

Centre Stage

Supporting small theatres in the capital

July 2013



Economy Committee Members

Stephen Knight (Chair)	Liberal Democrat
Fiona Twycross (Deputy Chair)	Labour
Tom Copley (Rapporteur)	Labour
Tony Arbour	Conservative
Gareth Bacon	Conservative
Andrew Dismore	Labour
Jenny Jones	Green

Tom Copley AM was appointed as a rapporteur to lead this investigation on behalf of the Committee in January 2013, with the following terms of reference:

- To examine the challenges facing small theatres in London; and
- To identify steps the Mayor can take to help address these challenges.

The Committee would welcome feedback on this report.

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ISBN 978 1 84781 557 6

Photography: Finborough Theatre
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Foreword



As a child growing up outside of London with a passion for theatre, I was always determined that one day I would live here. I remember well the occasional trips down with my parents to see shows, and I continue to marvel at the range, depth and breadth of the theatrical experiences that London offers.

London's theatres are as symbolic of our city as the Houses of Parliament or Tower Bridge. Attracting millions of tourists from around the world each year, London boasts more theatres and more theatrical performances than New York, Paris or Tokyo.

When most people think of theatre in London their thoughts immediately turn to the West End. Yet London's theatre scene extends far beyond the bright lights of Leicester Square and Covent Garden. From the Bull Theatre in Barnet to the Blue Elephant in Camberwell, Questors in Ealing to the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, London's small theatres play a major role in the cultural life of our city.

The importance of small theatres cannot be overstated. The vast majority of actors, writers, directors and production staff will cut their teeth in a theatre somewhere off the West End. The most cutting edge, controversial, offensive and challenging shows begin their existence in small theatres. A significant minority find their way to the West End.

Unlike in the rest of the UK, London's small theatres have been growing in recent years. Yet there are some serious potential threats to their existence. During the course of this investigation we have heard about uncertainty around leases, a lack of funds to carry out repairs and upgrades, limited marketing resources and many other problems.

For the first time, this report builds a picture of the state of London's small theatres, the challenges they face and the action that can be taken to help them continue to grow and flourish. Theatre has always been and remains an important part of my life, and it has been both a privilege and a pleasure to carry out this investigation on behalf of the Economy Committee.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Tom Copley'.

Tom Copley AM

1. Introduction

“Theatres and performance spaces are essential if we value cultural experiences. Opportunities to experiment and learn are vital to sustain the fantastic performing talent we nurture, - against all odds, it sometimes feels. Small is generally where you start, hence the preservation of small venues must be a priority, not just in London but country wide”.

Jo Brand – Actress and comedienne

London has a large and diverse theatre industry, with close to 200 theatre venues and over 32,000 theatrical performances taking place every year.¹ Theatregoers can watch a blockbuster show like *Les Miserables* at the Queen’s Theatre, a Shakespearean tragedy at the reconstructed Globe Theatre, or the best in new writing at Theatre503 in Battersea.

The capital’s West End has a highly successful cluster of major theatres. With around 40 major venues, it is a global centre for theatre, perhaps rivalled only by New York’s Broadway in its size and commercial success. The West End is a major attraction for visitors to London, boosting our economy as well as being a vital part of our cultural life.

But London’s theatre scene extends far beyond the West End. There are approximately 150 theatre venues across the rest of London. A number of these are as large as those found in the West End, such as the Rose in Kingston or the Hackney Empire. Many others are much smaller, for instance the Finborough, a 50-seat pub theatre in Earls Court, or The Space, a 90-seat venue in a converted church in the Isle of Dog: these are among the approximately 100 theatres in London that have a capacity below 300 seats.² These small theatres are the focus of our investigation. We also considered small theatre that takes place outside of traditional theatre buildings, such as in ‘pop-up’ venues or in open air spaces.

These smaller venues and spaces are a vital part of the theatrical ecosystem. They enhance the cultural diversity of London, while offering opportunities for Londoners to engage with culture in their local area and at affordable prices. They offer opportunities for community participation with the artistic process such as at the Chelsea Theatre on the World’s End Estate or places where art inspired and produced by ex-offenders and young people at risk is shown such as at the Only Connect theatre in Kings Cross. They develop new shows and talent, providing a pipeline for the bigger stages of the West End and elsewhere, as well as our film and television

¹ *World Cities Culture Report 2012*, BOP Consulting/Great London Authority, 2012

² We used a broad definition of ‘small theatre’ as any venue that is independent and has a capacity of up to 300 seats and/or income of up to £250,000. However our recommendations may also be applicable to other theatres facing similar issues.

industries. They also contribute to local economies, not only through their supply chains but by attracting visitors to an area and encouraging additional spending.³

In conducting this investigation, we have gathered evidence from a range of sources. We have visited over a dozen theatres across the city to view their facilities and speak to theatre directors. We invited written submissions from key individuals and organisations in the sector, and have also held informal meetings with a number of these. Over half of London's small theatres responded to our survey. We also heard from many members of the theatre audience who were able to share views via our website. See 'Views and information' for further details on the evidence we collected.

Challenges facing small theatres

Small theatres in London face a variety of short and long-term challenges. Many need to put themselves on a more secure financial footing, which could be achieved by boosting audiences and expanding shows. Others need to address serious issues with their buildings, which threaten their continued existence.

Despite recent economic conditions we have not seen a wave of closures among small theatres. While at least two small theatres have closed in London recently – the People Show Studios and the Warehouse Theatre in Croydon – others are opening. The Park Theatre in Finsbury Park opened in May, with the Omnibus Arts Centre in Clapham to follow in the autumn; plans are also being developed for a new community theatre in Archway and open air theatre in Shoreditch.

However, the combined pressures of a struggling economy and reductions in public spending have increased the risks facing small theatres. Most theatres have survived the economic downturn thus far, but a further squeeze on disposable incomes could have a significant impact. The reduced spending on the arts nationally and locally has hit several of London's theatres hard already, and the expectation is that further cuts are likely. Our survey found that about half of the theatres who responded felt insecure about their financial future, with twenty percent feeling very insecure.

In this report, we set out an action plan for small theatres. We identify the key actions that can help London's small theatres fulfil their potential by reaching more people and becoming even more successful. The five challenges the plan addresses are in the following areas:

³ See *Our venue's footprint on the local economy*, The London Theatre, 2012; *The Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of the City Arts and Culture Cluster*, City of London Corporation, 2013

- Marketing and promotion
- Theatre buildings
- Workforce development
- Supporting growth
- Performance and rehearsal space

Role of the Mayor

The findings of our investigation indicate the sector has the potential to have a bigger economic and cultural impact by reaching a greater number of people. This objective is squarely in line with the Mayor's culture strategy, in which expanding cultural participation – particularly outside central London – is a key ambition. It can also underpin the Mayor's efforts to rejuvenate London's town centres, as small theatres can play a vital role in attracting visitors to an area, especially in the evening.

The Mayor has a key role to play in ensuring our action plan for small theatres is implemented. We identify a number of specific, practical steps he and the GLA Group can take in the plan. The Mayor can also help ensure coordinated action by other organisations, including theatres themselves, the Arts Council and boroughs. For this purpose, we also recommend that the Mayor appoint a new ambassador for small theatres, who would bring the sector together to deliver this ambitious vision.

2. The shape of the sector

For this investigation we have undertaken detailed mapping of London’s small theatre sector for the first time, including theatre and audience locations, size and income. This analysis has helped to ensure our report is based on a strong understanding of the shape of the sector.

Location

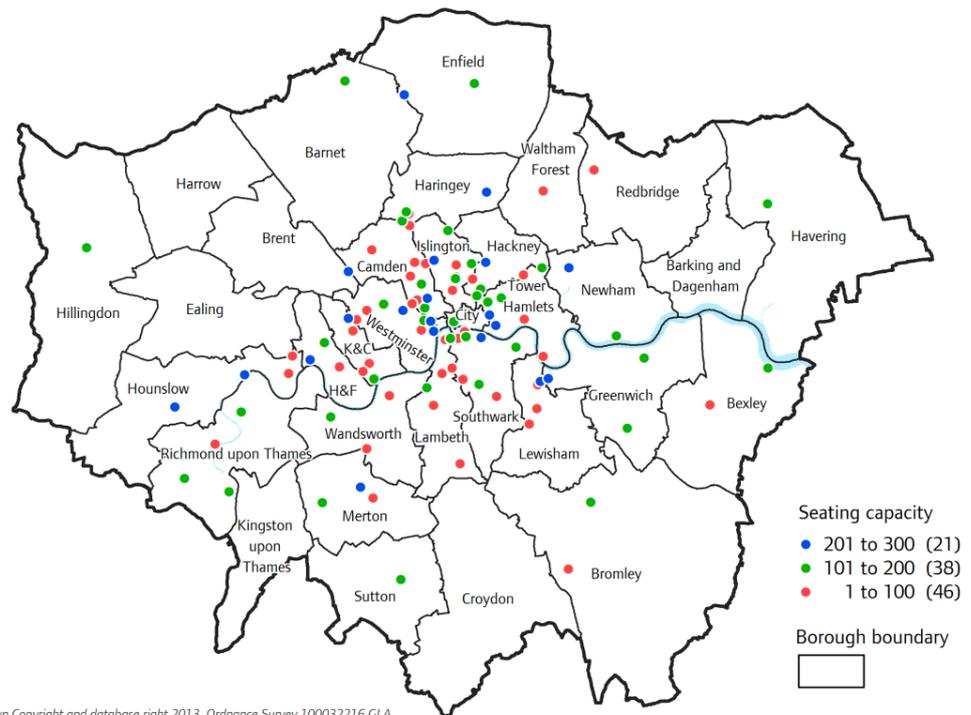
London has 105 theatres with a capacity up to 300 seats. They are spread across the city – in most boroughs in inner and outer London – although there is a greater concentration in central London.⁴ Figure 1 shows their locations, with Table 1 showing the distribution between TfL zones.

Table 1: Theatre location by TfL travelcard zone

Zone	Small theatres	Zone	Small theatres
1	32	4	7
2	40	5	7
3	14	6	5

Sources: Theatre websites; London Assembly survey; Transport for London. Zones based on closest station; stations on zone borders are counted in the lower-numbered zone.

Figure 1: Location of small theatres in London



⁴ Most theatres above this size are also in central London. We have identified 14 theatres above 300 seats that are located outside zones 1-2, for instance the Queen’s Theatre in Hornchurch, Artsdepot in North Finchley and the Broadway in Barking.

Theatre size

Breaking down London theatres by size shows there is a degree of polarisation in the sector. There are many very small theatres in London, with the number falling off above 200 seats, and a relatively large number of theatres with over 1000 seats, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Capacity of theatres in London

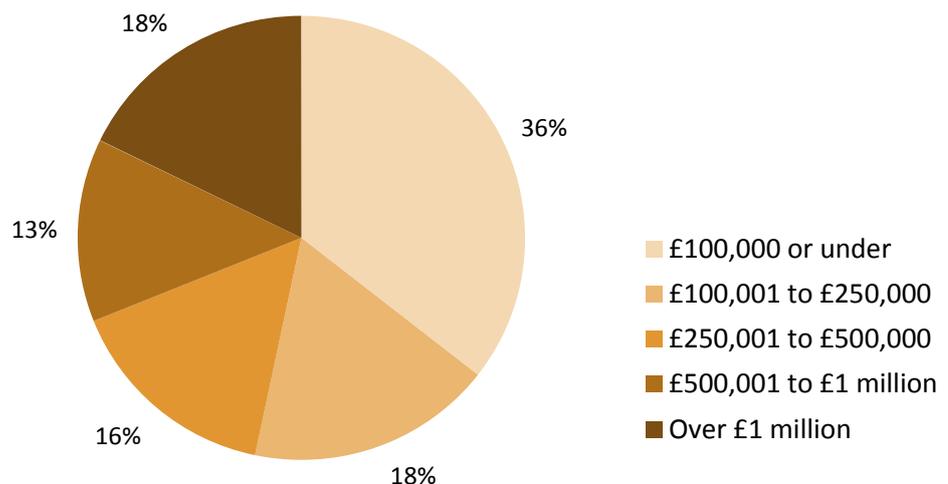
Seating capacity	Number of theatres	Percentage
Up to 100	46	24.0%
101-200	38	19.8%
201-300	21	10.9%
301-400	17	8.9%
401-600	17	8.9%
601-800	10	5.2%
801-1000	10	5.2%
1001-1500	17	8.9%
Over 1500	16	8.3%

Sources: London Assembly survey; Theatre websites; OffWestEnd.com; The Stage; LondonTheatre.co.uk. Only venues' main auditoriums included.

Turnover

The results of the Committee's survey of small theatres suggest that most have relatively low incomes, with over half below £250,000 and over a third below £100,000. There are, however, several with significantly higher incomes.⁵ Figure 2 below illustrates our findings.

Figure 2: Small theatre turnover



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes theatres up to 300 seats.

⁵ Two-thirds of the survey respondents that had turnover above £500,000 were Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations.

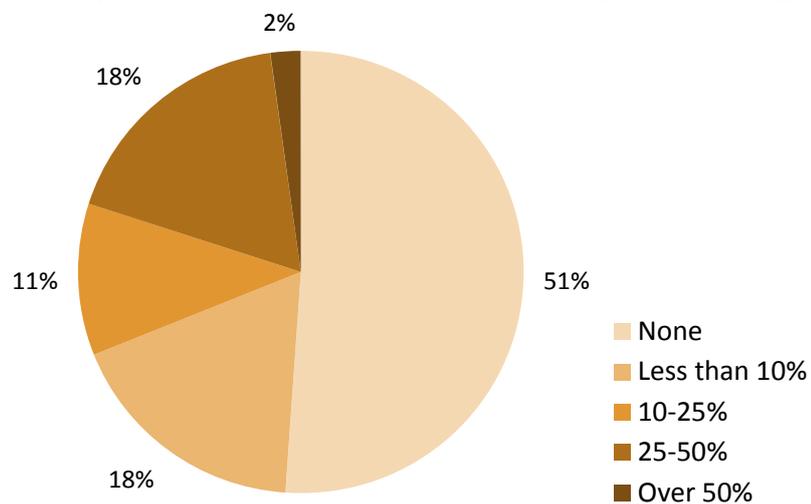
Public funding of small theatres

Our survey results show that about half of London’s small theatres do not receive any form of public funding. Figure 3 below illustrates the extent of public sector grant income among respondents. Of the respondents that had received public funding in the past three years, 65 per cent had been supported by Arts Council England, 65 per cent by a local authority, and 27 per cent from other sources.

We have looked in more detail at Arts Council funding of theatres in London, particularly those within the ‘National Portfolio Organisation’ (NPO) group. These organisations receive regular, core funding, generally with a three-year grant settlement.⁶ The Arts Council currently funds 77 theatre organisations as NPOs, spending about £44 million per year.⁷ A further 32 NPOs are ‘combined arts’ organisations – Including a significant number in the theatre sector – with combined funding of £51 million per year for this group.

National Portfolio Organisations are not necessarily physical venues. For instance, many are touring theatre companies while others provide outreach or educational services. We have identified that of the 192 theatres in London, 38 are funded as NPOs (20 per cent).⁸ Of these, 22 are among the 105 theatres with a capacity up to 300 seats (21 per cent).

Figure 3: Proportion of small theatre income from public funding



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes theatres up to 300 seats.

⁶ NPO funding is differentiated from the one-off capital or project funding theatres may also receive from the Arts Council.

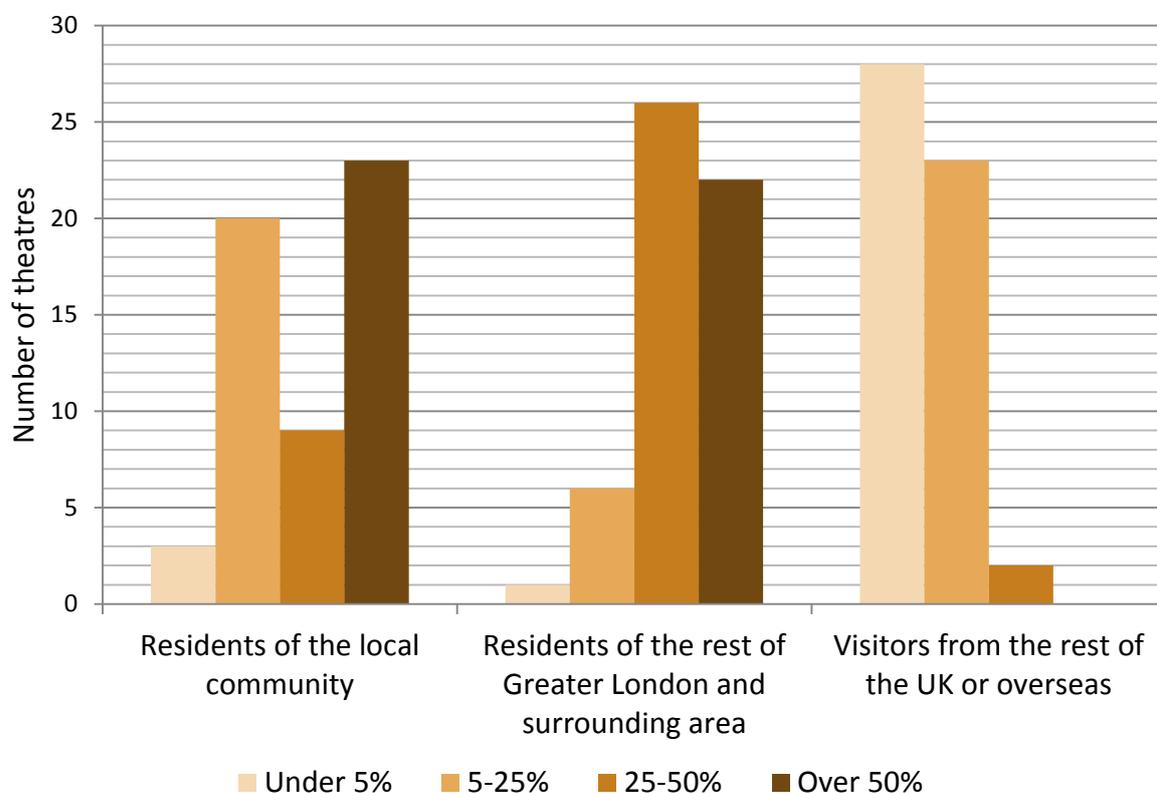
⁷ *London National Portfolio Organisations*, Arts Council England, 2011. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme>

⁸ 38 theatre venues have a National Portfolio Organisation as the managing or resident theatre company.

Geographical reach

Small theatre audiences tend to be more local than West End venues, which attract significant numbers of domestic and international tourists. Theatres responding to our survey were evenly split: about half told us that the majority of their audience came from the local community, and about half said the majority of visitors came from the rest of London. No theatres said that the majority of their audience came from the rest of the UK or overseas.

Figure 4: Location of small theatre audiences



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes venues up to 400 seats.

3. Marketing and promotion

Key findings

- Many small theatres do not attract enough customers to fill their venues; most are particularly struggling to attract tourists.
 - Theatregoers also want more and better information about shows at small theatres. But for small theatres, their greatest difficulty is finding the resources to market shows.
 - The GLA, TfL and London & Partners have the ability to help raise awareness of small theatres through their own marketing channels.
 - Small theatres could market themselves more effectively by working jointly; West End theatres could support this effort by agreeing to reciprocal advertising.
-

There is significant potential for small theatres to increase the size of their audiences. In the Committee's survey we asked theatres about ticket sales at their venue. Over half of respondents (56 per cent) told us that they at least a quarter of tickets for their shows are usually unsold.⁹ Attracting tourists is particularly challenging for small theatres, as shown in Figure 4 on the previous page.

Submissions from theatregoers suggested that the profile of small theatres among Londoners needs to be increased. As one respondent told the Committee:

I like to support local theatres, and am always interested to see what is new, but I know for most of my friends they are not aware of the theatres let alone what is on. I think there is a big job that needs to be done with making people aware of their local theatre and what it has to offer.

In our survey we asked theatres how they advertise shows. We found a variety of methods are used, but that paid-for methods were significantly less common, as shown in Figure 5 overleaf.

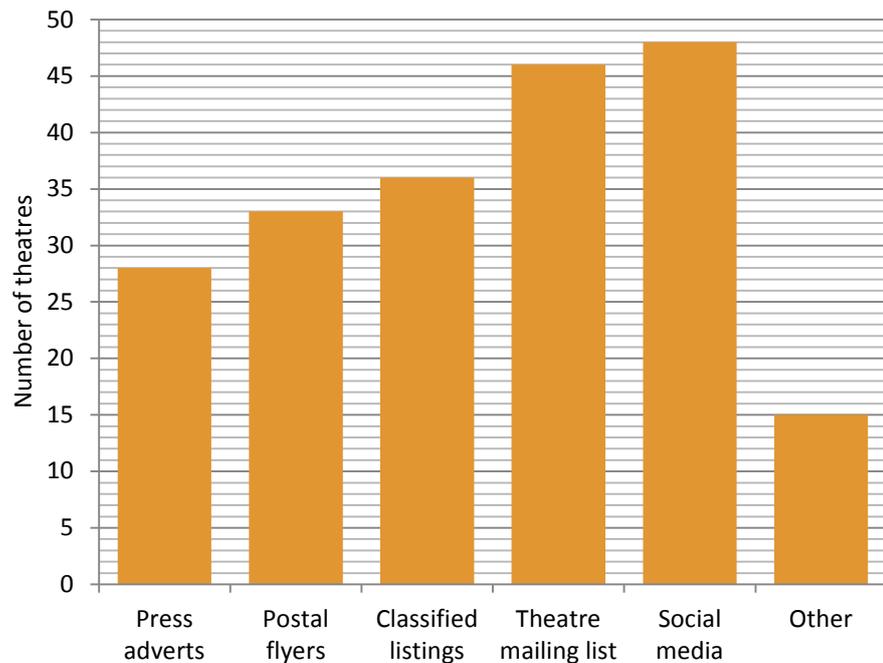
Small theatres told the Committee that limited staff and financial resources are the main barriers to enhancing their marketing. As Clare Slater, executive director of the Gate Theatre in Notting Hill explained:¹⁰

⁹ Unless otherwise stated, quoted survey results include all respondents with a capacity of up to 400 seats in their main auditorium; 55 theatres of this size submitted responses.

¹⁰ Findings of London Assembly theatre survey, April 2013

We have limited marketing budgets and we also, more importantly, have limited staff resources to focus on marketing. We do not currently have a dedicated member of staff solely working on marketing, and if we did this would allow a more in-depth strategy to help grow our core audience. Instead it is part of our producer's role, who is already very busy.

Figure 5: Small theatre advertising methods



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes venues up to 400 seats.

Coordinated marketing

During this investigation, we have explored how small theatres could coordinate the way they promote themselves to potential visitors. A number of theatregoers told the Committee they thought more joint marketing by small theatres would be helpful, for instance:

It is rather down to luck, happenstance and serendipity if one becomes aware of a production before the run ends. So a single point of reference for listings (in advance of the commencement of a run) would be very helpful, as would more cooperation/support of other theatres in the same area so they advertise/promote each other's productions. I believe that this happens to some extent but I'm sure it could be bettered.

We have found there to be very little coordination between West End theatres and smaller theatres. West End venues do cross-promote each other, in particular by placing flyers for shows at other West End venues in foyer displays. However, we have heard from several theatres and others in

the sector that West End theatres will not allow smaller theatres to advertise within their venues.¹¹

There is some joint marketing activity among small theatres. In particular, the *OffWestEnd.com* website includes listings for most small theatres in London, as well as larger fringe venues. Theatres pay to join the site as members and can use the OffWestEnd branding in their own marketing, as well as buying other services. OffWestEnd also runs an annual awards ceremony for the sector.

Other ways in which small theatres could coordinate their marketing have been explored during this investigation, including:

- Some theatres have proposed a single brochure advertising upcoming shows in London's small theatres. The Society of London Theatre produces a single, fortnightly brochure for West End theatre, but there is no equivalent publication for London's small theatres.¹²
- Events are often marketed by the agency contracted to sell tickets. London's small theatres use a number of different ticketing agencies, but may be able to market more effectively through a single system (see the box on page 27 for further discussion).

London's small theatres could raise awareness of the sector and of individual shows by coordinating marketing activity and producing more coherent information for theatregoers. There could be greater cooperation with the West End, too. West End theatres should welcome cross-promotional activity with smaller theatres; the success of small theatres is important for the vibrancy of the entire industry. For instance, if small theatres produce a new, single brochure for the sector this should be displayed in West End venues.

London & Partners

Small theatres struggle to attract tourists to their shows, and some have suggested the GLA Group may be able to offer support in this area. For instance, Joanne Hays, marketing director of the Brick Lane Music Hall in Silvertown told the Committee:¹³

The West End is well known throughout the world. It would be advantageous for all if the GLA could give fringe venues and unusual venues like ours –

¹¹ We have heard from one small theatre that it does cross-promote with a large West End theatre group, through reciprocal mentions in email newsletters. Findings from site visits, March-April 2013; Findings of London Assembly survey, April 2013; Informal meeting with theatre directors, OffWestEnd and Society of London Theatre, November 2012

¹² Findings from site visits, March-April 2013; London Assembly survey; Informal meeting with theatre directors, OffWestEnd and Society of London Theatre, November 2011

¹³ Findings of London Assembly survey, April 2013

which are quintessentially British – more publicity. We could attract visitors from all over the world if the GLA could use its influence to give our venue (and other arts venues) more prominence. We don't have to be a well-kept secret!

London & Partners is the capital's international promotion agency. It is funded primarily by the GLA, but also receives some commercial funding. West End theatres are among the biggest commercial funders of London & Partners via their representative body, the Society of London Theatre.¹⁴

We have analysed the way London & Partners promotes London theatre to tourists, particularly through London's official tourism website, *visitlondon.com*. This site advertises London attractions to tourists, and has a specific section for London theatre, including extensive show listings and a range of special offers.

However, the show listings included on the site are dominated by West End theatre. We checked the first 50 entries for shows listed on the site, and found 38 were for West End venues (76 per cent). Of the other entries, 11 were for other large theatres that also fund London & Partners: the National Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Regent's Park and Southbank Centre (22 per cent).¹⁵ Only one entry advertised a show at a small theatre: the Menier Chocolate Factory in central London.

The Visit London website does have specific pages dedicated to pub theatres and children's theatres, with links to about ten venues listed on each page. Information about upcoming shows is listed on the page for each venue; however, these do not appear among the entries in the site's main show listings.

The Committee met the Chief Executive of London & Partners, Gordon Innes, in April 2013. Mr Innes set out how the agency determined the content of its theatre guide:

Our main website gets 24 million unique users each year and the vast majority of those people want the big, blockbuster, popular stuff and we have to be careful we balance giving them what they want with also trying to push them in directions that they may be less keen on so it is

¹⁴ SOLT is a 'Platinum Partner' of London & Partners. Only 12 companies have this level of partnership with the agency, and only one has a higher level. For more information see: <http://www.londonandpartners.com/partners>

¹⁵ Listings checked on 7 June 2013, using the default 'Our favourites' setting on the site. The National Theatre, Southbank Centre and Sadler's Wells are also funded by the Arts Council as National Portfolio Organisations.

getting that balance.¹⁶

Mr Innes also explained how the agency prioritised its funding partners in promotional work:

We have commercial partners who help to fund our activities and we do partner first where we are looking to do extra promotion. Whilst we will cover all of the city, if some organisations are helping to fund the activity and providing match funding for that then they will tend to get first offerings.

London's smaller theatres are potentially a fantastic attraction for tourists. However, London & Partners' promotional activity focuses heavily on West End and other large theatres. This approach helps to further crowd out small theatres. London & Partners should adopt a new approach of promoting the sector as a whole.

Transport for London

London's transport system is an important marketing channel for many companies, with TfL providing on-board and station advertising space on the Underground, Overground, Docklands Light Railway (DLR), Tramlink and the bus network.

Theatres are among the biggest advertisers on the transport network. Adverts for West End shows are particularly prominent in the escalator spaces at tube stations. Platform and on-board spaces tend to have fewer adverts for theatres. Our snapshot survey of the adverts in escalator shafts at 10 tube stations across zones 1-4 found that 42 per cent of all posters were advertising West End shows.¹⁷ A further five per cent were Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) venues. Two per cent of posters were for theatres outside the West End.¹⁸ See Figure 6 overleaf for the full analysis.

Advertising space on the transport network is managed on TfL's behalf by several contractors; at tube, tram and DLR stations, the contractor is CBS Outdoor. As an indication of the price, a single board next to a tube station

¹⁶ Transcript of Economy Committee meeting, 23 April 2013, pages 11-12. Minutes from this meeting are available at:

www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=255&MId=4602&Ver=4

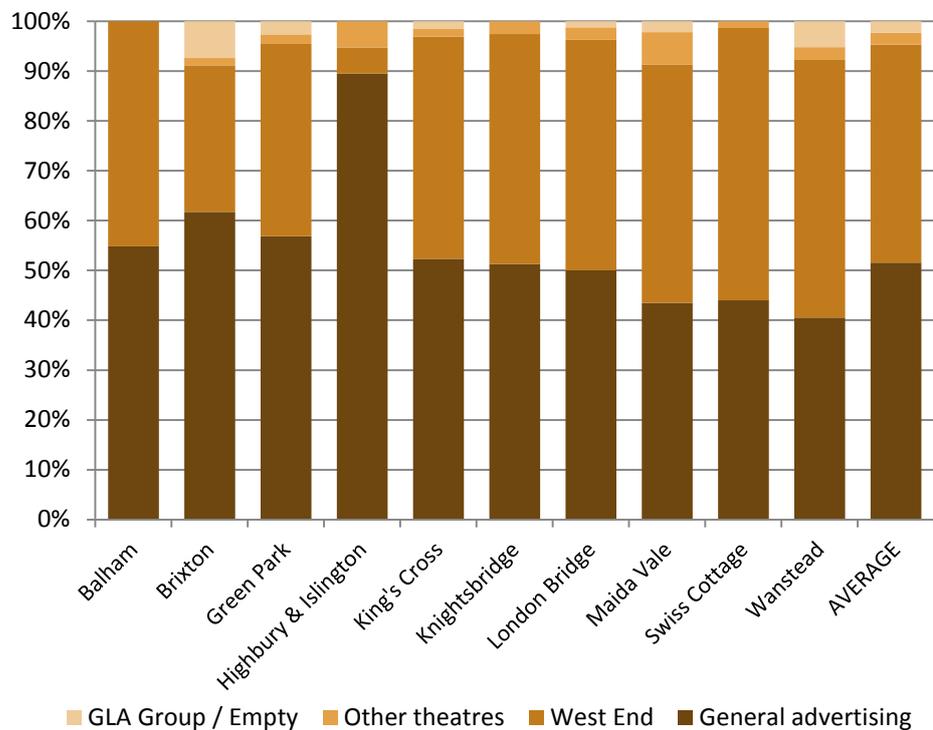
¹⁷ Tube stations were visited between 16-20 May 2013. Adverts at one escalator shaft in each station were categorised.

¹⁸ The non-West End, non-NPO theatres found to be advertising on the tube were the Charing Cross Theatre, St James Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, Old Vic and Riverside Studios.

escalator costs from £71-£317 for two weeks, depending on how busy the station is.¹⁹

Anecdotal evidence has suggested that many adverts on the transport network are expired, but remain on display.²⁰ Where an advert is expired, the concessionaire has the right – under its contract with TfL – to leave the expired advert in place, or replace it with alternative material provided by TfL.²¹ We have asked the Mayor to confirm how many advertisements currently on display at TfL stations are displaying expired advertisements, but he has not been able to do this.

Figure 6: Escalator advertising in selected tube stations



Source: London Assembly

Millions of Londoners and visitors to the city see advertising on London’s transport network every day. West End and other large theatres are able to exploit this opportunity by marketing their shows on the network, but very few small theatres can afford to do this.

Furthermore, it appears that TfL – and by extension London taxpayers – are providing an indirect subsidy to the West End by

¹⁹ For more information see: <http://www.cbsoutdoor.co.uk/Our-Media/London-Underground/Stair-Corridor-Lift-Escalator-Panels/>

²⁰ Findings from Committee site visits, March-April 2013

²¹ At the time of writing. Written response Mayor to Tom Copley AM, Mayor’s Question Time, 22 May 2013 [Questions 1438-1441/2013]

permitting expired adverts to remain on display. There is scope for this unsold space to be used by the Mayor to help small theatres and other cultural organisations promote themselves.

GLA festivals

The GLA organises and supports a range of cultural festivals and other events in London. These have included themed festivals such as the Rhythm of London dance festival and the Liberty Festival showcasing disabled artists performers, and those celebrating particular cultures such as Canada Day or Shubbak, a celebration Arab culture.

Festivals often involve a wide range of different events at venues across the city. For instance, at the 2013 Shubbak festival there were over 40 events. Several of these were performances staged at small theatres, including the Cockpit and Lion & Unicorn theatres and Rich Mix.²²

The Deputy Mayor for Education & Culture told the Committee during this investigation that festivals can bring much-needed attention to smaller theatre groups.²³ Theatres involved in local events – for instance the Bull Theatre, which runs an annual street fayre in Barnet – have also suggested this.²⁴

A variety of themes for new festivals might be considered by the GLA, which would help to showcase small theatres and other cultural institutions. An education or children-themed festival, for instance, could highlight the work of the many theatres in London producing plays for young people. Similarly, during the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, London successfully hosted a World Shakespeare Festival. A Shakespeare-themed festival in the future would be a chance to involve a wide range of small theatres and may have particular appeal to tourists.

The media and public interest generated around London-wide cultural festival is likely to have a positive impact on the profile of participating venues. Building on the success of festivals like Shubbak, the GLA should explore how to further involve small theatres in these events.

Local promotion

Small theatres can do more to raise their profiles among local communities, for example through coordinated marketing. This would involve targeting local residents and workers, encouraging them to engage with theatres and other cultural attractions in the area.

²² For information see <http://shubbak.co.uk/>

²³ Informal meeting, May 2013

²⁴ Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

We have heard about theatres participating in innovative joint marketing projects, particularly at a local level. For instance:

- The Questors Theatre in Ealing is part of the Creative Ealing consortium, which jointly markets galleries and theatre, music and comedy venues across the borough.²⁵
- The Camden Fringe is a month-long cultural festival featuring comedy, theatre, dance and music, with several small theatres such as the Etcetera Theatre and Upstairs at the Gatehouse involved.²⁶
- A number of theatres on the South Bank and Bankside – mainly larger venues – have been part of a Cultural Quarter partnership alongside boroughs, business groups and other attractions, promoting the cultural opportunities in the area.

Engaging with local business groups could help theatres encourage this kind of approach in their area. Our survey findings suggest engagement could be increased: only 52 per cent of small theatres said they were members of a local business group; a further 16 per cent said they did have regular contact with local businesses.²⁷

In areas like Camden and Ealing, small theatres are part of groups that promote local cultural activity. An approach based on identifying and promoting a local 'cultural quarter' would help raise awareness among and encourage local people to visit attractions in their area more often. Where this is not happening, boroughs and business groups could engage with theatres to explore how to enhance the promotion of local culture through branding an area.

²⁵ For more information see <http://www.creativeealing.com>.

²⁶ For more information see: <http://www.camdenfringe.com/>

²⁷ This was a supplementary question to our survey with 25 responses from small theatres.

ACTIONS

- 1a **London and Partners** should enhance the information it makes available to tourists about shows at London's small theatres, particularly on the 'Visit London' website. The site should feature listings for upcoming shows at small theatres, and/or a prominent link to other sources of this information.
- 1b **Transport for London** should provide opportunities for small theatres to advertise at tube, rail and tram stations close to their venue. This could be achieved by TfL providing its advertising contractors with posters supplied by the theatres for local venues that can be placed in spaces that are empty or displaying expired advertisements. TfL could also set aside foyer space for notices from local cultural attractions.
- 1c The **Greater London Authority** could consider how small theatres can play a greater role in new or existing festivals organised by the GLA. For instance, festivals celebrating particular cultures or nations could feature performances at small theatres. New themed festivals – for instance, a Shakespeare festival or children's theatre festival – could allow a wide range of theatres to become involved. The GLA should work closely with organisations such as Society of Independent Theatres when discussing and communicating policies that affect all of London's small theatres.
- 1d **Small theatres** should seek to develop new joint marketing methods, for instance a single brochure or email newsletter advertising upcoming shows. **West End and other large theatres** should commit to reciprocal arrangements whereby they will allow small theatres to advertise at their venues.
- 1e **London boroughs** and **local business groups** (such as Business Improvement Districts) should review how they promote local cultural venues, particularly to local residents. They should consider targeted marketing campaigns based on a 'cultural quarter' approach.

Good practice



Ticketing

Some theatres sell all tickets for their shows directly, although most use external agencies in addition to their own box office. Theatres have told the Committee that external agencies charge relatively high booking fees. Furthermore, they do not provide additional marketing support to small theatres, as agencies tend to do for larger venues.²⁸

Small theatres could coordinate ticketing operations using different models in order to make them more effective. Proposals have been developed for a new not-for-profit ticketing agency, based on the system used at the Edinburgh Fringe, which could be

jointly owned by small cultural institutions.²⁹ Theatres may also be able to achieve some of the benefits of this approach by acting jointly to secure a better deal with an existing agency. Another possible step is for theatres to adopt a common ticketing system and jointly employ call centre staff for telephone bookings.

Pub-theatre relationships

Eighteen of London's 105 small theatres are located within pubs, or in some cases clubs and cafes. While there are positive relationships between theatres and pub management at many of these venues, some theatres have reported problems with noise, building repairs and regular management changes.³⁰

One frustration shared by many theatres located in pubs is that while they generate business for the pub by attracting customers, they do not always see the reciprocal benefits. For instance, one small theatre told us their research showed that 70 per cent of theatregoers bought drinks at the pub below.

There may be effective ways for theatres to develop stronger, mutually beneficial relationships with pubs. For instance:

- Theatres and pubs could offer joint deals to customers, for instance a discounted price for a theatre ticket and a meal at the pub, with the increased revenues shared.
- If there is capacity to increase the number of shows staged, the theatre could negotiate a deal to share pub proceeds above an agreed baseline, in return for organising more performances.

²⁸ Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

²⁹ Informal meeting with Pleasance Theatre, May 2013

³⁰ Findings from site visits, March-April 2012

4. Theatre buildings

Key findings

- The need to renovate buildings is the most serious medium to long-term risk facing many of London's small theatres.
 - Small theatres find it very difficult to raise money for capital investment; they could be supported to access GLA, borough or Arts Council funding for this purpose.
 - Some theatres are at risk from sale or conversion, but there is low awareness of new legislation that may help protect theatre buildings.
-

Renovation

Many small theatre buildings are in need of renovation. In our survey of theatres, 75 per cent said significant repairs or upgrades were required. This was also a recurring concern raised during our site visits. The state of theatre buildings affects the visitor experience, running costs, energy efficiency and the safety and accessibility of the venue.

The type of work required varies between theatres. Among the range of responses we received, some distinct categories of renovation can be identified. Each of these was a common response:

- Addressing structural problems with the building such as plumbing, roofs or disabled access.
- Enhancing production facilities such as lighting and sound-proofing.
- Increasing energy efficiency, for instance by installing double-glazed windows or insulation.³¹
- Improving the visitor experience through better seating or upgraded toilets.
- Offering new services, such as rehearsal space for theatre groups or a café for customers.

Some of these renovations may be considered necessary for the continued operation of the theatre, particularly structural problems. Others, meanwhile, could represent an investment offering the potential for significant returns. This might be through increased ticket sales, or by

³¹ From 2009-2012 the Theatres Trust ran an Ecovenues project to support theatres to adapt their energy, water and material use, and improve waste disposal; for information see: <http://www.theatrust.org.uk/resources/ecovvenue>. In 2008 the GLA produced, *Green Theatre*, a guide for theatres on how to reduce carbon emissions; the guide is available at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/publications/green-theatre-taking-action-on-climate-change>

helping to exploit new income streams. For instance, the Putney Arts Theatre told us that by investing in a new studio space the venue could grow its rental income as well as enhancing its educational work.³²

One small theatre director explained the scale and difficulty of the renovation required at this venue:³³

The entire building has no central heating, or air conditioning. The theatre and offices above are freezing in the winter and far too hot in the summer. It puts audience off. It is pointed out and criticised in reviews. It's unsociable, unprofessional and costing us ticket sales. The theatre walls and stage are not strong enough. Ideally, we need to go dark for two weeks, rip up the stage, tear down the walls, re-stage and re-plaster the walls. I don't have the funds to be able to do this, nor can I afford for the theatre to be dark.

The need to improve building facilities was also a recurring theme in the submissions we received from theatregoers. As two respondents told the Committee about their experiences:

I've seen many a great show in small fringe theatres, but the enjoyment has quite often been dampened a bit by uncomfortable seating. A numb bum can pull your focus and concentration away from the shows.

I have stopped going to at least one my local-ish theatres due to its grotty state and lack of fully working facilities. I don't expect anything shiny, but the place needs to be in basic repair.

Sources of funding

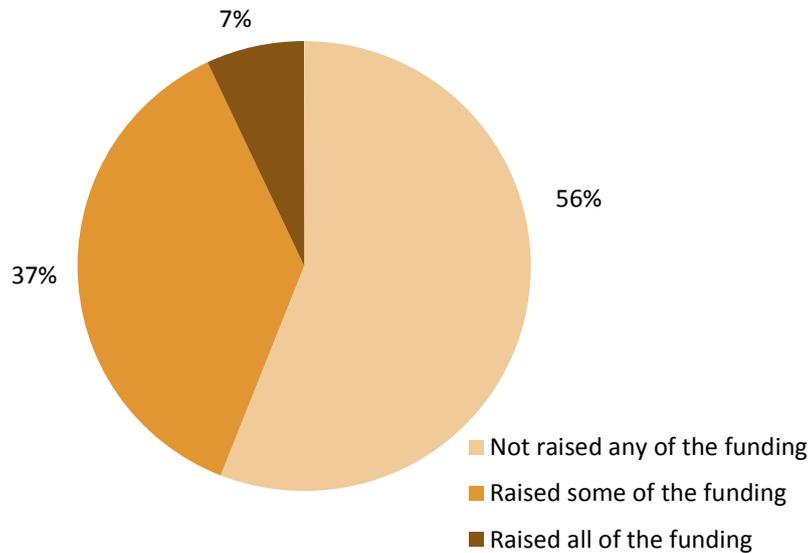
Small theatres find it very difficult to obtain funding for renovation. Figure 7 overleaf illustrates the responses we had from theatres requiring renovation, showing that most had not raised any of the necessary money.

There are several potential sources of public funding for capital projects, which theatres might be able to access, in particular from the GLA, London boroughs and the Arts Council. We have found that it is very difficult for small theatres to access these sources of funding. Table 3 overleaf outlines the funding available from these organisations and how they could ensure it is more accessible to small theatres.

³² Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

³³ Findings of London Assembly survey, April 2013

Figure 7: Money raised for renovation of small theatres



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes venues up to 400 seats.

Table 3: Sources of capital funding for theatres

Source	Funding	Access for small theatres
Greater London Authority	<p>The GLA distributes several regeneration funds via London boroughs in particular the Outer London Fund, Mayor’s Regeneration Fund and London Growth Fund. Much of the investment is designed to revitalise town centres; the Mayor is aiming to spend a total of £221 million on this over four years.³⁴</p> <p>The GLA has made ad hoc capital investment in theatres justified on a range of economic, social and cultural factors.³⁵ In April 2013 the Mayor announced a £1 million investment in the Lyric Hammersmith to allow the venue to develop new studio, café, office and educational facilities. The Arts Council, local borough and central government also contributed funds to the project.³⁶</p>	<p>As small theatres can attract visitors to town centres, investing in upgrades to their venues could form part bids to these funds. The GLA could actively encourage boroughs bidding for regeneration funds to consider this type of scheme as part of their applications.</p> <p>The Arts Council recommended to the Committee that the GLA could create an ‘innovation capital fund’ to make similar investments in other venues, designed to help theatres exploit other sources of funding.³⁷</p>

³⁴ *Growing the London Economy*, Boris Johnson, May 2012

³⁵ <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/mayor/mayoral-decisions/MD682>

³⁶ For more information see: <http://www.london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2013/04/mayors-1-million-boost-for-lyric-as-he-hails-success-of-londons>

<p>London boroughs</p>	<p>London boroughs distribute GLA regeneration funding where their bids have been successful (see above).</p> <p>London boroughs can now charge a Community Infrastructure Levy on new developments in their area, and use the proceeds to fund new local infrastructure.</p>	<p>As part of bids for GLA regeneration funding boroughs could work with local small theatres to identify potential capital investments that could help boost local economic performance.</p> <p>The Theatres Trust, the statutory advisory body on theatre buildings, has recommended that boroughs could use proceeds from the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide capital investment for theatres.³⁸</p>
<p>Arts Council England</p>	<p>The Arts Council has a capital investment programme, with £235 million being spent nationally over 2012-15.³⁹ The minimum grant that can be awarded from this programme is £100,000, with £5 million the upper limit, which may be increased in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The Arts Councils' capital funding is available to small theatres, but the priority is given to applications from its own National Portfolio Organisations. Non-NPOs are only eligible to apply to the programme if receiving written permission from the relevant regional council within the Arts Council.</p>	<p>Since the Arts Council's current investment programme was launched most of the successful applicants from the theatre sector have been NPOs, and none have been small theatres. The Arts Council may need to raise awareness among small theatres and actively encourage applications.</p> <p>Based on the findings of Committee site visits, it is clear that most small theatres could enhance their venues with much smaller grants than are available through the Arts Council's capital programme. For instance, a number of theatres need to improve their heating or air conditioning, which could be done for several thousand pounds. The Arts Council could modify its programme by making smaller grants available.</p>

Small theatres need to invest in their buildings, to help make them more sustainable, attract visitors and develop new services. Most have been unable to raise the required funding. However, there are several sources of funding that may be available, including GLA regeneration funds and the Arts Council's capital programme. Theatres need the right support from funding organisations to be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

³⁷ Written submission, Arts Council England, May 2013, page 9

³⁸ Written submission, Theatres Trust, April 2013, page 4

³⁹ For more information see: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/capital>

Protection

Some theatre buildings are at risk of being sold and/or converted to non-theatre uses. In our theatre survey, we found that 34 per cent of theatre managers believe there is a risk their venue may be sold to a new owner in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, 40 per cent of theatre managers believe there is a risk of the theatre being converted for another use, either by new or existing owners.

During this investigation we have spoken to several theatres facing these issues. This includes one theatre currently for sale, one where there had been frequent changes of ownership in the past decade, and another where a new owner was seeking to increase the theatre's rent after buying the venue.⁴⁰

Legislation has recently been introduced that could give theatres a degree of protection from sale or conversion. The Localism Act 2011 requires that local authorities maintain a list of 'assets of community value'.⁴¹ Community groups can put forward any asset to be considered for inclusion on the register. If approved, groups would be allowed a six month period in which to prepare a bid for the asset when the owner decides to sell it.

Findings from our survey of theatres show that only a third of small theatres (32 per cent) were aware of the new legislation. Even among the theatres that are aware of it, only 13 per cent had been involved in any discussions about becoming registered as a community asset.

Our investigation has found that a large number of London's small theatres may be at risk of being closed, if existing or new building owners seek to change the use of the building. If this possibility becomes a reality across London, it could have a severe impact on the small theatre sector. We believe that a degree of protection can be gained from new community assets legislation, but the effectiveness of this depends on theatres being aware of how to make use of it.

⁴⁰ Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

⁴¹ For more information see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-right-to-bid-non-statutory-advice-note-for-local-authorities>

ACTIONS

- 2a The **Greater London Authority** should actively encourage potential bidders for regeneration funds to consider how supporting a small theatre can contribute to their proposed regeneration projects, particularly in stimulating the night-time economy in town centres. The GLA should also consider a dedicated innovation capital fund, which could help theatres lever in other sources of investment, particularly drawing in philanthropic support.
- 2b **London boroughs** should consider what capital investments may enhance the offer of local theatres and consider how these might be funded in applications for GLA regeneration funds or with the proceeds of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2c The **Arts Council** should actively encourage small theatres to apply for its capital investment programme, raising awareness of the programme among the sector and available guidance. The Arts Council should also consider reducing the minimum grant amount below £100,000, perhaps introducing a pilot project for smaller capital grant.
- 2d The **Theatres Trust** should develop a new guide for theatres on community asset legislation, and send this to all small theatres. The guide should set out how the legislation may apply to theatres, how theatres can become registered as community assets and what rights this status would convey. It should also give information on other sources of advice about building protection and renovation.
- 2e **Small theatres** should explore the possibility of becoming registered as a community asset, discussing this with their local borough, community groups and the Theatres Trust.

5. Workforce development

Key findings

- London's small theatres offer a range of opportunities for people to launch careers in the creative industries.
 - Joint apprenticeship and similar schemes could allow more small theatres to offer training opportunities for young people, if they are able to coordinate their work
 - The Arts Council has a funding programme for training schemes that may be able to support small theatres, potentially in partnership with the GLA.
-

Small theatres provide the opportunity for actors, writers, producers, directors and others to develop their talents and launch careers in the creative industries. A number of theatres have specific schemes for new people joining the sector. For instance:

- The Finborough Theatre in Earls Court has a resident assistant director programme, and offers internships in the fields of administration, technical management and production.
- The King's Head Theatre in Islington has a trainee scheme for directors, producers and in theatre marketing, as well as offering internships. The theatre has an agreement with a larger venue, Rich Mix, through which its King's Head trainees have the opportunity to work on shows there after their traineeship.
- Theatre 503 in Battersea focuses on new writing. Its Literary Department aims to nurture writers with workshops, script development and a regular Writers Night at the venue.

For many theatres, limited resources mean they cannot run such schemes. Small theatres tend to be managed by very few people, with some we visited employing just one or two paid staff. Where internship and traineeship positions are offered they are sometimes unpaid, although some schemes have attracted external funding.

The Arts Council has launched a Creative Employment programme, which is distributing £15 million nationally to support 6,500 apprenticeships and internships in the arts and cultural sector for unemployed people aged 16-24.⁴² The programme is being delivered by the sector skills council, Creative and Cultural Skills, through the National Skills Academy.

⁴² For more information see: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/creative-employment-programme/>

The GLA has recently led an apprenticeship scheme within the theatre sector as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. The GLA offered five apprenticeships through the Culture Squad 2012 project, in which young people received year-long placements at The Albany, Roundhouse, Barbican, Watermans or the English National Ballet, working specifically on producing outdoor events.⁴³ The Mayor has pledged to create 250,000 apprenticeships in London from 2012 to 2016.⁴⁴

Small theatres have the opportunity to offer joint training programmes for new staff. The Creative Employment programme accepts applications from consortia of organisations, under which apprenticeships, traineeships and internships could be shared across theatres. This would allow smaller institutions to be involved in schemes they may not be able to manage individually.

Small theatres play a vital role in developing London’s cultural workforce, and there are opportunities to strengthen this work. Coordination among theatres would allow them to offer joint schemes, such as apprenticeships. This would help young people gain a variety of experiences from across the sector, as well as providing much-needed support to small theatres. We welcome the GLA’s work in this area, and believe the GLA could also play a role in new schemes by providing administrative support to small theatres – potentially funded by the Arts Council – to enable them to participate.

ACTIONS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 3a | The Greater London Authority should invite expressions of interest from London’s small theatres in delivering joint apprenticeships. The GLA could then be the lead organisation in a consortium bidding for funds for the scheme from the Creative Employment programme. |
| 3b | Small theatres should develop plans for joint apprenticeship, internship and traineeship programmes – allowing young people to gain experience across several organisations – and apply for funding from the Art Council’s Creative Employment programme. |
| 3c | The Arts Council and its delivery partner Creative and Cultural Skills should work to encourage small theatres to apply to the Creative Employment programme for funding for apprenticeships, internships and traineeships. In particular they should provide guidance to theatres seeking to make joint applications. |

⁴³ For more information see: <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/young-people/education-and-training/apprenticeships/culture-squad-2012-a-new-scheme-for-apprentice-producers>

⁴⁴ *Growing the London Economy*, Boris Johnson, May 2012

6. Supporting growth

Key findings

- Arts Council project funding helps many small theatres develop new talent and new shows, which is vital for the vibrancy of the sector.
 - Small theatres often seek to expand successful shows by transferring them to larger venues, but opportunities to do this in London are limited.
 - Mid-sized theatres and the Arts Council could take steps to ensure larger performance spaces are more widely available to small theatres.
-

Small theatres are a key source of new talent and new material for London's theatre sector and wider creative industries. Their impact could be greater, delivering more value for London's economy and cultural offer, if they are able to develop more shows and expand successful work. We identify two ways in which this can happen, by providing more support for small theatre projects and opening up opportunities to transfer shows to bigger venues.

Project funding

Small theatres can receive public funding for projects, including specific productions. The main potential source of public support is the 'Grants for the Arts' programme run by the Arts Council, which provides project funding to theatre groups. Grants can range from £1,000 to £175,000 although the majority of grants are for £10,000 or less.⁴⁵ About £4.5 million was awarded to theatre groups in London through this programme in 2011/12.

This funding can help improve the quality and reach of a show. It may contribute toward research and development, the costs of staging a production such as performer pay (see the box on page 39), marketing, touring a show to different venues, and other activity.

The success rate for Grants for the Arts projects in London is 38 per cent. This is lower than in other regions, where about 60 per cent of applications succeed. Neil Darlison, the Arts Council's Director of Theatre, told the Committee the success rate is lower in London because of the greater number of arts organisations in the city; he suggested that the Arts Council was aiming to bring London's success rate into line with other regions.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For more information see: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/grants-for-the-arts/>

⁴⁶ Informal meeting, May 2013

We heard from a number of small theatres about difficulties with the Grants for the Arts funding process, in particular its complexity and timing.⁴⁷ Some theatres suggested that they are left in an uncertain position while making applications and waiting for the outcome. Theatres often need to invest significant time and resources into a project before reaching the point where an application can be made. Furthermore, a decision may not be known until a late stage in a project, meaning that activity such as designing sets, hiring a cast and planning marketing must be carried out without knowing what the show's budget will be.⁴⁸

Arts Council project funding has supported many small theatres in London to deliver successful productions and expand their activity, for instance through touring new work. We hope that the Arts Council will take into account some of the difficulties experienced by theatres and take steps to address these, for instance by making it easier for theatres to apply earlier in the production process.

Transferring shows

Many small theatres in London seek to transfer their shows to bigger venues. Doing this is an important part of the small theatre business plan. It allows shows to produce more income for the theatre and helps make their venue sustainable. One small theatre director told us during the investigation that his company tends to make a loss on shows staged at their own venue, but subsidises this through profits on touring shows. It is vital for the sector as a whole that shows are able to transfer to bigger venues to maintain a flow of new ideas and talent.

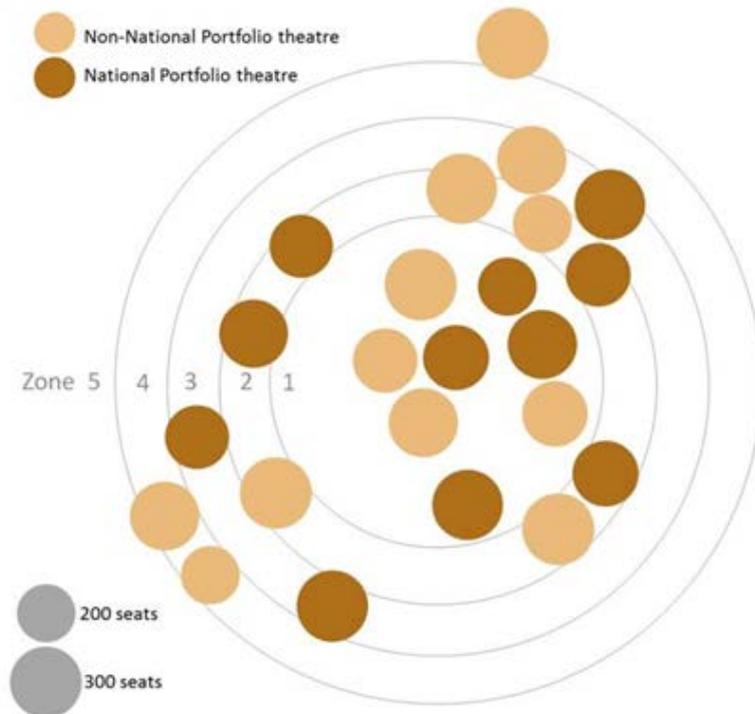
We heard from a number of smaller theatres that it is very difficult to transfer shows to bigger venues in London because of the lack of availability of suitable venues for hire. In particular, we have heard of a shortage in venues ranging from 200-300 seats.

London has a total of 23 theatres with a capacity of 200-300. However, 11 of these venues (48 per cent) are Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs). Figure 8 overleaf illustrates the prominence of NPOs among mid-sized theatres, also showing their approximate location. The concentration of Arts Council funding in this group of theatres is much higher than in the rest of the sector: only 15 per cent of theatres outside of this group are NPOs.

⁴⁷ Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

⁴⁸ The Arts Council commits to assessing applications for small grants, below £15,000, in six weeks.

Figure 8 Mid- sized theatres in London



Source: London Assembly

This is a challenge for small theatres because venues with 200-300 seats represent the next step for theatres with lower capacities wanting to expand shows. NPO theatres tend to focus on in-house productions by resident theatre companies, with their programmes heavily subsidised by the Arts Council. This reduces the need to supplement incomes by making the venues' performance spaces available for hire, therefore restricting their availability to smaller groups.

Although there are 12 non-NPO venues in the 200-300 group, these are not necessarily suitable for all productions. For instance, several venues are far outside central London, which may reduce the size of the audience a show can attract. Other venues may be too expensive for many small theatre groups to consider, for instance the two venues that are within the West End.

The Arts Council invests disproportionately in London's mid-sized theatres. This approach is reasonable, because these are the venues outside of London's West End with most capacity to reach greater numbers of people, providing best value for public investment. However, a consequence of public subsidy is that it has reduced the amount performance space available to smaller groups wanting to expand successful shows.

Mid-sized theatres may be able to address this problem directly, if they commit to making their auditoriums available for hire to smaller theatres. The Arts Council could also consider making it a condition that National Portfolio venues can be hired by external companies for a certain proportion of the year at affordable rates.

ACTIONS

- 4a **Mid-sized theatres**, particularly Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations, should ensure performance space is regularly available for external hire and actively encourage smaller theatre groups to use their venue to expand successful shows.
- 4b The **Arts Council** should take steps to encourage National Portfolio theatres to make their venues available for hire by smaller theatre groups, for instance making this a condition of funding. The Arts Council should also set a firm target for bringing the success rate in London for project funding applications into line with the rest of England, ensuring its process for distributing funds is more straightforward and timely for theatre venues.

Good practice

Pay and working conditions

Performer pay is one of the challenges facing the sector. It is clear that many small theatre productions do not pay the minimum rates recommended by the trade union Equity, which equate to the National Minimum Wage. Some theatres do pay performers at this level, including any productions funded by the Arts Council; others have told us that this could make shows financially unsustainable, or force a reduction in cast sizes.⁴⁹ Some productions use profit-share agreements to remunerate performers, although there is no standard method for doing this.

Working conditions are an equally important concern for performers. Equity has raised concerns about health and safety issues in relation to working times, shared dressing rooms, cleanliness, production equipment.⁵⁰

There is consensus among most theatres we have spoken to in this investigation that pay and working conditions are issues that need to be addressed by the sector. The newly formed Society of Independent Theatres had made this issue an early priority for its work. We believe there is significant scope to improve standard working conditions and to clarify how profit-share arrangements are used.

⁴⁹ Findings from site visits, March-April 2013

⁵⁰ Informal meeting with Equity, March 2013

7. Rehearsal and performance space

Key findings

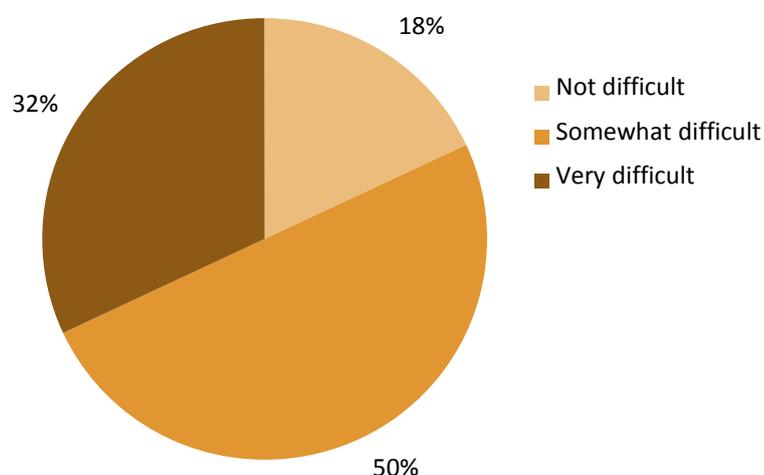
- Small theatres tend to have limited rehearsal space available, but finding affordable space elsewhere is very difficult.
- The government, GLA and others could help bring empty buildings such as shops into use as rehearsal space.
- There is a growing trend toward performing theatre in non-traditional venues, which is welcome: access to empty buildings could again help this type of provision to flourish.

Rehearsal space

Many small theatres report a lack of affordable space to rehearse shows being staged at their venue. This makes it more difficult and expensive to produce shows in London's small theatres. About 85 per cent of theatres answering this question in our survey said that a lack of rehearsal space is a problem for the shows staged at their venue.

With limited space at small venues, many theatres have sought affordable rehearsal space elsewhere. Some have been successful in using office space donated by businesses, which may be able to claim relief on business rates if their building is used for charitable purposes. Others report that finding space is more difficult, as illustrated in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Finding affordable rehearsal space



Source: London Assembly survey. Includes venues up to 400 seats.

London has a large number of empty buildings. Even in occupied offices, space may be largely unused in evenings and weekends; this is true of City Hall, for instance. Daniel Winder, artistic director of the Iris Theatre in Covent Garden suggested to the Committee how small theatres could be supported to use these.⁵¹

Regarding rehearsal space, many local councils in London have access to underused and empty spaces. Having some organisation city-wide which sources these spaces from the borough councils and then offers them at low or no cost to small theatre companies would be a relatively low cost way for the GLA to support the London theatre scene.

There are also thousands of vacant shops in London, which may be suitable as rehearsal space for theatre groups. In the Economy Committee's recent investigation into this issue we found that over seven per cent of shops in town centre were vacant, with higher rates likely outside of town centres.⁵² Recommendations from this investigation included:

- Temporarily reduce landlords' entitlement to Empty Property Rate Relief in London, which would help encourage them to let shops more quickly or make empty space available for free or at discounted prices.
- Creating a London-wide database of empty shops containing landlords' contact details – using Empty Property Rate Relief – to help groups and traders identify available space.
- Boroughs and Business Improvement Districts to run local schemes encouraging pop-up and interim uses for empty shops, actively recruiting potential tenants that can add diversity to the high street and encourage footfall.

London's small theatres tend to have only limited space for rehearsals, but many find it difficult to find affordable rehearsal space at external venues. There are many potentially suitable venues, including office buildings and empty shops, although these are not always made available. The Committee has identified a number of steps that could help bring shops into use for this purpose. We also believe the Mayor could lead by example by offering up available space in City Hall.

⁵¹ Findings of London Assembly survey, April 2013

⁵² *Open for Business*, London Assembly, March 2013. Available at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/open-business-empty-shops-londons-high-streets>

Performance space

Theatre in London is increasingly taking place outside of traditional theatre venues. The capital has a range of groups staging performances in different kinds of spaces, indoor and outdoor.

Examples of this trend we have come across during the investigation include:

- Shunt is a collective of artists curating live performances in unusual locations. Recent locations where Shunt has been based include vaults underneath London Bridge station, and in a warehouse in Bermondsey.
- Stamp Collective is a group creating participatory theatre experiences tailored to specific sites. For instance, the group is delivering an event called Fantasy Café on Lower Marsh, Waterloo, as part of an arts festival celebrating the high street.
- Theatre Delicatessen is a charity that takes over buildings to deliver immersive theatrical events. The group is currently based at the former BBC studios in Marylebone.
- The musical Taboo was staged in the Brixton Club House nightclub, which involved adapting the show to fit the new type of venue, allowing greater interaction between the cast and audience.

Traditional theatres themselves are also participating in this trend. For instance, the Putney Arts Theatre stages outdoor performances in the local area over the summer. The Bush Theatre worked with Theatre Delicatessen to create the Bush Bazaar, where the whole building was provided for a range of performances by different theatre companies.

This kind of theatre depends on suitable space being. As with rehearsal space, this may include empty buildings, although these would need to be large enough to stage public performances. Following the publication of our report the Committee is going to stage a performance in the chamber at City Hall in order to promote the concept. The Mayor could build on this experience by exploring whether events can be staged more regularly, and also help identify similar venues that could be made available.

We welcome the increasing number of theatrical performances staged outside traditional venues. This is a way of delivering innovative shows and reaching new audiences. Rather than being a challenge to traditional theatres, this is a trend they can embrace and participate in. We urge building owners to consider whether their space could be made available for theatre performances. Again, this is an area where the Mayor could help inspire other building owners by encouraging City Hall to be used for this purpose.

ACTIONS

- 5a **Central government** should encourage landlords to make more performance and rehearsal space available by temporarily reducing entitlement to Empty Property Rate Relief, and by requiring landlords claiming this relief to publish contact details.
- 5b The **Greater London Authority** should establish a database of empty shops, helping theatre groups to identify potential rehearsal space. The GLA should also develop a scheme to 'badge' organisations making empty space available for theatre and other cultural activity.
- 5c **London boroughs** and **local business groups** (such as Business Improvement Districts) should seek to identify empty space that may be available for use by theatre groups in their areas, including in their own buildings. They should consider establishing schemes promoting pop-up and interim uses, and market these to theatres.
- 5d **Small theatres** should explore what empty space may be available as rehearsal space for groups performing at their venue, discussing this with their borough and local business groups.

8. An action plan for small theatres

Recommendation to the Mayor

We recommend that the Mayor implement each of the actions for the Greater London Authority set out in this plan, and instruct Transport for London and London & Partners to implement relevant actions. He should also work in partnership with the other organisations referred to below to support the implementation of the rest of this plan.

In order to ensure the necessary coordination across the sector, **the Mayor should appoint a new ambassador for small theatres**. This person would have significant experience of London theatre, and be able to strengthen links between the Mayor's office and organisations across the sector.

We ask that the Mayor responds to this recommendation and the action plan by the end of October 2013.

Marketing and promotion

- 1a **London and Partners** should enhance the information it makes available to tourists about shows at London's small theatres, particularly on the 'Visit London' website. The site should feature listings for upcoming shows at small theatres, and/or a prominent link to other sources of this information.
- 1b **Transport for London** should provide opportunities for small theatres to advertise at tube, rail and tram stations close to their venue. This could be achieved by TfL providing its advertising contractors with posters supplied by the theatres for local venues that can be placed in spaces that are empty or displaying expired advertisements. TfL could also set aside foyer space for notices from local cultural attractions.
- 1c The **Greater London Authority** could consider how small theatres can play a greater role in new or existing festivals organised by the GLA. For instance, festivals celebrating particular cultures or nations could feature performances at small theatres. New themed festivals – for instance, a Shakespeare festival or children's theatre festival – could allow a wide range of theatres to become involved. The GLA should work closely with organisations such as Society of Independent Theatres when discussing and communicating policies that affect all of London's small theatres.
- 1d **Small theatres** should seek to develop new joint marketing methods, for instance a single brochure or email newsletter advertising upcoming shows. **West End and other large theatres** should commit to reciprocal arrangements whereby they will allow small theatres to advertise at their venues.

- 1e **London boroughs** and **local business groups** (such as Business Improvement Districts) should review how they promote local cultural venues, particularly to local residents. They should consider targeted marketing campaigns based on a ‘cultural quarter’ approach.

Theatre buildings

- 2a The **Greater London Authority** should actively encourage potential bidders for regeneration funds to consider how supporting a small theatre can contribute to their proposed regeneration projects, particularly in stimulating the night-time economy in town centres. The GLA should also consider a dedicated innovation capital fund, which could help theatres lever in other sources of investment, particularly drawing in philanthropic support.
- 2b **London boroughs** should consider what capital investments may enhance the offer of local theatres and consider how these might be funded in applications for GLA regeneration funds or with the proceeds of the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2c The **Arts Council** should actively encourage small theatres to apply for its capital investment programme, raising awareness of the programme among the sector and available guidance. The Arts Council should also consider reducing the minimum grant amount below £100,000, perhaps introducing a pilot project for smaller capital grant.
- 2d The **Theatres Trust** should develop a new guide for theatres on community asset legislation, and send this to all small theatres. The guide should set out how the legislation may apply to theatres, how theatres can become registered as community assets and what rights this status would convey. It should also give information on other sources of advice about building protection and renovation.
- 2e **Small theatres** should explore the possibility of becoming registered as a community asset, discussing this with their local borough, community groups and the Theatres Trust.

Workforce development

- 3a The **Greater London Authority** should invite expressions of interest from London’s small theatres in delivering joint apprenticeships. The GLA could then be the lead organisation in a consortium bidding for funds for the scheme from the Creative Employment programme.
- 3b **Small theatres** should develop plans for joint apprenticeship, internship and traineeship programmes – allowing young people to gain experience across several organisations – and apply for funding from the Art Council’s Creative Employment programme.
- 3c The **Arts Council** and its delivery partner **Creative and Cultural Skills** should work to encourage small theatres to apply to the Creative Employment programme for funding for apprenticeships, internships and traineeships. In

particular they should provide guidance to theatres seeking to make joint applications.

Supporting growth

- 4a **Mid-sized theatres**, particularly Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations, should ensure performance space is regularly available for external hire and actively encourage smaller theatre groups to use their venue to expand successful shows.
- 4b The **Arts Council** should take steps to encourage National Portfolio theatres to make their venues available for hire by smaller theatre groups, for instance making this a condition of funding. The Arts Council should also set a firm target for bringing the success rate in London for project funding applications into line with the rest of England, ensuring its process for distributing funds is more straightforward and timely for theatre venues.

Making use of empty space

- 5a **Central government** should encourage landlords to make more performance and rehearsal space available by temporarily reducing entitlement to Empty Property Rate Relief, and by requiring landlords claiming this relief to publish contact details.
- 5b The **Greater London Authority** should establish a database of empty shops, helping theatre groups to identify potential rehearsal space. The GLA should also develop a scheme to 'badge' organisations making empty space available for theatre and other cultural activity.
- 5c **London boroughs** and **local business groups** (such as Business Improvement Districts) should seek to identify empty space that may be available for use by theatre groups in their areas, including in their own buildings. They should consider establishing schemes promoting pop-up and interim uses, and market these to theatres.
- 5d **Small theatres** should explore what empty space may be available as rehearsal space for groups performing at their venue, discussing this with their borough and local business groups.

Key organisations in London's theatre sector

The **Greater London Authority** (GLA) is controlled by the Mayor of London. It has strategic oversight of economic development, culture, transport, housing, planning, regeneration and health inequalities in the city.

London & Partners is funded primarily by the GLA. It is London's official agency for international promotion, marketing the city to potential tourists, investors and international students.

Transport for London (TfL) is controlled by the Mayor of London. It runs or oversees much of London's transport network including the London Underground, bus services and major roads.

The **London Cultural Strategy Group** is an advisory body appointed by the Mayor to advise the Mayor on the provision of cultural activities in London and the promotion of the city as a cultural capital.

Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for the arts in London, distributing government and lottery funding to support theatre, visual arts, dance, music, literature and other areas. ACE has a regional council for London, the Chair of which is appointed by the Mayor of London. ACE is an executive non-departmental public body overseen by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

London boroughs are responsible for local economic development, culture, planning, regeneration, housing, public health, education, social services and other areas. Many boroughs own and/or manage theatres and other cultural venues.

The **Theatres Trust** is the national advisory body for theatres. It is a statutory consultee in planning decisions affecting theatres, and provides guidance and funding for theatres in relation to building protection. The Trust is an advisory non-departmental public body overseen by Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The **Society of Independent Theatres** (SIT) is a representative body for theatres. SIT was established in 2012 and currently has about 30 member theatres in London; its membership is drawn mainly from small theatres that do not receive regular Arts Council funding.

The **Independent Theatre Council** (ITC) is a representative body for performing arts organisations, with about 30 members from the London theatre industry. Its theatre membership is drawn mainly from mid-sized

venues receive regular Arts Council funding.

The **Society of London Theatre** (SOLT), run jointly with the Theatrical Management Association, is a representative body for theatre owners, producers and managers in central London. Its membership is drawn mainly from major commercial theatres in the West End.

The **Little Theatre Guild** (LTG) is a representative body for amateur theatres. LTG has nine members in London.

Creative & Cultural Skills is the sector skills council for industries including craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts. It delivers training schemes through the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural.

There are several trade unions representing employees in the sector, including **Equity** for performers, **BECTU** for technicians, the **Writers' Guild** and the **Musicians' Union**.

Views and information

Findings from the Committee's survey and site visits, and copies of all written submissions, are available from the London Assembly website via: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/culture-and-leisure>

Meetings

During this investigation Committee Members and officers held informal meetings with the following individuals and organisations:

Academy of the Science of Acting & Directing
Arts Council England
Canal Café Theatre
Equity
Greater London Authority
Independent Theatre Arts Committee, Equity
King's Head Theatre
LOST Theatre
Munira Mirza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture
New Diorama
OffWestEnd
Pleasance Theatre
Society of Independent Theatres
Society of London Theatre
St James Theatre
Stamp Collective
Team London Bridge
Theatre Delicatessen
Theatres Trust
Upstairs at the Gatehouse
Veronica Wadley, Chair of the London Council, Arts Council England

Visits

Committee Members and officers visited the following venues during this investigation:

Unicorn Theatre, London Bridge
Questors Theatre, Ealing
Finborough Theatre, Earl's Court
King's Head Theatre, Islington
Jacksons Lane, Highgate
Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate
Union Theatre, Southwark
The Space, Isle of Dogs

The Bull Theatre, Barnet
Lion and Unicorn Theatre, Kentish Town
Etcetera Theatre, Camden Town
Putney Arts Theatre, Putney
Theatre 503, Battersea

Survey

The Committee conducted a survey of London theatres in early 2013, with 65 responses received in total. Members of the public were also invited to share views on small via our website, with 136 responses.

Submissions

The Committee received written submissions from the following individuals and organisations:

Arts Council England
Arts Theatre
Audience Agency
Equity
Folie à Deux Productions
Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain
Mayor of London
National Archives
Pleasance Theatre
Ray Rackham
Frances Rifkin
Streatham Theatre Company
Theatres Trust

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assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Chinese

如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，
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Email 与我们联系。

Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফোন করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة،
فجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي أو عادي أو عنوان البريدي
الالكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જાણવો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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