



THEATRE

Secretariat: Society of London Theatre & UK Theatre

APPG for Theatre AGM

Tuesday 12 January 2021

Parliamentarians in attendance

Nickie Aiken MP
Tracy Brabin MP
Simon Baynes MP
Kevin Brennan MP
Lord Kerslake
Andrew Lewer MP
Stephan Metcalfe MP
Giles Watling MP (Chair)

Also in attendance

Julian Bird, SOLT and UK Theatre
Hannah Gagen, SOLT and UK Theatre
Annie Waugh, SOLT and UK Theatre
Ryan Pratt, Lord Taylor's office
Charlotte Raymond, Simon Baynes MP's office
Dan Russell, Giles Watling MP's office

Apologies

Theo Clarke MP, Baroness Hamwee, Kerry McCarthy MP

Meeting

Giles Watling MP welcomed everyone to the meeting and recapped the APPG's activities since launch in 2019.

Julian Bird provided an update on the current position of the theatre industry in relation to COVID-19 and Brexit.

- The overwhelming majority of theatres that opened with a production in the lead up to Christmas were not able to complete the run due to an increase in coronavirus restrictions. This has led to further financial loss.
- Applications are currently open for the final round of Culture Recovery Fund grants. It is expected to be very heavily applied for.
- SOLT and UK Theatre have written to the Chancellor to ask for some technical adaptations to Theatre Tax Relief to help incentivise the sector.
- Discussions are ongoing with the insurance sector to try to secure a cancellation insurance package for the performing arts similar to that already agreed for the film and television industries.
- Freelancers remain in an incredibly perilous position. There are a group of theatre freelancer workers who have been unable to access any government money since the start of the pandemic. The Theatre Artists Fund (set up by SOLT and UK Theatre), has now distributed over £5 million. The latest funding round was brought forward to help those who lost work due to closures over the Christmas period, with approximately £1 million to be distributed in small grants. SOLT and UK Theatre are now fundraising for future rounds.

- A trade deal has been agreed with Europe but there are numerous issues for our sector, particularly around UK artists being able to work in Europe and European artists working in the UK.

Parliamentarians asked questions on the following topics:

- Has any data has been collected on the loss of pantomimes due to theatre closures around Christmas? SOLT and UK Theatre are in the process of collating this data. Theatres across the country were affected leading to a significant financial loss.
- Can the APPG focus on the streaming of performances and highlight examples of good practice? SOLT and UK Theatre are already collecting examples of good streaming models. One of the issues around streaming is that organisations cannot claim Theatre Tax Relief for productions which do not have an audience and have been mounted for streaming purposes only. SOLT and UK Theatre have written to the Chancellor about this, as removing this exemption would encourage more theatres to stream productions.
- What do SOLT and UK Theatre think about the Arts Council’s approach to the second wave of the Culture Recovery Fund? A vast number of funding applications are expected, with many losing out. It is anticipated that some flexibility will be applied by the Treasury on the timing of when money received needs to be spent by.
- What advice is available for producers and theatres on reopening dates? Dates will become clearer over the following month as vaccination data grows. SOLT and UK Theatre are taking a cautious approach to dates, which is reflective of the attitude within the industry.

Election of officers

New officers were elected to the APPG. It was noted that Matt Western MP is standing down. All officers are listed in the table below.

Role	Name	Party
Chair and Registered Contact	Giles Watling MP	Conservative
Vice Chair	Nickie Aiken MP	Conservative
Vice Chair	Simon Baynes MP*	Conservative
Vice Chair	Tracy Brabin MP	Labour (Co-op)
Vice Chair	Kevin Brennan MP*	Labour
Vice Chair	Theo Clarke MP*	Conservative
Vice Chair	Baroness Hamwee	Liberal Democrat
Vice Chair	Lord Kerslake	Crossbench

Vice Chair	Andrew Lewer MP	Conservative
Vice Chair	Kerry McCarthy MP*	Labour
Vice Chair	Stephen Metcalfe MP	Conservative
Vice Chair	Alison Thewliss MP*	Scottish National Party
Vice Chair	Baroness Whitaker	Labour

*Newly elected officer

Finances

The financial statements for 2019 and 2020 were approved.

Hannah Gagen noted that the APPG hopes to do in person theatre visits in the future. Officers will need to provide guidance to the secretariat on the appropriate process for purchasing tickets. While venues remain closed, SOLT and UK Theatre will arrange a virtual session with a theatre.

AOB

Simon Baynes MP emphasised the need for the APPG to involve Welsh theatres and producers, despite being financed in a devolved structure. Hannah Gagen noted that the APPG's evidence session on 26 January 2021 is focusing on the impact of COVID on theatre in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.