



**Dorset
Community
Foundation**

**The Dorset Performing Arts Fund (DPAF)
Year 5 Impact report – grants awarded May 2023**

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The idea to create the Dorset Performing Arts Fund emerged from a Bridport based community theatre Project called “FLEA!” which took place in 2017. This large scale production involved a diverse cast & crew of over 200 children and adults, led by a team of local professional artists. Local philanthropist Alasdair Warren was inspired by the level of enthusiasm, community engagement and broad-based community benefit which “FLEA!” generated. Working with the team responsible for producing “FLEA!”, producer Sally Vaughan, community dance practitioner Anna Golding and theatre director Niki McCretton, the purpose and guiding principles for the Dorset Performing Arts Fund were defined.

Note: Spring 2023 is the last round of the Dorset Performing Arts Fund in its current form, which saw distribution of almost all of the remaining funds that were donated to DCF in 2019 for the purpose of creating the Dorset Performing Arts Fund. There was no grant to the Arts Development Company in this financial year as applicants to the Main Grants Programme had already received support to apply.

Main Grants Programme

Summary

Group	Artists	Community participants	Community Audience
AsOne theatre company	10	55	45
B Sharp	12	242	178
Brave Bold Drama	8	0	41
Common Ground	9	12	95
Emerald Ant CIC	12	212	0
Island Community Action	27	100	300
Islanders Youth and Community Centre	4	40	250
Landance CIC	18	3	656
Tall Tails Theatre Company & Kushti Bok	20	300	0
Vita Nova	4	28	45
TOTALS	124	992	1610

1) AsOne Theatre Company

Summary

£7950 grant awarded to deliver a series of community workshops with Ukrainian refugee families residing in Weymouth, and their hosts – gathering their stories and creating performing arts to share their stories.

“Without this grant the project would not have been possible and the many positive outcomes could not have been realised. It has helped many Ukrainian's to build new lives and find employment, while they are still forced to be away from their homeland. This was a successful first step in building a vibrant cultural community for the displaced Ukrainian families giving them a shared sense of community and the confidence to reach out and enhance lives.”

Beneficiaries

- 10 artists (8 new to the organisation)
- 55 community participants (50 new to the organisation)
- 45 community audience

Project delivery

We met with representative Ukrainians, learning that although many acknowledge the kindness and friendship in Dorset, they needed to share their worries, hopes and fears - the invasion fiercely ongoing, and with families and friends left behind. They needed new friends, and a sense of independence for their own wellbeing.

Grant funding allowed us to give the parents a safe quiet space for art therapy sessions. We hired Oksana Papeta (local Ukrainian refugee and qualified professional) for the adults and arranged children’s playful, creative workshops in a separate room. The filming of the stories to camera were entirely voluntary. Our translator Natalia Surkova, made sure each storyteller knew what they were asked for, felt reassured, and comfortable. We

filmed 9 stories. Host-sponsors of Ukrainian families were filmed in their own homes. Our videographer then coordinated with a Ukrainian Film director who provided subtitles in English. These are in the process of being up-loaded to a You-tube channel. They will also be going to be made available to The Dorset History Centre via links for a legacy in Dorset of this unique time in the County's history.

Children's workshops involved activities like puppetry, dance/movement, and original song, designed to engage the children, uplift spirits by being in the moment and ignite imaginations where the group of Ukrainian refugee children went on a journey of self-discovery and play. Through the innovative use of masks, puppetry, dance, and drama, the workshop provided a platform for the children to express themselves and connect with their inner joy.



The group worked with a songwriter and a poet to compose an original song - 'Strength of Will', and a poem 'Rucksack'. The final showing of work in progress coincided with a Ukrainian Craft Fair in the foyer of the Church. This gave us around a dozen friends who joined us afterwards, to experience a workshop of breathing and relaxation exercise, the connecting ribbons of Ukraine exercise, and our documentary short of the series of four previous workshops. We also sang the song and read the poem created.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

Finding a suitable space to host 'We Came from Ukraine' was a challenge and to resolve this we needed an associate with knowledge of the Ukrainian community. St Mary's Church and Weymouth Town Centre Chaplain, Neil Biles connected us with team leader of St Aldhelm's Church, Radipole, Rev. Nick Clarke who introduced me to Andy Dukes. He had been working with Ukrainian families since their arrival. His input helped the project to move forward quickly and we were able to work at St Aldhelm's Church, where some Ukrainians were familiar.

There were challenges in marketing the project because of language difficulties and because we needed direct links to the Ukrainian community. Both, 'Help and Kindness' project community officer, Maryna Dovbysh, together with Andy Dukes assisted greatly in this respect.

One thing we learned was with 'Ukrainian time' and to go with the flow. This after all was a project with those adjusting to a new culture, as well as dealing with their trauma, and adapting to a new country.

Impact

The art therapy group and children's workshops were presented in a professional and sensitive manner such that the fears and insecurities of the participants could be managed in a positive and cathartic way. The children in a separate room freed the mothers to relax, laugh and cry without fear of upsetting their children. It also enabled time apart for both. Participants all said that the integration with fellow Ukrainians was invaluable and joyous. The Art Therapy gave them a chance to exhale their fears and inhale some peace in the moment. The individuals who were brave enough to tell their own personal and often harrowing stories have all gained from the cathartic and healing process of sharing with those who have similar experiences. The mission to give

strength to adults via art therapy, discovery, and healing of minds does seem to have been a success. There were some of the 50 who attended the workshop sessions who chose not to tell their own story on camera as this was too upsetting for them. However, they still benefited enormously from the community spirit and in developing new friendships. The hosts felt it important to let others know of the joys, the difficulties, the red tape, and the experience one way or other of a lifetime. All are changed in some way.



For the Ukrainian professional practitioners - Arts Therapist, Oksana Papeta; and Song writers, Slavio and Irina Pole - to have the opportunity to work their respective crafts in a new country has been uplifting and provided a unique platform for them to develop new contacts, and partnerships in this country.

Oksana says:

“I’m very pleased and grateful for this project, because as a director I understand how important it is to fix information and feelings that Ukrainians have experienced. It’s very important not only for us and for British people, but it’s important for understanding crisis situations and how people cope with it and what helps them - it’s serious analytics which can be helpful in future. The adults chatted and learned resourcefulness, how to help themselves and their children cope with anxiety, uncertainty, and fears with the continuing war.”

Quote from Ukrainian Refugee:

“We had to leave everything behind that we had built up and now to be somewhere being a nobody. It's like smile, put on a mask. That's how it is - OK you just need to try to build a new life here!”



Quote from Host Family:

“You can't expect to be somebody's best friend just because you've offered them accommodation, but at the same time, they're living in your house, it's getting that boundary between helping but not interfering. Supporting, but not trying to influence. Being friendly and welcoming, but allowing privacy. Cultural differences and the whole process has been fascinating.”

Future legacy

The song and poem have both been audio recorded for posterity. Also, the text of each are contained in a book recording the whole project. Additional funding was achieved through grant funding from Weymouth Council to cover Composers costs and additional Videographer costs.

'Grains of Hope' is a festival group now formed out of this project thanks to more funding from DCFs Dorset Welcome Fund. We were invited to 'One World Day' in Dorchester's Borough Garden's. As a result, a group project is forming that will be both therapeutic and educational, that will follow 'Grains of Hope'.

The film-short of 'We Came From Ukraine': <https://youtu.be/5ZMzeBRyP8w>

The song written for the project – Strength of Will: <https://youtu.be/ql1Cstp5rBQ>

2) B Sharp

Summary

£7833.50 grant awarded to support young trainees to deliver live, interactive music experience with and for children aged 0 – 8 and their families.

“Thank you for your support for this project. It has been really invaluable to help us develop a new aspect of our work.”

Beneficiaries

- 12 artists (2 new to the organisation)
- 242 community participants (150 new to the organisation)
- 178 community audience

Project delivery

6 musicians and B Sharp music leaders, all local young emerging artists (age 16 – 30) who are working professionally or training in the local area, worked together to arrange the performance repertoire under the direction of B Sharp's Early Years Development Lead. This involved R&D activities, learning from other organisations that produce early years performances (Magic Acorns, BSO Participate, and working with projection artists (Dean Tamagno and Tom Hughes) to learn about how to extend staging repertoire. In the run-up to the performance, they also delivered a number of outreach activities to engage local families and children:

- Early years music sessions – 2 with Lyme Regis Children's Centre and 1 with Reception/year 1 at St Michael's
- Artist-led family making session to create large scale props
- Artist-led family session to create animations to project at the performance

They created a live music experience - Little B's Boogie - with and for children aged 0 – 8 and their families. It was an opportunity for young children and families to experience, and interact with, a contemporary music gig, and live musicians, in an accessible and age-appropriate way. The theme was 'transport' which allowed us to put together a programme of contemporary current rock/pop/dance/rave/indie tracks – familiar to the parents/carers. These tracks were interwoven with musical moments (games, songs and activities) tailored to early years children. The performance was created both by the live band, and children and families, all taking part through dancing, singing, processing, and though participating in activities using instruments (percussion) and props (scarves, bubbles, parachutes, puppets and large-scale artist-made props).

The staging was innovative, with live projections created by local artist Tom Hughes, and also by open workshop family participants created with artist Cleo Cobb. There were also props created by artist Holly Miller, working with family participants at open workshops.



Little B's Boogie was staged twice in 2 x 1 hour sessions at the Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis in April 2024. The earlier session was quieter, and slower paced, to meet the needs of any children who needed a less stimulating environment due to sensory or processing issues.

We had good attendance at engagement events with 11 families attending music sessions, 26 Reception and Yr1 children attending music sessions via the school, and 9 families attending craft activities. The final performances at the Marine Theatre were very well attended, with 178 children and adults attending.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

We were aiming to engage families and children from Lyme Regis who are economically disadvantaged or who do not regularly engage with creative and cultural activity. Engagement sessions were designed to provide opportunities in familiar safe environments via known partners (Children's Centre, St Michaels School and The Hub Community Venue, Lyme Regis) in order to encourage attendance at the final events. Engagement activities were promoted via the Children's Centre by Dorset Council's Early Years Help Team, and to parents of Reception and Year 1 Children at St Michael's School via the school itself. The Hub also helped promote activities, reaching community projects such as Play Group, Community Fridge, Welcome Café. Free tickets for the final performance were provided for families attending engagement activities via partner referral.

Impact

Engaging children age 0-8 in high quality music activities encourages them to listen, vocalise, explore musical sounds, and move to music. This helps them develop their innate musicality (eg understanding of pulse, rhythm, pitch, dynamics, melody) and also their confidence and communication skills. Feedback from parents who attended music sessions said that they had observed their children being actively involved in the music and mentioned that children had especially enjoyed these things: sounds, rhythms, recognising familiar songs, seeing the instruments and playing with them, dancing, singing, the interactions and playing with tempo and volume. 100% of Parents surveyed said they had enjoyed the sessions, and that they would now do more music activities at home with their children: sings songs from the sessions with scarves and props, dancing, play the ukulele/guitar/other instruments, action songs, using bubbles. In the long term, it is hoped that this early

engagement with music at home will help children identify as musical, increasing their confidence to embrace musical opportunities as they progress through their lives.

The project engaged families who do not regularly take part in creative and cultural activity. We reached a large number of local families with children in the area who are now aware of B Sharp, and so we will be able to reach them with information about future music activities for young people. We estimate that about 1/3 of respondents hadn't accessed Marine Theatre for cultural activities for children before.

Parents feedback included:

"The interaction with the kids was great. Really good fun"

"it's so lovely to have something for this age – that isn't soft play"

"I thought it was really magical – all the props and music –. It was beautiful. We haven't been before"

"We haven't been to the theatre before. We went to the workshop last week where we made fish and things. We will definitely come again!"

"It was brilliant. Just the kind of thing that we are lacking in the area. Brilliant for kids and adults. I have been to theatre before many, many years ago, but not for years. It's the first time bringing the kids."

Children's feedback included:

"My favourite part – was the bit when we get to dance!"

"My favourite song was jumping"

We hope that children from local area who attend Little B's Boogie will be inspired to want to make music, and play instruments and will join our groups – this aims to ensure that music opportunities don't become only available to children from more affluent backgrounds.

Future legacy

The Project has developed our skills producing performances, helped us learn about integrating projections & largescale props into musical performance, as well as integrating early years activities within a contemporary music set. We were able to spend time learning from other organisations and expert professionals, and feel more confident to stage innovative, immersive family performances in the future. We would like to develop a future programme of innovative and inclusive music performances for children and families.



3) Brave Bold Drama

Summary

£4000 grant awarded for Research & Development work towards a new show 'The Keepers' in 2024/25 - about British lighthouse keeping and how people weather storms. Working towards a version for families and a version for people living with dementia.

"Thank you for the support!"

Beneficiaries

- 8 artists (2 new to the organisation)
- 41 community audience

Project delivery

We worked initially with a theatre designer Rebecca Plant to create a flat-pack wooden lighthouse structure. Unfortunately Rebecca, due to health reasons, had to leave the project before she'd fully completed this task, and the remainder of the work was completed by another construction specialist, Mike Knight.

We spent a day at Dorset History Centre archive researching Portland Bill lighthouse in their archive in order to further inform the design and props of the show. After this we tasked a placement student from Bristol University to collate this research along with our initial R&D findings from the first explorations back in 2021.

We rehearsed an improvised storytelling show for performance at the Chickerell Care home inspired by all the lighthouse archival research we had discovered. We have subsequently received more enquiries about The Keepers from other Weymouth care homes as a result of this pilot performance. We also secured performances of this iteration at a community festival in south Bristol, and at Bristol's Harbour Festival, for July 2024.

The premise of the show as it now stands, where a pair of lighthouse keepers have heard each others' stories before and are in search of fresh ones to keep them interested as they stay up all night watching the lighthouse, is a playful, engaging and energetic offer that has proven appeal to all ages from children to older people living in care homes. Because at the moment it's an improvised storytelling show, the content of each performance is directly and actively informed by the audience.



Ensuring an inclusive audience

We have played this iteration of The Keepers to both a family audience with quite young children, and to a community of care home residents, and everyone showed enjoyment and engagement, so we feel that's testimony that this project has broad, inclusive appeal for many people.

We know that theatre companies making original work suitable for touring to care homes are few and far between. We are extremely proud to be able to build on the learning we gained from that first tour to care homes in 2019 and apply it to a second show made specifically for care home residents.



Impact

The care home manager and activities co-ordinator at the Chickerell Care home both attended the performance of *The Keepers*, and commented on how energetic and engaging it was, and how they had seen many of the residents very engaged, particularly in the moments of broad physical comedy. They spoke about how many of the residents had written extremely detailed stories on their postcards about seaside memories, and how enjoyable it was for those residents to see their stories played back to them.

Some residents due to their dementia could only process the performance in terms of movement and sounds, as they no longer fully process spoken word, but we all witnessed several of these residents come alive during a post-story singalong, joining in enthusiastically with well known songs like *Oh I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside* and *What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor*.

This process has further proven to that we should definitely proceed with our future plans to make a fully non-verbal version of a show set on a lighthouse in 1969, because this would then be highly inclusive to more members of a care home community, not just those who can still process spoken word.



Future legacy

We have a week's in-kind support from Poole Lighthouse's Sanctuary residency to move the project closer to being a fully developed theatre show. We intend to find an arts organisation based in a coastal area to partner on an ACE grant to help us to fully rehearse this show. This would be a grant of around £30k.

4) Common Ground

Summary

£2500 grant awarded to deliver performance workshops that will help local people to perform and participate in a new outdoor participatory show 'Caught in the Net', inspired by memories, stories, conversations and oral histories gathered by writer, Sarah Acton, for her book 'Seining Along Chesil'.

“We are proud to be associated with Dorset Community Foundation. Caught in the Net were grateful to secure this grant early on in the project and it made everything else possible”

Beneficiaries

- 9 artists (6 new to the organisation)
- 12 community participants (11 new to the organisation)
- 95 community audience

Project delivery

Anna Golding (dance), Phil Smith (theatre), Sarah Deerejones (music and harp) and writer Sarah Acton developed an outdoor performative site response to the landscape after site visits, and created a piece there with volunteer performers. Sarah Deerejones composed an original new soundtrack and musical score, Anna Golding co-created and choreographed set pieces with non professional performers, and Sarah Acton engaged community performers in tasters with the story and themes, and worked with the landowners to make it possible to present a scratch show at at Weymouth College studios and then outdoors in the landscape. The work was inspired by Sarah Acton's book Seining along Chesil.

Anna Golding worked with Grace & Growl volunteer community dance company (that has been established by her for last 7 years) to choreograph several dances prior to the week of devising, while Sarah Deerejones spent time with the cast and company to teach the songs and singing techniques outdoors. The ensemble also took on acting multi-roles within the piece, performing as fish, smugglers and villagers and all of the team benefiting from skill sharing of movement, music and character performance. We offered travel and expenses to volunteer dancers from Grace and Growl in Bridport and our community performers from Dorchester. Each of these offered 35-50 hours during the week of their voluntary time etc rehearse and perform with us.

The team delivered library outreach art-making and performance activities with artist Darrell Wakelam and theatre-making team members. They made 21 paper fish as puppets for the dancers to perform with. Weymouth College Bay Studios was perfect for the company to make and rehearse rather than a village hall as planned. This was especially necessary as the Grace and Growl dance community group are mature dancers and the time outdoors was very tiring.



The site response was performed as a scratch sharing to a small audience of 45 people after a dress rehearsal. It was a dynamic collaboration with the landscape and included real histories and local stories while interpreting the seine fishing and seasons of Dorset Mackerel in dance and movement. The performance was described by an audience members as 'magical' and 'astonishing' 'beautiful', the outdoor experience inspiring deeper connections to our themes of sustainable fishing and seasonal food sources, Dorset seine traditions and coastal landscape and heritage, together with real histories, memories and stories gathered in communities in research.

"I found the text of the play and the songs very powerful, and I loved the movement and the dynamics of use of the spaces, whether these were stage bound or on location."

"Dancing in the landscape is pure magic. I found this to be a very exciting and satisfying project to be part of - having a chance for older dancers to perform is a rare opportunity. Thank you. I would recommend anyone to do it - what a wonderful collection of creatives!"

"I'm not very experienced at this but am learning how to step away from my comfort zone in front of an audience. It was a truly magical experience. Being involved in such a creative project has been something I've been wanting to do for a long time, but have never had the time/confidence/opportunity to explore. Meeting Sarah Acton and the rest of the creative team was such a lovely, uplifting moment in my life. I've been unwell and over the last few months have become a little anxious about whether I'd ever be able to dance again, but despite my injury, I was able to fully participate and felt totally welcomed and valued. I would recommend this experience to anyone looking to explore their own personal creative journey, and how we can connect with each other through narrative, social history and dance."



Ensuring an inclusive audience

There are challenges working in the outdoors on uneven terrain for people with disabilities or lacking mobility; we addressed these by providing chairs for a performer with an injury and for older people with walking difficulties, and adding resting points during the promenade to make sure no one felt they needed to rush to keep up.

As the location is not accessible by public transport, we organised car sharing for people wishing to attend and promoted free tickets to the sharing.

Grace and Growl are all older dancers in their 50s/60s/70s/. Challenges engaging this community group included real consideration of energy/ toilet facilities/ and hydration etc.

We ran two library 3D art making activities with Darrell Wakelam and 50 people attended, all from local communities and all ages at Wyke Regis (29) and Portland Library (21) – making mackerel on sticks. These were targeted to working families and intergenerations.

Impact

Participants and audiences experienced performative arts outdoors in an unusual location, and learned from real history, creating a sense of relationship between people and place. It encouraged deeper and meaningful connection to a place little known by many of the company or our audiences (e.g. Old Church in Fleet). We collected feedback from our audiences and community dancers which clearly demonstrated that the work is needed and vital to connect people to place and to bring uncynical joy, social connections, creative connections to place and environment. We were told by our community that the impact of the work is deep and will have a lasting effect on individuals who took part, many said it was the highlight of the year. The impact was immediate and yet it will have longer effect in the confidence of participants to take part in further projects and feel part of the bigger story of the place and belonging to it through the lens of theatre and dance.

Workshops brought diverse local communities together in a process of creating with professional artists. This has sewn seeds of new ongoing relationships to culture and arts, and diverse communities such as the working families who are regulars of the Lugger Inn at Chickerell who helped promote the events.



Singing and dancing to and with a landscape brings a sense of audacious and bold bright beauty, it was felt by both the participants, professional team and audiences as they told us in the Q&A after the sharing and in feedback and observation.

By creating the fish together and the co-creative process of the site response with the dancers, participants had a real sense of ownership and investment in the project. We have built new relationships with organisations and community groups, building on previous connections Sarah Acton has forged with Weymouth & Portland communities

Working on this piece has extended the repertoire of Grace & Growl dance community group and offered a platform for them to highlight the value of dance and performative arts for mature people.

Here is the evaluation film for the project by Rob Jayne: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EMpWRFi4D0>

Future legacy

In October the project secured Arts Council England fund to run a full R&D on Portland and in Chickerell in indoor locations with performance tasters in communities. After feedback with Artsreach post-R&D, the project now plans to apply for further funding to support a more commercial tour along Chesil Beach. . Artsreach have offered support and will book the venues through their rural touring scheme.

5) Emerald Ant CIC

Summary

£6750 grant awarded to contribute to a project performing The Iguanodon Restaurant at 3 Dorset SEND schools, followed by workshops with children, involving local museums to enhance learning about fossils/geology. The project was also supported by; Arts Council £65,127, Dorset Council £4066, Valentine Trust £5000, Clark Trust £10,000, Schools' contributions £1800, Museums' contributions £3900

“Thank you for supporting our work. The project is a good learning curve for all professionals and volunteers involved, amongst providing excellent practical advice, it encourages us to continue our work and pursue our goals in working with SEND children.”

Beneficiaries

- 12 artists (6 new to the organisation)
- 212 community participants (also the audience)

Project delivery

After seeking remaining funding, we started the project in September 2024 at Yewstock school. The 'Iggy residency' includes the show and theatre workshops as well as a training programme for museums, so they can confidently plan and deliver creative work with SEND children. The Iguanodon Restaurant, is a panto-style performance lasting 35 minutes, and tells the story of the discovery of fossils in Victorian times, leading to Darwin. It is set in a 30 foot Victorian Iguanodon.



We spent 4 days at Yewstock School, North Dorset. This included a day of set up and take down, a performance of the show for the whole school, a half day training session with Diverse City for the cast, and 2.5 days Iggy Experience workshops for groups of children. The Iggy Experience workshops were delivered by our team of 3 working jointly with local museum staff and volunteers. We worked with 12 groups of students age 5-19, each for 40 minutes; each group consisted of 5- 10 students. Students split into 3 activities, so smaller groups of 2-3 students and a staff member, rotated: 1 – dressing up in costumes and doing a small performance in character, 2 - learning about and operating props (a wine trick and a pigeon popping out of a pie, and operating Iggy as a giant puppet), 3 - 15 minutes with the museum handling fossils and heritage items learning about Deep Time using our Deep Time carpet, and creating fossil rubbings.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

In early September the team met to rehearse and to make changes to the show to make it more SEND-friendly. On the advice of a trainer from Diverse City, we used this time to make a Social Story for our new SEND audiences, which included an introduction to us as performers and the characters using Makaton names. We created an introduction to Iggy the iguanodon, a warning about anything unusual like thunder noises, and costumes for people with limited movement. We were given advice on fidget toys to be given out during performances, and evaluation tools to use with SEND children. We also set classes in art activity so the children could bring their own "little Iggies" to the show. This helped reduce anxiety and provided familiarity when Iggy showed up in the playground on Day 1. We used BSL interpretation at performances and workshops.

Comments from teachers:

“The Iggy Show was hilarious and very informative. It made a difficult subject to teach very fun and accessible and taught so much in a short space of time... It was engaging from our youngest to oldest students with something for everyone. The signer made it even better and more accessible.”

“This was a brilliant week for Yewstock School, it really energised our school community... I had very good feedback from staff and pupils across the school. I think the hands on resources allowed all children to access the workshops and all of the adults supporting through the week were very child centered and understanding of the additional needs of our learners.”

Impact

Students had an introduction to outdoor theatre as a sensory experience. They have an increased understanding of local natural heritage, landscape and coastline e.g. fossils and dinosaurs, and a better understanding of Victorian history e.g. characters such as Mary Anning. Students increased their self-confidence through doing drama, using their voices and bodies in a positive environment alongside professional performers. The work was built on in class after we left, providing a deeper context.



“Really exciting. I wanted to watch Iggy being built. I loved it. It was loud but I enjoyed it.”

“I really enjoyed the rubbings of the fossils.”

“I liked seeing the mechanics of Iggy’s head and making it move.”

“We were allowed to touch and hold things which was great. (not just looking) Some of the fossils were very fragile and we had to be careful...”

Around 45 teachers and support staff supported the students to participate. They developed creative approaches to learning, and support in delivering drama, science, art and history curriculums.

The Blandford and Sturminster Newton museums are run by volunteers, many of whom are elderly and lacked confidence in working with people with SEND. Through hands on collaboration, the volunteers were able to get an introduction to working with SEND children in a safe space, being supported by our artists and school teachers. They are also attending our wider training programme, and will host Dino Days in the Summer.

Young people were signposted to other drama groups in Dorset where they could develop their skills further, during and after leaving school, a difficult time of transition for many.

Future Legacy

We now provide a Social Story video for SEND school pupils and audiences, available on line. This is especially useful for those who have increased anxiety. We now do an Access Audit for all classes, so we can adapt our workshop techniques and activities to meet the learning and sensory needs of students. Future performances, or Dino Days, will be held at museum sites in summer 2025. The shows will be marketed to local SEND schools and groups, and a BSL interpreter will be present on all 11 performance days.

6) Island Community Action

Summary

£3240 grant awarded to enable local people to take part in workshops and interactive performances throughout the day of an Environmental Fayre on Portland.

“The fact that the Bee Circus has also gone on to perform across Dorset, at Bestival and Glastonbury 2024 is a brilliant achievement and evidences the culmulative impact that local funding, delivered by local organisations with local knowledge, can have. Thank you.”

Beneficiaries

- 27 artists (7 new to the organisation)
- 100 community participants (50 new to the organisation)
- 300 community audience

Project delivery

The Performing Arts project funded by the grant was an innovative, family-friendly interactive show about a Bee Circus, which focused on raising awareness about the vital role of bees in our ecosystem, particularly within the food chain. The show was anchored by the character of a Romanian beekeeper and ringmaster, who guided the narrative and introduced the audience to the medicinal properties of bee products. This character also incorporated Romanian language lessons, adding a layer of multicultural education to the experience.

The creation of Bee Circus was a highly collaborative process, involving a diverse team of performers, educators, & costume designers. Before each show, we held workshops where participants made bee costumes from recycled materials, fostering creativity and a personal connection to the bees they were learning about. Participants then became bees in the interactive performances that followed.



Multiple performance disciplines included physical theatre, puppetry, music, and dance. Our approach centred on audience participation. We experimented with various forms of engagement, such as allowing children to throw pollen balls (covered in Velcro) at a performer dressed as a bee, which was both educational and entertaining. The audience learned and performed the waggle dance, a crucial aspect of bee communication. Performances also included participation via games, call and response activities, visual slapstick-comedy and puppetry. The playful, yet informative nature of the show captivated children and their families, making complex ecological concepts accessible and relatable.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

Our series of colourful, creative and celebratory engagement opportunities pulled in even the most reserved (or initially resistant) members of our audience. Furthermore, working collaboratively with other local organisations also meant we promoted the project through a wide range of different networks, further expanding our reach and inclusivity.

Performances took place in familiar public outdoor settings. This helped to draw in numerous passersby, increasing the range and number of people that took part. The interactive elements of the performances were designed to make learning about bees fun and memorable, while also accommodating neurodiverse children through a relaxed performance style that encouraged inclusivity.

The performances also included simple Romanian translations of key bey words, along with insights into Romanian culture around bees and their medicinal uses of honey and pollen. This helped the project inspire cross-cultural interest and integration, including engaging other local Romanian families. Crucially, everyone that participated was treated equally and participation was free, removing any economic barriers to engagement, a vital consideration for an area characterised by high deprivation.



Impact

The Bee Circus performances delivered a range of benefits to the local community. Firstly, participants interested in working within the creative industries themselves, were able to talk to Sophie Fretwell and ask questions about her direct experience, which was of particular importance to young people who, on Portland, have limited access to such face-to-face experiences and information. Secondly, Bee Circus performances helped educate the audience as a whole on the global importance of bees as pollinators. Thirdly, by placing the performances at the heart of a larger Environment Fayre, they were surrounded by immediately accessible stepping-stones into other nature and arts-based activities. This included opportunities to create mini-projects e.g. bug hotels, toad abodes and bird snacks. The Bee Circus team handed out 'pollinator packs' (bee friendly seeds packs) that families could take home and plant at home.

Through the 'hands-on' engagement opportunities offered we witnessed increasing levels of confidence in those that participated. For young people on Portland this is an incredibly important achievement because stats, experience and past consultation activities have continually shown the island's youth as often having low confidence and aspirations. Participants reported feeling a real sense of 'pride-in-place,' along with the aspiration to champion Portland's natural surroundings long-term and to get involved in future ICA and partner activities.

Future legacy

The project's impact extended beyond performances, contributing to Bridport's recognition as a Bee Friendly Town. The Bee Circus project also contributed towards ICA's confidence to become part of the delivery team that have just secured Dorset's Town of Culture status.

The show has been invited to venues and events including National Trust properties like Stourhead, Kingston Lacy, and Lulworth Castle, as well as major festivals such as Camp Bestival and Glastonbury Festival's Kidzfield.

The grant helped us form a relationship with Save the Children, which resulted in them not only providing funding but also a follow-up activity with Portland Youth Council on how to develop and deliver a campaign.

The project evidenced the importance and benefits of cross-subject delivery e.g. arts and environment and performance and life skills. This has helped shape various projects that followed, including a Future Portland workshop (around 80 attendees), ICA's Community Crafters project and several of Portland Youth Council activities e.g. a gardening club

7) Islanders Youth and Community Centre

Summary

£4250 grant awarded to provide an opportunity for young people to work with professional artists to devise a performance at the B-Side festival.

“Everything went so well and we are extremely grateful for you enabling us to complete this project to benefit our community.”

Beneficiaries

- 4 artists (3 new to the organisation)
- 40 community participants (30 new to the organisation)
- 250 community audience

Project delivery

Our project gave young people the opportunity to work with award winning theatre company, Wildworks, and showcase their performance at the B-side festival. Our participants devised original work practicing multiple disciplines e.g. creating a performance on a mini bus. The young people were encouraged to utilise their own personal experiences and knowledge of Portland to design the artistic flair. They excellently embraced the b-side theme of 'This Land' and articulated beautifully their connection to our island's environment and heritage and how everyone, especially young people, can protect it.

It was fantastic to see our young people design and perform in such a way that demonstrated their pride in where they live and knowledge of how climate change is affecting our island. The performance was extremely well received by festival crowds and they really demonstrated the disciplines they had been practicing. The B-side team expressed how wonderful it was to have the island youth so actively involved and utilising the festival as a learning opportunity.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

Various methods of advertising were used to ensure a wide reach. The access costs ensured those with low income were not disadvantaged.

Impact

The grant has profoundly impacted the 40+ young people involved, providing them with transformative opportunities for creative expression, personal growth, and skill development. Through access to professional training, mentorship, and performance opportunities, these young artists have cultivated their talents, building confidence, discipline, and collaboration skills. The grant has also fostered a sense of community and belonging, allowing participants to explore their identities and share their stories of Portland through the arts. The experience also equipped them with essential life skills, empowering them to pursue future endeavours with greater resilience and ambition. It has had a lasting impact as it led to new volunteers and users of the Islanders community center.

8) Landance CIC

Summary

£1286 grant awarded towards workshops with young people and contemporary dance event 'Light' in Swanage Bay, which follows a Research & Development grant awarded last year, culminating in Arts Council support for the project.

"It has been a huge boost to be able to apply for your funding. To have local support is crucial to our projects and to Landance going forward, with local young artists taking on more responsibility within performing arts projects."

Beneficiaries

- 18 artists
- 3 community participants
- 656 community audience

Project delivery

The project ran free project related dance workshops in the local Primary School, the Library and accessible workshops for Remix and Allsort'd; an organisation which supports local people with learning difficulties to access employment.

Three young dance artists then worked onsite with three professional dance artists to create the performance piece, developing their ideas along the route through the Downs, in the amphitheatre and then in the Mowlem Theatre's community room. They discussed the movement work that the workshop participants had created and the inspiration of the site, Swanage Bay, the sea and sky. They developed the work from those loose ideas into a compelling, highly imaginative performance piece. They used music from 'Water is the Shovel of the Shore' CD by Shovel Dance Collective as musical inspiration, and during the second part of the live performances (in the amphitheatre) their singer performed live, accompanied by accordion.



We ran 2 free evening promenade performances, starting on Swanage Downs and ending at the Amphitheatre.

Go to <https://www.landance.org.uk/> and choose 'events' to watch the two short videos made of the performances.



Ensuring an inclusive audience

Thanks to in kind advice from Diverse City marketing officer we were able to tailor our marketing to be inclusive and therefore to attract a wide range of community members including 40 less mobile members of the audience plus two wheelchairs users.

The second performance offered an accessible option, by including the screening of a video of the previous evenings promenade performance before the live performers and promenade audience joined them to experience the rest of the live performance at the Amphitheatre. This was the first a Landance performance offered an accessible experience due to the nature of outdoor promenade performances.

Impact

Feedback was very positive from the workshop attendees & benefiting organisations and from the audiences also, nearly all of whom were local.

“Sammy worked with 4 classes meaning between 110 and 120 children. The children (and the staff) really enjoyed Sammy's sessions. A member of staff said it was lovely to have some creative dance in school. One of the children said to me after the day, 'I really enjoyed that. Can we do more dance in school? That was great fun'.” Martin Godfrey, Headteacher at Swanage Primary School

“The girls thoroughly enjoyed stewarding. The dance was mesmerising and beautiful! Thank you for inviting us to take part in the production! It was an honour!” Paula Kirk, Director of Allsort'd

The creative work was outstanding, and was extremely well received by audiences from the local community, many of whom were not accustomed to watching live contemporary dance, let alone outdoor contemporary dance shining a light on the beauty of their home environment. We asked audience members for 3 words of feedback, on prize draw cards:

“beautiful, thoughtful, made me smile”

“wonderful, magical, atmospheric”

“interesting, inspiring, very welcome”

“mesmerising, exciting, happy”

“inspiring, freedom, local”

“magic in the evening’ ‘Haunting, compelling, soothing”

We brought the local community together to attend the free performances, people of all ages and from all walks of life, breaking down social isolation and helping build happy, empowered, and connected communities. Many children took part in the free workshops and also attended the performances, thus raising their awareness of creative collaboration, of dance as a fun activity, and of live dance performance and how the arts can link to their own local environment in a fun and engaging way.

Claire Hodgson MBE Joint Artistic Director of Diverse City & Extraordinary Bodies and Swanage resident:

"Landance was a really significant event for Swanage. It was well attended and there was excitement leading up to the event. Because it was free I attended the performance with many of my child's friends and parents, who in the cost of living crisis wouldn't have the money to buy tickets. It brought the community back together after the tourist season and it marked a change in seasons. The event was a beautiful example of site specific work in the landscape and I was walking round it with people of all ages who were delighted by the surprise they felt at seeing an area of the town that they know so well, used in an entirely different way. The children I was with were really excited by the fact local children had inputted into the movements that came part of the final dance. One of the (adult) audience members I knew, felt that it was the best thing he had ever seen in Swanage. I felt it reminded the local community of the connection between arts & culture and the environment and the ways in which these two things can be closely linked."

Future legacy

I feel that Swanage is now aware that Landance will offer them a professionally run and engaging outdoor dance performance experience, which will help further the ambitions of the young artists who create work under the wing of Landance, and help the Mowlem develop their plans to offer enhanced dance activities in Swanage.

9) Tall Tails Theatre Company & Kushti Bok

Summary

£9600 grant awarded to create performing arts with Gypsy & Traveler communities in Dorset, celebrating their culture, history and storytelling, and aiming to support a larger scale public performance

"Activities prompted discussions among family members, rekindling memories & sharing stories from the past. Intergenerational exchange helped strengthen family bonds and preserve cultural traditions."

Beneficiaries

- 20 artists
- 300 community participants (200 new to the organisation)

Project delivery

We worked with Traveller young people from the Piddlehinton site, Thornicombe, Ash Oaks, Orchid View and Oak Academy school in West Howe. Working alongside Kushti Bok Charity, and trusted figures Rev Jonathan Herbert and Rev Hilary Bond, we delivered bespoke activities based on popular Gypsy folk tales that celebrated the identity, traditions, and culture of the GRT communities. We looked at the local history of the families and what Gypsy trades families were connected to (Rag and Bone, Flower Selling etc) and we bought in artists that could demonstrate the crafts and trades/ They shared and developed craft skills with the community and asked individuals to improvise around theme. For example, Leon Rawlings made pegs and the groups designed a sign for him for his summer trading as he cannot read or write. Alongside this he told us a ditty that his late mother

would chant to bring attention to and sell her pegs and Elder flowers. The young people took it in turns to sit with their signs and call out for business as if they were selling.

We had theatre workshops that included music sessions and the young people each played a role in the old folk tales. We taught herbalism led by Romany artist Debbie Billington, who also taught the young people to make paper flowers and Betty from Kushti Bok taught them her great grandmas selling chant which they all workshoped and tried out for themselves.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

The GRT communities use word of mouth. To ensure this was effective we did multiple visits to each site to ensure availability & attendance.

Each time we arrived on site all the children were gathered waiting for us. Working with Betty Smith Billington, 'Queen of the Gypsies' helped to promote the activity and reassure participants activities were appropriate. Sessions were free to enjoy and were delivered across 4 Traveller sites and Oak Academy School which is built on an old Gypsie encampment where many Romanies were housed by the council. We delivered work in small steps which build trust, created interest and established commitment.

Impact

This is the second year we have run this project, albeit we developed the sessions and they are longer. The dominoes pizza was a highlight and bought a lot more adults to the sessions than last year.

The storytelling and drumming workshop conducted on the Gypsy site aimed to Foster inclusion among young people and mitigate their geographical isolation. This initiative allowed the participants to engage in cultural activities that strengthened community bonds and promoted a sense of pride and belonging.

Storytelling sessions provided a platform for young people to come together, share experiences, and build connections. Sessions facilitated social interaction, which helped reduce feelings of isolation. Participants played, laughed, and commended each other, creating a joyful and supportive atmosphere. This camaraderie was crucial in helping them feel included and valued within their community.

The drumming workshop was a highlight. Every child discovered their ability to keep rhythm, which led to enormous sense of pride. This activity not only enhanced their musical skills but also boosted their self-confidence. The workshop brought the young people together in a collective activity, fostering teamwork & mutual encouragement; vital in creating a cohesive group. Many of the young participants were unaware of their ancestors' traditional crafts



such as making flowers and pegs. The storytelling sessions sparked conversations about these "old ways," leading to a rediscovery of their cultural heritage.

The project had a profound impact on the participants and the wider community: Deep Connections: The storytelling and drumming sessions developed strong connections among the participants and between families. This sense of community was reinforced through shared experiences and collective activities.

The overwhelming response from the community indicated a high level of satisfaction. People expressed their desire for the project to continue, noting that it was the most enjoyable activity they had participated in for a long time.



We made a new with Oak Academy and many more young people revealed their ethnicity to friends as a direct outcome of this work. It was wonderful to see their pictures and hear their memories and see their friends ask them questions about it all. The young people were so proud and so excited every time we visited. Young people in the school are now more aware of us and the work of Kushti Bok.

Future legacy

We were unable to deliver the final performance as so many of the sites are in a huge period of change, particularly Piddlehinton. This site has had a lot going on including court cases, eviction notices and the news that they are losing their community room to make space for more pitches.

We gathered lots of feedback from the young people and their parents and they were keen to tell us what they would like to see delivered this year if we were to come back. That will of course inform ongoing work. We hope to create a performance using the work we developed, ready for a summer performance in summer 2025.

10) Vita Nova

Summary

£3790 grant awarded to support the Vita Beaters group and the Care4Yourself drama group; two unique, integrated community activities supporting wellbeing and community cohesion through artistic work.

“We were incredibly grateful to receive this funding. The support from DCF is a constant in the life of Vita Nova and important to so many across the locality.”

Beneficiaries

- 4 artists
- 28 community participants (5 new)
- 45 community audience

Project delivery

Vita Beaters is a music group offering companionship, a chance to extend skills, explore new challenges & improve confidence. We specifically support those in recovery from



addiction and have an ongoing referral pathway from Street Scene, BCP Drug&Alcohol treatment centres, Faithworks, Health Bus, Community Action Network and more. We use principles of co-design and inclusivity. Membership include multi-instrumentalists and those that are really just beginning their journey. Facilitator Jack uses a mixture of aural learning and sight reading to structure the mixed ensemble to learn existing arrangements but to also explore improvisation. Jack is a skilled teacher who strikes a unique balance in his sessions, incorporating differentiation into his integrated approach, ensuring all learners of all abilities are involved. Across this funded period, the group also welcomed a visitor - a trained classical/flamenco guitarist from local group Mi Flamenco.

Care4Yourself is an open session in that we welcome everyone to join regardless of their 'profile': this has included adults with mild learning disabilities, dyslexia, those with sensory impairments, older people (65+), neurodiverse adults, and longer-term physical impairment (brain injury). Many report common personal concerns that include social anxiety, isolation and loneliness. A mixed ability and inter-generational group, it uses co-devising techniques to create new drama in the studio space. Participants take turns in supporting the facilitator, Jon Nicholas, to articulate not only the direction the session will take but also the creative content. Situational and often humorous and almost entirely improvised the work can be challenging, sometimes emotional but always inclusive offering everyone a role.

<https://www.youtube.com/@VitaNovaNewLife>

This is a new channel set up in May; we are editing videos from Vita Beaters to include, as well as footage of Wasps Nest, our community theatre and educational outreach offer.

Ensuring an inclusive audience

The profile of the participants is highly diverse in terms of protected characteristics however we do have a lack of representation in terms of global communities, a bias towards males (Music particularly) and an under-representation in terms of LGBTQI+. We have in place the necessary policies to ensure we have a welcoming environment and continue to work collaboratively with local partners that include Increase the Peace, Bournemouth University (research partner to inform improved evaluation), Black Cherry, BEAF and various other independent arts practitioners.

At Care4Yourself we supported a male in his 40's, referred by Healthbus. He had been homeless for many years and has a history of substance abuse. Now in recovery and in housing, his social interactions and conversation were a challenge to some members of the group. The facilitator addressed this by raising a wider question of how one communicates, reflecting on individual experience and what leads to groups forming and also falling out. The group grew as a result, reflecting on diversity of experience and, for some, their own perceptions and how these come to bear when interacting. The challenging participant in question made a welcome contribution during his time with us.

Impact

Across the two groups the most reported on improvement was the reduction in social isolation. The needs of the group members vary immensely as do the individual responses in terms of perceived or observed benefits, illustrated by these two case studies:

One young female, 29, joined during a period of unemployment and experienced PTSD following her time as a nurse during the pandemic. A lover of theatre and drama, and with past experience of performance, her time with the group concluded when she secured a new role as a nurse in Christchurch. Whilst we cannot lay claim to be the sole influencer in this positive step, she was clear in her feedback that her inclusion in the Care4 group had been key in restoring her social confidence and enabling the next step towards re-establishing her independence.

Another older female, Janet, who has been with the group for some time, chose in a co-devised sketch, to introduce the group to the idea of entering Boscombe's iconic 'PoliceBox' located on the high street; encouraging each person to enter, they discovered an older perhaps less troubled Boscombe, and one that was there to explore. Drawing on her local knowledge, Janet introduced the rest of the group to places they didn't know had existed - facilitator Jon reported a noticeable change in the participants demeanour and subsequent engagement with the group.



Feedback is gathered both verbally and through the completion of anonymous questionnaires, which are baselined against the start of term and then reissued at the end. 85% of responses reflected an upwards positive trend with 12% remaining the same and only 3% of responses showing a minor downward shift by one point or even less. Attendance in Vita Beaters is in itself a marker of the success; with an average weekly attendance of between 10 and 15, on occasions 18, the sessions were deemed 'full' by Jack the facilitator. Across the 12 weeks we are reporting on, there were no relapses and membership remains consistent and indeed, oversubscribed!

Observed improvements in skills and musicianship is across the board, with peer to peer mentoring further supporting group and individual development, and bolstering the comradery within. The group have recently performed at We are with you, Boscombe, and have approached a care home to see whether a performance is possible later this year

Future legacy

We have been successful in securing core cost funding from two Charitable Trusts, part of which will go towards continuing the music sessions. Care4Yourself drama has paused for the summer as we consider our 25th Anniversary and a set of new strategic funding priorities for attracting major donors & sponsorship. We have secured Arts Council England funding for a new community production.

A new opportunity has arisen with Absolute Music Trust who are delivering a similar model of musical intervention at 'We Are' in Boscombe. They will be collaborating with us in September to offer a community performance from both our and their new ensemble in a community venue local to both. This will be a further strengthening of the referral pathways.