

Communities come together to celebrate Durga Puja

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The Durga idols

Durga Puja is one of the biggest festivals in India - and now, thanks to National Lottery players, communities in south Wales are working together in a £20,000 project, sharing their cultural history to create the festival's all-important Durga idols.

Local secondary school children and students from Cardiff Metropolitan University have worked with two artists from India to get the eye-catching statues of the goddess Durga and her children ready for the festival.

Youngsters have also helped record the legacy of the festival in South Wales since the 1970s through films, photos and interviews, which will be stored on the People's Collection Wales website.

Around 1,500 families will attend this year's five day Puja in Caerphilly, which is free and includes music, dance, drama, entertainment and food. The image of the goddess is central to the celebrations, with the life-sized clay statues of Durga and her four children spanning almost 20 feet.

Neeleem Saha, from the Wales Puja Committee (WPC) which has organised the project, explains why the statues are so important: "Traditionally, clay is collected from the banks of the Ganges, but

for our statues we have mixed this with local clay to help bring our two worlds together, creating something amazing to behold for anyone who sees it - no matter their culture.

“The Durga Puja is for Hindus as big as Christmas – but while Christmas is about being with your closest friends and family, Durga Puja is about going out into the community and celebrating together. The statues remind us that this festival should be shared by everyone, and so far we have certainly seen huge interest from the local community and also more second and third generation Indians re-connecting with the puja through our project.”

The statues are on display for two weeks between 8–20 August at the Cardiff Story Museum, before they will be used for the Durga Puja between 7–11 October. To find out more, please visit WPC’s [Facebook page](#) or [website](#).