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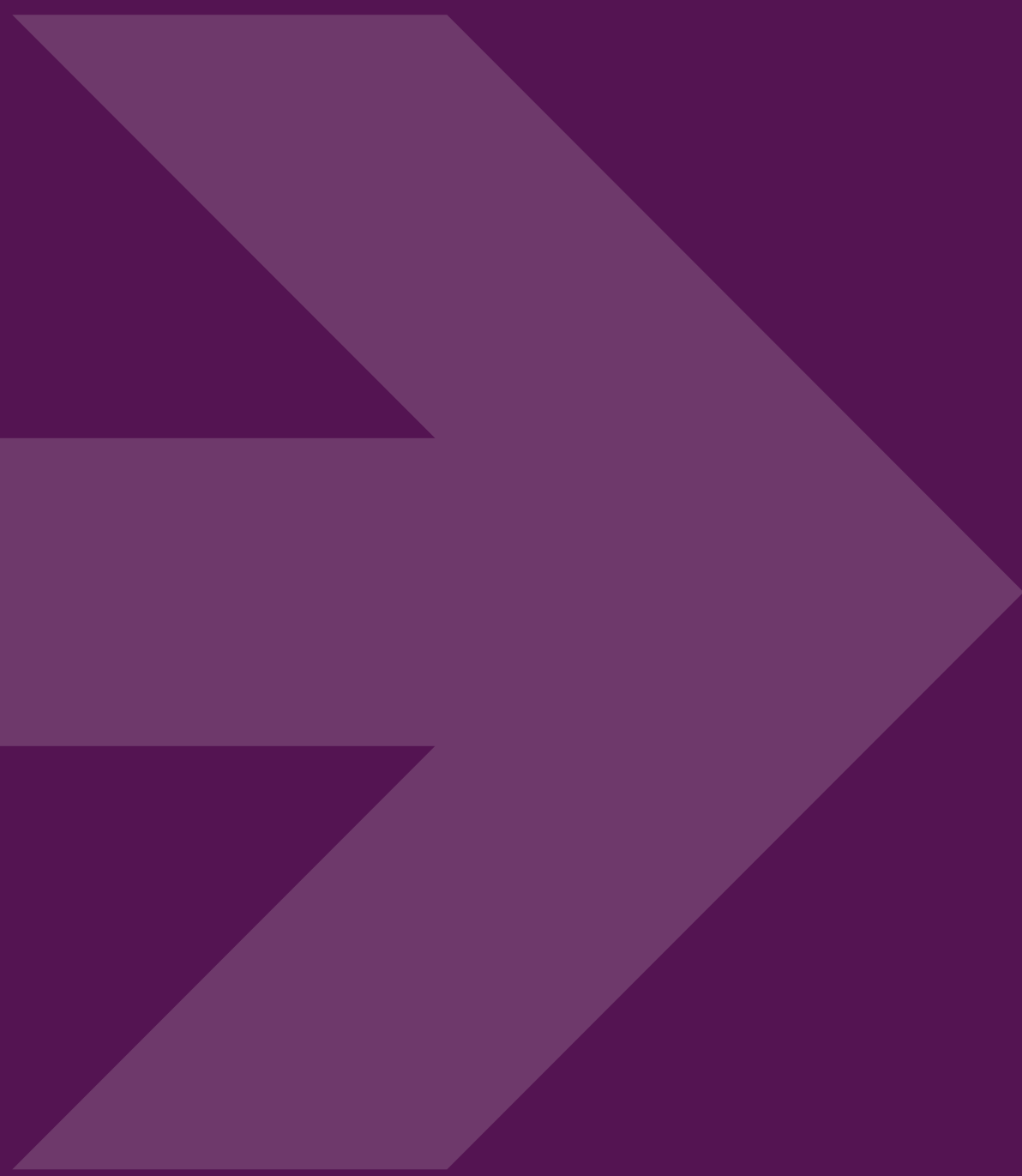


Voluntary Arts Scotland
Ealain Saor-thoileach an Alba

PROFITING FROM CREATIVITY

Exploring ways to bring creative industries in to
the sustainability mix for community venues





The Community Ownership Support Service, delivered by the Development Trusts Association Scotland, is funded by the Scottish Government to support the sustainable transfer of publicly held assets into community ownership. This adviser led service provides specialist advice and information on all aspects of asset transfer on a Scotland wide basis.

THE EARTH WITHOUT 'ART' IS JUST 'EH'



Halls, theatres, galleries and the myriad of buildings and spaces across Scotland where people come together are valuable to us all, socially and culturally. Keeping them running, sustainable and engaging is a challenge increasingly taken up by communities themselves rather than relying on cash-strapped public or private institutions.

This publication explores some of the creative activities that are taking place in community venues across Scotland that add to the sustainable income mix. We hope you will be inspired by some of the ideas, and find practical tips and resources that will allow you to develop your own income streams and profit from the arts.

More than that, these activities draw people in to often rural areas and bring a unique vibrancy, as well as creating a destination in itself. Whether that is in the form of events like The Easdale Island World Stone Skimming Championship, rivalling Glastonbury for 'cool', or BonFest in the village of Kirriemuir paying homage to all things Bon Scott and AC/DC; both are brilliant creative responses to their unique heritage of place.

The 'ordinary village hall' can become something quite different, attracting quality acts and money from catering, bars and overnight accommodation. The Three Villages Hall, Cove Burgh Hall, Dunlop Village Hall and Letham Nights have built up reputations for quality events and performances. Nairn Community & Arts Centre is a gorgeous space valued by locals for its cakes and craft, and as a lovely venue in itself.

It takes determination and dedication to bring in the kind of money needed to transform and rebuild spaces like the Drill Hall in Leith taken on by Out of the Blue, proving that the impossible is sometimes possible. It is rooted in its local community and is at the forefront of Edinburgh's cultural vibrancy, helping to promote the image of Edinburgh as a culturally rich city.

We are indebted to the community organisations who have contributed their time and experience so generously to this publication. You are an inspiration to many. Our thanks to Kelly Apter, freelance journalist, for researching and writing this publication and to Voluntary Arts Scotland for its early-stage input and expertise.

The COSS team

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TURNING CREATIVITY INTO CASH



TURNING CREATIVITY INTO CASH



Nobody is going to get rich from programming cultural activities at their venue – but as Sam Morrison says, incrementally, they can contribute a lot to your bottom line.

There are a number of ways to bring artistic endeavour into your building – be that participatory or simply something for audiences to watch and enjoy. Here are some examples of how organisations across Scotland are using the arts to generate income:

“None of the things make a huge amount of money, but put together, they make up a regular income.”

Sam Morrison, Nairn Community & Arts Centre

Performance and Programming



Live performance case studies

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This could be theatre, live music, dance or singing. It could be performed by local companies, or professional artists using your venue as part of their tour. How you pay for this will determine how much you make – see the ‘Box office and ticketing’ section for more details.

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Successful programming is an art in itself. You will need to provide an interesting and engaging programme whilst also making a profit to reinvest, so start small and build up partnerships with performers, other venues and commercial providers. Venues often employ staff to develop a programme, and seek funding for special performances or cultural events.

Audience feedback is an important part of programming – find out what they like, and try to book shows accordingly. If you’re bringing in performers to a small community venue, make sure you know your audience and its tastes. Live music and mainstream theatre shows/musicals are often popular, but each community is different, so it’s worth soliciting their views via feedback forms etc.

Even then, it can be tricky. If you want to take a risk with something new, see if there is any help available. Often, if these are combined with workshops, you can access grants (e.g. from Creative Scotland or the Touring Network – see ‘Helpful contacts’ for more details).

Programming a larger space, such as a restored Victorian theatre, requires operational management and strategic thinking.



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Community cinemas operate in a number of ways, depending on the licence you procure, from a simple film club to a fully licensed local cinema offering the latest blockbusters (see the ‘Licences, insurance and regulations’ section for more details). However you choose to run it, donations or ticket sales can off-set the costs – and people often like to eat and drink while watching a film, which can also generate income.

Your programming could be themed, such as ‘family viewing’, ‘indie-nights’ or ‘remember this?’ Whatever the theme, local people can come together and spend money in their local area which would otherwise have gone to a large commercial cinema chain. Tourists can also join in and feel involved in local life.

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This is a regular income generator for most venues. Thousands of participatory groups get creative in Scotland each week, from choirs to knitting groups to amateur theatre companies – and they all need a space to meet.

Many venues charge local groups a cheaper room hire rate than commercial/public sector users, and this can help build a good relationship between you and the groups. Hire rates usually fall within the bracket of £5–£40 per hour, depending on who is using it, and the size of space.

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Storage Solutions

Linked to hiring out space is the need different user groups have for storage. Groups might prefer to pay for additional storage rather than carting materials in and out each week, so you could charge extra for this.

To accommodate their requirements, consider adding in shelving at varying heights to create spaces of different sizes. Have a variety of storage boxes with lids, which groups can label and store materials in. Install lights inside large, deep cupboards so that everyone can see what’s inside. Use magnetic rails and hooks to store smaller items on the inside of cupboard doors.

TURNING CREATIVITY INTO CASH



Exhibitions	→ Exhibition space case study	Page
<p>Artists need a space to display their work to the public, and if it sells, your venue can take a commission (percentage) of the selling price. This can vary wildly depending on the venue and the artist, but usually starts at 20% upwards. Depending on your business model, you may want to take less commission when supporting emerging local artists.</p> <p>An exhibition can also be a nice way to draw people into your building, who may then spend money in your café, or see a poster for something else they'd like to do.</p> <p>If you are holding a dedicated exhibition in a gallery space, you may need to pay for invigilators and cover marketing costs. An admission fee would deter people from coming in, so consider putting a small mark-up on any drinks or card sales etc. to quietly absorb these costs. You could also have a rota made up of volunteers and the artists themselves to avoid staff costs.</p> <p>Having an attractive display area in your café can draw people in, and you can charge a commission on anything that sells. Café staff can keep a note of works sold (using a numbering system on each item) but you will need to consider whether purchasers take the work away there and then (in which case, ensure you have something to wrap it in) or sent to them once the exhibition comes down (so factor in post and package). Asking the buyer to pick up their artwork at a later date is best, if possible.</p>	<p>The Barony Centre</p>	<p>38</p>
Craft Fairs	→ Craft fairs case studies	Page
<p>Popular with locals and tourists alike, craft fairs are also a way to bring people into your building (which might encourage them to spend money in other ways, such as in the café).</p> <p>You supply the tables and stallholders pay you a fixed fee (anything from £20 upwards) to sell their wares. You can also encourage them to donate something to your raffle, which also generates revenue.</p> <p>If it's a particularly popular event, you could also charge a small admission.</p>	<p>Dunlop Village Hall</p> <p>Out of the Blue</p>	<p>44</p> <p>52</p>



Festivals	→ Festivals case studies	Page
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Is there something special about your local area? Then exploit it! Some venues balance the books on their annual festivals, which generate enough income to subsidise the rest of their activities.

DD8 Music

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Easdale Island Hall

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Ticket sales, bar/food sales and merchandise can all generate income – especially if you operate them in-house. Items such as t-shirts, posters and badges are relatively easy to get printed, and are usually sold at 100% mark-up.

Festivals can also contribute greatly to the local economy, feeding into accommodation and local transport, so it's worth speaking to your whole community to see how they could get involved.

Workshops

Bringing in an artist/maker to work with your local community can be a good way to generate interest in your building, and increase your profile as a creative place. Charging participants for the workshop may not cover the artist's fee and materials, however, so you may need to seek additional funding to subsidise it.

Bar and Café	→ Bar and catering case studies	Page
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It's one of life's few guarantees, that people will always want food and drink at events. Whether you choose to run the bar and/or pop-up café yourself, or bring in outside help, it will generate income – it's up to you how you maximise that.

The Barony Centre

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Contrary to what many people think, it is very difficult to get a café to break-even, let alone make a profit. Many venues run a pop-up style café or bar when they have a programmed event, or use these events to offset the losses from the quiet times. However it may be important to you to have a café open daily for the community. Relying exclusively on volunteers to run your café or bar is not always realistic – you will probably need at least some paid staff hours. You will also have to consider food health and safety implications.

TURNING CREATIVITY INTO CASH

Bar and Café continued...



Running a bar involves licences and training, but you'll walk away with more profit than if you buy in help (see the 'Licences, insurance and regulations' section for details). Take advantage of supermarket sale-or-returns and free glass hire, or try to build up a good relationship with local independent suppliers.

If you'd rather hand over the task to an outside company, ensure you get a good deal. Flat fees rarely work in your favour, so suggest a profit share instead (e.g. you get 20% of the takings). Alternatively, you could avoid selling alcohol and have a BYOB policy, where customers pay you a corkage fee.

Useful project sheet on setting up a community cafe: <http://tinyurl.com/communitycafesheet>

Non-artistic events

Meetings, conferences, weddings and functions are often the backbone of a venue's income. Much of the equipment they require (screen, projector, lighting, PA system etc.) is also useful for creative groups, so you can use commercial income to help facilitate cultural groups.

The Art of Programming

Attending the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and other high-profile events can give you access to multiple performers, who you can talk to about adding your venue to their tour, or working in collaboration with you to do a series of performances.

Performers can sometimes seek funding for collaborations and developing new ideas, and if you want them to come to you, put in place a team that can support them with technical requirements, accommodation, transport and marketing for their show. Your local authority may have an arts and theatre team that can help you with some of that.

Building up a good relationship with theatre groups and performers can often mean they will come back to you, having had a good experience previously. Every interaction counts, from courtesy phone calls before they arrive to the right lighting and sound – so make sure it's all spot on.

Bringing a large professional theatre company in to do a show could demand a great deal from your venue and staff. Tour funding can sometimes be secured, but these events should be viewed more as loss leaders as you're unlikely to sell out.

By involving children from the local primary schools or local adults that are well known in the community (and who are willing to make a fool of themselves for a good cause), you can guarantee good audiences for your pantos. These are often income generators which will underwrite your 'riskier' shows throughout the rest of the year.

Seek to put on special events during your traditionally quieter months. Advertising something as having sold out at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and winning awards such as a Fringe First can attract new audiences.

ADAPTING THE SPACE FOR CREATIVE USE



ADAPTING THE SPACE FOR CREATIVE USE



This will vary depending on whether you're starting from scratch, in the process of renovating a space – or simply making small tweaks to an existing building. If you are adapting a space, you may be able to access a specialist grant for lighting, sound and collapsible seating/staging.

Here are a few things to think about to ensure cultural groups feel at home in your venue:

Performance

Performance area

This could either be on a raised stage area or on the floor. Remember to check sight-lines and give as many people as possible a good view. Some companies like to perform 'in the round' (with seats on all sides), others may stage a 'promenade performance' where they (and the audience) move around the building.

Seating

Few community venues have the luxury of tiered seating, but it unquestionably affords the best view. Failing that, floor seating works well providing the performance is on an elevated space, or the seats are placed so people can see between each other. Cabaret style seating (around tables) can create a nice, informal atmosphere. If you're staging live music, remember to leave some space at the front for those who wish to get up and dance.

Lighting

Some companies will bring their own lighting desk, rig and lanterns, others may need you to provide it. Lighting can be as complicated or simple as you can manage – but having some sort of basic lighting in place may be all your regular users (local amateur theatre, choirs etc.) need. If not, expertise and equipment can be bought in. Speak to the technician at your local professional theatre, who will be able to point you in the right direction.

Flooring

This may not be something you have budget or space to do anything about. However, if you have a stage area, you might want to consider buying special hard-wearing, slip-resistant flooring. Similarly, if your venue hosts a lot of dance, you could consider fitting a sprung floor. A quick Google search will bring up lots of companies who make and install theatrical flooring.

Looking after your performers

If you give your performers a good experience, they're more likely to come back. Simple provisions like a backstage area to change, complete with good lighting, mirrors and access to a sink and toilet are important. As is keeping them happily fed and watered.

Equipment

- **Curtains:** If you have a stage, you'll need a pair of thick stage curtains to draw across it. You may also need to create a 'black out' situation, which can be achieved by curtains or blinds – or even just sticking black paper to your windows.
- **PA system:** Many bands or musicians will bring their own – or perform acoustically, and therefore not need one. If you have to provide a sound system (speakers, amplifier, mixer, microphones) this can be hired – although if you find you're using it regularly, buying one may be the best option. Like most things, you get what you pay for, with prices ranging from hundreds to thousands. Speak to other venues to see what has worked for them.
- **Musicians:** Most musical groups and choirs will provide their own equipment, however bear in mind that musicians will need a chair without arms to sit on. They may also need you to provide music stands.



Cinema

Seating and lighting

Many of the requirements for screening films are the same as staging theatre and music – comfortable seats that afford a good view, and black out curtains or blinds to keep out the light.

If you can't afford that, only show films in the winter, like Three Villages Hall – or tape black paper to the windows, as Balerno Village Screen used to, until one of their committee members made some blinds.

Equipment

This can be bought or hired, but you'll need to acquire the following kit to show films:

- High definition projector – These can cost anything from £1,000–£5,000, but you should be able to get a good quality projector for around £1,400.
- Screen – Some venues have these integrated into their space, and simply press a button to make it come down. Others use 'pop-up' versions that assemble in seconds. Depending on what you go for, these can cost anything from £100–£1,500.
- Blu-ray and DVD player – Just like the one you use at home. These can be bought for around £50, and you'll need HDMI cables to link it to your projector.
- Sound system – Your venue may already have a PA system for other events, in which case just use that. Otherwise you'll have to hire or buy an amplifier and a couple of speakers to ensure everyone can hear. (see the 'Helpful contacts' section for more details)

Licences etc.

Before you can screen anything, you'll need a licence for your venue, a licence to show each film, public liability insurance and a PRS licence for music. Details of what to purchase and where, can be found in the 'Licences, insurance and regulations' and 'Helpful contacts' sections.

Exhibitions

Lighting

As you might imagine, lighting is key for showing art and craft work in the most favourable way. Usually this will involve a combination of natural and artificial light. Depending on the kind of art/craft (2D work that lies flat on a wall, or 3D work that sits on a plinth) the requirements will vary.

For many venues, the artwork will just have to make do with whatever light you already have. However, if exhibitions are a big part of your remit, expert advice should be sought as to where to place spotlights, floodlights or downlights to best effect. If something is going to be in-situ for a long time, ensure it won't be damaged by continual sunlight shining on it.

Space

Give the work room to breathe by keeping the rest of the walls plain and clear. Similarly if you're showing work on plinths in the centre of the room, choose a wooden floor or plain covering.

Selling area

If the work in the exhibition is for sale, ensure it has signage to convey the price and how people go about purchasing it. It might also be worth having a separate selling area (perhaps with smaller, more affordable pieces or postcards) nearby.

Commission

There are different ways to work out commission. The artist can name the price they want for the work, and you add your commission plus VAT to that, to reach a selling price (if you are VAT registered). Or the artist can state the selling price, and that will include your commission.

Make sure you discuss with the artist how the work will be sent to the purchaser, if not handed to them at point of sale – and factor in any post and package charges.

ADAPTING THE SPACE FOR CREATIVE USE



Room hire

Space

The key to room hire is making the space as adaptable as possible. Some venues have a large hall with partitions, which divide it up into smaller spaces – others have rooms of different sizes.

Your users will tell you what they need, so it's worth asking about their requirements in advance, and requesting intermittent feedback through a comments box or user group meetings.

Here are some of the things groups and individuals may need from a space:

- good lighting (for visual artists);
- adjustable heating (for physical pursuits, like yoga or dancing);
- access to hot water (to clean brushes, wash down tables etc.);
- smooth, clean flooring (for exercise/dance classes – also for easy cleaning after art classes);
- stackable tables and chairs (chairs without arms for musicians);
- changing area (this can be the toilets);
- WiFi;
- soundproofing (for music rehearsals/recording);
- plug sockets and extension cables;
- something to play music on / watch DVDs;
- recycling / rubbish facilities;
- storage (for regular users).

Disabled access

This is something you will have to think about for your venue, regardless of how you use it – but a performance might bring people to your building in greater numbers than before. Ensure details of disabled parking and toilets are displayed on your website, and that there is a phone number for people to call to check facilities in advance.

You could also list your venue on 'Euan's Guide', a free online resource which allows disabled people to check information about disabled access in venues. www.euansguide.com

Bear in mind if you have wheelchair users, or somebody with a guide dog, coming to a performance, you will need to leave suitable space for them. You may also want to consider holding special signed or audio described performances (Voluntary Arts Scotland has an information briefing on this – see the 'Helpful contacts' section for more details).

Technical information

To help people decide whether your venue is right for them, it's helpful to put all your technical information on your website. This could include:

- measurements (rooms and stage area);
- sound and lighting equipment (if you can provide a PA system, stage lighting etc.);
- audience capacity (standing and seated);
- access to performance area (i.e. how they can enter and exit the building, and ideally door sizes so they can work out if their set will fit through it);
- backstage changing facilities.

Discussions about fees/box office splits, and how you will help market their show are best carried out between you and the company on a case-by-case basis, so put the appropriate contact details on your website.

Transport and parking

Some of this may be beyond your control, but it can be useful for people to know how to reach your venue, and if there is car parking available (and where else to park when it's full). Feature this on your website, and make sure your user groups have information to pass on to members. It is particularly important to know when the last trains and buses run and to try and programme around these as much as possible.

The journey to and from a performance is all part of the experience for an audience member – and will dictate whether they come back. So give them as much information as possible. For example, Easdale Island Hall carries all the ferry times pertinent to each performance on its website, and Letham Nights gives details of bus numbers and taxi firms. Most venues give directions if coming by car.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

– WHO DOES WHAT?



Staff and volunteers – who does what?

Volunteers are often the lifeblood of a community venue, and the building couldn't function without them. In this publication, you'll see many case studies where the entire venture would fold if it wasn't for volunteers. However, sometimes you will need to recruit paid help, either on an ad-hoc basis, part-time or full-time depending on your needs.

Where to look

As with other walks of life, word of mouth is often the best way to find people. Contact your local professional theatre venue, gallery or museum for advice on bringing in freelance technical support, and other organisations in your area which may have used bar/catering facilities.

Technical support

Whatever the make-up of your organisation, you may need to occasionally buy in outside help. For example, Letham Nights pays £100 per gig for a sound technician, and Nairn Community & Arts Centre brings in freelance lighting experts for more complicated shows.

Bars

Changes in legislation mean that running a bar isn't always straightforward. As well as the appropriate licences, all those working or volunteering behind the bar need to have a minimum of two hours training, so your venue may wish to buy in a bar for events (on a profit share basis) rather than run your own (see the 'Licences, insurance and legislation' section for more details).

Sub-committees and advisory groups

As well as a venue's main committee or Board, it's worth considering setting up sub-committees or advisory groups for specific things. This not only shares the workload, but builds up valuable expertise.

For example, The Barony Centre has a separate advisory group of people from the creative and craft industries, who meet quarterly to support the staff in programming and promotion. Cove Burgh Hall has a number of sub-committees who take on different projects – one runs the Real Ale Festival, another the Hogmanay Ball and another the Live@CBH events programme.

Involve the community

If you build up a good relationship with the people who use your space, you may find they're happy to help out on an occasional basis. When Cove Burgh Hall holds a concert or dance, it's not the committee who tidy up at the end of the night – it's the people who attended the event.

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BOX OFFICE AND TICKETING





Ticketing

How to sell tickets is an ongoing dilemma for many venues. Some organisations are happy to install online booking systems which do the hard work for them, recognising that in this day and age, people are used to parting with a booking fee along with their ticket price. Others shun the idea of passing on booking fees to their users, which means the selling process is more labour intensive, but morally satisfying!

Online booking

If you go down the road of online booking, there are many options available. Some, like Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.co.uk) allow you to distribute tickets for free events at no cost – only charging you if you actually sell tickets. Others, like Ticket Web (www.ticketweb.co.uk) or TicketSource (www.ticketsource.co.uk) only sell tickets, and will charge a service fee plus a payment processing fee – which organisations then pass on to the ticket buyer. So, for example, if the face value of your ticket is £10, it will work out at about £11.05 for the buyer.

One of the benefits of using an online booking company is the various marketing services that go with it. For example, sending out email reminders to people close to the event (something Balerno Village Screen finds very useful, when it uses Eventbrite to distribute free tickets to the community).

You could also build an online booking system into your website, like Easdale Island Hall, who use PayPal to process payments. Again, this involves a booking fee for the end user, which you work out to cover your PayPal costs (usually around £1.50 per transaction).

Hallmaster is an online booking system which has been chosen by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) as the preferred booking system for village halls throughout Scotland. It provides a reliable and easy to use online reservation system for church halls, village halls, clubhouses, community centres and all other bookable function rooms. The software can be integrated into your own website. Visit www.hallmaster.co.uk for more details.

Other ticketing systems

Pay on the door

For years, this is how many venues operated. However, turning people away is not a happy prospect. If you prefer to take payment on the night, consider operating a reservation list on your website, so you can gauge numbers and warn people not to travel if it's unlikely they'll get in. You can entice people to do this by offering tickets for a couple of pounds less if they reserve in advance.

Also, be aware that just because people have said they'll come, doesn't necessarily mean they will. Many venues have moved over to online booking systems to avoid 'no-shows', which can be frustrating if you've turned prospective buyers away.

Cheques/bank transfers

This is a good system if you want to gauge numbers and get the money in advance, but don't want to inflict booking fees on your audience. Ask people to send in cheques to secure a booking, or transfer money into your organisation's bank account. Letham Nights is a good example of this – visit www.letham.org.uk/lethamnights to see how they do it.

Donations

This is particularly pertinent for some community cinemas, whose licences prohibit them from selling tickets. However, to avoid turning people away, consider using Eventbrite to allow people to book a free ticket online, or put paper tickets in the local shops for people to pick up. That way, you'll know how many to expect, and can announce if it's likely to be full.

BOX OFFICE AND TICKETING



Paying your performers

– box office split vs flat fees

Many performers will not entertain the idea of a box office split in smaller, more rural areas – because it's just too big a risk. If they travel miles to perform, and five people turn up, they'll operate at a serious loss.

Instead, they'll usually ask for a guaranteed flat fee, which you will have to negotiate with them on an individual basis. Some performers are willing to take a hit on a small venue with a great atmosphere (knowing they can charge higher rates at more commercial venues) – especially if you can throw in accommodation and food. Anything you take on the box office, over and above the flat fee, is yours to keep.

If a box office split is an option, you'll need to work out who gets what. For example, if a band plays at the Three Villages Hall, they get 75% of the takings, and the Hall gets 25%.

Another option is a guaranteed fee, and a split of any box office takings above that. Again, you would have to work out the ratio with the company.

Occasionally, if your event is part of something bigger (for example a festival), the festival organisers may be willing to guarantee a fee on your behalf, in order to get an act they want in their festival into your venue. So, if you don't make enough money on the door, they will pay the shortfall.

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING



PUBLICITY AND MARKETING



You can have the best acts in the world at your venue, but if you don't tell people about it, nobody will come.

Ways of publicising events constantly evolve, but at the moment, the accepted wisdom is that a mix of traditional print publicity, social media and word of mouth is the best strategy – that way you can reach a number of different audiences.

Using print publicity

Brochures

If you know in advance who is coming to your venue, produce a brochure announcing it. This is also a potential way to generate income, by running adverts for local businesses in it. Send it to previous bookers, tourist boards, other community/arts venues, and holiday homes for inclusion in their 'things to do' folders.

Posters

Display these in your venue and around the local area (including any tourist accommodation within a reasonable distance).

Leaflets

Hand to people at the end of a previous event at your venue – or at the end of similar events elsewhere. Also give to groups using your space.

Local media

If you can turn your event into a story, so much the better. If not at least try and have your event listed in your local press or radio station. If it's a really big deal, try for national coverage.

Social media and online

Social media

Promote your event on Facebook, and invite your followers or friends to come along. Drip feed interesting facts about the band/theatre company, and link to previous gigs/videos to generate interest. If you programme a lot of events, consider having a different Facebook page for theatre shows, music gigs, cinema etc. – that way people can 'like' whichever artform they're interested in.

Link with the artists and musicians coming to your venue on Twitter and with their Facebook pages, so they can retweet and promote your event to their followers and friends. Closer to the event, if tickets aren't selling well, social media is a good place to offer '2 for 1' deals or competitions.

Encourage 'ambassadors' for the event to shout about it via their own personal social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest – and whatever the next big sensation is!

If social media isn't something you're comfortable with, think about recruiting a volunteer or intern to set something up and run it for you. Voluntary Arts Scotland has a number of helpful information briefings and YouTube videos on this topic – see the 'Helpful contacts and resources' section for details.

Your website

Make sure your event is listed on your own website, with plenty of information to tempt people along. If the band/company has any YouTube or Vimeo videos, embed them onto your own site (this is easier than you might imagine – simply follow the short instructions under the video).

Encourage people to sign up for an newsletter via your website, so you can let them know as soon as an event goes on sale.



Utilise others

Have your event listed on other people's websites, including tourist boards, local council sites, local press and event websites.

Trip Advisor

This is an increasingly popular way for people to learn about a venue. If yours is on there, make sure you respond to any negative comments that are posted and consider ways you could improve your visitors' experience.

Brand your events

Consider giving the performance side of your operation a name. For example, all the gigs and performances at Cove Burgh Hall come under the banner 'Live@CBH' – this is then placed on their website and any print publicity.

Similarly, a logo can work well, as it starts to build recognition. For example West Side Cinema in Orkney designed a unique logo which it uses on all its print and online material.

Build customer loyalty

There may be no business like showbusiness, but when it comes to the box office, there's no business like repeat business. If your users enjoy themselves, they're much more likely to return. Here are a few ways that venues are encouraging audience loyalty and commitment:

Supporters scheme

This is a way for people to feel part of your venture. The Swallow Theatre in Whithorn (Scotland's smallest theatre) charges people £10 a year to be a supporter – and many people add something on top of that, just to see the venue thrive.

Membership society

These can work in a number of ways, but Music Nairn is an example of one of the most successful. They are one of the best attended music societies in Scotland, with one of the highest memberships. Based at Nairn Community & Arts Centre, they charge an annual fee of £16 for an individual and £26 for a couple, for which members receive discounted tickets, email updates on events, an invitation to a 'Members Evening' each season, a membership card detailing that year's programme.

Friends schemes

Much the same as supporters schemes, 'Friends' schemes help people feel part of something. What they get in return will vary, from reduced tickets to backstage tours to 'meet the artist' events. Cove Burgh Hall operates a Friends scheme for £10 a year. Those able to pay more can become a 'Gold Friend' for £100, which gives them free entry to all Live@CBH events (usually £10 each, with around 12 held each year).

Loyalty scheme

Just like your local supermarket or coffee shop, you can encourage repeat visits with a loyalty card, which is stamped each time people visit. This could then entitle them to a free product (such as a coffee in the café) or a free visit - as with Cinema Nairn, where your sixth film is free.

Keeping in touch

If you have people's contact details on a mailing list, make sure you comply with the Data Protection Act. You need to ask permission to communicate with people via email, so adding a tick box about this to your membership application form is a good idea. Online communication systems like Mailchimp (www.mailchimp.com) are free to use and work well for newsletters and updates.

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING



Seek feedback

Getting feedback from your users not only helps you programme events, based on their likes and dislikes, it can also add to the fun (thereby encouraging them back). Feedback can come through a comments box or focus groups – but try and think outside the box to make it interesting for people.

For example, West Side Cinema in Orkney has a ‘Ping-pongometer’. They give viewers a ping pong ball on their way out, which is then put into one of five boxes. One equals ‘this film shouldn’t have been made’ and five equals ‘I’d take it to movie heaven’.

Be part of something bigger

Are there big events happening locally or nationally you could be part of? If so, make sure you’re on their website and in their brochure. This is something that most local council areas will accommodate, on their website and in printed literature.

The Swallow Theatre runs events that are part of Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival – which means it can take advantage of a marketing machine much bigger than its own. Remember to ‘hang on the coat tails’ of your performers, so you can maximise publicity via their followers on Twitter, Facebook and other social media.

Make the most of tourism

Make sure any brochures or flyers you produce are in the local tourist office, and featured in tourism websites. Send publicity to holiday homes and local B&Bs/hotels.

You can also feed into the local economy yourself, by putting helpful contacts on your own website. If people know there is a nice place to stay nearby, they may be inclined to make a weekend of it – meaning they can spend more money in your bar! Carrying a link to B&Bs, hotels and guest houses nearby may also buy you some in-kind, or even financial, support from the owners.

LICENCES, INSURANCE AND REGULATIONS



LICENCES, INSURANCE AND REGULATIONS



Like it or not, if you're running a venue and/or events, there is a certain amount of red tape you'll need to wrap yourself in. Most of which actually leads to best practice, so it's worth spending some time to get it right.

The information here is by no means exhaustive, it's just the surface layer – with signposting for where to find out more.

Licences

Here are some of the things you may need a licence for:

Selling alcohol

If you plan to run a bar less than twelve times a year, you can apply for an 'Occasional Licence' each time you run it. These cost £10 from your local council. Visit www.gov.uk/occasional-licence-scotland for more information. If you want to run a bar more regularly, you'll need a 'Premises Licence'. Visit www.gov.uk/premises-licence-scotland to find out more.

Before you apply for a Premises Licence, one of your team must be appointed the 'Designated Premises Supervisor' or DPS. They need to hold a 'Personal Licence' before they can apply. This involves undergoing training, and ensuring their training is refreshed when required. Visit www.gov.uk/personal-licence-scotland for more information.

All other members of staff (paid or volunteers) involved in the sale of alcohol are required (under the new Scottish Licensing Act 2005) to undertake a minimum of two hours formal staff training on the relevant Scottish laws. This can be undertaken by the DPS, who must keep paperwork to document the training. Visit Personal Licence Scotland for more details: www.personallicencescotland.com

You may also need a Food Hygiene Certificate from your local council, if you're selling food. Visit the Food Standards Agency website for more information: www.foodstandards.gov.scot

Showing films

To screen films at your premises, you will need two separate licences:

- One for your building – a 'Premises Licence', which you renew annually from your local council.
- One for the film itself – which you can buy either through a booking service or the film distributors themselves. See the 'Helpful contacts' section for details on where to buy licences.

The cost of your film licence will vary, depending on whether you plan to charge admission fees to your screening, or merely ask for donations.

NB Some independent films don't come under licences and you will have to contact the filmmakers themselves to get approval for screening. Tip: social media can be a good way to make first contact with them.

Playing music

When it comes to playing music in your venue – either live or recorded – there are two organisations you need to be aware of: Performing Right Society (PRS) and Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL).

PPL collects money on behalf of performers and record companies for the use of their recorded music. PRS for Music collects money on behalf of songwriters, composers and music publishers, for the use of their musical compositions and lyrics.

If music is ever played on your premises, at a live performance or through a radio, TV or CD etc., this is considered a 'public performance' and you will need a licence. This includes film screenings, which have a soundtrack.



In 2012, PPL and PRS joined forces to provide a joint licence for community buildings, which is administered by PRS. These cannot be ordered online – phone PRS on 0845 140 0090 to get a bespoke quote for your organisation.

Providing entertainment

A licence is not required if your audience is less than 500 people. Over that, you will need to apply for a 'Public Entertainment Licence' from your local council (unless the entertainment is taking place in a school or church hall, in which case a licence is not required).

If you are unsure what to apply for or how, contact your local council.

Running a market or craft fair

Depending on the circumstances, you may need to apply for a 'Market Operator's Licence' from your local council. Visit www.gov.uk/market-operators-licence-scotland for more information.

Exemptions include 'craft fairs or fêtes run by a community or faith group' which are 'not being run for private profit'. However, as some of the craftmakers at your fair may be selling for private profit, this could have an impact. Licence fees vary considerably, so speak to your local council to see if yours is exempt.

Insurance

Alongside your usual buildings and contents insurance, there are several other forms of cover you may need to have:

- Employers' liability
- Public liability
- Trustee indemnity
- Event cancellation
- Money and products

Before going out and buying them all individually, it's worth considering joining an organisation which offers money-saving insurance packages, such as Development Trust Association Scotland, Making Music, National Operatic and Dramatic Association and Cinema For All (see the 'Helpful contacts' section for details).

NB Even if your organisation is covered, any groups coming in should have their own public liability insurance. If somebody hurts themselves on your equipment, you would cover them. However, if somebody hurts themselves due to the activity they're carrying out, the group would need to cover that.

Risk assessment

Everyday health and safety, such as building capacity, fire regulations and first aid will no doubt already be considered by your organisation.

Bringing in cultural activities to your space should have a limited impact on your existing procedures. However you may have to factor in higher numbers to your risk assessments (for example, after an event, everybody will be leaving at roughly the same time, leading to possible congestion). You should also speak to your performers to ensure their sets and costumes meet current fire safety regulations.

LICENCES, INSURANCE AND REGULATIONS



Child protection

Although you personally may not have responsibility for training or caring for under 18-year-olds, the groups using your premises might. When agreeing their hire, it's worth checking that your users have the relevant PVG Scheme documents in place, if they are working with young or vulnerable people.

Voluntary Arts Scotland has a useful information briefing on this topic. See 'Helpful contacts' section for more details

If young people are using your premises, it's also good practice to have your own child protection policy in place.

Financial considerations

If an area of your premises is being devoted to business – for example a gallery shop – this may have VAT implications. Speak to a VAT specialist, to discuss the proportion of floor space deemed as being for 'business' or 'non-business' use, as this will have an impact on what expenditures you can claim back.

HELPFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES



HELPFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES



If you're considering altering your space to accommodate cultural activity, running events or hiring space to groups, the best people to seek advice from are those nearby who are already doing it. Better yet, pay them a visit and see for yourself.

Here are a few other organisations you might find useful to join, or know about.

Community Ownership Support Service

Funded by the Scottish Government, COSS provides support for communities across Scotland to take on assets, and offers advice for local authorities and public bodies on fair and sustainable asset transfer.

COSS also runs themed workshops around the country aimed at supporting asset ownership; their long-term viability and short-term sustainability.

The COSS website is the first port of call for any group interested in taking on an asset – www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk

Development Trust Association Scotland

If you are involved in the wider regeneration of your area with multiple assets, projects and services then joining the DTAS network will be useful.

DTAS is a membership organisation, which offers information, resources and direct support for communities which have decided to set themselves up as a development trust – or are in the process of exploring the possibility. Benefits of membership include:

- group pension scheme;
- discounted insurance scheme;
- free legal, VAT, HR and accounts advice;
- bulk energy buying scheme;
- free and discounted training;
- access to a wide range of helpful resources and support;
- grants for study visits to other development trusts and community enterprises.

There is a small charge for membership. For more information, visit www.dtascot.org.uk

National artform bodies

There are many different artforms that people can engage in, the majority of which have 'umbrella bodies' set up to advise and support them. These are a good place to start if you have questions about a particular cultural activity. Contact Voluntary Arts Scotland (details right) to find out the relevant body for a particular activity.

Two of the major umbrella bodies are Making Music Scotland (www.makingmusic.org.uk) and NODA Scotland (www.noda.org.uk) which champion amateur music-making and drama respectively.

Both offer money-saving insurance packages to members, as well as providing help and advice.

The Touring Network

The Touring Network is a membership organisation which provides help, advice and training for those involved in putting on professional arts events in small-scale, rural venues. Benefits for members include:

- a programme of co-funded events, helping you bring new shows to your venue;
- access to information about which shows are currently available;
- advice and support, including funding guidance;
- access to training and workshops;
- subsidised opportunities to go and see a wide range of performances and events across Scotland;
- help with marketing and promotion.

Annual membership ranges from £75-£125 a year. For more information, visit www.thetouringnetwork.com



Voluntary Arts Scotland

Voluntary Arts Scotland provides information, advice, support and advocacy for the thousands of people across the country who take part in creative cultural activity, purely for the love of it. It has a wide range of free resources on its website, including helpful briefings and short films (all aimed at arts organisations) on topics such as:

- health and safety;
- risk assessment;
- creating and maximising your Twitter, YouTube and Facebook presence;
- planning a marketing campaign;
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme;
- Gift Aid;
- making your performance accessible to people with hearing or sight loss;

and many, many more...

They also have a fortnightly enewsletter, and can help promote your group and events via their website and social media.

Visit www.vasotland.org.uk to find out more.

The Musicians' Union

The MU represents the interests of all musicians and can advise on technical aspects of setting up your venue for gigs and getting the appropriate insurance. They have recently teamed up with Co-operatives UK to form a music teachers co-operative. Visit www.musiciansunion.org.uk

Community Cinema

There are around 50 community cinemas, film clubs and societies across Scotland, so speaking to some of those may prove beneficial (Regional Screen Scotland has a map of community cinemas – see over).

A number of organisations exist across the UK, to provide information, support and funding to those thinking of setting up a community cinema. Here are some of them:

BFI Neighbourhood Cinema

Run by the British Film Institute, this hugely informative website features the 'Seven steps to starting a community cinema', including everything you need to know about licencing your own cinema.

Here you'll find direct links to places you can buy a film licence.

It also carries a list of potential funding streams, plus a directory of community cinemas across the UK, so you can visit some of them on a research mission.

If you're looking to buy your own equipment, you could also apply for the BFI Neighbourhood Cinema Equipment Fund.

www.bfi.org.uk/neighbourhoodcinema

Cinema For All

Cinema For All is the trading name of the British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS). Whether you have been screening films in your community for years, or are just thinking about setting one up, Cinema For All can support you along your journey.

Much of its advice and support is free, with a huge range of additional services and benefits (including discounted insurance) for those who take out membership, which costs £95 a year.

One of Cinema For All's major strengths is its booking service, which gives you access to over 800 films. Most titles are available for around £85.

You can also hire equipment from Cinema For All for a trial period, while you decide whether to invest in your own kit.

www.cinemaforall.org.uk

HELPFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES



Regional Screen Scotland

Regional Screen Scotland supports the development of cinema in Scotland in a number of ways, including funding, information and advice.

They also have a map of community cinemas across Scotland – so you can get in touch and learn from other people’s challenges and successes.

Regional Screen Scotland also operates the ‘Screen Machine’ – an 80-seat, air conditioned mobile cinema. Encouraging them to visit your area may be something to consider.

www.regionalscreenscotland.org

Film Hub Scotland

Accessed via the Regional Screen Scotland website, Film Hub Scotland is one of nine hubs across the UK.

They provide their members with a range of funding opportunities, screening programmes, training and networking events, and audience research. Membership is free.

www.regionalscreenscotland.org/filmhubscotland

Film Bank Media

Film Bank Media represents many of the major film companies, and supplies licences for a wide range of films. Their user-friendly ‘Licence Wizard’ takes you through a step-by-step guide to buying the appropriate licence for your screening.

Costs will vary, depending on whether you are charging admission or not. Prices start at around £85 plus VAT for a screening where no admission is charged. Costs for screenings with paid tickets will vary, depending on how many people watch your film (you supply them with this information afterwards).

www.filmbankmedia.com

Village Hall Cinemas

The idea behind the Village Hall Cinemas website is to connect community cinema projects and people, and advertise their existence to the public and film community. It carries a list of many of the community cinemas in Scotland, England and Wales, and various other helpful information.

www.villagehallcinemas.co.uk

Reel Scotland

To help inform what films you choose to screen, Reel Scotland is an independent source for reviews, previews, features and interviews covering film in Scotland, including new releases, classic re-releases, film festivals and one-off screenings at Scotland’s cinemas.

www.reelscotland.com

ARTS FUNDING



ARTS FUNDING



Along with other, more general, funding you may apply for, it's worth looking into grants specifically tailored for the arts.

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland distributes funding for the arts, screen and creative industries. Their 'Open Project Funding' supports, amongst other things, projects which 'present work to audiences, or which try to develop and reach new audiences, including those hard to reach' and projects which 'encourage more people to get involved in artistic and creative activity.'

www.creativescotland.com

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK. One of its funding priorities is 'art as an instrument for social change, community cohesion or participation'.

www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Awards for All

Awards for All is run by the Big Lottery, and awards grants of between £500 and £10,000 for projects that aim to improve local communities. Arts groups have been regular recipients of these grants.

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/awardsforallscotland

Heritage Lottery Fund

Heritage Lottery Fund is the largest dedicated funder of heritage in the UK. It supports all kinds of projects, as long as they make a lasting difference to heritage, people and communities. Think about ways in which your local area could celebrate its local heritage through cultural activity.

www.hlf.org.uk

Robertson Trust

The Robertson Trust aims to improve the quality of life, and realise the potential of, people and communities in Scotland. One of its funding priorities is community arts.

www.therobertsontrust.org.uk

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BALERNO VILLAGE SCREEN, EDINBURGH



“By involving the community in how we shape the service, they feel part of it and give us that commitment back.”

Mark Sproul, Co-founder, Balerno Village Screen





Balerno Village Screen, Edinburgh

Mark Sproul, co-founder of Balerno Village Screen, tells us about the community venture that brings people together in a fun, affordable way.

When the people of Balerno decided to set up their own community cinema, they needed to ask themselves a number of big questions. What films to screen, when to screen them – but perhaps most importantly of all, whether to charge people to come in. The answer was a resounding “no”.

The question was important not just because it set out their reason for being (to improve life in the community and bring people together) but dictated what kind of licence they would need to show films – a crucial part of the administration of any cinema. Balerno Village Screen opted for a ‘pay what you can’ donations policy, meaning they can use a Public Video Screening Licence. It also keeps the venture as inclusive as possible.

“It’s really important to us that people pay what they can afford,” says Mark. “Some people give effectively the same amount they would pay if they went to a commercial cinema, which on a Saturday night for two people can be anything up to £25. And some people give much less, because that’s all they can afford, and that’s fine – as long as enough comes in to cover our costs.”

So far, the system has worked well and costs have always been covered. Any extra equipment required is paid for through additional fundraising or grant applications. Showing films on commercial cinema release would be prohibitively expensive, so the group waits until films are released on DVD to buy and screen them then.

Films are shown monthly, with Friday nights devoted to quirky, independent films, and Saturdays catering to more mainstream tastes. The group has access to two separate halls in Balerno Parish Church (both of which are kitted out with a high definition digital projector and drop down screen), so occasionally shows films in both halls at the same time.

“We ran dual screenings for the first time in 2013, when we showed Skyfall,” says Mark. “We had a James Bond theme with cocktails, a borrowed Aston Martin, and red carpet with over 800 people attending over the weekend. And at Christmas we show It’s A Wonderful Life in one hall, and a kids film in the other hall.”

The nights may be free, but to comply with health and safety regulations on capacity (the halls seat 90 and 120 people), the screenings are ticketed. Around 20% of tickets are paper, placed in the local café and post office, the rest are distributed via online ticketing service, Eventbrite, which allows them to send out email reminders.

With donations underpinning the venture’s success or failure, it’s been imperative that Balerno Village Screen builds up a good relationship with its audience. This has partly meant ensuring their committee is as representative of the local community as possible, but also reaching out to those who attend.

“We engage people in decisions, and get feedback from them on the films,” explains Mark. “And by involving the community in how we shape the service, they feel part of it and give us that commitment back.”

www.balernovillagescreen.com

THE BARONY CENTRE,
WEST KILBRIDE, NORTH Ayrshire



“It’s a terrific space for showing art, with plain white walls and wooden flooring. My view is always keep it simple, and let the work on show speak for itself.”

Maggie Broadley, Executive Director, Barony Centre





The Barony Centre, West Kilbride, North Ayrshire

**Executive Director, Maggie Broadley talks
about the importance of good light for
exhibitions, working out commissions, and
how to make the most of your café.**

Opened in May 2012, the Barony Centre is one of the focal points of 'Craft Town Scotland', as West Kilbride is known. Seven days a week, this former church welcomes craft enthusiasts, locals and tourists through its doors. Inside, the building is home to a large, bright exhibition hall, workshop area, gallery shop and café.

"We've got lots of lovely original windows, so the space is flooded with light," says Maggie. "It's a terrific space for showing art, with plain white walls and wooden flooring. My view is always keep it simple, and let the work on show speak for itself."

Sunlight can't always be relied upon, of course, so the exhibition hall has small spotlights and directional lights shining onto the craft pieces, most of which are displayed on plinths. Whether hanging on a wall or in the centre of the room, artworks need space to be appreciated, so clutter is a no-no.

"Storage is always an issue," says Maggie, "and is something you really have to think about. We have plinths, where the tops lift off and the base can be separated and stored flat."

When it comes to the exhibitions themselves, the Barony Centre balances generating an income with being a supportive venue for craft development. *"We want to show innovative work, which is perhaps not commercially viable," says Maggie. "But we also have high quality work for sale – and there are other ways of generating income, like our gallery shop and café."*

All work sold earns the Barony Centre a 40% commission (plus VAT on the commission only) – but the way the retail price is calculated can vary.

"If an artist or maker is exhibiting in lots of galleries, the preferred practice is not to sell similar pieces of work for differing prices," explains Maggie. "So they will tell you the selling price of the piece, and depending on the commission of the gallery, the artist or maker gets more or less from the sale."

"Other people tell you how much they want for their work, and you add your commission on to that to work out the sale price."

Trying to gauge what will sell isn't easy, so everything is brought in on a sale or return basis, and is usually given three to four months shelf-time before being returned. Respecting how much an artist/maker wants to charge is important, and Maggie says she would never "barter anyone down".

As a visitor attraction, the Barony Centre also runs a popular café serving home baking and seasonal fare from local suppliers. Managed by an external company, the café always generated the Centre a steady income – but Maggie realised there were limitations to this.

"We've just brought the café back in-house," she explains. "It was run by a licensee for the first three years, who paid us a set fee. However, it became apparent that it didn't matter how many extra visitors came in to the café, we still only got a set amount. So we've taken that over and all profits will now be reinvested in the project."

www.crafttownscotland.org

COVE BURGH HALL,
ARGYLL & BUTE



***“About 40%
of our income
comes from the
user groups, and
the other 60%
is a fight to find
where we can
get it.”***

Jim McDowall, former Chair, Cove Burgh Hall





Cove Burgh Hall, Nr Helensburgh, Argyll & Bute

Local cultural and social groups are the lifeblood of Cove Burgh Hall, says Jim McDowall, but there are other ways to bring money into the venue.

No matter what day of the week you wander into Cove Burgh Hall, chances are you'll find something creative going on. This busy building hosts an art club, ballroom dancing classes, a book festival, film society, literary society, choir, Scottish country dance club and spinners and weavers group – as well as the many social groups that call Cove Burgh Hall home.

All of them provide a valuable service to the local community and beyond, so although they pay to hire the space, rates are always kept at an affordable level.

"We've always said that the Hall needs to self-fund," says Jim, "but we took a view that we can't expect the hall users to fund all its expenditure, because if we did we would lose a lot of the groups. So about 40% of our income comes from the user groups, and the other 60% is a fight to find where we can get it."

That "fight" includes donations, which accounts for roughly 5-10% of income (and includes money raised by dances and concerts held by their user groups). The Hall's annual Real Ale Festival – running now for 14 years – raises about £3,500 and their annual Hogmanay Ball is another income generator.

A steady programme of performances and concerts is booked up to a year in advance, and is presented under its own distinct branding – 'Live@CBH'. All of which takes a lot of planning and volunteer time, but Cove Burgh has the tasks well distributed.

"We have an events sub-committee who oversee all Live@CBH events," explains Jim. "The Real Ale Festival is a sub-committee of that, and our Hogmanay ball is another sub-committee."

"Our events team has two objectives – to get money into the hall, and to bring things to our community we would not otherwise see. Like the National Theatre of Scotland, who came to the Hall – that's the kind of thing locals would not usually have the opportunity to see."

Cove Burgh has three letting spaces: the main hall (which can accommodate 120 people), a small hall (for around 40), and both halls combined to create a larger event space. Occasional licences are used for each Live@CBH event, when beer, wine and soft drinks are sold.

At the Real Ale Festival, alcohol is, of course, the star of the show. *"Our main hall is set up with the ale, the stage is used for entertainment, and the small hall is for light meals,"* explains Jim. *"The Festival has a very good name and is good for the hall because it generates money, but it's also good for the area because the B&Bs and hotels are filled with people staying overnight."*

Customer loyalty has also been important for Cove Burgh, and their 'Friends' scheme has been running for 10 years. Costing £10 a year (or £100 for a 'Gold Friend'), this generates about 20% of income, including Gift Aid.

"Gold Friends get free entry into all our Live@CBH events," says Jim. *"We run a dozen or so of those a year, and each costs about £10, so if they come to everything they get quite a bit of discount."*

www.coveburghhall.uk

**DD8 MUSIC,
KIRRIEMUIR, ANGUS**



“Bonfest takes place in the Town Hall, and we make money from ticket sales, a bar and a merchandise stall where we sell t-shirts, posters and badges.”

Graham Galloway, Music Development Worker, DD8 Music





DD8 Music, Kirriemuir, Angus

Graham Galloway tells us how an annual rock festival bankrolls an inspiring music project for young people.

When Ronald ‘Bon’ Scott was a little boy living in Kirriemuir, he could scarcely have imagined the impact he would one day have on his home village. Bon went on to become lead singer with Australian rock band AC/DC, before his untimely death in 1980 – but part of his legacy has been the annual ‘Bonfest’, which takes place in Kirriemuir each May.

Started in 2006, Bonfest is one of the main sources of income for DD8 Music, an award-winning project which gives local people, and teenagers in particular, access to rehearsal and recording facilities. Space at the studios is hired out by the hour, which covers DD8’s immediate overheads such as utilities, rent and insurance. But it’s Bonfest that ensures they can keep all their musical and recording equipment up-to-date.

“It’s our major income generator by a long shot,” says Graham. “Bonfest takes place in the Town Hall, and we make money from ticket sales, a bar and a merchandise stall where we sell t-shirts, posters and badges.

“For the first few years we brought in companies to sell t-shirts and run the bar for us, and they both gave us a donation. But we realised that clearly, that’s where the money was being made so now we do it all ourselves.”

One of the reasons DD8 shied away from running its own bar, was the fear of being left with unsold stock. Once they discovered the ‘sale or return’ option at their local supermarket, this removed the financial risk. Graham says that each year “they get better and better” at running the festival, learning useful tips to cut down on volunteer workload.

“Every year, we would go to the supermarket, buy about £1,000 worth of drink in lots of trolleys and pack it all up,” says Graham. “But this year, they told us to send them a list of what we want in advance, and they’ll have it all ready on pallets to just roll into the back of our van.”

Time, as well as money, has also been saved by joining Making Music, which offers its members a handy, and cost-effective insurance package.

“We’ve just recently become members, and our insurance bill has dropped by nearly £1,500,” says Graham. “They do an absolutely phenomenal package, specifically tailored for voluntary music groups, which includes buildings, contents, public liability, employers’ liability and event insurance, all bundled into one package.”

As any group playing live music knows, noise pollution can be a problem. But for DD8, it was more important to keep the noise out. The group took over their premises in 2010, and soundproofing their recording studios has meant they don’t bother anyone, and nobody bothers them.

“We paid for an acoustic expert to come in and advise us on the main spots to focus on,” Graham explains. “Soundproofing isn’t necessarily about the thickness of acoustic foam, but about the different layers that will stop the sound coming in or out. That was a major part of the building’s renovations.”

www.dd8music.com

DUNLOP VILLAGE HALL, DUNLOP, EAST AYRSHIRE



***“The increased
profit from the
café more than
makes up for
the amount the
manager is paid.”***

Peter Inglis, Trustee, Dunlop Village Hall





Dunlop Village Hall, Dunlop, East Ayrshire

Amateur theatre, cinema nights and arts classes are all adding to the vibrant mix at Dunlop Village Hall, says Peter Inglis.

Back in 2002, Dunlop Village Hall was on the verge of closure, so run-down were its facilities. Today, it's home to a wide range of creative activity, including sewing and art classes, a knitting group, Highland dancing class and local amateur theatre company, the Dunlop Players.

It's all thanks to Dunlop and District Community Company, who now run the venue, and generate regular income by providing space for local groups to meet.

"Half our income comes from letting out the premises to groups and for social functions," says Peter. "The other half comes from profits made from our café, from running a bar at various events, and also from the cinema."

The Community Cinema took a while to establish, but now it's here, locals make good use of it.

"We always had a notion that it would be nice to have a cinema, but we were always too busy doing something else and never got around to it," says Peter. "And then a local couple who are film buffs did some research and discovered that the British Film Federation Scotland is incredibly helpful to any group that wants to do this. They lend you the equipment free of charge for a year and after that, if you've established interest, you buy your own."

The Hall pays roughly £100 in licence fees to the BFFS to show a film, which is based on the size of each audience. Tickets are sold at £4.50 for adults, with concessions for children and £10 for a family ticket. Volunteers run a bar at each event, which also helps with running costs.

The cinema equipment comes with its own PA system, but when regular users, the Dunlop Players stage shows, they bring their own sound desk. The group also has its own stage lighting, which they leave on the premises for the Hall to use during other events.

As with many venues, Dunlop Hall has a sliding scale when it comes to room hire. Year-round, the Players are charged the reduced rate – except at panto time, when the Hall increases their fee to the higher 'social event' rate. All box office takings are then kept by the Players.

Small amounts of cash are also generated by art exhibitions, which are run by a sub-committee, with the hall taking 25% of anything sold. An annual Christmas fair also adds to the pot, with crafters hiring a table for £20, and donating an item for the raffle.

Twice a week, Dunlop Hall also opens the doors to its popular café, which is run by volunteers, coordinated by a paid café manager. Prior to employing the manager, a small group of volunteers managed the café and organised the rota of volunteer helpers.

"However, this became increasingly onerous," explains Peter, "and they asked the Board if someone could be paid to undertake this role. Now, the increased profit from the café more than makes up for the amount the manager is paid."

www.dunlopvillagehall.org.uk

EASDALE ISLAND COMMUNITY HALL, EASDALE ISLAND, ARGYLL & BUTE



“It’s crazy - it’s so bad, anything can happen. None of us are actors, but it goes down an absolute storm and we get an enormous crowd.”

Keren Cafferty, Chairperson, Eilean Eisdeal





Easdale Island Community Hall, Easdale Island, Argyll & Bute

Keren Cafferty tells us how a mix of professional and amateur leads to a rich mix of culture on the island.

All venues have to consider how visitors will get to them – Easdale Hall more than most. A tiny passenger ferry, taking ten people at a time, is the only way to reach the island. Which, when visitor numbers rise to almost 800 during Easdale's annual World Stone Skimming Championship, means a lot of ferrying back and forth. But, with a journey time of just a few minutes, it's all part of the fun.

It's something the venue has to factor in when booking theatre companies to play the hall, particularly those with large sets. For that, Eilean Eisdeal, the island's charity and community development group, puts in a grant application to Creative Scotland, whose 'Open Project Funding' allows them to bring in music and theatre shows they couldn't otherwise afford.

"Theatre is one of the things we don't break even on," says Keren. "We pay the companies a set fee and all their accommodation, food and transport costs. So the costs are high, and audience numbers are lower. But the Creative Scotland money covers the cost of the show. They like the fact we're bringing high quality acts to a rural location, for people who wouldn't ordinarily be able to see it – that ticks a big box with them."

Like most halls, profit on performance nights comes via the bar. Easdale Hall has its own licence to sell alcohol, and employs a bar manager with their own personal licence.

"Every person who works behind the bar now legally has to have had two hours of appropriate training," explains Keren. "Our bar manager is responsible for bringing in volunteers, training them and handling all the paperwork for that."

Volunteers are also recruited for the Stone Skimming Championships, when the Hall is packed to capacity for the 'Pre-Skim Dance' the night before. Then, on the day itself, the Hall is used for registrations, merchandise sales (t-shirts, hoodies, hats and jackets with the World Championship logo on) and a barbecue.

"All the barbecue food, and drink for the dance the night before, is donated," says Keren. "And selling that has doubled our income in the last few years. The Championship used to generate £2–£3,000, and now takes closer to £7,000 – which supports the charity's running costs for the hall, museum and harbour throughout the year."

Events run in the Hall include popular ceilidhs at New Year and Easter, a number of well-attended music gigs, Burns Supper, summer arts festival, craft fairs and museum festival. The Hall also programmes two art exhibitions each year, taking a 20% commission of anything sold.

But the highlight of Easdale Hall's event calendar is undoubtedly its annual panto. Performed by 'Easdale Very Amateur Dramatics Group' the show is a huge crowd-puller each year.

Raffle tickets are sold on the way in, but rather than sell tickets for the panto, people are asked for a donation in order to be allowed out.

"We usually take about £300 in donations," says Keren. "And we sell ice cream during the interval. The raffle also raises an extra £50. Easdale has a very strong New Year tradition, and the panto is a big part of that."

"It's crazy – it's so bad, anything can happen. None of us are actors, but it goes down an absolute storm and we get an enormous crowd. The busiest person is the prompter."

www.easdaleislandhall.org

LETHAM NIGHTS, LETHAM, FIFE



“There are so many musicians out there wanting to share what they do, that it really wasn’t long before people started contacting us.”

Michael Farrell, Co-founder, Letham Nights





Letham Nights, Letham, Fife

Michael Farrell tells us how Letham Village Hall became host to the 'Best Small Gigs in the World'.

A small village, 16 miles from the nearest big city (Dundee) may not seem like the most rock 'n' roll place on the map – but appearances can be deceptive. Letham Nights started in 2008, and since then has won many endorsements for its strapline – 'The Best Small Gigs in the World'.

Many people would assume that finding high quality acts willing to travel to rural Fife might be a challenge – but they'd be wrong. At first, Michael reached out to bands, hoping they would perform, but soon discovered there was no need.

"That side of things, to our surprise, was quite easy," says Michael. "There are so many musicians out there wanting to share what they do, that it really wasn't long before people started contacting us."

Now, on a weekly basis, musicians from the local area, across Scotland, the UK and internationally approach Letham Nights hoping to get on the bill. Supply may not be a problem, but as Michael and his co-volunteers found, capacity can be.

"During that first year we ran nine gigs and it nearly killed us," laughs Michael. "Three or four of us head it up, but we all work full-time elsewhere and we just couldn't cope. So we decided to run a maximum of six gigs every year, each with a 6-8 week gap, and always on a Saturday."

Another learning curve was negotiating what to pay – something Michael does with each individual artist, based on their profile.

"If you want decent music, you have to pay a decent fee," says Michael. "We realised early on just how hard these people work, so we're determined to make that fee as big as we can. For some artists, it's probably the lowest they'll take, but they recognise a village hall can't pay

much more than that."

Most gigs cost £10-£12 to attend, with concessions available, and Letham Nights operates a pre-paid booking system with no booking or credit card fees. Ticket buyers send in cheques in advance, or pay by bank transfer. It's a system that works well for them, but they found out the hard way.

"At the start, we asked people to put their name on a list and then pay at the door," recalls Michael, "but that was really frustrating, because people would put their name down, and then wouldn't come – so we were turning people away unnecessarily."

With a capacity of 140, Letham Nights frequently sells out, but once the band fee and hall hire is paid, plus £100 for the sound technician, it doesn't leave much in the way of profit. Which is where the 'Clap and Tipple' bar comes in.

A local supplier offers them sale or return alcohol and soft drinks, and a nearby micro-brewery has let them re-name one of its products 'Letham Nights Ale'.

It doesn't happen overnight, but Letham Nights has built up a strong reputation for staging high quality music, and providing artists with a great atmosphere.

"Our last show with Dundee band Sinderins was a sell-out, the hall was absolutely packed," says Michael. "Several people said it was the best gig they had ever been to anywhere, and their reason wasn't just the music but the atmosphere, the warmth and appreciation towards the musicians from the audience. It's that combination of excellent music with a really appreciative and supportive audience that makes it."

www.letham.org.uk/lethamnights

NAIRN COMMUNITY & ARTS CENTRE,
NAIRN, HIGHLANDS



***“This morning
we had a Zumba
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afterwards a
public lecture for
150 people.”***



Sam Morrison, Centre Manager,
Nairn Community & Arts Centre



Nairn Community and Arts Centre, Nairn, Highlands

Sam Morrison talks about the benefits of using a multi-purpose venue built with the arts in mind.

Before a single brick was laid, the remit for the new Nairn Community & Arts Centre was set – to be a hub for the local community and provide a service to as many people as possible.

“The Board of directors was involved with the original Community Centre, and had used it in a number of ways,” explains Sam. “So they sat down with the architect and made sure it was flexible enough for the classes and groups that used it regularly, but also for concerts, conferences and meetings to generate extra income.”

As a result, Sam and her team can respond quickly to the wide range of activities in their calendar. Current users include a knitting group, camera club, sewing group, dance, music and art classes – as well as a community cinema, music society, conferences and meetings.

“This morning we had a Zumba class, and then immediately afterwards a public lecture for 150 people,” says Sam. “We had to change from an empty room to tiered seating, with projector and microphone – and it only took a few minutes. We just press a button and the seats come out.”

Opened in 2007, after the previous centre fell into disrepair, word soon spread that this was a building worth investing in. A tiered theatre seating up to 300 people, stage lighting and a sound system, are just some of the facilities it has to offer.

“Once we opened it very quickly built up, as Nairn is a thriving community with lots of different groups and activities looking for space,” says Sam. “It’s a nice building, light and clean, with friendly, welcoming staff. And we try to keep the rate for the regular groups as reasonable as possible by bringing in income from more commercial business.”

The venue is home to Music Nairn, Cinema Nairn, Jazz Nairn and Nairn Book & Arts Festival – all of which have their individual websites, but are heavily promoted by the Centre. Staging a classical music concert each month, Music Nairn is a membership society offering discounted season tickets. Cinema Nairn runs a loyalty scheme where the sixth film is free, while the Festival draws people from far and wide.

“They all pay us a hire fee, but we also help with tickets, advertising, sound and lighting,” explains Sam. “For basic events, we can do the lighting ourselves. But if it’s more complicated, we’ll pay a freelance technician to come in.”

“We help with publicity, by putting all the events on our website and Facebook, and helping with posters and flyers. We offer a box office facility for a small commission, which in turn generates income for us.”

The local tourist information is also run by the Centre, with B&Bs and hotels paying a flat fee of £50 a year to advertise their accommodation in a folder and on the Centre’s website. This not only attracts tourists to the venue, but provides another outlet for marketing events – to both the guests and the accommodation owners themselves.

The Centre also hosts art exhibitions, taking a 15% commission on anything sold. As Sam points out, it may not be a major money spinner, but can have positive knock-on effects elsewhere.

“We’re not going to make a huge amount of money from art exhibitions, but it looks nice and brings people in,” she says. “And the idea is to get as many people into the building as possible – even if they’re not paying for anything at the time. Because that’s what actually generates most of the business – people coming in for one thing and then seeing a poster for something else and thinking ‘oh that looks good’.”

www.nairncc.co.uk

OUT OF THE BLUE, EDINBURGH



*“We asked artists to tell us
what their requirements
were – and we were guided
by this.”*

Rob Hoon, Manager, Out of the Blue





Out of the Blue, Edinburgh

Rob Hoon tells us how this historical building has become home to a diverse range of artists.

A former army barracks, the Drill Hall in Edinburgh's Leith area is one of the city's best-loved cultural centres. Prior to being taken over by arts and education trust Out of the Blue in 2004, it was used to store military vehicles – but the new residents needed much more from the building than just a space to cool their engines.

Dividing the premises into artists' studios and rehearsal spaces of various shapes and sizes, Out of the Blue looked to prospective tenants for specifications.

"There are a huge range of artforms, and some of them need different things – for example painters want light," says Rob. "We asked artists to tell us what their requirements were – and we were guided by this."

Today the building is a busy hub filled with designers, film companies, event organisers, casting agencies, drama groups, dance companies, painters, silversmiths, musicians and many more.

Rentals range from £100 a month for a shared studio up to £450 for a large office, which includes a service charge for heating, lighting, toilets and water – internet and phone costs extra. Filling the space has never been a problem.

"Studios are like allotments – nobody wants to give them up," says Rob. "Or if people need to leave for a while, they'll sub-let their room."

As well as the office and studio space, Out of the Blue has a large main hall and substantial rehearsal room, both of which can be hired by the hour (with studio holders offered a 20% discount).

"The spaces are flexible," explains Rob. "The rehearsal studio has acted as a theatre space or for film screenings and book launches. The main hall is used for markets, conferences, voluntary sector or public sector events. Occasionally people take over the whole building."

Hall rental can also lead to catering revenue, provided by the Out of the Blue Café, which is run as a well-established training project for young people.

"The Café has a turnover of around £200,000," says Rob. "It breaks even rather than makes a profit, because it's a training scheme. But we recognise its value and it helps the building function."

Regular flea markets and arts markets are popular at the venue, with Out of the Blue charging stall holders to sell their goods, as well as a small fee for entry to the arts market.

"We also hold exhibitions," says Rob, "and if we administer the sales, we take a commission. Although often we just let our artists exhibit and we'll promote it, because it brings people into the space. There's also a small shop, where artists sell their work, and we get a commission from that, too."

In the city centre, below Edinburgh Central Library, lies another Out of the Blue venture: the Bongo Club – a much-loved, multi-functional, multi-arts venue for live music, theatre and clubs. The Bongo Club is a wholly owned trading subsidiary of Out of the Blue.

"When we get funding, we also run significant arts projects," says Rob, "where people from the local community are encouraged to get involved. We don't just sit in the community – we help create it."

www.outoftheblue.org.uk

SWALLOW THEATRE, WHITHORN, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY



***“In 2014, we moved
onto an online
ticketing system,
which is working
well for us.”***

David Sumner, Co-founder, Swallow Theatre





Swallow Theatre, Whithorn, Dumfries & Galloway

David Sumner explains how Scotland's smallest theatre is using renewable energy to power its stage lights, and recently moved to online ticketing.

Housed in a converted byre, three miles from Whithorn, the Swallow Theatre got its name from the birds which used to nest in its roof each summer.

Sumner and his late wife, Jill, took over the building in 1990, and spent from 1996-2004 transforming it into a performance space with retractable seating, a toilet block and car parking. To keep costs down, and reduce the venue's drain on the national grid, four solar panels and a wind turbine were installed – generating enough electricity to power all the stage lights.

"We started small, with six low voltage lanterns and two batteries," explains David. "Then we gradually expanded to 24 lanterns and four batteries. The turbine is very small, with a 100 watt peak, so in the summer the solar panels do most of the work. But my hope is to move to LED lighting, which comes in different colours so you don't need gels, has very low power consumption and lasts a long time."

The theatre stages around 20 events each year, including drama, music and poetry. David sends out a brochure announcing that season's shows, and advertises through social media and posters in the local area (including the local caravan sites, in the hope of attracting holidaymakers). Most shows are well attended, although theatre can occasionally be a hard-sell.

"The audience for traditional music is pretty consistent," says David. "And there is an audience for theatre, but it's relatively small and people are wary of new plays they don't recognise. But I've taken a few risks and hope that if people see something good, they'll come back and maybe take a risk themselves."

For years, audiences used to phone and reserve tickets, then pay on arrival. However the inevitable no-shows sometimes meant David was losing money and turning potential audience members away. Moving to an online system has helped with that.

"Now it's a combination of online booking, people sending in cheques and last minute phone calls," says David. "In 2014, we moved onto an online ticketing system, which is working well for us. People click a button on our website which takes them through to the TicketSource website."

"It doesn't cost us anything, the people buying the tickets pay a surcharge, but I think they're generally used to that."

Additional income comes from the 'Friends of the Swallow Theatre' scheme, which people join for £10 a year (although some pay more, to support particular events or outlays at the theatre). Local businesses also donate the odd £100, for which they receive publicity in the theatre brochure and website.

As for the acts themselves, David offers them a mix of flat fee and in-kind payment (board and lodging, with food cooked by his own fair hands).

"We pay them a straight fee, because a box office split would be too dangerous for them," he explains. "We agree that fee in advance, and if I think it's a bit high I'll say you can have free accommodation and food here – would you be prepared to lower it a bit?"

"Another possibility is a two-night run – which is tricky to gauge, because sometimes you just can't fill two nights. But if you can fill one and a half nights, the second performance is at a lower fee than the first, so you're actually slightly better off doing that."

www.swallowtheatre.com

THREE VILLAGES HALL, ARROCHAR, ARGYLL & BUTE



“The aspiration is to have a big event every 4-6 weeks, with something for everyone.”

Stephen Mackenzie, Administrator, Three Villages Hall





Three Villages Hall, Arrochar, Argyll & Bute

Hall hire, gigs, meetings, cinema club and Real Ale Festival help generate a steady income in this most idyllic of settings, says Stephen Mackenzie.

With dramatic mountain ranges on either side, and Loch Long before it, Three Villages Hall has an enviable outlook. Run by the Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust, the hall was completed in 2010, and acts as a vibrant hub for the communities of Arrochar, Succoth and Tarbet – plus any tourists passing by.

A large chunk of the Hall's income comes from room hire, with a camera club, Zumba class, youth club and various sports groups hiring space in the building. Rates range from £5-£40 an hour, with those holding events for the local community charged more favourably.

"The idea is that everyone pays according to their ability," explains Stephen. "So we have a lower rate for locals and community events. We also have quite a few meetings for the Council and various businesses, who get charged a higher rate. The bulk of our income comes from those meetings."

The buildings' main space, Arrochar Hall, is large enough to accommodate 100 people seated or 200 standing, making it well placed for weddings and functions, as well as hosting bands and theatre companies.

"Mull Theatre comes quite regularly, and we've had tribute bands, a jazz trio and folk groups," says Stephen. "Comedies do better than serious plays – we had a production of Whisky Galore which was a huge success. The aspiration is to have a big event every 4-6 weeks, with something for everyone."

The hall has its own PA system, although many acts bring their own – or perform acoustically. Stephen asks the performers to set the ticket price themselves, which averages at £10-£12. The box office takings are then split, with 75% of the takings going to the performer.

Selling tickets for the Hall's Cinema Club, however, is not an option.

"We get our licence from Film Bank, and it's the cheapest one they do," explains Stephen. "And with that particular licence, you can't charge admission. But we run a bar, and ask for donations when people come in."

"We use the same film projector as for meetings, and buy DVDs to show. There's also a popcorn machine in the kitchen. Unfortunately we can't show films during the summer because it's too bright, and we don't have full black out."

Over the past two years, the Hall has introduced a new, highly successful addition to its events calendar – a Real Ale Festival. Stephen describes them as "happy occasions", well attended by both locals and tourists.

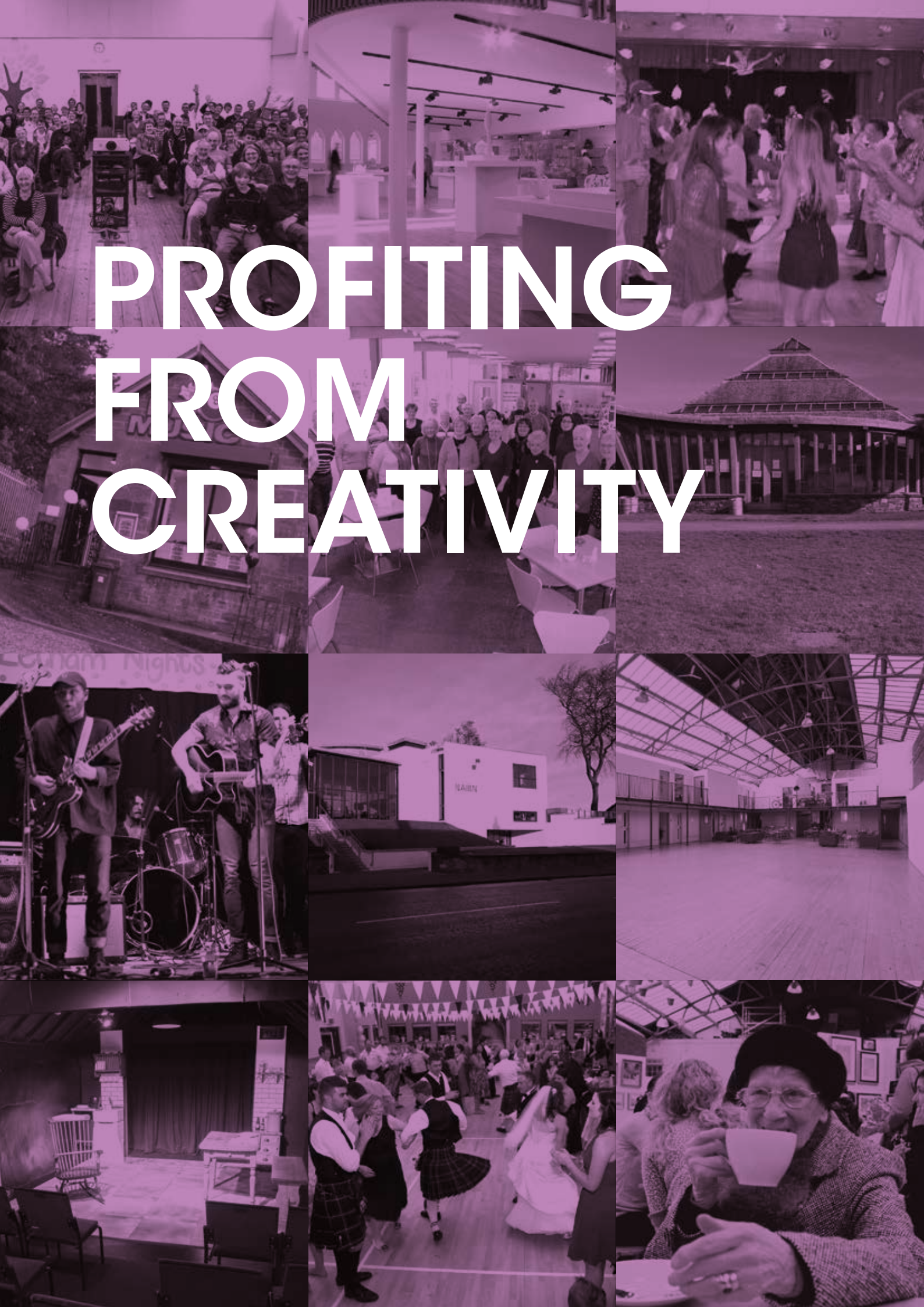
A £5 entry charge generates income, along with beer and food sales. Little ones are kept occupied by film screenings in another room, and a free minibus to Helensburgh and back is laid on to make transport easier.

Like many venues, food and drink help balance the books, with the '3 Villages Café' (formerly the Pit Stop Café) now owned by the Trust. A licenced bar is run during gigs and the Cinema Club, stocked with drink from the supermarket, where they also get free glass hire.

A regular coffee morning and raffle, held every Saturday morning in the Hall's front room, lets locals and tourists alike make the most of that amazing view.

www.threevillages.org.uk

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