



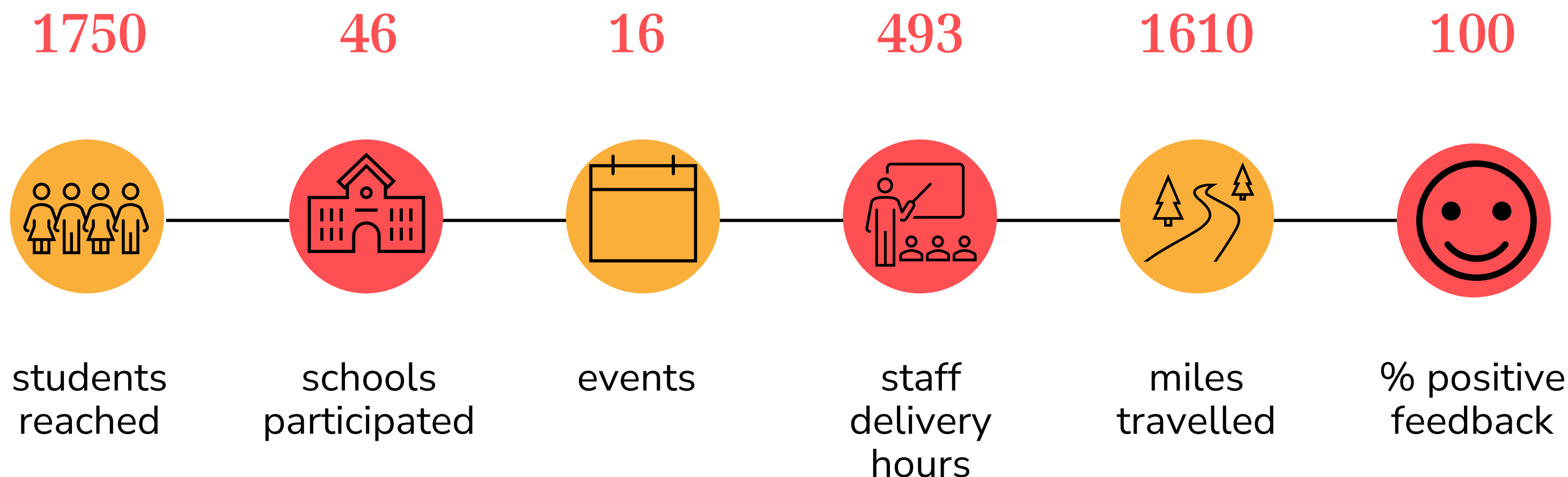
Annual Report

The Big Bridge

December 2024

YEAR ONE AT A GLANCE

Our impact to date



SUMMARY

Inspiring the Next Generation of Engineers!

In Summer 2023, The Big Bridge was launched as a dynamic and standalone social enterprise, bringing an incredible 13-metre-long, 3-metre-high buildable bridge kit to schools and events.

Our mission is to spark a passion for careers in science, technology, engineering, maths, and construction among students aged 7–12, empowering them through an unforgettable, hands-on learning experience.

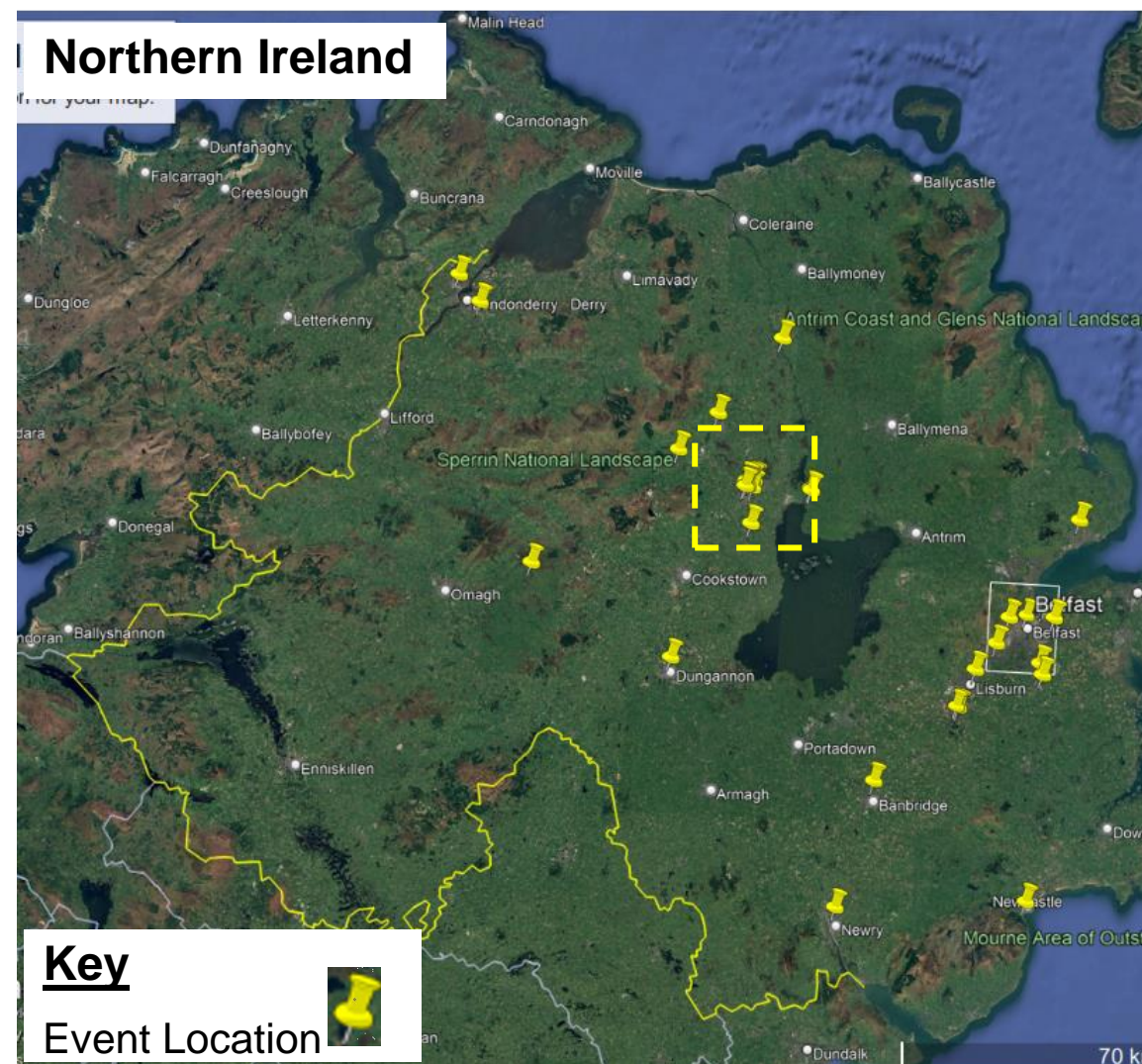
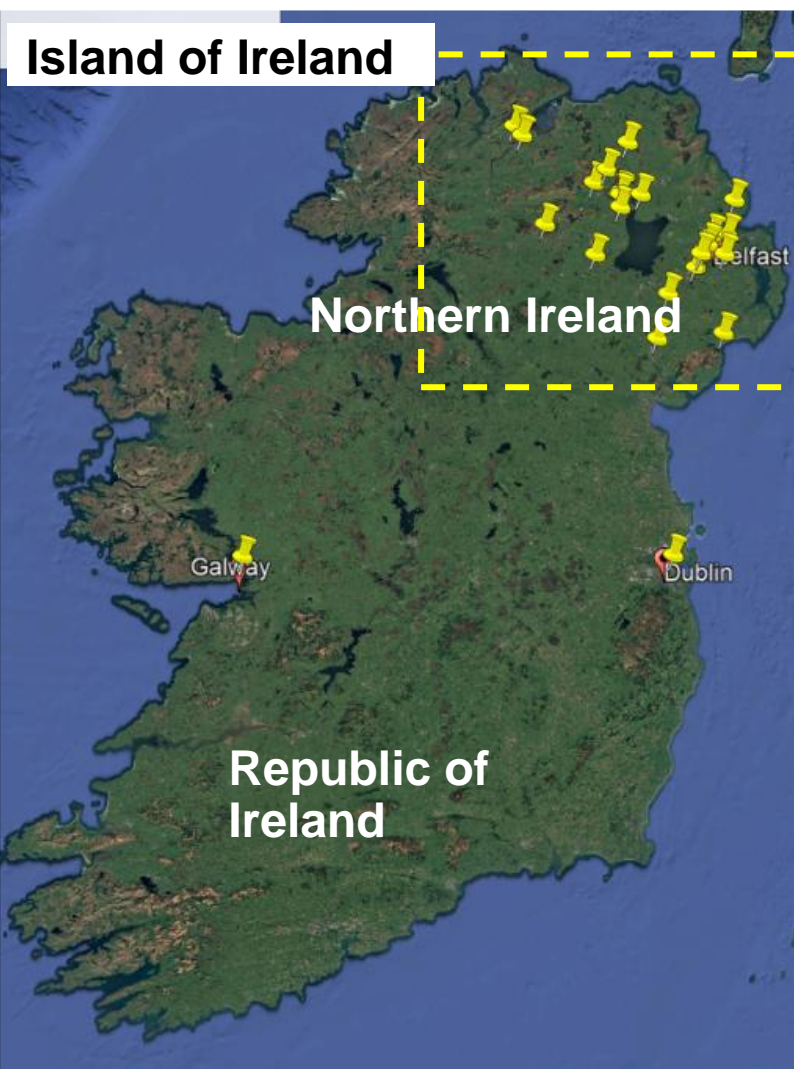
Our vision is bold and ambitious: to create a sustainable programme that ensures as many students as possible can feel the thrill of constructing their very own bridge And what an incredible journey it has been so far!

In just our first year, The Big Bridge has reached over 1,750 students, leaving them inspired and eager to explore the world of STEM. With the amazing support of our four Patrons, we've successfully delivered 16 events, engaging with over 46 schools and receiving outstanding feedback along the way.

This report celebrates our achievements, reflects on the challenges we've overcome, and outlines our exciting plans for an even bigger and better Year Two.



WHERE WE'VE BEEN



The Big Bridge Locations 2023 and 2024

THANK YOU TO OUR PATRONS

FARRANS
A CRH COMPANY

**Design
ID**

McC
fpmccann

adman

**ENGINEERS
IRELAND**

bam

A young boy with freckles, wearing a yellow safety vest over a blue shirt and red work gloves, is focused on working on a metal structure. A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light green shirt, is assisting him, holding a metal rod. To the left, a man with grey hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with a name tag that says "RENDAN", is also working on the structure. The background shows a workshop setting with other people and equipment.

THANK YOU

We would like to begin by thanking our early Patrons, without your support the scheme would not be possible.

With your backing we have reached over 1,750 students and attended 16 events, surpassing our target of 12 events in our first year.

We have engaged with over 46 schools across Ireland and Northern Ireland, from rural and city locations; including integrated, Irish language and Educate Together Schools. We also ran workshops at the highly prestigious Transport Research Arena in Dublin and held a female only event for International Women in Engineering Day. Ages have ranged from 8 to 17 years old.

We have had numerous enquiries from councils, companies, events and organisations across Northern Ireland and we are pleased with the spread of events we attended. We also held two events for Big Bridge Ambassadors and used the workshop to train Apprentices and Graduates, improving their skills and confidence.



In our first year we have focussed on the set up and logistics of the scheme, determining how best to make things financially sustainable, how to advertise and how to run events. We have set up documentation to allow the administration of the scheme along with policies and procedures. As a new partnership effectively establishing a business from scratch and allocating staff roles and responsibilities, there have definitely been challenges and lessons learnt. The key aim of Year One was to set up and test a model whilst finding our feet and exploring the potential audience for the scheme. We are now confident that we have a model that works and that there is extremely high interest.

In the next year we will refine how we deliver sessions and explore ways to rely less on Engineering staff to run events and reduce staffing costs. We have found that most enquiries rely upon The Big Bridge providing facilitators to run events, which considerably raises the cost and led to some events we could not attend due to lack of budget. We will continue to explore funding avenues to ensure the scheme is sustainable.

We hope we can rely on your support for Year Two!

Thank you

The Big Bridge Team

ACHIEVEMENTS

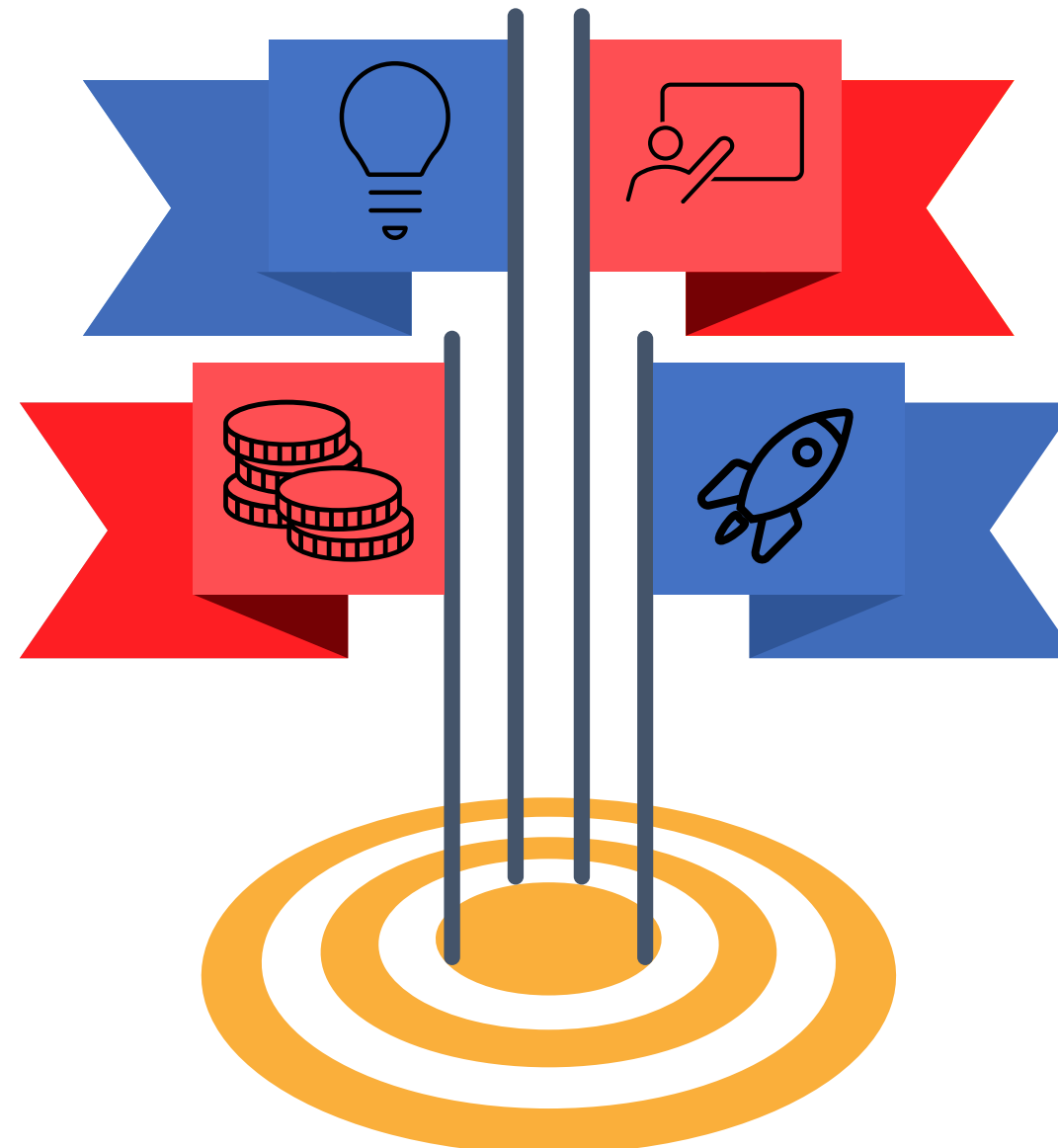
How we made an impact in our first year

Set Up

- Establish terms and business model
- Create business plan
- Create policies, procedures and forms

Funding

- Generate interest
- Secure funding
- Research grants
- Test model



Training and Testing

- Train Engineers and Ambassadors
- Run training sessions
- Establish reporting and feedback metrics

Launch

- Run 16 events
- Advertise and form relationships with customers
- Seek partnerships

Establish sustainable business model	Define governance, policies, health and safety procedures
Secure £10,000 funding Promote across Northern Ireland construction industry	Hold 12 events Hold 1 training session
Engage underrepresented students, schools with high free school meals and females.	Ensure geographical reach across NI
Collaborate with teachers to align with the curriculum.	Develop feedback mechanisms to track participation and STEM interest trends.

YEAR ONE TARGETS

We achieved all our targets!

The Big Bridge was established to help fill the skills gap for engineers in Northern Ireland and generate a talent pipeline for students studying STEM, construction and Engineering.

We aim to encourage them to select STEM subjects at GCSE level and continue into Apprenticeships or further education in Engineering.

The activity is designed to be stimulating, engaging and exciting. It teaches students about construction, engineering and all the different roles involved in a major project. It also includes teamwork, problem solving and resilience skills; key issues highlighted by teachers to be included in post-covid education. The sessions are designed to supplement the curriculum and provide a link to industry for schools and practical education in construction.

The Big Bridge is also a fantastic opportunity for businesses to display their commitment to social value and generate positive publicity as a forward-thinking company who contribute to their local community.

REPORT

An overview of our commitment so far

The Big Bridge have 8 staff who have administered The Big Bridge: The total cost to cover staff time in Year One was: £25,000 The total time for Year One is:

- 240 hours: Administration, documentation and project set up,
- 60 hours: Training
- 490 hours: Attendance at events
- 174 hours: Hours volunteered

We have worked to establish an operating model, research effectiveness and promote the bridge to generate bookings and income. Significant time was required to create the website and documentation including:

- Business plan and costings including projections
- Patron pack for advertisement plus patron terms and conditions
- Bridge set up and session delivery planning, health and safety documentation, ambassador handbook and code of conduct
- Event Tracker
- Providing cost estimates for potential events. Advertising, writing funding applications, attending meetings and generating leads to secure finance and Patrons.



REPORT

We inspected and maintained the bridge and trailer, with spare parts ordered to ensure high levels of health and safety.

We held multiple meetings with organisations and businesses, leading to valuable feedback and successful engagements. Although our funding applications for RAEng Ingenious and Shared Ireland were unsuccessful due to financial track record requirements and specific criteria, the feedback was positive. If successful, these applications could have secured over £40,000, enabling free school visits, greater event attendance, and the ability to meet all scheme enquiries.

Feedback from teachers and students was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the bridge activities as enriching, hands-on, and inspiring for STEM learning. We will continue working with Principal networks and local schools to meet their needs and explore funding opportunities.



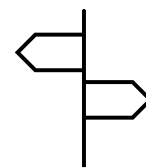
THE FUTURE

In Year Two we aim to:



ORGANISATION

Refine our communications, documents and booking systems.
Provide clarity on pricing breakdown in promotional pack.
Improve website functionality to promote information and updates.



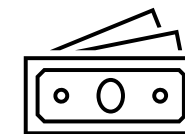
EVENTS

Run a roadshow across Northern Ireland.
Attend at least one high profile event.
Offer hire-only option where suitable.
Continue to offer high quality sessions.



DELIVERY

Reach 3000 students.
Increase funding to offer free school visits and condense events into targeted period for efficiency .
Maintain our positive feedback record
Develop additional activities to cater for larger class sizes.



FUNDING

Add five more Patrons and retain existing Patrons.
Secure funding, targeting RAENG Ingenious and Shared Ireland.
Explore new funding sources.
Reduce staff delivery costs.



THANK YOU

The Big Bridge is committed to providing to promoting STEM and inspiring the next generation of students into careers in construction and Engineering.

We are a way for businesses to achieve their social value targets and ensure a talent pipeline for their future workforce.

In our first year we have achieved many of our goals and reached a huge number of students.

We would like to reiterate our thanks to all of our Patrons and customers for your support, this would not be possible without you and we hope that you will continue to be involved to allow us to continue our important work.

The background image shows a group of children in school uniforms (blue shirts and orange high-visibility vests) and white hard hats. They are working on a project, possibly a model or a construction task, on a table. One child in the foreground is focused on a task, while others are visible in the background, some holding tools or materials. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting like a classroom or a workshop.

THE BIG BRIDGE

AD 19.12.2024