

Conference 13 Report  
**thriving theatres**

11 June 2013

The  
Theatres  
Trust



Protecting theatres for everyone

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# Conference 13

## thriving theatres

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### Conference chairman

Vikki Heywood CBE

### Opening address

Ruth Mackenzie CBE

### Keynote speech

Baroness Hanham CBE

Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government

### Session chairs

Nigel Hugill, Chair, The Royal Shakespeare Company and Executive Chairman, Urban&Civic

Dave Moutrey, Director & Chief Executive, Cornerhouse & Library Theatre Company

Anna Stapleton, Administrative Director, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow

### Contributors

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Ian Pratt, Vice Chairman and Technical Director, Kings Theatre Southsea

Jessica Hepburn, Executive Director and Joint Chief Executive, Lyric Hammersmith

Jiselle Steele, Regional Team and Partnerships Manager, Livity, somewhereto\_

Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive, Northamptonshire Arts Management Trust

Martin Halliday, Chief Executive, Lowestoft Marina

Flick Rea, Chair, Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, Local Government Association

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# Mhora Samuel

Director, The Theatres Trust



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**thriving theatres**, The Theatres Trust's seventh annual conference took place on the 11 June 2013 at the St James Theatre. Our conferences are important annual events that aim to develop the debate on what makes a good theatre and help guide us, and we hope others, towards developing better protected theatre buildings. We hear from case studies, identify actions and principles and consider next steps. I'm proud of the way each year the Trust brings together those running, designing and building theatres to discuss current issues and concerns, celebrate successes, share stories and consider ways we can help each other. Through our conference reports we capture the learning on the day as a resource for all to use.

Some conferences take particular types of theatre building and consider what makes them architecturally and theatrically special: and how they can be designed, and developed to make them even more fit for purpose. Others, including our conference this year, take stock of the prevailing wind and look at how we can be best placed to respond to changes and harness opportunities.

At the end of Conference 12: Delivering Sustainable Theatres we were set the challenge of considering how theatres could develop building design, maintenance and retrofit strategies to achieve financial self sufficiency; secure ownership of theatres as assets for their local communities; and have the facilities that enable us to increase community engagement.

So in 2013 with changes to planning regulations starting to affect theatres and the austerity challenges beginning to bite, Conference 13 aimed to address these three issues and look at how theatres were responding and thriving in this current climate.

The title of this year's conference, **thriving theatres** was in part provocative. But it was also a call to all

those who aspire towards a thriving economy, more engaged communities, healthier people, and who are harnessing innovative ideas, to see that theatres can provide solutions.

My thanks go to our Conference Chairman, Vikki Heywood who excellently guided us through the day, and everyone who worked hard to make this year's conference such a success. It was the best attended of all our conferences. And it took place in a new London venue, the St James Theatre, which replaced the former Westminster Theatre – a theatre that the Trust had had a major role in protecting and bringing back to life.

I would also like to thank the many people without whom our annual conference would not have been possible – our speakers, our sponsors, the production team, and delegates, and the Trust's staff.

Thanks also go to the sponsor of this report, the Association of British Theatre Technicians, and its author, Conference Reporter, Fin Kennedy.

A clear theme to emerge this year was the important role played by community-led theatres and how they engage with their local audiences and 'gather their friends around them' as Jim Beirne said. This will be our conference theme for 2014. Aimed at those setting up, designing and running community-based theatres, Conference 14: Community Theatres will look at the role local groups are increasingly playing as providers of theatres in their localities, towns and villages; how to achieve appropriate scale capital projects that meet delivery, design and funding expectations; the inventive solutions used by groups to resolve building and ownership issues; and how to 'make friends and influence people' through the Localism and Cultural Wellbeing agendas. Conference 14: Community Theatres will take place in Leeds on Monday 28 April 2014. I hope to see you there.

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# Vikki Heywood CBE

Conference Chairman



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In my opening remarks to the conference I challenged us to accept that it was important to take the opportunity to look at how theatres can still thrive, even in a challenging economic environment. I said that there were three aims for the day. It was an opportunity for us to 'clear space' in the mind to consider further those things which might be obsessing or bugging us; a chance to come up with ideas for action, which we might not have thought of on our own; and a space to be moved to action, perhaps motivated by hearing something that had engaged us sufficiently to make us angry!

One excellent example for me in satisfying those three aims was a piece of fundraising advice from Jessica Hepburn who has 'earned her spurs' to be forthright about the challenges of raising money in challenging times. Simple to say but complex to achieve she advised us – "to ensure you have 'the right people, asking the right people, at the right time'". For me this key unlocked a piece of complex strategic thinking which has directly affected my advice and approach.

This report excellently summarises what happened when a highly talented and motivated group of people who are responsible for the future health and wealth of our theatres was brought together by The Theatres Trust, to share ideas and experiences and find new solutions to old problems. Some theatres may not survive unless they can find a new path. Bringing into the room the brains that encompass theatre design, direction, management, architecture, cost consultancy, sound and lighting design, PR, fundraising – amongst many others – will always generate new perspectives and stimulate new ideas.

As I said in my piece in the Conference issue of the Trust's *tm*, *Theatres Magazine*, our job is to find ways to articulate and demonstrate to government and the public, the centrality of a theatre to the sustainability of its community and we must work together in such straightened times.

Looking forward, the challenge for next year's Theatres Trust conference is to make sure that we hear from the communities with whom we share the running of our buildings. What are their challenges? And what have been the results of interesting and rewarding partnerships? How can we truly demonstrate that theatre plays a part in community wellbeing and economic benefit? We need to find new ways to tell our stories to make an even greater impact.

After all, as we proved yet again on the day, we are the best story-tellers and we do tell our stories brilliantly.



Vikki Heywood CBE

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# Introduction

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There is no doubt that this year's conference took place at an economically challenging time. The financial year 2012-13 saw the largest cut to the Arts Council in a generation take effect – followed by further, subsequent in-year cuts. In her opening address Ruth Mackenzie made a clarion call to continue lobbying hard about the then-imminent 2013 Spending Review.

It is interesting that against this backdrop this year's conference was called **thriving theatres**. Was this a question? A challenge? A statement of fact? In different ways it turned out to be all three.

Conference 13 delegates came together from multi-purpose venues, new writing theatres, technical services, consultancies, trade associations, architects' firms and youth development agencies to hear 17 speakers across four panels relate case studies from across the UK of theatres having thrived – or hoping to thrive – despite the gloomy economic outlook.

For some, **thriving theatres** was indeed still a question. Derby Hippodrome Restoration Trust related a sad tale of developer neglect – but with the silver lining that they were also the first UK theatre to be established as an Asset of Community Value.

For some, **thriving theatres** was most definitely a challenge to which they had risen. The Marina Theatre in Lowestoft and the Kings Theatre in Southsea gave insights into how they had not only rescued and restored, but thoroughly revitalised some of the oldest theatres in the country, with little more than personal vision, resourcefulness, and an ability to channel local goodwill.

Others threw the challenge back out to the conference. Youth development agency Livity's stirring short film about 'somewhereto\_', its campaign to get underused local space leveraged for young people's creative projects, asked every

theatre present whether they would be opening their doors.

For others, **thriving theatres** was simply a statement of fact. We heard how Shakespeare's Globe had doubled its turnover in its first seven years, how Live Theatre Newcastle had secured its future through local property development, and Eden Court in Inverness, using a capital redevelopment project to open up its building to all-day, every day activity, had halved its reliance on public investment.

We also usefully heard from a range of speakers on the planning side. These included a keynote speech from Baroness Hanham about recent changes to planning legislation and Trudi Elliott from the Royal Town Planning Institute offered a whistlestop user's guide to the National Planning Policy Framework.

If there was a common theme, it was about theatres developing resilience by investing in meaningful partnerships at all levels in their local communities. At local authority level there were examples of the benefits of engaging with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and being around the table. Despite some of the biggest Government cuts to arts and culture since the 1980s we heard about new funding opportunities through the LEPs which cultural organisations could exploit.

We heard how theatres need to be on the front foot in order to do so, and proactively seek out and broker new connections with those around them. Conference 13 definitely felt as if we were hearing the encouraging sound of theatres reaching out – and those that were making a genuine, expansive offer to communities up and down the country were clearly thriving.

Conference Reporter **Fin Kennedy**

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# Opening address

Ruth Mackenzie CBE

## Keynote speech

Baroness Hanham CBE

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### Ruth Mackenzie CBE

*“We need to weave a tapestry which shows that we are at the heart of our community.”*

Ruth Mackenzie kicked off the conference with a fiery exhortation for theatres to do more to mobilise their audiences. We can't avoid the politics taking place around us, she said, given that the Comprehensive Spending Review was being announced on 26 June and we only had a few days to influence it. Ruth said that if the arts received a 10% cut it would imperil two-thirds of ACE National Portfolio Organisations. At that point the Department for Communities and Local Government had already accepted a 10% cut from the Treasury and as a result she pointed out that we were bound to see further cuts at local level. Given the important role that arts subsidy plays to delivering growth what could we do to stop this?

Ruth reminded us that theatre's core audience is women aged 35-60 – a demographic which is also important to the current coalition Government. Our biggest fans were therefore also those who the Treasurer, George Osborne wanted to reach. We had to ask ourselves the question: Why have we as a sector historically not managed to motivate audiences to advocate on our behalf?

During Ruth's time running Nottingham Playhouse, the theatre claimed to be part of the fabric of its community. The proof came via an anecdote from a local special needs school. The school told its children that if they ever got lost in the city centre they should make their way to the theatre and someone there would help. This wasn't a theatre-led initiative. It was just the culture of the theatre. For Ruth, it was one of their greatest achievements.

### Baroness Hanham CBE

Our second major speech was the keynote given later in the morning by the Conservative peer Baroness Hanham. RSC Chair, Nigel Hugill hosted the Undersecretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who also agreed to take questions.

*“Theatres are a crucial part of our present and national heritage.”*

**Baroness Hanham**

Baroness Hanham said that the past two years had seen the coalition Government significantly reform the planning system. The National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) had reduced regulations and

streamlined thousands of pages of guidance into just fifty, embracing planning's social role and supporting communities' aspirations for their area.

*“Planning policies can guard against the unnecessary loss of local cultural facilities, and develop and modernise established ones.”*

**Baroness Hanham**

So what new opportunities were there? Baroness Hanham told us about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a charge on an all new development. The funds are held by the local planning authority to spend as their communities see fit. This could include theatre restoration, for example. She also told us about new legislation – the 'Community Right to Bid' which involves asking for nominations of local buildings or land to go on local authority-held lists of Assets of Community Value. Once listed, the clock stopped for 6 months on any proposed sale of that Asset, giving local groups the opportunity to bid.

She also highlighted the continuing role of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) now to be administered through LEPs along with the Single Growth Fund.

Baroness Hanham acknowledged that these were challenging times and said that there would be threats to theatre buildings and companies posed by local authority cuts. She closed by saying that she would not try to convince us that things were going to be easy. But she was confident in our sector's survival techniques; we must adapt, grow and harness change.

Nigel Hugill asked the Baroness whether only wealthier areas were likely to benefit from CIL as they were the most attractive to developers? Baroness Hanham acknowledged this might be an issue. Dave Moutrey asked what opportunities existed for the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and DCLG to work together to advance arts and culture. Baroness Hanham replied that DCLG tended to be more about the 'bricks and mortar' of the arts and steering local authorities towards recognising their importance.

Michael Holden pointed out that there was anecdotal evidence that some Community Asset nominations had been refused in favour of redevelopment. The Baroness responded that she expected local authorities to be sympathetic. Gregor McGregor requested further guidance from the Government on how to definitively assess the value of cultural facilities for such purposes. Baroness Hanham replied that for central government to do this would undermine the point of it being done locally and its drive towards greater localism.

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# Session #1

## Opening the doors – theatres leading the way

Setting the scene for the day, our opening session heard from theatres whose capital projects were building their capacity to secure their future viability, community and social engagement – and were winning over hearts and minds.

Chair: Vikki Heywood

**Deborah Aydon**

Executive Director, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse

**Ian Pratt**

Vice Chairman and Technical Director, Kings Theatre Southsea

**Jessica Hepburn**

Executive Director and Joint Chief Executive, Lyric Hammersmith

**Jiselle Steele**

Regional Team and Partnerships Manager, Livity, somewhereto\_

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**Deborah Aydon: Executive Director, Liverpool Everyman**

*“There’s a wonderful army we are mobilising in Liverpool, of audiences of every age, background, shape and size.”*

Deborah Aydon

Deborah introduced the vision behind the new Everyman Theatre. The motto for the project is ‘An Everyman for Everyone’. The old Everyman building was dated and not physically accessible, though it was remembered fondly. The journey to the new Everyman began with a finale for the old building, which took the form of a collection and sharing of memories. The public were invited to write these onto luggage tags, which were displayed around the building. Thousands of people came to say goodbye – simultaneously discovering why the redevelopment was needed. This drawing out of emotional connections created a feeling of ownership and belonging. Though the former building has now been demolished, 25,000 bricks were saved and used in the walls of the new theatre.

*“Everything we do is infused with our city, inspired by it and by its people.”*

Deborah Aydon

Deborah explained that the new design was to be democratic and inclusive, with every seat the same, each close to the stage, and a rehearsal room and studio dedicated to youth and community work which had deliberately been placed right at the centre of the building. Reimagining the building as a creative and social hub, and connecting the theatre’s social spaces, aimed to physically bring artists and audiences closer together. On the front of the theatre some external screens were needed to manage the levels of sunlight coming into the building. The architect, Steve Tompkins, took the opportunity to make a feature of this, and turned it into an art project which expresses the Everyman’s ethos. The ‘portrait wall’ was made of aluminium sheets each etched with images of local Liverpool residents connected to the theatre.

*“‘Philanthropy’ means ‘love of humanity’. That sums up everything the Everyman does.”*

Deborah Aydon

Local citizens of ordinary means had taken it on themselves to fundraise for the new theatre through activities such as tea parties and sponsored mountain climbs. Deborah wasn’t talking about

large sums of money, and the goodwill and sense of belonging which came with those donations was arguably as important as the gifts received from wealthy donors.

**Ian Pratt: Kings Theatre Southsea**

*“We won the campaign for the Kings because of one enormously important thing: public support.”*

Ian Pratt

The Kings is an Edwardian era theatre designed by Frank Matcham, which like many from that period became run down and entered a period of decline in the 1990s. After a big local campaign, it was bought by the City Council and leased to the Kings Theatre Trust, an organisation with huge public support. In the early days, a huge number of volunteers were needed to put it back on its feet, helping the small number of paid staff. Twelve years on, there is now a much larger paid staff, but volunteers are still vital. Ian spoke about one important lesson – that staff and volunteers need treating slightly differently. Volunteers need managing and motivating. As such they aren’t completely ‘free’.

Prior to its restoration, the Kings only put on shows. There was no education work and, as a consequence, there was not enough community engagement or involvement. Since its refurbishment, this is now at the heart of the theatre’s work. The theatre also has strong links with Portsmouth University. One graduate came to work with them as an admin placement, worked her way up, and recently left for a job in London’s West End.

*“We’ve worked hard to get involved in the life of Portsmouth.”*

Ian Pratt

In 2001, the theatre was threadbare, damp and semi-derelict. The restored theatre is clean, fresh, transformed and loved. However, the Edwardian design means the foyer areas become crowded, and access is difficult. A redevelopment is planned, including a full education suite. The cost is estimated at £6 million, and the Council has kickstarted the fundraising with a very welcome grant of £200,000 – which has already generated matched funding of a further £200,000. The rest will be raised over the next few years. Ian ended by outlining his four Ps for success: Passion, Public Support, Partnership and Participation. But he added a fifth key one: Performance. The venue must first and foremost succeed as a working theatre.



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**Jessica Hepburn: Executive Director and Joint Chief Executive, Lyric Hammersmith**

*“Capital projects are not necessarily a recipe for thriving theatres.”*

**Jessica Hepburn**

Jessica is currently overseeing a £16.5 million redevelopment project of the Lyric, Hammersmith. Historically, the Lyric has had two linked aspects: producing theatre, and the creative development of young people. Its redevelopment will provide a new two-storey extension with facilities for young people and theatre artists to work together. However, Jessica had three words of advice for those considering undertaking such any capital project: don't do it! She was only half-joking – any such project, she said, would be long, hard and very messy, on top of which there was no guarantee that it would make your theatre thrive. The Lyric's redevelopment had also been an exercise in negotiating capital works with their landlord. Jessica freely admitted that the project would not come in on time or on budget – and didn't believe that there is one which had.

*“It is virtually guaranteed that the world will be a different place when you finish than when you started.”*

**Jessica Hepburn**

The Lyric has a belief in two things: that their theatre should be a home for great art, and that it should emphasise young people's creative development. Partnerships with other local organisations were key. She gave the example of Hammersmith Action for Disability, an organisation which would benefit from the Lyric's creative expertise, whilst bringing in hard-to-reach groups which the Lyric would struggle to attract on their own. The Lyric is also lucky to have a supportive local council, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, which has contributed £5 million.

*“Be totally clear about what your organisational mission is. Then connect your mission with the needs and the opportunities within your constantly changing environment.”*

**Jessica Hepburn**

Jessica emphasised that they had felt that professional fundraisers were not appropriate for the Lyric. Instead, she had instigated a culture of every senior manager at the Lyric being responsible for income generation. Her top tip when fundraising was to ensure you have the right people asking the right people at the right time.

**Jiselle Steele: Livity, somewhereto\_**

*“Will you open your door?”*

**Jiselle Steele**

Livity is a youth engagement organisation set up and funded as part of the 2012 Legacy Trust UK. 'somewhereto\_' is a project they started which aims to help 16-25 year olds across the UK access unused or underused spaces for creative projects. Their statistics are impressive – with 7,600 young people assisted so far.

*“Set space free from the constraints of emptiness.”*

**Jiselle Steele**

The project's theme of opening doors seeks to support emerging talent in professional environments. Jiselle spoke passionately about the confidence that making these kind of connections can build early on in a creative career – from actors to producers.

*“Providing the opportunity for emerging talent to test their ideas... can bring a fresh perspective to your arts programmes, and greater ambition among young artists.”*

Livity has received £7 million from the Big Lottery Fund to run the project until 2016. It has found that these sorts of projects have the capacity to become self-sustaining. Young people setting up their own companies under the same roof as a theatre end up giving back to the theatres which supported them.

#### **Q and A**

The response from the floor was positive, prompting discussion about the importance of use of spaces to make audiences welcome and promote the involvement of young people. Deborah Aydon pointed out that once young people are in a building they bring in others – especially if you give them control of the space. One delegate suggested theatres should open their doors more to make rehearsals public, and predicted strong audience interest. Vikki Heywood concurred. In her time at the RSC she had put understudy performances on sale and been surprised to find that Y Ffwrnes in Llanelli described the responsibility to help audiences make the link between a building's past and its present. Dave Moutrey agreed – the theatre staff don't own the brand, he said, the audience does. We are merely custodians.

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# Session #2

## Going local – the opportunities

New government policies to promote greater local and neighbourhood ownership of planning decisions and community assets have created new opportunities for theatres. In this session we looked at how these can help theatres take the initiative and secure their assets and future.

### Chair: Nigel Hugill

Chair, The Royal Shakespeare Company and Executive Chairman, Urban&Civic

### Martin Sutherland

Chief Executive, Northamptonshire Arts Management Trust

### Martin Halliday

Chief Executive, Lowestoft Marina

### Flick Rea

Chair, Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, Local Government Association

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### Martin Sutherland: Chief Executive, Northamptonshire Arts Management Trust

*“The main impact of working in this way is a political one.”*

Martin Sutherland

Martin was unusual in that he not only ran two theatres through the Northamptonshire Arts Management Trust but was also involved with his Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Though acknowledging this was at times not his core business, he advocated sitting round the table with local councillors and business people. It was an important way to get culture’s voice heard and influence policy.

*“Working across the county means we are more attuned to the agendas of local authorities not directly on our doorstep.”*

Martin Sutherland

Martin described the way that LEPs work and how they have replaced the role of Regional Development Agencies. They exist in most areas and are comprised of local businesses. They also involve elected councillors and MPs from all parties. He said there is nothing to stop those running theatres applying to sit on them, as theatres are also part of the local business community. Through Martin’s influence Northampton’s LEP is now very focused on the creative industries and it considers what impact its decisions will have on the local creative economy.

Martin gave some specific examples of areas he had been able to influence. They included working with Corby Borough Council to help them develop their business plan for the town. He had also convinced the Northampton LEP to change the boundaries of its designated Enterprise Zone so that it included local arts organisations. This in turn led to the development of a Cultural Forum in the area, attended by the council leader, and a Cultural Quarter.

His message to the conference was to get involved with your local LEP. It meant you had a seat at the table when important investment decisions were being made: decisions that could have an impact on the future of your theatre.

### Martin Halliday: Lowestoft Marina

Like many Edwardian theatres, the Marina in Lowestoft had a rich heritage of repertory and variety, but by the 1990s was semi-derelict

and close to demolition. A friend of Martin’s convinced the local estate agent let him look around and he realised the town had a £20 million asset sitting on its doorstep. After some lobbying, the local authority voted to keep it, though it was administered through the recreation department and only put on occasional one night events, with no ambition, no marketing, and an audience largely made up of local amateur dramatic groups. Its upkeep was also haemorrhaging £500,000 a year for the council.

*“I was told: ‘Lowestoft is fish ‘n’ chips not champagne and caviar’.”*

Martin Halliday

When Martin was put in charge they told him ‘You’re the man who’s going to save our theatre’. He instigated a major programming change, cancelling more shows than he booked. He was told not to do opera and ballet. But when he programmed the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and opera from Eastern Europe it sold out.

*“My bosses used to think I went to a theatrical cash ‘n’ carry...”*

Martin Halliday

Given the pressures on its budget the local authority then decided to look at options for the future running of the theatre. When the theatre’s management contract was put out to tender, Martin decided to put in his own bid. It was accepted, and a new trust was established and trustees appointed. He emphasised the importance of having a broad range of trustees and that they shouldn’t have vested interests.

They got charitable status and started to look into refurbishing the theatre. Martin spoke despairingly of the obligation to use Council Procurement Teams as they can cost more than going out to the market. But they attracted a grant for the refurbishment and somehow negotiated being able to bypass the procurement team and negotiate directly with suppliers. They re-carpeted, re-seated and re-painted the auditorium, upgraded the cinema to digital and refurbished the foyer. They also took over the lease of a vacant building next door, converted it to a café, and got planning permission to join the two buildings together. Everything was procured from within the local area and the project came in on budget and on time. Almost all the money for this came from knocking on doors and canvassing local businesses in exchange for programme advertising and discounts for staff.

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*“Our nearest motorway is in Holland.”*

**Martin Halliday**

Location is still an issue for the theatre and attracting the promoters and companies can be hard. The Marina still receives no Arts Council funding. But despite that the Marina is about to enter its tenth year of collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic. Everything is paid for by bums on seats. He would love to be able to bring the National or RSC to Lowestoft, but simply can't afford the risk. He has an excellent relationship with the local authority. He has taken away their burden, brought in expertise they didn't have, and saved them a fortune.

**Flick Rea: Chair, Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, LGA**

Flick started her life as an actress and 30 years ago became a Lib Dem councillor in the London Borough of Camden. She is also the Chair of the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board of the Local Government Association (LGA). Flick described local authorities as 'place-makers' – the sense that councils had an obligation to make their areas not just liveable in but worth living in.

The culture committee which Flick chairs seeks to support local authorities in continuing to support culture despite difficult times. She admitted that this could be an uphill struggle.

*“Some local councillors have to be dragged gently into the 21st century.”*

Research in 2012 by the LGA showed that LGA members spend around £3 billion per year on cultural services. However, Flick warned that a spending cap for local authorities was likely to be brought in by 2020, which would be bleak news for the arts because they were not a statutory service.

*“Councillors need educating and, if necessary, need to be removed. That's what elections are for.”*

**Flick Rea**

Flick advised that what matters to local councillors is regeneration and growth. In making the case to a local authority a theatre should highlight its contribution to the visitor economy and talk about how it creates jobs. Research shows that businesses want to relocate to areas with good cultural provision so that they are attractive to employees and their families.

She also pointed out the importance of having a good relationship with your local authority – even if it wasn't based on funding. When they were on your side the local council could be hugely useful in cutting bureaucracy and not introducing policies that could negatively affect your theatre. Flick cited the example of the successful lobbying of Westminster Council when it had proposed putting up parking charges in the borough. Theatres had shown how this would affect their audiences – and ultimately the wider local economy. Flick ended by encouraging us all to be proactive and look further afield for new funding opportunities.

**Q and A**

Vikki Heywood asked Flick Rea for further advice on how theatres can work with their councils. Flick suggested a variety of measures including: partnership working and strategic commissioning; looking at how Sport England work with local councils; and signing up to LGA seminars or downloading their published booklets. However Flick did acknowledge that it was hard for councils to access the theatre sector as it is very disparate and doesn't have an easy single point of contact in any given area. Flick suggested that local consortia of arts and cultural bodies could provide a way for theatres to communicate more effectively with their local authorities.

Martin Halliday agreed, but urged us to make sure party politics did not influence arts consortia as they this would not be helpful to maintaining the cross-party dialogue which is needed. Flick concurred: the LGA is cross-party and has widespread agreement about the arts. The arts should not be a political issue, she said, nor should explaining to people why the arts matter. However, when Flick's comment was tweeted on the #thrivingtheatres hashtag, Ruth Mackenzie replied 'Should not but it is'.



Martin Halliday





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# Session #3

## Louder voices – speaking up for theatres as cultural and community assets

New planning initiatives create new challenges to theatres' future viability, operation and capital redevelopment plans. In this session we looked at the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on theatres and arts centres; lessons learnt by theatres engaging with the planning system and how they needed to be vigilant to the relaxation of planning regulations; where theatres were taking the lead in developing new community based venues and cultural facilities; and being recognised as Assets of Community Value.

**Chair: Dave Moutrey**

Director & Chief Executive, Cornerhouse & Library Theatre Company

**Alan Bishop**

Chief Executive, Southbank Centre

**Trudi Elliott CBE**

Chief Executive, The Royal Town Planning Institute

**Nica Burns**

Chief Executive and co-proprietor, Nimax Theatres Ltd

**Peter Steer**

Director, Derby Hippodrome Restoration Trust

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Dave Moutrey opened the session with his own case study. The 60-year old Library Theatre had merged with independent cinema and gallery the Cornerhouse in April 2012 and were to be housed in a new arts venue, HOME. Because the city council was procuring and building the new space, most problems had been ironed out before they got to the formal planning stage. The Council had also chosen not to charge CIL on the development.

**Alan Bishop: Chief Executive, Southbank Centre**

*“Commercial objectives can actually be well-integrated with artistic objectives – and profit both.”*

Alan Bishop

The focus of Alan's presentation concerned the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy on the new Southbank Centre Festival Wing redevelopment. The project involves updating the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Rooms and creating a significant new building between these two performing arts venues and the Heywood Gallery. There is a particular emphasis on creating space for literature, young people's projects and music, and on 'greening' – building roof gardens.

*“‘Reach’ is about attracting people to an arts centre who wouldn't normally go. By making the destination attractive in its own right, hopefully they'll bump into some art.”*

Alan Bishop

Alan outlined how the previous refurbishment of the Royal Festival Hall had created an 'active frontage' at ground level. This helped create a sense of leisure and relaxation along the waterfront – once a dreary road. The retail income generated from the new restaurants and shops now helps to pay for much of the art and 50% of the Southbank's cultural offer is now free to experience. Leasehold income from the retail units can also underwrite new borrowing to help with further investment. This has created a 'virtuous circle' between commerce and culture. The Southbank's commercial income is now equal to its ticket income.

*“Commercial activity is not some isolated part of our programme – it is actually critical to our future.”*

Alan Bishop

Alan highlighted some 'grey areas' around CIL. The Southbank had originally assumed that as a charity they would be exempt from the

'charge', but this was not the case. The basis of the charge rested on the percentage of time the new development would be used for commercial purposes versus cultural.

*“It's worth investing in the relationship with your local council – give them meetings and tours, updates and news. This is particularly important when it comes to how they choose to implement CIL.”*

Alan Bishop

There was also some confusion about the definition under CIL of 'existing spaces'. Technically, these are not liable, but it can be hard to define this if you are substantially adapting an existing space, and where and how the line is drawn was not at all clear. Alan's answer was 'Regulation 43' which gave some room for manoeuvre. It allows exemption from CIL for charities if the building is to be used 'wholly or mainly' for charitable purposes.

**Trudi Elliott: Chief Executive, The Royal Town Planning Institute**

*“Do something radical – go and read the National Planning Policy Framework. You might be surprised to find that there are lots of references in there to culture.”*

Trudi Elliott

Trudi attempted to give Conference an 'eight-minute trot' around recent planning changes, with some 'Planning Top Tips'.

Her first tip was to 'play the game' about what value we can create, in economic, community, environmental and social terms. She encouraged us to be 'proud, unashamed and persistent' about articulating this.

*“Be positive, solution-focused and terrier-like... Nobody likes a whinger.”*

Trudi Elliott

On the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), whilst it was true that thousands of pages had been condensed to fifty, Trudi did not feel it was entirely the case that it was a "developers' charter". There was scope to make it what we wanted it to be. Trudi suggested we learn by heart the core principle on 'health, social and cultural wellbeing' and the duty for planners to provide 'sufficient cultural services'. She also recommended finding out as soon as possible where your local authority was at in the

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process of defining and applying both CIL and developing their Local Plan and what opportunities existed to influence them.

**Nica Burns: Chief Executive and co-proprietor,  
Nimax Theatres Ltd**

*“Theatres need to stand up and be demanding.”*

**Nica Burns**

Nica admitted that when she became the owner of six London theatres she had seriously underestimated the amount of time that she would have to spend dealing with planning issues. In her words “London is ‘beseiged by planning’”.

*“My Executive Director has to monitor Westminster Council’s planning website every single day.”*

**Nica Burns**

Nica praised Westminster Council as an efficient and supportive council, which places theatres at the centre of its planning policies. But like most councils it was also having to make substantial savings and this had led to some oversights and errors amongst its planners. She described planning applications being sent to the wrong address, or the Council failing to consult The Theatres Trust (a statutory consultee).

Nica told some hair-raising tales about some planning near-misses, most memorably teaming up with The Theatres Trust, Really Useful Theatres and ATG to object to a planning application appeal for a block of flats right next to the stage door/get-in at the London Palladium. This would have prevented late night or Sunday get-ins, get-outs or concerts, would have forced the theatre to turn off its air conditioning units in the summer and left the theatre vulnerable to complaints by residents when star names were in the show due to the noise of fans at the stage door. In effect the development would have threatened the viability of the business.

*“Get to know your local Planning Officer so you can make your presence felt.”*

**Nica Burns**

Nica urged theatres to stand up and be more demanding – particularly in localities that were not exempt from the relaxation of planning regulations, which enabled developers to change office uses to residential without the need for planning permission. Unsuitable development should not be allowed to imperil hundreds of years of culture.

*“We must have development, but it should be the right kind of development, which can work as a neighbour.”*

**Nica Burns**

**Peter Steer: Director, Derby Hippodrome**

*“The Hippodrome is the first theatre to get onto a list of Community Assets.”*

**Peter Steer**

Peter gave an engaging potted history of ‘the Hippo’ as it is affectionately known in Derby. Opened in 1914 as a variety venue, with a 2,300 capacity in 1927 it went down in history when Bud Flanagan performed his song Underneath The Arches there. During the 1950s the Hippo became one of variety’s regional centres.

In 2007 it was bought by a developer who ignored its Grade 2 listed status and embarked on some disastrous repairs which saw the roof collapse. This was followed by two fires. The Derby Hippodrome Restoration Trust was formed to try to rebuild the theatre, at an estimated cost of £18-25 million.

In 2012 they successfully registered the theatre as an Asset of Community Value. Peter said that when attempting to establish a theatre as a Community Asset, four basic questions have to be answered. The first three are easy: Where is the land? Who owns it? And, is the Trust an acceptable nominator? The fourth was more complex: What are the reasons for the local authority to conclude that the land is of community value?

To answer this, Peter and the Trust drew on the Hippo’s rich social and cultural history. It was realistic to hope that the next five years could see a revival of the theatre’s fortunes.

#### **Q and A**

Mhora Samuel for The Theatres Trust asked how best we could influence planning decisions. Trudi Elliott responded that we are a small island with competing demands for space and a strong developer lobby. Theatres needed to be clear about the economic case they present and think of themselves as businesses too. They needed to engage with more Government bodies than just the DCLG and DCMS – for example, the Treasury and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). All agreed that theatres need to be ‘on the front foot’, actively monitoring planning applications, getting involved with LEPs and contributing to Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

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# Session #4

## Survive or thrive?

What are the leadership qualities and capital strategies which can make the difference between surviving and thriving? In our final session we looked at innovative schemes that had balanced risk and reward and created more financially, culturally and socially resilient theatres through implementing major capital and asset developments.

### Chair: Anna Stapleton

Administrative Director, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow

### Jim Beirne

Chief Executive, Live Theatre, Newcastle

### Colin Marr

Director, Eden Court, Inverness

### Gemma Playford

Senior Project Manager, Arup

### Neil Constable

Chief Executive, Shakespeare's Globe, London

### Jack Mellor

Theatre Manager, Theatre Royal, Plymouth

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The final panel of the day was chaired by Anna Stapleton of Glasgow's Citizens Theatre. Anna shared the story of her theatre's relationship with Glasgow Council which owns 'The Citz'. The theatre, which is listed on the city's Common Good Fund had been a local 'community asset' for over one hundred years.

### Jim Beirne: Chief Executive, Live Theatre

*"The more communities you can create around you, the stronger you will be."*

Jim Beirne

Newcastle's new writing venue Live Theatre celebrated its fortieth birthday in 2013. The company occupies historic buildings on the banks of the Tyne, some of which are over 500 years old. They have historically had a good relationship with both Arts Council England (ACE) and Newcastle City Council (NCC), as well as an average of 90% attendance for their shows in the 200-seat capacity theatre. With the recession Live realised it had to adapt to survive, and sought to secure its future by developing new social enterprises.

The first was an expansion into digital technology. The theatre's in-house training programme for playwrights is now offered online [www.beaplaywright.com](http://www.beaplaywright.com). It generates £15,000 per annum and is growing. The theatre then expanded its catering offer by buying up The Broad Chare pub next door and turning it into a gastropub run by a Michelin-starred chef. The income generated pays for 'one play a year'.

Live has also expanded into property development, and acquired the 1750 Schoolhouse next door. The building was purchased with the help of European funding and was transformed into a hub for cultural businesses. The purchase and refurbishment cost around £900,000 and it generates an annual income of £25,000 – £40,000. Most recently Live has been able to benefit from further European Regional Development Funding (£3m) and 'prudential borrowing' (£6m) where the Council borrows money on the theatre's behalf at a preferential rate. Live has purchased land next to the theatre to create a long term endowment for the organisation. 'LiveWorks' includes mixed use new and existing commercial offices and a public park and will generate around £500,000 per annum.

### Colin Marr: Director, Eden Court Inverness

*"We're the best attended per capita theatre in the UK."*

Colin Marr

Eden Court is a Category A listed 840-seat theatre in Inverness. It serves the entire Scottish Highlands, much of which is inaccessible by public transport: it is not unusual for the theatre's audiences to have to travel over three hours to reach the venue. Eden Court has annual attendances of around 350,000 (the Highland population is only 60,000).

When Colin took the venue over it was 50% reliant on subsidy. He led an ambitious £23 million capital project including a new 240-seat studio, 2 cinemas and facilities to enable it to host activity all-day, every day. The theatre's catering offer has increased, and it is now a venue of choice for events such as the Scottish Labour Party's annual conference. 70% of the Highland population has visited the theatre since its reopening. Subsidy now makes up only 21% of the theatre's turnover, and it employs 150 people – 60 of which are in its Creative Learning department.

*"You have to keep giving your staff the confidence to be involved. You do that by getting them involved early."*

Colin Marr

Colin recommended involving core staff closely in any design and construction process. Architects and builders were not the theatre experts so input was essential. He also advised being careful about putting the estimated project redevelopment cost into the public domain. When your project inevitably goes over budget, as it did at Eden Court, this exposes you to negative press stories. In hindsight, Colin also acknowledged that the theatre should have made more use of its audience as advocates. The public also expect a new building to be perfect, but it's important to manage expectations – even after opening there is still work to do. The redevelopment might take two years, Colin said, but you will spend five years learning how to run your building again.

### Gemma Playford, Senior Project Manager, Arup

*"If you start with the answer, you risk missing the best solution."*

Gemma Playford

Arup is a global consultancy firm of designers, planners and engineers. In the UK it has most recently been working with the Southbank Centre on its Festival Wing redevelopment. Improving access and circulation around the buildings was crucial to the project. Gemma spoke about how the Southbank had already been successfully 'animated' with people, commerce, pop-up art, installations and roof gardens replacing cars and roadways and as



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a result footfall had dramatically increased. This ethos of creating public space was central to the new Festival Wing development.

*“Be a strong client – you are the experts in your field.”*

**Gemma Playford**

One of Arup’s tasks had been to provide engineering solutions to create flexible public spaces with lots of loading points, acoustic support, floor boxes for power, vertical surfaces that could be used for projection and hanging art, circulation that provided flexibility for performances and oversized lifts and doors. Gemma stressed the need for getting the balance right between reward and risk in any redevelopment project. She emphasised three points: having a clear vision for what you want to achieve; giving the design team problems to solve rather than offering solutions yourself; and incorporating flexible public spaces.

**Jack Mellor: Manager, Theatre Royal Plymouth**

*“We survived by thriving – by building up the empire.”*

**Jack Mellor**

The Theatre Royal Plymouth is a 1970s-designed, adaptable theatre space seating between 750 and 1,300 which opened in 1982. It stages opera, dance and musicals, though is perhaps best known for its home-grown plays performed in The Drum, its 192-seat studio theatre. A series of cost-cutting measures implemented when the theatre was first built meant that it required refurbishment as early as the 1990s. In 2008 the theatre started to plan a ‘public spaces strategy’, which sought to improve the way people moved through and used the theatre building.

In 2012 they achieved planning permission and work is underway. The £7m scheme includes a new front extension, public realm works, and new entertaining and retail facilities. ACE has committed £5 million and Plymouth City Council is very supportive. A new Creative Learning Space will also provide the education programme based at TR2, its out-of-town workshops with a city centre base, including its own 100-seat studio.

**Neil Constable: Chief Executive, Shakespeare’s Globe**

*“Undertake a ‘master planning’ exercise to fully get a handle on how the site operates at all times of day and night.”*

**Neil Constable**

Neil reminded us that it is easy to forget that the Globe only opened in 1997. It is a historically-accurate reconstruction of Shakespeare’s famous theatre which burned down in 1613 and it can hold 700 ‘groundlings’ in its main standing area. The Globe attracts one million visitors a year and does not receive any Arts Council funding – though Neil acknowledged that the Globe was lucky with both its location and brand and its strong tourist appeal. Visitors can now experience an exhibition, a popular tour, and catering and events facilities. There is also a dedicated education department with its own separate space, the Sackler Studios.

The Globe will open a new theatre in January 2014, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, modelled on plans by Jacobean architect, John Webb. The project has involved theatre historians collaborating with archaeologists, present day architects and master craftsmen. The new auditorium will be as authentic as possible and candlelit. The Globe had to persuade its board to raise the £7.5 million cost. The new theatre will seat 350 and is expected to bring in £400,000 a year. Following the opening of the Playhouse, the Globe’s next capital project involves refurbishing the exhibition space and creating a new tour, a library and a Shakespeare archive. The Globe aims to become the pre-eminent place for discovering Shakespeare.

#### **Q and A**

A delegate asked if the new audiences being reached through these projects were unlimited. Jim Beirne replied that different ‘communities’ have different needs – and you needed to differentiate your offer to give something to each of them. Live Theatre’s community comprises artists, young people, local residents, the pub crowd – and they catered for all of them. He said “Gather friends so that you are loved.” Colin Marr agreed but said he had noticed that generally audiences’ appetite for riskier shows had diminished with the recession – audiences wanted more certainty when buying a ticket. Jack Mellor said that *War Horse* and *The Lion King* were sold at record high prices for their theatre, but both sold out.

Mhora Samuel for The Theatres Trust asked how we could encourage the kind of cultural tourism which sustains the Globe, elsewhere in the UK. Neil wasn’t sure – he said the Globe is very lucky. Jim Beirne said this was often linked to wider regeneration; Gateshead had been transformed in recent years. For Live Theatre, involving young people had been key. The great thing about youth theatre is that its members grow up. As adults, they become your next audience and hopefully also speak up for you. Neil concurred – a key part of the Globe’s strategy was using sponsorship to offer 50,000 free tickets a year to London schools.

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## The Last Word

Tom Morris  
Artistic Director, Bristol Old Vic

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*“When we arrived, we did a random sample and asked people in the foyer: Where’s the foyer? We got seven different answers.”*

Tom Morris

Tom Morris rounded off the day with a witty and engaging gallop through the history of Bristol’s Old Vic Theatre and its capital plans to redevelop the theatre’s front of house spaces. The oldest part of the theatre was originally built in 1766. The current team had learned a lot from the recent restoration of the auditorium, which had been based around its original design and brought the forestage back into the auditorium. Work was led by Andrzej Blonski and at times had felt more like an archaeological dig.

*“We think it’s the most beautiful theatre in Britain, but there are still people in Bristol who don’t know it’s there, because it’s hidden away from the street.”*

Tom Morris

He read a quote from Peter Moro, the architect who had refurbished the Old Vic in the 1970s: “A building that works well but is aesthetically unsatisfactory is as bad as a beautiful building that fails to function properly on the physical plane.”

Tom identified three questions that they were using during their capital planning: Does it work? Is it beautiful? Does it belong to the people of the city? He said these could be applied to any such project. These questions had led them to examine the way the bars and foyer areas worked and how their current layout limited circulation and income generation and had no face to the city. He shared architect’s Haworth Tompkins’ plans to rationalise the foyer spaces, improving their trading capacity and how it would, for the first time ever, reveal the theatre to the street, to the city of Bristol, and to the world.

Tom also had some good news about local councils. In Bristol, they had a Council which openly believed that culture was at the heart of a healthy city. Bristol’s elected Mayor, George Ferguson (who spoke at The Theatres Trust’s Conference 10), was an architect and former RIBA President, and owner of the Tobacco Factory.

Tom felt that we were experiencing a historic reversal of government centralisation of power, what Michael Heseltine called ‘a peasant’s revolt’ and theatres need to be a part of it.

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## Final thoughts

Vikki Heywood CBE  
Conference Chairman

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Vikki Heywood then took the floor and led us through some ideas, some unanswered questions, and some challenges arising from the day. One idea was the need for a toolkit to measure the value of cultural assets. Another was a challenge to us all to take the lead. A third was to harness the opportunities presented by the planning system. Yet another was to be brave and look at the ways in which capital projects could diversify a theatre’s income.

However, there were several unanswered questions. The first was how could we help the Office for National Statistics measure the ‘Cultural Wellbeing’ achieved by theatres? Another was how to respond to Nica Burns’s challenge and make planners more aware of the implication of planning decisions on theatres – how could we strengthen our case?

And there was the question of whether we could be better at engaging audiences in raising awareness of the value of theatres. On capital projects, was there more room for flexibility in the procurement process to provide better value for money and creative outcomes? More fundamentally, Vikki asked whether we could ever truly future-proof our buildings? Every theatre building seemed to need to undergo two or three refurbishments within one human lifetime as technology, people, and cultural habits changed.

Vikki thanked everyone for sharing the journey and in particular the sponsors for all their help and support. She also thanked the conference production team and the St James Theatre for their sterling work and Mhora Samuel and The Theatres Trust for their leadership in bringing everyone together.

Looking forward, Vikki felt the challenge for next year’s Theatres Trust conference was to make sure that we heard from the communities with whom we share the running of our buildings. What were their challenges? And what have been the results?

We need to find new ways to tell our stories to make an even greater impact, she concluded: “After all, we’ve proved today that we are the best story-tellers and we do tell our stories brilliantly.”

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# Voxpops

## Comments from conference attendees



**Jim Beirne, Chief Executive, Live Theatre**

*Am I an entrepreneur? I'm more interested in art. But the way we've done all of these things is by thinking like a private sector business. It's a bit ironic really; given that Live is a former Marxist co-op.*

**Jiselle Steele, Livity**

*Times like this are an opportunity for theatres to come into their own and demonstrate what they can do with not very much.*

**Gregor McGregor, The Grand Pavilion Ltd**

*The way to argue to the government that money should be spent on the arts is that a) it will be well spent and b) that it will get a reward... Successful city centres have become successful because people are putting on the arts.*

**Annett Baumast, Baumast Culture and Sustainability**

*What I've found really interesting today is how much discussion is going on about 'opening the doors'. That's stuck with me as one key idea... I find there's a lot going on here we can learn from. The whole community and people-centred discussion is definitely what I'm taking away.*

**David Brownlee, Theatrical Management Association**

*I thought that many of the stories that were told were just wonderful, and really helped to show our diversity and strength. I think what encouraged*

*me more than anything else was the number of people who were speaking about the importance of engaging – really, meaningfully engaging – with their public, to ensure that it wasn't the theatre presenting 'to' their communities, but that it was about the people's theatre, and about how we can work together in the future.*

**Emma Rees, London Theatre Consortium**

*The afternoon sessions were saying really strongly and clearly, be part of your community, be engaging, be irresistible, be exciting, be interesting, be important. In future we're all going to have to know what our organisations do in the communities they're based in. Both Colin Marr at Eden Court and Jim Beirne of Live said the same thing – they have so many different audiences. We're going to have to know who those audiences are, and how we keep our relationships with them going.*

**Anne Minors, Anne Minors Performance Consultants**

*We've been through quite a big cycle of theatre building and a real revival of theatre. All that theatre building activity has brought its own success. But that's happened and now we're moving into the next stage.*

**Matt Lloyd, GDS**

*There were some great success stories. Live Theatre in Newcastle was tiny a few years ago, but look at what it's achieved. You have a building, an asset, and a team – use them.*



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# Key principles

Vikki Heywood asked some key questions in her piece for The Theatres Trust's *tm*, *Theatres Magazine*, accompanying the conference. Conclusions from the day are provided in answer to her questions.

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## How can we develop and utilise entire theatre buildings to be of use to our local communities?

Recognise that different communities have different needs – think about how your building currently meets their needs and how this could be improved.

Design spaces that will make your audiences feel welcome, at home and special.

Consider the 'openness' of your theatre building (both literal and metaphorical) and the local community's sense of ownership.

Offer foyer areas to local groups, such as parents and children during the day, encouraging them to purchase tickets for performances.

Think about how you will attract young people to use your theatre and how you will support their creative development – you don't need a dedicated education space, but it helps.

Design your public spaces as flexibly as possible with good circulation, loading points, acoustic support, power, and vertical surfaces for projection and hanging art, and where possible oversized lifts and doors.

Consider opening up unused public space to commercial development but demonstrate clearly how this meets your charitable or artistic objectives.

Animate public spaces to improve footfall and, if linked to commercial opportunities, help meet programming costs.

Provide space that gives your community the opportunity to try out new ideas and enables talent to flourish – you could achieve a creative return on investment.

Reduce reliance on public subsidy by building new spaces which open up your theatre to new users – and new income streams.

Develop commercial activity on your site or strengthen your asset base to underwrite further borrowing.

Bring in communities and young people and nurture your future audiences and advocates – ten of the day's 17 speakers cited young people as crucial to their present survival and future plans.

Get audiences to show how much they care – you are the custodians of their theatre and they are your best advocates.

## If there is a different model that works, what would that look like?

Nominate your theatre as an Asset of Community Value with your local authority. You don't have to be at risk to do this – being on your local list sends a clear message that your local theatre matters.

Consider the potential of associated social and educational enterprises to diversify your theatre's activity, reach and income.

Develop capital projects that play to the strengths of your organisation and provide spaces to diversify activity.

Nurture your audiences as 'citizen philanthropists', each raising and donating small sums to your theatre.

If your local theatre is being sold, consider forming a local consortium to take on the building.

Work with your local authority – they are important allies and are very influential in decisions related to infrastructure spending. They also have access to 'prudential borrowing'.

When looking for investment for capital redevelopment consider what impact you will have on economic growth, regeneration, jobs, and social and cultural wellbeing – it could open up opportunities to benefit from the Community Infrastructure Levy, European funds (through the Local Enterprise Partnership), and locally distributed growth funds.

Consider how best to procure your capital project – try to select a process that doesn't crowd out creative flexibility.

## How do we engage, consult and influence when there are so many diverse groups and plans?

Think local – find out if there is a local forum or group which is developing a Neighbourhood Plan and join it. (You can nominate your theatre as an Asset of Community Value in the Neighbourhood Plan).

Work with education partners to commission research about the value of local arts and culture.

Provide space in your theatre for a local consortium of arts and cultural bodies to meet and communicate more effectively with your local authority.

Find out if you or one of your board members could get onto the panel of your Local Enterprise Partnership. If all the places are taken, find out when new appointments will be considered, and how you could engage in the meantime.

Follow the fundraising mantra – be prepared – make sure you have the right people asking the right people at the right time.

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### **How important is it for theatres to have a presence on these forums?**

Your theatre is part of the bigger picture – make sure local forums understand the value of your theatre in the context of economic, housing and infrastructure targets.

Influence development so that it takes place, in the right place – and doesn't have a negative impact on the viability of your theatre.

Be clear about your theatre's economic case and think of yourself as a business which brings value to an area just like any other.

By talking regularly to your local authority you can help them understand the impact of their decisions upon their local theatre.

### **How can theatres make their voices heard in this new planning system – which increasingly seeks to relax regulations that have previously protected them?**

Get to know your local authority's Planning Officer. If you don't get a response go through your local Councillor.

Make sure your Planning Officer knows that they are legally required to consult The Theatres Trust if development involves any land on which there is a theatre.

Check your council's website for planning applications in your local area which might affect your theatre. And if you are in an area where change of use from office or retail to residential doesn't require planning permission make sure planning officers are aware of the impact upon your operation and if 'Article 4' directions could be applied to restrict development.

Read the National Planning Policy Framework and share the following core planning principle with others: Planning should 'take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs'.

Find out what stage your local authority is at in the process of defining and applying both the Community Infrastructure Levy and developing its Local Plan – it could be as simple as being put onto a mailing list to receive consultation notices.

Talk to your local authority if you are planning a capital development – as well as resolving planning issues you could be liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy – simply being a charity does not exempt you from being charged. 'Regulation 43' gives exemption from The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for charities if the building is to be used 'wholly or mainly' for charitable purposes.

### **What should we be doing as an industry to make our case?**

Demonstrate the value of your theatre to local regeneration and growth – it will mean Councillors are more likely to listen.

Consider how the Office for National Statistics is measuring 'Cultural Wellbeing' and how you can demonstrate you are delivering this.

### **Highlight your theatre's contribution to the visitor economy – can you show where your audiences come from?**

Prove how you create jobs and improve the prospects of young people.

Ask your audiences to make the case for your theatre to their local MPs and Councillors.

If your theatre is listed as an Asset of Community Value – let everyone know. This could be a material consideration in planning applications and proves your worth to your community.

Consider the Mayor of Liverpool's description of culture as the 'rocket fuel' of the local economy – what are you driving?

Ask yourself where your sphere of influence begins and ends – does your work only relate to DCMS and DCLG agendas? Perhaps what you are doing is of interest to the Treasury, the Department for Education or to Business, Innovation and Skills?

### **How might planning guidance advise local authorities and developers to maximise the value and impact of their theatres to create sustainable communities?**

Make it clear, as Nica Burns said, that theatres understand the need for development, "but it should be the right kind of development, which can work as a neighbour".

Help to guide the allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy towards investment in your theatre and the delivery of 'sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs'.

Work with your local planning authority to establish a way of valuing your local theatre as an Asset of Community Value – could you help them create a local toolkit?

Harness your creative talents and storytelling abilities to show local authorities and developers how theatres help create sustainable communities.

# Attendees

**Andrew Aldis** Spa, Bridlington  
**Kerida Allaway** Dept for Communities and Local Government  
**India Aspin** Foster Wilson Architects  
**Deborah Aydon** Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse  
**Matthew Baker** Foster Wilson Architects  
**Chris Baldwin** ShowTex  
**Polly Bansal** Andrzej Blonski Architects  
**Grant Barden** Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff  
**Jason Barnes** ABTT  
**Peter Barnett** Shoreditch Town Hall, London  
**Annett Baumast** Baumast, Culture & Sustainability  
**James Bawn** A C Special Projects Ltd  
**Darren Beckley** Stage Electrics  
**David Beidas** New Stages Ltd  
**Jim Beirne** Live Theatre, Newcastle  
**Craig Bennett** White Light Ltd  
**Ken Bennett-Hunter** The Stage  
**Miranda Bertram** Park Theatre, London  
**Deborah Bestwick** Ovalhouse, London  
**Chenine Bhatena** Greater London Authority  
**Vicky Biles** York Theatre Royal  
**Peter Bingham** Royal Central School of Speech and Drama  
**Alan Bishop** Southbank Centre, London  
**Sandy Blair** Creative Scotland  
**Adam Blaxill** Stage Electrics  
**David Blyth** Ambassador Theatre Group  
**Julien Boast** Hall for Cornwall  
**Angela Bond** The Theatres Trust  
**Paul Braddock** Wigwam Acoustics Ltd  
**Mike Bradford** Birmingham Hippodrome  
**Suzie Bridges** Suzie Bridges Architects  
**David Brownlee** Theatrical Management Association  
**Richard Bull** Institute of Education, University of London  
**Bernadette Burbridge** Riding Lights Theatre Company  
**Nica Burns** Nimax Theatres Ltd  
**Joanna Bussell** Winckworth Sherwood LLP  
**Fiona Callaghan** Criterion Theatre Trust, London  
**Peter Carey** Donald Insal Associates  
**Kate Carmichael** The Theatres Trust  
**Mary Caws** Theatre Royal Stratford East, London  
**Roland Chadwick** Audio Light Systems Ltd  
**Neil Chandler** Woodville Halls, Gravesend  
**Nargis Christopher** Trinity College London  
**Nick Clark** The Independent  
**John Clarke** GVA Acuity  
**Hazel Clover** Clover Theatre Management  
**Natasha Coccia-Clark** Bridge Academy, Hackney, London  
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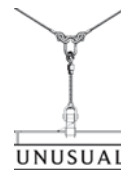
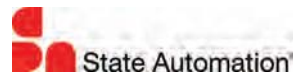
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