



## Pre-election briefing by Society of London Theatre (SOLT) & UK Theatre:

### The power of theatre:

- Theatre is an economic powerhouse, a source for transformative social good and embedded in communities up and down the country.
  - The sector generates £2.39 billion in GVA and supports 205,000 workers.
  - For every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, an additional spend of £1.40 is generated in local economies.
- Our members deliver community outreach and access schemes, including free/subsidised performances for schools, skills development initiatives and space for up-and-coming artists and community groups.
- British theatre is a complex, networked ecosystem. Its different sectors are inextricably linked, with cooperation and co-dependence increasing recently due to rising costs and the response to the pandemic.

### SOLT & UK Theatre asks:

SOLT & UK Theatre have two key asks of candidates in the pre-election period:

#### SOLT & UK Theatre priority 1: [Theatre for Every Child](#)

The ask:	Fund a theatre visit for every child before they leave school.
The need:	<p>Theatre has many known benefits for young people: It promotes wellbeing, builds empathy, and supports educational attainment. Recent <a href="#">research from the Royal Shakespeare Company</a> shows theatre boosts language development and confidence among children.</p> <p>However, both parents and teachers report a decline in children's access, which is disproportionately affecting children in target levelling up areas. This is despite the plethora of schemes that our members offer to subsidise and encourage children's access.</p>

The cost:	<p>Our costing suggests that this would involve a maximum investment of £34 million per year from government. This is based on 800,000 per year at a ticket price of £25 each and covers transport costs and adult supervision, which schools report as a significant barrier.</p> <p>If necessary, this fiscal contribution could be reduced significantly by a range of funding streams, which the government could choose to incentivise, including philanthropy, sponsorship, contributions from the theatre sector and parental contributions.</p>
Support:	<p>Polling conducted by SOLT &amp; UK Theatre suggests this would have widespread public support, with 84% of parents supportive of such an initiative.</p>
Delivery:	<p>There could be a range of delivery mechanisms, such as direct distribution to schools, ring fenced local authority funding, or a scheme managed directly by Department for Education.</p>

## SOLT & UK Theatre priority 2: Capital investment in theatres

The ask:	<p>A systematic and strategic approach to investment in cultural infrastructure if theatres are to thrive. SOLT&amp;UKT stand ready to collaborate with politicians and other relevant stakeholders to achieve this.</p>
The need:	<p>Investment in our cultural infrastructure enables creative excellence, with programming highly dependent on the quality of spaces available. It is essential that we have a range of venues that can house innovative productions.</p> <p>We welcome the investment of £26.4 million in upgrading the National Theatre’s stages and infrastructure, and the £1.6 million for Theatr Clwyd.</p> <p>Many theatres are in urgent need of investment to ensure they are fit-for-purpose. Many are heritage buildings, with costly maintenance requirements, while others are Millennium projects in need of upgrading. The sector’s post-pandemic recovery has also been hindered by the economic downturn and rising energy prices.</p>

	The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) recently conducted a survey to establish the need. We are awaiting the publication of the findings. We are currently building the evidence base for both the jeopardy if investment is not received and opportunity for growth if it is.
The cost:	The findings from the DCMS survey will support the determination of the overall cost. Any public investment could be matched by sponsorship, philanthropy and sources of local investment.
Support:	People in the United Kingdom engage with the arts on a significant scale: A 2023 DCMS survey found that 91% of UK adults had engaged with the arts at least once, in one way or another, during the previous 12 months. 74% had attended an arts event such as an exhibition or a theatre performance.
Delivery:	There also could be a range of delivery mechanisms, such as direct distribution to institutions, ring-fenced local authority funding, an application programme run by Arts Council England, or a scheme managed directly by DCMS.

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