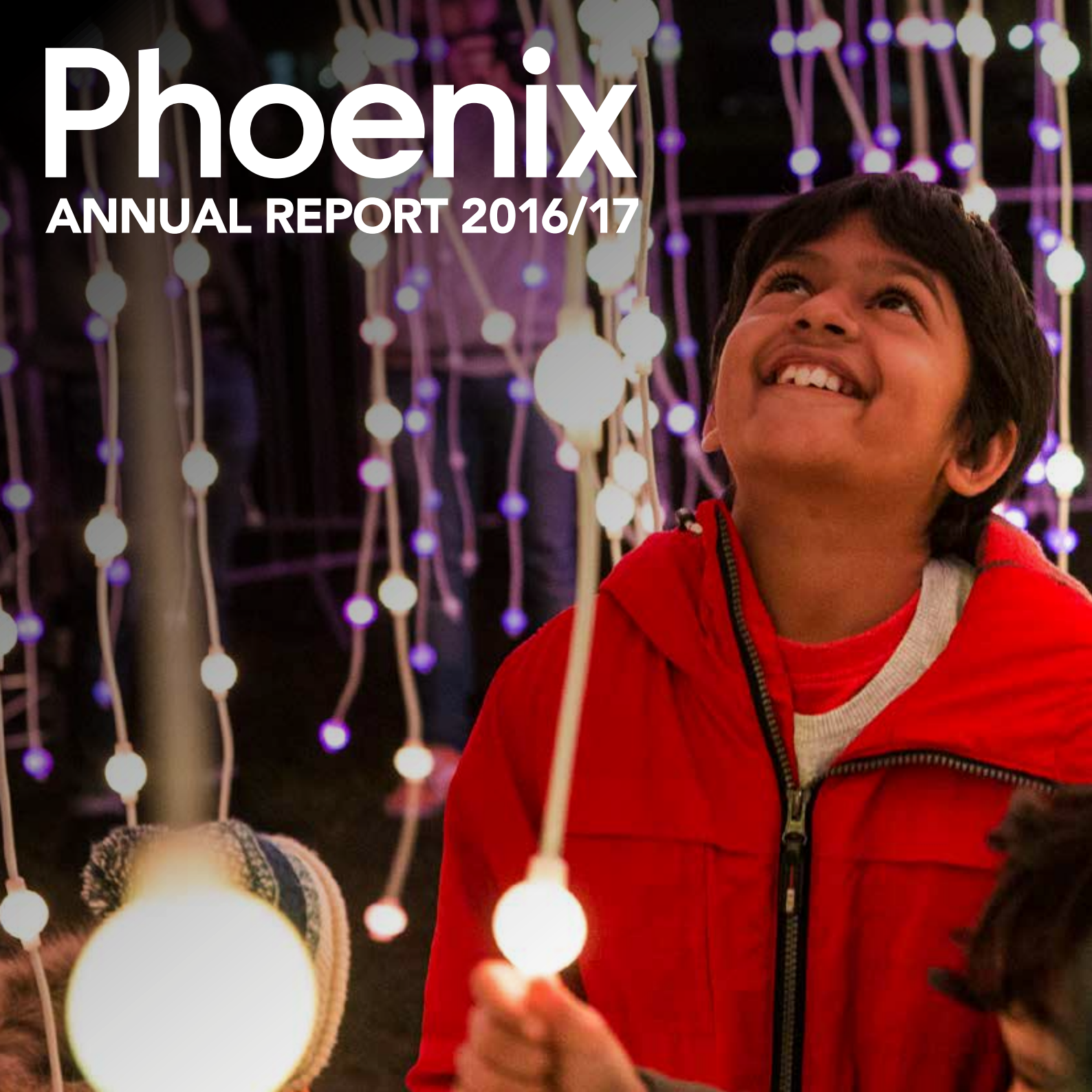


Phoenix

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17



WELCOME TO PHOENIX

Located in the heart of Leicester's Cultural Quarter, Phoenix is the city's centre for independent cinema, art and digital culture.

A registered charity, we aim to bring inspirational film and art to all and are supported by funding from our major stakeholders – Leicester City Council (LCC), Arts Council England (ACE) and De Montfort University (DMU) – as well as from income generated through ticket sales, our Café Bar, business events and hires, and donations from customers and members. We work hard to ensure Phoenix is a place where everyone can feel welcome and inspired.

Our diverse programme provides opportunities for all ages to explore, engage and create with film, art and digital technology, offering new ways of looking at the world around us and challenging us to think differently.

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I want to start our fourth Annual Report by thanking our many loyal customers as well as our stakeholders – Leicester City Council, De Montfort University, Arts Council England and the British Film Institute. We made some great progress over the last year with your invaluable support.

Interest in our cultural programme continues to rise, and awareness of our charitable activities is also increasing. The MyPhoenix loyalty and membership programme – now two years old – is very popular with people who attend regularly and who wish to support Phoenix's charitable activities: by March 2017 there were 2,560 active enrolments – 55% more than in 2015/16.

With this support, our increased effort to attract new people from diverse backgrounds and communities is proving to be successful. We've seen a sizable increase in participation by young people as a result of our focus on cultural programming and educational activities aimed at children, young people and families. This part of our audience has grown very significantly in absolute terms and our total audience comprises 30% children and young adults compared to 18% just two years ago.

Similarly, participation by people from ethnic minorities rose to 22.7% of our total audience, an increase from 17.6% last year. And we have improved our Access Cinema programme by investment in partnerships, staff development and new equipment so that more people can enjoy the Phoenix experience.

...AND OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

This has been an exciting year for Phoenix, as we have progressed our plans to develop the site to add two new cinema screens; increase the size of the café bar; create new space for learning; and extend our digital arts gallery.

We are grateful for the support given by Leicester City Council as we turned initial ideas into successful bids for grants from Arts Council England and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). This financial backing will enable us to prepare a full development proposal by December 2018 which, if successful, will unlock further funding of over £4 million from Arts Council England.

Phoenix's board of trustees is now beginning in earnest the task of raising the additional £3 million we need to fully realise a development that will enrich the cultural life of the city, enhance the range and diversity of cinema and arts on offer and provide increased opportunities to showcase the work of local artists and filmmakers.

We are grateful for the continued support of our stakeholders – notably Leicester City Council, De Montfort University (DMU), Arts Council England (ACE) and the British Film Institute (BFI).

My fellow trustees know just how much we are indebted to the dedication, creativity and passion of the staff, and of course we are grateful for the continued enthusiasm and support of all the users of Phoenix. Thank you all.



Lipstick Under My Burkha (dir. Alankrita Shrivastava)
Leicester Asian Film Festival, Mar 2017

FOCUS ON FILM

Phoenix's independence affords us an enviable degree of creative freedom, enabling us to programme for a local audience and firmly positioning us at the heart of Leicester's vibrant arts scene. Diversity is at the core of our film programme: world cinema challenges our preconceptions, providing valuable insight and fresh cultural perspectives and, supported by the BFI through its UK Film 2022 plan, we work with a wide range of partner organisations to deliver a programme that is relevant to the community we serve.

We screened 353 films from 38 countries across our main film programme and the 15 festivals and seasons that took place throughout 2016/17, reaching over 96,000 people. Many of these films were not shown anywhere else locally, and included heritage film and locally-made work.

March heralded the first Leicester Asian Film Festival, showcasing contemporary South Asian independent cinema curated specially for Leicester audiences. Attended by almost 500 people, this unique four-day event included UK premieres and Q&A sessions with a new generation of South Asian directors and performers.

Black History Month 2016 saw nine screenings programmed in collaboration with local arts organisation Serendipity and DMU. December's Black Star season celebrated some of the finest film performances by Black actors – including Paul Robeson in *The Proud Valley*, and Dorothy Dandridge who received the first nomination for an African American actress in a lead role for *Carmen Jones*. Phoenix has celebrated Black History Month annually for over 20 years and we were excited to be part of the 30th anniversary celebration in October 2017.

Visionary Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky made just seven films before his untimely death at the age of 54; each one screened at Phoenix from a pristine, new digital print in a major retrospective, *Sculpting Time*, in July and August.

Regular features of our film programme include Essential Cinema, focusing on must-see masterworks; Cinema Bizarre, which as its name suggests brings audiences the weird and wonderful; 35mm Club, with titles screening from real film – a rare treat in this digital age; and Mystery Film, which has proved hugely popular with a broad audience, selling out virtually every show.

BFI is a longstanding funder of our film programme and we are proud to have been awarded their Screen Diversity mark in 2017, in recognition of our commitment to quality and diversity across the organisation – from our film programme to accessibility for our audience, and also our role as an employer.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

LEICESTER ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

A four-day festival of South Asian contemporary cinema, in partnership with the London Asian Film Festival and Phizzical Productions.

THE SHORT CINEMA

Annual festival of short film featuring work by local and international directors. 'Best in Festival 2016' prize won by Leicester filmmaker, Keith Allott for his film *Dolls*.

JAPAN FOUNDATION TOURING PROGRAMME

An exciting season of films by established and up-and-coming Japanese directors on the theme of obsession, hope and desire.

35MM CLUB

Monthly screenings from 35mm film, focusing on masterpieces of classic and contemporary cinema.

COMMUNITY CINEMA

378 events across 60 community venues throughout Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire, reaching over 14,000 people.

DIGITAL CULTURE

Phoenix's independence gives us the ability to push creative boundaries and offer a programme that truly reflects the diversity of the city. As an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation we are at the forefront of innovation in digital creative media: our cultural programme explores the impact of technology on society and actively reaches out beyond the boundaries of our building to engage audiences of all backgrounds and ages.

Almost 25,000 people engaged with our digital arts programme in 2016/17, enjoying work from nationally and internationally distinguished artists and emerging local talent. We held eight major exhibitions – in our own gallery or at other locations in the city – and seven art events, including a one-day conference on the use of creative technology in the public realm.

Phoenix co-commissioned five new art works in 2016/17, including *Canary Songs*, a sound and choral performance by artist Teresa Dillon inspired by the women who worked in UK munitions factories during WWI; *Killbox*, an interactive installation that critically explores the nature, complexities and consequences of drone warfare; and *Where Shapes Come From*, a moving image work by Semiconductor looking at the formation of matter on an atomic scale.

In October 2016 we staged an outdoor exhibition as part of the city's Diwali celebrations, which are some of the largest outside India. The interactive installation *Ocean of Light* used thousands of lights suspended in space to create a huge three dimensional screen and was seen by 7,000 people, many of whom had never before engaged with Phoenix's art programme.

We continue to host the Institute of Contemporary Arts' (ICA) national touring Artists' Moving Image programme, bringing new and rarely-seen artists' film and video work to Phoenix: the 2016/17 programme included *Falls Burns Malone Fiddles* by Turner Prize winner Duncan Campbell.

Phoenix is home to a thriving community of artists, filmmakers and creative businesses, and there are opportunities throughout the year for them to collaborate, engage audiences and exhibit their work. For example, in October 2016 our artists bursary scheme culminated in *Speaking Spaces*, an off-site exhibition and series of workshops by three Leicester-based artists – Lindsey Warnes Carroll, Sam Francis Read and Mark Towers – each of whom benefited from financial and practical support through the scheme.

Leicester-based Seven/Five Productions – a filmmaking collective with 140 members – meet weekly at Phoenix to network, collaborate and share their work, and in August we host the annual Short Cinema film festival showcasing work by established and up-and-coming filmmakers from across the Midlands and beyond.

Our strong creative partnership with De Montfort University enriches Phoenix's cultural programme, through introductions and Q&A sessions for screenings; conferences, such as *Women in Film* in May 2016; screenings for DMU's Cultural Exchanges and Pride festivals; heritage projects like the History of Cinema Going in Leicester which formed part of our Heritage Open Days programme in September 2016; and digital art events, including *Visible Bits Audible Bytes* held in March 2017.

Across the year over 1,700 young people participated in digital culture at Phoenix, across our innovative programme which includes regular free creative technology workshops and five-day filmmaking courses during the summer holidays.

We were also a host venue for the city's annual Spark Festival, attracting around 2,000 people across four days of creative activities and exhibitions for children and families.

We regularly work with a range of other organisations across the city to deliver a culturally relevant and accessible programme: key partners include Serendipity, Let's Dance International Frontiers, Leicester University's Literary Leicester festival, the Journeys Festival and Leicester Print Workshop.

51 new films and creative digital media works produced in 2016/17 as a direct result of Phoenix's support

Where Shapes Come From by Semiconductor
Cube Gallery, Feb – Mar 2017



A HUB FOR LEARNING

Phoenix is a dynamic learning environment, with opportunities for people of all ages – from short courses for adults and young people’s workshops to school events, professional development for teachers and apprenticeships. Our aim is to inspire, support and stimulate creativity through learning, offering rewarding experiences throughout.

We play a significant role in developing the film industry professionals of tomorrow: De Montfort University – awarded Gold in the 2017 Teaching Excellent Framework – base their highly-rated Film Studies degree course at Phoenix, with over 100 students taught in our cinema spaces each day. We also work in partnership with the students to programme a film festival each year, giving them valuable experience in curating and producing a film festival for a public audience: this year’s was the six-day Sentient Festival, in March – which explored the theme of artificial intelligence and incorporated screenings for schools, a one-day course on AI, and off-site screenings.

We engaged with almost 3,000 children at 36 city schools and colleges in 2016/17, through our programme of educational events in partnership with Into Film and local schools. We also offered professional development opportunities for teachers and home educators, including iPad filmmaking in the classroom and film in the curriculum.

Opportunities for developing professional skills are also provided through paid internships and volunteering opportunities in cultural programming, marketing, and accounting, giving people valuable work experience, enhancing their CVs and helping them transition into employment at other organisations. We offered 37 such roles

across Phoenix in 2016/17, including three new apprenticeships in catering and digital marketing.

Almost 2,500 adults engaged with learning for pleasure and skills at Phoenix in 2016/17 through our film appreciation and creative media courses – an increase of 20% on the previous year. The varied programme included practical courses on screenwriting and acting for film through to one-day courses on the work of Woody Allen, Hollywood and Politics, and Neorealism.

We also offer an innovative programme of activities for young people and families. In 2016/17 we held 15 free creative workshops; three summer film camps for 7-19 years olds, taught by professional filmmakers; and our regular free term-time Code Club – part of a national network – which introduces 9-11 year olds to computer programming using tools like Scratch. We engaged with over 1,700 young people and their families during the year through these activities, with an additional 2,000 attending our Spark Festival.

As a result of our focus on cultural programming and educational activities aimed at children, young people and families we saw significant growth in our young audience in 2016/17: now 30% of our annual audience is under the age of 30, up from 18% just two years ago.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Three recent members of Phoenix front-of-house staff have moved into exciting new roles at other organisations:

SEEMA SAUJANI

Formerly Box Office assistant and usher; now a film distribution intern at Disney (Europe and Middle East) FDA.

REMI HINDS

Formerly Box Office assistant; now at Thunderbird Releasing, on the Independent Cinema Office’s (ICO) film exhibition, distribution and sales (FEDS) trainee scheme.

AMANPREET DOSANJH

Formerly front-of-house assistant; joined the ICO’s FEDS scheme as an intern at Soda Pictures; now full time Classification Officer for the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC).



School screening, July 2016
Photo: Pamela Raith Photography



Ocean of Light by Squidsoup
at Leicester's Diwali celebrations, Oct 2016

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Phoenix brings many benefits to Leicester at a community level, through access to networking and employment opportunities. Creative businesses, volunteers, staff, students and professionals come together here to support and undertake collaborative projects, contributing directly to Leicester's cultural, social and economic prosperity.

Phoenix's visitors generate vital revenue for local businesses, and our active involvement in creative partnerships with other organisations – such as DMU and Leicester City Council – is helping to stimulate the city's creative industries and regenerate the Cultural Quarter.

Our conferencing and hires business continues to grow and in 2016/17, over 90 different organisations chose to hire Phoenix for conferencing, workshops and training, including Nando's, NHS, Lush, Arriva and the British Psychological Society.

Involvement with local and national festivals and events added to our programme's reach, and attracted people from across the city's diverse communities. Highlights included DMU Pride; the Leicester Asian Film Festival; the City Festival; Black History Month; Diwali; and the Spark Festival.

Our successful Community Cinema network – which screens films in community venues – held 378 events across 60 locations throughout Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire. Reaching over 14,000 people who would otherwise have limited access to cultural services, these activities help to broaden our engagement with communities across the city and beyond.

Our support for local filmmakers, through our partnership with Seven/Five Productions, has

fostered the growth of a vibrant filmmaking community in Leicester. From screenwriters and directors, to costume designers and grips, this creative community benefits from networking opportunities, skills development workshops and the chance to screen their work here.

In September 2016 we took part in the national Heritage Open Days scheme, giving the local community a rare chance to see behind the scenes. Over two days 130 people enjoyed free tours of our projection room and screenings of a locally-made short film, *The History of Cinema-going in Leicester*.

Local community interest groups – such as StarBase sci-fi club, Phoenix Writers and Seven/Five Productions – meet here regularly, while our MyPhoenix membership and loyalty scheme enables our audience to engage more deeply with our creative programme and charitable activities. By March 2017 our MyPhoenix community had 2,560 active sign-ups, 55% more than in 2015/16.

Our community partnership with Everards continued in 2016/17, providing support for our volunteer-led community garden project and sponsorship for the 2016 Short Cinema film festival. Everards also ran a beer tasting event for our members in July 2016 – unsurprisingly one of our most popular member events to date.

ACCESS FOR ALL

At its heart Phoenix is a community venue, bringing film and art to all.

To ensure the widest participation we screen films in a range of specialised environments to suit people who may usually find it difficult to enjoy cinema, with supportive environment screenings for people on the autistic and Asperger's spectrum, as well as audio-described and subtitled screenings.

In 2016/17 we ran 68 Access Cinema screenings, attended by over 1,273 people, an increase of 59% on last year.



PHOENIX 2020

Phoenix has reached a very exciting point in its development, having firmly established itself as a centre for creative digital arts and independent cinema and in one of Europe's most diverse cities. Cultural participation and earned income has increased impressively over the last seven years whilst public grant is significantly lower, and the challenge now facing us is to find ways of meeting rising demand while offering the richest possible programme.

Our strategy has two main aims: to increase our positive impact through even wider participation in a richer and more ambitious cultural programme, and to improve our financial resilience.

To achieve this we plan to extend the venue, creating two new cinema screens, a more accessible and visible digital arts gallery, and a bigger café. We also plan to extend and remodel spaces for learning and creative production.

As our Chair puts it "...at times Phoenix is bursting at the seams" and the additional spaces will enable us to capitalise on the rising demand for our innovative cultural programme, improve accessibility for a wider audience and offer a richer customer experience. This will in turn increase our self-reliance, through higher ticket, café and conferencing income as well as education, community and other project work. Our overall contribution to Leicester's visitor and creative industries economies will be boosted, as will our value to stakeholders.

Supported by LCC, in 2016/17 we made a successful first stage capital funding proposal to Arts Council England for £4.17m and were delighted to be among the 11 successful organisations invited to submit second stage applications for capital grants. We are now working with our partners to produce detailed designs, consult with a wide range of people and organisations, and raise funds to match the provisional offer of capital grant.

Though there is still a long way to go – the process is complex and lengthy (it could take until 2020 to come to fruition), requiring formal consultation and planning consent – the prospects are tremendously exciting and we look forward to sharing progress with you over the coming year.

The challenge is undeniably huge, but Phoenix is rising to it.

Opposite page: Architect's impression of the proposed extension
Image: Maber Associates Ltd



"Phoenix's vision for the building promises to bring even more visitors to the art centre and Leicester's Cultural Quarter. We're delighted to be involved in exploring the feasibility for the next stage in its development."

Peter Knott,
Area Director, ACE

"The BFI has been a supporter of Phoenix's fantastic film and education programme for many years. The expansion of their cinema and learning spaces at the heart of one of our most vibrant cities is a great opportunity to engage more people from across the area's diverse communities in the riches of British and world cinema."

Amanda Nevill,
Chief Executive Officer, BFI

"The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership is supporting the Phoenix development. Increasing Phoenix's cultural offer supports our aim to create a vibrant and distinctive place to attract further inward investment to the area."

Nick Pulley, Chair, LLEP

"As a long standing stakeholder, De Montfort University supports Phoenix's strategy for development which will see the organisation continue to play a leading role within Leicester's cultural and educational economy."

Prof. Dominic Shellard,
Vice Chancellor, DMU

"We are fortunate to have such a vibrant and ambitious independent cinema and art centre in Leicester. With Leicester City Council's ongoing support, Phoenix has gone from strength to strength, building audiences and enriching the city's cultural offer. We will be working closely with Phoenix to help them develop their plans and attract the funds they need to realise their bold vision."

Sir Peter Soulsby, City Mayor

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2016/17

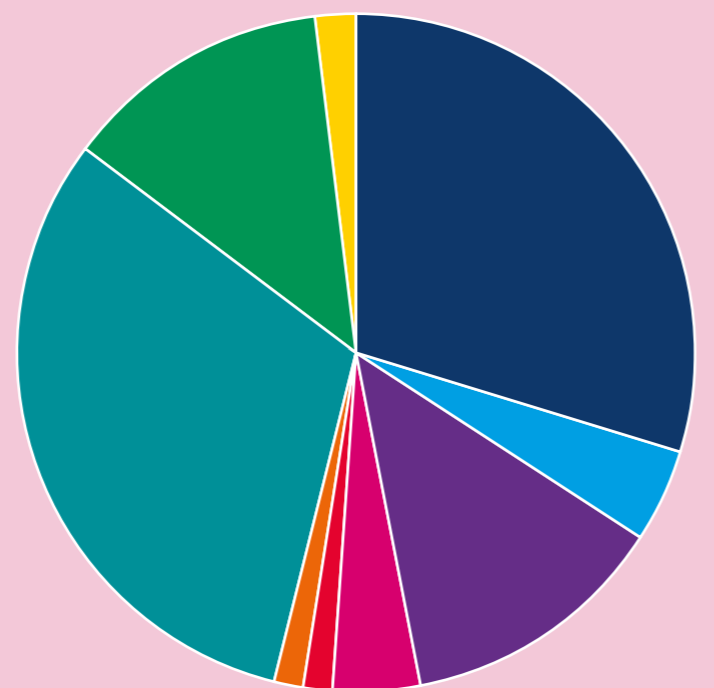
Phoenix is a registered charity. We invest 100% of our resources and earnings in our mission to enrich lives and celebrate diversity through film and art. Investment and support from our stakeholders – in particular our founding partners, Leicester City Council and De Montfort University (DMU) – has enabled us to become an established part of Leicester’s cultural life. Arts Council England (ACE) and the British Film Institute (BFI) are regular funders of our cultural programme; their support helps us commission and create new work, and reach out to more people. Many other organisations and individuals also support us, by sponsoring our programme, collaborating on events, or working with us to engage an ever wider audience.

Total income to the charity and its trading subsidiary during the year amounted to £2,024,149 with corresponding expenditure of £2,070,093. Earned income from cinema, café, conferencing and education activities grew for the seventh consecutive year whilst there was a reduction in total grant funding to the charity.

The continuing partnerships and financial support of Leicester City Council, DMU, ACE and the BFI were vital to the development and extension of our cultural, educational and community programmes. The support of these partners enables Phoenix to offer its unique diverse programme of world cinema, creative digital media and associated education and community activities. The effort to attract new people from diverse backgrounds and communities is succeeding as this report shows. This work will continue alongside the focus to increase earned income and to diversify sources of charitable income.

A significant investment was made in 2016/17 in developing a plan and proposal to expand the venue. This will be a significant capital project with the aim of producing a step-change in both participation and earned income. Further work will be done in 2017/18 to refine this plan and raise the necessary finance.

Phoenix applied successfully to retain its ACE National Portfolio status for another four years from April 2018. We are also working more closely with the BFI to support its new strategy for UK film. We will continue our work with DMU to develop the film industry professionals of the future, and with Leicester City Council by contributing to the development and promotion of Leicester as a great place to visit, live, study and work.



- Cinema, Education and Festivals
- Community Cinema income
- Local Authority grant
- Café Bar income
- Arts Council England grant
- Other operating income
- BFI grants
- Membership & donations
- Other grants

THE PHOENIX TEAM

Phoenix is run by a dedicated and passionate team who take immense pride in their work. Our board of Trustees, all of whom are volunteers, are leaders drawn from local business, education, arts, finance and legal practice organisations. Our management and creative teams work behind the scenes to develop our programme and steer us towards our goal of becoming a world class centre for digital art, while our front-of-house staff provide the excellent friendly and informed service that so many customers appreciate.

RICHARD DAVIS
Chief Finance Officer

DAN FARMER
Head Chef

JAKE HARVEY
Cinema Programme Manager

ROS HILL
Operations & Customer Services Manager

ALEXZANDRA JACKSON
Education Manager

DINDY OUTEN
Business Development Manager

JOHN RANCE
Chief Executive Officer

RICHARD SMITH
Catering Manager

CHRIS TYRER
Digital Arts Manager

SARAH VALLANCE
Membership & Communications Manager

PATRICK WELSH
Marketing Manager

ALAN TUCKETT
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NIGEL WRIGHT

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MEDIA-PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Film Hub
Central East

Phoenix is the trading name of the charity, which is called and registered as Leicester Arts Centre Ltd

Phoenix

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