
Date

16 December 2009

Local Residents Helping the Arts in the South West

Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw Very First to Say Thank you

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Artspace Lifespace, Animated Exeter, The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre, Bridgwater Arts Centre, Cyprus Wells, Devon Arts in Schools Initiative, Dartington Hall Trust, Exeter Festival, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Dance in Devon, New Devon Opera, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Royal West of England Academy, Sidmouth Folk Festival, Somerset Art Works, Tobacco Factory Theatre, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, Theatre Royal Plymouth

A select number of residents from across the South West have been identified as “Cultural Champions”. They will attend a celebratory reception at Exeter Cathedral where Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw, alongside Arts and Business, will publically acknowledge and thank them for their outstanding cultural support.

The arts cannot survive without the support of thousands of people who are generously giving their time, expertise and money to make culture thrive in the South West. Today we will celebrate all those individuals who have given dedicated support to their local arts scene.

Arts organisations both big and small from across the South West have stepped forward to recognise these crucial individuals. Support can come in many forms from giving time, offering business acumen, donating funds or even helping with DIY.

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Colin Tweedy of Arts & Business says: "Arts & Business is always looking for new ways to celebrate and profile the work of individuals who bring the very best resources to their local cultural organisations. We owe huge thanks to these Cultural Champions as they freely give their skills, energy, ideas and money to help the arts go from strength to strength."

Ben Bradshaw says "As Culture Secretary, I have been privileged to see at first-hand the incredible contribution that people in communities across the UK make to the cultural life of the nation. Without the profound generosity and commitment of donors, volunteers and supporters up and down the country, the arts – and all of our lives - would be much the poorer. It is right that we should celebrate these Cultural Champions, and I am delighted that the first region to host this event is the South-West. I offer my thanks and congratulations to all those being recognised today.

James Taljaard, Regional Director for the South West, Arts & Business says, "The South West is fortunate to have so many talented and enterprising individuals enhancing our regional cultural offer. Arts & Business works throughout the region from our offices in Bristol, Devon and Cornwall to bring the very best private sector resources to local cultural organisations. These first Cultural Champions will reinforce the importance of individuals to our local cultural communities. They are a force for good."

In Plymouth, Neil Jones and Peter Smithers volunteer at the City Museum and Art Gallery. Neil has labelled thousands of specimens for the Natural History department whilst Peter has volunteered for over 15 years running bug hunts and mini-beast pantomimes for local families.

The Tobacco Theatre in Bristol has benefited from the immense support of Cultural Champion, Simon Inch who having made a substantial one-off donation has contributed additional funds allowing the theatre to sustain and develop their work. Simon works on Front of House and the Box Office as a volunteer; he loves the theatre and seldom misses a performance.

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra dates back to 1893 and is world renowned. Terence O'Rourke has been one of the most

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significant individual donors to BSO, currently supporting the “Young Conductor Scheme”, he has given extensively of his time and business experience and helped develop the business and fundraising strategy of the orchestra.

Further West in Cornwall, Dennis Arbon stepped in when the bank threatened to withdraw its finances, keeping the Hall for Cornwall in Truro from insolvency and closure. He continues to sponsor performances, educational activities and capital campaigns. Not content with the conventional means of sponsorship Denis Arbon’s most unusual gift came when he very generously donated the beach made famous by Virginia Woolf’s “To the Lighthouse” for auction. It raised a fantastic £80,000 for The Hall for Cornwall.

Ron Rudd has volunteered at the Bridgwater Arts Centre for over 50 years. Ron works on the reception, runs the bar, serves refreshments, sorts out any DIY disasters and even offers accommodation to visiting musicians, whilst cultural champion Graham Greetham uses his skills as a professional photographer to help New Devon Opera by taking press images of the cast.

Across the region the arts have had immense support from individuals from all walks of life and at all levels. From vast capital donations to stuffing envelopes, the arts organisations of the South West are richer, and more successful for the contributions made by local residents.

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For further media enquiries and images please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- Arts & Business sparks new partnerships between commerce and culture. We connect companies and individuals to cultural organisations and provide the expertise and insight for them to prosper together.
- Arts & Business' total figure for private sector investment in culture reached a record high in 07/08, climbing 12% to £686 million in the UK. However, investment from business declined falling 7% from the previous year to now stand at £163 million and accounts for 24% of the overall contribution from the private sector.
- On November 24th 2009 HRH The Prince of Wales presented his five Medals for Arts Philanthropy. This medal celebrates individuals who support the arts and recognises the contribution of the most inspiring cultural philanthropists in the UK.
- This year's honourees are: Michael and Dorothy Hintze; Dr Keith Howard; Donald MacDonald CBE and Louise MacDonald; Mrs Mary Weston CBE and Sir John Zochonis.

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