



## The largest arts centre outside of London needed a more suitable solution to grow with.

Dorset is well known for its beautiful coastline, however many people may not know that Poole, one of its largest towns, is also home to the largest arts centre outside London. This is how Advanced Exchequer helped Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts, lift the curtain on its own success.

With the help of an external facelift and an internal systems boost from Advanced Exchequer, Lighthouse is growing into a force to be reckoned with in the performing arts field.

Lighthouse, formerly known as Poole Arts Centre, provides the town of Poole in Dorset with a theatre, concert hall, studio, gallery, cinema and conference facilities. A charitable trust established in 1978, it has recently undergone an £8.5 million refurbishment and re-branding project to bring the centre into the 21st century.

Lighthouse hosts over 2,000 performances a year, ranging from cinema showings to plays and musicals, which attract audiences of all ages from across the county. It employs 50 full-time and 50 part-time staff.

To coincide with the transformation of the centre itself, the internal processes were overhauled and new systems were required to facilitate growth. One of the tasks was to replace the old accounting software that was no longer able to cope with the demands of the rejuvenated Lighthouse.

Graham Wilkin, Head of Finance at Lighthouse commented: "We were prompted to look for a new finance solution because the licences on our existing software from Sage were within months of expiring. However, due to the changing requirements of the centre, modernisation of our accounting practices and the need to streamline our systems, the Sage system was also no longer meeting our needs.

We wanted to replace it with a more suitable solution that could grow with the centre and help us adapt by being flexible."

Graham continued: "We wanted to ensure that our accounting system gave everybody involved in the running of Lighthouse a clear and concise view of its financial affairs, from the board to the accounts clerks. It was important that we made sure that any new system could cope with the complexity of the centre's financial processes."

Each one of the 2,000 performances per year at Lighthouse is an individual job for the finance team. Costing functionality is vital to the accounting staff when it comes to ensuring that each department runs smoothly and to budget.

**Lighthouse**  
POOLE'S CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

### Client >

Lighthouse Poole

### Sector >

Theatres and  
Performing Arts

### Project >

Upgrading existing  
financial management  
system.

*"Advanced Exchequer  
ad Lighthouse have  
formed what we see as  
a long-term working  
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implementation for the  
finance team."*

Graham Wilkin >  
Head of Finance >  
Lighthouse Poole

## 20% reduction in administrative headcount.

With this in mind, Graham looked at a number of mid-range suppliers including Advanced Exchequer.

Graham said: "Advanced Exchequer satisfied our criteria in terms of features and functionality more than the other products we looked at. Job costing was a very time-consuming process using the old Sage product and took an enormous amount of administration time within the team.

Advanced Exchequer had the ability to streamline this process and we knew we could trust it to adapt with us as our needs grew. Once we decided to migrate to Advanced Exchequer, it was only three months before the new system was up-and-running. Advanced Exchequer's training and helpdesk facilities have been fantastic. Our team of finance staff, including the accountant, clerks and myself, holds eight licences in total."

"In terms of how Advanced Exchequer has improved the finance team and how my team adds value to Lighthouse, the change has been remarkable and implementing the service has paid dividends. It has totally altered the way we work, and turned our systems into a business tool rather than just a run-of-the-mill accounting system."

Graham added: "The biggest change and cost saving has come from the fact that we

have been able to reduce our administrative headcount by 20% due to the fact that Advanced Exchequer provides automated functions which were performed manually with the help of the old Sage system."

"All accounting tasks have been speeded up with Advanced Exchequer. The process of a transaction from start to finish is now far more transparent, which increases visibility for all, including senior executives who need to have a grasp of the finances of the centre. Information flow has been improved, especially to third parties. The invoicing process is now a simple task."

**Graham concludes:** "Advanced Exchequer and Lighthouse have formed what we see as a long-term working relationship. It has been a very successful implementation for the finance team."

For smaller businesses, particularly charitable trusts that have to be aware of their financial dealings and are accountable to their benefactors, it's easy to see how the right accounting software can make such a positive difference.

Exchequer has been able to help the Lighthouse finance team remain at the hub of the changes brought about by the refurbishment, and has provided them with the reassurance that it will have the scope to remain there as the centre grows and develops in capacity.

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Head of Finance >  
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## More information

**w** [oneadvanced.com](http://oneadvanced.com)  
**t** +44(0) 8451 605 555  
**e** [hello@oneadvanced.com](mailto:hello@oneadvanced.com)

Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, SL3 9LL

Advanced Computer Software Group Limited is a company registered in England and Wales under company number 05965280, whose registered office is Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, SL3 9LL. A full list of its trading subsidiaries is available at [www.oneadvanced.com/legal-privacy](http://www.oneadvanced.com/legal-privacy)