

NLHF Funding Application Proposal

Trinity Arts Centre

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Trinity Arts Centre: NLHF Application Estimated Costs

Stage 1: Expression of Interest

- Producing an Expression of Interest to submit to NLHF.
- Reviewing NLHF feedback on the EOI.
- Revising/updating the project vision, plan and costs for a R1 submission.

IPC – £900 (as agreed)

Some input/advice from WLDC's buildings team (particularly an architect and QS) works would be useful at this stage.

Stage 2: Putting together an NLHF R1 Application

- Revising the project vision and scope, based on NLHF feedback.
- Commissioning the necessary designs and plans required to support the application.
- Producing a budget, project cashflow, timetable.
- Writing the bid and supporting documents in line with NLHF guidance.

NLHF Grant Scheme	<£250,000	>£250,000
Assumptions	Project budget of ca. £260,000 Scope is minor building repairs, equipment purchases, limited improvements. New activities and events planned, using volunteers and existing staff.	Project budget of ca. £5m Scope is major investment in repairs/conservation work, reordering of spaces, installation of new facilities and infrastructure (as project vision). Activities, events, new staff posts, volunteer roles (inc. training and upskilling) put in place. Business planning for future sustainability.
Budget Guesstimate	Capital: £200,000 Activities and Events: £30,000 Other costs: £20,000	Capital: £3,500,000 Activities and Events: £750,000 Other costs: £750,000 (includes contingency and inflation)
Capital Scheme*		
Architect: scope out proposed repairs/condition survey/conservation plan	£10,000	Plans up to RIBA Stage 1 £30,000
QS: cost out proposed capital works	£4,000	£10,000
Other Professional advice: SE, M&E, etc.	£1,000	£3,000
Activity Programme**		
Outline Activity Plan	-	£3,000
Outline Business Plan	-	£3,000
Fundraising Strategy	-	£3,000
Production of R1 Application		
Draft R1 application and accompanying project plan, timetable and budget, briefs etc	£3,900 (IPC as agreed)	£3,900 (IPC as agreed)
TOTAL to R1 Submission	£18,900	£55,900

*Some/all of these services could be provided by WLDC in-house team, so a budget for these may not be required.

Recommendation

Trinity Arts Centre has demonstrated great potential in recent years with an improved programme and increased usage by the local community. Trinity's growth however has been restricted by the physical condition of the venue offering limited accessibility and rooms that are not of decent proportions or configurations. This has consequently lost Trinity the ability to maximise on its pool of available stakeholders, providing limitations on programming and engagement.

It is therefore recommended that a larger bid to the NLHF is submitted up to the value of £5 million where a significant program of works can be carried out to make the venue suitable, fit-for-purpose and adaptable to an ever changing landscape. A larger bid will help to provide the necessary restoration of heritage features as well as providing usable facilities that are scaleable and accessible to meet the wide ranging demands of the service, the local community and weekly activity.

The Story House Project

Trinity Arts Centre, Gainsborough
Vision and Project Plan

Version 6

21 June 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Trinity Arts Centre (TAC) is a West Lindsey District Council run venue in the South West Ward of Gainsborough. The Centre offers a vibrant and high-quality programme of professional and amateur performing arts events, including theatre, film, live music and streamed events. It is an artistic hub for the area and is the only professional arts venue within a 15-mile radius of central Gainsborough. In addition, it hosts amateur dance, drama and rural touring groups.

Although valued deeply by the community, TAC has struggled to be financially viable since it opened in the 1980s. It relies on financial support from the District Council, Arts Council England and other funders. There has been a growing awareness that the venue, with its dated and inflexible facilities, accessibility problems and limited seating capacity, may never be self-sufficient in terms of the income it can generate. Furthermore, whilst the overall condition of the building is relatively sound, the original conversion of the building hid, rather than accentuated, the church's architectural features and its associated stories. The current inflexible layout and limited seating capacity also prevents TAC from attracting national touring productions and being able to run simultaneous events. This prevents growth and diversification of the existing arts and events programme, impacting not just on potential income but in a limited cultural experience for users and audiences. Significant capital investment in the building will allow a more diverse programme to be offered, which will better serve the needs and interests of current (and potential) audiences.

Over the last 18 months, TAC has been closed due to Covid-19 and was fortunate to secure a £200,240 grant from the DCMS Culture Recovery Fund. This provided a period for reflection on what a successful future for TAC looks like, the steps that are necessary to bring about that change, and how the significant investment made by WLDC and other funders can be built upon. Those ideas and aspirations are brought together in this Vision and Project Plan for discussion and consideration.

2. PROJECT VISION

The project aims to establish Trinity Arts Centre as a 'Story House', where the creative arts are used to improve the social, emotional, and physical well-being of West Lindsey's residents and, in particular, those from deprived wards.

As a thriving cultural hub, TAC will serve local and wider communities across West Lindsey District and the East Midlands. Trinity Arts Centre will become a centre of excellence for artistic programming, community engagement, artistic development, and customer experience. The Centre will serve as a cultural campus for those wishing to be enriched by the transformative nature of the performing arts, as well as offering entertainment from across the commercial and subsidised sectors, bringing household names to Gainsborough.

The Centre's pioneering focus, and ambition to be recognised as an innovative learning theatre, will build on what has already been achieved. For instance, in 2019 TAC collaborated with Little Angel Theatre, Gainsborough Arts Society, and Shooting Fish Theatre Company to provide a live theatre experience and learn essential performance and production skills for hard-to-reach young people. These unique collaborations placed learning at the core and provided a free full year engagement with artists going into schools, and with teachers benefitting from creative CPD sessions.

To achieve this vision, the Story House Project will:

- Establish an exciting creative arts programme that engages proactively with existing and new audiences across West Lindsey (and beyond), particularly those from deprived wards, with an emphasis on well-being.
- Reveal the original fabric of the building, so it can be seen, appreciated and tell its community story.
- Improve accessibility and movement throughout the building, both front of house and backstage, ensuring people with disabilities are no longer excluded from attending and/or performing at TAC.
- Increase the capacity of the venue, allowing it to accommodate larger audiences and attract national touring productions.
- Create modern, welcoming spaces and flexible facilities which meet the needs of audiences/users and maximise the opportunities for community engagement and income generation.

The result of this investment in the capital and activity programme will be:

- A reconfigured venue which is fit for the future and architecturally 'legible'.
- Audiences and communities in West Lindsey will be better served by the programme offered by TAC.
- The future operation, management and maintenance of the building will be sustainable, supported by income generated from TAC's creative arts programme.

This project will build on the work of those who, over the course of 150 years, have enabled Holy Trinity to be a place where stories come alive and enrich lives. This echoes its former life as a Parish Church which served the people of Gainsborough: many today still remember it as a place where life events were celebrated, and a focus for support in times of sorrow and sadness. With its closure as a church, the building was given a new lease of life as the Performing Arts Centre. Once again, a place of gathering for the whole community, where stories are created and acted out, talent fostered and exhibited, people brought together, and emotions explored.

The Story House Project will chart this progression, rediscovering the past, celebrating the present and revealing an exciting future for Trinity and the wider community.

3. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Gainsborough in the nineteenth century was described as having "a large populous with many poor". In 1831, Asiatic Cholera reached Gainsborough from Sunderland – out of 223 who caught the illness 43 people died. As a direct response the Diocese of Lincoln saw the need for more churches and three were planned with Holy Trinity the first to be built. The foundation stone was laid in 1841 and it was opened for public worship on 29 June 1843. There followed several years of prosperity with the church extended, gas brought into the building, and decorative additions were made. By 1867 the population of the parish was 2,436 and it was described as "working class, economical but not poor". In 1943 a fund was started to mark the church's centenary but rather than flourishing the worshipping life of the church began a gradual decline with the church being made redundant in 1973.

In 1979, the church was given as a gift to the West Lindsey District Council by the Church Commissioners for conversion into an Arts and Community Centre. This decision was made a few years after a local organisation – the Gainsborough Theatres Association – had begun looking for a suitable venue to host live events and be a "home" for the arts in the town. After considering several venues – including the empty Trinity Church Institute – the Chief Executive of West Lindsey District Council wrote to the Association drawing their attention to

Holy Trinity Church. As a result, the church premises were inspected and found worthy of consideration.

However, since being made redundant the church had suffered considerable vandalism, leaving the building shell requiring extensive repairs to the roof, glazing, rainwater disposal system and floors; in addition, there was no heating system and the building was in need of electrical re-wiring. However, the structural condition was essentially sound with only a few repairs to the masonry required.

The Theatre Association saw the potential of the building as an Arts Centre and over the following year assembled a team of professional advisors, acquired the necessary funding, and worked with local organisations and communities to enable the conversion process. The building work commenced in 1982 to be completed two years later with the new Arts Centre opened by HRH The Princess Royal.

4. CURRENT SITUATION

Lack of Competition

The Centre is the only professional arts venue within a 15-mile radius providing a valuable local resource: it is an artistic hub that many community learning groups call home and provides high quality entertainment and life enriching experiences for all with its rural touring activity impacting residents across West Lindsey District and beyond.

Potential for Growth

There is scope to attract larger audiences and national touring productions, though this is largely dependent on increasing the capacity of the venue and improving the flexibility/accessibility of the space.

In recent years, Trinity Arts Centre has run a small 'cinema', which has proved to be popular. It is a relatively simple and most cost-effective operation, and the live streaming of performances has been a significant success for the venue. Although a new cinema is planned for the town, TAC benefits from being outside any contract exclusion zone and, with modest investment, could enhance this part of its offer.

Diversification of Income

The 2019-2024 Business Plan identified hospitality, secondary events and space hire as having the greatest potential for income growth, based on the current seating limit/capacity of shows. Steps were taken to maximise on these opportunities, though Covid-19 and ongoing restrictions may impact on their financial potential in the future.

Vital Community Resource

The South West Ward of Gainsborough – where TAC is situated - is the most deprived super output area (SOA) in Gainsborough: South West ward is within the 5% most deprived in the country and is the most deprived SOA in West Lindsey. The Centre provides a valuable service to the local community: a community that is troubled with severe levels of deprivation in employment, education, and health. The Centre has been described as a lifeline to many.

Focus for Anti-Social Behaviour & Vandalism

Vandalism is a constant worry and concern for the management team, with £3,000 spent in 2019-2020 on repairs following lead thefts, and subsequent repairs following damage caused

by vandalism has been in the region of £5,500. There have been several attempted break-ins which caused glass panels to be destroyed, the suspended roof in the male toilet been pulled down and the lightening conductor cable severed. Significant damage was caused when a large van was reversed into the rear of the centre. In addition, the curtilage is used as a gathering space by young people and has become a focus for anti-social behaviour: to the south of TAC is a small recreational area which is used for the consumption and the dealing of drugs. Despite being subject to regular police inspections, illegal activity continues.

Location within the Townscape

TAC is located away from the centre of the town, and many of Gainsborough’s restaurants, pubs, and other entertainment venues are some distance away when walking. The centre benefits from a small (free of charge) on-site parking area; however, when this is full customers have to park in the nearby streets which has caused resentment by local residents unable to park. In addition, there have been some incidents when customers vehicles have been damaged by vandals.

Further to this, Gainsborough’s evening and night economy is largely dependent on private transport with the public provision being somewhat limited. Pre-pandemic, the latest public transport to urban areas within the catchment of TAC departed Gainsborough by 21:50. As most evening performances finish around 22:30, those reliant on public transport struggle to attend. This is amply demonstrated by the strong attendance at matinees when public transport is still available post-performance.

Shortfall of Income

At present the District Council provides a significant annual subsidy to TAC, as the venue is not currently self-sustainable from income derived from its activities.

The table below (taken from the 2019-2024 Business Plan) lists earned, and pro-rata forecast income from 2017 to 2022. Where actual figures are known, overall expenditure for the venue was, on average, significantly above income accounted for by much-needed investment in TAC’s infrastructure. These levels of expenditure were forecast for the next three years, but do not address the fundamental capital changes that are required to make the venue self-sustaining and able, in the future, to invest in upgrading its facilities.

Since the Business Plan was produced, income for 2020 and 2021 was impacted significantly by COVID-19. TAC received an ACE emergency grant of £35,000 and WLDC funding (using existing Trinity reserves and additional grants) of £274,895.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22
Income	Actual	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
Office Income	119,618	128,334	185,907	185,907	185,907
Hospitality Income	32,915	38,455	39,253	46,808	54,362
Other Income	21,727	24,345	14,546	24,946	24,946
Total Income	174,259	191,134	239,707	257,661	265,215

Expenditure					
Box Office Expend	81,609	97,041	92,056	84,540	84,540
Hospitality Expend	22,719	18,735	18,485	19,655	21,995
Total Direct Spend	104,328	115,776	110,540	104,195	106,535
Total WLDC Retention From Activity	69,931	75,358	129,166	153,466	158,680
Total other costs*	166,104	184,351	226,960	221,960	221,950
WLDC Subsidy (net cost)	96,173	108,993	97,794	68,494	63,270

* 'Other Costs' includes upgrades to TAC's infrastructure, such as new curtains, cinema screen, new carpeting, new auditorium seating, new sound system.

Steps to Self-sustainability

TAC is committed to becoming financially sustainable. During the pandemic, the Centre took drastic and significant steps to reduce core costs: all non-essential spend was reduced and third-party expenditure was either reduced or ceased altogether; staffing was reduced, with casual staff not being offered work, one member of staff being temporarily redeployed and the termination of the Technical Assistant post.

5. SCOPE OF CAPITAL WORKS

After a difficult and challenging eighteen months, Trinity Arts Centre is looking forward to a future which allows it to serve the local community and the wider district, providing a vibrant programme of entertainment, education, and community facilities to wider and more diverse audiences. This provision, alongside significant capital investment, will allow the venue to become self-sustaining in the long-run. The challenges and opportunities outlined above, along with the recommendations made in the Business Plan, require assessment in light of Covid-19. Prior to the pandemic, work had progressed to maximise this income stream but the pause in normal operations brought this work to a halt. The break in 'normal' operations provided an opportunity for TAC to reflect on lessons learnt, assess its present activities, and plan for an effective and viable future. These ideas centre around a significant reordering of the internal space, the revealing of the pre-existing fabric, and a more efficient and significantly more accessible use of the building. However, this will require significant investment in the venue's infrastructure, layout and facilities to allow it to fulfil its artistic and financial potential. The following capital elements should be considered:

Reopening the Main Entrance

Located at the west end of the building, immediately beneath the imposing nineteenth century spire. During the 1980s conversion, the door was retained but made redundant. It is no longer used as an entrance to the building. By reopening these grand double doors, the original entrance to the building would be re-instated, providing a large accessible entrance to the building, introducing an appropriate sense of occasion, expectation and anticipation on entering the building.

Creating welcoming and flexible spaces

The building's present configuration has the main entrance on the south side where the Box Office is situated, and which in turn leads to the main auditorium, toilets, and a small bar area. This whole area is compact and, when the auditorium is at maximum capacity (presently 201), busy and potentially chaotic. This leads to what should be a pleasant

opportunity to gather before a performance being instead rushed, packed and unpleasant for those attending. It also hinders TAC's options for maximising on secondary spend on concessions, souvenirs, and other additional purchases.

Opening the main entrance and reconfiguring the box office, bar and toilets would create a large and welcoming space, with the flexibility to accommodate a variety of uses (spaces for offering hospitality, a place for meeting and greeting, for events, as well as pre-show drinks and refreshments). This area could also be made available for community use, providing a safe and accessible space to gather and meet. This would only provide a vital facility for the local community but also a valuable secondary income stream for the Arts Centre.

Seating Capacity

A substantial improvement will be to increase the seating capacity of the existing auditorium. The present capacity of 201 has served the Arts Centre reasonably well over the last 40 years but increasingly this limited seating, configuration, and static nature is proving a liability and prevents TAC from maximising its income and offering a national touring programme to its audiences. Ideally, the seating capacity needs to accommodate 300-400; economies of scale would see profit margins increase. The present seating is fixed and therefore the configuration cannot be altered. Movable seating would enable the whole space to be used in a versatile and imaginative manner.

The lack of accessible seating is problematic. In the present auditorium the provision for accessible seating is severely limited to a few spaces at the front of the auditorium, but even this is compromised by its proximity to the stage and there are significant Health and Safety considerations in the event of an evacuation having to take place. This would be resolved by installation of flexible seating which can be reconfigured to accommodate those using wheelchairs.

Increasing the seating capacity and maximising flexibility will necessitate moving the stage into what was the chancel/sanctuary of the former church to create a larger auditorium whilst maintaining the same size stage and storage space. Moving the stage will also reveal the original chancel arch - now mainly hidden by lighting equipment and building infilling. This would create an impressive 'proscenium arch' and allow the original architecture of the church to be legible.

Present provision means that during a performance it is not possible to go from the north side of the building to the south without crossing the stage itself. This unfortunate compromise would be removed by the provision of an access way beneath (or behind) the stage area. Reconfiguration of the stage area would also facilitate access for disabled performers.

Reordered Ancillary Spaces

Rehearsal spaces, offices, storage, changing rooms and the green room were provided in the original conversion, which made use of the transepts to accommodate these spaces. However, the rooms are small and corridors restricted, with access via narrow steps and narrow doorways, no lift access, and limited natural light. Most of these spaces are equipped with outdated fittings and offer little flexibility in how they can be used.

Accessible Spaces

A recurring theme is the poor accessibility throughout the building. As previously stated, there are no lifts in the building but there are many small (and awkward) staircases. Access is compromised to those seeking access to the main auditorium, the stage, and majority of the backstage facilities. This project would enable there to be access for all throughout the

building, by creating obstacle free, accessible routes throughout the building, enabled by the provision of lifts or ramps, as well as associated works and refurbishment.

Toilet Facilities

The present toilet provision, including accessible toilets, may be required to service a larger auditorium and increased use of ancillary facilities. The inclusion of a Changing Places Toilet would also be considered; there is presently no such provision in Gainsborough or the surrounding area.

Parking & Transport

Parking management needs to be considered. At present there is limited parking at the rear (east end) of the building, though reconfiguration of the curtilage may offer more spaces. The limitations of public transport may need to be considered in terms of operation or timing of performances.

Imaginative input from an architect is required to explore the feasibility and options for these spaces to be reinvented, in a way that meets the needs of the venue, its audiences and community.

6. PROJECT PLAN: PRE-APPLICATION STAGE

The project outlined above is likely to require multi-million-pound investment in Trinity Arts Centre. It would seem appropriate to approach the National Lottery Heritage Fund to seek the majority of funds for this work. NLHF currently runs two major grant schemes for heritage, with an above or below £250,000 threshold. The process and project timescale for the latter is much more involved, can take up to seven years to complete and requires seed-funding for the production of outline architectural, structural and cost plans. However, a grant of up to £5million can be requested. If WLDC wish to explore the opportunity of securing a grant of up to £5million with NLHF, then the following steps are suggested:

1. This vision and project plan is submitted to WLDC for discussion, consideration and/or recommendation and a decision made about whether to make an initial approach to NLHF.
2. Initial consultation takes place with key partners, users and the wider community about how the project can meet their needs and requirements (IPC)
3. Preparation of rough outline budget/costings for capital and activities (will require input from an architect/QS and/or comparator projects) (IPC and others as required)
4. Preparation of an NLHF 'expression of interest' form using the above information (IPC)
5. Consideration of NLHF advice and feedback (ALL)
6. Production of a project plan to produce an NLHF Round 1 Application (IPC) – this will include details of the seed funding required to progress this stage of work.

*AI & JP
21 June 2021*