

The Civic Theatre, Darlington

A Route Map to Restoration

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by



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Theatresearch would like to acknowledge the help and support of Darlington Borough Council’s Officers in the preparation of this report.

Darlington Civic Theatre

Route Map to Restoration

1. Introduction

1.1 This report was commissioned in the Spring of 2012 to provide a route map through the issues and processes that need to be addressed in order to develop a restoration strategy for the Civic Theatre in Darlington. Elected members resolved in 2011 to continue to manage and operate the theatre as a directly managed service within the existing framework of Darlington Borough Council.

1.2 Having had an opportunity to examine the whole building we are of the opinion that it is no longer fit for purpose and needs significant capital expenditure in order to be able to maintain its service provision within the area, attract quality performances to the theatre and sustain a long term arts strategy within the community.

1.3 Theatresearch was engaged to examine the key issues, opportunities, and challenges that will lay ahead of any proposed restoration scheme having had significant experience working with Local Authorities on similar projects which include; Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne, Palace Theatre, Redditch and the City Varieties Music Hall in Leeds.

1.4 It is clear from having examined the Civic Theatre in some detail that the building is struggling to deliver a high-quality product in surroundings commensurate with public expectancy. The quality of the present facilities when compared to other competitors is now significantly below the expected standard. The building struggles at all levels to deliver on a day to day basis and is in urgent need of refurbishment and restoration.

1.5 Whilst this report is not intended to be a condition report it should be understood that the intrinsic infrastructure of the building is now in need of complete replacement. This will include but will certainly not be limited to: all mechanical and electrical services, toilets, technical aspects backstage, employee facilities (office and welfare), DDA, energy efficiency, seating, decoration, sustainability etc. A small scale approach to incremental renewal is no longer an option and a more radical approach is now required in order to ensure that the building is simply fit for purpose.

1.6 It is clear that the Civic Theatre is now in need of urgent attention if it is to continue to attract high quality performances and significant attendances. By re-evaluating the way in which the theatre works, the number of seats available, the quality of those seats, the potential market opportunities, the potential reductions in revenue costs brought about by energy efficiency measures etc., the theatre could be capable of competing and attracting even better performances and greater audiences. However, in order to achieve this the theatre will need significant capital investment.

1.7 Other competitors in the North-East such as the Empire Theatre Sunderland and the Theatre Royal Newcastle have had significant capital investment in recent years and this inevitably reflects poorly upon the Civic Theatre. Failure to invest in the building will unquestionably result in a downturn in business, a reduction in ticket sales and an increased need for revenue support. At the same time it will become increasingly difficult to attract and contract high quality performances – the theatre is at a crossroads and needs to take urgent remedial action in order to stem an imminent downward spiral.

2. The Building

2.1 The Theatre originally opened in 1907 as the *Palace Theatre & Hippodrome* and was designed by the commercial architectural practice of Owen and Ward who were theatre architecture specialists based in Birmingham. The building remains largely intact as conceived, and out of the thirty theatre buildings they were involved with the Darlington Civic Theatre is now the most complete and intact example of their work. This fact raises the national importance of the building and as a Grade II listed building it is now one of less than 100 listed theatre buildings within the British Isles.

2.2 The building was extended in 1990 to create additional front of house space for bars, toilets, catering and public circulation. However the DDA issues were not fully addressed at this time and given the apparent limitations of the budget the outcome was less than favourable. This issue needs to be re-evaluated for both public and staff facilities throughout the building.

2.3 It is also recommended that the whole site context of the theatre is re-evaluated as early as possible in order to identify any opportunities and needs which may or may not support the acquisition or disposal of adjacent land. In order to gauge this need accurately it would be essential to assess it within the context of a full scale development study.

3. Existing Staff Accommodation

3.1 The present staff offices are located in the premises on the western side of the theatre. The ground floor is currently occupied by the box office and the upper floors provide offices for the theatre administration. This element of the complex was originally built as a separate shop with domestic accommodation on two upper storeys. In consequence it is domestic in scale, poorly serviced by a tight and narrow staircase and generally far too small for a modern theatre organisation which also supports a number of additional theatre outreach related activities.

4. Existing Staff Structure

4.1 As part of the process of creating a development strategy it will also be necessary to ensure that the current staffing levels are commensurate with the needs of the building. At the same time the development brief, a document which will need to be developed at a later stage, will need to identify the expected levels of staffing balanced off against the revenue costs and income of the theatre once it reopens.

4.2 In addition to this there will also be a need to factor in both the revenue and operational implications associated with the closure of the theatre for restoration purposes. There may for instance be a need to re-deploy staff during the period of closure as well as allocate a number of them to assist with the work of developing other new strategies e.g. new marketing campaign, ongoing fund-raising etc.

5. Governance

5.1 The theatre is currently run as a department of the Darlington Borough Council. There is no arms-length operating company and no registered charity able to undertake additional fund-raising or beneficial giving activities. In consequence without any change in governance arrangements Darlington Borough Council are likely to be responsible for the capital cost of any proposed works.

5.2 Whilst such works would working under the aegis of the Local Authority be eligible for Heritage Lottery Funding, they would not be eligible for additional grants and awards made by other charitable foundations. This is often a key element of any fund-raising campaign and without change of governance would undoubtedly pose a significant problem for the Council. The public perception associated with a Local Authority seeking rate-payers to “top-up” the coffers of a Council based scheme is something which often receives very bad press. Conversely, a reconstituted theatre, set up as a registered charity, with arms length operating status may provide a far better option for long term governance. However before any decisions are made it will be essential to examine this issue in much greater detail. A significant amount of excellent work has already been carried out by DBC Officers with respect to cultural exemption and VAT. It is likely that further work will be required once the issues of governance have been examined further.

5.3 Governance will need further careful consideration, particularly with respect to the VAT status of any newly constituted body. In this respect it is essential that expert advice is sought at the earliest opportunity in order to ensure that VAT will be reclaimable on the proposed capital works. (see section 6 below)

5.4 The theatre will also need to re-evaluate the brand or identity of the building. At the same time we would urge that serious consideration is given to the re-naming of the theatre. Civic Theatre was at one time (largely the 1960s) associated with new and visionary arts. Today it is extremely dated and conjures up certainly within the theatre industry imagery of dated civic architecture. It in no way communicates the glory and splendour of the theatre’s historic heritage – an identity which needs to be developed and encouraged as a brand in the years to come.

5.5 The Civic Theatre governance will also need to consider how to mobilise and re-direct the existing “Friends” organisation in order to maximise the fund-raising opportunities.

5.6 It may also be worth considering the formation of a “Restoration Trust” which would have charitable status. This approach was taken by Harrogate Borough Council for the restoration of the Royal Hall. In this particular instance the Trust was made up from the Civic Trust and respected members of the business community. Through the good agencies of the Lord Lieutenant they were able to attract the patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales. The Trust was then able to approach other trusts and charities for additional funding via avenues not directly available to local authorities. Having raised the necessary funds the Trust then grant aided the project by funding specific items on the projects “shopping list” e.g. restoration of painted murals within the auditorium.

6. VAT Cultural Exemption

6.1 As part of this study Theatresearch consulted the chief executives of both the Theatre Royal, Wakefield and the Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne in order to establish their current VAT status, specifically in relation to “cultural exemption” on capital projects.

6.2 Around 2005 the European Union legislated for a change in the VAT rules governing organisations where “the decisions of last resort” were made by a Board of Voluntary Non-Executive Directors. In such cases these organisations are deemed to be partially exempt from VAT.

6.3 The sector most affected by this was the charity sector and with reference to arts organisations the primary issues were:

- Sales of tickets (the primary source of income for arts/cultural organisations are exempt from VAT (it is important to point out that exempt and being zero rated are different).
- Other revenue streams – such as bar sales for instance – are unaffected.
- The net effect of this is that the organisation can only reclaim a portion of the VAT paid out on supplies. This is based on a complicated formula which has to be agreed with HMRC based upon the proportion of revenues that are exempt and the proportion that remains taxable.
- In the case of Wakefield Theatre Royal the net effect was potentially additional costs on normal revenue operations of at least £30,000 per annum (in 2005)
- The key factor, however, was that this also affects such areas as capital development where, similarly, there is only a capability of reclaiming part of the VAT paid out on costs. The net effect of this is a requirement to raise more

money to cover the non-reclaimable VAT and therefore potentially making the capital project more unattainable.

6.4 To avoid becoming automatically exempt the Wakefield Theatre Royal Trust took legal advice and, as a result, amended its Articles of Association the key change being that the Executive Director became a member of the Board with a revised contract which entitled him to a small share in any operating profits. In addition his contract was amended to include his service as a Board Member, thus making him remunerated in the capacity as Managing Director. These changes mean that the Board is no longer the decision making authority of last resort, although of course the Executive Director still reports to them and they have overall responsibility for strategic decision making.

6.5 The amendments were agreed with the Charity Commission and adopted at the AGM in 2009. As a result, the Company is now fully taxable for VAT purposes and is able to reclaim all VAT paid out from revenues including capital construction and other costs.

6.6 With respect to the Theatre Royal Newcastle Trust, the Theatre Royal building is owned and maintained by Newcastle City Council and leased to the Theatre Royal Trust to operate as a presenting theatre.

6.7 The Theatre Royal Trust, as an independent charitable trust, has Cultural Exemption for VAT purposes. In essence this means that it neither charges VAT on its charitable activities (the sale of tickets to theatrical productions) nor claims back VAT for expenditure on its charitable activities (the cost of theatrical productions and associated activity).

6.8 The restoration of the Theatre Royal auditorium would have been deemed charitable expenditure as it would have been undertaken in support of the charitable activity of presenting productions, and so VAT would not have been able to have been claimed back from the costs incurred. However, as the building is owned by Newcastle City Council, the Council contracted and paid the Consultants and Contractors and was then itself repaid the net amount by the Theatre Royal Trust, thus saving the Theatre Royal Trust the lost cost of VAT.

7. Fund-raising Strategy

7.1 As part of a Heritage Lottery Fund application it would be necessary to develop a fund-raising strategy which identified specifically the approach to fund-raising set against the estimated capital cost. Such a strategy would typically identify key partners which in this instance would be:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Darlington Borough Council

7.2 This would then be supplemented by additional funding bodies which might include:

- Charitable Foundations e.g. The Monument Trust
- Land-fill Application e.g. Biffa or similar
- Seat Naming Scheme

7.3 Other theatre restoration projects have in recent times introduced a scheme which is usually referred to as a *Restoration Ticket Levy*. This involved adding, sometimes as a “voluntary contribution”, an additional premium to the theatre ticket price. Theatre Royal Newcastle added £1.75 per ticket, based on their 175th Anniversary restoration, whereas others have simply added £1. These funds are set aside on receipt and paid into a separate holding account in order to make a capital contribution to the restoration scheme.

7.4 In the case of the recent Theatre Royal, Newcastle restoration scheme, the City Council agreed to cash-flow the capital shortfall on the scheme, allowing the Ticket Levy to be used post-restoration to pay off the balance. It is also envisaged that this levy will now remain in perpetuity in order to support ongoing restoration and capital renewal as may be required.

7.5 It is clear that this scheme is only tenable if the theatre is perceived to be an independent charitable trust as opposed to an adjunct of the council. Governance is therefore an urgent issue which needs to be addressed as quickly as possible.

8. Route Map to Restoration

8.1 Based on Theatresearch's experience of previous similar projects we would recommend the following process and sequence of events to deliver an effective scheme of restoration. The whole process is identified in the *Draft Project Timetable* which accompanies this report and is given in *Appendix 1*.

8.2 A summary of the Project Draft Timetable is given on the following page. The assumption has been made that construction would take place over one calendar year, but would sit between the two pantomime productions e.g. close mid-January and re-open at the beginning of December.

The Civic Theatre, Darlington – Indicative Key Dates

Activity	Start Date	End Date	Activity Duration	RIBA / Round Duration
Inception Date		September 2012	Milestone	
Procurement of Professional Team [Lead Consultant, Architect (OJEU), Project Manager]	September 2012	April 2013	7 months	Pre Round 1 11 months
Procurement of Professional Team [Quantity Surveyor, Structural Engineer, M&E Engineer, CDM Co-ordinator]	December 2012	March 2013		
Appraisal and design brief (RIBA Stages A&B)	April 2013	July 2013	4 months	
Round 1 application submitted		August 2013	Milestone	
Round 1 application decision		November 2013	Milestone	Round 1 Assessment 3 months
Procurement of Other Consultants [Business / Activity Plan, Interpretation, Access, Acoustic, Fire, Graphics / Branding] <i>Consider progressing these during Round 1 assessment period so consultants in post at start of RIBA Stage C</i>	November 2013	April 2014	5 months	Round 2 11 months
Outline proposals (RIBA Stage C) complete	March 2014	June 2014	3 months	
Design Development (RIBA Stage D)	July 2014	September 2014	3 months	
Round 2 application submitted to HLF (anticipated)		October 2014	Milestone	
Round 2 (Development) funding approved – anticipated, following 3 month assessment period (subject to change depending on Trustees meeting date)		January 2015	Milestone	Round 2 Assessment 3 months
Design development (RIBA Stage E)	January 2015	May 2015	3.5 months	Round 3 (RIBA E - K) 22 months
Production information (RIBA Stage F /G)	May 2015	September 2015	3.5 months	
Out-to-tender		September 2015	Milestone	
Tender period and assessment	September 2015	December 2015	3 months	
Contractor appointed		December 2015	Milestone	
Mobilisation	December 2015	January 2016	1.5months	
10 months Construction Period	January 2016	November 2016	10 months	
Fit out and Familiarisation / Interpretation / Float	November 2016	December 2016	0.5 months	
Official Opening		December 2016	Milestone	

Procurement and implementation of Interpretation to be developed during Development Period

9. Conservation Management Plan

9.1 Based on the assumption that an application would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for grant aid towards the restoration of the building we would recommend that Darlington Borough Council commission a full Conservation Management Plan for the building in order to understand the way in which the building has changed and evolved, what is currently wrong with it and what would need to be done to make it serviceable and attractive for HLF funding.

9.2 The development of a full Conservation Management Plan is not a requirement of the initial HLF application process. A conservation statement (a much briefer piece of work) would be acceptable for the purpose but from our experience understanding the building properly prior to the appointment of a full Design Team can save both time and money later. In consequence the Conservation Management Plan then becomes the central briefing document for the development of the restoration scheme.

9.3 This piece of work can be carried out whilst the Design Team procurement process is progressing and will not therefore cause any delay to the project development.

9.4 Discussions with Tim Crawshaw (DBC Conservation officer) indicates that there is also an intention to develop a Conservation Management Plan for the streetscape surrounding the theatre. This will provide an ideal opportunity to examine the building both in context and isolation.

10. Development of a Design Team Brief and User Specification

10.1 It is essential that the project is developed in a manner which delivers precisely what the theatre needs to develop its audience and offer to the public. This may seem obvious but a refined brief at an early stage will ensure that the project does not go off course at a later date.

10.2 The creation of this document, which needs to be developed in collaboration with Darlington Borough Council, the Civic Theatre staff with consultation from selected regular users, e.g. promoters, agencies, audiences and existing clients, will form the kernel of all the studies, costings and work that will ultimately follow. The document must also define what is not required in order to save time and costs associated with designing options that will ultimately be rejected.

10.3 The actual User Specification needs to be developed as a collaborative process between the Lead Consultant and the Civic Theatre staff. In order to achieve a vision with which everyone can identify it is essential that all the staff are given an opportunity to contribute through a series of workshop sessions. Information about seating capacity and technical capabilities are of course essential, but preferences on litter bins, booster seat cushion storage, and ice cream sale points are often effectively developed by talking to the people who actually carry out these functions.

10.4 The purpose of this document is to identify the information which will be contained within the final project brief, and to examine the areas of responsibility allocated to both client and consultants.

10.5 A rigid brief is not perhaps the best way to develop a design relationship between client and theatre consultant. Moreover, there should be an opportunity once the appointment has been made to discuss, develop and explore the alternatives which may not have been considered, or which were not even available for consideration when the brief was originally considered. Within such projects as the one currently under discussion, all parties must be prepared to reconsider and reassess the development on a regular basis. If they do not there is a great danger that a philosophy which was adopted at the start in good faith, may become a millstone which is wholly impractical, simply because the situation has changed since its inception.

10.6 As a starting point the brief should produce a clearly defined statement of intent encapsulating the primary goals and objectives of the task to be undertaken. In this particular case it might be:

'The theatre will be restored to its original condition whilst incorporating the needs of today's audiences and performers, and its core activity will centre around....'

10.7 In other words the client must make a statement of intent, what will the primary uses be? What will happen in the building?

10.8 You must create a list which states specifically the intentions of the project and place them in order of priority. If all are given equal priority the building will be multi-functional, but will do most things in an inadequate way. It is therefore essential to focus on the intended core activities.

10.9 The parameters of the brief are particularly important to define in order to place the project in perspective. This should include an indication of the responsibilities and relationships within the selected design team, specifically identifying the tasks which each professional or company is expected to lead on.

10.10 The scale of the building project has already been defined to a certain extent by the footprint, and this therefore allows a precise definition to be created about the scale of the activity which will take place within the building. This definition assists everyone concerned with the project to grasp the end goal its size and complexity. It will assist both architect and consultant to estimate accurately the expected quality of finishes, the depth of public facilities. More importantly it will help to assess whether both client and consultants are singing off the same hymn sheet - in other words are the expectations and levels of expectation equal?

10.11 Undoubtedly Darlington Borough Council already has many ideas about how the building will work, but generality is not enough at this crucial point. Clear concise statements of function and capacity must now be defined. This will help to colour in the picture, and for all parties to understand the critical spatial relationship between the performance space and the ancillary rooms which support the main function. How will backstage areas work, how will the public circulate, are the toilet facilities adequate for both front of house and backstage, etc. etc.

10.12 Within this functional definition of spaces, there must be a clear and concise overview of the total site and its possibilities. The brief should therefore identify, where possible, areas for all the functions to be performed within the building. More importantly, it should also define the specific functions which cannot be performed within the intended building. This can often throw up any immediate variations between the perception of the client and appointed consultants.

10.13 Inevitably, the restored building will have a significant impact upon the artistic programme that can be successfully delivered within the building. It is therefore important for the client to provide an envisaged yearly programme for the building, and the artistic policy breakdown on a weekly basis. Obvious but important statements need to be made about the size of productions, the number of performers to be accommodated at any one time, the number of seats which will be required within the building.

11. Design Parameters

11.1 There should of course be some flexibility within the brief which will allow the project team to develop its own ideas. Yet at the same time there must be a clear statement of definite intent. This might include for instance:

1. The theatre will be seated to a maximum capacity of.....
2. The performance area will be a minimum of.....
3. The dressing rooms will accommodate..... persons.
4. The theatre will be equipped with.....
5. Consideration should be given to the possibility of future additional space within the building.
6. The disabled access issues must all be addressed where practical.
7. The stage floor will be suitable for
8. The theatre will also be equipped with the following specialist equipment (list)

11.2 The existing building defines to a certain extent the scale of productions which will be possible, but the client must further tailor this definition to ensure clarity of vision. Otherwise fundamental planning errors could result from a poorly written brief which would forever compromise the running of the building for the people it is intended to serve.

12. Artistic Policy Review

12.1 The existing artistic policy will need to be reviewed in order to ensure that the artistic aspirations are fully encompassed within the Design Team brief. Assumptions will need to be challenged in a positive way and opportunities identified to ensure that the restored building can grow develop and prosper within its new facilities.

13. Description

13.1 What impact will the building have on the surrounding area/street/site. Will the building be capable of performing other secondary functions when not in use as a theatre. This is particularly important when considering potential additional income from other sources.

13.2 This should also put the building into a national/regional context, indicating how the management team perceives regional and or national companies using the building from time to time. How for instance might such an attraction be put to best use?

13.3 Conservation and restoration philosophy are key elements that need to be carefully detailed, especially if an application for funding is to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund. These considerations need to be carefully made at every point within the development of the brief, specifically to manage the inevitable conflict between aspirations and restoration.

14. General Requirements

14.1 This should identify the specific requirements of the construction programme. Quality of finishes, durability of finishes, stylistic considerations, and the overview of importance placed upon the finished aesthetic atmosphere of the building. This should also state any cost parameters which may be deemed necessary to impose upon the brief from the outset.

15. Defining the Uses

15.1 Whilst the primary use of the building may be clear to the individuals of the client team it is essential that the team agrees a definition on paper. Different types of Arts activity demand very specific and very varying types of facility. A theatre focused around the activities of 'number one touring' will have very different needs to one which aspires to have a mixed programme with significant community involvement.

15.2 The secondary functions of any arts building are becoming ever increasingly important to the successful operation of a building. The general belief today is that such a building cannot survive if it is open between the hours of 7.30p.m. and 10.00p.m. Monday to Saturday. It should, if at all possible, be a full-time operation providing all kinds of facilities throughout the day.

15.3 As a performance venue the building could perhaps be put to other uses from time to time. During the day there is often a requirement for conference facilities and or trade union meetings, private functions, as well as matinee entertainments. It must however be clearly understood that such events require staffing and there are inevitably fundamental revenue implications to such an arts strategy.

15.4 Clearly all of these secondary functions when totalled together provide a large quantity of additional usages which cannot be overlooked or ignored. They must therefore be catered for within the initial development brief of the building. Alterations at a later date will prove to be a messy and expensive way of correcting a fundamental problem which should have been accommodated at the outset.

15.5 If such additionality is envisaged for the building then provision must be made for sufficient albeit small catering, bar, storage, public circulation and toilet facilities. In addition, it must also be made possible to isolate specific areas of the building from a security point of view. This may well reduce the number of staff required to be present in a building. (There are of course statutory obligations during performance)

16. Detailing Spaces

16.1 All main spaces must be allocated function. Some will be obvious whilst others perhaps more contentious. Similarly a number of spaces may have a potential joint use function, wholly dependant upon the type of event taking place within the venue.

16.2 Clearly areas such as this require detailed discussion between client and consultant, but it is nevertheless important at the brief stage to identify preferred uses, so that they can be examined in order of priority. It is for example a waste of time and money for the architect to examine possibilities which the client will not entertain. This simply serves to illustrate the importance of a clear brief. It must influence the way in which the design team examines a specific problem but it must not create an inflexible framework, which has no room for creativity or variation.

17. Building Relationships

17.1 The overall spatial relationship of the building and its satellites is of paramount importance for the ensured success of the building as a place for public attendance. If circulation and accommodation are inadequate, then the spatial relationship and flow of people within these areas will be flawed.

17.2 There may be an opportunity to acquire additional premises in close proximity to the theatre. This needs to be taken into consideration early in the project development stage.

17.3 Such considerations to bear in mind in this respect include the separate movement of staff and public, ensuring that their separate movements do not interfere with one another. This is particularly important when taking into account the fact that there are peak flow movement periods, during intervals, and after the performance has finished. The actual location of certain functional areas can therefore have a profound effect on the way in which the building works.

17.4 Taking this a stage further, the spatial relationship of the surrounding townscape is critical, and it may well be worth considering significant changes to such elements as car parking provision, traffic flow, public egress onto pavements, street lighting, set down and taxi points. Such considerations are worth examining early in the planning process as alterations will almost certainly involve third party negotiations and alterations. The brief should therefore be detailed to identify any possible external planning issues so that discussions can be initiated at the earliest opportunity.

18. Special Requirements

18.1 Specific requirements which have been agreed by the management team, but which are not necessarily self evident to an external observer should be detailed in the brief. If, for example, there is a specific desire to include a certain level of disabled access (to exceed the minimum statutory requirement) , or to install within the complex a seminar provision for educational purposes, it should be clearly stated as a specific requirement over and above the fundamental function of the building. It is also important to include the reasoning behind such requests, particularly if the development or facility is intended to be targeted towards a grant application.

19. Procurement of a Design Team

The recommended process for appointing a Design Team would be:

19.1 Procurement and appointment of a client appointed Lead Consultant who will undertake the following initial work:

- Development of Design Team Brief and User Specification. This will include detail for the appointment of the core design team, namely: Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Mechanical & Electrical Consultant, Structural Engineer, Project Manager
- Development of additional professional briefs namely: Access Consultant, Acoustic Consultant, CDM Consultant
- Development of Conservation Management Plan (this could be carried out by the Lead Consultant or could be a separate appointment)
- Work with Client Team to identify their capacity and capability to undertake the various Plans and strategies for public funding applications and develop a brief, if required, for the appointments of, say a fundraiser or business planner, etc.

19.2 Procurement and appointment of the full Design Team. This would include main appointments of:

- Architect with both theatre and conservation experience
- Project Manager with a theatre specialism
- Quantity Surveyor with theatre experience
- Structural Engineer with conservation experience
- Mechanical and Electrical Engineer with theatre and possibly natural ventilation experience
- CDM Co-ordinator

19.3 This would probably be augmented by additional smaller fixed fee appointments:

- Access Consultant – with heritage building experience
- Acoustic Consultant
- Fire Engineering Consultant

19.4 The full design team would be appointed through an OJEU procurement process given the likely level of professional fees that would be involved.

19.5 It is usual in this kind of project for a full Design Team to be assembled by the lead architect. The fee bid is therefore based upon the collective professional services outlined in above in 19.2.

19.6 The alternative approach to 19.5 is for all the professional appointments to be made on an individual tender and appointment basis. This has the added advantage of allowing the client to specifically select every discipline within the Design Team but it does require a greater degree of procurement input.

19.7 The additional appointments as outlined in 19.3 are at a relatively low level of fee and in consequence are usual appointed on a “three quotations basis”.

20. Client Team

20.1 The make-up of the Client Team is something that also needs to be given careful consideration. With a project of this kind it is essential that a Lead Officer is also appointed to represent the Council as and when may required. This appointment must be someone from a senior management level, who has the ability and authority to make decisions and draw upon any additional professional experience that may be needed from within the Council resources. Previous experience of capital schemes is essential, and a Project Management background would be a great benefit.

20.2 In addition it will be essential to have both legal and procurement support from the Council’s resources. Such resources will only be utilised on an as required basis and should not require constant or regular attendance at meetings.

20.3 The Civic Theatre staff will also have a significant role to play within the development of the whole scheme. It is essential for instance, that the “User Specification” as identified above develops the aspirations of the staff and addresses the key issues which will have been identified by the Lead Consultant during the development process. Projects of this kind evolve, and in doing so both the views of the staff and senior council officers may change during the planning and development phases. In consequence it is essential that these changes are monitored and evaluated effectively. Particular reference will need to be made to cost impact on any changes in order to ensure that the project remains within the scope of the budget.

21. Heritage Lottery Fund

21.1 The listed building status of the Civic Theatre immediately suggests that the best opportunity for significant capital funding is likely to come from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

21.2 The current arrangements for applications dictate that a minimum partnership funding of 10% of the total project cost is required, though in reality a higher intervention rate of between 15%-25% is far more likely to have a successful outcome.

21.3 Applications for capital grants of under £2million are dealt with by the regional Heritage Lottery Fund offices. Applications for more than £2 million are dealt with by the highly competitive national committee.

21.4 Applications deadlines for both committees, regional or national, fall four times a year (held in March, June, September, and December) and the process is divided into Round 1 and Round 2. Round 1 requires a project developed to RIBA Stage B, with a simple basic cost plan and drawings. If a Round 1 pass is obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund, development costs are provided (at the agreed partnership funding percentage) for professional fees etc.

21.5 After development of the scheme to RIBA C/D the application is re-submitted for a Round 2 approval. On receipt of this approval the project is then clear to proceed through to construction.

21.6 The whole HLF application process commences with a short “Pre-Application” which outlines the intention of the scheme and provides HLF with a loose indication of cost and what will be involved. We would recommend that this is submitted as soon as possible.

22. Round 1 HLF Application - Costs

22.1 The application to HLF and work required to produce this application will require an initial financial commitment on the part of Darlington Borough Council.

22.2 Architectural development to RIBA Stage B would require a financial commitment which could not be claimed back even if the HLF application was successful. These costs would therefore be “at risk”.

22.3 There will also be a requirement for the development of a business plan, audience development plan and associated artistic policy document. Some this work could undoubtedly be done “in-house, collaborating where appropriate with the Design Team

23. HLF Round 1 “Pass” and Development Phase

23.1 In the event of a successful HLF application, HLF will grant a Round 1 pass. This will then unlock funding to develop the scheme through to RIBA Stage B/D prior to the submission of the Round 2 application.

23.2 During this “Development Phase” there will be a requirement for a number of additional key documents and reports to be produced. These will include but not be limited to:

- Business Planning and Development
- Access/DDA Report
- Audience Development Plan
- Activity Plan – Education & Learning

23.3 The costs associated with this work will be eligible for funding from HLF, though there will still be a requirement for partnership funding at the by then agreed intervention rate. This partnership funding rate is likely to be greater than 10% and less than 25% of the total costs.

24. Summary

24.1 The Civic Theatre is in urgent need of capital for restoration and renewal purposes.

24.2 The Heritage Lottery Fund would appear to be the obvious place to search for such funding. Other sources of partnership funding will also need to be found.

24.3 The governance and branding of the theatre needs to be re-evaluated as soon as possible.

24.4 In order to produce a comprehensive and convincing case to the Heritage Lottery Fund it will be necessary for Darlington Borough Council to find some initial capital funding in order to commission the necessary professional services. The cost of this is likely to be in the region of £50,000. This would be required to cover the cost of:

- Design Team costs to prepare RIBA Stage B proposals (£10K)
- Conservation Management Plan (£25K)
- Surveys and Investigations (£5K)
- Digital Drawings (not a full survey) (£5K)
- Heritage Lottery Application documentation (£5K)

Appendix I

Draft Project Timetable

