



Vale Rural Cinema

Community Cinema Toolkit

So you've decided to run a community cinema at your village....what a great idea!!! This document will hopefully help you in setting up this kind of initiative, and give you things to consider, ideas, dos and don'ts as well as a few practical tips. You may be starting this off as an individual or as part of a group, but what you will be sure of is that Creative Rural Communities (CRC), the Vale of Glamorgan's Rural Regeneration Team, is here to help you every step of the way!

This fantastic idea was created as a result of demand from the rural communities of the Vale and following the success of Cowbridge's Big Screen. As a result of this demand, CRC have developed a community cinema project and have also purchased mobile cinema equipment for you to trial cinema showings at your village. If successful you may be able to apply to CRC for funding to purchase your own equipment!

This document will cover the following topics to help you get started:

- Models of operation
- Licensing
- Accessing films
- Ticketing
- Marketing
- Programming & presentation
- Other critical success factors
- Equipment

Models of Operation

By starting up this kind of initiative you'll be providing your local community with an invaluable, quality service that will bring people together. You'll also be competing with the big multiplexes!! This should not be a daunting prospect for you as what you will be offering will be something different...a social and local experience which won't cost the earth!

However, it is important that you keep the multiplexes in mind and ask yourself if what you're offering is enough to make people attend your screening rather than drive to Bridgend or Cardiff. What are you offering that is special? Have you got comfortable seating? Will you sell refreshments?

You could set up as a 'club' rather than pay as you go. Members would pay a joining fee, pay a subscription to cover all entry fees or have a discount on tickets (e.g. members £3, non-members £5).

You could leave entry open to all (subject to film classification). No membership fee but more of a risk for you to cover costs.

The option you choose will affect the film hire fees. If you run as a club you can rent films on a 'non commercial' basis as it's 'closed' to the public. With this option you'd be charged a flat fee of around £80 plus VAT. However you will not be able to advertise the film to the general public, only to members. That means no ticket sales at the door, it would be a member only and guest tickets available in advance.

The other open is to be 'open to all'. This is usually charged as a percentage of ticket sales (typically 35%). You would be able to advertise the film showing to the public with no restrictions, exactly on the same basis as the multiplex.

Licensing

There are 2 types of licences:

- Local authority
- Film distributor

Local authority

First of all when setting up a mobile/community cinema you must first ask yourself where will you show these films? Village hall? Local pub? Has the venue got a premises licence? If so, what is included on this licence? Does it include permission to show films? The village hall/pub may already have a licence, but you may need to update this licence to include the showing of films. These are the choices you have:

1. get a new licence – this is free but does involve a good deal of paperwork and you will be required to advertise the film in the press.
2. update the current licence – this comes with a charge but involves less paperwork.

3. apply for a temporary event notice – this is a one off application that will need to be done every time you show a film. You'll need to apply for it a good 2 weeks before the showing of the films. It costs £21 each time you apply and you're limited to 12 notices per year.

Another consideration is if you want to sell alcohol at the film showing. This again requires a licence and again carries a fee. If you just want to consume alcohol, i.e. for participants to bring their own alcohol to the event, this does not carry a fee, neither does selling confectionary (sweets, ice cream, popcorn etc). This can be done without a licence.

For more information please contact the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Licensing Department on 01446 700111 or visit the Vale of Glamorgan website where there's a specific page on licensing.

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/working/business_support/licensing_service.aspx Take a look at the section titled *Licensing Act 2003/Alcohol & Entertainment*

Film distributor

The film distributor will issue you with a licence to show a particular film on a particular day. This is your proof that you're not pirating the film. It is absolutely forbidden to charge any entry fee for a DVD simply rented from a local shop. Indeed public performance of any film is prohibited even if you own the disk and it is a 'private' group. Distributors will allow you to use a DVD of your own or one rented for the night provided you have the 'licence' to show for them.

You have to pay to show a film, either a flat fee for a film club or a commercial hire fee/box office split of approximately 35% of the takings for fully open shows.

Accessing films

You now have to ask yourself what kind of films you want to show. If you're confident that villagers will want to see older films then you can buy your films from various outlets as you wish. However, if you want to show new films, those who have been showing at cinemas but not yet released on DVD, then you can do this via various film suppliers. You have several options here:

1. Film Bank

Filmbank Distributors Limited (Filmbank) is a joint venture company owned by Warner Bros. Entertainment UK and Sony Pictures Releasing, representing many of the leading Hollywood, Bollywood and Independent film studios in the area of film usage outside the cinema and home. To show a film, outside the home, you need permission from the owner of the copyright (the studio or the authorised distributor) from the major Hollywood, Bollywood studios, as well as some of the leading independents, Filmbank can give you that permission. Filmbank provides content to a number of diverse markets such as schools, hotels, ferries, trains, film societies and community film groups. It operates in

over 75 international countries and territories including most of the major hotel chains.

From here you need to choose which film licence suits you better, Single Title Screening Licence (STSL) or Public Video Screening Licence (PVSL). Please visit the licensing webpage for more information

http://www.filmbank.co.uk/which_licence.asp or call 0207 984 5950

2. Moviola

Moviola started similar to what you are deciding to do, as a community group wanting to show films in rural locations. They have now grown into a fully fledged company that not only offer advice in setting up a community cinema facility, but also offer to run these film events for you.

You can become a Moviola Associate Member. This type of membership allows community-based venues to share their 'block booking' and benefit from having no minimum hire charges and no VAT on film hire charges.

Associate Moviola venues are sent a Menu of recommended films and a DVD of trailers three times a year: in June for the September to December season, in November for January to Easter, and in March for Easter to the end of August. This allows participants to choose from the very latest film releases.

Associate Moviola members can also request free of charge a support disk for each feature film containing either a short film and trailers of forthcoming films or just trailers.

Here are your options with an Associate Membership:

- a) The Gold Service – Moviola do everything for you
- b) The Silver Service - Moviola handle the booking (licensing) for you and all other contacts with distributors but you provide your own disks.

What Moviola do advise is that you run this type of event commercially i.e. aim to attract the widest social groups. Also think about how you will publicise and market the shows to get the best attendance. How much will you charge for tickets and who will sell them? Who will keep records of the showings (this will be crucial in case of film distributors audit)? Who will staff the shows? You will most definitely need at least one person to know how to use and take care of the equipment, the projectionist. Moviola do offer a service where they provide a qualified projectionist who will provide the equipment, trailers and will show the film in a smooth professional way. All you do it sit back and enjoy the experience!

For more information visit the Moviola website <http://www.moviola.org/>

3. BFFS

The British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) is the national support and development organisation for the film society and community cinema movement.

Established in 1946, BFFS has successfully weathered the considerable changes in the cinema landscape over seven decades and today stands for the right of all communities to determine their own access to film culture.

BFFS will:

- Provide hands-on support for emerging film societies and community cinemas
- Offer advice and support covering all aspects of film society operation

- Work with other organisations such as Regional Screen Agencies, the British Film Institute and the Independent Cinema Office on behalf of film societies and community cinemas
- Provide training, conference and networking opportunities
- Publish information and educational material
- Develop member benefits and access to discounts and offers from partners

For more information please visit the BFFS website <http://www.bffs.org.uk/>
If you are interested in starting a cinema club it might be worth you reading through the **BFFS starter pack**.

Ticketing

When setting the price of your tickets it's imperative to take into account what the true cost of showing your film is. This should include the cost of hiring the film itself, venue hire, publicity, and possibly even cost incurred by volunteers. It would also be useful to consider a 'rainy day' fund to cover films that don't end up attracting large audiences.

However, do not undersell the show. If you don't charge enough people won't value it or take it seriously. Multiplexes are becoming very expensive, then add transport costs, parking, refreshments etc and all of a sudden the cost triples!

Be competitive yet realistic. With all costs incurred what would make you at least break even? The guide ticket price is around £5 but you may feel this is too much or too little. You could offer one price for advanced booking and another price for on the door. Will you offer concessions for kids or the elderly or will it be one fixed price?

You may even consider opening a bank account in the Cinema Club's name and build a reserve. It may also be worth setting up as a constituted group or even set yourselves up as a community enterprise.

Marketing

Marketing is key to the success of your film showings, both before each screening and at the screening itself. Here are some suggestions:

1. Place an advert or story in your local newspaper, newsletter or parish magazine
2. Deliver flyers on individual film door-to-door and place them in key local spots (doctor's surgeries, dentists, pubs, shops etc)
3. Put up posters in key local locations
4. Identify neighbouring villages where you think it might be worth marketing your show
5. Set up an email contact list and send email adverts to all for each up and coming screening

6. Contact other interest groups in your area that could help promote your films.
7. Set up a website (this must be kept up to date) with useful information about tickets, future screenings etc and direct people to it via email and other marketing. CRC will be setting up Vale Rural Cinema umbrella website so make sure you get involved in that!
8. Give your cinema a name, a brand, a logo.
9. Consider buying a banner for outside your venue 'film night here tonight!' and put it somewhere where people will see it.
10. Don't be afraid to promote the 'green' advantage of your venture e.g. reducing carbon footprint etc
11. Show trailers for your next showing to entice people back.

Programming & presentation

Film choice – make sure you're showing films that people WANT to see! DVD's are so cheap these days, and many have home cinema equipment, so you need to offer something extra special. Try to access those films that have just left the cinema but not quite on DVD release. These films can be accessed (at a cost) either directly via Film Bank www.filmbank.co.uk/ or via a middleman such as Moviola www.moviola.org/

Identify your core audience and although it'll be difficult to please everyone make sure you please them and not yourself. Invite suggestions for future showings. Listen and respond to comments.

Picture: make sure it's bang on centre, in focus and no heads are in the way. The bottom line of the picture should be as high as possible, the screen filled from side to side with gaps at top and bottom (letterbox).

Sound: don't put the sound on too loud, it can become distorted. Be aware of your venue's acoustics, it's likely to be your biggest problem when it comes to sound.

Presentation: use black out blinds if you can, they do make a difference. Failing that use layers of black bin liners. You'd be surprised how much light comes through curtains even when they're closed, also fire exits! It is advisable not to offer a break in a film. However you may find that your audience would prefer this, especially if the film is particularly long. Why not formally welcome people and say goodnight....the personal touch.

Other critical success factors

- You won't be able to compete with the multiplexes for their picture and sound quality, but you will be able to offer something different.
- Make it a sociable event, make it fun and give people a good night out.
- Offer different (and cheaper!) refreshments, e.g. ice cream, chocolate, soft drinks, wine (although make sure you've got the correct licence to sell wine, otherwise make it a 'bring your own' event).

- Build up a group of volunteers to help you to avoid burnt out by doing everything yourself.
- Get people to understand where their money is going, what a bargain it is, and the whole community benefits from their money staying in the community.
- Also promote, as mentioned above, the 'green' aspect of your venture.

Equipment

Creative Rural Communities have invested in state of the art mobile cinema equipment for village halls, groups, pubs etc to use. This equipment can be used on a trial basis to see if the venture has potential to be successful. Good quality equipment is a must for any group wanting to set up cinema events and we encourage all organisers to run the events as professionally and commercial as possible, thus attracting the widest possible audience and to compete with the nearby multiplexes. People will attend if they quality is good, there is a warm welcome, the refreshments are good and there is a good social atmosphere!

The equipment available includes:

- 2 x foldable front projection screen in 2 sizes:
4.33 x 2.71m
3.15 x 1.97m
- 1 x projector
- PA package (including amplifier, speakers & sub woofers)
- 1 x Blu Ray player
- 1 x DVD player

You may have access to some or all of the above equipment, depending on what your venue already has access to. Please note that the equipment is fairly bulky and a reasonable sized car (e.g. estate) should be sufficient to transport the equipment. However, you can also request the equipment be delivered to your venue by CRC staff. Please contact us if you wish to take advantage of this option. Informal training on how to set up the equipment will be provided. It is advisable to enlist the help of other is setting up the equipment, helping hands are appreciated!

With regard to damage or theft of the equipment, the Vale of Glamorgan Council's insurance covers all of the equipment in transit and at various venues. However, this insurance carries a £250 excess which will be passed on to you should the equipment be damaged or stolen whilst in your care.

If in doubt...

...please contact your friendly CRC officer, Mari-Wyn Elias-Jones, for any further advice and guidance or if you'd like to use the mobile cinema equipment listed above. Tel: 01446 704637 Email: mwelias-jones@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Creative Rural Communities is a regeneration and economic development initiative led by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in partnership with various public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The project is funded by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and through the Welsh Government's Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. As well as basic services there are funding programmes available for villages, heritage, farming, tourism and community grown food, which will strengthen communities and businesses in the rural Vale. For more information visit www.creativeruralcommunities.co.uk

