

CREATIVE HUB

NOVEMBER EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things
creative in Exeter!

What have you been up to this month?

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity
you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on our
social media channels and we'll include what we can
in future editions.

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Contents

News

Scratch Night Alumni: The First Ripple

Exeter Seed Bank

Jo in the Water: A Q+A with Pip Piper

Film Commission Update: Sunbeam

Opportunities

Events

Networking

Professional Development

Recommended events



Scratch Night Alumni: The First Ripple

Ahead of our next Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott, we're interviewing our Scratch Alumni to find out what they got up to next! Menghan Chen, Yirui Fu, Jia Zhuang presented The First Ripple with us back in May 2025.

Tell us about your Scratch Night experience at Exeter Phoenix. How valuable was this opportunity to the development of your work?

Scratch Night was our very first attempt to step beyond the university context. Our piece explores themes of female sexuality which is (maybe) sensitive. And as three international creators, we were initially unsure how it might make sense within a cross-cultural context.

But it showed that the experience was incredibly smooth and inspiring, and we were moved by how open-minded, honest and intelligent the Phoenix audiences were. Their response strengthened our confidence and encouraged us to envision the piece's next stages.

You recently went on to perform a full version at Elevate Festival; Exeter Northcott's annual celebration of South West artists and their work. How much did you find your work changed from the Scratch to this performance?

During the Scratch performance, we invited the audience to share written feedback on how they connected with our use of creating materials. Their responses were rich and generous, and we took them seriously in next stage.

We kept and developed the elements that audiences found resonant, while clarifying parts that previously caused confusion. Because the work seeks to be embodied, sensory-immersive, calm, and beautiful, we relied deeply on the audience's perceptions. And their generosity allowed us to deepen the sensory expression and the emotional honesty of the piece, turning the process into a dialogue of mutual listening and shared resonance, for which we felt really enjoyable.

What advice would you give to other artists considering applying to Scratch Night?

Show what you have. Don't hesitate. The team at Exeter Phoenix are professional, caring and supportive. The audience is remarkable: sensitive, open, and sharp in their perception. We also met other artists performing that night, the sense of mutual support within the local artist community was wonderful. And it's worth noting that our tech rehearsal was fast, precise, and ran smoothly, which gave us a strong sense of safety and that's very important!

Most importantly, bring your work into the world and be ready to be surprised by what comes back. Scratch Night is an invitation for our work to begin its own artistic journey.

Our next Scratch Night will take place on Mon 23 Feb 2026, 7:30pm - 9:30pm. Callouts are currently open, find out more in the Opportunities section below.



Exeter Seed Bank

Exeter Seed Bank, or ESB, is a community-based project led by Mandy Biscoe, Johanna Korndorfer and Martyn Windsor. We caught up with them to hear about the exciting projects that they are currently working on.

What is Exeter Seed Bank and what are you up to now?

We work with community gardens, local allotment groups, home gardeners and small holding growers around the city to collectively share and distribute seeds and seed saving knowledge. It is a form of community activism that boosts biodiversity, reconnects people with the land and raises awareness of climate adaptive horticultural strategies.

We're interested in how communities can lead direct change towards climate resilient food security which for us starts with the importance of seed sovereignty. Unfortunately, most seed production is controlled by a small number of companies that have drastically re-shaped our environment and food systems. Within a corporate world reliant on commodification, saving our

own seeds and sharing them in our local setting is a deeply radical act.

We collect and share all sorts of seeds which are well-suited to our local soils and climate. These are vegetables, flowers and herbs that are open-pollinated, heirloom, heritage and organic. We also distribute meadow mixes.

It is important to say that we're a 'living' seed bank; this means that we share seeds for people to grow each year as opposed to preserving seeds in storage over long periods. Making seeds freely available reminds us that true value doesn't come from the commodification of nature. By sharing the abundance of each season, we nurture systems of care, reciprocity, and shared stewardship of our environment and food supply.

Right now, we've got a few exciting projects underway. One of them is our long-term project called the Exeter Broad Bean. We have 25 people across the city 'crowd growing' different broad bean varieties together. These will open pollinate and evolve over several growing years into a genetically diverse, locally adapted



‘flock’ of beans. We’re just about to meet-up again 2 Nov at Newtown Community Centre for the second year if you want to get involved.

We’ve also been developing a soil testing kit to help local growers understand the health of their soil which are also available for anyone around the city to access and use.

We’ve also got our own allotment for growing for seed and we will soon have a new shed where can dry and process seeds. We hope to host workshops and even mini artist residencies there too. We are inspired by Georgia Gendall’s Residency in a Shed project.

Although we are very much a local resource, we are also committed to international solidarity work focusing on seed sovereignty and food justice, as these issues are as much local as they are global. To this end, we are twinned with the Palestine Local Seed Bank (PLSB), which supports thousands of Palestinian farmers. On 31 July 2025, the Israeli occupying forces bulldozed and destroyed, without warning, the PLSB’s largest multiplication unit, which included fields of seed crops, and electrical and irrigation infrastructure. This direct attack on Palestinian seed and food sovereignty has reduced the PLSB’s ability to support 2,000 farmers next year.

We have been fundraising to support them in the rebuilding of this vital infrastructure and have organised events with our friends at DAR (Dance Against Racism) as well as with other seed banks and community projects nationally. So far, we have raised just over £10,000.

So, a lot happening, all rooted in the power of seeds and community. It’s the things we can do creatively and collaboratively that are interesting to us.

What has been the most interesting plant/seed (or just your favourite!) to have come out of the seed swaps and why?

Mandy: My favourite seed, I am going to say is Phacelia, a beautiful cover crop for enriching the soil; the perfumed purple flowers bringing the bees buzzing. If you look at the oval shaped seed using a magnifying botanist's loupe, it reveals a detailed ridged form. The beauty of it, unseen with the naked eye, sparked my love of looking at seeds close-up.



Johanna: Sunflowers have such lovely seeds. They can be all black or have little stripes of white and grey across them forming endless variations. They were the first seeds we packed up to

give away using our cardboard tree kiosk. It's a humble looking seed, but they will make the most spectacular flowers and then produce the most incredibly prolific seed heads.

Martyn: Yin Yang beans which are a type of dwarf French bean. As the name suggests, they have black and white streaks that resemble the symbol of Yin and Yang. The beans are smooth

and shiny, and they feel very precious. You can understand why beans were used as early forms of jewellery, such as necklaces. You can also find examples of seeds used as prayer beads all over the world too.



What can people be doing during the winter to prep for planting/growing?

Winter is an important time for getting ahead and preparing for the new growing season.

As part of our Soil Testing Kit project funded by FUTURES Festival which took place at Exeter Phoenix in early October, we have been packing and giving away green manures and winter cover crops, such as fava beans, phacelia, clovers and vetch, as an easy addition to anyone's growing practice.

Sown in autumn/winter as a cover crop that resists frost, green manures can play an important role in boosting soil health as it continues to feed microbial life, store carbon, and in some cases, fix nitrogen.

And in a cheeky take on the global carbon offsetting industry where companies 'offset' their emissions with credits, we have been issuing our own Offset Certificates. These are for growers who agree to plant a square meter of green manure in their gardens and plots.

Come to our seed packing events where you can drop-off any seeds you have saved and help us pack seeds for sharing at our seed swap event in the following spring. Our next sessions are on 15 Nov at Exeter Phoenix and again on 13 Dec at Newtown Community Centre.

Find out more from Exeter Seed Bank at www.exeterseedbank.co.uk or join them for a [seed packing workshop](#) at Exeter Phoenix on Sat 15 Nov, 2pm - 4pm, free!



Jo in the Water: A Q+A with Pip Piper

Jo in the Water follows a passionate sea swimmer turned reluctant activist, Exmouth-based Jo Bateman, as she takes on one of the UK's biggest water companies in a David-and-Goliath battle to protect our waters from devastating sewage pollution. We caught up with the director, Pip Piper about the process of making the film.

How did this film come about?

The film came about as a consequence of sitting next to David Parsley, then chief news correspondent from i news whilst hot desking at the brilliant Propeller co working space in Exmouth. David talked to me about the news story he had recently broken about Jo Bateman and her battle with South West Water over sewage dumping in Exmouth. He talked about how the story had gone viral attracting national interest. I don't often get great documentary stories right on my doorstep! It brought

together the local with the wider zeitgeist of the national scandal of water pollution and my filmmaking senses were piqued. I met Jo and well the rest is

What are the challenges and joys of working in nature with filmmaking?

Whilst the film is a portrait of Jo both reflective and actual as we followed her I knew straight away that this film needed to be bedded in nature and especially the sea and waters. It needed to be a film that helped the audience to feel immersed in those blue spaces. We are a very small creative team so we called on some brilliant collaborations that really helped us. Filming in nature is always a joy.





How do you incorporate creative input into documentary film contexts?

My story telling practice is always collaborative. As a documentary director I will have an idea, a shape of what I sense the story is and how it might speak to an audience. I then work closely with my producer and cinematographer and editor to develop and shape the story. Other influences come to bear too, family and friends that I speak too. Research. Jo of course helped with this too.

What's next for the work - what do you want audiences to take away from this?

The film will come to cinemas across the UK in the spring of 2026. Our real hope is that it will inspire and inform audiences, champion local activism and encourage us all to take action for clean waters.

We are screening [Jo in the Water](#) here on Sun 16 Nov



Film Commission Update: Sunbeam

For our next film commission update, Sinead O'Toole shares the experience and behind the scenes images of working on their Micro Short Film Commission, Sunbeam.

After a summer of preparation and planning principle photography has now completed on Sunbeam. It's looking great, and we're really excited to see it come together. There were some slight issues with the shot of the titular sunbeam, but there's one more day of filming planned to get these pick ups using Exeter Phoenix's most powerful film light to recreate the suns rays.

This year's completed commissions will debut at [Two Short Nights Film Festival](#) in March 2026.



Callout for open mic night for neurodivergent voices

As part of Neurodiversity Celebration Week, and in collaboration with Exeter University, We Are ND will be hosting a spoken word open mic night for neurodivergent voices at The Mermaid on Weds 18th March 2026. We're currently looking for participants, and would especially like to hear from anyone who has not tried spoken word before and would like help preparing a piece of writing for the event. We will be running a workshop in January for anyone wanting to do this.

This is also an opportunity for the neurodivergent community of Exeter to work with neurodivergent students from Exeter University. A chance for ND adults of differing ages to come together and celebrate diverse voices, right in the heart of the city.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott | Deadline: 10am, Mon 19 Jan 2026

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott offers South West based artists in need of an audience a chance to stretch their ideas and the opportunity to test their work in the Exeter Phoenix Auditorium, along with £150 to help develop their idea and a small amount of rehearsal space before the Scratch Night. Scratch Night will take place on Mon 23 Feb 2026, 7:30pm - 9:30pm

[Find out more and apply](#)

Creative Enabler / Support Worker | Deadline: Wed 31 Dec

Theatre & multi-media performance artist Hugh Maylon is seeking a people-person to support with day to day practicalities and in their creative practice.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Peninsula Producers and New Writers Network 2026 | Deadline: 5pm, Mon 03 Nov

Screen Cornwall and Exeter Phoenix are collaborating again with BFI NETWORK South West to develop emerging producers and writers in Devon and Cornwall. Selected participants will receive support and guidance, through a series of events held online and in person, to develop their short form projects in scripted and immersive.

Peninsula Producers Network (PPN) and New Writers Network (NWN) offer a unique opportunity to enhance your skills, expand your industry knowledge and make regional connections. Previous participants have found they develop valuable peer networks, with some creative collaborations going on to receive funding from the BFI and beyond.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Networking

[Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#) | First Thursday of the month | Exeter Phoenix | £6 OTD

[DOCLAB](#) | Wed 12 Nov, 7 – 9pm

[We Animate on Tues](#) | A new monthly animation gathering!

[Exeter Film Collective](#) | First Wed of the month, 7pm - 9pm

[Little Scratch](#) | Wed 26 Nov, 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Professional Development

South West Dance Hub | Second Fri of the month, 12.30pm - 2.30pm | [Find out more](#)

Recommended Events

Spork! The Not Dead Poets Society – last Tuesday of each month, 5:30pm – Exeter Library, free, drop-in.

[Sarah Ryder: Multiferals Exhibition Preview](#) | Sat 15 Nov, 3pm–5pm, free.

[Exeter Seed Bank: Seed Packing Workshops](#) | Sat 15 Nov, 2pm - 4pm

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