



## **Theatres Trust awards c.£170k to help nine theatres improve environmental sustainability**

Through its partnership with the Wolfson Foundation, Theatres Trust is awarding grants totalling £169,497 to nine theatres across the UK for vital environmental sustainability projects.

The Courtyard Centre for the Arts in Hereford is one of five theatres receiving funding in this round to upgrade tungsten stage lighting to energy efficient LEDs. When completed, the project will reduce electricity usage in its main house and two studio spaces by 90%. The Courtyard is committed to recycling and reducing waste, with its traditional lighting being offered to small local theatres and some of the tungsten lights being upcycled and converted by artisan makers to create domestic standard lamps. Broadway Theatre Catford in London; Centre Stage in Kilmarnock; Sherman Theatre in Cardiff and Theatre Royal Bury Edmunds also receive grants for similar stage lighting projects.

Two Roderick Ham designed theatres, Derby Theatre and Ipswich's New Wolsey Theatre, will switch to LEDs and introduce timers, movement and light sensors in front and back of house areas, thanks to funding from this scheme. This follows advice on the most appropriate green actions for mid-century theatres in the Theatre Green Book, the grassroots environmental project of which Theatres Trust is a steering group member. Similarly, The Old Fire Station in Oxford, which works with people experiencing homelessness, will upgrade its domestic lighting to LEDs with movement sensors.

The final project supported in this round is an innovative two-part scheme by SPID Theatre, a company that makes art advocating for housing justice from its base in Kensal House Theatre on a Ladbrooke Grove housing estate in London. Curtains installed in the main hall will provide a level of insulation that will keep the theatre a comfortable temperature without needing heating. Green walls will be created in the outdoor waiting area, which will have a myriad of benefits including removing air pollutants, improving biodiversity and reducing noise.

Theatres Trust's Director Joshua McTaggart says *This round of the Theatre Improvement Scheme demonstrates the true range of cultural excellence found in these incredible theatres across our country. From a Theatre of Sanctuary, through to a learning theatre, and a building dedicated to working with those experiencing homelessness, these grants remind us that sustainability goes hand in hand with civic pride and empowering communities. I am grateful to the Wolfson Foundation for their ongoing support that enables Theatres Trust to award these crucial funds.*

The Wolfson Foundation's Chief Executive, Paul Ramsbottom, says *There is an urgent need for organisations to think about sustainability, from both an environmental and financial perspective. We are pleased to continue our partnership with Theatres Trust, providing vital investment in theatre buildings at a time when it is arguably needed more than ever.*

Since Theatres Trust and the Wolfson Foundation started working together in 2017, grants totalling more than £920,000 have been awarded to 55 projects for theatres to improve their buildings, including 41 grants to improve environmental sustainability.

The next round of the Theatre Improvement Scheme is currently open for applications with a deadline of Friday 5 September 2025. Further details on the scheme can be found at <http://www.theatretrust.org.uk/how-we-help/grants-funding/theatre-improvement-scheme>.

## Notes to Editors

Website	<a href="http://www.theatretrust.org.uk">www.theatretrust.org.uk</a>
Twitter / X	@TheatresTrust
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## Theatre Improvement Scheme grant recipients

### **Broadway Theatre Catford, London, £19,425**

The Broadway is a Grade II listed building in the heart of Catford that boasts a unique mix of Art Deco, Tudor and Gothic Revival architecture styles that led to its listed status. Originally opening in 1932, it has a rich history of variety, comedy and Black theatre productions and now delivers a diverse annual cultural programme in partnership with Associate Artists Nouveau Riche. The theatre's current stage lighting rigs consist of 172 tungsten halogen lamps, a system fast approaching obsolescence due to their harmful environmental impact. Starting a five-year campaign to switch entirely to LEDs, this project will replace 45% of the overhead PAR Cans and fresnels in the auditorium, reducing their carbon footprint from 7 metric tonnes of Co2 per year to 0.7 and saving more than £4,000 annually on energy consumption costs.

### **CentreStage, Kilmarnock, £20,000**

As part of Scotland's largest community led asset transfer, CentreStage regenerated the site of the former Kilmarnock Academy into a fully accessible site and features a main theatre with three smaller stages. The project funded is to update the lighting

equipment in the main auditorium theatre, which has been in use for between 10 to 18 years, with LEDs and a DMX lighting board. Currently the wattage consumption for a 6-hour rehearsal/performance period sits at 98.8k Wh, which would be reduced to 37.1k Wh following the upgrades funded.

### **The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Hereford, £20,000**

Purpose-built in 1998, The Courtyard is Herefordshire's leading cultural community venue, offering a varied programme of received and co-produced work and an active participatory programme. This grant will contribute towards a major project to replace dimmers and tungsten lighting with LEDs, which when completed will save an estimated 9,000kgs of Co2 permanently and reduce electricity usage in the main house and studio spaces by 90%. The savings made, along with addition income generated by hiring out the more specialist LED lighting, will be reinvested in activities including The Courtyard's community and outreach programme. Another important element of the project is recycling and upcycling with the traditional lighting that is being replaced being offered to other small local theatre groups and some of the tungsten lights converted into domestic standard lamps by artisan makers.

### **Derby Theatre, £17,437**

Designed by notable mid-century architect, Roderick Ham, Derby Theatre opened in 1975 as Derby Playhouse, situated in the shopping centre in Derby city centre. After a brief period of closure, the theatre reopened as Derby Theatre in 2009, an independent charity operating as part of the University of Derby group. Since 2012, Derby Theatre has been a unique Learning Theatre, with a programme that includes produced work and professional touring productions alongside student productions, learning and community activities. This grant will fund the installation of domestic LED fittings and movement sensors to complete the final 20% of the upgrade project. Due to earlier interventions, the building's DEC rating is currently B, having improved from a G rating in 2013. The reduction in energy usage from completing this installation will support it to maintain a B rating and continue to improve towards A.

### **New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich, £16,315**

The Wolsey Theatre was designed by Roderick Ham and opened in 1979. After a brief period of closure, it reopened in 2001 with a new business model that mixes produced, presented and education / community focused work. This grant will fund a

project to make environmental improvements backstage and front of house. This includes replacing the incandescent / halogen lights across the backstage areas of the theatre with LED lighting and improving lighting controls by installing a range of sensors backstage. The final part of the project is to replace the use of paper towels in the front-of-house and backstage toilets by installing energy-efficient hand dryers. This project is the latest phase in an ongoing larger scheme, which aims to achieve a range of decarbonisation improvements across the building by its 50th anniversary in 2029.

### **The Old Fire Station, Oxford, £20,000**

The Old Fire Station is a centre for creativity in Oxford, housing two organisations, Arts at the Old Fire Station (AOFS) and the homelessness charity Crisis. Working in partnership with Crisis, AOFS offers people who are homeless, socially isolated or disadvantaged space to define themselves by including them in the running of the centre. The grant will fund upgrading the remaining 25% of theatre building's domestic lighting to LEDs, meaning it will become a fully LED theatre. Additional sensors will also be installed to reduce unnecessary energy use.

### **Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, £20,000**

Built in 1973 with a major redevelopment between 2010 and 2012, Sherman Theatre is a leading producing theatre, working in both Welsh and English with a particular focus on the development and presentation of new writing. In a typical year, the Sherman premieres around four new plays by Welsh and Wales-based writers and is home to Wales's only dedicated bilingual Literary Department. Sherman Theatre became Wales's first Theatres of Sanctuary, in recognition of its support for refugees and asylum seekers. The funded project will support the theatre to begin changing over from tungsten to LED lighting. The current tungsten lighting uses a lot of energy, the bulbs have a short lifespan, and it generates a lot of heat when operational. The new LED system being funded is energy efficient, cost-effective and has a much longer lifespan. As well as supporting sustainability, this project will protect the theatre against the phasing out and resulting increased costs of tungsten lamps and repair costs of an ageing lantern stock. It will also have the additional benefit of giving lighting designers of both in-house and visiting productions, more flexibility in their designs.

### **SPID Theatre, London, £16,320**

Built in 1936, the Grade II\* Kensal House estate contains the theatre and community rooms where SPID (Social Progressive Interconnected Diverse) creates art that advocates housing justice. The historic modernist gem was designed by architect Maxwell Fry and social reformer Elizabeth Denby and was a crucial part of their vision for improving the lives of the urban poor. After a period of disuse and neglect, SPID Theatre was unanimously invited by residents to occupy the space in 2005, which it has been restoring and updating ever since. As the award-winning charity celebrates its 20th birthday, it is proud to have been shortlisted for the architectural MacEwan award. The project funded has two key components – insulating windows and creating green walls. The windows will benefit from curtains that will prevent air leakage, keeping the theatre at a comfortable temperature without relying on heating. Green walls will be created in the outdoor waiting area, which will remove air pollutants, provide thermal benefits, improve biodiversity, reduce noise and increase feelings of well-being.

### **Theatre Royal Bury St. Edmunds, £20,000**

Designed and built 1819 by William Wilkins, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds is Grade I listed and the last working Regency playhouse in the country. The theatre produces four productions a year as well as presenting its own work, and specialises in co-creating with those who have survived domestic abuse, those who are homeless, those recovering from addiction, older people, adults with learning disabilities and those of the Global Majority. As part of the theatre's ongoing strategy to achieve best practice in sustainability, this grant will fund upgrading its lighting rig to a full LED rig. As well the environmental and cost benefits, this project will also improve the experience for audiences, participants and artists.

### **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 Wolfson Foundation**

[The Wolfson Foundation](#) is an independent charity with a focus on research and education. Its aim is to support civil society by investing in excellent projects in science, health, heritage, humanities and arts. Since it was established in 1955, some £1bn (£2bn in real terms) has been awarded to more than 14,000 projects throughout the UK, all on the basis of expert review. Funding for the Theatre Improvement Scheme is part of a wider investment in the cultural sector, supporting museums and galleries, historic sites, educational institutions as well as performing arts organisations.

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All enquiries, high res images and further information:

Emma Wall, Chloé Nelkin Consulting

E: [e.wall@chloenelkinconsulting.com](mailto:e.wall@chloenelkinconsulting.com), T: 020 3627 2960

W: [www.chloenelkinconsulting.com](http://www.chloenelkinconsulting.com)