



As adopted at AGM 2014



THE WAY AHEAD

Development Strategy 2014 - 19

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Report Status

Following its adoption by Shaftesbury Arts Centre's Board of Directors on 13th January 2014, this document was formally adopted by Members as the Centre's formal policy and five-year development strategy for the period 2014 - 19 at the Annual General Meeting on 9th April 2014.

Earlier versions of this document were published and adopted as follows:

'The Way Ahead: Development Strategy 2005-2015' was first published in October 2005 and formally adopted by the membership at SAC's 2005 Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 16th November 2005.

'The Way Ahead: Development Strategy 2005-2015 (Revised 2009)' was published in January 2010 and formally adopted by the membership at SAC's 2010 Annual General Meeting on Monday 15th February 2010.

Acknowledgement

Shaftesbury Arts Centre's Board of Directors would like to thank the Centre's team leaders, volunteers, sub-committees and its many activity groups for their input to this strategy.

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Shaftesbury Arts Centre At-a-Glance

- Shaftesbury Arts Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is run wholly by volunteers drawn from its membership.
- Shaftesbury Arts Centre has been at the heart of the community of North Dorset for over 50 years, providing a place of entertainment for the area and a resource for the community to develop, pursue and promote their artistic and cultural interests.
- The Centre offers a varied and lively year-round programme of amateur and professional theatre and live performances, drama for all ages and abilities, films, art, craft and photography exhibitions, dance and other group activities.
- The centre has a regular membership of some 600 and attracts its membership and its audiences from a wide radius covering South East Somerset, South West Wiltshire and North West Hampshire as well as North Dorset.
- The centre has an annual turnover/budget of around £110,000.
- The Centre makes a small surplus on its programme of activities. Since it receives little public subsidy, development projects are funded largely by internal fundraising and the generosity of local supporters.

THE WAY AHEAD

Development Strategy 2014-2019

‘Shaftesbury Arts Centre will take the lead in seeking to optimize opportunities for the community of Shaftesbury and the surrounding area to experience and take part in the highest standard of the widest range of the creative arts.’

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines Shaftesbury Arts Centre’s plans for consolidation and development during the five-year period following its adoption at the Annual General Meeting in April 2014. This revised version builds on the previous document, which was adopted in 2010, which in itself followed and reflected the aims of previous documents dating back to 1991. We must continue to work hard at maintaining a very positive ethos as the main Arts provider in our immediate, extended and extending community

The 2014 version has been compiled after consultation with all of the Centre’s activity groups and management areas. The opinions, feelings and wishes of each of these bodies have been included in the document and will feature in our plans for future developments. We take pride in the fact that the Arts Centre is run solely by a team of volunteers from within our membership. It is vital, for our future, that we continue to offer a happy and welcoming environment to both existing and new members and that those offering the skills we need in so many areas are welcomed onto the volunteer team.

The document’s main aim is to provide a focus for future developments so that best use is made of resources whether they are material, skills, time or financial. It will be readily available as a source of information for existing members, new and potential members and any members of the public, or public body who wish to know more. It gives a picture of where we are now and how we plan to move forward facing the main challenges of increasing our membership, maintaining our position as the main Arts provider in the Shaftesbury area, fostering further links with the widening community, encouraging more volunteer workers and maintaining a healthy financial status.

It is not to be seen as a fund raising tool in itself. However, it can, and probably will, be submitted with any major funding bids, but it will be alongside other specific documentation required by any potential funding body.

During the compilation of this document we have been aware of the recent growth in Shaftesbury’s population and the expected continued growth in the coming years. We have positive links with various public community groups in existence within the area. Where it is appropriate Shaftesbury Arts Centre will welcome the opportunity to continue working alongside any such group so that all concerned within our community can enjoy mutual support and benefit.

John Cadmore
Chairman
April 2014

1. TOWN AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Town Shaftesbury is a small and ancient hilltop market town in north Dorset on the boundary with Wiltshire and in close proximity to both Hampshire in the east and Somerset to the northwest. It grew up around the 9th century foundation by King Alfred the Great of a major Benedictine Abbey for nuns - though it is believed to have had an even earlier history as a Celtic stronghold. It is at the intersection of two main routes, the north-south A350 and the east-west A30. Its population has risen from 5,700 in 1986 to over 7,000 in 2013. This is due to rise to some 10,000 by 2019 with the development of around 900 homes on the eastern side of the town up to the Wiltshire boundary.

The Community Recent years have seen an influx of retired or semi-retired people from areas such as London and the Home Counties, but the growth of information / communications technology and the new Eastern development has also brought younger families who can combine commuting and working from home. The age profile of Shaftesbury is surprisingly close to the national average as a result.

The Economy There is no large industry in the area and it remains predominantly rural. Recently there has been a resurgence of smaller scale farming producing local food linked to farm shops and farmer's markets. Shaftesbury itself is the main centre for tourism in the area, largely as a result of its hilltop position and iconic Gold Hill of Hovis TV ad fame.

Tourism Tourism in Shaftesbury mainly depends on day visitors with a smaller number staying the night or a weekend. Visitors come mainly to see Gold Hill and the remains of its abbey but also to shop in its many independent shops. The town has a growing reputation for arts and crafts, which has been recently enhanced by our newly created Art Gallery opened in September 2013.

Neighbouring facilities In the surrounding area, within an almost equi-distant 20-mile radius, there are professional theatres as well as commercial cinemas in Salisbury, Yeovil and Frome. Further afield are the larger centres of Bath, Bristol, Bournemouth and Poole, also with theatres and cinemas as well as a wide variety of private and public entertainment centres. Dedicated music centres at nearby Port Regis and St Mary's private schools built since 2000 provide good support for a strong local tradition of musical societies, groups and choirs. Gillingham School opened a purpose-built creative arts centre in September 2005 with a performance studio area to be made available for outside use (by touring groups etc) containing retractable raked seating for 120.

Since 2001 the neighbouring towns of Gillingham and Sturminster Newton have each developed plans for large (300-seat) multi-use arts and community facilities supported by public funds. Gillingham's plans are still at the development stage but The Exchange in Sturminster Newton opened in July 2007 at a cost of £3 million. Its main hall has a proscenium stage with retractable raked seating for 300. In October 2009 Shaftesbury School also underwent a refurbishment and upgrade of its main hall/theatre to include similar retractable raked seating with a capacity of 250.

2. CENTRE PROFILE AND PURPOSE

Foundation

Founded in 1957 out of the Shaftesbury & District Arts Club started in 1949. It has been in continuous use throughout that period with the exception of a short break between 1965-7 when it was rebuilt after a fire.

Status

The Centre changed status in 2005 after 48 years as a voluntary association to become a not-for-profit limited company with charitable status - i.e. a charitable company - with the principal aim of improving its viability and efficiency and to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Membership

Current members come from a wide area from every part of the community and from all socio-economic groups and surveys have shown the Centre is well liked and supported by them. Membership has steadily increased in the last few years, with current membership of around 600. This total represents an estimated 8 per cent of the resident town community.

Purpose and Vision

The purpose of the arts centre remains basically the same today as when the centre was first established and as expressed in its constitution, namely *“to promote, maintain, improve and advance the education of the public in the arts and science of music, opera, ballet, drama, film, photography, literature, painting, drawing and sculpture by the presentation of concerts, performances, exhibitions and other activities”*.

In 2010 these aspirations were further revised as follows:

‘Shaftesbury Arts Centre will take the lead in seeking to optimize opportunities for the community of Shaftesbury and the surrounding area to experience and take part in the highest standard of the widest range of the creative arts.’

The Centre functions first and foremost as a place of entertainment for the community and as a resource for members to enable them to develop, pursue and promote their particular artistic and cultural interests as well as to meet socially and exchange ideas and interests with others like-minded. It is now increasingly being seen as a vital and energetic centre for all, contributing significantly to the quality of life of the town and surrounding area generally as well as taking the fun and enjoyment of the arts out to the wider community. For example, the Board is continuing to explore ways in which the Centre can work increasingly with schools, by taking the arts out into the surrounding villages, and in working in partnership with existing complementary facilities nearby such as Swans Yard Crafts Centre.

3. THE PREMISES AND FACILITIES

The Centre is at Nos. 11 and 13 Bell Street in the town centre. Until 2007 it consisted of No. 13 Bell Street only but the acquisition that year of No.11 Bell Street allowed the Board to almost double the floor space of the Centre during 2008-9 (*see below*).

No 13 Constructed in the shell of the former town market hall, No 13 was purchased freehold by voluntary subscription from the then Shaftesbury Borough Council in 1951. Built originally in the 19th century in the characteristic local green sandstone, the building is category II* listed as well as being within the designated town centre conservation area. Although the frontage is narrow the building has considerable depth. Access is by a single main entrance at the front of the building although there is now also an internal entry from the Gallery in No. 11. The rear emergency exits are approached through an archway between nearby buildings not part of the Centre. Listed status and being within the town's conservation area imposes some constraints on development, but internal improvements inside the building since 2007 have included upgrading lighting, seating, technical equipment and Bar and Kitchen extensions.

No 11 The building was previously occupied by a retail furnishings company. The purchase of the freehold was completed in December 2007. The extended and refurbished premises were formally opened in September 2009, virtually doubling the size of the Centre and considerably adding to the facilities on offer. The extended premises provide:

- A meeting/function room for 60 seated and 100 standing (**The Rutter Room**)
- A conference room seating 20 /reference library/ printing/scanning/copying facilities/ editing suite for film/video-making (**The Proctor Room**)
- A drama/dance studio taking 20 (**The Dance Studio**)
- Five new toilets including two for the disabled
- A new lift specially designed for the disabled
- A refurbished and expanded box office
- A retail shop unit converted in 2013 into an **Art Gallery**.

These elements complement the original Centre facilities, the main components being:

The Theatre

The theatre consists of a proscenium-arch stage with fixed raked 'tip-up' seating for 146 (new seating installed in 2013). Although the back stage area is currently limited for space, the theatre is well-equipped for a largely amateur theatre of its size with computer-controlled lighting, high specification sound equipment, and a hearing loop. The theatre is popular not only with professional touring groups who visit regularly, but also with Dorset Drama League that has chosen it as its permanent venue for the first round of the annual All-England Theatre Festival.

Foyer/Reception Area

The Foyer/Reception area (formally the Centre's Art Gallery until Summer 2013) is between the theatre and the entrance. It serves as an overflow gallery area and an interval space during theatre productions and film showings. It is intended to extend the space by removing the adjoining corridor wall and making it the main interval area by providing a new bar facility. This work is hoped to be carried out in 2014 if funding is available.

The Phoenix Room

Situated on the first floor it provides a space for rehearsals, other centre group activities, meetings and social events as well as presently being the main interval area during theatre productions and film showings. It is licensed for 100 standing and 60 seated and has its own sound equipment and projection screen as well as a bar and a well-fitted kitchen. The Centre is licensed under the new Licensing Act 2003.

The Box Office

Situated close to the main entrance, this is manned entirely by volunteers under the direction of a Centre director. The box office is open for two and a half hours every morning from Monday through Saturday from 10.00-12.30. The box office was considerably enlarged during the 2008 refurbishment programme and now has the space and volunteer capacity to accept both bookings and payments online. The box office is also the location for a video screen showing current and forthcoming productions and events at the Centre to passers-by.

The main facilities within No. 11 are:

The Proctor and Rutter Rooms

These first floor rooms seat 20 and 60 people respectively and are offered for hire to outside bodies at competitive rates to add to the facilities (theatre, gallery, dance studio, Phoenix Room) that are already for hire. Both rooms are fitted with projector screens.

The Proctor Room also houses the Centre reference library and printing/scanning/copying facilities linked to a high specification computer used for the design and production of Centre publications and publicity material, as well as a small editing suite for film-making.

The Dance Studio

This ground floor room for twenty occupants is fitted with engineered wood flooring and full height mirrors to provide a suitable environment for dance practice and instruction.

The Art Gallery

The Art Gallery was created in Summer 2013 from the Centre's former charity shop premises fronting Bell Street. Work involved creating an internal access to the Centre next door and completely remodelling the interior with new flooring, lighting, heating, furniture and fittings to form a modern, light and attractive environment for art and craft exhibitions.

4. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Centre was incorporated as a charitable company limited by guarantee in 2005 replacing the former voluntary association. It remains managed and run by unpaid volunteers drawn from its membership as before. The membership elects trustee-directors of the charitable company who are responsible for meeting the requirements of Companies Acts and the Charity Commission and form the management Board of the company. Presently the Board consists of 12 trustee-directors, including a chairman, vice-chairman, company secretary, and honorary treasurer. All directors, including officers, are appointed to liaise with one or more of the centre's activities (*see below*).

Centre activities are run by volunteers in each of the groups as the volunteers see fit. Some, such as the film society and music and drama groups, elect their own committees that operate independently of the Board while subject to overall Board control on Centre policy and finance. Activities necessary to support the Centre such as stage management, buildings, marketing, fund-raising, and programme development have their own working groups and all are represented on the Board by a nominated director.

In 2012-13 the officers and directors of Shaftesbury Arts Centre and their responsibilities were:

Chairman	John Cadmore	<i>Also responsible for: Stage, Technicals.</i>
Vice-chairman	Bob Truscott	<i>Buildings, maintenance, health & safety.</i>
Company Secretary	Richard Lloyd	<i>Administration, Music and Drama Group, Poetry Group, Reading Group.</i>
Hon Treasurer	Denis Scott	<i>Finance & Fundraising, Membership Sec.</i>
Directors (in alphabetical order)		
	Sue Cadmore	<i>Art Group, Fundraising, Catering, Costumes/Wardrobe.</i>
	Amber Harrison	<i>Film Society, Social Media Head, SAC Website Head, Publications Head.</i>
	Richard Longfoot	<i>Bookings/Events Officer.</i>
	Peter Moull	<i>Junior Drama Group.</i>
	Jenny Parker	<i>Marketing Head, Box Office Head.</i>
	Tom Sleigh	<i>Gallery Head, Archivists.</i>
	Richard Thomas	<i>Community Film Unit, Creative Writing Group, Community Radio Group</i>
	Allan Timms	<i>Email Newsletter Head, Acoustic Music Group, Keep Fit Group.</i>

In addition Valerie Baker is Hirings Officer and reports and attends Board Meetings in a non-voting capacity.

The Board also sends a Board representative to meetings of Shaftesbury & District Chamber of Commerce, Shaftesbury & District Tourism Association and the Shaftesbury Community Partnership (Shaftesbury District Task Force Ltd).

MANAGEMENT GROUPS

The following Management groups are led by volunteers, mainly from the board of directors:

Archives

Two volunteers responsible for collecting and organising information on SAC publicity, promotions, records and memorabilia. Also responsible for digitalising the information, making it accessible and promoting the gathering of information for the collection.

Main Challenges

Problems with digitalising the collection and coping with software. Need for more I.T. guidance.

Bookings

One volunteer is solely responsible for booking external performers, Theatre Companies, Music events, comedy shows and other light entertainment, mainly involving the theatre and the Phoenix room.

Main Challenges

- Co-ordination with other users of the SAC facilities, - especially in-house drama productions and hirings
- More support required in promoting and marketing shows.
- Uncertainty about the number and type of shows to stage in a given year.
- Uncertainty about the market for the shows

Box Office

The Box Office is managed by one volunteer and assisted by a further 15 – 20 other fully trained volunteers.

At present the Box Office is open 6 mornings a week plus evenings when there is a show on.

Tickets are sold through a computer system, Oscar, and customers may buy over the counter, on the phone or on line. When the Box Office is closed tickets may be bought on line or from the Tourist Information Centre.

The Box Office is the face of the Arts Centre and its operators require a huge knowledge of what is happening within the Centre and are daily faced with complex questions.

The Box Office manager is required to liaise with all the areas of Marketing, the groups and the treasurer, who feeds the programmes on to Oscar and to trouble shoot when the volunteers are experiencing difficulty.

All volunteers are kept *au fait* with the programme, the Centre and different procedures as they arise.

Main Challenges

- Extending Opening Hours.
- Increasing the Volunteer Base.

Buildings

One director heads a group of 5 working to;

- Maintain and upkeep existing building fabric

- Plan and prepare for renovations, alterations and extensions
- Coordinate subcontractors and suppliers
- Act as Health and safety officer for the Centre, maintaining records, statutory testing of systems, inductions and training for volunteers.

Main Challenges

- Working within budget constraints
- Sometimes finding volunteers
- Finding funding needed to:
 - Complete the Foyer and Bar Area and create new access to Auditorium
 - Overclad existing asbestos cement roofing over Auditorium and Stage
 - Develop rear land for urgently needed workshops, dressing rooms and storage.

Finance

One director acts as Treasurer for the Centre and makes full use of appropriate software programmes to keep the Board fully aware of the financial position of the Company on a monthly basis.

Fundraising

Capital Fundraising Committee

See information on history and responsibilities in Section Six.

Main Challenges

No active group for this area at present and its formation is urgently required.

Social Fundraising Committee

The fund raising committee was formed 10 years ago with approximately eight members and a team of volunteers meeting as the need arises.

Their aim has been to raise funds to help service capital building projects and also more recently our large bank loan. They have provided a wide spectrum of enjoyable cultural and social monthly events. However as a result of falling numbers supporting these monthly events the committee is considering a programme of fewer events with more widespread appeal and therefore greater involvement.

Main Challenges

Encouraging new members, fresh ideas and more people willing to organise events.

Front of House Management

This complex and important job is done by one volunteer who organises the rota for volunteers acting as Front of House staff for all shows i.e.

- Front of House manager
- Box office
- Programme selling
- Taking tickets
- Selling ice cream
- Making and selling coffee
- Bar tending

Main Challenges

- Finding sufficient volunteers, particularly when regulars are involved in large productions.

Gallery

The new Gallery opened in September 2013.

Three volunteers manage the quite complex day-to-day running of the gallery e.g.

- Sales
- Admin
- Banking
- Co-ordinating community exhibitions
- Managing change over days
- Volunteer rotas
- Maintenance of gallery hanging system and lighting.

In the main, artists steward their own exhibitions but there is a team of volunteer stewards ready to help with this where necessary.

Hiring

This one volunteer looks after the hiring of or allocating the various rooms and the theatre to either outside, fee paying persons or to Arts Centre groups.

This often involves

- Meeting with hirers, at the Centre to show them round.
- Completion of the paperwork.
- This includes the collection of the deposit and later the balance.
- Much time is spent working as caretaker, setting out rooms before the hirers arrive.

Main Challenges

- Trying to juggle rooms and groups during large productions
- Finding a back-up volunteer to deputise during holidays and help manage the website calendar

Marketing

This group consists of up to 10 dedicated volunteers, each playing their part in forming a comprehensive and consistent marketing framework.

The present Marketing Framework

(The starred items are new initiatives since the last review)

Programme of events

- 12 000 in total printed and distributed
- 6000+ delivered door to door in Shaftesbury and Gillingham *

Website*

- Frequently updated

E newsletter*

- Weekly where applicable and in conjunction with Oscar ticket sales.

Face Book and Twitter posts*

Weekly ad. in Blackmore Vale Magazine

Other Websites*

- SAD Folk website for music events
- Ents 24 advertising all local entertainment

Sign rite boards* for our in-house productions, four, in strategic positions in the town.

Posters and leaflets

- Poster Boards*
- Shops
- Lampposts
- SAC window
- SAC Drama board

Simple audience survey at key productions*

- Audience requested to post a counter in the appropriate box stating where they learnt about the production.

Main Challenges

- Communication with all groups in such a large and complex organisation
- Getting information, posters and photos on time
- Getting groups to communicate their needs to the those disseminating the information
- Getting groups to take responsibility for their own particular needs

TECHNICAL GROUPS

These groups support the Music and Drama productions and outside shows where necessary. They comprise:

Costume

One head of group plus a pool of up to ten helpers.

Main Challenges

Lack of storage space

Lack of an adequate costume workshop

Providing a multitude of costumes for productions such as pantomimes in a tight timeframe.

Make up

For all Music and Drama Productions.

There is a pool of 15 – 20 helpers to call upon.

Main Challenges

- Organising enough helpers for large productions.
- Temperature control of make-up rooms - too hot in summer, too cold in winter.

Technical group (light & sound)

There is currently one head of group and two technicians running the technical side of shows plus a few keen helpers. They manage all the technical functions within the Arts Centre from the equipment to the personnel who use it and provide technical support for all in-house and external shows.

Main Challenges

- Too many events booked in to the Arts Centre calendar especially those booked in on weekday evenings.
- There is a lack of communication from Bookings. The Stage Manager and Technical Manager needs to be consulted before any bookings or stage/technical hirings are made.
- Need for replacement of equipment, including existing lighting with lower power longer life systems and the lighting console.
- Need for technical staff to be identified easily by visiting outside groups.
- Need for group heads to have fixed time tenure to avoid stagnation and allow others to take up the reins.

Stage Management (including Set Building & Painting).

The centre stage manager works mainly alone but calls on volunteers when needed.

Responsible for:

- The upkeep of stage & all non-technical equipment there on (e.g. tabs, cloths, flying gear, etc.)
- Storage of scenery, set building materials, paint, tools, etc.; storage of stage furniture & large props
- Health & safety of stage & backstage areas
- Ensuring stage & backstage areas are prepared for users & that they leave things as they found them
- Liaising with Music & Drama set designers, builder & stage managers
- Providing storage for costume & props
- Any other stage & backstage-related issues.

Main Challenges

- Lack of communication from bookings & hirings regarding when the stage is required.
- Lack of communication with some Music & Drama set designers, builders & stage managers.
- Rubbish being cleared post Music & Drama shows.
- Lack of storage space.

5. ACTIVITIES

At 31 August 2013 the following activities were being carried on at the Centre by Inhouse and Professional groups:

- A Capella singing
- Art
- Creative Writing (Storyslingers)
- Card making
- Film
- Film-making
- Keep Fit and Dance
- Music and drama, including Junior Drama.
- Poetry
- Reading
- Traditional English Dance
- Traditional Music
- Ukulele band
- Yoga

INHOUSE GROUPS: purpose, aims and requirements

The Art Group

Its aim is to help members of all abilities to enjoy and improve their drawing and painting through a regular daytime programme of instruction, practice and encouragement.

This group of 15 – 20 Arts Centre members meets on Monday afternoons in the Phoenix Room throughout the year apart from some sessions in the summer when they meet outside to sketch.

Tutors are employed by the group and paid for by additional, individual subscription.

Main Challenges

- Lack of storage space and sinks
- Poor lighting and dark walls.
- Tables provided are too large or too small.
- There is a lack of suitable space or dais for a model.

Community Film Group

This newly formed and growing, group, under new leadership, hopes to use both film and television to produce promotional videos of both the Arts centre and events around the town.

The ultimate dream would be to produce a feature film, and it is hoped to enter for awards in the future.

Main Challenge

Keeping the equipment as up to date as possible.

The Film Society

Its aim is to educate and entertain the public about the Art of Film in all its forms.

Membership is limited to 205 at present and members are guaranteed a seat at each showing paid for by their subscription. Guests may pay for their seats.

Films are screened regularly on Friday nights. Children's films are shown on some Saturday afternoons and senior films are shown monthly on Tuesday afternoons.

Main Challenges

- The auditorium is in high demand and sometimes the film has to be shown elsewhere.
- The portable screen has to be erected on the day of the showing, sometimes around sets.

Junior Drama

Its aim is to provide the best possible support for children aged 7-11 to experience, develop extend and enjoy drama, dance and singing.

- The group has just 17 members, which is felt to be the right number in order to give each child enough attention and a fair part in a production.
- There is a 2-year waiting list.
- The group meets weekly in the centre and more frequently near to productions.
- During productions the group is well supported by the main technical teams.

Main Challenges

- Lack of Youth Theatre group leaders at present to take on Junior Drama members after the age of 11. This omission presently results in the loss of a pool of young singers and actors who would otherwise take part in the main Music and Drama productions.
- More adult and teenage volunteer helpers are needed when young volunteers move on to university.

Music and Drama

Its aim is to produce a wide range of events and productions to the highest possible standard, involving both children and adults for the enjoyment and edification of all members of our local community.

The Music and Drama group is open to all members of the Arts Centre (approx. 600) but in reality there are about 100 active members in the group.

There are usually four major in- house shows a year:- a Summer musical, a Winter pantomime, and one in the Spring and Autumn. A Christmas event is arranged for members to participate in.

A play is normally entered for the annual Dorset Drama League One Act Play competition and the Arts Centre is normally host to round one of the competition.

Main Challenges

- Lack of workshop space for the costume department. The dance studio is often used for costumes and is therefore not available for choreographers.
- No actual workshop space for set builders
- Lack of dressing rooms, particularly during large-scale productions when other rooms normally used by groups, have to be used. This causes friction and upset and the other groups are unable to meet. In addition, these rooms are too far from the stage door.
- Time constraints. As the use of the theatre is increasing, set build times is being lost to other show bookings. This encroaches on time for the Technical team to set lights and arrange special effects. Rehearsals for a current show can also be affected when outside shows are booked in on rehearsal night.

Poetry Group

Its aim is to foster and support the serious writing of poetry by the holding of regular meetings for poets living in the Shaftesbury area, wherein skill developing exercises are employed, finished work or work in progress is shared and constructively discussed, and members feel encouraged to progress.

Present membership: 10

Current programs: Meeting monthly, working on a book for publication, developing writing skills as per mission statement, consulting about suggestions for possible future wider group activities.

Future Aims: To maintain a focus of progressing members' poetry, to have a visible public profile, to decide what wider activities to engage in.

Main Challenge

The group has to move or sometimes cannot be held when there is a show.

Reading Group

This group is open to any member of the Arts Centre who enjoys reading and sharing ideas about books. It chooses its books, which can include biographies and travel as well as fiction, a year ahead, from member's suggestions. It has a group borrowing arrangement with the library.

The reading group meets monthly in the Proctor room for 11 months of the year and has a membership of up to 12.

Main Challenge

The group becomes homeless at least twice a year when a large-scale production takes place.

Storyslingers (Creative Writing Group)

Its aim is to support and encourage writers from all walks of life, hosting friendly meetings with a clear aim to improve its craft. It intends to put on more events such as Story Slams, workshops and author visits, to enable people from across the south to get involved in creative writing.

The group meets twice a month in the Proctor Room and wishes to maintain its present membership of about 12.

Main Challenge

Unable to have their own space when Music and Drama large-scale productions take place.

Traditional Music Group

It aims to teach musicians, who have already reached a basic standard, traditional folk music and styles and techniques from around the British Isles. Learning by ear or from music. Also to develop skills for playing for dancing as there are opportunities to do this in other groups such as TEDG on Wednesdays. Also, to occasionally provide opportunities to be involved in local performances both in SAC and other community events sometimes playing for dancers other times for theatre shows. To cater for all ages and abilities except complete beginners as there is not time for one-on-one tuition.

The group meets weekly on Tuesdays and at present has 4 members.

It could accommodate 8 – 12members.

Main Challenge

Unable to meet if the auditorium is in use due to noise transmission problems and use of Phoenix Room bar.

Traditional English Dance

Its aim is to bring people of all ages, backgrounds and socioeconomic groups together to learn old dances from around the British Isles from Medieval to Edwardian period. This is intended to develop social skills as well as coordination and gentle fitness. It is also the intention to display the dances we learn to both entertain and demonstrate a living tradition. Additionally, musicians are encouraged to learn the traditional music and to develop the skills required to play for dancers with all the interaction this involves.

The group meets weekly on Wednesdays. It has 16 members in total, not all of them present each week.

Main Challenges

- Unable to meet if the auditorium is in use due to noise transmission problems and use of Phoenix Room bar.
- It would be good to have more members.

Radio and Photography groups

There is equipment for a Radio group and a Photography group but these are not active at present.

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

The following groups are currently offered by outside professionals, who hire the rooms and charge members and non-members for attending :-

- Art for Everyone
- Card and Gift Bag making
- Emma and the Magic Bag, music for toddlers.
- Keep Fit
- Palida A Cappella choir
- Ukulele band
- Yoga

SUMMARY OF GROUP RESEARCH

Since the last update in 2010, the number of regular in-house groups has increased from 7 to 10 and in addition a further 7 outside groups meet weekly within the centre.

While these groups cohabit to the best of their ability, the overwhelming demand is now for: -

- More dressing rooms
- More space for groups: to allow them to operate with greater independence.
- Workshop space: particularly for costume, set builds and art groups.
- Storage space.

Challenges facing the groups fall into 3 main areas

- Communication within a large organisation
- Financial constraints
- Management of volunteers

Actions being initiated following this survey

- Email Communication Chain

An email communication chain to be set up that will enable any one person to contact all relevant departments with one click whenever a new event /production is instigated.

- Financial
Reinstate the Capital Fundraising group.

- Volunteers

It is estimated that there are presently between 100 and 200 volunteers working from time to time in the Centre.

Main Challenges

- Despite this apparently healthy number, many of the technical and management groups have to function at present without adequate volunteer support and backup.
- Pressure on existing volunteers within certain groups has increased in recent years mainly due to an increase in the number of bookings and hirings within the expanded Centre.
- On occasions it is difficult to invite a would-be volunteer to have an immediate input when they may not be needed until the next production, which may be some time away.
- Some crucial groups have to operate with only a single volunteer having the ability and expertise to perform their functions. This is not acceptable both from the individual's and the Centre's point of view and there is an urgent need for additional help to relieve the pressure on overworked volunteers.

Recommended Solutions

- Undertake an audit of our volunteers and create a comprehensive Volunteer Register.
- Appoint a volunteer to be responsible for heading a small group responsible for encouraging and mentoring new volunteers to the Centre.
- Limit the normal tenure of each group head to a three-year period. At the end of this period the Board to consider whether the present occupant should continue (if they wish to do so) or if the position should be placed with a new volunteer familiar with SAC procedures and with the relevant experience and expertise. This turnover of group heads would have the following benefits:
 - Allow knowledge and expertise to be distributed more widely within the volunteer base.
 - Reduce the risks of having to rely on single individuals to fulfil fundamental tasks.
 - Help to avoid overloading individual volunteers due to lack of adequate support.
 - Encourage innovation and new ideas.

6. FINANCE, FUNDING and MEMBERSHIP

General Policy

Through careful and prudent management the Centre has maintained a stable financial performance over many years and has returned a surplus in most of the last 15 years despite substantial spending on improvements to the Centre.

The Centre's main revenue stream is generated from ticket sales, gallery commissions, membership subscriptions and room letting.

In the last 5 years income has risen steadily to reach £112K per annum in 2013, as has the expenditure to support this with cost of sales and operating expenses at £106K in 2013. A surplus has been recorded in all of these years with an annual average of c£5K.

The Music & Drama Group produce the highest gross profit of all income streams, closely followed by membership subscriptions and room letting. The Gallery has suffered over the past few years but is showing a significant improvement in 2013 with the new facility booked into 2015.

Productions by visiting professional companies and live music events on average run at break-even, and the Film Society produce a modest gross profit each year.

Operating expenditure is closely monitored and on average this has risen in line with inflation.

In 2007 the Centre embarked upon the purchase, conversion and refurbishment of No 11 Bell Street at a total cost of almost £500,000. This was paid for through a combination of fundraising and grants, a £160,000 20-year mortgage, a £120,000 20-year bank loan (both with HSBC), and minimum five-year interest-free short-term loans of £15000 from private benefactors.

Interest payments for the mortgage and loan are paid from operating income with repayment of the capital being covered by fundraising.

At the end of the 2013 financial year £107K remains outstanding on the mortgage, £80K on the bank loan and £4K to members. The Centre had cash reserves of c£55K.

The company's tax year ends on 30 September.

Existing Loan Repayment Policy

The current policy of the Board is that it continues to pay the interest on the loans from Operating Income and the capital from Fund Raising income, as it has done for the past 7 years. As interest rates are low at present the majority of the monthly payments goes towards paying off the capital.

Whilst interest rates remain low there is very little benefit in paying down the loan from reserves as that money could be required for other means. Also, if the Board did pay a small amount off the loan from reserves it would make very little difference to the Centre's monthly payments.

When interest rates start to rise again it will only have a minimal detrimental effect as the monthly payment will stay broadly the same. However, the capital will not be paid off so quickly as the interest amount will be higher.

Fundraising

Fundraising is carried out by two distinct volunteer committees: The Fundraising Committee and the Capital Funding Committee.

The Fundraising Committee plans and executes all Centre activities that raise funds for capital projects and revenue support. Since 2004 the team have raised more than £115K from such diverse events as 'Souper Saturdays', raffles, bric-a-brac sales, bingo nights, special supper evenings with music or plays, a chocolate festival, film specials, 200 Club, themed evenings, Smartie tube collections, and the summer drama school.

A further £51K was raised from the SAC Charity Shop that operated from the retail shop for 18 months prior to its conversion to the new Gallery in August 2013.

The Capital Funding Committee has been responsible for securing major capital funding from national and local funding bodies and trusts, as well as the 'Make a Donation', 'Sponsor-a-Seat', 'Corporate Sponsor' and 'Leave a Legacy' initiatives.

Since its inception in 2006 this committee has raised over £200K. The majority of these funds have been spent on the No 11 project although over £60K has been allocated to other projects including the Front-of-House development; new Central Heating System; OSCAR Box Office system; Hearing Loop; Youth Theatre; Auditorium Seating; Community Film Unit and Film Projector.

The Committee is currently not operating and needs to be re-instated urgently.

Membership

At the end of FY 2013 membership stood at 591 made up of 350 Adult, 212 Film Society and 29 Junior members.

Prior to the installation of the OSCAR Box Office system membership was on average c500 but a number of initiatives including regular expiry reminders, the introduction of a Membership Card and a member benefits programme have resulted in a 25% increase.

The aim is to get membership numbers up to 750 within the next 5 years.

7. ACTION PLANS

Short Term Action Plans, to complete the following by the end of 2015

Group Requests

Meet requests from Groups with outstanding requirements as soon as finances allow, such as:

- Art Group: Suitable tables and a model dais
- Dressing Rooms/Make Up: Heaters/coolers for better temperature control
- Film Society: Large fitted dropdown electric screen
- Film Unit: More HD cameras
- Archives: Map cabinet for large posters

Volunteers

- Compile a register of volunteers and ensure they are adequately briefed and trained.
- Appoint Volunteers Head to co-ordinate recruitment and placement of volunteers.

Fundraising

- Re-instate an active Capital Fundraising group.
- Display and update a record of funds as they are raised.

Re-activation

- Re-instate the Youth Theatre Group.
- Re-instate the Photography Group.
- Re-instate the Radio Group.

Market Research

- Instigate a market research programme to establish a clearer idea of our existing and potential audiences and what they want.

Marketing

- Increase and improve communication with other groups.
- Appoint volunteer press officer to liaise with local media.
- Extend Box Office opening hours.

Phase Three Construction

Complete the remaining work of the Front of House project (estimated at £35,000) comprising:

- Remove corridor wall and open up old gallery.
- Install casings to form circular columns.
- Install new ceilings and lighting.
- Make new doorway into auditorium opposite gangway.
- Create new disabled space at back of auditorium.
- Install new bar/refreshment counter with security grille.
- Fit out bar with catering equipment, shelving, tea and coffee facilities and optics etc.
- Install new seating and tables.

Long Term Action Plan, to complete the following by the end of 2019:

Phase Four Construction

- Complete **Phase 4** consisting of a new two-storey extension at the rear of the Centre providing workshop/storage facilities for set building (the workshop doubling as an additional part-time art and craft studio when not required for set builds), an enlarged fly tower and much needed additional storage and changing room space.
- The cost has been provisionally estimated at £250,000.

Summary of Phase 4 requirements:

- Build new double height workshop at stage level for set building etc. plus use as a part-time art/craft studio.
- Create storage area for set and equipment storage.
- Alter roofing over stage to give full height fly-tower.
- Build new toilets and shower area.
- Build new dressing rooms.
- Build new meeting rooms.

8. SUMMARY

Throughout its history the Centre has proved itself to be self-sufficient and able to sustain steady growth in all areas. This has been due to the constant and continuing efficient management and the dedication of its strong and dedicated volunteer base. Allowing for the fact that the whole of the premises are now being used far more than in the past the greater revenue generated allows the Board to consider upgrading and improving the Centre's equipment and premises with a good degree of confidence. The new Gallery is testimony to this.

However as the Centre moves into its next period of consolidation and growth the Board is in agreement that any future major capital development projects can only be undertaken if supported by funding from outside public and funding bodies.

The item which came to the top of the "wish list" from many of our groups is the need for more dressing room space. This has the obvious benefit to the Music and Drama people but of equal importance is the fact that groups using the Proctor Room for regular meetings would be able to continue to function when there is a stage production with a cast large enough to need more dressing room space.

There is a strong argument for developing the land at the back of the premises to provide, not only extra dressing room space, but a set building workshop, a costume workshop, a flat and timber store, a studio for the Artists and perhaps a flying tower over the stage to enable more adventurous sets to be constructed giving the ability to change sets during a show more swiftly, smoothly and silently etc.

The final details for the completion of the front of house project have still to be agreed but it is obviously desirable that this project is brought to completion as soon as possible.

While we think of these wonderful, but not impossible, improvements our feet must hit the ground and we must remember such things as the fact that the main roof is showing signs of exhaustion and that it will need some major and expensive work in the not too distant future!

We are proud of the fact that we are run totally by volunteers. The team is large but we still need new recruits so that the load can be spread more widely. We would like to develop teams in some areas of Arts Centre management, once again so that the load can become one which is shared. We must aim to reinstate a Photography Group, we must also resurrect the Youth Theatre Group for which a new leader is sought and we must reinstate a group to take on the responsibility for seeking Capital funding. Without this last group a lot of the above simply cannot happen.

As we move forward we must always be aware of plans and developments in the field of Arts provision both at other local venues and also further afield and we must be prepared to take appropriate action if it is deemed necessary so that all can survive and develop together.

This document outlines Shaftesbury Arts Centre's aspirations for the future. A future, which with continued good management, can be faced with confidence. A future which offers a source of continued fun, pleasure and satisfaction for those who freely give their time to keeping the Centre so active and a future in which our highly valued audiences will continue to enjoy a varied programme of activities and entertainment.

NOTES