

Valuing the Arts in Rural Dorset The Social and Economic impact

of

Artsreach



Dr David Wood September 2019

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1. SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1.1 Artsreach is a registered charity, which brings high quality performances of live theatre, music, dance and family shows to rural communities across Dorset. Its performance programme is administered and operated by a team of salaried staff at its Dorchester office and through a network of around 50 volunteer promoting groups staging over 140 high quality professional events every year, usually in village halls, across rural Dorset. Artsreach offers its volunteers the opportunity to choose and promote professional arts events in their local venue. The income generated from ticket sales supports both Artsreach as a scheme, and the community venues in which events take place, as box office income is split between both parties. Artsreach receives grant aid from Arts Council England, Dorset Council and sponsorship.

The opening statement of the Arts Council England's recently published draft strategy 'Shaping the Next Ten Years' refers to the, '*...joy, satisfaction and wellbeing that living a creative life brings...*' Arts organisations which receive Arts Council England funds will, 'deliver work of the highest quality.' These statements reflect and rearticulate the value of the arts as an indispensable element of human flourishing, necessary and intrinsically beneficial to the wellbeing of humankind and society.

Artsreach stakeholders – staff, board members, village promoters and volunteers – frequently restate their belief in the intrinsic importance of the arts and culture. The interview evidence below is a testament to the value they attach to Artsreach's role in promoting the highest quality of performing, participatory and visual arts within rural Dorset.

The author is grateful to the sample of nine promoters for their time and to Artsreach's staff and board members for their support, help and constructive editing in the preparation of this report.

1.2 The research for this report was conducted between May and August 2019. Interviews were conducted with nine Artsreach promoters staging Artsreach performances in village halls at a sample of five village venues. In addition Artsreach's relevant and regularly collected statistical information from 2019 was analysed, in order to draw on a mix of qualitative and quantitative information.

The work of promoters and other volunteers to run Artsreach's programme in village halls is equivalent to a 'volunteer multiple' of £62,400 in support of Dorset arts. In addition Artsreach shows made net profits for venues of nearly £31,000 in 2017/18. Four of the five venues transferred their share of these profits to their village halls as well as to churches in two cases, all of which use their income to fund a range of maintenance and improvement projects. Usually local contractors carried out these village hall improvements, thus giving a further stimulus to the Dorset economy.

In one village Artsreach profits had been enough to fund three community projects.

Interviewees reported that their audiences sometimes ate at village pubs before a show and often bought their tickets at village shops. It is estimated that a 'churn' of economic activity catalysed by Artsreach could be worth nearly £31,000 to the Dorset economy annually.

Taken the above figures together, it is estimated that every pound of annual public funding for Artsreach's work generates a further 93 pence in benefits for rural Dorset and its economy.

Promoters reported that audiences socialising around Artsreach performances was its most prominent social impact, contributing to rural flourishing and networking. Interviewees also valued their interaction with local teams of volunteers who helped them stage Artsreach shows. They cited four examples where attenders at Artsreach workshops in their village had followed up their experience by exploring new art forms and activities. There was a small amount of evidence that easy access to professional performance provided by Artsreach is a factor in attracting newcomers to Dorset villages.

Whilst interviewees provided clear examples of the social impact of Artsreach any attempt to quantify this numerically alongside the clear economic impact would be unconvincing. However, Artsreach could, in future, refine its data collection in order to provide a sharper focus on its social impact. Alongside this, increasing its workshop and participatory activities programme might enhance Artsreach's social impact, by contributing to village networking and rural flourishing.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The social and economic by-products of rural arts touring which improve the quality of life in rural communities have been an important factor in evaluating and discussing rural arts and touring for some time. Matarasso's (2007) *Artsreach Discussion Paper* noted that *Dorset's Sustainable Community Strategy* of that time:

...focuses on several areas in which Artsreach might play a role, notably 'Improved access to services, employment and leisure,' and, 'Thriving communities'. Artsreach will have opportunities to propose how improvements in local services and quality of life can be achieved through its work. (2007:14)

At a national level, Matarasso's report *Only Connect: Arts Touring and Rural Communities* (2004) pointed out the contribution rural touring makes to strengthening commitment to community. One of the rural touring schemes he studied in the report was Artsreach:

There is a widespread belief that, as one person put it about her Dorset village, 'the shows did help to put a bit of heart into the place which had no pub or shop.' (2004:71)

At the present time (2019) the National Rural Touring Forum has partnered with Coventry University to investigate this issue. We are yet to learn whether this current research will propose a taxonomy for making claims about the value of the social and economic impacts which could partly be attributed to rural touring programmes and schemes like Artsreach. Funders and sponsors will continue to ask such questions as:

- aside from localised arts provision for rural communities, what are the additional social and economic benefits of rural touring;
- can we describe them accurately?
- and, most importantly, can we estimate their added value?

Questions of this sort are politically important. Decisions about continued funding for a host of public investment programmes, both within and outside the arts, can be influenced by such estimates. So, managers responsible for public funding streams frequently commission research aimed at appraising return on investment.

But to make such estimates is notoriously difficult. The assertion that, for every £1 of public money spent on the arts, the return is £1++ is a very inexact science. All the trappings of scientific research are missing. There is no direct line between cause and effect. Nevertheless, there has been a great deal of interest in this issue, leading to more reliable instruments for making claims about the social and economic benefits of the arts. Arts Council England's guide, *Measuring the Economic Benefits of Arts and Culture* (2012), proposes four techniques to estimate return on investment. One of them, the *Social Return on Investment* technique (SROI) draws on the most influential and comprehensive UK research project to address economics and the arts in the age of the welfare state: John Myerscough's work for the Policy Studies Institute, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (1988). Relevant aspects of Myerscough's work have been applied to this research and the SROI model best fits the Artsreach Programme model. But the key criterion on which to judge the SROI version proposed here will be plausibility. In other words, as the research tries to describe the socio-economic spin-offs of Artsreach's work, does it seem like common sense? This plausibility test will be applied in the conclusion to the report.

2.2 Through this report Artsreach is contributing, once more, to the national debate about the socio-economic benefits of rural touring. It attempts to identify and describe the ways in which its programme contributes to the flourishing of Dorset's rural communities. It provides a sharper picture of why communities want Artsreach events, beyond their simple entertainment value. It was undertaken to assist Artsreach in identifying the sort of benefit to rural communities that its programme provides and to record these benefits more systematically in the future.

Another research objective was to articulate, to sponsors and funders, the sort of measures which might plausibly assess Artsreach's socio-economic impact. So this report offers a more detailed

analysis and a provisional estimate of the programme's value to Dorset's village economies, rural communities and social groups.

3. THE RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 The research was not designed to make any judgement on the *quality* of any artists featured in the Artsreach programme itself. Rather, it seeks to focus on what people believe to be the benefits arising from staging the programme.

The research was principally qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews were held in spring and summer 2019 with nine volunteer promoters at five venues in Dorset villages. This group of people at each venue manage and promote Artsreach events locally. All interviewees signed consent forms, allowing us to use the information they gave us, albeit anonymised. A set of 21 questions formed the basis of the interview conversations. These were drafted, refined by a group of six Artsreach staff and board members and arranged in three groups: questions about the promoters themselves, followed by questions about social and finally economic impact. A record of these conversations provides a 'thick description' (Geertz: 1973) of the possible wider impacts of the Artsreach programme.

To complement this the research drew on relevant statistical information which Artsreach regularly compiles from the extensive questionnaires which promoters complete. So as a whole, the research employed a qualitative/quantitative mixed-method approach. From these complementary methods a set of benefits, both social and economic, emerged which can be tested by comparing the interviewee responses and returning to re-test the theories with promoters, audiences and stakeholders in the future. Indeed, shortly after the interviews were completed, an opportunity arose to interview Deborah (not her real name), a frequent attender at Artsreach shows from Poole. Her perspective both confirmed (see 6.2, 6.4) and contrasted with (see 5.6) some of the common issues which interviewees discussed. This last interview indicates how re-testing the issues which emerged can deepen an understanding of Artsreach's socio-economic impact.

4. THE INTERVIEWS WITH PROMOTERS

4.1 All of the villages and the promoters interviewed have been anonymised. The real village names have been replaced by fictional character names from Thomas Hardy novels, 'Boldwood, Fairway, Smallbury, Stockdale and Whittle.'

Smallbury – The former promoter and the current promoter gave interviews. The village hall at Smallbury, managed by a committee, also owns and maintains the adjacent village play park. Together, the two promoters have run Artsreach events for ten and a half years. The village

hall at Smallbury derived clear financial benefit from Artsreach events. For example, at just one musical event in 2018, the hall took £170 as its share of profits, as well as around £60 in bar profits. The parish council's £100 donation to Artsreach that year was, therefore, more than matched by village hall income from just one of its several annual Artsreach events.



Boldwood – Is a large village with a population of around 1000. Three people have promoted Artsreach events as a team for four years and nearly all events have a full audience. A typical event makes a net profit of £150-£200 which is transferred to Boldwood's community project. This fund makes grants available both for the village hall and community groups in the village. Annual profit from Artsreach events is sufficient to make the equivalent of three awards to these groups, or to contribute to village hall improvements.

Whittle – The promoter is in the second year fulfilling the role after over four years assisting the former promoter, who herself organized Artsreach events in the village for around 20 years. Whittle stages Artsreach events in both the village hall and the church. Net profits from Artsreach shows are currently not transferred to the village hall, although the promoter had checked and found that the village hall committee is content with this arrangement. Some money from these profits has been given to church funds in acknowledgment that the church stages certain



Artsreach events. The promoter and volunteer team are yet to disburse remaining net profits from Artsreach events in Whittle over the last two years. The promoter writes articles in the village magazine highlighting upcoming Artsreach events. A volunteer network of car drivers provide transport for local people with limited mobility to attend village hall events, a service potentially available for Artsreach events. Whittle is also notable for attracting an Artsreach audience from a very wide area.

Stockdale – Is another village of around 1000 population with a thriving village hall. The two promoters have been organizing Artsreach events in the village for three years, but have attended Artsreach performances since 1999 and helped at the Dorset village in which they previously lived. Performances are staged in the village hall and church, and summer workshops in the library. Net performance profits, including the raffle and bar, can reach around £200, which goes into village hall funds. Whilst this is a small part of village hall income, the Parish Council also donates

money to Artsreach. The promoters estimate that around 75% of their audience comes from the wider area around the village and 25% from within the village.

Fairway – Has been staging Artsreach events for many years, the current promoter having been in place for 12 years. Fairway is notable for making significant profits from its Artsreach Programme. The promoter recalled that the last three shows had each earned more than £500 in net profits, including from the bar and catering. This forms a significant proportion of the income for the village hall. Unlike the other villages, which have film clubs, amateur drama groups etc., the Artsreach programme is the only provision for the arts in Fairway and, as such, is a particular attraction to newcomers. The promoter reported that she had received 'phone calls about Artsreach from people thinking of moving to the village, and one new arrival had volunteered to help with Artsreach as soon as moving into the village.

4.2 The promoters and volunteers

The promoters interviewed tended to be 'serial volunteers' insofar as they fulfilled several volunteer roles in the community. Their voluntary efforts result in considerable benefit to the thriving of their communities and to the local economy. All but two of the nine promoters interviewed are retired.



At Smallbury both the previous and the current promoter also run the village hall film programme. The current promoter is also secretary to the village hall committee. The former promoter characterised this range of roles: 'Some people do a lot of things [for the village] some do nothing at all.' At Boldwood the promoters also volunteered in a sailing club and a choir. Whittle's promoter had volunteered for Coastwatch and in a Weldmar charity shop before taking over Artsreach from the previous promoter who had held the role for around 20 years. Stockdale's promoters fulfil multiple volunteer roles;

chairing the gardening club, the local Citizens Advice Bureau, the Library Trust as well as regularly promoting Artsreach events in the local area newsletter. Despite working full-time, Fairway's promoter had also served on the parish council, village hall committee, and as secretary to the Women's Institute.

Promoters said they enjoyed volunteering for Artsreach. Whittle's promoter noted the personal satisfaction derived from Artsreach events: 'I'm providing something for the community; it enables other people to get involved.' He enjoyed the interaction with his five other volunteers, especially when they sat down together to choose Whittle's programme of events from the

Artsreach menu. Stockdale's promoters also involved all their volunteer helpers in choosing from the menu. Two volunteers assisted the promoter at Fairway to pick the programme. Here also the promoter enjoyed meeting and working with, '...eight volunteers I didn't know before.' At Smallbury the former promoter described how she and her husband were keen to take on the role for Artsreach. The current promoter said that she had made new friends in the village through promoting Artsreach and:

'I get to meet really interesting people and I love meeting the artists.'

At Boldwood all three promoters listed meeting interesting performers as an important personal benefit. For Stockdale's promoters the principal benefit they derived was seeing a range of artists in performance, not just in Stockdale itself: 'I think we are unusual in going regularly to other village halls to see what they are doing.' Indeed they also went further afield to see professional performance. The promoter at Fairway described the many interesting performers she had met as a result of providing overnight accommodation for performers. Nevertheless, she listed seeing the shows as the main benefit of volunteering:

'We've a great love for the arts...the acts are astounding...Artsreach matters to us.'

At Smallbury the previous promoter estimated spending eight hours running each Artsreach event, whilst the current promoter judged that she and her two volunteer assistants spent 30 hours on each event, preparing and distributing leaflets and publicity, feeding and providing accommodation for performers and staging the actual performance event. Fairway's promoter estimated that she and her 8 volunteers put in more than 50 hours supporting each performance, especially when providing meals and accommodation for performers was factored in. Boldwood's estimation was that the six volunteers collectively put in about 30-40 hours per event, a figure which might have been higher but for an efficient email and promotional network to attract its audience. Stockdale and Whittle's estimates were both upwards of 25 hours distributed among the promoters and five other volunteers. The significant contribution to arts provision in Dorset that these volunteers make is an important factor in the estimates made in section 7.8 of this report.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT

5.1 It was clear that Artsreach events contributed to community cohesion, principally through the social interaction at the bar before, during and after performances. At Whittle the promoter was sure that 'personal networking' and socialising played a large part in Artsreach events: 'They're rolling in at about 6.30 for a 7.30 show.' At Smallbury too, social interaction was judged to be important to audiences, so the interval bar has an important social function. At Boldwood a promoter said: 'Usually the interval goes on longer than planned...it's more sociable.' Stockdale's

promoters always chose events from the Artsreach programme which had an interval, because of the importance of the interval to their audiences. Fairway's promoter had frequently noticed audiences discussing the show in the village hall's bar after the performance. Fairway's bar is open before shows as well as at the interval and afterwards.

5.2 New networks between people were occasionally forged as a result of workshops. At Smallbury the promoter cited the friendships which arose between parents and carers who brought children to summer workshops. Smallbury had held a circle dance workshop after which two or three people expressed a wish to carry on circle dancing. After a song-writing workshop for teenagers, three or four of them had followed up songwriting with the workshop leader from Poole. The promoter at Fairway reported that people followed up an Artsreach workshop by attending a subsequent workshop with the same arts practitioner at another venue.



5.3 The promoters drew attention to the advantages of having a very local arts venue. At Smallbury the promoter and her volunteer colleagues had a detailed sense of the local audience, many of whom would not choose to travel to London or bigger venues like the Lighthouse in Poole, especially during the winter months. The promoter also felt that many audience members particularly enjoyed the intimacy of a smaller venue. The former promoter highlighted the affordability of Artsreach events over larger, permanent performance venues: 'You'd pay two or three times as much in London.' Similarly, at Boldwood, one promoter recalled a renowned company performing at one of their events:

'We get an internationally award winning group for £10 [a ticket] with no transport costs for the audience.'

After a performance at Fairway someone had approached the promoter to say:

'I would have paid double for that. You would have paid so much more in the city.'

At Stockdale the promoters had the impression that:

'...from the 10% [of the typical audience] I know, I don't think many of them go anywhere else [to see performances].'

They also pointed out that it's not possible to go from the village to the larger performance spaces in the region by public transport in the evening. Fairway's promoter believed that half of the typical audience from the village and its surrounds would not be able to access a permanent venue at, for example, Bournemouth in the evenings. The lack of access to a convenient transport network was a major barrier to this, as was the cost.

5.4 Now that the majority of the population lives in towns and cities, keeping rural populations and facilities sustainable and diverse presents a challenge in the 21st century. For example, having young families as part of a wide rural age range helps to keep village schools open. There was a small amount of evidence that a thriving range of activities – of which Artsreach is a part – helped to attract new residents to the villages in the sample. A volunteer claimed that, 'One of the things which really attracted [us] to [Smallbury] was the amount of stuff going on.' At Boldwood a promoter echoed this: 'There's no doubt that people come [to Boldwood] for the facilities.' At Whittle the promoter added that Artsreach events added to resident attractions including, 'the village hall, pub, shop, church, school and sports field.' More than one person considering a move to Fairway had rung the promoter there to enquire about Artsreach. Conversely, at Stockdale, the promoters felt that the attractiveness of the village to incomers was not to do with Artsreach, particularly because around 20% of properties are second homes and holiday lets.

5.5 These small venues have disabled access and sometimes a hearing loop but are also able, in personalised ways, to provide access for audience members with particular needs. Smallbury had, until recently, a wheelchair user among its regular Artsreach audience, who could not easily access an Arts venue beyond the village. Also at Smallbury the promoter had liaised with a parent to provide access for a teenager with autism, and with a mobility scooter user. At Boldwood one of the promoters takes calls from people with disabilities before an event in order to provide specifically for that individual. Whittle has a volunteer driver network available to get people with limited mobility to village hall events. Fairway reserves particularly convenient spaces for known audience members with wheelchairs and visual impairment. Whilst permanent arts venues also provide comprehensively for disability, it is the small scale of Artsreach events, and its volunteer network, which supports a notably personalised response to special and individual needs among its audience. Providing this personalised access also promotes diversity in Artsreach audiences.

5.6 The promoters tended to pick shows from the Artsreach programme which would be popular with their audiences and fill their venues. So music tended to be favoured. All recognised the importance of bringing performance from other cultures, countries and ethnic groups to their venues but explained that opting for diversity in their programming could result in less interest and therefore reduced audiences. They faced this dilemma when considering whether to choose performances reflecting other cultures, genres and ethnicity from the Artsreach programme. So, they often opted for traditional Western genres as a result. However, at Fairway, in the last year, the promoter had chosen two performances of African music which had both been a big

success.

Deborah, the Artsreach supporter from Poole, was interviewed at the end of the research period. Over 15 years she has frequently travelled around Dorset to see Artsreach performances. She offered a contrasting perspective. Her view was that there was always an eclectic programme of music from around the world in each Artsreach season. When she attended these events she found the village halls, 'pretty packed.'

6. ECONOMIC IMPACT

6.1 Ploughing the venue's share of Artsreach profits back into the venue has a direct relationship to the development and maintenance of these spaces. For example, from its reserves at Smallbury, the village hall had been redecorated, had added new blinds, curtains and crockery and had improved its play facilities in the last three years. At Boldwood, the Community Project, to which Artsreach net profits are added, funded village hall improvements including new chairs, staging, lighting, a fridge, and coffee machine in the last five years or so. The thriving village hall at Stockdale had benefited from £50-60,000 of improvements over the same period. Whilst Artsreach profits are only one of a number of income streams for the Village Hall Trust at Stockdale, it had contracted for interior and exterior painting, new audiovisual equipment, roofing and bespoke double glazing in the last five years or so. Artsreach profits were a significant element of income at Fairway village hall, which had recently lowered its ceiling and installed a reconditioned lighting rig. Local contractors often undertook these works, which also plays its part in the local economy, boosting their order books and bringing contractors into the village, where they may decide to buy food and drink for their lunches at village shops.

6.2 Moreover, Artsreach events have some direct impact on village businesses. At Smallbury the promoter described a particularly successful event prior to which, '...a lot of people went to the pub that evening,' to have a meal before the show. The promoters at Stockdale indicated that their Artsreach audiences frequently reported that they had a meal at one of the village's two pubs before a performance. Deborah, the Artsreach audience member from Poole reported that she and companions usually found time for a meal in the village's local pub before attending shows.

6.3 Promoters at Smallbury, Boldwood, Whittle, and Stockdale described the arrangements they made to sell tickets in their village shop. At Smallbury the promoter estimated that around 15% of tickets are sold at the shop. At Stockdale, promoters estimated that 25% of tickets are sold through the community-owned village shop. Shops at Whittle and Boldwood also sold tickets for Artsreach events. These arrangements with Artsreach promoters inevitably bring people in to the shop and the other purchases they make during the visit help to support and sustain a vital rural resource.

6.4 Nonetheless the Artsreach audience is not simply parochial. At Smallbury the promoter estimated that 30% more of the audience came from outside the immediate village boundary than within it, some of whom tended to be those who, ‘...are faithful to Artsreach events.’ The previous promoter believed a larger proportion came from outside Smallbury, claiming that only 30% of the average audience are from the village itself, and a handful come principally to support the village hall. The promoter at Whittle estimated the village-resident composition of the typical audience at only 20%, the remaining 80% coming from throughout the county, attracted by promotion through the Artsreach programme brochures and *Facebook*. This promoter also estimated that 10% of Whittle’s audiences are principally fans of Artsreach shows, wherever they may be taking place. Stockdale’s promoters judged that a large proportion of their audience come from outside the village, including a segment of the audience who are Artsreach fans, a group who come from a local radius of dwellings and other villages nearby and some from the wider region as far afield as Poole, Lyme Regis or Yeovil. Fairway’s promoter also identified a segment of its audience from outside the village who: ‘See it’s an Artsreach event and know it’s a high standard.’ At Stockdale the attraction for audience members beyond the village also depended on the type and reputation of the performers appearing.

This significant segment of Artsreach audiences which come from outside each village venue is also reflected in the light blue, pink and green sections of figure 1 (below), from the most recently available 2019 Artsreach data collection. These three sectors represent nearly half of the 61 promoters who responded. These promoters reported that less than half of their audience came from the immediate radius of 4 miles. The green sector, for example, indicates that around 11 of the promoters judged that only a fifth of their audience was from within 4 miles. In other words in each of those large segments, taking up almost half of the survey, the minority of the audience was very local. This survey implies, therefore, that a large proportion of each Artsreach audience comes from a wide radius, which is likely to build interest in and allegiance to Dorset’s rural communities.

Roughly what percentage of the audience was from the immediate area (up to 4 miles)?

61 responses

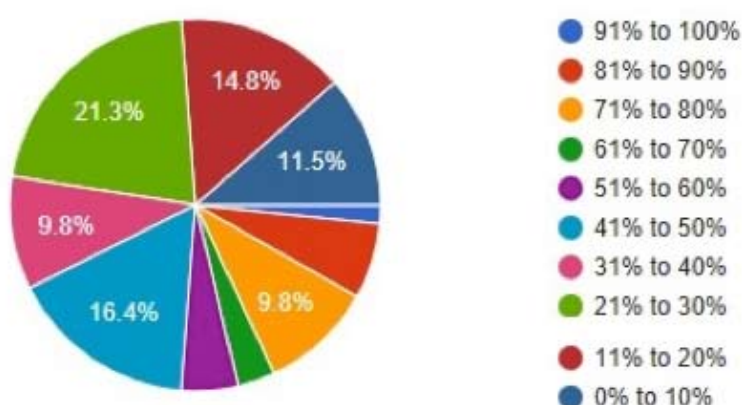


Figure 1

Deborah proved to be an individual example of how Artsreach shows can draw audiences from a wide radius around each village hall. From her home in Poole Deborah has travelled to many Artsreach performances over 15 years, having first discovered one of its shows advertised on an internet site featuring appearances by world music performers and groups. She continues to travel to Artsreach shows around Dorset, particularly to performances of world music. She said:

*‘It’s much more enjoyable to go out in the country and meet people.
[Artsreach shows] are quite unusual compared to the standard stuff at Poole.’*

She emphasised this last point, namely that she was more likely to find an eclectic range of interesting performances in an Artsreach seasonal programme rather than one at larger, purpose-built performance spaces. This may be another reason why an identifiable proportion of audiences seem to come from a much wider radius around village halls.

Although not among the questions, the promoters made a point of praising Artsreach’s paid staff, who maintained the generally high standard of performances on offer; ‘The acts are astounding,’ said one of the promoters. This is also confirmed by the most recent data collection (figs. 2, 3).

If possible, could you say whether the majority of the audience felt it was:

61 responses

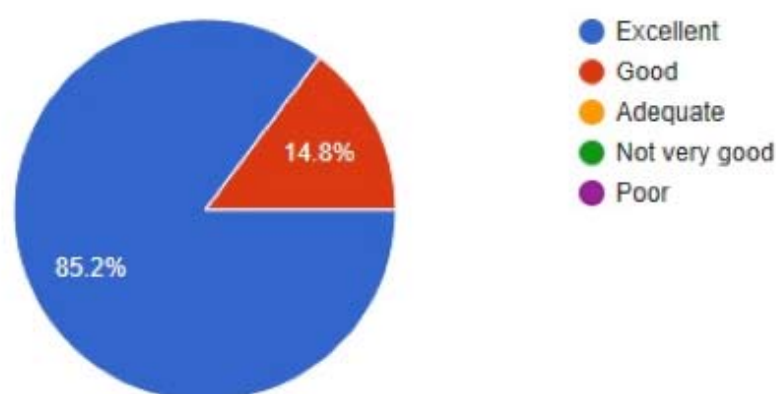


Figure 2

Did you (the person filling in the form) think the quality of the performance was:

61 responses

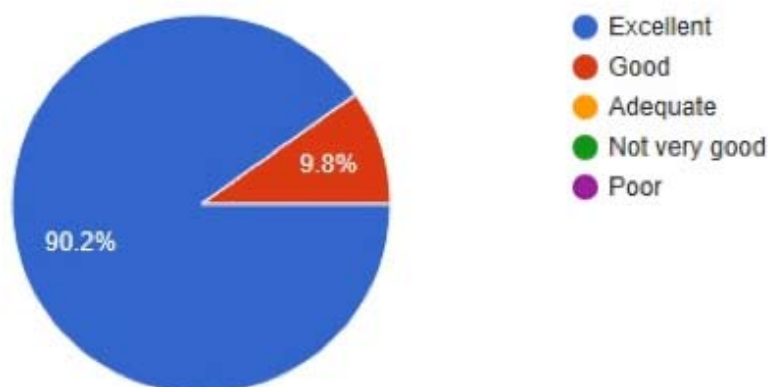


Figure 3

7. TOWARDS A FORMULA FOR ESTIMATING ECONOMIC IMPACT

7.1 In order to estimate the economic value of arts activity Myerscough, (1988, p.97) recommends a 'proportional multiplier', which looks like this:

$$\frac{\text{indirect spending} + \text{induced spending}}{\text{initial expenditure}}$$

In this context the *initial expenditure* means the public sector funding for Artsreach. This funding in 2019/20 is estimated to be £100,951. So the research is directed towards estimating to what extent indirect and induced spending, catalysed by Artsreach, matches this bottom line of £100,951. The next step is to identify what, from the research, can be identified as *indirect* and *induced* spending respectively.

7.2 Indirect Spending In this context Artsreach audiences are responsible for *indirect spending* when they buy food, drink, raffle tickets etc at events. This research reveals that net profit from performances and the catering etc at performances is almost always retained by the rural venues and used for repairs, maintenance and improvements to village halls and, in one case, for village community projects.

All but one of the venues included in this research could draw on annual Artsreach net profits running into the hundreds. Collectively the statistics show that venues received £18,828 in net Artsreach profits in 2017/18, together with profits from bars, raffles etc of £12,070. Figure 4

shows, for example, that in March 2019, 16.4% of venues made over £200 in catering profit from their most recent event before taking into account net profit from ticket sales. So £30,898 was available in venue profits from Artsreach in 2017/18.

**How much extra PROFIT has your hall made from this event?
(e.g. raffle, bar, refreshments etc - please DO NOT include your percentage of the box office here)**

Please select extra PROFIT banding

61 responses

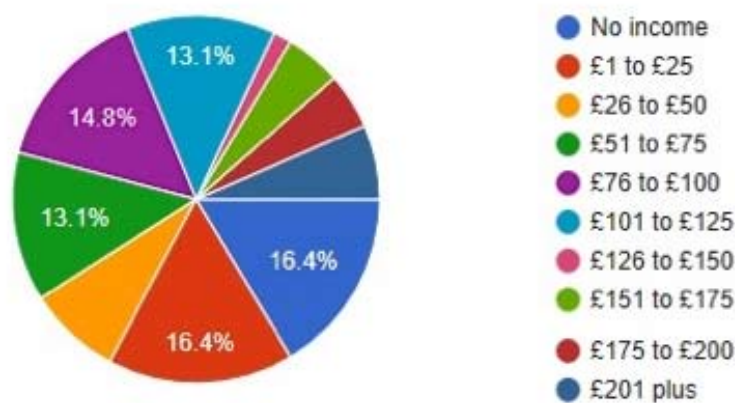


Figure 4

All but one of the venues benefited and drew from Artsreach profits to spend money on their buildings in the last five years. It is beyond the scope of this research to question village hall committees on their detailed income and expenditure, and this would doubtless be intrusive. But it is plausible to make estimates of Artsreach's influence on the rural construction and equipment economy of village halls. Although one of the venues sampled in this research did not direct profits at the village hall at present, the rest did. If we assume 90% of venue profit is invested in village halls, £27,808 is the indirect spend prompted by Artsreach across the county.

7.3 Induced Spending Building firms win contracts to work on village hall improvements funded by Artsreach net profits. In turn the contractors who carry out this work are benefiting indirectly from the profits. Their staff might also spend part of their earnings in the local economy, for example buying food at the village shop while working on the village hall. Village shops also benefit from footfall when they sell tickets for Artsreach shows. Audience members have a meal in a pub before an Artsreach show. Village halls stock their bars using local suppliers. All of this multiplies the economic activity, the ripples outwards, which have their origin in the Artsreach Programme. Myerscough, describes this churn of money prompted, in part, by the arts as '*induced spending*,' whilst the Arts Council (2012) describes it as a '*multiplier*' when making an economic impact assessment (EIA).

7.4 But the Artsreach programme is only *one factor* provoking this churn of money, since people visit pubs or shops anyway. So it is necessary to reduce estimates of induced spending, applying Myerscough's notion of the *deadweight* (1988, p71) to any estimates. In three cities Myerscough's researchers surveyed visitors to art galleries and museums to determine the proportion who were visiting a locality *because* of its arts and those who visited the galleries and museums because they *happened* to be in the locality. This latter proportion of casual visitors were known as the 'deadweight,' that is, people who were not initially induced to visit the city and thus contribute to its economy *because* of the art galleries, but who decided to visit them during their stay. Applying a large deadweight to the estimate of induced spending prompted by Artsreach is sensible if we are to allow correctly for what the Arts Council guidance (2012) calls 'attribution.' A very large and therefore cautious deadweight of over 90% has been attached to calculations below.

7.5 Village shops sold tickets in four of the venues. It is plausible to include visits to buy tickets at these shops as an element in the economic churn induced by the Artsreach programme. If we estimate that just 5% of the total Artsreach audience of 11,868 in 2017/18 visited their local shops to buy tickets and also, say, bought an item costing £2, across Artsreach's programme this modest estimate computes to £1187 in Dorset village shops' annual turnover.

7.6 Two of the five venues reported that audience members go to local pubs for a meal before their shows. We could scale this up to estimate that 20 of the 50 Artsreach venues or 29.6 of the annual Artsreach total of performances stimulate this sort of turnover in local pubs and restaurants. It is, however, cautious to apply a 'deadweight' and reduce that figure to around 10%. So, if 15 of the 148 annual performances stimulated the local catering economy in this way we have something to work on. Again, cautiously, if we assume that four friends at each of those 15 shows spent £30 per person on a pre-show meal and drink Artsreach has possibly a modest £1800 'churn' effect into the local catering economy.

7.7 The analysis and estimates above can now be applied to a draft of Myerscough's proportional multiplier to estimate Artsreach's economic impact:

Indirect spending = £27,808

Induced spending is £1,187 + £1,800 = £2987

Public funding initial expenditure = £100,951.

So the calculation looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} \underline{\pounds 30,795} \\ \pounds 100,951 \end{array}$$

So a modest estimate shows that public investment in Artsreach prompts almost exactly a further 30% in economic activity across the county. But this is only a small part of the story, as is explained below:

7.8 The ‘volunteer multiple’ A central Myerscough assertion is that investment in the arts multiplies economic activity. The most striking element of the estimate arising from this research is what could be defined as the ‘volunteer multiple,’ that is the time which promoters and their teams of volunteers spend on administrating each performance. It can certainly be defined as a multiplier, since the value of volunteer time enhances the effect of public funding. It can be thought of as a proxy for actual salary funding for staff. But, whether it is defined as a multiplier or a proxy, it emerges from the research as the most significant factor in making an estimate of Artsreach’s economic impact as will be clear from the calculation below.

Each interviewee in this research estimated the time they spend on a typical Artsreach show. The average of their estimates is 32.3 hours, a little higher than the estimates 60-70 respondents made in Artsreach’s most recent quarterly promoter survey (see fig 5). This shows that the largest percentage of respondents judged their volunteer hours to be typically 24-27 hours, with another 10% responding that they spent 28-31 hours on a show. However, in conversation with the sample of promoters, they revised their calculations upwards, often because they had omitted to count the hours spent providing hospitality for performers.

How many hours, approximately, have your team put into running this event? (including distributing tickets, setting up hall, taking bookings, artist hospitality etc.)

61 responses

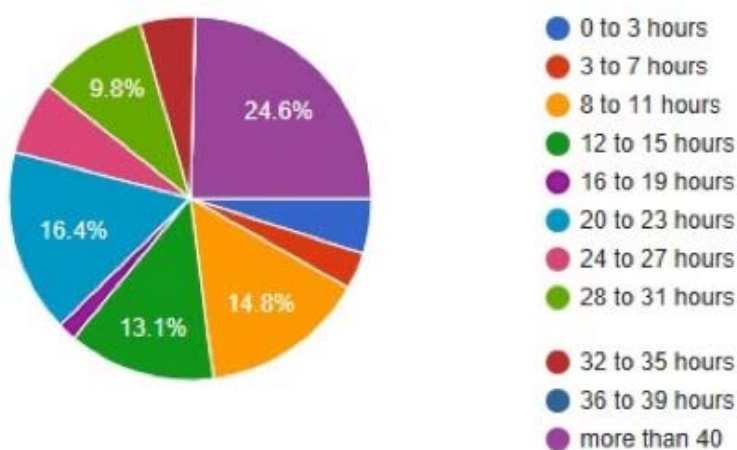


Figure 5

If we multiply 32.3 hours by the 148 performances in 2017/18, the estimated volunteer time Artsreach can call upon to promote rural arts annually is 4,780, or 106 hours per week over a 45 week working year. If these were paid arts administrators, this equates to 2.6 staff contributing

to arts provision in Dorset. These hours of volunteer time are defined by the SROI model as a *financial proxy*, which, in this context, means that - but for the Artsreach promoters - providing this programme of arts events would require 2.6 full-time staff in addition to Artsreach's paid staff. If we factor in the salaries of 2.6 arts administrators at a mid range salary of £24,000, the equivalent of £62,400 is generated on top of the public funding. Since public sector funding in 2019/20 is estimated to be £100,951, volunteer time generates the equivalent of over half as much again. This is the 'multiplier' effect highlighted by both Myerscough and the SROI model. In simple terms *just this one* aspect of the Artsreach model, the 'volunteer multiple,' has the effect of augmenting public funding for Artsreach by over 1.5.

We can now add the figure for the volunteer multiple to the indirect and induced spending prompted by Artsreach. Now the calculation looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£93,195} \\ \hline \text{£100,951} \end{array}$$

So public funding for Artsreach stimulates further economic activity worth around 93% of the initial funding. In other words the funding goes almost twice the distance or has almost double the effect on Dorset because of the Artsreach model; £1 in funding unlocks the equivalent of a further 93p in benefit for rural communities.

8. TOWARDS A FORMULA FOR ESTIMATING SOCIAL IMPACT

8.1 The research has provided a picture of the social effects of the Artsreach programme: The nine interviewees cited four examples of people forming new friendships and interests from Artsreach workshops. The promoters invariably described how they enjoyed networking with their teams of volunteers, but they all concurred that socialising was also an important benefit for Artsreach audiences. The community projects funded by Artsreach profits at Boldwood clearly contribute to community cohesion and a significant proportion of Artsreach audiences who cannot easily travel to permanent arts venues gain access to very local professional arts, often at a fraction of the cost.

Matarasso's influential work on the social impacts of the arts *Use or Ornament?* (1997) listed the following six:

- personal development
- social cohesion
- community empowerment and self-determination
- local image and identity
- imagination and vision
- health and well-being

This research has highlighted examples of:

- *personal development* where individuals have followed up Artsreach workshops;
- *social cohesion* through the socialising which takes place around performances;
- *community empowerment* through the teams of village volunteers who determine and run their Artsreach programme;
- *local image and identity* through the profile of Artsreach in each village's social calendar.

Moreover, the research reveals that Artsreach is making an impact on *health and well-being*. The interviewees all made clear that their Artsreach audiences contained identifiable groups - seniors, people living alone, people with limited mobility, people without transport, and people on low incomes – whose only access to high quality performance was Artsreach events. These evenings out with the local community are clearly addressing social isolation and boosting interaction, confidence and wellbeing.

Artsreach is also the initiator and/or partner in several projects designed to involve and engage the community. The Ridgeway Singers and Band, with its performers from the Dorset community, were originally formed as part of the South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and by Artsreach. They continue to promote Dorset music and heritage and involve local people, expressing gratitude on their website for the support of Artsreach. Late in 2018, Artsreach also initiated 'Stepping Into Nature' dementia-friendly walks with local folk group Ninebarrow, and is a key partner in the South Dorset Ridgeway Partnership, 'Land of Bones and Stones' project.



8.2 The above social impacts of Artsreach demonstrate that it contributes to the 'social capital' of Dorset villages (Matarasso, 2004). The SROI model (2012) involves estimating the value of such effects as *if* they had a financial value, so this is another form of 'financial proxy.' A section of the SROI model (2012, p.48ff) provides examples of how to develop financial proxies for social impact. For example, the research reveals that rural Artsreach shows result in travel and cost savings for a significant proportion of its audience, who do not attend performances at permanent venues. This could be modeled into a financial proxy which could throw light on the clear benefits Artsreach offers to lower income groups and people who are unable or unwilling to travel to permanent venues. Audiences could be asked in questionnaires whether they would travel to their nearest permanent venue to see the same show at a higher ticket cost. The

resulting statistics could lead Artsreach towards an estimate of the cost savings of its shows to rural audiences.

8.3 Also, the research reveals that occasionally local arts events such as Artsreach are a factor in attracting new inhabitants to a village. In the future, an analysis of property prices, time taken to sell properties and the level of planning consents and home improvements in a sample of Artsreach venues could help refine a financial proxy for this social impact of maintaining village populations and demography.

It would be stretching plausibility to attempt to monetize the social impacts identified by this research. But a sharper focus on certain data collection *in future* will allow Artsreach to estimate a more plausible and accurate financial proxy for its social impact. For example asking audiences whether they go to Poole, Bournemouth or Taunton to see the arts would be a first step towards estimating the savings Artsreach audiences make when high quality performances come to them.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Interviews with nine Artsreach promoters in five locations around Dorset is a small sample of the c100 promoters and c50 venues where Artsreach stages shows around the county. However, the notable concurrence of views and estimates amongst the interviewees implies that the sample is representative of the whole Artsreach project.

The research has revealed that the economic impact of Artsreach adds to public funding by an estimate of 93%, particularly through the 'volunteer multiple' which adds so much time, commitment and expertise to arts administration in Dorset.

Among the social impacts of Artsreach there was a small amount of evidence that new arrivals to Dorset villages are attracted by Artsreach programming as an element of the village facilities. There was also evidence that people attending Artsreach workshops are occasionally inspired to participate further in the new art forms they encounter. In the past, perhaps the most high profile example of Artsreach's part in encouraging arts participation in Dorset was the establishment of the Ridgeway Singers and Band. In the future Artsreach could further pursue this social impact by including more workshops in its programme, with more alongside performances and positively encouraging opportunities for attenders to follow up their workshop experiences of new skills and art forms.

Finally, the importance of providing a bar, catering, raffles etc around Artsreach shows was shown to provide an opportunity for audiences to socialise - a priority noted by all the nine interviewees, and an important contribution to the rural flourishing which Artsreach provides.

9.2 The research indicates that Artsreach’s social and economic influence might be enhanced if its staff and board consider and, where appropriate, take action, as follows:

- i. review its workshop and participatory arts offer with a view to increasing the opportunities for people to practise new skills and experience new art forms;
- ii. collect data from Artsreach audiences to determine the proportion which could not or would not access permanent arts venues in Bournemouth, Poole etc.;
- iii. collect more detailed data on the actual benefit to village shops of selling Artsreach tickets and promoting its shows;
- iv. collect more data on the use of Artsreach profits for village hall improvements;
- v. incentivise the take up of the more culturally and ethnically diverse productions on offer to village promoters.

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Images:

Cover: Budapest Cafe Orchestra at Evershot Village Hall, December 2018

Pg. 6: Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall and Ibberton Hut

Pg. 7: Volunteer promoter at Shillingstone, March 2019

Pg. 9: Children’s Workshop by Sarah Butterworth, July 2019

Pg. 19: Dementia friendly walk with Ninebarrow at Arne, March 2019. © Diarmuid Murphy

Back: Image montages from events in Winterborne Stickland and Corfe Castle

Dr. D. E. Wood September 2019.

Note: The report’s principal author, David Wood, is an Artsreach Board member. He spent 14 years as an arts and education researcher at Oxford Brookes University and then DW Consultants Ltd, conducting a range of evaluation projects for clients such as Arts Council England, the EU, NHS South East, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

“Almost 60% of people are more likely to report good health if they have attended a cultural place or event in the past 12 months; and levels of wellbeing are generally reported to be higher among those with higher arts and culture engagement”

CREATE - ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND 2014



“Participation in arts and culture makes communities feel safer and stronger”

STATE OF DORSET REPORT, MAY 2019



“The availability of the arts in a rural environment is very important to me as it reflects the wealth of a nation to provide entertainment and promote artistic ideas in general and to acknowledge these needs in a rural community”

AUDIENCE COMMENT, MARCH 2018



Images from top to bottom:

Landmark Trust Celebration, Kimmeridge. © Roland Tarr. Uchenna Dance, Halstock 2017. © Rachel Dunford. PuppetCraft, Broadoak 2016. © Rachel Dunford. Living Spit, Stalbridge 2014. © Kerry Bartlett



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