



BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24

**COMICS CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD**



comicartfestival.com

MAIN FUNDER:



Funded by
UK Government



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Opening Statement

Lakes Arts Festivals was established in 2012 to create and present an annual international comic art festival (as opposed to a commercial comic con) – the Lakes International Comic Arts Festival (LICAF) and associated educational projects.

It was and remains the only comic art event of its kind in the UK taking over a whole town, covering every genre and currently with more than 30 international partners. Our purpose is to enable all types of people to pursue their passion for culture and creativity through the accessible and dynamic medium of comics/graphic novels. Our mission is to create awareness and understanding about comic art through an international festival and year-round programme of work with social impact. As a result of this work we have become the UK's leading development agency for comics.

Since 2012 our festival and year-round work has grown exponentially in terms of reputation, reach and the demonstration of the transformational power of comics. Comics are an art form in their own right, not a genre of literature nor the visual arts and we have made substantial progress in making this case. We now also crossover into adjacent art forms such as animation, gaming and VR/AI. Comics reach an atypical arts audience and a substantial percentage are non-traditional arts attendees.

Our identity is global with strong local roots and since 2022 we have moved our festival to the heart of the Lakes to harness the potential of a location which combines a diverse visitor audience, an international brand/profile and a loyal local population. Our rallying cry is...

**COMICS
CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD**



Three Year Objectives – a summary

From 2023-2026 we will consolidate The Lakes International Comics Festival as a world-class event in a world-class location respected by its peers, creators, and audiences as the best comic arts event in terms of quality, diversity, innovation and accessibility. In tandem we will continue to establish ourselves as a national development agency for comics with a year-round programme delivering social change through the unique medium of comics. This will place a particular emphasis on reaching children and young people, and those who work with them, to exploit the special and particular potential of comics. We will provide opportunities for them to find their creative passion and increase their life chances, health and well-being and broader cultural capital.

Our programme of talent development and pathways to a creative life and career will focus upon diversity, working specifically with the autistic community and those in working class communities. Here we will aim to be at the vanguard of work in the arts and cultural sector and will be an active member of the new Diversity Leaders' Forum at Creative UK.

Ten Years to Save the World, our online environmental platform, will also influence and drive the content of our programming and commissioning as well as the themes of some of our education and outreach work. It will focus on the climate change emergency, biodiversity and the natural environment. Our collaboration with the higher education sector will provide robust evidence and underpin our developmental role. Internationalism will be at the core of our festival and a year-round programme, as will experimentation and innovation.

Our festival and year-round programme will have a symbiotic relationship (with new projects growing out of festival content, discussions during the event or receiving their public airing or performance at the festival) and both will aim to reveal, explore, exploit and celebrate the power of comics to reach atypical arts audiences, creators and participants. Comics as an artform have only recently been recognised and welcomed into the arts eco system and our 3-year programme will firmly establish comics as a legitimate world-class artform, at the vanguard of contemporary everyday culture.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Lakes International Comic Art Festival (LICAF) will focus its activities into three distinct but connected objectives...

1. Festival:

Our annual three-day comic art festival, that welcomes comic creatives at every stage in the creative ecology and from across the globe to one Lake District community, is at the heart of what we do. LICAF celebrates the wide range of comics for young people and adults, ranging from strip cartoons, through children's comics to graphic novels and the world of superheroes. We are proud that the word "international" in our title truly means something, with over 30 partnerships across the globe ensuring our festival celebrates great work from a huge variety of cultures, all of whom meet, share and learn through LICAF. We are justly proud of the innovation and quirkiness of our programme, the unconventional venues we adopt and quality of the way our performances and events are presented. We will continue to aspire to the best and most innovative programme in the coming three years.

We have been successful in harnessing the power of comics to reach an atypical arts audience for over a decade. Currently 25% of attendees are aged 14 or under and 39% are 20-39. We actively promote diversity with a particular strength in reaching those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those with invisible disadvantages in the neurodiversity community. Our festival will continue to be mostly free, taking place in unusual and everyday venues, rather than elite and intimidating institutions. We will continue to create quiet places at our festival, particularly for those with autism and sensory sensitivities, to decompress, read comics in a peaceful environment and thus enable them to participate in the weekend's activities. Our volunteers will be drawn from a wide demographic and we will continue to train and support those with autism and/or mental health issues.

LICAF will ensure its programme is appealing and relevant to its comics community/ audience. Our research indicates that currently satisfaction of the event is very high, with 97% of our audience rating the festival very good and 94% rating the quality of the event very good. We believe this level of satisfaction indicates ongoing support for the quality and range of our programme; an offer which deliberately avoids the tried and tested offer of the comic con and includes more

challenging and diverse "festival- style" programming. This ambition to encourage experimentation in the programme is supported by the festival pass, which allows audiences to dip into a wide range of content for no extra charge.

2. Year-Round Projects:

Over the past five years LICAF has radically increased the amount and scale of its year-round activity using the unique properties of comics to deliver positive social change. Most of this work is built upon partnerships...

- with funders to financially support the projects we deliver. Currently Arts Council England, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Westmorland and Furness Council (formerly South Lakeland District Council), The British Council, Creative Europe (via Comic Art Europe) and The Arts Fund are funding partners on projects extending into the period of this plan.
- venues and institutions seeking to work with LICAF to deliver projects for their audiences, pupils and communities.
- comic art creatives and technicians whose expertise and innovation allows comics to positively and impactfully improve lives and communities.
- universities and other academic institutions that provide research and evaluation of our projects, to truly understand how "comics can change the world".

Key projects for 2023/24 include...

- *Comic Potential*, a project to understand the learning potential of comics in the classroom, working with two primary and two special schools in Barrow-in-Furness and Kendal and including rigorous evaluation of outcomes by the University of Manchester. This project builds on learning from a previous project at Abraham Moss Community School in Manchester which was funded by Comic Art Europe/Creative Europe. Comic Potential is a two-year programme funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

- *Artivator Fellowship* an Art Management Incubator programme aimed at building the capacity of cultural practitioners from the South West Asian/ North African region. Funded by The British Council, the programme offers two one-month-long Fellowships in Arts, Event, and Festival Management during the month of September 2023. The Fellowship will focus on the four-week run-up to the festival and the festival weekend itself (September 2 – October 2, 2023). It will focus on practical tasks and will include one-to-one and group sessions on particular skills and areas of knowledge.
- *Make Mine Manga*, a touring exhibition of contemporary manga touring 11 north west libraries and seeking to engage young people (16-24). Funded by Bolton Museums & Libraries via an ACE Project Grant, LICAF will offer its contacts and expertise with comic creatives, comic curators and event organisers to create the exhibition and its wrap-around engagement programme developed by young people.
- *Comics Up Close*, an annual seminar offering lectures and discussions by leading academics and creatives using comics as a key element of their work and research. Delivered and hosted by the University of Manchester & Sheffield Hallam University.

3. Comics Development Agency

The range of year-round projects that LICAF develops and delivers are the most tangible examples of our work in promoting the positive role of comics in society and the wealth of innovative talent involved in the UK comics industry and its adjacent art forms. For example, we seek to create robust research and evidence of the learning potential of comics via the Comic Potential project and use this evaluation to advocate for the wider incorporation of comics into the curriculum of UK schools.

We have a track record of excellence in working with the best creators in the UK and internationally through commissioning and participation in our festival. We have created major commissions for national projects eg 14-18 NOW and the British Council's COP26 Creative Commissions. We are at the vanguard of talent development in the medium, having run a number of initiatives aimed at specific protected characteristics' groups ('Breakthrough' and 'GAP') and a range

of career development programmes focussing on funding, marketing and pitching to publishers. We have recently been invited to join the new Diversity Leaders Forum at Creative UK. This wealth of experience and knowledge will be harnessed over the coming three years to ensure significant new cultural content, with comics at its heart, is made available to UK audiences. A current example of this ambition is the Wild Escape project. LICAF is working with its learning team and freelance comic creatives to develop a range of learning tools for over 400 UK schools, so they can imagine natural history exhibits from their local museum escaping to the country; using comics to tell their stories.

Our research and evaluation demonstrates that comics and their adjacent artforms are very popular with neurodiverse people; as a creative activity, as a career or pastime. They also appeal to a particularly broad range of socio-economic groups because they are an everyday, low cost, relevant and accessible artform. Our future research with partner universities will attempt to drill down further into the reasons why this is the case and we will work with Creative UK to develop a range of programmes that harness the creative and career potential of neurodiverse and working class people.

LICAF has over 30 international partnerships with 22 different countries, offering opportunities for UK creators overseas and bringing international artists and residencies to Britain. Our Director has participated in several international juries including America, France and Belgium and has recently acted as a juror at the Khalil Mahmoud Awards for Arab Comics in Beirut where she also wrote the foreword for the resulting anthology. In addition, LICAF leads the research element of the EU-funded Creative Europe programme, Comic Art Europe, with our Spanish, French and Belgian partners. We are recognised by festival peers and cultural partners for our innovative and inclusive approach to programming and artistic development and our production values are often cited by guest artists and festival directors as raising the quality bar. LICAF's awareness of international perspectives on comic art and a pragmatic and "hands on" approach to delivering projects with international partners means LICAF can be innovative and resourceful in advocating for comics development in the UK.

LET'S CREATE

LICAF is the only organisation in Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio of regularly funded organisations that works exclusively within the medium of comics, graphic novels and their adjacent artforms.

ACE's strategy Let's Create focuses on three areas of development...

- Creative People
- Cultural Communities
- Creative & Cultural Country

This is how we will deliver significant activity within these three areas of ACE's strategy...

Creative People

We will offer primary school age children (including those at special schools) exciting creative opportunities both in and out of school which will also have a positive impact on their reading/learning, health and well-being and access to culture more broadly. This will range from a special free zone at our annual festival through to well-designed workshop series in schools, to an intensive programme funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation from which we can demonstrate comics' potential in seriously deprived communities and share the results nationally and internationally. Our aim here will be to influence arts-based learning policy and practice so the ramifications of our work will be far reaching. Through online resources, CPD sessions and more we will support teachers in weaving creativity into the life of their school and give them the tools to sustain this approach. We will also develop and deliver projects with young people over the age of 12 providing opportunities to unlock their creative potential and gain new skills, through contemporary media, that taps into their everyday interests and passions.

Cultural Communities

Our annual festival will rely on full participation by the community in which it is based. Our track record in this respect, in our previous location, was cited as "exemplary" in the most recent ACE assessment. We will involve and mobilise local people in a variety of creative ways from art trails in business windows to a volunteer programme that will be inclusive and support those with autism and mental health issues to participate. We will also use a myriad of cultural and unusual venues transforming them for a weekend into hubs of creative energy and celebration. We will create inter-generational opportunities to engage with these familiar but transformed local venues knowing that comics offer valuable intersections between different age groups within and between families.

Creative and Cultural Country

Our festival will continue to evolve to maintain its position and reputation as an international leader in the presentation of comic art and associated artforms. We will remain the only comic art event of its kind in the country bringing alternative cultural content to the national cultural landscape. We will continue to exploit this to engage new, as well as existing audiences and participants. We already have 30+ active international partnerships and will reach out to new partners and countries as well as building on those we already have and increasing investment into our work from these sources. This will be at the centre of our role in bringing world-class culture to the country. We are uniquely placed in the comic art world to provide international opportunities to our English creators and we will seek to continue to identify those from under-represented backgrounds who would most benefit from this kind of international creative experience. Next three years will see a different focus country at our festival, beginning with comics from the Arab world in 2023, where we will take the opportunity to forge even deeper relationships and present more about the culture of that region. This enables us to connect with diaspora communities and connect them with other communities in a meaningful way. Our talent development programme will focus upon supporting autistic people in the first year and seek to expand this work to collaborate with those from working class backgrounds to increase their chances of starting a professional career in creative industries and, even more importantly, to sustain it. Our partnerships with universities underpins all our work enabling us to reflect, interrogate, disseminate and influence future cultural developments.

Investment Principles

The *Let's Create* strategy also identifies four areas where ACE will focus its financial investment in cultural development. Here is LICAF's three-year vision for each of these investment areas...

Ambition & Quality – LICAF will cement its role as the foremost UK agency for comics, through year-round projects for social change, an innovative festival engaging local people, UK enthusiasts and international content. We will also develop a continued reputation for innovative, high-quality performance and presentation in comics during our festival and at year-round events like Comics Up Close. We will work with universities and other partners to generate meaningful research and evaluation on the impact of comics to deliver social change.

Inclusivity and Relevance – Our organisation will demonstrate the power of comics to reveal and develop the under-recognised cultural capital of both working class and autistic people across all of our work and enable them to connect with and participate in cultural practices and opportunities, as audiences, participants, and creative practitioners.

Dynamism – LICAF will enhance its ability to flex and change in response to necessity and opportunity, based on thorough, regular review and evaluation of our work by our delivery team and Board. We will enable our delivery team to be innovative and have organisational space to be reactive as well as proactive to developments in all three areas of our activity (festival, year-round programme, comics development). We will infuse this ethos of innovation into our working partnerships, enabling our collaborators to understand our practice.

Environmental Responsibility – LICAF will develop a holistic approach to reducing our environmental impact and promoting change through the festival and year-round projects, delivering long-term programming and commissioning to influence and activate audiences and creative partners and creatives. We will also ensure best practice demonstrated by international partners will be incorporated into our operation.

ACTIVITY PLAN 2023/24

Driven by our Strategic Objectives and informed by ACE's Let's Create strategy, the following table outlines the nine key areas of activity LICAF will seek to deliver in 2023/24. Each of the areas of activity have clearly identified targets and outcomes and the LICAF Board will regularly review our progress to ensure that an appropriate level of success is achieved.

Activity Plan

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Culmination of partnership with ArtFund and BBC on 'The Great Escape' project connecting several hundred museums and galleries and thousands of children and their families focussed on those with lower cultural capital, exploring environmental themes.	Partner on national launch of digital portal with work by children from across the country with collaborative social media campaign. Up to 300 primary schools working with local Museums and Galleries. Feature work produced on 10 Years to Save the World website. Roll-out educational resource we co-produced to our network and 10 partner schools in the Lakes, Barrow, Copeland. Showcase at festival in Windows on Comic Art Trail. Support Museums and Art Galleries across England to use comics to engage with children and young people, particularly with non-attenders and under-represented groups	Number of children participating nationwide estimate 9,000 50% from areas with limited cultural engagement and opportunities. Include work by up to 100 children from across England on our environmental website with 75% chosen from levelling up areas. Toolkit used directly with 8 local partner schools and showcase work in windows in our festival trail later in year. Support museums and galleries who declare an interest in using comics further. Ensure project survey includes questions on impact of comics on participation and enjoyment from schools and museums and galleries
CULTURAL COMMUNITIES	Work with local community on an holistic place-based programme of creative projects, volunteering, business involvement, audience development elevating cultural engagement, embracing the visitor market with high percentages from levelling up NW areas	Develop windows comic art trail with at least 30 shops and businesses across town in partnership with local schools, Kendal College, community groups e.g. mental health and isolated people and professional artists. Use windows trail to connect with visitor market to ignite their interest in comics and the festival. Recruit and train more local volunteers of all ages with extra support for those with mental health issues, autism and lower socio-economic groups.	Involve 30 businesses in comic art trail a 15% increase on 2022 Increase number of volunteers from 40 to 50 focussing upon those with special needs and/or lower socio-economic groups from the local area.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Deliver a free under 12s zone, Little LICAF, within festival, for diverse children and their families to discover, enjoy and create comics. Create a new strand of activity for 15-25 years co-curated with a local group of diverse young people.	Dedicated space with minimum of 16 drop-in workshops presenting, exploring and experimenting with all elements of comics making with children under 12 and their families led by wide and diverse range of professional creators. Basic drawing to using panels and visual storytelling. Additional creative activities (minimum 6) and option to gain basic arts award. 4 show and tell sessions on how to choose comics and comics readings. 4 co-curated workshops and events focussed on manga/anime for young people including skills development e.g. animation, drawing for manga, character design..	Number of children participating in Little LICAF exceeds 250 and percentage from lower social-economic groups increases by 15% on 2022.
			New workshops for young people attracts minimum of 100 young people and involves at least 6 young people in co-curation from a broad demographic.
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Igniting and developing children's passion for creativity and culture through comics activities in targeted primary schools, online resources and toolkits for wider reach and new opportunities for secondary pupils to unlock their potential	12 workshops with primary school children in the Lakes area in 2 towns and 2 villages and in Barrow and Copeland with up to 4 different locations. Produce work for windows trail and for an anthology. Workshops will be developed into 2 online resource/toolkits for school and home educators and made available to schools across the country through our existing networks, partners and social media. The Thursday before our festival will offer a programme of 4 workshops for secondary school children from across the local authority area with our best international guests to engage and inspire.	Run 12 workshops with primary school children in the Lakes area (Barrow & Copeland)
			Up to 150 young people who aspire to a creative career engage with our pre-festival Thursday programme

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
CREATIVE PEOPLE	Intensive, research-based programme supported by Paul Hamlyn Arts-Based Learning Fund, tackling systemic disadvantages in 2 primary schools and 2 special schools embedding comics in classroom, equipping teachers/support staff with skills	Immersion day for all staff including teachers and librarians in each school – up to 60. 1 CPD session for 48 teachers, governors and support staff, 2 training sessions for creators who will run workshops. 16 workshops led by our team and creators using comics for arts-based learning and well-being. 60 primary school and 60 special school students attend festival for the first time with a special day featuring comics workshops and other creative activities. Weekly free Phoenix comic to each primary school child's home – 60 in total. An interim report on research findings	<p>60 primary school children and up to 60 special school students to take part in creative workshops as part of intensive research programme to prove impact on comics on literacy, well-being and learning more broadly.</p> <hr/> <p>4 creators trained to work with special needs children and with children from multiple disadvantaged communities.</p>
A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY	We Are Here - a programme designed with autistic community focussed upon talent development ie artistic skills for aspiring creators and tools and skills to pursue a creative life/career for existing creators acknowledging barriers to autistic people	4 workshops in under-served parts of England in collaboration with Cambridge University, 2 aimed at new, aspiring autistic creatives, 2 at more established autistic creatives, all offering free creative skills sessions and professional skills tailored to autistic people enabling pathways into a career in comics. Supported by mentoring and participation in festival marketplace. 4 online videos to reach wider audience focusing on professional skills promoted via National Autistic Society and other networks including our lead creative producer, a female, autistic and big influencer on social media.	Up to 48 people with autism participate in 4 workshops.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY	International collaborations eg Artists' Residency exchange programme aimed at artists with protected characteristics and focus on Arab Comics leading to showcase at the festival. Co-production and touring via EU-funded Comic Art Europe partnership.	International collaborations eg Artists' Residency exchange programme aimed at artists with protected characteristics and focus on Arab Comics leading to showcase at the festival. Co-production and touring via EU-funded Comic Art Europe partnership.	Delegation of 8 artists from Arab world from at least 5 countries showcasing comics via minimum of 4 events, 1 exhibition, 2 special publications and more.
			Work with 5 artists-in-residence appointed by Comic Art Europe partnership to produce new comics, exhibitions and experiences to tour to Lyon Festival and our own and to other festivals across the world. 5 artists showcased at LICAF.
A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY	Collaborate with Sheffield Hallam University and University of Manchester to raise the profile and push boundaries of research and sharing of research related to the use and impact of comics in widest arenas particularly with under-represented groups	Two MOUs and one free Comics Up Close day – a collaboration between LICAF, Sheffield and Manchester taking place in Sheffield with more than 10 presentations focussing on comics and “invisible” disadvantages (autism and lower socio-economic groups) attracting more than 100 delegates (academics, educators, cultural providers, creators) in person and more than 100 virtual participants plus recorded and posted on youtube. LICAF will share the interim results of its own research project. All presentations available online.	100 people including 10% creators to attend Comics up Close and provide feedback on impact of the day and individual elements.

Primary Outcome	Activity	Outputs	Measurement
A CREATIVE & CULTURAL COUNTRY	Deliver Comics Laureate programme, a voluntary bi-annual appointment tasked with advocating for comics increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness of their many impacts. Raise confidence to use them in wide range of contexts and extend reach.	Delivers a minimum of 6 CPD sessions with librarians and educators across England focussed on places with lower cultural engagement and provision to increase enthusiasm, knowledge and confidence to employ comics in a variety of settings. Each session will be tailored to the location and demographic of users. Deliver one session at the festival in October focussing on their programme to date, future plans and impact so far.	Comics Laureate to run 6 CPD sessions with at least 75% of attendees saying it has given them the interest, knowledge and confidence to use comics further in their programmes of work. Follow up to find out exactly how they now use comics and, if a library, if they have extended their collections.
	An international mostly-free festival of the best in comics and associated artforms featuring a diversity of creators appealing to many tastes and levels of interest with an innovative, ambitious events programme, exhibitions, marketplace and trails	Events programme with minimum 35 live draws, performances, presentations, new formats with 60 national and international guests in 8 indoor and outdoor cultural and everyday venues. 2 live-streaming and 2 digital content and 2 gaming/VR animation. Free marketplace of independent creators and publishers. 4 free exhibitions main exhibition lasting 1 month+. Autism-friendly space for quiet time. Pop-up comics shop. Comic art windows trail across town running for 3 weeks over festival weekend in 30 windows. Co-commissioned new comic launched and distributed. 20 countries with focus on Arab Comics.	<p>Increase in new audiences by 15% through audience surveys and online by 15%.</p> <p>Percentage of independent creators in marketplace from protected characteristics increased to 20% of total exhibitors (100 in total).</p> <p>Increase in digital content including via animation, gaming and VR content by 10% bringing wider audience interest.</p> <p>At least 20 countries represented within the festival.</p>

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Activity Plan outlines how our identified outcomes and impact will deliver positive change for our local and comics communities and the cultural life of England as a whole.

However, LICAF's activities also deliver economic benefits for Westmorland & Furness and Cumbria as a whole. Our festival takes place during a "shoulder period" within the tourism season, boosting occupancy in hotels, guest houses and campsites with festival guests, marketplace exhibitors and audiences. Clearly there is a knock-on benefit for restaurants, shops and bars. The festival's windows trail encourages festival attendees to explore Bowness' wealth of retailers and in 2022 businesses as diverse as Costa Coffee and the Red Cross charity shop noticed marked increases in business against previous years. The festival also commissions services like marquee hire, equipment hire, printing, leaflet distribution, transport etc from local suppliers; positively impacting the local economy.

LICAF's year-round activities also delivers smaller but significant economic impact, as we host visiting comic creatives, taking part in projects and events and attendees of Comics Up Close also use hotels, bars etc when attending the conference.

Through commissioning of new work and the delivery of workshops and other events, LICAF seeks to offer comic artists, particularly those at the early stage of their career or from working class backgrounds or with autism, new working opportunities. We consult the Artists Network and partners across Europe to ensure we pay fairly for this activity.

GOVERNANCE

Lakes International Comic Art Festival is the trading name of Lakes Arts Festivals, a company limited by guarantee with its own Board of Directors, that take the lead on governance of LICAF.

We are legally constituted with a Memorandum & Articles of Association and Terms of Reference document, outlining the roles and duties of the Board of Directors.

The Board comprises a minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 members, representing diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, socio-economic background and work experience. Diversity is monitored annually, along with a review of skills and expertise. These processes identify potential weaknesses that are reviewed by the Board and where necessary, addressed through recruitment of appropriate members or advisors to the Board. Recruitment of appropriate members is outlined in the Board Terms of Reference. Board members also annually update conflict of interest declaration forms.

Some Board members carry an additional role as portfolio holders – focusing on a key aspect of the organisation that is considered central to its work by the Board (diversity & inclusion/young people/environment). Portfolio holders take responsibility for examining all aspects of LICAF's work through the lens of their portfolio, ensuring it is considered throughout the organisation.

The Board meets 4 times a year, plus extraordinary meetings/task & finish working groups when deemed necessary by the Chair. Meetings are the main forum where the Board agrees LICAF's strategy and programme of activity for the year, monitors progress and reviews if LICAF is achieving its goals, as outlined in its Business Plan. Assessment is via report, discussion & analysis of data, ahead of meetings and discussion during meetings.

The Board works closely with the executive team, who attend and report at all Board meetings. Dialogue continues outside meetings, so the Board maintains an awareness of LICAF's activity and supports executive team where appropriate. Portfolio holders develop a close working relationship with the executive and wider LICAF team to understand how their portfolio is being incorporated within LICAF activity

LICAF is supported by Patrons; a diverse body of high-profile creatives working in comics and associated industries. They provide industry insights, fundraising opportunities, advocacy etc. Where the Board can obtain significant intelligence from an individual who is unable to take on the role of Director, they will be adopted as a Board advisor. Academics are an example.

The Executive Team (Director, Associate Director, Festival Manager) oversee the strategic development of LICAF and day to day delivery of the festival and year-round programme. Work of the executive team is driven by the LICAF Business Plan and by the direction of the LICAF Board. Each member of executive team has specific areas of responsibility on which they take a lead...

Director: Overall festival artistic direction, international relationships & partnerships, festival advocacy and development (local, regional, national, international), audience development & marketing, financial management, education & learning, year-round project delivery

Associate Director: Fundraising, international cultural institutes and partnerships, academic partnerships and academic programme, year-round project delivery, audience development & community engagement, exhibitions programme

Festival Manager: Venue liaison and administration, guest/creatives/speaker liaison and administration, sponsor liaison, volunteer recruitment/Comic Art Europe consortium administration and liaison. Board administration and monitoring, year-round project delivery, data-collection and reporting

LICAF is supported by a Technical Director - a specific brief to oversee all aspects of festival technical delivery and we have delivery leads for education/ learning activity and volunteer liaison/ support. Marketing, data collection and PR is delivered by contracted specialists with the level of knowledge required by LICAF, overseen by the Director

The executive team meet monthly to review strategic direction of the organisation and explore potential opportunities for development. The executive also meet monthly with other members of the LICAF team to update on activity, review progress against the Business Plan and tackle the day-to-day issues. It is also an opportunity explore strategic ambitions for LICAF

In 2023/24 LICAF will introduce a new Board deaf/disabled member and portfolio holders (Ambition & Relevance and Business Dynamism). LICAF will also recruit a new advisor to the Board with academic specialism in working class engagement in culture and cultural capital, to support our methodology and implementation. We will also focus on training and investment in new data collection techniques for audiences, creative partners & presenters, business & community partners etc to ensure the Board & team are informed about on-going impact, relevance and breadth of engagement; to inform decision-making.

FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING

Cost of Living Crisis

The inflationary momentum for the UK, following the Covid 19 pandemic, has risen to a new level since the start of the war in Ukraine. LICAF is now delivering its festival and year-round programme during a cost-of-living crisis, with high inflation. To some extent the fact the organisation does not face the increasing fixed costs of operating its own venue or a permanent workforce means LICAF can flex its activity and delivery to meet the financial situation. However, increasing costs in areas core to the delivery of the festival e.g., transport and accommodation, do mean we have to operate tight financial constraints and review. Additional Executive Team time has been allocated to this area of our operation to address this issue.

Arts Council England

At the heart of LICAF's funding model is the support of Arts Council England (ACE), with LICAF the only regularly funded (NPO) organisation working exclusively in the field of comics. However, ACE funding does require LICAF to deliver a range of objectives and outputs that support its Let's Create strategy and for the Board of LICAF to ensure these targets are being achieved and that reporting to ACE is undertaken in line with NPO funding.

Project Grants

LICAF seeks to support its own and partner objectives by supporting ACE funded Project Grants from partner organisations. LICAF is a delivery partner in the Make Mine Manga touring exhibition; a project led by Bolton Libraries but with LICAF supporting the creation, consultation and CPD programmes and touring of the exhibition. LICAF will engage with other Project Grant projects where this support our objectives, particularly as a national development agency for comics. We will also continue to support the delivery of the Wild Adventure project, delivered by the Arts Fund with Project Grant funding from ACE in 2023/24

Local Government

Following reorganisation, LICAF seeks to continue its strong and supportive relationship with its host district council, now Westmorland and Furness Council. LICAF anticipates continued funding from W&FC as a significant cultural partner in the district - delivering economic, educational and wellbeing benefits for residents. LICAF also anticipates transitional funding from the now disbanded Cumbria County Council in 2023/24 and 2024/25

The support of the Windermere & Bowness Town Council is important financially and recognises the important of the festival to local residents and the business community

NGO's

LICAF recognises the significant financial and in-kind support from the Lake District National Park Authority. Their enthusiasm, advice, and guidance about working within the national park is also invaluable.

LICAF continues to develop strong relationships with the British Council, following the 10 Years to Save the World project in 2021/23. LICAF has now received significant funding from the British Council to deliver a programme celebrating comics from the Arab speaking (SWANA) world into 2024. This includes commissioning of new comics from 10 comic creatives based in the SWANA region, their participation in two festivals, a presence for the resulting comics at COP 28 and a professional development programme for 4 Fellows during LICAF in 2023 and '24. A major exhibition of comics from the Arab speaking world, curated by academics from the American University of Beirut, is funded separately from the British Council funding, but builds upon shared foundations.

LICAF will seek further opportunities to develop its work with funding from NGO's during the period of this business plan and as our reputation as the leading development agency for comics becomes established, we believe this activity will grow significantly.

As a truly international festival, LICAF relies on the financial support of many embassies and cultural institutes to deliver its festival programme and to enable us to welcome guests and contributors from across the globe. LICAF also recognises the ongoing financial and in-kind support of the National Cartoonists Society of America; enabling LICAF to welcome a diverse range of American guests to the festival and in supporting our Sergio Aragones Award.

Trusts & Foundations

LICAF has received significant funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to continue to develop its research into the educational potential of comics in the classroom, based on rigorous academic research and evaluation. Working in primary and special schools in Barrow-in-Furness and Kendal and in partnership with the University of Manchester, the project builds on previous work at the Abraham Moss Community School in Manchester and will continue until the end of 2024.

LICAF is working with experienced fundraisers to attract further funding from trusts and foundations, including the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Postcode Lottery Fund to increase its work harnessing the educational potential of comics and to support the professional development and engagement of working class and autistic comic creatives and audience members.

Business Sponsorship

LICAF continues to seek sponsorship, both financial and in-kind to support the delivery of the festival and our year-round programme. Simple discounting of accommodation rates, in-kind promotion of the festival to visitors etc are all important to the success of our activities.

LICAF is seeking to harness the comics industry to support LICAF, as it's leading comic art festival and development agency. In 2023 LICAF will launch a prize for comic translation. As well as recognising an undervalued element of the comics

ecology, this prize will bring us into closer contact with comic publishers both as a development agency and as a route to sponsorship. We are also exploring the way in which established comic artists can support the festival by providing contacts and introductions to other significant players in the industry.

Donations

LICAF will seek donations from a range of supporters. These will include...

- Established and recognised comic creatives & enthusiasts, seeking to support the ecology of the comics industry and the professional development of emerging comic creatives in particular. We will encourage donations from these individuals through personal recommendation and attendance at the festival.
- Comic enthusiasts and festival attendees. Using social media, the LICAF website and during the festival we will encourage donations to support the development of the festival and its year-round activity.

Crowdfunding

LICAF will use online crowdfunding platforms like Go Fund Me and Just Giving, allied with social media campaigns targeted at the widest demographic of comic creatives and enthusiasts to generating funding towards specific LICAF projects, particularly linked to our year-round programme and Little LICAF.

Fundraising Events

We will develop efficient and deliverable fundraising events. In 2023/24 an online and physical auction of comic artwork will be hosted as part of the '23 festival. Work by current and past festival guests will be auctioned to an audience of enthusiasts attending the festival and online.

PARTNERSHIP

The Funding and Fundraising section of this Plan exemplifies how fundamental partnership working is to the delivery model of LICAF. Partnerships range across...

- Creative and comic development
- Academic and educational
- Funding and engagement
- International
- Delivering social change

The following registers identify many of our key partners but is by no means comprehensive

LICAF PARTNERSHIP REGISTER

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Comic Art Europe Consortium	Lisa Weill	Creative Europe	3 year pilot project delivering a suite of projects including residencies, summer schools etc to develop the comic art sector across	Festival BD Lyon, Escola Joso, Barcelona and Musee de la BD, Brussels
L'Institut Francais, London	Mathias Rimbaud, Marion Loire	L'Institut Francais London, ACE	Funding of 3-5 French Comic artists at LICAF. 2020 additional funds for exhibitions	Festival Lyon BD (Nicolas Piccato), Festival BD Amiens (Pascal Meriaux)
Wallonie Brussels International/ Belgian Embassy	Mathias Rimbaud, Marion Loire	L'Institut Francais London, ACE	Funding of 3-5 French Comic artists at LICAF. 2020 additional funds for exhibitions	Festival Lyon BD (Nicolas Piccato), Festival BD Amiens (Pascal Meriaux)
Flanders House, Flemish Literature Fund	Lien Devos, Bart Brosius	FH/FLF, ACE	In 2019 they supported our Belgian focus with 6 artists and a range of cultural activities and production of a comic about Belgian beer.	

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Embassy of the Netherlands	Hanns Wurzner	ACE	IN 2021/2 they provided funding for 'Flood – A Climate Change Project' by Eva Hilhorst & Judith Vanistandael	
Finnish Institute London	Jaako Nousiainen	FI, Finnish Embassy, ACE	The fund 1 or 2 artists per year to attend LICAF and in 2019 funded a homage to Tom of Finland	Helsinki Comics Festival, Mirja Koltola
Italian Cultural Insitute, London	Nicola Locatelli	ICI, ACE	2 year funding commencing 2019 for artist in residence programmes	Festival BD de Quebec, (Thomas Louis Cote), Festival BD de Montreal (Johanna Desrochers)
Art Bubble, Denmark	Arni Beck Gunnarsson, Lars Jakobsen	Danish Arts Foundation	In 2018 they funded a fact finding mission for LICAF staff to attend Art Bubble in Copenhagen, in 2019 and 2020 they funded the attendance of 6 Danish artists at LICAF.	
Lyon BD Festival, France	Nicolas Piccato,	Lyon BD, ACE	A major partner for us and they partnered with us on the NCSFest in USA. We collaborated on the exhibition Heroines in 2018/2019 and will continue to collaborate wherever possible. In 2019 formed part of a bid of 7 countries for EU funding.	
Amiens BD Festival, France	Belinda Billen	Departement de Picardie, ACE	A long-term partner with whom we have collobrated on many projects including Black Dog and Traces of the Great War.	
Czech Literary Centre	Martin Krafl	ECR	A new relationship from 2019 with an exchange in 2019 in October and November to coincide with LICAF and the Frame festival in Prague, plus they are funding the attendance of 6 Czech Comic Artists and the Czech festival focus at LICAF in 2021.	Frame Festival – Martin Krafl, Jan Zikmund

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Dutch Fund for Literature	Stefan Niewenhuis	DFL	5 Dutch comic artists attended LICAF in 2018 funded by DFL. In 2019 they sent 2 representatives to review and assess LICAF festival and are funding 2 Dutch comic artists to attend LICAF 2021.	
Quebec BD Festival	Thomas-Louis Cote	QBD/ACE	Since 2019 we have been involved in organising residencies and between the 2 countries and have hosted Quebecois artists at LICAF	
Beirut Comics Festival	Mathieu Diez	BCF	A new relationship that commenced in 2020, BCF hosted a UK comic artist and we plan further collaborations	
American University of Beirut	George Khoury Lina Ghaibeh	BC	Curation for exhibition of comics from the Arabic speaking world, support for British Council project focusing on Arabic comic creatives	British Council 10 Arabic comic creatives 4 Fellows
Bilili BD Festival, Republic of Congo	Joelle Ebongue	Bilili BD	A new relationship. The Director guested at LICAF 2019 and we are discussing joint projects	
National Cartoonists Society of America, USA	Steve McGarry, Bill Morrison, Tom Richmond	NCS Foundation	The NCS has been attending LICAF since 2015 and LICAF acted as consultants to help NCS launch their own European style comics festival (NCS Fest) in Huntington Beach, CA in 2019. 2010 and 2021 elements of LICAF festival livestreamed in Partnership with NCS.	
Perth Comic Art Festival Australia	Stuart Medley, Bruce Mutard	TBC	We have an ongoing relationship with Edith Cowan University, Perth. They have attended LICAF 5 times, taking part in the Academics Programme. On-going projects are under discussion.	

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Kaiga Manga Fest, Tokyo	James Stacey, Aude Yukiko	Kaiga/ACE	We have an on-going partnership with Kaiga with UK artists attending when funding available.	
Beijing Total Vision	Wang Ning	Chinese Embassy, London	Wang Ning is a comics publisher and promoter who organises comics festivals and we are planning, with funding from the Chinese Embassy London, for Chinese comic artists to attend LICAF in 2022 plus they wish to fund a number of Chinese artists as the festival focus in 2022.	
Komiket (Philippines International Comic Art Festival)	Paolo Herras	ACE	In partnership with LICAF on '10 Years to Change the World' COP26 climate project funded by British Council	
Goa University	Orijit Sen	ACE	Partnership on comics and literacy promotion	
Fantagraphics, USA	Eric Reynolds	Fantagraphics	Partnership re. artist collaboration and provision of guest artists.	
Cairo Comics Festival	Mohamed and Haitham Elseht		We are in the early stages of planning collaborations with Cairo Comics and will host Twin Cartoon at LICAF in 2022.	
Congolese Comic Strip Centre, DRC	Roger Beley Alonso		Covid prevented representatives of CCSC attending LICAF in 2021 however future collaborations are planned	
International School Tsukuba, Tokyo	Michael Bell	International School	Joint projects featuring UK comic artists funded by the school	
Black Hook Press, Japan	James Stacey	BHP	Sharing of knowledge and promotion of indie UK creators in Japan and niche manga in UK	

UK PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Kendal College	Kelvin Nash	ACE, Kendal College	Provide technical support to events, catering support with involvement in LICAF part of several student curricula. Partner with us on educational programmes.	
Bowness Chamber of Trade	Adrian Faulkner	BCT	Business partnerships development funded by local businesses and SLDC	
Westmorland & Furness Council	Councilor Helen Chaffey	ACE	In partnership with LICAF on '10 Years to Change the World' COP26 climate project funded by British Council	
Windermere & Bowness Town Council	Clerk		Possible future funder	
Space2Create	Mat Butler	ACE, S2C	Take part in Windows Trail, provide cohort of volunteers from within their membership	
Cumbria University	Nick Dodds	ACE	We have a MoU for engagement to collaborate on various educational projects etc. Leading participants in annual Academics Day at LICAF	
Lancaster Uni	Prof Simon Guy	Lancs Uni	We have a MoU for engagement to collaborate on various educational projects etc. Leading participants in annual Academics Day at LICAF.	
Sheffield Hallam University	Pam Bowman	International School	Joint projects featuring UK comic artists funded by the school	

UK PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
University of Manchester	John McAuliffe	Partnership re Comics Up Close and other initiatives	Sharing of knowledge and promotion of indie UK creators in Japan and niche manga in UK	
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Charlotte House	PHF	Delivery of Comic Potential project in Cumbrian schools	Cambridge Primary School, Barrow-in-Furness
Lakeland Arts Trust		LAT	Commencing 2019 are supporting projects to feature Comic Art at the Abbot Hall Gallery in Kendal	
Lake District National Park Authority	Richard Leafe and team	LDNPA	Collaboration on new projects within the national park	
Windermere Youth Project	Simone Backhouse/Bill Smith		Partnership project working with young people in Windermere and Bowness particularly those at risk funded by trusts/foundations	
Abraham Moss Community School		CAE/LICAF	Workshop programme researching comics as an aid to literacy, Comics Laureate presentations to students	
Bolton Central Library	Caroline Hall Paul Gravett	BLS/ACE	Creation and touring of young people's exhibition of manga, touring 10 north-west libraries	Manchester City of Literature Kyoto Manga Museum, Kyoto 9 other north-west libraries
Art Fund	Jo Paton	AF/ACE	Comic workshops and activities supporting engagement with natural history collections in museums across UK	400+ primary schools across UK

UK PARTNERSHIPS				
PARTNER	CONTACT	FUNDING	PROJECTS	OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
Cumbria Museums Consortium	Kate Parry	ACE	Project to recruit hard to reach residents as festival volunteers	
Myriad Editions/ SelfMadeHero	Corinne Pearlman/ Emma Hayley	Myriad/LICAF /SMH	Collaboration on First Graphic Novel Award and New Black British artist mentoring scheme (GAP)	
Page 45	Stephen Holland	Page 45	Stephen is a patron of the festival and Page 45 provide sponsorship to support elements of the festival	
Knockabout	Tony Bennett	Knockabout	Provide sponsorship to elements of the festival	
Fanfare Presents	Stephen Robson	Fanfare	Provide sponsorship support to elements of the festival and publish graphic novels in partnership with LICAF	
Freshwater Biological Association	The Director	FBA	Developing projects for 2022 onwards, supporting festival with accommodation	
Phoenix Comics		Phoenix	Sponsoring literacy project	

APPENDIX 1

OPERATING BUDGET 2023/24

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Income		
Arts Council England - NPO/IPSO		£238,306
Arts Council England - Other		-
Contributed income - e.g sponsorship, donations		£ 15,000
DCMS		
Direct Activity Income		£ 18,000
Other earned income		
		Ticket sales £ 10,000
		Marketplace £ 3,500
		Merchandise £ 1,500
		Enter detail here -
Total other earned income		£ 15,000
National Lottery Heritage Fund		-
Investment Income		-
Local Authority Income		£ 30,000
Other National Lottery Grants		-
Other income sources		
		Paul Hamlyn Foundation £ 51,000
		British Council £ 31,500
		Universities of Manchester and Sheffield £ 7,500
		Enter detail here -
Total other income sources		£ 90,000
TOTAL INCOME (autosum of subtotals above)		£ 406,306

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Expenditure		
STAFF COSTS		
National Insurance		£10,000
Pension		-
Salaries		£115,000
Temporary staff		-
Redundancy costs		-
Other staff costs	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Total other staff costs	-
TOTAL STAFF COSTS		£125,000
DIRECT ACTIVITY COSTS		
Artistic and cultural spend	Autism resources developmen	£4,000
	Festival guests	£50,000
	Artist residencies and exchanges	£ 4,000
	Arab world focus	£ 25,000
	Total artistic spend	£83,000
Programme costs	Technical and production festival	£ 27,000
	Comics Up Close	£ 5,000
	Enter detail here	-
	Enter detail here	-
	Total programme costs	£32,000
Education and outreach costs	Paul Hamlyn project	£45,000
	Schools workshop programme	£ 6,000
	Little LICAF all costs	10,000
	Educational resources and Comics Laureate	£ 4,000
	Total education and outreach costs	£65,000

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Expenditure (continued)		
DIRECT ACTIVITY COSTS (continued)		
Other direct activity	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
Total other direct activity costs		-
TOTAL DIRECT ACTIVITY COSTS		£180,000
OVERHEADS		
Advertising & Promotion		£ 60,000
Audit & Accountancy		£ 5,000
Bank Charges		-
Capital expenditure		-
Company development		-
Consultants Fees & Subscriptions		£ 2,500
Contingency		-
Corporation tax		-
Depreciation		-
Earned income costs		-
Insurance		£ 1,000
IT costs		-
Legal & Professional		-
Loan repayments		-
Miscellaneous costs		-
Office equipment purchase		-
Other costs (not elsewhere specified)		-
Other office expenses		£ 1,000

ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24		ANNUAL BUDGET
Expenditure (continued)		
OVERHEADS (continued)		
Rates		-
Rent/Mortgage		£ 10,000
Research & development		£ 5,806
Travel		£ 6,000
Utilities		-
VAT liabilities & Irrecoverable VAT		-
Other overheads		-
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Enter detail here -	
	Total other overheads	-
Total Overheads		£ 91,306
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		£ 396,306
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)		£ 10,000
FUND BALANCES		
Restricted funds/endowments		-
Unrestricted designated funds		-
Unrestricted general funds		-
Total funds		-
Free reserves		£ 10,000

*free reserves includes unrestricted, undesignated funds, not held in fixed assets or investments



comicartfestival.com

MAIN FUNDER:

