



Theatres Trust awards £64k to help futureproof 14 theatres

More than £64,000 is being awarded to 14 theatres by Theatres Trust, the national advisory body for theatres, from its Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust. Designed to ensure the viability of these valued and vital spaces, the grants scheme will allow theatres to improve accessibility, increase energy efficiency and reduce costs, as well as upgrade key plant and machinery. These are all crucial to ensure the long-term survival of these spaces in an ever-changing and developing world.

Belfast's **MAC** will use its Theatres Trust grant to install a new foyer announcement system, which will work across 10 areas within the venue to better support its diverse requirements and users, providing a consistent and inclusive welcome. To improve accessibility for staff and performers the **Lighthouse** in Poole will add push-button doors so wheelchair users can access the stage and orchestra pit without assistance. The volunteer-run **Market Theatre** in Ledbury will purchase a mast lift for its tech team, to ensure an accessible and safe method to reach its over-stage lighting grid.

Other accessibility-related projects funded by Theatres Trust include hearing loop installations in the main auditoria at **Lichfield Garrick** and **Theatre Deli Sheffield**. **Southwold Arts Centre** will make its front of house more accessible and purchase equipment to expand its digital offer.

The Courtyard in Hereford will repair its wooden floors in well-used areas, including its dance studio, to ensure the safety and enjoyment of users. **Torch Theatre** in Milford Haven will install a new air conditioning unit in its ground floor café / gallery space and the **Hope Mill Theatre** in Manchester and **The Gateway Theatre** in Seaton will upgrade their air conditioning systems. This will enable the theatres to expand their programming and engagement activities, generating additional income.

Taking an environmentally sustainable approach to support their long-term viability, **Barn Theatre** in Welwyn Garden City, **Duchess Theatre & Chatsworth Arts Centre** in

Long Eaton, **Little Theatre** Gateshead, and **The Mowlem Theatre** in Swanage will upgrade to LED lighting in various parts of their buildings.

Jon Morgan, Director of Theatres Trust, comments, Theatres Trust is proud to support these 14 theatres with small but important projects, great examples of the different ways theatres are looking to futureproof their operations and remain at the heart of their communities.

Stuart Hopley, Director of The Linbury Trust, comments, Theatre spaces bring such incredible value to community life, and we're thrilled to support these theatres, right across the UK, helping them to thrive, improve accessibility, and continue to share the joy of arts and culture with the local people.

The Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust will reopen for applications in early September, with a deadline of 12 January 2024.

Notes to Editors

Title	Theatres Trust
Website	http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/smallgrants
Twitter	@TheatresTrust @TheLinburyTrust
Photograph	Hope Mill Theatre, Manchester

The Small Grants Programme was launched thanks to The Linbury Trust's generous support and donations from Judy Craymer CBE and Charles Michael Holloway Charitable Trust. In February 2022, The Linbury Trust committed to £300,000 to the scheme over three years; in autumn 2022 the Mackintosh Foundation committed to £150,000 over five years.

Small Grants Programme recipients

Barn Theatre, Welwyn Garden City, £4,967.48

The Barn Theatre operates from two large 16th-century Grade II listed wooden barns. It is a strong community hub with an active programme of produced amateur work. The grant from Theatres Trust will convert the existing lighting in the 60-seat studio to energy-efficient LEDs. Transitioning to cost-effective LED lighting will remedy existing high temperatures, allow the venue to increase programming, save on fuel costs, and reduce its carbon footprint.

Duchess Theatre & Chatsworth Arts Centre, Long Eaton, £5,000

The volunteer-run Chatsworth Arts Centre is a mixed-use community venue in a former church. A Theatres Trust grant will enable the theatre to replace house lighting with LED and install new electric cabling and control infrastructure to the lighting control system in its 180-seat Duchess Theatre. The new equipment will reduce fuel costs by

70%, saving the venue from passing on increased ticket and hire costs to its customers. Audiences and staff will also benefit from a better-lit environment.

Hope Mill Theatre, Manchester, £5,000

This venue within a Grade II* cotton mill has been running since 2015, focusing on LGBTQ+ and under-represented artists within its own-produced work and as a host for visiting companies from the Manchester area. The grant from Theatres Trust will allow the Hope Mill Theatre to install an air conditioning unit in the 140-seat auditorium. The new air-handling system will provide a more comfortable environment for audiences, artists, and participants year-round. Better energy efficiency will also reduce fuel costs, improving the theatre's carbon footprint.

Lichfield Garrick Theatre, £5,000

A professional, purpose-built community theatre which opened in 2003. With the Theatres Trust grant, the Garrick will purchase a replacement hearing loop system for its 550-seat main auditorium. The new system will not only ensure that customers with hearing loss can have a full experience, but the specific technology chosen will also allow the theatre to develop other services such as audio description or translation for specific projects.

Lighthouse, Poole, £5,000

The purpose-built Lighthouse in Poole, a nationally significant receiving venue, opened in 1978 with a concert hall, theatre, studio and cinema. Having previously installed automatic doors front of house with Theatres Trust support, Lighthouse is now looking to remove barriers to access backstage for performers and staff. The theatre will install automatic push-button doors at stage and pit level to ensure wheelchair users can access the stage and orchestra pit without assistance.

Little Theatre, Gateshead, £5,000

The volunteer-run venue opened in 1943 and provides a key resource and a social hub for local amateur groups and audiences. The Theatres Trust grant will allow the theatre to upgrade its tungsten stage lighting with LED. With new energy-efficient lighting, it is anticipated that energy use in the auditorium will reduce by up to 90%. As well as introducing environmental improvements, the new lighting will enhance show production values – and reduced costs will improve the venue's operational viability.

Southwold Arts Centre, £4,879.20

A key venue in a former 1930s church hall in Southwold, providing a 220-seat community and entertainment venue for residents and visitors. The Theatres Trust grant will allow the theatre to undertake access improvements front of house by installing a new sliding door to the accessible WC and by providing level access through the side door. It will also purchase projection equipment to expand its programming.

The Courtyard, Hereford, £5,000

Purpose-built in 1998 with a busy programme of received and co-produced work and an active participatory programme. The grant from Theatres Trust will help the theatre maintain and improve the condition of the wooden floors in the main entrance, foyer, bar, and dance studio the Garrick Room, ensuring safety and enjoyment for customers.

The Gateway Theatre Seaton, £2,000

A 276-seat community venue in Seaton's 'Town Hall' building that provides wide-ranging community benefits. The Theatres Trust grant will contribute to upgrading its 40-year-old heating system and installing radiators in backstage WCs and dressing rooms for the first time. The new condensing heat boiler will offer intuitive control over heat output, reducing fuel consumption and improving seasonal efficiency. A more efficient heating system will be more welcoming and attract new groups to use the space.

The MAC Belfast, £4,932.61

Purpose-built in 2012, the MAC is one of Belfast's leading arts spaces. The venue delivers a year-round programme of received and co-produced work and has a vibrant visual arts programme across its three galleries. The MAC will use its Theatres Trust grant to replace its existing foyer announcement system with an enhanced system that is adjustable, adaptable, and fit for purpose. The system will facilitate audible announcements across 10 zones within the venue, catering to the diverse requirements of the audience, including those with hearing impairments and additional needs, ensuring that shows start on time and provide a consistent MAC warm welcome for all customers. The system is more energy efficient, contributing to the MAC's ongoing sustainability commitment as it has recently been awarded the city's Green Tourism Award.

The Market Theatre, Ledbury, £5,000

The 128-seat Market Theatre in Ledbury is an important venue on rural touring circuits. The grant from Theatres Trust will support the theatre in purchasing a new mast lift for working at height. This lift will enable its volunteers to safely adjust and hang lighting in the theatre. The project aims to ensure the theatre's viability by continuing to work with volunteers and improving accessibility for individuals, including those with disabilities.

The Mowlem Theatre, Swanage, £5,000

The 380-seat purpose-built seafront theatre opened in 1967 and provides a social and community hub for Swanage. The grant from Theatres Trust will allow the theatre to purchase and install a new lighting console as its system will be obsolete shortly. The equipment is LED compatible, supporting replacement lighting in the future. The new kit will help the theatre deliver a reliable service to visiting companies and hirers and attract new partnerships and programming.

Theatre Deli, Sheffield, £2,950

Theatre Deli has a track record of repurposing unconventional spaces for artists and audiences to develop and present new work. Its new Sheffield space is based in Arley Street Studio Hub (a collection of artist studios) and opened in March 2023. The Theatres Trust grant will install an infrared hearing loop system in its 140-seat theatre space. This will ensure that performers and audiences with hearing impairments can fully participate in and enjoy performances and activities and allow the venue to diversify programming.

Torch Theatre, Milford Haven, £4,987.72

The Torch Theatre in Milford Haven is a crucial venue for artists and audiences, being one of only three producing venues in Wales. With a Theatres Trust grant the theatre will install a new air conditioning unit in the ground floor café / gallery space. The current air conditioning system is inadequate, causing the space to become unusable due to poor temperature control. The project's impact will improve energy efficiency by 40%, generate more income through hires and lettings, and allow the theatre to contribute to the Warm Space initiative as a community venue for winter 2023.

Theatres Trust

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

The Linbury Trust

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

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