

HEBDEN BRIDGE PICTURE HOUSE

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2012 – March 2013

Hebden Bridge Picture House is owned and managed by
Hebden Royd Town Council



Town Mayor

Cllr Christine Davenport

Chair of Picture House Committee

Cllr Susan Press

Other Members of the Picture House Committee

Cllr Bampton Smith, Cllr Fearon, Cllr Hodgins, Cllr Sweeney, Cllr Yorke

Picture House Manager

Rebekah Fozard

Clerk to the Council

Jason Boom

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Hebden Bridge Picture House Annual Report 2012-13

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A: Report from the Chair of the Picture House Committee

A year ago Hebden Royd Town Council embarked on its most ambitious project ever – taking a transfer of the ownership of the Hebden Bridge Picture House from Calderdale MBC – raising the funds needed from our annual precept.

We did this following a widespread consultation which attracted over 1500 responses – overwhelmingly in favour of the project.

Twelve months down the line the Picture House is going from strength to strength despite a year which brought us a challenge we could not have envisaged: the devastating floods of summer 2012.

I'm sure councillors would want to place on record their thanks to Town Clerk Jason Boom and all our employees for the way they worked tirelessly to keep the Picture House open and safe for the public. Unlike other businesses in the town, we were luckily able to carry on without actual closure, but it was a tough challenge for everyone.

The damaged flooring has now been replaced and we are looking forward hopefully to a very bright future.

Perhaps the most significant event this year was our £50,000 investment in new digital equipment. Most films are now produced and delivered in digital form instead of the old 35mm format and we were increasingly in a position where it was becoming difficult to source the prints we needed. So our priority was to install state-of-the-art technology. And we did – with great results. We have had much positive feedback on the vast improvement in sound and picture quality.

Most importantly, we have helped ensure the Picture House's long-term viability, as without the new equipment it simply could not have survived.

It was always our aim to preserve the unique visitor experience offered by the Picture House and we did not want anything to change that. However, new toilet facilities were desperately needed so we set to work last autumn. Plans are also in hand for the refurbishment of the toilets on the balcony level.

Our famous range of cakes, Fairtrade products and other kiosk stock has been increased and in the evenings a glass of wine, beer, pilsner or cider is also available. Thanks again to staff for their flexibility in making this happen.

In the coming period, another exciting project is about to start. We now have planning permission to install a satellite dish which will enable us to 'stream' live broadcasts of music, sport and other events. So we now have the potential to show opera from Italy, live theatre from London, and the very best in sport here in Hebden Bridge. This 'Alternative Content' project is the latest in a long line of proposals we have planned to make the Picture House the best cinema in the UK – without losing its unique appeal.

In November we welcomed our new Picture House Manager, Rebekah Fozard, and we would like to thank her and all the Picture House staff who make it all possible. I hope the next 12 months are even more successful. Special thanks also to Town Clerk Jason Boom without whom the Picture House project would never have got off the ground at all.

Cllr Susan Press, Chair, Picture House Committee



Photo copyright Graham Rogers, Studio 110.

The stalls with small event stage in front of the main stage, taken from the Balcony, prior to the installation of new flooring.

B: Report from the Manager

I joined the Picture House as Manager (working 24 hours per week) on 1 November 2012. My previous position as the Vice Chair of the Friends of the Picture House, and attendance at Picture House Committee meetings over the previous year meant that I knew something of the process of the asset transfer and how the first 7 months of ownership had been progressing, prior to my role as Manager commencing.

As the core business of the Picture House is established, the programme successful and well regarded by our customers, and many of the team of employees long serving and loyal to the Picture House I've been well supported and have settled in to the new role quickly. However, despite the business and staff being well established, improvements and developments during Hebden Royd's first year managing the Picture House, both planned and responsive, have been numerous, and affected the customer experience and staff experience positively in many ways.

i. The Building and Facilities

The main stalls level ladies and gents toilets have been treated to a complete refurbishment, with new cubicles, sanitary ware, lighting, wall cladding and flooring. The improvement is enormous, and the public reception of the new facilities has been very appreciative. A baby changing unit has been installed in the unisex disabled toilet in the foyer.

The carpeting and vinyl flooring in the auditorium has been replaced – from the escape lobby floors through the auditorium up to the doors into the foyer. The new flooring is unified with the dark red auditorium colour scheme, is non-slip and hard wearing.

The lower level walls of the auditorium (and the escape lobbies to the front of the auditorium) have been maintained and re-painted in existing colours. Externally to the rear of the Picture House the Friends of the Picture House have repainted fire doors and railings to improve weather proofing and presentation.

A new mobile bar has been commissioned from local designer Jim Leach, which has been delivered in three 1 metre wide sections which can be used separately or in combination. One section houses a new bar fridge and the other two house stock, real ale hand pulls and long life plastic glasses for in-auditorium drinking. The mobile bar has been used since November at live events and special screenings, where is it situated in the foyer.

More recently, the back section of kiosk has been refurbished to a high standard to match the mobile bar, to allow an under counter bar fridge to be installed, and the work-top and storage shelves to be rationalised to accommodate more stock and equipment. Part two of the kiosk refurbishment (the front section) is to occur in 2013-14 alongside the foyer redecoration project (see sub-section v. below).

In addition, maintenance to the fire alarm and advance warning pager system, the security alarm system, the kiosk hot drinks boiler, the heating system and various radiators and convector heaters and to areas of the flat roof all proved necessary over the course of the year. All items requiring repair or renewal were attended to in a timely fashion, and

funded from income, with the exception of damage to part of the heating system which was as a result of the flooding, and was funded by our insurers.

ii. Public presentation

The presentation of the Picture House to the public has been improved. Staff uniform has been renewed so all polo shirts and sweatshirts now bear the new logo introduced a few years ago by Calderdale, and staff are encouraged to follow the dress code of wearing black trousers / skirts and shoes alongside the provided branded tops and badges.

A full website of trailers, synopses, film times and news was launched in the early part of the year, and has been developed subsequently. A mobile version of the site is available, and our Programming and Marketing Officer is responsible for content management. We also have a Facebook profile and a good number of followers both on Facebook and Twitter. Social media marketing proved invaluable in the aftermath of the summer's two floods, when it was used to rally Friends and supporters to help with the clean up and let our audiences know we'd re-opened after only one missed screening.

In the foyer modest progress has been made ahead of next year's scheduled re-decoration project. New pamphlet and leaflet holders have been installed inside and outside of the foyer, new information posters designed advertising our membership scheme, Picture This, our Parent and Baby screenings and our social media presence, and a new extendable barrier system has been introduced to help queues form in a better manner and to avoid customers jumping past Box Office and gaining admission without a ticket – a minor problem which was encountered when the foyer was particularly busy.

iii. Public offering

Revenue boosting innovations have been made, aimed at freezing ticket prices (which has occurred) whilst cutting certain overheads and boosting secondary sales revenue.

The postal mailing list, which was contained largely historic data, and saw postal distribution for free of 1,500 programmes by post every month, has been largely replaced by a monthly email of the programme in plain text, word and PDF formats. Our email list stands at over 1,600 and is rising. Postal mailing is still available for a fee of £5 per annum towards the costs of postage and staff time, but fewer than 100 people have opted to continue receiving a physical programme by post. At the same time we have increased our multiple programme distribution to venues in the locality from which our customers can collect a monthly programme, and supplied venues with a leaflet holder.

Our Picture This membership scheme was in need of an overhaul, and prices had not been increased in line with various admission price rises over the last five years. Single and joint memberships were retained and the prices were increased to the ratio the scheme had in relation to admission prices when it was launched a decade or so ago. Now members receive two hot drinks vouchers each in addition to two complimentary tickets, and can choose to pay a lower level of membership fee if they only require a programme emailed to them rather than mailed. Income for Picture This was £4,835 for year, which was more than 50% over budget.

By the end of the 2012-13 year the offering at the kiosk had changed substantially. Favourites such as home-made cakes, hot drinks in mugs and popcorn were retained and prices of these items largely maintained – hot drinks are still just £1. Sales levels of all other stock was analysed and poor performing stock retired in favour of a broader choice appealing to all possible customers. Ice cream is now sourced from Skipton's Yorkshire Dales ice creams, and stock generally caters for children more than it did previously. Gluten free cake bars and flapjacks are now stocked, along with peanuts and jelly sweets. In the evenings the bottle bar area of the kiosk serves locally produced real ale, Czech pilsner and English cider and a choice of single serve bottles of wine.

Our Hire Prices have been rationalised and favour weekday (Monday to Thursday) bookings generally and local user group bookings specifically by offering reduced rates. Weekend hires do occur but can substantially disrupt or limit the film programming for the entire weekend. Now potential hirers receive a Hire Pack consisting of the price list, terms and conditions and a technical specification pack and quotes are provided speedily. We are unable to provide (as we do not own) a full PA sound system for live bands, meaning the hirer must source this themselves which can be expensive, but our hires calendar for the coming year is impressive with comedians, poets, an animation festival and live bands all making use of the venue.



Photo copyright Graham Rogers, Studio 110.

iv. Programming improvements

The installation of a new digital projector last June has made the Programming and Marketing Officer's life much easier, as in 2011 and 2012 an increasingly small number of new releases were being made available in the old 35mm film format and our choice of topical films to present was becoming quite limited.

A monthly Parent & Baby screening was introduced in January, being held on a Tuesday morning, where the most suitable 12A or under certificate film being screened that month is offered at a screening exclusively for parents / carers and their babies and young children. The reception from local parents to this innovation has been nothing but positive. One of the Friends of the Picture House committee members is assisting us with marketing the screenings more widely to likely users.

v. Planned Projects

In early 2013-14 we will commence live screenings of alternative content, beginning with National Theatre Live's *The Audience* in June 2013, following the installation in May of a satellite dish and receiver. The ground work for this was done in 2012-13 when Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission were sought to enable the physical installation to occur. It is planned that the Royal Opera House's 2013/14 cinema season of five operas and five ballets will be subscribed to, commencing in September 2013.

2013-14 will also see the addition of online ticketing and booking for our live screenings and special screenings. We're partnering with wegottickets.com to offer tickets for our live screenings online, with a 10% booking fee, taken by the web provider, to cover their admin costs. It is a nil cost service to the Picture House but does demand some administrative time. We're also investing in a desktop thermal ticket printer to enable us to produce print runs of tickets for our special events in a manner that is responsive to demand rather than printing 490 tickets at a local printers for every event. Tickets printed on our new ticket printer will cost 1/5th of the price of those previously printed commercially.

The beginning of the new financial year will see replacement curtains being installed either side of the stage, and the back of the auditorium, by J & C Joel, made to match the existing other fabric in the auditorium and to replace previously flood damaged curtains.

Essential maintenance and repair work will be undertaken to the two main dressing rooms, to replace damp damage, and general wear and tear ahead of a group of volunteers decorating the dressing rooms for the Picture House at the end of June. Ground floor level windows to the rear of the Picture House will also be repaired and re-painted at this time.

Funding has been made available by the Council towards the cost of refurbishing the three remaining toilets – two located at the back of the balcony and the disabled toilet accessed from the foyer. Work on the toilets will commence in summer, and in early autumn the foyer redecoration and front kiosk area refurbishment will commence, with a new painted colour scheme, new curtains, new flooring and new kiosk counter top and front being provided, to make a smarter and brighter first impression to customers.

The Friends of the Picture House have offered to redecorate the very tired staff seating and rest area at first floor level, which will also benefit from a new vinyl floor.

The kiosk stock room and bar stock room will have a minor overhaul with the provision of sturdy built-for-purpose racking in each area.

The appointment of a new Bar Duty Manager to run our live event and special screening bars is anticipated in the near future, and recruitment of additional casual Duty Managers is also planned for summer 2013, to add greater flexibility to the provision of the Duty Manager rota.

Rebekah Fozard, Manager, Hebden Bridge Picture House

C: Report from the Town Clerk

Following the initial suggestion that the Picture House be transferred to Hebden Royd Town Council key principals were swiftly adopted to ensure the continuity demanded by the users of the Picture House. These principals have remained as a point of reference up to and following the Picture House's transfer, all have been adhered to and have played a role in ensuring the Picture House retains its highly visible place in the lives of the people of the Upper Calder Valley and beyond.

The building has remained a public space with the Town Council clearly accountable democratically for its operation. The involvement of the 'Friends' takes this accountability to another level.

Picture House Staff have enjoyed continuity of employment and hours of work have been increased. Transferred under TUPE conditions staffing arrangements across Hebden Royd Town Council have been challenged and a complete review of staff contracts and Terms & Conditions has been undertaken to ensure the Picture House, and indeed the Town Council, has the correct staff in place to provide the services it delivers for many years to come.

The Picture House, while striving for a surplus to reinvest in the business, is not profit driven and operates to serve the whole community and has remained available for community use with an open mind applied to all approaches.

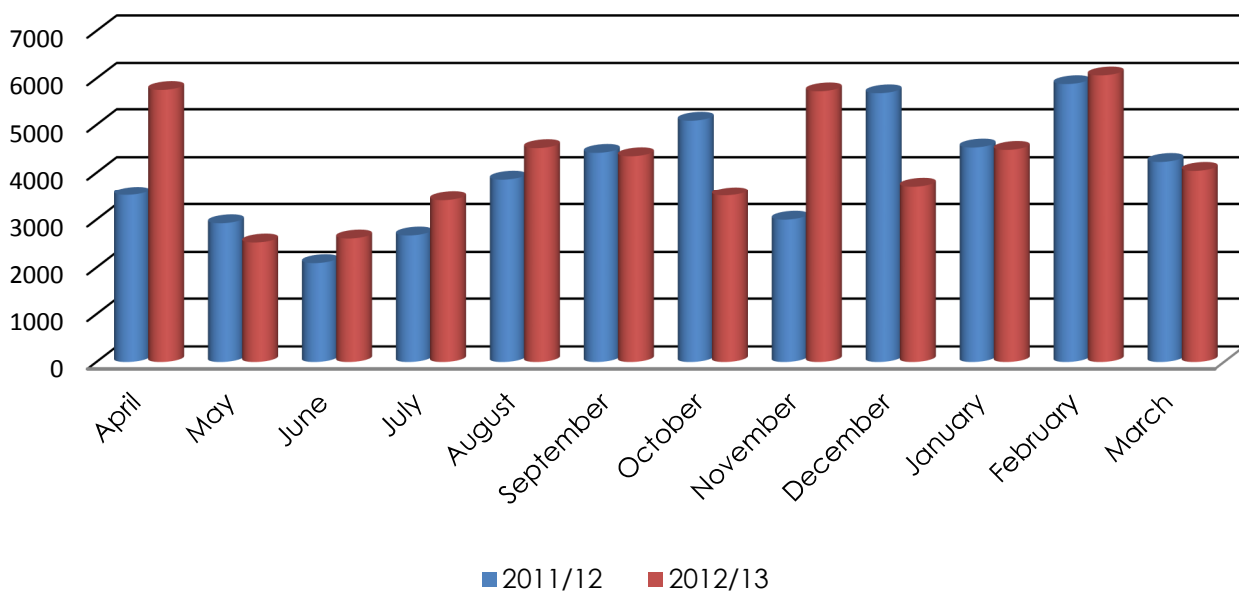
The programme has remained wide and varied with expansion into live event streaming further adding to this and the Picture House has remained that friendly, relaxed cinema that it has become well known as.

Delivering these principals means that the Picture House has been strengthened and developed but we know that further work is needed to retain these standards. The plans that we have for the future ensure that the Picture House will remain at the heart of the community and that it will remain on a solid footing for many years to come.

2012-13 performance summary

In the first year of managing the Picture House Hebden Royd Town Council has achieved a small growth in audience numbers, up on 2011/12 by 2,797 admissions. The graph below shows month on month admissions for the year just ended and the preceding year – seasonal fluctuations are largely due to blockbuster films being released i.e. November 2012 saw the new Bond film Skyfall screening and that produced the large spike in the graph below. Other events such as international sporting fixtures will impact on audience numbers, and good weather often has a negative impact at weekends and during school holidays.

Audience Numbers (before and after asset transfer)



Sales analysis reveals that Net Box Office income increased from £215,332 to £222,196 from 2011/12 to 2012/13 and the number of screenings over the year returned to 2007/08 levels, with 641 screenings being programmed, as against 618 screenings the previous year. Secondary sales (kiosk) income increased by just under £2,000 (note stock re-structuring and price increases only occurred in the fourth quarter) and alcohol sales from special bars added a further £5,249 to the secondary sales income figure.

In addition to ticket and secondary sales income, income was generated through on-screen advertising, two shop unit rental receipts, hire fees and Picture This membership scheme income. Income, at £304,464, exceeded expenditure by just over £6,529.

Expenditure in the year included many exceptional items such as numerous examples of unplanned maintenance with equipment reaching the end of their useful lives, developing a new website, legal fees for the asset transfer, ancillary projection equipment, bar and kiosk refrigeration equipment (totalling 3 new fridges), and the acquisition of bar stock from a standing start of nil alcoholic stock at the transfer date.

The challenges brought by the severe flooding of June 2012 have provided opportunities to reconsider how best to present the Picture House to the public. The insurance in place has provided new auditorium flooring, new drapes and redecoration in the auditorium. Repairs made to the heating system as part of the insurance works should mean that the system is in good order for the next 10 to 15 years.

With the programming of films following the same tried and tested policy, increased bar revenue anticipated, live event screenings introducing a new revenue stream and web and social media marketing activity attracting new customers, we hope in the 2013-14 year to see our operating surplus increasing further, as the number of items of exceptional expenditure decreases. Surplus will be focussed in the main on the on-going maintenance, refurbishment and redecoration programme at the Picture House.

Acknowledgements

Without the knowledge and support of the staff of the Picture House none of what has been achieved in 2012-13 would have been possible. Without them the Picture House would not be the place that it is.

The staff of Calderdale MBC who in the past managed and supported the Picture House and who have continued to be a source of knowledge and guidance.

The Friends of the Picture House who pass on their positive experiences about the Picture House with special thanks going to those who rolled up their sleeves to help the Picture House reopen just 12 hours after having 4 ft of water in the auditorium in June 2012.

Many thanks to you all.

Jason Boom, Town Clerk, Hebden Royd Town Council