Bispham CastAways
Community Theatre Group
CIO Registered Charity Number 1182404

Annual Report of
Bispham CastAways CIO
RCN - 1182404
Address - 40 Cavendish Road, Bispham, Blackpool, FY2 9JR

FINANCIAL YEAR
January 2025 - December 2025

TRUSTEE REPORTING PERIOD
January 2025 - December 2025

TRUSTEES
Susan Hope
Angela Crossley
Hayley Price
Debbie Flavell
Martin Thompson
Suzanne McEachran
Ian Dodd

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Bispham CastAways CIO is governed by a Constitution together with a set of policies including Safeguarding, Social Media and Public Benefit policies. Each member has also been given a copy of (and on joining the group signed their agreement to) our Member Code of Conduct, Privacy Notice and Netiqette Policy. At the moment, we do not have any policies or procedures for induction or training of trustees. We believe that as we are such a small charity and have a stable group of trustees, this is not a priority at the present time. During this period we were just coming out of lockdown and have continued to deal with the effects of COVID on our practices and audiences.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The charitable purposes of Bispham CastAways CIO are:

(a) the advancement of arts, culture and heritage, particularly relating to theatre and performance, through the presentation of theatre performances and other performance arts for the public benefit and by providing opportunities for people to learn about, participate and engage in theatre, in particular but not exclusively for those people living in Bispham and the surrounding areas.

(b) the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health and disability through, but not exclusively, the provision of theatre performances, outreach and awareness programs, for the public benefit, with a view to improving the conditions of life for such people living in Bispham and the surrounding areas.

What this actually means is as follows. Firstly, that we take anyone from the area who wants to become a member of Bispham CastAways and experience the benefit of participating in theatre, no matter age (as long as 16+), gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, past experience or confidence in their own ability. Secondly, that we strive to perform as many different, high quality shows throughout the year for the public in the Bispham and Blackpool areas, so they can engage with good theatre at as low a cost as possible. We use our Artistic Merit policy to ensure we are not solely relying on “in-house” or unpublished scriptwriters, also maintaining NODA District 2 membership to ensure, with included independent reviews of productions, that we are creating quality, varied theatre, within our means. Finally, that through “going on the road”, developing relationships and programmes with social

prescribers and other charitable organisations, that we can help those in need in the area, especially to help those with mental health issues.
Our Public Benefit Policy is followed at all times and any monies made are funnelled back into the objectives of Bispham CastAways with all Trustees and members being volunteers, with zero employees.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This reporting period has seen Bispham CastAways grow from strength to strength! The way our group utilises a dedicated board of trustees, implementing policies designed to support all members to grow and enjoy theatre, has attracted multiple new members during this time, allowing the group to thrive. Several new members were given stage debuts during the reporting period. The trustees know from conversations with members (old and new) that the group is found to be welcoming and supportive, especially to those who are facing personal struggles. Any vulnerable members are encouraged to succeed by participation in our activities, both at our theatre home and in the community, while being supported by our safeguarding policies. We utilise weekly rehearsals, three full whole group meetings a year, social media and our private group chats to ensure all members can keep in touch with each other and know everything that is going on in the group, welcoming suggestions, comments and volunteers to help the group reach it's charitable purposes.

NODA North West District 2 was in a bit of disarray during this reporting period. However, we were lucky enough to have our three main productions reviewed and this demonstrated that our performances are continuing to develop and provide artistic merit. We have also continued to work with Holy Family RC Church to add value where we can by loaning and running equipment (when the boiler in the church was out of action) and helping with maintenance of the hall. We always use the facilities with care and consideration. However, we cannot get away from the fact that renting facilities adds huge expense and uncertainty to the group.

Our first production of the reporting period was "According To Rumour" in April 2025, a hilarious, farcical comedy by Robert Scott. This marked the directorial

debut of Ian Dodd and produced some of the most entertaining rehearsals and scenes that we have seen. This also got him an amazing review from NODA:

"This version of the play was directed by Ian Dodd, and I must commend him on just how many plates he had to keep spinning in the production! This comedy/ mystery is a handful to direct, and it was clear that Dodd did so with a steady hand and a clear concept. He instinctively knew how to draw the comedy out of the script and ensure that his audience were laughing from start to finish. Dodd's direction moved the action along at a cracking pace and ensured that there was never a dull moment — impressive for a debutant director."

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Towards the end of the rehearsals for the April play, some of our members also began creating our first foray into community theatre at our local library at Moor Park Health And Leisure Centre. Rather than aim at a care home audience, as we had in the previous reporting periods, we chose to aim younger. Our focus was to attract young children (and their families) to see live theatre for maybe the first time, by producing a short mini-pantomime and put it on for free at the library on an afternoon in May 2025. The script used, "The Princess And The Mouse", self-written by Susan Hope, included everything expected in a pantomime but shorter, so it works for young children as well as the elderly (as demonstrated when it was first produced at a care home). It was directed by Debbie Flavell and Ian Fleetwood built an amazing travelling technical setup with drapes, overhead mics and speakers that we will be able to utilise for community events in the future. This performance was a huge success, increasing our community impact and helping people in our community, who may not usually access mainstream theatre, to experience its benefits. We have been asked to return to perform again at Moor Park Library in the future.



Our next production in August 2025 was an interactive murder mystery, "Gunshot Wedding" which marked a scriptwriting debut from Hayley Price and she also took on the director's role. The script was filled with kooky characters and some nice twists. Audiences really enjoyed the show and the NODA review was promising and demonstrated that this immersive, different form of theatre, can create a great atmosphere and get people talking to each other in the audience. We even managed to overcome a huge setback when a cast member injured herself and Hayley Price had to successfully step into the role, while the original cast member supported the show by acting as prompt.

Finally, we completed 2025 with our annual family pantomime in December. This year saw us produce "Aladdin" by Ben Crocker, the most ambitious script we have tackled. The set required several working pieces; washing machine, dryer, mangle, rock cave and suspended, swinging axe, to name a few! We also had to replace two cast members and lost rehearsal time to illness, but everyone involved really pulled together to make it work. All the cast got involved in helping with set and prop movements making this a very tiring but satisfying set of performances. We also ran some community stalls before the Saturday performances but found this did not work this year, so we will be saving the carnival games for community outreach in the future. The audiences all enjoyed the show, although numbers were down on the previous year so we will have to look at advertising in the future, and the NODA review showed that what we are trying to create is working.

"Bispham Castaways are a local Blackpool charity dedicated to promoting community participation in theatre, and that spirit was evident from the moment I arrived. This is a warm, friendly, welcoming group, with a clear commitment to making theatre accessible, whether you're interested in performing, directing, writing, tech, costumes, front of house or simply finding a supportive creative community. Their inclusive ethos (including a willingness to help if membership cost is a barrier) is something many organisations could learn from, and it's an approach that really matters in today's climate.

This year's panto of choice was *Aladdin* by Ben Crocker, a pantomime that sits firmly within a much-loved UK tradition. Panto is often a first step into theatre for performers and audiences alike: a shared, multi-generational experience built on laughter, participation, and the joy of live performance. Bispham Castaways clearly aim to make that experience as open and inclusive as possible, ensuring that anyone who wants to get involved can do so, regardless of background or experience. That ambition is admirable, and the company looked as though they were having a great time bringing it all to life.

(…)

A lovely final touch came at the end: a photo opportunity for children in the audience to come onto the stage with the cast. Moments like that remind us exactly why pantomime, and community theatre more broadly, remains so important. Bispham Castaways may be a relatively new company, but they are already succeeding in something even more vital: building an inclusive, encouraging and joyful theatre community."

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Looking to the future, we are aiming to get further involved with community activities at Moor Park Health And Leisure Centre as well as looking for other places in our community to spread the joy and benefits of live theatre to. We also aim to continue to cultivate the welcoming, supportive and inclusive group atmosphere, that we have taken great pride in creating.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

We have a current Public Benefit Statement that has not been changed within the reporting period. Please see attached.

Public Benefit Statement for Charitable Purposes of Bispham CastAways

The benefit that flows from the purposes:

Promoting the enjoyment and better understanding of the arts, culture, heritage and science, in particular those relating to theatre and performance, through exposure to and participation in (either as audience member or physical participant) the art and culture of theatre and performance. Independent research (although gaps have been identified in their data) has found that exposure to cultural experiences and participation in the arts, can have deep value to the individual and the wider community. *(See the table below taken from " Understanding the Value and Impacts of Cultural Experiences - A Literature Review" prepared for Arts Council England by John D. Carnwath and Alan S. Brown for the value which the arts, culture, heritage and science can have.)*

CONCURRENT IMPACTS *(Those that occur during the experience)*	**EXPERIENCED IMPACTS** *(Observed post-event, hours or days later)*	**EXTENDED AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS** *(Lifelong engagement/ memory, weeks or years later)*
Unconscious psycho-physical responses and states, such as: - Physiological response (heart rate, skin conductance) - Pre-cognitive response (arousal) - Captivation (flow, awe, absorption, concentration) - Energy and tension	Short-term experienced impacts, such as: - Emotional affect and meaning - Spiritual uplift - Learning and critical reflection - Social connectedness - Aesthetic enrichment and creative activation *These impacts can occur before, during and after experiences, but are typically measured afterwards.*	Delayed impacts of individual events and impacts that accrue through repeated engagement in cultural activities over time, such as: - Memory of event - Sense of social belonging - Increased cultural capacity - Increased capacity for empathy - Expanded worldview - Health benefits - Subjective well-being

These benefits will be evidenced through:

- Photo and video documentation.
- Regular internal and external qualitative assessment.
- Regular collation of quantitative data on charitable activities, audiences and participation.

- Regular collation of qualitative data on charitable activities using surveys *(some based on those used in independent research into the value of cultural experiences)* of the general public in Bispham and the surrounding areas, audience members and participants, some targeted to specific groups of the general public if the need arises.
- Regular reporting of charitable activities and financial performance in annual trustee reports, audited annual accounts and other reports where necessary.

The beneficiaries are:

The beneficiaries are the general public, in particular but not exclusively those living in Bispham and the surrounding areas. However, some projects may address the needs of specific sections of society, for example access to a one act play festival targeting young people to increase their confidence, social connectedness, exposure to cultural experiences, health and wellbeing, etc.

The possibility of harm:

The possibility of harm, for example by physical or emotional injury incurred through participation in or experiencing of theatre performances or workshops, are outweighed by the benefits. The risks are significantly reduced by the policies and procedures in place to address them, such as the health and safety policy, rules and safeguarding policies.

The possibility of private benefit:

Any private benefit gained, for example through rental or improvement of rehearsal space, exposure of and payment for specific artists' works, advertisement of or increased use of goods and services from the local area, are ancillary to the charitable purposes and is greatly outweighed by the public benefit. No trustee or member of the CIO, nor any connected person to them, will make a financial gain from it's activities. *(See the Constitution for further detail on this.)*

Provision for the poor

The CIO will charge for membership and performances, so to ensure we have made provision for people who are financially struggling to benefit from our services, we may:

- Regularly review the cost of our membership and tickets.
- Membership fees will be broken into four instalment payments.
- Offer concessionary ticket prices.
- Offer free or reduced price membership, where needed.
- Offer additional free or low cost performances of a play or event, for example a dress rehearsal performance.
- Offer family tickets.
- Perform in other venues like state schools and other community facilities.

Accounts

Bispham CastAways Accounts January 2025 to December 2025

Income			Expenditure	
Takings	4665.61		Rent	2000
Subs	640		NODA	205
Other	191.93		Printing	321.13
			Royalties	118.8
			Catering	867
	5497.54			3511.93
BF	2332.27			
income	5497.54			
expend	-3511.93			
Balance	4317.88			
Bank	2577.88			
Cash	1739.97			
Total	4317.85			