

Annual Report 2015-2016

Last year we reported on a challenging period for ADEC, our primary objective was to stabilise the organisation financially. Having made the decision to re-new our lease at the Babylon for five years our aim was to move forward, securing arts activity and build the local arts ecology.

In May 2015 ADEC met with Arts Council England to create new organisational development model based around the 'Babylon Arts Centre', our Grants for the Arts funding would enable us to rebrand and redevelop the Babylon Gallery as a micro-arts venue and hub for arts development. Funding was also put in place to test a programme of live events across two venues at the Babylon and working with The City of Council at The Maltings.

The project funding was to be used for organisational development support, essential in helping us generate income to sustain ADEC in the longer term. As a charity we also needed to overhaul our legal and financial structure so we started the process of developing our operations, administration and finance to create fit for purpose systems and processes for sustainability. Following consultation with key stakeholders we rebranded our organisation as Babylon ARTS with a new website and signage. We actively recruited a range of new trustees and volunteers over the last year to strengthen our existing team.

Work to refurbish the gallery began on 1 September 2015 – we were closed for just a month whilst walls were knocked down, flooring replaced, ceilings painted. Working with local companies Freeman Brear Architects and Salmon Brothers Builders gave us an increased space for exhibitions and performances, with a better flow within the space. Capacity was increased and our box office area was more welcoming. The use of specialist moveable walls allowed for more flexibility not only with visual arts' displays and new gift shop area but for our live event programme.

A key part of the process was in the rebranding of the Babylon site so that it was no longer viewed as just a gallery but a multi-use, micro-art centre. Visual arts continue to be a central part of the programme but it was important that the public, artists and ADEC staff changed their perception of the space which should be open to a wide variety of arts uses and users.

Within our new space we continued to work with local, regional and national artists and groups. Visitor numbers continue to increase, with an estimated 26,000 visitors attending gallery exhibitions, workshops, activities and events throughout the year. Just a few of the highlights this year included Matisse : Drawing with Scissors, our Summer Exhibition, East Cambridgeshire Schools Exhibition and working with local groups Ely Art Lovers and Cambridge Open Studios.



Film (including Ely Cinema)

ADEC operates Ely Cinema in the Maltings, Ely. This provision continues to meet the need for cinema locally. Our cinema is supported by a team of local volunteers who help to promote and steward our programme in the venue, giving approximately 100 hours of their time a month. Digital technology, with full 5.1 Dolby surround sound has transformed the screening experience for our customers allowing us to programme a wide range of live and encore productions including National Theatre, RSC and live music and art productions.

Projects

ADEC project activity is often developed in partnership with other organisations (both arts and non-arts, professional and voluntary) to ensure that we are able to deliver activity in the most appropriate and effective way. Our project work often tackle issues such as rural isolation, increasing arts engagement, providing support for young people and supporting communities. Our project work in 2015/16 saw us receiving repeat business from partners with whom we have developed a good reputation and strong track record e.g. Cambridgeshire Libraries, MAP (Music Arts Project). Our project work has also seen us increase our geographical reach through the 'Market Place' project, where we are delivering across seven market towns in Fenland and Forest Heath.

Ongoing projects delivered during the 2015/16 financial year included:

- Creative People & Places 'Market Place'
- Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership
- Art Alive In Libraries
- The Horseman's Word
- MAP – Gateway Development Project
- Ely Youth Hub Workshop Programme
- Kickstart
- Twilight at the Museums
- Innovation ('Innovate Test & Embed' by for & with young people)

Development Support

ADEC provides a range of services for groups and individuals promoting arts activities.

In 2015/16 this included:

- Management and promotion of the 2015 Isle of Ely Arts Festival
- Overseeing the Atelier East Poet Laureate competition and Summer Exhibition
- Coordinating the activities of community music group Fenland Jam
- Arts Award training and delivery across the region
- Programming Ely's Summer of Music concert series
- Bringing interactive arts activities to Ely Folk Festival
- Assisting with the organisation and delivery of Ely's Eel Day
- Active membership of CS3 (Culture and Sports Consortium) and YFCC (Young Fenland Cultural Consortium)

Chairman's Report

ADEC is a small independent arts development charity where we make big things happen. We deliver arts events, activities and projects that engage audiences and participants in memorable and personal ways as well as providing quality entertainment.

We believe that the work we do for the community in Ely and beyond makes the area a better place to live and contributes to our audiences' enjoyment of their environment. We think that the arts offer us opportunities to understand ourselves better, and our place in society; enhances our sense of well-being, confidence and self-esteem and even enables us to make new friends.

I would like to thank our Board Members for all their time and expertise over the last 12 months which has been a great support both to me and to the ADEC staff. Following the election to the Board last year of five new members, we have strengthened and expanded the skills available to us. The support of the City of Ely Council and Arts Council England has been essential, without them we would be in a very different position today.

I am very sorry to report that John Hunter, our Treasurer was diagnosed with lung cancer, earlier this year. Mike Macey, very gallantly, undertook the role of acting Treasurer and worked, with John, to prepare the accounts. Very sadly John passed away at the end of July. John had only been a member of the Board for two years, but in that time, he had made an enormous contribution to rebuilding the accounting systems that we use, enabling far more transparency. We feel a great sense of gratitude for the work that he did for us and thank his family for the time that he gave us.

After a few difficult years, the business model, which is currently being updated, is more sustainable, and we are looking forward to a successful future. We will continue to rise to the challenge of offering our audiences and local community a mix of exciting, entertaining and inspiring events and projects.

Our continued policy of free entry to the gallery with a rich variety of contemporary exhibitions has seen our visitors numbers increase from previous years. The Maltings, Ta Bouche restaurant and the continuing success of our neighbours, Peacocks Tearooms, Waterside Antiques, and not forgetting Geoff's Summer ice cream van, has seen the Riverside area of Ely become an increasingly vibrant place to visit within the City.

We are not complacent about our future and both Staff and Trustees are working tirelessly to ensure the continued success of ADEC in its refurbished premises, Babylon ARTS.

Following the launch of our new babylonarts.org.uk website, information about our various events, projects and activities is readily available in an easy to access manner for phones, tablets and computers.

We also need to thank our committed team of volunteer stewards, gallery volunteers and installers. Without their support, it would have been impossible to make our various projects and other activities such a success

Simon Gilligan
Chair of Trustees

Finance summary

This has been a year of consolidation of our activities, which has allowed us to analyse our profile, to review the range of projects and identify sources of income for the future.

We operate in a challenging economic environment but one where increasing amounts of leisure time are being spent and cultural activities generally are becoming better appreciated.

In order to be able to meet those demands we have reviewed our cost base, developed new reporting procedures and built on our strengths. This process has accelerated since the year end. The major impact on our results has been the re-opening of the gallery in October last year (approx. 3 months) as a result of a grant that has enabled us to broaden our income base and create a sustainable brand. This fully meets our objects as a charity and has provided additional sources of income. The popularity of the gallery has continued to develop well into the new financial year.

We also started the largest project undertaken for some years (Creative People & Places : Market Place) and the accounts reflect the **first six months (?)** of the project. The income from other projects has increased significantly compared with the previous year. This has allowed for a greater recovery of overheads including salaries, as staff members have been more fully employed in project delivery.

We have seen many of our partners invite us to apply for repeat business often at an increased level from previous years, which reinforces our reputation and helps us to budget better and provide stability.

We can now better identify the profitability of our activities and plan accordingly. We are confident that the benefits will enable us to provide improved service levels and develop within our means.

Turning to the numbers, in what are progressively more complex accounts, there is a small trading surplus for the year, which considering the reductions in turnover for non-restricted activities is very encouraging. Costs have been kept under control – even reducing in some areas. This modest increase in general reserves will assist us to withstand any short term reduction in activity.

All unrestricted activities have shown small surpluses, which are essential, since by definition, projects do not create surpluses but allow us to recover an element of overheads and salary costs. We have also identified the cost of our fund raising activities this year and this, together with the governance costs of £1,200, more or less equals the trading surplus. It could be said that the level of donations and gift aid recovered equates to the surplus for the year. We are extremely grateful to all our supporters for their contributions.

Mike Macey
Treasurer

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