

Dual in the crown

Andy O'Hanlon outlines the benefits of dual-use facilities at a time of budget difficulties.

Something happened in South Cambridgeshire a couple of years ago that is making the recent bad news of a 60% cut in the arts budget just a little bit easier to bear. It is called dual use arts.

Some history

Dual-use typically means that certain facilities, equipment and resources used for the school curriculum and community education classes are also available for the benefit of the community. It is a familiar term in the lexicon of sports development, where swimming pools, fitness suites, playing fields and other facilities are managed for community use out of school hours.

Dual use arts

In 2001 South Cambridgeshire District Council - largely in response to demands from its 102 growing villages and plans for further housing, including a new town - adapted the dual-use approach for the arts. After copious research and consultation with the heads of the nine village colleges (secondary schools) that serve the district, a framework strategy was produced. The Council's Cabinet and the school heads supported this and funding was allocated. Unlike the sports model, dual use arts is not based on capital facilities. It is specifically designed to raise levels of community participation throughout villages served by the Village College. This involves building audiences, support networks and forums and identifying new sources of income for arts activity, both amateur and professional.

How is this achieved?

Participating schools appoint a local Arts Development Manager (ADM) for the area served by the school. The post is funded by the District Council on a tapering basis over three years and in time becomes established within the college.

Crucially, the main purpose of the ADM is that of a resource provider. The role is to enhance the quality and quantity of existing arts provision through actively encouraging greater public participation in the

promotion and delivery of arts activity.

This means that principal activities involve:

- Fundraising & Advice
- Skills training programmes
- Facility hire
- Marketing & Communications
- Youth arts texting service
- Research
- Networking
- Professional arts residencies
- Equipment Bank
- Volunteer development
- Film on Your Doorstep
- Advocacy

What's in it for the secondary schools?

An Arts Development Manager raises the status of the school within the community. In South Cambridgeshire dual use arts has made the arts more relevant to the work of the colleges and the communities they serve.

An impact study by Rick Bond (*of The Complete Works*) in August 2004 considered the work of the first two ADMs, providing recommendations for the future direction and development of the scheme. It found that within a relatively short time it had resulted in new arts activities being promoted, reaching a wider section of the community including vulnerable and isolated groups. In the first year over £70,000 had been raised for local arts activities and an intergenerational arts project had resulted in a complete reduction of complaints to the police about young people's behaviour.

What's the future for dual use arts?

The dual use arts approach is still in its infancy yet it has already proven its viability in difficult circumstances. Dual use arts is politically very attractive. Councillors like the idea of Village Colleges as hubs for a spectrum of community-based arts activities in their villages and can see and point to direct benefits for residents.

Meanwhile, council tax capping has led to draconian cuts in the District's arts budget. The recommendation of senior officers is to delete the Arts Project Officer post and make huge cuts in grants to professional arts organisations. In contrast the dual use arts plan is being actively encouraged and all the signs are that, through partnership, it is likely to grow. As far as I can tell, for South Cambridgeshire's Arts service, dual use arts is the future.

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The three local Arts Development Managers describe the highlights and the challenges that have faced them since they took up their posts:



Dan Schumann (*Sawston and Linton Village Colleges*) appointed September 2003

"As a DUAS Arts Development Manager the possibilities seem endless, the post has been very exciting and one of my highlights has to have been bringing the local (disused!) cinema back to life and starting the first local film festival in the area. It seems that, with this post, the limits are only those of your own imagination...however it has its challenges too. Trying to find the funding for projects is always a challenge. Also it has been very challenging to convince parishes of the worth and value of my work, and indeed the schools taking part in DUAS themselves. However when you get it right the rewards are numerable and they are your greatest allies." dschumann@sawstonvc.org



Cheryl Bennett (*Bassingbourn and Melbourn Village Colleges*) appointed June 2005

"One of the highlights of my role has been discovering just how much arts activity goes on in the villages already and how passionately people feel about it. Now I can help facilitate the use of the college's facilities including a recording studio and purpose built dance and drama studios, which are all on their doorstep! The biggest challenge so far? Meeting the entire community - local business people, Primary School Heads and arts groups - it's a long process!" cbennett@mvc.org.uk



Gillian Hunter (*Swavesey Village College*) appointed September 2005

"My greatest ongoing challenge is encouraging the coming together of arts disciplines both in school and community. I believe that sharing ideas and resources across disciplines is beneficial across the board, though this seems not always a view shared by all! My most tangible achievement has been the launch of a community arts newsletter." gillian.hunter@swaveseyvc.cambs.sch.uk