

The Art of Rural Touring



The National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) is the umbrella body representing rural and community touring schemes in England and Wales. It also has burgeoning links with rural touring in Scotland and Ireland.

Rural touring has 2 aims. It offers access to high quality arts experiences and contributes to the social life of rural communities.

At the heart of rural touring is the relationship between the touring schemes and their local volunteer promoters.

The NRTF has 3 main functions:

- Advocacy – Influencing policy makers, making alliances and producing publications
- Networking – providing support to our members through a central office and annual conference
- Partnership – making links with arts and non-arts sectors and agencies (e.g. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation)

Future plans include extending early years touring, continuing with our international work and developing work with urban communities.



Sheffield Theatres - Handful of Henna - Photo: Andy Pratt



Cartoon De Salvo - The Chaingang Gang - Photo: Mark Passmore



Mtiebe - Celebrate - Singing Out West Photo: Kevin Clifford



Miracle Theatre - Cats Cradle - Photo: Kirstin Prisk

The Schemes

The network of 37 schemes works with 1,600 rural communities

Schemes vary in size and entity. Some cover a county area and are limited companies and registered charities; others cover a district area and are run through local authority arts departments.

In Wales the scheme is run by the Arts Council of Wales and covers the whole country.

Schemes offer a similar range of services which include:

- Offering a shortlist of companies and their availability

- Providing financial support to offset possible financial risk
- Offering marketing support, providing posters, tickets and publicity
- Drawing up contracts between promoters and artists
- Paying artists and billing local promoting groups

There is a national network of 37 schemes working with 1,600 rural communities and 13,500 volunteers to promote over 5,500 performances each year to approximately 260,000 people.

Turnover exceeds £3 million of which £1.5 million is artistic expenditure.

"Promoters are becoming more adventurous and this has emboldened all concerned, promoters and audiences... offering choice and unique opportunities." Sue Roberts - Artservice



Rural Communities

14 million people or 29% of the population live in rural areas

Rural areas are in a state of flux. After years of decline, the rural population is on the increase. At a time when climate change is a key issue, bringing professional arts events to rural communities supports the sustainable agenda.

Rural communities are difficult to categorise. Some are ex-industrial, others still depend on agriculture. Some are retirement settlements, others have high numbers of families on low incomes.

Increasingly schemes are working with urban and semi-urban

communities, linking their work to regeneration and community cohesion initiatives.

Most villages have a village hall committee planning activities for their community. Many villages have a handful of enthusiastic volunteers or a passionate individual who wish to see high quality arts events taking place in their village. These are the local voluntary promoters and they are at the heart of rural touring.

Uniting these groups is a desire to keep their villages 'alive and kicking' and without these key and committed people rural and community touring **SIMPLY WOULD NOT HAPPEN!**

"Fantastic evening, within walking distance, what more can you ask?"

Voluntary Promoter, Essex on Tour

"The show was wonderful and people still stop me in the street to say so"

Voluntary Promoter, Centre Stage Leicestershire



Local Value & Benefit

People who live in rural areas are more likely to have attended arts events

The 2007 Taking Part survey (commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in partnership with Arts Council England) found that those who live in rural areas are more likely to have attended arts events (73%) and participated in arts activities (58%) than those living in urban areas (65% and 52% respectively).

"The tour acted as a catalyst for arts development within these areas and provided a quality arts experience for all - at an accessible cost."

Community Arts Development Officer,
Flintshire, Wales

An NRTF survey found that:

- 33% audiences only see arts events through this medium
- 66% live within 5 miles of the village hall
- 40% are unwaged, unemployed, retired or look after the family
- 85% agreed that shows were of a high quality
- 80% highly valued these events being held in their village hall

"A superb intimate performance. They wove a spell in the room such that you could hear a pin drop." Audience member
Shindig Worcestershire



Artists and Companies



OTTC - Ain't Misbehaving Fats Waller Show -
Photo: David Fisher



Cartoon De Salvo - The Sunflower Pot - Photo: Ed Collier



NTTC - Country Voices -
Photo: Keith Patterson

“For me as an artist, it allows me to perform at my relaxed best in a very intimate setting, to a very welcoming group of people. I feel that these performances build on my existing strengths and add to my abilities.”

Martin Simpson

Over the last 12 months the schemes worked with:

- 125 small-scale theatre companies
- 250 musical groups representing all genres from classical and opera to jazz and folk
- 20 dance companies producing work specifically for rural venues
- 40 multimedia, visual and cabaret artists, poets and storytellers

Members of the NRTF network represent a large sector of employment for artists and companies in the UK. Artistic expenditure amounted to £1.5 million over the last 12 months and there is a commitment to diverse programming and to touring international work.



The NRTF has published *Eyes Wide Open*, a toolkit for companies and artists interested in rural touring available via the NRTF website.

Companies and artists can join the NRTF as associate members.

NRTF has searchable databases on the website to enable companies and performers and touring schemes to contact each other.

www.nrtf.org.uk

NRTF Touring Scheme Members

Scotland

Associate Members

- 1 PAN – Promoters Arts Network
- 2 NEAT – North East Arts Touring

North West

- 3a Highlights – Northumberland
- 3b Highlights – Cumbria
- 4 Arts Out West – West Cumbria and Barrow
- 5 Spot On – Lancashire Touring Network
- 6 Cheshire's Rural Touring Network

North East

- 3c Highlights – Teesdale and Wear Valley
- 7 Elements – Durham County

Yorkshire

- 8 AiR – Arts In Richmondshire
- 9 On Tour – North Yorkshire
- 10 ArtERY – East Riding of Yorkshire
- 11 Livelines – North and North East Lincolnshire

West Midlands

- 12 Live & Local – Staffordshire
- 13 Arts Alive – Shropshire and Herefordshire
- 14 Artservice: Shindig – Worcestershire
- 15 Black Country Touring – Sandwell, Walsall, Dudley and Wolverhampton
- 16 Live & Local – Warwickshire

East Midlands

- 17 Live & Local – Derbyshire
- 18 Village Ventures – Nottinghamshire
- 19 Lincolnshire's Rural and Community Touring Scheme
- 20 Artservice: Centre Stage – Leicestershire and Rutland
- 21 Northants Touring Arts

East

- 22 Arts in Cambs on Tour – Cambridgeshire
- 23 Creative Arts East – Norfolk and Suffolk
- 24 Essex on Tour

South East

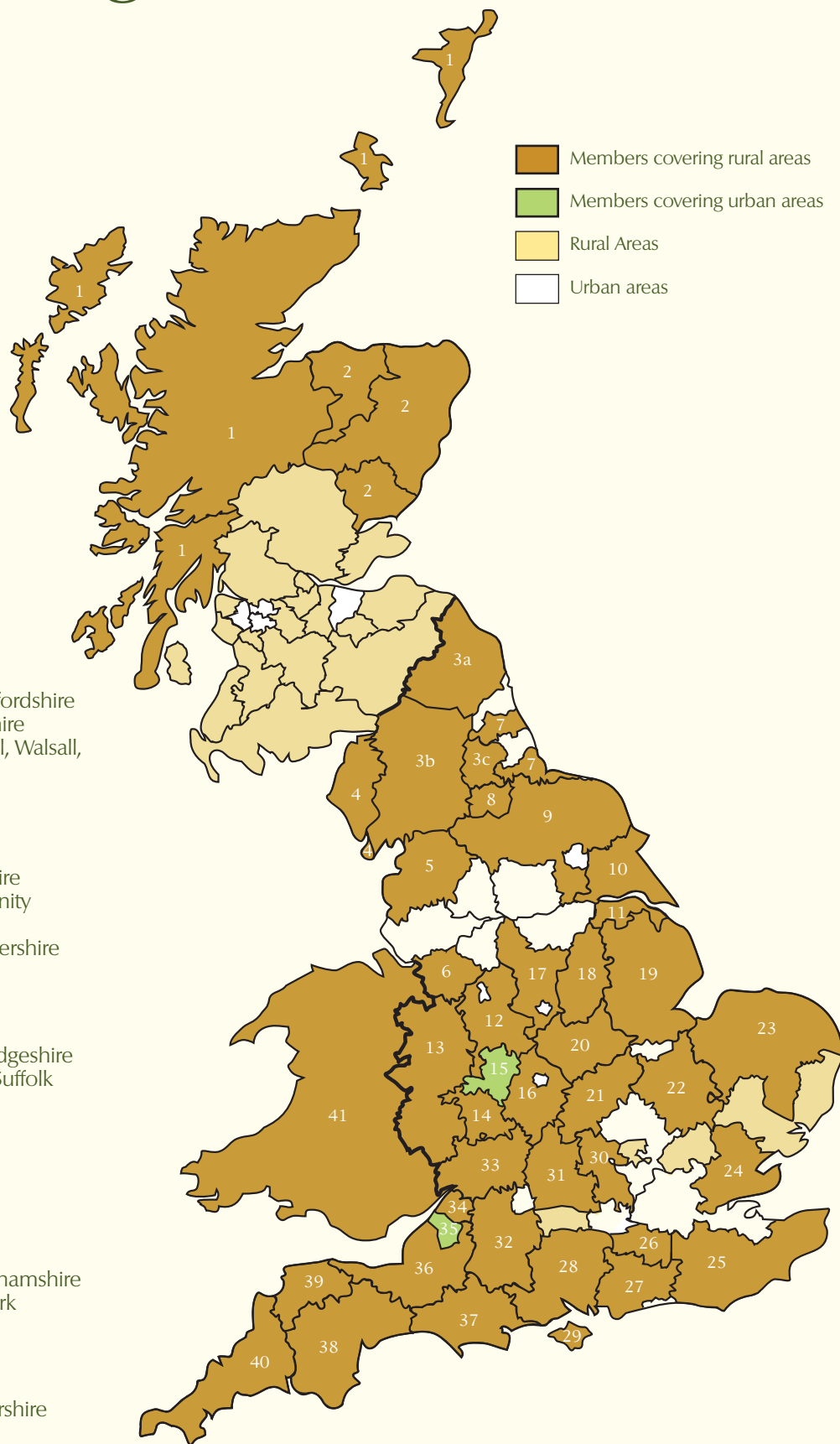
- 25 Applause – Kent and East Sussex
- 26 Farnham Maltings – Surrey
- 27 Making Tracks – West Sussex
- 28 Hog the Limelight – Hampshire
- 29 Arts Away – Isle of Wight
- 30 Theatre in the Villages – Buckinghamshire
- 31 Oxfordshire Rural Touring Network (Live & Local – Oxfordshire)

South West

- 32 Rural Arts Wiltshire
- 33 Air in G – Arts in Rural Gloucestershire
- 34 Razzle – South Gloucestershire
- 35 Lighting the Touch Paper – Bristol
- 36 Take Art – Somerset
- 37 Artsreach – Dorset
- 38 Villages in Action – Devon
- 39 Beaford Arts – Devon
- 40 Carn to Cove – Cornwall

Wales

- 41 Night Out – run by Arts Council Wales in conjunction with local authorities



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