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**Theatres
Magazine**
Autumn
2022

Theatre Porto, Ellesmere Port
Midlands Arts Centre at 60
A new chapter for Slung Low
Levelling Up in Colne
Future Arts Centres
Green Arts Collective, Northern Ireland
Q&A with Dave Moutrey OBE

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The Drifters performing at The Muni, Colne.

Photo: Pendle Leisure Trust

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Welcome to the autumn edition of Theatres Magazine, published to coincide with our annual conference.

Like the conference, this issue of the magazine follows the theme of Theatres Fit for the Future, focusing on four broad and overlapping topics that dominate the sector as we emerge from the pandemic – business resilience, inclusion, placemaking and sustainability.

This edition's Showcase feature, Theatre Porto (formerly Action Transport Theatre), touches on all of these subjects (pg 7). The project to redevelop its home in Ellesmere Port was driven by the desire to improve its visibility and accessibility and contribute to the regeneration of the local area, but it has also been an opportunity to improve the theatre's environmental sustainability. Similarly, the Levelling Up Fund-supported Heritage Quarter in Colne, East Lancashire is a placemaking-driven project, but which is bringing significant improvements to accessibility, viability and sustainability to the three theatres at the centre of it (pg 2).

For more on what theatres are doing to improve their sustainability, there is a round-up of the fantastic work happening across Northern Ireland's theatres, spearheaded by the Green Arts Collective (pg 4).

After nearly two years of interrupted performances and now facing a cost-of-living crisis theatres are having to think differently about how they do things. For arts



Manchester Collective
performing at The Holbeck

Photo: Gaele Beri

centres, this has always been the case as co-leads of the Future Arts Centres initiative Gavin Barlow and Annabel Turpin set out on page 17. Arts centres have also always been rooted in their local areas as exemplified by the Midlands Arts Centre, which celebrates 60 years of being part of its community with a special exhibition (page 19). Like arts centres, Slung Low theatre company has built a reputation for hosting imaginative creative work while being very much part of its local community. On page 15 Alan Lane explains how its move to a new home will allow it to realise its dreams of being fully inclusive.

For our part at Theatres Trust, we will continue to work to support theatres to weather the difficult times ahead, make best use of their buildings and take advantage of the opportunities presented by placemaking and regeneration. On page 21, our recently-appointed Chair Dave Moutrey talks about his motivation for taking on this role and his priorities in steering Theatres Trust in our mission to support the sector.

A round-up of recent planning cases (pg 24), a brief introduction to our new Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities project (pg 27) and the most recent recipients of our Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust (pg 23) gives a flavour of our work and immediate concerns. We'll be talking more about our longer-term plans in upcoming issues of this magazine, which I'm looking forward to sharing.

Investing in culture

Alison Goode Chief Executive of Pendle Leisure Trust gives an overview of Colne's successful Levelling Up bid.

Colne is situated in the borough of Pendle in East Lancashire. It is a small historic market town with an attractive high street with numerous heritage and cultural assets within the Albert Road Conservation Area and is a popular destination for culture and leisure.

The idea for the development of a Heritage Quarter in Colne was born a few years ago through discussions with various partners but it never came to fruition. The long-term strategy was to enhance the cultural, heritage and arts offer of Colne and the surrounding area by upgrading, enhancing and conserving the Muni Theatre, owned by Pendle Borough Council but managed and operated by Pendle Leisure Trust and including two other venues, Pendle Hippodrome and the Little Theatre, both community venues managed and operated by volunteers. All three theatres are situated near one another within the town centre and offer a completely different experience for the customer, hence the idea to create Colne's Heritage Quarter.

The council had previously recognised the importance of the arts within Pendle. Working with partners including Pendle Leisure Trust, it had published its Arts, Culture and Creativity Strategy 2020-2030, where one of the aims was to ensure Pendle became a vibrant cultural destination by 2030.

Following dialogue with the council it was agreed that the Levelling Up submission would be made up of two projects, one being the Heritage Quarter, the other one being the redevelopment of Colne's existing market hall and bus station and was a joint bid with Pendle Borough Council.

The proposal was to deliver these two schemes which would drive economic recovery and growth in the heart of the historic town centre through a focus on culture, leisure, retail, and town centre living to support footfall, spend and enhance people's quality of life.

Opportunity knocks

Colne's three theatres are an integral part of Colne's wider cultural offer that also includes other small live music venues, restaurants, bars and cafés, which make the town of Colne what it is and as a destination for culture and leisure activity.

Following the pandemic, as the town recovered, we saw an opportunity for Colne to maximise its heritage and cultural assets as a platform for growth, attracting people back into the town for shopping and leisure, both from Colne and further afield to realise the town's potential as a tourism destination.

The theatres have suffered from chronic underinvestment over a number of years, putting these non-designated heritage assets at risk. When the Levelling Up Fund was announced discussions were held with the council about the opportunity to submit a bid in partnership with them for the development of a Heritage Quarter. Initial approaches, discussions and meetings were then held with Pendle Hippodrome and the Little Theatre to develop the idea further. As a Trust, we realised that for the long-term viability of the Muni Theatre significant investment was required to make the building fit for purpose. We were also aware that Pendle Hippodrome had previously purchased a pub next door to the theatre with the long-term aim of knocking through and creating a new box office with disabled facilities and access. After discussions with the Little Theatre we were conscious that they needed better access and a box office which they currently do not have.

Audiences at Do I Love
You by Northern Live at
The Muni, Colne



Pendle Hippodrome
Theatre



The Little
Theatre, Colne



The Muni, Colne

It was agreed that investment in these three venues would enhance and conserve a series of culturally significant buildings by enhancing existing and providing new facilities. This, in turn, would also facilitate participation in culture and the arts and also encourage the community to engage in arts, culture and heritage, thereby supporting mental health and well-being.

Working alongside Pendle Leisure Trust and the other two theatres, Pendle Council submitted the bid in June 2021.

All change

The total funding awarded from the Levelling Up Fund for Colne's Heritage Quarter is £3,487,000.

The Muni is a council-owned facility managed and operated by Pendle Leisure Trust. It is an Edwardian theatre that opened in 1902. It is a commercial venue that provides year-round entertainment for Pendle and the surrounding areas. The theatre is versatile and can be transformed to provide standing room for crowds at live music events or seating for theatre shows. The Muni has been allocated £1,563,300 for a major refurbishment, including new roofing and windows, along with new heating and lighting to improve its energy efficiency. The works will help deliver reduced carbon emissions and will also mean a reduction in operating costs for the venue.

Pendle Hippodrome is owned by the Pendle Hippodrome Theatre Company, and operates as Pendle Hippodrome Theatre Ltd. The building originally opened in 1914 as a cinema and variety theatre. Today the theatre company stages two productions a year in the theatre, which is also home to Pendle Hippodrome Youth Theatre and provides space for local performers, schools, musical, drama and dance groups. Pendle Hippodrome has been awarded £1,661,100 for refurbishment and alterations to the ground floor and first floor of the former historic Derby Arms public house situated next door to the theatre and now owned by the theatre. Passenger lifts will be installed, and the existing theatre's foyer, box office and toilet areas will be redeveloped.

The Little Theatre operated by community theatre group Colne Dramatic Society was converted from an old coach and horses stable block in the 1930s. As the name suggests, this charming theatre is small with the auditorium seating just 68 people. There is currently poor access to the building and limited toilets facilities. The funding award of £262,500 will enable the society to future-proof the theatre. The project will incorporate a single-storey extension to provide much-needed wheelchair access and facilities, along with a modern foyer, additional toilets, a green room and kitchen / bar.

The long-term aim is that by working in partnership across all three venues, grassroots participation and accessibility within arts and

culture for all minority groups will increase, which in turn will encourage our audiences to be socially active and develop cohesive relationships.

Benefits galore

The Levelling Up Fund is a major investment to revitalise Colne, with wider substantial benefits for the Pendle area.

The project offers expanded access to culture and heritage to a community with acute levels of deprivation. The accessibility improvements will enable greater participation for people with more complex needs and a better use of space will allow greater youth engagement in the arts. Improved facilities will allow for more regular shows and increased attendances in more comfortable spaces, while improved energy efficiency will reduce emissions and running costs for the venues.

The investment in our cultural assets will allow us as operators of the Muni Theatre, along with our partners at Pendle Hippodrome and the Little Theatre to deliver an enhanced programme of events and activities, supporting our local communities and our visitor economy.

This significant investment offers a lifeline for the long-term viability of these three important cultural venues and will help Pendle's community to engage far more in arts, culture and heritage for a better quality of life.

Leading the way for a greener Northern Ireland

Claire Murray introduces the Green Arts Collective and the sustainability initiatives of some of its theatres in Northern Ireland.

The Green Arts Collective was established in 2019 by a group of Belfast-based arts and culture organisations to support the city's sustainability plans and the recently launched Belfast Climate Commission. The network now brings together almost 40 cultural organisations across Northern Ireland and meets regularly to share best practice and develop new ways to collaborate, inspired by similar collectives across the UK and Ireland.

We believe that creativity and culture can help lead the way for a greener Northern Ireland, and we aim to support the wider arts sector here with practical advice on reducing their carbon footprint and overall environmental impacts and encouraging the use of cultural events to drive awareness of climate action. With the Belfast Climate team, we are examining an arts-based approach to engaging our communities to take their own climate actions. We lobbied for support for creative commissions to raise awareness of the climate crisis during COP26 in partnership with Belfast City Council, and we support wider conversations around climate and culture with Queen's University and others.

The Green Arts Collective recently worked with environmental charity Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to provide carbon literacy training for the cultural sector. We were very pleased to work alongside Theatre and Dance NI to embed the Theatre Green Book practices, and earlier this year 16 theatres and venues across Northern Ireland had a one-to-one session with Theatre Green Book Coordinator Paddy Dillon to kick-start this journey.

Here are updates from some of these theatres with progress on their green journeys.

For more information on the Green Arts Collective in Northern Ireland, contact Claire Murray at clairemurray@lyrictheatre.co.uk.



Artitude at The Playhouse Derry

The Playhouse, Derry

An arts centre with a strong community focus, and with a 146-seat theatre, gallery space and dance studio, The Playhouse Derry is currently leading the way on climate action, having recently become the first arts organisation in Northern Ireland to recruit a Climate Action Officer. It has also convened a working group to draft and execute a new Sustainability Policy and procedure designed to make every aspect of its work as climate-friendly and carbon neutral as possible while remaining grounded in the principles of the circular economy.

In tandem with a number of initiatives around sustainable buildings, sustainable operations and sustainable productions, The Playhouse recently announced a ground-breaking project and festival on climate action in Derry. The ambitious arts community project is called Artitude: Climate, Culture, Circularity, and has been funded from the second round of grants from the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund. The Playhouse will work with partners Zero Waste North West, Northern Ireland Resources Network, Queen's University and Derry City and Strabane District Council to use the arts to co-ordinate and deliver a programme of activities over the next 18 months, encouraging behaviour change and challenge attitudes to waste, consumption and climate action.

The project will culminate in an Artitude Festival as part of the 10th anniversary celebrations of Derry and Strabane's UK City of Culture in 2023. This will include public campaigns, a volunteer programme, a conference to share learning, and the publishing of useful resources. Its ambition is to work with its partners to make a real change and become the first Zero Waste Region in the UK and Ireland.

Work has also begun on a sustainable, zero waste community garden in a currently underused outdoor courtyard behind The Playhouse building. Permaculture design expert Joanne Butler is managing the project in conjunction with The Playhouse's Climate Action Officer, Paula Larkin. The garden will provide a space for urban growing, rewilding and creative practice that will open to the public in spring 2023.



Green Arts Collective members

MAC

Built in 2012, the MAC is an award-winning arts centre, with two theatres and three gallery spaces in Belfast city centre, and home to all kinds of art exhibitions, live theatre and family fun. The MAC has recently developed a building sustainability plan and has sought funding to:

- install an energy monitoring system
- install a new building management system to control plant more efficiently
- install new efficient theatre equipment
- conduct a survey of the building and identify suitable energy-saving projects such as solar electric panels, heat pumps and LED light upgrades.

The MAC has also appointed a new waste management company to ensure more sustainable operations, including 0% waste to landfill, and all food waste used for anaerobic digestion. Earlier this year, it facilitated an eight week student placement from Queen's University's MSc Leadership for Sustainable Development, who helped shape its sustainable building plan. The theatre plans to extend this to a 24-week placement this coming academic year to progress its sustainable operations and production plans based on the principles of the Theatre Green Book



Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast

Strand Arts Centre

The Strand Arts Centre established in 1935 is Belfast's oldest cinema and a live entertainment venue, and a strong community hub. A refurbishment plan for the period building will get underway in 2023, and sustainability is the key to this plan. In the short term, the venue is concentrating efforts on operational improvements. It is also taking part in the UK-wide Future Art Centres' plan for nature post boxes and has five nature-themed films for free for families.



Lyric Theatre Belfast

Photo Johnny Frazer.

Lyric Theatre

The de-facto National Theatre of Northern Ireland, the Lyric has been the main producing theatre and home for new writing for over 50 years. In recent years, the Lyric has implemented a number of initiatives throughout its building in an effort to minimise its carbon footprint including a new Building Management System and the installation of LED lighting. Key to its efforts in creating sustainable productions was the creation of a new in-house Scenic Construction Manager role and the procurement of an additional storage facility off-site. This team has recently been extended with a Scenic Construction Apprentice, a post that was funded by Art Work, an employment and skills initiative for the arts sector. The scenic construction team aims to improve the theatre's environmental sustainability practices by using materials from reused or recycled sources, re-using and storing materials, and running technical systems more sustainably.

Visit Belfast and Belfast City Council recently launched a partnership with Green Tourism to help organisations in Northern Ireland secure an internationally recognised Green Tourism Award. The Lyric received a Bronze award, along with music centre and studio theatre The Black Box. Importantly, both organisations now have a Green Action Plan as they work towards higher Green Tourism accreditation.

The Crescent Arts Centre

Built in 1873, and a listed building, The Crescent is a busy arts centre and cultural hub which has been serving the population of Belfast and beyond with a wide range of arts and cultural activities for over 40 years. It recently had solar panels installed on the roof which have so far produced enough electricity to run one small house for eight years.

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Showcase

Theatre Porto, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire

Graham Lister, independent arts and cultural advisor specialising in capital projects, reflects on the journey to create the only specialist, purpose-built theatre and cultural centre for children and young people in Cheshire.

A few weeks ago, Ellesmere Port's new cultural building Theatre Porto finally opened its doors to the public. Capital projects in the cultural sector can typically take between five and six years to complete – and Theatre Porto was no exception.

Theatre Porto's story reaches back many years when the company was known as Action Transport Theatre. It has been in existence for some 40 years, operating from a makeshift, partially converted Edwardian building, Whitby Hall, located in a beautiful park in Ellesmere Port. It is a member of Arts Council England's National Portfolio and also in receipt of revenue funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council and others.

Under the inspirational leadership of Nina Hajianni, the company has positioned itself as one of the national leaders in the provision of arts and culture for children and young people. Its work is diverse, inclusive, and often ground-breaking. Engaging with those who would otherwise have little or no access to artistic and cultural activity, the company works with some of the borough's poorest and marginalised children and their families.

Ellesmere Port has in the past had little or no cultural investment. It has high levels of child poverty and socio-economic disadvantage.

The new-look Theatre Porto

Showcase

Right and below: photos from the Once Upon a Time Arts trail and extravaganza weekend in Whitby Park

Although the company's work connected with some 10,000 children and young people per year, its work remained under the radar. This was largely due to a lack of visibility. Operating out of a building that spent much of its time boarded up for security reasons, with many physical and visual barriers contributing to a lack of transparency and brand profile. It was ironic that the company's profile was stronger nationally and internationally than locally.

There were also major problems with the condition of the building, limiting the effectiveness and reach of the company's work. Many parts of the building suffered from damp and water ingress and drainage issues, which at times caused flash flooding, and temporary closures of the building. The building was also inaccessible for those with mobility issues and therefore limited the theatre's ability to be fully inclusive.

In 2015, the Ellesmere Port Development Board provided some funding, enabling a study to be carried out by Bennetts Associates – looking at how the building could be refurbished, reconfigured and extended. A new vision was starting to emerge where the building would be transformed into 'a world class centre; specialising in high quality arts and culture for children, young people and their families'.

In 2016, I was leading the Storyhouse project in Chester, on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council. Here was a local authority investing upwards of £30m on a new landmark building which was due to open the following year.



Although in 2016 the building had yet to open, there was a sense that Storyhouse was going to be transformational for the city and the wider borough.

Through conversations with senior officers and political leaders it was clear the council was keen to ensure its cultural investment was not limited to its flagship city and extended to other parts of the region where investment of this nature could be even more transformational.

Later that year the government announced a new funding stream – one of those with culture and regeneration in the title. Here was an opportunity to develop the emerging vision further and create a building that would respond to some of the socio-economic challenges faced in Ellesmere Port. An outline business case was put together predicated on an architectural scheme that connected the building with the park, creating iconic, contemporary new spaces which would engage, broaden and inspire new audiences and participants.

Showcase

This vision aligned with local priorities to improve the centre of the town, attract and encourage investment, drive footfall and make people proud of Ellesmere Port as a place to work, live and visit.

Unfortunately, the funding application was unsuccessful, and despite questions raised by the local MP Ellesmere Port had once again missed out on government funding. However, the application process had enabled the project to gain traction and had secured the support of a large number of local people, agencies and organisations including Ellesmere Port Development Board and Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

Undeterred, the council to its credit, decided to press forward with the scheme, allocating £2.5m from its own capital programme. This enabled us to apply to Arts Council England's small capital programme, which was used to fund all of the production-related infrastructure and equipment as well as catering and final fit-out works.

Of course, the journey was never going to be smooth. The impact of the pandemic compounded by Brexit and the general economic uncertainty were a challenge throughout the latter end of the design and pre-construction period. Our timing was impeccable. As we went out to the market in the summer of 2020, the UK was just coming out of the first lockdown and there was a general sense that the whole world had just turned upside

down. The costs coming back from sub-contractors were astronomical and we found ourselves looking at significant cost pressures of between 35-40%. This was certainly the point where we could have lost the project. However, once again Cheshire West and Chester Council stepped up, providing strong leadership and a commitment to complete the scheme. The design and construction team, council project managers and end-users worked tirelessly with the sub-contractors to identify savings through alternative design solutions. We also targeted additional funding streams, Arts Council England's Cultural Capital Kickstart Fund, the council's own Climate Emergency Funding and other trusts and foundations.

The net result was that we were able to reach a viable position for all concerned. We entered into a contract with the main contractor Equans UK and celebrated the proverbial first spade in the ground in May 2021.

The building opened on 14 August 2022 and it has been an extraordinary journey for all concerned. Not least for Nina Hajianni and her colleagues who have been the inspiration behind this project. It is their commitment to the children and young people of Ellesmere Port that has driven us all to deliver this project come what may!

Watch the Hello, we are Theatre Porto video put together for the opening.



The new auditorium, seen through the doors that open up to Whitby Park

Photo: Jake Ryan / Theatre Porto.

Showcase

The team at Bennetts Associates discuss the architectural transformation of Whitby Hall for Theatre Porto.

Set in the parkland setting of Whitby Park, the project has rejuvenated the locally listed, historic house of Whitby Hall. The building has a long history of re-use. First purchased by Ellesmere Port Council in 1931 and converted into offices, the estate was replanned as a public park by Thomas Hayton Mawson and the centrepiece of Ellesmere Port's expanding suburbs. Today, the hall is the beating heart of the community once more and an amenity to be enjoyed by all.

Theatre Porto, or Action Transport Theatre, as it was known at the inception of the project, had long been using the dilapidated hall as its home. Using a 1970s council debating chamber extension as a make-shift production space, the building was in great need of redevelopment.

The ambition of the project looked to provide a flexible auditorium space that would meet modern standards and an audience capacity of approximately 150 people. Restoring the condition and character of the hall was key in helping address the perception of the building.



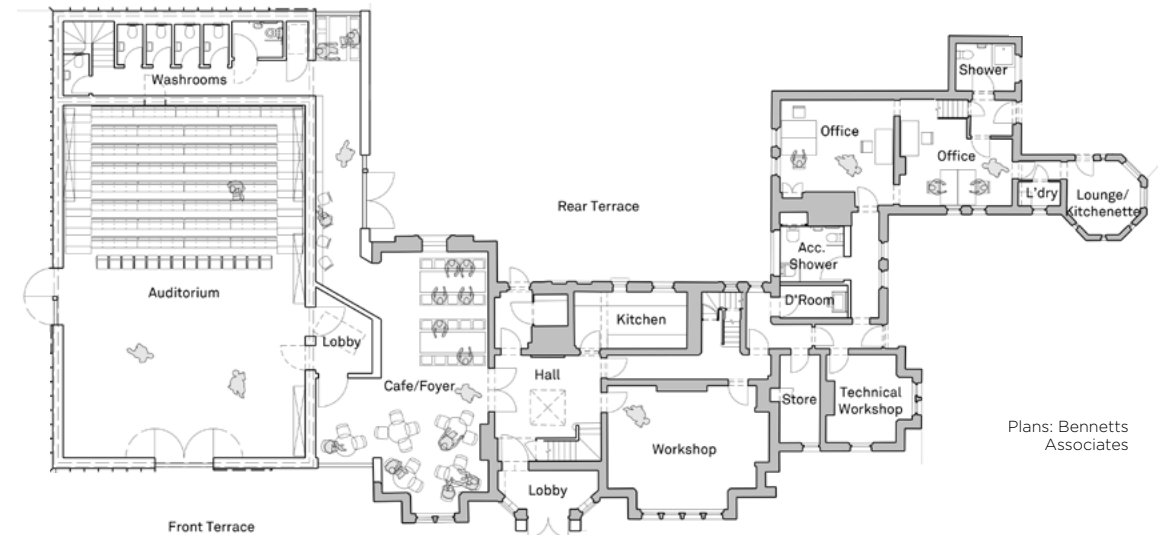
The refurbished
café for Theatre Porto

In a state of neglect, the building felt vulnerable in the middle of the park. It did little to encourage people to venture inside in addition to the myriad of problems caused by the failing building fabric. As such, the project developed as two core components, the new auditorium extension and the retained historic hall.

The roof of the hall had been overhauled by the council, addressing a large number of issues from water ingress. This facilitated the works of the capital project in renovating the spaces throughout the building. New electrical and heating services were installed and remedial works were undertaken to rescue the building from years of damage. This work provided the opportunity to re-arrange the spaces throughout the hall, maximising areas open to the public, creating functional back-of-house spaces and further rooms that could be rented out for various functions.

Critically, the windows were cleaned and restored with old grilles removed and a new set of glazed doors added to the porch to create an inviting welcome to the building. An old turning circle was removed from in front of the building, opening the entrance back up to the park.

With the unique location of the building in the middle of a suburban park, the design for the auditorium looked to utilise an innovative natural ventilation system. Expert input from Max Fordham was provided in the design of the passive ventilation system. Air is drawn into the building through a labyrinth under the auditorium. Thermal mass of the building's foundations then cools the air down in the labyrinth before it enters the auditorium through floor grilles. Openings in the auditorium's roof then let the air out that has warmed up in the space, maintaining internal conditions. In colder months, heater coils warm air before it is drawn into the auditorium through the floor grilles. Importantly, this allows the whole system to operate with minimal energy and maintenance.



Plans: Bennetts
Associates

Charcoalblue provided expertise on the acoustics for the ventilation system as well as the auditorium and extension. Breakout noise is prevented with acoustic attenuators on both the supply and extract vents for the air system. Acoustic finishes in the auditorium maintained a refined palette of wood-wool panels that are matched to plywood panelling on the walls and ceiling.

Architecturally, the auditorium interior is treated with authentic materials. Glulam beams are left exposed, and the ceiling is painted black. A rectangular void is formed in the ceiling where the ventilation extracts are left exposed. The walls are panelised with unistrut channels running vertically, set between full-width plywood and acoustic panels. This provides full flexibility for mounting technical equipment and reducing material wastage.

The key requirement of the auditorium design was an adaptable space that Theatre Porto could use in a plethora of ways beyond traditional performances. The retractable seating system aids this flexibility allowing the theatre to operate in a wide range of formats from front-on to in-the-round. Timber finishes were deliberately left exposed for the character they provide the space. Anything from weekend yoga classes to wedding receptions can comfortably be hosted with windows and doors left open to the park.

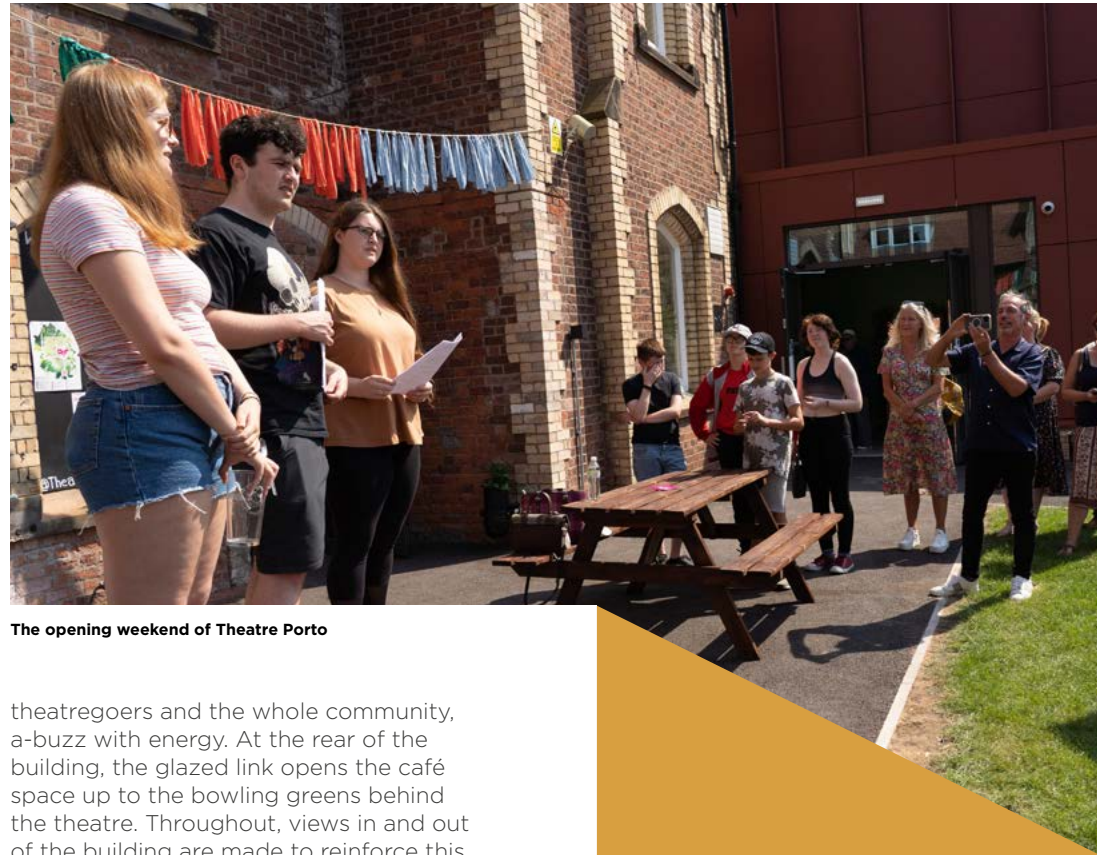
The relationship of the auditorium to the park was fundamental to the scheme. Working with artistic director, Nina Hajianni and the client team, the design

was developed to allow the auditorium to be opened to the park and foster engagement between the building and park users. As a result, the front of the auditorium may be opened with glazed double doors so activity can spill out of the building.

The new front to the auditorium invites interaction as the new extension sits on its own landscaped stage. Accessibility has been maintained with an existing ramp to the front. Access to the back of the building has been improved with new paved areas. The front façade addresses the park, with its proportions informed by the original hall. It is articulated by vertical fins that wrap the new form of the theatre extension. Again, material efficiency has been used to set out the vertical lines between full-width panels that break up the mass of the building. Fibre cement panels have been coloured to tie into the terracotta rosemary tiles of the hall's roof. The minimal and uniform cladding creates a bold and contemporary addition to the original hall, standing as a partner to the local landmark. The strong visual identity of the building celebrates the opportunities that it now brings to the park.

A large format glazed link respectfully merges the new with the old. This visual break allows people passing by to see into the building, inviting them in with the creativity and activity of those inside. This space inside was recognised early in the project as the heart of the building where the multitude of building users can meet and mix. It now forms the café space that can be enjoyed by passers-by,

Showcase



The opening weekend of Theatre Porto

theatre-goers and the whole community, a-buzz with energy. At the rear of the building, the glazed link opens the café space up to the bowling greens behind the theatre. Throughout, views in and out of the building are made to reinforce this relationship with the building once more feeling like the centrepiece to the park it was always intended to be.

Beyond re-using the historic hall and unique natural ventilation system, further opportunities were taken by the project team to maximise the environmental credentials of the design. The new theatre superstructure is predominantly formed by timber, structural insulated panels, and exposed glulam frame. Partitions were framed out in timber too. Additionally, the project team was able to procure a second-hand array of solar panels from a local school, giving them a second home at the theatre with the benefit of saving them from landfill as well as providing the theatre with renewable energy.

Whitby Hall has been transformed into a new and exciting cultural hub in the heart of Whitby Park. The use of the building has been secured for generations to come. Supporting the work of Theatre Porto, the building gives a new home to the exceptional, creative work the theatre does. Most importantly, it offers a place of excitement and intrigue to all the young people, families and members of the community who use the park and visit the building.

Long may Whitby Hall delight those who enjoy the spectacles and adventures within.

Project information

Construction cost
£2.5m

Construction duration
May 2021 – March 2022

Client
Cheshire West and Chester Council

Theatre user group
Theatre Porto

Architect
Bennetts Associates

Structural engineer
MDA Structural Engineers Ltd

Services engineer
Max Fordham

Theatre & acoustic consultant
Charcoalblue

Planning consultant
Lambert Smith Hampton

Fire consultants
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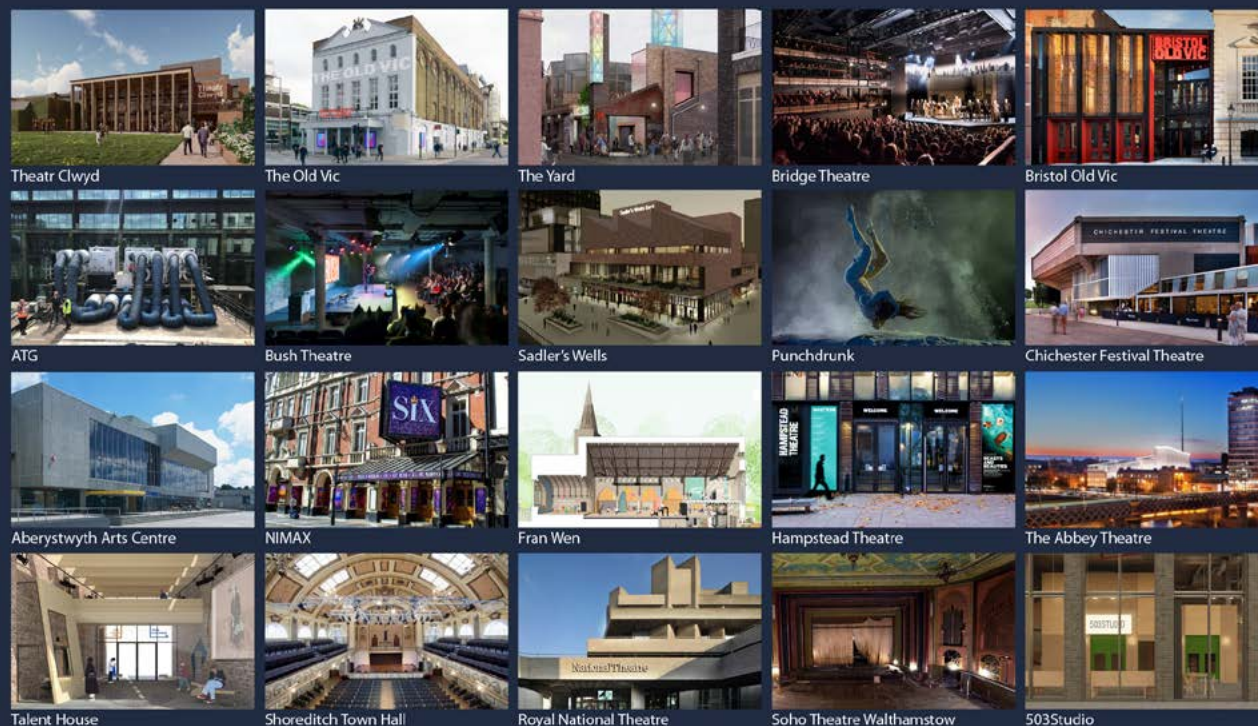
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A new chapter for Slung Low

Alan Lane from Slung Low talks about its ties to the community and why the theatre company is moving on from its current premises, The Holbeck Working Men's Club.

For the last few years Slung Low, a theatre company in South Leeds specialising in large-scale outdoor work, has been based at the oldest working men's club in Britain, The Holbeck, a brilliant, sprawling building with a 250-space cabaret theatre, snooker room, bars and much else.

We've run The Holbeck as a pay-what-you-decide theatre and community space: we paid off the historic debts and filled the building with activity from visiting theatre shows, Ghanaian funerals, LGBTQ+ football supporter groups, to family events, a food bank, and English as second language courses. For us, all these are the work of a theatre, each nourishing and informing the next. But later this year we'll leave the club, returning it to the management of the club's committee.

That the club is owned by members is a magnificent thing. In an age where the customer is king and the market dominates everything, it is refreshing to be based in the oldest of these community-held spaces, given to education, entertainment, and mutual support for over 150 years.

But The Holbeck is in a changing community. The ravages of post-war politics have been felt hardest in places like Holbeck, South Leeds and the club finds itself in a different place - with profoundly different people with profoundly different attitudes to alcohol - than when it was built 150 years ago.

And while we at Slung Low have been an important part of The Holbeck these last few years it is important that

its members continue to own the club. Literally and morally and culturally.

Despite our best efforts, we haven't been able to convince the committee that real change - change predominately but not entirely about how the various communities of Holbeck were welcomed into the club - was needed. And to strong arm those changes would be a failure of cultural democracy of the highest order.

At the same time as all this was being worked out, Arts Council England let us know that having failed an eligibility test, it would not be able to support a capital investment bid from us at the club. A building of that scale and age requires huge investment to ensure it is safe for today and ready for the future: that our principal funder was not able to support us made the endeavour impossible.

We've always maintained that our commitment to Holbeck is absolute. But The Holbeck is but one building in our community. The club must now find a way to exist in the world without the substantial financial support that Slung Low has been able to provide. And so we started the search for a new home.

These are important things to realise, wider lessons to be learned perhaps. If places are going to be allowed the privilege of existing beyond the market they are duty bound to ensure they welcome all parts of their community. And it takes every inch of possible support to keep these venues surviving beyond the market - in the coming years any blinking from

funders will see organisations much larger and grander than The Holbeck fall by the wayside - there are tough decisions to be made.

For Slung Low there is a new chapter - a larger, clearer, even more useful chapter. We move into a new warehouse theatre space in Holbeck later this year: a big industrial warehouse to be turned into performance and rehearsal spaces, with much more theatrical capability than the club could ever manage. It is next to our most important creative partner, the local primary school. And it is owned by the local Buddhist temple.

We hope for less racism and less asbestos in our new home. A place where we can create wonder for our communities. A palace of fun.

It's natural to feel sadness in change. But change is coming regardless, not just for Slung Low but for our whole sector. And if the last few years have taught us anything in theatre it is that it is necessary.

Our new company home will (like all the three homes we've had in Holbeck) be a place for all members of our community; a place where the city's young and emerging artists can make their work; where visiting artists can present their work to new audiences; a pay-what-you-decide venue that sits beyond the all-suffocating market. A place for education, entertainment, and mutual support. For everyone, whatever they need, or there's no point at all.

LASTheatre performing outside The Holbeck

Photo: Simon K Allen



Future Arts Centres

Gavin Barlow and Annabel Turpin
co-leads of Future Arts Centres
network discuss its work and the
continued success of arts centres.

Arts centres are increasingly being talked about as anchor institutions, critical community hubs in this new world where placemaking is the talk of the town halls. They are recognised for the diversity of their programmes and audiences, and for both the social and economic contributions they make to their local place – whether that's a major city as in the case of HOME, Manchester and Midlands Arts Centre – or more rural settings such as Queen's Hall in Hexham and Lyth Arts Centre on the northerly coast of Scotland.

This is not a new phenomenon. Arts centres have been doing this since the 1950s, with some, like Bluecoat in Liverpool, dating back as far as the 1920s. Their work became more visible in the 1960s and 1970s but were still seen as the domain of community arts, and rarely taken seriously in terms of their artistic outputs.

Future Arts Centres was founded in 2013 to address this. From the nine original members, it has grown into a network of more than 120, with a remit to champion the unique role of arts centres at local, national and international level. Providing arts centres with a unifying voice has led to major projects, new international partnerships and a much higher profile with stakeholders and the media.

There are a number of factors that have led to the success of arts centres.

Firstly, they are often of-their-place, providing a less intimidating entry point for people into the arts, whether as staff or artists. Somewhere people can take their first career steps without having to contend with living or travelling to a new place. This in turn makes it easier to engage local communities, where people can see themselves reflected in the organisation itself.

Secondly, their business models have traditionally relied less on core revenue funding, with more diverse income sources. The nature of their buildings provides more scope for a range of activity, with room hire or tenancies a major income stream. Likewise, the diversity of their programmes often allows for cross-subsidy, with comedy, music and film often subsidising other artforms. Comprehensive creative learning programmes that exist in their own right, rather than as an audience development tool, are attractive to project funders.



A family event at
Lyth Arts Centre

The breadth of programmes also open doors for much wider partnerships, well beyond other arts and cultural sector partners. Many arts centres have strong partnerships with local voluntary and community organisations, who use their building or deliver work together. New partnerships are emerging with housing associations and health and social care services. As we reimagine our town centres, looking for more stuff to do, rather than stuff to buy, arts centres are seen as important partners in contributing to the vibrancy of a place, extending their programmes beyond their buildings to animate local public spaces.

Arts centres can be nimble, fleet of foot and responsive to local needs and interests. In 2019, Future Arts Centres was able to pull together a £1m project to celebrate the National Lottery's 25th birthday in the space of three months, from initial conversations to confirmed funding. Here and Now, as it was called, involved 40 arts centres, who went on to deliver 40 projects across the country, many during the pandemic, but their willingness to jump on board quickly at the initial stage enabled the whole project to happen.

Back in 2013, the Future Arts Centres' tagline 'the cultural venues of tomorrow' felt appropriate, but the truth is, they feel much more like the cultural venues of today. Arts Council England's new 10-year strategy, Let's Create, feels like it was written for arts centres, and we hope Future Arts Centres is going to play a key role in helping members – and others – deliver it over the coming years.

To find out more about Future Arts Centres visit futureartscentres.org.uk and follow the organisation and its co-leads on Twitter @artscentres, @gavinjbarlow, @annabelturpin.

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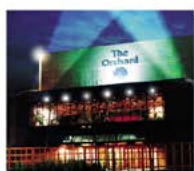
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Pictured: Arts Ed, London
De Matos Ryan / Charcoalblue (photo ©Hufton+Crow)



Photo of John Blundall, who led Canon Hill Puppet Theatre and is acknowledged as one of Britain's authorities on puppetry.

A history of MAC in 60 Objects

A special exhibition to celebrate Midlands Arts Centre's 60th anniversary is using donated objects to tell the rich and fascinating stories of people's personal connections to the venue.

built. Later, the arts centre became an important part of my life when I joined The Ardencote Arts Club. It's been great to see the (at that time rather exclusive) centre develop over the years into the inclusive and welcoming place that it is today."

On 19 March 1962, the official Incorporation of Cannon Hill Trust Limited was established, followed by a 75-year lease granted by the City of Birmingham for 8.62 acres of Cannon Hill Park to Cannon Hill Trust Ltd. The site would soon become the homeplace of Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), formally known as the Midlands Art Centre for Young People. It included the Cannon Hill Puppet Theatre, one of the UK's few full-time companies of puppet makers and puppeteers, which gave many thousands of schoolchildren their first experience of theatre.

The exhibition has uncovered stories of people finding love, discovering a creative talent, meeting theatre legends, working on building projects, and memorable moments from their own or family members' histories. One couple, Amanda and Greg Dickinson, donated two photographs entitled Then and Now. The first photograph captures the couple in the mid-1960s sitting together on steps at the venue, which they have replicated in 2022 with a new photograph, sat in the same spot, 60 years on.

This year MAC celebrates its 60th anniversary and as part of its celebration it is hosting an exhibition, A History of MAC in 60 Objects. The idea behind the exhibition is to offer a snapshot of life at MAC through the eyes of residents, artists, visitors, and former and current staff. From theatre programmes to ticket stubs, family photographs, and concert posters, each of the objects chosen to be part of the exhibition tells a unique story of the role MAC has played in the everyday lives of its community.

The couple said **"The Midlands Arts Centre for Young People attracted many teenagers in the mid-1960s. The real pull was the Friday night disco. In fact, that is where we first met! We have now been married for 49 years and are living in Moseley, a stone's throw from MAC. We greatly appreciate the diversity of events and MAC's inclusive values. We have continued to regularly attend, taking advantage of the facilities here."**

MAC's team has been surprised by the sheer volume of applications to donate objects, which ranged from puppets to vintage photographs, to ceramics and pottery pieces made in the centre's studios.

Through another object, the story of MAC's connection with singer, songwriter and actress Ruby Turner MBE is told. Ruby sent in photographs from performances at MAC in the 1980s, and reflected "Those days performing at MAC, enjoying singing with the band and learning my craft, were some of the best of my life."

Artist and designer Chris Eckersley visited MAC regularly as a child and continues to visit the centre as an adult. His object Sketch of the Hexagon Under Construction, 1965, depicts the centre during early stages of construction, documenting MAC's evolution over the years to the contemporary venue it is today.

MAC was founded on the idea of providing creative opportunities for younger generations and now welcomes over 350,000 children and young people and almost 1 million visits from the wider public each year. A History of MAC in 60 Objects is a celebration of these people, in the local community, that have supported and loved the centre for the last 60 years.

Chris said **"From a very young age, I was always interested in buildings, and especially in going out and making sketches of them. Here is a drawing from when I would have been about 13 years old of the Hexagon being**

A History of MAC in 60 Objects is on display until Sunday 6 November and is free to visit. To find out more about MAC's 60th anniversary and programme visit macbirmingham.co.uk/mac-at-60 #MACmemories #MAC60.



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Q&A with Theatres Trust Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

**Our new Chair Dave Moutrey tells us
about himself and his aspirations for
the work of Theatres Trust.**



**Dave outside HOME,
Manchester**

Photo: Drew Forsyth

**Could you tell us about yourself and your
career so far?**

Originally from Teesside, I've lived and worked in Greater Manchester for almost 40 years. I trained as a teacher in Leeds and taught drama for a couple of years in Oldham before becoming the Theatre Manager at the Abraham Moss Centre in North Manchester. I then went on to establish Arts About Manchester (now part of the Audience Agency), led the marketing of Manchester UK City of Drama in 1994, and then became Director of Cornerhouse an arts centre in Manchester. As Director of Cornerhouse, I subsequently led its merger with the Library Theatre Company and the project to build and open HOME where I am currently Director and CEO. I am also seconded part-time to Manchester City Council as Director of Culture.

**What attracted you to the role of Chair at
Theatres Trust?**

When we were planning HOME, Theatres Trust undertook two very helpful design reviews for the project. Through that process, I became much more aware of the Trust and its work. I have always been interested in the history of theatres, theatre architecture, and the role of theatres in places, however, it was the Theatres at Risk Register and latterly Theatre Green book that really interested me and pushed me into applying. Hopefully, without sounding pompous, I want to do what I can to help our vitally important theatre sector to be there for future generations as it has been, and continues to be, for my generation.

What are your ambitions for Theatres Trust?

Our role in protecting theatres is vital and as the energy and cost of living crisis continues more theatres will be at risk and we will have more to do. Consequently, we need to play an increasing role in helping the development of

environmentally and financially sustainable buildings and businesses. I want to see how we can grow our service to be even more useful to UK theatres.

**What role do you see theatre as having in
society?**

When asked this question I am always reminded of the TED Talk by Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director of the Public in New York where he spoke eloquently and inspirationally about the role of theatre in democracy and as a place at the heart of our communities. Theatres - volunteer-run, public sector, third sector and commercial - are part of our public realm and have a civic purpose too where artists and communities can get together and make magic and perhaps make the world a little better.

What is your favourite theatre?

That's a tough question! I have lots including the one that I run. However, the Forum Theatre in Billingham, Teesside has a special place in my heart as the place of my very first professional theatre job which was life-changing for me.



Forum Theatre, Billingham

Photo: Ian Grundy

Helping theatres thrive

We look at what theatres are doing to improve access and viability with funding from the latest round of our Small Grants Programme.

Theatres Trust awarded £49,476 across 10 theatres from our Small Grants Programme with The Linbury Trust, set up to support the UK's not-for-profit theatres to make essential repairs and improvements. Awards this round will help enhance accessibility and facilities and create better more welcoming spaces.

York Theatre Royal is creatively using technology to make its shows more widely available. The theatre will use its grant to purchase equipment to capture immersive recordings of live performances for members of the community that are not able to visit the theatre in person. The experience will be as close as possible to watching a live show in the theatre with an audience. This project is in response to the theatre's increased digital engagement during the pandemic closure period.

We supported more theatres to improve the accessibility of their buildings for their staff, performers, and audiences. **South Hill Park Arts Centre** in Bracknell, purpose-built in the mid-1980s, will install magnetic openers to doors into its auditorium to allow free and easy movement into the foyer. The volunteer-led community and arts space **Malvern Cube Community and Arts Centre** and fringe theatre **The Space** on the Isle of Dogs have been awarded funding to improve accessibility for their audiences front of house. **The Y Theatre**, Leicester's oldest working theatre, will make accessibility and safety improvements to its Victorian stage ensuring more staff, performers and user groups can use the stage.

Making the overall theatre experience more welcoming for its users, **The Playhouse** in Derry will upgrade its toilet facilities front and back of house, bringing them in line with modern visitor expectations. Newcastle's **Northern Stage**, the North East's largest producing theatre, will install sustainable panels to improve the acoustics and reduce general noise levels in its large foyer.

We also help theatres to remain viable through this scheme, with projects that address sustainability, repairs, and improvements. The Grade A listed **Dundee Rep Theatre** will install variable speed fans to maintain the ventilation conditions required for dancers while better managing energy usage in the venue. **Plaza Theatre Romsey** will replace its obsolete electrical distribution board, an urgent project that will ensure a planned stage house improvement will go ahead. In response to antisocial behaviour in the area, The Grade II* **Theatre Royal Wakefield** will install CCTV, improving safety for its users and to deter further damage to the building.

The next round of the Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust is now open for applications with a deadline of 13 January 2023.

For more information about eligibility criteria and to apply go to theatrestrust.org.uk/how-we-help/grants-funding.

The Y Theatre,
Leicester



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New supporters

Thanks to the following who recently joined us as a Corporate Supporter:

Delfont Mackintosh Theatres

We'd also like to welcome the new Friends who have joined us since the summer issue of the magazine:

Thomas Dempster

Oliver Grieve

Michael Lynas

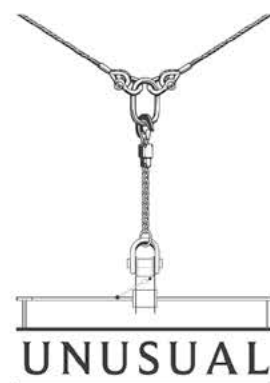
In memory

Sadly, the following Friend passed away in recent months:

Robert Wildgust

We remain grateful for their contributions to our mission.

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Our Work

We provide advice on the planning and development of theatres.

New theatres

Theatres Trust actively supports theatre owners and operators who plan positively for cultural use and much of our advice is around ensuring proposals for theatres, change of use to Sui Generis and temporary theatres offer the most viable solution. Cultural facilities are increasingly recognised as vital for arresting decline and encouraging activity within town centres because they generate footfall and spend in other businesses.

We wrote in support of plans for the change of use of a locally-listed restaurant, built as a library in the early 20th century, to provide Newbury Corn Exchange with a new **studio theatre, workshop, and dedicated learning space** (22/01814/FUL). Plans show that the new site will deliver a 120-seat studio theatre to the ground floor, a bar and foyer to the front, and four WCs. There will be a workshop with office space and a further WC on the first floor, accessible by lift. Following best practice principles, we suggested the first floor WC should also be accessible and believe this is possible by altering the location of the store and layout of the office. The plans will create additional space to develop and enhance cultural provision, better facilitating smaller productions and new work. They will also bring the former library, a historically significant building, back into use and improve the vitality of the town centre.

We also supported the change of use of The Mannequin Factory (former Fulham Boy's School) near West Kensington to an **immersive theatre and dining experience** (2022/01426/FUL) for a period of up to five years. The performance space will sit alongside a technical theatre workshop, green room, storage and offices for the company, and a creative co-working space for artists. We like to see applications for cultural meanwhile use as it positively impacts its surroundings; it minimises the negative effect of empty buildings, improves cultural participation, and helps attract longer-term development opportunities.

We were consulted on plans for the refurbishment and extension to **Carlton Cinema, Maryport** (FUL/2022/0103) and its change of use to a mixed arts venue with a theatre and flexible space, café, studios and rehearsal space. The cinema opened in 1934; it was later used for bingo and then a shop and has been vacant since 2013. Though not listed it sits within a conservation area. Plans show the auditorium will be re-established as a larger single space for use as a theatre and flexible events venue. The neighbouring site will be demolished with a replacement building linked to provide a foyer and bar / café. Its upper levels will house studios and workshops plus exhibition space and a recording studio. The plans will bring a large and prominent site back to active use. We wrote in support of this scheme and the ambition to create Maryport's first hub for the arts to meet the cultural needs of different groups in the town. It is also positive to see a Future High Streets Fund project that recognises the role of culture in supporting town centre growth.

We welcomed plans for the alteration and extension of the Grade II listed **St Mary's Town Hall, Isles of Scilly** (P/22/033/COU & P/22/034/LBC) to provide a multi-purpose cultural centre and performance space. With no dedicated theatre space on the islands, the ambition is for the Town Hall to be able to host theatre, live music, film screenings, and other events. Plans show the space will be flexible, offering 124 seats, stalls seating will be retractable to allow increased capacity for standing events, and the stage will be able to be lowered and raised as required. There are no specific dressing rooms but this can be addressed through flexible use of other back-of-house spaces. The front of house will be expanded with a new foyer café / bar. We recommended further soundproofing to ensure performances are not disturbed by activity elsewhere and encouraged the applicant to engage with us on operation, wayfinding, and accessibility as plans are further refined.

We raised no objection to the demolition and replacement of the existing **Southport Theatre and Convention Centre and Floral Hall** (DC/2022/01391), which has been unused since its operator went into liquidation in 2020. This is a Town Deal Fund project by the council to create a number one touring venue in Southport. Plans include a new 1,500-seat venue and a 2,400-seat event and conference



hall with a VIP / function lounge, café restaurant and meeting rooms, plus landscaping, a terrace and improved pedestrian routes around the site. We made specific comments in relation to accessibility and crowd management so that the new theatre does not replicate the shortcomings of the existing one. We are supportive of efforts to retain and provide a large-scale theatre for the area. However, we were disappointed that it appears no consideration has been given to delivering a replacement theatre within the vacant former Garrick Theatre, new on the Theatres Trust's Theatres at Risk Register in 2022. Re-provision could have brought this important building back to active use in its original function offering a capacity broadly in line with requirements and the opportunity to use its front-of-house spaces and lounge for other revenue-generating purposes.

Restoration, redevelopment and refurbishment

Theatres Trust encourages theatre owners and operators to invest in their buildings to meet the needs and expectations of modern users and improve accessibility and sustainability to increase their viability and social value.

We wrote in support of plans for a two-story extension and alterations to the foyer and bar / café and an auditorium refurbishment at the **Embassy, Skegness** (S/153/01087/22) to bring additional services to the building. The

project is being modelled on the Scandinavian concept of a 'culture house', which is a cultural and civic centre for an area. The Embassy originally opened in 1926 as a ballroom and restaurant but was also used for variety shows and concerts. Its programme includes a mix of theatre, comedy, and live music. There is a general need for upgrading and enlarging the theatre's front-of-house facilities and public areas as they are currently small for its capacity. Skegness and its wider local catchment have low levels of engagement in arts and culture and we are supportive of efforts to invest in the Embassy and to develop and expand its facilities to broaden its role and value as a facility for local people.

Plans have been submitted for an extension to the Grade II listed **Ipswich Regent** (22/00403/FPI3 & 22/00401/LBC). With a capacity of 1,500, the Regent is the largest theatre in East Anglia with a busy programme of theatre, comedy, and live music. It was designed by cinema architect W. E. Trent and opened in 1929 as a cine-variety theatre. As such, its back-of-house facilities are relatively limited, restricting the type of productions it can host. The extension at the rear of the theatre will provide three additional dressing rooms equipped with showers and

WCs, one of which is accessible, along with a flexible multi-use space. There will also be ramped access into the extension. We wrote in support of the plans as they will help the theatre meet the demands of performers and support staff of visiting companies and will boost its longer-term viability.



Embassy, Skegness

Ipswich Regent Theatre

Photo: Ipswich
Theatres

We welcomed and supported plans for various internal and external works to repair and refurbish **Golders Green Hippodrome** (22/3464/LBC), reverse some BBC-era alterations, provide larger foyer space and reinstate a stage to help facilitate live shows in line with a planning condition. The Hippodrome is a Grade II listed heritage asset that opened in 1913 and is a rare example of a surviving large-scale suburban theatre. It is of great architectural and historic interest having been designed by renowned theatre architect Bertie Crewe. It was purchased by a church group in 2007, and we did not raise any objection to the resultant change of use on the basis that safeguards were in place to maintain the potential for a full return to theatre use. We are supportive of the interventions and alterations and welcome the applicant's stated intentions to use the Hippodrome for public events and performances once again. The Hippodrome is a very important building for Theatres Trust and we are pleased to see it being occupied and open to the community.

Golders Green
Hippodrome

Photo: Ian Grundy



We also supported an extension to **Little Theatre, Hertford** (3/22/1506/FUL) which will provide additional foyer space, a better building layout, and improved back-of-house facilities. The theatre opened in 1972 in a converted former schoolhouse dating from 1868. The foyer will be substantially increased for greater room and comfort for audiences and circulation, allowing the space to also be used for rehearsals and social functions. This area would be directly served by new WCs, including an accessible WC. Back of house will be made accessible and the workshop area will be increased. We consider the extension to be sensitive to the existing building's character and its wider setting within the conservation area. There will be substantial public benefit generated through improving the theatre's accessibility, function, and flexibility to meet the needs of the community.

We strongly objected to planning permission and listed building consent for a change of use and conversion of the floor below **Attic Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon** (22/01580/FUL & 22/01581/LBC) from theatre to short-term holiday accommodation. The Attic Theatre is a small fringe theatre operated by a well-established local company on the second floor of a Grade II listed warehouse in Cox's Yard, a former timber yard that also houses a pub and café. It is clear that residential use below an active theatre gives rise to strong risk of acoustic breakout between the two uses and the applicant has failed to demonstrate the compatibility of residential with the theatre in terms of noise, vibrations and appropriate living conditions for occupants. We also have significant concerns as the loss of theatre use to the first floor will limit the theatre's potential expansion and future viability.

We were consulted on alterations to the long dock and painting room at **Theatre Royal Drury Lane** (22/02727/FULL & 22/02728/LBC). The long dock was originally a 'scene room' for the storage of canvasses and props and the painting room was added in 1900 to produce scenery. These are significant as the only example of a complete ensemble that remains within a theatre. There would be alterations to both spaces to make them functional for administrative functions. The nature and previous purpose of the long dock means that this part of the building is less sensitive in terms of change with its significance coming from its role as a back-of-house space supporting the theatre operation. Changes to the painting room are more contentious due to its rarity. We wrote in support of the plans, in principle, and requested a condition that the painting room machinery should be retained, remain operational, and displayed to ensure the function is not lost permanently.

Non theatre-use for former theatre buildings

Theatres Trust is also consulted on works to former theatre buildings, and we welcome proposals that retain significant architectural features or allow for a return to public use, or live performance.

We objected to plans to demolish the remaining foyer block of the former **New Victoria Theatre / Odeon, Preston** (06/2022/0663). The building opened in 1928, designed by renowned cinema architect W. E. Trent, whose works included the Apollo Victoria Theatre. The 2,110-seat cinema and theatre had a full stage. Its foyer block was particularly large, built to include an unfinished 900-seat cinema. In May 2022, the auditorium was destroyed in an arson attack and was later demolished. The remaining foyer block has an attractive front façade which improves the character of the town. We believe there is significance in the remaining elements of the building and that they should be retained. We requested that alternative site options be explored before a decision is made on irreversible demolition works.

Theatre Royal
Drury Lane

Photo: Philip Vile

Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities

Thanks to support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, and Swire Charitable Trust, we are launching a new programme of work to reduce the threat to 'At Risk' theatres and strengthen the theatre sector's resilience following a difficult few years due to the pandemic.

The three-year project will focus on supporting communities operating a theatre building, and communities considering taking over a theatre building.

- A grants programme will fund strategic and organisational development work for three to six theatres 'At Risk' a year. Details of this fund will be announced in December.
- Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities will feature a new training and knowledge sharing programme, including a cohort training programme for groups working with Theatres at Risk. A series of free webinars open to all theatres will support knowledge sharing and developing expertise across the sector – further details will be available early in 2023.
- A bank of specialist consultants will boost Theatres Trust's existing advice-giving service.



Contact us if you are planning a capital project or want advice and guidance on maintaining your theatre building: advice@theatrestrust.org.uk

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