



Frequently Asked Questions regarding the closure of Theatre Bristol.

Updated 26.09.2023

Theatre Bristol announced its intention to close on 10th July 2023, please find below Frequently Asked Questions.

What is the history of Theatre Bristol?

Theatre Bristol was founded in 2005 with the aim of enabling the very best conditions for brilliant live performance to be created across Bristol, the South West and beyond.

How did you reach a decision?

The staff team and board worked tirelessly to scope out alternative options and considered various routes, however the overriding cultural landscape, our financial position and the uncertainty around funding, led to the ultimate decision that the organisation was no longer in a position to deliver its work.

How long did it take to reach this decision?

We have been working on scoping out the future of Theatre Bristol since the NPO result, although we were able to give it our full attention from April 2023.

What were the key reasons for closing?

- Arts Council England (ACE) made the decision to not continue to invest in Theatre Bristol as an National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) for April 2023 onwards.
- We have been unsuccessful with other applications for project funding.



- Bristol City Council (BCC) are unlikely to make any new investment decisions until March 2024 meaning that there is currently no core funding or project funding available from them.
- Without ACE NPO funding, Theatre Bristol needs to fundraise 100% of core funding from alternative sources. Typically, large core funding bids take a minimum of 8-9 months to process following an initial EOI. With the time required to prepare such a bid and the subsequent processing time, there are not enough funds to keep Theatre Bristol running in its current form.
- Without CIC or Charity status the organisation is severely limited in funding options.
- Given the nature of the work that Theatre Bristol delivers it needs to have a healthy and fiscally-sound business model. Without that it is fragile and vulnerable. We cannot support artists and other organisations in the way we do this at our best if we are not on stable ground (for at least a year at a time).
- The Government's leveling up agenda means that fundraising as a Bristol organisation is particularly challenging and one of the main reasons given by Arts Council England for their decision not to fund as an NPO. This is unlikely to change before the next General Election

How have you used the transition fund?

The first three months were used to interrogate and scope out what the alternative business models could be for the organisation.

Since making the decision to close, the fund has been used to protect the legacy of Theatre Bristol and its staff and ensure legal and financial compliance in the process of closure.



Why did you not get NPO funding?

What we know from our application feedback is that leveling up has played a big part in ACE's decision, and that our application, our impact and our ideas for the future were as strong and as valued as we hoped. Given that the majority of our work takes place in Bristol and under the 'theatre' art form these were the most competitive across the region and disciplines.

Have you applied for other funding?

Yes. We were unsuccessful in our application for restricted grants from various funders and due to Bristol City Council's recent decision do not have confirmed core funding to be able to continue.

Why can't you apply for other money?

We scoped out various routes for funding and applied for some. However the timeline for securing core funding along with the reserves we have meant that it was not possible to secure significant funding in this timeframe. Although we could have secured project funding, Arts Council England's NPO 2018-2022 funded 100% of our core costs, and although we had made significant commitments for 2023 onwards to diversify our income and reduce our reliance on ACE without NPO 2023-26 we were unable to leverage this additional core funding in the timeframe we had.

We are limited by our legal structure – we are a limited company by guarantee with not-for-profit in our Articles of Association, and therefore cannot apply for the majority of trusts and foundations .

Those trusts and foundations that we can apply for are hugely oversubscribed and have longer application processes.



What will happen to sector support now?

We are worried about the future of sector support, and we are worried about the availability of neutral, bespoke support that takes place free at the point of access and at a grassroots level following the closure of Theatre Bristol. We do not believe that sector and artist support should be delivered as a strand of activity from within other organisations, and that it needs to be delivered independently by an organisation or group of people that can see the bigger picture and understand the nuances that exist.

How can I/We help?

We would love to keep the legacy of Theatre Bristol alive long past its closure – if you have ever received support from Theatre Bristol in any form we'd love you to put the Theatre Bristol logo on your website if you have one. [You can download it here.](#)

Where can we get support from now?

We have developed a list of places where you will be able to get different types of support.

- Beyond Face – (Global Majority Artists) [Artist Development](#)
- Tobacco Factory Theatres – [Artist Membership](#)
- Bristol Old Vic – [The Forum](#)
- Diverse Artist Network – [Training and Development, Consultancy, Membership](#)
- [Arts and Health Hub](#)
- [AN Network](#)
- [Gather Up](#) – Library of People
- [Arts Admin](#) – [join the mailing list](#)
- [The White Pube Funding Library](#)



- [The Uncultured](#) – templates and resources
- [Christina Poulton](#) – resources and training
- [Arts Professional](#)
- [Arts Jobs](#)
- [Independent Theatre Council](#)
- [In Good Company](#)
- [OutdoorArtsUK](#)
- [The Island Circus Space](#) - Facebook page with opportunities
- [Artspace Lifespace Newsletter](#) - Bristol events

What will happen to the newsletter?

There will be a final newsletter in September 2023 which will publish a collection of Theatre Bristol stories.

Where can I find your resources and how long will they be available?

We are simplifying our website and the resources will be available here until 2028. These will no longer be updated so may not be relevant, for example, following changes to ACE funding.

How will you protect the legacy of Theatre Bristol?

We are creating a physical and digital archive which will be held in the University of Bristol's [Theatre Collection](#).

When will the last open/public event be?

Our last open/public event was a coffee morning on **Wednesday 12th July 2023** at St Anne's House, Bristol.

How did you look after the team?

All staff were offered monthly coaching and support to look for new employment were offered training and skills development. The decision to close was a joint one between staff and board and all



processes have been open and transparent. There is a commitment to care and wellbeing throughout this difficult process.

What is the timeline for closure?

Following the public announcement we will deliver a legacy plan up to the end of September 2023.

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