

# The Impact of Local Cinema

## Overview

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## Executive Summary

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### 1.0 Summary

- This overview demonstrates the wide range of positive impacts local cinemas have on their communities. The venues foster a sense of place and provide a focus for the local community, whilst enhancing local cultural life through the provision of mainstream and/or specialised film. The cinemas play an important social inclusion role, reaching out to otherwise underserved elements of the local population. They enhance learning opportunities through links with local schools and colleges, improving the skills and knowledge base of the community.
- Cinemas also contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of town centres, encouraging the evening economy and increasing footfall. This often has a positive impact on safety and security.
- Cinemas contribute to the local economy through audience and visitor spend, the use of local suppliers, and their (albeit limited) impact on the local labour market

### 1.1 Background to report

- In 2003, the British Film Institute and the UK Film Council commissioned a study to measure and assess the impact of local cinemas on the social, cultural and economic life of their communities. Two Regional Screen Agencies, EM Media and Film London, also funded case study elements of the project.
- This report is aimed at cinema exhibitors, local authorities, development agencies and those interested in cinema provision and/or the vitality of smaller towns.

### 1.2 Measuring impact

The study had two aims:

- To investigate and describe the impact of local cinemas on their communities
- To develop a package of “impact measurement” tools that could be used by other research teams to assess the impact of other small venues

### 2.1 Methodology

To meet the aims of the study, a multi-method approach was adopted with the following elements:

- initial desk research to explore existing literature on impact measurement methodologies
- selection of five case study cinemas

Then for each of the five cinemas:

- a site visit
- depth interviews (and regular follow-ups) with cinema manager and staff
- focus group with cinema audience
- telephone interviews with some of the cinema's local suppliers, community groups or educational organisations with links to the cinema, the local council and the local press

Additional fieldwork was conducted for certain case studies, including interviews and a postal survey with local residents, a focus group with educational programme participants and a cinema audience survey.

## **2.2 Selection of case studies**

- Five independent, locally owned and operated cinemas were selected (The Savoy, Penzance; The Curzon, Clevedon; The Lonsdale, Annan; The Rio, Dalston; and The Metro, Derby).
- The cinemas are located across the UK, and were selected to cover a range of characteristics – both urban and rural settings, mainstream and specialised programmes, single screen and multiple screen cinemas, and private, trust and public funding.

## **3.1 Local social and cultural impacts**

All five case study cinemas enhance the social and cultural lives of their local communities in the following ways:

- Local cinemas play a crucial part in fostering a “sense of place” for their communities as key venues with a community focus. They provide a strong social function as a meeting place and centre in which to socialise.
- The venues widen the range of cinema-going opportunities for local residents, enhancing local cultural life. They either provide a mainstream programme where no other cinemas exist in the locality, or a specialised alternative in those areas with multiplex provision.
- The opportunity to see mainstream films in a non-multiplex atmosphere is attractive to some sections of the audience.

- Moreover, the cinemas play an important social inclusion role, particularly for elderly people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to watch films “for them” in an easily accessible “traditional” environment, and for other excluded groups such as young parents with babies. The cinemas are “re-introducing” people to film.
- Special events and activities target various community groups which would otherwise be excluded. Film festivals, special screenings and educational initiatives often reach underserved subgroups of the population. For example, The Metro, Derby holds special screenings for children with autism and with hearing impairments. Two of the case study cinemas also enhance access and participation among otherwise excluded local minority ethnic groups through film festivals and special screenings of world cinema.
- Cinemas enhance local learning opportunities through links with local schools, screenings and courses, although lack of funding often restricts the range of educational activities.
- The case study cinemas are also involved in the delivery of “lifelong learning” opportunities through courses around film. Their role in improving the skills and knowledge base of the community is recognised by participants and practitioners alike.
- Cinemas also make an important social contribution to their local communities through the provision of volunteering opportunities.
- Links with Film Societies have a strong impact on local film culture, with the cinemas providing a venue, and often taking the lead in booking films.
- Local cinemas are seen in general as affordable leisure options for families, with fewer concerns over travel and food costs than other activities. The cinemas are seen as safe, secure venues fostering independence among young people.

### **3.2 Local environmental impacts**

The local cinemas make a positive contribution to the built environment and town centre vitality:

- Most of the cinemas retain a traditional façade, creating a positive architectural ambience and providing a strong focal point in the town centres.
- Their presence has a positive knock-on effect for other traders in the vicinity. The cinemas encourage footfall, particularly in the evening, and make the local area feel safer.

### 3.3 Local economic impacts

The case study cinemas contribute to the local economy in terms of audience/visitor spend, the sourcing of local suppliers, and the local labour market.

- The cinema audiences generate money for the local economy through visits to local bars, restaurants, bakeries, food shops and take-aways as part of their cinema trip.
- All five cinema managers, where the market allows it, try to seek out local suppliers in favour of more distant alternatives. There is a feeling that, as small businesses themselves, they should try to help sustain the local economy.
- The cinemas have a direct, albeit limited, positive impact on their local labour markets through the employment of local residents as staff.
- The cinemas also provide valuable job opportunities to otherwise excluded groups. For example, The Curzon makes part-time jobs available to older residents not in search of a full-time job.
- Staff training and provisions of career development opportunities enrich local labour markets.
- Association with the cinema, with its prominent local image, creates important marketing opportunities for other businesses.

## Foreword

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Film has the power to inspire us. It allows us to inhabit new identities, hear new voices and to see the world from many different perspectives. Film brings us news of other cultures, other mores, other values. The apparently universal ability of film to excite and enthrall audiences, to make them think, to encourage empathy and compassion, to provoke laughter and tears, makes it the most pungent, mysterious and international of art forms.

Such a significant and popular medium should be accessible to all communities in its most potent form, which is the cinema. The magic of cinema in the cinema is connected to two unique conditions – the sharing of an experience in an audience and the contemplation of images projected on a scale beyond the perspective of normal perception. A face in an average television screen approximates to our sense of the human head. On a cinema screen, eyes, mouths, smiles, kisses, guns are amplified, pulling us into their power, for good or bad.

This document aims to draw attention to the many benefits of local cinema provision. Of course, providing access to this most democratic and popular cultural pursuit of our times is at the heart of the argument but it's also evident that a well-supported local cinema can make less obvious contributions to small communities, providing economic benefit, confronting social exclusion, enhancing tourism. It's also clear from the report that such advantages are often forgotten; local cinema is not perhaps as celebrated as it might be. It is my real hope that this report will act as a valuable resource to those who support and champion local cinema.

Anthony Minghella

## 1. Introduction

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In 2003, the British Film Institute (*bfi*) and the UK Film Council commissioned a study to measure and assess the impact of local cinemas on the social, cultural and economic life of their communities. Joining the two national bodies were the Regional Screen Agencies EM Media and Film London, funding case studies in Derby and Hackney respectively.

The background to this study lies in the dramatic changes that have taken place in the cinema landscape over the last two decades which has seen the rise of multiplex cinemas and the consequent decline of town centre or 'traditional' cinemas. This has resulted in an increase of 232% between 1995–2004 of multiplexes from 730 to 2426 and a decline of 28% in traditional cinemas from 1275 to 916 in the same period. The Dodona Cinemagoing report of 2000 noted that multiplexes were increasingly being planned in towns with a population catchment area of 50,000 whereas a few years previously double this population would have been required.<sup>1</sup> This is actually a relatively low figure and reflects a level of screen density which has increasingly lead operators to explore these 'smaller' population areas. Nevertheless, the majority of multiplexes remain in higher population areas – for example in 2002 only 1% of multiplexes were in populations of less than 55,000. Many smaller communities or areas with low population densities have therefore lost access to cinema through the closure of so many traditional sites and the inability/reluctance of larger operators to take their place. In the last 3–4 years, the arrival of newly built multinationally-owned town and city centre midi and multiplexes has had an additional but more complex impact on existing local cinemas (e.g. Scunthorpe and Nottingham). Furthermore, the mainstream programming of the vast majority of multiplexes has restricted the breadth of the cinemagoing experience for audiences outside the major metropolitan areas wishing to see more specialised films<sup>2</sup>.

The prevalence of out of town developments was a particular feature of the multiplex transformation which has paralleled a general decline in town centres. Recent years have seen a concerted policy effort by local and central government to address this decline and arrest the development move away

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<sup>1</sup> Dodona - Cinemagoing 8, p. 61

<sup>2</sup> The UK Film Council defines a specialised film as one which engages current political, social and cultural issues; challenging English language films; UK minority indigenous language films; Foreign language films; Films where ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation are key themes; Classic films; Archive films, and films which appeal to underserved audiences.

from the centre. Two Policy Planning Guidances were of particular note here. PPG13 had its background in the mounting concern at the increased reliance on the private car to support out of town developments with its consequent environmental, transport and social exclusion impacts. The Guidance meant that accessibility by public transport should now be a key feature in drawing up development plans.

The decline of shops and services in town centres was seen to have a negative impact both on the town itself and on the surrounding area. PPG6 stated that wherever possible, new developments should take place in the town centre. This is part of a general trend which has also manifested itself in other ways. Local authorities and central government have increasingly recognised the importance of revitalising small towns – market towns in particular have been the focus of attention in recognition of their hub role for the surrounding catchment area. The need for a vibrant evening economy (or indeed any evening economy) and the role of leisure in this has been at the heart of small town initiatives. The Rural White Paper which was presented to Parliament in 2000 focused on sustainability of local communities and on the issues of quality of life in areas of smaller population. Using work done by the East Midlands Development Agency, the white paper proposed a set of facilities that should be available in a market town of a given size. For a community with a population of 2,000–10,000 weekly cinema provision was required; for a larger town with a population of 10,000–25,000 it proposed a full time local cinema as desirable. This template of provision was used as the basis for Government’s policy of ‘asking public service providers to make Market Town provision a key element in their strategies’<sup>3</sup>

### **1.1 Background to the report**

This report is aimed at cinema exhibitors, local authorities, development agencies and those interested in cinema provision and/or the vitality of smaller towns. It seeks to build on previous work in the field by establishing a more robust evidence base upon which to support the case for local cinema provision.

The interest of the *bfi* in the area of local cinema goes back many years. The establishment of the regional film theatre network was overseen and developed by the *bfi* throughout the 1960s and 1970s and many of these were in smaller communities (often part time). During the 1990s the *bfi* was involved in various early initiatives to create enhance the provision of cinema

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<sup>3</sup> Rural white paper p. 76

in rural areas including the CineLincs consortium project and the Cinemobile touring cinema.

In 1999, along with East Midlands Arts and Eastern Arts, the *bfi* commissioned a report, *The Case for Rural Cinema*, which considered the issues around rural cinema exhibition and various models of provision and was followed up in 2000 with a conference, Delivering Local Cinema, aimed at local authorities in particular. Most recently, the *bfi* publication *At a Cinema Near You: Strategies for sustainable local cinema* (2002) has been widely distributed and offers practical advice and guidance to those wishing to set up a cinema in their area.

The UK Film Council supports distribution, exhibition (theatrical and non-theatrical) and audience development through a variety of funds. Diversity is key to all UK Film Council strategy, and the role of local cinema in terms of social inclusion and community cohesion is directly relevant to its ambition for a vibrant UK film culture.

The National and Regional Screen Agencies also perform a vital role at a local level in terms of supporting regional and national distribution and exhibition, and this research will directly inform future initiatives.

## **1.2 Measuring impact**

The research team were clear from the outset of the study that the local impact of cinema would be by no means a simple thing to measure, and that ultimately it would be impossible to *prove* a cause and effect relationship between cinema services or characteristics and a measured outcome in individuals or the local area, given the complexities of the context in which the cinema is operating. It would be impossible, within the constraints of a research project with a limited budget, to measure and take account of *all* circumstances in individuals' lives and in the local area.

However, in this study, we have attempted to build on the best methodologies currently being used in impact measurement. One of the aims of the study was to develop an 'impact measurement package' which could be used by local venues wishing to measure their own local data. So our aim was to develop a simple methodology which can be used to give an *indication* of the likely impact, and to provide a greater understanding of the value of cinema to the social and cultural lives of the community, the local economy, and the environment.

Previous impact measurement studies have been criticised for lack of conceptual clarity, lack of methodological transparency, over-reliance on data from small unrepresentative samples, and over-claiming conclusions. Throughout the development of this project, the research team made efforts to avoid these shortcomings.

## 2. Outline of study

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The study had two aims:

- a) To investigate and describe the impact of local cinemas on their communities
- b) To develop a package of 'impact measurement' tools that could be used by other research teams to assess the impact of other small venues

To meet these aims, the study involved the following elements:

- initial desk research to explore existing literature on impact measurement methodologies
- selection of five case study cinemas

Then for each of the five cinemas:

- a site visit
- depth interviews (and regular follow-ups) with cinema manager and staff
- focus group with cinema audience
- telephone interviews with some of the cinema's local suppliers
- telephone interviews with some of the community groups or educational organisations with links to the cinema
- telephone interviews with the local council
- telephone interviews with the local press

In two of the case study areas, local residents (who were not necessarily regular visitors to the case study cinemas) were also interviewed.

And in one of the case study areas, a focus group with participants in the cinema's educational programme was conducted, together with a quantitative survey of the cinema audience and a small-scale local resident postal survey.

### 2.1 Overview of the five case study cinemas

The research team decided to focus on independent, locally owned and operated cinemas, and the five case studies selected were:

- The Savoy, Penzance
- The Curzon, Clevedon
- The Lonsdale, Annan

- The Rio, Dalston
- The Metro, Derby

The cinemas were located across the UK, and were selected to cover a range of characteristics – both urban and rural settings, mainstream and specialised programmes, single screen and multiple screen cinemas, and private, trust and public funding.

While three of the cinemas were offering the only significant film-screening service in the local area, two – the Metro in Derby and the Rio in Hackney – were presenting a more specialised programme alongside other more mainstream multiplex cinemas.

A brief overview of each case study cinema is given below. A full report on each individual case study is available separately in sections 5–9.

***The Savoy Cinema, Causewayhead, Penzance***

[www.merlincinemas.co.uk/penzance.php](http://www.merlincinemas.co.uk/penzance.php)

The Savoy cinema is the only cinema in Penzance, which is a small coastal town in West Cornwall with a population of about 17,000. It is one of a chain of five cinemas run by the Merlin group: four cinemas in West Cornwall (Penzance, Redruth, St Ives and Helston) and one in Torquay, Devon. The Savoy offers a predominantly first-run mainstream programme, with most major releases secured on date. It is a three-screen cinema with 273 seats, purpose-built in 1912 and claims to be the longest continuous running cinema in England (a claim also made by another case study cinema – the Curzon in Clevedon!). The Savoy sells more than 90,000 tickets a year. The Merlin group has little cinema competition in West Cornwall, and the Savoy's nearest non-Merlin cinema is a 50 minute drive away in Truro. The Savoy differs from the other case study cinemas in that it has an on-site restaurant, take-away pizza and ice-cream kiosk, all of which are available to non-cinema goers. This added dimension clearly makes an important contribution to the town as a place to meet and socialise. As a result of this additional provision, the Savoy has a larger, more diverse group of staff than some of the other cinemas in the study, employing four regular full-time staff, and 16 regular part-time staff. It is also unique in the study in that its audience profile varies considerably with the time of year, due to a seasonal influx of visiting tourists during the summer months.

***The Curzon Cinema, Old Church Road, Clevedon***

[www.curzon.org.uk](http://www.curzon.org.uk)

Clevedon is a seaside town in Somerset, with a population of about 22,000. The Curzon cinema is a purpose-built cinema dating from 1912 with an art deco facade, and proudly claims to be the longest continuously running cinema in England. The cinema has one screen, with a capacity for seating 380 people. It is located in the centre of the town and offers a largely mainstream programme, with monthly Film Club screenings of more specialised films. The cinema sells about 55,000 tickets every year. It is the only cinema in the town, and its nearest competitors are more than 12 miles away. The manager is the only member of full-time staff at the cinema, and he is supported by a small group of part-time staff who work in the projection room and front of house.

The cinema was threatened with closure in the mid-nineties, but was saved as a result of a successful 'Save the Curzon' campaign run by Jon Webber, a local resident and the ex-manager of the Rio cinema in Dalston, another of the cinemas taking part in this study. Jon had successfully led a campaign in the 1970's to purchase the Rio cinema, and to operate it as a community business; and he put together a similar business plan to buy and run the Curzon. As a community cinema, local people are now involved in all aspects of the Curzon's operation: there is an elected management body, and a substantial pool of local volunteers who help out with day-to-day ushering, maintenance, stock control and so on, providing an important social function in the town.

The cinema is currently working with the local community to raise £1.2 million as "match funding" as part of a Lottery bid for £5.2 million to restore the cinema to its former Art Deco glory.

***The Lonsdale Cinema, Moat Road, Annan***

[www.lonsdalecitycinemas.co.uk](http://www.lonsdalecitycinemas.co.uk)

Annan is a small (population: 8,000) Scottish market town near the English border. The Lonsdale cinema in Annan is linked to a sister cinema in Carlisle, both run by the same family-owned company. The same, predominantly mainstream, programme is screened at both cinemas, with a world cinema screening every week. The building's use has varied over the years, but it has been used as a cinema since early in the 20th century. The recently refurbished Annan cinema has two screens, seating a total of 150 people, and sells about 30,000 tickets a year. Although it is the only cinema in Annan, there are competing cinemas, both specialised and mainstream, in nearby Carlisle and Dumfries. The cinema has two permanent full-time staff,

and four part-time staff, with an additional six casual staff working as projectionists or front of house.

***The Rio Cinema, Kingsland Street, Dalston***

[www.riocinema.ndirect.co.uk](http://www.riocinema.ndirect.co.uk)

The Rio cinema is located in Dalston, Hackney. The Rio is a purpose-built cinema dating from 1915 and is an English Heritage Grade II listed building, with 1930s art deco facade. It is a one-screen cinema with 402 seats, offering a mainly specialised programme, although in recent years, also showing an increasing number of popular mainstream films. The Rio sells about 70,000 – 80,000 tickets every year. It is the only cinema in Hackney, although there are a number of both mainstream and more specialised cinemas within the neighbouring wards of Islington and Tower Hamlets. There are 23 members of staff on the pay roll, mostly part-time, and the cinema is supported by a voluntary board of 13 directors, who help with marketing, finance and other operational matters. Film London provided extra funding to the Rio cinema in order to conduct a resident's discussion group and widen the scope of the study.

***The Metro Cinema, Green Lane, Derby***

[www.derby.ac.uk/metro-cinema](http://www.derby.ac.uk/metro-cinema)

Metro cinema in Derby, established in 1981, is the only cinema in the study that receives significant amounts of public funding from a variety of sources. It offers a mainly specialised programme and offers a range of educational activities from pre-screening talks to courses in film studies and screen-writing. It is a single screen cinema, seating 126 people. It sells about 25,000 tickets a year. While it is the only specialist cinema in Derby, there are two mainstream competitors within the city. Metro employs nine permanent members of staff (3 full-time, 6 part-time), with a further 12 or so part-time staff working front of house. The cinema is currently housed in a Grade II listed building, owned by the University, and although within walking distance of Derby City Centre, its location is in a residential area and not well sign-posted.

The Metro is currently working with Q Arts – a Derby based contemporary visual arts organisation – on the planning of a major building and relocation project. This will result in a purpose-built, accessible building in the centre of Derby, and will include three additional screens for an expanded Metro programme and audience.

The Derby case study received additional funding from EM-Media, which gave the research team scope to collect more detailed data. This was the only cinema for which separate audience and local resident surveys were conducted. We also held an additional discussion group in this area, with participants in the Metro's educational programme.

## **2.2 Issues to be explored at each case study cinema**

At the outset of the study, the research team put together an initial checklist of the sorts of issues to be explored. This list is presented in the appendix as a series of tables, along with the intended purpose behind collecting each piece of data, i.e. whether it was of potential use in informing an assessment of the social, cultural, economic or environmental impact of the cinema.

In many cases, data items have been identified as potentially informing more than one of these three impact types. For example, a good range of films offered by the case study cinema could be assessed in terms of its *social* and *cultural* impact, i.e. provision of access to film for local residents. This in turn affects the cinema's local *economic* impact – if residents are impressed with the range of films on offer, ticket sales are likely to be high, bringing more money into the cinema, which can then in turn spend it on the salaries of local staff, and buying services from local suppliers, and so on.

These issue checklists were then converted into a number of topic guides and questionnaires, which were used for the interviews with cinema managers, suppliers, audience, local residents, council staff and so on. The research tools are all included in section 11, the methodological toolkit, published separately.

## **2.3 Structure of this report**

The rest of this report is structured as follows. Section 3 looks at the social, cultural and environmental impact of local cinema, followed by section 4 which examines the impact of local cinema on the local economy.

Sections 5 to 9 present the findings of individual case studies in full, and are published separately.

Also available separately are sections 10 and 11, which provide a methodological discussion and a set of impact measurement tools for use in similar projects.

All documents relating to this project are available from the UK Film Council website ([www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/statistics/localcinema](http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/statistics/localcinema)).

**Note:**

Where tables in this report present percentages, figures have usually been rounded to whole numbers. This may mean that on occasion, percentages do not sum to 100%. In addition, \* is used to indicate a value that is less than 0.5%.

### 3. The social, cultural and environmental impact of local cinema

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As described earlier, the five case study cinemas were located across the UK, and were selected to cover a range of characteristics – both urban and rural settings, mainstream and specialised programmes, single screen and multiple screen cinemas, and private, trust and public funding.

Table 3.1 Main characteristics of case study cinemas

	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
Number of screens	3	1	2	1	1
Number of seats	273	380	150	126	402
Main type of programme	Mainstream	Mainstream	Mainstream	Specialised	Specialised
Annual number of ticket sales	92,000	54,000	30,000	25,000	75,000
Type of location	Seaside town	Seaside town	Small market town	Urban	Inner city
Town / borough	Penzance	Clevedon	Annan	Derby	Hackney
Population of town / borough	17,000	22,000	8,000	222,000	201,000

#### 3.1 Who visits the cinema?

##### 3.1.1 Regular cinema audience

Clearly, one of the main groups of people on whom the five cinemas have a direct impact is their regular audience, who benefit from the cinema's programme of films. As mentioned earlier, the cinemas attract between 25,000 and 90,000 ticket sales every year.

Three of the case study cinemas are operating as the only cinema in their towns, and are offering the local residents the opportunity to see current or recent mainstream films on their doorstep, rather than having to travel further afield. On the other hand, the Metro cinema in Derby and the Rio in

Dalston both have several competing cinemas within their local areas. The more specialised programmes of the Metro and Rio are designed as an alternative to the mainstream fare available at the local multiplexes.

The type of audience attracted by the different case study cinemas is a reflection of both the film programme that is on offer, and the demographic profile of the local population.

**Table 3.1.1 Analysis of cinema programmes 2002 – 2003**

	% of annual screenings				
	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
Specialised films	7	13	6	65	55
Mainstream films	93	87	94	35	45
English language	99	97	99	72	65
Foreign language	1	3	1	28	35
<u>Certificate</u>					
U	17	17	29	6	18
PG	31	16	31	11	9
12 / 12A	30	37	24	17	19
15	19	24	14	53	40
18	4	3	1	13	14

### ***Mainstream cinemas***

The three mainstream cinemas all cater well for families with children. The Savoy in Penzance, for example, sees this sector of both the local and the tourist population as an important part of its audience, and a high proportion of the films at the Savoy are screened to appeal to families. The vast majority (93%) of the Savoy screenings are of mainstream films; and about half of the annual screenings are of films with certificate PG or U. However, the cinema manager also recognises the fact that the local Penwith population is older than the national average, and has a significant proportion of residents interested in the arts. Therefore, outside the school holidays, there are three or four weekly screenings on a Sunday and Monday of a specialised film.

The Lonsdale, Annan similarly caters well for families, particularly those with young children. Among its most successful films in 2003 were *Peter Pan*, *The Haunted Mansion* and *Looney Tunes: Back in Action*, and 60% of the

annual screenings were of films were certificate PG or U. However, the cinema also does well with older people, and this is a reflection of both the cinema's programming (which includes weekly matinees with free tea and biscuits for older audiences) and the profile of the local population – Annan has a higher than average proportion of pensioners amongst its residents.

The Curzon, Clevedon views its audience as a mixture of family groups, and adults (predominantly women) aged 35 or older. Its programme therefore caters for both groups. A third of the screenings are of PG or U certificate films (70% are films of 12A and below). However, in the top ten most popular films shown at the cinema during 2003 were *Calendar Girls*, *Chicago*, *Love Actually* and *The Hours*, films which appealed to the older, female members of the audience.

Both the Curzon and the Lonsdale report that 15–24 year olds, usually a key group of mainstream cinema visitors, are under-represented in their audiences. For the Curzon, this is likely to be at least partly due to the local population profile which is notable for its high proportion of residents over 64, and correspondingly low proportions of residents under 25, and students. The cinema manager at the Lonsdale suspects that this shortfall is due to the fact that local teenagers are drawn towards the multiplexes in Carlisle, which are more likely to screen first-run films, and offer additional entertainment and catering options that are attractive to this age group.

### ***Specialised cinemas***

The programmes, and as a result the audiences, at the Metro and Rio cinemas are quite different. For both cinemas, a minority of their annual screenings are of mainstream films, and about three in ten screenings are of foreign language films. And compared with the other case study cinemas, there are far fewer films designed to appeal to children and young families.

Both cinemas have specific programme aims. The Rio aims *"to bring the best of world cinema to north and east London"*, and the Metro aims *"to offer choice beyond the commercial mainstream, bringing to Derby a diverse selection of titles which would otherwise never reach the city"*. As a result, both cinemas tend to attract a particular sub-group of the local population – typically described by the cinemas as predominantly middle class, middle aged, well-educated and interested in independent film.

However, both specialised cinemas also actively seek to complement this niche film enthusiast audience by scheduling films and events to appeal to

otherwise excluded groups of the local community such as the minority ethnic population.

The Rio, although predominantly specialised, is also the only cinema in Hackney, and therefore tries to ensure that a substantial proportion of its screenings are of popular films of wide enough appeal to attract a mainstream audience from Hackney.

While the Metro does not try to compete directly with the multiplex cinemas in Derby by showing popular mainstream films, it also has a varied programme of events and activities targeted at specific local community groups, as detailed in the next section.

### 3.1.2 Additional cinema visitors targeted by special events

As well as their main programme of films, all five cinemas sought to engage particular sub-groups of the local population through a series of specific screenings and events. Examples of these types of event are detailed in the following table.

**Table 3.1.2 Examples of special events and screenings at each case study cinema**

Savoy, Penzance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of term screenings for local primary schools</li> <li>• Annual screening for local Further Education (FE) college students</li> <li>• Occasional screenings for local hospital patients</li> <li>• Weekly screenings of "arts films" for Penwith Film Society</li> <li>• Cinema occasionally hired out for meetings &amp; conferences to local groups</li> <li>• Savoy restaurant used every year for local bank's Christmas party</li> </ul>
Curzon, Clevedon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Cinema and Baby club</li> <li>• Weekly Tea &amp; Biscuit matinees for older people</li> <li>• (Until recently), Kid's Clubs matinees</li> <li>• End of term screenings for local primary and secondary schools</li> <li>• Involvement in local primary school's local history project</li> <li>• Involvement in video production training course at local youth clubs: resulting reels screened at cinema before main feature</li> <li>• Monthly Film Club screenings of specialised films</li> <li>• Regular charity screenings, to help raise funds for various local societies</li> </ul>

- Cinema occasionally hired out as a venue for non-film events, such as wedding receptions, concerts
  - Rent-free space provided for Curzon FM, a local community radio station
  - Occasional screenings of films with particular local interest, e.g. documentary about local man's attempt to swim the Irish sea; special screening of *Land Girls* for local ex-land girls
- Lonsdale, Annan
- Saturday morning birthday parties for young children, involving private screening and special trip to the projection box
  - Regular end of term screenings for several local primary and secondary schools
  - Regular private screenings for local youth groups, such as Girls' Brigade, Scouts and Beavers
  - Weekly Tea & Biscuit matinees for older people
  - Weekly world cinema screenings
  - Cinema occasionally hired by local groups for special fund-raising events
- Metro, Derby
- Films included in the programme to appeal to particular sections of the local community, e.g. series of lesbian/gay films, films shown as part of Black History Month, Japanese films for local Japanese community
  - Regular private screenings for South Asian women's group
  - Monthly sign-interpreted screenings for children with hearing impairments and their families
  - Monthly screenings for children with autism and their families
  - Special screenings for adults with complex needs
  - Special events for various local community groups, e.g. Derbyshire Cuba Network, Derby multi-faith centre, Derby African Association, local Tibetan society
  - Extensive programme of educational activities, involving various local primary and secondary schools, colleges and youth clubs, including film-illustrated lectures, screenings preceded by talks; events aimed at KS3 to A level students, and often linked to the National Curriculum
  - Regular screenings of work by film students at local FE college
  - Involvement in film and video production courses for local African-Caribbean youth group, and local people with few or no qualifications
  - Programme of lifelong learning activities, including pre-film talks, informal and formal film studies courses, script-writing
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	<p>course, and study evenings on particular film genres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly screenings for parents and babies</li> <li>• Screenings in community buildings and town halls, for audiences living in rural areas</li> </ul>
Rio, Dalston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Turkish and Kurdish film festivals</li> <li>• Provision of space in cinema building for Turkish-speaking youth video training project, plus screening of course members' work at the Turkish festival</li> <li>• Screenings for Black History Month</li> <li>• Special screenings and events for a mentoring organisation working with young black people</li> <li>• Subsidiary venue for Raindance East film festival, screening work by local Hackney film-makers and young people, and films with connections to local communities from various ethnic backgrounds</li> <li>• Weekly Saturday morning Children's Picture Club, Playcentre Matinees, and School Holiday Matinees</li> <li>• Weekly Parents and Babies Club screenings</li> <li>• Free screenings available for primary and secondary schools, plus regular end of term screenings for local schools, play schemes and youth groups</li> <li>• Monthly free classic matinees for older people</li> <li>• Annual screenings as part of Hackney Festival for Older People</li> <li>• Annual Rio Tape Slide course, organised with a local community college</li> <li>• National Schools Film Week screenings for secondary and primary school pupils, in conjunction with Film Education</li> <li>• One-off events for local community groups and organisations, e.g. local African dance group, special film show organised by Learning Difficulties Service in Hackney, event organised in collaboration with a local yoga group, workshops on black visual artists.</li> </ul>

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As the above table shows, the case study cinemas are involved in a range of initiatives targeted at various local communities and groups.

### ***Local minority ethnic communities***

Both the Metro and Rio cinemas are located in areas with significant proportions of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Both cinemas schedule events and activities to appeal to their local minority ethnic communities. For example, the Metro often actively promotes films from particular countries to appeal to local minority ethnic communities, as well as

incorporating direct requests for particular films from local ethnic groups. The cinema has a well-established link with a local group of South Asian women, and holds regular private screenings of Indian films for them. The main Metro programme has also recently included Japanese films to appeal to the significant Japanese community living in the area (Toyota is a major employer in Derby), films screened as part of Black History Month films; as well as one-off events or series of events in conjunction with local Cuban, Tibetan, African, Jewish, Congolese and Bosnian-Herzegovnian societies.

The Rio has established good links with the Turkish and Kurdish communities in Hackney, and two key annual events for the Rio are the Turkish film festival, now in its 12th year, and the Kurdish Film Festival, now in its third year. Given that about a quarter of the population of Hackney are Black or Black British, the Rio is also involved in various events and collaborations designed to appeal to and promote the work and issues of this section of the community. For instance, in recent years, the Rio has screened films as part of Black History month, and as part of the Black Filmmakers International Film Festival. It has also worked with a number of organisations that run training courses or activities for young African-Caribbean people.

#### ***Local school pupils, college students and lifelong learners***

All five cinemas have established links with local schools. The extent of these links varies between the case studies. The Savoy, Curzon, Lonsdale and Rio all hold regular end-of-term screenings for pupils at local schools, and several cinemas also hold special screenings for local youth groups and FE college students. Both the Curzon and Rio have been involved in the delivery of video and film production training courses to young people, and screening of course members' work.

The Metro is the only one of the five cinemas to have a dedicated education officer, who organises an extensive educational programme, targeted at local primary and secondary school pupils, colleges and youth clubs. Activities such as film-illustrated lectures, and screenings preceded by talks, are aimed at local children from Key Stage 3 to A level, and screenings are also programmed to coincide with books being studied on the National Curriculum. The cinema regularly screens the work of students at two local FE colleges, and is planning to extend this kind of event to local secondary schools. The Metro also regularly works with a local African-Caribbean group who run after school video-making clubs. The cinema helps with editing and screening their work.

In addition to this educational work with school pupils and students, the Metro also offers its older visitors a range of 'lifelong learning' options. Some of the screenings are preceded by introductory talks by academics, film makers, screen writers and other industry practitioners. There is also an informal 'Talk Cinema' course, and a more formal 'Introduction to Film Course' every year. Other Metro courses include an amateur script-writing course, and study evenings on particular film genres such as film noir or Japanese animation.

The Rio also offers a regular course open to all ages in tape slide production. This course is run in conjunction with Shoreditch Community College, and leads to a qualification accredited by the London Open College Network.

### *Children and families*

Several of the case study cinemas have recently introduced Parent and Baby screenings, the purpose of which is to enable parents or carers with babies under one year old to visit the cinema without having to find a baby sitter, or worry about their babies causing a disturbance.

As well as the regular programme of films, two of the cinemas are involved in additional initiatives targeted directly at young children. The Lonsdale arranges on request Saturday morning birthday parties for young children, involving a private screening and a special trip into the projection room for the birthday child. The Rio runs a weekly Saturday Morning Children's Picture Club, as well as weekly Playcentre matinees and School Holiday Matinees of films to appeal to children.

The Metro has recently successfully applied for support from the charity Children in Need for an officer to organise screenings, events and outreach activities for deaf and autistic children and their families. The officer works two days a week, organising special events for them every few weeks, including regular BSL-interpreted screenings of children's films. Derby has become an important city for deaf people: the local population has about three times the national average of people with hearing impairments, in part due to the location in Derby of the Royal School for the Deaf and the Derby College for Deaf People. In addition to the Children in Need work, the Metro holds special events directed at this community: for example, a recent screening of work produced by deaf people.

### *Older people*

Three of the case study cinemas hold regular (weekly or monthly) matinees for older people, often preceded or followed by tea and biscuits. In addition to this, the Rio also holds an annual screening as part of the Hackney Festival for Older People, and the Curzon holds special screenings for the residents of local nursing and retirement homes.

### *Independent film enthusiasts*

The three mainstream case study cinemas all cater, to varying extents, to local residents who are interested in viewing films outside the popular mainstream. Both the Savoy and the Curzon schedule regular Film Club or Film Society screenings, which are also open to the public. The Savoy holds several screenings per week of a film selected by the Penwith Film Society; the Curzon's Film Club screenings are held monthly. The Lonsdale also programmes weekly world cinema screenings.

### *Other cinema visitors*

As table 3.1.2 shows, there are a variety of other occasional users of the case study cinemas. These include local charities that hire the cinemas' auditoria or meeting rooms for fund-raising events, local dance or theatre groups who hire the venue as performance space, and local societies for which the cinemas hold special private screenings.

The Curzon also provides rent-free space to a local community cinema, Curzon FM. The Metro reaches additional audiences in rural areas by screening films in community buildings and town halls across Derbyshire. The Savoy, in addition to its film-watching visitors, attracts customers to its first floor bar and restaurant, and the street-front pizza and ice-cream outlets.

## **3.2 What impact do the cinemas have on their visitors, and the wider community?**

In the previous section, we described the type of people that visit the case study cinemas. In this section, we explore the type of impact that the cinemas have on their visitors, and the local community as a whole. This section draws on the views expressed by regular audience members, the cinemas' suppliers, local schools and youth groups, and representatives from the local press and councils.

### **3.2.1 Local access to a cinema**

As the only cinema in Hackney, the Rio is seen by local residents as an important resource, enabling them to see films without having to travel

further afield. Although there are other cinemas within a few miles, travel across London to these for Dalston residents can be costly and time-consuming. For some in the local community participation can also be inhibited by a lack access to affordable tickets in addition to the travel costs.

Similarly, as the only cinemas in their towns, local residents in Penzance, Clevedon and Annan see their cinemas as important local venues. Although there are alternative cinemas in each area, these are ten to fifteen miles away and local public transport to and from the towns is generally regarded as inadequate, particularly in the evenings. So the case study cinemas are seen as providing a valuable service to residents without cars, who would be unable to access cinemas in other towns.

All five case study cinemas are centrally located, on or near the high street. This, together with nearby or adjacent car parking for most of the cinemas, helps to ensure good access for residents living in the immediate vicinity. Several of the cinemas reported that a significant proportion of their audience walked from home.

*"Me and my friends come here because it is just a ten minute walk, and you can see films in the evenings. Whereas if you want to go to a Warner Village, there is a bus there and it takes up a whole Saturday to go and come back. This is much more convenient"*

Regular Curzon visitor

Poor public transport, particularly in the evening, was cited by cinema visitors in all five areas as a barrier to access for some local residents living further afield. For instance, the lack of good public transport to outlying villages in the Penwith district, and the distance of the cinema from Penzance bus or train station, meant that rural residents without cars were under-represented in the Savoy audience. And in Dalston, it was thought that the lack of a tube station in the area put off some potential visitors from other parts of Hackney or adjacent boroughs, although the cinema is served by numerous bus routes and Dalston Kingsland train station is a five minute walk away.

Although the central location of each cinema is seen as positive, there are some aspects of the cinemas' neighbourhoods that were identified as possible problems for the cinemas. The perceived safety of the area is an issue for the Metro, Rio and Savoy. The Metro and Rio are both located in

areas of their cities that are slightly run-down and have reputations for crime; and the Savoy is located on a pedestrianised street, the southern end of which has been a meeting place for rough sleepers and drinkers. While most of the visitors to these three venues felt safe when visiting the cinemas, it was acknowledged that some potential audience might find the areas a little intimidating and stay away as a result.

In the Lonsdale audience discussion group, it was felt that the scarcity of good eating and drinking places near the cinema made it difficult for the cinema to generate good audiences. For people who wanted to "make an occasion" of a trip to the cinema, bars and restaurants were a key factor in their decision about which cinema to choose.

### **3.2.2 Local access to varied programme of films**

All the case study venues, to varying extents, were screening both mainstream (i.e. big budget "Hollywood" films) and specialised cinema (i.e. independent, challenging, sometimes foreign language films). In focus groups with regular cinema visitors, this access to a mixed programme of films was welcomed. Importantly, both the Savoy and Curzon were seen as offering access to unusually varied programmes for such small towns. In interviews and discussion groups with regular audience members, all were impressed at both the number and range of films on offer every week, and appreciated the opportunity to see interesting films on their doorstep, for which they might otherwise have to travel to Bristol or London. This suggested a clear cultural impact on members of the community who would not otherwise have access to such a variety of film.

Similarly, in a focus group of local Rio audience members, the cinema's programme variety – again ranging from blockbusters to lesser known foreign films – was greatly welcomed, and was compared favourably both with the nearby multiplexes which offered only mainstream films, and with some other independent cinemas in London that tended to show only one or two films all week.

There were a few Rio regulars who would prefer a more predominantly specialised programme. However, they also recognised the need for the Rio, as the only Hackney cinema, to screen popular films in order to attract the custom of a wider range of Dalston residents.

*"The programming is surprisingly diverse: I have the opportunity to see films here that I might have expected to have to go to London for"*

Regular Savoy visitor

*"I think it's wonderful because you do get to see a whole range of films from the blockbusters like Lord of the Rings, down to small films you wouldn't normally see in Clevedon"*

Regular Curzon visitor

*"My partner and I come to quite a range of films here, from blockbusters to quite a good selection of foreign films, which are not as easy to find elsewhere"*

Regular Rio visitor

Although the weekly world cinema screenings at the Lonsdale were also recognised by local residents as an unusual programme for such a small cinema, they were fairly poorly attended with average audiences of only six or seven. This is likely to be in part due to the size of the town – only 8,000 residents – and possibly also the Sunday evening screenings. Several people in the Lonsdale audience focus group felt that Sunday night was a time for the family, and that the screenings might be more successful if they were shown on a weekday evening.

As discussed earlier, the Metro's programme was predominantly specialised, aiming to offer a choice of films beyond the commercial mainstream; and the regular Metro audience welcomed the opportunity to see films that were not available at local multiplexes. In a survey of the Metro audience, 70% said that the main reason they had chosen to visit the Metro that day was because "the particular film was showing only at the Metro".

*"We come to see the sort of films that you can't see at other cinemas"*

*"Knowing there is something else, knowing there is really good cinema to be seen, if only you can find it. And cinemas like this offer that. You would never get that from mainstream multiplexes"*

Regular Metro visitors

As well as the regular programme of specialised cinema, the Metro also screens a number of mainstream films, several weeks after their first release. Although some Metro visitors found it frustrating that the Metro didn't show more first run mainstream films, many appreciated the opportunity to see

these more popular films in a non-multiplex atmosphere, and when they had missed their initial run.

The varied programmes at the case study cinemas were seen as helping to expand people's horizons, introducing them to films they might not otherwise consider. And world cinema screenings were recognised as an opportunity to learn about different societies and ways of life:

*"I have found that I have come to see films that I thought I wouldn't enjoy. So it's actually made me step outside of what I thought I would enjoy"*

Regular Curzon visitor

*"The Rio is good if you want to learn something about other cultures"*

Regular Rio visitor

In Penzance, the link between the cinema and the Film Society was highly valued. Society members felt very fortunate that they were able to select their own films, and then view them in a "real" cinema, unlike their counterparts in most other film societies who had to meet in church halls and other community buildings.

### **3.2.3 Access to film for families, children and teenagers**

Films and events targeted at families and children were welcomed by regular visitors to all five case study cinemas. Parents welcomed the opportunity to take their children to a local cinema. The combination of the cinemas' convenient town centre locations, and the cheap ticket and confectionery prices, meant that a trip to the cinema was an affordable option for local families.

Family trips to the multiplexes further afield were sometimes seen as prohibitively expensive, once the travel costs, higher ticket prices and expensive confectionery on offer at multiplexes were taken into account.

*"The price has to be a consideration. I mean, where we lived before, when we had our three boys at home, we used to think twice about going to the cinema. I mean a fiver for each child, well, we just couldn't do it. But here it's so cheap"*

Regular Lonsdale visitor

The Savoy's weekly bargain price screenings of family films, at which a £1.99 ticket covered admission, a small carton of popcorn and a drink, were seen as a very important way of increasing cinema access for families. Keeping ticket prices low was a way of ensuring that films were accessible to as many local residents as possible, particularly important in locations like Penzance and Dalston, some areas of which are among the more deprived in England and Wales.

The time involved in such a trip to neighbouring towns or districts was also seen as a problem that cinema visitors were delighted not to have to contend with. As a regular Curzon visitor explained, it meant that for families with very small children, they could eat their tea at home, pop out to the cinema to see the film, and then be back at home very quickly, which made the trip much more manageable for everyone.

The safe, friendly environment of these small independent cinemas, compared to bigger more impersonal establishments, was also an important draw for family audiences. As one Rio regular explained:

*"I come on a Saturday morning to the Picture Club, which is brilliant with my two children.... they love it, and they come week after week. It's a really nice atmosphere, and they feel a strong sense of loyalty to the cinema"*

The more personal atmosphere in small cinemas meant that on family trips to the cinema, the parents or guardians could be more relaxed about keeping an eye on their charges at all times; but it also meant that local parents were happy for the older children to go to the cinema on their own. This demonstrated the social value of the cinema as a safe place for the children to exert some independence. For example, the following quotes were typical of the discussion among audience members in Annan:

*"You know maybe in a big cinema, you might not even let them go to the toilet on their own, whereas here you know it's OK. In the city, I would probably be waiting outside for them"*

*"Parents are probably more willing for them to come here on their own than travel to Carlisle. And so they can have their bit of independence by coming here without mum and dad"*

## Regular Lonsdale visitors

This view of small cinemas as offering a safer, more personal environment than multiplexes was repeated in Derby during a discussion group with local residents. All of the residents in this group were multiplex visitors rather than Metro visitors, and they explained that a key driver behind cinema choice for them was the desire of their children to see the latest family films. Although the Metro gave special screenings of these type of films for children with hearing impairments and autism, it did not appear to be offering this service to all families. Within the focus group, there was a shared view that the Metro would be an attractive cinema to which to bring their children if there was a more family-oriented programme, because it was seen as a safer place to take children than the large multiplexes, and several members of the group fondly recalled trips to another local independent cinema (now closed).

*"I was sad when we lost Long Eaton's [cinema] as I always used that, always took a group of kids... It was a family run cinema. We were always there. It was where the old fashioned sweetie shop was, it was ever such a little place and the kids loved it... because it was easy to get to, small"*

*"With the smaller cinema, I could take a group of ten kids, and I knew people well enough so they would keep an eye on them while you took the others to the toilet. So having that personal touch does make you feel better"*

## Local Derby residents

The central location of the Metro, and its nearness to the shops and eating places, would also make it an attractive option for families at the weekends, if it were to show more family films.

In Annan, it was suggested that as there were not that many options for family entertainment in the town, the cinema was providing an important opportunity for families to do something together that they could all enjoy.

*"It's a family thing. You enjoy it together and talk about it when you get home"*

## Regular Lonsdale visitor

As mentioned earlier, three of the case study cinemas had recently introduced Parents & Babies clubs. These were proving very popular, enabling parents, who were keen movie-goers before becoming parents, to continue enjoying trips to the cinema, without having to find a babysitter or worrying about their baby disturbing other cinema-goers. As one mother was recently quoted in the Hackney Gazette:

*"I thought I'd have to wait for the latest films to come out on DVD before I saw them, but now I go to the cinema more than my partner"*

These weekly or monthly screenings were also a social occasion for new parents, and had led to new friendships being made.

In Clevedon, these screenings were particularly welcomed by local authority youth workers as a good way of including mothers under 21, who can otherwise be an excluded group.

While most of the cinemas were doing well with young children, and parents of young babies, the cinemas were not always engaging so well with older children and young people. This issue was discussed with various participants in the study, and it was felt that the modern multiplexes were more of a draw for this age group for various reasons – the bigger screens and sound, the less "old-fashioned" image, the opportunity to choose from a number of mainstream films on any one day, cafes in which to "hang out", and the food on offer at the cinema.

*"If I go with a group of friends, the food is a big factor – they all want the whole experience. The hotdogs, the popcorn, the massive drinks... Cakes [at the Rio] don't attract the junk food loving youth of today"*

The fact that the smaller cinemas were not always able to secure mainstream films on the date of their release could also be a deterrent for this age group. For some major blockbuster films, such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, the two week wait before the film was screened at the local cinema was just too long for some people to wait, particularly children and teenagers.

*"A film like that, especially for the kids, they want to see it straight away, so you feel you have to go and see it somewhere else. That's a shame"*

Regular Lonsdale visitor

*"Here, you do sometimes have to wait for the big films, so the youth market probably go to the Warner Village to see those films"*

Regular Curzon visitor

Ticket price was also an issue for young people: one young Dalston resident explained that although she was interested in going to the cinema, most of her contemporaries were not, and that many preferred to hire videos or DVDs because it was cheaper. This is an important point when considering the potential social and cultural value of the local cinema for some young people who may be excluded by unfavourable ticket price structures.

#### **3.2.4 Access to film for children with autism & hearing impairments**

At the Metro in Derby, although the main programme was not very family-oriented, there were frequent screenings for children with autism and hearing impairments. Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of local support groups for deaf and autistic children, and both were strongly supportive of the Metro's work.

The representative of the Derbyshire Autistic Support Group sees these screenings as a "godsend" for autistic children and their families. It's often the only opportunity that these children have of experiencing a trip to the cinema. Because the screening is exclusively for autistic children and their families, it means that parents and siblings can accompany the autistic child, without worrying about his/her behaviour, knowing that they are in the company of understanding people.

Sometimes, this is the only opportunity that families have to go out together. Families with autistic children often lead very fragmented lives, with parents taking turns to care for the autistic child while the other parent takes out the siblings, or does the supermarket shopping.

There is also some indication that this opportunity to visit the cinema has increased some of the older children's interest in cinema, with two young

people expressing interest in taking drama lessons and a third wanting to get involved in film making.

As well as increasing access to film and cinema for these children and their families, other benefits were mentioned such as introducing the children to new experiences, giving them the opportunity to learn basic skills such as how to sit still, how to behave in a cinema, and learning to be flexible about the choice of film. The content of the films themselves was also seen as having an impact: even for children who didn't understand the plot, they often came out of the films talking about the colours, or particular characters.

And there were benefits for the families too – the screenings could be a social occasion, at which families could meet other people in similar situations, experiencing similar difficulties. And where children were taken to the screenings by the Support Group, this could be a welcome break for the families.

A representative of the Derby Deaf Children's Society reported similar sorts of benefits to hearing impaired children and their families. Again, the Metro was seen as providing a unique opportunity for hearing impaired children and their families to see sign-interpreted films at the cinema. It was an opportunity for families with hearing impaired children to access cinema in the same way that hearing families are able to do. It was also seen as a social occasion for the children and their families, an event where they could socialise with people in a similar situation. In this case, the cinema is having a clear positive social and cultural impact for those families who may otherwise be excluded from such activity.

### **3.2.5 Access to film for older people**

As mentioned earlier, the local populations of Annan and Clevedon were older than the national average, and the older residents were seen as an important part of both cinemas' audiences. The matinees for older people were seen as a "godsend", particularly for those who did not like going out in the evenings. At a Curzon audience discussion group, it was pointed out that without a local cinema, many of the older Clevedon residents who were currently enjoying this service would not dream of travelling for miles to visit the cinemas further afield.

*"They wouldn't go to the cinema at all if it wasn't here"*

Members of the Lonsdale audience focus groups felt that these screenings were a valuable service for this section of the population, and a way of re-introducing people to the cinema, who might not have attended for years:

*"My mother came to see Calendar Girls, and she hadn't been to the cinema in 30 years... that's great, because my mother now may come back again. They enjoy it when they get there, they just need the push"*

The screenings were seen as a real social occasion for the audience:

*"They're a god send... you come here, have a hot drink and a biscuit, sit down and watch it in a great atmosphere, and have a wonderful experience".*

Regular Curzon visitor

*"We make a point of keeping Tuesday afternoon free... it's really sociable. Everybody says hello"*

Regular Lonsdale visitor

These matinees were also an opportunity for carers to come to the cinema with their charges.

An interview was conducted with one of the organisers of the Hackney Festival for Older People. She had been heavily involved in setting up the annual Rio screenings, and had received a lot of very positive feedback from the audience at these events. In the first of these screenings, it became clear that for many of the older people in the audience, who came from across the borough of Hackney, it was the first time they had been to the cinema for 20 or 30 years. Lack of independence or mobility, lack of money, poor access to transport, no partners or friends to go with, and also fears about the safety of going out (particularly at night time) were common barriers to people visiting the cinema. A significant proportion of the audience at these screenings were living in old people's homes, or sheltered housing, so were often reliant on others to organise outings for them.

These special screenings, initially wholly funded by Hackney Council, had provided them with an opportunity to see films in a safe environment, with no worries about transport to and from the cinema, or paying for the tickets.

The events, at which refreshments were served and entertainment provided were seen as a welcome social occasion for older people of all ethnic backgrounds, and a positive way of increasing the quality of life of older people in Hackney.

Attendance at these events had dropped off since the Council withdrew some of the funding. A small charge is now made for each ticket, transport now has to be organised by the various nursing homes and other community organisations involved, and refreshments are no longer provided. However, the Rio reduces the prices of its own refreshments for these screenings to keep costs manageable for the audience and helpers. New funding arrangements are currently being explored, in order to keep these events running.

### **3.2.6 Access to film for particular local minority ethnic groups**

As described earlier, both the Rio and the Metro were located in multicultural areas, and were engaged in programmes and events designed to appeal to particular local minority ethnic groups.

The Rio's various festivals and special screenings of world cinema were welcomed as a very positive way of engaging the local minority ethnic communities in Hackney. For instance, in an interview with one of the organisers of the Kurdish festival, he felt strongly that the festival was giving the East London Kurdish community access to films that would not otherwise have an outlet in this country. He pointed out that the festival would have been impossible without the Rio's agreement not to charge an up-front fee for obtaining the films, and hiring the cinema. The fee is taken out of the ticket sale income. The Rio's practical help with organising the festival, and raising funding has also been invaluable.

The festival representative also felt that the festival was a service to the community, in that it drew people into the cinema who would not normally attend. He felt sure that some people who had attended the Rio for the first time at the festival had gone on to become regular Rio audience members.

Feedback was also extremely positive following the 100 Black Men of London screenings for young people and their parents (in 2003). The following comments were received after screenings of films about Rosa Parks and Marcus Garvey, both important figures in Black history:

*"This is an ideal opportunity to teach our children about someone so prominent in our history"*

*"I found the showing of Rosa Parks amazing. Not just the film, but being in a room with black women and men and most importantly children"*

*"Can I just say how much we enjoyed the screening on Sunday. We all felt that we came away better informed and enlightened, and proud to be part of such a rich and diverse community – thank you"*

While these festivals and special events were welcomed, both audience and local residents felt that more could be done within the main year-long film programme to engage the various minority ethnic groups living in Hackney: including more films which would appeal directly to the sizeable African-Caribbean population in Dalston, the local Vietnamese and Chinese communities, and the Turkish and Kurdish communities.

This was a view supported by other participants in the study, including members of both the Kurdish and Turkish Festival committees, a local Turkish newspaper, and the director of Kush Promotions, who promote the work of black filmmakers, and have used the Rio's basement to run a digital video production training course for socially disadvantaged young people.

The shared view was that, while the festivals and special events were a good way of making links with the various local minority ethnic communities, these links were not being maintained outside these special events, and there were not enough films in the main year-round programme to appeal directly to these local residents. It was particularly noticeable that in a borough in which one in four residents were Black or Black British, the regular cinema audience fewer than one in ten of the regular Rio audience came from this ethnic background.

Interviewees suggested two ways of tackling the problem: firstly, a change in programming, to include regular screenings of films throughout the year that appeal to these different communities, would generate a year-round audience for the cinema. Secondly, a change in the marketing strategy was recommended. For instance, there was felt to be scope for better targeting of advertising of such films, for example in Turkish newspapers, restaurants and kebab shops. Local community organisations could also be enlisted to

help with spreading the word about films or events of particular interest to them.

In Derby, the local population was not as ethnically diverse as in Hackney. However, 13% of the local population were from minority ethnic backgrounds, and as discussed earlier, the Metro sought to programme a diverse range of films designed to appeal to the various local minority ethnic communities. In an audience survey conducted as part of this study, like the Rio, the Metro appeared to be attracting a disproportionately high percentage of residents from a white ethnic background. However, one initiative that is worth noting is the well-established link with a local group of South Asian women. In response to an initial request from the group, the Metro agreed to set up private screenings of Indian films for the group. By doing this, the Metro is enabling this group not only to see Indian films which might not be screened elsewhere in Derby, but also to view them in a female-only setting. For cultural reasons, these women would probably not feel comfortable attending regular cinema screenings.

### **3.2.7 Access to film for people with disabilities**

The case study cinemas varied in the level of access they provided for people with disabilities. The Curzon, Lonsdale, Savoy and Rio all offered wheelchair access to their screens and toilets. The Metro's ability to offer access to people with mobility problems is limited by its current building, which is owned and run by the University of Derby. There are no dedicated toilets for disabled customers, and no unassisted access to the cinema. However, when the cinema relocates to the new QUAD development, disabled access will be improved.

The Metro is fully equipped to screen films for people with hearing impairments, and is equipped with an infra-red system. It also provides sign-interpreted screenings, as described in an earlier section. The Curzon and Rio also have infra-red assisted hearing systems or induction loops for the hard of hearing. The Curzon also offers audio description facilities on selected films, through Dolby screentalk. There are no facilities in the Savoy for induction loops or subtitling.

The Savoy does not currently offer wheelchair access to its restaurant and bar. However, the Merlin Cinema group is in the process of adapting some of its other cinemas in West Cornwall for disabled users. The Regal cinema in Redruth is the most accessible.

### 3.2.8 Opportunity to learn new skills or knowledge

As discussed earlier, all five case study cinemas have established links with local schools or colleges. To illustrate the sort of benefit that these links can have, interviews were conducted with a teacher from a local primary school in Annan, and a media studies teacher at an FE College in Derby.

The Annan primary school teacher explained that her school had been organising twice-yearly screenings for its pupils for the last four years, and found that children really benefited from the experience, both socially and educationally. She described the purpose of the screenings as "educational pleasure". Children who might go to the cinema with their parents got a particular pleasure out of going with a group of peers. The school, wherever possible, tried to link the trips to literacy skills, organising discussions of the content of the film in class before and after the screenings. It was also suggested that the screenings were a particularly important provision for children from poorer families and those living outside Annan, who were isolated by lack of transport. These children might otherwise not get the opportunity to visit the cinema.

Several cinemas tried to accommodate school requests to screen particular films with links to subjects being studied by pupils. These screenings were of clear educational benefit to the pupils: for example, a special screening at the Lonsdale of *The Pianist* for local secondary school pupils to coincide with the school's Remembrance Day lessons about the holocaust.

The Curzon provided another example of direct involvement in local pupils' studies. The cinema had recently been the focus of a local history project (organised by the Watershed in Bristol) for pupils at a local primary school. And the Savoy cinema manager, in his role as a local businessman, had given presentations to the college's tourism and media students about how to market services to the local community.

An interview was conducted with a media studies teacher at an FE college in Derby. The teacher was herself sometimes a guest lecturer at Metro, and often took her A level students to Metro screenings. She saw the links with the Metro as having many benefits for her students. At the simplest level, their attendance at regular screenings was a valuable way of introducing them to a wider range of films than they would see at the multiplexes; and served to increase their interest in cinema-going. The screenings also helped to illuminate particular issues being studied on the A level course. And the trips to the cinema were a good social occasion for the students.

The links with the Metro were also valuable in providing students with career information. Recently, the Metro had held a media careers day at which students were able to learn more about various different sectors of the industry, including journalism, television and film making. The education officer at the Metro was also proactive in organising behind-the-scenes tours of Metro for interested students; and arranged end of year screenings of the work of student film-makers. The good two-way communication between the college and Metro was much appreciated; in particular, Metro was very open to suggestions about programming that would fit in with specific aspects of the college course.

The Curzon, Rio and Metro were all involved in the delivery of training programmes in video and film production to local young people and other residents. Interviews were conducted with a number of the tutors, course directors and youth workers, to explore the impact of such programmes on the participants.

The Curzon has ongoing links with various local authority-run youth clubs. One recent project involved a group of about seven 15-16 year olds, who were selected because of attention problems at school. They made local news reels, working under the guidance of a local production company, and a local film editor who is on the cinema's management committee. The resulting reels were screened at the cinema before the main feature.

An interview was conducted with a Clevedon youth worker who had been involved in various projects with links to the Curzon, including this news reel project. She very much welcomed the links with the Curzon and the enthusiasm of the cinema manager, who attends monthly youth forum meetings; and she could see clear benefits for the young participants. As a result of the newsreel project, some of the participants had decided to change their career ideas, and pursue work in film production and other media-related sectors. She also felt that the project had been important in giving *"a voice to the community, particularly the younger people"*. Following this project, the youth group had been inspired to start a new project, making a "scary movie", and together with "Calling the Shots", a production company in Bristol, successfully applied for a First Light grant. The resulting film will be shown at the Curzon, and will be attended by other schools and youth groups in the area. There are also plans to start another newsreel project, to be screened monthly in the cinema. As well as motivating the young people, and introducing them to new career ideas, the link with the

cinema is create new younger audiences for the Curzon. Clearly, links between the local cinema and young people in the community can be enhanced by the First Light scheme.

The long-running tape slide course at the Rio is the only such course on offer in London, and is unique in its direct association with a working cinema. As part of this study, an interview was conducted with the course tutor to discuss what sort of benefits were gained by course participants.

The course attracts up to ten students a year from a range of backgrounds – women who wanted to come back to learning after raising families; photography, fine art or film students seeking to expand their technical skills, and their portfolios; and Rio visitors and local residents simply interested in learning a new skill. Completion of the course quite often led students towards further training courses, or opened up potential new career opportunities.

The association with the Rio was felt to be invaluable for the course, and meant that the students were able not only to view screenings of their work in progress, but also to promote their finished product in a public arena. It took the course out of a purely academic environment and placed it in a professional work environment, making it much more clearly vocational and career-enhancing.

It was also a good social network for course participants, and for some had helped to reduce feelings of isolation – for example, for people new to the area, or for mothers who had felt excluded from work or learning networks while raising their families.

Similar benefits for participants were reported by the director of 'Bridge to Normal Living: a digital video production course', run by Kush Promotions in the basement of the Rio from 2000 until December 2003. As well as helping to engage a group of socially excluded young people, who had been having problems with substance misuse and offending, the course enabled participants to learn new film-making skills, and introduced them to the joys of film-watching. Many of the course participants became regular Rio visitors after the course. The director of Kush Promotions also felt that having the course based at the Rio made the cinema appear more accessible to the wider local community.

About 24–30 students per year participate in the Balik Arts Video Projects, which are based at the Rio. Most of the students are local young people from Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds. And some of the projects are targeted at specific groups, such as young offenders. The course leader reports similar benefits to those highlighted for the above courses: increased confidence, ideas for future training and careers, enhanced social networks and an increased appreciation of film-watching (enhanced by the provision of free tickets to selected Rio screenings).

As mentioned earlier, Metro offers its visitors a range of 'lifelong learning' options, such as introductory talks before screenings of films, an informal Talk Cinema course, a more formal Introduction to Film course, and various study evenings on particular film genres.

In the audience focus group, it was clear that these courses and events were seen as a real selling point for the Metro, and an opportunity for people interested in cinema to expand their film knowledge:

*"It's different, and you wouldn't get that in a multiplex. That's why you come here ...I come to learn stuff"*

Regular Metro visitor

A discussion group was held with people who were currently attending, or had recently attended, the Introduction to Film or Talk Cinema courses. They were asked what they felt they had gained from attending the courses, and one of the main benefits was felt to be an introduction to new films and film genres. The following quotes are typical:

*"I have certainly seen films that I wouldn't have done. We saw one that was advertised as a film about two teenage boys in Spain, and that would just not have appealed to me. But it was one of the best films I have ever seen".*

*"It motivates me to go out and see films that I probably wouldn't see otherwise".*

*"Now I have come in and seen things that I never would have thought of seeing. It has broadened my horizons; it's been really good"*

Talk Cinema / Introduction to Film course participants

Taking part in the courses and study evenings was also seen as an opportunity to meet like-minded people:

*"It doesn't feel like a course – it feels like a night out and a chance to talk... There is an image of people coming out of a cinema animatedly discussing what they have just seen, and it's become part of the culture. I think to give people the opportunity to do that in some sort of organised but fairly flexible way is great. It can be a way to meet people with like-minded interests"*

Other reported benefits were an increased interest and motivation to read more books about film, see more films of particular genres, or by particular directors; and perhaps investigate more advanced film studies courses.

As mentioned earlier, the Metro is the only case study cinema with a dedicated education officer. During the study, several of the other cinema managers explained that they were very keen to expand their educational activities and links with schools, but struggled to make any progress with this within the constraints of their budget and without additional staff.

The Rio manager, for example, is very keen to expand the educational work of the cinema, but had felt unable to make progress on this, with the current level of staffing. Hackney Council also acknowledged the huge untapped potential for the Rio to work with local schools, and has recently provided funding to enable the Rio to offer free screening events to local schools. The manager reports a high level of interest from local schools so far. The funding is only for a 3-month trial, and for the Rio to continue this level of educational activities may require the appointment of an outreach and education post.

The Curzon manager has met with local school teachers to discuss the possibilities of establishing more school links and educational projects, and one of the cinema's future plans is to apply for funding for a part-time education officer.

In Annan, another potential problem was raised. Although some local schools are still clearly supportive of the cinema trips, the manager feels that the demand for school screenings may be decreasing. This is due in part to the increasing requirements for schools to carry out risk assessments and send out consent forms, even for simple trips to the cinema; and also to the

increasing technical ability of schools to project their films themselves from DVDs on the school site, providing the appropriate licences are in place.

### **3.2.9 Specialised cinemas: Drawing in local audiences**

For the two specialised cinemas, a key issue that was raised during the study was their ability to attract a wide range of local residents. Both cinemas were successful in attracting niche groups of film enthusiasts, and also had good links with specific local minority ethnic communities, schools, youth groups and so on, as described earlier.

However, it became clear during the study that both cinemas were less well engaged with the more general local population.

The perception of the cinemas as offering only a specialised programme appears to be one of the main deterrents for the wider local population. In a focus group of local multiplex visitors in Derby, none had been attracted to the Metro by the listings in the local press, mainly because they did not recognise the film titles, directors or stars. When deciding to go the cinema, they tended to be drawn to multiplexes as a result of the national advertising campaigns for the big budget blockbuster movies.

Similarly, in a focus group of Dalston residents who were not regular Rio visitors, they felt that the Rio has had a rather specialised image, only catering to those who were interested in "intellectual", out-of-the-ordinary and subtitled films; and despite the increasing numbers of mainstream films being screened at the cinema, this specialised image endures for many, and puts people off. As one local resident put it:

*"No matter how good it looks on the outside, if the films don't appeal to certain people, they are not going to come"*

In both the local resident groups, the cinemas' marketing and advertising strategies were highlighted as possible problems. In the Dalston resident group, several people mentioned that they were often not aware of what was showing at the Rio, and would like to see more prominent advertising on the outside of the building about current and forthcoming films, and wider and more frequent distribution of brochures. None of the local Derby resident group had seen the Metro brochures, despite the 22,000 brochures distributed locally every two months.

The residents in these two discussion groups were regular multiplex visitors, and one of the features of multiplex cinemas that attracted them was the quality of the facilities, including the screen and sound quality, the comfort of the seats and the range of confectionery on offer. Multiple screen cinemas are also able to screen films for longer. Small cinemas like the Rio and Metro would struggle to compete with the multiplexes on these terms.

However, the idea of a community cinema was certainly something that appealed to the local Derby residents. As explained earlier, there was some interest in the idea of the Metro being a safe, friendly, central cinema, particularly appealing to local families. The group were also impressed with the links the Metro had with community groups. They had not seen any press coverage of this, and felt that the Metro could do more to promote itself as a community cinema.

Whether the specialised cinemas, in particular the Metro, should be casting their nets wider to appeal to more of the local population is an issue for debate. Both Hackney and Derby City Councils were supportive of the cinemas' current work, but felt that both the Rio and Metro could do more to create a stronger local image for the cinema, build up a wider audience base, and extend their outreach activities.

Among the regular Rio and Metro visitors, there were mixed views about whether the cinemas should attempt to appeal to a wider audience. Some were of the view that the cinemas should reach out to a more diverse audience from all sections of the local population. Others felt that in order to attract a wider audience, the cinemas would need to change the balance of their programmes between specialised and mainstream, which would reduce their appeal to the current committed audience.

### **3.2.10 Opportunity to see films in a "traditional" local cinema setting**

In interviews and discussion groups with the audience for all five case study cinemas, the cosy, friendly atmosphere of the cinemas was repeatedly praised. The cinemas were seen as providing the opportunity to see films in an intimate local setting, rather than in a large "impersonal" out-of-town cinema. There were repeated references throughout the study to the real "sense of community" that was part of the traditional cinema experience, and was not in evidence in the modern multiplex cinemas.

The following quotes are typical of the discussions:

*"It's a charming little cinema, with a personal touch"*

*"People get to know you – they recognise you, and have a chat. You meet other people and there is a real community thing"*

*"The atmosphere is wonderful, and it's very much a community in the afternoon. We've been welcomed with open arms"*

*"I like to come here because it's very local, very cosy and very intimate... the atmosphere is better"*

*"In the multiplex, it's just not the same sort of experience at all. It's very big and impersonal"*

Regular visitors at the Savoy, Curzon, Lonsdale, Metro and Rio

For the audiences at the Rio and Curzon, the historic nature of the cinema building itself also contributed to the experience of watching films in a traditional setting, as the following quotes illustrate.

*"I think the Rio has a very nice personality. It's quite cuddly. It has this nice building with the Art Deco feel"*

*"It's smaller, different, it has a bit of history to it"*

Regular Rio visitors

*"When you come here, you really do come for the cinema experience. Anywhere else, you are just going to watch the film. Here, you appreciate everything... it's friendly, it's nostalgic, going up the stairs, the kiosk in the corner..."*

Regular Curzon visitor

It was recognised that the case study cinemas' facilities sometimes compared unfavourably with those of some multiplexes. For instance, the seats at the Metro were felt to be rather uncomfortable, and the quality of the sound and screen were not always as good as other Derby cinemas. However, the slightly dated, well-worn nature of the facilities had its own appeal for the audience, as illustrated by these quotes from Metro regulars:

*"It's quirky"*

*"I quite like the ticket office and the till. It's cute"*

For some regular visitors at the Rio and Metro, part of the appeal of the cinemas over the more commercial cinemas was the type of audience they attracted:

*"You do not get the kids here so often: that puts me off going to a mainstream cinema, with kids screaming. You often can't hear anything, and I can't watch the film properly... that's why I come here. Because you know that people generally are going to be avid film fans"*

Regular Metro visitor

*"I think that is what independent cinema is all about... it's not for the young people to hang out. It's to appreciate the movie"*

Regular Rio visitor

But even for the committed Rio and Metro regulars, multiplexes were sometimes the cinema of choice. For watching big action movies, the multiplexes' bigger screens and higher sound quality were attractive. The greater viewing opportunities available on any one day at multiple screen cinemas were also a draw, and for younger people, the food available at the multiplexes was a more attractive option than the Rio or Metro refreshments.

### **3.2.11 Contribution to a sense of place / Focus for pride in the local area**

Participants in the study were asked what sort of wider role the cinemas played in their local areas, and in improving the image of the locality.

#### ***Role as local venue***

In all five areas, the cinema was regarded by local residents and the local press as a key entertainment venue. In Penzance, Clevedon and Annan, there were not felt to be many other entertainment options in the towns: for example, the Clevedon Mercury described the Curzon as Clevedon's *"only venue of note in the town"*. And the cinemas were seen as providing a vital service for local residents, particularly the young people. One regular Curzon visitor highlighted a potential negative social impact arising from cinema closure:

*"There would be a lot less for young people to do here if it closed down, and there would be many more kids hanging around on the streets"*

Savoy, Curzon and Lonsdale visitors shared the view that small towns like theirs were *"lucky"* to have a cinema that showed such a variety of films every week. It was recognised that local cinemas had closed down in many other areas in recent years, and their towns were unusual in this regard.

In Derby too, although local residents were not always fully aware of the Metro, its committed regulars and the local press felt that the cinema was providing an important cultural service in Derby:

*"It helps to keep it [cultural life] ticking over in Derby, because the cultural pulse of Derby is very weak"*

*"I think if the Metro was to close tomorrow, it would be a huge cultural loss to Derby"*

When lists of "places of interest" in Hackney were being compiled by the local paper, the Rio always featured as one of the key entertainment venues in the borough along with the Empire and Ocean. It was seen as a vital resource for local residents, given there were no other cinemas in the borough.

### ***Local press coverage***

One indicator of a cinema's place in the local area is the level of prominence it achieves in the local press. The extent of local press coverage varied among the five case study cinemas. Press support was strong for the Curzon and Rio, reasonably good for the Metro and Lonsdale, but less so for the Savoy.

In Clevedon and Hackney, the local press has been actively involved in campaigns to support their local cinemas. The Clevedon Mercury, a free newspaper distributed throughout North Somerset, has adopted the Curzon cinema as *"its big campaign"*. In the nineties, when the cinema was threatened with closure, the Mercury covered the story and fund-raising efforts, and contributed £3,000 of its own money to help the community buy the cinema. Since then, regular coverage is given both to the cinema's programme of films, but also to the many fund-raising activities that have taken place, and the cinema logo features prominently above the paper's

masthead logo. The cinema has also been featured on local television news programmes.

In May 2003, an article in the Hackney Gazette alerted the Rio and its audience to a proposed development for Dalston which included a four-screen multiplex in its plans. The Rio management sought public support to oppose planning permission being granted, and features appeared in both the Hackney Gazette and Time Out, which led to the voicing of much local support.

The Lonsdale is reasonably prominent in local newspapers, largely due to the cinema's weekly adverts. However, in the film reviews, because prominence is usually given to the "big titles", the local papers do tend to favour the Odeon cinemas over the Lonsdale. The cinema manager is also fairly proactive in getting editorial coverage of the cinema's community initiatives. For instance, the Annandale Observer had recently published articles about school visits to the cinema, and a recent initiative with young mothers. The Observer was also quick to produce a substantial piece, with colour photographs, about the participation of the cinema in this study, with a prominent reference to the article on the front page of the paper.

In Derby, the Metro was regularly covered by the local press, both in terms of programme listings and more substantial stories about the films or news stories. Both local papers tried to provide more coverage to the Metro than other cinemas in Derby. They recognised that as a specialised cinema, it needed more local press coverage than multiplexes which benefit from the big national advertising campaigns associated with individual mainstream films. The local papers also provided regular coverage of Metro news stories, such as its screenings for deaf children, links with local schools, and its place in the QUAD development; these stories were often written in response to Metro press releases.

Although the Savoy cinema has received good press coverage in the past (in 2002 the magazine *Cornwall Today* ran a feature about the history of the cinema, and its recent refurbishment by the current owner), its coverage is now limited to basic cinema listings in the local newspapers. The cinema itself rarely receives additional press coverage. This was confirmed in an interview with a representative from The Cornishman newspaper, who felt that beyond weekly advertisements of the film programme, the cinema was not very proactive in getting press coverage for its events.

### *Local council support*

Another indication of a cinema's place in the local area is the level of Council support and recognition it receives. The Curzon, Metro and Rio were well supported by their local councils, but there was not much Council recognition of the Lonsdale or Savoy cinemas.

The Curzon, Metro and Rio have all received both financial and practical support from their local Councils. North Somerset District Council provided a financial contribution to the community purchase of the cinema in the nineties, and further grants for the purchase or maintenance of equipment at the cinema. The Council also make a practical contribution to the running of the Curzon through the presence on the management committee of two town councillors, and practical advice from Council staff in funding applications, and facilitating links between the cinema and other local events and organisations, such as the local museum.

Derby City Council is the principal funder of the Metro, and there are close day-to-day links between the Metro and Council staff. There is a member of the council on the Cinema Board, and council staff advise and assist the cinema on various aspects of local authority policy and funding. The Council actively supported the Metro several years ago in its appointment of a permanent education officer.

The Rio has received revenue support in the past from Hackney Council, and is now in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, which supports specific programming such as the Turkish and Kurdish Film Festivals and a recently launched trial education programme. The Council have been working closely with the Rio's board and management in recent months, to expand the cinema's programming and organisational development and ensure that the cinema's future is secure.

The Curzon and Metro cinemas were both identified as a key part of their Councils' cultural strategies. The Metro, in particular, had a central place in the QUAD project: Derby's future visual arts and media centre, a project which the Council was part funding. The Metro manager is involved in the Arts Community Forum, and is a member of the steering group for the Council's Arts Strategy. While the Rio did not feature explicitly in Hackney Council's cultural strategy, the cultural development officer at the Council recognised the Rio as one of the three best known cultural institutions in Hackney, and its importance as the only cinema in the borough.

Both the Metro and Rio were also recognised by their local Councils as key community-based organisations. Derby City Council felt that the Metro was doing very important work through its links with various community groups such as children with hearing impairments, and its educational work with schools and colleges. The Council saw this as the Metro's unique selling point, and was very keen that this work continue when the cinema relocated to its new building. Hackney Council recognised the Rio as *"a strong and vibrant community-focused institution"*.

All three of these cinemas also featured in Council tourism materials. In Clevedon, the Council Tourism Committee were seeking to promote the cinema in a number of ways, including on brown signs from the major roads, and via a North Somerset regional heritage and tourism information centre. The Rio is featured in Hackney Council's "Discover Hackney" brochures, which are distributed throughout the borough; and the Council also displays the Rio's brochures in council offices, buildings and libraries. And the Metro was briefly referred to in Derby tourism print and web publicity, and is marked on the Tourist Office city map.

In Penzance and Annan, there was much less evidence of local council support for the cinemas. Neither cinema was mentioned in their council's cultural or tourism strategy, although there was some promotion of the Savoy as a rainy day attraction by the local Penzance tourist office, and the Savoy also features as one of twenty sites of historical interest on the local authority's "Penzance Trail", and is marked as such by a plaque on the front of the building.

In Annan, neither the cinema nor its visitors felt that the Council recognised the value of the Lonsdale. The cinema, despite applying, had not benefited from the council's "high street facelift fund", and had had to fund the installation of brown street signs to the cinema itself. And unlike the nearby towns of Moffat and Gretna, the council in Annan had not funded a town map, marking key sites such as the cinema and swimming pool. The Lonsdale audience focus group participants were not sure that the council would necessarily step in to help if the Annan cinema was threatened with closure. The local council was viewed as generally rather neglectful of Annan, letting some of the historic buildings fall into disrepair.

### ***Place within local community***

It became clear during the study that all five case study cinemas enjoyed strong support among local residents. This was particularly strong in

Clevedon, where the cinema had been the focus of a major fund-raising campaign. The high regard in which the Curzon is held locally is demonstrated by the significant and ongoing involvement of local residents and businesses in fund-raising efforts for the Curzon Restoration Fund. Recent fund-raising activities include sponsored parachute jumps and cycle rides, annual open-air concerts, seat sponsorship and black-tie events to celebrate the cinema's 90th birthday. To date, £150,000 has been raised.

Both the Savoy and the Rio had also enjoyed demonstrations of local support when they were threatened with closure. The Savoy had been saved from almost certain closure in the early nineties by the current owner who had bought the cinema in 1990 and embarked on a five-year programme of improvements. By transforming it into a three-screen cinema and incorporating a bar, restaurant and take-away units, he had successfully turned the failing single-screen cinema into a financially viable operation. During the renovations, owner Geoff Greaves received a considerable amount of local support for his efforts, and Cornwall Today described him as a "knight in shining armour".

In 2003, when the Rio was threatened with a potential multiple screen cinema development in Dalston, the cinema sought public support to oppose planning permission being granted. The Rio supporters, both local and London-wide rose to the challenge. A flurry of emails and letters were received by the Planning department supporting the Rio's position, and planning permission for the new cinema was refused.

In interviews and discussions in all five areas, the cinemas' regular visitors expressed feelings of loyalty, pride and protectiveness towards their cinemas, which they saw as vital amenities for the local communities, as the following quotes illustrate.

*"I think people feel very protective towards the Rio because we don't want to lose it"*

*"If it [the Savoy] were to close, there would be an outcry... it would be a disaster"*

*"It's [Curzon] our cinema, it's the whole community's, not just a particular group, but everybody's... That's something to be really proud of"*

*"I don't know what the community would do if we lost the cinema [Lonsdale]"*

In Derby, the Metro was highly valued by its regular audience of film enthusiasts, and the various local organisations and schools that were linked to the Metro. However, the cinema did not have a consistently strong image across the wider community. The City Council hopes that Metro's new visible, central location in QUAD, and its expansion to two screens will enable the cinema, in its main film programme, to reach out to a wider local audience, rather than its current limited appeal to a certain type of film enthusiast. As one Metro visitor put it:

*"If the Metro were to close, it would be a tragedy for us, but for the community as a whole, they would not really notice what had happened"*

This suspicion was given weight during interviews with local Derby residents who were not regular Metro visitors. A focus group was conducted with residents who had been recruited in local streets and shopping centres. Several of those attending the group had not even heard of the Metro cinema, and those who were aware of its existence tended to be unclear about where the cinema was, or what sort of films were being shown:

*"People don't have a clue as to where it is. It's not in a prominent position, is it? If you don't know Derby town centre, then you don't know how to get there"*

*"If it's a local community cinema, it's not really going to have the funding to push big on the marketing like the Showcase and the UCI. So people don't get to know that it's here, and if they do know it's here, they don't know what films are on, or what they are about"*

As has already been discussed in various sections of this report, all the cinemas were seen as playing a part in the local community to a greater or lesser extent. The Curzon was a community-owned cinema, and the local community were actively involved in supporting the cinema through their fund-raising activities and working as volunteers at the cinema itself. The Metro and Rio were well established as community-focused institutions through their work with various community organisations and schools. The Savoy was perhaps rather less community-focused than the other four

cinemas in terms of outreach work. However, it was recognised as a key local business in the area, and regularly supported local charities and fund-raising events. In Annan, local perceptions of the cinema were inextricably linked to perceptions of the cinema owner, and his commitment to the local community was highly valued. The owner's teaching background meant that he was well known among local children, and he was often personally involved in local school events, Girls Brigade award ceremonies as well as working as a local swimming coach. The Lonsdale cinema was also a regular sponsor of local events and organisations.

### ***Effect on local migration***

In three of the case studies, the cinema's regular visitors felt that the presence of the cinema in the town affected people's decisions to move into or out of the area. In Annan, the Lonsdale had been a factor in attracting some of the newer residents to the town, as the following quotes from members of the audience group indicates:

*"It's just over a year since we moved here from Glasgow, and the cinema was one of the considerations we took into account when we moved here. We lost our local cinema on the south side of Glasgow, and that was quite an event, having fought for it twice over ten years. So to come here, and find one that has very up to date films was a great bonus"*

*"We moved up from London about three years ago, and one of the reasons we chose Annan was because it had such a good range of facilities, which included a cinema"*

While the Curzon regulars did not believe that the presence of the cinema in the town would necessarily attract people to move to the area, they did feel that the cinema was *"a very good reason to stay once you're here"*.

These sentiments were echoed by one of the regular Savoy visitors in Penzance:

*"I would move back to London if it closed"*

### ***Environmental impact on immediate vicinity***

Another way in which cinemas can contribute to the sense of a local place is via their environmental impact on their immediate vicinities. This issue was discussed with study participants.

The Lonsdale, Savoy and Rio were all recognised as having played an important part in raising the image of the local area. With several of the older buildings in Annan falling into disrepair, regular Lonsdale visitors were impressed with the "real effort" that the cinema management had made with the upkeep of the cinema. Several commented on how well-kept the building was, the quality of the sound and screen, and the toilets were described as "immaculate". The cinema was seen as setting a good example in a town that was looking rather neglected, with an increasing number of empty shops on the high street, and a big site near the Town Hall that has been derelict for several years.

The manager of the Savoy plays an active part in the local Trader Association, and hosts the association's meetings in the Savoy bar. In this role, he has been directly involved in working with other local businesses to regenerate Causewayhead, the pedestrianised street on which the cinema is located. In the early nineties, the street was largely derelict, with many shop windows boarded up. The subsequent renovation of the cinema and the rest of the street has significantly improved the ambience of the area, and the level of trade, both for the cinema and other adjacent businesses, has risen as a result. The regular cinema-goers appreciated the cinema's interior and exterior renovations, but some still described the cinema as "a bit tatty", particularly the foyer and toilets, and felt that this needed to be improved in order for the Savoy to properly create an impression of being an important building in Penzance.

A representative of the Hackney Gazette described the Rio as *"a local landmark – most people know of it"*, with its Art Deco frontage and being situated in the main shopping area. Both Rio regulars and other local residents agreed that it created a focus for the high street, which was important for generating passing trade for other businesses, in an otherwise fairly deprived area:

*"I think it is a symbol of the fact that Dalston is not a dump... we have a lot there – there's the Rio, the jazz bar, a lot of excellent Turkish restaurants, the theatre. And I always think of the Rio first, as it is in a prominent position"*

*"Without the cinema, I could imagine that a lot of the cafes and restaurants wouldn't be here as they would lose the passing trade. People wouldn't probably hang out in the high road"*

At the time of this study, the Metro was looking forward to its relocation to a more visible location in Derby, as part of a new visual arts and media centre being planned for the City Centre. In its present location, within a University building on a mainly residential street within five minutes walk of the city centre, the cinema's presence was fairly unobtrusive. However, it was felt that its presence on Green Lane had benefited the immediate local area. The cinema is located on the edges of the City Centre and Normanton, in an area which has a poor reputation, and has been associated with prostitution, drugs and car crime. The nearby dwellings are largely flats and hostels, with a fairly transient population. The cinema had helped to improve feelings of safety in the area. The comings and goings of the Metro audience increased "footfall" in the area considerably, and the neon signage of the cinema added considerably to the street and pavement lighting.

*"It brings life to Green Lane, and when it goes from here, in the evening there will be nothing up here"*

Regular Metro visitor

Similarly, the Lonsdale was felt to have improved security in its immediate vicinity through the building of a fence around the car park, and improved street lighting.

In Clevedon, all those interviewed during the study were keen to see a successful outcome to the cinema's Lottery bid, and felt that the cinema, once restored to its former glory, would be an enormous benefit to the image of the town:

*"I think if they did the building up maybe back to its original look, then people would come from miles around to see it"*

*"It could become like a national treasure, and then pull in a wider audience"*

### ***Generating regional or national interest in the local area***

We have already mentioned a number of ways in which the case study cinemas were seen as enhancing the image of the area: making it a more attractive place to live, contributing to the overall cultural image of the area, and enhancing the built environment.

Some of the cinemas had also generated some regional or national interest in the local area. For instance, the Curzon's historical claim to be the "oldest, purpose-built, continuously operated cinema in the world" is well marketed by the cinema via its website and annual Open Days. As a result, the cinema has attracted the support of a number of well-known film makers based in the West of England who recognise the Curzon's importance in cinematic history. Aardman founders, David Sproxton and Peter Lord, and director Nick Park, have all become patrons of the Restoration Fund appeal. Other patrons include Terry Gilliam, Alan Rickman, Tony Robinson and Sir Charles Elton who has lived in Clevedon all his life. This historical claim, and these associations with senior figures in the film industry, give the Curzon some national as well as local kudos. The cinema has received some national press coverage as a result, on the BBC 6 o'clock news, and on Sky television.

The Savoy also claims to be the longest continually open cinema in the country, but it was widely felt among those interviewed in Penzance that this historical claim was not well promoted beyond the plaque on the foyer wall about the 1912 opening. The cinema had received some regional attention in 2002 when it was the subject of an article in the magazine 'Cornwall Today'. This article had outlined the history of the cinema from its 1912 opening, through its various changes of ownership and fortune, and its recent refurbishment. However, there was very little ongoing promotion of the historical aspects of the cinema, and this was felt by many to be a missed opportunity, and that it should be seen as a selling point for both the cinema and the town.

The Rio was recognised not only as a key entertainment venue for Hackney, but also as one of the key London art-house cinemas. Time Out, which has an estimated readership of 280,000 and is distributed throughout London and the rest of the UK, always has listings for the Rio cinema, and will often include a review of the film in its 'repertory and special screenings' section, and special coverage is always given to the Turkish and Kurdish Festivals. In a poll of Time Out readers a few years ago, the Rio appeared as one of their top 15 London cinemas.

## 4. The impact of local cinema on the local economy

### 4.1 Overview of income and expenditure

Each case study cinema provided details of their annual income and expenditure. As Table 4.1.1 shows, ticket sales income was the biggest contribution to turnover in four of the cinemas. The exception was the Metro, Derby for which the biggest contribution – 42% of annual turnover – was made by public funding from Derby City Council and EM Media.

Food and drink sales were the next biggest contribution to income for the cinemas; this was particularly strong for the Savoy, Penzance which incorporated not just a cinema but also a bar, restaurant and takeaway outlet.

Advertising revenue made up between 2% and 9% of annual turnover in the cinemas.

**Table 4.1.1 Annual income of case study cinemas**

	% of annual turnover (2002–2003)				
	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
Ticket sales	54	77	57	34	75
Food, drink & merchandising	42	17	33	2	11
Advertising revenue	4	6	9	2	8
Revenue funding	-	-	-	42	3
Project funding	-	-	-	12.5	-
Other income	<1	-	-	7.5	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

As shown in Table 4.1.2, film hire and staff costs tended to be the biggest expenses for each cinema. In the four non-subsidised cinemas, film hire accounted for between 25% and 40% of their expenditure; and staff costs accounted for between 16% and 39%.

In the Metro cinema which, unlike the other case study cinemas, employed permanent staff members who focused solely on education and community activities, staff costs accounted for about half the annual expenditure (49%); and film hire 17%.

Another major item of expenditure included catering costs. Clearly, the extent of this expenditure varied with the type of catering arrangements being offered by the cinema. For cinemas with catering that was limited to a small kiosk or bar, catering accounted for between 2% and 14% of annual expenditure. The Savoy cinema in Penzance had a bar and restaurant, and fast food outlets serving the street directly, and catering costs accounted for almost a quarter of its annual expenditure (23%).

**Table 4.1.2 Annual expenditure of case study cinemas<sup>4</sup>**

	% of annual expenditure (2002–2003)				
	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
Staff costs	29	16	24	49	39
Film hire	30	40	25	17	31
Catering	23	13	14	2	5
Repairs and maintenance	3	7	22	11	5
Rent / mortgage	6	9	–	–	3
Advertising and publicity	2	4	4	8	5
Office costs and travel	3	4	1	5	2
Fuel and utilities	2	5	2	–	3
Insurance	1	*	2	2	2
Subscriptions & licences	*	1	3	1	1
Bank charges & finance fees	1	1	4	1	2
Other expenditure (inc. educational activities)	*	–	–	4	2

#### 4.2 Measuring local money flows: cinemas' local spending in their communities

As part of this study, we wanted to look at the place of cinemas in their local economies. In this section, we discuss the extent to which the cinemas' expenditure stayed within the local area.

As stated in the Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2000):

*"the problem is not necessarily that too little money flows into a neighbourhood. Rather, it is what consumers, public services and businesses do with that money. Too often, it is spent on services with no local presence, and so immediately leaves the area".*

In order to measure what proportion of cinemas' income immediately left their local areas, the researchers and cinema manager first needed to agree a definition of "local", in order to calculate what constituted "local spending".

<sup>4</sup> Each case study cinema provided account information categorised in slightly different ways. In order to present directly comparable expenditure breakdowns for the five cinemas, Table 4.1.2 excludes NI & pensions, rates, taxes and depreciation.

In making these decisions, the main criterion was the catchment area for the cinema audience. Other criteria were the geography, transport links and travel patterns of the area; and the location of, and pattern of business between, suppliers in the area.

This was inevitably a rather subjective decision in each case, but on the whole, "local" was defined as within a 10–20 mile radius of the cinema. Table 4.2.1 gives a description of the local area for each cinema.

One of the most difficult definitions to agree was the local area for the Rio in Dalston. As the cinema was the only one in Hackney, the borough of Hackney may have seemed the obvious choice. However, this would not have reflected the fact that the Rio's specialised programme attracts a more London-wide audience, or the unique nature of the London economy and distribution of businesses. The four-borough definition which was agreed was an attempt to explore the cinema's relationship with geographically close businesses, but any such definition is somewhat artificial in such a highly concentrated area as London.

**Table 4.2.1 Definition of "local area" for each case study cinema**

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Savoy, Penzance	Penwith district – an area of West Cornwall that stretches from Lands End to Hayle
Curzon, Clevedon	Within a ten mile radius of Clevedon
Lonsdale, Annan	Within a twenty mile radius of Annan
Metro, Derby	Derby
Rio, Dalston	The four neighbouring London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Islington and Haringey

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Cinemas were then asked to estimate how much of their annual expenditure was "local". The five case study cinemas, on the whole, reported broadly similar patterns of local spending, in that each cinema reported that most or all of their staff lived in the local area, so all or the vast majority of staff costs (excluding NI and pension) could be classified as local expenditure.

And all five cinema managers, where the market allowed it, tried to seek out local suppliers in favour of more distant suppliers. There was a feeling that, as small businesses themselves, they should try to support other small local businesses where possible, in order to help sustain the local economy.

However, one of the major expenses for all cinemas is film hire, and as most film distributors are based in central London, or abroad, this money automatically left the locality of each cinema.

But for services such as building upkeep, printing and advertising, supply of confectionery and other catering stock, vehicle hire and accountancy, a significant proportion of the suppliers were located in the cinemas' localities.

This proportion of local supplies did vary between the cinemas, and this was often for geographical boundary reasons. For instance, the Savoy was very successful in using suppliers from Cornwall and Devon. 88% of the money spent on catering supplies and equipment went to businesses located within these two counties. However, only 19% went to businesses located within the Penwith district, the "local area" definition agreed on initially.

The Rio also reported a low local spending rate for its confectionery supplies, as very few suppliers were based in the boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Islington or Haringey. The artificial nature of this "local area" definition was discussed earlier; and if we look at the wider region, the Rio spent 76% of its confectionery budget within Greater London.

Other factors came into cinemas' decisions not to use local suppliers, and these were often simple business decisions about saving money. For instance, sometimes local suppliers were simply not offering value for money, when compared to more distant competitors; and sometimes the cinema wanted to maintain a long-standing contract with a particular supplier, with whom they had developed a good working relationship, despite their geographical distance.

As table 4.2.2 shows, the cinemas' overall local spending rates (after excluding taxes, rates, depreciation, staff NI and pension) ranged from 42% of annual expenditure to 62%. The overall rate for each cinema was of course dependent, not only on the local spending rates for the different types of expenditure, but also by the extent to which different types of expenditure contributed to the cinema's overall annual expenditure.

Therefore, for example, at the Metro with its relatively large number of local paid staff (several of whom were full-time), its higher staff costs contribute a lot to its overall local expenditure rate. For other cinemas, their reliance on volunteers and occasional part-time staff meant that their lower local staff costs had less impact.

Table 4.2.3 shows the regional spending rates of the cinemas. For the Savoy, the wider region was defined as Cornwall and Devon, for the Lonsdale as 'within 40 miles of Annan', for the Metro as Derbyshire and for the Rio, the region was Greater London. (Only local spending information was collected for the Curzon). Regional spending rates ranged from 43% to 88%.

**Table 4.2.2 Local expenditure of case study cinemas<sup>5</sup>**

	% of annual expenditure (2002–2003) that was spent in the local area, as defined in Table 4.2.1				
	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
All expenditure (after tax)	42	50	43	62	43
Staff costs (excl. NI and pension)	100	100	100	100	85
Film hire	0	0	0	0	*
Catering	19	81	67	64	23
Repairs and maintenance	36	90	12	0	30
Rent / mortgage	0	100	0	0	100
Advertising and publicity	1	100	100	84	45
Office costs and travel	48	96	22	23	5
Fuel and utilities	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance	100	0	0	100	0
Subscriptions & licences	0	0	0	0	12
Finance fees	7	74	79	66	0
Other	90	0	0	32	55

<sup>5</sup> Each case study cinema provided account information categorised in slightly different ways. In order to present directly comparable local spending rates for the five cinemas, Tables 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 exclude NI & pensions, rates, taxes and depreciation.

**Table 4.2.3 Regional expenditure of case study cinemas**

	% of annual expenditure (2002–2003) that was spent in the wider region				
	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
All expenditure (after tax)	59	n/a	43	74	88
Staff costs (excl. NI and pension)	100	n/a	100	100	100
Film hire	3	n/a	0	0	95
Catering	88	n/a	67	100	76
Repairs and maintenance	68	n/a	13	91	73
Rent / mortgage	0	n/a	0	0	100
Advertising and publicity	52	n/a	100	93	65
Office costs and travel	67	n/a	22	27	5
Fuel and utilities	10	n/a	0	0	0
Insurance	100	n/a	0	100	100
Subscriptions & licences	19	n/a	0	0	25
Finance fees	7	n/a	79	66	46
Other	90	n/a	0	51	95

In this study, we had originally intended to use a local multiplier tool, LM3, which has been developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), in partnership with the Countryside Agency and Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, to help small businesses measure the impact of local spending in their communities. This LM3 tool is designed to track where money is spent in the local economy, and would have enabled us to estimate what proportion of a cinema's income stays within the local economy, and what proportion leaves the area.

The LM3 tool measures only the first three rounds of spending, and is designed to give an *indication* of the cinema's impact on the local economy, rather than a precise measurement. The first round of spending is the initial income of the cinema itself. The second round is the money spent locally by the cinemas; and the third round is the money spent locally by the cinema's staff and suppliers. A local multiplier score (LM3) can then be calculated by adding the money from all three rounds together, and dividing by the initial income. The LM3 tool is described in more detail in section 10, along with an account of our experiences of adapting the tool for use with local cinemas.

As described above, only the first and second rounds of spending have been reported. As the work progressed, it became clear that within the budget of this study, it was not going to be possible to calculate LM3 scores for the cinemas with any degree of confidence, based on the third round of spending with cinema staff and suppliers. For the tool to be used successfully, much more face-to-face contact with the study participants would be required than the current research budget allowed, in order to encourage staff and suppliers to participate in the study, to reassure them of confidentiality and to advise them on the categorisation of the various items of expenditure. Although we have not therefore been able to report any quantitative indication of our case study cinemas' impact on their local economies, we feel that this methodology could be a useful tool for small cinemas and similar venues, and would be worth exploring further in the future. These issues are discussed in much more detail in section 10.

### **4.3 Other direct and indirect local economic impacts**

#### **4.3.1 Additional local spend by cinema visitors**

The above section takes into account money spent by the audience on cinema tickets, and drinks and confectionery bought from the kiosk. There is an additional impact to be considered on the local economy, that is, the money spent by cinema customers (and staff) on their way to and from the cinema in local shops, bars and restaurants, and on local transport, babysitters and so on.

Precise information about how much cinema customers spent in this way was not systematically collected during this study. However, in discussion groups with regular cinema visitors in all five case study areas, a number of local bars, restaurants, bakeries, food shops and take-away outlets were identified, which regularly attracted the custom of cinema visitors.

As the scope of this study did not enable us to conduct audience surveys in each of the case study areas, a quantitative survey was conducted with the audience of the Metro, Derby. One of the questions asked in the survey was about whether the visitor had been for a meal or drink before or after visiting the cinema. Half had done so, although the Metro's own bar was the most commonly frequented: 34% of Metro visitors had been for a drink in the Metro bar, 9% had visited another bar, and 11% had gone for a meal at a local restaurant or pub.

### 4.3.2 Impact on local labour market

All five cinemas had a direct, albeit limited, impact on their local labour markets through their employment of local residents as staff. However, none of these were large businesses, and numbers of staff ranged from five to twenty-three, most of whom were employed part-time, as seen in Table 4.3.1. In addition to these regular staff, most cinemas also employed occasional part-time staff to help out in peak periods.

**Table 4.3.1 Local expenditure by cinema staff**

	Savoy, Penzance	Curzon, Clevedon	Lonsdale, Annan	Metro, Derby	Rio, Dalston
Total no. full-time staff at cinema	4	1	1	3	3
Total no. of part-time staff at cinema	16	13	4	6	20

The Curzon is unique in also drawing on a large pool of local volunteers, who help out with ushering, repairs and maintenance, finance and management. It is also unique in that most of its staff and volunteers are of, or approaching, pensionable age, and as such, the cinema is providing valuable part-time working opportunities to older local residents who are not in search of a full-time job.

Staff training and the provision of career development opportunities are other ways of enriching the local labour market, and all five cinemas offered their staff training of some sort.

Most cinemas offered selected staff in-house projectionist training, first aid and fire training; and new recruits were generally inducted informally into the various elements of the cinema business, by being shown the ropes by more experienced staff members.

However, some cinemas – the ones with the largest, most diverse staff base – offered more training and development opportunities than others. The Savoy cinema in Penzance with its on-site bar, restaurant and take-away outlets, and its links to other cinemas in the Merlin group, was able to provide its staff with good opportunities for progressing within the company. For example, one long-standing staff member had moved from cleaner to chef

to accounts. All Savoy staff are expected to "multi-task", moving from cinema to catering as necessary; thus, a job at the Savoy was seen as offering work experience in a number of different roles. The cinema also sent its office staff on occasional externally-run Business Link courses.

The Savoy was also fulfilling an important role in the seaside town of Penzance, in that it was one of the few businesses that had been able to offer local people permanent year-round employment. Because of the large influx of summer tourists, traditionally much of the work in Penzance has been seasonal, although this situation is now improving with the recent opening of the nearby Eden Project and the Tate at St Ives which has extended the tourist season by several months.

The Metro in Derby was another cinema that offered its staff good training and development opportunities. Recent training had included externally-run computer courses for office staff, deaf awareness training to help staff work with deaf people, and courses on marketing via the internet. Key staff were also regularly sent to various film festivals, in order to keep up to date with industry developments and contacts. Staff also reported opportunities to learn skills from each other within the Metro office, mainly related to computer software, such as Photoshop.

The Metro also liked to enable collaborations between members of its staff and local film-makers, in which both the staff and the film-makers are able to learn new skills. For example, in a recent project, a film-making course was jointly run by a member of Metro staff and a local film-maker. Through the running of this course, the Metro staff member learned new film-making skills and knowledge, while the local film-maker (previously inexperienced in teaching) learned new teaching skills. He has since gone onto use these teaching skills on other courses.

A number of staff at the Metro are themselves keen film-makers, and the Metro sometimes provides them with opportunities to screen their own short films or trailers before the main feature.

#### **4.3.3 Cinemas' links with other local businesses**

As well as the cinemas' direct expenditure on local supplies and local staff wages, all the cinemas, to varying extents, had links with other local businesses, which helped to embed them within their local economies.

Association with the cinemas, some of which have fairly prominent local images, can be a marketing opportunity for local businesses, and four out of the five cinema managers reported this kind of relationship with local businesses. For example, numerous Clevedon businesses have sponsored fund-raising events at the cinema, or contributed funds or goods in kind; in turn they are acknowledged in the Curzon brochures and website. In Dalston, the Turkish and Kurdish film festivals are part-sponsored by local Turkish restaurants and bakers, who are then listed in the festival programmes. Rolls Royce and Derbyshire Building Society sponsor the screenings for hearing impaired children at the Metro cinema in Derby, in return for free advertising in the cinema brochure. In Penzance, local businesses tend not to advertise in the regular Savoy leaflets. However, when the Merlin Cinema group launches a new venture, such as a refurbished bar in one of its West Cornwall cinemas, local businesses often take out support advertising in the local paper, wishing the company well. It was clear from talking to local suppliers in Penzance that the manager of the Savoy was held in high regard as a key local businessman, and had established good long-standing relationships with numerous local suppliers. One of the Savoy's suppliers, a sign designer who had installed the new signage at the cinema, used it as an illustration for potential clients of the sort of work he could provide.

Some of the case study cinemas had engaged in occasional collaborations with local businesses, to the benefit of both organisations. For example, the Metro had organised a special Thai-themed event, for which the cinema had screened a Thai film and a nearby Thai restaurant had provided the food and drinks. The Rio had set up an occasional link with nearby cafes or restaurants, which had offered discounted meals to cinema users on production of a cinema ticket. Both the Curzon and the Lonsdale in Annan had engaged in similar discount deals with local restaurants.

The Rio had made very good links with local Turkish and Kurdish businesses in Hackney through its annual screenings of Turkish and Kurdish film festivals. In interviews with the organisers of these festivals, both highlighted a number of ways in which the festivals were important for the local economy. The festivals brought in Turkish and Kurdish audiences from all over London and beyond, who visited many of Dalston's Turkish bars and restaurants. The international guests were put up at local hotels (sometimes in Dalston, and increasingly since its refurbishment, in the Islington Hilton). Receptions were held in local Turkish restaurants. And local businesses were

used by the festival organisers: for example, to design the festival posters, or to drive VIP guests around.

Several of the cinemas also had links with local film industry practitioners. In fact, the Metro cinema saw one of its key roles to provide a meeting place and networking opportunities for local film-makers and film-making teachers. For example, the cinema has provided free meeting and working space for various local industry organisations such as Script Engine and Derby Scriptwriters. It has also screened work for Mediaworks, a Derby organisation that runs film-making courses, and has collaborated directly with local film makers in the delivery of such courses.

For the other cinemas, links with film industry practitioners were not as central. The Rio recently held an event to celebrate the work of local Hackney-born film director, Asif Kapadia; as well as the occasional screening of less well-known film makers such as a short film about the anti-war rallies. The cinema also occasionally organises out of hours screenings for cast and crew of low budget films. The cinema also screened the work of a number of short film and video production making courses, that were run from the cinema basement.

The Lonsdale in Annan had organised an event recently for local students, promoting the work of screenwriter Frank Cottrell-Boyce, who has a holiday home nearby.

The Curzon cinema had high profile patrons who were locally based, including Aardman Animations and Sir Charles Elton. Also, one of the cinema's management committee was also a film editor, who got involved with the day-to-day running of the cinema and educational events at the cinema.

The Savoy occasionally screens rushes for local shoots, has sometimes been the location for TV productions, and is also involved from time to time in offering training to local media and tourism students in how to market services to local communities.

## **Further reading**

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- For details of the case studies see sections 5–9.
- For a full account of the methodology see section 10.

- For the impact measurement toolkit see section 11.
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## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank all those who kindly assisted us in this research project by either filling in a questionnaire survey, providing key local data, participating in a telephone interview or a discussion group. In particular, our grateful thanks go to the managers and staff of the Metro Cinema, Derby; Rio Cinema, Dalston; Curzon Cinema, Clevedon; Lonsdale Cinema, Annan and Savoy Cinema, Penzance.

## Appendix

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Table 1: Cinema income and expenditure

Information	Impact
Ticket sales (and membership income)	Economic
Food, drink and merchandising sales	Economic
Advertising revenue (screen and brochure)	Economic
Public / private funding	Economic
Staff costs	Economic
Marketing and publicity expenses	Economic
Film rentals	Economic
Premises costs	Economic
Office costs and licences	Economic
Programme enhancement / education costs	Economic
Finance costs, interest, audit fees	Economic
Annual gross turnover	Economic

Table 2: Building / Facilities / Location

Information	Impact
Style of building / 'fit' with surrounding buildings and area	Environmental
Number of screens / seats	Economic/Social/Cultural
Location (central / outskirts)	Environmental/Economic
Part of, or close to, other leisure facilities	Economic/Environmental/Social
Type of businesses adjacent to cinema (before & after)	Economic/Environmental/Social
Parking facilities	Environmental/Social
Accessibility by public transport	Social/Environmental
Quality of seating, projection, sound equipment, screen, sound-proofing, air-conditioning, toilets, office space etc.	Social/Cultural
Provision of other facilities: bar / restaurant / shops etc.	Social/Economic
Accessibility for people with disabilities	Social/Economic
Future development plans	Social/Economic/Environmental
Distance from other first run cinemas / specialised cinemas in the region	Social/Economic

Table 3: Programming and pricing information

Information	Impact
Type of circuit / hub and spoke arrangements etc.	Social/Cultural/Economic
Range of films showing (including special events, festivals)	Cultural/Social

Range of times showing	Social
Number and frequency of films showing by type (certificate, genre etc)	Cultural/Social
Number of tickets sold by type (certificate, genre etc)	Economic/Social/Cultural
% capacity sold by type (certificate, genre etc)	Economic/Social
Target audience (local only, or attracting audiences from further afield)	Social/Cultural/Economic
Ticket pricing structures (including membership schemes, discounts, partnership offers with other businesses)	Economic/Social
Other cinema uses (e.g. bingo, amateur productions, conferences)	Economic/Social
Future programming plans	Social/Cultural/Economic

Table 4: Profile of cinema audience &amp; local residents

Information	Impacts
Demographic profile (age, sex, ethnic origin, disability, socio-economic group, area of residence)	Social
Frequency of cinema visits, if any	Social
Type of journey to cinema / time taken	Social/Environmental
Barriers to use (accessibility, transport, price, timing, film choice, lack of interest in cinema etc.)	Social/Economic/Environmental
Other film consumption (books, videos/DVDs, TV etc.)	Social/Economic
Spend outside cinema as part of same trip, or as a result of cinema attendance	Economic
Use of, awareness of, views about other cinemas / cultural facilities / meeting places	Social/Cultural/Economic
Awareness of cinema showings and services	Social/Cultural/Economic
Views about range of films on offer	Social/Cultural/Economic
Views about ticket prices	Social/Cultural/Economic
Views about quality and range of cinema facilities	Social/Cultural/Economic
Views about service quality	Economic/Social
Views about accessibility	Social/Economic
Views about transport links to cinema	Social/Environmental/Economic
Views about location of cinema (security, lighting, litter, noise, proximity to other facilities etc.)	Environmental
Views about cinema as meeting place, focal point	Social
Level of interest in film generally	Social/Cultural
Pros and cons of watching films in cinema vs. other	Social/Cultural/Economic

media (TV, video/DVD etc.)	
Pros and cons of multiplexes vs. traditional cinema	Social/Cultural/Economic/Environmental
“Life after five” in the local area – for different age groups	Social/Cultural/Economic/Environmental
What services / qualities wanted from a local cinema	Social/Cultural/Economic
Attitudes towards local cinema closures	Social/Cultural/Economic/Environmental
All above to be looked at from the point of view of different social and age groups	Social/Cultural/Economic/Environmental

Table 5: Employment and training by cinema

Information	Impacts
Number of full-time / part-time jobs (permanent / temporary or casual)	Economic/Social
Demographic profiles of staff	Social
Training provision	Economic/Social
Skills level of staff	Economic/Social
Volunteering	Social/Economic

Table 6: Marketing and publicity

Information	Impacts
Type of marketing	Economic/Social/Cultural
Local media coverage	Social/Cultural/Economic
Any national coverage / corporate involvement	Social/Cultural/Economic
Any local / national kudos associated with cinema	Social/Cultural/Economic

Table 7: Links with local business / organisations

Information	Impacts
Local expenditure (local supplies etc)	Economic
Other links / partnerships with local business (ads, events, sponsorship)	Economic
Links with local production industry	Economic/Cultural
Links with other local groups (film societies, community groups etc)	Social/Cultural/Economic

Table 8: Educational activity

Information	Impacts
Educational activities in / linked with cinema (formal /	Social/Cultural

informal)	
Links with local schools, colleges, other groups	Social
Outreach activities	Social
Local relevant training / education provision (FE / HE / Adult education)	Social/Economic

Table 9: Social inclusion/community cohesion activity

Information	Impacts
Action aimed at minority or disadvantaged groups (e.g. content of films, specific initiatives involving particular groups, ticket discounts)	Social/Cultural
Action aimed at fostering links with community (historical / social)	Social/Cultural

Table 10: Views of participants and tutors in educational / outreach activities

Information	Impact
Gains / losses from participation during activity	Social/Economic
Gains / losses from participation after end of activity / course / workshop	Social/Economic
Ongoing contact with other participants, tutors, cinema staff etc	Social/Economic
Further enrolment / repeat participation	Social/Economic
Personal development	Social/Economic

Table 11: Views of local businesses

Information	Impacts
Local spend	Economic
Levels of trade associated with cinema users	Economic
Potential / existing partnerships with cinema	Economic
Cinema as focus for local regeneration / tourist promotion	Economic/Environmental
Reasons for location in area (e.g. as a result of or in association with cinema, or independent of its existence? Proximity of cinema seen as benefit to them?)	Economic/Environmental/Social

Table 12: Views of local authority / other local officials about:

<b>Information</b>	<b>Impacts</b>
Place of cinema in local cultural strategy	All impacts
Place of cinema in local regeneration / development strategy	All impacts
Public funding of cinema	Economic
Use of cinema as part of the image of the area (in local policy, tourism promotion etc)	Social/Economic/Environmental
Potential of cinema to engage different sectors of local population	Social/Cultural
Awareness of / perceptions of any cinema-related education / outreach work	Social/Cultural
[Social benefits / community cohesion]	