

Curzon

The Curzon: Strategic Plan 2008- 9

Introduction

The Clevedon Curzon is unique. We believe it is the oldest, purpose-built, continuously operating cinema in the world. Built as a picture house in 1912 it has operated as a cinema ever since, surviving bombs, the vagaries of the industry, changes to the fabric of the building and threats to its viability. The Curzon Clevedon Community Centre for the Arts is a registered charity that bought the Curzon on behalf of the local community in 1995. It owns the historic, Grade II listed building and its subsidiary, The Curzon Community Cinema, operates as a community business.

The charity is pledged to bring film, cinema education and media and performing arts to the local community and to restore the historic building to its former glory.



The Curzon auditorium

Since 1995 The Curzon has:

- Declared its reputation to be the world's oldest, purpose-built, continuously operating cinema.
- Installed a new screen, a Dolby Digital sound system, new seating, a refurbished foyer and a new 35 mm projector.
- Become a focus for film in the local community, with a thriving 'art house' Film Club, the CineMa and Baby club for parents with babes in arms and state-of-the-art facilities for visually and hearing impaired patrons.
- Developed a phased project for the restoration of the Art Deco building.
- Installed a new digital projector as part of the UK Film Council's Digital Screen Network of over 200 cinemas.
- Contributed to North Somerset Arts Week, using the Oak Room as a venue for local artists, and held its first film festival
- Worked with local partners to support film making in the community, especially with vulnerable young people
- Strengthened its organisational capacity and systems of governance
- Contributed to a successful bid for the North Somerset area to pilot 5 hours of culture a week for young people.

The Current Strategy

Our first full strategy covered the period 2005-2008. It was an ambitious programme of work that has been pursued with energy and dedication. We have achieved considerable progress in the period, which is reflected in this document. The current strategy covers the next year to 18 months. Our long-term vision remains strong and valid. The full realisation of our ambitions will start with the attraction of funds for the restoration of the roof and roof structure, the development of the Curzon Collection and the expansion of our work with young people as part of North Somerset's pilot of the Government's 5 hours of culture initiative. This will be taken forward in the period covered by this plan in the course of 2008 and 2009. Having established the safety and security of the building's fabric, begun to develop the importance of the Curzon's heritage and enhanced our cultural offer to young people and the community as a whole, we will focus on a future strategy for the period leading to 2012, when The Curzon marks its 100th anniversary.

The 10-year Vision

People who care about The Curzon are motivated by the importance of its place in the history of cinema, and the intrinsic quality of the building and its decorative features. We are proud of its past and present value to the local community as a centre for arts and entertainment. We are excited by its future prospects as a thriving centre for cinema and the arts, fully restored as a national treasure.

In 2005 we set out our 10-year vision which covered:

- **improvements in organisational leadership and competence**
- **development and extension of our activities with the community and in education for the arts and film**
- **plans for restoration of the fabric of the building and our increasingly important collection and archive**
- **extending our programmes and improving our customer service**
- **supporting and valuing our staff and volunteers.**

Progress and future plans of each of these aspects of the vision is set out in the sections below.

Organisational Leadership and Competence

The Board of Management of The Curzon has devoted considerable efforts to ensuring that it has the skills, capacity and governance structures to fulfil its charitable purposes and to improve its ability to deliver its ambitions on behalf of the community. This was identified in the 2005-8 strategic plan as a key requirement underpinning all future development.

What we have achieved since 2005

- Following a skills audit of the Board, we have recruited additional trustees with relevant and diverse skills through open competition. The Board has more than doubled in size and has substantially strengthened its capability and the efficiency of its operations.
- An organisational structure of working groups, reporting to the Board, that covers the main priorities of the organisation and drives action forward whilst ensuring effective communication across groups.
- Sought to ensure that all Board members understand their roles and responsibilities and the changing statutory framework within which they operate.
- Recruited through open competition a new full-time executive Director who has substantial experience and track record in managing and programming for community cinemas.
- Established strong and robust financial controls, a clear understanding of our trading position and a process for setting budgets and monitoring expenditure against profiles on a quarterly basis.
- Established a full understanding of our reserves and taken action to maximise income from investments
- Kept under review our charitable and company constitutions, structures and administrative practices to ensure that they operate in the best interests of the community and customers we serve.

What we will do in the next 18 months

- We will continue to develop Board members, ensuring that they have clear understanding of the new legislation governing charities and companies.
- We will develop our fundraising strategy targeted more effectively to our key objectives through public events, corporate sponsorship and grant funding.
- We will follow up the fire and health and safety risk assessments of the building and our operations to ensure that our staff, volunteers, customers and visitors are properly safeguarded and that there is a scheduled programme of future inspections.
- We will strengthen our links with key relevant organisations, such as North Somerset Council, South West Screen, local arts organisations and other independent cinemas.

Community and Education

The Curzon's role in increasing the appreciation of film as an art form, promoting understanding of film and media and facilitating film making in the community is a central and growing element of our operations. We have taken some exciting initiatives in recent years, building on our continuing offer to show a wide range of films to all types of audience and growing and showcasing our own talent.

What we have achieved since 2005

- Maintained our CineMa and Baby screenings and 'Tea and Biscuits' and school holiday matinees catering for patrons who find it difficult to attend our normal evening shows.
- Expanded the Film Club to show art house and foreign language films fortnightly to ever larger audiences.
- Shown special screenings for schools, especially during the National Schools Film Week.
- Extended our programmes of re-mastered and silent film classics, often with cinema organ recitals, and shown archive footage of films taken over the previous century in the local area.
- Run our first film festival in conjunction with North Somerset Arts Week with a film competition for short films on the theme of "Song and Dance".
- Opened up the Oak Room as a Gallery for the work of local artists during North Somerset Arts Week 2007
- Worked with 'The Barn' youth centre on a successful film making project for school students who were excluded or at risk of exclusion, and hosted the annual North Somerset Media Showcase for A level coursework.
- Run a film tutorial course running for eight sessions for aspiring local film-makers, led by experts in the field.

What we will do in the next 18 months

- Work with North Somerset Council and other cultural partners in the area to develop as a centre of excellence for film and cinema piloting the Government's initiative that children at school should experience 5 hours of culture a week.
- Appoint a community and education officer to penetrate our outreach work more deeply into local schools and the community at large.
- Develop and reinforce our participation in North Somerset Arts Week 2009 with a second film festival and competition
- Set up a Youth Film Club organised by young people
- Encourage young people to act as volunteers at The Curzon
- Promote and expand the use of the theatre as a resource for film appreciation, history of the industry, heritage building and an important part of local history in the 20th century
- Begin to develop our plans for 2012 to ensure that The Curzon contributes to the cultural legacy provided by the Olympic Games for children and young people and the community at large.

Heritage and Conservation



Maurice Thornton and Hilary Neal open the Stanley Newton Projection Room, May 2008

Our vision to restore The Curzon to its Art Deco glory and to celebrate its place in cinema history remains a core purpose of our organisation. We recognise that our aspirations can only be realised through a carefully managed, phased approach that considers the sustainability of each element of the restoration and our capacity to manage it. We also appreciate that lottery funding is increasingly difficult to obtain and we need to carefully match our plans to the Heritage Lottery Fund's criteria and priorities.

What we have achieved since 2005

- Opened discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund about the urgency of funding for the restoration of the roof and roof structure and the presentation and interpretation of the Curzon Collection, having agreed that an application to HLF should be made by Autumn 2008.
- Tendered to select a building surveyor and worked with them to survey the roof and external structure of the building and obtain a price for the restoration.
- Re-housed the Curzon Collection to the second floor and took steps to improve its presentation.
- Signed a formal agreement with the Projected Picture Trust putting our relationship with them on a formal footing with regard to the loan of their historic cinema exhibits.
- Set up regular Curzon Collection open events for the general public with improved interpretation.

What we will do in the next 18 months

- Submit an application to HLF for restoration of the roof and roof structure as well as improved interpretation and public access to the Curzon Collection, and undertake the works in 2009.
- Use the opportunity of building improvements to undertake minor work on parts of the building that require scaffolding e.g. windows.
- As part of our aim to become a visitor destination in the SW, we will make links with other local attractions and ensure that we capitalise on opportunities for collaboration and improved signage and publicity.



Damage caused by water leaking through the roof

Customers, Programming and Marketing

We have recognised that 'The Curzon Experience' is at the heart of our offer to our customers. The combination of a state of the art cinema in a historic setting is what makes us distinctive in the marketplace, and brings both faithful and new patrons through the doors. Building on this, sustaining the quality of this experience and publicising our activities widely will ensure that we go from strength to strength.



The Curzon Experience
Cinema & Baby
Parent and baby cinema screenings in Clevedon
Wednesday mornings

Curzon Community Cinema
Old Church Road
Clevedon
North Somerset
BS21 6NN
01275 871000
www.curzon.org.uk

The Curzon Experience
Curzon Collection
Exhibition of Heritage Cinema Technology
2008 Open Days
Free Entrance

Curzon Community Cinema
46 Old Church Road
Clevedon
North Somerset
BS21 6NN
01275 871000
www.curzon.org.uk

What we have achieved since 2005

- We have opened a permanent Curzon office in the 'stable block' for the Director and other administrative staff, which is also open to personal callers during working hours.
- We have introduced the capability for credit and debit card sales at the box office
- We have provided advance ticket booking for some performances
- We undertook a major marketing survey and as a result introduced more weekday performances
- We have given special gala showings of the **Wallace and Gromit, The Curse of the Were Rabbit** (October 2005), **Nanny McPhee** (November 2005), **The Brothers Grimm** (November 2005), **Keeping Mum** (January 2006) and **Flushed Away** (November 2006).
- A regular customer newsletter 'Screen Talk' was introduced in 2006
- We have improved customer communications by introducing a new feedback system and better display of programme information and other publicity materials

- Developed costed plans to improve the display of 'Quad' film posters on Great Western Road ready to secure the appropriate consents.
- We have extended marketing beyond the immediate locality through advertising in *Things to see and do in Somerset*, periodic advertising in the *Bristol Magazine*, vouchers in the Invitation Book and film listing advertisements in *Weston & Worle News*.
- We have maintained our public profile by increasing the press coverage of The Curzon
- We successfully celebrated our 10th anniversary as a community cinema in 2006/7

What we will do in the next 18 months

- We will refurbish the customer toilets by the end of 2008.
- Subject to available funding, we will keep under consideration the redesign of the foyer to include a new box-office and a second kiosk, and the introduction of advanced bookings sales during the day, to personal callers and via the website.
- We will review and refresh our website
- We will create a single customer and supporter database
- We will consider ideas for a loyalty card or 'friends' membership scheme for Curzon customers and sponsors
- We will develop a clear corporate identity to provide consistency for all our publicity material
- We will develop a strategy for marketing the organisation to public sector decision makers and the corporate sector
- We will produce a DVD of films of Clevedon, showing examples of our archive footage
- We will review Kiosk display and sales



Staff and Volunteers

The Curzon has a small number of paid staff who, apart from the full-time Director, work on a part-time or sessional basis. The success of the operation relies on them and a much larger number of volunteers. Organisation and communication is therefore a major challenge to make sure that everyone understands the changes underway and what we aim to achieve.

What we have achieved since 2005

- We have undertaken a succession planning exercise to develop the resilience of the organisation and costed options for future staff roles and structure, subject to funding being available.
- We have recruited a part time administrator and a finance officer/book keeper
- We have established a regular programme of meetings between the Director and paid staff, some attended by Board members.
- The Board Chair writes quarterly to all staff to update them on developments and plans and the business of the Board in general
- A staff representative is a formal member of the Staff and Volunteers Working Group.
- We have undertaken reviews of policies on discipline, grievance, age equality, equal opportunities and customer care.
- We have reviewed volunteer recruitment needs and training requirements and hosted an event to thank volunteers and establish clear channels of communication.
- We have trained new part-time projectionists to ensure that we can sustain our operations

What we will do in the next 18 months

- We will develop plans for staff and volunteer training, focusing on operational procedures, customer care, and representing The Curzon to the public
- We will review and resolve issues relating to basic terms and conditions so that there is complete clarity about job descriptions, rotas and contracts.
- We will conduct regular reviews to ensure full compliance with employment law relating for example to terms and conditions and health and safety
- We will continue to ensure that new staff and volunteers are recruited as necessary