

the Lights andover



The Lights 3 Year Business Plan

2012 - 2015

The Lights
West Street
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 1AH

Supported by



Owned and Managed by



There is no doubt that the Borough Council made a bold decision when it purchased a closed and run down theatre, which had a poor reputation and poorer attendances. Fortunately, the Council had councillors and officers with the vision and skill to turn the shell into what is now “The Lights”.

The Lights has gone from strength to strength is down to a talented and imaginative Venue Director supported by dedicated staff and a committed team of volunteers. The reputation of The Lights far exceeds the boundaries of Andover and Test Valley. The programmes that are produced both in the theatre and with partners as part of Andover Vision exceed expectations and bring the arts in reach of all our residents.

With the current overall visitor satisfaction at just under 100 per cent, I am looking forward to the continuing success of The Lights in the coming years. The Lights sits at the heart of the Council's corporate plan vision to improve the quality of life for the residents of Test Valley. In addition to their success in attracting top acts to the venue, I welcome the business plan drive to expand the artistic programme to attract a new and wider audience with more dance, drama and a wider music offering.

The five years since The Lights opened have sped by and I congratulate everyone involved in what is surely a major success story and am proud that I was and still am able to play a small part.

Councillor Ian Carr

Leader, Test Valley Borough Council
Chairman, The Lights Theatre Board



Theatre, in all its forms entertains, educates and inspires and at The Lights we embrace these aims with our commitment to being creative and enterprising in our approach to the delivery of this business plan which will take the venue forward from 2012.

The Lights is determined to give its visitors both from the local community and further afield, the best experience possible and the business plan therefore includes an overview assessment of achievements over the last five years and a review of future opportunities and risks to the venue and its service delivery.

We know that there are many challenges ahead for the venue due to the financial climate, however through the work of the creative and resourceful team working at The Lights and through the continued vision and support of Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, the venue will continue to change and adapt as required, to provide our visitors and customers with the best we can offer.

At The Lights, we will endeavour to give the best customer service possible as we know that our customer's expectations are high and rising. To deserve and achieve customer loyalty, we must meet their needs and compete effectively with other cultural and leisure choices. We are committed to having excitement and energy, to being innovative and willing to take risks and create new opportunities, as well as responding to opportunities which arise.

In our first five years we have created a solid reputation for a consistently wide and diverse professional artistic programme and have formed strong links with producers, promoters and agents in the industry who are keen to work with the venue. We will always endeavour to achieve this excellence in everything we do, striving to provide a venue that serves the whole community including people who are not regular or committed arts attenders, as well as our loyal audiences.

We are proud of our many achievements over the last five years and it is therefore a pleasure to present this comprehensive business plan to take the venue forward for the next three years.

Culture is the expression of ideas, stories and voices on a local, national and international stage that inspires Hampshire people to explore and grow confidence in their own identity. It is the creative heartbeat of Hampshire. From culture grows our individual ability to innovate, invent and understand and enjoy the world around us.

Creating Hampshire

Draft Strategic Plan for Arts and Museums

Test Valley is a mainly rural borough covering 628 square kms on the western side of Hampshire. The Hampshire County Council Small Area Population Forecast states that the 2011 population of the borough is approximately 113,619 (increase of 3.5%). The population is expected to further increase to 118,947 by 2017 with an estimated 5,000+ new homes by 2026. Around half of the population (47%) live in the two market towns – Andover to the North and Romsey to the South, with the rest of the population scattered across the borough.

The Lights – a multi purpose theatre and arts centre in the heart of Andover – celebrated its fifth anniversary in October 2011. During the five years since opening, The Lights has established itself as a cultural hub for Andover, as well as being a high quality community facility used by many local groups, organisations and societies.

Creativity and the arts can, and do, have a powerful effect upon people's health and wellbeing. In our modern fast paced lives its vital there are opportunities to take time out and enjoy or participate in the arts. The Lights provides many such opportunities for keeping our minds active and healthy and is a cornerstone of the council's leisure and wellbeing services.

Councillor Tony Ward

Leisure & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

In 2011 The Council launched a new four year Corporate Plan – ‘Doing Things Differently’. The plan sets out the vision for Test Valley over the next four years and after taking into account the views of local people, statistical data about the Borough and the experience of democratically elected councillors focuses on what is important to the people who live and work in Test Valley. The Lights sits at the very heart of the aims of the Corporate Plan and is a key player in the council's aim to “Encourage all of our communities to reach their full potential” through council support for the borough council's key leisure and arts facilities. The venue also embraces the priorities of the Hampshire County Council Corporate Plan in the work it undertakes:

- Hampshire safer and more secure for all
- Maximising Wellbeing
- Enhancing our quality of place

To be an organisation of excellence committed to improving the quality of life of all the people of Test Valley.

Doing Things Differently

Test Valley Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-15

In addition, The Lights has embraced 'Creating Hampshire' – Hampshire's draft strategic plan for Arts and Museums, with the key values mirroring those already embraced by The Lights:

- Participation
- Excellence
- Professionalism
- Collaboration
- Competitive

The plan, led by Hampshire's new Culture, Communities and Business Service, will help to create an environment which will:

- Inspire a greater sense of place
- Support the Hampshire visitor economy and creative industries
- Contribute towards the educational attainment of young people and support transition into successful adulthood
- Improve the health and well-being of older Hampshire residents
- Generate income and improve sustainability

The plan covers the period 2012-16 and therefore underpins the next three years of trading for the venue. The Lights continues to broaden and develop its delivery of a wide range of activities, performances and services and will keep the above priorities and values at the very core of its planning and development.

The Lights has made an extremely positive impact on the town, increasing the attractiveness of the town centre to residents and visitors alike. Theatre brings not only an enhanced cultural offer to a town, but also helps to bring more outside visitors and spend and bring a higher quality and more vibrant night time economy.

The Lights has continued to contribute to all four principles of the Vision through its creative programming, workshops and outreach work. It is an absolutely vital partner in realising the Vision's key strategic aims. The Lights leads the way in excellent entertainment locally and has gone from strength to strength every year. We are all continually proud of its success.

Sue Sheppard

Andover Vision Manager

The Lights remains a key success in the delivery of the Andover Vision – a plan for a more prosperous, more entertaining and a more inclusive Andover.

The Vision is based on sound basic principles:

- Education for All
- Passionate Participation
- Business and Enterprise
- Health and Wellbeing

The Lights actively addresses the principles of the Andover Vision in the delivery of its services, both through the artistic programme and its work with communities, businesses and schools.

Strengths

- Friendly & welcoming atmosphere
- Quality & variety of programme
- Spotlight Members Scheme
- Excellent reputation
- Enthusiastic, capable and dedicated team with low staff turnover
- Strong performance attendance figures
- Supportive, loyal and appreciative audiences
- Location
- Flexible spaces enable multi-purpose use
- Loyal & supportive team of volunteers
- Strong political support

Weaknesses

- Size of auditorium
- Location of car parking
- Poor public transport links from south to north of borough and from villages
- Venue reliance on casual staff and volunteers
- Limited technical facilities in arena space
- Continual maintenance required to fabric of building
- Age and upkeep of ageing building and plant
- Reliance on HCC grant funding

Opportunities

- Increase attendances from schools
- Social Media for targeted marketing
- New housing developments (increasing local catchment) and population
- Cultural Olympiad
- Business Members Group
- Retain & reward staff through structured staff development
- Increase income from external hirings
- Develop Arena Café Bar
- Develop partnership working
- Develop bistro
- Extend Wedding Package

Threats

- Sustainability of funding
- Increasing energy costs
- Increased Health & Safety legislation
- Uncertainty of long term grant support from HCC
- Loss of sponsorship
- Financial Climate
- Change in cultural habits
- Cost of investment to fabric of building
- Increased competition for existing audiences
- Staff turnover and subsequent loss of skill base
- Audience numbers decline

1.1 The Artistic Programme

1.2 Trading

1.3 Marketing & Audience Development

1.4 Operations and Management

1.5 Finance

1.6 Sponsorship and Funding

1.7 Volunteer Programme

1.1 The Artistic Programme

The Lights will continue to provide a strong artistic programme incorporating a wide variety of performances including comedy, drama, dance, music, children's theatre and 'audience with', ensuring that the programme appeals to a wide sector of the community. The Lights will look to maintain an overall high occupancy level in both the auditorium and arena, with the quality of the programme mirroring the expectations of the loyal audience base.

Over the last three years, The Lights has secured a significant number of preview dates for top comedy talent. Securing these dates has given The Lights increased profile in the local community and has contributed to the high membership figures for the Spotlight Members Scheme, with many people joining the scheme to ensure they receive priority booking. It is essential that the Venue Director maintains the strong working relationship with agencies to ensure the venue continues to benefit from these events. Despite the strength of music and comedy at the venue, it is important that the range of the artistic programme is as wide as possible whilst remaining financially viable. The venue will therefore look to draw new audiences from schools and the Spotlight Members Scheme, with a particular focus to increasing audiences for dance, drama and music genres including jazz, blues, roots, folk and classical.

Focus areas in the artistic programme will be as follows in each forthcoming season:

- Continued use of the arena space for a variety of live events to include local acoustic band nights, comedy club, blues, folk and jazz, exhibitions, craft fairs etc
- To ensure the venue delivers a wide and balanced programme, with a range of music, comedy, theatre, dance and spoken word well represented in the programme
- Develop audiences for open-air theatre
- Increase attendances at theatre and dance performances
- Working in partnership with other agencies, develop offer for children and family audiences

Number of professional events per annum

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Performances			
Theatre	9	10	10
Musical Theatre	3	4	4
Classical Music	2	3	3
Popular Music (jazz, rock etc)	28	25	25
Other Music (folk, roots etc)	13	14	14
Ballet	4	6	6
Other Dance	2	3	3
Light Entertainment (comedy etc)	29	26	26
Literary Events	3	3	3
Children's Events	19	20	20
Other (Audience With etc)	9	8	8
Total	121	122	122

Reach of professional events per annum

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Performances			
Theatre	1128	1240	1353
Musical Theatre	403	423	443
Classical Music	281	309	337
Popular Music (jazz, rock etc)	4545	4317	4317
Other Music (folk, roots etc)	1203	1323	1443
Ballet	774	851	928
Other Dance	291	305	320
Light Entertainment (comedy etc)	4373	3935	3935
Literary Events	341	358	358
Children's Events	3209	3529	3850
Other (Audience with etc)	1271	1271	1271
Total Reach	17819	17861	18555

Objective: Continue to widen and develop the artistic programme to provide a balanced, high quality programme to maintain the high audience capacity

Action	Detail	Current Position	Owner	Date	Comments
Maintain the audience attendance at over 70% of the theatre capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure high quality programme • Produce schools newsletter • Work in partnership with library service to develop children's theatre events • Director to continue securing comedy preview events • Director to continue comparing & researching other arts venues 	09/10 - 80% 10/11-74%	Director	2012-15	Programme highly respected regionally with excellent attendance figures and strong customer feedback
Increase audiences for drama, classical music and dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link programme to syllabus, national initiatives etc • Target marketing activity • Director to attend festivals and showcases • Use social media to reach new audiences 	Average audience capacity: Drama – 52% Classical Music – 58%	Director/ Marketing Manager	2012-13	
Increase average numbers of tickets purchased by members per annum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to market benefits • Establish members forum • Director to hold briefing session per season 	10/11 – 2.93 tickets per member	Marketing Manager/ Director	2011/12	575 Members
Balance Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a wide range of drama, dance, music and comedy are well represented in the programme • Maintain strong links with agents, producers and companies 	Wide mix of genres represented, although music & comedy predominant	Director	2012-15	
Develop audiences for children and family events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure sponsorship • Work in partnership with library service and Waterstones to develop children's theatre events • Develop use of Kidz Club 	19 events per year – average capacity 70%	Marketing Manager	2012-13	
Programme events in the arena to attract new audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with TVAF to produce an annual open art fair • Produce an annual Wedding Fayre • Develop dance events • Lunchtime concert series in partnership with Andover College 		Director	2012-15	

1.2 Trading

There are two main areas of trading income:

- Venue Hire – performance hire and conference hire
- Bar & Café Income

In addition the venue also receives trading income from the following sources:

- Spotlight Members Scheme
- Merchandise Commission
- Booking Fees

Venue Hire

As with any new venue, building a reputation takes time, however over the last five years The Lights has become renowned for its competitive rates; pleasant surroundings; technical facilities and most of all for its excellent customer service. These have proved a major draw in the success of the conference and hirings side of the business which has continued to grow year on year. In addition, The Lights is used by many amateur arts groups, dance groups and schools around the area who use the venue to stage regular shows and concerts.

Over the last eighteen months, the venue has secured many more regular weekly bookings and the venue has far exceeded its financial targets in this area with these bookings bringing an increased source of valuable income which is then made available to reinvest in services at the Lights. Many of the regular weekly hires are from creative groups and include dance classes, life drawing and photography lessons; this is obviously of additional benefit to the venue as it enables an even wider reaching offer to both children and adults looking for participatory activities at the venue.

It is important when programming the venue, particularly in the current climate, that the venue maximises its potential wherever possible and that a reasonable amount of dates are allocated to hirings in the auditorium without jeopardising the demand for a professional programme of entertainment. It is essential for a venue such as The Lights to capitalise on the local community's creative spirit.

Over the last few years, the specification of the Conference Room and Board Room has been upgraded with both rooms now fully equipped for the requirements of business meetings and conferences. In addition, a new sound system has been installed in the dance studio, investment required due to the high level of occupancy this room attracts.

Bars and Catering

The bar has always been a valuable income stream for the venue making a profit as a standalone cost centre of around £17-20k per annum, which in turn, enables otherwise non-sustainable events and performances to be staged. The bar operates for all live events and is staffed by a team of casual staff, many of which are long-serving. In October 2010, the overall running of the Coffee Shop returned in-house and re-branded as the Arena Café Bar. The café bar is staffed by a full-time chef and two part-time staff, with the remaining staff employed on a casual basis. The café bar now offers a full café and bar service Monday – Saturday from 9am-4pm with food served until 2pm each day.

The Lights has worked hard over the last three years to develop opportunities for the bar to generate more income, including additional arena events; after-show bars; price comparison exercises etc and with a large number of events programmed over the Autumn 2011 season in both the arena and the auditorium, this should have a considerable impact on the income generated through the café bar. The new offer of wedding packages at The Lights should also have an additional impact on bar revenue.

It is intended to develop the arena café bar further and explore options for how to best operate the service. With this in mind, The Lights will advertise for expressions of interest for the café bar in the autumn of 2011. Following analysis of any interested parties, a decision will be made as to whether to keep the café bar provision in-house, or to outsource the service to an external provider.

A catering service for conference and hirings and events such as weddings, dinner dances etc is provided by three pre-selected external caterers who pay a commission to the venue for any large-scale events.

Further consideration will also be given in the coming year to use of the current 'bistro' space, to again ensure that the venue is maximising its potential and achieving high level room occupancy.

Sundries

Transaction Fee

The Lights charges a £1 transaction fee to all non-cash bookings on the box office. This transaction fee is currently waived for Spotlight Members as a benefit of the scheme.

Objective: Maximise the main income streams at The Lights to ensure a balanced Budget

Action	Detail	Current Position	Owner	Date	Comments
Increase level of business hirings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop business e-zine Promote The Lights USP Use of social media ie LinkedIn Promote use of arena space 		Operations Manager/Marketing Manager	2012/13	
Increase footfall and income for arena café bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise for expressions of interest for café bar Staff Training Continued monitoring of brands, cost of sales and pricing Develop cafe offer Marketing Strategy Develop arena events 	Footfall over last three years between 85 – 105,000 per annum	Finance Officer/ Operations Manager/Director/ Marketing Manager	2012/13	
Increase income from sundry streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal training for box office and FOH volunteers Increase merchandise commission fee for venue sales Develop offer for Spotlight Members and promote scheme 	Currently the venue takes a 10% commission from merchandise sales	Marketing Manager/ Director	2012-15	
Seek Expressions of Interest for Arena Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise Expression of Interest Review and assess applications 	Arena Café Bar is currently operated in-house on a temporary basis	Director	2012/13	
Review options for bistro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Explore alternate business opportunities 	Currently vacant and used as additional hire space	Director	2012/13	

1.3 Marketing & Audience Development

Marketing activities at The Lights are many and varied working to promote and develop the main areas of work; professional shows, education activities, business and community hirings, the Arena Café Bar and our Wedding Reception package. With traditional methods of communication now well established, our current strategy is to embrace and develop e-marketing and new social media methods which are becoming increasingly utilised in the arts both for business contacts and audiences alike.

Research

An annual customer questionnaire is sent out with the Autumn Season brochure each summer. In 2011, 700 questionnaires were distributed with the autumn season brochure mailing. The venue is now building a body of information for a year on year comparison with the results feeding into the business planning exercise. An annual customer questionnaire is sent out with the Autumn season brochure each season. In 2011, 700 questionnaires were distributed in July. The venue is now building a body of information for a year on year comparison with the results feeding into the business planning exercise. Some actions resulting from the feedback include:

Requests for the bar to be open for a longer time after evening shows resulted in after show bars being successfully trialled on selected shows. These are now regularly publicised in the brochure.

The café area regularly received fewer than 50% good or excellent results. We will be monitoring results carefully to see if this has improved since taking this facility in-house.

Comments regarding youths loitering outside the venue causing disturbances and increased litter have been addressed by working closely with local PCSOs, the Police and the Council's wardens and Environmental Services Clean Team.

We hope to produce an on-line questionnaire to develop this research further. A summary of the findings for the last three years can be found in Appendix One.

The Lights Brochures

Seasonal brochures continue to be the venue's main communication tool. In 2011 the design was updated and refreshed. We produce 10,000 copies each season – 3 seasons per year. An average of 5,500 brochures are distributed directly to individuals on the mailing list, together with a wide distribution of supplies to local and regional public outlets such as libraries, information points, and even Doctor and Dentist surgeries, in fact most public places in the community with a waiting area. As the mailing list continues to grow – currently 17,844 – mailings are managed to ensure that brochures are sent to current patrons ie those who have purchased tickets in the past 3 years. Our aim is to provide active customers with brochures and cut down on wastage and postage costs.



The Lights website – www.thelights.org.uk

The website was originally designed by Hampshire Graphics and implemented by TVBC, with on-line sales supported from Tickets.com. Immediacy software is used internally to keep the site up to date on a daily basis. The site continues to be one of our main communication methods and is well used by on-line bookers. The brochure is also now available to download and view on the website. Visitor figures for the period August 2010-11 rose by 11.10% on the previous year to 53,305, with 55% of these being new visits. Plans to update and refresh the website are due to be completed in 2011. The update will hopefully allow the site to be viewed through the range of modern browsers and allow us to embed videos / clips which we are unable to do at the moment.

Social Media

The Lights is now actively utilising several methods of social media, not only to promote the business but almost as importantly to create a platform for interaction for and with our audiences. Unlike some of the more traditional methods, social media tools are usually “no cost” communication methods; however staff time is required to produce and manage the information.



The Lights **Facebook** page now has over 570 members who regularly visit The Lights page and comment on the postings.

Posts vary from last minute reminders, to offers, to observations, all of which help to engage our audiences. Facebook has proved particularly useful for spreading the word about last minute bookings resulting in a keen interest in the venue, and in turn increased Spotlight Membership and ticket sales.



The Lights **Twitter** page currently has over 370 followers who receive tweets about happenings at the venue.

We also follow other industry users which help keep the venue informed and topical.

The Lights continue to ensure that all venue information is listed on numerous websites with links back to our own website. These include sites such as netmums.com, andoversound.com, ents24.com, skiddle.com, hants.gov.uk, wherecanwego.com. The Lights monthly E-zine is sent to customers who have registered to receive this specific type of communication. The E-zine is used to provide a friendly update on the business with special offers and details of last minute performances and activities. Since the E-zine’s introduction early in 2009 numbers receiving it have grown from 400 to 4,500 patrons.



Local Radio

Andover Sound continues to support activities at The Lights by broadcasting details of The Lights in their news slots and conducting live interviews with the Venue Manager and Marketing Manager, as well as visiting artists. We plan to develop artist’s interviews even more as these can be a big draw. Bought radio advertising is only undertaken on selected activities as it is not cost effective for one night shows, which make up the majority of our programme.

We have a strong working relationship with the station developing several joint projects including free lunchtime promotional events for new and upcoming bands in our Arena Café Bar with the artists provided by the station and themed music nights which benefit from good coverage broadcast on the station.

Hirers

The Lights has a professionally produced Hirers Information Pack which is distributed to potential business and community group clients and is also downloadable from the web site. The production of the pack follows the established strong branding, making it part of the family of publications and features customer endorsement and full hiring details. We have recently introduced a specific Business E-zine for these contacts which contains the latest news and developments happening in the venue. Further work will be undertaken to establish more communication links with the business community leading to additional hirings for the venue.

In 2011 a specific package was produced for those wishing to hire The Lights as a wedding reception venue. This includes an introductory leaflet for distribution which in turn points enquirers to a dedicated page on the web site which contains full details.

Arena Café Bar

The catering operation was taken in-house in October 2010. Marketing of the new Arena Café Bar was fairly low key until March 2011 when a chef was appointed enabling us to launch an attractive new menu with everything from breakfasts, lunches and afternoon teas to catering for business meetings.

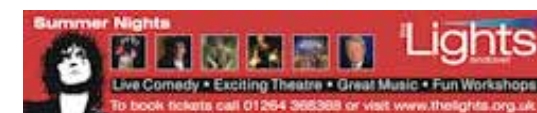
The Arena Café Bar is now promoted using a variety of methods including take-away menus, posters, branded clothing, newsletters, flyers, on-site banners and a dedicated section on the web site. We run a monthly prize draw for business clients, the names gathered receive our Business E-zine, and also operate a loyalty scheme offering discount for coffees. It is intended to develop the arena café bar further and explore options for how to best operate the service. With this in mind, The Lights will advertise for expressions of interest for the café bar in the autumn of 2011.



Banners

Seasonal banners are produced to accompany each brochure and are prominently displayed outside the venue. We are currently investigating the possibility of placement of banners in more prominent positions throughout the town.

Banners are also used outside the venue to promote the Arena Café Bar and the facilities available for businesses to hire for meetings, seminars and exhibitions.



We have produced several light weight portable roll-up banners ranging from The Lights general information versions to specific 'Wedding' versions. These are particularly useful for displays and exhibitions when promoting outside of the venue for example supermarket sessions.

Visiting artists often provide the venue with this type of banner to help promote ticket sales.

Spotlight Members

Anyone can become a spotlight member – the fee is just £20 per annum. The current membership has now grown to a very commendable 574, exceeding the industry norm for the scale of community venue.

As part of the Member's benefits package three newsletters per year are produced providing news and advance notice and information about shows. The newsletter, together with invitation only events, priority booking, various discounts and the Director's briefing sessions has kept the offer to our Members fresh and interesting. This year, with the installation of a new colour copier at the venue, we have internally designed and produced the newsletters making a considerable time and cost saving.

International Andover based company Le Creuset have completed a three year sponsorship agreement and we are now actively looking for a new sponsor for this scheme.



Information Board at Andover Hospital
with leaflet dispenser

Targeted Mailing

Using the box office marketing software, mailings are targeted to selected patrons. At times, mailings are used to highlight events of a similar genre that our records indicate they have enjoyed in the past, and at other times to give special offers to encourage further sales. Box Office staff record how customers heard about a show or activity to help monitor the effectiveness of the mailings.

Press releases

Regular press releases are sent out to a large number of local newspapers, regional magazines, radio and TV stations resulting in good coverage. This is a no cost activity but of course comes with no guarantee that the releases will be published. We do however have a good relationship with the local media and receive good coverage in this way. We regularly offer competitions for tickets in the Andover Advertiser for which we also receive good coverage.

Advertising

One regular weekly advertising block is purchased in a local newspaper which ensures continuity. Other advertising is always carefully considered as it can be expensive with limited return. Advertising is planned in appropriate periodicals for specific projects for example, promoting The Lights as a wedding venue in Weddings in Hampshire and on www.guidesforbridges.co.uk and targeting potential customers in the Stockbridge area by advertising in the Stockbridge & Test Valley Forum. All advertising uses The Lights strong branding.



Example of weekly newspaper advert

Marketing Objective: To increase audiences for the artistic programme

Action	Marketing/Audience Development Actions	Timescale	Owner
Maintain the audience capacity of the theatre/arena at over 70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a members forum to discuss programming, promotion etc • Stage free special events ie 5th birthday celebrations • Target new housing developments in the area • Develop website • Use of social media and e-marketing 	2012-15	Marketing Manager
Develop audiences for children and family events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote family friendly protocols • Develop events through partnership working with Andover Library • Develop Kidz Club • Programme open-air theatre in the borough 	2012-13	Director/ Marketing Manager
Increase attendances from schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce schools newsletter • Link programme to syllabus, national initiatives etc 	2012-14	Director/Marketing Manager

Marketing Objective: Maximise the main income streams at The Lights to ensure delivery of a balanced budget

Action	Marketing/Audience Development Actions	Timescale	Owner
Increase level of business hiring's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote The Lights USP through organisations including Business Link Wessex and Hampshire Economic Development • Develop business e-zine • Promote use of arena space for events • Investigate use of social media - LinkedIn 	2012-13	Operations Manager/Marketing Manager
Develop venue Wedding Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research events at comparable venues • Scope and cost event • Develop wedding package 		

1.4 Operations & Management

The Lights is situated in the heart of Andover on the Andover College campus and has now established itself not only as a cultural hub for the town, but also as an excellent community hiring facility due to the variety of rooms and spaces available for use. The venue is now becoming increasingly popular for dinners, award ceremonies etc due to the capacity for large-scale dining in the arena area. In terms of auditorium size, the venue is placed between the smaller capacity Hampshire Arts Centres (Havant, Aldershot, Fareham and New Milton) and the mid-scale venues such as Newbury Corn Exchange, Winchester Theatre Royal, Salisbury Playhouse and The Point, Eastleigh. A new 300 seat theatre has recently opened at The Wellington Academy in Tidworth, however at the current time; there are no plans for a professional programme of events at this venue.

It was anticipated that the rebuild of Andover College would have a major impact on The Lights, however due to changes in government funding, the College are no longer undertaking this work and this is therefore no longer a risk (in terms of potential disruption) to the venue. The Lights does still continue to have occasional issues with having dual utilities with the college, however in the main, this does not significantly impede the day to day operations of the venue. Car parking remains an issue for The Lights, particularly during the day time for delegates attending conferences and events at the venue.

The Lights continues to maintain and upgrade its facilities to ensure the venue remains at the high standard its customers have come to expect. Over the last five years, work that wasn't undertaken when the building was refurbished has now been undertaken - new boilers have been installed, windows have been replaced to the front of the venue, new carpets have been laid in the meeting rooms and access improvements have been made. The technical offer at the venue also continues to improve with improvements to arena and auditorium stage lighting and installation of a new sound system in the dance studio. Despite improvements however, the technical capabilities of the arena space remain limited. The technical specifications of the meeting rooms have also been upgraded with projectors and screens installed in both the conference and board rooms. Additional improvements to the venue have been identified; these including ICT provision (i.e. WIFI service) and these are outlined in the Council's Asset Management Plan. An overview of overall room occupancy levels can be seen in Appendix Two.

Staffing

The Lights currently has 5 permanent members of full time staff and 7 part time staff (one temporary). In addition the venue also employs a team of casual staff to cover the bar, coffee shop and technical operations. There have been no changes in permanent staffing over the last four years with the exception of the café bar team who have been employed by the Lights since October 2010, with the temporary chef taking up post in February 2011. The Lights is supported by a strong volunteer workforce, whose hours equate to 7.5 FTE

In 2011, The Lights were successful in securing a six months Future Jobs Fund placement. The successful applicant was a great addition to The Lights team and worked as an assistant to the Marketing Manager, learning a number of transferrable new skills.

The Lights team are highly experienced and motivated and hold a wide and varied range of skills between them. Skills held include:

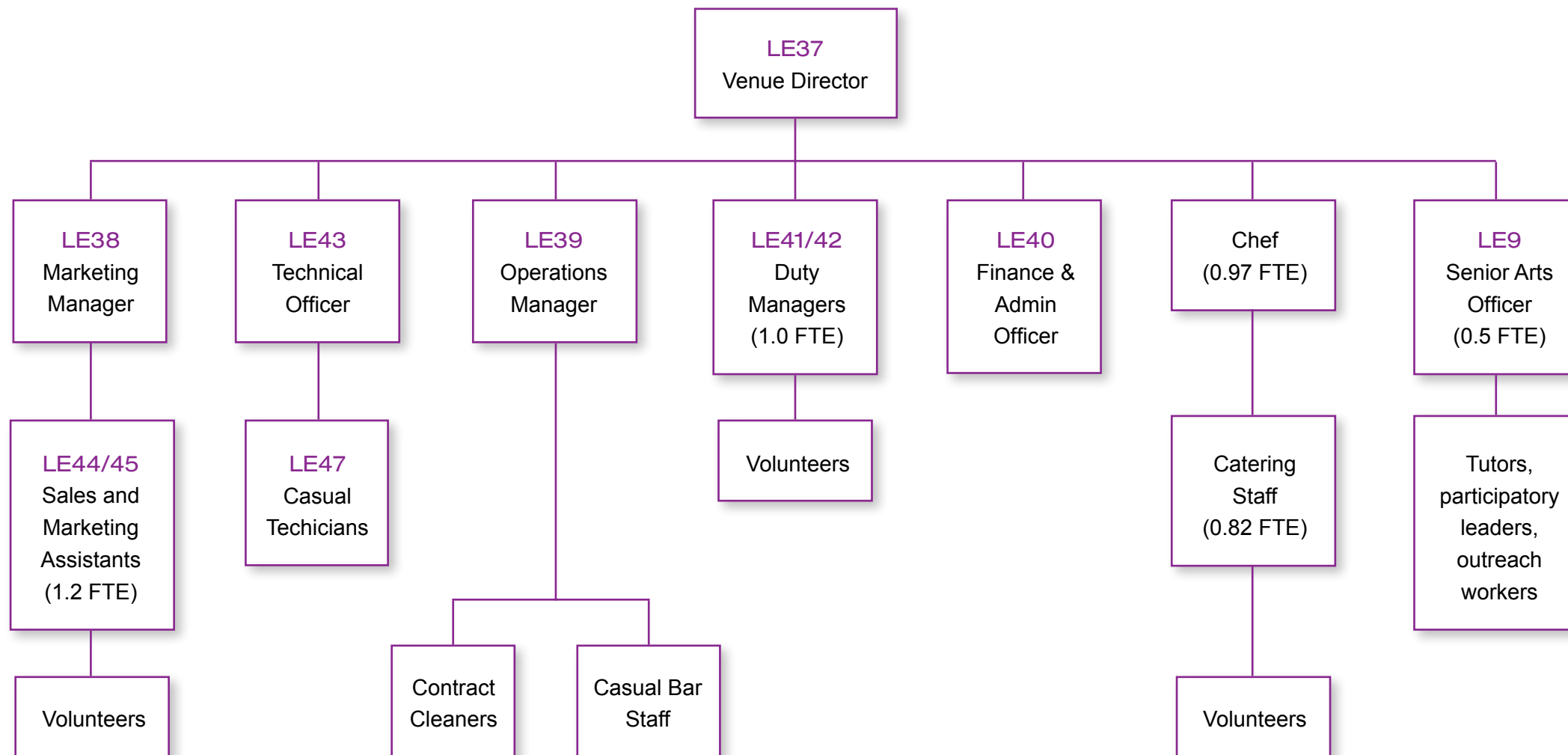
- Excellent customer care – ‘Welcome Host - Gold’ trained
- Considerable technical expertise
- Forward thinking
- Self motivated
- Management skills – budget, people, time
- Directing
- Event Management
- Marketing and PR
- First Aid
- Presentation skills
- Food Hygiene
- Finance and Accountancy
- Creativity and Imagination
- Years of programming expertise
- Personal Licence holders
- SIA Licence holders

It remains essential that we continue to invest in developing skills and experience within our workforce at every level. Having staff with these skills has been paramount to the overall successes of the venue over the last five years.

With the ever increasing workload, budget restrictions and the increasingly large demand for performance and conference hires along side the professional programme, the team are working as much as possible to maximise the venue’s capacity to ensure that the additional income from hirings enables the venue to achieve an overall balanced budget. It is essential also that the venue continues to develop the training of its casual technical staff to enable them to deputise as duty managers, to therefore ensure that the team are able to cope with the above workload without jeopardising the overall operations of the venue in any way.

The development of the arena café bar will have a significant impact on the staffing structure as current arrangements were put in place on a temporary basis when the Arena Café Bar returned in-house. Whether this part of the business remains in-house or is out-sourced (following the seeking of expressions of interest and market testing) a full review of staffing requirements at the venue will be required.

Current Staff Structure



Objective: To continue to value and developed the staffing skills required to ensure continued high standard or service delivery.

Action	Detail	Current Position	Owner	Date	Comments
Staff Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a full analysis of staff training completed over the past three years Assess venue needs & requirements Develop a duty management training schedule for casual technical team 	Training records currently available for all full-time staff	Director	2012/13 Annually	
Customer Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend 'Welcome Host' training to key frontline staff Continue to develop box office training for volunteers 		Marketing Manager	2012/13 Annually	
Health & Safety Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor changes in health and safety legislation Roll out manual handling training for café bar staff through 'Train The Trainer' Extend food hygiene training to all café staff 	Three café staff currently hold Level 2 food hygiene certificates	Operations Manager	2012/13 Annually	
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue fact finding visits to comparable arts venues Re evaluate current service based on fact finding visits 	Visits to Salisbury Playhouse, The Hawth, Cornerstone and Dorking Halls taken place in last 12 months	Director	2012/13 Annually	
Team Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange team building exercise for Lights core team and casual staff 		Director	2012/13	

1.5 Finance

The approved budget for 2011/12 is shown below together with a forecast for 2012/13. It is anticipated that the ongoing net budget for The Lights will remain relatively constant over the life of this business plan after allowing for the effects of inflation.

There are a number of uncertainties surrounding the level of external funding provided by Hampshire County Council towards future service delivery. At this stage it is expected that any cuts in grant will result in reduced service delivery, with only major changes to the net budget position above.

	Current Approved Budget 2011/12	Estimated Net Income & Expenditure 2012/13
Service Controlled Summary	£	£
Management & Administration	262,580	265,700
Theatre Programme	(42,900)	(42,900)
Arena Programme	650	650
Education Programme	25,280	25,280
Conference & Hall Hire	(46,200)	(46,200)
The Lights Bar	(17,180)	(17,180)
The Arena Café	0	0
Net Service Controlled Expenditure	182,230	185,350
Management and support service costs	179,640	169,440
Total Net Expenditure	361,870	354,790

1.6 Sponsorship

Securing sponsorship for the venue has proved difficult in the current financial climate; however through tailoring specific sponsorship packages to suit an individual company's needs, The Lights has continued to have some success in this area, including sponsorship from Pink Olive Group and Behind the Bikeshed. The venue did secure a three year sponsorship deal with Le Creuset for the Spotlight Members Scheme, however this has now come to an end and the venue is actively seeking a new sponsor for this area of the business.

To address the above and encourage sponsorship from smaller companies, The Lights launched its Business Members Scheme in Autumn 2009 giving businesses the opportunity to have their logo appear in the venue's What's On brochure and link to The Lights website. In addition, to encourage 'individual giving' The Lights has re launched its Sponsor a Seat scheme and will actively promote this through traditional and social media.

Sponsorship opportunities are currently broken down into the following areas:

- Sponsorship of Programmed Activities – i.e. Show Sponsorship; Comedy; Children's Theatre; Live Music
- Ticket Sponsorship
- Sponsorship of Spotlight Membership Scheme
- Sponsor a Seat (scheme re launched in Summer 2011)

Objective: To develop sponsorship opportunities at The Lights to encourage funding from the local business community

Action	Detail	Current Position	Owner	Date	Comments
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify additional areas for potential sponsorship • Develop a sponsorship plan • Promote Sponsor a Seat Scheme 		Director	2012/13	
Business Members Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop offer for businesses • Develop marketing strategy • Secure sponsorship 	Currently 7 members of the Business Members group	Director/ Marketing Manager	2012/13	
Sustain and increase sponsorship from business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain strong working relationships with sponsors • Use of Social Media • Tailor specific opportunities for businesses Work in partnership with Andover Vision 	3 local businesses currently sponsor The Lights	Director/ Marketing Manager	2012-15	

1.7 Volunteer Programme

The Lights continues to work with a thriving volunteer workforce, with over 60 active volunteers. The Bright Sparks scheme attracts a wide range of volunteers who support the work of the venue by working across a range of duties to enable the theatre's operation. Duties undertaken by volunteers include box office, front of house, merchandising, youth theatre, cloakroom and more recently, café assistant. Volunteers work on average 281 hours per month, making a saving of over £20,000 per annum in casual staff salaries. (See Appendix Three).

The majority of volunteers are aged 55 – 65 however The Lights has recently attracted a number of younger volunteers keen to train on the box office as this gives excellent work experience opportunities and transferrable skills.

Regular training is given to volunteers in all areas, in particular with the theatre's box office system and a number of volunteers recently participated in deaf awareness training to develop the theatre's customer care for visitors with hearing impairments. The volunteers trained on the box office system are essential to the venue in ensuring that a weekend and evening box office service is available.

The Lights embraces the spirit of 'Big Society' and in particular, its value of 'helping people to come together to improve their own lives'. The volunteers working at the venue are committed and enthusiastic about their role and the part they play in enabling the delivery of the wide range of activities and services that The Lights provides. Over the coming years, The Lights will endeavour to give volunteers opportunities to participate in training to develop their skills, in the same way as are given to the development of the core team of staff. The venue always values the work of the volunteers and the core staff team are committed to this.

Volunteering provides many benefits:

- Increased confidence
- Acquisition of new skills
- Opportunities to make new friends
- A sense of satisfaction and achievement
- Encourages a healthy and active lifestyle

Objective: Continue to develop the 'Bright Sparks' volunteer programme

Action	Detail	Current Position	Owner	Date	Comments
Increase the number of box office volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target current volunteer workforce • Programme volunteer open day • Work with TVCS 		Duty Managers/ Marketing Manager	2012/13	
Increase number of volunteers aged 16 – 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Strategy • Programme volunteer open day • Work with TVCS/V-Involved 		Duty Managers/ Marketing Manager	2012-15	
Develop training opportunities for volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of volunteer training needs • Identify potential sources of funding • Assess health & safety requirements of venue 		Operations Manager/Duty Managers	2012/13 Annually	
Retain current volunteer workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace 'Big Society' • Develop new opportunities for volunteers • Develop volunteer benefits scheme 		Director/Duty Managers/ Marketing Manager	2012/13 Ongoing	