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Theatres Trust announces Theatres at Risk Register for 2018

Comedian Dara Ó Briain urges local authorities and communities to rally together to save their local theatres.

Theatres Trust has announced its **Theatres at Risk Register 2018** with a call for local authorities to better support their theatre buildings by developing the opportunities they offer to their communities. The Register lists 35 theatre buildings across England, Scotland and Wales that are most at risk of being lost - even though each has real potential for a sustainable future as a working performance space. The 2018 Register, which was launched at the **Soho Theatre, London**, saw **Theatres Trust** Trustee, comedian and television presenter **Dara Ó Briain** lending his support. He said:

"This is a list of 35 theatres, from all over the country, each different and unique, but all sharing one thing; they are at risk of being lost forever, but they are also so, aching, close to being saved. They are not on this list because they are beautiful ruins; they're here because they are just a few good decisions from living again; of taking their place at the heart of their communities, of entertaining further generations.

Today we're asking local authorities to stop viewing these sites as liabilities, and start thinking of them as opportunities; to work with eager local campaign groups and experienced theatre operators to put these incredible spaces back to work at the heart of their communities. And the call goes to the public as well. These campaigns work, these buildings can be saved, and you can help bring these wonderful theatres back to life."

Jon Morgan, Director of Theatres Trust, said: "The 2018 Register clearly demonstrates those venues that receive support from their local authority are much more likely to take an assured path towards an ongoing life as a performance venue. These are challenging times for local authorities, as they are under tight financial pressures, but our evidence shows that through collaboration and creative partnerships, these venues are opportunities for local authorities to support and stimulate their local economy, provide a focus for local pride and act as an important community resource."

The **Theatres Trust's Theatres at Risk Register**, now in its 11th year, highlights and supports theatre buildings under threat of closure or demolition. Theatres can be at risk for a variety of reasons, including loss of funding, lack of maintenance, or neighbouring development. Any number of these can have an adverse effect on the venue and its ability to operate.

The Trust has been working with theatre buildings and local authorities to find creative solutions in order to keep buildings such as those on the Register in use. The industry body is encouraging local authorities to embrace and develop creative partnerships that secure new lives for these buildings with the following practical recommendations:

- Reviewing the economic and social benefits of a theatre when making any decision about its future

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

- Ensuring the inclusion of culture within local plans to promote and encourage new venues and protect existing buildings.
- Offering full support to community groups campaigning to get buildings back into use, such as suspending demolition proposals, putting their support behind funding bids etc.
- Intervening to prevent deterioration of listed buildings through repairs notices, section 215 notices etc.
- Providing assistance to groups to investigate the viability of their theatre and develop proposals
- Offering theatre campaign and community groups leases with a reasonable length and conditions, to enable them to secure funding from other partners
- Offering affordable rents to operators that want to develop the theatres as future performance spaces
- Offering capital grants and / or loans to support capital works projects

Jon Morgan concludes “Each theatre on the **Theatres at Risk Register** has the potential to have a life as a performance space and each deserves the opportunity to explore how this potential can be realised. National government needs to get involved too, by fostering and improving its planning frameworks to support local authorities in developing their existing buildings. Theatres Trust will be participating in the forthcoming national consultations on these planning frameworks for England, Scotland and Wales, to ensure that theatre buildings are given the best chance to prosper.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors below.

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Theatres at Risk Register 2018

There are 35 buildings on the Theatres at Risk Register 2018. Theatres Trust launches its 2018 Register at Soho Theatre on 23 January 2018 at 10.30am - 12.30. The event is kindly sponsored by Integro Entertainment & Sport Insurance Brokers, and hosted by Soho Theatre.

If you would like a press pass to the event please email: press@theatrust.org.uk. Download the Theatres Trust Theatres at Risk Register 2018 List, map and risk criteria

Our work with Theatres at Risk goes right to the heart of what we do – protecting theatres for everyone. We work with local groups, theatre operators and local authorities up and down the country to help find creative and sustainable solutions either to restore and reopen these buildings or to keep their buildings open.

The annual launch of the Register is aimed at highlighting and raising the profile of those theatre buildings we consider to be most at risk across the UK.

These theatres are assets to the local community; economic drivers for job creation and for the night time economy; and place makers. They should be viewed not as theatres at risk but as buildings of opportunity.

Notes on Register

1. This year's Register sees a greater emphasis placed on the Community Value category which establishes the community demand for the retention and protection of a theatre, and it makes an assessment of the viability of the building as a performance venue.
2. The Register sees two new additions this year, the **Theatre Royal, Margate** and **Streatham Hill Theatre, London**. The Theatre Royal in Margate was removed from the Register in 2012 when the council agreed to temporarily subsidise it but it has been re-added. A theatre operator has recently been appointed as the Council's preferred partner for the operation of the building. However there is a need for a considerable capital works project to restore the venue and provide cross-subsidising facilities to sustain the theatre's ongoing operation. Significant capital funding is required and yet to be secured, which leaves the future of the theatre in doubt.
3. The second theatre new to this year's Register is **Streatham Hill Theatre**, a building that has been monitored by the Theatres Trust for many years. The Grade II listed Sprague theatre is now under threat after the main bingo operation within the building closed.

4. There are three removals from the 2018 Register, all of which involve demolition, though two of the buildings - **Colwyn Bay Pier Pavilion** and the **Royal Victoria Hall in Southborough** - have new performance venues planned, with the Theatres Trust working with the groups concerned to ensure the most practical solution is achieved. The third removal from the list is the **Futurist Theatre in Scarborough** where the council has approved demolition of the building - a huge loss to the local community and to future generations of Scarborough residents. The c. £4 million price tag to demolish the theatre, a complex operation as it supports the cliff face beyond, sees the building replaced by an empty site, a cost that could have seen a restored and reopened venue. The contractor has taken possession on the site and enabling works are now underway with demolition programmed to commence in March 2018.
5. It is our ambition to remove theatres from the Register because they have been saved and we work with campaign groups, operators and councils to try to achieve this. Many theatres on the Register have made significant advances through partnership but remain on the Register until long-term viability can be assured. For example, although **Alexandra Palace Theatre** currently has works on site to reactivate the space, the Park and Palace Trust have yet to achieve their capital fundraising target.
6. Eighty years after its original reopening **Peterborough Broadway** is operational again after a local Charitable Trust secured a 20 year lease on the building. The Broadway is currently programmed up until 2019. Theatres Trust initially challenged an application to turn the building into a residential site on the grounds that the application failed to demonstrate that The Broadway was not viable as a cultural venue, and the Theatres Trust is currently offering the new operator advice and support for the continued sustainable operation of the venue.
7. **Dudley Hippodrome** has seen its local authority allowing the Friends group to take control of the building in an attempt to bring it back to operational use. However, the length of the lease issued - only five years – has meant that the Friends have not been able to leverage funding. The group are in discussions with the council to extend the lease. Should the discussions prove unsuccessful the building could once more be under threat of demolition. Over past years Theatres Trust has been active in persuading the council not to demolish the building. We are currently engaging with the council in discussions over the lease, and are supporting the Friends group with their business planning.
8. The **Secombe** and the **Charles Cryer in Sutton** have been closed since 2016 following the operator going into administration. Whilst it was hoped that the London Borough of Sutton would consider bids to reopen the theatres, the council will only offer the buildings on a commercial lease. Their closure makes Sutton the only London borough now without a theatre. Theatres Trust believe these theatres could be saved through offering a peppercorn lease to a community operator, and have been in discussions with the council to highlight the importance of the economic and community benefits of retaining the theatres. Buildings such as these can bring positive value to the community economically, as well as have an impact on placemaking.
9. Success stories on the Register include the **Odeon/New Victoria, Bradford** with the future of the venue looking positive. Theatres Trust has previously challenged

an application to demolish the building and provided ongoing support to campaign groups and local authorities. Bradford Live, the group behind the restoration of the theatre have recently announced the NEC Group International (part of Birmingham's NEC Group) as their operating partner. NEC have taken on a 30 year lease and will be contributing £2 million towards the conversion costs. The council has been very supportive of Bradford Live both in backing of funding applications and in providing some capital towards urgent repairs. In December 2017 the Council Executive agreed 'in principle' to provide a £12 million loan to Bradford Live towards the anticipated £20 million restoration costs.

10. Soho Theatre, London has also been working with the owners of **Walthamstow Granada** to create a high quality proposal for a new comedy and theatre venue in the former cine-variety building. This is an area of London where Soho Theatre are already actively involved in a community education programme for young people, and the London Borough of Waltham Forest is supportive of Soho's ambition. The building would provide a new performance space for the Borough of Waltham Forest which does not currently have a major permanent theatre or performance space.
11. Other theatres on the Register actively considering their viability and developing business plans, or undertaking options appraisals, include **Brighton Hippodrome, Swansea Palace, Burnley Empire, Spilsby Theatre, Salford Victoria** and **Leith Theatre, Edinburgh**. Once achieved, these should bolster campaign groups' confidence, and provide evidence to local authorities and communities, that the theatres have a viable future and should be supported.
12. The full Register 2018 and information sheets for each theatre on it will be available publicly online on 23 January 2018). More information on other theatres on the Register theatretrust.org.uk/how-we-help/theatres-at-risk

Images

Key images of theatres mentioned above can be downloaded from dropbox.com/sh/jwxiyavalctnwa7/AABYGgOS-PwRG6iu__AWImpLa?dl=0

For all other images please contact the Theatres Trust.

Assessment of Risk

There are 35 buildings on this year's Theatres at Risk Register.

As in previous years theatres at risk are assessed on 3 criteria - Building Risk; Star Rating; and Community Value, definitions of which are given below. Every building is given a score between 0 and 3 in each category. These scores are then added together to give a total Risk Value. The maximum score is 9 and the minimum to ensure inclusion on the list is 4.

This year we have reassessed the Community Value category to include the viability of the building as a performance venue. The definition of Community Value is explained below.

We have also weighted the categories slightly differently this year: where the total risk score for theatres is the same, the Community Value, which includes the viability of the venue, takes precedence. This is followed by the Star Rating and then the Risk Rating. Lastly, if all criteria scores are equal, the buildings are listed alphabetically.

Definitions of Risk Criteria

Building Risk: theatres are assessed and given a 'Building Risk' rating of 1 - 3 dependent on whether the risk to the building is perceived as low (1 point), medium (2 points) or high (3 points).

Risk criteria in this category includes the following:

- **Demolition**
- **Alteration to another use, particularly when this involves a change of Use Class**
- **Local development adversely affecting theatre operation or restricting expansion / improvement**
- **Threat through sale or change of ownership**
- **Threat to building fabric, e.g. decay of a building not in use or the removal of significant features**
- **Threat to building fabric, i.e. irreversible works which may prevent a return to theatre use, or damage to (or removal of) specifically theatrical materials**
- **Capital or revenue concerns**
- **Poor quality of building operation threatening the continuing or future theatre use of the building**

– **Other external issues affecting theatre operation**

– **High cost of maintenance / refurbishment works**

Star Rating: this is a qualitative judgement on the importance of the theatrical qualities of a theatre. This includes a building's architectural quality, workability as a theatre, heritage, and geographical uniqueness. Points are awarded from 1 - 3. A theatre must score at least 1 point to be on the register.

3 points are awarded where it is a very fine theatre, of the highest theatrical quality.

2 points are given to a fine theatre which is an excellent example of its type.

1 point is given to a theatre which is of some interest or quality.

0 points are applied to a building which is of lesser interest, half complete, irretrievably altered, or a complete but unremarkable theatre.

Community Value: this establishes the community demand for the retention and protection of a theatre. Importantly this category now includes the viability of the building as a performance venue. Points are awarded between 0 - 3 and are allocated as follows:

3 points are awarded where there is clear community demand and viability for the building to be used as a theatre.

2 points are given to a theatre where there is a possibility and demand for returning the building to performance use - this could include community performances / music.

1 point is awarded to a theatre where there is potential for the building to be brought into use as a community facility with no / minimal community performance.

0 points are applied to a building which would have a future in uses other than as a live performance or community venue.

Theatres at Risk Register 2018

	Theatre	Listing	Building Risk	Star Rating	Community Value	Total Risk
1	Brighton Hippodrome	II*	3	3	3	9
2=	Theatre Royal, Margate NEW	II*	2	3	3	8
2=	Victoria Pavilion/Winter Gardens, Morecombe	II*	2	3	3	8
4	Dudley Hippodrome	Not listed	3	2	3	8
5=	Victoria Theatre, Salford	II	3	3	2	8
5=	Winter Gardens Pavillion, Blackpool	II*	3	3	2	8
7=	Century Theatre, Coalville, Leicestershire	Not listed	2	2	3	7
7=	Granada, London Borough of Waltham Forest	II*	2	2	3	7
7=	Spilsby Theatre, Lincolnshire	II	2	2	3	7
7=	Streatham Hill Theatre, London Borough of Lambeth NEW	II	2	2	3	7
11=	Kings Theatre (Former): Continental Restaurant & Ballroom, Dundee	B	3	1	3	7
11=	The Cryer, London Borough of Sutton	Not listed	3	1	3	7
11=	The Secombe, London Borough of Sutton	Not listed	3	1	3	7
14=	Burnley Empire	II	3	2	2	7
14=	Plymouth Palace	II*	3	2	2	7
16	Hulme Hippodrome, Manchester	II	3	3	1	7
17	Leith Theatre, Edinburgh	B	1	2	3	6
18	The Broadway, Peterborough	Not listed	2	1	3	6
19=	Conwy Civic Hall (Cube)	II	3	1	2	6
19=	Coronet, Elephant and Castle, London Borough of Southwark	Not listed	3	1	2	6
19=	Mechanics Institute, Swindon	II*	3	1	2	6
19=	North Pier Pavillion, Blackpool	II	3	1	2	6
23	King's Theatre, Kirkcaldy	B	1	1	3	5
24	Tameside Hippodrome, Ashton-under-Lyne	II	1	2	2	5
25=	Garston Empire, Liverpool	Not listed	2	1	2	5
25=	Odeon/New Victoria, Bradford	Not listed	2	1	2	5
27	Grand Theatre, Llandudno	II*	1	3	1	5
28=	Doncaster Grand	II	2	2	1	5
28=	Swansea Palace	II	2	2	1	5
28=	Theatre Royal, Hyde, Cheshire	II	2	2	1	5
31	Derby Hippodrome	II	3	1	1	5
32	Alexandra Palace Theatre, London Borough of Haringey	II	1	1	2	4
33	Hulme Playhouse, Manchester	II	1	2	1	4
34	Theatre Royal, Manchester	II	2	2	0	4
35	Wokington Opera House	Not listed	3	1	0	4

Removed

Theatre	Listing	
Futurist, Scarborough	Not listed	To Be Demolished (March 2018)
Pier Pavillion, Colwyn Bay	II	Now Dismantled
Royal Victoria Hall, Southborough, Kent	Not listed	Now Demolished

