



THEATRE

Secretariat: Society of London Theatre & UK Theatre

How Local Authorities and theatres can help each other recover from COVID-19.

8 June 2021, 1.30pm-3pm

Chair: Andrew Lewer MP

Parliamentarians in Attendance

Jane Bonham-Carter, Lib Dem Spokesperson, DCMS, House of Lords

Jayne Aston, on behalf of George Howarth MP Knowsley

Baroness Hamwee, House of Lords

Lord Faulkner of Worcester, House of Lords

Tom McNally, House of Lords

Giles Watling, MP (DAN)

Baroness McIntosh, House of Lords

Alison Thewliss, MP

Also in Attendance

Hannah Gagen, SOLT & UKT

Julian Bird, SOLT & UKT

Sebastian Cater, SOLT & UKT

Natalie Wood, SOLT & UKT

Annie Waugh, SOLT & UKT

Claudia Courtis, Glynis Henderson Productions

Jon Gilchrist, HOME

Lauren Lucas, Local Government Association

Fleur Mellor, Freelancer

Dafydd Rogers, Cambridge Arts Theatre

David Harvey, The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre

Maria Barrett, Parliamentary Academic Fellow

Em Newton, National Theatre

Neil Darlison, Arts Council England

Geraldine Collinge, Royal Shakespeare Company

Nadine Patel, Policy Researcher & CUK Lead

Helena Breck, The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre

Allegra Galvin, DCMS

Jane Ellis, Royal Shakespeare Company

Niamh Flanagan, Theatre and Dance NI

Jo Gordon, Royal & Derngate/The Core at Corby Cube

Charlotte Jones, ITC

Nurinder Mantell, Royal Shakespeare Company

Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Leader of Islington Council

John Cole, A Ticket 2 Ride Entertainment

Jo Crawley, 1927

Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Tom Stickland, Theatre's Trust
John Plews, The Society of Independent Theatres
Stella Kanu, LIFT & Eclipse Theatre
Janthi Mills-Ward
Anil Gupta
Emily Newton

Local government and theatres- context and current situation, Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson

- Councils are the biggest funder of public culture, spending around 1 billion annually on the arts, heritage, museums and libraries. They have an important part to play in setting the scene for cultural economies to thrive, regenerating the high street, building new homes, and before the pandemic they were creating jobs faster than any other part of the economy.
- During the pandemic, Councils have relaxed grant payments, provided interest-free loans and advanced grant payments, they've also helped theatres and other cultural sector industries apply for grants
- The arts entertainment and recreational industries have had the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough- 34% compared with 9% across all industries. Theatres and performing arts venues had to remain closed for longer than other sectors, as many as 50% are still closed under the step three of the roadmap, reopening with social distancing measures in place is not possible for many theatres
- There is a need for a recovery plan, which includes everybody, the LEP's, business improvement districts, creative clusters, and theatres, to renew a local approach to culture building on the profile of the sector and driving development.
- Many theatre buildings are in a state of disrepair and need significant investment, if they're to play their potential role in levelling up society and building back better. Many of them have spent their reserves that they built up over the years for repair work on surviving the pandemic.
- Councils have found a particular issue with working with DCMS, as they don't tend to view councils as a strategic partner in terms of cultural activities. It's incredibly important, that we work together between theatres, councils, DCMS and The Arts Council, to make sure that we're able to sustain the theatres across the country

Theatres and health/wellbeing. Jon Gilchrist HOME

- In an economic impact study taken pre-pandemic, through the work that HOME does, there is around 1 million pounds of saving to the NHS. Theatre, Arts and Culture can provide joy, hope and a sense of community. UK Theatre's research also showed a 102 million pound saving for the NHS across a year period.
- Manchester looked at Partnership and how culture could drive recovery from the pandemic and that was fed into the city's recovery strategy.
- There are four projects. GM Artist hub- supporting freelance ecology of the city, which led to working with the city council. HOME did the Cultural Hardship Fund which was funded by the B&M Foundation which was for all the freelancers who fell through the gaps. Manchester Cultural Education Partnership (MCEP) a group of people working

together to provide educational activities for young people affected by being unable to access arts and culture. Joint Audiences Project, advertising on trains, trams, posters around the city, one of the most successful campaigns that Marketing Manchester has ever experienced. Encouraging people to remember experiences of culture but also building back better.

- Getting people who weren't attending before is as important as getting the people who were coming back
- CRF money can be a catalyst to further funding, we need that continued support over this next transition period.

Theatres and local regeneration/empty spaces in towns, Geraldine Collinge, RSC

- Stratford Upon Avon has a population of 40,000 and normally visitors of approx. 4 mil a year, it is a small town but a global destination
- Residents found it shocking to go back into Stratford Town Centre after the lockdown and to discover that the story of the town did not feel like it was there anymore.
- Stakeholders came together to work together and find a way through it. From the market providers to the district and local councils. They joined together with partners across the region to help galvanise around culture and help people understand the benefits of working together.
- In Stratford, there were projects around empty spaces. An advent trail was created that worked in 23 venues across the town, plus a freelance designer was hired to work on the shop fronts, which helped bring the story back to Stratford and make it feel like a welcoming place again.
- RSC took over an empty shop, so even though the theatre building is closed, when shops were able to be re-opened, the theatre was there too with a kindness shop working with a local artist.
- People could spend time doing something creative, and talk, which made you realise how much people need to talk about the experiences from the past year.

A council example: Islington council's work with the National Youth Theatre/ theatre, children and young people, the local impact, Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz

- The small borough of Islington has over 30 theatres, they employ thousands of people in the borough, and have an economic impact on off-trade as well.
- Islington has 40% child poverty and is the second most densely populated borough in London.
- There is a barrier between those children and the chance to access culture. All the cultural organisations in the borough came together to create 11 by 11, which involves 11 exceptional cultural experiences for children before they reach the end of Year 11. In the first year, 67 schools in Islington benefited from over 12,000 cultural experiences.
- Helps young people with their skill development, emotional well-being and their job prospects.
- After COVID-19, cultural institutions remained supportive of the project and still willing to contribute, an example being Tall Stories who streamed performances to schools.
- As a local authority, Islington have supported The National Youth Theatre who in turn have helped to develop important programmes for the children in targeted groups.

AOB

This was Hannah Gagen's last APPG session before moving on to a new job. Everyone involved in the Theatre APPG thanks her for all the work she has done, and wishes her the best in her new role.