days when prejudice was rife’*. This comment and many others were in relation to the threat posed by Trump in the US and how easily those hard-won rights could be taken away. Another visitor commented on the rise in right-wing politics in Europe and how *‘scary it is when politicians are not openly denouncing extreme and right-wing narratives’*, emphasising the need for programmes that *‘amplify the voices of minority groups, even more so now’*.

Similarly, one visitor wondered whether: *'some of us are going backwards rather than forwards'* and thought that *Prejudice and Pride* was helpful in drawing awareness to the challenges faced by LGBTQ people, and the legal battles and changes taking place over time and advocated to *'keep it going, because as soon as we forget it or think it's something we don't have to worry about then things get worse'*.

Some respondents thought about younger generations and the type of world and future that they want them to grow up in. Whilst others, particularly those from the LGBTQ community, felt a need to ensure that young people knew about how hard older generations had to fight for their rights and that the world hasn't always been so tolerant of LGBTQ people. One visitor to Sutton House also considered how geographical location might have a part to play in attitudes towards the LGBTQ community, prompting people to think about what the reality might be like for people living outside of London, reminding us not to make assumptions of what life might be like based on your own experiences of where you live. As figure 26 shows:

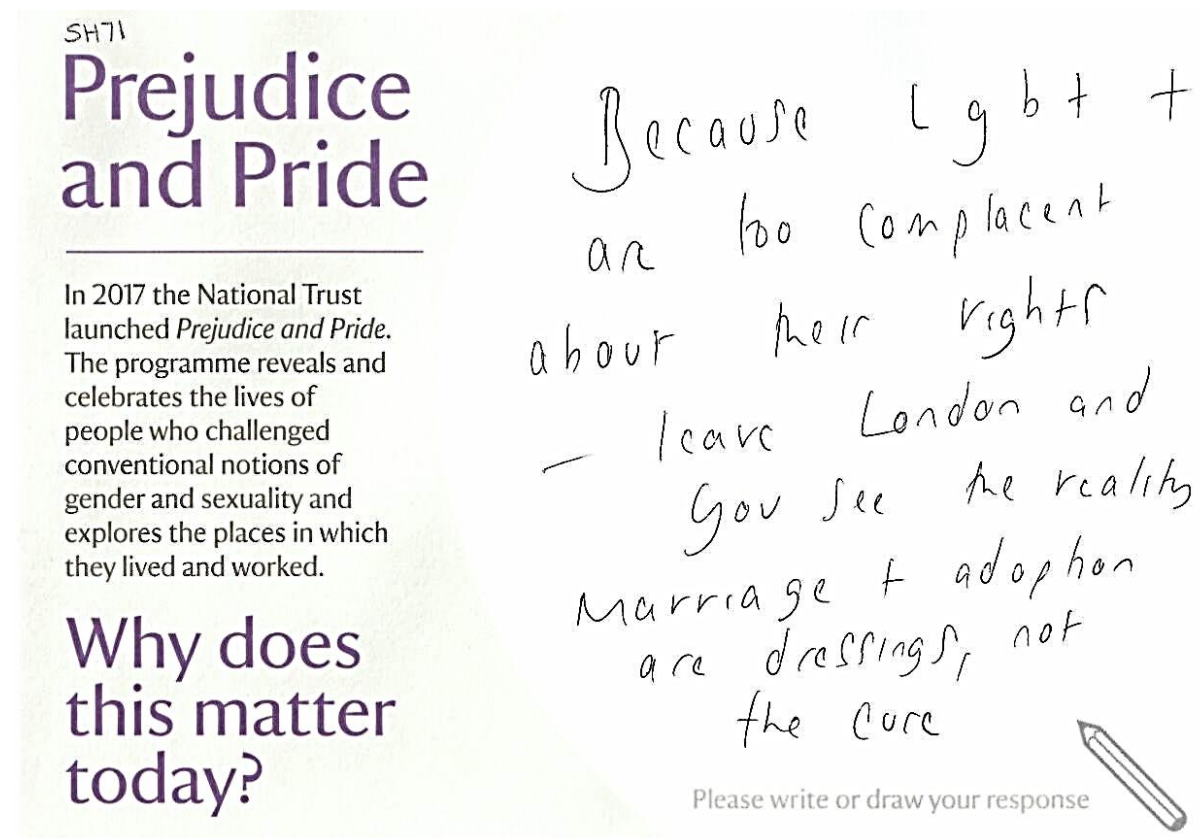


Figure 26 Comments card collected from Sutton House - *'Because LGBT+ are too complacent about their rights – leave London and you see the reality. Marriage + adoption are dressings, not the cure'*.

Several of the young people, interviewed as part of the research study, also recognised the importance of education, both in schools and through programmes like *Prejudice and Pride*, in helping younger generations to develop understanding and more open-minded and empathetic views, as this secondary school student visiting Knole Park suggests:

I think everyone is aware of gender and stuff like that, but to actually understand it and have a fuller idea of what's going on and how people feel and what's happening.

I think it's really, really good to teach people, especially our age and younger what it's all about – to get that understanding from a young age.

Others thought about the huge inequalities LGBTQ people faced internationally and that more still could be done today. One visitor thought about the importance of exhibitions like EXILE in marking changes in the law and in demonstrating to other countries the processes through which change can take place. He shared his personal plans to take back this knowledge to his friends in Taiwan, when asked what he would take away from his experience of *Prejudice and Pride*:

For me I think that it's really good that I will be able to take this away and tell my friends in Taiwan, because Taiwan is now undergoing the process of legalising same-sex marriage and it will be the first Asian country ever to legalise it. Therefore, it is quite important and beneficial for our society to gather all information or as you would say good examples from all over the world to demonstrate that actually it wasn't so long ago that homosexual was actually the victim of an improper law. So, it's so important that you have to make sure your law does not abuse the innocent, that's a personal view of the whole exhibition that I can take away.

Many visitors commented on the fact that despite the change in law that partially decriminalised homosexuality was 50 years ago, homophobia still exists today. As this visitor to Kingston Lacy suggests: *'Even though all these laws have been passed, people are still terrorising... it's still going on, it's still taking place'*.

Everyday experiences of homophobia were shared by visitors from the LGBTQ community, with one visitor shrugging off being shouted at in the street and being called a 'faggot' when he was walking hand in hand with his husband. Many visitors commented on the programme mattering because *'there are issues in our society, which are still not discussed and we think... gosh we've allowed gay marriage, isn't that fantastic, but that doesn't mean that all underlying prejudice has been eradicated'*. One visitor described finding that: *'there's a lot of stigma about homosexuality'* and *'there's a lot of misinterpretation and a lot of misunderstanding about it'*, considering further whether *'it could be just pure ignorance, I don't think people understand what people are going through that are homosexual.'* Whilst another visitor felt that *'it's almost ok to say prejudiced things at the moment, and it doesn't seem to be challenged by people in authority or government'*, later going on to comment on the vital role the Trust can play in challenging this:

... actually for an exhibition, that is part of the establishment, that you [the Trust] are saying this is what is happening, we're going to celebrate things, I think is really important because you need to speak out, you need to keep your head above the parapet.

Human Rights

Other visitors also reflected on the legitimising power of the National Trust as a ‘mainstream institution’ and the significant role heritage organisations can play in supporting LGBTQ rights and equality. Although not all visitors discussed these issues in terms of human rights, a few did, as one visitor to the installation, EXILE, at Kingston Lacy in Dorset pointed out:

I think this is a fantastic exhibition and a great setting for it. I think it is a shame that some people seem to deem it inappropriate for the National Trust to be involved in an exhibition of this subject matter – I think it is absolutely appropriate as LGBT rights and history are inextricably linked to owners, occupiers and workers of the houses and historic locations the Trust preserves. The exhibition has opened my eyes to how much progress has been made in LGBT rights in the last 50 years but I am also very aware of how much discrimination still exists. I hope in my lifetime I will see this eradicated.

Similarly, a secondary student, visiting Knole Park with his school, discussed the contemporary relevance of the Trust through *Prejudice and Pride* and advocated equal rights for all. He stated that:

I think it's definitely very politically relevant especially in a time where shock conversion therapy was only banned 2 years ago, 2015, and in a time when Donald Trump and Mike Pence are trying to limit LGBT rights and allowing churches and other institutions to discriminate against who wants to be married. I think it's important that people announce themselves – say actually we are here and we do deserve the same rights as everyone else because we are humans just like all of you.

However, as the quantitative findings have shown and the report will now go on to explore in more depth, not all Trust members and visitors were supportive of the aims of *Prejudice and Pride*. As is often the case when cultural institutions explore new ways of presenting long-established narratives, the loudest voices tend to be those expressing negative viewpoints. That being said, the expressed opposition to *Prejudice and Pride* was diverse and complex.

‘I wish the Trust would stop harping on about LGBTQ issues’

A number of visitors, from a range of backgrounds and perspectives, didn't see the need for presenting LGBTQ stories and histories. Their reasons were varied – some believed that there are more pressing issues to be addressed, others felt that LGBTQ people no longer faced prejudice, whereas a few described this approach as counter-productive. Figure 27 is a comments card collected from Kingston Lacy, where a member of the LGBTQ community expressed his unhappiness with the Trust and wished that they would ‘stop harping on about LGBTQ issues’ and ‘give it a rest’.

KL049 Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?



AS A GAY MAN I JUST WISH
THE NATIONAL TRUST WOULD
STOP HARPING ON ABOUT
LGBTQ ISSUES. COUNTER
PRODUCTIVE! GIVE IT
A REST.

Please write or draw your response

Figure 27 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy - '(As a gay man I just wish the National Trust would stop harping on about LGBTQ issues. Counter productive! Give it a rest.'

A number of visitors who offered criticism of the programme felt that they were experiencing LGBTQ 'fatigue' as a result of seeing LGBTQ culture celebrated widely during the year on television and radio, and at other cultural venues, such as theatres or museums and galleries.

One visitor initially presented his issue with the Trust putting on a programme like *Prejudice and Pride* as a form of 'fatigue' or as something that had been 'overhyped', but in so doing revealed an underlying concern of feeling excluded as a heterosexual man (a point that will be explored further later in the report), with no personal connections to the LGBTQ community. He went on to describe how he no longer felt welcome at this local theatre when they put on a season dedicated to LGBTQ culture:

I think a tolerant and more inclusive society is a much better society. The only thing is if people bang on about it too much, and it's just something, as far as you're concerned, that's going on in the background, I'm not involved or know anybody who is gay, well not at the moment. Like I said to you before about the Kings Head Theatre they had to have a whole season of gay stuff and I couldn't go there... I haven't been back there since they had a season of gay theatre presentations because I lost the habit of going over there and I thought well I can't be bothered now I'll go somewhere else.

A number of other visitors, although not necessarily dismissive or critical of *Prejudice and Pride*, did feel that the Trust should invest their energies elsewhere, for example, by interrogating issues as diverse as racism, disablism, a lack of representation of women and even female genital mutilation. One visitor to Beningbrough Hall, who described himself as male, heterosexual and white British, wrestled with this, posing a number of questions on his comments card (see figure 28 below):

It is always easy to follow a crowd, they never ask really difficult questions????? As a liberal 21 year old I think it is important to ask questions that challenge current perceptions. Currently it is apparent that LGBT issues are prominent, should this be the case? Ancient Greece & Rome didn't care. This is nothing new. Should issues such as genital mutilation be more important?

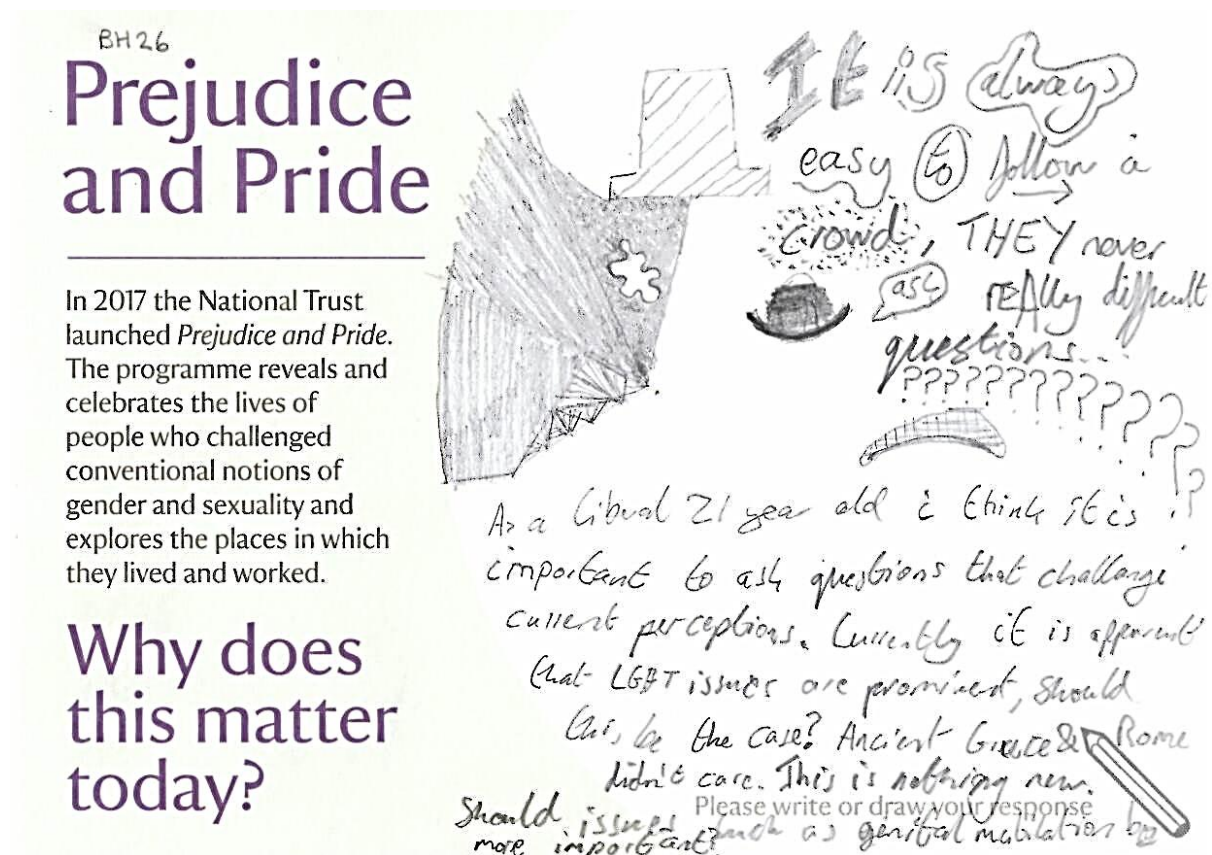


Figure 28 Comments card collected from Beningbrough Hall

There was a degree of denial of prejudice, with several respondents believing that LGBTQ people no longer faced discrimination. Some individuals who had not personally experienced prejudice were unable to acknowledge that discrimination still took place in today's society. A visitor interviewed at Kingston Lacy considered that: 'The amount of time that's allotted to it, it seems more than it should be', while another visitor asked: 'why are they making such a fuss?'. A couple visiting Knole Park stated that: 'it's not important today', and a group of friends at Sutton House felt that the Trust didn't need to do this as: 'LGBTQ is not an issue anymore, it's accepted now'.

'The Trust is getting too political'

Prejudice and Pride is outside of the Trust's remit

A significant finding from the research, and where the vast majority of criticism fell on the spectrum of negative responses, was in relation to people's perception of the Trust and its role in society. Several visitors felt that programmes such as *Prejudice and Pride* fell outside of the Trust's responsibility or core function, taking them into a political realm, which they believed the Trust should remain outside of, or 'neutral' to.

A number of visitors viewed *Prejudice and Pride* as 'going beyond the remit of the National Trust', whilst others described it as 'political correctness gone mad'. Several visitors strongly shared their beliefs that the Trust's priorities should be to protect the physical heritage of the nation, as the following three comments, all collected from Kingston Lacy, testify:

The National Trust should stick to what it does best maintaining and conserving our heritage – instead, it has become TOO POLITICAL!

I pay my money to the National Trust to look after houses, gardens, and preserve historic furniture etc. I do not expect them to get involved in political issues such as is on exhibition today. We do not need films and hanging ropes or display to spoil what should be an enjoyable visit to a National Trust property. The other info I can get off TV, newspapers etc. Don't ram it down my throat!!!

Once again over the top PC. How does this relate to preserving old houses. Most visitors are straight!!

Another visitor interviewed at Kingston Lacy, who had come on a group visit as part of a horticultural society, spoke in no uncertain terms about her disappointment with, and disapproval of, the Trust investing funding into exhibitions such as EXILE, believing they 'should plough funds into the garden instead'. She felt that 'everyone is aware of these issues' and believed that it was only the LGBTQ community 'who would be supportive of the National Trust putting funds into work like this [Prejudice and Pride]'.

Often these viewpoints were expressed vehemently, perhaps more so when visitors and members could respond anonymously using the comments card. One response, also collected from Kingston Lacy, sparked a heated exchange, with three other visitors responding directly on top of the original respondent's comment (see figure 29):

Original respondent: *The Exit Exhibition is inappropriate it is not the function of the National Trust to be involved in such a divisive subject stick to what members pay their membership for preserving these wonderful buildings if the information on the subject of the exhibition had been on the website I would not have travelled 60 miles here today. Like the building. Hate the exhibition.*

Second respondent: *Better without bigots like you!*

Third respondent: *We're gay and we pay our membership. Ignorant.*

Fourth respondent: *Arsehole*

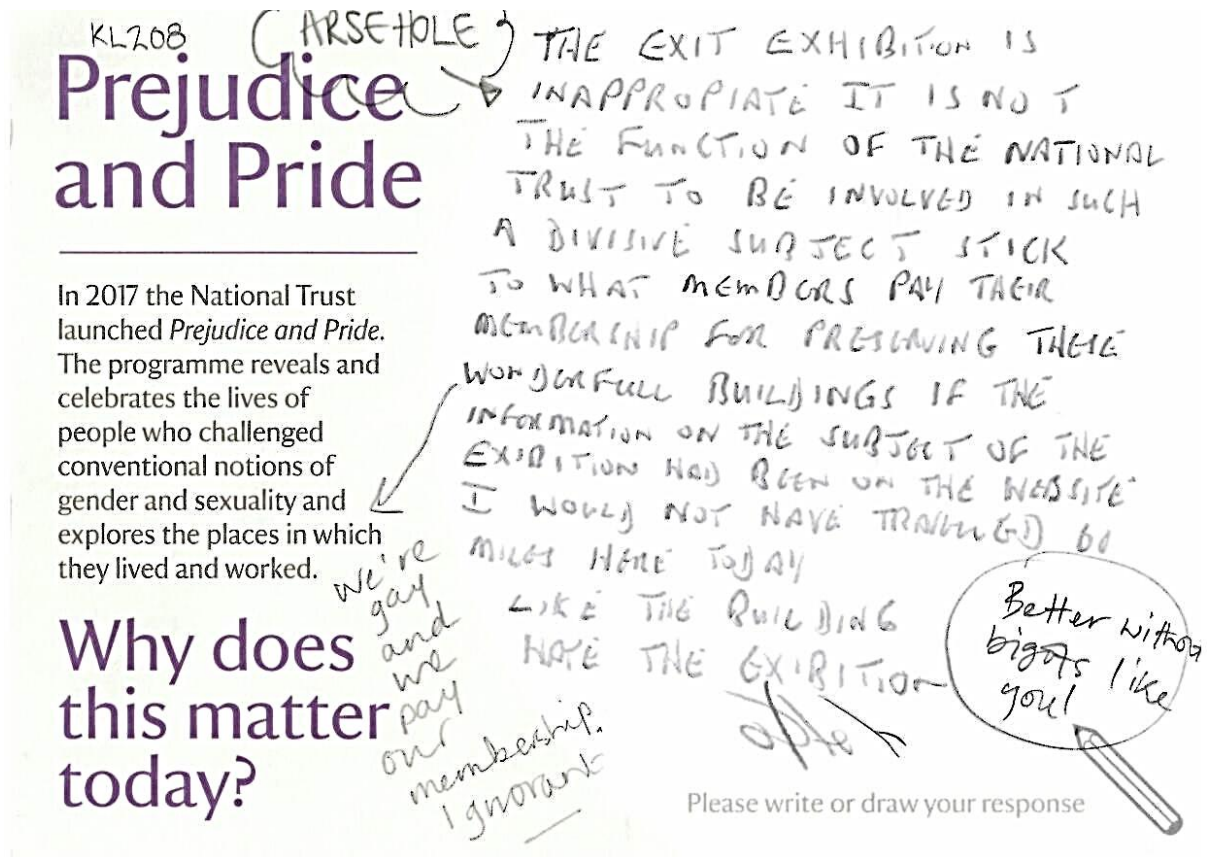


Figure 29 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy

A number of visitors and members described the Trust as ‘getting on the bandwagon’ through celebrating LGBTQ heritage and culture as part of the 50th anniversary, and that: ‘it corresponds with society’s current trend, ways of thinking and political correctness’. Whereas some saw it as a form of campaigning or ‘pushing a LGBTQ agenda’. One visitor described *Prejudice and Pride* as ‘propaganda’ and another called it ‘promotion’ (for example, see figure 30), whereas a visitor to Kingston Lacy (who particularly focused on a video with Ruth Hunt, CEO of Stonewall that featured at the end of the EXILE exhibition), described Stonewall as a ‘pressure group’ and this type of work as ‘preaching’. Similarly, one volunteer working on EXILE stated that:

At the end of the day the National Trust is not Stonewall, the job of the National Trust is not to promote homosexuals, lesbians or whatever. The job of the National Trust is to preserve historic houses and look after the countryside and that’s why it worries me when the National Trust gets political... So, if Stonewall started giving opinions about historic houses, I wouldn’t mind, but I would think what the hell’s it got to do with Stonewall.

FH97

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

Although we accept that people do behave in such a way. We don't feel it should be promoted and shame on the National Trust for promoting it.

P.S. we have friends and acquaintances who are of different sexual orientation that we are happy to speak to, but feel the National Trust should not be involved in this promotion.

Please write or draw your response



Figure 30 Comments card collected from Felbrigg Hall - 'Although we accept that people do behave in such a way we don't feel it should be promoted and shame on the National Trust for promoting it. P.S we have friends and acquaintances who are of different sexual orientation that we are happy to speak to, but feel the National Trust should not be involved in this promotion'.

A number of respondents compared the Trust to 'aligning themselves with a liberal agenda' or 'siding with left-wing politics' through *Prejudice and Pride*. As one interviewee shared, commenting that the programme felt 'incongruous with the National Trust' and that: 'perhaps it's going off its, I don't know what its maxim or policy is, or its general intentions. It seems a bit left, left side if you like'. Whereas other visitors counteracted these views by asserting that: 'It's not political, it's life', with one visitor speaking back to another respondent (see figure 31):

A response to one of the comments LGBTQ+ issues are not political – they're human concerns, centred on real people. The NT preserves stories, people & ideas as well as objects. Long may they continue to do so. Thank you.

A small number of members questioned whether it was democratic decision in presenting *Prejudice and Pride*, calling for the Trust to ask members to vote on future programming choices. The 'expected visitor experience' was challenged in some instances by encountering *Prejudice and Pride*, with visitors stating that 'I don't come to be challenged', preferring a safe and uncritical reading of history. A number described their motivations for visiting as for 'a nice day out' or in terms of wanting a 'purely aesthetic experience'. One visitor's expectation fell in the former category, she said:

This is a politically overt exhibition and a departure for the N.T. I'm not sure it's appropriate even if one of the previous owners was a homosexual or because he was one. I have very mixed feelings about the exhibitions and its content, not because of the sexual judgements it invariably invokes, but because it's too serious an issue for a venue which primarily designed for "recreation".

KL 148

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

A response to one of the comments:
LGBTQ+ issues are not political — they're human concerns, centred on real people. The NT preserves stories, people & ideas as well as objects. Long may they continue to do so. Thank you.

Please write or draw your response

Figure 31 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy

That being said, some visitors who were cautious of the perceived political nature of the programme *Prejudice and Pride* still found value in the Trust expanding its remit to encompass a more holistic understanding of heritage. One member sent a letter directly to the Trust's head office in August to express their thanks and share their belief that *Prejudice and Pride* would help to shift perceptions of the organisation. He wrote:

I would like to express my appreciation for the work that the National Trust has done in relation to this celebration, especially given that you have come in for some criticism: surely evidence of how important it is to continue to hold such initiatives.

I have found the celebration fascinating, and it has furthered my admiration for the National Trust. I am wary of politically correct box-ticking, but I believe the LGBTQ history celebration is a genuinely interesting and relevant campaign for the National Trust to be running, as well as helping define its image as a modern and welcoming organisation.

'It's a private matter'

Some visitors described the themes *Prejudice and Pride* raised, in particular sexuality, as a 'private matter', something that 'should be kept behind closed doors'. Others spoke about people's 'sexuality as being no one else's business but their own' and that 'as long as they don't hurt anybody else it's fine.'

A number of visitors connected this idea with their perceived remit of the Trust. For example, stating: 'I'm not interested in the person that owned the house, only the building and gardens'. This concern was also often brought up in relation to the suggestion that *Prejudice and Pride* 'outed' Felbrigg Hall's last squire – Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer in the film 'The Unfinished Portrait'. One respondent to Felbrigg Hall wrote about their considerable unease of sexuality being brought into the public domain (see figure 32):

I enjoyed looking around Felbrigg but why all this comment and displays about homosexuality. In my lifetime it was against the law & in my opinion still should be in public. What people do or say in their own homes is up to them but why oh why is there such a fuss & pushing these ways into everybody's faces.

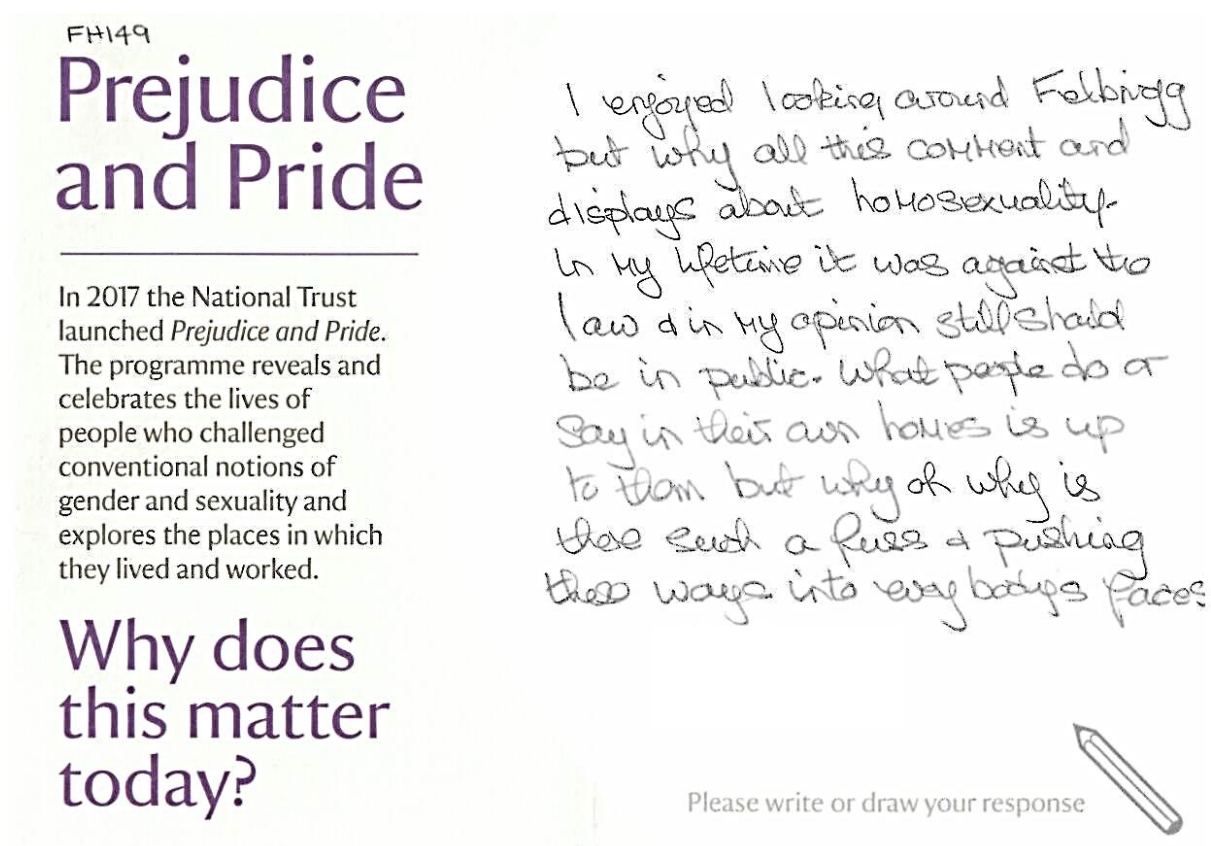


Figure 32 Comments card collected at Felbrigg Hall

Whereas, another visitor to Felbrigg Hall thanked the Trust for 'shining a light' on the story of Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer and his homosexuality, alongside unpacking society's use of the phrase 'a private man', as we can see in figure 33:

Well done NT for shining the light. Listening to the short film 'Unfinished Portrait' it would not surprise me that Robert would, if he was living now, not object in any way to being 'outed,' despite being a 'private' man. So often a phrase used by society and the majority to repress + hide the reality of the diversity of sexuality.

FH27

Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?

Well done NT for shining the light.
Listening to the short film 'Unfinished portrait' it would not surprise me that Robert would, if he was living now, not object in any way to being 'outed'. despite being a 'private' man, so often a phrase used by society and the majority to repress + hide the reality of the diversity of sexuality

Please write or draw your response

Figure 33 Comments card collected from Felbrigg Hall

'What about straight history?'

Other criticisms could be understood as a manifestation of broader anxieties around social and political change and a sense that the inclusion of more diverse histories potentially undermined the experiences and value of those whose lives have traditionally been privileged in heritage presentations. For example, one visitor interviewed at Kingston Lacy commented:

I just worry that minority views are being pushed upon us. My view is that minorities should be allowed to enjoy their lives, without it almost turning around so that the majority feel guilty if they have a different view.

A number of respondents asked: 'what about straight history'? One respondent who commented on a card at Felbrigg Hall asked: 'Do you celebrate heterosexuals? No.' Also, writing about how they understood the role of the Trust as 'preserving our heritage for the future and should not involve sexuality', underlining the word 'our' twice. Some visitors saw LGBTQ heritage as something 'different' or 'exceptional', while assuming heterosexual stories were 'normal'. Others were unable or unwilling to share 'the spotlight' having been at the centre of programmes, exhibitions and events for so long. A number of visitors didn't

seem to recognise that the majority of cultural and heritage-based presentations were of heterosexual narratives, as figure 34 demonstrates:

Original respondent: *Looking forward to the Hetrosexual [sic] exhibition?*

Respondent two: *It's already on – all the time.*

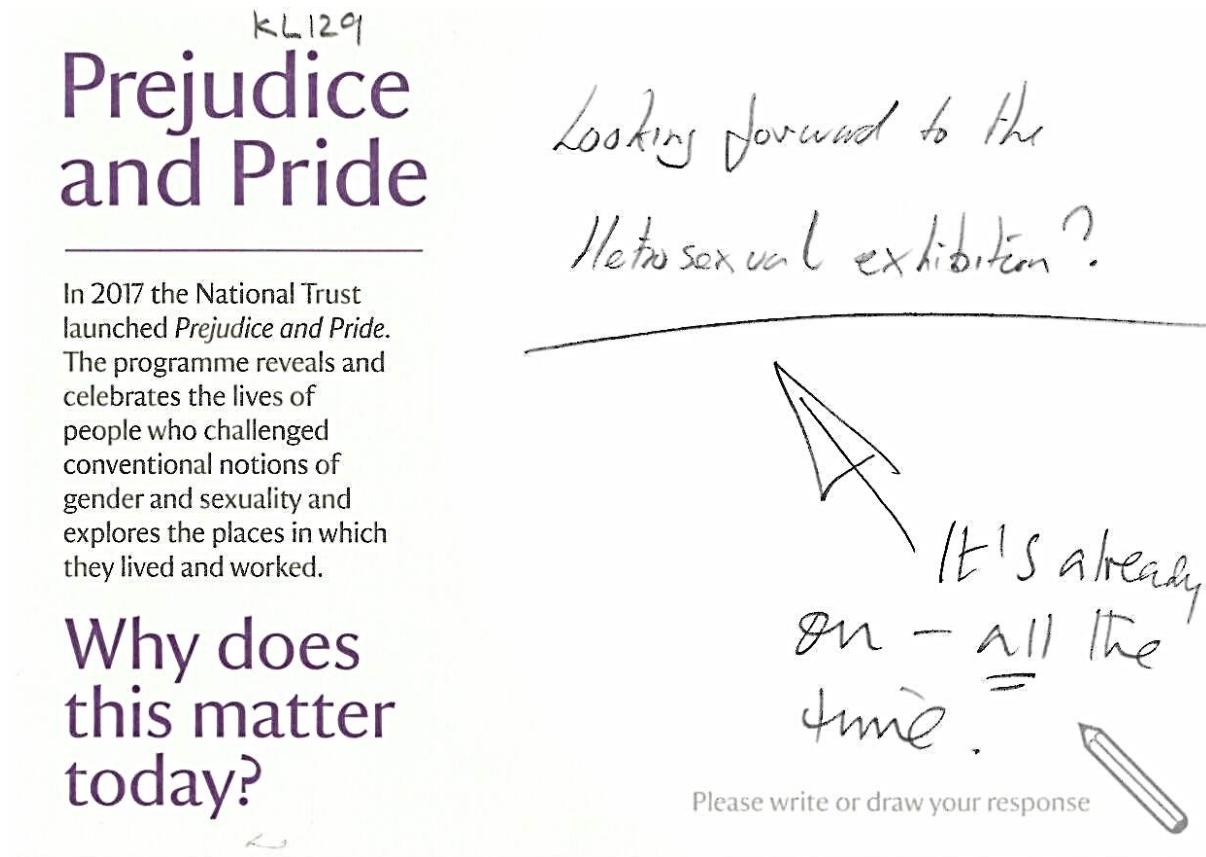


Figure 34 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy

One interviewee from Kingston Lacy believed there were more effective approaches to increasing and diversifying audiences at the Trust rather than presenting LGBTQ narratives. He stated:

I would think that there are better ways of swelling numbers if that's what you want to do, so focusing on a minority, the definition of minority means that you are unlikely to achieve swelling the numbers by focusing on a small group of people, as so a business is conceived.

He later acknowledged the privileged position he was in as a heterosexual man, but questioned the implications of a minority group not being represented at the Trust:

One of the problems I always struggle with is being a male heterosexual I don't know what the minority community actually experiences these days in terms of prejudice against them. I have always been open minded, not a lot of our best friends are gay, but we like to treat them equally and be sensitive about how they are, so it is a bit difficult for me to judge because I don't see from their perspective. Do they feel if

they walk into a National Trust property that they are being disadvantaged because of their sexuality? I just think it's slightly bonkers I must admit.

A young white heterosexual man interviewed at Knole Park had a different perspective to put forward. He understood that his experiences might be different to others and encouraged others to see and acknowledge their own situations and positions:

It's never affected me personally, I'm a white male and I'm heterosexual so I've never had any prejudice against me, so it's never really personally affected me, but I do have friends. Actually, one of my sister's best friend is Ghanaian and he's often said things about when people have discriminated against him. It's just good for people to really become aware of their opinions.

Contradictory views

Often, visitors' responses to the programme were not straightforward. Sometimes visitors presented contradictory views, for example, being very supportive of the programme and advocating the need for a tolerant and inclusive society in one part of the interview and, in another part, expressing homophobic remarks such as describing gay men's behaviour as 'predatory'.

In other cases, respondents might comment seemingly showing support for the *Prejudice and Pride* programme, but through an in-depth analysis of the language and phrases used in the cards and semi-structured interviews a more complex picture was unearthed – in some examples latent homophobia was exposed. A number of people participating in *Prejudice and Pride* talked about 'not having a problem' with the Trust celebrating and revealing LGBTQ heritage, suggesting that they, as individuals, were 'ok with it' despite believing that it might be a 'problem'. Figure 35 (see below), a comments card collected from Felbrigg Hall, evidences an example of this complex response.

Others spoke about 'not minding it, as long as it does not affect me', and some visitors talked about 'tolerating it', but might also inadvertently reveal that they did not believe that LGBTQ people deserved the same rights as everyone else. One visitor to Knole Park interpreted the story of Eddy Sackville-West choosing to occupy only a small part of his property as his family banishing him to his own quarters because he was gay, casting him as an isolationist, which ultimately revealed more about the visitor's own values and views towards the LGBTQ community.

A small number of interviewees were hostile towards the interview process, with one visitor to Kingston Lacy refusing to introduce themselves, and offering only monosyllabic and combative responses. Some interviewees showed an unwillingness to acknowledge that they had learnt anything from *Prejudice and Pride*, with one couple later admitting that they had 'no idea that gay men were hanged in the past' before seeing EXILE at Kingston Lacy, but only when the recording device had been switched off. A few respondents started the interview presenting a view that accepted a need for a tolerant society, but as the interview continued and they became more comfortable with the process they used more negative language to describe the LGBTQ community and shared more hostile opinions, perhaps,

revealing that some visitors recognised what views are, and aren't, socially acceptable today.

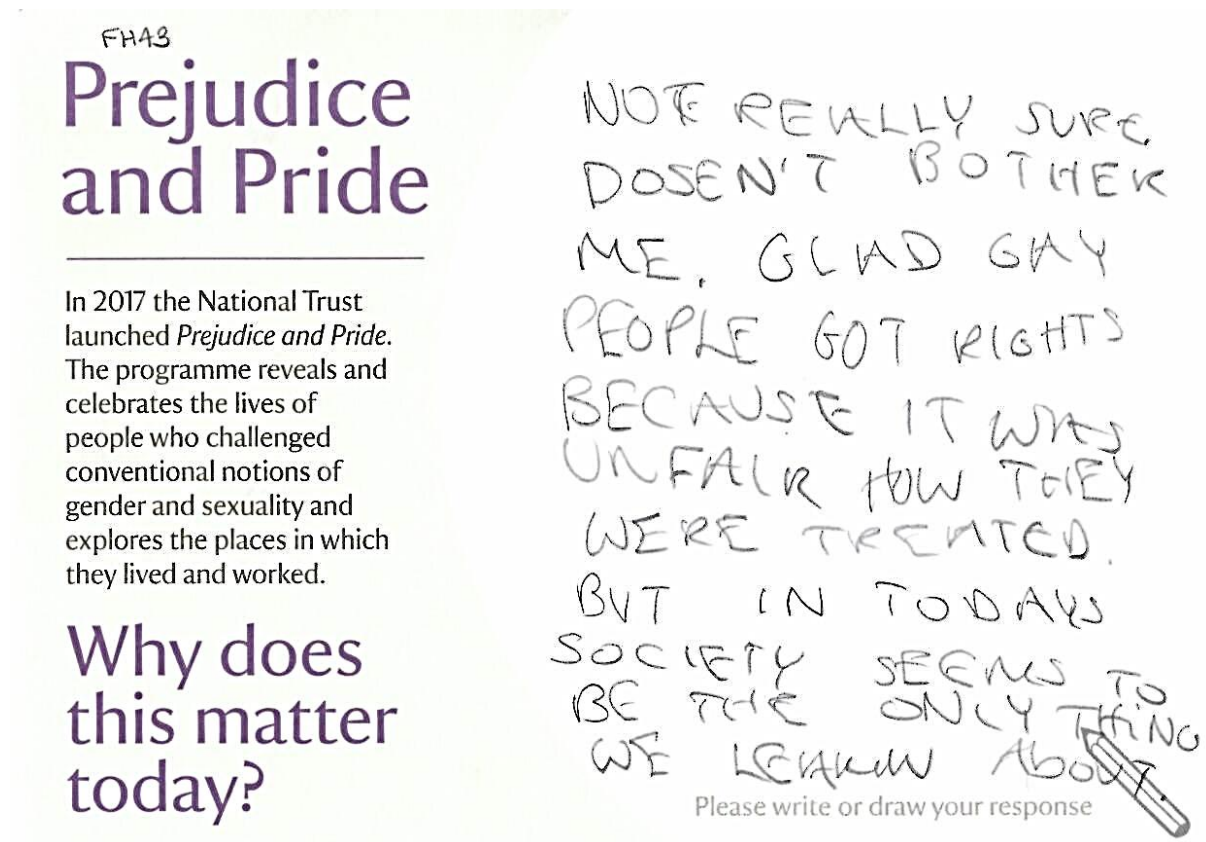


Figure 35 Comments card collected from Felbrigg Hall - 'Not really sure. Doesn't bother me. Glad gay people got rights because it was unfair how they were treated. But in today's society seems to be the only thing we learn about.'

The phrase 'my friend is gay, but that's ok, they're different', was used by some visitors, revealing a disconnect between attitudes towards known individuals and the broader issue of LGBTQ rights. This issue generated an intense discussion between one couple at Kingston Lacy, in relation to their gay friends who had recently got married. They discussed:

Respondent one: *I've got a gay friend who got married last week, he's up in Australia, he's already had a couple of bits of, what do you call it... well he's off there on honeymoon, they're there for three weeks, but they were there for one week and they had a bit of... not argy-bargy, but a little bit of a run-in with some people, who don't like that sort of thing, but they've moved on to somewhere else and they're doing a tour of Australia and they're back in a couple of weeks.*

Respondent two: *How did that make you feel hearing that had happened to your friend?*

Respondent one: *No, no he's my friend, he's just like any, he's alright, you know, they'll get through it, they're more men than I am probably, they're good people, you know. I was brought up more or less the old-fashioned way. My beliefs, some of them have changed and some of them haven't. I've sort of mellowed, as I say I've got gay friends, one that died of AIDS, ones I know from work, one I know from the golf club*

and that didn't bother me at all. Give them a good hug and whatever, as long as I'm left alone, if nobody tries to pick me up in a pub or a club... [but I believe] Marriage is between a man and a woman, my view, my view, but if you're going to be that way inclined then you keep it behind closed doors. As long as I don't see it on TV, or street, or pub, or club, or in the street or whatever, that's fine I have no problem with it at all. But it just makes me, you know, feel uncomfortable.

RCMG interviewer: *Does Prejudice and Pride matter to you personally?*

Respondent one: *It doesn't affect me in anyway whatsoever.*

Respondent two: *But what about your friends?*

Respondent one: *Yeah, obviously because they're my friends, that matters to me.*

Many visitors who were interviewed consciously or unconsciously avoided using words such as 'gay', or would pause or lower their voices before, or when, saying 'homosexual'. LGBTQ people were often 'othered' through the over-emphasis of the word 'them' when visitors described individuals from the LGBTQ community, automatically separating LGBTQ people from their own world and narrative.

However, an unease with language and terminology was not always a manifestation of latent homophobic views. Rather, in several cases, it was an anxiety around saying the 'wrong thing' or a lack of knowledge of particular terms. Several visitors struggled with acronyms, but expressed open-minded and supportive views. For example, one interviewee at Kingston Lacy commented that: *'I'd got to grips with LGBT over the last couples of years, and now they've added a Q on the end'*, later asking what the 'Q' stood for.

Overt homophobia

A very small minority of visitors expressed their opposition through explicit homophobia. One visitor to Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, for example, commented:

Promiscuity and gay behaviour is wrong. We should set good examples to our children, not promote abnormal as good.

In most of the cases of overt homophobia, comments with religious associations were expressed, as the following two comments collected from Kingston Lacy show:

I am so sorry to see all the LGBTQ propaganda by the National Trust. Such sinful acts are destroying the family structure and are causing the cultural and societies crumbling that we see all around us.

All these worthy tributes to LGBT people. Where is the area showing the cons of homosexuality (biblical texts, potential curing of LGBT). Too positive about the care and respect needed about their community what about us homophobes? The story about gay men deliberately targeting Christian cakemakers, hoteliers etc. who refused to cater for homosexuals because of their religious beliefs.

However, a similar number of positive and supportive responses to *Prejudice and Pride* drew on religious beliefs, and how religion had shaped a view of the world where all people are valued. For example, see figure 36, a comment collected on a card from Kingston Lacy:

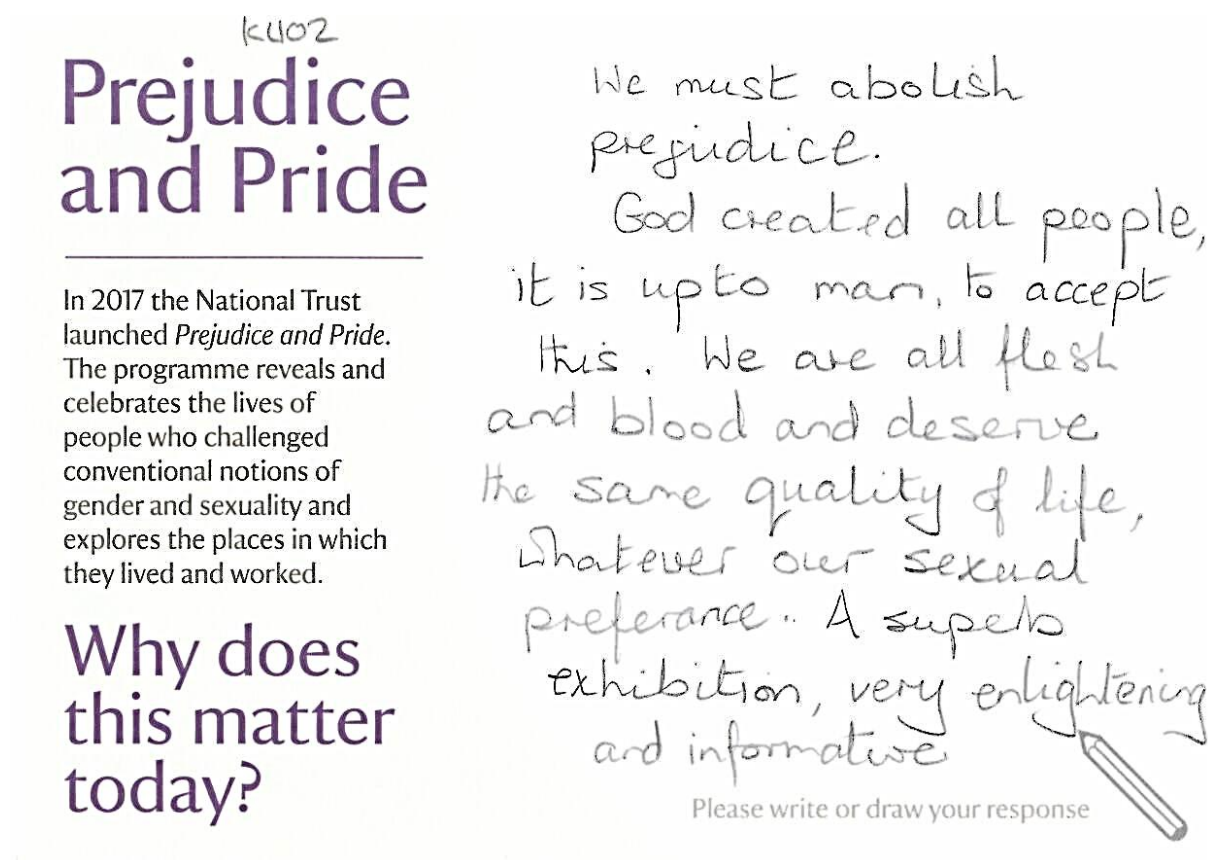


Figure 36 Comments card collected from Kingston Lacy - 'We must abolish prejudice. God created all people, it is up to man to accept this. We are all flesh and blood and deserve the same quality of life, whatever our sexual preference. A superb exhibition, very enlightening and informative.'

Does age matter?

Many visitors and members made assumptions about differences in generational attitudes towards LGBTQ people and issues.

Some younger visitors suggested that older generations 'frown upon homosexuality' or 'cannot cope with it', or that 'prejudice lies with older people'. However, these assumptions did not always live out and the research revealed a far more complex and nuanced picture.

Unusually, in one example, a visitor from Sutton House suggested that it was younger generations who were more prejudiced, as when she was younger it was less talked about, less of an issue, and 'now that more LGBTQ people can be themselves it has made people less tolerant'.

Some visitors lived at a time when homosexuality was still illegal, and many spoke of not knowing it existed when they were younger. Visitors spoke of how their attitudes have shifted over the years and their positions had changed, whereas others spoke of an ingrained prejudice, from being taught that it was shameful to be gay when a child. One visitor to Knole Park, who is 85-years-old spoke of 'wanting to understand the modern

world' and that she 'didn't want to have a closed mind'. Another visitor to Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, who described herself as 76+ years of age and gay, shared that:

I am old enough to remember the "hiding & sense of shame & being wrong & not acceptable". SO, I am in total agreement of all that challenges idiotic thoughtless and uninformed notions – such as have made so many lives of men & women almost intolerable.

'I've never even thought about it'

A large number of individuals reflected on the fact that they 'had never thought about it before' when asked whether a programme like *Prejudice and Pride* mattered to them. Two teachers interviewed at Sutton House revealed that they hadn't thought about LGBTQ issues before seeing the 'School of Anarchy' exhibition, but felt it personally mattered because of their roles as teachers and on behalf on their students. A member of staff at Kingston Lacy, spoke about EXILE 'challenging' her understanding of LGBTQ history 'because I don't think I'd thought about it before, I was probably quite ignorant of it.' Later going on to ask: 'Has it enriched it? Yeah probably in the sense that I'll be looking for these stories elsewhere, not just in National Trust places'.

Through being asked the question: 'why do programmes like *Prejudice and Pride* matter today?', visitors were provoked to think about issues in a deeper way and reflect on concerns that they might only have superficially considered in the past. As this interviewee shared:

I don't know really, that's something I haven't really thought about it, that's something that I'll probably go away and think about it later on. Because being truthful it's something I hadn't really thought about, that I've kind of grown up with so I kind of accept it in this day and age, but when you start to look back in history and how people suffered for it, but I've never really given that a thought. But I will probably go away now and like I say this is a good thing that they've done this because hopefully it will make more people go away and think about it.

In spite of 'never really thinking about LGBTQ issues before', many visitors relished the opportunity to reflect on the concerns raised by the programme and appreciated the chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings.

Were visitors changed by their experiences of Prejudice and Pride?

The in-depth, qualitative analysis of visitors' responses offers a compelling picture of majority support for *Prejudice and Pride*. At the same time, regardless of whether visitors were critical of the programme or positive about it, many responses were characterised by thoughtful and deep levels of engagement, evidenced by rich and full responses to comments card and a considerable number of very lengthy interviews. This depth of engagement points to the success of the programme in stimulating and enriching contemporary debate. But did the programme provoke people to think differently about history, identity and the world today? Did *Prejudice and Pride* impact the ways in which visitors thought about LGBTQ lives and equality?

Through carefully listening to visitors we were able to explore the potential of heritage sites to stimulate reflection, encourage visitors to negotiate difficult, sometimes contested, ideas and to generate new understandings. The responses to the programme that we captured in the study include the most stridently expressed opinions, the quieter voices, and those that fall somewhere in-between. Although responses were often lengthy, complex and sometimes even contradictory, it is nevertheless possible to discern patterns in the ways visitors were prompted to think. Five main categories of response can be seen in the diagram below (figure 37).

At one extreme, some visitors out-rightly rejected *Prejudice and Pride* with even a small minority expressing their intention to cancel their National Trust membership. At the other end were a similarly small number of visitors who were unequivocal in their support for all aspects of *Prejudice and Pride*, sometimes already active in championing LGBTQ rights and fighting for LGBTQ equality.

The majority of responses, however, fell somewhere in-between these two extremes; visitors whose responses evidence some form of reflection or shift in thinking, whether subtle and incremental or, in a few cases, more profound and even transformative. In debates related to contentious topics that are dominated by polarised viewpoints – such as LGBTQ equality – it is often these voices that are overlooked, even unheard. When we do listen attentively to visitors' reflections, what experiences of change do we find?

Were visitors changed by Prejudice and Pride?

OUTRIGHT REJECTION	STIMULATED REFLECTION	SHIFTED ATTITUDES	INSPIRED ACTION	UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT
<p>Sick of hearing about LGBTQ etc. I'll be cancelling my National Trust membership!!</p>	<p>The project had a profound effect on us, bringing us to tears. That such a display should have proved so controversial must indicate the residual strength of homophobia in this country. I say this as a 76 year old heterosexual male who regrettably in the past had significant difficulties in understanding homosexual feelings.</p>	<p>As a child of the 1950s I am on a continuing journey to lose the prejudices of my youth. Thank you National Trust for helping myself and others on that journey.</p>	<p>I guess I always thought your sexual orientation was a matter for private consideration and that the whole kind of campaigning, 'out there', thing was a bit over the top, but Prejudice & Pride made me realise that our society is not as liberal as we believe and there are people with strongly homophobic views still. So from here on in I will speak out about my sexuality and make sure I stand up for my rights.</p>	<p>Our heritage is for us all, whether lesbian, gay, straight, trans, bisexual. It's fantastic the National Trust has created this programme to help us all take pride and share in this heritage.</p>

Figure 37 A diagram of change in visitors engaging with Prejudice and Pride

The research produced overwhelming evidence that the programme deepened connections for visitors, many of whom were existing members, whose experiences were characterised by unexpected levels of emotion. A couple who were long-term members of the Trust wrote a letter of support directly to John Orna-Ornstein, sharing the profound effect the programme had on them:

We are writing to say that the Exile project at the house [Kingston Lacy], in particular the rope memorial, had a profound effect on us. We would not have predicted that it would have such an effect, bringing us to tears. That such a display should have proved so controversial must indicate the residual strength of homophobia in this country. I say this as a 76 year old heterosexual male who regrettably in the past had significant difficulties in understanding homosexual feelings. Things are changing and in our view will be greatly helped by such strong displays as that at Kingston Lacy.

Others described their experiences of the programme as ‘incredibly moving and powerful’, alongside being both ‘inspiring and deeply upsetting’. Whilst a couple who happened upon the EXILE exhibition at Kingston Lacy unexpectedly spoke of their strong emotional reaction, in particular to the work ‘In Memoriam’; an installation of knotted ropes that represented the 51 men who were hanged under the laws that criminalised same-sex acts during the lifetime of William John Bankes. One of the individuals remarked that:

You walk in the doorway and it's awe-inspiring, it's very emotive. It makes you stand there and think about your own person, your own body if you like. You're looking at all these knots in the ropes and thinking that could have been me one hundred years ago...

Stimulated reflection

Many of the events and activities associated with *Prejudice and Pride* stimulated a process of reflection and helped visitors to ‘see with new eyes’. One visitor to Beningbrough Hall, who participated in a live-portraiture event, noted that the experience created an opportunity for contemplation, stating:

Everyone's life matters. We are all part of the picture of life in the past, present & future. We need to know and understand in order to move forward in the future. Taking time to listen to and, watch the 'life portrait' was very relaxing - also a good opportunity to reflect.

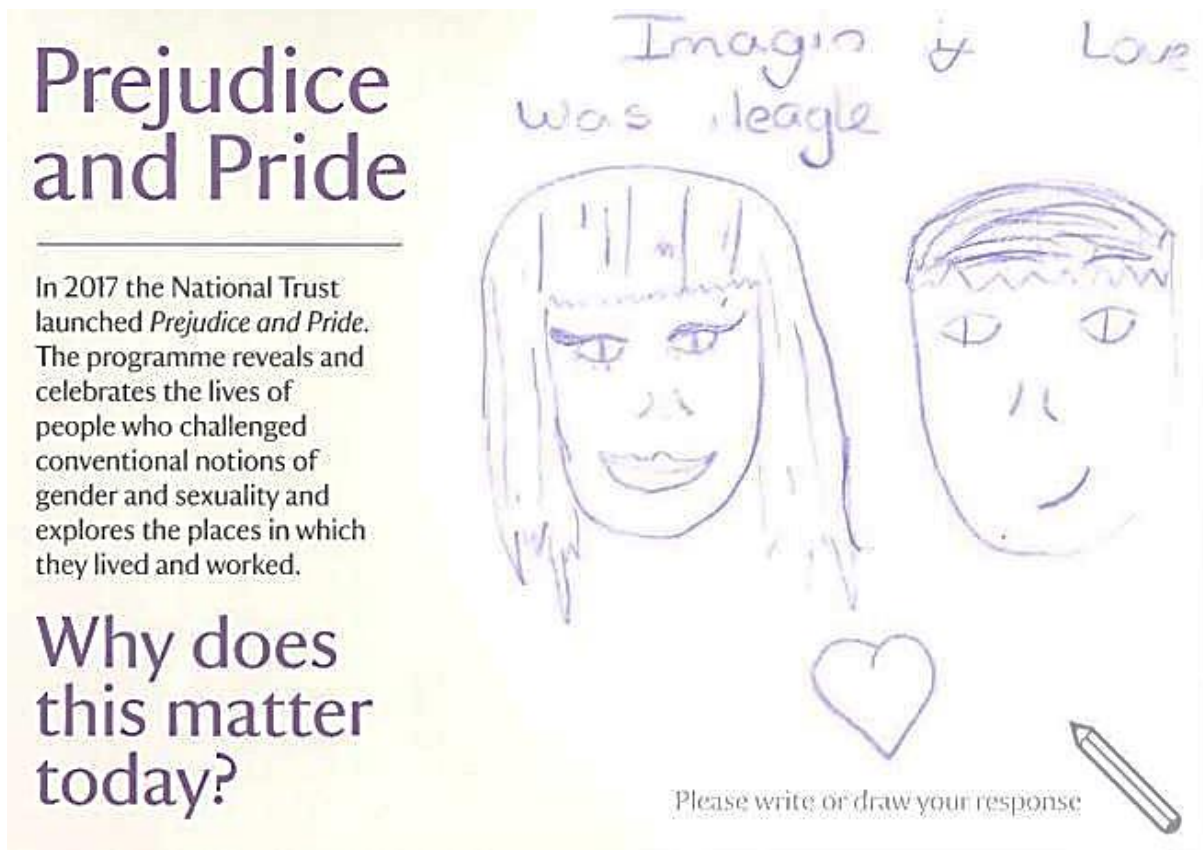


Figure 38 Comments card collected from Hanbury Hall

Similarly, activities at Hanbury Hall provoked a profound reflection from a child visitor, who asked us to ‘*imagine if love was illegal?*’ (see figure 38 above). Several visitors reported having their ‘*eyes opened*’, and credited *Prejudice and Pride* with expanding their knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ issues, with one visitor to Sutton House commenting that:

... as an informed person I am ashamed to say that I know very little about the LGBTQIA community. Exhibitions like this change that; we need them to harvest understanding and inclusivity.

A visitor to Kingston Lacy also tells of an increase in his awareness of past events and treatment of LGBTQ people, alongside a desire to see a more tolerant and inclusive society:

As a gay man it is important to me to learn more about LGBT history and stories of our ancestors, so thank you for helping to tell more about our history. Until learning about William Bankes’ story I had no idea that gay men were executed for who they loved from the 1500s to 1800s. I am so lucky to live at the current time. May tolerance & acceptance continue to grow.

A number of visitors also struggled with language and terminology, unsure of what words to use. One visitor who attended a talk at Wightwick Manor, expressed her anxiety about her understanding of transgender issues.

I have to say though I’m confused by the whole transgender thing, and I consider myself quite a liberal person. But all these different words! I’m supposed to call

myself a 'cis' woman, so I've been born a woman and I identify as a woman. So all this new nomenclature I'm confused by and I suppose it's quite a fresh debate at the moment. We've got some feminists coming out and going 'if you're born as a woman and you live as a woman you will have had a different experience, a cumulative experience or affect, but if you're born as a man and you transition to becoming a woman you will not have the same life experiences'. I agree with them, but I kind of have this slight liberal thing where I go 'ooh am I allowed to admit that? Am I not politically correct? ... I mean I don't care, if you want to become a man or a woman that's cool, but why does that mean I have to change what I call myself, how I identify myself, so I'm not resisting it I'm just a bit confused about it.

She recognised that at no other time had she had the chance to talk about her thoughts, later reflecting that she greatly valued the opportunity to discuss this within the interview. She said:

I'm a bit worried that I'm being left behind actually, I feel like I missed those opportunities to have those sorts of conversations in a safe environment because, when you're at school, you can kind of explore these things and have conversations and have younger friends and you're all experimenting with your personalities. I feel like you've got the space to have those conversations. I feel as you get older and you're more formed as a person, and arguably your peer group is more formed and fixed, I think you have less and less opportunity to just discuss these things in an open and safe way. So I'm sitting here going to you, I feel a bit embarrassed, that I feel a bit uncomfortable with all this transgender stuff because I don't know what to do with it and I don't know what I'm supposed to say and how I'm supposed to behave, but I don't want to offend anybody. But I don't feel I have the opportunity to have that conversation in a more public space. I'm not sure whether it would be appropriate, isn't that sad?

In considering these two long extracts, we see a visitor not only provoked to reflect on contemporary issues but someone who appreciates the opportunity to be challenged to think differently. Visitor comments may not always reflect the kinds of views that exhibition makers and event organisers hope to inspire but they nevertheless point to the largely untapped value of heritage sites as sites of reflection, debate and dialogue on contemporary issues.

It was clear that many visitors were surprised by what they found on site, and had not previously given much thought to the issues it raised but welcomed the opportunity to learn more and reflect as well as the chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings. Some explicitly welcomed the opportunity to have their perspectives challenged and be provoked to think in a different way.

WM91
Prejudice and Pride

In 2017 the National Trust launched *Prejudice and Pride*. The programme reveals and celebrates the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and explores the places in which they lived and worked.

Why does this matter today?



Figure 39 Comments card collected from Wightwick Manor

In many cases this enhanced understanding around prejudice faced by LGBTQ people, both historically and today, moved people, shifted attitudes and aroused more empathetic views, helping visitors to reflect on their own positions (see figure 39 for a visualisation of responses to and the potential impact of *Prejudice and Pride* on one visitor to Wightwick Manor). In some cases, this led people to declare that they had become more tolerant, as we see with one visitor to the exhibition at Smallhythe Place, who reflects on the nature of intolerance as well as her own prejudices, stating:

I think Edy and her friends were definitely brave, they were pioneers and they set the ball rolling. It's going to make me think more before I make an opinion, and, as I say, it's going to make me more tolerant. I think it's human nature that you are prejudiced, but you've got to curb it and you've got to have more love in your life, you've got to have more love for everyone.

Inspired action

We also found that the programme inspired visitors, albeit a small number, to declare their intention to take some form of action following their experience of *Prejudice and Pride*. One visitor to Kingston Lacy reflected on her shift in attitude, stating that:

I guess I always thought your sexual orientation was a matter for private consideration and that the whole kind of campaigning, 'out there', thing was a bit over the top, but Prejudice & Pride and the experience of going to Bournemouth Pride has changed my view of that because it's made me realise that our society is not as liberal as we believe and there are people with strongly homophobic views still. So for that reason from here on in I will certainly speak out about my sexuality and make sure I stand up for my rights.

Other visitors described how what they saw and experienced as part of the programme moved them to want to go away and find out more, as well as be more compassionate and support people facing persecution. One volunteer at Kingston Lacy was prompted by their own experience of the EXILE installation to do their own additional research on the men who were executed for same sex acts and to share this with visitors. Another visitor to Smallhythe Place spoke of a desire to go away and revisit histories he thought he knew, looking through a new lens that *Prejudice and Pride* had provided:

I'm quite a big fan of history and it's made me think some of the aspects of history that I've learnt, maybe I need to go back and look at it and assess it from a different view and a different standpoint, with different opinions and points of view.

Shifting perceptions of the Trust through Prejudice and Pride

As the qualitative research has revealed, in many cases *Prejudice and Pride* shifted visitors' and members' perceptions of the Trust, both in terms of how the organisation relates to their own lives and the role it can play in contemporary society.

Many visitors described how they had originally thought of the Trust as a 'stuffy, conservative organisation', somewhere with 'old-fashioned values', a 'mainstream institution', a place for 'retired people' or for 'middle class white people'. Many people were fiercely loyal describing how they are 'big fans of the National Trust' or observing it as a 'national treasure'. International visitors often spoke in very positive terms about the Trust, remarking on the importance of a national organisation preserving and protecting a nation's rich heritage, often wishing that their own countries (America, Taiwan, Germany) had something similar.

Of course, as the research has already shown, some visitors felt that the Trust 'was losing its way' through programming *Prejudice and Pride*, but the majority saw this shift in approach as a positive move. When commenting in relation to *Prejudice and Pride*, people still valued the Trust as a 'mainstream organisation' and 'part of the institution', but considered how this aspect held huge potential in legitimising hidden histories and challenging more 'conventional or old-fashioned values'. One visitor, and former member of staff at Kingston Lacy, commented on *Prejudice and Pride*, considering the role the Trust could play in shaping contemporary thinking around issues, stating that:

I think it's fantastic, I think they should do more of it, for the Trust as an organisation it's obviously about relevance today... the more relevant to modern day exhibitions and relevant to thinking today they can do, the better.

A couple of visitors explicitly remarked on the role that the Trust could play in setting an example for others, as one young visitor interviewed at Knole Park suggests:

I think it sets an example for other organisations to get with the times I suppose. I think a lot of people have the notion that the National Trust all it really does is take care of heritage and history and it can get, and for some people it can be dull, but for now they're really engaging what's modern and what's now and I think that's really good.

People spoke about having their 'prejudices about the National Trust challenged', and several visitors commented on how 'unexpected' it was, or how 'surprised' they were that the Trust was revealing and celebrating LGBTQ heritage. Whereas, others stated that they 'weren't surprised at all' as 'of course the Trust should be doing this and moving with the times'. Many spoke about the fact they saw the Trust 'taking a stand' as positive and 'refreshing'; one visitor described it as 'hopeful' and another from Sutton House thought that they could be seen in a negative light if they weren't doing this type of work.

Others described *Prejudice and Pride* as 'long overdue', as 'finally moving with the times' or 'the Trust moving out of their comfort zone'. Visitors used phrases such as being 'on trend', presenting a 'new-fashioned mind-set', and showing another side to the Trust which is innovative and 'exploring different sides of history'. Several respondents offered up thanks and congratulations, for example 'Bravo!' and 'Well done NT!'.

Prejudice and Pride deepened connections with existing members and encouraged them to engage with the Trust in new ways, as one interviewee at Kingston Lacy described, after deciding to visit the house having read about the exhibition EXILE in the media:

I'll see the National Trust in a slightly different light because they've obviously put this exhibition on, they've engaged with research and I love the logo I think that's brilliant. Yeah, so I might not feel that they're such a stuffy, conservative organisation, and I am a member, but probably just for the parking usually [laughs] and the grounds, I often don't come into the houses when I visit National Trust properties, but this exhibition, particularly, has made me come to the house.

Although the majority of participants in the study were Trust members, the research revealed very positive responses from a number of non-members. For example, one visitor attending an event at Smallhythe Place shared how his perceptions of the Trust had changed as a result of *Prejudice and Pride*:

LGBT people contributed so much to our history and to our national identity and obviously our big homes. As a mainstream organisation I'm pleased that it's looking at minority populations and their contribution to national life. So, what it's done for me, it's made me engage with the National Trust, which I probably wouldn't have done before that. In a word I feel welcome here now. This is the first time we've visited a National Trust for years and we're now considering joining as a family member.

The research found that for many visitors *Prejudice and Pride* did change their perception of the Trust and not only its relevance to their own lives today, but contemporary society more broadly.

Conclusions and questions for the future

Through listening to, and carefully considering, the fullest range of visitor responses to, and engagement with, *Prejudice and Pride* we were able to capture evidence and develop a nuanced understanding of the impact of the Trust's work on visitors. The programme proved to be highly effective at stimulating reflection and dialogue between visitors around LGBTQ history, culture, identity and rights, prompting people to think, feel, and in some cases act, differently. There were also many examples of *Prejudice and Pride* changing existing members' and new visitors' perceptions of the Trust and its relevance to contemporary society.

Why it matters today

Political and global context

In the context of a rapidly changing world and at a time when there is much uncertainty around equality and rights for all; when president Donald Trump and members of his cabinet attack LGBTQ rights in the US; when there has been a 147% rise in homophobic hate crime in the UK in the wake of Brexit;⁷ when Russia has recently introduced laws banning the promotion of homosexuality and gay relationships are still criminalised in 72 countries;⁸ and when LGBTQ people continue to face discrimination in their daily lives, the question of why programmes such as *Prejudice and Pride* matter today becomes increasingly critical. In times like these it is pertinent to ask what roles can cultural organisations and heritage sites play, and what active measures can they take, to work towards nurturing a more equitable and just world, where all individuals and communities are equally valued?

Legal and policy context

Although the fifty years since homosexuality was partially decriminalised in England and Wales have been witness to huge advances in LGBTQ equality, attitudes towards LGBTQ people today are still highly uneven and, for many, in a process of flux. As *Prejudice and Pride* has undoubtedly shown, efforts to publicly celebrate same sex love and gender diversity – despite advances in the law – continue to divide public opinion. At the same, when we attend closely to the full range of responses to a more inclusive approach to understanding the past we find both an openness to new ways of seeing and a thirst for opportunities to explore and reflect on the relevance of these histories to the present day.

⁷ Townsend, M. (2016) 'Homophobic attacks in UK rose 147% in three months after Brexit vote', *Guardian Newspaper*, Saturday 8 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/08/homophobic-attacks-double-after-brexit-vote>.

⁸ Duncan, P. (2017) 'Gay relationships are still criminalised in 72 countries, report finds', *Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday 27 July 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/27/gay-relationships-still-criminalised-countries-report>.

How can the Trust embed this approach?

Prejudice and Pride was a year-long programme that marked the 50th anniversary of a change in law in 1967 – the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality. A number of properties programmed *Prejudice and Pride* in a compartmentalised way in terms of both process and product. One consequence of this was that activities arising from the programme were differentiated and marked as separate from the rest of the Trust's approaches, for example, interpretation and design strategies utilised on-property and off-property. Where sites, such as Wightwick Manor, revisited and reworked their current interpretation and embedded new artworks in to the property, visitors encountered themes raised by the *Prejudice and Pride* programme seamlessly and as part of the wider offer of the house, standing more chance of capturing people's attention who might not usually engage with such issues.

Although a number of visitors welcomed an increased visibility of LGBTQ representation through a focused year-long national programme, some visitors commented on the potential of the Trust making these histories a fundamental and integrated part of their offer, as one visitor to Kingston Lacy went on to suggest. She stated that:

... it would be great to see this sort of thing become the fabric of each property... and in all National Trust properties because it's got to be, and it's not just about gender and sexuality, it's those hidden stories, but once this exhibition's moved on – the nationwide one – to make it integral, so it just becomes accepted and everyday.

Other visitors shared their concerns over the programme only running for one year (see figure 40 for a comment collected from Plymouth Pride). One visitor to Kingston Lacy asked whether the programme was tokenistic or just a 'box ticking exercise' for the Trust, questioning whether after the 50th anniversary LGBTQ heritage 'will be forgotten about', and commenting that:

To have a permanent effect some of the content needs to be more permanently established and also how William John Bankes and his design, sending things back, relates to each room... So, I think the key thing here is to move from having a one-off exhibition to making it a permanent feature.

What might be gained by blurring the boundaries between programmes and activities that address contemporary social issues and set out to attract new visitors and deepen connections with existing members, and the conventionally understood remit of the Trust to preserve and protect the nation's heritage? In recent years the Trust has shifted its definition of conservation to a more holistic view that takes into account the significance of its places (cultural and natural, tangible and intangible) to ensure that 'their special qualities are protected, enhanced, enjoyed and understood by present and future generations.'⁹ How might a more explicit presentation of this holistic view of what the nation's heritage is

⁹ National Trust, Conservation Directorate, (September 2003), *Conservation Principles*, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/conservation-principles.pdf>

support this aspiration, so that the intangible heritages (such as the stories of those properties) are equally valued alongside the tangible and physical makeup of a property or environment? As one visitor to Kingston Lacy powerfully puts it, the Trust '*preserves stories, people and ideas, as well as objects*'. And how might the Trust build on the successes of *Prejudice and Pride* and set new standards through incorporating and embedding LGBTQ histories as part of a whole and authentic offer to move beyond a 'one-off' or 'special' programme? And, in so doing, continue to recognise and celebrate the lives of people who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and made the properties what they are today.

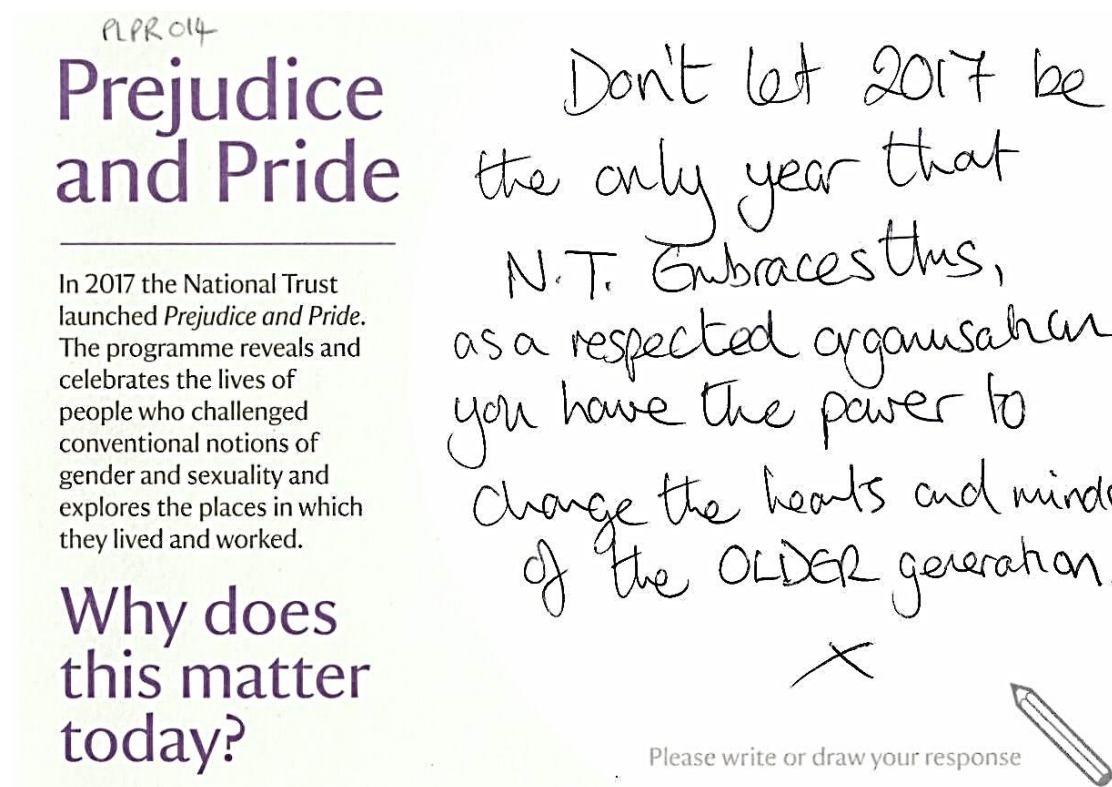


Figure 40 Comments card collected from Plymouth Pride - 'Don't let 2017 be the only year that NT embraces this, as a respected organisation you have the power to change the hearts and minds of the older generation x'

Perceptions and relevance of the Trust

All cultural institutions, including heritage sites, have the potential to harness the power of culture and history to help people to learn about, and understand the world around them, to think about and reflect on the issues that matter. Through drawing on this potential, how might the Trust reassess and better understand their resources and responsibilities to help people consider and reflect on the critical issues of our time and think about the role they can play in changing things for a better future?

As we witnessed through the visitor research, *Prejudice and Pride* not only shifted many people's perception of the Trust, but their perceptions of the roles the Trust can play through asserting their values more explicitly, moving away from an apolitical or 'neutral' position. Taking a stand and being clear about the value of 'For Ever, For Everyone' located

the Trust in, and as part of, a wider socio-political context, both historically and today. How might the Trust continue this work through committing to those values in everything they do? How can the Trust live out the value of 'For Ever, For Everyone'?

How can the Trust create a space for debate?

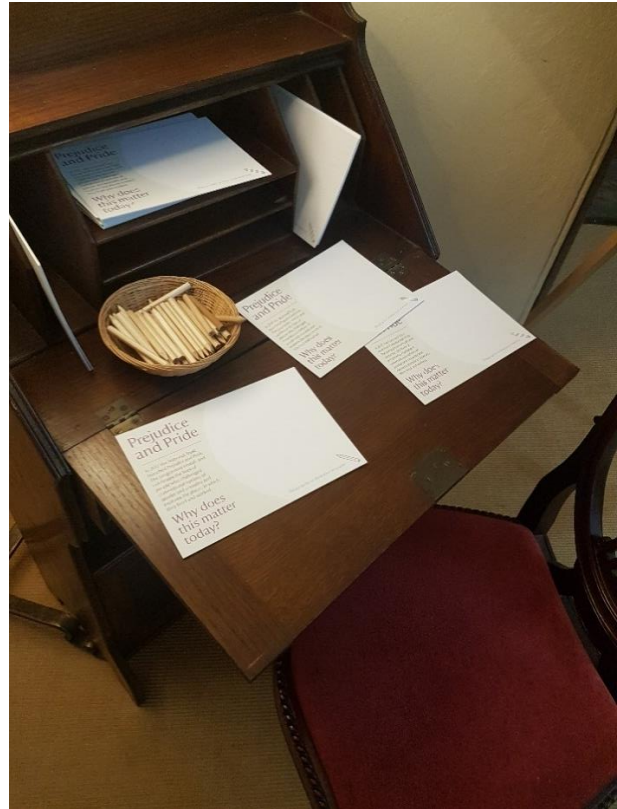
A key element in the success of the *Prejudice and Pride* programme was its capacity to stimulate reflection. What more could be done to facilitate and shape public dialogue and debate around contemporary issues?

A couple visiting the *Prejudice and Pride* programme at Sutton House appreciated the opportunity to discuss their thoughts on the exhibition 'School of Anarchy' and the issues it raised through the interview process, commenting that had there been an opportunity for public discussion and debate integrated into the show there might have been more potential for people's attitudes to be challenged, possibly even shifted. They recognised that this might not have necessarily led to people's '*minds being changed*', but it would at least '*given them the opportunity to think about their values and consciously reflect on them*'. As one of the individuals goes on to further consider:

Challenging people's views or putting something in front of them that might encourage them to change their views is a good thing, but saying someone's views are bad and they need to change, I'm not sure that's the right solution to the problem really. I think that will just encourage people to not challenge themselves because they've been told to, but anything that suggests something that is a little bit different I think is a good thing... I think some of the displays here, I would say "does that help me enter into a conversation?" I'm not sure. I feel that some of the exhibitions are a bit like "here's my view", you know, "take it or leave it", and I wonder does that encourage people who might not be tolerant to enter into that conversation, I'm not sure. I'm not sure that it bridges that gap. I feel that bringing out that message [enabling a conversation to happen] might encourage somebody to think more than somebody saying: "this is what I am and this is what I believe", because a lot of people would just say "well I don't believe that".

Visitors to the installation EXILE at Kingston Lacy made extensive use of the comments cards and dedicated space at the end of the presentation to share their opinions, feelings and reactions (see figures 41, 42 & 43). On a number of cards visitors directly responded to other visitors' comments, generating further dialogue and debate. As we have seen previously Kingston Lacy collected the most comments cards of any property (311), this alongside evidence from the interviews, demonstrates a clear desire for the public to engage in debates such as these.

What might be gained through facilitating and embedding opportunities for public debate more fully within the physical and intellectual space of National Trust properties, for example within an exhibition? And how might the process of debate and dialogue be woven into other aspects of programming? What approaches might be appropriate, authentic and 'in keeping' with the Trust?



Figures 41 & 42 EXILE Installation at Kingston Lacy – visitor comments on display

Our research points to the huge potential heritage sites hold to provide a space for reflection on the contemporary world as well as the past and to provoke different ways of seeing, thinking and feeling. Giving people the opportunity to reflect and, importantly, to share their views acts as an important part of this process. Through the visitor study we witnessed people negotiate ideas, generate new understandings and, in some cases, move towards greater understanding and empathy towards difference. One visitor described themselves as on a *'continuing journey to lose the prejudices of my youth'*, explicitly thanking the National Trust for helping them and others on that journey.

With this in mind, it is important to ask, what public spaces exist where adults in particular can think about, discuss and debate contested issues and generate new understandings? Heritage organisations, along with museums and galleries, can provide a stimulating and safe environment for this to take place. They can provide a space for evolving ideas, developing language and exploring values.

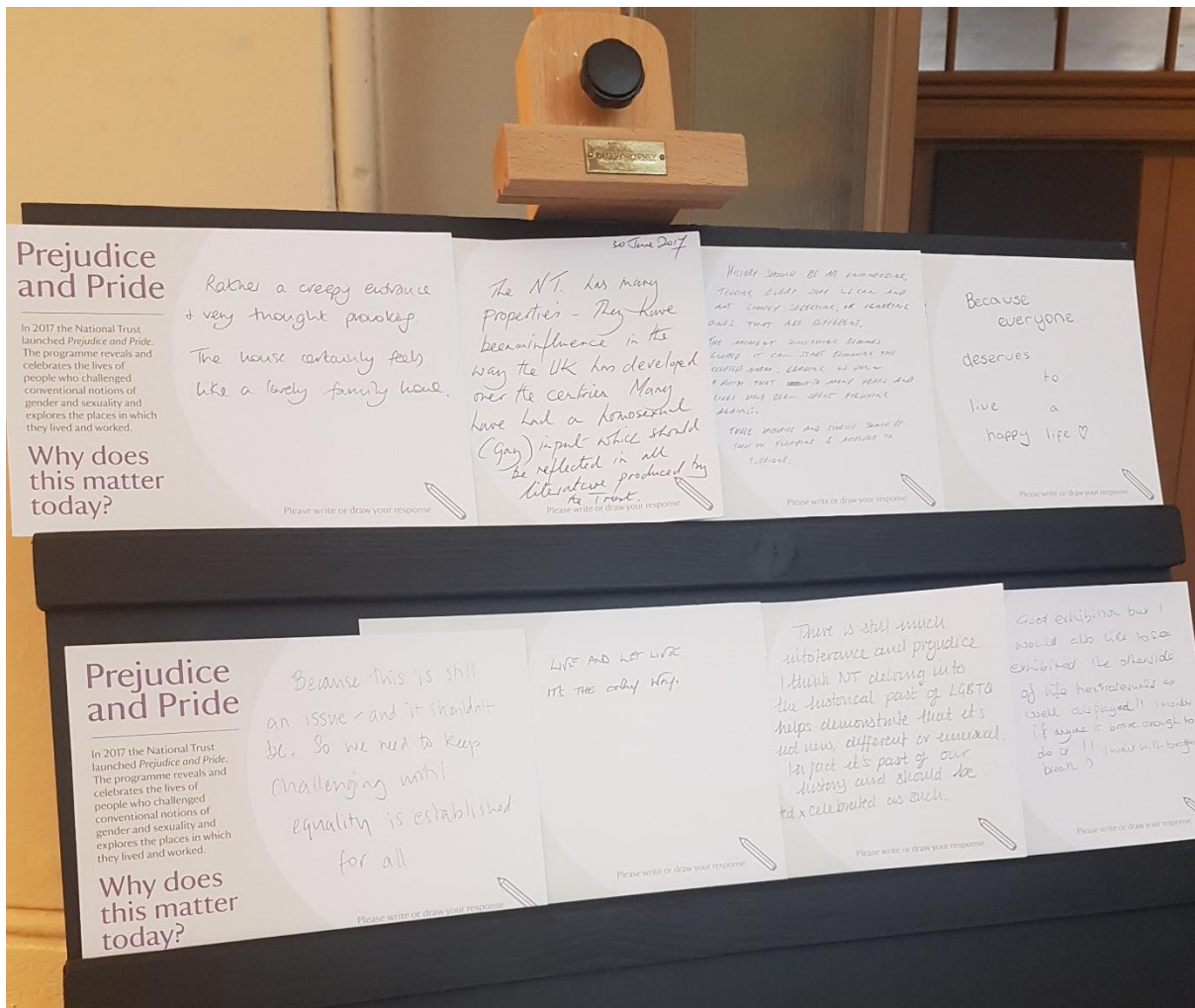


Figure 43 EXILE Installation at Kingston Lacy – visitor comments on display

How can the Trust assert their values, whilst engaging visitors who are uncomfortable with hidden histories?

The values of acceptance, respect, understanding, empathy, and an active support for LGBTQ rights and equality issues, as we have seen, operate on a continuum and there are often tipping points along the way. This presents a challenge – heritage sites have a responsibility to take a strong position on contemporary social issues as by choosing not to take sides in situations of injustice in fact means to side with the oppressor. This in turn can challenge and extend the boundaries of acceptance and understanding. However, where this stance is perceived to be too extreme or too provocative there is a danger that programmes, such as *Prejudice and Pride*, are viewed as sensationalist and can, perhaps, ultimately undo some of the positive work being achieved. As one visitor to Kingston Lacy’s EXILE persuasively articulates: *‘Too much horror would have had an alienating effect’*. A balance is therefore required concerning how far these boundaries can be pushed when one of the goals is to engender increasing support for LGBTQ rights.

What is acceptable behaviour and what isn't, at both ends of the continuum? How can the Trust live out their value of 'For Ever, for Everyone', whilst not alienating visitors who feel uncomfortable with hidden histories? How can the Trust bring people with them along this continuum and accept that, sometimes, a small number of people will be lost along the way?

The research revealed that when LGBTQ histories were strongly connected to an individual's life, for example William John Bankes' exile at Kingston Lacy, visitors more powerfully engaged with the stories; it '*made sense to them at the property*', often imagining what it would have been like for the individual experiencing discrimination and in many cases speaking on their behalf, enabling a more empathetic position to be reached. One visitor to Kingston Lacy felt that *Prejudice and Pride* was a more '*personal approach*' for the Trust to take, stating that:

... it's more about the person than the building, maybe that brings it home and has an effect on people a bit more... it's his story, it happened and then it gives you the wider context of other people who have been in that position.

How the programme was delivered and interpreted also made a difference to the level of visitor engagement. A significant number of people were moved by the stories of injustice told, this emotional engagement served to 'unsettle' visitors without shocking them. Visitors also spoke of how the high-quality execution and finish of a number of *Prejudice and Pride* activities '*did justice*' to the stories being revealed and celebrated. Working with a range of experts from researchers, artists, filmmakers, designers and composers, as well as working closely with Trust staff and volunteers, brought the LGBTQ histories to life and presented the stories through a new lens. Even visitors who felt that *Prejudice and Pride* was outside of the Trust's remit, and potentially would have initially dismissed and rejected engaging with the work, found value in experiencing it, often remarking on the excellence of the work, bringing these visitors with them and moving them in some way along the continuum. For example, one visitor to Kingston Lacy, whose wife volunteers at the property, stated that:

I felt quite strongly against the exhibition when I first heard about it... having said that when I came on Monday I thought it was so professional, so well-presented that it did make me feel more comfortable with the concept. I feel much more comfortable with it now, because they've done it so well, but I still think it's not what the National Trust should be doing.

When LGBTQ histories and cultures were well researched and authentically presented, with multiple entry points and a layering of interpretation offered, it appealed to a wide range of visitors with diverse interests and tastes. And when these stories were interpreted in an open way, framed by the Trust's values, and offered up possibilities for discussion and debate, as opposed to a didactic approach that told people what to think or shut down any opposition, visitors felt comfortable in engaging in a dialogue and were more open to new ways of thinking. As one visitor thoughtfully considers: '*I think it's important that people are not confronted, but encouraged to think about things... I think that people just need to be made to think*'.

Similarly, a regular visitor to Kingston Lacy who lives locally, when asked what she will take away from her visit, discussed the opportunities the installation EXILE offered in starting a conversation with friends and family around LGBTQ issues, particularly friends who might usually be dismissive. Recognising the potential of programmes such as *Prejudice and Pride* to seep out and influence everyday life beyond the Trust, she perceptively reflects on where such glib and insensitive comments might stem from:

... me being able to talk about it with friends locally and people I know so that just to point it out and, you know, if you get the dismissive laughing comment, but so often when you start to talk to people they'll say things like "yes I had an uncle, I had a cousin", and you realise that underneath it, the jovial sort of catty approach, that actually very few people are inordinately naturally defensive, because it is defensive rather than aggression. It helps you discover the real people behind Kingston Lacy, but it also helps draw out people themselves and you start to see the real people behind them.

Creating opportunities for reflection and debate – especially in relation to contemporary issues that hold the potential to polarise viewpoints – can be fraught with difficulty. Where these difficulties were anticipated and carefully considered, fewer people felt threatened, and fewer people retreated into prejudicial views and attitudes. Where visitors felt confident, comfortable, and able to express themselves without judgement they were more likely to move forward in their thinking. As one 85-year-old woman visiting Knole Park commented:

... when I married at 25 I had never heard of homosexuality. Now I want to explore shades of grey, not binary. Two nurses I worked with were lesbians and only in retrospect I realise this. I want to understand the modern world. I do not want a closed mind.