

DAVID LEAN CINEMA

2025 REPORT



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2025 was an exciting and invigorating year for our volunteer-led community cinema.

Audiences from Croydon and beyond have enjoyed an imaginative and diverse programme of film. Plaudits were received during our participation in the BIFA Cinema of the Year Award. DLC patrons have benefitted from an enhanced viewing experience and from their engagement with our increasingly diverse cadre of over 90 volunteers. We are making better use of data for reporting and planning. Our financial management is sound, enabling prudent investment in systems improvement and better communication and outreach strategies.

Early in 2025, we launched the DLC Strategy 2025–2027. We defined our medium-term priorities and objectives with regard to programming and screenings, audience diversity and growth, valuing our cadre of volunteers, working in environmentally responsible ways, and being financially viable. With the Strategy in place, an Action Plan for 2025 was launched.

This report offers a summary of how we performed in 2025, some of the challenges that we met, and lessons that have been learned.

It is written with a wide community audience in mind: our volunteers, our patrons, Croydon Council and the variety of voluntary, educational and film-related organisations, local and national, with whom we engage.



REFLECTIONS

We start with two important reflections. The first comes from Joanna Scanlan, DLC's patron who works tirelessly on our behalf, including to raise the profile of DLC nationally as well as locally. Second, Sam Clark, DLC's Committee Chair captures key moments in the life of DLC 2025.



JOANNA SCANLAN, DLC PATRON

The David Lean Cinema continues to be the shining beacon of film entertainment and education at The Clocktower in 2025. Within our dynamic, though beleaguered borough's network of cultural offerings, what DLC delivers is unparalleled. In 2025 the volunteer team surpassed many professional cinemas in both how they served Croydon patrons and advanced the art form of cinema. I heartily thank each and every one of our community giving time and energy for their passion and consistent contributions. Thank you too to the loyal adventurous local audiences.

The Cinema caters to many tastes and needs while at the same time retaining a coherent programme. This is no easy feat. The team cooperates and fulfills promises week after week to benefit and enhance the lives of local people. I believe all the volunteers and the exceptional committee are to be championed and recognised as a genuine force for good in a world which faces unparalleled challenges. We look forward to building and evolving in 2026.



SAM CLARK, DLC COMMITTEE CHAIR

Looking back on 2025, I feel a real sense of pride in what the David Lean Cinema has achieved. It has been a year not just of steady growth, but of deepening our connection with the community we serve. We attracted just shy of 10,000 cinema goers into the centre of Croydon to the Clocktower. What has been especially meaningful this year is the way we have extended our reach—through partnerships with organisations such as Croydon Carers, Croydon Young Carers, the Croydon Family Hub, and new initiatives like Reel Talk, which have welcomed new audiences into the cinema. Our community screenings, from Dementia Friendly to Relaxed and Babes in Arms, continue to create inclusive spaces where everyone can enjoy film in a way that suits them. Alongside this, Q&A events and the return of National Theatre Live screenings have brought a unique sense of occasion, making the cinema feel like a shared cultural home.

What stands out most to me is how much of this is made possible by people—our volunteers, our partners, and our audiences—who shape the cinema's character and purpose. The launch of our 2025–2027 Strategy has helped us focus our efforts, particularly in growing and diversifying our audience and strengthening our community presence. We've made encouraging progress, supported by improved data and a more confident approach to outreach and communication. At the same time, we are clear-eyed about where we can do more: reaching those who do not yet see the cinema as a place for them, building on our relationships with local groups, and continuing to remove barriers to participation. These challenges are ones we embrace. For me, 2025 has reaffirmed that the David Lean Cinema is not only about showing films—it is about creating opportunities for connection, inclusion, and shared experience, and I am genuinely excited about how we continue to build on that in the years ahead.

PROGRESS REPORTS 2025

Programme convenors and their teams for each of the five priorities cited above developed a one page statement of their 2025 objectives, their ways of working, the resources they required and an indication of how they would assess success. The five sections that follow, summarise their progress.



In December 2025, Joanna Scanlon and Aimee Lou Wood presided over a jam-packed gathering of quizzers and raised £2367.

OUR FILMS

In 2025, DLC sustained its imaginative approach to film programming.

One hundred and nineteen individual films were shown (138 in 2024), across 320 screenings; a mix of genres, old and new, responsive to the interests of our diverse filmgoing community in Croydon and beyond.

Using the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) twelve-fold categorisation of films, DLC screened 64 dramas and 21 comedies, 75 percent of our 2025 programme. Thrillers and documentaries (12 in total) made up a further 15 percent of the programme.

Eighty-nine of our films were in the English language (75 percent) while 30 foreign language films (with sub-titles) highlighted the cultural diversity of DLC programming. Fourteen foreign languages were represented: Arabic, Bemba, Danish, Farsi, French (11 films), German, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish and Thai.

Based on the number of screenings, by far the most popular film shown in 2025 was *Conclave*. It had nine screenings. Seventy-eight of our films were shown twice.

Our Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions with actors, directors and critics, remained extremely popular attracting a good mix of new and regular patrons. We remember, in particular, the presence of Chi-chi Nwanoku at the showing of *Passions: Samuel Coleridge Taylor*, on the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth, along with two musicians who played some of Coleridge Taylor's music before the screening. In addition, our Patron Joanna Scanlan hosted another entertaining Q&A with actor Neil Pearson in support of a screening of *Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy*, in which they both starred.



National Theatre Live screenings returned to the cinema in March 2025 for the first time since 2011 with a sold-out screening of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Seven subsequent screenings have been shown and have been popular in terms of ticket sales particularly amongst our regular patrons and volunteers.

Post-film discussions were held by the u3a film group on seven occasions, attracting strong audiences each time. While twelve classic 35mm films were shown in association with The Cinema Museum.

We celebrated events through film including Holocaust Memorial Day in February, LGBT+ History Month also in February, and the 30th anniversary of the opening of DLC with a showing of the 1945 David Lean film, *Blithe Spirit*. In conjunction with the Croydon Black History Partnership, we screened *Summer of Soul* in October to celebrate Black History Month.

We continued to design film programmes for specific audiences including *Babes in Arms*, Dementia friendly and Relaxed screenings for those living with autism and neurodiversity. The sub-titling of films was regularly provided for those with hearing loss.

New partnerships were formed with Croydon Carers and the Croydon Family Hub both of which attracted new faces to the cinema. In addition, we partnered with East Croydon

Cool and local post-production company DISAUTHORITY to create the Reel Talk Film Club, focused on creating film nights for local young professionals. We also combined with the Croydonites Theatre Festival for the first time to show a digital presentation of salt: dispersed. Again, attracting a new audience to the cinema.

An eight-strong programming group, including some new members in 2025, selected films based primarily on new release information from

distributors. Advantage was taken of invitations from distributors to attend pre-release screenings. This helped to determine those films most likely to attract our patrons. It is not always possible, however, to screen films that are released with short booking windows that are determined by streaming services, or because there are too many good films available at the same time, a perennial problem in the early part of the year prior to the BAFTAs and the Oscars.

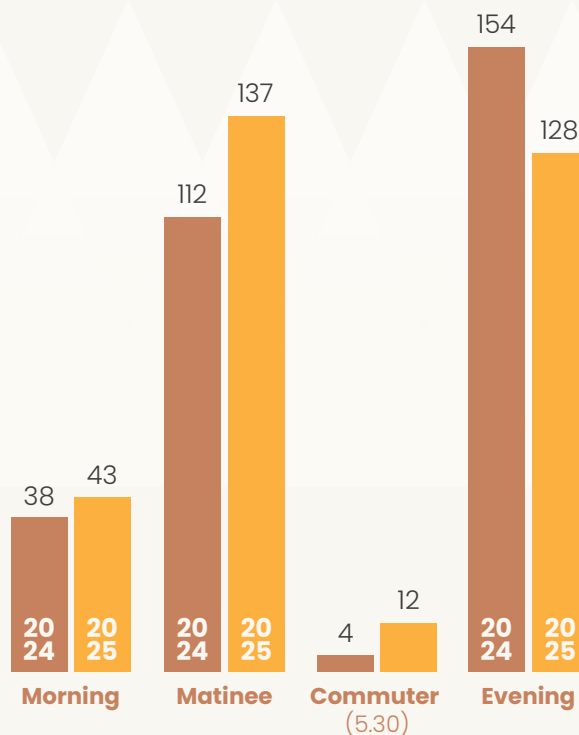
OUR SCREENINGS

Based on ticket sales data, our screen came alive 320 times in 2025, a marginal increase on 308 in 2024.

The main programme of films accounted for just over 76 percent of all screenings, 246 in total. Community screenings (Dementia friendly, Relaxed and Babes in Arms) plus 'specials' (Q@A events, National Theatre Live screenings) accounted for the remaining 24 percent. In addition, there were 15 films that did not require ticket sales, for example, the monthly British Film Institute's subsidised Escapes programme.

Analysis of the screening of DLC's films, by time of day, for 2024 and 2025 is tabulated below. This shows a not insignificant increase in matinee screenings balanced by a comparable fall in evening performances.

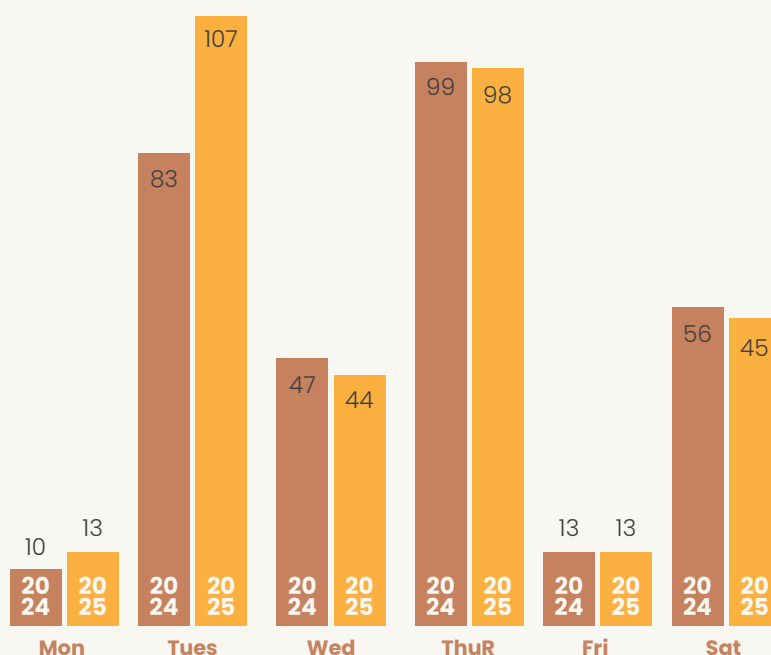
SCREENINGS BY TIME OF DAY



TOTAL SCREENINGS 2024 = 308
2025 = 320

Data on main programme screenings by the day of the week, tabulated below, shows that DLC was primarily active on four days, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, with an occasional screening on Monday and Friday. There was a notable increase in the number of films shown on a Tuesday from 2024 to 2025, while the number of Thursday screenings remained relatively constant. Both Wednesday and Saturday screenings in 2025 were down on 2024.

SCREENINGS BY DAY OF THE WEEK



Two points are worth stressing. Tuesdays and Thursdays are the key components of DLC's programming and screenings in terms of audience and income. But this headline should not obscure the increase in screenings for special groups. This requires flexibility both in the day and the time of day when films are screened; a community responsive approach.

Without a sound evidential base, it seems probably that the absence of screening films on Friday and Saturday evening limits our ability to attract patrons who for a variety of reasons are unlikely to go to the cinema on a weekday. We have had to accept that this is the screening

model defined by our location in Croydon Council premises and the security requirements that go with this partnership.

Importantly, in 2025, we installed a new server, a brand new screen and an enhanced Dolby sound system, designed to improve the experience of our patrons. Our Q&A events benefitted from better sound equipment.

The smooth running of the screening of films depends on an Operations team lead by Roger Dowling. Under his leadership, we have 11 volunteer projectionists, with a number of others in training. The size of this team is always under review to adapt to our screening calendar.



Babes in Arms

OUR AUDIENCE

We continued to explore ways to both grow and diversify our audience. In addition to imaginative programming, screenings of a high quality and a welcoming cinema environment, we gave attention to:

Better Understanding Our Patrons

Profiling our audiences is one way into understanding our patrons' interest in film and their expectations of DLC. Information is derived primarily from our new ticket sales data base, Ticketsolve, but informal conversations with regular patrons and from specific audience groups such as the u3a film group and Babes in Arms, add to our knowledge. We did not, however, institute more formal surveys or notice board feedback from patrons on their experiences of our cinema and of the films that they have seen: nor was there the planned debate on the merits or otherwise of a membership scheme. These topics will continue to be reviewed in the year ahead.

Ticket sales data for screenings in 2024 and 2025 provide one indication of the profile of our patrons.

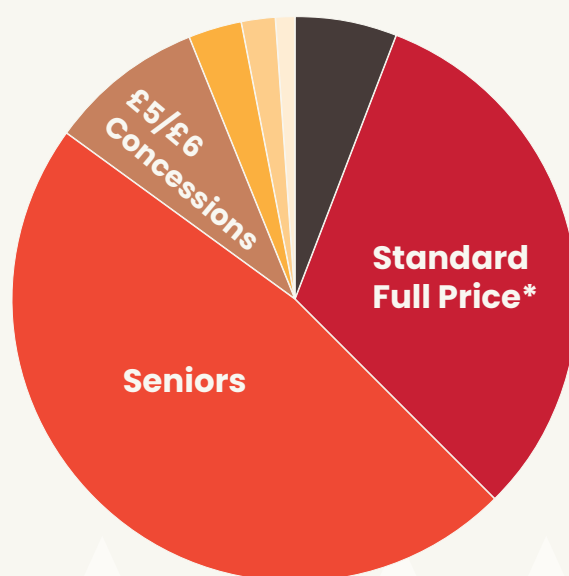
Ticket Type	2024	2025
"Specials" Tickets	545 (6%)	708 (7%)
Standard Full Price*	3066 (32%)	2757 (28%)
Seniors	4526 (48%)	4491 (46%)
£5/£6 Concessions	875 (9%)	1438 (16%)
U25s	251(3%)	338 (3%)
Complementary **	152 (2%)	52 (<1%)
Carers***	32 (<1%)	70 (<1%)
Total	9447	9854

* BiAs tickets were full price until Oct 24 when they were reduced to concession rate

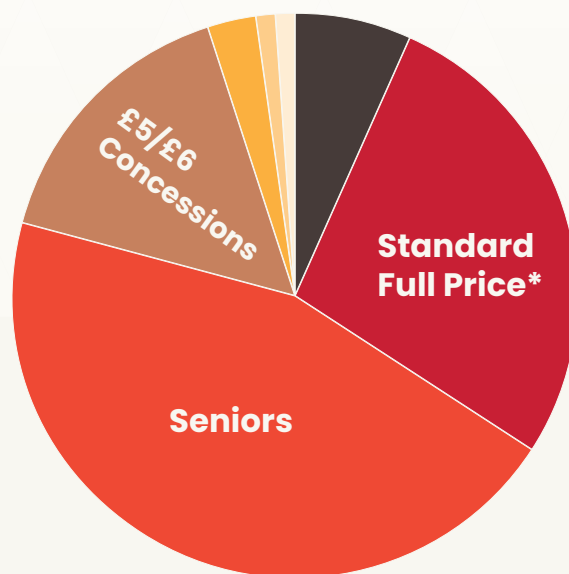
** two 2024 screenings were shown free of charge.

** TS2 allows wheelchair users to book a free carer seat on line

2024



2025



From this data, the importance of senior DLC patrons over the age of 65 is clear, notably so for main programme screenings where they comprised 46 percent of the audience in 2025, only slightly down on the previous year. Under 25 patrons are just three percent in both years. Our full price/standard price customers were 28% for standard screenings.

However, when we look at the profile of those who attend Q&A events, we see that these screenings typically attract a higher proportion of newcomers to the cinema than is typical.

Seniors favoured matinees (2,885 tickets compared with 1,999 in the evening). Full price patrons who attended evening performances numbered 1,667 (a significant drop from 2,089 in 2024) but only 915 for matinees. The 5.30 p.m. early evening 'commuter' screenings attracted 322 customers, 134 of whom were seniors.

DLC does not gather gender and ethnicity data. However, it is possible to interrogate post-code data for 1,571 patrons who bought cinema tickets in 2025, a not insignificant sample. Seventy-five percent of this total gave a Croydon post-code, 380 of them in East Croydon. CR0.1 and CRO.2 provided 129 patrons in central Croydon and a further 291 cited South Croydon. In the four adjacent boroughs to Croydon, 229 post-codes were recorded, including 90 in Bromley and 82 in Sutton. A further 91 came from other London districts, 57 of them from South London. Thirty-four people gave addresses outside of London, including post-codes in Australia and USA.

Given the location of DLC, the geography of our patrons is not surprising. Arguably, given good transport links into central Croydon, West Croydon, Coulsdon, New Addington and Mitcham are under-represented in our audience base.

Vigorously promoting DLC locally and nationally

DLC was promoted in a mix of old and new ways. Three thousand copies of our monthly programme brochure are circulated to patrons and distributed across the borough by DLC volunteers. In addition, the DLC website gives online access to forthcoming films alongside a weekly DLC newsletter.

There was a significant growth in DLC's social media followers; over 2,000 on Facebook and 3,000 on Instagram, which was our highest performing site. Thirty-five to forty-four year olds are the biggest group of Instagram followers, 67 percent of whom are women. Bluesky had over 700 followers and LinkedIn nearly 1,000 impressions.

During the year we generated original content on social media to increase our reach and engagement. Two examples of this were the Favourites video series and our drone location footage. The Favourites content involved short videos of cinemagoers, volunteers and special guests sharing their three favourite films and identifying a forthcoming DLC screening that they were keen to see. We also shared on social media specially commissioned drone footage



to help patrons find the cinema from each of Croydon's three railway stations. Both of these initiatives proved very popular on social media.

Work on DLC's visual identity took time to get off the ground. It was initiated in the latter part of 2025 to unify visual and textual messaging in order to present our cinema in ways that appeal to the widest possible audience. The transformation of the DLC website will be a key part of this process.

We created an Outreach group with a remit to find ways to entice more under 25-year-olds and young professionals to DLC and to get wider take up of community specific screenings. This is work in progress.

We gained attention too, in other ways. DLC participated in the British Independent Film Awards (BIFA) for 2025. We didn't win but gathered up to 60 pages of very positive feedback from our supporters. We were ranked among the best 25 cinemas in London by Time Out. Added to which, Joanna Scanlan, our proactive patron appeared on ITV News and ITV's This Morning Programme as an advocate of independent cinema, including a plug for DLC.

Work has advanced in collaboration with the Council to improve the wayfinding signage, both outside and inside the Croydon Clocktower, with the aim of making it much clearer how to find the cinema.

Creating new community-based partnerships

We are continually on the look-out for new film-related community partnerships. For example, in November we helped to establish a brand-new film club- REEL-TALK – in partnership with East Croydon Cool and DISAUTHORITY. And we took part in

Croydon's Open City programme in September and Croydonites Festival in October.

Holding events within and outside of our cinema

In addition to special programmes described in the programming section, the DLC Christmas Quiz has become a firm favourite in Croydon (and an important fundraiser for DLC). In December 2025, Joanna Scanlon and Aimee Lou Wood presided over a jam-packed gathering of quizzers and raised £2367. (See photograph page 5)

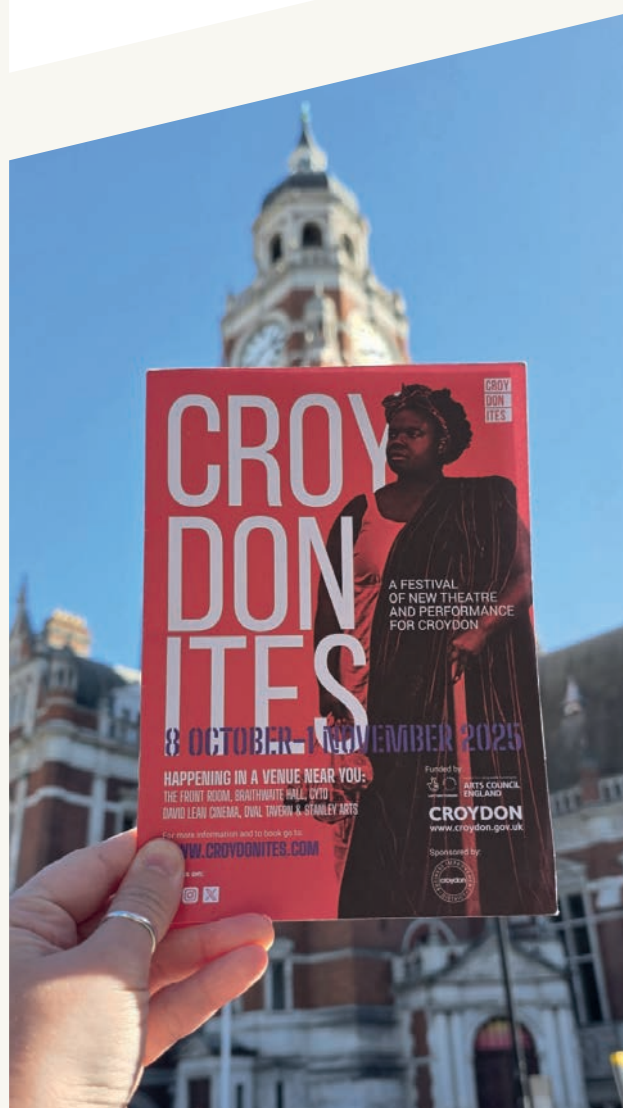
The hidden South London cinema with £5 tickets and celebrity Q&As named one of city's best

Forced to close in 2011 due to council cuts, the David Lean Cinema has since made a remarkable comeback - it just needs more people to discover it



Comments

WHAT'S ON By Harrison Galliven Local Democracy Reporter
06:00, 26 Sep 2025



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our 90 strong cadre of DLC volunteers is the lifeblood of our cinema. Most volunteers live in the Croydon area, but some come from further afield including from north of the Thames.

Eleven projectionists screened 119 films in 2025. Twenty volunteers ensured that the Box Office was open to DLC patrons for each and every show. Two volunteers (from a team of 37) manned the Arts Bar while two stewards (from a cadre of 36) were always on hand within the cinema to welcome patrons, including those with accessibility and hearing needs, and to ensure that safety and evacuation regulations were followed. So, for every show, six DLC volunteers facilitated all aspects of a well-managed event. Eighteen volunteers undertook more than one role.

The overall number of volunteers met the needs of the screenings schedule in 2025 but the size of the cadre necessarily needs to be sensitive to any change in the number of films shown.

We are pleased that there has been a noticeable improvement both in the age range of our volunteers and in the ethnic diversity of the cadre, representing a little more closely the profile of the community in which we live. Our younger volunteers in full-time employment, change jobs and location more readily than older volunteers and we lost a very small number of volunteers in 2025 due to new employment opportunities.

We recognised the hard work of our volunteers. At least four social events or outings were held during 2025 with an annual celebration event taking place in June. Quarterly DLC volunteer postcards are sent out with updates of DLC news and upcoming volunteer events. Complimentary film tickets are also made available from time to time.



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

This was the one area of our Action Plan 2025, where progress was limited. At the beginning of the year, a framework for action including the intention to conduct an environmental audit was developed by a DLC volunteer. Since then, it has proved difficult to find someone willing and able to lead on the action plan. Efforts have continued within our volunteer cadre, and beyond, to find individuals to meet the challenge. In the meantime, volunteers have made small efforts to manage waste collection, and the Council has improved its labelling of waste disposal bins.

OUR FINANCIAL VIABILITY

DLC cinema remained on a strong financial footing, but this continues to require careful management. Our year-to-date average monthly income has increased by 8 percent on the previous financial year, included in which is a 17 percent increase in ticket sales. There is a corresponding increase in our outgoings of 25 percent.

Sound finances have enabled significant investments, including in a new film-server, an enhanced Dolby sound system, a new screen, and updated Q&A sound equipment.

The implementation of our new ticketing system, in the first half of 2025, has been a great success. It has provided a simpler ticket and gift voucher purchase for our patrons, as well as an increase in donations (up 155%). It also offers improved management information and automates a number of hitherto manual tasks.

We exceeded the VAT threshold at the end of November 2025 and hence were registered for VAT from 1st December 2025. Our accounts have been moved to QuickBooks in readiness for our first VAT return, at the end of the first quarter in 2026.

We have appointed a Finance Manager to look after all daily financial transactions plus a new Fundraising Officer to help us to explore grant opportunities to fund projects to better connect with our community partners whilst funding more targeted marketing campaigns.



New Screen

GOING FORWARD

The 2026 Action Plan, which we will issue in the first quarter of the year, will continue to focus on how to achieve the five main objectives of the DLC's three-year strategic plan. As highlighted in this report, it will also recognise that there were commitments made in 2025 which require a longer timeframe than originally anticipated.

We have much to celebrate. Equally, we are fully aware that sustaining our DLC community, promoting imaginative cinema and investing in DLC responsibly will continue to require high levels of focus from our management team and directors and can only be executed with the extraordinary commitment of our outstanding cadre of volunteers.



ITV News London



BIFA feedback



Carers



Reel Talk film club