

# Annual Report for DVA Trustees

**October 2025**

## Overview

The past 12 months have been one of challenges but also of significant new opportunities for Dorset Visual Arts and its membership.

In April 2025, our working relationship with The Sherborne ended, after having successfully delivered the first year of exhibition programming at this new centre for the arts in Dorset. Six headline exhibitions, films, education tours, workshops, installing sculptures, additional exhibitions, the return of Making Dorset and partnership support for film programming and other cultural activity created an exceptionally busy time which raised the profile of DVA, its members and the Dorset visual arts community across the region. Our final work at the project was the end of year showcase for Yeovil College, held in the Pavilion, supporting young emerging talent and forging important links with one of the main colleges in the area.

With the addition of four new trustees in November 2024, we have been able to enact decisions around our governance at a faster pace, such as re-evaluating our mission and core purpose in line with our charitable objectives as well as looking at other areas with an appropriate degree of scrutiny, such as our Membership offer. In this instance, we have been able to simplify our Membership structure to be more inclusive and accessible. Memberships have grown to 250, a record in a non-DAW year, the highest since Covid, and is set to exceed 300 in 2025-26.

Responding to feedback from DVA Members in our first ever member survey in 2024, we implemented many initiatives to support Dorset creatives around three key strands/demands - more exhibition opportunities, support and networking.

This formed an important basis for our new curated project programme, DVAtions. DVAtions was initially conceived as an alternative project to run at the same time as Dorset Art Weeks in the non-DAW year, but quickly evolved into a region-by-region, demand-led approach, enabling us to develop projects in response to ideas, localised funding or most importantly, rural collaboration and partnerships.

We are still in a phase where organisation development, including building core funding, is the priority before we can deliver more public/community focussed projects but we are now delivering most of the initiatives that we said we would for our members. We need to develop a pilot residency programme as well as delivering some remaining micro projects and bursaries in 2026, including some bursary support for a handful of participants in DAW. To reflect this, we applied for ACE NLPG funding in May. We were unsuccessful at the first bid but we have a strong bid which has now been resubmitted. If successful, we plan to implement a full artist development programme with a focus on supporting emerging talent and to also relaunch a new DVA website, allowing year-round sign ups and up to date features, ticketing, public e-bulletins and more, to support this programme.

## **Opportunities**

Our main projects have been:

**Biophilia** - a partnership with Arts in Hospital and The Arborealists at Dorset County Hospital. This exhibition invited artists from within a 40-mile radius of Dorchester to consider the notion of health and creative wellbeing through the theme of 'Biophilia'. The exhibition tied in with Creative Health and Wellbeing week, showing work from 35 artists. In July, it travelled to Bath Royal United Hospital with an expanded show. It will then go to Taunton Musgrove in January 2026. There is also interest from Bristol Southmead, Royal Bournemouth Hospital and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership.

**Droves & Downs** - this project secured Dorset Council Community and Culture funding and in partnership with Cranborne Chase National Landscape, awarded four bursaries for artists to respond to the history, ecology and culture of Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The exhibition will be shown at Shaftesbury Arts Centre in November 2025 with a second leg in discussion for the Museum of East Dorset in 2026, and a possible link to Towns of Culture. We received 37 applications for the bursaries, many from younger and emerging artists. It raises a question around the amount of support needed from creatives and our capacity to help them.

**In Our Nature** - in line with our commitment to Culture Declares, this exhibition followed on from 2024's 'The Instinct of Hope' with another DVA Members-only

opportunity held at Durlston Country Park. We made a small amount of income from sales but an opportunity like this should seek to secure project funding and sponsorship in the future. DCP are a good partner with a well-equipped gallery in one of the most impressive and stunning locations in the county and a remit that includes access, nature and education in its programming. Over 80 works were selected by a panel of judges and the exhibition was shown during the traditional Dorset Art Weeks window, with approx 2,000 visitors over 16 days.

**The Dorset Open** - this inaugural initiative is a partnership between DVA, Dorset Museum & Art Gallery and 6 other cultural partners, building on the legacy of The Dorchester Open and The Evolver Prize. Nearly 600 submissions were received, with 138 works selected by a panel of 5 experts from the arts. It marks the start of an important partnership between DVA and DMAG, and an opportunity for DVA members to engage with the collections, spaces and resources at DMAG to inform research and creative development.

## **Artist Support**

We also delivered 4 DVA Masterclasses, support sessions with Gillian Taylor to help artists with different aspects of marketing and promoting themselves, covering topics such as Tell Your Story, Photographing your Work, Using Social Media and E-bulletins. We have also provided informal mentoring for several artists, signposting and supported two placements with students at Bath Spa University - Elliot Perfect and Taryn Thomas. A mentoring-led approach to support is proposed for 2026 alongside further Masterclasses.

## **Networking**

Monthly e-bulletins continued with an increased focus on promoting our own opportunities alongside those from around the region and other profiling and sector updates. We held our first DVA social at The Duchess of Cornwall in Poundbury in early 2025 and a further social in September which also acted as a Q+A for DAW 26 participation.

A further gathering was arranged during In Our Nature and another one will be held in Shaftesbury during the Drovers & Downs exhibition in November.

DVA attends regular sessions held by cultural leaders and stakeholders in the county, often with Arts Development Company and Dorset Council, to contribute to and advocate for our artist members, to inform planning for cultural activity, and to understand current sector challenges. We also regularly attend events and openings to support the network and to develop collaborations.

### **Dorset Art Weeks relaunch**

After carefully reviewing the production and delivery of Dorset Art Weeks, it was announced that DAW would become an annual event from 2026. The event's headline sponsors, Hall & Woodhouse, committed to supporting the event for the next 3 years. This all provides several key benefits - more opportunities to promote artists and for them to receive exposure at their creative source, for audiences to engage annually with our flagship event, and to provide more consistency across our own organisation and financial planning.

#### [Proposal for Annual Dorset Art Weeks](#)

We are also looking at the 2027 dates and announcing those as early as possible, enabling cultural organisations and other spaces to plan ahead and for different types of events and experiences to take part. This will enable DAW to evolve its focus, and create a more easily navigable event with a stronger focus on the participants. This will allow DVA to simultaneously develop its DVAtions programme and develop curated projects which align with the County Cultural Strategy, developing ambition and quality.

Steps have also been taken to overview the delivery of the event and improve certain areas such as roadsigns, press marketing and most importantly, [a brand new website](#) which launched in September. This has a focus on clearer and easier to access information for artists taking part as well as for audiences. This includes comprehensive FAQs, resources, a guide to taking part and better venue matching. For visitors, there will be improved mapping, Visitor FAQs and tools for visit planning. The

website will also work on different devices and should remove the need for the Art Weeks App next year.

DVA is developing a Digital strategy with advice and guidance from Digital Culture Network. As well as relaunching the DAW website, we plan to relaunch the DVA site in 2026, keeping the DAW site separate because of its branding and identity and ease of use for audiences. The Digital strategy will incorporate social media, access needs, public bulletins, event ticketing, analysis and look at other areas for development through 2026.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- We have finalised our vision and missioning statement
- We have finished developing key policy documents and job role descriptions for all of the operational team to help ensure the organisation is better regulated as it grows
- We have developed a fundraising strategy which includes approaches for individual giving, business partnerships, and making a series of grant applications. One of these included an application to Arts Council England NLPG fund. This was unsuccessful at the first bid but we have been encouraged to respond to the feedback given and to reapply, with the result expected in November
- We have finessed and simplified the Standard membership offer with a further increase to the range of benefits, removed the group categories and plan to finally launch an Artist Development Programme fully in early 2026.
- Membership of Making Dorset continues for existing members and we continue to explore opportunities to showcase the work of the group elsewhere in the county as well as looking at opportunities to represent Dorset makers outside of the county. Once the Advisory Group has reconvened, we will look at new applications but this is on hold until another opportunity to show members' work is found
- Engagement on DVA's and DAW's Instagram accounts and websites continues to grow with news also shared across the members' newsletters, DVA website and more regular press releases
- We are taking steps to better understand some of the different needs in various regions of the county, particularly the north-east, Portland and Weymouth, and

Purbeck, through dialogue with Dorset Council, Towns of Culture and the Arts Development Company

- We continue to deliver against our Organisation Support Funding objects from Dorset Council, supporting our core objects and programme planning for 2024-27
- We worked with Yeovil College to produce their stunning end of year exhibition at The Sherborne. We are developing working relationships with Bournemouth & Poole College, Coastland College and Arts University Bournemouth to support young and emerging talent
- We are focussed on developing more core income streams to support our long term core operation plans
- We have delivered multiple activities across the county for our DVAtions programme, a second phase will continue in 2026 including residencies at Durlston Country Park, a micro project in West Bay and bursaries in partnership with b-side. As part of this, we need to focus on cultural partnerships in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch

We now have to focus on the following:

- Securing further core funding- an additional £10 -15k is needed
- Actioning areas of the fundraising strategy including developing business relationships through Dorset Chamber, developing specific campaigns, promoting easyfundraising and general 'support us' messaging
- Continue to find and make grant applications
- Produce an audience development plan by February 2026
- Finish developing a digital strategy
- Focussing on delivering the first year of a full Artist Development Programme with a range of activity delivered at Dorset Museum & Art Gallery
- Look for new opportunities for Making Dorset to maintain the momentum of this initiative
- Rerun the Membership survey
- Ongoing strategic development and training for the team
- Deliver a reinvigorated and successful DAW '26
- Focus on curatorial direction and project planning for DVAtions
- Review roles and contributions for team members

Paul Newman, Creative Director, Dorset Visual Arts  
15th October 2025

**DORSET VISUAL ARTS - CHARITY NO. 1113249****ACCOUNTS MARCH 2025****RECEIPTS**

Subscriptions	12,142.50
DVA Biophillic Entries	200.00
Gift Aid Reclaim	1,252.50
Transfers in from DVA Promo	4,500.00
Sherborne House Arts Programme Development Funding	42,000.00
Advertising	1,075.00
Donations	1,070.00
Exhibition Sales/Commission	1,864.80
DVA Book Sales	248.00
Grant Income	12,500.00
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>76,852.80</b>

**PAYMENTS**

Sherborne House Exhibition Expenses	5,910.00
Artists Sales Commission	1,398.60
Marketing & Advertising	3,022.98
Admin & Bookkeeping	62,456.00
Meeting Expenses	993.00
Telephone	84.00
Insurance	895.19
Bank charges and interest	250.58
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>75,010.35</b>

**SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR YEAR** 1,842.45

**ACCUMULATED FUNDS**

Balance b/fwd 01/04/23	1,518.53
Excess of Expenditure over Income	1,842.45
<b>Balance c/fwd 31/03/24</b>	<b>3,360.98</b>

**ASSETS & LIABILITIES**

Current Account	2,776.88
Computer Equipment	584.10
<b>Total Assets &amp; Liabilities</b>	<b>3,360.98</b>

These accounts have been prepared based on the information and explanations provided by the charity's trustees. The accounts are compliant with the Charities Act and reflect the receipts and payments for the specified period and the statement of assets and liabilities as at the period end.

*Hunts.*

Hunts Accountants

*M. Ardine*

Chair

## Document Activity Report

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## **Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Dorset Visual Arts**

Charity Name: Dorset Visual Arts

Charity Number: 1113249

Period of Accounts Examined: 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025

### **Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 (as amended by the Charities Act 2022) and any applicable regulations.

As the independent examiner, I am responsible for:

1. Reviewing the financial records and accounts as presented by the trustees.
2. Conducting my examination in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the guidelines set out in the Charity Commission's "Independent examination of charity accounts: guidance for examiners" (CC32).

### **Basis of Independent Examiner's Report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission; and includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters.

The procedures undertaken do not constitute an audit, and therefore no audit opinion is given.

### **Independent Examiner's Statement**

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011; and
  - To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act 2011

have not been met; or

2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mr Luke Vivash

ACCA

28/08/2025

Hunts Accountants – [luke@huntaccountants.co.uk](mailto:luke@huntaccountants.co.uk)

## Document Activity Report

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