



Society of London Theatre (SOLT) & UK Theatre: Key Issues Briefing

29 May 2024

Contact: PublicAffairs@soltukt.co.uk

Briefing contents

1. [Key policy asks ahead of 2024 General Election](#)
 - a) [Capital Investment in Theatre Infrastructure](#)
 - b) [Theatre for Every Child campaign](#)
 - c) [Local authority funding cuts](#)
 2. [Value of theatre to the UK economy](#)
 3. [Ticket Prices](#)
 4. [Theatre Tax Relief](#)
 5. [Education and Skills](#)
-

Key policy asks ahead of the 2024 General Election

Capital Investment in Theatre Infrastructure

- We welcome the recent investment of £26.4 million in upgrading the National Theatre's stages and infrastructure and the £1.6 million for Theatr Clwyd in Wales and look forward to engaging with the UK government to secure further investment across the UK.
- Without sustainable investment in building maintenance, infrastructure modernisation or other capital investment projects, many theatre buildings are no longer fit for purpose. Infrastructure projects range in scope from discrete projects such as the installation of LED lighting rigs through to major new design and construction projects.
- In January 2024, the Theatre's Trust published its latest [Theatres at Risk Register](#). Two theatres (Abbeydale Picture House, Sheffield and The Epstein Theatre, Liverpool) were added to the register, taking the total number in the list to 39.
- While some grants to support the improvement of theatre buildings exist, a more systemic and sustainable solution is required if we are to adequately address the sector's infrastructure needs across the UK.
- Investment in theatre buildings enables creative excellence, helping the UK to maintain its world leading reputation. The ambition, quality and diversity of programming is closely related to the availability of good performance venues.

- The scope and ambition of productions such as Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club and the multiple Olivier Award winning Life of Pi, currently touring the UK and Ireland can only be realised in buildings are fit for the 21st Century.

Theatre for Every Child campaign

- Every child has the right to enjoy our country's culture and world-leading theatre, and to experience the power of live performance and learn about career opportunities in the sector.
- In order to sustain our world-class reputation for theatre, we need to invest in our future audiences and workforce by ensuring every child has the chance to go to the theatre by the time they leave secondary school.
- Evidence shows that children from low-income families are the [most likely to miss out on cultural education](#) because they are less likely to have access to cultural experiences outside of school.
- For a young person, a visit to the theatre can:
 - Provide cultural enrichment and educational benefits,
 - Build empathy and promote wellbeing, and
 - Highlight potential dynamic creative careers in a growing sector.
- The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) & UK Theatre are asking political parties to commit to providing funding and support for our aim [that every child goes to the theatre by the time they leave school](#).

Local authority funding cuts

- Public investment in the arts in the UK has led to British art being recognised and celebrated around the world but this investment is in decline. English local authority spending on arts and culture has declined by 43% since 2009/10.
- We are engaging with members and working to further develop resources to support members on this issue.

Value of theatre to the UK economy

- Theatre is an economic powerhouse, a source for transformative social good and embedded in communities up and down the country.
- Theatre is a vital part of our fast-growing creative industries. A recent study conducted on behalf of SOLT & UK Theatre suggests that the [UK theatre sector generates £2.39bn in GVA and supports nearly 205,000 workers](#).
- This is made up of just over £1 billion of direct turnover in the UK theatre sector (e.g. from selling tickets for performances, licensing of production rights, managed tours), which generates £1.3 billion worth of turnover in the broader economy.

- Theatre audiences also contribute additional spending to local economies 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 £1.94 billion per annum of extra value added to local economies.
- For every £1,000 of turnover generated by the theatre ecosystem in the UK, there is a positive effect of £1,909 turnover in the rest of the economy.
- UK theatre continues to drive inbound tourism, with two times the number of visitors seeing a theatre production than see a sporting event. Nine percent 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.

Ticket Prices

- In recent years there has been considerable coverage on the cost of theatre tickets. Costs for the sector have risen dramatically since the pandemic while ticket prices remain stable. SOLT & UK Theatre's 2023 Annual Member Survey showed that supply costs, energy costs and staffing costs were the biggest factors likely to negatively impact turnover in the next 12 months.
- In addition to increases in labour costs, the sector has seen increases in transport costs due to fuel prices, material costs, which have risen between 30% and 100%, and energy costs, which spiked at between 350% and 500% for some theatres.
- London (figures are based on all full/organisational SOLT members reporting): Average price paid: £57.31 (+5.39% on 2022, -1.65% adjusted by inflation).
- Indicative figure for non-London UK Theatre members based on data from 31 venues: Average price paid: £28.80 for 2023 which is down -3% on 2022 average price paid.

Theatre Tax Relief

- SOLT & UKT welcomes the [new permanent rates of TTR](#) (40% & 45%) announced at the Spring Budget. The permanent tax reliefs will provide our members with much needed security and stability in a challenging economic climate, empowering them to forge ahead to create bigger and better productions, creating more jobs.
- 83% of the sector say these higher rates enable both greater scale of productions and more employment. Read more about the impact of the higher rates of relief in our latest research report.
- We will continue to measure impact of the reliefs to demonstrate their additionality.

Education and Skills

- In March 2024 SOLT & UK Theatre responded to the UK government's consultation on its proposals for a new [Advanced British Standard](#) (ABS), which aims to introduce parity of esteem between technical and academic qualifications.
- The ABS proposals would only be effective within the context of a broad and balanced curriculum prioritising both arts and STEM subjects, strengthened teaching capacity and good creative industries specific careers advice. [Read our response to the ABS consultation.](#)
- The theatre sector is facing [skills shortages and gaps](#) in technical, operational and production teams, including front of house, lighting, sound, rigging, automation, costume, wigs, hair and make-up, among others.
- We welcome the [announcement](#) made on 18th March of a reform package to boost apprenticeships and cut red tape for of small businesses.

Contact: PublicAffairs@soltukt.co.uk