

Chipping Norton Town Council

Core Grant Impact Report

Review of the 2023–2026 Core Grant Agreement

Organisation: Chipping Norton Lido Ltd

Main contact: Claire Jarvis

Position: Director/Trustee

Email: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Date submitted: 15 September 2026

1. Organisation Overview

Please provide a brief overview of your organisation, its aims and the services or activities it provides.

Chipping Norton Lido Limited is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, run by a board of eight volunteer trustees. Having saved the pool from closure over 20 years ago, our charitable objective is to provide access to healthy recreation and sport for the benefit of the inhabitants of Chipping Norton and the surrounding villages, in the form of an open-air heated swimming pool and recreational area.

In short, we describe the Lido as a 'pool with a social conscience.'

The Lido comprises a 25m heated outdoor pool, a toddler pool, a café and changing rooms (leased from West Oxfordshire District Council and the Chipping Norton & District Volunteer Fire Brigade Charitable Trust) and extensive lawned grounds (leased from Oxfordshire County Council). We run a full summer season from April to September offering public swimming, swimming lessons for children and adults, activity classes (yoga, Pilates, tai chi, aquafit, swimfit and synchronised swimming), private hire and community events. In October 2025 we launched a new cold-water swimming and sauna season on autumn/winter weekends – our first venture into year-round opening.

We are a registered RLSS training centre, delivering National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) and First Aid at Work courses each year.

2. How the Town Council Grant Has Been Used

Please explain:

- How the Town Council's Core Grant has been spent over the last three years.

- Whether it has supported staffing, operational costs, projects, capital investment or specific programmes.
- Why this funding has been important to your organisation.

In each of the last three financial years (years ended 30 November 2023, 2024 and 2025) Chipping Norton Town Council has awarded the Lido an unrestricted grant of £5,000, as part of a three-year funding commitment from its Grants to Voluntary Bodies resources. The Council has remained our only source of public funding for core costs throughout this period.

The grant is unrestricted and is not explicitly tied to a single project. It is received into our general fund alongside swim admissions, café income, fundraising and donations, and is used to help meet the annual operating deficit that every open-air lido incurs – no open-air pool of our kind is profitable on swim admissions alone. In practice it is available to support core running costs such as staffing, energy, water, chemicals and routine maintenance, keeping the pool safe, open and affordable.

The funding also allows us to support activities that aim to widen access but which otherwise we might consider unaffordable, such as our subsidised weekly Over 60s swim sessions.

|In 2025 we used the funding to keep prices unchanged from the previous year.

In short, this funding has been important to us for three reasons: it directly plugs a gap in our unrestricted income that would otherwise have to be found through additional fundraising or price rises; it gives trustees the confidence to plan the season and invest in improvements, knowing this element of income is secure for three years; and it demonstrates to other funders (trusts, foundations and grant-makers) that the Lido has the ongoing backing of the local authority, which strengthens our other funding applications and match-funding cases.

3. Financial Sustainability

Please describe:

- Your principal sources of income.
- How financially sustainable the organisation is.
- Other grants, sponsorship or funding secured during the last three years.
- Any significant financial challenges experienced.

Please attach:

- Audited or independently examined accounts for the previous three financial years.
- Summary of income sources.
- Details of grants, donations and sponsorship received.

Principal sources of income

Pool trading income:

2023: £124,931

2024: £135,467

2025: £173, 656

The increase in 2025 is attributable to both good summer weather and income from the first six weeks of the new winter programme.

Café income:

2023: £33,349 (surplus £5,644)

2024: £32,827 (surplus £3,532)

2025: £48, 670 (surplus £3,639)

The surplus from the café, whilst not large, is used to support core operating costs.

Public fundraising:

Lottery, Auction of Promises, sponsored events, community initiatives such as Water for Water

See Annual Reports for individual details – variable each year

Feed-in Tariff income from solar PV installation:

2023: £2,639

2024: £3,582

2025: £4,029

Grants and donations, including Chipping Norton Town Council, Sport England and several local trusts (see below)

Investment income

Financial sustainability

As with all open-air pools, our trading operation runs at a deficit that varies significantly year to year depending on the weather; this is covered by fundraising, grants and donations. Our reserves policy aims to retain unrestricted operating reserves of around £35,000, enough to fund six months of working capital without fundraising.

Other grants, sponsorship or funding secured in the last three years

- Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (Phase 2): £87,000 capital award for solar PV and air source heating, installed over 2024–2025.
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme funding in collaboration with the Theatre Chipping Norton: c.£980–£1,010 per year each year.
- You Move (via WODC): c £45-95 per year, funding reduced-cost family swims for families receiving free school meals.
- Thrive: £325-1,000 per year, subsidising summer holiday swims for 8–16 year olds in families living in deprivation.
- Midcounties Co-op: £250 towards free coffees at subsidised Over 60s sessions.
- Ormonde Charitable Trust, Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust and Doris Field Charitable Trust: £1,000 each towards refurbishment of the accessible changing room (2025).
- HDH Wills Charitable Trust (£2,000) and David Cameron & Lord Chadlington's local fund (£1,000): towards a stretch tent (2024).

- Donations from the Water Hygiene Centre, the Churchill Car Show, the Chipping Norton Festival, and numerous individual and business donors and fundraisers.
- Pro bono/gift-in-kind support, including chemical handling training and winter chemicals from Complete Pool Controls (CPC), pump servicing from Ecojet, and branding support from Mark Making.

Significant financial challenges

- Persistently high and volatile energy costs (electricity and gas).
- Rising wage, chemical and materials costs.
- A significant increase in repairs and maintenance spend, including a £26,000 refurbishment of the accessible changing room in 2025.
- The financial risk of launching a new winter season, which trustees chose to underwrite from reserves while monitoring its performance.
- Continued weather-dependence of trading income, which makes annual results volatile.

Copies of our accounts for the years ended 30 November 2023, 2024 and 2025 are attached.

4. Community Impact

Please describe the activities delivered during the last three years and the difference they have made.

Where possible include measurable information such as:

- Visitor numbers
- Attendance figures
- Participants
- Educational programmes
- Outreach projects
- Events
- Volunteer involvement
- Testimonials or case studies

Please include any evidence that demonstrates the impact of your work.

Overall usage of the Lido, measured in customer visits, is growing:

- Total swims rose from 16,672 (2023) to 16,647 (2024) and then to a record 20,407 in 2025 (19,385 in the summer season plus 1,022 in the first six weeks of our new cold-water season) – a 16% increase in summer swims alone against 2024, nearly matching our best-ever year in 2018.
- Free toddler swims: 487 (2023), 452 (2024), 543 (2025).
- Children's swims: 4,179 (2023), 4,176 (2024), 4,972 (2025).
- Over-65s swims: 1,030 (2023), 1,213 (2024), 1,554 (2025).
- Over-60s free/subsidised sessions: 367 (2023), 368 (2024), 581 (2025).

- Activity sessions (yoga, Pilates, tai chi, aquafit, synchronised swimming, swimfit): 726 (2023), 353 (2024), 611 (2025).
- Sauna visits in our first cold-water season (2025 only): 731.

Educational and outreach programmes:

- Each year we offer a two-week summer holiday programme of children's swim lessons for beginners and improvers, alongside 1:1 lessons for both adults and children. We also offer weekly Swimfit classes for adults wishing to improve their swim technique and stamina.
- In 2026 we delivered a fourth consecutive year of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme with Theatre Chipping Norton, giving disadvantaged young people supervised, free access to the pool and food, before bringing families in to swim together
- We continued our You Move partnership (reduced-cost family swims for those on free school meals)
- Working with the local charity Thrive, we piloted half-price summer holiday swims for 8–16 year olds in 2025. In 2026 this programme has been rolled out more widely in the form of holiday swim passes for families in greatest need.
- Also working with Thrive and Chipping Norton School, we were able to provide our first training bursary to a 16 year-old NPLQ candidate to whom we were subsequently able to offer employment over the summer of 2026.
- We are a registered RLSS training centre, running NPLQ and First Aid at Work courses each year, providing training and work experience for young people. Each year we take on a number of newly qualified junior lifeguards and provide employment and additional training.

Events:

- Summer Solstice evening swim and barbecue
- Late Summer evening swims
- Annual Dog Swim
- Auction of Promises (2024 and 2026)
- 2025 Lido Birthday Party marking 21 years of independent, community-run operation, with an exhibition of photos and documents.
- 2025 Mayor's Charity Day
- Winter 2025 saw our first Christmas and New Year swim events.

Volunteer involvement:

The Lido is run by eight volunteer trustees, supported by a wider team of volunteers who give specialist expertise (for example in HR) and practical help with fundraising, events, maintenance and reception duties.

We are also working with an expert volunteer on the Lido archive in order to create an online and physical gallery charting the Lido's history since the fundraising campaign of the 1960s.

Sustainable Chipping Norton has been using the Lido as a venue for its parent wellbeing group for the past two years and has taken on the development and management of native tree and wildflower planting to create a nature-friendly 'zone' along the boundary of our lawns.

Testimonials:

THRIVE:

"Over the summer of 2026, Thrive worked with Chippy Lido and Chipping Norton secondary school to cover the cost of a lifeguarding course for a student who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to gain this qualification. We are proud to report that following their training course, the young lifeguard started work at the Lido with a skill that they can take anywhere with them to find work and gain access to new opportunities." August 2026

SUSTAINABLE CHIPPING NORTON:

"Our wildlife parent wellbeing group met up yesterday at the Lido and as always it was a delight to see what was new and developing. We weeded out the tall grasses area where opportunistic fat hen and spiny sowthistle were taking over, and planted in wild strawberries to help hold the soil in place. These were kindly donated to our Swap Shop on Friday so it was great to find the perfect spot for them, and imagine children foraging in the grasses in years to come. We were treated to this gorgeous leopard moth, reminding us how much this area is populated by creatures at night after we have all gone home. Fun to see our friendly willow bee bobbing away by the stretch tent, watching over all the pollinators visiting the flowers in the grass - thank you Liz and the team for opening this space for us." July 2026

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

"I discovered the Lido when I moved to Chipping Norton in 2020, and when it reopened after lockdown I headed straight there and have been going ever since. It is truly my 'mental health happy place' - the Lido is so unique and special, and somewhere I go not just for physical exercise but also for my mental health. When the team introduced cold water swimming I gave it a go and found it really helped my menopause symptoms such as anxiety and brain fog. I also loved the challenge of cold water immersion and made friends in the cold water season. A sew-on badge was the icing on the cake! A highlight this summer was swimming during the solar eclipse which felt very unique. The Lido is way more than a pool - it's a community hub and a calm escape in an increasingly noisy world."

"What a lovely lido. Visited and swam here for the first time today. Friendly and helpful staff, spotlessly clean facilities, and a super pool. Thank you so much, I'll definitely be back!"

"What a great asset this place is to Chipping Norton. A really lovely little find with water at 28°C perfect for a post August Bank holiday swim. There's plenty of picnic tables and seat and a large under cover area. The café has a great choice too with snacks and coffee, tea hot chocolate. Changing rooms are clean and private."

"Lovely little pools, a young child's one and a deeper one. My children loved it. Great little cafe."

“Thanks to everyone involved at Chippy Lido that had the vision to open for cold water swimming over the winter, it’s been amazing to be able swim outdoors still over the cold months.”

5. Benefits to Chipping Norton Residents

Please explain specifically how residents of Chipping Norton have benefited from your organisation.

Where possible include:

- Number or proportion of visitors from Chipping Norton
- Number of members from Chipping Norton
- Volunteer hours contributed by local residents
- School engagement
- Community events
- Activities supporting vulnerable or disadvantaged groups
- Any concessions or reduced-cost access for local residents

Please explain how these figures have been measured where applicable.

The Lido exists specifically for the benefit of the inhabitants of Chipping Norton and the surrounding villages – this is our core charitable object – and the great majority of our users live locally. Our entire trustee board is made up of Chipping Norton residents, and our AGM each summer is open to all users to discuss the report and accounts and raise ideas.

- Concessions: free or subsidised weekly sessions for over-60s (offered every year since we took over the pool); free toddler swims; half-price summer holiday swims for 8–16 year olds via Thrive; reduced-cost family swims via You Move for families receiving free school meals; free access days for young people via the HAF programme.
- Prices held flat between 2024 and 2025 despite rising costs, a deliberate decision to protect access for local families.
- School and youth engagement: regular ad hoc hire by local primary and secondary schools, cubs, guides, air cadets and church youth clubs.
- Volunteer hours: contributed by local trustees and volunteers across fundraising, HR support, maintenance, event support and volunteer reception.
- Support for vulnerable/disadvantaged groups: the HAF, You Move and Thrive partnerships specifically target children and families who could not otherwise afford to swim. We also provide a venue for Sustainable Chipping Norton’s Parents Wellbeing Group.

These figures are drawn from our online booking system, which records session type, concession category and attendance, and from records kept for each partnership programme (HAF, You Move, Thrive).

We also provide employment for around 30 people each year, the majority of whom are under 25, giving many young people their first paid work experience. We provide ongoing training free to all our lifeguards, enabling them to maintain their training logs and

therefore to secure employment at other pools. We also make First Aid at Work training available to all staff. Additional specialist training is provided in lifeguarding and first aid to all staff involved in our cold water swim season.

6. Partnership Working

Please provide examples of partnership working undertaken during the last three years, including work with:

- Schools
- Community organisations
- Voluntary groups
- Local businesses
- Health organisations
- Public bodies
- Other charities

Please describe the outcomes achieved.

- Schools and youth groups: local primary and secondary schools; regular hire by cubs, guides, air cadets and other youth groups.
- Community and voluntary organisations: Theatre Chipping Norton (HAF programme, four consecutive years); Thrive; You Move; Sustainable Chipping Norton (wildflower planting and a Parents' Wellbeing Group in 2025); Chippy Larder and The Branch.
- Local businesses: Whistler's Restaurant and the Red Lion pub, Long Compton (Water for Water and quiz-night fundraising); Jaffé & Neale (Lido Guide); the Churchill Car Show; Complete Pool Controls (pro bono training and winter chemicals); Ecojet (pump servicing); Mark Making (pro bono brand identity work); Still & Wild (provision of saunas on revenue share basis)
- Health organisations: the Water Hygiene Centre, our Legionella risk assessors, who also provide pool-plant training.
- Public bodies: Chipping Norton Town Council (core grant); Sport England (Swimming Pool Support Fund capital grant for energy generation); West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council (our landlords). We were also supported by WODC in our bid for the Swimming Pool Support Fund grant.
- Charitable trusts: HDH Wills Charitable Trust, Ormonde Charitable Trust, Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust and Doris Field Charitable Trust.
- Peer organisations: Portishead Lido, who generously shared their expertise ahead of our first cold-water season, Future Lidos campaign group, for whom we have hosted visits from campaign groups and with whose members we share data and experience.

Outcomes:

These partnerships have enabled us to extend our season into the winter for the first time, deliver free and subsidised access for disadvantaged families and young people, secure significant capital investment in sustainability (solar PV, solar battery storage and air source heat pump), and complete a full refurbishment of our accessible changing room.

7. Looking Ahead

If Core Grant funding were renewed, how would your organisation propose to use it over the next three years?

Please outline:

- Your priorities.
- Planned developments.
- Expected benefits for Chipping Norton residents.

If the Town Council's core grant funding is renewed, we would propose to use it, as before, as unrestricted income to help cover our annual trading deficit and core operating costs, and also to support initiatives to ensure the pool remains accessible to all. Over the next three years our priorities are:

- Consolidating and growing our new autumn/winter cold-water swimming and sauna season into a sustainable, profitable offer.
- Completing further capital works funded from designated reserves: plant room repairs and plumbing (estimated £24,000 + VAT) and replacement of the corridor roof and flooring (estimated £45,000 + VAT).
- Continuing to widen access for families facing cost-of-living pressures through partnerships such as You Move, Thrive and HAF, while keeping admission prices as low as possible.
- Building on our sustainability programme – solar PV, battery storage and air source heating – to further reduce energy costs and environmental impact.
- Refreshing our brand and communications, with pro bono support from Mark Making, to reach new users and strengthen fundraising.

Expected benefits for Chipping Norton residents include a longer season offering more opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation across the year, continued and expanded concessions for older people, children and lower-income families, and a more resilient, lower-cost pool operation that protects the long-term future of a much-loved local asset that has served the town since 1970. Continued core grant support would also strengthen our case with other funders.

8. Additional Information

Please include any further information you believe would assist Members when considering your application.

The Lido is run entirely by volunteer trustees; there is no trustee remuneration or expenses.

We would be delighted for Council Members to visit The Lido, meet our trustees, or ask any further questions.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided within this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name: Claire Jarvis

Position: Director/Trustee

Signature: *Claire Jarvis*

Date: 15 September 2026

Checklist

Please ensure the following documents are enclosed:

- ☐ Impact Report completed
- ☐ Accounts for the previous three financial years
- ☐ Summary of income sources
- ☐ Details of grants, sponsorship and donations received
- ☐ Visitor or attendance statistics
- ☐ Evidence of outreach and community engagement
- ☐ Evidence of benefits to Chipping Norton residents
- ☐ Partnership working evidence
- ☐ Any additional supporting information

Chipping Norton Town Council

Core Grant Impact Report

Review of the 2023–2026 Core Grant Agreement

Organisation: Chipping Norton Local History Society CIO

Main contact: John Graves

Position: Treasurer

Email: chippingnortonmuseum1@gmail.com

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Date submitted: 9th September 2026

1. Organisation Overview

Please provide a brief overview of your organisation, its aims and the services or activities it provides.

The **CN Local History Society CIO (LHS)** is the legal, charitable body that provides the management (through a committee of trustees) of the LHS, Museum and our specialist archaeological subgroup CHARG. Our primary charitable object is to help preserve the historical and archaeological heritage of Chipping Norton and surrounding district and to inform and educate the public about the history of Chipping Norton

The **Museum** collects and preserves artefacts, archives and photographs relating to Chipping Norton and the surrounding area and presents these in series of displays and collections.

The archaeology subgroup **CHARG** provides specialist knowledge of the local archaeology items in the Museum's collection and runs 'hands-on' activities of fieldwalking and test pit digs.

We actively encourage the greater use of the museum by the local community, particularly families and education groups and have kept our admission price low to facilitate this.

2. How the Town Council Grant Has Been Used

Please explain:

- How the Town Council's Core Grant has been spent over the last three years.
- Whether it has supported staffing, operational costs, projects, capital investment or specific programmes.
- Why this funding has been important to your organisation.

Over the past 3 years the Town Council grant has been used to fund a significant part of the operational costs of the LHS and Museum. Our annual operational costs are approaching £10,000. We do not employ any staff nor outsource any of our activities; all work is carried out by volunteers. The detailed accounts for the past three years are attached as an appendix. Town Council's funding is crucial to the ongoing existence of the organisation for two main reasons. One, the provision of over 30% of our income, which is a major alleviation of the burden

of our own fundraising activities and two, we anticipate that relatively soon our lease cost will be increased by a significant amount (possibly 100%) and so our fundraising will have to be greatly increased. When we approach major funders, it will be to our advantage to say that we receive significant financial support from our local Town Council.

3. Financial Sustainability

Please describe:

- Your principal sources of income.
- How financially sustainable the organisation is.
- Other grants, sponsorship or funding secured during the last three years.
- Any significant financial challenges experienced.

Please attach:

- Audited or independently examined accounts for the previous three financial years.
- Summary of income sources.
- Details of grants, donations and sponsorship received.

We have four main streams of 'routine' fund-raising activity that generates our income viz. membership subscriptions to the Society, museum entrance charges and sales of books and goods in the museum. In addition, we are fortunate to receive donations from the public.

In addition to these 'routine' fundraising activities our major fundraiser is the provision of, on six or seven occasions through each summer, refreshments (tea and cake) for visitors to Chastleton House. This raises the lion's share of our 'non-routine' income.

We do not purchase items to sell in the Museum, as we are fortunate to have members with the skills to create the items that we sell (e.g. cushions, scarves and cards using Bliss Tweed). One talented member of the Society also writes (and the LHS publishes) books on local historical characters and enterprises. Over the last three years, four books have been written and published.

To support our future **financial stability**, we registered the Local History Society as a "Charitable Incorporated Organisation" (CIO) with the Charity Commissioners and with HMRC for Gift Aid. When we embark on future fundraising activities our status as a CIO will be a critical part of our credibility as an organisation with potential donors.

Over the past few years, we have consciously built up our financial reserves in anticipation of the impact of the cost of the renewal of the lease with Coop Properties, which expired in March 2025. We negotiated an agreement to continue paying the lease at current rates until a new lease is agreed. Matters are clearer now that the property is no longer up-for-sale and, so, we won't have a new landlord. As a sitting tenant we have the right to a new lease but not at the existing rent. The sales documentation for the site gave an indicative rent for the space the Museum currently occupies of £16,500 per year (i.e. 3 times our current rent). This is, obviously, unaffordable and we will have to negotiate hard to achieve a realistic rent. However, we have assumed in our budgeting process that our rent will be close to double its current cost.

We do not receive recurring grants, sponsorship or funding from any bodies other than the Town Council.

4. Community Impact

Please describe the activities delivered during the last three years and the difference they have made.

Where possible include measurable information such as:

- Visitor numbers
- Attendance figures
- Participants
- Educational programmes
- Outreach projects
- Events
- Volunteer involvement
- Testimonials or case studies

Please include any evidence that demonstrates the impact of your work.

The Museum is open from Easter until October for two hours every day except Sunday. All sessions are staffed by volunteers. In 2025 the Museum was open on 181 days with a total of 828 (including 63 children) **visitors**. This total compares to 661, 639 and 536 for 2024, 2023 and 2022 respectively.

The Society organises and holds a series of **monthly talks** from September to May on topics of local interest. These talks complement the Museum's operation by overlapping the period that the Museum is closed. Talks are well publicised and visitors are encouraged to attend. The talks are growing in popularity and attract, on average, an **attendance** of around 35 people per talk (20% of whom were non-members).

The **LHS membership** has grown in numbers over the three-year period. At the end of December 2023 membership was 43. By the end of December 2024 this had grown to 65 and by the end of December 2025 it stood at 68. It has grown since.

We do not have any formal "**outreach projects or educational programmes**" but do provide extensive informal and ad hoc support to local schools, groups and organisations in the Town. For example, out-of-hours visits to the Museum were arranged for a number of local schools and youth groups. We visit local care homes to give talks and display artefacts to their residents to both entertain them and stimulate their memories. We also host special visits from members of the public or other organisations who are researching various topics.

We have undertaken or have been involved with many **events** that have had some impact on the community over the past three years. Some examples are given in below: -

- The Museum's window display draws a lot of attention and much praise of its topics and quality of the displays. Displays are changed every month or so and depict themes relating to events in history and the town (e.g. the 80th anniversary of VJ day, as many men from Chipping Norton were involved in the Far East conflict).
- We hold an annual "Finds Day" where we open the Museum free of charge so townspeople can bring in any artefacts they may have, or have found, so that Oxfordshire County Council's "Finds Liaison Officer" can identify them for them. The event is well attended and several of the 'significant' finds are recorded and added to the British Museum's "Portable Antiquities Scheme" database.
- We have organised talks in the Town Hall on historical and archaeology topics by experts. The talks are open everybody. Over the last three years these talks have included: -

- The national “Victoria County History” (VCH) project’s presentation of the content of its recently published volume on north Oxfordshire.
- The academic authority on Roman Oxfordshire gave a talk on the Romano-British settlement listed monument sited on Glyme Farm/Tank Farm.
- Bronze Age Oxfordshire given by a renowned Bronze Age specialist.
- A presentation at an annual town meeting on the subject of the Romano-British settlement in Chipping Norton.

We have a number of requests for information on houses and buildings in the area by new residents who are interested in finding out about the history of their properties. Our expert volunteers provided copies of all the documentation and photos we hold relating to their property.

We do not employ any staff, so all work is undertaken by our trustees, committee members and **volunteers**. There are 8 trustees and around 25 volunteers who undertake all aspects of the operation of the LHS/Museum/CHARG. An indicator of their involvement and commitment is given in Section 5, where we have estimated the number of hours per year given by these volunteers.

5. Benefits to Chipping Norton Residents

Please explain specifically how residents of Chipping Norton have benefited from your organisation.

Where possible include:

- Number or proportion of visitors from Chipping Norton
- Number of members from Chipping Norton
- Volunteer hours contributed by local residents
- School engagement
- Community events
- Activities supporting vulnerable or disadvantaged groups
- Any concessions or reduced-cost access for local residents

Please explain how these figures have been measured where applicable.

Our membership at the end of 2025 was 68, of whom all bar one are residents of Chipping Norton or the surrounding villages. All our volunteers are local residents. We have estimated the total number of hours per year that volunteers contribute as 2,440. This total comprises “Operational” (e.g. committee, treasures, curator) – 1,560; creation of sales items – 150; Museum duty – 360; Talks (organising and holding) – 170 and Fundraising (organising and holding) – 200.

In Section 4 we gave details of our work with **local schools**. In addition, we have also helped the Chipping Norton School with their fund-raising “Easter Egg Trail” and “Stranger in the Window” events. We make special provision for visits by students from “The Park School”, located at Southcombe, to visit the Museum in a manner and at a time when we can respond to their diverse needs. Their first trip was so well received that the Park School’s associate schools are planning visits for their students in the future.

We support the Town’s **annual celebrations** of, for example, the “Christmas Lights Switch-on” and “Town Festival” plus one-off anniversaries such as the “VE Day Celebrations” by opening of the Museum with free entry at these events.

CHARG played a major part in establishing the Scheduled Monument for the **Romano-British settlement** near Glyme Farm/Tank Farm. Historic England believes this site to be of national importance. The site deserves better presentation to the townspeople and visitors to the Museum of its size, scope and type of settlement. Therefore, we commissioned an artist to produce an illustration of the settlement, which will be on display in the Museum and used in educational visits.

A **geographical information system** (GIS) was developed to show historic and archaeological data for Chipping Norton and its surrounding parishes in the context of specialist (e.g. OS 1880) maps and, say, aerial photographs. The GIS is available to visitors to the Museum and help is on hand to explain its use. The GIS allows us to show images of the many hundreds of local 'finds' held in the Museum. Links to local finds held by other museums together with to other archaeology databases and on-line resources are available.

Recently, and in the near future, many organisations in the Town had, or will have, significant anniversaries. The Museum provided information on the history of the organisation and, if there were any relevant artefacts, made temporary loans of artefacts for exhibition. Examples are Probus Club's 50th, the Chipping Norton School's 100th, the Lido's 21st and the library's 70th.

6. Partnership Working

Please provide examples of partnership working undertaken during the last three years, including work with:

- Schools
- Community organisations
- Voluntary groups
- Local businesses
- Health organisations
- Public bodies
- Other charities

Please describe the outcomes achieved.

Out-of-hours visits to the Museum are arranged for the **local schools** as part of their studies. Some schools (e.g. St Mary's) have called on the Museum's collections and expertise to assist them with their projects (e.g. the history of the school).

Local **community groups** and organisations (e.g. The Chippy News, The Theatre, the Chipping Norton Choral Society) call on the museum's collections and expertise to assist them with information, photographs and artefacts to include in, and inform, their projects. The Theatre also borrows items on a temporary basis for their outreach work in the local community. Other **voluntary** groups (e.g. WOWI, U3A) were given conducted 'walking' tours of Chipping Norton to describe the background and history of the Town and its buildings.

Many visits were made to **local care homes** to give talks and display artefacts to their residents to both entertain them and stimulate their memories. We have visited most care homes in the area and also give talks on local history to the Monday Club in Glyme Hall.

We provided the **CN Town Council** with information on prominent local people whose names could be considered as potential street-names for new developments in the town

Liaison with other local museums, societies and **charitable organisations** takes place to mutual benefit. For instance, Hook Norton Museum has been cross-referencing deeds held by them and us to improve our archival sources and we are coordinating our talks programmes with the Chipping Norton Railway Club to mutual benefit. Burford Museum was recently 'accredited' and has offered to help us on our path to accreditation.

We hosted a visit by the Engagement Manager of the **Oxfordshire Museums Service** and staff as part of their exercise to see what different museums were doing (e.g. exhibitions, etc.).

We assisted the **Oxfordshire Local History Association** in its study day in Chipping Norton by holding talks and conducting 'walking' tours of Chipping Norton to describe the background and history of the Town and its buildings. We contributed to a survey by **"Visit England"** designed to measure the levels of visits to museums and other tourist attractions in the country.

7. Looking Ahead

If Core Grant funding were renewed, how would your organisation propose to use it over the next three years?

Please outline:

- Your priorities.
- Planned developments.
- Expected benefits for Chipping Norton residents.

Our top **priority** is to negotiate a new lease for the Museum with Co-op Properties. Of lesser urgency is to continue the process of accreditation as a museum with the Arts Council of England. This is at least a three-year process and involves extensive work in creating and updating policies and procedures in line with recommend practice.

Space remains a premium in the Museum and we constantly look to ways of improving the display of artefacts. We had to vacate the additional storage space we had leased from the Coop but the QD shop came to our rescue by allowing us to move less vulnerable items to a safe space in their storage area. This is a temporary measure that needs to be addressed in the lease renewal.

To improve the conservation of the artefacts held in the Museum we took advantage of a member's specialist knowledge to undertake a review of our artefacts, their storage and display. This review will help us improve the storage, conservation and display of the artefacts held in the Museum. It will involve additional costs for, for example, environmental conditioning and special lighting.

The trustees are acutely aware of the limitations to access to the Museum due to its physical location. There is no way that this can be physically mitigated in the short or long-term. Therefore, we will look to complementary alternatives by adding and enhancing existing methods of virtual access to our collections of artefacts and to our archives. This will become more important as the population of the Town (as elsewhere in the UK) becomes more elderly.

We expect the community to continue to benefit from our activities through attendance at the Museum, monthly talks on local history, special talks on subjects of interest as they occur, our

contributions to the young and the elderly through our outreach activities. In short, doing more of what we have been doing but to a wider audience and through partnership with the Town Council on its planned activities, festivals and, now, the "Town Hall" project.

8. Additional Information

Please include any further information you believe would assist Members when considering your application.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided within this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name: John Graves

Position: Treasurer

Signature:



Date: 9th September 2026

Checklist

Please ensure the following documents are enclosed:

- ☐ Impact Report completed
- ☐ Accounts for the previous three financial years – *attached as Appendix 1*
- ☐ Summary of income sources – *included in the accounts and the body of the report*
- ☐ Details of grants, sponsorship and donations received – *included in the accounts and the body of the report*
- ☐ Visitor or attendance statistics – *included in the body of the report*
- ☐ Evidence of outreach and community engagement – *included in the body of the report*
- ☐ Evidence of benefits to Chipping Norton residents – *included in the body of the report*
- ☐ Partnership working evidence – *included in the body of the report*
- ☐ Any additional supporting information – *none attached.*

Chipping Norton Town Council

Core Grant Impact Report

Review of the 2023–2026 Core Grant Agreement

Organisation: Chipping Norton Theatre

Main contact: John Terry

Position: Director

Email: jterry@chippingnortontheatre.com

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Date submitted: 29.07.2026

1. Organisation Overview

Please provide a brief overview of your organisation, its aims and the services or activities it provides.

Chipping Norton Theatre is an arts centre, theatre, arthouse cinema, gallery, concert hall, stand-up comedy venue and, most crucially, a key community asset working proactively to meet the needs of the town. Working hand in hand with the Town Council and other local third sector partners, we aim to tackle exclusion, social isolation and inequality of opportunity, placing communal, creative activity at the heart of the town.

Functioning as both a resource for our community and a professional arts venue, we welcome an audience of over 40,000 every year. Crucially, and very unusually for a community of our size, we are a successful producing house, creating original 'Homegrown' live work that supports the wider artistic economy and promotes Chipping Norton nationally as a creative destination. Our most recent national tour played to 28,000 people across the country.

Our roots lie deep in our local community. Fifty years ago, residents of the town contributed £1 to local RSC actors Tamara and John Malcolm, and together they launched 'The Theatre'. Our home is a former Salvation Army Citadel. Today, the Theatre is still driven by the bold vision of our artistic team and a deeply held commitment to strengthen our community. We stand as a defiant exemplar of a creative hub thriving in, and because of, our strong rural identity.

Since 2020 The Theatre has transformed its relationship with the town, becoming one of the most trusted and visible community organisations in our locality, bringing change to individual lives and cohesion and opportunity to the community as a whole. Building on the support of our Town and District Councils, our work has been recognised nationally by bodies such as Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Theatre's Trust and Arts Council England for delivering high quality, transformative programmes for young people and their families.

Looking to the future, our particular areas of growth and focus for the next three years will be:

- 1) Supporting the growing community of older people in the area with a new 'Creative Ageing' strand of work based on the old Highlands site on Burford Road. This work aims to tackle social isolation, create intergenerational connections and improve mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 2) Supporting young people with neurodiversity, mental health challenges and special educational needs. We bring expertise and specialist arts-based practices to provide culture-based activities for these young people and their families.
- 3) Maintaining and strengthening the live theatre elements of the programme with high-quality touring work, inhouse productions and a series of amateur/professional hybrid community theatre projects.

2. How the Town Council Grant Has Been Used

Please explain:

- How the Town Council's Core Grant has been spent over the last three years.
- Whether it has supported staffing, operational costs, projects, capital investment or specific programmes.
- Why this funding has been important to your organisation.

The introduction of core three-year grants from the Town Council to Chipping Norton's key charities has been vital and hugely appreciated. This foresight by Councillors following the uncertainties of Covid has helped provide greater stability and certainty.

At The Theatre we get no core Arts Council funding, so your core multi-year grant gives security, allowing us to plan ahead and sustainably grow provision where it is most needed. It helps us to help you support the town's most vulnerable, maintain fair ticket pricing for all, deliver a superb artistic programme and improve our facilities.

Since 2023 our Town Council core grant has supported:

A Theatre for everyone, including:

- Our first large-scale community-led live theatre productions: Lark Rise and Barn Dance, as part of our 50th anniversary. With a cast of over 80 local performers of all ages and levels of experience, these performances played to sell-out audiences.
- Relaxed performances of our annual Pantomime and the introduction of a breakout space for those with additional sensory challenges.
- Accessible ticket pricing with concessionary tickets for over 60's, pick a price, £5 tickets for under 26-year-olds and hundreds of free community tickets for households on low incomes and carers.
- Free family cinema screening for families on our Free School Meals programme.

Expansion of our Take Part community programme, including:

- Free school holiday lunches (voucher-based scheme) with arts activities and workshops for over 170 local young people every school holiday.
- The introduction of two new Youth Theatre groups – YT Open and YT SEN for young people needing greater support or with special educational needs.

- Addition of a second group to Great Company, our theatre company for adults who are neurodivergent or have a learning disability.
- Increased provision of mental health and anti-bullying support in local schools.
- Expansion of Little Limelights, our drama sessions for under 5's.
- Growth of our Creative Writing workshop.

A sustainable Theatre, including:

- Our transition to low energy LED stage lighting.
- New double-glazed windows.

"More intelligent, more esoteric and more intellectually exciting than many a theatre several times its size"

Oxfordshire Life

3. Financial Sustainability

Please describe:

- Your principal sources of income.
- How financially sustainable the organisation is.
- Other grants, sponsorship or funding secured during the last three years.
- Any significant financial challenges experienced.

Please attach:

- Audited or independently examined accounts for the previous three financial years.
- Summary of income sources.
- Details of grants, donations and sponsorship received.

Principle income sources and sustainability

To deliver our artistic and community work we need to raise around £370,000 per annum in funding to achieve a balanced budget, maintain accessible ticket pricing and improve our ageing building. That represents around 21% of our funding with the rest (79%) coming from ticket and trading income, which is impressive for a regional arts centre with just 225 seats.

Since 2008, and excepting emergency support during the Covid pandemic, this has been achieved without any core Arts Council funding. Every donation and grant is therefore critical to reaching our target. Having used a significant proportion of our reserves to survive the Covid pandemic we are now, when able, currently rebuilding them to pre-Covid levels. Whilst it remains an ongoing challenge to run a small arts organisation, The Theatre remains financially viable with strong governance, adequate reserves and a diverse spread of stakeholders.

Significant funders

We currently receive significant grant or sponsorship support (per annum) from:

- West Oxfordshire District Council (£33K including Arts 4 Elders)
- CHK Foundation (£30K)
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (£20K)
- Michael Bishop Foundation (£15K)

- PF Charitable Foundation (£5K)
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCVA) Connected Communities (£5K)
- Singer Foundation (£5K)
- Wise Investment (£4.85K)
- Bloxham School (£4.5K)
- Chipping Norton Town Council (£3K)
- Plus a large range of smaller grant awards from local and national bodies.

In addition to grant and sponsorship support we receive individual donations through our Patrons and Friends schemes.

A full list of organisational funders and the breakdown of fundraising income is shown in the Impact Report attached.

4. Community Impact

Please describe the activities delivered during the last three years and the difference they have made.

Where possible include measurable information such as:

- Visitor numbers
- Attendance figures
- Participants
- Educational programmes
- Outreach projects
- Events
- Volunteer involvement
- Testimonials or case studies

Please include any evidence that demonstrates the impact of your work.

Since 2023 and during the grant funded period we have achieved the following:

Artistic:

- Hosted **117,492** visits to The Theatre
- Presented **680** live shows (including Pantomime)

Social Impact and Community

- Worked with **41,392** participants across our whole Take Part programme.
- Provided **30,970** free school holiday lunches and art packs for young people and their families.
- Provided **139** free school holiday workshop places.
- Funded **926** theatre sessions through our Bursary Fund.
- Distributed **2,579** free community tickets.
- Provided **149** places in mental health and wellbeing workshops at local schools.

Our latest impact report for 2025-26 is attached and here is what one family said about their involvement with us:

"My daughter does Youth musical theatre, and I do the parent and baby drama group, and come to the parent mental health group, and we all have the free meals. The theatre bursary has been life changing for my anxious eight-year-old who has not only made great friends but also gained confidence in herself and become a brilliant public speaker which will really help her all the way through her education. She is struggling in school, and at home, and this has made a real difference. The support during holidays just makes everyone that little bit happier with less stress around what we can afford. I wanted to say thank you, I'm so glad the new SEN parent group has started, we really needed it. We love the Theatre and all love being a part of everything you do."

Testimonial from Community Theatre Project participant, aged 17

"People of all walks of life, disability or not, have been able to be part of the theatre and get involved with what they do here, and I think that's something sort of at the heart of this place everyone, no matter what, is allowed to be here. Makes me so happy. the idea that there's just some places that they don't care about what political ideology you are, they don't care what background, they don't care about disability. They are just happy to have you here, and that's just the best thing. It's heartwarming."

Testimonial from Great Company member (theatre group for adults with learning disabilities):

'It's harder for people with learning disabilities to actually get an opportunity to do something that's bigger. It's just one of those things - I'm lost for words, because I can't even express how much it meant to me to be part of something as big as that'

5. Benefits to Chipping Norton Residents

Please explain specifically how residents of Chipping Norton have benefited from your organisation.

Where possible include:

- Number or proportion of visitors from Chipping Norton
- Number of members from Chipping Norton
- Volunteer hours contributed by local residents
- School engagement
- Community events
- Activities supporting vulnerable or disadvantaged groups
- Any concessions or reduced-cost access for local residents

Please explain how these figures have been measured where applicable.

Around 35% of our overall audience live within the OX7 postcode*, while almost all of our community participants are from Chipping Norton and the surrounding rural area. We have an average of 66 volunteer ushers (mostly local) who have contributed a total of 18,156 volunteer hours over the funded period.

Through our community programme we regularly deliver mental health and anti-bullying support to our local schools with 149 student places supported over the funding period. We directly support 170 local young people from low-income backgrounds with free school

holiday meals and arts activities, deliver two Great Company groups for adults who are neurodivergent or have a learning disability and expanded our Youth Theatre provision to support students with additional and special educational needs.

During our 50th anniversary we delivered two highly successful community plays - Lark Rise and Barn dance, giving 108 community participants the chance to perform alongside professional actors and creatives.

We maintain accessible pricing for everyone with an average ticket price of just £19.60 across every event at the Theatre last year. We offer "Pick a Price" events and concessionary ticket pricing to over 60's, under 26's and free community tickets to local residents on low incomes and carers.

*Based on audience booking data.

6. Partnership Working

Please provide examples of partnership working undertaken during the last three years, including work with:

- Schools
- Community organisations
- Voluntary groups
- Local businesses
- Health organisations
- Public bodies
- Other charities

Please describe the outcomes achieved.

Partnership is at the heart of what we do and The Theatre leads on Chippy Creative, an informal group made up of representatives of the organisations which support the community of the town and surrounding villages – the food bank, Chippy Larder, the Branch, each of the schools, Town Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and more – and the creative and leisure organisations based in the area – the Theatre, the Library, the Lido, Leisure Centre and more.

At meetings which happen approximately every 3 months, we come together to share updates, share needs and try to make change. Out of these meetings, in response to local need the Theatre has launched our mental health projects, working with young people on the CAMHS waiting lists, our schools-based anti-bullying work and supported Chippy Pride. Through these partnerships we are able to remain responsive to the needs of our community.

To give an example following the ongoing success of our mental health workshops in schools - in the coming year we have been asked to run two further mental health support groups in schools, and for the first time to support a local primary school in launching a new SEN and SEMH support hub, introducing drama as a therapeutic activity for primary aged young people. We will work closely in partnership with teachers and senior leaders at the schools to ensure programmes are responsive to the needs of their young people and to equip staff with practical skills to use in the classroom day to day.

During the funded period The Theatre has worked with:

Chipping Norton School
St Mary's Primary School
Park Special School
The Albion Centre
Chippy Larder
The Branch
Farm Ed
Chipping Norton Pride
North Oxfordshire Thrive
West Oxfordshire District Council
Chipping Norton Town Council
Chipping Norton Lido
Chipping Norton Museum
Chipping Norton Leisure Centre
Local care homes

7. Looking Ahead

If Core Grant funding were renewed, how would your organisation propose to use it over the next three years?

Please outline:

- Your priorities.
- Planned developments.
- Expected benefits for Chipping Norton residents.

Given the huge contribution The Theatre makes to supporting Chipping Norton's residents, as demonstrated here, we would like to request an increase in core annual support to £6,000 per annum for three years. Our core funding from the Town Council is hugely valued and impactful, but has remained at a similar level for quite a few years whilst both costs and our level of impact for the town and its residents has increased substantially. We have recently been successful in receiving some other smaller grants from the Town Council, but our planning and stability would be much improved with being able to plan for an increased level of funding over a multi-year agreement. We have previously had constructive and positive discussions with Council officers and members on this point.

This funding would be used as core seed funding across our work for young people (including Mental Health and SEN work) and creative classes for adults (Including our theatre company for neurodivergent and learning disabled adults).

In addition, it would support new strands of work developing community-led theatre productions and our new Creative Ageing programme.

Your grant would continue to support our Community programme for families and young people. As part of this work, and building on the success of our recent Lark Rise/Barn Dance community project, we hope to create and present a major community-led project in each of the next three years. Each production will involve large casts of local people working alongside professional creative teams to make work reflective of the town and its people.

- 2027 – Promenade Community Play (The Chipping Norton Mysteries)

- 2028 – 'Memory Lanes' Intergenerational project, partnering primary school children and care home residents to create a unique reflective live performance.
- 2029 – Community Pantomime

NB that these projects would be dependent on securing match funding from other sources.

It would also enable us to extend our community programme to better support our fast-growing elder community.

Chipping Norton and the surrounding rural area has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over than the district, county, regional and national averages. The elder population has increased by 32% over the past decade indicating a significant demographic shift towards an older population. As at 2024 25% of the town's population is aged 65 and over. This trend is reflected in the area's health and well-being profile*, which shows higher prevalence of older people living alone and other health indicators that are worse than national averages.

To address this we want to grow a programme of arts-led activities we are calling *Creative Ageing*, including wellbeing walks, Dance and movement classes for those living with Parkinsons and reminiscence workshops. Further match funding will be sought with the aim of running a 'Men's Shed', and daytime singing and drama groups. These activities, delivered in fully accessible spaces in our Pop-Up Studio spaces on Burford Road (and, where possible, with free transport provided), seek to tackle social isolation, improve mental and physical health and help build community cohesion.

I do hope the Councillors can support our shared commitment to our wonderful community with a renewal of grant support at an enhanced level.

*Oxfordshire JSNA 2021

8. Additional Information

Please include any further information you believe would assist Members when considering your application.

The scale of Chipping Norton Theatre's social impact work is extremely unusual for an arts organisation of our size in a smaller rural community. We have used this form to give an overview of the extensive reach and breadth of the work, and a summary of some of our priorities for the coming years. More detailed line by line activity plans, budgeting and participant numbers can be provided on request.

The Theatre would work with the Town Council to agree a regular annual reporting framework in line with other stakeholders to keep members and officers well informed of progress, changes in delivery schedule and match funding secured.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided within this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name: John Terry

Position: Director

Signature: 

Date: 19th August 2026

Checklist

Please ensure the following documents are enclosed:

- ☒ Impact Report completed
- ☒ Accounts for the previous three financial years
- ☒ Summary of income sources
- ☒ Details of grants, sponsorship and donations received
- ☒ Visitor or attendance statistics
- ☒ Evidence of outreach and community engagement
- ☒ Evidence of benefits to Chipping Norton residents
- ☒ Partnership working evidence
- ☒ Any additional supporting information

THE THEATRE
CHIPPING NORTON

IMPACT REPORT 2025 -26



Contents

Welcome from our Artistic Director	2
A Little Giant of the Arts	3
A Theatre for Everyone	5
Celebrating Five Years of Community Support	7
Fostering Skills that go Beyond the Stage	9
From Participant to Practitioner	11
Funding Your Theatre	13
Our Supporters	14

Welcome

from our Artistic Director

This year has marked a step change in the scale and reach of our inhouse theatre productions, and a maturing and consolidation of the social impact of our community programme. We hope you will enjoy finding out more about what we have been up to!

Our Mission Statement

We are the little giant of the arts – a rural venue and producing theatre with doors open to all.

We make and share inspiring performances and transformative creative activities.

We act as a driver of social change and community cohesion, and as a source of joy and curiosity for both our local community and national audiences.

Chipping Norton is a town characterised by extremes. Alongside Cotswold stone buildings and areas of extreme affluence sit hidden but significant pockets of severe disadvantage, underachievement and increasing deprivation. The west end of town ranks within the 10% most deprived nationally.

We are intent on addressing the issues of rural poverty, isolation and poor mental health which impact many young people and families in our local area. This year marked five years since the inception of our new approach to community led engagement - an approach that has seen us recognised as field leaders in rural socially impactful arts activities by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Theatre's Trust.

But don't just take our word for it. Later in the report, you can read, in her own words, the story of one person's relationship with The Theatre, from Mental Health Group participant to becoming a confident team member and arts practitioner.

John Terry, Artistic Director

“A little giant of the arts”



The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged

We produced two major in-house shows this year; bringing professional productions to our stage which would not otherwise be viable in a small rural theatre and creating opportunities for professional creatives to work in Chipping Norton.

The Theatre co-produced a major new production, working with The Reduced Shakespeare Company, which has played to over 25,000 in a 26 week national tour, with venues including Bristol Old Vic, York Theatre Royal and the Oxford Playhouse. The tour marks a new milestone in the scale of our in-house production and touring work.

27

the number of venues in our biggest national tour to date!

25,000

people have seen this production of 'The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged'

105
LIVE SHOWS

AND

92
PANTO
PERFORMANCES

We also hosted...

LIVE THEATRE - we hosted 64 live theatre performances from the dystopian world of 1984 to family shows including The Cat in the Hat.

COMEDY - 22 comedians from pre tour warm up gigs for national names to local legends

MUSIC - 19 live music performances on stage.

SCREENINGS 42 theatre, opera and ballet performances from houses in the UK and the US.

FILM - screenings every week ranging from indie arthouse to Oscar nominees

DANCE & ART - our gallery hosted four exhibitions and we began screening art exhibitions from national galleries taking you behind the scenes.



**"One thing you can
count on here is
excellence"**

Red Kite Days Review
Beauty and The Beast
2025-26

Beauty and the Beast, 2025-26

A Theatre for Everyone

We make and share inspiring performances and transformative creative activities which are a source of joy and curiosity for both our local community and national audiences.

35,984

visitors watched
live shows in the
theatre this year

"I was blown away by the performance"
audience feedback for 1984

"We left with an aching jaw from laughing"
audience feedback for Mark Watson

6,700

children watched
Beauty and the Beast,
either with their school
or with their family

**"Every aspect of the evening was first class. A
wonderful venue, friendly staff and a superb
performance by the five musicians"**
audience feedback for Buddy Holly
& The Cricketers

First Experiences of Theatre

We're Going on a
Bear Hunt, 2026

**"My grandchildren were enthralled throughout.
A real joy to share in their experience of real theatre"**
audience feedback for Tales from Acorn Wood

"A wonderful first theatre experience"
audience feedback for We're Going on
a Bear Hunt

380

children took part in
our 'Intro to Panto'
workshops in primary
schools, funded by
Cotswold Arts Through
Schools



We aim to ensure that our doors are open to all by making theatre more affordable & accessible for everyone.

£19.60

the average ticket price across every event at The Theatre last year

£5

Pick A Price and subsidised tickets for under 26s make live theatre and new and emerging talent accessible.

502

free community tickets were distributed to local supported families & individuals.

845

people attended accessible live shows or screenings including audio described, captioned and relaxed performances.

We also offer free tickets for carers or companions so those with disabilities or additional needs are able to access the theatre without additional cost.

"It was amazing. I've never been to the theatre before and it's just perfect. I love how personal it felt. The staff were amazing too"

audience feedback for relaxed performance



James Rowland, Learning To Fly
Pick A Price at Chipping Norton Theatre

Five Years of Social Impact

In 2020, The Theatre launched a new community programme in response to the pandemic, and the dramatic reduction of statutory community services in our region. We set out to bring lasting change and impact to our community.

Prior to 2020, The Theatre's participation programme, Take Part, ran a broad and much-loved range of youth and adult theatre groups. But despite a bursary scheme, what we didn't see in these groups were the members of our rural community who had the greatest needs, and perhaps had the most to benefit from engaging in community and creative activities.

In 2020, in response to calls for help from the food bank we instigated a Free School Holiday Meals programme. Over the years, this went from buttering sandwiches, to weekly shops, to food vouchers and now, five years later, we support 170 children every week of the holidays. As a result, this group are among the most regular users of our building



WISE INVESTMENT

WISE Investment's support for school holiday lunches has been the foundation for our community programme

"The Theatre is leading the way in socially impactful arts programmes in a rural setting" Theatre's Trust

We have been recognised by bodies such as Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Theatre's Trust and our own West Oxfordshire District Council for delivering high quality, transformative creative programmes for young people and their families.

"The lunches have made a massive difference over the school holidays & the children have been able to access the theatre to see shows that we wouldn't normally take them to due to cost. It makes such a difference to families on benefits" Parent of Family supported by Free School Holiday Meal Programme



Theatre staff distributing arts activities in 2022

But school holiday lunches were just the beginning. Our 'Ladder-of-Engagement' model meets young people in ways that are comfortable, accessible and affordable, before gradually building their confidence and integration into the life and broader programme of The Theatre. This began with easy-to-use art packs, then more creative art packs and in-person workshops, taster theatre workshops and finally to year-round bursaries for our youth theatre.

17,000

To date, The Theatre have provided more than 17,000 lunches alongside thousands of arts & theatre activities, opportunities to experience live theatre, and to get on-stage.

Our community scheme now also includes more strands, including theatre-based mental health programmes developed with mental health practitioners to support young people who are struggling in our local secondary schools, a long-term, regular community ticket programme giving families access to the theatre regardless of their finances and specialist SEN and trauma informed youth theatre groups to offer extra support as needed.

"The young people we support are thriving, learning new skills and gaining confidence. Many have joined our Youth Theatre with bursary support, performed on stage and even joined our team!" Clare O'Hara, Project Coordinator



All The Theatre's community programmes are free to the participant; funded by grants and donations.

Participants at a free family arts workshop

In 2025-26 our community programme has provided

11,050

free school holiday lunches

1,066

free school holiday arts activities

926

term time theatre sessions funded by bursaries

502

Community Tickets

52

places in mental health and wellbeing workshops at local schools.

42

Free places in Holiday Theatre Workshops.

Fostering skills that go beyond the stage

286

Adults, children and young people 'Take Part' in creative classes at The Theatre every week.

ADULT DRAMA

CHIPPY SINGERS

CAN SING CHOIR

DANCE 50

CREATIVE WRITERS

GREAT COMPANY

177

young people have performed on stage in school holiday drama and musical theatre workshops

LITTLE LIMELIGHTS

SATURDAY DRAMA

YOUTH THEATRE

YOUTH MUSICAL THEATRE

YT-SEN

We believe that creativity and expression is for everyone.

Our 'Take Part' programme includes something for everyone with a variety of weekly participatory classes for different groups including babies, toddlers, young people, adults and those with additional needs.

This year we expanded **Little Limelights**, our drama sessions for under 5's, **Great Company**, our theatre company for young adults who are neurodivergent or have a learning disability and **Creative Writers** classes for adults so more people can benefit by getting involved.

22% OF YOUTH THEATRE STUDENTS WERE SUPPORTED BY THE JUDITH & TONY YAROW BURSARY PROGRAMME



"I LOVE adult drama. The group is very special with a supportive teacher who encourages us to play and grow. Very welcoming theatre which has given me the creative outlet I was longing for." Adult Drama Group Participant

Adult Drama Participants in rehearsal

"I always feel so at home and inspired when I'm on the stage at The Theatre"
Bursary Recipient

"That was SO FUN!.." the words of my daughter! Parent of Take Part Participant

"It's fantastic to watch both my kids perform so confidently within such a short time",
Parent of Holiday Drama Participants

Learning backstage skills at YT Extra!

Taking part in theatre and drama offers far more than just acting skills.

It develops confidence, collaboration, communication, self-worth and adaptability; vital skills for today and for the future. We aim to provide this opportunity to people of all ages, abilities and all backgrounds in our community.

"My daughter was incredibly nervous when she first arrived ... the theatre were fantastic at building her confidence, encouraging her to be brave and make new friends. She has absolutely loved these sessions! Thank you so much.'

Youth Theatre Parent

YT Extra!

In September 2025 we hosted a day of insider masterclasses, free to our participants, teaching new skills across all areas of theatre including lighting design, make-up, stage combat and theatre skills.



YT Extra was made possible by donations to Anthony Peter's 'Good Morning' fundraising appeal.

From Participant to Practitioner

In this spotlight, we share the story of a young person, in their own words, who began her journey with us by receiving targeted support from The Theatre, and now, as a young adult, is launched into a confident career as a creative artist and practitioner.



What began as a small workshop for a shy ten-year-old became a life-changing journey — one that turned a participant into a mentor, a leader and an aspiring practitioner determined to support the next generation in return.

"I first came to The Theatre for a musical theatre workshop with my older sister. I was 10 at the time and I was not a confident child. Never have been. Whilst I do love being on stage, I could never do it solo, I struggled with it a lot.

In year seven I had some counselling as I wasn't coping very well, but as soon as covid happened, that stopped immediately. I know a lot of people felt just completely and utterly alone throughout that time and a lot of people started struggling with anxiety. When we went back to school all the counsellors had gone; they just didn't have the support that we needed.

I joined The Theatre's first mental health workshops in my school in 2021. It definitely helped me feel like I was less alone a lot of the time. <The Theatre practitioners> were from a place that was very local to us and were friendly and really kind. Knowing that someone cared enough to come from the theatre to school just to try and help us out meant a lot to everyone. The workshops offered a space where we felt we could speak out a lot more.

I've definitely used the toolkit of skills that I learnt through those workshops. I still do a lot of the activities, especially in moments where I am feeling a lot more anxious around exams or other pressures.

At 14, I was offered a place in a holiday workshop at The Theatre and then mum got an email asking me to become an assistant, which I very happily agreed to be. When I started I was not confident, obviously I was nervous, but the practitioner I was assisting welcomed me in straight away.

People come here from different backgrounds, of different need. A lot of people are less confident when they come in and just standing with them, showing them the stage for the first time, watching them grow, especially in their performing abilities and their confidence. Seeing how excited they are when they come off stage, I get a great sense of pride out of it.

I think working at the theatre and coming here, it's impacted me a lot. Learning how to be myself without being apologetic about it. In the theatre you build a community. If you have an idea, you can say it. It might not always be used, but it's always considered.

Even travelling by myself, I wouldn't have been able to do years ago and now I can, because I just feel a lot more secure in myself.



"I've always loved doing the arts so to have the opportunity to do something at the theatre was very cool to me. It was the first time I ever felt that I was truly in charge of something"

This summer I'm participating in a project at The Theatre teaching young people to become assistants and practitioners along with acting and skills workshops. I'm desperate to learn more about how to work with young people within the arts.

In September, I have a place at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. I think the only reason I've managed to actually do that is through working here. Being able to be here has just been one of the greatest experiences that I could have ever had".



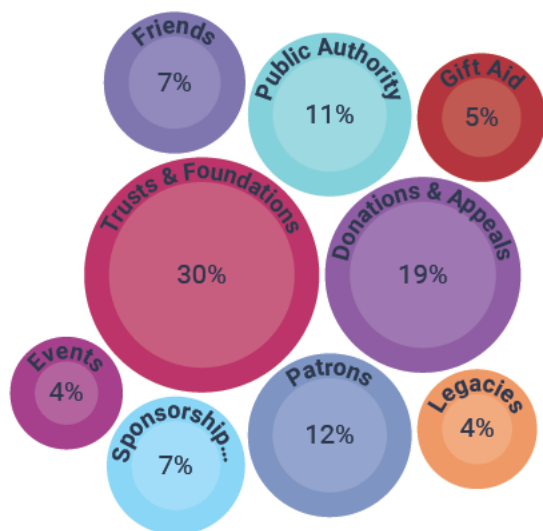
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As a charity, your support ensures The Theatre remains a vibrant, thriving centre for the arts. Everything that happens at The Theatre, from ticketed events to community programmes, is made possible by our members, donors and sponsors. Approximately 25% of The Theatre's running costs are covered by fundraising and we earn an impressive 75% of our income each year through tickets, sales and Box Office services.

Fundraising 2025-26

£345,633



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Over 150 people volunteer each year from our wonderful team of more than 70 ushers, to our trustees, cake bakers, craft kit packers, volunteers & fundraisers.

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Ellie in training for the London Marathon, 2025

Ellie's Marathon effort

Ellie Walker ran her first ever marathon, at London 2025 raising £4,536

WITH THANKS TO THE TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS WHO SUPPORTED THE THEATRE IN 2025-26

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