

# FACT SHEET 1: COMMUNITY SCREEN NETWORKS

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**Community Screen Forum (CSF) was established in March 2017. This Fact Sheet is the first of three to shine a light on the vital work of organisations that coordinate and deliver high quality cultural and social screen-based experiences to audiences across the UK**

## About CSF

Community Screen Forum is a new body representing the interests of organisations that promote, support and enable community screen experiences in under-served areas of the UK.

The Forum was established in March 2017 following a conference on rural cinema exhibition hosted by the University of East Anglia and Creative Arts East in August 2016.

Forum members provide centralised services to communities via different models of support.

These include direct delivery of screening events, touring schemes and the coordination of screening activities by local promoters hosting their own film shows.

CSF members operate across the UK and include:

- Arts Alive, Flicks in the Sticks
- Carn to Cove, C Fyln
- Creative Arts East, Village Screen
- Driftwood Cinema
- Independent Cinema Office
- INDY Cinema Group
- Live & Local, Big Picture Show
- Moviola
- National Science and Media Museum, Cine North
- NEAT Flicks
- North Lincolnshire Council, FilmLincs
- Open Cinema
- Phoenix Community Cinema, Centre Screen
- Regional Screen Scotland, Screen Machine
- Suffolk Cinema Network

## Community Screen Networks

By bringing local people together for shared cultural experiences, screen networks encourage social engagement, adding to the variety and vitality of community life.

Creating social value is often the driving rationale behind such networks, rather than the pursuit of profit (this aspect of community screen network activity is explored further in **Fact Sheet 2**).

In this regard, community screen networks share much the same ambition as volunteer-run film societies and other community cinemas (represented for over 70 years by Cinema for All).

While individual film societies operate independently, organising and delivering screening activity themselves, centralised coordination is the defining characteristic of CSF networks, providing invaluable support to volunteers who may otherwise lack the film knowledge, technical skills and equipment necessary to run a regular screening programme of their own.

There are two main modes of operation for networks: traditional touring activity and a 'hub and spokes' model. Most networks follow one or the other approach, but some, like Moviola and Flicks in the Sticks, offer a mix of both.

## Touring

The very earliest days of public film exhibition were characterised by travelling showmen touring their 'moving picture shows' around music halls, fairgrounds and other makeshift

venues to the delight and wonder of paying audiences.

However, this style of exhibition soon gave way to purpose-built cinemas that expanded rapidly from 1909 onwards.

Yet the touring model continues today in those parts of the country where film exhibition is often not considered commercially viable. In such situations, mobile cinema operators can provide local communities with regular access to the latest films at pop-up locations, in an echo of those pioneering days.

This has been made possible in part by technological developments. Film exhibition has changed markedly from the single-reel penny gaffs delivered on celluloid by those early showmen, which are a long way from today's digital cinema experience.

Nowadays, even a basic consumer-level DVD or Blu ray set up can deliver high quality presentation standards and the prospect of accessible and cost-effective communal film shows in almost any location.

Today's touring operators deliver screening activity directly to audiences at a number of different locations, deciding film choice and taking responsibility for booking, scheduling, marketing and promotion, ticketing and projection.



© Regional Screen Scotland/ Screen Machine

In the case of the 80-seater Screen Machine, owned and operated by Regional Screen Scotland, the mobile cinema experience arrives on the back of a specially adapted heavy goods vehicle complete with state of the art digital cinema projection facilities. Screen Machine has a busy schedule of stops across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Other operators, like Phoenix Community Cinema, send trained projectionists (or 'presenters') out to village halls and other civic spaces to screen films, either with portable disc-based projection equipment (DVD or Blu ray) or by making use of kit already found in venues.

Local promoters, usually village hall committees and other community groups, provide a venue, front of house support and local promotion, as well as selling refreshments.

Income generation varies according to the service model adopted by a touring operator. In Screen Machine's case, revenue comes directly from ticket sales and is retained by the operator, once costs have been deducted.

Other touring operators share box office revenue with promoters on fixed terms, often applying an additional administrative charge for projection and film booking services.

### 'Hub and spokes'

An alternative approach to the touring model involves a network of individual promoters organising screenings in their local area with the support of dedicated services offered by a CSF member (or similar group). This model is closely allied with live performance touring schemes that first appeared in the UK in the 1980s.



© Flicks in the Sticks

A number of CSF members, including Arts Alive (which runs Flicks in the Sticks<sup>ii</sup>), Creative Arts

East<sup>iii</sup> (Village Screen), Carn to Cove (C-Fylm), Live and Local (The Big Picture Show<sup>iv</sup>), and North East Arts Touring (NEAT Flicks) all began by providing live performance touring services before adding community film exhibition to their promoter offer.

The range of support services available varies from network to network, and promoters can take up whichever suit their particular needs. The most common services include:

- Equipment loan/hire scheme
- Film booking & programming support
- Marketing support
- Training for promoters and volunteers
- Technical support
- Advice about funding & project opportunities
- Promoter networking opportunities & events
- Promoter newsletters, web sites & social media support
- Discounted insurance

Networks following the ‘hub and spokes’ model usually generate income from service charges paid by promoters, like equipment hire and film booking fees (and they may also share box

office revenue with promoters in the same way as touring operators).

Another approach, adopted by some community screen network organisations, including C Fylm, NEAT Flicks and Village Screen, involves a subscription model with promoters paying a fee for network membership.

Project funding can provide another important income stream for community screen networks, from sources including the British Film Institute and the Film Audience Network; other Lottery distributors like Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Big Lottery and the Heritage Lottery Fund; local authorities and community councils; social interest charities and other community groups.

CSF members have a strong track record in accessing these funds, bringing additional resources to bear in communities that might otherwise struggle to make a case for support without the backing of an established partner.

## Network activity across the UK

CSF members currently operate across the full length and breadth of the UK, from Cornwall to the Orkney Islands, and Belfast to Norfolk.

Screen Machine is the oldest network among CSF members, established in 1998, followed by Flicks in the Sticks (1999) and Moviola (2001). Other networks are less than 10 years old. Despite the relative youthfulness of this sector, the scale of activity is extensive and evidence suggests it is growing.

Using data from the majority of CSF members, it is estimated that:

- around 6,400 screenings took place in nearly 700 different locations in 2016 (Table 1);
- these screenings generated 339,400 admissions, with box office revenue totalling over £1.6 million (calculated using the average ticket price of £4.78).

**Table 1: Community screen network databank**

Number of screening locations/ promoters in 2016	696
Number of screenings in 2016	6,400 (estimated)
Number of admissions in 2016	339,400 (estimated)
Average number of screenings per location/promoter in 2016	9
Average number of admissions per screening in 2016	53
Average ticket price	£4.78

Notes: Figures are based on information derived from 11 community screen network organisations via a CSF member survey and desk research (C-Fylm, Cine North, Driftwood Cinema, FilmLincs, Flicks in the Sticks, INDY Cinema Group, Moviola, Open Cinema, Phoenix Community Cinema, Screen Machine, and Village Screen)

## CSF member directory

### Arts Alive, Flicks in the Sticks

<http://www.artsalive.co.uk>

### Carn to Cove, C FyIm

<http://www.carntocove.co.uk/cfyIm>

### Creative Arts East, Village Screen

<http://www.creativeartseast.co.uk/villagescreen>



### Driftwood Cinema

<http://driftwoodcinema.org/>



### Independent Cinema Office

<http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/>

### INDY Cinema Group

<http://www.indycinemagroup.com/>

### Live & Local, Big Picture Show

<http://www.liveandlocal.org.uk/>

### Moviola

<http://www.moviola.org/>

### National Science and Media Museum, Cine North

<http://www.cinenorth.co.uk/>



### NEAT Flicks

<http://neatshows.co.uk/>

### North Lincolnshire Council, FilmLincs

<http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/tourism-museums-and-the-arts/the-arts/get-involved/rural-cinema-scheme/>

### Open Cinema

<http://opencinema.org/>



### Phoenix Community Cinema, Centre Screen

<http://www.phoenix.org.uk>

### Regional Screen Scotland, Screen Machine

<https://www.screenmachine.co.uk/>

### Suffolk Cinema Network

<https://www.suffolkinemaneetwork.org/>

## References

(1) <http://cinemaforall.org.uk/> (2) <http://www.artsalive.co.uk/> (3) <http://www.creativeartseast.co.uk/>  
(4) <http://www.liveandlocal.org.uk>

## Check out...

- Fact Sheet 2 for further information about the social and cultural benefits of community screen network activity
- Fact Sheet 3 for details about film licensing arrangements