

Chairman's Report April 2021 to March 2022

AGM 13th June 2022



Welcome to our Annual General Meeting for the year ending 31 March 2022 – our first as a CIO. This year, with the end of COVID-19 restrictions, we are holding the meeting in person, as required by the Charity Commission.

I have tried to pull together here the key points for the year April 2021 to March 2022, and a few weeks more to bring us up to date. I'm sure I've missed a few things out; it has been another eventual period!

Our first objective [I paraphrase] is to save the Streatham Hill Theatre for the benefit of the community. We address this by campaigning to bring the theatre to the attention of the community and to relevant organisations, and to work with them to seek a way to achieve this, for example as an arts and cultural centre.

Following on from the publication in April 2021 of the Viability Study and Economic Impact Assessment, and the Statement of Heritage Significance, we have continued to engage with key bodies such as Lambeth, GLA, Theatres Trust to make the case for a rejuvenated Streatham Hill Theatre.

As there were Lambeth council elections in May 2022, we contacted all the local candidates we could to ask them to support the campaign, and received positive responses from some. After the election we met with the new councillors from Streatham Hill West and Thornton ward (where the theatre is situated) who have given their support. New Council cabinet members have given their support in quotes for our press releases, as did Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. And our MP has raised the campaign in her debate in Parliament

This year we have also engaged with Historic England who added the Grade II theatre to their national *Heritage at Risk Register* in Nov 2021 – supported by publicity including our Patrons Simon Callow and Floella Benjamin photographed in the theatre. And with SAVE Britain's Heritage, who have also added the theatre to their *Buildings at Risk Register*, which was launched just in June 2022. Along with inclusion in the '*at risk*' lists of the Theatres Trust and the Art Deco Society, and its status as an Asset of Community Value, the building is widely recognised as important and needs saving. Regeneration of the theatre remains a key element of Lambeth's strategy for Streatham.

After the year end and tying in with that SAVE launch, we have also added two more high profile Patrons – David Harewood and Jools Holland - from the creative world to help promote the campaign, bringing the total to 12.

The campaign was featured in a documentary by MA broadcast journalism students from University of Westminster who approached us for help. This is

well worth a watch (via the website) as they have done a great job telling our story, featuring a range of interviewees from the campaign team and wider.

We also continue to work closely with InStreatham, our local business improvement district (BID) – your Chairman is a volunteer director there – who would like to see the theatre rejuvenated and who support our campaign. We continue to work with them and Lambeth to seek government help aimed at regenerating high streets. We contributed to a government High Street Task Force initiative for Streatham to present The Friends viewpoint, including the benefits of a revived theatre.

Over this year we have also engaged with a theatre company who wanted to acquire the freehold of building for use as a theatre. Much of our discussion was limited by commercial confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements, but they seemed to have good proposals for the building, which aligned to The Friends vision.

In May this year, they were beaten by another company – a property investment company – who bought the building from the original owners for £2.76m. We made contact with the new owner's representative who explained they were looking for a medium to long term investment, and would be looking to revise the existing leases to free up more of the building for use in the short term. This might have allowed the theatre company or the community to gain some access.

However, subsequently the new owner has agreed a sale to Ruach City Church for £4m. The church plans to move their current Brixton Hill church to the theatre over the next two years, after renovations. We have heard from the church who want to work with us, and are setting up a meeting in the next few weeks to better understand their plans. They will need change of use, planning and listed build consent, which provide an opportunity for us to influence how the building is renovated and used. This is an emerging situation so keep an eye on our newsletters or come to campaign meetings for updates. We can cover this more in questions later in this meeting.

We continue to receive enquiries from organisations, including some major entertainment companies, wanting to use the theatre, e.g. for filming or shows. Obviously, we cannot oblige but we pass these enquiries onto the occupiers to show the level of interest.

Looking at our supporters, we currently have 190 creatives, joining the 1250 supporters on our mailing list, plus 1400 Twitter, 1000 Facebook and 1300 Instagram followers.

We are constantly adding more to our [website](#), which is the gateway to everything about the theatre and the campaign, including audio or video interviews with people who performed at or otherwise remember the theatre – including Tom Courtenay and Simon Callow. These provide some great insight into the theatre’s history, as do the various historic entries, some with photos and images, in our blog which goes back to 1912!

Our planned community engagement event for last year’s Streatham Festival, was a pop-up “Imaginarium” to let people develop ideas for the building, and a “treasure hunt” around the area. We received funding from InStreatham and donations of prizes from local business. Unfortunately, we were unable to acquire a pop-up shop front for the Imaginarium, which went ahead online only (check the website), but the Treasure Hunt went ahead successfully.

The Friends and the campaign are run entirely by volunteers giving their time and experience for free – **I would like to thank them all** – and appeal for others to join them in helping, so as to spread the load over a wider number.

Our Committee became the charity Trustees for the first year, and they are required to stand down for this first AGM but are eligible for re-election. During the year, Liz Burton stood down as a Trustee. Not standing for re-election this time are Francis James and Rob Keeling.

Our day-to-day campaign continues to be run by a separate but overlapping Steering Group. You can think of the Trustees as the board of directors, and the Steering Group as the management team. A number of dedicated teams are focussed on specific areas of the campaign, such as digital comms, creative supporters, the Memories and Your Vision projects.

Remember we have regular campaign meetings, currently being held online, where you can get frequent updates on the campaign, and contribute to planning. These are held every 4 weeks. The next one is in 4 weeks’ time on 10th August. Please register at the website!

Finally, can I say a big thank you to everyone who has helped with the campaign, giving time, pledging money and spreading the word! Give yourselves a big round of applause...

David Harvey

Chairman