



## Theatres Trust awards grants of c£49,000 to improve accessibility and viability

Through its partnership with The Linbury Trust, Theatres Trust is awarding £49,476 across 10 theatres from its Small Grants Programme, which supports the UK's not-for-profit theatres to make essential repairs and improvements to enhance accessibility, sustainability measures and facilities. Projects in this round of grants focus on improving theatres' accessibility as well as urgent repairs and maintenance works, all of which are essential to the ongoing viability of the nation's theatres, and which will help create better, more welcoming spaces.

With Theatres Trust funding, **York Theatre Royal** will buy equipment to capture immersive recordings of live performances and will deliver them using virtual reality technology. This is a cutting-edge digital project aimed at those facing barriers to attending the theatre in person, making shows more widely accessible.

Bracknell's **South Hill Park Arts Centre**, **Malvern Cube Community and Arts Centre** and **The Space** on the Isle of Dogs have been awarded funding to improve front of house accessibility for audiences. **The Y Theatre** in Leicester will use funding to address accessibility issues for performers and crew backstage.

Making the theatre experience more welcoming, Newcastle's **Northern Stage** will install innovative sustainable panels in its foyer to reduce general noise levels. In Northern Ireland, **The Derry Playhouse** will refurbish its bathroom facilities.

**Dundee Rep Theatre** will replace ventilation in its studio, maintaining conditions required for dancers while better managing energy usage in the venue. Theatres Trust has also given grants for essential projects to support the ongoing viability of **Theatre Royal Wakefield** and **Plaza Theatre Romsey**.

Jon Morgan, Director of Theatres Trust, comments, *The wide array of projects funded this round show the many challenges that theatres continue to face. We are pleased to be able to help these theatres with projects that protect future use, remove barriers to participation and attendance, and make them more welcoming spaces.*

Stuart Hopley, Director of The Linbury Trust, comments, *We're very pleased to be supporting this work through our partnership with Theatres Trust. They set out the very important role our theatres play in contributing to local community life, and as places for everyone to enjoy.*

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

## Notes to Editors

Title	Theatres Trust
Website	<a href="http://www.theatretrust.org.uk/smallgrants">http://www.theatretrust.org.uk/smallgrants</a>
Twitter	@TheatresTrust @TheLinburyTrust
Photograph	York Theatre Royal

The Small Grants Programme was launched thanks to the generous support of The Linbury Trust, as well as donations from Judy Craymer CBE and Charles Michael Holloway Charitable Trust.

In February 2022, The Linbury Trust committed to funding the scheme for a further three years, with funding totalling £300,000.

## Small Grants Programme recipients

Dundee Repertory Theatre, £5,000

Dundee Rep Theatre was purpose-built in 1982 and is Category A listed as an example of a post-war repertory theatre building with an original layout and fittings. Home to the Dundee Rep Ensemble, Scotland's only full-time company of actors, and contemporary dance company Scottish Dance Theatre it operates as a producing and receiving house. This grant will fund the installation of variable speed fans in Scottish Dance Theatre's studio. By installing these fans, the venue will guarantee specific temperature conditions in the studio space for dancers. The new system will make the venue more energy efficient and save money.

Malvern Cube Community and Arts Centre, £5,000

A volunteer-led community and arts space, Malvern Cube was developed within a former county council youth centre building dating from the 1960s. It supports locally produced work by three resident theatre companies and provides a flexible performance and rehearsal space for emerging artists, touring theatre and other performance groups. The single-storey building has split levels separated by steps. Anyone that finds steps a barrier to access has to use a separate route taking them outside the building to get from the theatre to the café, accessible toilets and other meeting rooms. This funded project will install a platform lift and related improvements to ensure a more accessible route for all users within the building.

Northern Stage, Newcastle, £5,000

Northern Stage, the North East's largest producing theatre, was built in 1970 as the University theatre. The main entrance foyer is a large open space with high ceilings and open exposed brick walls; there have been issues with sound reverb and sound travel since opening. The grant will fund an innovative solution to the reverberation problem, soundproofing the space using sustainable wall panels. This will improve the acoustics of the space for the benefit of all users and make it a more welcoming and accessible space.

Plaza Theatre, Romsey, £5,000

Plaza Theatre opened as a cinema in 1931 and was converted by Romsey Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society into a 256-seat theatre in 1982 / 83. The theatre presents amateur work and hosts touring shows. The theatre's electrical distribution board dates from this conversion and is now obsolete. The grant will fund a replacement distribution board, an urgent project that will secure the theatre's future viability and ensure a planned stage house improvement will go ahead.

South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, £5,000

South Hill Park Arts Centre's Wilde Theatre, purpose-built in 1984,, produces a professional annual pantomime, hosts touring drama, dance, and music, and has a full participation programme. A grant will allow the theatre to install magnetic door holders. This will ensure that doors into the theatre auditorium are easier and safer for staff and volunteers to use and will allow patrons with mobility issues better access. They also help the theatre stay fire compliant.

The Playhouse, Derry, Londonderry, £5,000

The Playhouse in Derry. Londonderry is one of the most vibrant arts centres in Northern Ireland. Established in 1992 The Playhouse is dedicated to creating community, celebrating diversity and empowering people through the arts. Historically home to St. Mary's convent and St. Joseph's school in the 19th and early 20th century, The Playhouse buildings have been lovingly restored to become a thriving hub for arts, education and peacebuilding. The current bathroom facilities in the B1 listed buildings are in urgent need of a refurbishment. The grant will fund a series of works to upgrade facilities front and back of house, including installing sensor-operated soap dispensers,

low-noise hand dryers, new toilet seats, and a full repaint of all toilet facilities, bringing it into line with modern visitor expectations.

#### The Space, Isle of Dogs, London, £5,000

The Space is a fringe theatre housed in a Grade II listed church in London's docklands. It serves as a hub for small-scale theatre and new writing. Primarily it is a receiving house, but it hosts occasional in-house productions and festivals. The grant will fund the replacement of an unreliable front of house passenger lift that is over 25 years old. The lift is critical for the accessibility of the building.

#### The Y Theatre, Leicester, £5,000

Leicester's The Y Theatre is a Grade II listed association hall built in 1900. It is a small-scale receiving theatre run by the local YMCA with a professional programme and it works with marginalised youth. The funding will enable accessibility and safety improvements to the Victorian stage, including the installation of a passenger lift for performers and crew and a stage refit. This will help secure the historic stage and allow a wider range of users access to it.

#### Theatre Royal Wakefield, £5,000

Theatre Royal Wakefield is a Grade II\* listed building and the smallest remaining of renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham's theatres. It is an important receiving house in its region as well as running innovative community programmes. In response to a rise in local antisocial behaviour, the theatre will use the funding to install a CCTV system of cameras and control equipment to improve safety for all users and to deter further damage to the building.

#### York Theatre Royal, £4,752.50

A Grade II\* listed theatre built in the mid-18th century. It programmes produced work, co-productions, and touring shows. Following increased digital engagement during the pandemic closure period, the theatre wants to expand its offering by capturing immersive recordings of live performances and delivering them using virtual reality (VR) technology. The grant will fund the purchase of technology, including a specialist camera, computers, and VR headsets, as recommended following a trial in association with York University. The theatre will deliver these experiences to small groups in the community.

## **Theatres Trust**

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

During the pandemic Theatres Trust has supported theatres with advice on building maintenance, funding applications and business planning, as well as organising free webinars. Its previous grant scheme, the Theatre Reopening Fund, awarded more than £300k to 75 theatres to help prepare for reopening.

## **The Linbury Trust**

The Linbury Trust is an independent grant-making Trust established by Lord Sainsbury and his wife Anya, Lady Sainsbury CBE. The Trust funds compelling projects in the areas of culture, environment, social and community welfare; the Trust also funds work benefiting young people, older people and overseas humanitarian aid. [www.linburytrust.org.uk](http://www.linburytrust.org.uk)

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