

FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL

First Light Festival C.I.C. Business Plan 2024

Summary

2024 will see FLF delivering its fourth First Light Festival and enter its second year running the East Point Pavilion. It will also be our second year as an Arts Council England NPO and running East Point Pavilion with a food and drink offer, delivering a raft of community activity and developing the building's hire potential. 2024 will also see the organisation pursue charitable status.

Introduction

First Light Festival C.I.C. was established in 2018 and the first, First Light Festival took place on midsummer's weekend 22nd/23rd June 2019 on Lowestoft's South Beach, Kensington Gardens and Promenades. The free access festival was conceived as part of the vision for the cultural regeneration of Lowestoft, that builds a positive narrative for the town which celebrates its position as England's most easterly point.

First Light has four board directors: Wayne Hemingway, Clare Matterson, Mary Graham and Sarah Kemp. It is run by Chief Executive Genevieve Christie with a management team of Project Manager, Communications Manager, Music and Arts Coordinators and Finance Manager. A raft of local freelance practitioners join for different projects and a large number for the festival. Festival Programming is broad, accessible and of very high quality, mixing world class artistes with highly regarded local talent with a focus on shining a light on new talent and offering local communities opportunities to make and create. The CIC has strong partnerships with local, regional and national cultural partners including with Museum and Library services, education providers and community groups.

Governance:

First Light Festival C.I.C is a social enterprise with a board of directors: Wayne Hemingway MBE, co-founder of HemingwayDesign, Festival of Thrift, National Festival of Making, Vintage by the Sea, Classic Car Boot Sale and the Good Business Festival, Clare Matterson CBE, Director General of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), former Executive Director of Engagement, Natural History Museum and former Director of Strategy Wellcome Trust; Mary Graham, co-founder of Yellobelly branding and PR agency and a Suffolk Ambassador and Sarah Kemp, former Chief Executive of Trinity College London, former Director of Finance and Business Affairs at Royal Opera House and current Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee of the Cherie Blair Foundation. All four directors have extensive experience including in delivering high quality, nationally renowned arts and science events and festivals, major national regeneration projects, educational and engagement programmes and have extensive skills in management, finance, branding, PR and marketing. First Light C.I.C. carries out an annual Skills Audit to evaluate strengths and any gaps in skills and initiates training including for equality and diversity, health and safety and leadership. In 2023 an Audit and Risk Committee was established, chaired by Sarah Kemp.

First Light Festival CIC

Reg Co No: 114 80047

Reg. Address: East Point Pavilion, Royal Plain, Lowestoft, NR33 0AP

www.firstlightlowestoft.com

Steering Group

First Light benefits from a strong steering group with representation from local community organisations, education providers, public services and cultural organisations. Members are:

Access Community Trust

Cefas

East Coast College

Friends of Kensington Gardens

Kirkley Peoples Forum (Community Action Suffolk)

Kirkley Youth Group

Lowestoft Rising

Lowestoft Sixth Form College

Lowestoft Town Council

Lowestoft Vision

Marina Theatre

Norwich University of the Arts

Seagull Theatre

Suffolk Police – Community Policing/Diversity/Human trafficking

In addition, we work with Lowestoft Sixth Form College to bring a youth voice and perspective to our Steering Group.

Freelance Community – First Light Festival C.I.C. is part of the Lowestoft Creative Hub to ensure that we engage with, listen to and collaborate with the local freelance community of artists and technicians. The Hub now meets bi-monthly at the EPP, coordinated by Jo Leverett, freelance FLF Project Coordinator.

First Light Festival 2024 Focus

First Light Festival 2024 will celebrate Lowestoft's location as the most easterly place in the country, and a growing centre of cultural engagement, where creativity, community and new cultural infrastructure are flourishing. Our 2024 key theme will be Cardinal Points celebrating Lowestoft's unique location as a nationally significant part of the country. Our New Dawn programme will develop to increase opportunity for local / emerging musical talent including offering development opportunities linked to the project with a performance slot at Latitude Festival for a selected act. Our Planet Positive and Power Positive zones will develop further and be powered by solar panels. We will increase accessibility with more beach trackway, more BSL and further work with transport companies for accessible travel options for people in the region to enjoy the festival.

Resources, Business Development and Growth

First Light Festival C.I.C. has secured funding from Arts Council England and East Suffolk Council and 2024 funding has been confirmed by Suffolk County Council, though cuts are forecast from 2025. Our CIC team includes a General Manager and Duty Managers to run the East Point Pavilion with contract cleaners, traders, bar and outside kiosk operators plus a new CIC Development Manager. 2024 will see infrastructure development on South Beach including Jubilee Parade and FLF is working with ESC on mitigation of any risk and any growth potential that this will have.

East Point Pavilion

The East Point Pavilion is a key element of East Suffolk Council's regeneration plan for Lowestoft and First Light Festival C.I.C. is excited to be managing it and creating a calendar of year-round activity that blends high season trader income with low season community activity and opportunity for developing a mixed model of usage. Infrastructure development around the EPP and seafront as part of major plans will impact operations in 2024 but offer potential positive impact going forward.

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Other Projects

In 2023 FLF CIC was commissioned by Suffolk County Council to develop a project linked to the new Cultural Quarter. If funding for this project is secured it will commence in spring 2024. In addition, where appropriate, we will look to produce other projects that link to placemaking and cultural activity in Lowestoft and the East Suffolk District.

Risk Management

We have carried out a full risk assessment, have a live risk register and have created a risk management plan for the festival and projects as well as a separate register for the Pavilion. If any key elements of our activity such as delivery plans, delivery partners, venues, timeline are impacted we will work closely with funders, partners and stakeholders on mitigation. In 2023 we established an Audit and Risk Committee chaired by director Sarah Kemp.

Finance

First Light Festival is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company set up to produce First Light Festival and linked projects for the Lowestoft locality, to impact cultural regeneration. Following advice and consultation in 2024 we will look to become a charity. Arts Council England NPO core funding commenced in 2023; management of the East Point Pavilion will evolve and respond to the macro climate and all its pressures including the cost-of-living crisis. Overall increases in costs for both the festival and the Pavilion, particularly around heating and power mean that CIC budgeting must be prudent.

First Light Festival 2024 has confirmed financial support from East Suffolk Council, Arts Council England and Suffolk County Council.

Sponsorship – We are looking for a variety of sponsorship opportunities for the festival. Advertising for local businesses in the festival brochure proved popular in 2023 and we will maintain the programme size and scale.

Grant approach: NPO grant funding enables longer term planning for the CIC; support is confirmed from East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council. Applications will be submitted to Lowestoft Town Council and we will work hard to access trusts and funds for specific parts of the festival and free community activities.

Earned Income: To support our free festival access status, our earned income streams are an important component. With the current cost of living crisis however we will not increase ticket prices for 2023 but where we are able, will look to increase the amount of tickets available. We will maintain the number of food and beverage traders and keep pitch fees at 2023 rates. Camping will remain at the increased level of 200 x 4 person pitches plus 50 campervan pitches. We will maintain our number of ticketed events in our late-night venues for earned income streams alongside our free events and activities.

First Light Festival 2024 Funding Plan	
Arts Council England	£220,000
East Suffolk Council	£170,000
Suffolk County Council	£20,000
Earned Festival Income	£45,606
Other Income (trusts, funds)	£73,173
Total	£533,779

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East Point Pavilion 2024

Festival workshops and community activity for the festival parade, and Noon to Moon project will take place in East Point Pavilion, which will also host festival music. Working with East Suffolk Council the model for the EPP has been refreshed and spring 2024 will see this being put into operation. The model sees a reduction in traders, an increase in events and community activity and a new focus on promoting the space as a venue, with a focus on wellbeing and social activity, to support social cohesion in an accessible space. 2024 will be a transition year, with works around the EPP being carried out to reinstate the fountains on Royal Plain and to enhance the Pavilion's own garden. In addition, new landscaping to green up Royal Green will commence. This work will mean short-term disruption, but the CIC anticipates that the dividend will be greater footfall and greater connectedness with town.

Reserves:

6 months of overheads enable the CIC's reserves to provide resilience and if circumstances prevailed to ensure an orderly wind up of the business.

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SWAT Analysis 4

Strengths

- Clear and unique concept and brand
- Scenic, airy, open air location
- Experienced and professional delivery team
- Supportive local partnerships
- Expanding national partnerships
- Connections with community groups and charity sector
- Support of stakeholders and steering group members
- Supportive funders
- Accessible base in the East Point Pavilion
- Supportive regional media for PR
- Increased accessibility through new trackway
- Increased BSL and captioning provision across festival events

Weaknesses

- Significant festival security costs to ensure safety and stewarding across a large site
- Increased festival insurance and power costs

Opportunities

- Develop and increase artistic offer at the Festival
- Growing local and regional audiences
- Develop and create new partnerships with local, regional and national cultural and heritage organisations
- Hugely increased online engagement grows national and international reach of the First Light solstice brand
- Working better with public transport providers / cycling groups
- Work with local stakeholders / groups to become more environmentally sustainable
- Create new festival and East Point Pavilion jobs and employment opportunities

Threats

- National context of economic instability and recession
- Increased festival costs
- South beach development around Jubilee Parade overrunning and causing disruption

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