



21 theatres receive a share of £100k from Theatres Trust

Theatres Trust, the national advisory and advocacy body for theatres, has announced the latest theatres to receive grants through its Small Grants Programme with The Linbury Trust.

In the eighth round of the scheme, 21 community theatres received grants of up to £5,000 to support vitally important projects. The programme funds not-for-profit theatres to deliver small projects that make a big difference to their resilience, sustainability, and accessibility, or to increase the diversity of their audiences.

The Corn Exchange in Newbury has received funding to install a new live-audio accessibility system, which can be used by hearing-impaired audience members with their own smartphones. Arts Centre Washington in Sunderland and The Y Centre in Leicester will both install hearing loops in their venues. Projects to make buildings more accessible are being funded at the Barn Theatre in Welwyn Garden City, Little Angel Theatre in London, and The Place Theatre in Bedford.

Funding will support The Old Market in Hove to continue its innovative 360-degree digital projection format in a more environmentally friendly and time-efficient way by installing a permanent projection grade gauze on a runner system. Digital updates

are also being funded at CatStrand in Castle Douglas, Scotland, and Kidz r Us in Tredegar, Wales.

Environmental sustainability projects funded include LED upgrades and replacing boilers at the Ilkley Playhouse, Millgate Arts Centre in Saddleworth, Oldham, Pound Arts Centre in Corsham, and the Puppet Theatre Barge in London.

Funding from this programme will allow volunteer-led Glusburn Institute Community and Arts Centre near Keighley in Yorkshire to transform a disused education room into a versatile, mixed-use space. Eccles Town Hall and Northern Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) in Hull both received grants to make vital improvements to their buildings. The Cut in Halesworth, Half Moon Young People's Theatre and Theatre Peckham, both in London, Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield, and St Joseph's Hall in Leigh have all been awarded funding for essential repairs and safety projects that will ensure these theatres remain safe and welcoming spaces.

Joshua McTaggart, CEO of Theatres Trust says, Theatres Trust is delighted to be able to support more than twenty ambitious theatres with vital projects that will ensure these important cultural spaces can continue to serve their local communities for many years to come. The vast array of projects funded in this round illustrates the many ways that theatres are keen to improve their buildings to welcome wider audiences and host a broader range of performances and activities. Amongst the essential repairs and upgrades, I'm particularly pleased to see more theatres embracing the possibilities of harnessing digital technology to build a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Stuart Hobley, Director of The Linbury Trust said, This is such an incredible range of theatres across the UK, and all of them are using this funding to help their spaces to thrive and be more welcoming for people to visit. From better Wi-Fi infrastructure to urgent repairs, and improved access for people with disabilities, these grants have a big impact in supporting theatre and its role in everyday life.

The next round of the Small Grants Programme is currently open for applications with a deadline of Friday 6 June 2025.

Notes to Editors

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Small Grants

The Small Grants Programme funds small projects that make a big impact to a theatre's resilience, sustainability, accessibility or improving the diversity of audiences. This scheme provides grants for essential works to enable not-for-profit theatres across the UK to be viable and thrive in the future.

It was launched in 2021 with the generous support of The Linbury Trust, which has since renewed its funding twice, with the current scheme running until 2028. The scheme has received additional support from The Mackintosh Foundation and Charles Michael Holloway Charitable Trust.

Small Grants Programme recipients

Arts Centre Washington, Sunderland, £4999.95

Housed in a converted 19th century farm building, Arts Centre Washington's 120-seat theatre presents a year-round programme of small-scale touring theatre, music, comedy, and film and is home to several community theatre groups. The grant will support accessibility improvements in the venue. The first part of the project is replacing the narrow ground level doors with a single fire door with a stay open / self-closing mechanism. The second part of the project is to install a hearing/induction loop in the box office and alternative performance space, The Low Barn.

Barn Theatre, Welwyn Garden City, £5,000

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 will fund the volunteer-run theatre to purchase a portable platform lift to make its stage accessible for wheelchair users. This will make considerable savings rather than hiring this equipment and it will enable the theatre to market its availability to encourage disabled performers to take part in auditions and performances.

CatStrand, Castle Douglas, £5,000

Built around the former New Galloway Primary School, CatStrand reopened as a performing arts venue in 2007. It is an important part of the Scottish touring circuit and a cultural hub for the communities of rural southwest Scotland. Funding will support the venue to invest in a modern digital sound desk and upgrade stage lighting to LEDs, offering a better experience of touring artists and audiences alike, while reducing energy consumption.

Corn Exchange, Newbury £4,907.79

The Corn Exchange Newbury and 101 Outdoor Arts is a thriving arts centre, housed in a corn exchange building dating back to 1862, which reopened as professional 400-seat theatre in 1993. The theatre's Equity & Inclusion Action Group identified the requirement to upgrade its hearing loop system. This funding will support the installation of a live-audio accessibility system running over a secure Wi-Fi network to supplement the current Audio Frequency Induction Loop technology. The dual technology approach will ensure that users have the choice to use the system that works best for them.

The Cut, Halesworth, Suffolk £5,000

The Cut was founded in 2000 with theatre and dance at its core. The Cut Dance Studio is the only professionally equipped dance space in the area, but the skylight overlooking the studio is no longer fit for purpose and water ingress seriously threatens the sprung floor below. This grant will contribute towards funding a replacement skylight, which also have environmental benefits as it will help retain heat better.

Eccles Town Hall, £5,000

The theatre was restored and refurbished and was re-opened in 2013. Since then, it has become apparent that the building acoustic properties are poor for theatrical performances. An acoustics survey has recommended fitting acoustically absorbent panels to the theatre walls, which this grant will part-fund. This will allow the theatre to diversify its programming offer to include more plays, lectures and other events where the spoken word is critical.

Glusburn Institute Community and Arts Centre, Keighley £5,000

Glusburn Institute Community and Arts Centre is a volunteer-led community arts venue based in a Grade II listed building. Funding will support renovating a disused education room in the venue into a versatile, mixed-use space that meets two critical needs: a dedicated educational and training area, and much needed changing and dressing room facilities for performers.

Half Moon Young People's Theatre, London, £5,000

Half Moon is a leading small-scale young people's venue and touring company. The grant will support a series of measures to ensure that the theatre building meets the fire safety regulations, providing a safe environment for young people and families. The works include fire detection and alarm system upgrade, fire compartmentation upgrade and passive fire protection works and remedial work to existing fire doorsets.

Ilkley Playhouse, £5,000

Ilkley Playhouse has been a significant part of the cultural life of Ilkley for 64 years and its resident voluntary company, The Ilkley Players for even longer. With rising prices and an aged building, the energy costs for the theatre have soared. This grant will contribute to the project to replace the main boiler. This will reduce consumption by around 33% and give an annual saving of more than £2,000.

Kidz R Us, Venue 1, Tredegar £5,000

Kidz R Us is a non-profit, self-funding social community enterprise, which teaches performing arts to the children of Tredegar and the surrounding areas in south east Wales, hosting activities for more than 500 disadvantaged children every week. This

grant will fund the purchase of a new lighting system to replace the 18-year-old equipment and investing in digital editing technology.

Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield £5,000

Housed within a Grade II converted Victorian Methodist Mission Hall, the Lawrence Batley opened as a theatre in 1994 and now presents a wide-ranging year-round programme of in-house and visiting productions at the heart of its community. The grant will fund essential repairs in its two performance spaces. The main auditorium stage is in need of reboarding urgently due to wear and tear and is becoming unfit for use, while investigative work is needed into the water leakage in the Cellar Studio, which has caused the floor to begin to warp.

Little Angel Theatre, London £3,861.45

When it opened in 1961, the Little Angel Theatre was the first puppetry theatre in London, and it remains at the forefront of puppetry training and performance. The company undertook an access audit in 2024 and has identified that installing additional handrails across the venue will remove a key barrier to inclusion. This grant will fund a moveable handrail in the accessible WC, additional handrails on the stairs to the auditorium and to the dressing room, and on the doors to the workshop space.

Millgate Arts Centre, Saddleworth, Oldham £5,000

Originally built as a Coop building in two stages between 1865 and 1897 the building was converted into a theatre by Saddleworth Players in 1973 and continues to be an active community theatre run and staffed almost entirely by volunteers. This grant will fund replacing some of the auditorium tungsten spotlights with LED units, improving the quality of lighting for its productions and saving energy. Switching to colour-changing LED units will also significantly reduce the need for ladder work, lowering the risk of accidents and increasing the number of people prepared to help with lighting.

Northern Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), Hull, £5,000

From its home in the Grade II* listed 1904 Art School, NAPA provides a wide range of dance, acting and musical theatre classes to around 650 students each week. This

project will transform the largest and most accessible internal room in the theatre, the Backstage Studio, into a flexible welcoming space. This includes restoring the original wooden sliding doors so multiple uses can take place at the same time, making the walls and ceiling watertight, and installing new blackout blinds to make the space more comfortable for year-round use.

The Old Market (TOM), Hove £5,000

Post-Covid and in response to audience' move towards experiential theatre, this independent venue has developed IN THE BOX, an innovative 360-degree digital projection format. TOM has been using single use plastic sheeting to turn the auditorium into a fully video mapped immersive performance environment, but this funding will allow it to switch to a more environmentally sustainable alternative. The venue will install a permanent projection grade gauze on a runner system, a solution that will also save hours of operational time as well.

The Place Theatre, Bedford £3,379

Previously a youth club, The Place Bedford has been converted into a theatre by Bedford Players Trust and since opening as a theatre in 2002 has become home to a number of resident companies and grown in stature. The organisation had planned to install a stairlift to make the venue more accessible and open up underused spaces in the venue. This project stalled when asbestos was discovered in the staircase. This grant will fund the removal of the asbestos, which once completed will allow the stairlift project to proceed.

Pound Arts Centre, Corsham, £3,779

Pound Arts programmes a year-round mixed season of live performance at The Pound Arts Centre in rural Wiltshire. It also acts as an Environmental Hub for cultural organisations in the surrounding areas, helping other organisations and individuals on their own environmental journey. The funded project has two strands; replacing the damaged LED lights that are used for audience accessibility and replacing the boiler that powers the heating in the artists' support rooms.

Puppet Theatre Barge, London, £5,000

A unique 40-seat theatre inside a converted Thames barge, the Puppet Theatre Barge is the only children's theatre in Westminster. Updating its lighting to LEDs is essential to the future running of the theatre, enabling it to be more environmentally sustainable, safer and keep up with modern lighting standards.

St Joseph's Hall, Leigh, £5,000

The only purpose-built theatre remaining in the former mining community of Leigh, the theatre is home to St Joseph's Players, who have been performing there for almost a century. A recent survey found that rainwater is entering the building in several places, resulting in damp, mould, and crumbling plasterwork. This grant will support essential building work to make the hall watertight.

Theatre Peckham, London £4,869

Theatre Peckham gives underrepresented voices from its local community the platform to express themselves through theatre. With this grant, the theatre will install Dorgards, a mechanism which safely allows doors to stay open, but are released when a fire alarm is triggered. This will enable visiting companies and audience members to move freely around the building, while meeting fire safety standards.

The Y Theatre, Leicester £4,963

The Y Theatre is a bustling live performance venue based in Leicester city centre, built in 1900 making it the city's oldest surviving theatre. It is a small-scale receiving theatre with an eclectic programme that includes music, comedy, theatre, dance, new work and family shows. As an independent theatre run by YMCA Leicestershire, they also work with young people experiencing homelessness. This funding will enable the Grade II listed theatre to upgrade its equipment to improve its hearing loop/sound matrixing, so the venue can support a wider range of performances and improve access for visiting companies. The upgrade will also help to facilitate audio description services for productions.

Theatres Trust

Theatres Trust is the national advice and advocacy body for the UK's theatres supporting all forms of theatres, whether old or new, commercial, subsidised or community-run.

We protect theatres and champion the future of live performance by advising and supporting our nation's theatres to develop best practice in design and management following the four principles of resilience, environmental sustainability, inclusivity and placemaking.

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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