



Over 50% of charity-run small theatres could fail in the next 3 months without government support

Due to the Covid-19 crisis and temporary closures of theatres, 57% of small theatres in the UK could fail without government support. Theatres Trust warns that as many as 136 small local theatre operators could go into administration in the next three months. In response, Theatres Trust has announced a package of additional support for small theatres to help them survive the impact of Covid-19.

At this critical moment, the national public advisory body for theatres is increasing its support for these smaller theatres including:

- Taking on an additional adviser to help small theatres with business planning, budgeting and cashflow, fundraising and essential building maintenance.
- Creating a new Theatres Trust Skills Bank to match theatres with experts willing to offer pro bono advice on preparing to reopen including hygiene and social distancing needs and general property management.
- Repurposing its small grants programme to support theatres to cover the additional costs of reopening after several months' closure, including making adaptations for increased hygiene and social distancing measures.

The UK has a world-leading theatre industry and the small local theatres across the country are vital not just as places of entertainment but as community centres. Theatres Trust is lobbying the government and providing additional support to ensure that theatres are still there for communities around the UK to return to when the crisis is over. Local theatres include venues which are at the very heart of their local communities like Market Theatre Ledbury, Sheringham

Little Theatre and Settle Victoria Hall, the oldest music hall in the world which has become a true community centre delivering shopping, prescriptions and making PPE during the Covid-19 crisis.

The role of Theatres Trust is to ensure everyone can access live performance where they live.

Almost 40% of the UK's theatres are small local venues and more than half of these – around 240 – are run by small charities. 38% of these have only one month's reserves and 19% only have three months' reserves. Without additional government support, including the full continuation of the Job Retention Scheme, many will have to permanently close their doors.

Theatres Trust Director Jon Morgan comments, *These are tough times for the theatre sector and we are talking to the government about the additional support theatres need, but we hope that with these resources we can help more theatres to survive the current crisis. We have already seen some operators go into administration and unfortunately others are likely to follow, but Theatres Trust has a strong track record of supporting theatres to be saved and returned to cultural use and is working to ensure that no theatres are permanently lost due to Covid-19.*

Jon Morgan sits on the Entertainment and Events Working Group which is working with DCMS and health officials to determine how theatres can reopen with minimised risks to staff, performers and audiences. Alongside this, Theatres Trust is calling for the government to invest in the theatre sector, including extending the furlough scheme for theatres to protect operators from going into administration.

Notes to Editors

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| Title | Theatres Trust |
| Website | www.theatrestrust.org.uk |
| Twitter | @TheatresTrust |
| Photo | Settle Victoria Hall |

Theatres Trust

Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We believe that current and future generations should have access to good quality theatre buildings where they can be inspired by, and enjoy, live performance. We champion the future of live performance by protecting and supporting excellent theatre buildings which meet the needs of their communities. We do this by

providing advice on the design, planning, development and sustainability of theatres, campaigning on behalf of theatres old and new and offering financial assistance through grants.

Theatres Trust's advice service offers free support to theatres owners, operators, local authorities and campaign groups trying to save their local theatre. Specialist advisers offer advice on issues including capital projects, viability and planning. The additional adviser will focus on helping smaller theatres with issues ranging from business planning, fundraising and essential business maintenance. They will also match theatres with experts through the Theatres Trust Skills Bank and assess applications to the grant schemes.

Theatres Trust Skills Bank will match theatre operators needing specialist support with experts willing to give pro bono advice. This could range from cashflow guidance to how to adapt their building for reopening. A number of leading theatre consultants and suppliers to the theatre industry have already signed up, including Avison Young, Charcoalblue, Gardiner and Theobald, Greenwood Projects, Hayes Parsons, Paddy Dillon Architect, Plann and Unusual Rigging.

Theatres Trust runs the UK Small Grants Programme and London Small Theatres Grants Programme. Funding from these schemes are normally restricted to capital improvement projects and emergency repairs, but in light of Covid-19, theatre organisations will be able to apply for grants towards adapting their buildings for reopening, in line with any new health and safety guidance.

Theatres Trust Database includes information on all of the UK's theatre buildings. There are approximately 1,130 theatres in active use as performance venues. Of these, 440 (39%) are small venues with fewer than 200 seats. 239 (54%) of these small venues are run by charities. Using records held at the Charities Commission, we have identified that 90 (38%) of these charity-run small theatres have less than one month's reserves and 46 (19%) have less than 3 months' reserves.

Local theatre case studies

Settle Victoria Hall is the world's oldest music hall, which has been entertaining audiences since 1853. It acts as a hub for its rural community, hosting more than 150 events each year, and is a community meeting space in the daytime. Since the lockdown, it has become a community response hub, co-ordinating the delivery of prescriptions and shopping, pet care, liaison with local services and businesses and providing a calm, friendly, trusted voice on the other end of the phone for isolated and vulnerable people. A meeting room has been converted into a 'visor workshop', assembling more than 2,200 masks that have been sent out to care homes, ambulance stations, hospitals, medical centres and professionals, and others throughout the area.

The Market Theatre Ledbury is a 128-seat theatre which was purpose-built in 2000 by its owner and resident company, Ledbury Amateur Dramatic Society (LADS). The theatre is Ledbury's dedicated

entertainment venue, and in normal circumstances stages an average of two events a week throughout the year. These include films, live screenings received by satellite from London and Stratford-upon-Avon, live drama and music presented by touring professional companies, and four to five of LADS' own live performances, including the annual panto in January. The theatre is also used by local schools, dance troupes and drama schools for recitals and presentations in the summer, and a two week summer workshop is hosted for local children to prepare and present a full-scale musical production. The overall annual audience for these events totals close to 10,000. LADS has a thriving Youth Theatre Company which provides a weekly workshop for youngsters to learn drama, dance and stagecraft. The theatre is also used as a venue for a variety of other activities, including embroidery classes, music practice, Mothers' Union meetings, and kiddies' dance and drama sessions. During its closure the theatre has provided charitable grants to local music and drama groups whose future contribution to its artistic programme might otherwise be lost.

Sheringham Little Theatre is a 160-seat theatre in a small coastal town in North Norfolk. It has been at the heart of the community since it was a community hall in Victorian times, and a moving picture house in the 1920s. As a theatre with a summer repertory season for 60 years, it should have been celebrating that diamond milestone this year as one of the country's last remaining outposts of traditional 'rep'. An average of 30,000 people enjoy around 425 shows a year – ranging from movies and music, to 'am dram' plays and professional touring productions. The venue also has a busy Hub café where people meet in the day and it runs a thriving youth theatre and after-school drama classes for local young people. The theatre provides community and friendship for over 100 volunteers, dementia singing for wellbeing and special dementia-friendly shows, as well as outreach performances for care homes. During the crisis, the theatre has donated 'spare food and drink' to local food banks and care homes. Its volunteer trustees have rallied to post and co-ordinate information and entertainment online to keep the theatre alive while the doors are locked.

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