



Annual Impact Report

April 2024 – March 2025

| Different every day



| Our Year in Numbers



Pride and Prejudice* (*sort of) – photo credit: Mihaela Bodlovic



335

Live events

217

Films screened

1,113

Individual Performances
& Screenings

(1,021 in 2023/4)

8

Exhibitions in our main gallery

10

Exhibitions in our
community gallery spaces



201,800

Tickets sold

11.2%

Increase in total tickets
sold compared to last year

(181,373 in 2023/24)

37%

Increase in total tickets sold
for our relaunched cinema
programme

(23,266 in 2024/25, 16,901 in 2023/24)

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Front Cover: African Rhapsodies starring Seckou Keita

| From The Chair

As Chair, I am pleased to present this report for the year 2024/25, which has seen Lighthouse continue to strengthen its role as a cultural hub for Poole, Dorset and beyond under increasingly challenging circumstances.

Once again, we delivered our mission of providing a rich and incredibly diverse programme across the wide range of the Arts that we are lucky enough to be able to showcase under one roof. This is due to the leadership of Elspeth McBain, our CEO, the hard work and ingenuity of our people, and the enthusiastic loyalty of our audiences.

Speaking of roofs, however, we are highly conscious of the increasing costs of maintaining the building; of employing the workforce, and, quite literally, of keeping the lights on – pressures we are all familiar with in our daily lives. The significant increase in these costs over this year has resulted in a deficit, but one we have been able to manage judiciously without sacrificing the programme or the audience experience. We will, of course, be looking to improve this position in the coming year.

We have implemented a number of different initiatives that help us better know and understand our audiences. For example, the crowdEngage software platform integrates the ticketing and bar ordering systems to make a visit to Lighthouse as seamless and enjoyable an experience as possible and helps us understand the needs of our different audience segments. This is helping us build a more effective and efficient Marketing Plan, making best use of our resources.

At Lighthouse we are driven by the conviction that the Arts are deeply important to personal and community wellbeing because every day we see it in action.

There is now a growing body of robust evidence that in addition to bringing joy, the Arts yield measurable benefits for mental health, physical wellbeing, social cohesion, and preventative health. A major study* commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport found that engaging in cultural activities generates an estimated £8 billion annually in benefits via improved quality of life and increased productivity. Participating in music, theatre and dance is particularly linked to reductions in depression and pain, better life satisfaction and improvements in overall wellbeing, and regular cultural engagement is associated with lower risks of depression in older people.

We must continue to defend the crucial importance of the Arts as funding of all kinds is squeezed, and we are extremely grateful to BCP Council and to Arts Council England for their ongoing support and confidence. There is, however, always much more we can do, so we would also like to thank those individuals and organisations who have supported us during the year, either through our Friends programme, through individual donations, or by giving to our Christmas Appeal. It really does make a difference.

We go into the next year with four excellent new Trustees joining the Board, strengthening our skillset across a range of disciplines and energising us for the challenge and opportunities ahead.

MT (Mary Teresa) Rainey OBE
Chair of Trustees

*Monetising the Impact of Culture and Heritage on Health and Wellbeing, prepared for DCMS by Frontier Economics, 12 November 2024



BOARD OF TRUSTEES (2024/25)

MT (Mary Teresa) Rainey OBE – Chair

Monika Barnes – Deputy Chair

Spencer Clarke – Trustee

Ali Gannagé-Stewart – Trustee

Caroline Gitsham – Trustee

David Hoare – Trustee

Tony Johnson – Trustee

Prof Donald Nordberg – Trustee (Retired Oct 2024)

Channa Vithana – Trustee

Jane Webster – Chair of Finance Committee

Introduction from our Chief Executive

I am pleased to present our impact report for 2024/25. It provides a summary of the work that Lighthouse delivered and the benefits that this provides to our communities.

It was a highly productive, deeply rewarding year if, at the same time, financially challenging. Political and economic instability, both at home and abroad, has affected many aspects of our operations. The rising cost of food, energy, heating, and the increase in National Insurance contributions have placed real pressure on the organisation, our audiences, and our artists alike. The result of this has given us a financial deficit greater than budgeted, but which our prudent reserves have supported.

Yet still the artists continue to inspire with their extraordinary work and because of this, our audiences have remained engaged and resilient. They continue to support a diverse programme that spans high-profile drama, celebrated performers, innovative new works, and more experimental small-scale artists, working locally, nationally and internationally. Audience levels have continued to grow, a testament to the strength of our artistic offering and the loyalty of our community.

We remain committed to bringing the very best of today's music to our audiences and this year we continued to strengthen our contemporary music programme, welcoming a diverse range of celebrated artists to our Concert Hall and Theatre. Highlights included memorable performances from Paul Weller, Dexys, Kate Rusby, Nick Mason, Bombay Bicycle Club, Tony Hadley, Afro Celt Sound System, The Unthanks, Boyzlife, The Levellers, Brit Floyd and Blue.

We continue to work tirelessly to attract great musicians and ensure our stages reflect the richness and variety of the contemporary music scene.

We are proud to be the home of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus.

In 2024, the BSO welcomed Mark Wigglesworth as their new Chief Conductor, who is captivating audiences. I am grateful to their CEO Dougie Scarfe for his support and collaboration that creates a genuine partnership. Their extensive programme at Lighthouse gives our communities the chance to experience world-class musicianship and remarkable repertoire, right on their doorstep.

Our in-house pantomime *Sleeping Beauty* was another highlight, delighting nearly 20,000 customers across 39 performances, making this show a fantastic achievement by our team.

Our Creative Engagement programme continues to be an integral part of our work. It supports artist development, creates opportunities for our community to participate in the arts, and helps local schools to deliver inspiring creative experiences. Sustaining this work is challenging, especially in the current funding climate, and we are deeply grateful to all those who have given their time, resources and financial support to ensure this important programme not only continues but grows.

Thanks to generous support from The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, we were able to expand our popular Young Technicians courses and provide bursaries to enable participation.

Lighthouse is proud to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and to receive vital support from BCP Council, our freeholder. We are especially thankful to our stakeholders for their continued endorsement of our work and mission.

Individual donors and sponsors remain crucial to our success. Their generosity has helped sustain our education and learning programmes, while also supporting much-needed updates to our building and equipment.



An extraordinary gift from Mr Spyros Niarchos enabled us to replace our 30-year-old foyer furniture, transforming the look and feel of the venue and greatly improving audience comfort. We were also delighted to donate our former sofas to local community groups.

Our annual Christmas Appeal once again demonstrated the generosity of our community, enabling hundreds of young people and families to attend our pantomime and other performances and to take part in the arts.

Alongside our artistic programme, Lighthouse also plays an important role as a venue for commercial and non-artistic events. We were thrilled to receive the Silver Award for Best Business Events Venue at the 2025 South West Tourism Awards.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to our Lighthouse family – all our team, our Trustees, our volunteers, our friends, audiences, suppliers, partners, donors and funders, whose support makes everything we do possible.

Elsbeth McBain
Chief Executive

“

I'm really proud to work here.
So much of this job is about
looking after people and
making sure they have the
best experience possible.

Martyn Balson, Head of Operations

| About Us

VISION

As a nationally significant, regionally important, locally loved multi-arts venue, Lighthouse is one of Dorset's cultural gems. At the heart of the community it serves, it is a dynamic, vibrant place where people feel inspired, entertained and welcomed; and where artists and performers feel supported and empowered to do their best work.



Lighthouse

MISSION

Lighthouse exists to provide the people of Poole and the wider region with a vibrant, diverse and relevant cultural programme of live performances, film, engagement and participation. We aim to entertain, move, surprise and challenge our audiences through an ever-changing programme that encompasses the popular and familiar as well as the eclectic and innovative, reflecting and respecting the breadth of their interests and their trust in us.

Supporting Artists

Lighthouse is here to enable and encourage established, emerging and experimental artists to create, rehearse and perform their work, using our world class facility to inspire and delight those who encounter it and support the national arts ecology.

Supporting Culture

As an active and collaborative partner with other creative organisations, Lighthouse supports local strategy to establish the region as a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

Supporting our Community

We are also dedicated to maintaining our iconic venue to create a bright, safe and environmentally responsible facility, with a range of attractive amenities, activities and cultural opportunities the community can be proud of.

OUR VALUES

Aspirational

We are up for it! We believe passionately in the power and value of Lighthouse. We believe that bold, audacious arts can enrich and inspire the lives of our community through shared cultural experiences. We strive to improve and develop in everything we do and lead innovative ways of working.

Welcoming

We welcome our staff, volunteers, artists, audiences, partners, and our community into our work. We are friendly, inclusive and work together effectively and safely, ensuring that teamwork is at the heart of everything we do.

Excellence

Everything we do is of the absolute highest quality. We strive to achieve excellence in every aspect of our work and how we deliver it.

ASPIRATIONAL
WELCOMING
EXCELLENCE

“

**What a great arts centre!
Wonderful programming for
all ages. Great staff under
superb leadership.**

J Cottrell, Lighthouse customer (Google review)

“

**Fantastic concert hall,
great venue, a real asset
to the town.**

A O'Brien, Lighthouse customer (Google review)



A Programme That Entertains, Challenges & Inspires

From household names and classic productions to arresting new work and breakout artists, this year Lighthouse audiences have found inspiration at every turn.

While our Theatre stage hosted new touring productions of classics like *The Mousetrap* with EastEnders star Todd Carty and *The Tiger Who Came To Tea*, we also welcomed Iqbal Khan's brilliant revival of Yasmina Reza's comedy *ART*, which opened its UK tour here, as well as the madcap comedy *...Earnest?*, the superb new adaptation of 1984 with Keith Allen, acclaimed West End hit *Pride And Prejudice** (*sort of) and two visits by English Touring Opera.

A range of high-quality children's shows included *In The Night Garden Live!* and *Dear Zoo*; while older children enjoyed a new adaptation of the heartwarming *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, and Dame Floella Benjamin's powerfully joyful story, *Coming To England*.



...Earnest? – photo credit: Greg Veit

The revitalisation of our live music programme continued at pace with memorable shows that included the debut tour of The Amy Winehouse Band, The Zombies' farewell tour, a winter themed show by acclaimed folk artists The Unthanks, and bass guitar maven Jah Wobble who so enjoyed the experience he released a special Live At Lighthouse single. The Fisherman's Friends sold out, Dexys souled out, Nick Mason's Saucerful of Secrets rocked out on Pink Floyd classics, and Bombay Bicycle Club played out a euphoric festival set to the delight of a standing audience.

At Christmas, we laughed, boo-ed, hissed, danced and had a ball as our family pantomime *Sleeping Beauty* – made specially for Poole audiences by Lighthouse – hit the heights of previous productions created by writer-director Chris Jarvis and production designer James Smith. Starring Todd Carty, the production was seen by nearly 20,000 people, 27% of whom were new to Lighthouse. In our audience surveys, it scored a resounding average of 4.8/5!

The Sherling Studio is home to smaller scale, more intimate performances across a range of artforms most notably music, drama and comedy. Revered songwriters Dean Friedman, Ian Prowse and Martin McAloon from 80s hitmakers Prefab Sprout all found their way here, as did jazz giants Yolanda Charles and Xhosa Cole in the highly regarded monthly Studio Jazz strand.

Alongside Coastal Comedy, our monthly stand-up night featuring emerging comic talent, the Studio saw appearances by established mirth makers like Milton Jones, Ahir Shah and the incomparable Rob Auton. Meanwhile, the Studio continues to find appreciative audiences for innovative new work, including the surreal ukuele musical *Do Zombies Dream of Undead Sheep?* and the acrobatic irreverence of *Cabaret With Balls*.



Coming to England – photo credit: Mark Senior

The inaugural Poole Pride put Lighthouse on the map as one of the UK's few building-based Pride celebrations with a short film festival leading up to a full day of performances, activities, exhibitions and discussions bringing a splash of colour to the town centre.

Arguably the biggest name in world ballet, Carlos Acosta not only sent Birmingham Royal Ballet's development company BRB2 to Poole this year but also included us on the first UK tour for his mesmerising *Acosta Danza Yuniór* from his native Cuba – breathtaking.

And in our Main Gallery we hosted a wide range of visual arts, from the finalists in our first ever Open Call competition, to the Men of Iron collaboration with Poole Museum to mark the 40th anniversary of the closure of Poole Foundry, and *From the City to the Sea*, a new show of work by ten very different artists hosted by feted London gallerist Ben Oakley.

Lighthouse & BSO: Our Partnership



Our partnership with Lighthouse is one built on trust and friendship. It features two teams motivated by the common goal: a civic duty to deliver awe-inspiring performances that lift the soul, empower our communities, and bring joy.

Dougie Scarfe OBE
Chief Executive, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

LIGHTHOUSE & BSO: OUR IMPACT

29,560

People attended BSO concerts at Lighthouse

14,698

Online audiences for streamed BSO concerts at Lighthouse

4,992

School children attended BSO school concerts at Lighthouse

22,639

School children watched BSO school concerts, streamed from Lighthouse

Seckou Keita performing with Fiona Monbet and the BSO at African Rhapsodies - Photo credit: Callum Haslam

Collaborating with Our Partners

Lighthouse continues to forge partnerships with an ever-widening range of national and regional cultural organisations and artists to help realise artistic projects.

In doing so we drive economic activity worth millions of pounds, promoting the town and its facilities and enhancing the region's reputation as a beautiful and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

The cultural strategy for the region continues to evolve and Lighthouse has taken a central role in championing BCP Council's objectives to support arts and culture in Poole.

This year Lighthouse was incredibly proud to announce that our long-time friend and pantomime partner Chris Jarvis has agreed to become our Lead Patron.

"It's such an honour – Lighthouse has been part of my life for many years," said Chris. "In that time it has established itself as a beacon for high quality arts, culture and entertainment, not only in Poole but in the wider region. Our annual pantomime is a highlight of my year and we work very hard all year round to make it a highlight for our wonderful audiences as well."

Chris has been joined by Poole's record-breaking solo round-the-world yachtswoman Pip Hare, who said: "I am honoured to be asked to become a Patron of Lighthouse. As one of the largest cultural organisations outside of London, Lighthouse has been instrumental in putting Poole on the map and focussing the attention of the wider world on our wonderful town."



Lighthouse Patrons Chris Jarvis and Pip Hare with Elspeth McBain - photo credit: Richard Budd

PARTNERS

Activate Performing Arts
Arts University Bournemouth
Arts Council England
Arts Development Company
BCP Council
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra



Big Sing - photo credit: Jayne Jackson Photography

Bournemouth Symphony Chorus
Pavilion Dance South West
Soundstorm

NETWORKS

Arts Marketing Association
The Audience Agency
BCP Cultural Hub
BFI Film Audience Network
British Association of Concert Halls
Creative Health Strategy Dorset
Cultural Compact (BCP)
Dance Along the South Coast
Digital Culture Network
Dorset Chamber
Dorset Theatre Promoters' Consortium

Film Hub South West
Future Arts Centres
Julie's Bicycle
Music Beyond Mainstream
PooleBID
Regional Engagement Network
What Next? Dorset

COLLABORATIONS

Bournemouth & Poole College
Dorset Blind Association
Dorset School of Acting
Forest Holme Bereavement Cafe
NHS Pain Management Group
National Theatre Connections
Original Music Awards

Poole Leisure Painters
Poole Maritime Trust, with RNLI,
Dolphin Centre, Poole BID developing
an exhibition to mark Poole's part in
Dunkirk 1940, the largest evacuation in
military history
Poole Museum
Poole Pride (with Dolphin Centre,
Bournemouth University, AUB,
BourneFree, HSBC)
Poole Society of Young Musicians
Stagewise
Swish
Wessex Youth Orchestra
Young Drummer of the Year



“

Very attentive and friendly service from the amazing staff.

J Tew, Lighthouse customer (Google review)

“

Really lovely venue with friendly helpful staff.

M Palmer, Lighthouse customer (Google review)

“

Staff are friendly, professional and helpful.

Lesley W, Lighthouse customer (Google review)

Creating a Welcoming Experience

Lighthouse is about much, much more than the performances on its stages. An iconic building, it is many things to many people – a place that artists, audiences, and the whole community can feel part of and proud of.

We are continually looking at how people interact with the building, and what it feels like for customers and artists alike – as well as staff and volunteers – to arrive at Lighthouse, come into the building and use it. Everything from buying a ticket, or a cup of coffee, to finding a dressing room and walking on stage, it's all part of how Lighthouse is experienced by the people who come here.

To improve the experience for everyone who visits Lighthouse, a Customer Journey Action Group was formed from across the organisation's different teams, with the aim of understanding what our visitors want

and to find new ways to make the experience the best it can be. The Group has made changes across our entire customer journey, covering everything from booking tickets online, and our service for schools and groups, to the actual visit on the night.

To help first-time visitors, we created a walk-through video fronted by Josh Ward, a former Ticket Office colleague. The video highlights the customer experience of approaching Lighthouse, buying a ticket, using the facilities and settling in to watch a show. This has now been placed on our website.

Plans are also underway to make significant changes to the building over the next year, all informed by what customers are telling us via our daily surveys. There will be a major improvement to the first floor, with new furniture that has been funded very kindly by a private donor. The bar and lounge area outside of the Cinema and Sherling Studio will also be transformed, with the intention of raising the profile of the two venues and to create a distinctive and welcoming social space.

Of course, how existing and prospective customers interact with Lighthouse is about more than moving around the physical building and this year Lighthouse successfully applied to participate in JP MorganChase's Force For Good programme, a global initiative which supports charitable organisations across the world by providing new digital solutions and consultancy to increase their community impact. Our project will use the latest technology to improve our entire online booking experience, enabling our customers to arrange their entire visit in one go, including ordering interval drinks, pre-booking a meal in The Beacon before the show and purchasing show merchandise and bespoke drink and food offers.



Photo credit: Jayne Jackson Photography



86%

of our customers would highly recommend Lighthouse to their family and friends

(This number is our Net Promoter Score®, a key customer satisfaction indicator. As a comparison, Apple has a score of 61).

Google

4.6/5

Google Users Rating

Tripadvisor

4/5

Tripadvisor Rating



12,765

people were welcomed for business events and private functions



These kids will be playing in big bands in the next ten years.

Mike Dolbear, founder of Young Drummer of the Year



In 2024-25 we delivered

13,515

engagements with young people,
aged up to 19yrs

3,270

engagements with adults,
aged 20yrs and above

2,380*

engagements with members of
local community groups

(* estimated)

Unlocking the Creative Potential of Young People

Young talent takes centre stage at Lighthouse where the next generation is able to access a range of opportunities designed to nurture creativity and provide vital career routes into the industry by opening up access to good quality careers advice and vital hands-on experience for the jobs of today.

Nationally, at least 3.5 million jobs (about one in 14 of total UK jobs) are in the creative industries that contribute £10.8 billion a year to the local economy. Yet young people can often be dissuaded from pursuing careers in the industry.

To help address this, Lighthouse played an active role in this year's Discover! Creative Careers Week, a call to arms to the creative sector to solve its own skills shortages by providing young people with the chance to learn about careers in the industry through direct encounters in cultural workplaces.



Orchestral Training Day – photo credit: Jayne Jackson Photography

We welcomed lively and interested groups of young people from St Edward's Poole, Autism Unlimited, Poole High School, Young Carers and Dorset School Of Acting. They were able to meet technicians and experiment with light and sound, as well as enjoy a walk-through on the set of the smash hit musical *Pride and Prejudice** (*sort of), which was playing to packed houses in the Theatre.

We also collaborated with Dorset Careers Hub on a new event called Teacher Encounter, a new initiative at which educators heard from Patric Gilchrist, a director of David Pugh Ltd, the production company presenting *Pride and Prejudice** (*sort of), who spoke about the importance of encouraging young people into the industry.

Career progression routes are rarely more evident than at the Zildjian Young Drummer of the Year contest hosted at Lighthouse for the last three of its 23-year history. Now sponsored by the world's oldest manufacturer of musical instruments, several previous winners have gone on to forge stellar careers in music, most notably perhaps Stormzy drummer Matty Brown who returned this year as a judge.

"I was 15 when I won it and it absolutely gave me the confidence to do the things that I'm doing now," he said as Jack Manders was announced the winner... on his 16th birthday, the last day he could qualify to be in the competition!

In a first for Lighthouse, a new Work Experience Day saw 15 Year 10 pupils from local schools get a taste of the different jobs that people do in our organisation, learning about stage effects and how different performance spaces are used. We also offered ongoing work experience opportunities to young people throughout the year, providing invaluable industry experience.

Lighthouse also collaborated with a number of national partners to provide young people with opportunities



We provided

3,738

discounted tickets for school children

and experiences and remains a key venue for the Shakespeare Schools Festival as well as NT Connections, the National Theatre's annual festival of youth theatre, in which 126 young people from Dorset Drama Academy, Poole High School, Dorset School of Acting, Oasis Youth Theatre, Swanage School and Mayflower Youth Theatre performed five new plays on our stages over three days.

No less electrifying, in another first, 60 of the region's most talented young musicians came together in the uniquely inspirational Orchestral Training Day organised by Poole Society for Young Musicians with the help of the BSO's Calleva Assistant Conductor, Enyi Okpara.

The regular programme of Lunchtime Recitals in the Sherling Studio gave recent graduates from the prestigious Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance the chance to perform to an appreciative audience, in many cases marking their professional debuts.

Our pantomime also played a key role in providing opportunities for new talent through well attended open auditions for the young ensemble cast. Corben Heward-Mills, a student at LeAF Studio, who successfully auditioned for *Sleeping Beauty*, so impressed with his talent and skill that he was invited back to join the principal cast in this year's production of *Dick Whittington*.

Hundreds of young people also visited Lighthouse each month to develop their talents through performing arts courses offered by Dorset School of Acting and Stagewise.

“

Lighthouse provides a space for creation, whatever that may be, a community play or careers! You couldn't think of a better place for an internship.

Aoife Kelly, Marketing Intern



Students from Poole High School taking part in Discover! Creative Careers Week— photo credit: Lindsey Harris

Lighthouse Academy

Lighthouse continues to build upon its industry reputation for high quality, hands-on training and learning, largely through the work of Lighthouse Academy where young people are able to find opportunities to engage with a wide range of art forms while developing their skills for a career in the cultural industries.

Alongside a rolling programme of visiting artists, workshops and pre- and post-show talks, we continue to develop and produce courses designed to support young people into creative careers, off- and on-stage.

- Young Technicians is a structured 12-week course offering a direct career pathway into the technical team at Lighthouse in which young people aged 13 to 19 are mentored in technical expertise. Thanks to generous funding awarded by The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Lighthouse was able to offer more bursary spaces than ever before to aspiring young technicians. Lighthouse would also like to thank James Smith for running the courses and sharing his 20 years of professional experience with the young trainees.



Lighthouse Technical Apprentice Sam Vincent

- In January, we worked with the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) to pilot a new Copper Award, created to recognise the achievements of initial entrants in the industry by engaging them in introductory training into backstage jobs. The course also ran at the Southbank Centre in London as part of its Technical Academy, ensuring that opportunities were there for young people both in the South West and London.
- Young Writers offers free creative writing workshops for young people aged seven to 18 in a safe, supportive environment, where they can share work and give and receive feedback in a respectful way. This year, a poem by one of our Young Writers was selected for inclusion in a new anthology, Poetry Escape – Voices from the UK.
- Our first intake of Young Producers worked on the inaugural Poole Pride; and planning continues for an aspirational course for Young Performers.

We continue to support paid internships in the Marketing team and are always delighted when we see interns build on their training and find employment elsewhere in the sector. Our recent trainee, Aoife Kelly used the experience she gained at Lighthouse to secure a marketing role at Sinfonia Smith Square in London.

Finally, following a performance of Coming To England attended by more than 90 young people from our partner school Longfleet Primary, we delivered 82 Arts Awards – a record!

KICKSTARTING CAREERS

Having recently graduated from AUB with a BA (Hons) Event Management, Alex Southwell reflects on her experience in the first intake of Lighthouse Young Producers.



"It was really good. I extended my stay to 12 weeks and had an amazing time. We worked on several different projects doing a huge range of things, but the main thing was building up to what was the first ever Poole Pride. That was a massive thrill because to be actively and creatively involved with something that means so much to so many people was really special. It really mattered.

For me, the big difference between anything I'd done before and Young Producers was working in a professional environment. I had experience of student projects but there was always this understanding that we were just learning. In the real world, working with people who do this all the time, excellence is expected, and you have to deliver.

The whole experience at Lighthouse made me more certain than ever that this is the world I want to work in. What I liked about it was that we were able to say what we hoped to get out of the course and then our programme was tailored to suit that. I drew so much confidence from the experience; it was entirely positive. It was hard work, but I've always felt that the more you put in the better outcome you will enjoy."



“

The local music scene was hugely important for myself when I was a teenager... I felt supported and encouraged by the whole artistic community there.

PJ Harvey, speaking in a special video at the Original Music Awards 2025

Supporting Dorset's Creative Community

The ripple effect created by the Covid pandemic continues to be felt and one of the legacies of that time is the Sanctuary artist development programme.

Launched in 2020 in response to the challenges then faced by local artists, Sanctuary is now an established feature of summer at Lighthouse when the Sherling Studio is made available as an artistic development space. It offers participating artists and companies time and space, giving them room to think, dream, play, experiment, stumble, succeed, refine, and create.

This year we supported 126 artists in residency, including bursaries to cover travel, accommodation and living expenses, working on projects such as the critically acclaimed *Fort* that was developed in part at Lighthouse in Sanctuary and explored teenage friendships and

the experience of growing up in rural Dorset. Written by former Lighthouse Young Writers facilitator Tabitha Hayward and directed by her successor Rohan Gotobed of Dorsetborn, it returned later in the year as part of a regional tour.

Other artists who took part in Sanctuary included Angel Exit working on a prospective early years show *Betty and the Yeti*; *Alternative Crackers*, Michele O'Brien's contemporary theatre piece incorporating physical theatre, gesture, dance, puppetry and music; and our first international guests the Queer/feminist Lunar Collaborative, from New Zealand, who spent three days telling stories, writing and painting as they explored ideas in search of their next creative project.

We were also able to welcome back the inspirational artist Dave Young, aka The Shouting Mute, to continue work on *Social Media Meltdown*, his latest project with *Diverse City*, that he hopes will tour schools and theatres. Co-created with children and inspired by their relationship with social media and its impact upon their mental health, the work will be performed using eye-gaze technology, combining storytelling, poetry and original music.

"It's about people having adventures in that space and how technology can drive equality," says Dave.

For emerging writers, the PIPELINE partnership with Dorset Scriptwriters has been a great success and this year we proudly hosted the premiere of *Pot Licker*, one of the pieces showcased in the very first PIPELINE session, at Lighthouse as the first date of a UK tour.

Launched in 2023, PIPELINE reveals new writing to a live audience with the aim of empowering writers by giving them a platform to see and hear their work before it goes into production. Actors present rehearsed script-in-hand performances of curated works in front of an

audience that is invited to pay what they can to contribute to covering actors' expenses. The idea has blossomed and the programme now includes masterclasses with established writers and special events in which writers are set a challenge and have to produce a piece to a deadline then perform it.

Lighthouse is the home of *Live and Unheard*, a monthly club night for original grassroots music presented in collaboration with *Hangover Hill*, a Dorset based recording studio whose owners, Mel Payne and Matt Black, are dedicated to supporting original live music.

Live and Unheard has been instrumental in providing a focus for emerging bands and songwriters. Giving unsigned talent an opportunity to perform in a world class venue with state-of-the-art sound and lighting – and be paid – has been an invaluable experience for dozens of performers both local and from further afield. And there's a clear progression with one band selected to open for chart-topping singer songwriter Jake Bugg; while many others have been honoured at the Original Music Awards hosted at Lighthouse.



PJ Harvey – photo credit: Steve Gullick



126

artists supported
through our
Sanctuary
programme



89%

of Sanctuary artists
were from Dorset

(*112 of 126
participating artists)



“

Having grown up in Poole and been subject to homophobic and transphobic abuse on its streets throughout those years, Poole's first ever Pride was a huge moment for me and many of my friends. It's a great place for LGBTQ+ people to network, make friends, and build community, and its effects resonate all through the year.

Sukie Baker, aka Thorn

| Building Communities

Lighthouse has a lengthy track record of providing a wide range of opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds across our community, from watching inspiring, entertaining and thought-provoking performances, to participating in high quality cultural activities.

Our audiences are engaged, curious and eager to get closer to the artists, the creation process and the ideas we present, but we continue to challenge ourselves to develop new connections and build relationships with under-represented communities.

This year we were proud to host the first ever Poole Pride in celebration of the LGBTQ+ identities and inclusive of all sections of the community. In the interests of creating a fully accessible event in a safe and welcoming space with a programme of free activities and performances, it was decided Poole Pride would be entirely building-based.



Poole Pride 2025

Audiences of all ages enjoyed a day of performances, talks, workshops and fun activities – including the Proud Pooches dog show – followed by an evening party.

In addition, a month-long exhibition in the Gallery of work inspired by the archive of pioneering gay activist John Chesterman, and a week-long Queer film festival, saw Lighthouse working closely with Arts University Bournemouth, while the commissioned Queer As Dorset artwork found artist curator Paul Sammut making an illustrated Queer history of Dorset.

Poole Pride also marked our first exploration of podcasting, providing an opportunity to pilot new ways to talk about what Lighthouse does.

More than ever, it's our aim that Lighthouse is the creative hub of our community, ensuring the region is culturally vibrant, and that residents, visitors and those who work here can access quality arts and culture within their neighbourhood.

Lighthouse also continues to be a popular meeting place for many well-established community groups including Dorset Blind Association's Lighthouse Club, and Poole Leisure Painters, who have met in the building since their foundation in 1981. Each month, we welcome hundreds of people from these groups, all using our building to meet up, create friendships, socialise and share their interests and passions.

We believe that Lighthouse has a key role in responding to the needs of our local community, actively encouraging the creation of diverse and welcoming communities who can meet in our spaces. To help us develop new connections and strengthen existing collaborations, plans are now under way to fund our first Community Connector role at Lighthouse.



Poole Pride – photo credit: Richard Budd



Poole Pride – photo credit: Richard Budd



“

Dave works from an iPad... that mainstream technology can be used by disabled people means it is less expensive, it removes the 'disability tax'. The Studio... is not a big space, but if it wasn't there it would leave a massive hole.

Eilis Davis, Diverse City

Making What We Do Accessible to All

Lighthouse continues to actively confront inequality in the arts and we're building on our decisive strategic plan for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB).

In September, Poole-based disabled artist Dave Young's company The Shouting Mute were at Lighthouse as part of the Sanctuary artist development residency. With director Ellis Davis from disabled-led charity Diverse City, musician Harry Bassett and a team of local actors and producers, he worked on Social Media Meltdown, a new performance piece highlighting the positive power and potential dangers of social media based on real-life experiences.

"I formed The Shouting Mute as a CIC to help disabled people gain access to the cultural sector," Dave explains.



Poole Pride – photo credit: Richard Budd

"We believe that everyone should have a voice and be represented on stage and on screen. Working with young people on Social Media Meltdown during the research and development, allows me as a writer to listen and learn what young people are saying on the topic and deeply embed that into the creative process."

Our programme of audio described and captioned performances continues, as well as touch tours, with BSL-interpreted performances of our family pantomime Sleeping Beauty.

Including pantomime and orchestral performances, as well as cinema, we offer relaxed performances for anyone who might find our usual environment a little overwhelming. This includes people with sensory, communication and learning sensitivities, or anyone who would feel more at ease in a less formal theatre environment.

Thanks to a generous donation from NFU Mutual and an individual donor, the future of dementia friendly film screenings at Lighthouse has been ensured for the coming year, enabling us to provide a safe and comfortable environment tailored to the unique needs of individuals with dementia.

We have used technology to greatly improve the experience for customers booking tickets for accessible performances.

Customers with access needs can now sign-up to an online Lighthouse account, through which they can record their requirements and can easily access the seats they need when booking. So far, 3,367 customers have signed up for this service, an increase of 60% over the last year.



3,367

audience members have told us about their individual access needs to enable bespoke online booking, a 60% increase on last year

(2023/24: 2,100 members)



We issued

3,402

free companion seats for disabled patrons, a 24% increase on last year

(2023/24: 2,726)



“

We filmed multiple scenes for our latest movie on location at Lighthouse over two days and had a wonderfully smooth experience. We honestly couldn't recommend Lighthouse enough...

Dan Pringle, BH_Movies

Working with Regional Business

In partnership with the region's leading multi-venue arts organisation, local businesses are fast realising that Lighthouse is uniquely placed to help them achieve their commercial objectives.

This has been a year of two halves in terms of how Lighthouse works with local business. Having taken time to fully scrutinise our income generation strands and understand how we might open up new opportunities, we completely reviewed our identity in terms of how people in the business world felt about us.

At the heart of this was the idea that successfully working with business means our relationship is not about corporate philanthropy, it's about bringing in businesses that want to be part of what Lighthouse can offer.



Our Concert Hall transformed for the Forest Holme Strictly Extravaganza

Simultaneously, a great deal of work has been done to better understand our loyal audiences – who they are, where they live, what they like. Armed with that, and also putting in some work to understand the business community, our Development team has been able to approach potential partners whose brand aligns well with Lighthouse and who could benefit from our audiences learning how we work together.

Every business we work with is exclusive to us within their industry, and businesses have responded positively to these new partnerships, taking Lighthouse seriously and credibly as a business partner, and understanding that we have opportunities for them that they wouldn't find anywhere else.

For example, we've been able to position Tops Day Nurseries in front of our extensive family audience with visibility front of house, advertising on the safety curtain in the Theatre and on screens in the Cinema, as well as through all printed collateral and social media marketing. Equally, we made PRC Streamline our official taxi partner and they offer a 10% discount on journeys to and from Lighthouse that we promote to hundreds of thousands of people who come here – a whole new audience base for them.

We have amazing events facilities and an incredible events team that is very accommodating and flexible. Last year, we hosted 50 events for businesses, groups and charities, building a very important income stream. Hires are discounted as one of the benefits for members of Lighthouse Business Club.

Alongside our work with the business community, we have galvanised our relationships with individual donors and, working closely with the Programming team, have established a set of community engagement projects including dementia-friendly film screenings, Poole Pride and Young Writers.

We have incredibly generous donors, some make regular contributions, some give money for specific projects, others donate to our core funding for projects that will benefit the whole community. The greatest example is the significant personal donation we received from Mr Spyros Niarchos, a businessman and renowned patron of the arts, to make the building more accessible and comfortable for everyone who uses it. This will fund the much-needed replacement of the furniture in the first floor foyer.

Our Lighthouse Friends are a vital link to our audiences, and we work hard to understand who they are. It's always a joy to welcome them to special events throughout the year.

Most recently, we have refocussed our approach to funding from Trusts and Foundations. They are a bedrock of the cultural sector, but in an increasingly difficult climate for arts funding, successful applications are becoming more difficult than ever. We have received a grant from the Talbot Village Trust to fund the appointment of our first Community Connector – a person whose job it is to go out and understand our disengaged areas and listen to what would bring them to Lighthouse. This evidence-based approach is exactly what Trusts need in order to assess funding applications and will enable us to redefine some of our offering to the community.

| Our People

Lighthouse values the people who work and volunteer here and is rewarded with a loyal and dedicated work force whose excellence is frequently noted by audiences, visiting artists and business clients alike.

We are proud to have retained our Investors In People accreditation and, in line with our core values, our staff continue to receive training and mentoring to ensure the customer experience we offer is second-to-none. Ensuring we have a healthy workforce has become a major-priority post pandemic and Togetherness, the staff wellness programme introduced in June 2021, has gone from strength to strength. We now have three Mental Health First Aiders who provide vital support to our team members when they need it.



Lighthouse – photo credit: Jayne Jackson Photography

This year we carried out a comprehensive staff survey to understand the views of our team and to encourage feedback and suggestions from everyone who works at Lighthouse.

Comparison with the national Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) national Good Work Survey shows that Lighthouse compares favourably with national trends, exceeding the national average in 71% of survey areas, including management support, staff communications and staffing capacity.



55

**Full Time Equivalent Staff
2024–25**

(53 Full Time Equivalent Staff 2023-24)

91

Casual Staff 2024-25

(73 Casual Staff 2023-24)

18

Volunteers 2024-25

(19 Volunteers 2023-24)



Above all, I need a happy, welcoming place to work and that is what I have found at Lighthouse. Ever since I first came here, I have felt part of a family and been welcomed with open arms.

Hatty Greenway, Ticket Sales Assistant

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Lighthouse volunteers perform a range of duties from greeting audiences and showing them to their seats, to selling programmes and ice creams, arranging interval drinks, clearing up, packing away and restocking for the next performance. They're a visible presence during performances and if there are any issues they're quick to alert the stewards or duty managers.

"To many people they are the face of Lighthouse, and I don't know where we'd be without them," says Volunteer Co-ordinator Fay Gilland.

"Volunteering is a collegiate activity that offers a social connection with others," says Lighthouse Chief Executive, Elspeth McBain. "For the organisation, it helps us to keep our costs down, which is more essential than ever, and it also enables us to provide additional levels of friendly customer support, which gives our audiences an even better visitor experience. We know that volunteering is rewarding on many levels, and the contribution that our volunteers make is essential to our business model."

Our Building: Towards Net Zero

We believe that the global environmental situation is of urgent concern, and we are taking action now to reduce our environmental impact across all areas of our operation.

Our mission is to work towards Lighthouse becoming a net zero venue by 2030, by changing what we do and using the arts to inspire change.

To achieve this, we worked with Michael Holden, a leading environmental consultant, to find innovative solutions to reducing our carbon footprint, across our entire energy infrastructure.

Having made significant gains in the first phase of our domestic LED lighting replacement project, phase two is now underway and further savings are anticipated. For now, 90% of the front of house foyer lighting has now been converted to LED and this has dramatically reduced power usage.

REDUCING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

5%

Saving in our yearly water consumption

(Compared to 2023/24)

90%

of our Front of House lighting converted to LED

And in the interests of audience comfort, as well as for environmental reasons, we are also replacing old toilet cisterns with a fast-flush alternative that is estimated will save 234 cubic metres of water a year – roughly the equivalent of the annual domestic water use for a six-person household*.

Since the 2015-16 capital project, the building is using 80% less than the industry benchmark† for thermal energy performance and 68% less than the benchmark for electrical energy performance.

Wherever possible, we are using new digital solutions to help reduce our environmental impact. An example is our new payroll system SAGE, that has transformed our paper based system into a purely digital one, saving time and resources.

MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

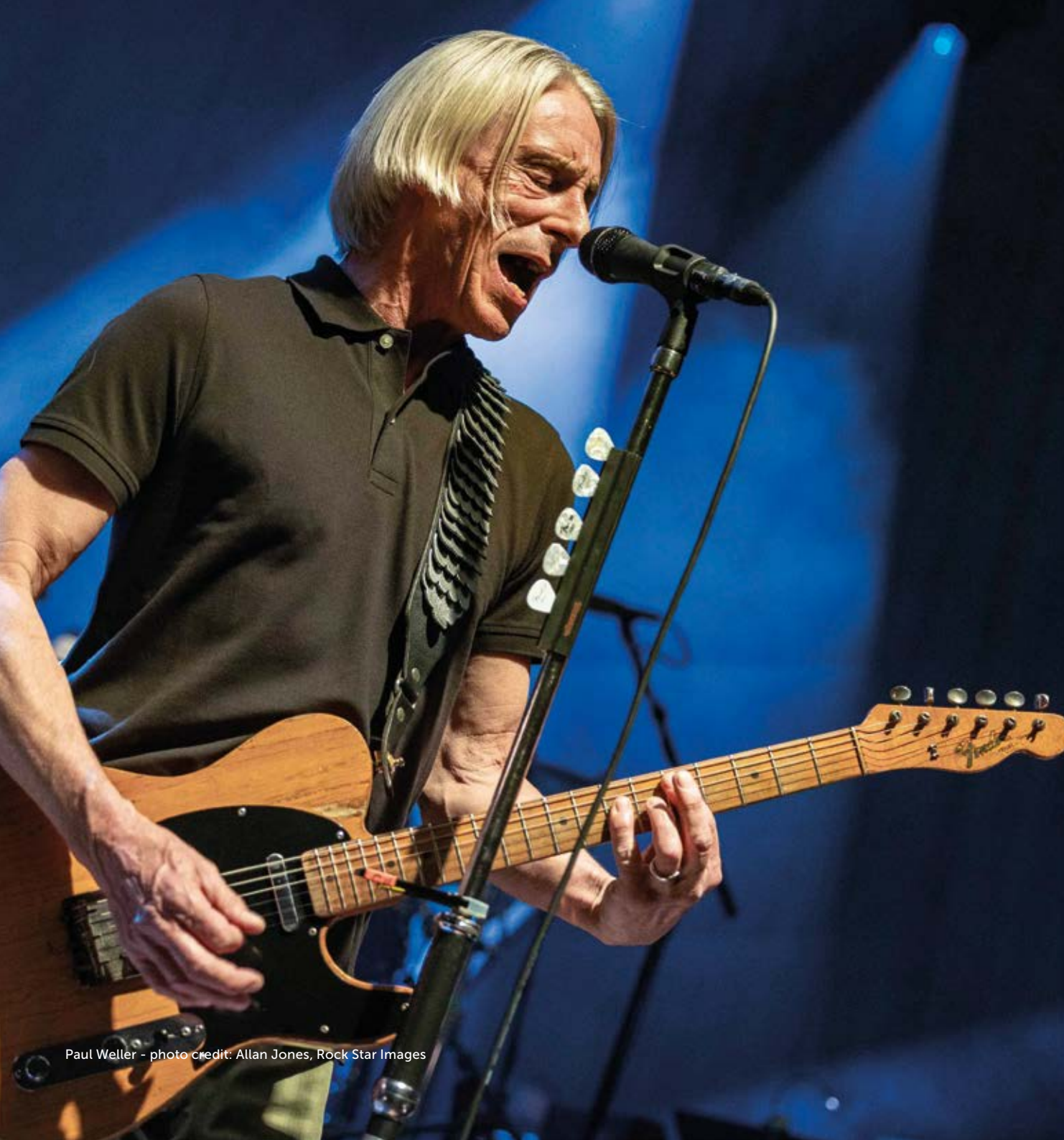
For nearly 50 years our iconic, award-winning* building has been a local landmark and an invaluable facility for the Poole community and the wider region.

Naturally, the focus of our activity remains the building itself with all the attendant challenges of maintaining and improving our historic home. The annual maintenance programme is more complex each year, partly due to the increasing age of the building, but also our commitment to achieving the highest levels of audience experience.

As a result, the programme of updating technical equipment in our spaces is ongoing with improvements including a cutting-edge digital till system to reduce service speeds and enable a fully joined-up retail offer to audiences.

* South West Community Building Category, 2018 Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards.

* Bryce Energy Services
« The Consumer Council for Water
‡ Set by Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)



Paul Weller - photo credit: Allan Jones, Rock Star Images



Kicking off a short British tour in Poole... this was an impressively rich and high-energy performance, a banquet of music from a spiky elder statesmen who remains rightly wary of embracing his national treasure status.

Stephen Dalton, Review Of Paul Weller at Lighthouse, Uncut Magazine



57%

of our audiences visit from the BCP catchment area

(Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole)
Dorset 31% , New Forest 5% , Other 7%



20,455

people booked an event at Lighthouse for the first-time

29%

of our tickets were sold to first-time bookers

| Our Audiences

According to its NPS* score of 86 for customer satisfaction Lighthouse is outperforming huge brands such as Apple (61) and John Lewis (68) – incredible! It demonstrates how much our audiences love us and like coming here, but there's always more work to be done and capacity to be filled.

Lighthouse is already loved by those who know us, and we work hard to continue providing our loyal audiences with great entertainment and a high quality experience, while also aiming to engage those who may not know us as well, to make them curious about what we do and surprise them when they visit.



Photo credit: Jayne Jackson Photography

The central desire is to become a genuinely inclusive venue, ensuring that our entire community has access to the unique and vibrant experiences that we offer.

Nearly 30% of our audience benefitted from a subsidised or discounted ticket and our average ticket price across the entire year was only £22.97.

New data tools have been introduced to help us understand who our audiences are and where they visit us from. This research is now being used to create a new Audience Development Plan that will provide a strategy to reach new audiences, provide our existing audiences with a bespoke and high-quality customer experience, and ensure that all parts of our community can enjoy and benefit from what we do.

A data-driven plan for growth in specific geographical areas is emerging around clearly identified art forms by boosting awareness of what we do to targeted audiences.

There's a Lighthouse for everyone – no matter what their interests.

This year has seen The Beacon Cafe benefit from a welcome refresh with warmer lighting and bistro seating. The Lantern Bar, a purpose-built bar on the top floor, has been enthusiastically embraced by audiences, alleviating pressure on the first floor bar at busy times and generally improving our service to customers.

*Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a customer satisfaction metric that measures how likely customers are to recommend a company, product, or service to others.



26,800

Facebook followers

8,744

Instagram followers

12,600

X followers



1,951,496

Website visits

An increase of 22% on last year
(2023/24: 1,589,776)

1,141,315

Website users

An increase of 19% on last year
(2023/24: 956,158)

The Money

After a positive and wholly post-pandemic year in 2023-24, financial hopes were high this year. Unfortunately, it was soon apparent that the wider macro-economic climate would make this a challenging 12 months.

The artistic programme remains as strong as it has ever been, and we have been delighted to see the trend continue of audiences eager to experience the one-of-a-kind live events Lighthouse does so well. We treasure the faith that audiences place in the work we present. Nevertheless, the cost of presenting this work is growing exponentially, and in a climate where core funding continues to be under pressure, the outlook can be challenging.

We have responded by bolstering our Development team, which has been one of the clear success stories of the year, as has growing our audience attendance. Moreover, we invested in the secondary areas of the organisation to ensure the audience experience remains of the highest calibre, especially with six figure increases in NI ERS (employer's contribution), and further increases in utilities costs.

We are immensely grateful to all those who have supported Lighthouse in the last year (see the graphic, right).

Lighthouse plays a key role at the centre of our community, and our Creative Engagement team goes from strength to strength. The opportunities the team are delivering are at the heart of what we, as a charity, seek to provide.

Lighthouse remains a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) of Arts Council England for the period 2023-2027 and we are grateful for their support and endorsement.

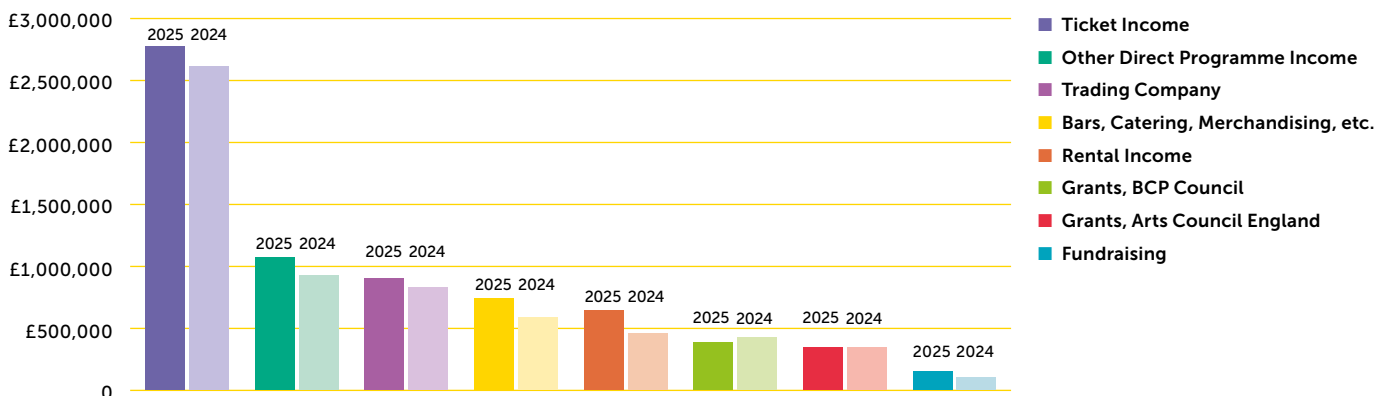
We remain a key asset to our other major funder, BCP Council, whose support enables our building to be maintained and our community programme to flourish.

Pete Wilson, Head of Finance

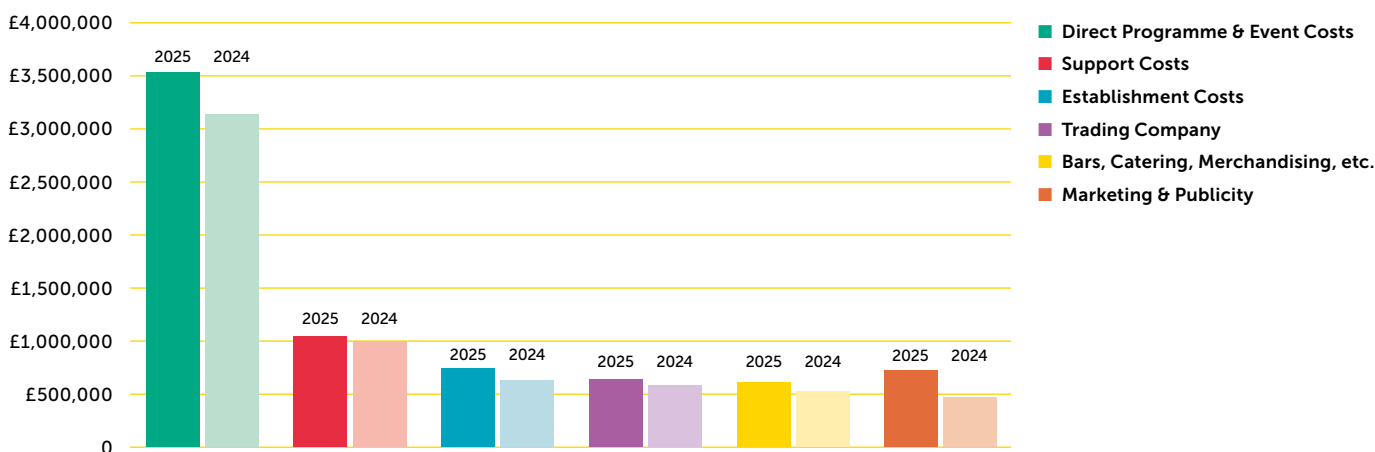
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	2025	2024	2023
Earned Income	5,240,890	4,610,879	3,849,858
Ticket Sales	2,778,163	2,613,790	2,161,136
Secondary Income	743,211	592,298	489,510
Grants	736,410	784,510	794,155
Donations / Fundraising	152,281	107,950	41,516
Total Unrestricted Expenditure	7,254,319	6,245,341	5,455,458
Unrestricted Surplus / (Deficit)	(94,648)	36,971	(19,125)
No. Tickets Sold	201,800	181,373	161,394

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



Thanks

Lighthouse is a major community asset, a cultural jewel in the BCP region and intrinsic to the development of artists, both current and those yet to start their creative journey. We want to thank all the trusts, foundations, companies and individuals who have supported Lighthouse with donations, grants and gifts.

FUNDERS

We are extremely grateful for the funding and continuing support of our major stakeholders.

- Art Council England
We are proud to be a National Portfolio Organisation
- BCP Council

CORPORATE PARTNERS

- Arts University Bournemouth
- Breeze Motor Group
- The Dolphin
- Even Keel Solutions
- HSBC
- Ocean Automotive
- PRC Streamline
- Tops Day Nurseries
- Trethowans

DONORS

- Mrs Lyn Glass
- Mr & Mrs Philip and Jane Green
- Mrs Renny Gye
- Mr & Mrs Mike and Pam Jeffries

- Mr & Mrs Ralph and Janet Marshall
- Mr & Mrs John and Maggie Mills
- Susan Gostick and Dai Smith

And thank you to our donors who wish to remain anonymous.

BEST FRIENDS

- Mr Ralph Marshall
- Mrs Maggie Mills
- Mr John Mills
- Mrs Lyn Glass
- Mr David Tibbs
- Mr David Middleton
- Mr John Challinor
- Mr Robin Loader
- Mr Philip Green
- Professor Christopher Wood
- Mrs Pam Warren
- Mr Dai Smith
- Mr Thomas Morrissey
- Mrs Colleen Hillier
- Mr Alan Murphy

GREAT FRIENDS

- Mr Colvin Aldous
- Mrs Judy Appleton
- Stuart Armon
- Rev Paul Baird
- Mr Robert Barron
- Mrs Valerie Battrick
- Mrs Patricia Brandwood
- Mrs Hannah Butterworth
- Mr Karl Bygrave
- Dr Peter Chandler

- Ms Lynne Chellingworth
- Lucinda Coombs
- Professor Jonathan Crabtree Parker
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- Mr Tony Ferguson
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- Mrs Amanda Manton
- Dr Antoinette McAulay
- Mrs Elspeth McBain
- Mr Graeme Michel
- Mr David Middleton
- Mr Brian Miles CBE
- Mrs Susan Minchin
- Mrs Susan Mitchener
- Miss Sarah Morgan

- Mrs Jackie Nixon
- Mr Mark Noble
- Mrs Sali Pike
- Mrs Milly Roberts
- Mrs Jackie Roberts
- Mr Jonathan Russell
- Miss Sara St George
- Mr David Swift
- Mr David Tibbs
- Sharon Toft
- Mr James Tuhey
- Dr Janet Walker
- Mr Anthony Ward
- Mrs Pam Warren
- Ms Ruth Wharton
- Adrian Williams
- Mrs Cheryl Willis
- Mrs G J Wood
- Mr & Mrs D G Woodruff
- Mrs Helen Woods
- Mrs Katharine Woollard
- Mrs Doreen Wretham
- Mrs Anne Wright

TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

- Art Fund
- Bournefree
- The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- Talbot Village Trust
- The Theatres Trust

OUR COMMUNITY

Thanks to all the people within our community who have ensured that Lighthouse continues to thrive and serve our region's cultural strategy, particularly:

- Our Lighthouse staff team, for their work, warmth, humour and positivity.
- Our Trustees, who give their expertise and guidance freely.
- Our volunteers, who ensure that our audiences are welcomed.
- Our artists, whose work is our reason for being and makes our programme so vibrant and diverse.
- Our audiences, whose love of and support for culture is what drives our ambitions.
- Our funders, without whose financial support Lighthouse simply would not exist.
- Our suppliers, who keep our bars and café stocked, our equipment maintained and our building safe and inviting.
- Our clients, who hire our spaces and provide amazing cultural and business opportunities for our community.
- Our corporate sponsors, who support our work and value our contribution to the region.
- Our donors, who have generously supported us.



Birmingham Royal Ballet - BRB2 Mason King and Mailene Katoch in Swan Lake Pa de deux - photo credit: Johan Persson

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