



Cinema & Community Regeneration The Role of Social Enterprise



Foreword

This paper is part of a series of Sencot Briefings which aim to showcase the approach that social enterprise is taking to address a range of complex social issues across Scotland. This Briefing highlights the regenerative effects that local cinema can have on communities, bringing about positive social change through a range of activities.

What is a social enterprise?

A social enterprise (SE) is a trading business – selling goods and services – whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental goals. Sencot recognises SEs in Scotland based on the criteria set out in the Voluntary SE Code of Practice.

Who are we?

Sencot is a third sector intermediary established in 1999. Along with others, we have helped to develop a support infrastructure for SEs over the last 15 years. A key part of our work is to support Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) – geographic and thematic - across Scotland. See www.sencot.net to find out more.

The context of this briefing

Published in 2016, Creative Scotland's Mapping Film Exhibition in Scotland provided a comprehensive overview of film exhibitors across the country, identifying 324 exhibitor locations from mobile community cinemas operating in village and town halls all the way through to large multiplexes. In the same year, a joint report, *Your Cinema, Your Community*, from Regional Screen Scotland and Social Value Lab offered a statistical analysis of the impact of local cinema in Scotland.

By researching the broad spectrum of cinema exhibition, these reports highlighted gaps in provision, issues with accessibility, a lack of programming diversity and pressures on sustainability. They also demonstrated the importance of local cinema to communities, particularly in terms of removing barriers around geographical access and affordability.

The Scottish Government has stated its commitment to “supporting, developing and advocating Scotland’s culture, heritage and creativity, and ensuring that culture reaches a wide audience at home and abroad.” In September 2017, the Scottish Government pledged an extra £10million investment into the film and TV sector while maintaining investment in the Production Growth Fund.


Cinema & Regeneration

“Culture, creativity and a rich, diverse heritage sit at the heart of Scottish life and play a critical role in the economy, communities and almost everything we do.”

Scottish Government

Audiences in Scotland access film through a wide variety of venues, including multi-arts spaces, independent cinemas, community cinemas, film societies, touring cinemas, local film festivals and multiplexes. In spite of this, many of Scotland's largest communities, including five local authority areas, have little or no access to cinema or screen provision.

Poor public transport links in rural locations is one of the main barriers to access, particularly in winter months when people are reluctant to drive long distances in adverse weather.



“I'd like to see organisations working closer together, much more collaboration. Sharing knowledge, resources - looking at how we can create a strong community cinema scene across the whole of Scotland by joining the dots.” - Emyr Bell, North East Arts Touring.

“Changes needed to make communities sustainable will only be achieved when communities themselves play a part in delivering change.”

Scottish Government

The screen industry makes a vital contribution to jobs and the economy in Scotland. Local cinema and screen provision can contribute to town centre and community-led regeneration through the improvement and development of assets and supporting the community's response to local issues.

As budgets continue to be cut, communities across Scotland are losing access to venues. This, in turn, has a negative impact on community cohesion and compounds issues such as loneliness and isolation for some of the most vulnerable people.

Cinema can therefore be used as a driver of positive change in communities. Inclusive programming, such as dementia and autism-friendly screenings, offers a social outlet to audiences who would otherwise be excluded. Access to archive film, Scottish screenings and community film-making projects can all act as an important social bond in communities, also providing training and employment prospects where opportunities are limited.

The Contribution of Social Enterprise


Digital cinema has dramatically changed the cinema landscape, allowing communities to show a huge array of film, theatre, music and even sport. Taking cinema directly into communities is a simple yet effective way to tackle cultural isolation.

By providing affordable access to film, and taking away costs and issues associated with travel, social enterprises can use cinema as a tool to improve the lives of the people they work with.

Community cinema is about bringing people together, sharing the experience and in many cases enjoying additional activities such as live music, discussion, speaking to the film makers and food.

Using film innovatively brings communities together and makes it easier for hard-to-reach audiences to be included in programming plans. Cinemas within the social enterprise network endeavour to provide a raft of novel programming ideas to maximise their reach, including:

- Singalongs
- Community films, including shorts screened before the main feature
- Autism-friendly screenings
- Over-65s screenings
- Dementia-friendly screenings
- Food and drink themed nights



“Creating a local cinema is one of the ways that groups look to bring communities back to use the halls and recreate them as centres for the community.” - Matt Kitson, Driftwood Cinema.

“Something small-scale feels more personal and inclusive. Not just allowing people to come in, but actually making people feel part of the area that they live in. I think that that’s a really nice thing and I feel very lucky to be a part of that.” - Simon Lewis, The Birks Cinema.

In 2016, Voluntary Arts Scotland and Cinema for All ran a pilot - Grow Your Own Cinema - that supported 20 community groups to pilot regular film screenings across Scotland. With practical support from national agencies, groups came together to design and deliver cinema experiences in their own communities.

By virtue of being planned by local people for local people, these projects - and other social enterprises - are able to boost an area’s economy, create new learning experiences, promote regional heritage and involve hitherto excluded groups, making them a vital part of the screen industry in Scotland.

Key Messages

- Cinema can be used as a tool for rural, urban and community regeneration if the community is at the heart of the organisation.
- Cinema is not necessarily about dedicated buildings but can be pop-up cinema events, taking screenings to a range of isolated locations.
- Cinema needs to be recognised, at a national and local level, as a route to tackling cultural isolation, improving well-being and sustaining community cohesion. To be able to do this it must be resourced properly.
- Existing rural models of touring cinema could also help more urban communities gain access to film.
- Partnerships between social enterprises and cinema providers could help grow audiences, reach deprived areas and improve accessibility.

Key Organisations & Documents



[Screen Sector Leadership Group Report](#)

[Creative Scotland - On Screen Film Strategy 2014-17](#)

[Regional Screen Scotland - Your Cinema, Your Community](#)

[Regional Screen Scotland - Map of Cinema Provision in Scotland](#)

[Voluntary Arts Scotland - Grow Your Own Cinema](#)

Case Study 1

The Birks Cinema



Mission

Engaging the local community with film culture and offering a venue for a variety of community events. Birks aims to show a wide variety of film screenings, as well as broadcasting live events from around the world.

Main activities

Based in Aberfeldy, Birks Cinema provides a varied and dynamic range of screenings, from first runs of hit blockbusters to arthouse films and live opera streams.

Families can enjoy reduced prices for children with the 'Little Birks' kids screening every Saturday morning, with Perthshire's Tayfest Festival also providing family-friendly programming at Birks.

Live events from the National Theatre, Royal Opera House and the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow ensure that culture fans have access to the latest stage plays, musicals and ballets locally.

Birks often collaborate with local community groups and festivals, hosting storytelling screenings, film societies, as well as putting on free screenings for the Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival (SMHAFF). Running an impressive array of

community activities, Birks Cinema act as a cohesive force in Aberfeldy and the surrounding area. A Gaelic café and conversation group offers a social forum for local speakers, while the Craic 'n' Craft club brings people together to bond over the



The local community rescued Birks from disrepair.

exchange of their chosen craft expertise. A chair-based exercise club helps keep the local senior population active, while a weekly Lego club is available for children with additional support needs.

The Movie Memories club, run in partnership with local football team St Johnstone, encourages personal reflection through nostalgic screenings, and is open to people living with dementia free of charge. Birks also provide the opportunity for individuals and small groups to create their own short animation film reflecting the local community. A range of workshops are provided free of charge, with the final product being showcased on the big screen.

Business Model

Ticket sales make up the backbone of Birks Cinema's revenue, currently accounting for around 60% of their total incomings. Tickets are priced competitively to be in line with other Scottish cinemas and remain cheaper than large chains.

A fully-licensed café and bar area, selling homemade cakes, sandwiches, paninis and refreshments, is another important source of income, roughly 30%.

Birks also generate advertising revenue from listings in their monthly brochure, and by renting out a mezzanine space for parties, events and even weddings.

Social Impact

Birks' community development officer ensures that events include access for under-represented groups.

Special events and screenings are organised for additional support needs children as well as people living with dementia, while film-making workshops help develop the skills of young filmmakers.

A wide range of community activities also help to maintain a strong social bond with Aberfeldy residents.

The Birks Cinema Fact File

Established
Reopened in 2013

Turnover year to end 2016
£400k

www.birkscinema.co.uk



@birkscinema



facebook.com/birkscinema

Workforce
14 staff plus around 30
volunteers

Legal Structure
Charity

SEN SCOT

Case Study 2

North East Arts Touring (NEAT)

Mission

To develop and support a thriving network of voluntary promoters, enabling them to promote high-quality professional theatre and dance performances and community cinema screenings in rural venues across the North East of Scotland.

Main activities

NEAT promotes professional theatre via a subsidy scheme to ensure that rural communities have access to professional theatre performances and cinema screenings.

In 2015, they launched the Young Promoter Scheme in partnership with Aberdeen International Youth Festival, with financial support from Youth Arts Collective North East. The Scheme works to equip young people with the skills in event and arts management, empowering them to become active event promoters in their community. Their model gives regional promoters autonomy over programming, ensuring screenings are tailored for local audiences.

NEAT's community cinema scheme, launched in 2013, has five sets of mobile cinema equipment, costing

around £5000 each. Volunteers are then trained as projectionists to deliver professional cinema experiences at venues across Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Most of the screenings tend to be new DVD releases, with occasional access to pre-release DVDs.

Promoters encourage residents to engage with programming, sometimes taking the opportunity to screen films of a local interest or archive footage.

Themed nights are popular, for example, whisky tasting organised to coincide with Whisky Galore, and a Bollywood film shown alongside a 'pot luck' curry night.



NEAT receive sponsorship from Mackie's ice cream.

Business Model

NEAT runs a membership scheme, where local promoters pay an annual subscription fee of £70 and receive a raft of benefits in return, including training and regional marketing.

Cinema events are mostly self-sustainable, with the average cost of each screening coming in at around £150. Any profits raised after costs are reinvested back into the venue to support future screenings.

NEAT also maintains an emergency support fund, which can be offered to venues depending on the profit made from the previous four screenings.

This gives promoters a safety net, but also the flexibility to put on more adventurous screening programmes which might be less commercially attractive.

Core staff are paid from Creative Scotland's RFO funding, while a sponsorship deal with Mackie's of Scotland Ice Cream covers the support fund and equipment maintenance.

Social Impact

NEAT events attract a wide demographic, creating a social bond in the heart of communities where access to high-quality film and theatre experiences are extremely limited.

BFI funding allows them to engage with non-traditional cinema audiences through a series of free screenings, while autism-friendly screenings have also been piloted in one venue over the past year.

North East Arts Touring Fact File

Established:
2013

Workforce:
1 FT and 3 PT

Turnover to end of 2016:
£175,642

Legal Structure:
Charity & Company Ltd by
Guarantee

www.neatshows.co.uk

 [@tweet_neat](https://twitter.com/@tweet_neat)

 [facebook.com/
NorthEastArtsTouring](https://facebook.com/NorthEastArtsTouring)

Case Study 3

Driftwood Cinema

Mission

Driftwood Cinema brings local people together for shared cultural experiences by taking the cinema to isolated communities. Events encourage social engagement, adding variety and vitality to community life.

Main activities

Driftwood offers a range of services to communities to develop, support and sustain cinema provision across Dumfries and Galloway.

Advice is given to community groups regarding local screening, covering licensing requirements, equipment, programming, securing funding and marketing and engagement.

Driftwood also facilitate regional meetings, where emerging groups can come together with more established community enterprises to plan their development, sharing knowledge and resources.

Start-up costs for community groups are covered by Driftwood's access to national funding, in many cases covering the cost of an initial programme of six to eight films so that organisations can fully test the waters and develop an audience.

Three sets of portable screening equipment (screen, projector, DVD player, amplifier, speakers) are available for hire. Communities can 'dry hire' the kit (equipment only) or book one of Driftwood's technicians to run the screening.

Community groups are then provided with a bi-annual programme of films to help them to choose a range of interests to engage with their community.



Communities can rally around a cinema screen.

Business Model

Driftwood's business model incorporates commercial sales alongside community delivery.

Screening services are sold to organisations or groups, ranging from private parties, corporate events, video game parties or regular screenings. Profits from these screenings are then reinvested into

Driftwood's community activities, enabling them to reduce the hire cost to community groups.

Communities are responsible for their individual ticket prices to support their screenings. The average price per screening at a community event is £5 (full price) and £3 (concession).

Licensing costs are reduced by putting on screenings across multiple venues. They also work with community screen networks around the UK to further increase savings, which can then be passed on to communities.

The average cost of putting on a community screening is approximately £160, meaning venues need to sell around 35 tickets to break even.

Groups tend to offer refreshments such as tea, coffee and cakes to provide extra revenue for the venue, or alcohol if the venue is licensed.

Social Impact

Driftwood provides opportunities for those who are without private transport, on low incomes, or not inclined to leave their community for a variety of reasons. Community screenings instil positivity into communities, reducing isolation by creating a safe place for people to meet and engage with their community.

Driftwood Cinema Fact File

Established
2013

Turnover
£13,500

Workforce
1 FT with 50 volunteers

Legal Structure
Company Ltd by Guarantee

www.driftwoodcinema.org



facebook.com/DriftwoodMovies

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