



## MY THEATRE MATTERS

### STATEMENT

Taunton Theatre Association reopened The Brewhouse Theatre & Arts Centre in 2014, transforming it into a vibrant regional hub that nurtures and presents world-class talent. We are the largest provider of arts and culture in Somerset West and Taunton; delivering over 1,000 live performances, films, arts activities and exhibitions a year. 71,000 people attended events in 2018-19; audience growth this year is 21%.

Ambitious, yet realistic, plans commissioned by Taunton Deane Borough Council to redevelop The Brewhouse into a multipurpose flexible venue with a 750-seat theatre, dedicated cinema, 180-seat studio theatre, art gallery, library and community studios have been put on hold by Somerset West & Taunton Council. The redevelopment, based on a decade of research and feasibility studies, is designed to reinvigorate Taunton's town centre with far reaching benefits to the region and its people. The project, anticipated for the Brewhouse site, could be repurposed to provide a spectacular centrepiece for Firepool.

Aware that delays to the planned redevelopment combined with the Brewhouse's lack of seats and ageing facilities meant TTA would require increased investment, the Council asked TTA (on 1 Apr 2019) to request additional funding to sustain its operation over a five-year period. TTA has carried out considerable work at the Council's request on financial modelling and business planning, for the cost implications of a delay to the redevelopment and business model of redeveloped venue. A funding decision was due to be taken by Full Council on 8 Oct, hence our Councillor briefing on 2 September, reports and many meetings.

My Theatre Matters collected over 3,000 signatures through Change.Org and hard-copy petitions in two weeks, alongside a letter writing campaign to Councillors to demonstrate public support for TTA, its plans, and request funding to enable us to continue to deliver our high-quality, diverse arts and cultural offer.

On 30 Sep, SWTC Officers told us that the relevant report would not be presented to Councillors as planned.

### ACTION REQUIRED

1. Secure future funding to enable TTA to continue to deliver its current programmes of activity
2. Invest in and work with TTA in order to deliver a much improved and sustainable arts venue the region deserves.

### And, as supplementary resulting from retraction of TTA Report:

3. Clarity about why planned TTA report did not go to Full Council and who decided this.
4. For Councillors to receive TTA report and make informed decision on future investment in TTA.
5. Decision about SWTC intentions with regards TTA future funding and Brewhouse redevelopment.

### PETITION CREATED BY: Taunton Theatre Association Ltd

Petition authorized and presented by Val Hammond (Valerie Berry) Chair of TTA Ltd.

Taunton Theatre Association Ltd, The Brewhouse Theatre & Arts Centre, Coal Orchard, Taunton, TA1 1JL

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