Running a Creative Passions Exhibition

Introduction

This document shows how the recent Creative Passions Exhibitions were run. Mainly based on the experience of CP26 held in Thurlestone Parish Hall (TPH) August 2nd-14th in 2026. It covers all aspects of the preparation and running of the event with references to external documents where relevant. It will hopefully be of use to others who wish to run such events. The objective of CP26 was to run a “Gallery” type of event, rather than a “bric-a-brac” type of event, with all artwork professionally presented.

Take from this document what is useful. It is not intended to be prescriptive. Future exhibitions may be in different places, at different times, and with different objectives. Hopefully this document at least gives you a checklist of things to consider.

Overall Timetable

Creative Passions is usually held in August. Assuming this is planned, the following approximate timescales should be followed:

April - Establish a sub-committee to organise the event. Ideally Creatives (Selection and Curation), Promotion (Social media, advertising), Logistics (Layout, equipment, setup), IT (Mailing, registration, catalog, sales system) and Finance (Ordering, Sales management) people. Of course some people will fulfill several roles.
April - Planning of the event (Timing, budget, entry fee, numbers of participants)
May - Call for participants and selection
June - **July** Detailed planning (Layout, equipment, setup, stewarding, sales handling, artwork registration, printing etc)
July - Promotion (Printed leaflets, social media, road signs, email campaigns etc)
August - The Exhibition, reporting, feedback

Budget

The budget must be established prior to calling for participation to work out what the entry fee will be. SHAF normally expects Exhibitions to operate on a break-even basis, but exceptions can be agreed with the Committee. SHAF does not normally take any commission on sales, and use of SHAF equipment is normally free, although in 2026 the Committee retained any surplus as a contribution to the large capital investment in display panels to run the exhibition.

Example budget from 2026:

Events	**CP26 Budget**	**Comment**
Date	2-14 Aug	
Participants	24	
Entry fee	£75.00	
Fee/Day	£5.77	
Entry Fees	£1,800.00	
Ad Sales		
Grants & Loans		
Other	£50.00	Refreshments
Sales in		
Total in	**£1,850.00**	
Venue fee	£750.00	Thurlestone Parish Hall
Advertising/Publicity	£70.00	Village Voice
Design		
Printing	£319.10	2000 A5 flyers, 200 A4 Notices, 8 A1 Road signs, 300 Artist Catalog, 2 TPH A1 notices
Other		
Panel hire	£100.00	Frogmore Art Group (£100)
Open evening	£100.00	
Expenses	£100.00	Mileage, laundry etc
Sales out		
Total out	**£1,439.10**	
Net Subsidy/Surplus	**£410.90**	

Planning the event

1. Check available dates for TPH (or other venue) Booking clerk: (Ingrid French)
2. Check price for TPH - don't rely on the booking clerk, talk to the committee (Lisa White)
3. Check availability of Frogmore Display Panels if used (Ian Carr, Linda Fox)
4. Decide nature of the exhibition - Gallery <----------> Bric-a-brac

5. Decide on numbers and the layout. TPH can hold 18 2D artists and 4 3D artists or 12 2D artists and 8 3D artists. Many other combinations are possible. The Yeo room has been used as a less formal SHAF curated area for replacement and spare stock. It is seen by Artists as undesirable space compared to the main hall.
6. Decide on the selection method. Range from “First come first served” to “fully curated”. If curated, should preference be given to newcomers? Should sample artwork be submitted, or the gallery on the SHAF website used? For CP26 we used the SHAF website to encourage people to populate it.
7. Decide if Easels and/or browsers will be allowed for 2D artists (we allowed one each for CP26 but placement was at SHAF discretion)
8. Decide if refreshments will be served. They were at CP24,25 and 26 and proved popular, but took up space.

Call for Entries and selection

Issue the call for entries, using the SHAF MailChimp system to email all SHAF members. See https://mailchi.mp/shaf.org.uk/cp26-call for the call for entries in 2026.

The event in 2026 was slightly oversubscribed and the committee had to turn people down.

The number and selection of participants has to be co-ordinated with the possible layouts. 18 2D and 4 3D works, as does 12 2D and 8 3D (used for CP25), but combinations other than these need to be checked that there is an acceptable layout.

Communicating with participants

Rule number 1. Many people don’t open emails, and few people open, read and retain all the information therein. Repetition and continued chasing is essential.

WhatsApp has a better response rate than email, but is less suited to distributing bulky information. Can be used to alert people to a new email.

Consider setting up a web page on the SHAF website which summarises all key information, to which people can be directed when prompted by email or WhatsApp.

MailChimp was used to send emails to the participants, covering welcome, detailed information, weekly updates, calls for specific information etc. All these emails can be seen by viewing the historic campaigns on the SHAF Mailchimp account.

Two WhatsApp chats were established - **CP26 Rota**, for discussions about stewarding, and **Social CP26** for general chat. However, while it was intended to restrict the stewarding chat to the topic, because this was the only one which everyone signed up to it became a general CP26 chat, being much more direct and convenient than email. In future it is recommended to set up an official chat for general CP traffic.

Promotion and Social media

1. Design an A5 flyer for the event - give to participants to hand out
2. Also print as an A4 Notice for shop windows, notice boards, etc
3. Prepare a catalog of Artists to show the range for handing out at the event and also use in promotion
4. Book a slot with Thurlestone Village Voice to advertise in the July edition and include the A5 flyer as an insert
5. Start regular emails to the full SHAF mailchimp distribution list
6. Start regular SHAF Social Media posts promoting the event
7. Encourage all participants to use their own social media to promote the event
8. Install the road signs at key junctions one week before the exhibition
9. Prepare the entry signs to TPH
10. There are a number of undated road signs which can be added during the exhibition.

Stewarding Rota

Start work on the Stewarding rota in June. Needs a spreadsheet showing all participants and all days. In CP26 hours of opening were 10:00 to 16:00 and shifts were 10:00 to 13:15 and 12:45 - 16:00 to give an overlap. Best practice is to produce an arbitrary first stab and let people comment and request changes. Ensure at least one person is on shift who is trusted with handling sales. People who are geographically distant may prefer to come for a whole day. Stewards need to cover Sales, Meet & Greet, and catering. Also re-stocking sold items.

Registering Artwork and Cards

In CP24, CP25, and CP26 printed price labels with appropriate branding were used for 2D work in order to give a professional “gallery” style appearance. As in CP26 we were dealing with over 200 individual artworks producing these was a significant task. The approach was to use part of the SHAF Website to capture each artist’s work on a form which loaded the data directly into a spreadsheet. From this spreadsheet a label-printing program produced a pdf of sheets of labels which was sent to Nick Walker Printing for printing on card, and guillotining. Great care must be taken lest overlong titles etc word-wraps and destroys the format.

The spreadsheet also allowed a consolidated list of all artwork in the exhibition to be produced.

The spreadsheet was also used in the sales handling. It automatically assigned a stock number to each work, and uploaded the stock list to the SHAF Sales Handling system, so that the artist and artwork could be presented as a pick-list and selected for purchase.

Cards are the biggest seller by far, and CP26 sold nearly £2,000 worth of cards. Some artists price each card individually; some have them in baskets with a sign giving the price; most artists give discounts on multiple packs and so on. You need to get a clear list of the

pricing for the sales steward. In CP26 we incorporated cards into the registration system so for each artist the card prices appeared as a pick-list for the artist.

Also in CP26 several 3D artists saw the benefit of having a pick-list for their work, and these were also incorporated.

Equipment used

The following equipment was used in CP26, for 19 2D artists and 5 3D artists.

Number	Item
9	2D Display stations, each consisting of 3 poles and bases, and 2 1Mx1M display boards, and 2 1Mx60cm display boards
Many	Brass picture hooks
Many	Hanging wires, 2mm stainless steel (1M, 1.5M and 2M)
276+48	Zipper Hooks (48 borrowed from Jane Davarian)
2	“Frogmore” panels, concertina style, 5 off 1.8M high, . 0.8M wide plus supplied picture hooks.
	Bags - Large, medium, small
3x50M	Bubble wrap
	Tissue Paper
1	Riser Blocks, for 3D work
	Tablecloths - we insist on white tablecloths reaching the ground
	Cash box with £50 float, and labelled cash bags for each day
	Payment terminal, SumUp machines (2), Visitor counter, chargers
	SHAF Pull-up advertising sign, SHAF Flag (now bent)

Liaison with TPH

Apart from the booking and negotiation of the fee and payment, a few other items need consideration:

1. Which rooms are required - normally the Main Hall, the Kitchen and the Yeo Room.
2. Do we need the stage erecting - in CP25 and 26 we used a small stage to put easels on.

3. What lighting scheme. TPH have a programmed lighting scheme which was suitable, but can be changed,
4. What storage is available. In CP26 we were able to use a cupboard off the Foyer for extra artwork.
5. What equipment is needed. Long tables and a few small tables are standard, but TPH also have some small card tables which we found useful in the layout.
6. Chris White is the contact concerning all this.

Setting up and breaking down

Access to TPH was granted the day before the exhibition. A team with at least 3 cars is needed to transport equipment from the Modbury store to TPH. The morning was reserved for SHAF equipment delivery and setup. A schedule was established for the artists to attend and set up their space, designed to avoid crowding of aisles and leaving the main thoroughfares clear as long as possible.

In TPH there is little storage area. Artists were asked to move all of their packaging, and the SHAF containers and packaging were returned to the store.

Breakdown took about 2 hours after the exhibition closed. The Artist's work was quickly removed and many people stayed around to help with the clearing up. Again, 3 cars are required to move all the equipment back to the store.

Daily operation

The stewards arrive about 9:45 for a 10:00 opening, switch on the lights and prepare the kitchen for refreshments. One steward should be trained/experienced in operating the Payment System. The other stewards look after Meet & Greet and refreshments. All stewards should be alert to the possibility of theft. Stewards are responsible for replacing sold stock with spare artwork stored under the table or in the store room.

The Meet & Greet steward should have the Visitor Counter and click it for each new visitor.

At the end of the day the day's cash takings are checked and bagged up, electronic equipment connected to chargers, the kitchen tidied up and the lights switched off before leaving. Any supplies required for the refreshments are notified on the WhatsApp group.

Sales Handling

One steward should be familiar with the SHAF Payment System, the SumUp payment terminals and cash handling. Training is usually given prior to the event.

Meet the Artists event

For CP25 and CP26 a "Meet the Artists" evening was planned on the evening of the first day of opening. Complimentary wine and finger-buffet were provided. All the Artists were

invited/encouraged/coerced to attend, and most did. Naomi Hulatt as Chair of SHAF gave an opening speech for CP26. It is important to get a good turnout. The event was widely promoted among friends and family, to the SHAF email list, on social media, and by personal email to local councillors, TPH Committee members etc.

Feedback and reporting

Daily Reporting

The SHAF Payment System automatically provided a daily sales report to each artist every evening, showing each sale.

Final Reporting

At the end of the exhibition the SHAF Payment System sent each artist a complete list of their sales showing the net figure payable to them after deducting the SumUp commission on card sales. They were given a few days to check this before payments were made using the BACS system.

The Visitor Counter information is downloaded and provides data on the number and distribution of visitors.

Feedback survey

A Feedback Survey using Google Forms was sent to the participants. Results are here.

The Project File

A Project File was created and left on the sales desk. This contained:

- Contact details for all participants
- Important codes, eg entry code, media cupboard code, usernames and passwords
- The stewarding rota
- The catalogue of artwork
- The list of card prices for each artist
- The layout of the exhibition
- SHAF's Public Liability Insurance certificate
- The Risk Analysis for the event (needed for the PLI)
- Instructions for using the SHAF Payment System
- Instructions for using the SumUp system
- Instructions for using the Visitor Counter
- Paper sales sheets for use if the technology failed.

Technical

Artwork Registration

A web page is established on the SHAF website for collection of artwork details. This will require updating each year, at a minimum for titles. Also, the content may vary, for example it would be useful to include the number of items available (eg for prints). Changes should be made by Scot Baston, the support person for the website or other IT support.

Associated with the web page is the Contact Form 7 page, which links the data entered to an existing spreadsheet. The spreadsheet needs to be created or re-initialised for each event, and will then collect the data required. The data serves a number of purposes:

1. It provides the data for printing the labels via a mail-merge program
2. It provides a printed catalogue of artwork
3. It uploads the data to a database used by the SHAF Payment System to present a pick-list of products for each artist.

SHAF Payment System

The SHAF Payment System consists of a User Interface running on an Android Tablet, which collects sales data and uploads it to a database. It uses a pre-configured list of Artists for an event, and also the registered artwork for the event, so a sale can be processed just by selecting an Artist, then a particular artwork. The system is integrated with SumUp so payment may be immediately taken with a card. Payment can also be taken with cash, or by a non-linked SumUp terminal.

The “back end” part of the system runs as a google sheet in the cloud, downloads the sales data from the database then can automatically email daily or final reports to the artists, as well as providing a summary report for the organisers.

Configuration of this for a new exhibition should be done by IT support.

Visitor Counter

The Visitor Counter is a simple app which when clicked increments the number of visitors, both as a daily total and an exhibition total. Data is uploaded to a database. A “back end” downloads the data from the database and can show a number of reports, eg a histogram of visitor times during the period of an exhibition. Totals and Exhibition name can be reset through the app - tap the SHAF logo three times.

Layout Design

TPH website provides accurate drawings and dimensions of TPH in order to plan a layout. For CP26 the program “Sketchup” was used to plan the layout and assign artists to different stations. This can be done with other drawing packages, or with pencil and paper. For CP26 we planned 1.5M gaps at a minimum for any passageways, and 2M gaps in the main aisles. Some artists felt that this did not provide sufficient space to appreciate large artwork, but increasing aisle space will substantially reduce the number of artists who can exhibit.