



## 14 theatres look to the future with £95,000 in funding from Theatres Trust

Theatres Trust, the national advisory and advocacy body for theatres, has awarded £95,000 to 14 theatres in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland through its Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust.

Now in its tenth round, the Small Grants Programme funds not-for-profit theatres to deliver small projects that make a big impact to the venue's resilience, sustainability, accessibility, or improving the diversity of its audiences. Funding in this round will support a range of projects across all four of these areas.

**Sleaford Playhouse** in Lincolnshire has been awarded funding for a sustainability project to install solar panels that will help address the high energy costs associated with running a historic building. **Puppet Theatre Barge** in London, the UK's only floating puppet theatre, has secured a grant to upgrade its toilet facilities so that they are inclusive and accessible to a wider range of audiences. **Accidental Theatre** in Belfast will use its share of the funding to help cover the cost of necessary repairs to fix the converted bank building's leaky roof.

Other futureproofing projects supported in this round involve improving energy efficiency (**Sewell Barn Theatre** in Norfolk, **Cranleigh Arts Centre** in Surrey, **The Flavel Centre** in Dartmouth, **The Chrysalis** in Milton Keynes, and the **Whitefield Garrick Theatre** in Manchester), enhancing venue accessibility (**New Theatre Royal** in Portsmouth, **Mowlem Theatre** in Swanage, and **West Walls Theatre** in Carlisle), undertaking necessary building repairs (**The Lowther Pavillion Theatre** in Lancashire) and upgrading digital infrastructure (**Criccieth Memorial Hall** in Gwynedd and **The Forum Northallerton** in North Yorkshire).

Theatres Trust CEO Joshua McTaggart comments *Theatres Trust is delighted to support a further 14 theatres with forward-thinking projects that will protect the future of these spaces as vibrant cultural hubs for their local communities. Successful projects in this round address all four priorities of the Small Grants Programme, showing that theatres are finding innovative ways to tackle some of today's most important sector-wide challenges. From assistive technology upgrades to vital repairs, we are pleased to invest in projects that help these theatres boldly reimagine their spaces to meet the needs of tomorrow's audiences.*

Stuart Hobley, Director, The Linbury Trust comments *These locally-loved theatres are rooted in their communities, bringing joy and connection to all; and these grants will help theatres to be even more welcoming, accessible and resilient, and to continue to play their valuable role in everyday life*

The next round of the Small Grants Programme is currently open for applications with a deadline of 12pm Friday 26 June 2026.

## Notes to Editors

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| Website     | <a href="https://www.theatrestrust.org.uk">https://www.theatrestrust.org.uk</a> |
| Twitter / X | @TheatresTrust @TheLinburyTrust   |
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| Photo       | Courtesy of The Flavel Centre in Dartmouth                                      |

## Small Grants Programme Round 10 Recipients

### **Criccieth Memorial Hall, Gwynedd, £7,437**

Criccieth Memorial Hall is a Grade II listed, volunteer-run community venue in North Wales. The grant will fund improvements to the theatre's digital infrastructure by replacing outdated hardware across the building. Upgrades to the electrical cabling, addition of smart switches, and improved Wi-Fi connection will enhance the theatre's programming and technical automation capabilities meaning a wider variety of events can take place which will benefit the local community.

### **Puppet Theatre Barge, London, £7,500**

Situated on a converted barge in Little Venice in North West London, Puppet Theatre Barge is the nation's only floating puppet theatre and one of the UK's last strongholds for marionette puppetry which was added to the Red List of endangered crafts by Heritage Crafts Association in 2023. The grant will help to cover the cost of upgrading the toilet facilities to make them more accessible to a wider range of visitors at a time when the theatre is looking to expand its programming to welcome new audiences.

### **Sewell Barn Theatre, Norwich, £7,500**

Opened in 1979, The Sewell Barn Theatre is a volunteer-run theatre operating from a converted hay barn in Norwich. The grant will contribute towards the costs of a larger project to renew and improve the building's electrical so that the group can continue to use the space to stage productions. The new fittings will help lower maintenance costs over time while also helping to reduce the theatre's environmental impact by switching to modern, more efficient electrics.

### **The Forum Northallerton, £4,854**

Situated in North Yorkshire, The Forum in Northallerton serves a diverse rural area, including communities experiencing isolation and barriers to accessing cultural opportunities. The Forum is a community-run venue shaped by and for local people, offering an affordable and varied programme of professional, amateur, and community-led events. The grant will go towards refurbishing the main stage floor to ensure its fit for purpose and remains a useable and enjoyable space for professional performers and community groups. The funding will also help cover the cost of replacing the venue's sound mixing system enabling the theatre to reduce long-term costs by removing the need to hire equipment.

### **The Lowther Pavilion Theatre, Lytham St Anne's, £7,500**

The Lowther Pavilion Theatre, situated along the Fylde Coast in Lancashire, is an entertainment and cultural hub offering a varied programme of live performances and community workshops. The grant funding will support the theatre in replacing one external office door and two fire safety doors to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet regulations and requirements. Replacing these doors will improve the building's energy efficiency and keep maintenance costs down, helping to improve the organisation's resilience.

### **Cranleigh Arts Centre, £6,129**

Founded in 1978 through the joint efforts of local community groups, Cranleigh Arts Centre is a community arts and entertainment venue based in a converted former village school building in Waverley, Surrey. The grant will cover the cost of installing LED lighting in the studio and uplighters in the main auditorium, which will help to keep energy costs low while improving environmental sustainability. The grant will also fund two new bespoke ushers' chairs which are separate from the main seating bank in the auditorium, helping to improve space allocation provision for wheelchair users.

### **The Flavel Centre, Dartmouth, £6,106**

As the main cultural provision in Dartmouth, The Flavel Centre is a key creative resource for its local community, providing a much-needed programme of artistic events, live performances, and community workshops. The grant will fund the installation of LED lighting and new stage monitors to replace the current system. The new LED lights will use less energy than the existing lighting meaning the theatre can reduce its energy consumption while saving money, which will help to improve both the theatre's environmental sustainability and resilience going forward. In addition, upgrading items in the out-dated stage monitor system, which has become unreliable, will ensure better sound quality and support during live performances.

### **Sleaford Playhouse, £7,000**

Located in the North Kesteven district of Lincolnshire, Sleaford Playhouse is an important community resource which is owned, managed, and maintained by Sleaford Little Theatre, an amateur dramatics society. The venue is a Grade II listed Georgian building with a rare and distinctive historic character and was restored as a theatre by the society in 2000. The grant will fund the installation of solar panels helping to reduce the theatre's energy consumption. Generating energy in this way will mean that the theatre can simultaneously improve its environmental sustainability while lowering its operating costs and ensuring that high-quality arts remain accessible and affordable for local audiences.

### **Theatre Royal Portsmouth, £7,500**

Theatre Royal Portsmouth is a mid-scale 500-seat venue which is one of just two remaining playhouses in the city designed by well-known Victorian theatre architects Phipps and Matcham. The grant will fund the installation of a hearing loop in the theatre which is used for performances, workshops, and community events. The installation of the hearing loop will improve accessibility on site, meaning the theatre can better meet the needs of its local community and a wider range of audiences will benefit from its programming.

### **Mowlem Theatre, Swanage, £7,500**

Opened in 1967 and situated directly on the seafront, Mowlem Theatre is the only theatre in Swanage. The theatre stages professional productions as well as amateur societies and performances from local schools. Funding through this scheme will help to improve accessibility at the venue as part of a major upgrade. The grant will fund the installation of a hearing loop system in the theatre and studio, in addition to replacing internal signage to improve wayfinding and accessibility on site.

### **Whitefield Garrick Theatre, Manchester, £4,805**

Located in Bury, Whitefield Garrick Theatre is a community-run, 87-seat, thrust stage theatre venue. The grant will fund the replacement of four costly and high energy consuming profile tungsten spotlights with more energy efficient LEDs. The change to LEDs will not only improve the theatre's environmental sustainability but will also offer a greater range of technical capabilities and creative flexibility for staging performances.

### **West Walls Theatre, Carlisle, £7,500**

West Walls Theatre is a small, community-run, 142-seat venue based in a Grade I listed former coach house and stables in Carlisle. The theatre is run entirely by volunteers from the Carlisle Green Room Club, who have been staging amateur theatre in the city since 1951 and operating from the converted theatre since 1979. Funding from the grant scheme will help cover the costs of upgrades to the toilet facilities at the theatre, including the provision of an accessible toilet. Upgrading the toilet facilities will help improve functionality and accessibility at the venue while also helping to reduce maintenance costs.

### **Accidental Theatre, Belfast, £7,500**

Located in one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in Belfast, Accidental Theatre is a leading arts venue based in a converted bank building in the city centre that works with artists and community members from disadvantaged backgrounds, minority groups and vulnerable members of its local community. This grant will help to fund necessary repairs to the roof, which is currently leaking and creating operational issues for the theatre's staff and audiences. Repairing the roof will help to improve the building's energy efficiency and ensure that the theatre can continue to operate and serve the communities it works with.

### **Chrysalis Theatre, Milton Keynes, £6,880**

Chrysalis Theatre is a 200-seat performance, events, and community creative hub based in Milton Keynes. The theatre was built in 2004 and designed to meet the needs of the Camphill Milton Keynes Community – an independent charity who provide supported living accommodation and meaningful work for adults with learning disabilities. This grant will fund the upgrade of all existing technical lighting to LED. As well as reducing energy cost and consumption, the switch to LED lights will help secure the theatre's future by ensuring the technical infrastructure of the building can support the organisation's new approach to programming.

## **The Small Grants Programme**

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 receives additional support from The Mackintosh Foundation and has received support by Charles Michael Holloway Charitable Trust.

## **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 in 1973 by Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, and his wife Anya, Lady Sainsbury CBE. The Trust has awarded almost £250m in grant funding across the world, supporting a wide variety of work including public engagement with arts and culture through education, training and development, and wellbeing; connecting to our natural environment, mitigating climate change; and programmes that improve the choices of people experiencing disadvantage and inequality.

[www.linburytrust.org.uk](http://www.linburytrust.org.uk)

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