

A woman with short blue hair and a gold headband is looking upwards. She is wearing a blue long-sleeved dress with gold trim on the cuffs and a wide gold sash. A black beaded belt is cinched at her waist. She holds a blue and white fringed umbrella. The background is black with falling pink and orange confetti.

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Creative Experiences

Norwich Theatre's strategy Apr 22 - Mar 26

Introduction

It is with a combined sense of relief, pride and excitement that we present this new strategy for how we will fulfil Norwich Theatre's vision and mission.

The sense of relief comes from being able to make a bold statement of looking to the future after two difficult years of being forced to focus on little more than the present and our survival. Whilst surviving a major crisis like the COVID pandemic might be deemed by many as something of which to be proud, our pride in this strategy is more drawn from the level of ambition that it contains and the fervour with which it seeks to fully live out our charitable mission like never before. We also challenge anyone to not be excited by the prospect of seeing this strategy come to life, and the amazing creative experiences it will provide and the incredible positive impact it has the potential to achieve!

All of this said, perhaps the most important sentiment that accompanies this strategy is one of deep gratitude. As we open this new chapter, we will always be indebted to those who have played a part in Norwich Theatre's success so far, in particular the Culture Recovery Fund and all those whose support ensured we survived the pandemic, thereby giving Norwich Theatre the ability to look to the future in this way.

Many people, organisations and voices have helped shape this route-map and made it so much richer by their input, for which we are hugely grateful. Their job as co-creators with us is not done as we will be relying upon them to keep us on track as well.

We cannot and would not want to do this alone, so our final thanks must be given in advance to all those who will help us make this journey, both those we know now and those we will meet along the way.

Michael Newey
Chair of Board of Trustees

Stephen Crocker
Chief Executive & Creative Director



Our Core Purpose

We provide **Creative Experiences**

Our Vision

To make all of our **Creative Experiences** have wide reaching positive impact

Our Mission

We provide creative experiences, rooted in the art of **Performance** and secure in our sense of **Place**, which generate positive impact for all **People** and inspire **Prosperity** in all its forms

Our Values

Creativity

We nurture our own creativity, apply our creative skills to everything we do and respect the value of all forms of creative experience

Kindness

We lead with kindness when working together and with others

Impactfulness

We deliver our work focused on achieving positive impacts for the people and places with which we engage

Inclusivity

We listen carefully and always strive to co-create to ensure that we hear the most diverse range of voices and actively break down real and perceived barriers

Honesty

We are open and honest with ourselves and all those with whom we work

Bravery

We are not afraid to challenge ourselves and actively embrace experimentation and innovation in pursuit of our vision



Our Strategic Pillars

We have structured this strategy around four key pillars, each of which is subsequently broken down by a set of work strands.

The strategic pillars on which we will build Norwich Theatre over the next four years have been devised to maximise impact in the many roles we play:

1. Performance

A major UK performing arts organisation and our venues being among the largest and most visited in the East of England

2. People

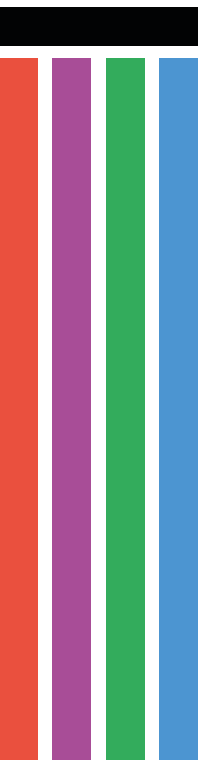
A place of employment, engagement, enjoyment and entertainment for a huge number and range of people

3. Place

A creative force rooted locally, regionally, nationally and internationally

4. Prosperity

A cultural organisation committed to dynamism and achieving positive impact in all that we do



Performance

The art of performance in all its forms defines our creative identity and runs across all our output, both audience-targeted and participatory.

We will at all times ensure a balanced programme that is commercially viable, resonates locally with audiences, and comfortably marries together **presented** work alongside the forging of our own artistic ambitions as an **originator** of work. All of our creative partnerships and decisions must be

based on our values and quality, with a shared commitment to original storytelling, diverse representation and accessibility. We take the responsibility that comes with being the largest theatre in our region, and our stages being critical to the national touring ecology, very seriously. We always seek to maximise the opportunities presented by our multi-scale stages for both creatives and audiences and will keenly embrace our stage **Norwich Theatre Beyond** as new means to create and connect audiences with performance.

There are three strands to this Strategic Pillar:

Presented Programme

- Ensuring high levels of attendance and financial return through populist commercial programming
- Growing and developing our national touring partnerships
- Celebrating internationalism through circus, dance and music
- Platforming local and regional theatre makers
- Reflecting relevant themes and issues of our time

Originated Programme

- Illuminating and amplifying locally resonant stories and voices
- Fostering East of England creative collaboration and co-origination
- Generating commercial return
- Changing perception through national and international profile

Norwich Theatre Beyond

- Widening our reach
- Increasing inclusion by tackling barriers to engagement
- Forging new and different partnerships

People

People are the life-blood of Norwich Theatre and the impact we have on those with whom we engage is critical to our vision and mission.

The fundamental principles of how we work with all of our people are captured in our values: to make equity of opportunity; to value diversity in all its forms; and to maintain our unwavering commitment to inclusivity.

We hugely value all those who give their time voluntarily or who are employed by us to be

co-creators and co-deliverers of our work and will hold ourselves to account for their good wellbeing, enjoyment and satisfaction in doing so. We also acknowledge that our mission is only viable thanks to the loyalty of **theatre attenders** and those **visitors and customers** who enjoy what our buildings have to offer outside of our shows. We place huge importance on extending our reach and providing open access opportunities for people to explore their own creativity as **participants**. We are hugely grateful for the loyalty we receive and to those who choose to become philanthropic **supporters** of our whole mission.

There are five strands to this Strategic Pillar:

Co-Creators and Co-Deliverers

- Driving positive engagement, wellbeing and happiness
- Embedding inclusivity across everything we do
- Being an outstanding place to work or volunteer
- Striving for the most diverse representation in our workforce
- Supporting personal and professional development

Theatre Attendees

- Driving loyalty and increasing frequency of attendance
- Developing new audiences
- Increasing the quality and depth of engagement
- Growing our online community

Visitors and Customers

- Delivering a consistent high quality visitor experience
- Animating our buildings
- Driving digital efficiency in our visitor experience
- Listening and learning to ensure equity of access to our buildings

Participants

- Engaging people of all ages in exploring our stage programmes
- Open access opportunities as entry points for creative exploration
- Encouraging creative togetherness for families

Supporters

- Embedding a new culture of philanthropy
- Increasing levels of individual giving
- Ensuring high quality donor stewardship

Place

We define our sense of place both by our own places, and the localities in which they exist, as well as our place within a national and international arts ecology.

We are the proud custodians of three theatre **buildings** in the heart of the City of Norwich. Each of our venues works hard for us and has its own set of demands in terms of general maintenance, its own challenges in remaining accessible and its own opportunities for future development. We will keep them in good order and fit for the future.

Whilst the COVID pandemic taught us that we can deliver our charitable mission without our buildings, our return to full financial sustainability is reliant upon the dynamism that comes from actively being more than a theatre; we must fully maximise

the opportunities that our buildings present through **commercial** income streams both linked to and separate from theatre shows.

We proudly call Norwich our home and work hard to embed ourselves in the fabric of Norwich, Norfolk and the East of England. Recognising that a post-pandemic world will see strategies change and need greater stakeholder collaboration, we will renew our efforts to engage in **place-based strategic work**.

Our ambition to renew our purpose, redefine perceptions of Norwich Theatre, and raise our national and international profile underpins our strategy for the coming years. A focus on our **national and international profile** will be critical to achieving this.

Prosperity

We believe we have the ability to support positive change, improve people's wellbeing and generate prosperity for our city, our region, our sector and our world and, in doing so, ensure our own future prosperity.

Our Creative Engagement work has given us a demonstrable track record in generating a broad range of impact and social outcomes with and for people and communities. This will be further developed into an outcomes-focussed programme of creative work directly supporting **social change**.

The period of COVID has highlighted the divide in the cultural sector between freelance artists/newly emerging companies and established organisations. Translating this to a local and regional level, a brighter light has

been shone on the lack of structured support in our region for theatre **artist development**. Our own research and pilot-working in this area has underlined and clarified these gaps, opportunities and needs.

Prior to the pandemic, Norwich Theatre had been a sector-leader in championing new approaches to addressing climate change and promoting greater **environmental sustainability**. We wish to re-attain this status and further our contribution to combatting the Climate Crisis.

A careful strand of work will be delivered around **organisational resilience**, to map and manage risk, recover our self-sustaining financial model, establish levels of financial future-proofing and achieve a new resilience.

There are four strands to this Strategic Pillar:

Buildings and Infrastructure

- Being good custodians of our venues
- Reducing financial and environmental cost
- Future-proofing our buildings
- Working towards the major Playhouse project

Commercial

- Maximising income and profitability from our show-related activities
- Growing income from our unique standalone hospitality destinations
- Generating new income through corporate relations
- Developing new commercial income streams

Place-Based Strategic Work

- Fostering new partnership and projects in support of levelling up
- Promoting Norwich, Norfolk and the East of England as cultural destinations
- Measuring, demonstrating and sharing our impact

National and International Profile

- Supporting Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy
- Building and maximising our partnership with University of East Anglia
- Expanding our commitment to consortium working
- Seeking opportunities for sector and thought leadership

There are four strands to this Strategic Pillar:

Social Change

- Generating creative social capital and social mobility with underrepresented communities
- Protecting the value of creative experience within educational settings
- Preventing and tackling social isolation in older adults
- Promoting individual wellbeing and resilience

Artist Development

- Engineering partnerships to best grow a more sustainable local theatre making ecology
- Providing targeted support for artists and companies
- Undertaking selective activities to widen our reach
- Developing our role as a creative hub through open access programmes

Environmental Sustainability

- Working proactively towards carbon neutral status
- Lessening our climate impact through innovation in our buildings
- Influencing, educating and advocating for climate prosperity

Organisational Resilience

- Re-attaining financial sustainability
- Embedding a new culture of impact measurement
- Increasing robustness in our leadership and governance



Why a new Strategy?

There is no doubt that Norwich Theatre, alongside other individual cultural institutions, has neither felt all of the impacts of the COVID pandemic yet, nor have we fully recovered. We have not established a normal, whether that is going to be a new normal, a restored one or a hybrid of the two.

Whilst a future normal is still ours to shape, this strategy is first and foremost an embodiment of our fundamental wish to not merely survive, but to thrive like never before.

In the weeks running up to the closure of our venues in 2020, budgets and plans were being prepared that would see us complete a three-year strategy during 2020-21. It is fair to say that we were thriving before the pandemic, with significant achievements under our belt and in the immediate pipeline. Had we been able to stay on course until March 2021, we would have been reporting not only significant achievement across all areas of what we set out to do, but over-achievement in many areas as well.

The roots of this strategy can be traced to early workshops that aimed to capitalise upon our momentum and see us scale new heights of ambition. It is important to note that all that we started, achieved and dreamed up before the pandemic has not and will not be lost; this strategy gets us back on that course.

We cannot deny, however, that the pandemic impacted us in ways that far surpassed the closure of our buildings and the financial challenges that were imposed, and we have taken considerable time for reflection. This focused far less on **what** we did in response to the pandemic than on **how** we did things during this time. It drove the earliest stages of developing this new strategy by capturing the sense of renewed purpose and a set of game-changing new values that emerged during the pandemic.

It is also no underestimation to say that the landscape around our work, and our position within that, has also changed significantly. Our future was safeguarded through interventional funding from the Government through the Culture Recovery Fund, and we are committed to repaying this intervention by ensuring our work seeks to support local, regional and national strategic agenda wherever and whenever it can and that we maximise the public benefit of all that we do.

Finally, as part of our reflections, we sought the opinions of a number of stakeholders, critically including our past, current and potential future audiences and participants, on how we have done and what our place might be as a large cultural institution in a post-pandemic world. This has enabled us to know that we have truly co-created this strategy.

Co-Creating the Strategy

We are committed to ensuring all that we do is relevant, impactful and welcoming. We have not created this new strategy in isolation. We engaged with audiences, participants, artists, stakeholders, communities and partners to broaden the creative experiences we offer to become more inclusive, and to be representative of the communities, artists and audiences with whom we work.

Creative Community Inquiry

We carried out an important consultation with communities, engaging with around 1,300 people. We wanted to learn more about who our audiences, visitors and participants are, and who they could be. We wanted to connect with communities and find out what the barriers are to preventing people from accessing creative experiences in our venues, and in turn, what are the opportunities which we can build upon.

Creatives Advisory Group

We are passionate about working with local artists to ensure that we can provide relevant, engaging and diverse creative experiences for all. To support this aim we formed a Creatives Advisory Group, which has advised and advocated for Norwich Theatre since September 2021 and helped to shape our strategy into one that ensures we are a culture hub for the region where creativity is nurtured and diversity in all its forms is celebrated.

Co-Creating Change

We have also sought to test and benchmark our approach with peers throughout and we are a member of the national Co-Creating Change network, exploring the role that artists, cultural organisations and communities can play to co-create change together around the UK and beyond. This peer-led network has provided rich and fruitful opportunities for knowledge and thought sharing in developing this strategy.

Local, Regional and National Context

We have ensured that this strategy connects with strategies, objectives and opportunities across a range of stakeholders including our Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnership, Arts Council England and emerging relevant national government policies. This process has provided rich context and inspired new thinking to supporting major elements of social agenda in particular. It is hugely important that this is kept under regular review to ensure that this strategy remains relevant, we maximise its impact, and we secure its sustainability.



Delivering the Strategy

This strategy is intentionally bold and ambitious.

To be successful in achieving our strategic objectives we must first ensure that our approach to delivery is driven by our values, particularly those of inclusivity, impactfulness and honesty, which were so intrinsic to the strategy development process. We must also carefully manage risk and ensure that working towards such ambitious goals does not negatively impact our reputation, viability or organisational culture.

For each year of this strategic period we will produce an annual delivery plan clearly detailing how we expect to achieve against the strategy in this year. Each delivery plan will be rigorously tested against the following critical success factors:

Relevance and Stakeholder Engagement

We must ensure that our strategic objectives remain relevant in terms of need and a shifting policy context and we are continuing to engage all relevant stakeholders.

Risk Management

We must ensure that we can afford to deliver this strategy without compromising overall organisational financial viability and that we do not over-commit and risk reputational damage.

Impact Measurement and Evaluation

We must ensure that we are able to demonstrate the outcomes, reach and quality of our work and it is perceived by all stakeholders as valuable and impactful.

Organisational Capacity and Buy-In

We must ensure that our work is always compatible with our approach to people and culture.

We will also openly share our progress along the way, learning wherever we can, adapting whenever necessary and both celebrating our successes and thanking those that have supported us throughout.





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