Case Study

Hull UK City of Culture 2017

Bespoke Uniform Design & Branding Supply

Project Summary

- **The Brief** - Distinguishable, comfortable, durable and functional uniforms suitable for all weather conditions. Supplied within 8 months for 4,000 volunteers.
- **The Garments**: Bespoke design polo shirts, soft-shell jackets, waterproof jackets, cargo trousers, shorts, backpacks and baseball caps.
- **Design**: Designed and developed in house to Hull City of Culture’s brand guidelines.
- **Special Supply Requirements**: Provided continuous supply replenishment.
- **Quantity Supplied**: 4,000 bespoke uniforms.
- **Timescale**: 8 month turnaround.
Planning Hull UK City Of Culture 2017

In November 2013, Hull was named the 2017 UK City of Culture. Chair of the City of Culture panel, TV producer Phil Redmond, said Hull was the unanimous choice with “the most compelling case based on its theme as ‘a city coming out of the shadows’.

As planning got underway and Hull stepped into the light with its exciting event programme, it became clear that the 4,000 volunteers would play a vital role in the city’s success, volunteering a tremendous 350,000 hours. Head of Volunteering, Shaun Crummey, developed a detailed programme to ensure the engagement and empowerment of volunteers was maximised. Part of this involved the idea of creating bespoke uniforms, to not only make volunteers clearly visible to the general public, but to help create a feeling of unity and pride.

Hull UK City of Culture 2017 required a major partner to design bespoke, distinguishable uniforms with functionality that would be fit for all weather conditions. What’s more, the partner needed to have sufficient resources to provide uniforms for 4,000 volunteers, in an extremely tight timescale.

Demanding Functionality

One of Hull UK City of Culture 2017’s main criteria for the uniform was that the garments were highly durable to last beyond the 12 month volunteering period in 2017. What’s more, the volunteers would be stationed in various parts of the city for long periods of time, often outside where they would contend with changing weather conditions. Therefore, the uniforms needed to be comfortable, practical and ready to adapt to the seasons.

Playing such a crucial role in scheduled events meant it was important volunteers would be immediately recognisable by the public, so distinguishable uniforms were essential. Hull UK City of Culture 2017 required eye catching designs that appealed to all-ages and genders, and offered a cohesive and inclusive identity.

Finally, due to Hull UK City of Culture 2017’s strong belief in ensuring ethical trading and sustainability, it was imperative that they used a trusted partner that was equally concerned about modern day slavery in supply chains, and would create the uniforms using only ethically sourced suppliers.
Relying on the Experts

Based on the criteria, Hull UK City of Culture 2017 approached Arco, the UK’s leading expert supplier of safety equipment and workwear clothing. As well as having a strong reputation for creating protective clothing that endures high-risk and changeable environments, the business had a proven track record of designing, developing and supplying large quantities of bespoke uniforms in a short space of time.

The Hull UK City of Culture 2017 team recognised Arco’s expertise in workwear and weatherwear, and valued the advice that its in-house experts, Kirby Griffiths and Tertia Beaney (Clothing Technologist and Designers) and Dalvir Sarkaria (Product and Procurement Manager) could provide on appropriate garments.

In just eight months the Hull UK City of Culture 2017’s uniforms were born. Throughout the process, Arco’s experts and Hull UK City of Culture 2017 worked closely together to finalise designs, select the appropriate fabrics required for the uniforms, review fabric colours, styling and branding.

A Successful Partnership

What’s more, as Arco had the capability and resource to order and distribute garments throughout the year, Hull UK City of Culture 2017 immediately saw the benefits of partnering with Arco. The fact that Arco was headquartered in Hull also meant the uniforms could be designed in the UK City of Culture 2017’s home city, which was an added bonus.
Striking Design, Practical Features & Comfort

The end result was an eye-catching creation that utilised Hull UK City of Culture 2017’s palette of base colours: ‘scandalous blue’, ‘ludicrous purple’ and ‘deep mischievous pink’. The striking colours ensured the volunteers were instantly recognised and easy to spot.

Comfort and functionality were considered at every stage of the design process. Arco adopted a layering approach for the range, starting with a short sleeved polo shirt and shorts which could be worn in warmer months. For colder weather, Arco produced cargo pants and a two-layer, soft-shell jacket that provided warmth, teamed up with an outer waterproof jacket to protect from rain and changeable weather. Designed so that they could be zipped together to form a single garment, every volunteer was able to dress in a way that satisfied their own comfort levels, regardless of the conditions.

Practical details were also considered: for example, to ensure volunteers were able to securely carry personal items whilst working, the uniforms came well-equipped with handy pockets that were easily accessible. As well as being delivered on time, the end result was a comfortable and functional uniform that stood out from the crowd.
The Verdict

Upon receiving their uniforms, the volunteers loved and praised the designs. Feedback demonstrated how Arco had conquered Hull UK City of Culture 2017’s goals for comfort, recognition and a sense of unity.

“I love wearing the uniform as it looks great as well as being suitable for all weathers.”

Volunteers expressed their admiration toward the unique style that set them apart from the crowd: “I’m bursting with pride every time I put on my uniform. I feel like a mini ‘City of Culture’ superhero!” Further feedback illustrated the uniform’s durability and functionality – “I love wearing the uniform as it looks great as well as being suitable for all weathers”.

“Arco is a fantastic partner - with its local focus and international expertise, we couldn’t be in better hands. We needed a uniform that was so many things, from durable to identifiable. As the year has progressed the uniform and our volunteers have become iconic, they are now intrinsically linked to the year.”

Shaun Crummey, Head of Volunteering at Hull UK City of Culture 2017

Lee Morton, Head of Brand and Partnerships for Arco and Phil Batty, Director of Marketing and Communities for Hull UK City of Culture 2017 at the unveiling of the uniforms to the volunteers.
An Award Winning Contract

If that wasn’t testament enough, the management of the contract and uniforms went on to beat stiff competition and to win “Best Managed Contract” at the 2017 Professional Clothing Awards.

Hull UK City of Culture 2017 was a huge success in many ways, and there’s no doubt that the sense of pride among the volunteers continues as the city enters its ongoing legacy programme.

“...It’s great for the programme to get this recognition. The volunteers look amazing in their Arco uniform and have really brightened up the city as part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017. You can’t go too far in the city without seeing or talking to a Hull 2017 volunteer. They really have embraced the year and the programme.

Shaun Crummey, Head of Volunteering at Hull UK City of Culture 2017
Trevor Stephenson, Mo Grimble, Victoria Tuthill, Zem Rodaway, Rev Lansford Penn-Timothy, Dr Mohanad Al-Anbar, Reece Dearing - Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Volunteers.