

The Box

Museum Gallery Archive

The First Five Years

Social & Economic Impact Report
September 2025



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The Box The **First Five** Years
Social & Economic Impact Report



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“The Box encapsulates the step change in cultural ambition from the key Plymouth stakeholders. It is exemplary and has added a critical mass to the South West map at a nationally significant level. I hope they feel proud of making something really special.”

**Phil Gibby,
Director South West, Arts Council England**



“The Box fulfils two roles. It’s a love letter to the city – one of our core assets that tells stories connecting us with narratives that are real and relevant to Plymouth people, making art and culture accessible. It’s also a regional tourist attraction and key anchor institution that gives Plymouth a bedrock of significant critical mass, supporting both place-making and a wider thriving cultural network.”

Tracey Lee
CEO, Plymouth City Council

Foreword

As Leader and Deputy Leader of Plymouth City Council, we are proud to introduce this report on the economic and social impact of The Box our city’s museum, gallery and archive in its first five years. More than a building, The Box is a symbol of Plymouth’s ambition, resilience, and creativity which, since opening in 2020, has become a cornerstone of our cultural life and a catalyst for inclusive growth.

This report tells a remarkable story. Over one million visits, nearly 100,000 hours of volunteering, and a £244 million economic footprint are superb achievements. It is the people behind the numbers that matter most though: the volunteers gaining confidence and skills, the families enjoying free access to world-class exhibitions, and the artists and freelancers who have found inspiration and opportunity at The Box. The Box has ‘given permission’ for the city to build an audience for and reputation in relation to contemporary art with appropriate facilities and backing to realise curatorial potential.

Beyond creating new cultural experiences, The Box has transformed how we engage with Plymouth’s rich heritage, from preserving over two million objects and 250,000 archival records to making our maritime history accessible through innovative exhibitions like the nationally significant ‘Pickle Collection’ (the Preserved Marine Specimens Collection), and heritage collection days such as Devonport 200, ensuring our past informs and inspires future generations.

The Box has welcomed visitors from across the world, forged partnerships with national institutions like the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery, and hosted ambitious exhibitions, all while being a place for all Plymothians, with 56% of visitors coming from the city.

The Box has delivered real benefits to our economy – supporting local suppliers and jobs – and to our wellbeing – contributing to improved mental health and reduced social isolation. Perhaps most importantly The Box has helped us tell our city’s stories in new ways and created pride in Plymouth.

Counterculture’s findings in this report give us much to celebrate about what we have achieved together – the Council, our partners, and the people of Plymouth. They have also provided us with a call to keep going. The challenges we face as a city are real, but so is our determination. The Box shows what is possible when we invest in culture, creativity, and community. It is a love letter to Plymouth, and a promise of what’s still to come.

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader, Plymouth City Council

Councillor Jemima Laing
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Children’s Social Care,
Culture and Communications

“The Box is unique and without it the artistic ecology for the whole of the South West would be vastly different. Artists from South West art schools can use its collections and not have to go to London to see exhibitions of the quality The Box shows. The welcome is warm, and The Box makes a big effort to reach new audiences.

The Box is now one of the significant regional institutions, creating and receiving exhibitions and showing substantial collections, sitting alongside The Whitworth, Laing Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery and Manchester City Art Gallery, making Plymouth’s offer truly distinctive.”

**Sir Nicholas Serota
Chair, Arts Council England**



Foreword

The Box opened, in autumn 2020, at a time of huge global uncertainty, so it has been a particular pleasure to reflect, through this report, on the extraordinary journey we’ve taken over the past five years. The Box has moved from being a bold and hopeful investment in Plymouth’s future to being an integral part of the city, a vibrant cultural hub, a trusted community space, and a nationally recognised institution.

The Box was never intended to be a passive repository of heritage; it is a living, breathing space where people engage with ideas, with each other, and with the city’s past, present and future. The dynamic contemporary art programme enables further connections and creative opportunities. Counterculture’s report captures not only the brilliant outcomes of The Box’s work in terms of jobs, economic and social impacts, but the values and relationships that underpin our work.

We have built a team that is imaginative, collaborative, and deeply committed to audiences. The team which includes educators, administrators, curators, technicians, archivists, marketers, front-of-house staff, caterers and volunteers have worked tirelessly to deliver programmes that are inclusive, ambitious, and relevant. We’ve developed partnerships that stretch across the UK and beyond, and we’ve welcomed artists, academics and communities into meaningful dialogue with our collections and exhibitions.

The Box has also become a trusted civic space. We’ve hosted difficult conversations, celebrated diverse voices, and created platforms for people to tell their own stories.

Through ambitious exhibitions, community archives, creative commissions, and (most importantly) the ethos and approach our teams bring to work every day, we’ve sought to ensure that The Box belongs to everyone.

There have been many challenges – a pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis required resilience and adaptability, but the last five years have reinforced our belief in the importance of offering cultural spaces that are free, welcoming and rooted in place.

The development of The Box couldn’t have taken place without the incredible vision, ambition and hard work of many individuals within the city and beyond for which we are all very grateful. The City Council invested in the capital costs of The Box with partners, notably Arts Council England and National Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as trusts, foundations and donors. Over the past five years, The Box has delivered on their vision and ambition to create impact for audiences and safeguard the care of the city’s outstanding collections.

As we look ahead to the next five years we are determined to deepen our impact, broaden our reach, and continue to innovate. We will keep listening, learning and collaborating with audiences, partners, artists, and the city. The Box is young – but we have begun to show what’s possible when culture and creativity is placed at the heart of civic life.

**Victoria Pomery OBE
Chief Executive Officer, The Box**



Introduction

The team at The Box commissioned us to write this report assessing the impact of The Box over its first five years. To do that we reviewed a huge amount of data that The Box has collected – financial data, visitor numbers, lists of schools who have visited, partnership agreements, information about exhibitions, and much more. We had conversations with staff, volunteers, artists, visitors, community groups and organisations across Plymouth and nationally.

The figures and some of the many comments about The Box are presented in the report in what we hope is a compelling way to encourage you to read to the end!

We consider it a huge privilege to have worked on this report. The people we met and spoke with were universally enthusiastic about what you have achieved as a city with The Box, and there's no doubt that other cities are looking to you as a great example of the positive impact that investing in the arts and culture can have. As a city you should be very proud of The Box. Having looked at the huge impact the Box has had – economically, socially and artistically – we can say with confidence that you are absolutely right to be proud!

As your visit number powers towards two million over the next few years we think Plymouth has yet to see the greatest impacts of this brilliant investment on people's joy, wellbeing and pride in your great city.

Sarah Chambers, Andrew Evans,
Andrea Nixon, and Jo Wright
Counterculture LLP



“The Box brings world-class culture to Plymouth, consistently delivering exhibitions and projects that are both ambitious in scope and outstanding in quality. Since its relaunch, it has hosted a dynamic and thoughtful programme that has gained national attention. Visual Arts South West values The Box as a cultural leader in the region championing the transformative power of the arts.”

Hannah Rose & Lucy Badrocke
Visual Arts South West

The Box in numbers

¹
1.1 million
visits to the Box²

100,000
hours of volunteering³

£244 million
total economic footprint of expenditure

2+ million
objects in the museum collections

89%
of schools in Plymouth have visited

Visits and Visitors

- **56%** of visitors are residents of Plymouth⁴
- **72,000** visits by international visitors⁵
- As part of **1,002** visits from schools across Plymouth, Devon, Cornwall and beyond, the Box has welcomed **41,090** school children⁶

Economy and Jobs

- Construction of The Box supported **373** full-time job years of work.⁷
- Today The Box supports **62** jobs directly (47 FTE)⁸
- **£28m** contribution to the Plymouth economy by visitors to The Box⁹
- **£48m** capital investment into The Box¹⁰
- **72%** of all The Box's spending goes to suppliers based within the South-West (and **100%** to suppliers based in the UK)¹¹
- **56%** of The Box's revenue expenditure goes to suppliers in Plymouth¹²
- **162%** the increase in the economic impact of The Box as a result of its redevelopment
- **£11.3m** the economic impact of expenditure by The Box in 2024/25¹³

Health and Wellbeing

- **£43m** in estimated benefits from reduced incidence of depression and dementia among adults aged 50 and over¹⁴
- **£49m** in estimated benefits from improved general health among adults aged 30-49, including improved quality of life and increased productivity from engagement with The Box¹⁵

Exhibitions, collections, partnerships and environment

- The Box has held **62** exhibitions¹⁶
- **37** partnerships¹⁷
- **38%** the reduction in CO2e emissions from The Box's use of energy since its first full year of opening (2021/22)¹⁸
- Produced **22,091** items for **4,820** researchers in the Cottonian Research Room

Executive Summary



Nationally known, locally loved

As The Box celebrates five years since opening, a significant milestone for Plymouth and the wider region, Counterculture is delighted to present this report on its impact.

The opening of The Box in the midst of a global pandemic was the most significant cultural initiative in the UK in 2020. September 29 2025 marks this new institution's fifth anniversary, a celebration of five years as Plymouth's social space for people, art, ideas and experiences. In that time Plymouth has built on its reputation as Britain's Ocean City, with one of the finest heritage pedigrees, unrivalled natural assets and a vibrant, thriving culture. Our report finds that The Box is rightly proud to have been a vital part of that growth. The Box is successfully fulfilling its aspiration of being nationally known and locally loved.

Despite the disruptions of Covid The Box has seen impressive visit numbers and media coverage, had rave reviews for its dynamic programme and impacted the lives of young people with around 250,000 visits to date by people aged under 25.¹⁹

The quality and number of partners, and their excitement to work with The Box is testimony to Plymouth's success in becoming a leading cultural destination, and helps to address the major social and economic challenges that remain in the city.

This report tells the story of The Box through data, the stories of the people who have contributed to the success of The Box, and those whose lives have been touched by its work. The report is organised around four key themes:

Inclusive economic growth for Plymouth

Generating civic pride

Partnerships

Learning and engagement

Gathering this data and understanding the impact of The Box has required wide consultation with partners and stakeholders and Counterculture and The Box are thankful to all those who have contributed.

Inclusive economic growth for Plymouth

The Box is helping to make Plymouth an amazing place to live, work and visit. Since 2017, expenditure associated with building and running The Box has contributed around £190m to the UK economy and nearly £50m to the local economy.²⁰ The Box employs 62 people, and supported 373 full-time job years during its construction.

Since 2012 the Box has supported suppliers based in the South West with 72% of the capital investment and 56% of the revenue expenditure going to suppliers based in Plymouth. The Box is proud to have contributed to the wider growth of the visitor economy in Plymouth, with visitors to The Box helping drive growth to 16.3m in 2024.²¹

In addition to the measured economic impact The Box has had significant wider positive economic impacts associated with volunteering, participation and learning, tourism and other spillover benefits of cultural engagement. For example, based on visitor numbers since 2020 and its status as a regional museum, the total 'welfare benefit' of The Box to its visitors (i.e., users) and to other Plymouth residents (i.e., non-users) is estimated at £9.6m.²²

There is a growing body of evidence of the links between cultural and heritage engagement and health and wellbeing. Counterculture estimates that the health and wellbeing impacts of The Box since opening is at least £100m.²³

Generating civic pride

The Box's visitor numbers are growing, reaching one million visits in April 2025. The last three years have seen an average of 254,400 people every year visiting The Box with 56% of those visits made by local people. The Box is proud to contribute to a city that residents are proud of with 77% of residents believing that Plymouth is 'a great place to live'.²⁴ Visitors from the wider South West and other parts of the UK made up 37% of visits and 7% of visits were from international visitors reflecting The Box's status as an important part of Plymouth's offer to tourists.

Diverse audiences are visiting The Box with a quarter of its visitors aged under 25, over a quarter describing themselves as retired, and 30% visiting with children under 16. Visitors are ethnically diverse too with 13% of visitors in 2024 identifying as an ethnicity that is not 'white British' or 'white other' – which is higher than the census data for Plymouth. Over 70% of people come with friends and family and nearly 60% come because someone told them good things about The Box. A particularly striking fact is that for 13% of visitors coming to The Box this visit is their first ever time participating in any arts or cultural experience.²⁵

“The Box is really committed to making art accessible. The volume and depth of what it holds in its collections and its approach to exhibition programming are great – so well curated and so much to see.”

Imtithal Rathil
Student

Partnerships that perform

The Box believes that cultural institutions are at their most transformative when they are open to collaboration and sharing, and when a wide range of people and organisations are able to bring their expertise and insights. This has been made manifest in The Box's practice with 37 partnerships since 2020 including a wide range of cultural institutions, businesses, and charities locally, regionally, nationally and across the world.

“Working with The Box is always a joy! As well as incredible physical resources – the archives are amazing – the team is brilliant. Always knowledgeable, collaborative and imaginative, they are a delight to work with and the results speak for themselves.”

Lindsey Hall,
CEO, Real Ideas Organisation

Learning for the future

It has been an amazing five years at The Box, and the team is determined not to rest on its laurels. There are many needs in Plymouth, including 30,000 people struggling with mental health problems and nearly 10,000 children living in poverty.²⁶ The Box's ambition is to deliver more of its work to more of the people who will benefit from it most over the next five years.

The Box's future learning strategy acknowledges Plymouth's significant social challenges while positioning the institution as a catalyst for positive change. The learning strategy focuses on three core ambitions: Igniting Imaginations through creativity and learning for new audiences, advancing Equity and Representation, and Empowering People through cultural democracy that inspires change.

The strategy responds directly to Plymouth's demographic realities as one of the top 20% most deprived local authority areas in England, where one in five children and one in six pensioners live in poverty.

With an increasingly diverse population (94.9% identifying as White in 2021, down from 96%) and around 350 refugee and asylum seekers housed in the city at any time, The Box recognises the need for more inclusive programming.

The approach emphasises strategic resource allocation to maximise impact through fewer but larger-scale projects, generating sustainable income while addressing access inequities. Crucially, the strategy embeds methods of delegated power, active participation, co-design and co-curation, ensuring communities shape their own cultural experiences rather than being passive recipients. This community-led approach, combined with improved feedback systems and evaluation processes, positions The Box to address Plymouth's complex social needs while building on its successful track record of cultural engagement and economic impact.

Focus on collections

The Box collections span over two million objects, artworks, specimens and archival materials and include archaeology, social history, natural history, fine and decorative arts, photography, moving image and contemporary art. It includes the Cottonian Collection, which is Designated as internationally significant and is Accredited through both Arts Council England and The National Archives; with the Archive being a Place of Deposit. Over 100,000 people have enjoyed the Cottonian Collection with 5,000 using the research room since opening in 2020.

One critical heritage asset of national importance is the Marine Specimens or 'Pickle' Collection. This comprises over 4,000 spirit-preserved marine specimens, the largest collection of its kind in the South West. The centrepiece Plymouth Marine Fauna Collection, established in 1896 and comprehensively developed between 1936-38, provides an unparalleled scientific record documenting marine biodiversity in Plymouth Sound. Considered unique in the UK, it is comprehensive in its regional coverage and documentation standards.

The collection serves as an irreplaceable databank for climate change and environmental impact research. Many specimens can no longer be replicated due to climatic and oceanographic changes, making this historical baseline data crucial for understanding biodiversity loss, pollution effects and overfishing impacts. The collection enables comparative analysis with future samples to measure ongoing environmental change.

Access to this collection unlocks significant educational and engagement potential through partnerships with Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) and integration with marine citizenship programmes. In partnership with PSNMP, the 'Pickle' collection positions Plymouth as a leader in marine heritage conservation while supporting tourism, education, and research sectors.



“The pickles are part of the Plymouth Marine Fauna Collection which is the ‘gold standard’ for all other marine fauna studies round the world – it was the first ever undertaken and 80% of the specimens in it are the originals. Thomas Vere Hodgson, the first ever curator, collected them and also went on Captain Scott’s first Antarctic expedition. The Collection is much easier for students to use now and we can take advantage of being at the centre of the National Marine Park. The Collection is important for academic audiences globally and there are real opportunities to do more – there are caves in Plymouth still to be excavated which are likely to contain significant palaeontology remains.”

**Professor John Spicer,
University of Plymouth**



The Box continues to acquire works for the collection with a specific focus on contemporary art. With the generous support of grant funding and donors, recent acquisitions include significant work by John Akomfrah, Anne Hardy, Ingrid Pollard, Tai Shani, George Shaw, Caroline Walker and Zadie Xa. In addition, legacy gifts have enabled works by Richard Batterham, Beryl Cook and Ben Hartley to come into the collection.

“The Box has proved an invaluable asset to the network of museums and galleries across the UK. Sharing its remarkable collections and programmes with over a million local, national and international visitors, The Box is also developing its art collection with a number of ambitious acquisitions supported by Art Fund. As well as creating its own exhibitions, The Box is an important partner for national touring exhibitions from the British Art Show to the forthcoming tour of the National Portrait Gallery’s Joshua Reynolds’s painting Portrait of Mai.”

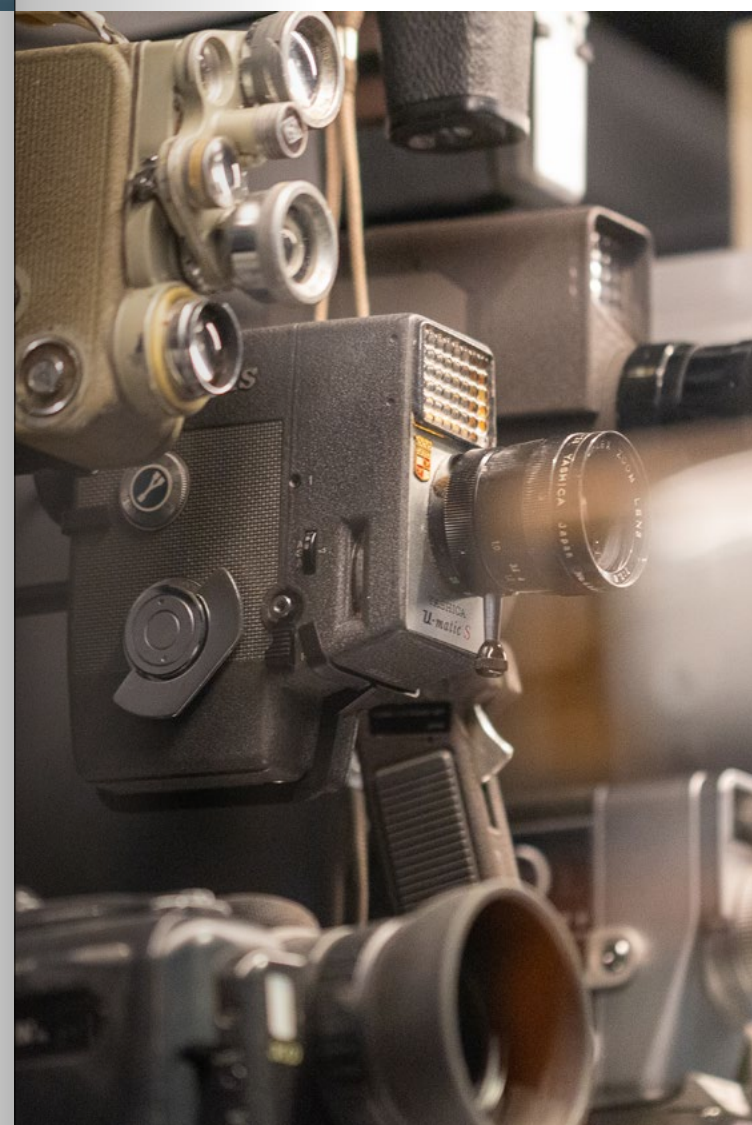
**Jenny Waldman,
Director, Art Fund**

BFI Funding Impact (2020–2025)

BFI investment over the past five years has been instrumental in enabling The Box to embed screen heritage at the heart of its cultural programme. The funding has facilitated a more sustainable and inclusive approach to collections management, public engagement, and digital access, making the institution’s nationally significant moving image collections more resilient, visible, relevant and accessible. Through open-access digital platforms, curated screenings, artist-led commissions, and innovative archive-based storytelling, BFI funding has significantly enhanced The Box’s capacity to interpret and share moving image collections in ways that resonate locally, regionally and nationally.

Reimagining the Film Archive (RTFA) Programme (2023–2026)

The BFI-funded Reimagining the Film Archive programme represents a vital component of The Box’s strategic development. The programme has enabled the institution to foreground stories that are often missing from the record and to support artists and communities in responding creatively to film archives. RTFA has deepened relationships with partners and participants, and opened up new approaches to identity, memory and place. The programme has positioned screen heritage not merely as material to preserve, but as a living resource that can challenge dominant narratives and spark fresh conversations. Through residencies, co-created projects and public engagement, RTFA is shaping institutional practice and strategic direction.



“The Box has transformed its moving image archive collections from a position of real vulnerability into a core, sustainable and inclusive part of its cultural programme, now thriving as one of the UK’s lead screen archives. We’re proud that BFI investment has helped make this transformation possible; supporting bold, inspiring work that amplifies underrepresented voices, connects with audiences in fresh ways, and unlocks the creative power of film archives as living, accessible resources.”

**Arike Oke
Executive Director of Knowledge, Learning
and Collections, British Film Institute (BFI)**

“The Box has transformed the cultural life of our city. It is an extraordinary place full of extraordinary things and extraordinary people. There’s something very special about walking through those doors, getting a big welcome from The Box volunteers and looking at school children experiencing the art and the collections. It’s truly a place for everyone.”

**James Mackenzie-Blackman,
CEO, Theatre Royal Plymouth**



“The Box was always going to have a profound impact on the cultural landscape in the city, but I have been particularly impressed with the wide range of national partners who have collaborated with The Box to create inspirational exhibitions and events. It is a testament to the quality of the institution and the staff team that this calibre of partner and artist are keen to work in Plymouth”

**Hannah Harris
CEO, Plymouth Culture**

Vision and Values

The Box operates with a clear vision of “Reimagining the future through the past” and a mission to be “a social space for people, art, ideas and experiences” that preserves cultural collections while “exploring the pressing issues of our age.”

The institution’s four core values

Connected

Progressive

Curious

Relevant

form the foundation of every initiative.

These values are not merely aspirational statements but operational principles embedded in every decision. From collections and archive preservation to supporting diverse entrepreneurs, from educational outreach to showcasing major artists and exhibitions, The Box consistently demonstrates how mission-driven programming creates authentic community impact. This values-based approach ensures cultural work remains meaningful, accessible and transformative rather than merely transactional establishing The Box as Plymouth’s cultural catalyst.

“Every time I come to work it feels really special.”

The Box staff member



“The Box has done absolutely what we wanted – it has put heart back into the city. The Box feels positive and welcoming. It doesn’t boss you about but lets you make your own choices. The Box is compelling and fun, vibrant not stuffy, and the galleries are fantastic. The Box is a place that makes people feel inquisitive – ‘What is that?’, ‘Where is that?’, ‘I never knew that!’”

Visitor attending a behind the scenes tour of the archives, May 2025

Inclusive growth for Plymouth

The Box is helping to make Plymouth an amazing place to live, work and visit. Since 2017, expenditure associated with building and running The Box has contributed around £190m to the UK economy and nearly £50m to the local economy. The Box employs 62 people and is proud to be a Real Living Wage employer.

Since 2012 The Box has supported suppliers based in the South West with 72% of its capital investment (£34.3m in actual spend, equivalent to £45.3m in current prices). From revenue expenditure 56% goes to suppliers based in Plymouth (£10m since The Box opened in 2020).

The Box is proud to have contributed to the wider growth of the visitor economy in Plymouth, with visitors to The Box helping drive growth to 16.3 million visitors in 2024. The Box has been a significant part of a new chapter for Plymouth as a place to visit since Covid-19. The Box has made a vital contribution towards placemaking and has helped raise the profile of the city on a national and international stage.

Creative organisations like The Box depend on the astonishing talent and imagination of artists and freelancers. The Box is committed to supporting the artist and freelance community, is part of FRANK (the body advocating for fair pay for artists), and has worked with many amazing artists and technicians over the last five years.

Building The Box

Creating a stunning new museum, gallery, and archive for Plymouth resulted in significant economic benefits even before opening, with an investment of £48m (£63m in current prices), most of which went to suppliers based in the South West (72%). The number of jobs supported by the construction work was 373.

Covid recovery at The Box

There were lots of challenges opening a major visitor destination whilst in the middle of a pandemic. The cultural sector and creative industries were hit particularly hard by Covid-19 across the UK and the period of high inflation that followed.

For Plymouth, opening The Box provided a great reason for residents and visitors to get back into the city centre – and being free to enter makes The Box a lifeline for people who want to be able to enjoy a great quality cultural experience.

Economic impact of The Box

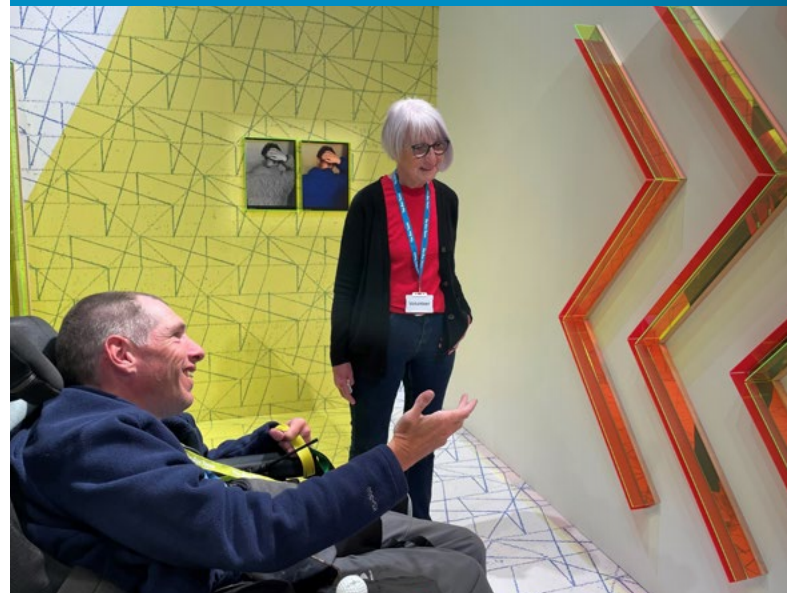
Expenditure by The Box has contributed an estimated £190m to the economy since 2017 including direct, indirect and induced impacts. In addition to this there are significant wider positive economic impacts associated with volunteering, participation and learning, tourism and other spillover benefits of cultural engagement.

Over 100,000 hours of volunteering has taken place at The Box since 2020 with an estimated economic value of £1.1m.²⁷ This value reflects the benefits to the volunteers who have gained skills, experience, and social benefits and to the organisation which has benefitted from the time volunteers have given.

An important way to understand the value of arts, cultural, and heritage assets (and one commended by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Arts Council England, Historic England, and the British Film Institute) is their 'welfare value'. This assesses the social and wellbeing benefits people get from engaging with or having the potential to use a regional museum, gallery or collection themselves ('use value') or from knowing that it exists and/or provides benefits to others ('non-use value'), based on the amount of money they would be willing to pay to continue to enjoy or support it. Based on visit numbers since 2020 and its status as a regional museum, the total 'welfare benefit' of The Box to its visitors (i.e. users) and to other Plymouth residents (i.e. non-users) is estimated at £9.6m.

"The volunteers at The Box are absolutely amazing. We bring our granddaughter here regularly and they are always so friendly and helpful!"

Visitor to The Box, May 2025



Health and wellbeing benefits

There is a growing body of evidence of the links between cultural and heritage engagement and health and wellbeing. A series of studies have shown that sustained, regular engagement by adults (as audiences or participants) in a variety of cultural activities can lead to improvements in physical and mental health; that arts-based activities can lead to improvements in 'externalising behaviours' and self-esteem in children and mental health in young adults; and that visiting museums and galleries can lead to reduced incidence of depression and dementia in older adults.

Recent studies (such as Frontier Economics' 2024 study *Culture and Heritage Capital: Monetising the Impact of Culture and Heritage on Health and Wellbeing*) have worked to put a value on these benefits. Frontier Economics' study identified 14 distinct models which can be used to estimate the value of engagement with arts and culture in terms of its benefits to individuals (e.g., improvements to quality of life), the NHS (e.g., cost savings from avoided health conditions) and wider society (e.g., productivity) of interventions that deliver health and wellbeing outcomes. This report considers two of these as examples of the health and wellbeing benefits of The Box:

General cultural engagement and general health for adults aged 30-49. The Frontier Economics model estimates a value of £992 per person per year for people aged 30-49 who engage with various cultural activities (including visiting museums and galleries) every few months or more, on a sustained basis. We estimate that around 10,500 adults in this age group visit The Box at least three times a year. This gives an estimated annual impact of around £10.5m for adults aged 30-49 – over £52m in the five years since The Box opened.

Engagement with cultural venues and depression/dementia in adults aged 50+. The Frontier Economics model estimates values of £314 per person per year in reduced depression incidence and £369 per person per year in reduced dementia incidence among people aged 50+ who engage every few months or more, on a sustained basis, with cultural venues. Around 13,500 adults in this age group visit The Box at least three times a year. This gives an estimated annual impact of £4.2m in reduced depression incidence and £5m in reduced dementia incidence among adults aged 50+ – around £46m since opening in 2020.

Case Study: Hello Sailor – A triumphant collaboration

“This looks epic! Are there tickets still available?”

The Box partnered with the National Gallery to create *Hello Sailor* at Tinside Lido in July 2025. This unique cultural celebration was curated by Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller and formed part of ‘The Triumph of Art’, a nationwide performance that culminated the National Gallery’s 200th anniversary celebrations, in Trafalgar Square.

Jeremy Deller drew inspiration from paintings in the National Gallery’s collection, including Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne*, which shows Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and revelry, with people of all shapes and sizes having a party. The event’s centrepiece was an inflatable sculpture of a character from a painting by the beloved Plymouth artist Beryl Cook, carried by bodybuilders in leopard skin outfits from The Box to the festival site. Cook, who lived in Plymouth for 40 years until her death in 2008, was known for her bawdy scenes of working-class life and curvaceous women, often inspired by snapshots of Plymouth life including at Tinside Lido.

“This is iconic, love it!”

Hello Sailor featured local strong people from the Powerbuilding Gym, synchronised swimmers from the University of Plymouth’s Swimming, the Synchro and Water Polo Club, live music including performances by the Camborne Town Band with Simon Dobson and community swimming in the lido as the event concluded. Over 500 tickets for the ticketed event were snapped up in minutes, with additional viewing available from The Hoe promenade.

“It was great to work with The Box, they understood what I was trying to do and helped me make it happen.”

Jeremy Deller

“Wonderful performance photos, and what a great expression of Beryl’s work – she’d surely approve!”

The project was described by the National Gallery as “the first of its kind in the UK” and “eventually becoming its own mythology in the stories, images and memories of those who were present.”



Case Study: Arts University Plymouth

Founded in 1856 as the Plymouth Drawing School and granted university status in 2022, Arts University Plymouth has developed a strong partnership with The Box, its neighbour in the Creative Quarter. Their physical proximity and shared values allow crossing of thresholds for both organisations, working together to develop audiences, enhance access and deepen a shared sense of place.

Arts University Plymouth and The Box have collaborated on a wide range of shared programmes and active engagement activities that benefit the University’s staff and students as well as the wider audiences at The Box. Key collaborations include:

- The Mission Mammoth project offering children an exciting experience of hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) activities using The Box’s building and collections.
- Using the expertise of The Box’s staff to deliver teaching on the University’s Museum Studies MA programme.
- The Children’s Art Award competition for schools, funded by Arts University Plymouth to enable children’s work to have a high-quality display in a central space at The Box.

- Many of the University’s courses are enriched by use of The Box’s spaces and collections for teaching subject material and learning spaces. The Film Archive in particular is a key resource for the University’s film students.
- Supporting The Box to deliver Design Lab Nation – a V&A programme of in-depth projects that explore new ways of engaging secondary school students across the country with design.

Beyond individual projects, the partnership contributes to a wider civic mission. Arts University Plymouth and The Box share a commitment to engaging Plymouth’s schools and creative communities. The Box also plays a role in student recruitment, helping to attract prospective students who might otherwise consider Bristol or London. This year, The Box’s Little Box venue was used as a pop-up shop for graduating students’ degree show work.

“If The Box wasn’t here there wouldn’t be a gap – there would be a chasm! The Box is a critical part of the city’s infrastructure and provides a vital social function even beyond its cultural work in a complex city at a complex time. No-one has funds or ability to fill the void if it wasn’t there.”

**Professor Paul Fieldsend-Danks,
Vice-Chancellor,
Arts University Plymouth**



"I can't think of anything in Plymouth, except the football club, that has such a universal love for it. The Box has an authenticity because it tells world stories through a Plymouth lens, so it's something that could only happen in Plymouth. The Box has carried a 'big weight' for the city, moving our image forward on the national and international stage."

David Draffan,
Economic Development Service Director,
Plymouth City Council

Generating civic pride

1 million

Visits by April 2025

254,400

Average
yearly visits

576,000

Visits by local
people (56%)

13%

Visitors new to any
cultural experience

Visitor numbers

The number of visits to The Box is growing and the total number of visits reached one million by April 2025. That's almost four times the total population of Plymouth coming through the doors in the five years since opening! The last three years have seen an average of 254,400 people every year visiting The Box, that's similar to Imperial War Museum North (272,211), Bletchley Park (268,257), National Waterfront Museum Swansea (241,080) and Manchester's Whitworth (236,445)²⁸ – a remarkable achievement for an institution that is only five years old!

Local people made 56% of those visits helping to fulfil The Box's ambition to be 'locally loved and nationally known'. Those 576,000 visits are enough people to fill Home Park Stadium 32 times (the home of Plymouth Argyle Football Club, if you're from Plymouth you almost certainly already know that!)

Visitors from the wider South West and other parts of the UK made up 37% of visits and 7% of visits were from international visitors reflecting The Box's status as an important part of Plymouth's offer to tourists.

The Box is proud to contribute to a city that residents are proud of with 77% of residents believing that Plymouth is 'a great place to live'.

Who visits The Box?

Our report finds that The Box is, genuinely, for everyone. There are significant young audiences, around a quarter of The Box's visitors are under 25. The Box has reached lots of young people with 17% of the audience being 16-25 year olds and 15% of visitors in full-time education.²⁹

Family audiences are growing at The Box too. 30% of the audience come to The Box with children under 16 (over half of those brought children of primary school age 5-11). Not only are they visiting but families love The Box with 75% rating the facilities as very good. Older people are also very much part of its audience with 27% describing themselves as retired.

Visitors are more ethnically diverse than the population of Plymouth with 13% of visitors in 2024 identifying as an ethnicity that is not 'white British' or 'white other'.³⁰

The Box isn't an arts venue for an elite. The visitor profile falls almost exactly in line with the socio-economic make-up of the South West with a breakdown of 22% AB; 36% C1; 22% C2; and 19% DE.³¹

Why do people visit?

People come for fun! Most visitors say 'enjoyment' is their main motivation. The second most common reason is exciting too: people say they are 'curious' about what happens at The Box.

The Box is a highly social place. Over 70% of people come with friends and family and people find out about The Box socially too, nearly 60% of visitors come because someone they know told them good things about The Box.³²

The Box attracts new visitors. For 30% of visitors surveyed it was their first time and they were mostly younger than the average age of museum visitors. For 13% of visitors their trip to The Box is their first ever time participating in any arts or cultural experience, introducing brand new audiences to arts and heritage!³³

Case Study: Pride in Plymouth

The Pride in Plymouth Community Trust was formed in 2010 to bring people and groups together to celebrate and promote the diversity that exists within the LGBTQ+ communities in Plymouth.

Pride in Plymouth has worked with the archives since 2011 to develop positive representation of LGBTQ+ stories and voices through an exhibition programme. The partnership has continued for 15 years and has deepened over the last five years as LGBTQ+ history and heritage has become a year-round focus – not tokenistic or only focused on Pride events or LGBTQ+ History Month.

Pride in Plymouth has always valued an ongoing relationship and conversation with The Box that has endured beyond the initial collaboration.

The partnership has brought new skills and confidence to the team at Pride in Plymouth and helped it to be more effective in its work. For example, the team at The Box has worked with the Community Trust to train people in oral history techniques so it can capture the stories of the LGBTQ+ communities across the city.

As a result Pride in Plymouth is now working with LGBTQ+ asylum seekers to help them present their experiences as part of their asylum claims.

“The Box is brilliant at listening and meeting you half way. It is willing to take chances and has created a culture of what's possible. It is international, aspirational, brave, and inspiring, but also down-to-earth, fun, and engaging. The Box is a safe space where people feel heard and welcomed. The Box has given us extra credibility and a long-term relationship.”

**Dr Alan Butler, Co-Director,
Pride in Plymouth Community Trust**

“The Box is now an indispensable attraction. It is a jewel in our crown as a city and something we should be very, very proud of.

I want to pay tribute to the team at The Box from the management to the catering staff, the curators to the volunteers. Five years on, it is still amazing to me, that there are people in our city who have not yet visited. Please put it on your to do list and get stuck in, you won't regret a visit to The Box.”

**Luke Pollard,
Member of Parliament for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport.**



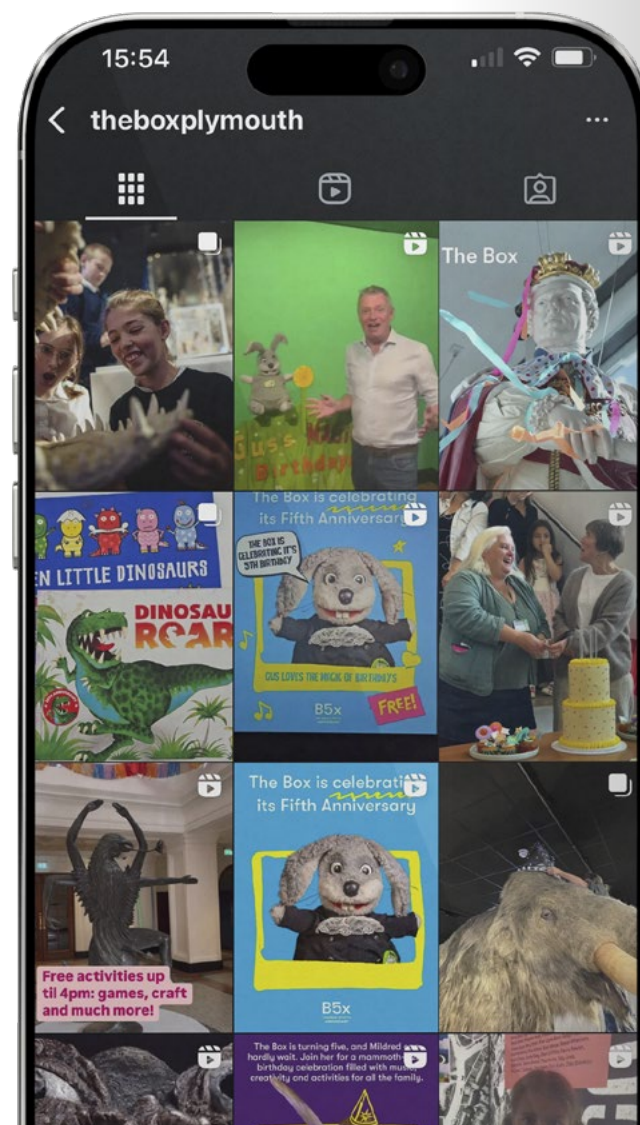


Spreading the word

Every year hundreds of millions of people hear about The Box and its work through a range of social media platforms and press coverage.

In 2024/25 The Box reached over 2.3 million people digitally and had over 45,000 followers on social media with Instagram being the fastest growing platform. The website is an international window with a rapidly increasing American profile (12,000 US users in 2024/25).

Press coverage for The Box reached a remarkable 813 million people around the world in 2024/25 – a 330% increase on previous years, with over 600 pieces of press coverage from national newspapers (e.g. The Telegraph, The Guardian, BBC News), specialist magazines and journals (e.g. Art Newspaper, Art Newspaper), and lifestyle publications (e.g. Conde Nast, Time Out). As well as putting a spotlight on The Box and Plymouth the press coverage last year was the equivalent of £7 million in advertising value.³⁴



“I didn’t think these kind of places were for me, but now I have a voice and want to help to build a legacy.”

**Leonie Prentice,
Devon Creative Collective (CoDeCC) CIC
and member of The Box’s Culture Club**



Partnerships

Over the last five years The Box has been part of 37 partnerships with a wide range of cultural institutions, businesses, and charities locally, regionally, nationally and across the world.

Partners include...



The Box believes that cultural institutions are at their most transformative when they are open to collaboration and sharing, and when a wide range of people and organisations are able to bring their expertise and insights. For the recent *Planet Ocean* exhibition (March 2024 – April 2025) there were partnerships with 14 other organisations to create an immersive exhibition that helped visitors explore the powerful relationship between humanity and our oceans, past and present – perfect for Plymouth, Britain’s Ocean City.

“The Box is compelling, high quality and opens the past to visitors and residents alike in a year-round experience. It demonstrates the routes and options for creativity and has created a culture of innovation, partnership working and evolving heritage.”

Ian McFadzen,
CEO, Ocean Conservation Trust

Partners for Planet Ocean:



Supporting a cultural ecosystem

The Box plays a pivotal role in Plymouth’s cultural ecosystem by fostering deep, meaningful collaborations across a wide spectrum of partners; from national institutions like Tate, the National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery, regional powerhouses such as The Whitworth, The Hepworth Wakefield and Kettle’s Yard, local networks and partnerships such as the City Curators group, Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership and Plymouth Music network, to grassroots organisations such as Plymouth Art Weekender, Queer District Collective, Rame Projects, Clean Our Patch and Conscious Sisters. The approach is not just about formal partnerships but about cultivating a culture of openness, curiosity, and shared purpose. This collaborative spirit ensures that exhibitions are not only rich in content but also deeply connected to local and global narratives, making The Box a hub for cultural dialogue and innovation.

Beyond exhibitions, The Box strengthens Plymouth’s cultural fabric by acting as a connector and catalyst. It amplifies the voices of artists, community groups, and educators, creating social spaces where diverse perspectives can meet and flourish. The Box’s Reimagining the Film Archive is a three-year programme (2023-2026) made possible thanks to the National Lottery and the BFI Screen Heritage Fund. Two important strands of this programme include contemporary commissioning opportunities for artist filmmakers that engage with the historic film collections, and research commissions that see archival practice as a tool for marginalised voices to reclaim their narratives. The archive is a vital space for preserving and valuing diverse stories.

Creativity and the arts are under pressure in UK schools, but their power has never been more vital. Art isn’t just a subject; it’s a lifeline. It helps young people express emotions, explore identity, and build resilience. It’s a gateway to mindfulness, focus and emotional wellbeing. Creative activities spark curiosity and unlock essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation – skills that ripple across academic performance and into future careers. Initiatives like the Family Workshop and School Visit programmes employ artists from the city to deliver creative opportunities for thousands of children each year, and the Children and Young People’s Art Competition, developed with Arts University Plymouth, demonstrates The Box’s commitment to nurturing emerging talent and engaging younger audiences. Its presence has transformed Tavistock Place into a vibrant public space, and its programming ranges from evocative archive films to contemporary art, making culture accessible and relevant to Plymouth’s communities. As a ‘love letter to the city’ The Box not only celebrates Plymouth’s heritage but also drives its cultural future.

“I look back at the time of working with The Box with affection and at the exhibition with pride.”

George Shaw, Artist

Case Study: National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) is home to the most extensive collection of portraits in the world and has been a long-term partner of The Box.

In 2024, The Box partnered with NPG on the development of a major exhibition, *The Time is Always Now*, curated by Ekow Eshun. The exhibition brought together the paintings of 20 international artists which looked stunning in the spaces at The Box. This exhibition diversified audiences to The Box with visit numbers reaching over 97,000, of which 13% were from the global majority, an increase from 8% the previous year.

The NPG team was impressed at the skilful approach taken by The Box which meant that everyone – curators, community groups, and artists – felt strongly connected to each other. The exhibition was visited by over 92,000 people when it was displayed at The Box from June – September 2024.

“The team at The Box ask great questions in an appropriate way. The Box is a place that is curious, interested, open, and accomplished at making people feel it’s their place to be and to have conversations. The Box is confident, has clear values, knows its communities and how to talk with them and act as a connector. The Box’s USP is its brilliant reach and the fact that what it brings to Plymouth is ambitious and relevant to people who live there.”

**Rosie Wilson,
Director of Programmes and Partnerships,
National Portrait Gallery**



Case Study: Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council

Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council (PDREC) was first established in Plymouth in 1993 in response to rising levels of racism and hate crime. It merged with Devon Exeter Racial Equality Council in 2010. It continues to challenge racism and discrimination in all levels of society. Its annual Respect Festival celebrates diversity in Plymouth and collaborates with lots of venues and communities. PDREC has partnered with The Box since it opened on a wide range of activities and projects including:

- **Culture Club** – a group that aims to explore The Box’s collections and exhibitions from the viewpoint of under-represented or more marginalised groups. Along with the Cornwall and Devon Creative Collective, PDREC supported a very special day of music, culture, fun and food that celebrated the impact that the Windrush generation and its descendants have had on British culture, reaching around 1,300 people.
- **Craft Collective** – a safe space for women of all ages and cultures who regularly met to share and learn traditional crafts and have for over 15 years.
- Young People’s projects including ‘Karibu’, a takeover day planned and delivered by young people for young people as part of *The Time Is Always Now* exhibition, and the development of a new young people’s group prioritising young people from under-represented or marginalised groups to support the co-development of both the exhibition programme and public programming opportunities, including working with the Government Art Collection and the National Portrait Gallery.

The partnership has particularly focussed on young people (enabling them to explore and question their role in the city), and on addressing issues of isolation and loneliness for people who use The Box, seeking to offer connection and a sense of belonging and quality spaces where people want to spend time.

“The Box is honest and brave. It tells stories properly for a range of audiences and doesn’t shy away from difficult topics. It’s incredibly proactive in engaging with communities and has created strong, deep, relationships. It is incredible what a transformation this has been – if you’re part of Plymouth, you’re part of The Box!”

**Vanessa Crosse,
Case Worker, Plymouth and Devon Racial
Equality Council**

Case Study: University of Plymouth

The strategic partnership between The Box and the University of Plymouth demonstrates how cultural institutions can drive academic excellence while amplifying research impact. This collaboration has generated measurable outcomes across teaching, research and public engagement, positioning both institutions as leaders.

The partnership's academic integration is exemplified through major collaborative projects including *British Art Show 9* in 2022, which brought internationally significant contemporary art to Plymouth, providing students with direct access to contemporary practice. In 2023, Dr Jenny Graham's curatorial contribution to *Reframing Reynolds: A Celebration* showcased how academic expertise enhances exhibition quality, with the 300th anniversary celebration of the renowned 18th century portrait painter attracting both scholarly and public audiences and reviews.

The Box's hosting of a Collaborative Doctoral Research student creates a pipeline for advanced cultural research and the University's dedicated teaching facility within The Box enables students to engage directly with the space.

“They haven’t put a foot wrong! The Box programmes really smart shows which also pepper Plymouth with the unexpected. It connects artist contextual programmes and events with our own teaching programmes.”

Professor Chris Bennewith, Executive Dean Arts, Humanities and Business Faculty, University of Plymouth

Case Study: Plymouth Marjon University

The Box's partnership with Plymouth Marjon University exemplifies the vital importance of working with educational partners to extend cultural impact beyond museum walls. The collaboration centred on relocating Alexandre da Cunha's internationally acclaimed *Figurehead II* sculpture from The Box's *Making It* exhibition to a permanent home at Marjon's campus.

Originally commissioned for The Box's 2020 opening, the brutalist sculpture proved highly popular with visitors before finding its permanent location next to Marjon Arts Centre. This transition demonstrates how museums can create lasting cultural legacies through educational partnerships, extending The Box's influence into Plymouth's academic community.

Working with universities enables The Box to reach diverse audiences, support academic research, and ensure artwork accessibility beyond traditional museum settings. The partnership aligns with both institutions' values of community engagement and social perspective, while contributing to Plymouth's public art landscape and supporting Marjon's arts and culture offering as the University celebrated its centenary.

Case Study: Theatre Royal Plymouth

The Box partnered with Theatre Royal Plymouth and Birmingham Royal Ballet in February 2025 to deliver 'Ballet at The Box' (see page 16), a spectacular flash mob performance featuring 150 young dancers aged 8-18 from across Plymouth. This innovative collaboration celebrated Birmingham Royal Ballet's upcoming *Cinderella* production while connecting with The Box's storytelling and folklore season, including the *Carnavalesque* exhibition by Caribbean British artist John Lyons.

The event achieved remarkable success, becoming The Box's busiest day since October 2023 with 2,225 visitors. The collaboration generated significant media coverage across ITV News Westcountry, Plymouth Live and One Plymouth, amplifying reach beyond the immediate audience.

This partnership demonstrated how cultural institutions can collaborate to create accessible arts experiences that engage diverse communities. The event successfully bridged dance, visual arts and storytelling themes, showing how fairy tales and folklore inspire across art forms while creating “unexpected moments of wonder” and reinforcing The Box's position as a catalyst for innovative cultural programming.

Case Study: Real Ideas Organisation

The Box partnered with Real Ideas Organisation (RIO), Plymouth Community Homes, and local businesses to commemorate Devonport's bicentenary through a co-produced community programme in early 2025. The initiative featured a three-month exhibition culminating in a community celebration, with residents sharing personal stories, films and objects alongside immersive dome content from The Box's media archive.

Direct outreach through 6,000 postcards to Devonport residents generated an 80% increase in website traffic. The project achieved extensive media coverage across BBC Spotlight, Radio Devon, The Evening Herald, Western Morning News and Radio Cornwall.

The project saw 2,320 total visits across the weekend finale, with 60% being first-time visitors to The Box. There were over 300 community drop-ins to the Foulston Room sharing space and 25 new items enriched The Box's Devonport collection. This demonstrates The Box's capacity to deliver meaningful community-centred programming that builds new audiences, strengthens local partnerships, and enhances collections through community contributions while achieving significant media impact and visitor growth.

Case Study: Diversity Business Incubator

The Box partnered with Diversity Business Incubator (DBI) to launch The Bazaar in 2024, a monthly marketplace celebrating Plymouth's cultural diversity while supporting local global majority entrepreneurs. This collaboration strategically combined The Box's cultural platform with DBI's business development expertise to create sustainable economic opportunities.

The partnership delivered exceptional results across five successful events with 27 vendors representing over 36 countries. The event brought up to 2,100 visitors to The Box on Bazaar days, there was cultural integration through global cuisines, artisan crafts and live entertainment and great community engagement spanning all age groups with interactive activities.

The Bazaar created a special fusion of commerce and heritage, positioning The Box as a catalyst for community empowerment while supporting DBI's mission to elevate global majority business success in Plymouth.

The Bazaar has continued to grow and, with the support of The Box, has relocated to a city centre location bringing the organisations involved to an even bigger audience.

“Victoria Pomery and her team at The Box gave me the most extraordinary and generative space to research, develop and deliver my solo show *When will we be good enough?* in 2024/25. This forward-looking arts venue allows artists like myself to connect with rich local histories and global themes, resonating with today’s socio-political issues. It’s not just that The Box is one of the UK’s key venues; it’s also about the kinds of conversations and work the gallery is willing to showcase, and the support it offers artists to be ambitious.”

Osman Yousefzada
Artist



Learning and engagement

The Box has had an outstanding start – in five years it has found its feet as an inclusive, accessible, innovative museum, gallery and archive and delivered many impressive arts and cultural experiences to over a million visitors.

There remain considerable challenges that The Box can be part of addressing over the next five years (and more!) There are over 30,000 people struggling with mental health problems. Nearly 10,000 children live in poverty in Plymouth. The city has a higher than average rate of adults who are not in employment,³⁵ and Plymouth residents are more likely to have a disability than other people across England.³⁶

The Box already seeks to make a difference for people with poor mental health. It works with amazing partners to engage residents in more deprived parts of Plymouth, and is a free to enter, fully accessible venue. However, it recognises there is more to do and has an ambition, over the next five years, to create greater impact for those who will benefit from it most, specifically through:

- Increased opportunities to support delegated power, active participation, co-design and co-curation across the exhibition programme and public programming opportunities, building on successful engagement with a range of geographic communities and communities of interest or experience.

- Continued support for community partners, such as PDREC’s Respect Festival and Plymouth City Centre Company’s West End Carnival.
- Developing ‘Box Beginners’, a programme that will target support to areas of the city where residents face multiple barriers to participation encouraging them to engage with The Box for the first time.
- Develop a new young people’s group prioritising young people from under-represented or marginalised groups to support the co-development of both the exhibition programme and public programming opportunities.
- Deliver new jargon-free exhibition tours led by staff and volunteers, with clear and simple language that is accessible for all.
- Train more staff to British Sign Language at Levels 1, 2 and 3 and continue to make improvements to accessibility across physical, intellectual, and financial needs.



“I can honestly say that working at The Box has been one of the greatest highlights of my career. The Box is a unique British institution – where else can you go to see contemporary art and a woolly mammoth under the same roof and at the same time research your family tree? But an institution is only as good as the people who make it. The Box has the best – from leadership to technicians to volunteers.

My experience of creating *Running and Returning* has been nothing short of life-changing. The process has connected me to my past, my family and roots in Plymouth and in so doing helped me expand my creative horizons as an artist. I couldn’t be more grateful for the opportunity to work with Victoria and her team in such an extraordinary place as The Box. Happy Fifth Birthday to The Box!”

**Jyll Bradley
Artist**

Looking Ahead

The Box is an evolving, dynamic organisation delivering on its aspiration to be ‘nationally known and locally loved’. The future programme involves a further partnership with the National Portrait Gallery which will bring Joshua Reynolds’ remarkable *Portrait of Mai*, a young Polynesian, to The Box in 2026. This will be an opportunity to share some of the objects from The Box collections to contextualise this painting. There are also landmark exhibitions by two significant women artists Gillian Ayres and Beryl Cook, and a collaboration with Tate in the Autumn. Other exciting partnerships and projects are being developed for 2027 and beyond.

The next five years will undoubtedly have challenges but working collaboratively, understanding more about the collections, analysing the visitor data, growing resilience, taking creative risks and remaining relevant will ensure that The Box continues to create impact for audiences, the city and beyond.



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Endnotes

- 1** These endnotes provide references to the data sources for the most significant statistics and data used throughout the report. Full analysis can be found in Counterculture's accompanying detailed reports analysing economic, visitor and other impacts.
- 2** 1.03m visits to the Box from opening until 11th May 2025 calculated using footfall counters with appropriate adjustments for errors, staff, suppliers etc. This includes visits to The Box and St Luke's – people who visit both of those venues on the same trip will appear as two visits as there is no way of disaggregating the numbers.
- 3** 98,579 hours until end March 2025 – approximately 106,000 hours as of end August 2025.
- 4** 2023-2024 Visitor Insights applied across all years in absence of other data.
- 5** Proportion of international visitors: analysis by Baker Richards for The Box (2024/25) applied across all years in absence of other data.
- 6** The Box schools' booking statistics tracks all school bookings against a list of Plymouth schools. The Box has had 492 visits from schools in Plymouth, 139 visits from other schools in Devon, and 115 from Cornwall schools to the end of March 2025.
- 7** Total value of capex provided by The Box and employment impacts calculated using UK Government Best Practice note for Calculating Cost Per Job, Home and Communities Agency (2015).
- 8** The Box salary and employment data March 2025.
- 9** Location of origin 2023-2024 Visitor Insights applied to all years in the absence of other data.
- Non-local visits – from analysis by Baker Richards (2024-25), which states that “Q3 and Q4 both saw 5% international respondents, fewer than Q1 (11%) and Q2 (7%)”, we deduce that 7% of visitors were from overseas. In the absence of other data, the same breakdown has been applied equally to all years. Domestic visits, average value – derived from Visit Britain: Great Britain Day Visits / Tourism Visits Survey Data for 21-23 and 22-24. International visits, average value – derived from Visit Britain: International Passenger Survey Quarterly Data 2019-2024. Figures shown are per night and assume that a single night is attributable to The Box (regardless of the actual duration of the stay).
- 10** Historic cash cost. Equivalent to £63m in current prices.
- 11** Capital and Revenue expenditure mapped against supplier postcodes provided by The Box which were available for 99% of spend.

- 12** Capital and Revenue expenditure mapped against supplier postcodes provided by The Box which were available for 99% of spend.
- 13** Total revenue expenditure 24/25 (£5.056m) multiplied by the CEBR/ACE economic footprint multiplier (2.23) – https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Economic%20impact%20of%20arts%20and%20culture%20on%20the%20national%20economy%20FINAL_0_0.pdf
- 14** Frontier Economics (2024) Culture and Heritage Capital: Monetising the Impact of Culture and Heritage on Health and Wellbeing includes 14 distinct models which can be used to estimate the value of benefits to individuals. Counterculture have worked up two of these as appropriate examples. Frontier Economics model 1 estimates a value of £992 per person per year for people aged 30-49 who engage with various cultural activities (including visiting museums and galleries) every few months or more, on a sustained basis. Analysis by Baker Richards of 2024/25 visitor data indicates that 31% of visitors to The Box are in this age group. This equates to 314k visits in total and (if typical) around 67k visits per year (on average). We have previously estimated the average frequency of visits to be around 1.5 per year, based on data in the 2024 YouGov survey. From this we can infer that there are around 45k unique visitors aged 30-49 each year. We do not know what proportion of these visitors did so at the required frequency or on a sustained basis. However, based upon the same 2024 YouGov survey we know that around 24% of those who visit a museum do so at least three times a year. Assuming (for illustrative purposes) that this is true of The Box, this equates to around 10.5k adults aged 30-49 each year who engage with The Box every few months or more. Multiplying this by the figure of £992 per person per year from the Frontier Economics report produces an estimated annual impact of around £10.5m in improved general health among adults aged 30-49. This includes improved quality of life for the individuals and productivity improvements benefiting wider society.
- 15** Frontier Economics models 8 and 10 estimate £314 per person per year in reduced depression incidence and £369 per person per year in reduced dementia incidence among people aged 50+ who engage every few months or more, on a sustained basis, with cultural venues – including, specifically in the latter case, museums, art galleries and exhibitions. Analysis by Baker Richards of 2024/25 visitor data indicates that around 38% of visitors to The Box are in this age group. This equates to around 401k visits in total and (if typical) around 86k visits per year (on average). Based on the same assumptions as in the example above, we can infer that there are around 57k unique visitors aged 50+ each year and that around 13.5k of these engage with The Box every few months or more. Multiplying this by the figures from the Frontier Economics report produces estimated annual impacts of £4.2m in reduced depression incidence and £2m in reduced dementia incidence among adults aged 50+. This includes cost savings to the NHS and social care, as well as improved quality of life and productivity.

- 16** The Box Exhibitions List.
- 17** The Box Partnership Register.
- 18** Data provided by The Box and analysed by Julie's Bicycle as part of its ACE Portfolio Organisation status. Reduction from 198 tonnes CO2e (2021/22) to 123 tonnes CO2e (2024/25).
- 19** Calculated from visitor data (footfall counters), and using Baker Richards' work on visitor demographic split and visit frequency for 24/25 applied across all years in absence of other data.
- 20** Total capital and revenue expenditure from 2017 to 2025 with (i) UK-based and (ii) Plymouth-based suppliers, multiplied by the CEBR/ACE economic footprint multiplier (2.23) to adjust for indirect and induced effects- https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Economic%20impact%20of%20arts%20and%20culture%20on%20the%20national%20economy%20FINAL_0_0.pdf
- 21** Data provided by Visit Plymouth.
- 22** Use value per visit is the estimated welfare benefit to 'users' of The Box expressed in monetary terms. Where evidence does not derive from a specific site values relating to other sites can be applied, through a Treasury-approved method known as 'benefits transfer. Sources used here are: Fujiwara, D. et al (2018) The economic value of culture: a benefit transfer ratio; and DCMS (2024) Embedding a Culture and Heritage Capital Approach. According to the latter (pp.54-55), average user willingness-to-pay for four regional museums is £6.01/visit (£7.86/visit in June 2025 prices).
- Use value for visitors to The Box has been added to non-use value per household to provide the total Welfare benefit. Non-use value includes the value people get from the knowledge that something exists as a cultural good or that other people benefit from it in the present or in future generations. Estimates can be derived from on contingent valuation (WTP/WTa) and benefit transfer methods. According to Embedding a Culture and Heritage Capital Approach (DCMS (2024) the average non-user willingness to pay for four regional museums equated to £3.17 per household per year (£4.14 in 2025 prices). According to DCMS (2024, p.56) , “an appropriate catchment area for which the non-use value should apply must be obtained” Of the three possible catchments (Plymouth (local authority), Devon (county) and the South West (region)) counterculture has used the most conservative option – Plymouth. The number of households in Plymouth (ONS data) was multiplied by the average non-use value, then by the length of the appraisal period (i.e. approx. 4 years 8 months, Sep 2020 to May 2025. The number of visiting households was then deducted from this figure to avoid double counting.

- 23** Figure derived from the addition of the health and wellbeing benefits described in the Frontier Economics examples (see endnotes 13 and 14 above) which total just under £100m and allowing for the fact that no health and wellbeing benefits for anyone under 30 are included in that calculation.
- 24** 77% of residents who responded to the City Survey 2022 thought Plymouth was a 'great place to live', and 65% had pride in their local area: [Plymouth Culture City Demographics 2023](#).
- 25** All data in this paragraph from Baker Richards – Visitor Surveys and Analysis 2024/25.
- 26** Plymouth City Council, [Plymouth Report 2023](#).
- 27** Multiplying the number of volunteer hours recorded by The Box by the over 21 rate for the National Living Wage for 2024. Although some volunteers are under 21, many are highly skilled and this figure is likely to represent an underestimate of the value of this volunteering.
- 28** 2024 visitor figures from [ALVA](#).
- 29** Baker Richards – Visitor Surveys and Analysis 2024/25.
- 30** Baker Richards.
- 31** Baker Richards.
- 32** Baker Richards.
- 33** Baker Richards.
- 34** The Box 2024/25 Press Coveage Report.
- 35** Plymouth City Council.
- 36** Office for National Statistics Dave, [Plymouth Culture City Demographics 2023](#).

Credits

Written and prepared by:

Andrew Evans, Andrea Nixon, Jo Wright,
and Sarah Chambers – Counterculture LLP



Image Credits

Front cover

The Box Exterior by One Plymouth

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Visitors looking at map table by Stephen Tolfrey

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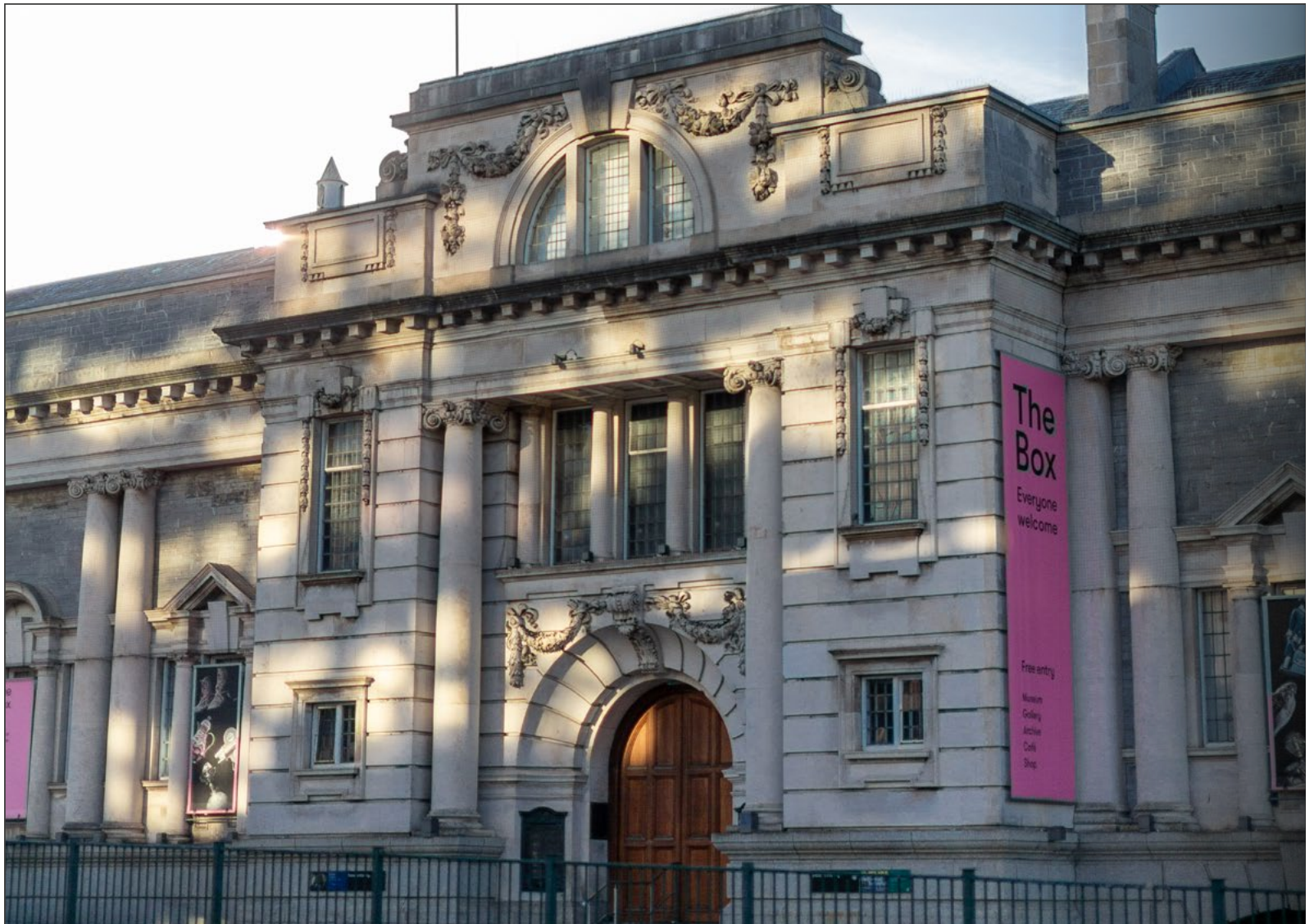
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Back cover

The Box from North Hill by Stephen Tolfrey



The Box



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