

The Regional Film Conference 2013

About the Conference



In early 2013 CSV Media had the idea to arrange a conference that would gather all local organisations and individuals with a vested interest in film and media.

During the summer Julien Mery brought Livid Films and FILM Suffolk on as partners for this conference and took on the programming. CSV Media's Cad Taylor coordinated the venue and overall delivery of the event, which made it possible to bring speakers from far and near. Many thanks have to be given to the Ipswich Film Theatre Trust and its staff, who provided a great venue and fantastic support

on the day.

We were also supported by 15 student volunteers from **Suffolk New College** who provided invaluable help as ushers, technical assistants, camera operators and vision mixers.

The Day



The Film conference opened its doors to the public at 9am at the Ipswich Film Theatre and welcomed guests to sign in, take programs and the accompanying leaflets and meet in the lobby area. At 9.30 everyone was invited to go down to the 200-seat screen.

We started with a brief introduction by the holder of the Portfolio for Culture at Ipswich Borough Council **Bryony Rudkin** who stressed that "it is absolutely vital that the creative industry is at the heart of our economy".

As our first main speaker we welcomed **Neil McCartney**, the chairman of the Independent Film Trust in Cambridge. Neil explained how the Trust is advancing the course of independent filmmaking and how his work with the Raindance Festival and the BIFA (British Independent Film Awards) - which he helped set up in 1989 - celebrates outstanding contributions in that field. He also showed examples of projects involving children and young people from disadvantaged

backgrounds, helping them gain basic filmmaking skills. His experience with the filmmaking scene in Cambridge is that “there is no place for people to gather, no place for people to exchange ideas, no places for people to talk to each other. (...) That’s why this conference is a great idea. If we can establish networks between various creative activities going on in this part of the world, things can be done!”

Next on stage was **Sam Burton** from the Low Carbon Innovation Fund - which provides funds for companies that embrace low-carbon methods of conducting their business. She explained how filmmaking can also contribute to the UK’s efforts to reduce carbon emissions and how the fund provides financial incentives to do so. One film that successfully followed that concept was *Peter Grimes on Aldeburgh Beach*, a production which successfully reduced its carbon emissions by a staggering 50%. This was the fund’s first feature film project; they are now welcoming more applications from filmmakers in the region. Ultimately Sam is hoping to “roll this out across the whole film industry”.



After a short break we resumed with a presentation by **Hayley Armstrong** who represents the eastern counties for Creative England. Hayley gave us a good overview over the value of the film industry in the east and the many successes and great films that have been shot in this region. One revelation was that of the eastern counties, Hertfordshire generates 80% of the total generated income, whilst the counties of Suffolk and Norfolk combined only generate 5%. This, Hayley explained, was mainly due to the presence of studios close to London, which are situated within Hertfordshire. Creative England is building a comprehensive database of production crews and locations available outside London and Hayley appealed for any film professionals to sign up to the database.

Next we continued with our locations strand and **Taff Gillingham** who is the co-founder and director of Khaki Devil, which provides unique locations, costumes and military advice specialising in 1st and 2nd World War periods. Taff listed the many productions Khalki Devil was involved with and in particular the successes it has had attracting various feature films to the region. Also noteworthy is the work the Khaki Devil team has done lobbying for equal tax credit treatment of TV and Film productions, which has recently become a reality and represents a huge opportunity for the UK to retain and attract TV productions.



Sarah Brown from Bentwater Parks showed us all the fabulous locations and facilities this former American Air-Force base has to offer. It has attracted many big movies and TV series to this region, with the latest being *Fast and Furious 6*, which filmed some incredible stunt scenes on its runways. Sarah further talked about her contribution to attracting more film productions to the region. She also noted the need to hold more of these

events as she pointed out that before this conference she had never met Khaki Devil, despite both being so close and working on the same issues “which is one of the reasons why hopefully in the future we’ll have more events like this so we can all work together and pull all our resources”.

Our last presentation for the morning was from **Rebecca Watkins** coming all the way from Brighton to tell us about the brand-new Film Show and Tell collective that is connecting filmmakers all over the UK. Rebecca talked about her experiences in the film industry and provided a varied yet clear overview over the general opportunities and pitfalls within this highly competitive field.



Lunch was provided for everyone during the one-hour break, which gave ample opportunities for everyone to network and catch up. The IFT’s lounge area by screen two and the upstairs bar area were taken over by our large audience and speakers eating their lunch - with extra cupcakes donated by the Ramada Encore Hotel.



After the break we continued our program with screenings of two trailers from feature films that had been shot in this region. In 2011 *Private Peaceful* was filmed at various locations across Suffolk and is soon to be re-released on DVD. Its producer **Guy de Beaujeu** was present at the Regional Film Conference to shine a light on the production process, how the film ended up being shot here and his experience of filming in this county. “Our experience of filming in Suffolk was an incredibly happy one. The biggest problem was that everyone here was trying to be too nice and too helpful” Next was **Daniel Simpson**, a Woodbridge-based director who has just completed his latest feature film *Hangar 10*. We were honored to be the first venue to screen a trailer of this film as it hasn’t been released yet. The film deals with the UFO encounter in Rendlesham Forest and the mysteries surrounding it. “It was a fantastic experience to make this film here in Suffolk.”



Next we welcomed our local education providers who have courses specially dedicated to film. First **Rachel Hipkiss** from Signals Media in Colchester, which has recently been awarded BFI Academy status. The organisation has built a significant track record of engaging young people by teaching them to use film and animation to tell stories and explore various issues.

This presentation was followed by **Alexandra Leaney**, course leader for the Film degree at UCS, who told us about the the film degree course and also a lot about the University's partnership with local businesses, who help provide work experience placements for students. "It's really nice to see how over the last three years the local community has embraced our students and we really want to continue to network with those people and provide opportunities for our students."



The next part of the conference consisted of a panel discussion, which was held to find out what measures could be implemented to attract more film productions to the region and how the local film industry can be supported and expanded. On the panel were **Jonathan Stevenson** - Operations Manager for the Arts and Entertainment department at IBC, **Daniel Shepherd** - Film Producer with Pilot Media, **Taff Gillingham** and **Sarah Brown** - who talked earlier in the day, **Julien Mery** - Director at FILM Suffolk and finally **Sue Hayes** - former Commissioner for Film London and now an Independent Consultant.

During the discussion between the members of the panel and the audience many different points were raised.

On the topic of promoting locations in Suffolk for film productions:

- raise the visibility through simple measures such as a Youtube channel to showcase locations.
- The council confirms that it is easy for it to close roads for film shoots and is very supportive to such activities.
- promoting film locations should also be an activity that the local tourism industry actively supports.
- Suffolk needs to be promoted at national conferences, have stands and national exposure to increase its visibility beyond the region.
- The slow rail network has been noted as a potential hindrance.

- Location scouts should be invited to visit the area.

Facilities for the region:

- There is a general consensus that the availability of a bespoke studio space would be of great benefit in attracting more productions to the region.
- Bentwaters has a very large 30.000sq.ft. hangar that could be split and that could be ideal for studio space, but finding the right funding opportunity has been tough. The smaller 5000sq.ft. studio would require several hundred thousand pounds to get fully kitted out.
- Post-production facilities in the region cannot currently compete with the ones available in London.

Other issues raised by the panel and the audience:

- London is perceived to “suck out all the talent from the region”.
- The attitude from some of the councils has been described as difficult for filmmakers attempting to get clearance for filming on locations.
- Many filmmakers in the region feel ignored by bigger organisations such as Creative England.



After the panel discussion we continued on to hear about the film festivals that are being held in this region. **Tristan Syrett** and **Steven Dorrington**, founders of the Colchester Film Festival, revealed their plans for next year’s festival including their new 60-hour film challenge.

Their presentation was followed by artist and film-maker **Eileen Haring-Woods** introducing her film about the Aldeburgh Documentary Festival.

As our last event for the day of the conference we dedicated an hour to welcoming local film businesses and service suppliers to talk for a maximum of 5 minutes in true speed-dating style about who they are and what they do.

We had a great uptake from 10 of the region’s best:

- **The Page UK** - a casting website run by **Adam Piercy**
- **Xtreme Productions** - a fresh film production company by **Aaron Weight**
- **Bickers Action** - a world-wide renowned stunts vehicle company introduced by **Paul Bickers**
- **Act-On** - a local talent agency and drama training centre with **Tanya Marshall**
- **Livid Films** - a film production company specialising in commercial feature film productions in the region, introduced by **Matthew McGuchan**
- **Summerisle Studios** - an award winning video and film production company with **Tom Newman**

- **Lightly Frozen** - a production company producing high-quality Commercial and Promotional films, presented by **Roy Jones**
- **East Anglian Film Network** - a non-profit organisation helping filmmakers in the region to connect, introduced by **Peter Barfield**
- **Bruizer** - one of the major video and film production companies in this region, introduced by **Beth Lockett**
- **Animals OKay** - one of the largest companies supplying animals for Film & TV, by **Diane Ling**
- **As Described** - video production company that also specialises in live visuals and events, by **Jim Horsfield**



Quotes & Soundbites

“It is absolutely heartbreaking to see productions that are so ideally suited to this area going overseas” **Sarah Brown - Bentwater Parks**

“The helpfulness of all the council parks staff far outweighed all the minor problems we had.”
Guy de Beaujeu - Fluidity films

“What we need to do is work a lot harder at gain a lot more interest in Ipswich and Suffolk and put it out there” **Jonathan Stephenson - Ipswich Borough Council**

“Ipswich has got a lot going for it” **Sue Hayes**