



SOLT & UK Theatre

Priorities for an Incoming Government

September 2023

www.solt.co.uk/manifestos | www.uktheatre.org/manifestos

SOLT & UK Theatre – About Us

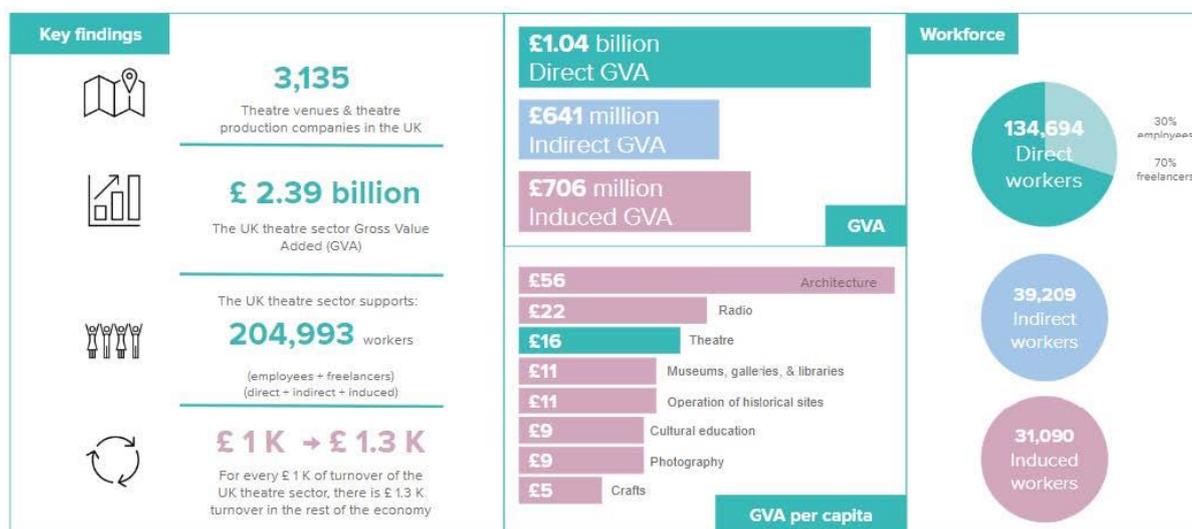
[Society of London Theatre](#) (SOLT) and [UK Theatre](#) are employer bodies for those who are actively producing or presenting theatre and manage or own theatres. Our memberships are made up of over 500 organisations and 1200 individual practitioners across the UK, predominantly presenting theatre in large and medium scale venues.

SOLT & UK Theatre's roles are to champion theatre and support our members to thrive, ensuring a dynamic, sustainable and world-class theatre sector in the UK.

The Impact of the UK's World-Leading Theatre Sector

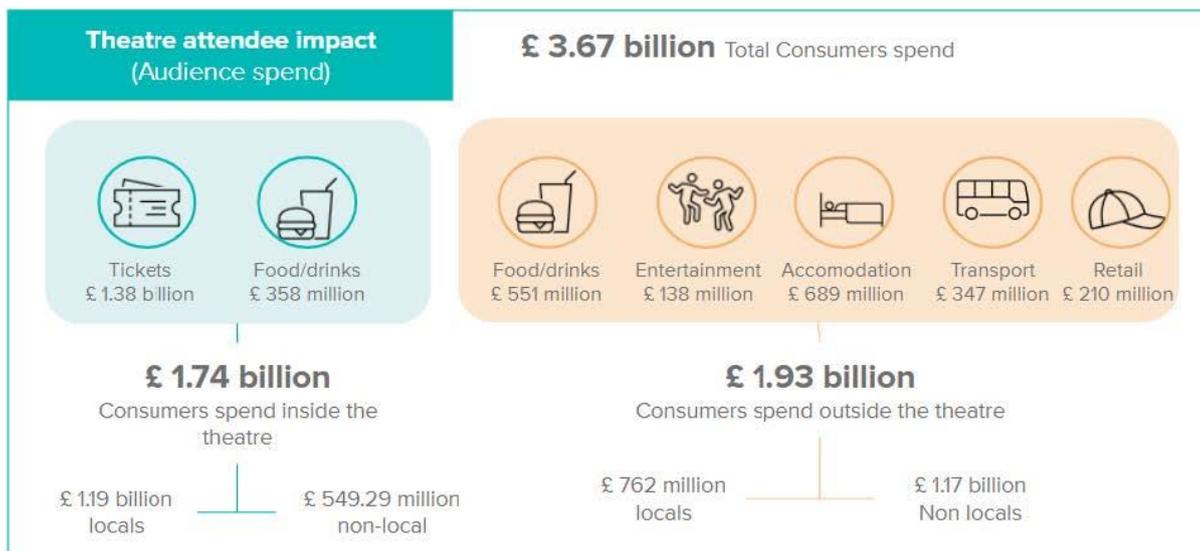
Economic Impact

A recent study conducted on behalf of SOLT & UK Theatre suggests that the **UK theatre sector generates £2.39bn GVA and supports 205,000 workers**. This is made up of £1bn of direct turnover in the UK theatre sector, generating £1.3bn worth of turnover in the broader economy.



Source: Sound Diplomacy

Theatre audiences also contribute additional spending in local economies up and down the country when visiting a performance. **For every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, an additional spend of £1.40 is generated in local economies**, adding up to £1.94bn per annum of extra value added to local economies by theatre audiences.



Source: Sound Diplomacy

Sound Diplomacy's Economic Impact Assessment of UK Theatre Sector found that the countries/regions that display the highest effect are East Midlands, where, for every £1 spent in tickets, there is £2.32, North East, with a relationship of £2.11, and Northern Ireland with £1.92

Country/Region	Average Ticket Price (ATP) (£)	Average spend outside the theatre per person/ticket (£)	Ratio ticket price and spend outside the venue ("For every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, £ ... are spent in the local economy")
East Midlands	17.82	41.27	2.32
East of England	20.95	35.72	1.70
London	52.17	66.35	1.27
North East	16.55	34.88	2.11
North West	24.83	39.65	1.60
Northern Ireland	17.58	33.76	1.92
Scotland	21.74	31.37	1.44
South East	24.44	39.10	1.60
South West	24.18	30.15	1.25
Wales	20.02	34.74	1.74
West Midlands	22.71	41.95	1.85
Yorkshire and The Humber	23.71	23.86	1.01
UK	33.28	46.57	1.40

Source: Sound Diplomacy

SOLT/UK Theatre Members' Sales Figures

In **2018**, the last year for which full figures from both organisations are available:

- 34 million tickets were sold to performances in SOLT & UK Theatre member venues
- 63,000 performances in SOLT & UK Theatre member venues
- £1.28 billion in box office sales at SOLT & UK Theatre member venues

Soft Power and Overseas Impact

In economic terms, the combined gross revenue of five productions that originated in London's West End – *Phantom of the Opera*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Cats*, *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon* is over \$17.9bn¹, exceeding that of the *James Bond* (\$7.8bn) and *Wizarding World (Harry Potter)* (\$9.7bn) film franchises² combined.

Theatre's contribution to the UK's soft power and international cultural projection is difficult to quantify. However, as a single example, *Phantom of the Opera* has been seen by over 140 million people in 183 cities across 41 countries.

Away from the stage, the UK Theatre sector is also a key contributor to the UK services export market, with British theatre architects and technical consultants involved in development and refurbishment projects at the Sydney Opera House, the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts in Orlando and Wild Rice in Singapore to name but a few of the approximately three theatre projects completed monthly around the world by British led teams.

Social Impact

According to research led by the Centre for Cultural Value, 57% of the UK population feel that taking part in arts and culture is important to their wellbeing, positively affecting their mood and helping them to manage anxiety. We saw how theatre and the arts offered joy, solace and escapism during the COVID-19 pandemic and research tells us that medical training programmes incorporating drama and theatre techniques, especially those that use role-play and improvisation, can improve students' understanding of patient perspectives and experiences, developing their empathy.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_musical_theatre_productions#Highest-grossing_musical_theatre_franchises

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films#Highest-grossing_franchises_and_film_series

In 2020 DCMS published *Evidence summary for policy: The role of arts in improving health and wellbeing*³ which found that:

- There is strong evidence that **music can support social development in infants** including enhancing infant attention, affect, and mother-infant bond.
- There is also promising evidence that **other arts activities can support child social development**, including improving prosocial skills, social competence and socio-emotional development.
- There is also strong evidence **that arts engagement can enhance aspects of social cohesion**, including reducing individual loneliness and isolation, increasing prosocial behaviours, reducing aggression and discrimination, and improving social consciousness.

Tourism Driver

UK Theatre continues to act as a driver for inbound domestic tourism, with two times the number of visitors seeing a theatre production than a sporting event. 9% of overseas visitors saw a theatre production in 2019, with visitors who plan a trip to the theatre likely to be higher spending than average.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing>

What Can the Next Government do to support this vital Creative Industry?

SOLT and UK Theatre are keen to work with the incoming government to deliver growth, not only in the theatre sector, but in the wider economy. Our recommendations are designed to:

- Stimulate economic growth.
- Boost tax returns.
- Encourage audiences to return to theatres.
- Widen access to theatre across the UK, particularly for children.
- Increase employment.
- Promote a sustainable and energy-efficient theatre economy.
- Increase the potential for inward investment and overseas growth.

We are asking parliamentary candidates and political parties to support and promote our three core objectives for the theatre sector:

Endorse our “Theatre for Every Child” Campaign.

- our Theatre for Every Child campaign asks for a manifesto commitment to pledge that **all children have the chance to visit a theatre before they leave school.**
- A visit to the theatre provides **cultural enrichment** and **educational benefits, builds empathy, promotes wellbeing** and **highlights potential dynamic creative careers in a growing sector.**
- SOLT & UK Theatre’s initial policy costing suggests this would cost the government **A maximum of £42.33 per child, or a total cost of £34m per year.**

Support and enhance our critical cultural infrastructure by increasing capital funding for the theatre estate.

Research shows that 86% of theatres said finance was a major barrier to making energy efficiency improvements, with this figure rising to 92% for historic theatres.⁴ In order to address this problem we are proposing, in partnership with the Theatres Trust, a Theatre Energy Efficiency Grant Scheme. This initiative would provide theatres with capital to make immediate 'quick win' energy efficiency adaptations, such as the installation of LED lighting rigs. The total value, and support hoped for from the government, of the scheme would be £56.7m, and the grants would range from £50,000 to £300,000 depending on the size of the venue. The scheme would support 472 theatres, half of all theatres in England, and would save these venues between £4.3m and £6.2m per annum depending on future energy costs. We estimate that the scheme would provide a 100% return on investment in between 9 to 13 years, depending on energy price variations.

Maintain the higher rate of theatre tax relief in perpetuity.

- The higher rate of tax relief, introduced in October 2021, has been pivotal in enabling the development of new theatre productions in the UK.
- Reducing the TTR rate in 2024 and 2025 would reduce the number of home-grown productions and risks stunting the growth of our world-class industry.
- An American Producer and investor based in the U.S. and producer or co-producer of over 60 productions on Broadway has increased investment in the UK by 250% since the introduction of the higher rate of Theatre Tax Relief. This increase in FDI will likely fall if the rate of relief tapers as planned
- Had TTR been at the current higher rate for its lifetime (since 2014), HMT would have still seen a ROI of 63%.

Each of these core objectives is covered in greater detail at www.solt.co.uk/manifestos. SOLT & UK Theatre stand ready to work with parliamentary candidates and parties to achieve these aims and deliver practical support to facilitate their introduction.

⁴ <http://www.theatrust.org.uk/latest/news/1626-more-than-1bn-needed-to-make-the-uks-theatre-buildings-sustainable>

Conclusion

The creative economy is a global success story, defined by a resilient and entrepreneurial spirit. Theatres create cultural and economic value for the communities they serve, working in symbiosis with our hospitality and tourism sectors. They are much more than entertainment venues, they are cultural anchors for communities, playing a central role in levelling up, bringing people together to share experiences and connect. The measures outlined above are carefully targeted to enable theatre organisations to navigate the challenges ahead, drawing on existing interventions that have been shown to stimulate economic growth, boost tax returns and encourage the return of audiences. Our energy efficiency grant scheme proposal represents an opportunity to fast-track efforts to decarbonise the arts, whilst cutting energy bills for half of England's theatres.

Contact

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