

1. Systematic changes

- a) Over the past 10 years, the activities at the Grand have expanded considerably and it is now regarded within the entertainment business as one of the premier theatres in the north-west. However, such expansion is not without its cost and the workload for volunteers has expanded from around 70 amateur performances a year to now include an additional 70 plus professional one night acts. The time involvement of two key volunteers has increased immensely particularly with respect to accounts and the bar. The workload now involved with the financial management of a multitude of contracts together with and the increase in stocking and providing many more nights of service in the bar have caused significant changes to the theatre “volunteer based “business model. Last year, the volunteer bar manager retired after 20 years service and there were no volunteers willing to take on the job. As a result, the job has been passed to a self-employed bar manager and the theatre income from the bar is now £8K less per annum. Similarly, due to the increased workload, no-one is prepared to carry out the significantly increased workload of the treasurer without some payment and the theatre now pays a £1K honorarium to him.
- b) Following the recent increase in salaries at the Dukes, the theatre had to increase the manager’s salary but even at its current level, it is still well below that currently being paid at the Dukes for a job that includes marketing in addition to general management. This increased theatre costs by £7K and is an ongoing cost
- c) Governance costs and utility bills have both increased.

2. Economic climate related changes

- a) Along with many other theatres, ticket sales have fallen by around 11% reducing income by around £5K. Coffee bar income has also fallen by £5K in line with reduced sales

In summary:

Income reductions

Bar management change	£8K
Reduced ticket sales	£5K
Reduced coffee bar income	£5K

Cost increases

Increased governance and utility bills	£4K
Salary increases	£7K
Governance costs	£2K
Treasurer remuneration	<u>£1k</u>
Total effect of the changes	-£32K

In anticipation of a challenging year, costs were reduced last year mainly by halting spend on long term repairs / capital items. The cost savings were not enough to avoid a loss of £12K.

Proposal to the Council for assistance.

Footlights manages and improve our 230 year old Grade II listed building on behalf of the city. It is a Community asset in all senses of the word and Footlights has in the past been able to cover all operating and maintenance costs. However due to the systematic changes listed above, it is now having difficulty servicing the infrequent, long term maintenance costs:

1. Stage scenery loading doors £700

It is proposed that rot be cut out and filled and both doors covered over with galvanised steel plate. This is the same as the under stage emergency exit doors onto Lodge Street. This will prolong the life of the doors.

Current situation: A temporary patch up with filler followed by 2 coats of paint has been carried out but not the plating over. The best long term solution would obviously be new doors but the proposed work should give us another 5 to 10 years

Cost estimate £700 including new catch and bolts.

2. Props external door replacement £550

This door also has sections of rot and needs replacing.

Cost estimate £550 including fitting. The rot could be patched but that would be a short term solution as it has been done once before. Proposed solution is a replacement door in hardwood.

Current situation. No progress due to lack of funds.

3. Stalls ventilation tower louvres £5K

Two of the louvres blew off during the high winds allowing pigeons to get inside the stalls roof vent stack. This meant the theatre vents system had to be blanked off to prevent pigeon dirt falling onto audience members. The gap has been temporarily filled by mesh which has successfully kept the birds out and the vent stack is now back in service but rain can now blow into the shaft and into the theatre.

Close examination of the vent tower reveals that the steelwork is badly corroded on the east side and has extensive surface rust in many other places. To get to the outside requires a scaffold which would cost £840 +VAT on each occasion. It would be possible to do a temporary repair to the existing design by fabricating two new complete louvre sets, removing the existing louvres on opposite sides and carrying out the required maintenance work from the inside the vent tower but that would not cure the severely corroded parts.

Current situation no progress due to lack of funds. Estimated cost of removal of the old tower, fabricating a new one, galvanising and refitting is £5K. A detailed estimate is being drawn up by a local contractor. The only realistic long term solution is to replace the tower. We did something similar with a corroded beam 10 years ago and there are no signs of deterioration to date.

4. **Façade tiles £180**

Three of the tiles on the left side of the façade are becoming detached from the base stonework. They need to be carefully removed and re-fixed.

Current Situation: The offending tiles have been removed and refitted by a local tradesman. They were found to be concrete tiles not quoins. The source of the problem was found to be a badly corroded steel placed inside the wall presumably around 1908 which had jacked the tiles off. Cost of the job including painting was less than expected at £180

Fitting or RCD safety socket on the side of the stage £546

This supply is the only supply not yet fitted with earth leakage protection. A suitable socket has been identified. These devices eliminate the possibility of faulty equipment causing electric shock.

Current Situation New board fitted at a cost of £546.

5. **Replace five out of the six dressing room doors with 30 minute fire doors with smoke seals £2750** One door has already been replaced to Fire Brigade recommendation. The others do not have smoke seals and need to be upgraded. Cost estimate based on the one already changed (£544) is £2750.

Current situation No progress. Awaits funds

6. **Fit heat detectors to the roof of the stage tower. £500** This is the only area in the theatre where fire detection is not fitted. It is not for personnel safety but needed to protect the asset in the event of fire to allow early detection and rapid response from the Fire Service to minimise damage. Estimated cost £500

Current situation No progress due to lack of funds

7. **Replace corroded protective grills over the boiler flues £200**The acid steam from the condensing boilers has corroded the centres out of the protection grills.

Current Situation No progress due to lack of funds. Cost estimated to be £200

8. **Replace damaged staircase from stalls to stage right fire door. £500**The stairs were damaged some time ago by a piano hire company from Manchester. We now use promenade Music for piano hire who use a different method of piano transport.

Current situation No progress due to lack of funds. The staircase is not unsafe but is gradually deteriorating. It has been repaired twice and is now in need of replacement

Cost estimate based on recent replacement of centre stage stairs £500

9. **Change all seat arm fixings from wood screws to bolted system. £3000** On average, an armrest comes off every three performances. 10 arms have been modified to test out a better solution and have remained tightly secured. It is proposed that a contractor be employed to change the remaining 450 arm rests. Cost estimate 3 arm rests per hour equates to 120 hours work which would cost £3000 at £25/hour

Current Situation No progress due to lack of funds

10. **Run cat 5 cables from the stage manager's corner £650** to the under stage area, the flying gallery and the foyer for monitoring purposes. 4 days work at £150/day plus cable will cost £650

Current situation No progress due to lack of funds

Recommendation:

The Cabinet is requested to approve an annual grant £4000 to assist the theatre cover its long term maintenance. It is proposed that the amount be reviewed on a regular 3 yearly basis.

Activities at the Grand in support of the Council's Cultural Heritage Strategy

The council cultural heritage strategy includes in its six objectives the following:

“Developing Lancaster as a Heritage City

Developing the City as a major cultural centre through enhancements to the Duke's and Grand Theatres and the creation of a centre for creative industries in the Storey Institute”.

The Objects under the constitution of Footlights are

- promote, maintain, improve, and advance education, particularly by the production of educational plays and the encouragement of the Arts, including the arts of drama, dramatic authorship, mime, dancing, singing, and music
- maintain and preserve the Grade II listed building built in 1782 known as the Lancaster Grand Theatre as an ongoing venue for such plays and encouragement of these objects

The Grand as part of the city's Heritage

The Grand was built in 1782 in the reign of George III when Lancaster was a major importing port. It has continued in operation as a theatre since then with the exception of six months in 1908 when it was rebuilt in the Edwardian style following a disastrous fire. It is the third oldest continually operating theatre outside London and has been systematically restored to its current high standard. Footlights runs monthly pre-bookable guided tours which have proved to be popular. The theatre also takes part in City heritage activities such as Lancaster unlocked and provides a unique attraction to tourists.

The Grand as a major player in Lancaster's cultural scene

a) Community involvement in Theatre

The Grand is run by Lancaster Footlights, a local amateur dramatic society who lets the theatre to other local groups which include amateur drama groups, amateur musical societies and several dance schools. These productions all provide opportunities for local residents and students from the universities to receive training and coaching in theatre skills and experience being part of quality productions. It also gives the general public the opportunity to see high quality drama and musicals.

Footlights itself produces four plays each year plus a four week pantomime. The summer family production and the pantomime both include children who learn or improve existing skills in stagecraft during rehearsals. Footlights also runs a week long summer school in August covering a wide range of stage skills which are put into practice in the production at the end of the week long course on the Friday evening. Following requests from children and teenagers for regular

training sessions, plans are being drawn up in conjunction with the Arts Council for three 10 week terms of evening classes each year to increase the opportunities for involvement of young people in the Arts.

Recent Footlights productions have also forged links with students from both Universities who are able to use the skills acquired at their University on stage and gain valuable experience from their future careers in the Arts.

Footlights has recently set up an additional string to its bow, "Studio Footlights". This group produces less well known plays which would not be able to attract sufficient audience numbers to fill the main theatre. The Storey Institute has been chosen as the preferred venue and to date three plays have been staged there with three evening runs, most of which were full to the capacity of the 60 seat auditorium. The next Studio play is planned for mid- November.

b) Catering for all tastes

The Arts programme at the Grand also caters for all tastes and there is a wide variety of acts to see with something to appeal to all audience preferences. The performances by nationally known comedians at the Grand theatre have enhanced the reputation of the city and offers opportunities for involvement with the Arts for some who would otherwise not visit a theatre.