



MVT
Music Venue Trust

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

**Protecting, securing and improving
Grassroots Music Venues across the UK**

**Leading the national and international
movement to sustain the Grassroots
Music Venue sector**

CONTENTS

1	A Word From Our Chairs & CEO	4
2	Summary of Purpose & Areas of Activity	5
3	Key Achievements & Figures From 2023	6
4	The GMV Sector	8
4.1	The Figures	8
4.2	The Membership	12
4.3	The Membership Review	14
5	MVT's Work	16
5.1	Venue Support Services	16
5.2	Nations Development	19
5.3	Campaigning & Advocacy	20
5.4	Live Projects	22
5.5	Pipeline Investment Fund	24
5.6	Networking Activity	28
5.7	Music Venue Properties / Own Our Venues	30
6	Financial Review	32
7	Thank Yous	34
8	Appendices	36

1

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRS & CEO

2023 was the most challenging year for the Grassroots Music Venue (GMV) sector since Music Venue Trust (MVT) was founded in 2014. An extraordinary number of closures reflected a combination of challenging factors, which also impacted on the ability of artists to tour and, for many venues, to sustain the level of live music provision in their communities. MVT worked with government, the media, and wider stakeholders across the music sector on a wide range of issues facing GMVs, while providing essential core advice and support services to venues. We offered planning, licensing, noise, acoustics, and legal advice to GMVs across the UK, directly responding to a broad range of key issues facing the sector.

We engaged with UK, Welsh, and Scottish governments on challenges including the energy crisis, business rates, VAT on ticketing, investment programmes, planning reform, and opportunities to enhance the community of venues across the UK.

We supported an emerging sector of regional live music organisations in England, inputting into initiatives in London, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Brighton, and York, and created new posts for coordinators in Scotland and Wales.

MVT successfully established Music Venue Properties as an independent, community-owned investment vehicle, raising over £2 million to support the concept of a 'National Trust of Music Venues'. The new organisation completed its first purchase of a venue in October.

The sector remains significantly underfunded in comparison to other areas of culture. MVT has worked with public funding agencies, trusts, foundations, and philanthropic individuals and organisations to increase the total level of financial support being made available to the sector, particularly through its Live Projects initiatives.

We expanded and developed our Pipeline Investment Fund programme and attracted new partners to financially support the sector. We delivered grants to venues to support improvements to building infrastructure; sound and lighting equipment; and enabling venues to invest in training and skills.

Team MVT has taken a lead role across a range of policies and initiatives that are important to our members and to the communities they serve, and this work was recognised in the Creative Industries Sector Vision and in the launch of a DCMS Select Committee Inquiry into GMVs.

We are fully engaged with an emerging network of music organisations dedicated to producing information and guidance that supports the push towards carbon neutrality; taking direct action to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion; and meeting the challenge of accessibility.

In what continues to be a very challenging and difficult environment for our sector, we are extremely grateful to all our partners, funders, donors, sponsors, and corporate supporters. Their generosity has enabled us to create a robust organisation that has been able to achieve real positive change for the GMV sector in 2023. The ongoing financial resilience of the charity enabled us to decide to make significant additional investments into the sector during 2023. We would also like to thank our patrons, who have been a powerful and effective voice in support of our work.

2

SUMMARY OF PURPOSE & AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Music Venue Trust is a UK registered charity¹ which acts to protect, secure, and improve the UK's GMV circuit. The established and accepted definition of a Grassroots Music Venue, developed by MVT, can be found in appendix 1 [page 36].

Created in January 2014, Music Venue Trust aims to secure the long-term future of GMVs in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, whether they are iconic venues such as Hull Adelphi, Exeter Cavern, The 100 Club, Band on the Wall, King Tut's, and Clwb Ifor Bach, or lesser-known venues that are equally important to their geographical or musical community. These venues play a crucial role in the development of British music, nurturing local talent, providing a platform for artists to build their careers and develop their music and their performance skills.

MVT works to gain recognition of the essential role these venues fulfil, not only for artist development but also for the cultural and music industries, the economy, and local communities. The geographical spread of GMVs provides access to live music, for both performers and audience members, in many locations that do not have alternative cultural venues. The charity provides advice to the government, the cultural sector, and the music industry on issues impacting GMVs and are the nominated representative that speaks on behalf of the Music Venues Alliance, an association of venues from across the UK.

Through the Emergency Response Service, MVT provides MVA member venues with access to free legal and expert advice on licensing, planning, development, noise, business resilience, and tenancy issues. Additional services include bespoke resources, training, networking opportunities, and events for MVA members.

When established, MVT's long-term aim was to acquire the freeholds of as many of these venues as possible. The 2022/23 Own Our Venues campaign and the creation of a community benefit society, Music Venue Properties, which leads on this work, are steps forward. MVT continues to have an active role in a long-term campaign to take control of these freeholds and bring them under a protected status of benevolent ownership.

The charity employs a core team who work with specialist consultants where further expertise is required. The team is supported by a Board of Trustees, made up of professionals who are passionate about GMVs and their social, cultural, and economic value. The Trustees voluntarily oversee the work of Team MVT, holding a legal responsibility for the charity's conduct and fulfilment of its mission.

¹ Music Venue Trust is a charity registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales: Charity Number 1159846 Music Venue Trust (Scotland) is a charity registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator: Charity Number SC052001

3

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & FIGURES FROM 2023

MVT'S WORK IN NUMBERS

Handled

164 emergency response crisis cases → **38%** increase from 2022



£282,546.43

awarded directly to venues via the Pipeline Investment Fund



MUSIC
VENUE
PROPERTIES

Music Venue Properties' first venue purchase:

**THE
SNUG**
IN ATHERTON

Created live projects with brand partners to enable gigs across the UK:

spent
£1,405,000



helping over
326 ARTISTS



tour
315 GIGS



across
266 VENUES



across
4 NATIONS

THE CHARITY

- Created and delivered the first ever *MVT Annual Report*, bringing together authoritative information about the GMV sector
- Appointed coordinators for Scotland and Wales to be the first line of contact for venues within their nation while also working on the strategic development of relationships and opportunities in their respective nations
- Significantly increased our advocacy and campaigning work and enhanced our political interactions at all levels of government
- MVT team members spoke on behalf of MVT in panels and presentations at 19 conferences and networking events in the UK, Europe, and the US

MVT's TEAM

16 Staff
17 Consultants
45 Gurus
12 Trustees

MVT's PATRONS

67 Artists
8 Broadcasters
16 Industry
3 Political

KEY SECTOR STATISTICS



835
GMVS



23,657,220
TOTAL AUDIENCE VISITS



187,040
EVENTS



1,683,360
INDIVIDUAL ARTIST PERFORMANCES



28,223
PEOPLE EMPLOYED



37.5%
RENT INCREASE



£501,101,118
TOTAL VALUE OF THE SECTOR



0.5%
PROFIT MARGIN



£114,814,162
TOTAL GMV SUBSIDY TO LIVE MUSIC

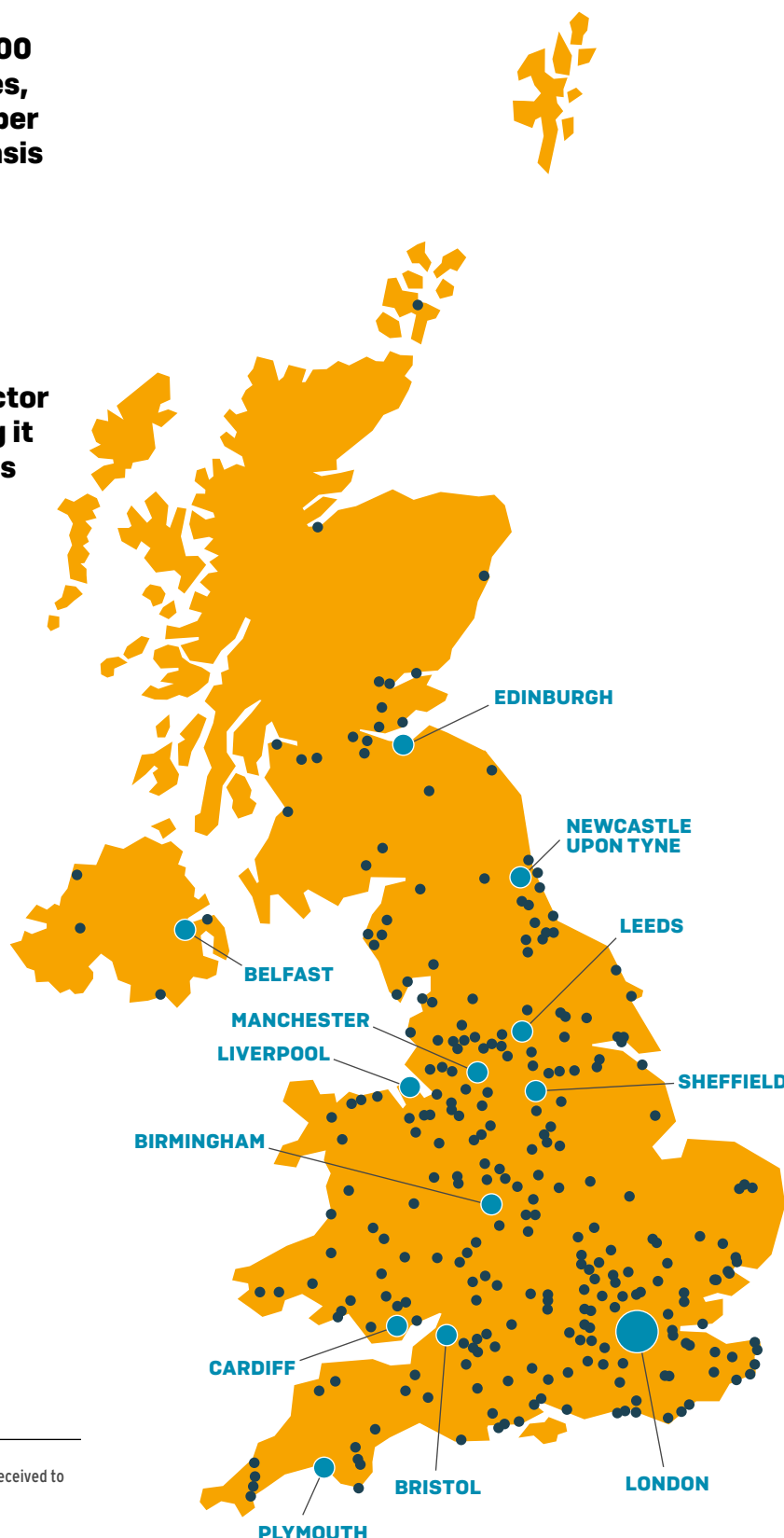
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THE GMV SECTOR

4.1 THE FIGURES

The UK GMV sector comprises over 800 GMVs across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The exact number of UK GMVs fluctuates on a weekly basis as a result of its dynamic nature.

The data presented in this report was collected by an in-depth and comprehensive survey of the Music Venues Alliance and was found to be statistically significant². The GMV sector itself is exceptionally diverse, making it important to interpret average figures as valuable illustrations rather than indicative of any specific venue.



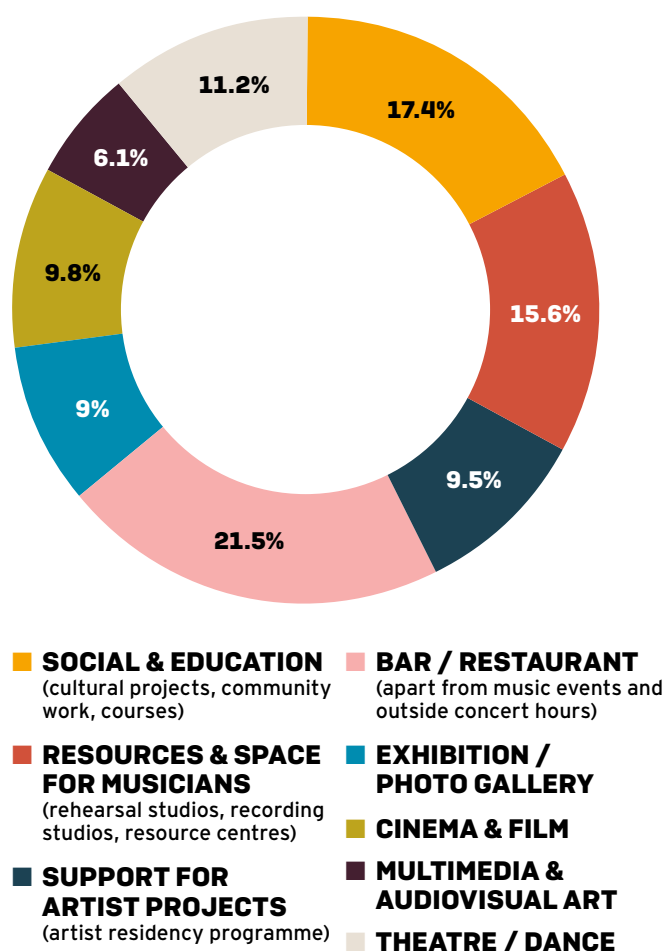
² Note that EDI statistics in this report are estimated – insufficient replies were received to the separate EDI survey for statistical significance

THE GMV SECTOR CLIMATE

In 2023, the Music Venues Alliance saw a decline in members, dropping to 835 GMVs from the previous year's figure of 960, a loss of 125 trading GMVs. 51.4% were found to have fully closed as trading businesses. 48.6% had ceased hosting live music. Throughout this report, this decline in the number of trading venues has significant impact on comparisons with 2022's annual report information.

Of the 835 remaining GMVs, 25.4% were registered as not-for-profit entities. 62.9% of for-profit organisations were registered as limited liability (Ltds). 81% of GMVs operated within rented premises, an 8% decline since 2022. The average rent paid by these venues experienced a yearly increase of 37.5%, rising to £4,549 per calendar month.

While the primary focus of GMVs remains live music, they also play a vital role in their communities, undertaking various functions. The most common reported function in 2023 was engaging in social & education projects encompassing cultural initiatives, community work, and courses. The second most popular function is the provision of resources and space(s) for musicians, including rehearsal studios, recording studios, and resource centres.



THE EVENTS

The average venue capacity was 309. There was a slight increase in capacity utilisation, up 1 percentage point from 2022 to 41%. Ticketed events saw a capacity utilisation of 42%, equating to 127 attendees per event and an annual average of 28,332 audience visits per venue.

The average number of events put on by the average GMV stood at 224, 21.7% higher than the 2022 figure of 184. 155 of these events were live music. However, the total number of live music events being put on by the entire GMV sector rose by only 2.9%. These contrasting statistics suggest that public demand was likely not a factor in the loss of the 125 trading GMVs; overall demand for live music remained broadly consistent, being met by the remaining GMVs increasing their supply.

In 2023, the weekly number of events staged by the average GMV stood at 4.3. Three of these events were live music, 77% of such events being ticketed live music.

Each live music event saw an average of nine artists perform, with a total fee per event of £475.77. An estimated 64% of these artists identified as men (cisgender), 30% as women (cisgender), and 6% as non-binary or transgender.

GMV AUDIENCE VISITS 2023

23,657,220

TOTAL NUMBER OF EVENTS IN 2023

187,040

TOTAL LIVE MUSIC TICKETED SHOWS IN 2023

99,365



**TOTAL PEOPLE
EMPLOYED
BY THE SECTOR**
28,223

THE WORKFORCE

The average GMV employed 17.3 PAYE staff, with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 8.5 PAYE employees; a slight decrease from the nine PAYE FTE per venue recorded in 2022.

The average GMV employed a high number of paid contractors with an average of 16.5 per venue. This marks a notable increase from the 12 contractors per venue in 2022, representing an uptick of 37.5% and aligning with the broader trend of a growing 'gig economy' across the workforce. An estimated 51% of the workforce identified as men (cisgender), 43% as women (cisgender), and 6% as non-binary or transgender.

Volunteers also make up a significant part of a venue's workforce with approximately seven volunteers helping out per GMV. While the number of volunteers per venue was stable (eight in 2022), the FTE work delivered by volunteers has dropped significantly to 1.96 (3.89 in 2022).

In 2022, the GMV sector employed 30,720 people. However, in 2023, this number dropped to 28,223. This decline can likely be attributed to the loss of the 125 trading GMVs, underscoring the impact of venue closures on the industry's workforce.



INCOME & EXPENDITURE

In 2023, the average total turnover of a GMV was £600,121. 68.1% came from food & beverage and other income, and 31.9% was generated through ticket sales, encompassing both live music and non-music events. Ticket prices increased by 4.8%, averaging £11.42 in 2023. Spend per head also saw a rise, reaching £13.10, a 11.8% increase. The average turnover increased by 15%; however, the total sector turnover only marginally surpassed last year's figure, rising by a mere 0.16%. This can likely be attributed to the decline in trading GMVs within the sector, underscoring the impact of venue closures on the sector's collective financial performance.

The expenditure of the average GMV totalled £597,143.85, which is an increase of 14.6%. GMVs spent £195,757.52 (33%) of their expenditure on staff and spent a total of £298,128.45 (49.9%) on live music provision. An additional £7,667.66 per venue was paid in licence fees to PRS (1.2% of total turnover, 4% of ticket income). In 2023, rents experienced a sharp uptick, with GMVs that rent their building paying an average of £4,567.45 per calendar month, a substantial increase of 37.5%. Venues that owned their building incurred an average monthly cost of £2,793.02. Regardless of their rental or ownership status, 66.2% of GMVs invested over £3,000 in enhancing their buildings in 2023, with the most popular improvement being their sound equipment.

This leaves the average GMV with a profit margin of £2,977.25 or 0.5%. It is important to note, however, that 38.5% of venues reported making a loss in 2023. A distinct contrast emerges when examining the profit margins of venues based on their geographical locations. Those situated in areas with populations under 200k reported an average loss of -2.55%, while their counterparts in more populated areas exhibited a profit margin of 1.7%. Additionally, venues with a total turnover under £500k were more likely to have a negative profit margin (averaging -0.5%) compared to those with turnovers exceeding £500k (averaging 3%).

When specifically considering the expenditure and income related solely to live music provision, the average GMV incurred a yearly loss of £137,501.99.



TOTAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY

£501,101,118



TOTAL SECTOR EXPENDITURE

£498,615,115

PROFIT MARGIN

0.5%

RENT INCREASE

37.5%



TOTAL INCOME FROM LIVE MUSIC IN 2023

£134,123,094



TOTAL SECTOR EXPENDITURE ON LIVE MUSIC IN 2023

£248,937,256



TOTAL GMV SUBSIDY TO LIVE MUSIC

£114,814,162

4.2 THE MEMBERSHIP

The MVA membership was a free-to-join alliance from 2015 to 2021. In 2022, it became self-funded by way of a subscription membership model, which offers membership benefits. A bursary scheme was made available for those venues that could not afford a membership fee.

Founded in January 2015, the Music Venues Alliance (MVA) is the UK's largest network of GMVs, acting as a representative body for which MVT advocates and campaigns on behalf of, across the nation, whilst providing direct support to owners and operators. The MVA enables MVT to work on behalf of member venues and talk to the government, the cultural sector, and the music industry about the challenges they are facing.

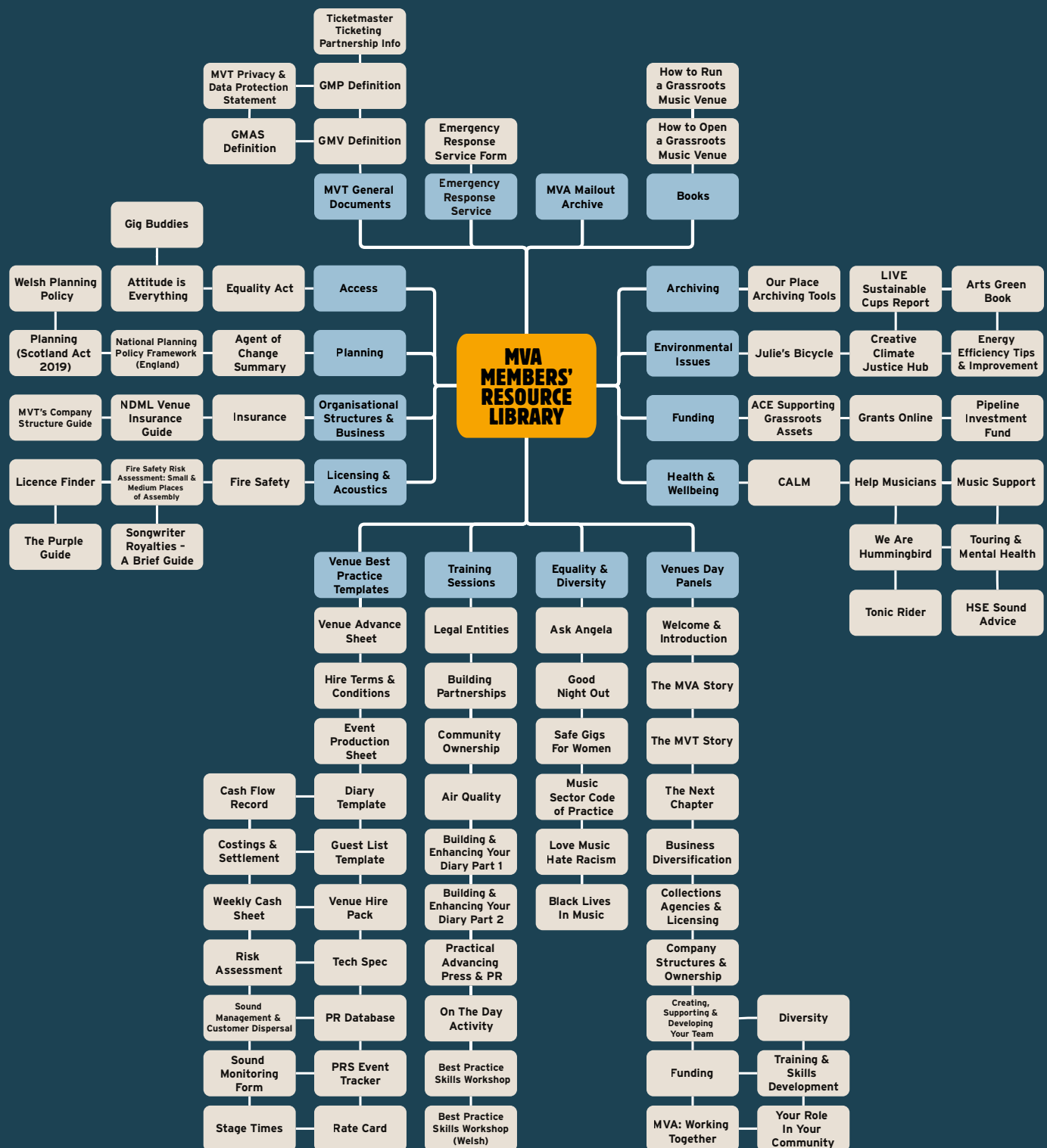
MVA membership is underpinned by the requirement of member venues to fulfil a specific set of organisational criteria, including their cultural and social role, economic activity, and infrastructural specifications. Applications are assessed using MVT's definition of a GMV (see appendix 1). In areas where there are no GMVs, Grassroots Music & Arts Spaces (GMAS) and Grassroots Music Pubs (GMPs) might fulfil the role of a GMV.

In March 2022, MVT introduced a subscription-based membership model to the MVA, so that this part of the charity's work could become a self-funding body, with essential functions upheld by the financial commitment of member venues. Structured by various levels of membership at incremental monthly costs, the subscription model is designed to allow venues in a more financially secure position to contribute a greater amount, enabling cheaper fees for venues facing economic precarity. A free bursary option is also available, upon application, for venues that are unable to afford the membership fee.

MVA members receive regular information from MVT, with access to resources, events, and opportunities throughout the year, in addition to personalised support as required. Their first line of contact is the Venue Support Team, now a complete service following the recruitment of Nations Coordinators for Scotland and Wales, and the formation of a Northern Ireland Steering Group, joining the existing England Coordinators and the Venue Support Manager.

In September 2023, MVT launched a new package of resources, available to all subscribed MVA members through an online portal, covering information vital to the effective functioning of a GMV, including legislation, policy, guidance on best practice, and templates and tools for use in assessments, applications, and organisational development. The membership resources were developed by MVT's Strategy and Project Support leads and are laid out on the following page.

MVA MEMBERS' RESOURCE LIBRARY



4.3 THE MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

Each year, Music Venue Trust conducts a full review of the Music Venues Alliance membership body to ascertain whether existing venues have reduced or ceased their live music provision and to identify any GMVs that have permanently closed without having come through the Emergency Response Service. This review ensures that the MVA is representing operative venues that fulfil the definition of a GMV whilst allowing MVT to maintain accurate figures and an informed understanding of how the grassroots live music sector is changing.

The 2023 review process consisted of researching each member venue's live music activity, using public information available on their websites, social media pages, and online listings, alongside any existing knowledge obtained through broader MVT engagement, such as venue support, live projects, and the annual survey. Consideration was given to locality when assessing the frequency and number of original live music events, taking account of whether each venue was situated in a major music city, on a touring route, or in an underserved area.

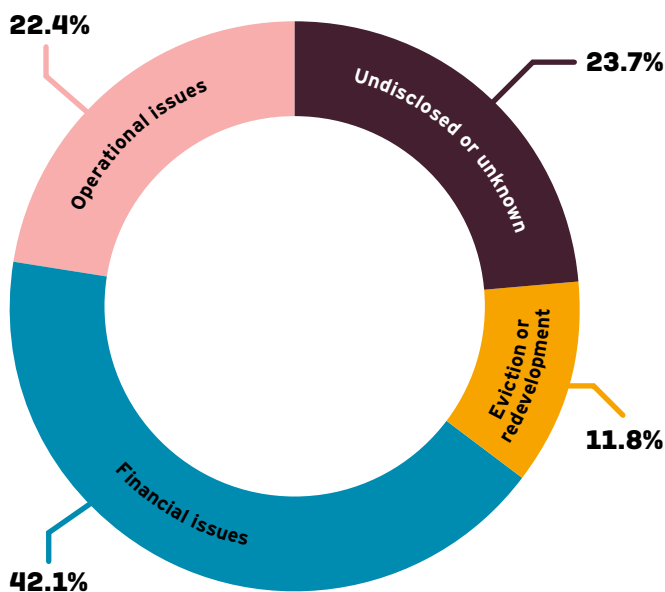
Where insufficient event listings or venue information were available, or it appeared a venue had substantially reduced its programming of live music, MVT attempted direct contact with the venue. This request for further information allowed venue representatives to provide a more detailed insight into the provision, identity, and circumstances of their venues whilst shedding light on the factors contributing to operational change and the business decisions of GMV operators.

FINDINGS

The membership review observed a significant decline in the number of trading GMVs, recognising that alongside closures and permanent loss of spaces, a second category of loss of music opportunities was identified: premises which were no longer operating as a GMV.

- The MVA counted **949** members as of 1 February 2023
- **835** remained operational as of 18 September 2023
- **76** venues were identified during this period as having permanently closed
- **72** venues were identified during this period as no longer fulfilling GMV criteria
- **34** venues were newly recognised as GMVs during the review period

REASONS FOR CLOSURE



The following causes were identified as contributing to permanent closure:

- Debt and bankruptcy resulting from energy prices, business rates, supply costs, or rent
- Financially unviable trading conditions; reduced footfall and increased operational costs
- Economic and logistical impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions
- Noise abatement orders and/or other neighbour disputes related to venue activity
- Revocation of the venue's premises licence or unachievable licence renewal terms
- Venue building sold by freeholder with view to redevelopment and repurposing

The following causes were identified as contributing to reduction or termination of live music provision:

- Reorientation of programming toward live comedy, sports screenings, or pub quizzes
- Reformatting business use so that the primary focus is on fine dining or alcoholic drinks
- Diversification of activities offered. For example, wellbeing, crafts, exercise, exhibitions etc
- Programming of pre-recorded music, rather than live artists, to reduce event costs
- Prioritisation of club nights or other themed events in order to increase footfall
- Limited access or availability of space, where venue used multipurpose building

CLOSURE CASE STUDIES

MOLES, BATH

For the past 45 years, Bath-based Moles has been one of the UK's key GMVs. Opening in 1978, it played a significant role in the early careers of internationally acclaimed artists such as The Smiths, Oasis, Blur, Radiohead, Ed Sheeran, Idles, Young Fathers, and many more. Right up until its doors closed on 5th December, Moles actively supported new and established artists.

A huge increase in trade costs in the past 18 months, combined with a reduction in footfall in response to the cost-of-living crisis, pressured the business into a state of financial inviability. MVT's Emergency Response Service offered rigorous and holistic support to the venue operators, including advice on grant funding, insurance, and energy supply options. However, the continued challenges meant that the owners of Moles had no choice but to file for insolvency.

Despite having survived recessions, a fire, a pandemic, and decades of social change, the situation for Moles in 2023 was insurmountable. News of the closure sent shockwaves not only through the local community, for whom the venue was a cultural hub and local landmark, but through the wider music industry, with promoters, venues, artists, and music journalists lamenting the devastating loss of Moles.

HARMONIUM, EDINBURGH

A staple of Edinburgh's vibrant Leith district since 2017, Harmonium offered original live music, ethical plant-based cuisine, and a range of local beers, natural wines, and spirits. The venue itself was part of a wave of exciting, forward-thinking spaces in the city, with experienced operators at the helm.

From 2021 onwards, the venue faced sharp increases in costs of overheads and trading, notably on wet and dry stock supplies, which were ultimately unsustainable for the business to continue operating under. Harmonium closed its doors on 7 May 2023, after six years of successful trading as a GMV, to a reception of great sadness from the local community and its loyal customer base.

MELODIC DISTRACTION, LIVERPOOL

Based on Constance Street in Liverpool, Melodic Distraction operated as a community radio station and arts space from 2015-2023, becoming a GMV in July 2021. After trading for nine years, presenting countless live events and having broadcast in excess of 9,000 radio shows, the venue closed its doors in September 2023.

The factors that contributed to the loss of this successful and key cultural space include a significant increase in operating costs, challenges in accessing suitable cultural funding, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. The venue team were also candid about how these challenges had impacted on their overall wellbeing and how this had added additional pressure to their day-to-day operation.

Music Venue Trust assisted the Melodic team with guidance around liquidation procedures, communications around closure announcements, and information on wellbeing support, made available through MVT's partners Tonic Rider and Music Minds Matter.

OCEAN ARTS CARDIFF

Based in the East Moors neighbourhood, Ocean Arts Cardiff focused on offering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community venue. In addition to live music events, the venue hosted art workshops, community choirs, multisensory groups for adults with additional needs, and housed several artists in residence. The venue was recognised as a Grassroots Music & Arts Space.

After six years of trading, Ocean Arts was hit by an unaffordable rent increase of almost 60%. The landlord was unwilling to negotiate, and the venue operator was left with no other option but to accept a short notice period and close its doors permanently in October 2023. The building was listed for sale and is no longer in use as a music venue.

5

MVT'S WORK

5.1 VENUE SUPPORT SERVICES

EMERGENCY RESPONSE SERVICE

Music Venue Trust's Emergency Response Service has been developed to help support venues going through crisis. The goal of the service is to give venue operators urgent support and where possible to stop venues closing down from challenges that could otherwise have been prevented.

In 2023, the Emergency Response Service offered specialist advice in 164 cases. This is the largest number of cases the Emergency Response Service has dealt with since it was created in 2017 and an increase of 38% on the number of cases seen in 2022. This increase in cases reflects the challenging trading environment for GMVs in 2023.

Venues in the Emergency Response Service are supported by the Venue Support Team and receive specialist one-on-one advice tailored to their specific needs throughout the year. This support is broad and includes advice on business models, operational viability, legal support, licensing, planning, acoustics, health & safety, and more.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS & BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

2023 saw MVT building on the Venue Skills Workshops for venue operators that were first developed in 2022 in partnership with the Greater London Authority. In 2023, with funding from Creative Wales, MVT was able to take the skills workshops to Wales for four sessions in Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham, and Aberystwyth. These workshops focused on: Building & Enhancing Your Diary, Practical Advancing, Press & PR, and On The Day Activity.

After listening to feedback from MVA members, MVT created new skill workshops for Venues Day 2023. The intention of these workshops was to complement the existing sessions by focusing on topics that had emerged as core themes in this year's Emergency Response Service. These new workshops were How To Respond To Planning Applications, Developing Your Organisational Structure, and Financial Tools To Help Manage Your Venue.

2023 also saw MVT develop its first *Best Practice Guide* in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Music Commission. This guide focuses on how venue operators can deal with the planning system, respond to planning applications, and gives guidance to help venue operators feel more confident in dealing with planning threats. *The Best Practice Guide* was launched at Venues Day 2023 and will be made available online for venues on the Greater Manchester Music Commission website in 2024.

KEY TRENDS IN 2023 WERE:



**Threats to venues
from financial issues**



**Threats to venues from
noise complaints**



**Threats to venues
from redevelopment or
planning applications**

VENUE CASE STUDIES

THE TROUBADOUR, LONDON

The Troubadour has stood on Old Brompton Road in West London since 1954. Despite being a year in which the sector has faced a challenging trading climate, 2023 saw the venue increase their provision of grassroots music talent.

Throughout the year, one neighbouring resident consistently submitted noise complaints against the venue to the local authority, to the point of involving councillors and MPs. The Venue Support Team, with the expertise of MVT's licensing guru, worked with the venue to ensure that all noise and audience management plans were written up and implemented into the venue's operation in order to most effectively contain any noise breakout. The venue set about building a relationship with the local authority with MVT's support and advocacy.

The complainant continued to escalate, becoming increasingly erratic and contentious. Eventually, MVT mediated a meeting with the complainant, councillors, local residents, and enforcement officers at the venue. The complaints have since stopped, and the venue has continued to work with the local authority so that they understand the ways in which they can contain and manage their noise whilst not compromising on their programming.

"We were receiving noise complaints on a semi-regular basis even though we had upgraded our soundproofing and changed our security team. We asked MVT to help mediate between ourselves, the residents, and councillors, and their help was amazing. The knowledge they brought to the table was priceless in helping us resolve the issues and move on and look forward."

Ian Screeton, Manager

TUNNELS, ABERDEEN

Tunnels is a GMV in central Aberdeen offering performances across the spectrum of live bands and electronic artists. MVT supported the venue to implore the council to repair areas of the cobbled roadway on Carnegies Brae as it posed difficulty in accessibility due to raised and loose cobbles in various areas, which was particularly problematic at night with obstructed street lighting. The Venue Support Team contacted Aberdeen Action on Disability, Aberdeen City Council, and called on support from MVT Gurus to establish a pathway to a solution. The venue had previously pursued a number of routes, and with combined action, the roadway was repaired to improve access to the venue.

"Due to weather and degradation, the road was sinking, and the cobbles were becoming loose - creating access issues. Originally, we tried to phone the local authority to be told it was online reporting only. Five or six of these online reports later, we never got a single response. We eventually had to email our licensing officer, again to no response. However, after a period of time, the roads department did appear and fill in the holes with tarmac, solving some of the most pressing problems with the road but with others still outstanding."

Ross Calder, Entertainment Manager

VENUE CASE STUDIES

PAVILION MID WALES, LLANDRINDOD WELLS

Built in 1912, The Pavilion has been a community hub for over 100 years. In March 2016, Grand Pavilion Events, a not-for-profit community interest company, reopened the building as a venue. In its seven years of operation, the team reinvigorated the venue as a major part of the live music scene in Mid Wales. From 2016 to 2020, the Pavilion had 135,000 visitors, attracted major artists to the area, supported the local grassroots scene, and gave local artists an opportunity to perform and share the stage with some of its acts.

There had been no investment in the venue for over 25 years, however, and the Pavilion had begun to show serious signs of decay. The venue was still operating on a rolling one-month licence due to the company not being in a position to sign the lease in its current form as this would have resulted in shifting responsibility for all maintenance and repair onto the company, including the historic maintenance, which would have proven entirely unviable.

MVT's Venue Support Team helped facilitate dialogue with local government asking for support covering the lease and the repair work and highlighted the venue's cultural value. Discussions were also held around energy usage/bills and potential business rate support.

MVT subsequently provided support and assistance through MVT's Funding Guru and helped guide the venue through an ultimately successful Shared Prosperity Fund application. The grant was awarded to fund a feasibility study and mechanical and electrical/structural survey. This grant award has now allowed the venue operators the time and capacity to accurately evaluate the building work required, as well as the ongoing sustainability of the business, to look for further avenues of funding for the work required and, hopefully, put them in a position to sign a long-term lease with the council to secure the venue's future.

"The Pavilion became a member of the Music Venues Alliance in 2017. Since becoming a member, we have received valuable support, networking, and advice from Music Venue Trust to assist our operation of the Pavilion. The Pavilion was a vital part of the touring circuit until the early 1980s; our aim has always been to relight that fire whilst providing the local grassroots scene with a venue suitable for larger events."

Jase Hawker, Managing Director

THE PRINCE ALBERT, BRIGHTON

The Prince Albert is a vital part of Brighton's celebrated grassroots music scene. When an application was submitted to develop the industrial building adjoining the venue into holiday lets, the Venue Support Team supported the operators of the Prince Albert, with guidance from MVT's Planning and Acoustician Gurus, to lodge an objection. This objection was successfully upheld and the application rejected.

Later on in the year, the applicant reapplied with a variation to remove the holiday lets and develop the building for commercial use. The Prince Albert team and MVT understood they needed to persist in their objections. The operators feared that if the application was approved and developed, it could more easily be converted into a residential building in the future. The fact also remained that the venue shares a party wall with the unit, and so the threat of future noise and vibration complaints was still a major concern.

With support from MVT, the venue operators organised another public campaign to inform their audience that the fight was not over yet. They collected over 18,000 signatures in just a few days and hosted a DJ set from Fatboy Slim to highlight the campaign. At the planning committee hearing, supported by MVT, the venue operator delivered an informed and passionate speech, and the planning application was again rejected.

"We faced an uphill struggle regarding a planning application that could have potentially closed us down, a new-build adjacent to us with the threat of accommodation clearly spelt danger. We contacted MVT and got advice and help, which boosted our determination to fight and put a stop to the proposals."

"The planning application has been turned down twice now, but we know it's something that's not going to go away. Knowing we have the RED BUTTON to hit anytime and get advice and help almost immediately is invaluable."

Will Moore, Venue Manager

5.2 NATIONS DEVELOPMENT

MVT has always prided itself on being a UK-wide organisation, advocating for artists and venues in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The charity is based in London, the majority of venues within the Music Venues Alliance are located in England, and the UK music industry tends to focus largely on activity in England. As MVT represents over 140 venues across Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, governments, funders, and other cultural bodies in all nations are key to our work.

For factors that impact on GMVs, such as planning legislation; licensing; business rates and designations; cultural policy and funding, each country is tracked to ensure that MVT is giving the correct guidance and support to venues. An ongoing dialogue with different layers of government, participation in consultations, raising concerns that impact on the GMV sector with relevant bodies, and advocating for the economic, social, and cultural value of GMVs often takes place four times. The nature of working across four nations means that it is a particular challenge when there is no equivalent policy/initiative/fund in one or more countries. In these instances, MVT frames its work so that advances in one nation could potentially assist in the others at some point.

MVT is a charity registered in England and Wales. MVT Scotland is a registered charity in Scotland. Operationally, MVT is committed to developing its work in every nation in the ways detailed below.

COORDINATORS

In March 2023, the Venue Support Team achieved full strength with the addition of coordinators for Scotland and Wales. These coordinators have the dual role of being the first line of contact for venues within their nation while also working on the strategic development of relationships and opportunities, building on earlier work done by the wider team. In 2023, the Venue Support Team comprised two full-time England coordinators, one part-time Scotland coordinator, and one part-time Welsh coordinator.

STEERING GROUPS

MVT holds regular online meetings with a volunteer steering group of venue representatives from Wales and Scotland. These take place roughly every six weeks, facilitating discussion of issues of particular concern in each country, providing valuable insight from venues. In early 2023, a Northern Ireland Steering Group was added, in an attempt to move ahead despite the challenge of having no working government in Stormont.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

MVT's work speaking directly to MPs, Members of Scottish Government (MSPs) and Members of Senedd (MSs) was developed further in 2023. Producing an annual report assists in articulating the needs of the sector and individual meetings with politicians have been helpful in advancing awareness. MVT attended the Cross Party Group on Music in Scottish Parliament and organised a panel about Scotland's music venues as part of the Festival of Politics, held in Scottish Parliament in August 2023. In October 2023, MVT was invited to join the Cross Party Group on Music in Senedd. Events to share the *MVT Annual Report 2023* are programmed to take place in the parliaments in Westminster, Senedd, and Holyrood.

EVENTS

In 2023, MVT partnered with key conference and networking events in Scotland (Wide Days, Edinburgh), Wales (FOCUS Wales, Wrexham), Northern Ireland (Sound of Belfast) and England (The Great Escape, Un-Convention, and Beyond the Music).

5.3 CAMPAIGNING & ADVOCACY

MVT worked across all layers of government – local, regional, and national – to inform decision-makers about the challenges and opportunities presented by the GMV sector. The team actively engaged the music industry in MVT's work through working groups, committees, and presentations. MVT created key press and media moments throughout the year to highlight the work it does.

Parliamentary briefing, evidence, and consultation sessions:

- DCMS Creative Industries Sector Vision
- DCMS Grassroots Sector 2023 Briefing
- DCMS Talent Pipeline Levy Briefing
- HM Treasury Business Rates Briefing
- HM Treasury Budget Briefing
- HM Treasury Response to Budget Letter
- DLHUC Briefing – Community Ownership Fund
- DLHUC Briefing – Distribution of Levelling Up Funding
- DLHUC Permitted Development Rights Consultation Letter
- Council for Science and Technology – Briefing on R&D
- MP Briefing Note for Debate on Supporting Freelancers
- MP Briefing Note for Debate on Our Creative Future
- Letter on the North East Devolution Deal

Political Engagement:

22 MP MEETINGS

Lucy Fraser, John Whittingdale, Stuart Andrew, Thangam Debbonaire, John Nicolson, Chris Green, Peter Aldous, Kerry McCarthy, Damian Green, Vicky Ford, Ian Mears, Julia Lopez, Bambos Charalambous, Robin Walker, Emma Hardy, Damian Collins, James Grundy, Caroline Dinenage, Barbara Keeley, Alex Sobel, Jeff Smith, Kevin Brennan

5 LORDS MEETINGS

Lord Stephen Parkinson, Lord David Watts, Lord Mike Watson, Baroness Lynne Featherstone, Lord Tim Clement-Jones

13 MSP MEETINGS/VENUE VISITS

Michelle Thomson, Donald Cameron, Craig Hoy, Carol Mochan, Alan Dorans, Siobhian Brown, Martin Whitfield, Alexander Stewart, Christina McKelvie, Sandesh Gulhane, Stuart McMillan, Daniel Johnson, Meghan Gallacher

9 MS MEETINGS/VENUE VISITS

John Griffiths, Andrew RT Davies, Luke Fletcher, Jayne Bryant, Sam Rowlands, Heledd Fychan, Tom Giffard, Rhianon Passmore, Cefin Campbell

10 OTHER POLITICAL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Festival of Politics (Edinburgh), DLHUC, Council for Science and Technology, Chelmsford City Council, Brighton City Council, Liverpool City Council, Manchester City Council, Edinburgh City Council, Cardiff City Council, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

MVT engaged with the following key stakeholders in 2023, ensuring GMVs are central to the music industry ecosystem:

- Founding member of LIVE (Live music Industry Venues & Entertainment)
- Venues Working Group (LIVE)
- Green Working Group (LIVE)
- Workforce Working Group (LIVE)
- Liverpool Music Board
- Greater Manchester Music Commission
- Maintaining international relationships through Networking Activity

When challenges arose, MVT responded with information, advice, and guidance for MVA members. MVT also cultivated more opportunities to secure venues and keep them informed about initiatives that secure their future.

Investment from partners was sought, and MVT engaged with initiatives to improve the artist and audience live music experience.

GROWTH



FACEBOOK
39,883
 4% INCREASE FROM 2022



INSTAGRAM
21,857
 19% INCREASE



TWITTER / X
22,285
 4% INCREASE



YOUTUBE
423
 10% INCREASE



TIKTOK
1,215
 125% INCREASE



LINKEDIN
2,197
 148% INCREASE



THREADS
4,057
 NEW

FIVE KEY CAMPAIGNS:
THE PR IN NUMBERS

COCA-COLA – CASEY LOWRY GMV TOUR

AUDIENCE REACH **58,760,299**

PIPELINE INVESTMENT FUND

AUDIENCE REACH **142,999,034**

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY 'UNITED BY MUSIC' CAMPAIGN

AUDIENCE REACH **1,533,533,957**

MUSIC VENUE PROPERTIES – #OWNOURVENUES LAUNCH

AUDIENCE REACH **311,312,591**

FREENOW – 'RIDE FOR MUSIC' CAMPAIGN

AUDIENCE REACH **205,284,953**

In tandem with day-to-day public relations activity, which covers general press releases, statements, comment, rebuttals, opinion pieces, organisation profiles and so on, the core focus for Velocity Communications (music industry trade media) and Republic Media (consumer media) during this period centred around five major campaigns, which included commercial partnerships with Coca-Cola, The National Lottery, and FREENOW, alongside MVT initiatives The Pipeline Investment Fund and Music Venue Properties.

MVT's wide-ranging activity across a broad spectrum of initiatives allowed both agencies to attain a more diverse range of media coverage than in previous years across digital, print, TV, and radio. There was also a move towards more 'in-depth' media coverage with key issues receiving a 'deeper dive' from journalists than previously seen.

The five campaigns mentioned saw a total audience reach of well over two billion, with the National Lottery's 'United by Music' partnership with MVT accounting for in excess of 1.5 billion of that figure.

MVT had a consistent presence in the music industry trade media throughout this period, which included regular column inches in all the major publications such as *Music Week*, *Music Business Worldwide*, *CMU Daily*, *Record of the Day*, *IQ Magazine*, *Access All Areas*, *The Ticketing Business*, *Pollstar*, *Billboard*, *HITS* and more. The consumer-facing campaigns undertaken saw high-profile visibility across the likes of *Good Morning Britain*, *Front Row*, *ITV News at Ten*, most of the daily broadsheet newspapers, the music press such as *Kerrang!* and *NME*, a range of lifestyle magazines, as well extensive regional radio, TV, and newspaper coverage.

5.4 LIVE PROJECTS

MVT are committed to supporting the MVA membership to do what they do best – putting on live music. The Live Projects department has worked hard to bring funding into venues right across the membership throughout 2023.

The Live Projects department uses brand partnerships in four ways:

- 1** To take on the financial risk of touring for developing artists so venues don't have to, supporting both artists and venues to have shows that otherwise won't happen
- 2** To underwrite local events with bursaries given directly to venues
- 3** To coordinate and enable underplays of larger artists in smaller-capacity venues to build positive PR to further promote the trust
- 4** To highlight and promote the charity's goals and campaigns through industry showcase events across the year

Live Project partnerships also have a strong focus on taking shows to venues underused by agents and promoters, showcasing some fantastic and unique venues off the beaten track across the UK.

In 2023, Live Projects continued to work closely with The National Lottery as its main funding partner, as well as welcoming new partnerships on-board including FREENOW and Coca-Cola.

UNITED BY MUSIC

MVT's partnership with The National Lottery (TNL) continued for a fourth campaign in 2023 under the new branding of United By Music, to work in conjunction with TNL's legacy plan for Eurovision 2023. The first half of the campaign saw MVT have a significant presence in Liverpool for the Eurovision celebrations.

During this Liverpool-based campaign, MVT:

- Invested £235,000 supporting artists, venues, and their subsequent crews
- Programmed 14 shows within 14 venues across Liverpool
- Programmed a key event at the Eurovision Fan Village to an audience of 12,000 people
- Funded 15 headline artists and 20 support acts – including six shows as underplays as part of the PR campaign to highlight the charity and partnership

United by Music was then expanded to a national programme of live music supported by The National Lottery from June 2023.

During this campaign, MVT:

- Invested £841,000 supporting artists, venues, and their subsequent crews
- Programmed 191 shows within 145 venues across the UK
- Funded 19 tours, 21 bursary grants for individual shows, and five underplays as part of the PR campaign to highlight the charity and partnership





FREENOW

FREENOW, the mobility super app, were the Mercury Music Prize 2023 sponsors. As part of their sponsorship of the prize, the brand committed to working with and supporting GMVs, as well as emerging talent, through MVT.

The partnership, Move to the Music, began June 2022 and concluded June 2023, specifically targeting venues in London, Manchester, and Edinburgh; the key cities in which the brand is developing their customer base.

During this campaign, MVT:

- Invested £253,000 supporting artists, venues, and their subsequent crews
- Programmed 96 shows in 96 venues
- Funded the fees of 93 grassroots headline acts and over 150 supporting artists
- Delivered three underplay shows as part of the PR campaign to highlight the charity and partnership

COCA-COLA

In 2023, MVT began a pilot project with Coca-Cola to explore the impact of a Live Projects campaign. MVT funded one headline artist to tour the UK during autumn 2023.

During this campaign, MVT:

- Invested £76,000
- Programmed 13 shows supporting the venues and their subsequent crews

SHOWCASES

To continue MVT's presence, exposure, and engagement with the wider music industry, MVT have worked in partnership with the following key industry events to showcase up-and-coming talent:

- ILMC
- Wide Days
- Focus Wales
- The Great Escape
- IFF
- Sound of Belfast

These events allow MVT to promote and engage with the music industry and potential brand and corporate partners.

5.5 PIPELINE INVESTMENT FUND

Since its launch in October 2022, the Pipeline Investment Fund (PIF) has awarded £282,546.43 directly to 67 GMVs across the UK. Established to deliver financial assistance to GMVs, the fund helps support the development and sustainability of organisations to secure their future, with a particular focus on encouraging applications from venues that have struggled to secure funding previously by making the process accessible and uncomplicated.

It allows small-scale grant applications (up to £5,000) from UK-based GMVs to support two areas of work:

- Small-scale capital applications; including lights, sound, access, ventilation, and minor building alterations
- Staff training; diversification of workforce, succession planning, skills development, and strengthening local community ties

70% of awarded applications involved venues wanting to improve and update their production delivery through capital purchases of sound and lighting equipment. The majority of these applications involved the upgrading of PAs, sound desks, microphones, and lighting, improving both artist and customer experience, increasing opportunities for production teams, and raising production standards across the industry.

20% of awards were granted to projects involving building works, with soundproofing, access improvement, and space diversification key areas of delivery. The awards have allowed venues to open up new performance areas within their premises and offer new facilities including recording spaces and green rooms. They have also highlighted the ongoing concerns that venues have about reducing their sound imprint on local neighbourhoods and the risks that noise complaints pose to venues.

16% of awards included provisions for backline and recording equipment. These projects have been particularly effective in supporting artists at the beginning of their careers by cutting their travel expenses and offering opportunities for live recordings and the filming of performances.

13% of awards have included training and staff development programmes. Training supported by the fund includes business mentoring, specific technical crew support, staff diversity, and access awareness.

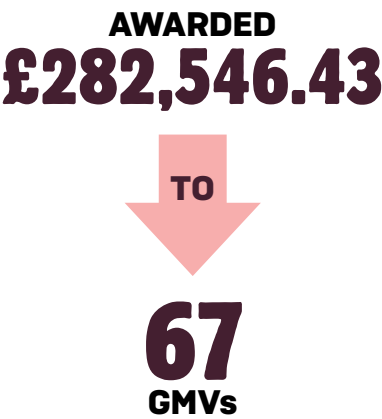
11% of awards involved improving the customer experience through the installation of air conditioning and upgraded seating. These applications have highlighted that whilst venues recognise the need for these improvements, they have been unable to prioritise them until a fund such as this has become available.

Distribution of Awards by Nation - with the exception of Northern Ireland³, the distribution is in line with our distribution of MVA member venues across the UK:

ENGLAND	53
SCOTLAND	3
WALES	5
NI	6
TOTAL	67

The fund has provided a mechanism for MVT to distribute raised funds quickly and effectively whilst also ensuring that the application process is rigorous and diligent.

The distribution of the fund has highlighted the difference that relatively small amounts of support can make to GMVs, both in terms of project delivery and also as an impetus to develop and explore other funding opportunities, with many applicants never having received funding support before.



³ In 2023, a partnership with Belfast City Council enabled MVT to distribute over £20,000 of funding on their behalf, with awards to five GMVs.



FUNDING THE PIPELINE INVESTMENT FUND (PIF)

In 2023, MVT generated £187,000 to support the PIF initiative, through ticket sales of the United by Music programme.

The charity has set an ambitious target that by 1 January 2025 every ticket sold at arena- and stadium-level should contain a £1 contribution to the grassroots ecosystem, which creates the artists that perform on these stages.

The charity has undertaken a strategic fundraising drive in pursuit of that aim, identifying support from across the industry that develops the PIF while also demonstrating proof of concept. In 2023, MVT sought support from a range of partners, organisations, and industry colleagues from all sectors of the industry: artists, promoters, venues, ticketing, arenas, stadiums, and major festivals. Below are the first in each stakeholder category to sign-up to the PIF in 2023:

- **Enter Shikari** (artist) committed £1 from every ticket sold for their 2024 arena tour
- **The Piece Hall** (venue) and **Cuffe & Taylor** (promoter) created a £1 donation mechanism on each ticket sold for their summer 2024 programme
- **Ticketmaster** (ticketing) committed to an annual one-month donation upsell on every ticket sold during October/November 2023, with the company match funding all donations made
- **Skiddle** (ticketing) introduced a mandatory donation of 50p on every ticket sold at medium to major events, with the company committing to match fund the amount raised
- **Good Show** (ticketing) introduced a donation option on all tickets sold
- **Swansea Arena** (arena) committed to an annual fundraising event and an option on every ticket sold for a donation to be made to the Pipeline Investment Fund
- **Music Venues Alliance** members (venues) created an option for customers to include a donation to the fund on every ticket purchased

Additionally, **FREENOW** (travel app) committed to a £1 per ride initiative whereby each customer opting to 'Ride for Music' generated a donation from FREENOW to MVT.

Altogether, these current initiatives are predicted to raise over £550,000 to fund PIF in 2024. This represents a significant expansion of the ability of MVT to directly support the resilience and sustainability of GMVs.

PIF CASE STUDIES



THE BLACK BOX, BELFAST

The venue applied for £4,200 to update a no longer fit for purpose PA system to increase artist and customer enjoyment of the space.

"We were delighted to receive PIF funding in 2023. We were able to purchase two brand-new speakers that were a huge upgrade from our old ones. It meant we could vastly improve the sound spec of the venue and present a more professional offering to local acts and touring artists alike. The Black Box is a charity, any income we generate goes directly back into developing our outreach projects and supporting both emerging and established artists, promoters, and festivals. Because of this, we've often found that upgrading things in the venue can fall down the list of priorities. With the equipment grant support from the Pipeline Investment Fund, we have been able to make some of our much-needed upgrades, to give the best-quality experience we can to artists and audiences alike."

Kathryn McShane, Director



BACKSTAGE AT THE GREEN, KINROSS

The venue applied for £4,050 to update from an analogue sound desk, which was showing its age, to a new digital Allen & Heath SQ6 to improve production quality and help with training and development of staff and local community students.

"The award has helped benefit everyone who attends a gig at the venue and has given a much improved sound quality, especially with the vocals. It has gained the respect of touring and in-house sound engineers all thanks to the PIF."

David Mundell, Director



THE CRESCENT COMMUNITY VENUE, YORK

After 30-40 years of use, the seats at this venue had become a liability, with bent legs, worn cushions, and loose screws posing a danger to staff and customers alike. Their application for £4,569 helped them purchase 100 new folding chairs and storage racks to increase customer satisfaction at the 100+ seated shows they host annually.

"This money was desperately needed to help us purchase a new set of chairs for seated shows as our previous chairs were inherited from the Working Men's Club when we took it over. New chairs make it more comfortable for audience members, as well as make it easier and safer for staff to set up and pack them away. At a time when music venues are facing significant financial challenges, this money is very welcome. A new set of chairs runs into thousands of pounds, which is simply something The Crescent can't afford to purchase by itself without assistance."

Harkirit Boparai, Venue Manager



THE TIN MUSIC AND ARTS, COVENTRY

The venue had a new lighting rig but no way to hang or control it, so applied for £4,994 to purchase a box truss system and new Chamsys lighting desk to vastly improve the level of production quality at the venue.

"This funding puts us on a par with much larger venues, which have bigger budgets for equipment. Tech-wise, we are now able to offer visiting artists and our local music community a really professional set-up and this will give our audiences a really great experience."

Sarah Morgan, Director & Programmer

5.6 NETWORKING ACTIVITY

MVT has a national and international profile as experts on the GMV sector and advocates for UK GMVs. An essential part of the team's work is representing the sector with music industry colleagues, other parts of the cultural sector, all layers of government, suppliers, academics, artists, and music fans. Providing opportunities for those venues to speak for themselves and with their peers is also vital. There is a wealth of knowledge in the GMV sector and peer-to-peer information sharing remains a powerful tool, which MVT enables through meetings and online groups. MVT's own national networking event, Venues Day, provides an annual focus for this activity.

VENUES DAY 2023

The ninth edition was held on Tuesday, 17 October at Woolwich Works, London. With circa 800 delegates attending, the event's tagline was 'Behind the Scenes' with the programme focusing on all the aspects of running a GMV that audiences and artists never see. A great deal of the support that MVT provides to MVA members has little to do with the live shows. Organisational structure, financial planning, dealing with the planning process or local media, considering a venue's environmental impact, and even recommended hero cleaning products were all covered during the one-day event.

Venues Day provides a key moment to present statistics and discuss challenges, balanced with announcing partnerships and initiatives. For the first time, MPs from the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee took part in a consultation session with venue reps at the event and announced a hearing and review into the current crisis facing GMVs. Facilitated and informal networking took place between venues, and between venue reps and agents, promoters, funders, MVT's expert gurus, suppliers, and non-profit organisations who work in the sector.

MVA members were offered free/discounted tickets and travel bursaries to enable venue reps from around the country to travel to London. Many venues brought three or four team members. Post-event evaluation showed a 97.9% participant satisfaction level of excellent or good and many of the evaluation comments emphasised the value of being part of a collective movement and not feeling alone in facing challenges. The opportunity to be reassured that financial struggles do not mean that any individual is 'doing a bad job' was highly valued.

Venues Day remains the only event that many GMV operators attend. It offers them the opportunity to meet people in person that they otherwise only communicate with via email or phone.

TEAM MVT OUT & ABOUT

MVT's main office is in London, but team members are also based in Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Wrexham, Yorkshire, Bristol, Somerset, and East Sussex. Attending events across the country is important as it demonstrates that MVT is a UK charity.

In 2023, members of the MVT team attended and partnered with the following key music industry events:

- International Live Music conference (ILMC), London - MVT showcase 1 March
- Wide Days, Edinburgh - MVT reception & showcase 13 May
- FOCUS Wales, Wrexham - MVT brunch & showcases 4-6 May
- The Great Escape, Brighton - MVT brunch & showcases 11-12 May
- International Festival Forum (IFF), London - MVT showcase 28 September
- Sound of Belfast - Contribution to programme 9-19 November

Team members presented MVT's work on panels and presentations at:

- ESNS, Groningen (Netherlands)
- Americana Music Association UK Conference & Awards, London
- Night Time Industries Association Summit, London
- Collective Futures, Birkenhead
- Futures Forum, London
- SXSW, Austin (USA)
- The Great Escape Music Education Conference, Brighton
- Music Week Awards, London
- Night Academy Stockholm (Sweden)
- Directions in Music Policy Research, Newcastle
- West Midlands Music Summit, Birmingham
- Festival of Politics, Edinburgh
- Fast Forward, London
- Beyond the Music, Manchester
- Un-Convention, Manchester
- Trad Talk 23, Aberdeen
- Bradford Music Scene Industry Panel, Bradford
- Music Cities Afternoon, Belfast
- Svensk Live/Live Europe Conference, Stockholm (Sweden)

VENUE VISITS

Members of Team MVT are avid gig-goers themselves. During 2023, between meetings with venue staff, attending events and gigs, members of the charity's core team visited:

151 VENUES IN ENGLAND
38 VENUES IN SCOTLAND
15 VENUES IN WALES
8 VENUES IN NORTHERN IRELAND



5.7 MUSIC VENUE PROPERTIES / OWN OUR VENUES

In the 2014 *Understanding Small Music Venues* report, MVT stated, "We have a long-term plan to protect that live music network which includes, where necessary, taking into charitable ownership freehold properties so they can be removed from commercial pressures and leased back to passionate music professionals to continue their operation." This long-term vision was reflected in the name Music Venue Trust, which was chosen because the charity aspired to be the National Trust of the music industry.

The reason freehold ownership was identified so early on as a core strategic aim of the charity is because the issue of who owns the buildings where live music happens underlies almost every other challenge that GMVs have faced during the last 20 years. This includes gentrification, noise complaints, underinvestment, poor economic models, and an inability to plan for the future.

At Venues Day 2021, MVT announced plans to launch Own Our Venues with the intention of raising finance to buy the freeholds of nine GMVs and rent them back to the current operators at a reduced rate whilst also making contributions towards repairs and insurance. In May 2022, Music Venue Properties (MVP) – a charitable community benefit society set up by MVT – launched a community share offer.

The community share offer allows music fans and ethical investors to purchase community shares and become members of the society. Community shares are withdrawable shares that cannot be sold, traded, or transferred between members, unlike shares in a typical company. All members are entitled to one vote – regardless of how many shares they hold. Members can be paid interest on their shares if the board believes it would be sensible to do so and can also withdraw their shareholding, along with any interest accrued, again subject to the approval of the board.

In March 2023, the share offer closed with almost £2.35m raised via a mix of community shares (over £1m invested through almost 1,250 individuals), grants (£500k from Arts Council England), loans (£650k from Arts & Culture Impact Fund and Preston City Council) and donations (including donations from the likes of Sony, Warner, and Amazon Music).

Over the next few months, Music Venue Properties worked tirelessly visiting venues, creating the necessary frameworks for purchases, seeking and securing more grant funding, and creating the cultural lease that will be used with its future operators.

In October 2023, MVT were happy to announce the purchase of The Snug in Atherton with the official launch event being held on 4 October. The event was attended by many of those who helped bring this initiative to fruition, including Mark Davyd; The Snug's owner/operator Rachael Flaszczak; John Whittingdale, Minister for Creative Industries; Claire Mera-Nelson, Director of Music for Arts Council England; and Jeremy Mills, Rhoda Dakar, Hugh Rolo OBE, and Chris Prosser of the Music Venue Properties Board. Local musicians were also in attendance; Ivor Novello winner Jamie Lawson and 16-year-old Jennifer King who is a shareholder in MVP.

MVP expects to announce their next venue purchase in early 2024, with several others lined up for purchase in 2024.



**MUSIC
VENUE
PROPERTIES**



"The Snug being purchased by Music Venue Properties means everything to me, my team, and our community, as it allows us to continue to provide this very important space to up-and-coming artists for many years to come. We now feel secure and confident to plan ahead, knowing the venue is in safe hands, with people that have a shared vision of the future of new music."

Rachael Flaszczak, Managing Director of The Snug

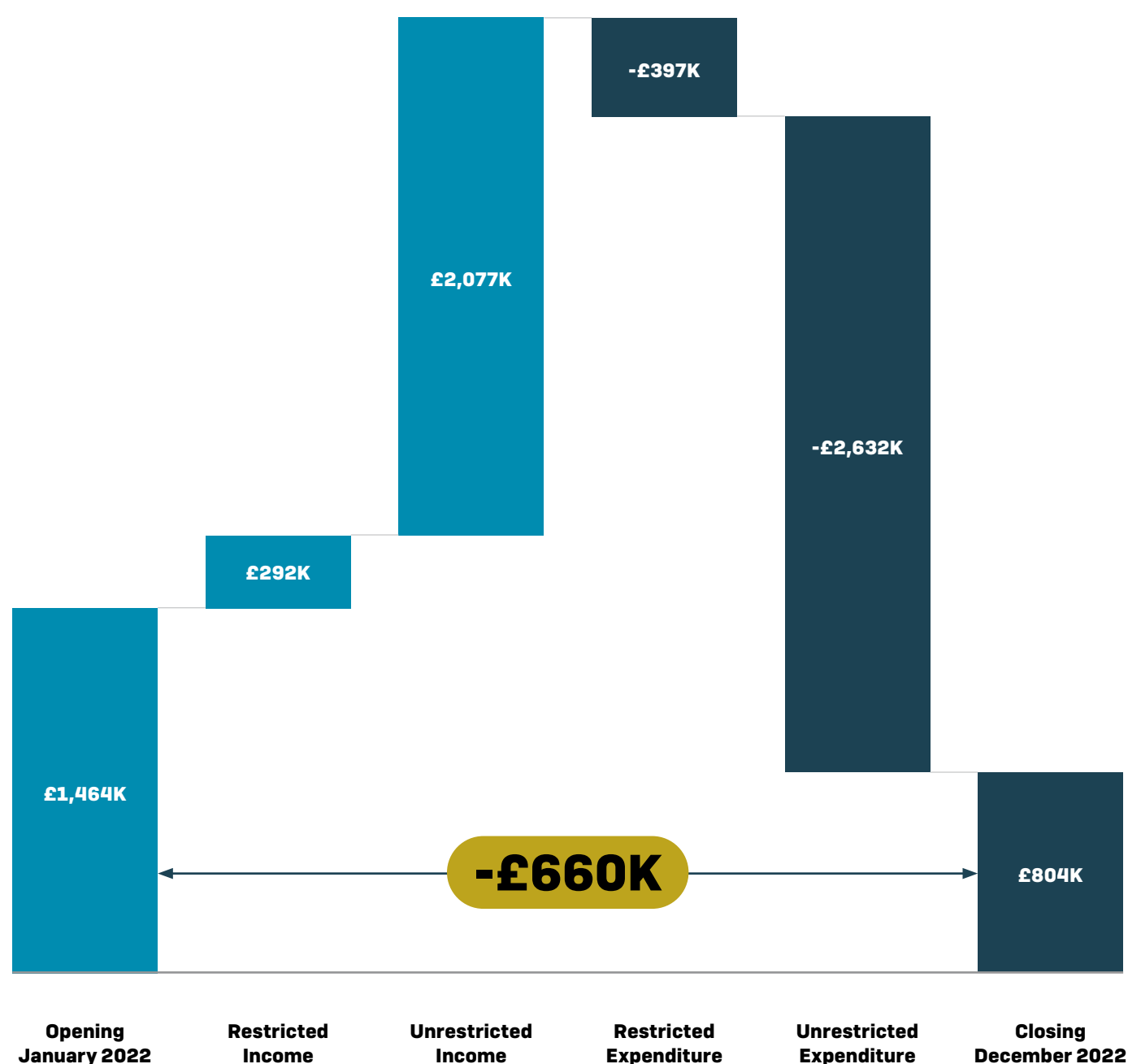
6

FINANCIAL REVIEW

- Income for MVT for FY 2022 was £2,369,015, which is £900,000 in excess of the average for the last five years
- The charity chose to unlock its substantial Unrestricted Reserves in 2022 to create a number of interventions to support the sector in a challenging economic climate. Total resources expended in the FY 2022 were £1,433,512 higher than the previous year, reflecting the wish of the charity to invest exceptional income received in 2021 and 2022
- This investment programme consequently saw closing balances for FY 2022 reduced by £660,387 or 55%

	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2022	Total 2022	Unrestricted Funds 2021	Restricted Funds 2021	Total 2021
Income from	£	£	£	£	£	£
Charitable activities	2,077,298	291,717	2,369,015	2,267,718	467,500	2,735,218
Expenditure on						
Charitable activities	2,525,121	292,891	2,818,012	1,134,954	344,991	1,479,945
Grants / bursaries	107,107	104,283	211,390	40,345	75,600	115,954
Total resources expended	2,632,228	397,174	3,029,402	1,175,299	420,951	1,595,890
Net income for the year / net movement in funds	-554,930	-105,457	-660,387	1,092,419	46,909	1,139,328
Opening fund balances at 01 January FY	1,358,542	105,457	1,463,999	266,123	58,548	324,671
Closing balance at 31 December FY	803,612	-	803,612	1,358,542	105,457	1,463,999

SUMMARY OF REVENUE & EXPENSE CATEGORISATION



7

THANK YOU

Music Venue Trust's ongoing work depends on the generosity of many people. The charity is grateful for every donation made, every sponsored activity organised, every article written, and each share on social media that helps raise awareness of the GMV sector and the work that MVT does to protect, secure, and improve these vital venues.

The following companies, organisations, and individuals deserve a special mention (listed alphabetically in each category). With thanks also to those who wish to remain anonymous.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

MAJOR SUPPORTERS – PROJECT FUNDING

Coca-Cola
FREENOW
The National Lottery
Ticketmaster

SIGNIFICANT DONATIONS IN 2023

Biffy Clyro
Caroline Butson - In Memory of Belle Star
Def Leppard
Fred Perry
Gigantic Tickets
Jeremy Yarron
Laura Kennedy

REGULAR DONORS

Fightback Lager
Gigtix
Strings & Things Ltd
TicketPort

MUSIC VENUES ALLIANCE MEMBERS

To the 404 venues who are subscribed members of the Music Venues Alliance and therefore contribute to the core funding of MVT's Venue Support Team

TRUSTEES

Team MVT is guided by a voluntary board of trustees:

Arusa Qureshi (from November), Bonita McKinney (Co-chair), Chris Prosser, Emma Bownes (from November), Jane Beese (from November), Jason Dormon, Jeremy Pritchard, Lohan Presencer (stepped down March), Phyllis Belezos (Co-chair), Rhoda Dakar (from December), Sarah Clover (stepped down October), Sarah Thirtle, Scott Taylforth (Treasurer), Simon Hilton

MVT PATRONS

Patrons are powerful advocates for the value of GMVs who bring attention to the charity's work.

ARTIST PATRONS

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Team MVT is enhanced by the expertise of professionals who work on specific areas or projects to support the team:

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GURUS

MVT's Venue Support Team is grateful for the pro bono support of experts who offer their services as gurus on specialist professional subjects:

Adam C. Pearson (Business Energy Specialist), Alex Gibson (Health & Safety), Alistair Duncan (Tax Specialist), Ben Dymock (Acoustics), Charlotte O'Mara (Music & Entertainment Law), Chris Brown (Commercial Litigation & IP), Chris Hoskin (Corporate & Insolvency Lawyer), Craig Page (Architecture), Dan Ailion (Landlord & Tenant/Real Estate Law), Dan Potter (Energy & Utilities Specialist), Dave Campbell (Employment Law), David Butler (Business Advisory & Turnaround), Ed Holloway (Architecture & Licensing), Ed Jolleys (Catering), Ella van der Klugt (Planning), Emily Berry (Energy Broker), Gideon Feldman (Inclusive Design & Access), Hamish Walke (Town Planning/Planning Applications), Jon Fox (Planning & Noise), Josh Finesilver (Safety & Production), Kris Mitra (Planning), Lee Peters (Insurance), Louise Aikman (Music & Entertainment Law), Martin Friend (Local Government & Planning), Matt Barnwell (Profitability), Matthew Dawson (Energy Broker), Niall Forde (Licensing), Nick Wright (Business Rates), Nicolas McBride (Licensing/Property Scotland & Northern Ireland), Pete Singfield (Legal), Peter Conisbee (Energy Broker & Police Licensing), Peter Laphorn (Business Analysis), Peter Pegasiou (Music, Media & Entertainment Law), Richard Vivian (Acoustics), Sam Dabb (Operational Efficiency & Profitability), Sean Keenan (Music & Technology Lawyer), Simon Ricketts (Planning Law), Steve Trigg (Finance Strategy), Stevie Kempner (Entertainment Law), Steven Swift (Insurance), Stuart Langer (Planning), Tim Taylor (Planning), Toby Lewis (Noise Planning & Licensing), Tony Trup (Acoustics), William Campbell (Energy Broker)

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ANNUAL REPORT PHOTOGRAPHERS

Adam Ward, FILM CAFE, Georgia Penny, Katie Frost, Olivia Brytz, Trust a Fox Photography

8

APPENDICES APPENDIX 1

GRASSROOTS MUSIC VENUE (GMV) DEFINITION

This definition is the one contained in the Mayor of London's Music Venues Rescue Plan (October 2015) and agreed at Venues Day 2015 (October 2015) by leading figures from within the music industry and from government.

The definition is being used by Arts Council England and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in discussions surrounding the future of music venues. It is based upon extensive audits and surveys of UK music venues and is comparable to the EU-wide definition of similar music venues implemented by Live DMA in more than a dozen European countries.

The definition of Grassroots Music Venues (GMVs) contained on this page comprises the only widely accepted measures and parameters for describing dedicated music venues, and its creation in 2015 was welcomed by the Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey, and the head of the BPI, Geoff Taylor. We are not aware of any other definition of this sector.

DEFINING GMVS – CULTURAL & SOCIAL ROLE

We define the cultural and social importance of a Grassroots Music Venue by testing its reputation, role, and activity against six criteria:

- 1 Elephant test.** Musicians and audiences in the town/ borough/city think that it is a GMV.
- 2 Focus on cultural activity as its main purpose and its outcomes.** The venue's raison d'être is the music it programmes.
- 3 It is a music business, run by music experts.** An organisational focus on music. Other ancillary services (alcohol, food, merchandise) subsidiary or dependent upon music activity.
- 4 It takes risks with its cultural programme and that risk taking is the ignition system of the engine that is the UK music industry.** Programmes artists that deserve audiences, with no expectation of direct financial reward; as a result of this loss-making activity, significant economic returns become available to the UK music industry.
- 5 A beacon of music and key generator of night-time economic activity.** The presence of a GMV (or GMVs) provides a central beacon of music activity that inspires towns/boroughs/cities to be musical, and the absence of one, causes a dearth of music activity. By programming and reputation, GMVs attract audiences who add significant value to other aspects of the night-time economy (restaurants, pubs, bars, clubs, transport).
- 6 Plays nicely with others.** Occupies an important role within its local community and is open to further networking.

A Grassroots Music Venue displays some or all of these characteristics, dependent upon factors such as location, economic climate, or seasonal variations.

DEFINING GMVS – ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

We use capacity, activity, employment, and financial return to seek to categorise GMVs in three bands:

SMALL GMV:

- less than 350 capacity
- over 144 live music events per year, providing opportunities for more than 180 micro-businesses (bands)
- entry-level musicians, some limited activity in established acts
- three to ten direct FTE jobs (programming, lighting, sound, bar, security etc)
- significant number of unpaid roles/volunteers
- high running-cost-to-capacity ratio
- little if any profit potential

MEDIUM GMV:

- 351 to 650 capacity
- over 96 live music events per year, providing opportunities for more than 144 micro-businesses (bands)
- mix of new and established acts
- five to 15 direct FTE jobs (programming, lighting, sound, bar, security etc)
- some unpaid roles/volunteers
- medium to high running-cost-to-capacity ratio
- propensity to programme non-live music (such as club nights) to support live music programme
- limited potential for profit

LARGE GMV:

- 651-plus capacity
- over 72 live music events per year, providing opportunities for more than 108 micro-businesses (bands)
- programme of mainly established acts
- ten to 20 direct FTE jobs (programming, lighting, sound, bar, security etc)
- internships and apprenticeships
- may be profitable dependent upon external factors (location, additional uses, ownership)

These bands and activities are flexible. Final definition of a GMV within these bands should include variable factors, such as location, economic climate, competition, or programming.

DEFINING GMVS – AMENITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1** Has a fixed or temporary stage, or as a minimum, an area defined as a stage, and exhibits at least one other structural hallmark conducive to live music, such as: defined audience space, sound booth, ticket hatch, sound proofing, room adapted to enhance acoustics, stage facing or elevated seating, dressing room, photo pit, external poster frames for advertising gigs, overnight band accommodation.
- 2** Possesses a mixing desk, PA system, and at least one other piece of equipment to facilitate live music, such as: stage monitors, lighting rig, drum kit, backline, stage microphones, stage box & snake, spare instruments, instrument consumables, signal processors, recording rig, smoke machine.
- 3** Employs or otherwise utilises at least two of the following (they may be the same person): sound engineer, booker, promoter, cashier, stage manager, security personnel.
- 4** Applies a cover charge to some live music performances and incorporates promotion within its activities, such as: publishes printed or electronic gig listings; issues printed tickets; utilises on-line ticketing; produces, displays, and distributes posters; advertises gigs involving original music via local media.

APPENDIX 2

GRASSROOTS MUSIC ARTS SPACE (GMAS) DEFINITION

The purpose of the definition of a Grassroots Music & Arts Space (GMAS) is to identify other spaces that are also contributing to the cultural offer of live music in our towns and cities, but which may lack the music-focused cultural programming of a Grassroots Music Venue.

Identifying multi-use arts spaces that host grassroots live music is important to the work of Music Venue Trust, as these spaces make a significant contribution to the talent pipeline, honing musicians' skills, providing employment, and, in many locations, delivering access to live music in the absence of, or in addition to, a specifically designated Grassroots Music Venue.

DEFINING GMAS – CULTURAL & SOCIAL ROLE

We define the cultural and social importance of a Grassroots Music & Arts Space by testing its reputation, role, and activity against six criteria:

- 1 Elephant test.** Musicians and audiences in the town/borough/city believe that the space plays an important role in the local grassroots music scene.
- 2 Music is a consistently featured element within a vibrant cultural programme.** A GMAS has a broad programme of cultural activity including elements such as theatre, dance, exhibitions, comedy, and which includes a substantial and consistent element of live music.
- 3 Identified live music champion.** A GMAS has one or more identified members of staff with responsibility for its diary of events, who within that role are designated as the person who books, promotes, and supports live music.
- 4 Strong live music programme that supports new talent.** A GMAS offers multiple opportunities to experience a range of live music, including at least 36 events per year where artists who perform music they have written themselves are showcased. A GMAS programmes artists that deserve audiences, with no expectation of direct financial reward; as a result of this loss-making activity, significant economic returns become available to the UK music industry.

- 5 A beacon of music and key generator of night-time economic activity.** The presence of a GMAS provides a beacon of music activity that contributes to the musicality of towns/boroughs/cities. By programming and reputation, GMASs attract audiences who add significant value to other aspects of the night-time economy (restaurants, pubs, bars, clubs, transport).

- 6 Plays nicely with others.** Occupies an important role within its local community and is open to further networking.

A GMAS displays some or all of these characteristics, dependent upon factors such as location, economic climate, or seasonal variations.

DEFINING GMAS – AMENITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1** Has a fixed or temporary stage, or as a minimum, an area defined as a stage, and exhibits at least one other structural hallmark conducive to live music, such as: defined audience space, sound booth, ticket hatch, soundproofing, room adapted to enhance acoustics, stage-facing or elevated seating, dressing room, photo pit, external poster frames for advertising gigs, overnight band accommodation.
- 2** Possesses or has access to a mixing desk, PA system, and at least one other piece of equipment to facilitate live music, such as: stage monitors, lighting rig, drum kit, backline, stage microphones, stage box & snake, spare instruments, instrument consumables, signal processors, recording rig, smoke machine.
- 3** Employs or otherwise utilises at least two of the following (they may be the same person): sound engineer, booker, promoter, cashier, stage manager, security personnel.
- 4** Applies a cover charge to some live music performances and incorporates promotion within its activities, such as: publishes printed or electronic gig listings; issues printed tickets; utilises on-line ticketing; produces, displays, and distributes posters; advertises gigs involving original music via local media.

GRASSROOTS MUSIC PUB (GMP) DEFINITION

The purpose of the definition of a Grassroots Music Pub (GMP) is to identify other spaces that are also contributing to the cultural offer of live music in our towns and cities but which may lack the full facilities or cultural programming of a GMV.

Identifying pubs that host grassroots live music is important to the work of Music Venue Trust, as these spaces make a significant contribution to the talent pipeline, honing musicians' skills, providing employment, and, in many locations, delivering access to live music in the absence of, or in addition to, a specifically designated GMV.

DEFINING GMP – CULTURAL & SOCIAL ROLE

We define a GMP by testing its reputation, role, and activity against the following six criteria:

- 1 Elephant test.** Musicians and audiences in the town/ borough/city believe that the GMP plays an important role in the local grassroots music scene.
- 2 Live music reputation.** A GMP promotes itself as a live music location.
- 3 Identified live music champion.** A GMP has an identified member of staff (or local volunteer) with responsibility for its diary of events who books, promotes, and supports live music.
- 4 Strong live music programme that supports new talent.** A GMP offers multiple opportunities to experience a range of live music, including at least 24 events per year where artists who perform music they have written themselves are showcased – the nurturing of talent being an essential function of the grassroots live music scene.
- 5 Dedicated live music space.** A GMP offers a dedicated space for musicians to perform in and supporting services and facilities that enable them to perform.
- 6 Plays nicely with others.** Occupies an important role within its local community and is open to further networking.

A GMP displays some or all of these characteristics, dependent upon factors such as location, economic climate, or seasonal variations.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Music Venue Trust is a UK registered charity, which acts to protect, secure, and improve the UK's Grassroots Music Venue circuit for the benefit of venues, communities, and upcoming artists.

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Visit musicvenuetrust.com/team/ for details

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