

Lowther Brief Report 2016 /2017

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This is the fifth year of the Trust running Lowther Pavilion working in partnership under a SLA with Fylde Borough Council. Despite trading conditions in the arts being very difficult nationally I am pleased to report that the Trust have once again broken even financially whilst further developing the Artistic offering and the community use of the facilities.

1. Lowther Pavilion's redevelopment: - We have embarked on a bold redevelopment plan for the Pavilion and this year it saw us replacing all the seating in the Auditorium, replacing (with capital support from FBC) the roof over the main auditorium, strengthening the floor of the main auditorium, replacing the roof over the stage, flooring in one of the dressing rooms and redesigning the foyer with an new open plan box office. The enablement works that we have completed will allow us to proceed with future refurbishment. As with all old buildings refurbishment can uncover some nasty surprises and the Pavilion was certainly a challenge with Asbestos being found under the floor and in the ceiling covering. I am pleased to report that we were able to deal with these little issues and still reopen the building on schedule and keep the refurbishment costs on budget.

2. Staffing: - Staffing has been strengthened this year with the addition of a bar manager, two full time box office staff, and an administrator. We have also just appointed a digital marketing officer. We have replaced the Technical Manager who comes to the organization with great experience and expertise. Roger (General Manager) left the organization in August and has not been replaced. The board of Directors of the operating company have taken on the responsibility of programming and supporting the full time staff and from a precarious position after the Titanic Exhibition which was not a successful venture the new board of management have not only pulled the financial situation around but they have also improved programming at the venue. The operating Company will review this arrangement at six monthly intervals.

3. Volunteer Hours:- Volunteer engagement has increased significantly over the last 12 months; this is partly attributed to a change in the Friends of Lowther Pavilion structure and increase in their push to subscribe volunteers. We have also increased the variety and offer for volunteers across the business for a variety of duties and utilising the huge range of skill sets available. The figures for the year 2016-2017 do include notable gaps of volunteer hours due to the remedial and renovation works undertaken in quarter 2, this saw a reduction in business activity generally and thus the requirement of volunteers.

Volunteer hours for 16/17

- Q1 – 1232 Hours / 154 Working Days (£8,870.40 @ 7.20)
- Q2 – 468 hours / 58.5 Working Days (£3,369.30 @7.20)
 - N.b this period includes renovation period for seating and floor which extended for 5 weeks.
- Q3 – 1898 Hours / 237.25 Working Days (13,665.60 @7.20)
 - N.b this period includes the pantomime run.

- Q4 – 1152 hours or 144 Working Days (£8294.40 @ 7.20)
 - N.b this includes the maintenance period
- Total Volunteer Hours for the year 4750
 - Totalling 593.75 working days and £34,200 @7.20.

4. Session Usage:-

- Amateur Dramatics & Dance
 - $22+19+34+27 = 102$ Sessions - Approx. 408 hours
- Local Interest & Charity Groups
 - $7+4+10+8 = 29$ Sessions – Approx 116 hours
- Non Performance, Fairs & FBC Usage
 - $6+10+16+10 = 42$ Sessions – Approx 168 hours

Session usage for amateur dramatics & dance are stable with it set to rise in the next year with the return of groups such as NOGAL to Lowther who previously left for a variety of reasons including cost. Local Interest & Charity groups usage has risen significantly in the beginning of the 17/18 year and includes the dementia sing-a-long programme which have become a regular part of Lowther's community engagement programme. Additionally this includes charity fund raising events such as the Christies Charity, St. George's Day events and Equity Blackpool. Non-Performance usage (including FBC meetings) have remained relatively stable. All the figures above were effected by the renovation period in Q2 & Q3.

5. Traffic & Sales

There were 145 unique saleable public shows with 250 individual public events in the year April 1st 2016 to March 31st 2017; in total 8,674 unique customers and 41,054 individual tickets were issued for these performances.

N.b The above figure does not include any agency sales for Lytham Festival 2016, St. George's Day 2016, Southport Flower Show or Lytham Hall. The below includes all agency sales.

In total 43,463 individual tickets were sold through the Lowther Box Office for events across the financial year.

N.B Between the closure period and extended periods of event such as the Titanic Exhibition affecting the number of sellable events the figures appear to be in keeping with expected growth and development over 15/16.

In conclusion

Our refurbishment costs have reached the half million pound mark and we have funded these by public donation and the capital grant from FBC. We envisage the rest of the redesign costs to reach between £4 and £5 million and will raise some of this through public donation with the rest coming through grant funding.

The Trust is now embarking on several new ventures including the showing of films at Lowther and has successfully raised the finance to pay for the equipment to be purchased and fitted. This will give the Pavilion the opportunity to provide daytime screenings for the elderly, holiday screenings for young people and event broadcasting for the general public. This will also allow us to have more operational days throughout the year.

Lowther gardens (Lytham) Trust is now embarking on it's second five year SLA with Fylde BC and hopes that we will be able to continue the excellent working relationship we have with officers and members alike.