

WYCHAVON RURAL CINEMA TOOLKIT

A Guide to setting up your own rural cinema screenings

This document will cover the following topics to help you get started:

- Models of operation
- Licensing
- Accessing films
- Ticketing
- Marketing
- Programming & presentation
- Other critical success factors
- Equipment

Models of Operation

By starting up this kind of initiative you'll be providing your local community with an invaluable, quality service that will bring people together. You'll also be competing with the big multiplexes!! This should not be a daunting prospect for you as what you will be offering will be something different...a social and local experience which won't cost the earth!

However, it is important that you keep the multiplexes in mind and ask yourself if what you're offering is enough to make people attend your screening rather than drive to Worcester or Cheltenham. What are you offering that is special? Have you got comfortable seating? Will you sell refreshments?

You could set up as a 'club' rather than pay as you go. Members would pay a joining fee, pay a subscription to cover all entry fees or have a discount on tickets (e.g. members £3, non-members £5).

You could leave entry open to all (subject to film classification). No membership fee but more of a risk for you to cover costs.

The option you choose will affect the film hire fees. If you run as a club you can rent films on a 'non commercial' basis as it's 'closed' to the public. With this option you'd be charged a flat fee of around £80 plus VAT. However you will not be able to advertise the film to the general public, only to members. That means no ticket sales at the door, it would be a member only and guest tickets available in advance.

The other open is to be 'open to all'. This is usually charged as a percentage of ticket sales (typically 35%). You would be able to advertise the film showing to the public with no restrictions, exactly on the same basis as the multiplex.

Licensing

There are 2 types of licences:

- Local authority
- Film distributor

Local authority

First of all when setting up a mobile/community cinema you must first ask yourself where will you show these films? Village hall? Local pub? Has the venue got a premises licence? If so, what is included on this licence? Does it include permission to show films? The village hall/pub may already have a licence, but you may need to update this licence to include the showing of films. If you do need to get a premises licence to show films contact Worcestershire Regulatory Services www.worcsregservices.gov.uk

Film distributor

The film distributor will issue you with a licence to show a particular film on a particular day. This is your proof that you're not pirating the film. It is absolutely forbidden to charge any entry fee for a DVD simply rented from a local shop. Indeed public performance of any film is prohibited even if you own the disk and it is a 'private' group. Distributors will allow you to use a DVD of your own or one rented for the night provided you have the 'licence' to show for them.

You have to pay to show a film for a flat fee for a film club or a commercial hire fee/box office split of approximately 35% of the takings for fully open shows.

You can purchase your licence from companies such as Filmbank Media www.filmbankmedia.com or there are other organisations with smaller (but growing) ranges of material - try www.themplc.co.uk 1 screening will cost you £83.

Other useful places include British Federation of Film Societies <http://cinemaforall.org.uk/>

Accessing films

You now have to ask yourself what kind of films you want to show. If you're confident that villagers will want to see older films then you can buy your films from various outlets as you wish. However, if you want to show new films, those who have been showing at cinemas but not yet released on DVD, then you can do this via various film suppliers. You have several options here:

1. Film Bank

Filmbank Media Distributors Limited (Filmbank) is a joint venture company owned by Warner Bros. Entertainment UK and Sony Pictures Releasing, representing many of the leading Hollywood, Bollywood and Independent film studios in the area of film usage outside the cinema and home. To show a film, outside the home, you need permission from the owner of the copyright (the studio or

the authorised distributor) from the major Hollywood, Bollywood studios, as well as some of the leading independents, Filmbank can give you that permission.

Filmbank provides content to a number of diverse markets such as schools, hotels, ferries, trains, film societies and community film groups. It operates in over 75 international countries and territories including most of the major hotel chains.

From here you need to choose which film licence suits you better, Single Title Screening Licence (STSL) or Public Video Screening Licence (PVSL). Please visit the licensing webpage for more information http://www.filmbank.co.uk/which_licence.asp or call 0207 984 5950

2. Live and Local or Flicks in the Sticks

Both these companies will not only offer advice in setting up a community cinema facility, but also offer to run these film events for you.

They both offer a service where they provide a qualified projectionist who will provide the equipment, trailers and will show the film in a smooth professional way. All you do is sit back and enjoy the experience!

For more information Live and Local www.liveandlocal.org.uk or Flicks in the Sticks www.artsalive.co.uk

3. BFFS

The British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) is the national support and development organisation for the film society and community cinema movement.

Established in 1946, BFFS has successfully weathered the considerable changes in the cinema landscape over seven decades and today stands for the right of all communities to determine their own access to film culture.

BFFS will:

- Provide hands-on support for emerging film societies and community cinemas
- Offer advice and support covering all aspects of film society operation
- Work with other organisations such as Regional Screen Agencies, the British Film Institute and the Independent Cinema Office on behalf of film societies and community cinemas
- Provide training, conference and networking opportunities
- Publish information and educational material
- Develop member benefits and access to discounts and offers from partners

For more information please visit the BFFS website <http://www.bffs.org.uk/> or contact <http://cinemaforall.org.uk/>

If you are interested in starting a cinema club it might be worth you reading through the BFFS starter pack

Ticketing

When setting the price of your tickets it's imperative to take into account what the true cost of showing your film is. This should include the cost of hiring the film itself, venue hire, publicity, and possibly even cost incurred by volunteers. It would also be useful to consider a 'rainy day' fund to cover films that don't end up attracting large audiences.

However, do not undersell the show. If you don't charge enough people won't value it or take it seriously. Multiplexes are becoming very expensive, then add transport costs, parking, refreshments etc. and all of a sudden the cost triples!

Be competitive yet realistic. With all costs incurred what would make you at least break even? The guide ticket price is around £5 but you may feel this is too much or too little. You could offer one price for advanced booking and another price for on the door. Will you offer concessions for kids or the elderly or will it be one fixed price?

You may even consider opening a bank account in the Cinema Club's name and build a reserve. It may also be worth setting up as a constituted group or even set yourselves up as a community enterprise.

Marketing

Marketing is key to the success of your film showings, both before each screening and at the screening itself. Here are some suggestions:

1. Place an advert or story in your local newspaper, newsletter or parish magazine
2. Deliver flyers on individual films door-to-door and place them in key local places
3. Put up posters in key local locations (sports facilities, doctor's surgeries, dentists, pubs, shops etc.) and put them on social media, facebook, twitter etc.
4. Identify neighbouring villages where you think it might be worth marketing your show
5. Set up an email contact list and send email adverts to all for each up and coming screening
6. Contact other interest groups in your area that could help promote your films.
7. Set up a website (this must be kept up to date) with useful information about tickets, future screenings etc. and direct people to it via email and other marketing.
8. Give your cinema a name, a brand, a logo.
9. Consider buying a banner for outside your venue 'film night here tonight!' and put it somewhere where people will see it.
10. Don't be afraid to promote the 'green' advantage of your venture e.g. reducing carbon footprint etc.

11. Show trailers for your next showing to entice people back.

Programming & presentation

Film choice – make sure you're showing films that people WANT to see! DVD's are so cheap these days, and many have home cinema equipment, so you need to offer something extra special. Try to access those films that have just left the cinema but not quite on DVD release. These films can be accessed (at a cost) either directly via Film Bank www.filmbank.co.uk e.g.

Identify your core audience and although it'll be difficult to please everyone make sure you please them and not yourself. Invite suggestions for future showings. Listen and respond to comments.

Picture: make sure it's bang on centre, in focus and no heads are in the way. The bottom line of the picture should be as high as possible, the screen filled from side to side with gaps at top and bottom (letterbox).

Sound: don't put the sound on too loud, it can become distorted. Be aware of your venue's acoustics, it's likely to be your biggest problem when it comes to sound.

Presentation: use black out blinds if you can, they do make a difference. Failing that use layers of black bin liners. You'd be surprised how much light comes through curtains even when they're closed, also fire exits! It is advisable not to offer a break in a film. However you may find that your audience would prefer this, especially if the film is particularly long. Why not formally welcome people and say goodnight....the personal touch.

Other critical success factors

- You won't be able to compete with the multiplexes for their picture and sound quality, but you will be able to offer something different.
- Make it a sociable event, make it fun and give people a good night out.
- Offer different (and cheaper!) refreshments, e.g. ice cream, chocolate, soft drinks, wine (although make sure you've got the correct licence to sell wine, otherwise make it a 'bring your own' event).
- Build up a group of volunteers to help you to avoid burning out by doing everything yourself.
- Get people to understand where their money is going, what a bargain it is, and the whole community benefits from their money staying in the community.
- Also promote, as mentioned above, the 'green' aspect of your venture

Equipment

Good quality equipment is a must for any group wanting to set up cinema events and we encourage all organisers to run the events as professionally and commercially as possible, thus attracting the widest possible audience and to compete with the nearby multiplexes. People will attend if the

quality is good, there is a warm welcome, the refreshments are good and there is a good social atmosphere!

The equipment you will need includes:

- 2 x foldable front projection screen in 2 sizes:
4.33 x 2.71m
3.15 x 1.97m
- 1 x projector
- PA package (including amplifier, speakers & sub woofers)
- 1 x Blu Ray player
- 1 x DVD player

You will need to purchase this equipment, you can do this by fundraising, or you may already have some of this equipment. Have a look on our funding page within community development for ideas www.wychavon.gov.uk/communitydevelopment or think about your villages new homes bonus funds if you have it.