

Viva Arts and Community Group

The community theatre putting a rural town back on the map



Organisation type:

Community theatre

Location:

Soham, Cambridgeshire

Award date:

December 2017

Award amount:

£220,000

Ownership :

Company limited by guarantee



power to
change

business in
community
hands

Grant purpose

To purchase and refurbish a 19th century mill as a community hub for creative and artistic activities.

Broad community impact

Viva Arts has a range of cultural activities that improve social cohesion, tackling isolation amongst the elderly and young people who are less socially mobile.

Improved social inclusion

There is a high interest for arts and heritage in the area that Viva Arts responds to by creating additional employment, improving wellbeing and offering social and skill based activities.

Accountable to the local community

Viva Arts was started by local people for local people, and volunteers aged from 11 to 80 do everything from stewarding to production to put on shows. The board of trustees are all local.

Situated in the rural town of Soham in Cambridgeshire, community arts and theatre Viva Arts started off in 1997 as a youth theatre centre run by a small team of volunteers. Since then Viva Arts has showcased many stage productions to audiences of up to 400. With growing enthusiasm of the arts and heritage from the local community, the centre's team began to grow, taking in a more diverse cohort of volunteers made up of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

One of the only cultural hubs within a 20-mile radius of the town, Viva Arts provides access to the arts to combat social exclusion and anti-social behaviour, improve the quality of life of local people and increase and encourage community cohesion and volunteering. Through the activities learnt at the centre, locals have enhanced their social skills and increased their education through

community projects. The only issue that had an impact on Viva Arts' survival was not owning a space to guarantee their community support.

So Power to Change awarded Viva Arts a £220,000 grant through the Community Business Fund to purchase a 100-year-old building in Soham, Cambridgeshire, where they can continue to provide a space where their local area thrive.



The building before and CGI of how it will look after the renovation.

The concept is to make Soham more of a 'destination town'. It is expected to create additional employment, improve wellbeing,



power to
change

business in
community
hands

reduce isolation of target groups and levels of anti-social behaviour by offering more positive activities for young people and improve the quality of life in the town.



Daniel Schumann

Founder, Viva Arts and Community Group

Viva Arts now stages two major productions a year and brings in an audience of up to 1000 people and have taken shows to Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 2013 they had a huge success of winning 'Best musical' and 'Best overall production' in the annual National Operatic and Dramatic Association awards.

There are many ways you can get involved; by auditioning to take part in the plays, helping out build the sets, joining the board of Viva Trustees, donating or volunteering. [Find out more on their website](#)