



Landmark Arts Centre, Richmond Upon Thames



Location

Richmond Upon Thames, London

Founded

1993

Legal structure

Registered as a charity (1047080) in 1995

Description of activity

Community arts centre that provides a space for the community to experience visual and performing arts, plus a related education programme. Events include fairs, exhibitions, live music, dance and spoken word. Space is also rented out to community groups for their own events and private events are operated by their Landmark Trading Company.

Key assets

Large cathedral-like building consisting of an office space, two rooms, main auditorium space with a stage area and a bar, kitchen, car park, and garden area around the building

Staff and volunteers

Three part-time staff, one full-time; five freelance staff; eight casual staff; seven trustees and 25 volunteers

Overview

Landmark Arts Centre (LAC), previously known as St Alban at Teddington Lock Building Preservation Trust, was established in 1993 and was registered as an independent charity in 1995. The trust was formed after local residents ran a campaign to save the building, a 19th century church (known as St Alban The Martyr), from being demolished for the construction of flats when the Church of England declared it redundant. After a public inquiry (1986–87), an agreement was reached to preserve the building and it was awarded Grade II* listing in 1991. The aim of the trust was to restore and preserve the building along with using it as an arts centre for the community. The trust was given a repairing lease of 40 years, which has currently been extended to 99 years, the landlords being the London Diocese of the Church of England. In 2004, the trust changed its name to Landmark Arts Centre with a renewed focus on promoting arts for the larger community of Teddington. “The name ‘Landmark Arts Centre’ was chosen as the cathedral-like building is magnificent and has been a landmark for the community for generations.”



Since its establishment, LAC has been focused on promoting different forms of art for the community. *“Initially, we tried everything, including music, dance, theatre, visual arts etc. However, the building has the best acoustics for certain kinds of music so, over the years, we have focused on activities that suit its natural acoustics and have been the base for many choirs and artists.”* Apart from this, LAC also has numerous fairs and exhibitions where local artists in the community can showcase their work and talent. LAC hires out its rooms to local groups to run varied art, music and lifestyle classes for different demographic groups at affordable rates. It also hires out the space for weddings through its Landmark Trading Company which supports the LAC in managing its costs, the arts and cultural activities and the preservation of the building.

“Arts and crafts are important in the community as they have an impact on the social wellbeing of the community. The LAC is that bridge for the community to experience this artistic freedom, irrespective of their age, that is sometimes missed in the regular day-to-day activities, especially in a city like London.”

The events focus on offering toddlers, their parents, school children, adults and the elderly exposure to art and music. *“For younger children it can be an antidote to the pressures of school relations and is a space for inter-generational mixing to experience arts and its freedom. In all, it is most definitely a space where social cohesion grows.”* For the elderly population, LAC aims to reduce isolation by providing a social space where they can get together and learn and experience new art forms and skills. *“Richmond being an affluent area has a high number of retired people who used to work in high-powered jobs, and many face a loss of purpose when they retired. LAC acts as the space for socialising and a different kind of networking for them.”*

The purpose of LAC has remained the same through the years, *“while the name of the trust might have changed from Building Preservation to Landmark Arts Centre, the focus has always been to save the building and use it for the benefit of the community by educating them about arts and crafts.”* Previously the focus was more towards saving the building, while the current focus is on strengthening its arts centre identity. Although the building is not owned by LAC, it is on a repairing lease, so the centre needs to fundraise regularly to maintain the building and investments are needed for the long-term use of the space. Community involvement and influence over the activities has been high since the campaign to save the building and remains so, with local groups renting out the space for activities.

Financial health

LAC meets its day-to-day costs through the arts classes and programmes that it runs, along with the rent received from local groups who use the space. Small grants, fundraising, donations received, and profits from the trading company are usually used for maintenance expenses. *“Overall, we operate successfully but on a very tight margin with no room for error!”*

The Centre’s financial health has fluctuated to an extent over the years but has recently broken even. *“In the last five years, we have found solutions to the challenges that we were facing previously.”* These include: generating funds through fundraisers with the aim to help LAC run better services for its users and the community; developing the physical capacity to cater to the needs of the community; becoming more accessible for everyone from the community; having numerous events; and using social media for their promotions. *“Overall, we have created a reputation for ourselves being an arts centre which hosts varied audiences and we train our staff to live up to the standards we have set out for ourselves.”*

Three key factors that have affected its development and financial health:

1. Aiming for financial self-sustainability

While LAC does not receive any funding from the local authority, it has been able to be financially self-sustainable with the income generated through the activities it runs and some capital funding aimed at specific infrastructure changes. These include ramp construction to make the building disability friendly, construction of toilets, chandelier lifts for lighting, etc. The trustees strongly believe that proper and focused financial management is also a key factor which helps small community assets to move towards financial sustainability.

“Financial sustainability is very much achievable and can exist. It requires exploring a new strategy and being open to change, which we at LAC (board and staff) agree upon and are open to achieve.” One of the biggest challenges faced by LAC is raising funds for capital investments in the infrastructure of the asset. A dedicated freelancer has been hired to support this by writing funding applications, as the current team of staff has no capacity, given its size (team of four) and its focus on utilising the space and generating earned income.

The management team is exploring an alternative funding model that aims to move away from being dependent on diminishing income sources like sponsorships from local businesses towards a new strategic model of earned



income and charitable trust grants and funding that can generate income year-round. LAC is also considering offering activities that would attract additional capital investment and new service users such as elderly people dealing with dementia or using art therapy for those with mental health issues, etc.

2. Motivated staff, dedicated volunteers and good leadership

A fundamental contributor to the success of the Landmark Arts Centre is that it has a team of staff, volunteers and trustees who all have a “fondness” for the building, being from the local community and having a shared vision of ensuring that the Centre utilises its resources for getting the community “to experience the artistic freedom which sometimes gets lost in the day-to-day activities.”

Another key element that has worked well is that the centre manager and the board of trustees have a good understanding and relationship with each other and work well as a team. “The trustees (both previous and current) have been very resourceful, generous with their time and given it a lot of support to get it standing on its feet.”

Utilising skills available within the community, with the team being from the area, has helped LAC develop its portfolio and its reputation within the community. “The staff (both paid and unpaid) that work here at the LAC, work for the love of the building, and it is surviving due to the resourcefulness and insightfulness of the staff.” However, one perceived challenge is that the current pool of dedicated volunteers, with a sense of community pride towards the Centre, are aging, and getting such expertise locally with similar values would be difficult in the near future.

Since the area houses a number of individuals serving in high institutions, LAC has been fortunate to have trustees and staff with good experience in large organisations who can bring in this unique experience. “Skills combined with commitment of the staff to the community has helped in keeping the Centre alive! The nice thing of working with small charities is that you feel you’re making an impact.”

3. Adapting its business strategies to the changing times and needs of the community

Over the years, the LAC team has adapted and changed its strategies to be more effective for its service users and become financially viable. For example, the Centre has been investing a lot of time in the promotion of activities run by local groups who find it difficult to increase audiences for their performances and so were thinking again about using the venue. For this, LAC has developed a shared profit model which helps cover the cost of renting the venue and has been very well appreciated by the local artists.

Given that the local area has a rich cache of arts activities, LAC aims to be a safe space for much of the population, offering a wide programme for everyone in the community and not being “niche.” The Centre aims to keep adapting to the needs of the community: “There is room for improvement as well! We need to have a more ethnic offering to the diverse community we are in.”

Apart from that, the Centre maintains a balance of community events and private events, such as weddings, which has helped the financial viability of the Centre. “Weddings and other such events help pay our bills and we acknowledge that these are not community-focused and hence we limit such events.” They also have activities which help connect it to the local community and have a relationship with them. “The aim of most of our activities that we run, or encourage local groups to run, is to ensure that the community needs are focused upon and they have a direct benefit for the community.”



Future direction

The Landmark Arts Centre has its priorities set to gather funds from charities for capital investments in infrastructure and developing activities for the communities based on their local needs. With a freelance development officer on their team, and having designed their business plans, the leadership team feels quite strongly that they would be able to establish themselves better within the community. The attention remains on maintaining financial self-sustainability and they are also seeking to obtain core funding to *“build/update our systems and reinvest in ourselves to help in the long term. It would help in achieving financial sustainability as well.”*

LAC also realises the need for market research and increasing its active links with the community and capturing evidence around the community needs. This, they hope, will help the Centre understand how best they can help, by diversifying and building relationships and networks, and being open and flexible to the changing social issues of the areas. This would ensure visibility of LAC among the different demographics within the local community and enable them to be more grounded within the community. With the longer lease and having autonomy in their decision-making, the Centre is looking to be more accessible to meet the artistic needs and aspirations of the local community.

Financial information

The following table provides an overview of Landmark Arts Centre income, expenditure and assets for the year ending on 31st March 2018.

Income	£382,492
Expenditure	£400,956
Difference between income and expenditure	-£18,464
Surplus/deficit on ordinary activities before taxation	£18,464
Annual income from grant or subsidy	£205,292
Fixed assets	£125,510
Current assets (Debtors; cash at bank and in hand)	Debtors £23,458; Cash at bank in hand £154,993
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£98,669
Total	£205,292
Net assets	£79,782

Source: Landmark Arts Centre Financial Accounts 2018, Annual Report 2018