



BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25

**COMICS CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD**



comicartfestival.com

MAIN FUNDER:



Funded by
UK Government



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Opening Statement

Lakes Arts Festivals was established in 2012 to create and present an annual international comic art festival (as opposed to a commercial comic con) – the Lakes International Comic Arts Festival (LICAF) and associated educational projects.

It was and remains the only comic art event of its kind in the UK taking over a whole town, covering every genre and currently with more than 30 international partners. Our purpose is to enable all types of people to pursue their passion for culture and creativity through the accessible and dynamic medium of comics/graphic novels. Our mission is to create awareness and understanding about comic art through an international festival and year-round programme of work with social impact. As a result of this work we have become the UK's leading development agency for comics.

Since 2012 our festival and year-round work has grown exponentially in terms of reputation, reach and the demonstration of the transformational power of comics. Comics are an art form in their own right, not a genre of literature nor the visual arts and we have made substantial progress in making this case. We now also crossover into adjacent art forms such as animation, gaming and VR/AI. Comics reach an atypical arts audience and a substantial percentage are non-traditional arts attenders.

Our identity is global with strong local roots and since 2022 we have moved our festival to the heart of the Lakes to harness the potential of a location which combines a diverse visitor audience, an international brand/profile and a loyal local population. Our rallying cry is...

**COMICS
CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD**



Three Year Objectives – a Summary

From 2023-2026 we will consolidate The Lakes International Comic Art Festival as a world-class event in a world-class location respected by its peers, creators, and audiences as the best comic arts event in terms of quality, diversity, innovation and accessibility. In tandem we will continue to establish ourselves as a national development agency for comics with a year-round programme delivering social change through the unique medium of comics. This will place a particular emphasis on reaching children and young people, and those who work with them, to exploit the special and particular potential of comics. We will provide opportunities for them to find their creative passion and increase their life chances, health and well-being and broader cultural capital.

Our programme of talent development and pathways to a creative life and career will focus upon diversity, working specifically with the autistic community and those in working class communities. Here we will aim to be at the vanguard of work in the arts and cultural sector and will be an active member of the new Diversity Leaders' Forum at Creative UK.

Ten Years to Save the World, our online environmental platform, will also influence and drive the content of our programming and commissioning as well as the themes of some of our education and outreach work. It will focus on the climate change emergency, biodiversity and the natural environment. Our collaboration with the higher education sector will provide robust evidence and underpin our developmental role. Internationalism will be at the core of our festival and a year-round programme, as will experimentation and innovation. The Making Its Mark project will also radically increase our ability to positively affect the comics sector across the UK'.

Our festival and year-round programme will have a symbiotic relationship (with new projects growing out of festival content, discussions during the event or receiving their public airing or performance at the festival) and both will aim to reveal, explore, exploit and celebrate the power of comics to reach atypical arts audiences, creators and participants. Comics as an artform have only recently been recognised and welcomed into the arts eco system and our 3-year programme will firmly establish comics as a legitimate world-class artform, at the vanguard of contemporary everyday culture.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Lakes International Comic Art Festival (LICAF) will focus its activities into three distinct but connected objectives...

1. Festival:

Our annual three-day comic art festival, that welcomes comic creatives at every stage in the creative ecology and from across the globe to one Lake District community, is at the heart of what we do. LICAF celebrates the wide range of comics for young people and adults, ranging from strip cartoons, through children's comics to graphic novels and the world of superheroes. We are proud that the word "international" in our title truly means something, with over 30 partnerships across the globe ensuring our festival celebrates great work from a huge variety of cultures, all of whom meet, share and learn through LICAF. We are justly proud of the innovation and quirkiness of our programme, the unconventional venues we adopt and quality of the way our performances and events are presented. We will continue to aspire to the best and most innovative programme in the coming three years.

We have been successful in harnessing the power of comics to reach an atypical arts audience for over a decade. Currently 25% of attendees are aged 14 or under and 39% are 20-39. We actively promote diversity with a particular strength in reaching those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those with invisible disadvantages in the neurodiversity community. Our festival will continue to be mostly free, taking place in unusual and everyday venues, rather than elite and intimidating institutions. We will continue to create quiet places at our festival, particularly for those with autism and sensory sensitivities, to decompress, read comics in a peaceful environment and thus enable them to participate in the weekend's activities. Our volunteers will be drawn from a wide demographic and we will continue to train and support those with autism and/or mental health issues.

LICAF will ensure its programme is appealing and relevant to its comics community/ audience. Our research indicates that currently satisfaction of the event is very high, with 97% of our audience rating the festival very good and 94% rating the quality of the event very good. We believe this level of satisfaction indicates ongoing support for the quality and range of our programme; an offer which deliberately avoids the tried and tested offer of the comic con and includes more

challenging and diverse "festival- style" programming. This ambition to encourage experimentation in the programme is supported by the festival pass, which allows audiences to dip into a wide range of content for no extra charge.

2. Year-Round Projects:

Over the past five years LICAF has radically increased the amount and scale of its year-round activity using the unique properties of comics to deliver positive social change. Most of this work is built upon partnerships...

- with funders to financially support the projects we deliver. Currently Arts Council England, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Westmorland and Furness Council (formerly South Lakeland District Council) and The British Council are funding partners on projects extending into the period of this plan.
- venues and institutions seeking to work with LICAF to deliver projects for their audiences, pupils and communities.
- comic art creatives and technicians whose expertise and innovation allows comics to positively and impactfully improve lives and communities.
- universities and other academic institutions that provide research and evaluation of our projects, to truly understand how "comics can change the world".

Key projects for 2024/25 include...

- *Comic Potential*, a project to understand the learning potential of comics in the classroom, working with two primary and two special schools in Barrow-in-Furness and Kendal and including rigorous evaluation of outcomes by the University of Manchester. This project builds on learning from a previous project at Abraham Moss Community School in Manchester which was funded by Comic Art Europe/Creative Europe. *Comic Potential* is a two-year programme funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

- *Artivator Fellowship*: an Art Management Incubator programme aimed at building the capacity of cultural practitioners from the South West Asian/ North African region. Funded by The British Council, the programme offers two one-month-long Fellowships in Arts, Event, and Festival Management during the month of September 2023. The Fellowship will focus on the four-week run-up to the festival and the festival weekend itself (September 2 – October 2, 2023). It will focus on practical tasks and will include one-to-one and group sessions on particular skills and areas of knowledge.
- *PopSeen*: following the success of the Make Mine Manga touring exhibition LICAF will work as delivery partner with Wigan Libraries to create PopSeen, a touring exhibition and curated programme of gigs and workshops celebrating the close links between pop music and comics.
- *Comics Up Close*, an annual seminar offering lectures and discussions by leading academics and creatives using comics as a key element of their work and research. Delivered and hosted by the University of Manchester & Sheffield Hallam University.

3. Comics Development Agency

The range of year-round projects that LICAF develops and delivers are the most tangible of our work in promoting the positive role of comics in society and the wealth of innovative talent involved in the UK comics industry and its adjacent art forms. For example, we seek to create robust research and evidence of the learning potential of comics via the Comic Potential project and use this evaluation to advocate for the wider incorporation of comics into the curriculum of UK schools.

We have a track record of excellence in working with the best creators in the UK and internationally through commissioning and participation in our festival. We have created major commissions for national projects eg 14-18 NOW and the British Council's COP26 Creative Commissions. We are at the vanguard of talent development in the medium, having run a number of initiatives aimed at groups with specific protected characteristics' groups ('Breakthrough' and 'GAP') and a range of career development programmes focussing on funding, marketing and pitching to publishers. We have recently been invited to join the new Diversity Leaders Forum at Creative UK. This wealth of experience and knowledge

will be harnessed over the coming three years to ensure significant new cultural content, with comics at its heart, is made available to UK audiences.

The Making Its Mark project, a nationally significant project funded by ACE running for the coming two years, will bring key global comics industry players to LICAF to find, promote, publish and distribute British comics talent through an International Rights Market (the 2nd of its kind in the world). In parallel, we will take diverse British creators to flagship international festivals/industry events to tell the story of British comics and find new partners and advocates. At our new Rights Market, British agents, publishers and creators will negotiate publishing rights to their comics with international counterparts right across Europe, intersecting with LICAF's existing curated marketplace featuring British comics creators. Additionally, a British comic art pavilion at two key festivals per year in North America and France will showcase the UK sector to huge audiences at global events. This activity will cement our role as a comics development agency.

Our research and evaluation demonstrates that comics and their adjacent artforms are very popular with neurodiverse people; as a creative activity, as a career or pastime. They also appeal to a particularly broad range of socio-economic groups because they are an everyday, low cost, relevant and accessible artform. Our future research with partner universities will attempt to drill down further into the reasons why this is the case and we will work with Creative UK to develop a range of programmes that harness the creative and career potential of neurodiverse and working class people.

LICAF has over 30 international partnerships with 22 different countries, offering opportunities for UK creators overseas and bringing international artists and residencies to Britain. Our Director has participated in several international juries including America, France and Belgium and has recently acted as a juror at the Khalil Mahmoud Awards for Arab Comics in Beirut where she also wrote the foreword for the resulting anthology. We are recognised by festival peers and cultural partners for our innovative and inclusive approach to programming and artistic development and our production values are often cited by guest artists and festival directors as raising the quality bar. LICAF's awareness of international perspectives on comic art and a pragmatic and "hands on" approach to delivering projects with international partners means LICAF can be innovative and resourceful in advocating for comics development in the UK.

LET'S CREATE

LICAF is the only organisation in Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio of regularly funded organisations that works exclusively within the medium of comics, graphic novels and their adjacent artforms.

ACE's strategy Let's Create focuses on three areas of development...

- Creative People
- Cultural Communities
- Creative & Cultural Country

This is how we will deliver significant activity within these three areas of ACE's strategy..

Creative People

We will offer primary school age children (including those at special schools) exciting creative opportunities both in and out of school which will also have a positive impact on their reading/learning, health and well-being and access to culture more broadly. This will range from a special free zone at our annual festival through to well-designed workshop series in schools, to an intensive programme funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation from which we can demonstrate comics' potential in seriously deprived communities and share the results nationally and internationally. Our aim here will be to influence arts-based learning policy and practice so the ramifications of our work will be far reaching. Through online resources, CPD sessions and more we will support teachers in weaving creativity into the life of their school and give them the tools to sustain this approach. We will also develop and deliver projects with young people over the age of 12 providing opportunities to unlock their creative potential and gain new skills, through contemporary media, that taps into their everyday interests and passions.

Cultural Communities

Our annual festival will rely on full participation by the community in which it is based. Our track record in this respect, in our previous location, was cited as "exemplary" in the most recent ACE assessment. We will involve and mobilise local people in a variety of creative ways from art trails in business windows to a volunteer programme that will be inclusive and supports those with autism and mental health issues. We will also use a myriad of cultural and unusual venues transforming them for a weekend into hubs of creative energy and celebration. We will create inter-generational opportunities to engage with these familiar but transformed local venues knowing that comics offer valuable intersections between different age groups within and between families.

Creative and Cultural Country

Our festival will continue to evolve to maintain its position and reputation as an international leader in the presentation of comic art and associated artforms. We will remain the only comic art event of its kind in the country bringing alternative cultural content to the national cultural landscape. We will continue to exploit this to engage new, as well as existing audiences and participants. We already have 30+ active international partnerships and will reach out to new partners and countries as well as building on those we already have and increasing investment in our work from these sources. This will be at the centre of our role in bringing world-class culture to the country. We are uniquely placed in the comic art world to provide international opportunities to our English creators and we will seek to continue to identify those from under-represented backgrounds who would most benefit from this kind of international creative experience. The next three years will see a different focus country at our festival, beginning with comics from the Arab world in 2023, where we will take the opportunity to forge even deeper relationships and present more about the culture of that region. This enables us to connect with diaspora communities and connect them with other communities in a meaningful way. Our talent development programme will focus upon supporting autistic people in the first year and seek to expand this work to collaborate with those from working class backgrounds to increase their chances of starting a professional career in creative industries and, even more importantly, to sustain it. Our partnerships with universities underpins all our work enabling us to reflect, interrogate, disseminate and influence future cultural developments.

Investment Principles

The *Let's Create* strategy also identifies four areas where ACE will focus its financial investment in cultural development. Here is LICAF's three-year vision for each of these investment areas...

Ambition & Quality – LICAF will cement its role as the foremost UK agency for comics, through year-round projects for social change and innovative festival engaging local people, UK enthusiasts and international content. We will also develop a continued reputation for innovative, high-quality performance and presentation in comics during our festival and at year-round events like Comics Up Close. We will work with universities and other partners to generate meaningful research and evaluation on the impact of comics to deliver social change.

Inclusivity and Relevance – Our organisation will demonstrate the power of comics to reveal and develop the under-recognised cultural capital of both working class and autistic people across all of our work and enable them to connect with and participate in cultural practices and opportunities, as audiences, participants, and creative practitioners.

Dynamism – LICAF will enhance its ability to flex and change in response to necessity and opportunity, based on thorough, regular review and evaluation of our work by our delivery team and Board. We will enable our delivery team to be innovative and have organisational space to be reactive to developments as well as proactive to developments in all three areas of our activity (festival, year-round programme, comics development). We will infuse this ethos of innovation into our working partnerships, enabling our collaborators to understand our practice.

Environmental Responsibility – LICAF will develop a holistic approach to reducing our environmental impact and promoting change through the festival and year-round projects, delivering long-term programming and commissioning to influence and activate audiences and creative partners and creatives. We will also ensure best practice demonstrated by international partners will be incorporated into our operation.

ACTIVITY PLAN 2024/25

Driven by our Strategic Objectives and informed by ACE’s Let’s Create strategy, the following table outlines the nine key areas of activity LICAF will seek to deliver in 2024/25. Each of the areas of activity have clearly identified targets and outcomes and the LICAF Board will regularly review our progress to ensure that an appropriate level of success is achieved.

Activity Plan

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
A CREATIVE AND CULTURAL COUNTRY	An international mostly-free festival of the best in comics and associated artforms featuring a diversity of creators appealing to many tastes and levels of interest with an innovative, ambitious events programme, exhibitions, marketplace and trails	All in Quarter 2. Events programme with approximately 35 live draws, performances, presentations, new formats with 60 national and international guests in 6 indoor and outdoor cultural and everyday venues. 2 live-streaming and 2 digital events. Free marketplace of more than 60 independent creators and publishers and a new International Rights Market. Pop-up comics shop. A fringe festival featuring a diverse range of indie creators and some off-the-wall trails and experiences. More than 20 countries represented including international and national festival directors. Award for best translation into the English Language and the Sergio Aragones International Award for Excellence in Comics in association with the National Cartoonists Society of America.	Increase in new audiences by 15% through audience surveys and online by 15%. Percentage of independent creators in marketplace from protected characteristics increased to 20% of total exhibitors (100 in total). Increase in digital content including via animation, gaming and VR content by 10% bringing wider audience interest. Number of people using autism friendly space increases by 20% on 2022. At least 20 countries represented within the festival. Measure reaction to Arab Comics focus on audiences through feedback via voxpops and surveys with at least 70% appreciation level.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
<p>CREATIVE PEOPLE</p>	<p>Deliver a free under 12s zone, Little LICAF, within the festival, for diverse children and their families to discover, enjoy and create comics. Create a new strand of activity for 15-25 years co-curated with a local group of diverse young people.</p>	<p>All in quarter 2. Dedicated space with minimum of 12 drop-in workshops presenting, exploring and experimenting with all elements of comics making with children under 12 and their families led by wide and diverse range of professional creators. Basic drawing to using panels and visual storytelling. Additional creative activities (minimum 6) and option to gain basic arts award. 2 show and tell sessions on how to choose comics and comics readings. Further animation of the zone and exhibits for families. A new pop up bookshop will feature children and young people’s titles.</p>	<p>Number of children participating in Little LICAF exceeds 250 and percentage from lower social-economic groups increases by 15% on 2022. Number of arts awards achieved increases by 15% on 2022. New workshops for young people attract minimum of 100 young people and involves at least 6 young people in co-curation from a broad demographic. A minimum of 20 arts awards achieved during festival weekend.</p>
<p>CULTURAL COMMUNITIES</p>	<p>Work with local community on an holistic place-based programme of creative projects, volunteering, business involvement, audience development elevating cultural engagement, embracing the visitor market with high percentages from levelling up NW areas</p>	<p>Quarters 1 and 2. Develop windows comic art trail with approximately 20 shops and businesses across town in partnership with local schools, Kendal College, community groups eg mental health and isolated people and professional artists. This year we will focus on quality of partnership rather than quantity to create something more engaging and meaningful. Use windows trail to connect with visitor market to ignite their interest in comics and the festival. Quarters 1-3 Recruit and train more local volunteers of all ages with extra support for those with mental health issues, autism and who are from lower socio-economic groups. Continue to share our expertise with other NPOs on working with those with autism and mental health issues in a volunteer programme.</p>	<p>Involve 20 businesses in comic art trail and increase local community group involvement by the same percentage focussing on mental health groups, those with autism and those from lower socio-economic groups. Increase number of volunteers by 10% focussing upon those with special needs and/or lower socio-economic groups from the local area.</p>

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Igniting and developing children's passion for creativity and culture through comics activities in targeted primary schools, online resources and toolkits for wider reach and new opportunities for secondary pupils to unlock their potential	Quarter 1 - 8 workshops with primary school children in the Lakes area in 2 towns and 2 villages and in Barrow and Eden. Produce work for windows trail as appropriate. Quarter 3 - Workshops will be developed into 2 online resource/toolkits for school and home educators and made available to schools across the country through our existing networks, partners and social media.	Up to 160 children and young people experience comics-making skills first-hand and at least 50% express desire for more and/or to attend LICAF. 75% of teachers interested in follow-up eg using our existing and new educational resources. At least 6 schools nationally pick up our new resources and pilot them with feedback.
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Intensive, research-based programme supported by Paul Hamlyn Arts-Based Learning Fund, tackling systemic disadvantages in 2 primary schools and 2 special schools embedding comics in classroom, equipping teachers/support staff with skills	Quarter 1 - Final stage of our 2 year-long programme including evaluation sessions with teachers, librarians, children and parents. Quarter 2- assimilation of research results into a draft report. Finalise proposed next stage to work with Academy Trust in Barrow with a focus on adaptive learning which will form the basis for a new application (solicited) to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.	60 primary school children and up to 60 special school students in creative workshops as part of intensive research programme to prove impact on comics on literacy, well-being and learning more broadly. Success also measured through interaction with parents via comic coming to home. 48-60 teachers, support staff and governors learn about how comics can be used in the classroom and why they can support learning. 4 creators trained to work with special needs children and with children from multiple disadvantaged communities.
A CREATIVE AND CULTURAL COUNTRY	Deliver Comics Laureate programme, a voluntary bi-annual appointment tasked with advocating for comics increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness of their many impacts. Raise confidence to use them in wide range of contexts and extend reach.	Delivers a minimum of 6 presentations and workshops focussing on diversity and inclusion in comics by our new comics laureate, Bobby Joseph, over all 4 quarters. Support Bobby as a delivery partner, if successful with his Projects Grant application, with a new project to create 4 new graphic novels by diverse creators from quarter 2 onwards.. Deliver one session at the festival in quarter 2 focussing on their programme to date, future plans and impact so far.	Comics Laureate to run 6 presentations focussing on diversity and inclusion in comics with at least 75% of attendees saying it has given them the interest, knowledge and confidence to use comics further in their programmes of work. Launch of new programme to find, nurture and publish 4 diverse creators with 100% never having an opportunity before largely due to their backgrounds.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY	Increase the business potential of the British comics sector ie independent creators and publishers but introducing the first International Comics Rights Market outside of France together with two delegations of diverse independent creators under the banner of 'British Comics Now' to two of the leading international festivals each year for two years.	Create new Rights Market in first quarter to be delivered in second quarter and evaluated in third quarter. Attract 15 international buyers and 15 British publishers as sellers plus up to 50 independent creators to participate in sessions to discuss work and, where possible, negotiate rights for publication in new territories focussing upon Europe. Alongside this take 2 delegations of 6 diverse creators to festivals in Toronto in quarter 1 and Angouleme in France in quarter 4. This will be under the banner of 'British Comics Now: The New Generation'. Each initiative will feature online preparatory sessions in quarters 1,2 and 4.	15 buyers and 15 sellers meet and discuss British comics and rights to publish and distribute in Europe. Up to 50 creators take part in sessions and also gain feedback on their work. Beforehand they will participate in online preparatory sessions. Whilst we expect negotiations to last weeks, months or longer we will gain feedback on all discussions and aim for at least 10 projects to develop further. 12 diverse creators will gain their first experiences of 2 major festivals accompanied by 2 mentors and with 2 online training sessions in advance. Detailed feedback will ascertain the impact on their work and its sustainability having been exposed to international audiences, publishers and media.
CULTURAL COMMUNITIES	Support the strategic development of comics in libraries by advising on and supporting the development of touring projects on themes of interest and relevance to young people through library consortia programmes. This involves the continuation of a 'Make Mine Manga' tour in Barrow, Kendal and the Lakes plus Leeds and the development of a new project 'Popseen' led by Wigan Library Services with a tour to at least 6 Northern libraries	Tour 'Make Mine Manga' exhibition from 2023 to libraries in the North up to 4 including Leeds, Barrow, Kendal and Lakes venue. This will include a library of manga, a toolkit created by young people around social media tips and ideas for wraparound activities. This will take place across all 4 quarters. Support new project grant bid by Wigan Library Services for a new touring exhibition called 'Popseen' looking at the crossover between comics and popular music and build on the original concept adding live music and more. If successful tour to start quarter 3 where we would be a delivery partner with the tour visiting a minimum of 6 libraries in the North.	At least 500 young people experience the exhibitions in each library and all libraries report increased footfall by young people and increased interest in their comics collections as a result. At least one additional activity takes place in each library related to the exhibition such as a performance or workshop.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
<p>A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY</p>	<p>International collaborations e.g. Artists’ Residency exchange programme aimed at artists with protected characteristics and continue to focus on Arab Comics leading to showcase at the festival. Residency partnership with Hospitalfields in Arbroath in quarter 2. Exchange will take place with the Philippines in quarter 2 with additional opportunities under discussion with East African countries, Belgium and Quebec.</p>	<p>Quarter 2 - Three artist in residence programmes before and at the festival engaging with the local community. Delegation of 3 artists from Arab world from at least 2 countries showcasing comics via minimum of 2 events, 1 exhibition, 2 special publications. Support for 2 Fellowships from Arab world region to be trained at LICAF in festival delivery skills funded by British Council. One residency in Scotland quarter 2, artist exchange with Philippines quarter 2, further possibilities quarter 3 & 4 being explored.</p>	<p>Offer 1 opportunity to an aspiring creator from protected characteristics groups for international exchange and assess with them challenges they face to enable better understanding of their needs. Promotion of opportunities and their results will attract more under-represented creators to come forward. Quarter 3 - Arab world comics focus will attract audiences from wider North West and beyond where there are large communities of Arab people and connect diaspora with the work featured, the creators and our festival in a meaningful way</p>
<p>A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY</p>	<p>Collaborate with Sheffield Hallam University and University of Manchester to raise the profile and push boundaries of research and sharing of research related to the use and impact of comics in widest arenas particularly with under-represented groups</p>	<p>Quarter 4 - Two MOUs and one free Comics Up Close event (online or physical) a collaboration between LICAF, Sheffield and Manchester taking place in Sheffield with more than 10 presentations focussing on comics and “invisible” disadvantages (autism and lower socio-economic groups) attracting up to 100 delegates (academics, educators, cultural providers, creators). LICAF will also disseminate year-round results of its research and pilot projects including the report from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We will focus on comics and literacy, impact on enjoyment of reading and health and well-being with some focus on work with those with autism and special needs and those from working class backgrounds.</p>	<p>Attract diverse range of speakers and participants on our theme and evaluate feedback feeding into wider national programmes such as with Creative UK. 100 people including 10% creators to attend Comics up Close and provide feedback on impact of the day and individual elements. Develop framework and methodology to apply to festival and year-round programme introducing it at the festival via audience surveys.</p>

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Activity Plan outlines how our identified outcomes and impact will deliver positive change for our local and comics communities and the cultural life of England as a whole.

However, LICAF's activities also deliver economic benefits for Westmorland & Furness and Cumbria as a whole. Our festival takes place during a "shoulder period" within the tourism season, boosting occupancy in hotels, guest houses and campsites with festival guests, marketplace exhibitors and audiences. Clearly there is a knock-on benefit for restaurants, shops and bars. The festival's windows trail encourages festival attendees to explore Bowness' wealth of retailers and in 2023 businesses as diverse as Costa Coffee and the Red Cross charity shop noticed marked increases in business against previous years. The festival also commissions services like marquee hire, equipment hire, printing, leaflet distribution, transport etc from local suppliers; positively impacting the local economy.

LICAF's work contributes to a number of key strategic policies designed to support the economy and local community and

protect the natural environment of Cumbria, including the Lakes position as a cultural landscape, as identified by the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation and Cumbria LEP's cultural strategy.

LICAF's year-round activities also deliver smaller but significant economic impact, as we host visiting comic creatives, taking part in projects and events and attendees of Comics Up Close also use hotels, bars etc when attending the conference.

Through commissioning of new work and the delivery of workshops and other events, LICAF seeks to offer comic artists, particularly those at the early stage of their career or from working class backgrounds or with autism, new working opportunities. We consult the Artists Network and partners across Europe to ensure we pay fairly for this activity.

GOVERNANCE

Lakes International Comic Art Festival is the trading name of Lakes Arts Festivals, a company limited by guarantee with its own Board of Directors, that take the lead on governance of LICAF.

We are legally constituted with a Memorandum & Articles of Association and Terms of Reference document, outlining the roles and duties of the Board of Directors.

The Board comprises a minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 members, representing diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, socio-economic background and work experience. Diversity is monitored annually, along with a review of skills and expertise. These processes identify potential weaknesses that are reviewed by the Board and where necessary, addressed through recruitment of appropriate members or advisors to the Board. Recruitment of appropriate members is outlined in the Board Terms of Reference. Board members also annually update conflict of interest declaration forms.

Some Board members fulfil an additional role as portfolio holders – focusing on a key aspect of the organisation that is considered central to its work by the Board (diversity & inclusion/young people/environment). Portfolio holders take responsibility for examining all aspects of LICAF's work through the lens of their portfolio, ensuring it is considered throughout the organisation.

The Board meets 4 times a year, plus extraordinary meetings/task & finish working groups when deemed necessary by the Chair. Meetings are the main forum where the Board agrees LICAF's strategy and programme of activity for the year, monitors progress and reviews if LICAF is achieving its goals, as outlined in its Business Plan. Assessment is via report, discussion & analysis of data, ahead of meetings and discussion during meetings.

The Board works closely with the executive team, who attend and report at all Board meetings. Dialogue continues outside meetings, so the Board maintains an awareness of LICAF's activity and supports the executive team where appropriate. Portfolio holders develop a close working relationship with the executive and wider LICAF team to understand how their portfolio is being incorporated within LICAF activities.

LICAF is supported by Patrons; a diverse body of high-profile creatives working in comics and associated industries. They provide industry insights, fundraising opportunities, advocacy etc. Where the Board can obtain significant intelligence from an individual who is unable to take on the role of Director, they will be adopted as a Board advisor. Academics are an example.

The Executive Team (Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director) oversee the strategic development of LICAF and day to day delivery of the festival and year-round programme. Work of the executive team is driven by the LICAF Business Plan and by the direction of the LICAF Board. Each member of executive team has specific areas of responsibility on which they take a lead...

Director: Overall festival artistic direction, international relationships & partnerships, festival advocacy and development (local, regional, national, international), audience development & marketing, financial management, education & learning, year-round project delivery

Associate Director: Fundraising, international cultural institutes and partnerships, academic partnerships and academic programme, year-round project delivery, audience development & community engagement, exhibitions programme

Assistant Director: Venue liaison and administration, guest/creatives/speaker liaison and administration, sponsor liaison, volunteer recruitment/Comic Art Europe consortium administration and liaison. Board administration and monitoring, year-round project delivery, data-collection and reporting

LICAF is supported by a Technical Director - a specific brief to oversee all aspects of festival technical delivery and we have delivery leads for education/ learning activity and volunteer liaison/ support. Marketing, data collection and PR is delivered by contracted specialists with the level of knowledge required by LICAF, overseen by the Director

The executive team meet monthly to review strategic direction of the organisation and explore potential opportunities for development. The executive also meet monthly with other members of the LICAF team to update on activity, review progress against the Business Plan and tackle the day-to-day issues. It is also an opportunity explore strategic ambitions for LICAF.

FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING

Cost of Living Crisis

The inflationary momentum for the UK, following the Covid 19 pandemic, has risen to a new level since the start of the war in Ukraine. LICAF is now delivering its festival and year-round programme during a cost-of-living crisis, with high inflation. To some extent the fact the organisation does not face the increasing fixed costs of operating its own venue or a permanent workforce means LICAF can flex its activity and delivery to meet the financial situation. However, increasing costs in areas core to the delivery of the festival e.g., transport and accommodation, do mean we have to operate tight financial constraints and review. Additional Executive Team time has been allocated to this area of our operation to address this issue.

Arts Council England

At the heart of LICAF's funding model is the support of Arts Council England (ACE), with LICAF the only regularly funded (NPO) organisation working exclusively in the field of comics. However, ACE funding does require LICAF to deliver a range of objectives and outputs that support its Let's Create strategy and for the Board of LICAF to ensure these targets are being achieved and that reporting to ACE is undertaken in line with NPO funding.

Project Grants

LICAF seeks to support its own and partner objectives by supporting ACE funded Project Grants from partner organisations. LICAF is a delivery partner in the PopSeen touring exhibition; a project led by Wigan Libraries but with LICAF supporting the creation, consultation and CPD programmes and touring of the exhibition. LICAF will engage with other Project Grant projects where these support our objectives, particularly as a national development agency for comics.

Local Government

Following reorganisation of South Lakes District Council, LICAF seeks to continue its strong and supportive relationship with its host district council, now Westmorland and Furness Council. LICAF anticipates continued funding from W&FC as a significant cultural partner in the district - delivering economic, educational and wellbeing benefits for residents. LICAF also anticipates transitional funding from the now disbanded Cumbria County Council in 2024/25

The support of the Windermere & Bowness Town Council is important financially and recognises the importance of the festival to local residents and the business community.

LICAF is also pleased to have successfully bid to South Lakes and Furness Locality Boards for project funding to deliver activity for young people in '24/25. We will continue to explore how we can deliver similar project activity that supports LICAF's and the Locality Board's strategic ambitions.

NGO's

LICAF recognises significant financial and in-kind support from the Lake District National Park Authority. Their enthusiasm, advice, and guidance about working within the national park is also invaluable.

LICAF continues to develop strong relationships with the British Council, following the 10 Years to Save the World project in 2021/23. LICAF has now received significant funding from the British Council to deliver a programme celebrating comics from the Arab speaking (SWANA) world into 2024. This includes commissioning of new comics from 10 comic creatives based in the SWANA region, their participation in two festivals, a presence for the resulting comics at COP 28 and a professional development programme for 4 Fellows during LICAF in 2023 and '24. A major exhibition of comics from the Arab speaking world, curated by academics from the American University of Beirut, is funded separately from the British Council funding, but builds upon shared foundations.

LICAF will seek further opportunities to develop its work with funding from NGO's during the period of this business plan and as our reputation as the leading development agency for comics becomes established, we believe this activity will grow significantly.

As a truly international festival, LICAF relies on the financial support of many embassies and cultural institutes to deliver its festival programme and to enable us to welcome guests and contributors from across the globe. LICAF also recognises the ongoing financial and in-kind support of the National Cartoonists Society of America; enabling LICAF to welcome a diverse range of American guests to the festival and in supporting our Sergio Aragones Award.

Trusts & Foundations

LICAF has received significant funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to continue to develop its research into the educational potential of comics in the classroom, based on rigorous academic research and evaluation. Working in primary and special schools in Barrow-in-Furness and Kendal and in partnership with the University of Manchester, the project builds on previous work at the Abraham Moss Community School in Manchester and will continue until the end of 2024.

LICAF is working with experienced fundraisers to attract further funding from trusts and foundations, including the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Postcode Lottery Fund to increase its work harnessing the educational potential of comics and to support the professional development and engagement of working class and autistic comic creatives and audience members.

Business Sponsorship

LICAF continues to seek sponsorship, both financial and in-kind to support the delivery of the festival and our year-round programme. Simple discounting of accommodation rates, in-kind promotion of the festival to visitors etc are all important to the success of our activities.

LICAF is seeking to harness the comics industry to support LICAF, as its leading comic art festival and development agency. In 2023 LICAF launched a prize for comic translation. As well as recognising an undervalued element of the comics ecology, this prize brings us into closer contact with comic publishers both as a development agency and as a route to sponsorship. We are also exploring the way in which established comic artists can support the festival by providing contacts and introductions to other significant players in the industry.

Donations

LICAF will seek donations from a range of supporters. These will include...

- Established and recognised comic creatives & enthusiasts, seeking to support the ecology of the comics industry and the professional development of emerging comic creatives in particular. We will encourage donations from these individuals through personal recommendation and attendance at the festival.
- Comic enthusiasts and festival attendees. Using social media, the LICAF website and during the festival we will encourage donations to support the development of the festival and its year-round activity.

Crowdfunding

LICAF will use online crowdfunding platforms like Go Fund Me and Just Giving, allied with social media campaigns targeted at the widest demographic of comic creatives and enthusiasts to generating funding towards specific LICAF projects, particularly linked to our year-round programme and Little LICAF.

Fundraising Events

We will develop efficient and deliverable fundraising events.

At the '24 festival we will host a physical and online silent auction of original comic art by well-known comic artists, coordinated by Michael and Keli Lark.

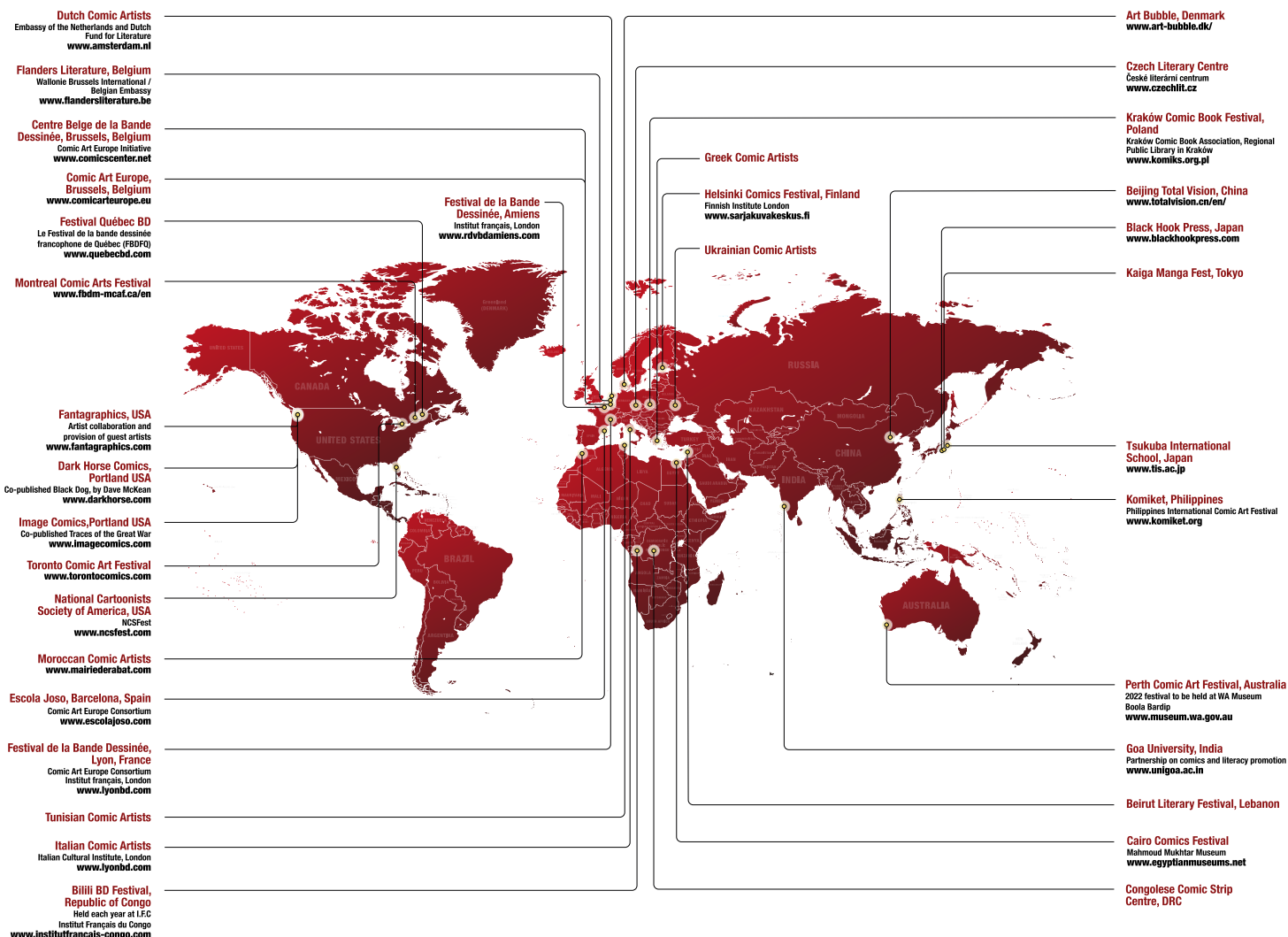
PARTNERSHIP

The Funding and Fundraising section of this Plan exemplifies how fundamental partnership working is to the delivery model of LICAF. Partnerships range across...

- Creative and comic development
- Academic and educational
- Funding and engagement
- International
- Delivering social change

The following map illustrates many of our key partners but is by no means comprehensive. Further information can be found at www.comicartfestival.com/licaf-partnerships.

LICAF Partnerships / Collaborations



APPENDIX 1

OPERATING BUDGET 2024/25

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Income		
Arts Council England - NPO/IPSO		£ 238,306
Arts Council England - Other		£ 65,000
Contributed income - e.g sponsorship, donations		£ 30,000
DCMS		
Direct Activity Income		£ 17,000
Other earned income	Ticket sales £ 7,000	
	Merchandise £ 1,500	
	Total other earned income	£ 8,500
National Lottery Heritage Fund		-
Investment Income		-
Local Authority Income		£ 42,500
Other National Lottery Grants		-
Other income sources	Lake District National Park Authority £ 10,000	
	Universities £ 7,000	
	British Council £ 15,000	
	International Partners £ 10,000	
	Total other income sources	£ 42,000
TOTAL INCOME		£ 443,306

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Expenditure (continued)		
DIRECT ACTIVITY COSTS (continued)		
Other direct activity		
	Paul Hamlyn final	£ 5,000
	Arab world programme including fellowships	£ 30,000
	Library tour direct costs	£ 4,500
	Universities and research programme	£ 4,000
	Total other direct activity costs	£ 43,500
TOTAL DIRECT ACTIVITY COSTS		£215,500
OVERHEADS		
	Advertising & Promotion	£ 49,000
	Audit & Accountancy	£ 2,500
	Bank Charges	£ 500
	Capital expenditure	-
	Company development	-
	Consultants Fees & Subscriptions	£ 2,500
	Contingency	-
	Corporation tax	-
	Depreciation	-
	Earned income costs	-
	Insurance	£ 1,100
	IT costs	-
	Legal & Professional	-
	Loan repayments	-
	Miscellaneous costs	-
	Office equipment purchase	-
	Other costs (not elsewhere specified)	-
	Other office expenses	-



comicartfestival.com

MAIN FUNDER:



Funded by
UK Government



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ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND