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PRESS RELEASE

18 MAY 2020

DORSET ARTISTS EMERGENCY FUND LAUNCHED

With cultural buildings such as theatres, galleries, cinemas and music venues remaining closed even as the coronavirus lockdown eases – and outdoor festivals and gatherings cancelled or postponed until next year – artists are facing the hardest of hard times.

Emergency funding has been made available through Government backed schemes, but many artists who lost their livelihoods overnight are falling through the cracks, left to count the cost as bills mount.

Undeterred, b-side has brought together a host of Dorset arts organisations and artists to launch a Crowdfunder campaign to raise money to meet urgent short-term financial needs.

b-side, Activate Performing Arts, Arts Development Company, Artsreach, Bournemouth Arts by the Sea, Diverse City, Dorset Music Hub, Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts, Opera Circus, Pavilion Dance South West, SEAFAIR, SoundStorm, Wave Arts Education, have rallied in support of the Dorset (& Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) Artists' Emergency Fund .

"Since lockdown on 23 March the delivery of creative work in the arts sector has come to a standstill," explains Molly Scarborough, Youth Programme Co-ordinator at b-side, based on the Isle of Portland. ***"Many freelance artists are not covered by existing financial aid packages because they are not supported by public funding, are too commercial, don't have premises, or haven't been trading long enough to make a claim, yet they still have to pay for essential living costs. This fund is to help balance cash flow when money is tight and tide people over until they can get further support."***

The fund is for all Dorset-based artists, including (but not limited to) visual artists, musicians, comedians, performers, directors, actors, writers, filmmakers, theatre makers, producers, curators, clowns. To apply artists must be aged 18 or over, have a bank account and be unable to pay for essential living costs because of the loss of freelance income. Grants of between £100 and £500 are available.

If you're in financial hardship you can apply here:

<https://bit.ly/dorset-artist-emergency-fund>



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The Hardship Fund has been set up with contributions from arts organisations, but YOUR DONATION is important, too. If you would like to donate to this campaign <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/dorset-artists-emergency-fund>

It is hoped that many of the people that would have been buying tickets to shows and attending many of the free arts events that take place in Dorset will donate to the Fund. The Arts are essential for our morale, our mental health, our wellbeing and for bringing us together and are needed now more than ever.

“The situation that the arts and cultural sector faces during and post pandemic is deeply worrying and while we are very concerned about the future sustainability of venues, Lighthouse, Poole is acutely aware that many of the individual arts practitioners whose work populates our theatres, concert halls and galleries are in a desperate position having lost their livelihoods while venues such as ours are closed.

We are relieved that some of those Dorset artists who are in most need will be helped through the new Dorset Artists Emergency Fund which has been set up by the cultural organisations in Dorset and the BCP regions and Lighthouse is pleased to be one of many partners supporting this. However we need many others to contribute and would urge people and organisations/companies to help our local artists get through this tough time and continue to provide their creativity to our region by contributing to the Crowdfunder.”

Elspeth McBain, Chief Executive of Lighthouse, Poole’s Centre for the Arts.

The fund opens for applications from noon on Friday 15 May and the deadline for all applications is midnight on Friday 19 June.

Images for this press release can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rTo5Kd2tEEhqAQmXGzPbXM5xCekywYFv?usp=sharing>

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Fund

- The Dorset Artists' Emergency Fund was initiated by b-side after a series of collaborative conversations through the What Next? Dorset Chapter arts network.
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- What Next? Dorset is a space to share, debate and take action on issues facing the local and national culture sector. It is part of the national What Next? Movement. It's open to everyone working in and connected to the creative and culture sector in Dorset. Find out more at <https://www.whatnextculture.co.uk/chapters/dorset/>
- b-side are coordinating and managing the fund and working in collaboration with a number of Dorset-based arts organisations including: Activate Performing Arts, Arts Development Company, Artsreach, Bournemouth Arts by the Sea, Diverse City, Dorset Music Hub, Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts, Opera Circus, Pavilion Dance South West, SEAFAIR, SoundStorm, Wave Arts Education. All are making a minimum of in-kind contributions and several have donated some funds.
- The Fund's initial target is £10,000. So far £5,000 has been raised and now the fund is opening up to the public to support and show appreciation for our Artists in Dorset.
- Apply for the Dorset Artists' Emergency Fund here: <https://b-side.org.uk/news/apply-to-the-dorset-and-bcp-artists'-emergency-fund>
- Donate to the Crowdfunder campaign <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/dorset-artists-emergency-fund?tk=0ee9ac8879cc72fee4a026aa532e392985da45f7>

ABOUT B-SIDE

- b-side is a Dorset based arts organisation working with artists, residents and young people to make new site-responsive work revealing the marginal, often forgotten and less commercial aspects of Dorset's coastal towns and communities.
- b-side are most famously known for their biennial festival a 9 day programme of events in visual art, text, sound and installations all in unusual places and spaces over the Isle of Portland. The festival generates thousands of visits to the many artworks uniquely created for the island.
- The next b-side festival has been postponed this year and will be taking place on Portland 11 – 19 SEPTEMBER 2021
- b-side is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation